

The Devotion That God Loves

*Clay is one, but pots are multifarious;;
Gold is one, but jewels are varied;
Milk is one, though cows are of many colours.
The Supreme is one, but wears many vestures.*

Embodiments of divine love!

Although clay is one, the products made out of it are varied in form and name. Gold is one, but many different ornaments are made out of it. Milk is the same, though it may be derived from cows of different colours. Though the Divine is one, He manifests Himself in various forms with different names.

On the fathomless ocean, countless waves arise. Though the waves appear as different from each other, the ocean is one. Likewise, though living beings appear in the Universe in a myriad forms, all of them are waves that have emerged from the ocean of Sat-Chit-Ananda (Being-Awareness-Bliss).

The joys and sorrows man experiences in daily life, his attachments and aversions, his pursuit of sensory pleasures, are all due to the vagaries of the mind. As long as man is subject to the feeling of duality, he cannot be free from attachments and hatred. There can be no escape from dualism as long as man does not recognise his inherent divinity.

Freedom from dualism

There are today few who recognise unity in diversity, though there are any number of intellectuals who are engaged in promoting divisions and differences. The world today needs righteous men who will promote unity.

The mind is the cause of differences and only by control of the mind can differences be eliminated. How can man discover his oneness with the Divine without seeking to know his true nature? Nine forms of devotion have been indicated for man to realise his divinity, starting with "Shravanam" (listening to the glories of God) and culminating in "Atmanivedanam" (Total surrender to the Divine). Of these nine forms of devotion, the greatest is total surrender. But who is to surrender, what, to whom? When this question is pursued, man discovers that the entire universe is made up of the five basic elements (Pancha-Bhutas), which are manifestations of God. Man is also a manifestation of God. God is not separate from man. But man is unable to recognise this because of his identifying himself with the body, which is only an instrument. When he gives up this feeling, he will experience the Self.

Three types

Men are of three types. First, the emotional type (Bhaktirasa-atmakam). The second is the active type (Kriyatmakam). The third is the rational type. The emotional type of persons are engaged in activities like worship of idols, bhajans etc. They offer worship to an idol or picture in the faith

that God in a certain form has shown to mankind the means to liberation. However, you may worship a picture as God, but not God as a picture. You may see God in a picture, but the picture is not God. No object exists with a form without the immanence of the Divine in it. Hence every object has to be elevated to the level of the Divine. Treat every object as a manifestation of the Divine. But do not reduce the Divine to the level of material objects. The process of devotion, beginning with adoration of physical objects, ultimately leads to the realisation of the Divine. Without this emotional yearning for God, active pursuit of the Divine is not possible.

When devotion develops, one resorts to the path of action. And then, one starts enquiring into what is transient and what is permanent, what is real and what is unreal. While this discriminating faculty is essential for the spiritual aspirant, it is being abused in the name of rationalism. The process of enquiring has assumed bizarre forms. Today many young persons are misled by so-called "rationalism" to deride spirituality. Few persons attempt to get at the correct meanings of things. By misinterpreting things and creating confusion, many are taking to wrong courses.

Human life is precious, sublime and meaningful. But by involvement in purely worldly pursuits, the greatness of human birth is forgotten. Without human values, life is meaningless. When there is purity in thought, word and deed, human values are practised. The unity of the three H's is essential 'Heart, Head and Hand'. But today this unity is absent among people, with the result that men are becoming inhuman.

Inherent Divinity

Because man has not been able to, shed the animal qualities inherited from his past, he does not behave like a true human being. Hence, man has to endeavour to understand his true nature, his immense potentialities and his divine qualities.

He must realise that whatever he perceives is essentially Divine. All his actions should be dedicated to the Divine. Thereby work will be transformed into worship. In essence, there is no difference between work and worship. But, unfortunately, in these degenerate days even worship is turned into some form of undesirable activity. Today devotion is used for deriving sensory enjoyment. It is used more as a source of fleeting pleasure than a fountain of enduring bliss. God will not approve of such part-time devotion. The Divine is omnipresent and is watching everyone of your actions, wherever you may be. People in their ignorance imagine that God takes no notice of them. Divinity cannot be understood as long as this ignorance prevails.

Many people imagine that they are caught up in the coils of "Samsara" and are the victims of worldly existence. This is a ridiculous idea. It is not family life that binds you. It has no arms to clasp you. It is you who are endowed with hands, eyes and ears. It is you who are holding on to worldly life and suffering the consequences. This is the truth in the false and the unreality in the Real. This accounts for the fact that in the world today the false is deemed true and the truth is considered as untrue.

God and Man

How can man realise the Truth? Only when he experiences non-dualism (the Advaitabhava). As long as he is steeped in dualism (that he and the Divine are different), he is bound to be racked by the opposites: joy and sorrow, the real and the unreal.

All that exists in the cosmos belongs to God. But man imagines that he is the owner of various things and is a prisoner of the conception of "mine" and "thine". In reality all are only trustees of the property belonging to the Divine. This means that everyone has to consider himself as a trustee for the world's goods. A bank cashier handles an enormous amount of money. None of it belongs to him. He cannot use it for himself, but has to ensure its safety and right use. Likewise, all are trustees responsible for the proper use of the goods entrusted to them. No one can claim ownership.

Hence one's life should reflect the unity of thought, speech and action. Devotion should also be the unified expression of love for God, action in the service of God and total surrender to the will of God. These are inter-twined like the braid of a woman's tresses. Bhakti (Devotion), Upasana (worship) and Jnana (Awareness of the Self) together demonstrate the oneness of the Divine.

This truth is common to all religions like Christianity, Zoroastrianism and other faiths. True spirituality emphasises the truth that is common to all religions. One should not hate any religion or ridicule any form of worship. One must recognise the unifying truth in all religions. God is not separate from you. However, by regarding God as separate from him, man resorts to various kinds of worship. In the present day world this type of "Karmopasana" (worship through action) is necessary. But one should not be engaged all his life in this form of worship. Gradually one should reach a higher level. Only then humanness gets divinised.

Be human

What is important today is not what particular faith one professes, whether he is a Christian, a Buddhist, a Muslim or a Hindu. The real question is now far he is a true human being. Develop therefore, your human qualities. What constitutes humanness? It is good conduct alone. The Indian epics hail man, as "Manujaa", one who belongs to the lineage of the sage Manu. As such every human being has the latent tendencies of a sage. Unfortunately, instead of these traits, only vicious tendencies are to the fore. Man must recover his spiritual heritage. He must cultivate sublime and divine feelings. However, owing to misdirected education men are taking to evil ways. Compared to the behaviour of the educated urban population, there seems to be more goodness and virtue among unlettered hill tribes. Injustice and wickedness seem to flourish in the places where you have educational institutions and courts of law.

Satsang

Men should concentrate on their natural spiritual tendencies rather than succumbing to the allurements of worldly objects. For this purpose, association with good people is essential. Eschew totally the company of bad people. Good company does not mean participating in bhajans and religious gatherings. "Satsang" truly means cultivating the company of one's conscience ("Sat") it means being immersed in the contemplation of God. Carry on your daily

duties with your thoughts centered on God. Deem every action as an offering to God. That is the way to perfect one's human nature and sanctify one's life.

“Likhita japam”

As this may not be an easy process, the method of “Likhita Japam” has been recommended for purifying one's mind, (“Likhita Japam” is a form of spiritual exercise in which one is engaged in writing the name of the Lord). “Likhita Japam” should be performed in a spirit of devotion. A wealthy man, who had no peace of mind despite his riches, went to a sage for advice. The sage suggested to him that as a way of reducing his insatiable desires, which were the cause of his worries, he should write the name of the Lord some crores of times. Unused to such an arduous exercise, the rich man found a shortcut to achieving what the sage had suggested, by resorting to mechanical devices for multiplying the number of times he wrote the name of the Lord. This is a total travesty of the spiritual exercise suggested by the sage. It is tantamount to cheating God. This sort of deception and hypocrisy is rampant today. It is not quantity that counts. Even the writing of a few names with sincere devotion is better than filling pages mechanically.

In Tamilnadu, numerous devotees have written with true devotion the name of “Sai Ram” many crores of times, thinking of the name in their minds, spelling it by mouth and writing it by the hand. The unity of mind, speech and action has produced purity in thought, word and deed. Any spiritual exercise like “Likhita Japam” should be done whole-heartedly. Only then it becomes sanctified and godly. All actions should be performed in this spirit of dedication and in accordance with the dictates of one's conscience.

The Example of Hanuman

The name of the Lord is like a precious jewel which must be considered valuable and cherished as a gem. Tulsidas sang in praise of the Lord's name (Rama's name) as the most invaluable gift given to him by his guru. The Lord's name should be recited with deep feeling so that it gets firmly entrenched in the heart. Hanuman is the supreme exemplar of true devotion. At the time of Rama's coronation in Ayodhya after his return from Lanka, Kama gave presents to ail those who had helped him in the battle against Ravana. When it came to Hanuman, Rama could not find anything that was worthy of the unparalleled devotion of Hanuman. Praising Hanuman's unexcelled services, Rama said that the only fitting reward for such a devotee was to give himself to Hanuman. He embraced Hanuman most lovingly. Sita saw this and felt Hanuman should not be left unrewarded for his great services. She took out from her neck the pearl necklace she had received from her father Janaka at the time of her wedding and gave it to Hanuman. Immediately after receiving the necklace, Hanuman removed one pearl after another from the necklace, crushed it between his teeth, placed it close to his ear and then threw it away.

Surprised at his strange behaviour, Sita asked him why he was treating the pearls in that manner. Hanuman explained that he had no use for any object that did not chant Rama's Name. Sita asked him how he could expect to hear Rama's name from an inert object like a pearl. Hanuman immediately pulled out a hair from his arm and kept it close to Sita's ear. The hair was chanting Rama's name! “Ram! Ram!”

True devotion means that even the blood stream should proclaim the Lord's name. Because Hanuman was such a devotee he could be the foremost servant of Rama. He was totally free from egoism, pride and envy. In Lanka, he did not boast of his prowess, but was content to declare himself a humble servant of Rama. This humility is the true mark of a devotee.

When a person is asked "where do you live?" the correct answer is: "I am dwelling in the Atma (The Indwelling Spirit)". This is the truth to be learnt from all the scriptures and epics. Everyone should realise the oneness in spirit of all mankind, which is proclaimed equally by all religions.

Collective singing

Sometime ago a devotional exercise called "Likhita Japam" (writing the names of the Lord as a form of worship) was started in Tamilnadu. It was a collective exercise ("Samashthi"). Large numbers of devotees assembled at one place and wrote the name of the Lord as a spiritual exercise (Japam). The joy to be derived from such a collective effort is indescribable. The community bhajan in which all join to sing in unison is an equally blissful experience. This community singing was started by Guru Nanak. During community singing divine vibrations emerge sanctifying the whole atmosphere. The same result cannot be expected when one sings alone. Community singing promotes unity which leads to purity and divinity. Today there is no unity, purity or divinity. What mankind needs today is unity based on the spiritual oneness of humanity.

Worship of the Lord's feet

Today we are celebrating the Paduka Festival (a festival for worshipping sandals blessed by the Lord). What is the significance of worshipping the Lord's feet? There is the devotee's yearning for touching the Lord. How is this to be done? The easiest way is to touch the feet of the Lord. A spiritual significance is attached to the touching of the Lord's feet which sanctify the earth by walking on it. Scientifically also there is meaning in "Padasparsha" (touching the feet). The blood circulates from the feet to the head. When one touches the toe of the Lord's Feet, he can experience a current present in the toe. That is a divine energy. From a mundane point of view the body appears as a physical form. But from the spiritual point of view, there is an aura around every body. It has effulgence (Tejas) from which arises "Ojas" (spiritual energy). This energy produces vibrations. That is why it is declared: "Darshanam Papanashanam" ("Sight of the Lord destroys all sins").

"Sambhashanam Sankatanashanam" ("Dialogue with the Lord destroys all sorrows").

"Sparshanam Karmavimochanam" (The touch of the Lord frees one from the consequences of one's actions). When the devotee touches the Lord, it is like the linking of the negative and positive wires, which generates divine energy. This connection should be from heart to heart. Only then the Divine energy will flow (from the Lord to the devotee). Then the Lord and the devotee become one. Because the spiritual significance of these practices is not properly understood people fall a prey to confusion. Men should go away from the worldly path like the fish which swim against the current in a river. That is the way to realise the Divine. If you allow yourself to be carried away by the worldly current, you can only meet with a sad end. Whatever the world may think, keep you eye on the spiritual goal. When people ask for liberation, they

should understand that liberation means oneness with the Divine. Become aware of your divinity. Then worldly thoughts will not enter your mind. To realise this oneness with God, one has to chant the Lord's name incessantly. You must pray for the vision of the Lord's feet in your heart. There should be no room for evil thoughts and feelings.

Lakshmana's devotion

It was because of the unalloyed devotion of Lakshmana that Rama considered him greater than Sita or anyone else. He declared: "It is impossible for me to find a brother like Lakshmana." This was a tribute to the way Lakshmana served Rama and Sita for thirteen years in the forest. During all these years Lakshmana had never looked at the face of Sita but revered her feet everyday. When the jewels dropped by Sita were shown to Lakshmana he could identify only the anklets and not any of the other jewels worn by her. (Bhagavan recited the sloka from the Ramayana in which Lakshmana explained how he could identify only Sita's anklets because he saw them every morning when he prostrated at her feet.) Can such reverence be found among the youth today? One feels ashamed when one listens to their talk. Young people should follow the ideal exemplified by Lakshmana.

Devotees should not feel satisfied with what they deem as their devotion. They should find out whether the Lord has appreciated their devotion. God should acknowledge your devotion. Krishna acknowledged Arjuna's devotion to Him only when the latter declared: "I shall abide by your words" ("Karishye Vachanam Tava"). If one does not pay heed to the Lord's words and does not act up to His injunctions, to claim that one is devotee is only a pompous boast. Activise your devotion. Let your actions be pure and sacred.

Old devotee's example

For one to come to this godly path, one has to contemplate on God incessantly. Today in Tamil Nadu the "Likhita Japam" movement and the worship of "Padukas" (sandals sanctified by the Divine Feet of Bhagavan) have grown by leaps and bounds. An 85-year-old devotee is striving to achieve even greater progress in these movements. In devotion it is not age that counts. What matters is the determination and the dedication. At this age, he comes almost every week to Prasanthi Nilayam without regard to the strain involved. His sole concern is service to Bhagavan. All devotees should become exemplars like him, of dedicated service. When that happens the world will be an earthly paradise.

This old devotee has been able to bring together large numbers of people to get involved in this form of collective worship by his example and enthusiasm. The saint Thyagaraja had great difficulty in chanting the name of Rama 96 crores of times. But in Tamilnadu today the Lord's name has been written 108 crores of times (one crore is ten million). Countless devotees have been engaged in writing the name of the Lord, without wasting their time in useless gossip or meaningless activities. What a sacred pre-occupation is this! Do not waste your time in useless pursuits. Instead devote all the time available to remembering and writing the Lord's name.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the song, "*Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahi.*"

(From Bhagavan's discourse in the Poornachandra Auditorium on December 18, 1994)

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CHRISTMAS IN PRASANTHI NILAYAM

The Avatar's Christmas Present

It begins to dawn on me a couple of days after Christmas in Prasanthi Nilayam that what Swami is really doing here is somehow far deeper (or higher) than we may realize. What He's really doing is beyond the beautiful experiences we've all just lived through. As usual with Him, there's much more to all this than meets the eye. Let's glance at this year's programme and then try to lift above it for a look into the significance of these wondrous Prasanthi Christmastimes.

Once again, this year's Christmas Programme was "the best ever." Every year it's that way! As we prepare to come here each year we ask ourselves how on earth this year's experience could possibly measure up to the utter glory of last year's. And each time, as so often happens in Bhagavan's presence, the current experience surpasses all previous ones.

This year's Programme began with a Satsang for all overseas devotees nine days before Christmas. The two aims of the meeting were to establish a guiding theme (which became "With Love") and to pull together the various working groups (singers, musicians, children's drama, seva dals, etc.). Other guiding themes emerged as the programme unfolded and were important to the overall success of it.

Daily satsangam

Three or four hundred foreign devotees attended one-hour Satsang meetings every day for eight days. Gradually, as they joined in singing the songs of the various nations (including Latin America, Russia, Germany, and others) and as everyone participated in the common devotional language of bhajans, the heart of the Satsang community swelled with a sense of love and unity. "Wherever my name is sung, I will be there," He says, and indeed, His loving presence was felt each day.

The "mandir chorus"

The Musical Programme sung by the five hundred voices sitting in Baba's new Mandap (the recently completed covering over the Mandir compound) was very beautiful. Swami sat in His chair on the edge of the verandah smiling, and swaying. Ten thousand others jammed joyously into the Mandap area listening contentedly to the hour-long program. A half hour before the event a partial cloud cover settled over the valley, as though some giant hand had drawn a celestial shade across the sky to protect the singers from the hot sun and enhance the peacefulness of the afternoon.

"For you only Swami, not for us," was the guiding theme that emerged for this segment of the Christmas programme. And this helped people set aside their own lifelong training and habits relative to music and allowed them to sing out to The Lord with full hearts (and wet eyes). Several Indians commented that this large chorus was drenched in devotion. Many others mentioned how well the foreigners sang Indian bhajans. The huge audience of Indians joyously joined in the singing.

A Prasanthi children's drama

Following the music a very happy Swami distributed prasadam (laddus) to the assembled crowd. Shortly after that, the masses moved to the Poornachandra auditorium for the Children's Christmas Drama. Presenting the play on Christmas eve rather than Christmas night was new this year and worked out beautifully.

"Peace" was the theme that came forth to help guide this segment of the Christmas Programme. A week earlier, Swami stopped on the veranda and asked, "What is the name of the play?" All eyes were upon Him, as usual. "A Journey to Shanti Clause, Swami." "Um," He nodded and then squinted a little, "Journey? No journey." The people began nodding that they were catching His teaching; Swami touched His heart and softly said, "Shanti is here, always." On three other occasions He asked the name of the drama, and then answered His own question, "Journey to Peace, Journey to Peace, Journey to Peace," emphasizing the last word. And indeed, peacefulness settled into the usually hectic play production process—touching all parts of it, writing, directing, acting, musicians, lighting, wardrobe, set design, and so forth. The days leading up to the performance were filled with a strange sense of peace, as though a gift had been given to this effort.

Finally, on Christmas eve the play was presented to Bhagavan before a huge crowd in the auditorium. It was simply a delight. Eighty-one people were in the play with seventy-five singers and musicians backing them up. The audience loved it, laughing heartily throughout, fully appreciating the teachings about the five human values that the play conveyed so enjoyably. People left the auditorium smiling, humming the songs "Why do we come here? There's nothing like being with You... Sai, Sai, Sathya Sai Baba, Baba, Baba..."

Nagarsankirtan—a river of light and love

Early the next morning a throng of nearly three thousand overseas devotees carrying lighted candles and singing Christmas carols—a moving stream of loving devotion—slowly poured into the Mandir grounds. Suddenly, the songs faded as throats caught and eyes brimmed when a broadly smiling Bhagavan, dressed in a snow white gown, walked through the silver doors to beam great waves of Divine Love to the vast crowd of Indians and foreigners. For fifteen minutes He did this.

Then He took Arati, waved to all, and went inside. As always, this was a very special and moving Darshan.

The SSSIHL Students' Christmas concert

A short while later Swami ceremonially blessed and cut a huge cake-depicting baby Jesus coming to earth on the hand of Bhagavan. Then the students from Swami's Institute presented a most joyful gift to all assembled consisting of popular Western Christmas music tied together by a thoughtful and informative voice-over narrative. This year a special treat was added as the institute's marching band also presented a short concert with a noted jazz trumpeter from the West as guest conductor and performer.

Following the music, Father Christmas skipped through the crowd tossing chocolates, and the final icing on the cake, so to speak, was more prasadam, laddus from Swami.

After the morning festivities at the Mandap, a charming new statue of Jesus was unveiled in the new garden adjacent to the South buildings. In addition to the traditional breaking of coconuts and puja the big Chorus again sang Christmas carols.

Bhagavan's Divine discourse

On Christmas afternoon Swami's Discourse was given to a large throng in the Poornachandra Auditorium. He explained how Jesus at first called himself the messenger of God, and later referred to himself as the Son of God, and finally realised that He and His Father were one. Swami also talked of the Star of Bethlehem, making the point that the real light is in our hearts. He ended His Discourse telling us that "Love is life; love is living; and love is god." (This is covered more completely elsewhere.) Bhagavan's closing bhajan was "*Prema Mudita Manase Kaho*."

Preceding Swami's talk, an overseas speaker reminded the audience that Swami used to say, "My life is My message," but now He says, "Your life is My message." He encouraged each of us to ask "What message is my life conveying?" And said that each of our lives should be such that others will see our Beloved Sai expressed in all our thoughts, words and deeds.

Following Swami's discourse the Messengers of Sai (the Anantapur Campus's old students' association) presented a touching and inspiring music and dance presentation by deaf students from a special school in Hyderabad.

A Christmas feast in the overseas canteen

Following all the programs, more than thirteen hundred foreign devotees enjoyed a magnificent meal lovingly prepared by the canteen staff and more than one hundred happy volunteers. Again, the Chorus gave of their wonderful voices while the huge crowd enjoyed the food. Two long time Indian devotees there as guest: were discussing the mellow atmosphere and their feelings of admiration for how well it was organised. "Pucca!" one of them exclaimed, giving the usual flick of the thumb and forefinger to emphasize his point. The other leaned over shaking his head slowly and said quietly "It is really clear that Bhagavan's three Ds Duty, Devotion and Discipline are all very obvious here." It was a fitting and wonderfully appropriate summary for a touching, moving Christmas in Prasanthi.

More to it than meets the eye

We return to the question asked above: What is it that makes Christmas in Prasanthi so special? The three Ds? Yes, but its more than that, even. The love drenched aspect of it all? Again, sure, but we must push beyond that, too.

Christmas is uniquely enchanting in Prasanthi. Every year thousands of people come from every corner of the planet to be here. They arrange their holidays, their family finances, and the kids' schooling far in advance so as to make sure that they're here during this special time. Not only Christians come, people of all faiths gather here. Buddhists, Jews, Muslims, Shintoists, Jains, Sikhs—you name it—all reach here during this period. And of course Hindus flock here by the thousands—because they love the something special that He does to and for everyone here during the Christmas season. Nowhere else on the planet does this happen.

At the worldly level Swami is giving us something very, every important. It's the opportunity to actually experience Jesus—his love, his dedication to service, his sweetness, his miracles and in some cases, even his Divinity. One European, man, in his mid-50s, commented, "I was raised a Roman Catholic, steeped in the church. but, I never really 'knew' Jesus until my first Christmas here. Suddenly I realised who and what Jesus really is. It was a wonderful feeling."

But, the experience of Christmas here takes many of us beyond even that. Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's Christmas gives us a breath-takingly profound teaching about the world. It's a mini-experience of creation. Baba, Brahma, breathes life into the "world" of the Prasanthi Christmas Programme. Each year that "world" is created, preserved, and ultimately withdrawn. While here, it has its own life, Its ups and downs, its cast of characters. Sometimes smooth going other times hard-going, the inhabitants of this "world" gradually learn that the world cannot succeed without turning toward God. Offering all actions, all work to Him makes things flow well. Trying to go counter to that is what causes pain and suffering.

Thus, for over a week in our lives we're all made witnesses to the great cosmic drama. The wondrous gift in this is that during this week, through service, love, and action for the sake of humankind, we're all brought a little closer to our own inner Truth, closer to God. That's the specialness here. That's the wonder of Christmas in Prasanthi!

AVATAR VANI:

CHRISTMAS SANDESH

Spread the Message of Love

*The Cosmos is controlled by the Divine;
The Divine is governed by Truth;
Truth is governed by noble beings;
The noble are the Divine itself. (Sanskrit Sloka)*

Embodiments of divine love!

The entire visible cosmos is under the control of the Divine. The Divine is governed by Truth. That Truth is subject to noble beings ("Uttamadheenam"). A noble person is the embodiment of God.

The human body, made up of the five basic elements and endowed with the five sense organs, is not different from the mind. The mind wears the body as a vesture. The mind, for its enjoyment, uses the body as an instrument. It is the cause of all experiences. A body without a mind is as illusory as a crop on a barren field.

In ordinary life people regard the body as permanent and for the sake of its pleasures undertake all kinds of efforts. This is a sign of ignorance. A body without the mind is as useless as a school without a teacher and a temple without a deity. The body should be regarded as an instrument for right living.

Men are developing their intellectual abilities but are using their intelligence for wrong purposes. Knowledge without right action is useless. Mere action without knowledge is foolishness. Hence it is necessary to combine knowledge with cultivation of character.

The most important faculty in man is Prajna-Shakti (the power of integrated Awareness). It is from Prajna-Shakti that other powers like Iccha-Shakti (will power), Medha Shakti (intelligence), Vaak Shakti (the power of speech) and Vicharana Shakti (the reasoning powers) are derived. This integrated Awareness is sustained by thoughts.

The most important requisite for man in the world is truth based on thought. True thoughts constitute the proper wealth for man. But, alas, modern man makes no efforts to cultivate good thoughts. The absence of good thoughts weakens the will power. With a weak will man cannot accomplish even simple things. To achieve anything worth while in life man has to strengthen his will power.

Good company and good thoughts

It is well known that humanness thrives on good company and good thoughts. What good thoughts can achieve is illustrated by the life of a poor boy in Tamil Nadu, Muthuswamy Iyer. His father died at a very young age. The forlorn widow summoned the young man and told him that there were many poor people in the world who were suffering many hardships because they were not able to get justice. "Somehow you must pursue your studies so that you may one day provide help to these unfortunate people," she said. The mother's words strengthened the determination of the young lad. He pursued his studies diligently though he lacked many necessities. In the evenings he used to study under street lamps, as there was no light at home. He was solely inspired by his mother's good advice. As a result of this hard work, he graduated and secured a law degree. He dedicated himself to the service of the weak and helpless. His zeal and devotion resulted in due course in his becoming the first Indian Judge of the Madras High Court. Consider the lowliness of his birth and what eminence he achieved! It was entirely due to the noble thoughts he cherished and his strength of will.

In many foreign countries, young men who started their lives as dishwashers, or newspaper vendors or shoeshine boys, achieved eminence as writers by dint of hard work and noble aspirations. Their achievements are entirely due to their ennobling thoughts which strengthened their will power and inspired in others confidence in their abilities.

In Britain there was a poor youth named James MacDonald who used to help school children by writing the addresses on letters for them. As he wrote each address he used to tell the boy, "God bless you". He also used to tell them, off and on, "God is great". Often he had to go without food, but his heart was filled with noble feelings. Such a lad one-day became the Prime Minister of Britain. Only his noble thoughts could have raised him from his poor state to the office of the Prime Minister.

Thoughts and destiny

Man's bad or good fortune is related to his thoughts. Sowing the seed of thoughts man reaps the fruit known as Karma (deeds). Sowing the seed of Karma, man reaps the fruit called Abhyasa (Practice). From Abhyasa, man reaps the fruit of Character (Seela). From character one reaps the fruit of good fortune (Adrishtam). Thus fortune is based on character, which is based on good practices arising out of good deeds based on good thoughts. Thus according to the development of good thoughts, one's good fortune will also grow.

Unfortunately, men today are deluded by bad thoughts and are engaged in evil deeds. They enjoy bad company and as a result come to a bad end. Every one of you can experiment in a small way with the gradual elimination of bad thoughts. You will discover for yourself how your will power grows with the diminution of bad thoughts. Man has forgotten that the spiritual path alone will rescue him from the grip of insatiable desires, endless worries and numerous troubles. He is indulging in various malpractices. As desires multiply, the will power weakens and vice versa. You can find out for yourselves how when addiction to coffee, tea and smoking is reduced, the will power gets stronger. The results can be verified with just one week of practice. By addiction to various deleterious practices, man's will power and other faculties decline in strength. The will power should be strengthened by giving up bad habits and it should be directed towards social service.

Jesus and social service

Jesus exemplified the spirit of social service. The inspiration for this came from his mother Mary. From his childhood Mary taught him such good qualities as truth, kindness, compassion and justice. In his twelfth year, Jesus and his parents went to Jerusalem for a festival. In the crowds the parents lost trace of Jesus and searched for him everywhere. Not finding him anywhere, Mary sat under a tree and prayed to God to come to her help. At that moment, a thought flashed in her mind that Jesus was perhaps in a nearby temple. And Jesus was there sitting in a corner of the temple and listening to the words of the priest. Mary affectionately rushed towards him and embraced him. "Child, what agony I went through on your account," she said. Jesus told her: "Mother! Why should you have any fear? Those who believe in the world will have fears. But why should anyone believing in God fear at all? I am in the company of my

Father. Why do you fear? You taught me that God is everything for us. How, then, can you worry like this?"

Jesus' Ministry

Jesus had learnt his lessons from his mother and developed his spiritual faith.

After they returned from Jerusalem, Jesus felt that service to his parents was his foremost duty, because he owed everything to them. In this spirit, he used to assist his father in his carpentry work. Joseph passed away when Jesus was thirty. He sought his mother's permission to devote himself to the service of the needy and the forlorn.

After leaving home, Jesus had himself baptised by John. Then for forty days Jesus observed severe austerities without food and drink. At first he considered himself as a "Messenger of God." After the penance he realised he was the Son of God. He began his ministry with a group of fishermen as his first disciples. He taught them that they should first seek the Kingdom of Heaven. To enter that Kingdom they had to cultivate loving hearts. Then, their hearts would become the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus further declared to them: "I and my Father are one".

Foster love

What is it that men should acquire today? It is the broadening of the heart so that it may be filled with all-embracing love. Only then the sense of spiritual oneness of all mankind can be experienced. Out of that sense of unity will be born the love of God. This love will generate pure bliss in the heart that is boundless, indescribable and everlasting. For all forms of bliss, love is the source. A heart without love is like a barren land.

Foster love in your hearts and re-deem your lives. Whatever your scholarship or wealth, they are valueless without love. Without devotion all other accomplishments are of no avail for realising God. Men aspire for liberation. True liberation means freedom from desires.

Today men cannot go to forests for penance or engage themselves in meditation and other spiritual exercises. The easiest spiritual path for all people is to dedicate all their actions to God.

Oneness with God

Today we celebrate the birthday of Christ. It is said that when Jesus was born in a manger, three kings were led by a star to Jesus' place of birth. In fact, they were not kings but three shepherds. One of them, seeing the infant Jesus observed: "This child will be a lover of God." A second one said: "No. God will love him." The third one said: "Verily he is God Himself."

The true significance of these three statements is: to love God is to be His Messenger. To be loved by God is to be a son of God. The final state is to be one with God. As Jesus said, "I and my Father are one." Thus all persons are messengers of God. This means that they should divinise themselves. When can men call themselves "Sons of God?" Recognise what pure actions are done by God, selflessly for the sake of all. There is no trace of self-interest in Him. Everything He does, says or thinks is for the good of others. On the other side, everything men

do, speak or think is born out of selfishness. Men have become puppets in the hands of selfishness. Men can describe themselves as "Sons of God" only when they are completely free from selfishness and become Godly. To call yourself the "Son of God," you have to manifest the qualities of the Father.

(Swami referred to the Prahlada story and the emergence of the Lord from a pillar and pointed out the significance of the distinction of the pillar as a prelude to the manifestation of the Lord. Swami said the illusion relating to the body had to be destroyed for the Divine to manifest Himself).

The body is no doubt essential up to a point. It has been given for the performance of right actions and to discover the secret underlying action. The body (Kaya), Action (Karma), the mystery (Marmam) and righteousness (Dharma) together signify the purpose of human birth (Janma). Today men are not aware of righteousness or the role of Karma. Of what use is human existence?

Spiritual path is narrow

Do not give room for the waywardness of the mind. Purify the mind and direct it towards the righteous path. It is a strait and narrow path. In the spiritual field there is no royal highway. The path is narrow because the goal is infinitely precious. Crowds swarm a fish market but only a few go to a diamonds shop. The road to God is for the few who are genuine sadhakas.

The birthdays of saints and prophets are being celebrated these days with feasts and festivities. This is not the way to celebrate them. The followers should live upto the teachings of the great Masters.

Uniqueness of X' Mas in Prasanthi Nilayam

Christmas is celebrated today in many countries. In every country small groups of people go to their respective churches, listen to the sermon and return to their homes. In some places people eat, drink, and make themselves merry. But nowhere in the world can you find Christmas being celebrated with the solemnity and holiness obtaining in Prasanthi Nilayam. (Cheers). Here are gathered men and women from all countries. There are many denominations among Christians and the members thereof celebrate Christmas in their separate ways. Only in Prasanthi Nilayam do Christians of all denominations and men and women of other faiths join to celebrate Christmas. Here are devotees from Germany, Russia, Argentina, America and many other countries. They speak different languages. Prasanthi Nilayam has become a mini-world. All of them work in unison (cheers). You witnessed last night the beautiful play by children from so many countries. They conveyed the Divine Message so effectively. Here is a concrete manifestation of the Brotherhood of Man and the Fatherhood of God.

People talk about brotherhood, but there are often no fraternal feelings among brothers even in one family. That is not the case here. Here you see brotherhood in action, from heart to heart and love to love.

Holy festivals are conducted in such an ideal manner only in Prasanthi Nilayam (cheers). Devotees should set an example of ideal living to the whole world.

"Messengers of Sathya Sai"

Today, the former girl students of Sathya Sai College at Anantapur, who have formed an association called "Messengers of Sathya Sai," are observing their annual day. They are doing good service. They carry out the commands of Swami in the spirit and the letter. They are spread all over the world—Switzerland, Australia, Canada, Germany, Japan, and other countries. They come to Prasanthi Nilayam from these far off places out of their devotion to Sai. They are bringing their husbands and children also out of their deep love for Swami. They go out to villages and do various kinds of service there. They serve the blind and deaf and dumb children and make them self-reliant and useful citizens. They are carrying on their work wholeheartedly.

For the expenses of their travel from far off countries they save money from their domestic budgets. This is a sign of their dedication to God's work.

In this manner the old students of the Anantapur college are leading exemplary lives wherever they are. In addition to all their multifarious household duties, they carry on their social service activities (cheer).

The message of unity

In this cosmic university all are students. Hence everyone should render social service to the extent of one's capacity and spread Swami's ideals among all. There is nothing selfish in Swami's message. Hence anyone can spread it selflessly.

Sow the seed of love in your hearts and it will grow in due course into a big tree. God is one. L3o not entertain any differences of creed or caste. Carry the message of unity to every home. Embodiments of love! Regard love as your life-breath and as the sole purpose of your existence.

(Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the Bhajan: "*Prema Muditha Manase Kaho: Rama, Rama, Ram!*")

(From Bhagavan's Discourse in the Poornachandra Auditorium on December 25, 1994)

Avatar Vani

Chant the Name: Sing His Glory

*When one gives up what has to be renounced,
When one knows what needs to be known,
When one reaches what should be one's goal,
How can the Bliss that is got therefrom be described?
What have to be given up are these worldly thoughts;*

***What has to be known is the truth about life;
What has to be attained is the Brahmic Consciousness;
What greater bliss can there be than this? (Poem)***

Embodiments of love!

Belittling human life as trivial and transient, people are forgetting the effulgent Divine that is eternal. Man is no ordinary being. The term 'Nara', applied to man, means Atma (the Spirit). Man is the embodiment of triple entities. He has one form in the waking state, another in the dream state and a third in the deep sleep state. Although the waking state is de-scribed in many ways, the presiding deity of this is called 'Vishvudu' (or Vishwa). This Vishwa is made up of twenty-five constituents : the five basic elements, the five pranas, (life-breaths), the five sense organs, the five sheaths (Kosas), the mind, the intellect, the will and Ego (Ahamkara) and the indwelling Spirit (Jivi). Together, these twenty-five represent the Lord of the waking state. This "Vishwa" making use of the sense organs in the waking state, experiences the cosmos as pervaded by the Divine.

In the dream state, the presiding deity is called "THEJASUDU" ("TEJAS"). "Teja" has only 17 constituents: The five sense organs, the five life-breaths and the five sheaths and the mind and intellect. In the dream state, the individual is creating his dream experiences, including joy and sorrow. The dream experiences are mental creations of the dreamer. In the deep sleep state, Prajna is the divine entity. In this state there is only one faculty present: the Prajna-sakti (the power of Awareness). This Awareness represents the Supreme Brahma Principle. The scriptures declare "Prajnanam Brahma" (Awareness is the Supreme Absolute). In this state, the five elements, the five life-breaths and the five sheaths are absent. With the mind and the intellect also absent, the individual is in a state of Supreme Bliss: Sat-Chit-Ananda (Being-Awareness-Bliss).

Man is thus not one entity but a threefold personality in the three states of consciousness. However not recognising the unifying factor, man revels in multiplicity, becomes a victim of his own self-deception through delusion (Maya) and forgets his true nature.

The river of live

It is because man becomes a slave of his senses that he descends to the animal level instead of rising to the state of the Divine Master (Pashupati). Man is like a piece of sugarcane, which has many knots, These knots in man are the evil tendencies like lust, anger, greed, attachment, pride and envy. These tendencies assume various forms such as love of wealth, attachment to wife and children and the like. Because of these attachments' he forgets his true nature. The scriptures describe man as "Tungabhadra". This name is familiarly associated with that of a river. But, in reality "Tungabhadra" is the River of Life. "Bhadra" means that which is auspicious. "Tunga" means that which is immense and immeasurable. "Tungabhadra" refers to the body which incapable of conferring limitless well-being on mankind. By misusing such a body man in ruining his life and destroying his true humanness.

The body is intended for rendering help to others and not for self-enjoyment. Unfortunately because of the perversions of the mind, man loses himself in worldly pleasures. He is a slave to the vagaries of the mind and ignores the counsel of the intellect (Buddhi).

God—realisation

Man should remember that the same Divine Awareness (Prajna) is present in all human beings. This truth is accepted by all faiths. It may be asked why God is not visible if He is all-pervading. The answer is that though God is omnipresent, He can be experienced only by those who have a pure heart. Just as a cow's milk can be got only from the udder and not from any other part of the cow, God's image can be visualised only by those with a heart full of love and which is pure and free from selfishness. God cannot be perceived by those with impure minds and polluted hearts. The sun cannot be seen when it is covered by a cloud. But when the wind sweeps the cloud away, the effulgent sun becomes visible. Likewise man has to drive away the cloud of ignorance enveloping his mind by meditating on God. In this Kali Age there is no greater or easier means of realising God than chanting His name.

Chanting the name

There are four ways of chanting the Lord's name. One is through song (Kirtan). Then there is community singing (Sankirtan). Another is meditating on the Divine (Dhyana). The fourth is contemplation of the form of the Divine. In all these, meditating on the name is basic.

By meditating on the Lord, Chaitanya and Mira experienced the ecstatic vision of the Lord within themselves. Both of them were immersed in the feeling of devotion to the Lord.

Those who experienced the Lord by chanting the Divine name are Narada, Tukaram, Tulsidas, Ramadas and others. In reply to a question from Narada, Krishna declared that He is present wherever His devotees sing His glories. The singing must not be merely a musical exercise but express genuine devotion.

Some devotees sing songs about the leelas of God. Jayadeva, for instance, sang only about the sports of Krishna and was oblivious of all other things. He totally identified himself with Krishna.

Radha represents 'Roopasankirtana', glorying in the form of Krishna. She saw Krishna in every object.

The heart is moved only when the words of the poem or song are rendered melodiously. (Here Bhagavan demonstrated how the manner of singing makes all the difference in the appeal of the song: "Rama Nannu Kaapaadu" ("O Rama, Save Me").

By devotional singing one can get merged in the Divine. That is the reason why the Lord is described as 'Ganalola' or 'Ganapriya' (Lover of song, one who is charmed by music.) It will be befitting if a devotee combines the reciting of the Lord's name with singing and praying for merger with the Divine.

Now these three are considered as distinct from each other. This is not correct.

God is one: names are many

Devotees are inclined to worship the Lord under different names. They consider the names different from each other, They forget that they are all equally embodiments of the Divine: Sat-Chit-Ananda (Being-Awareness-Bliss). There should be no feeling of high and low. Only the one who has the feeling of oneness can be called a renunciant. It is wrong to make a distinction between Rama and Siva as some small-minded devotees do. Vaishnavaites and Saivites who go to the Tirumalai temple hail the Lord as "Venkataramana" or "Venkateshwara", as if the two names are different, though they represent the same deity. Thyagaraja pointed out that the word "Rama" is made up of the vital syllables "Ra" and "Ma" in the Narayana and Siva mantras respectively. In this manner devotees should seek unity in apparent diversity rather than seek to divide what is one.

The love of God

The nature of the Divine can only be properly understood by those who are filled with devotion. Ali should be filled with love. Love cannot flow from the mantras of those who are steeped in selfishness and self-pride. Love flows from those who are humble. It cannot arise in those who are conceited and pompous.

The love of God can arise only from loving thoughts. There must be yearning for God, just as one has to experience hunger to think of food. There is hunger for God in every one, but the disease of self-pride prevents one from feeling that hunger. The denial of God is a kind of disease. The unbeliever is afflicted by a variety of diseases like pride, envy, anger and greed.

There are some who have one foot on faith and the other on disbelief. For sometime they live with devotion and then they get lost in worldly concerns. The result is they have the worst of both worlds. One should not attempt to ride two horses at the same time. Stick to one thing and pursue it with determination. There is no such perseverance today because men are attracted by various worldly pleasures. It is not good to be lured by such attractions. Man should be attracted only by the Divine. Krishna has been described as one who is alluring in every way—by his looks, words and action. One should be pure to be attracted by the Lord. A sensuous person is like a rusty piece of iron, which cannot be attracted by a magnet.

In the world today man is caught between the forces of evil and the forces of good, similar to the war in the Mahabharata between the wicked Kauravas on the one side and the virtuous Pandavas on the other. Krishna was on the side of the Pandavas, though He did not take part in the fighting. God is always on the side of the good and the virtuous.

"See good, be good, do good, that is the way to God". Make every effort to experience the Divine.

Glory of the bhajan

People may say that when you go to Sai Baba, there is nothing but bhajan. Realise that there is nothing greater than bhajan. What bliss is there in bhajans! What a demonstration of oneness is it when a myriad throats join in uttering the name of God! The vibrations emanating from them make the heart vibrant. If you sing alone in your shrine, the vibrations return to you as reaction. But in community singing, what you have is not a reaction but a wave of vibrations. They enter into the atmosphere and purify the polluted air. The atmosphere today is polluted by bad thoughts and feelings. When you sing the glory of God, the bad germs in the air are destroyed and the air gets purified by a treatment with antibiotics as it were.

Bhajans are therefore supremely valuable. It has been said that in the Kali Age there is no greater spiritual practice than chanting the name of the Lord. Let one remember the name of Rama at the time of passing, whether he is a millionaire or a pauper, whether he is a scholar or an illiterate. Sing the name of the Lord and redeem your lives!

Bhagavan concluded his discourse with the song '*Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahi*'.

From Bhagavan's discourse in the Sai Ramesh Hall on 23-10-94

CULTURAL INTEGRATION FESTIVAL

SPIRIT OF UNITY CONCERTS

Integration through the Fine Arts

'Music is the best medium of prayer to God and even a hard-hearted person will be moved by music', observed Bhagavan Baba in His discourse to a vast gathering in the Poornachandra Auditorium on November 19.

The occasion was a unique one. A three-day programme of music and dance had been arranged with the blessings of Bhagavan, by the Bharat Cultural Integration Committee under the name 'Spirit of Unity concerts'. This year's programme was the twenty-third to be held by the committee since its inception in 1981, with the blessings of Bhagavan.

Elaborate arrangements had been made at Prasanthi Nilayam for enabling the huge crowds to watch and listen to the concerts. The Poornachandra Auditorium was gaily decorated with festoons, buntings and flower draperies and floral motifs on the stage. Closed-circuit television and a big screen were set up along with sophisticated audio magnifiers for the benefit of large gatherings outside the auditorium.

The concerts went on from 2.00 p.m. to 11.00 p.m. on all the three days and it was a rare sight to see Bhagavan sitting through all the concerts and getting up to the stage for honouring the artistes at the end of each concert.

On 19th November, pleasant Nadaswaram music reverberated throughout the Nilayam heralding the start of the festival. Bhagavan Baba came in procession to the Auditorium at 2.00 p.m. accompanied by Nadaswaram music and Veda-chanting groups and was received with traditional honours by Sri B. D. Jatti, President of the Bharat Cultural Integration Committee, and other members. After Bhagavan and others had taken their seats on the stage, the President Sri B. D. Jatti extended a welcome to Bhagavan and other invitees and devotees and requested Bhagavan to inaugurate the cultural programme by lighting the Kuthuvilakku. Bhagavan lighted both the lamps on the stage.

The inaugural concert was given by Dr. M. S. Subbulakshmi, foremost Carnatic musician of south India, who regaled the audience with her melodious songs. She proved that great music transcends time and age. She sang a variety of devotional songs in several languages, and concluded her concert with the famous Sanskrit song, "Maithrim Bhaja", which she had sung many years ago in the United Nations.

This was followed by light music by Salur Vasu Rao and party who sang select Bhajans including some Sai Bhajans. The dance duet of Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi by Anupama Ravi Prakash and Vanaja Uday was well executed. The next programme of classical music by Sri B. A. Narayana of All India Radio, Vijayawada, was a memorable performance which received repeated applause. Kumaris Lalitha and Haripriya then gave a performance of classical Carnatic music.

At 6.30 p.m. there was a meeting at which Sri B. D. Jatti delivered the welcome address mentioning how the Cultural Integration Committee was blessed by Bhagavan and had so far held twenty-two cultural meets. He expressed his gratitude to Bhagavan for graciously agreeing to have the concerts conducted in His Divine Presence at Prasanthi Nilayam synchronising with His 69th birthday celebrations. Sri T.V.K. Sastri explained that the aim of the committee is to promote unity and integration of the country through music and fine arts by bringing together leading artists from all parts of the country. He requested Bhagavan to bless the guests of honour who had been specially invited for the function.

After the honouring of guests by Bhagavan, Sri T. N. Seshan, Chief Election Commissioner, speaking on behalf of the B.C.I.C said the whole world was one family according to the Indian scriptures. He eulogised the selfless service of Mr. T.V.K. Sastri, who was the moving spirit behind the Committee, but for whose marathon efforts these concerts could not have been arranged. Art and culture know no boundaries. They speak a universal language. In whatever language a song is sung or dance is performed all can appreciate it. He added: "The country is divided now by language and other factors. The purpose of language is only to communicate. As Baba says there is only one language, the language of the heart. People from all over the world are assembling here for the 69th birthday celebrations on 23rd November in order to pay homage to the living Avatar of the age who has come down to promote human values among mankind. I saw youngsters in thousands clad in white, singing Bhajans and waiting for Swami's darshan this morning and this was a new experience for me. I was struck by the sanctity of this great place

which fosters the unity and integrity of humanity. We should take a vow that we will not allow any force to divide us and that we will build a Prasanthi Nilayam in every home. I offer my humble pranams to Bhagavan." He observed that all of them were blessed to see Bhagavan in flesh and blood in their presence, on the eve of the 69th year of His advent, and prayed that He should be amongst us for many more 69 years.

Bhagavan, in His discourse, explained the greatness of the sacred land of Bharat, where tolerance and Truth have been the basic principles of life. The present generation is not recognising its own strength derived from the country's great spiritual and cultural heritage. He said that music was the best medium of prayer to God and even a hard-hearted person will be moved by music which touches the heart and fosters devotion. Bhagavan concluded His discourse with an appeal to all to practise what they sing and spread the message of universal brotherhood. After the function, there was instrumental jugalbandi by Niladrikumar on Sitar and Parthasarathy on Sarod. Smt. Sudha Raghunathan then gave a Carnatic music recital featuring compositions of Saint Thyagaraja and Annamacharya, and enchanted the audience with her fine voice and masterly rendering of the songs. This was followed by bhajan by Sri Bhimsen Joshi and a Kathak dance by Birju Maharaj and party. It was past one O'clock in the morning when the programme ended and Bhagavan took the arati.

On the following day the programme was advanced by one hour and the first concert started at 1 p.m. when Bhagavan arrived and blessed the gathering.

Nine-year old P. Nagamani, a child prodigy, gave a scintillating performance on the mandolin, which she handled with astonishing ease for a girl of that age. She rendered the famous kritis, Vathapi Ganapathim and Raghuvamsa Sudha.

Next was a concert in Hindustani vocal music by Ustad Mohammad Dilshad Khan and Begum Parveen Sultana, two of the foremost singers in the country.

This was followed by a percussion duet featuring Sridhar Parthasarathi and Fazal Qureshi on mridangam and tabla respectively. They displayed perfect mastery of their respective instruments.

The next item was a Carnatic music concert by two sisters Shanmukha Priya and Hari Priya.

Then came an astounding performance in Carnatic music by a blind boy, Maruthi Prasad, who enthralled the audience with a few select songs rendered in his rich resonant voice. He was specially honoured by Bhagavan who materialised a gold chain and put it around his neck. Similarly Bhagavan blessed the other child prodigy, Nagamani, also materialising a gold chain. Next there was a Veena performance by Smt. Geeta Krishnamurthy.

The next item on the programme was honouring of the guests and artists by Bhagavan. Sri B. D. Jatti detailed the progress of the Bharat Cultural Integration Committee over the years and expressed their gratitude to Bhagavan. Sri K. P. Singh Deo, Union Minister for Information and

Broadcasting, and Sri Shivraj Patil, Speaker of the Lok Sabha, spoke eulogising the service rendered by B.C.I.C. in promoting national integration and prayed to Bhagavan to bless them all. Sri Arjun Singh, Union Minister for Human Resource Development, spoke on the great role played by music in developing harmonious human relationships.

Sri T. N. Seshan in his speech referred to the description of Sri Krishna's Vishwaroopa (cosmic form) in the Gita, and said that Bhagavan Baba's divine effulgence would dispel the darkness surrounding the world.

Bhagavan in His discourse, explained that human life shines brilliantly because of the divinity within. Effort is needed to realise this latent divinity. Unity and purity are prime requisites to realise divinity. Bhagavan gave detailed exposition of the nature of the five basic elements and said that these are present in different parts of the body serving different functions. He stressed the importance of practising the values of Truth, Righteousness and love to attain peace of mind. He called on every one to take part in the efforts to restore the glory of Indian Culture through the fine arts.

On November 21, the concerts started at 1.00 p.m. with a Bharatanatyam recital by Smt. Chitra Visweswaran and party who presented the leelas of Krishna as depicted in the hymns of Andal and Meera Bhajans. This was followed by a Jugalbandi by a trio with Ratan Sharma vocal, Debasingh Bhattacharya on the guitar and Kala Ramnath on violin. The next recital was by Kavitha Krishnamurthy, who sang some bhajan songs. Then came the memorable performance of the evening, a classical recital by the eminent vocalist, Pandit Jasraj, who gave a superb performance of devotional music. Then came a light music concert by the well known playback singer K. S. Chitra, who sang several devotional songs including some specially composed on Bhagavan Baba.

There was an one-act drama by a century-old dramatic troupe, Surabhi Nataka Co. This was followed by a performance of bhajans by Smt. Padmaja Srinivasan. The next item was a violin trio concert by the famous violin maestro Lalgudi Jayaraman and his son and daughter. The concluding concert of the three-day programme was a bhajan by Anup Jalota who thrilled the audience with his masterly skill in Bhajan singing.

The Prime Minister, Sri P. J. Narasimha Rao, and the Chief Minister of A. P., Sri K. Vijayabhaskara Reddy, arrived at the Auditorium during the concert of Lalgudi Jayaraman.

At the valedictory function held to honour the guests and artists Sri C.H.G. Krishnamurthy, Vice-chairman, BCIC delivered the welcome address and Sri T.V.K. Sastri, Secretary, explained the aims of the Integration Committee and requested the Prime Minister to help them in continuing this activity for promoting National integration.

Sri T. N. Seshan expressed his desire to apprise the Prime Minister of their experience during the three days of the Spirit of Unity Concerts of the B. C. I. C. in the Divine presence of Bhagavan. He said that this was an indication that the country's future was in the safe hands of the Divine

incarnation. He was convinced that this country was not protected from Delhi but from Prasanthi Nilayam.

Sri K. Vijayabhaskara Reddy, Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, commended the efforts of the Bharat Cultural Integration committee which was conducting such unity concerts in all parts of the country. They were fortunate in having the concerts at Prasanthi Nilayam during Bhagavan's birthday celebrations. Bhagavan's fame has spread all over the world. People come to him in distress and go back blessed and happy. It is the wisdom of great saints and Avatars that has helped the country in times of despair. He prayed that Bhagavan should continue to bless the people of the world.

The Prime Minister, Sri P. V. Narasimha Rao, speaking next, acknowledged that he was sustained by the blessings of Bhagavan Baba for the past three decades and the experience one gains from Baba cannot be adequately expressed in words. He recalled his visit to Parthi about thirty years earlier, and remembered it as a small village in the past, and was amazed at the phenomenal growth of this village to its present state in such a short time. He exclaimed: "How great it would be if the whole of India progressed like Puttaparthi!" Apart from Bhagavan's blessings, the dedicated service of devotees to Bhagavan's institutions proves that it is only devotion that can achieve great things in any field. He said Bhagavan was a master planner and the appearance of all the buildings put up here will be the envy of even the most competent architect. On this occasion, when he was speechless with devotional feelings he could say nothing but pray for Baba's continued blessings for many more decades on the whole of humanity.

Bhagavan, in His discourse, described Bharat as a great country which had given birth to great saints and sages, had given to the world a rich legacy of fine arts, music, dance, painting, sculpture, literature, etc. of a high degree of excellence and produced many intellectual giants. After the achievement of Independence, it is the responsibility of the present generation to protect Bharat's sacred traditions and culture.

Bhagavan concluded his discourse by declaring that if people protect Sathya and Dharma they will be protected from all external forces. He sang the bhajan '*Sathyam Jnanam Anantam Brahma*', which was followed by the thousands who had gathered both inside and outside the Poornachandra Auditorium.

With this, the three-day cultural festival came to a successful conclusion.

"Padukas" Installation in Prasanthi Mandir

A unique function in December in Prasanthi Nilayam was the ceremonial installation of a pair of "Navaratna Padukas" (golden sandals studded with gems from the nine precious stones) in the

Prasanthi Mandir, after they had been sanctified by Bhagavan Baba's Lotus Feet and worshipped by devotees in the Poornachandra Auditorium.

The gem-set Padukas were kept on a beautifully made silver Adishesha Peetham (special pedestal of the coiled bed of Adishesha the serpent couch of the Lord with five hoods) and an elaborate ceremony of homa and joint recitation of mantras was gone through on December 18th, with 216 couples, who had brought the silver padukas from their shrines, participating in the ceremony with deep devotion in the sacred hall of the Poornachandra. The hall reverberated with the mantras as the flames rose from the "homa kunda" (the sacrificial hearth). As the two priests recited each mantra and made the offering of ghee to the sacred fire, the 216 couples repeated the mantras and performed "abhisheka" (pouring of holy water) on their respective padukas.

The entire ceremony had been organised by the Paduka Prathishtha Trust of Madurai, headed by the 85-year-old devotee of Bhagavan, Sri Subramanya Chettiar. The Auditorium was tastefully decorated for the occasion with floral arches at the entrance to the Nilayam and the Mandir gate. Towards the close of the sacrificial offering, Bhagavan Baba came to the hall for the "Poornahuti" (the completion of the ceremony) and blessed individually all the couples and the large gathering of devotees from Tamilnadu who had come specially to participate in the function.

On the 18th afternoon, there was a meeting which was attended by all devotees including a large number of overseas devotees who had come for Christmas celebrations. After invocation by students, Sri Srinivasan, son of Sri Subramanya Chettiar, extended a hearty welcome to all the assembled devotees on behalf of the Trust and expressed his gratitude to Bhagavan for having graciously permitted them to hold the puja for the Padukas at Prasanthi Nilayam. He recalled the function held in October 1993, when a pair of golden Padukas was offered to Bhagavan's Lotus Feet and installed in the Mandir. He prayed to Bhagavan to bless this festival to make it an annual feature and requested Him to give His Divine message.

Sri Srinivasa Raghavan then spoke about the notable devotional service rendered by Subramanya Chettiar in having pioneered the "Likhita Japa" movement, in which Namasmarana is done along with writing the name thus ensuring co-ordination of thought, word and deed. He mentioned that so far more than 10S, crores of names had been written and kept in an altar in Madurai to be offered at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan at His bidding. He also explained the significance of Paduka worship quoting from the epics.

Bhagavan, in His Discourse, elaborated on the theme of Namasmarana and extolled the services rendered by Subramanya Chettiar. (Details of Bhagavan's discourse are published separately).

On the 19th morning, the Navaratna Padukas, mounted on a special gold-plated Adishesha pedestal, was brought in procession in a decorated, motorised chariot, accompanied by Nadaswaram music and devotees carrying their padukas chanting "Om Sri Sai Ram". Bhagavan Baba stood at the entrance to the Mandir and blessed the processionists and directed them to go round the Mandir. After Bhajan at the Mandir, Bhagavan proceeded to the Auditorium and

acknowledged the Pada Puja (worshipping the Lotus Feet) with gold and silver coins, offered by Subramanya Chettiar while Bhagavan kept His Feet on the Navaratna Padukas. Bhagavan went round the couples who had performed Puja to the silver Padukas the previous day and presented shawls to the Vedic Pundits who conducted the Puja. Arati was offered to Bhagavan when the function came to a close. Subsequently, the Navaratna Padukas were brought to the Prasanthi Mandir and ceremonially installed there.

The span of life allotted to man is very short: the World in which he lives is very wide, time extends far behind and far beyond. What little man has to do here has to be done quickly, at the place that is assigned to him and within the time that is allotted to him. And, man has such a formidable task before him, it is to fulfil it that he has come as man, exchanging for this human habitat all the merit he has acquired during many past lives. The task is no less than the manifestation of the Divinity latent in man.

—Baba

The Power of Divine Love

Students!

To see an effulgent light you do not need another lamp. Likewise to know the self-luminous Atmic Knowledge there is no need for any other knowledge. Every human being has in him the knowledge of his true form. Owing to his failure to know this stupendous fact, man pursues all kinds of worldly knowledge.

All the diversity you see in creation is a manifestation of the Indivisible One. The cause is the same for both differences and oneness. All the changing entities are based upon the One that is unchanging.

Creation has to be viewed as a Cosmic Stage. God is the director and *dramatis personae* in this play. He assigns all the roles of the characters in the play. All creatures in the world are manifestations of the Divine. The good and evil in the world are expressions of the Divine consciousness. Man should not be misled by these expressions. Behind all the various actions of the actors, the Divine director is at work. It should be realised that though names and forms may vary, languages and nationalities may be different, the human race is one in its divine essence. All are sparks of the Divine—the Lord declared in the Gita: "All beings in the world of the living are aspects of my Eternal Self."

Manifest God's love

God is the embodiment of Love. Love is His nature. His love pervades the cosmos. This love is present in one and all. Just as God manifests His love in the world, everyone should manifest his love.

Love (Prema) has been described as beyond speech and mind. It is said to be indescribable ("Anirvachaneeyam"). This love cannot be got through scholarship, wealth or physical powers. God, who is the embodiment of love, can be attained only through love, just as the effulgent Sun can be seen only through its own light.

There is nothing more precious in this world than Divine love. God is beyond all attributes. Hence His love also is beyond attributes (Gunatheetha). But, human love, because it is governed by attributes (Gunas), results in attachment and aversion. Love should not be based on expectations of a reward or return. Love based on such expectations makes it a business deal. Love is not an article of commerce. It is not like giving a loan and getting it back. It is a spontaneous offering. Pure love of this kind can emanate only from a pure heart.

Love (Prema) should be like a mariner's compass. Wherever the compass may be placed, the needle will point only to the north. Likewise, man's love, in all circumstances, should be directed towards God. That alone is true love. It should be unaffected by pleasure or pain. It makes no difference between "mine" and "thine". Love has to be acquired only through love and not by any other means whatsoever.

Transcendental love

No one can describe the nature of Divine love. It is beyond the reach of poets. The one who is immersed in the waters of Divine Love will be unable to speak to anyone. When he is only upto neck-deep in the water he may be able to say a few words.

Those who speak about God in the world do so only from superficial experience, but those who are wholly saturated with God's love will find no words to describe their bliss. That is why the Vedas declared that the Divine is beyond the reach of the mind and speech.

Divine love transcends the three qualities of Satwa, Rajas, Tamas. It is beyond the dullness of Tamas, the passionate form of Rajas and the coolness of Satwa. God's love is pure, unsullied and utterly selfless. Everyone should make an all-out effort to experience this love.

The ancient sages identified this Love with the Supreme Self (Atma). The Self and Love are not different from each other. The Self is love and love is Self.

In every human being this love is present. But, not recognising this, man is a prey to greed, hatred, pride and envy. Man can get rid of these evil traits only by developing the Love Principle that is inherent in him.

Love is all-pervasive

Love is present not only in human beings, but also in all creatures, birds or beasts. Nor is that ail. It is in fact all pervasive. Love pervades everything in creation. Man's humanness is vitiated when he fails to recognise this love.

Today men worship wealth and power, which are transient and ephemeral. They must fill their hearts with love, which is greater than all the wealth of the world. What use is there in imparting knowledge to those who have no love in their hearts? (Cheers).

It is not got by education,
Nor by knowing the rules of logic,
Nor by secular studies,
Nor by professing any religion,
Nor by Vedic speculation.
It is present only
In a heart filled with compassion.

(Poem)

Every man should have a compassionate heart. Without compassion, all wealth or scholarship is of no use.

Acquire divine love

Students! You may seek various positions in life. You may desire to earn wealth. But Divine love, which is the source of everything, should be acquired first. Grasp the significance of this truth. Everyone should experience and manifest this love. Men today have become playthings in the hands of demonic forces like egoistic pride, envy and ostentation. Can they be called human at all?

People talk about Bhakti, Yoga and Jnana. What do they mean by these terms? Does Bhakti mean getting involved in bhajans and enjoying the tune and beat of the songs? Does Yoga mean sitting in a corner and exercising breath control? Does Jnana consist in reading some books and getting by rote a few slokas? What is Sanyasa? Is it wearing the ochre robe?

True devotion (Bhakti) means getting rid of the vices of attachment, hatred and envy and manifesting pure love. Anyone who loves pomp, who is filled with pride and is consumed by envy cannot be a devotee by any test. Devotion will go nowhere near him. The devotee has to overcome hatred, envy and attachment and experience the peace and bliss of love. That devotee will then acquire all the attributes of the Divine.

Yoga, jnana and sanyasa

As regards Yoga, people speak about Hatha Yoga, Kriya Yoga, Transcendental Meditation and some new-fangled ideas. All these are not Yoga. "Yoga is control of the vagaries of the mind." True yoga is control of the senses. One should treat alike both praise and censure, pleasure and pain. This kind of self-restraint is yoga.

What is Jnana? "Advaita darshanam Jnanam" (To see the One without a second is the supreme knowledge). To recognise that the same Atma dwells in all beings (Ekatma-bhava) is true knowledge.

True sanyasa (renunciation) consists in the transformation of one's qualities and not in a change of garb. The mind must change, not the apparel. A true renunciant (sanyasi) is one who has mastery over all his senses and has given up all desires. Sanyasis today have more desires than householders. Why have these desires? For whose sake? Not for the sake of the body, which is a perishable leather bag filled with nine holes. He is a sanyasi who seeks the feet of the Lord, giving up all attachments to the body, which is subject to disease and decay. He must treat life and death, pleasure and pain alike.

Student's role

Students, however, should learn to lead ideal lives even in the mundane world in which they have to get on in life. Most of them, boys and girls, are carried away by the attractions of the phenomenal world and go after worldly comfort. While utilising their education for earning a decent living, they should share the fruits of their knowledge with others. Education should inculcate in them good thoughts, good character, truthfulness, devotion, discipline and dedication to duty.

Bhakti and jnana

Adi Sankara proclaimed the supremacy of the path of knowledge for the realisation of the Self. In his "Anandalahari" he declared that Ananda (Bliss) is man's goal and it can be secured only by God's grace. He firmly asserted that Brahman alone is real and there is no second. Even for such a staunch exponent of Monism, devotion became necessary. Without cultivating devotion, Jnana (Knowledge of the Divine) cannot be secured.

What is the cause of the erosion of wisdom among the people today? It is the sway of bad thoughts and evil impulses over them. Capping all these bad qualities is egoism. The individual human being is such a pitifully petty creature in this vast cosmos that he has no basis at all for getting conceited. Egoism is a demonic quality. Those who are proud about their wealth or power should realise that both these are maladies presaging ruin.

Learn to give respect and receive respect. This is the first lesson students have to learn. When you revere and love others, they will also love and respect you. Practise humility and reverence, which are the hallmarks of true scholarship.

Students! By your conduct you have to demonstrate the basic difference between the Sathya Sai Institute and all other universities in the world. The teachers should also set the example in this respect. If the teachers and higher authorities go astray, how can the students be expected to behave properly? All teachers and administrative officials should act in harmony and unity. Without unity and cooperation, they are no better than wandering buffaloes.

Lead ideal lives

Students! The first and foremost thing you have to observe is respectfulness. This is the essence of education. Cultivate reverence and behave without pride and ostentation. Give no room for jealousy. Do not feel envious when some one is better than you in scoring marks or in sports. Even if you live for only three days, you should lead ideal lives. Better be a swan for a brief while than live long like a crow.

Today is a sacred festival day. It is a day for the celebration of plenty and prosperity. This day of Sankranti brings with it an abundance of crops and wealth. This Pushya month brings with it a cool breeze,; a bright sun, golden fields and trees echoing the songs of birds. The earth shines in the glory of Nature. (Swami sang a poem describing the beauty and glory of the month of Pushya.) People admire the beauty of Nature, but are not aware of the beauty in their hearts. Make your heart beautiful by adorning it with the sacred love of God.

Spread the Lord's name

Students! Members of this august gathering! From today harness the enthusiasm of youth for carrying to every street and alley, the glory of the Lord's name! (Cheers). The entire atmosphere is surcharged with electro-magnetic waves. Because of the pollution of these waves, the hearts of human beings also get polluted. To purify this atmosphere, you have to chant the Lord's name and sanctify the radio waves. There is pollution in the air we breathe, the water we drink and the

food we consume. Our entire life has been polluted. All this has to be purified by suffusing the atmosphere with the Divine name. Chant the name with joy in your hearts.

(Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan, "*Bhajan bina sukha santhi nahi*" and "*Prema Mudita*").

From Bhagavan's discourse in the Poornachandra Auditorium on the morning of 14-1-95

The Birthday at Buenos Aires

The unprecedented crowds present at Prasanthi Nilayam for Bhagavan Baba's birthday celebrations are just a fraction of the millions all over the World who wish to be here but for various reasons cannot make it. Nevertheless the birthday is celebrated with boundless enthusiasm and love in hundreds of Sai Centres all over the world. We give below a short account of how the birthday was celebrated in far away Argentina!

At the end of a beautiful and sunny day, 3000 devotees congregated at Buenos Aires (Argentina) to celebrate Bhagavan's birthday. "Love all: Serve all" was the theme of a festivity which delighted the hearts of all participants. The event was broadcast, partially in live shows, by a radio which has an audience estimated in tens of thousands of persons, while the TV news programme and the most important newspapers and journals of Argentina presented the information in prominent places.

The decoration of the stadium, made by a group of sevaks, was completed with special illumination. Every person received a gift of Vibhuti Prasad, a high quality magazine edited for the occasion and a book-marker, handmade by the devotees with Bhagavan Baba's photo. Beautiful bhajans from different religions were sung during the beginning of the celebrations. After all the participants joined in the chanting of "OM" thrice, the president of the Argentine Sai Organization explained to the newcomers the meaning of the event.

The Indian Ambassador to Argentina, Sri N. R. Verma, made public to the large gathering his love, devotion and respect for the person of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. He emphasised the great impact in India of Bhagavan's work in the spheres of education and medical relief, apart from His primary mission of raising the spiritual consciousness of mankind.

One of the culminating moments of the night took place when a Protestant clergyman, a Jewish rabbi and a Catholic priest, with a woman representing all the community, recited, each one, an ecumenical Peace Prayer. Each of the prayers was followed by the most well-known bhajan of that religion. The ministers, representing the numerically most important religions of Argentina, supported Bhagavan Baba's mission for promoting the Unity of all mankind, without differences based on religious beliefs. This practical and concrete manifestation of the Sarvadharmic message

ended with a moving performance by Bal Vikas children on the stage, while the entire audience sang the Alleluia as a thanks-giving for the unity of hearts enjoyed during the ecumenical prayers.

One adolescent, an adult and an older devotee related experiences of their personal transformation after contact with Sai. Thereafter the youth and the Bal Vikas group presented a play highlighting the need to be connected with God in spite of everyday demands. At the end; a film specially made for the celebration on the spiritual message of Baba, was screened. The success of the celebrations due to the voluntary and non-professional work of the devotees, was the fruit of an intense and productive process of unity between the active members of all the Sai centres and groups in Buenos Aires City. We realised that Sai was the real Director of the drama and that every one of us must play His universal game and not our little personal game. Sai gave us another opportunity to "think good, speak good and do good" and then He put a smile on our faces and filled our hearts with His love.

—**Jorge Bena, Buenos Aires, Argentina**

We light many candles with the flame of a single candle. But remember only a burning candle can light other candles. An unlit candle cannot light other unlit candles. Only one who has earned wisdom can enlighten others who are in ignorance. One who is himself unilluminated cannot illumine others dwelling in darkness, Maya. One must light his own lamp from the universal light of love and thence forward he can transmit illumination to all who seek and strive. All lamps shine alike since they are all sparks of the Param Jyoti, the Universal Luminosity, that is God.

~ **Baba**

THE PRIZE TO BE SOUGHT

The Prize to be Sought from Bhagavan

“Let us pray to Bhagavan this day to bestow upon each and every one of us the virtue which is most prominent—His sense of sacrifice,” observed Neilankh Jha, a student of the XI Standard in the Sathya Sai Secondary School, addressing a vast gathering in the Poornachandra Auditorium on the morning of January 14th.

Bhagavan distributed prizes to the winners in the Sports Meet held in the Vidyagiri Stadium from January 11 to 13.

After the prize distribution, Neilankh Jha was asked to speak. In the course of his speech, he said: "When I was a small boy my mother would tell me, "Neilankh, clean your room and I will give you a piece of chocolate cake." I would sincerely clean my room keeping in mind only one thing the delicious piece of chocolate cake. After finishing the job, I would go to my mother and

plead with her to come and see the work I had done. I would literally pull her sari. To be honest I don't remember the taste of the chocolate cake but I will never forget the warmth and love I experienced when she hugged me for the effort I made.

Well, it is the same with our Sports Meet. All the students work day and night keeping in mind only one thought and that is to please Bhagavan. I am sure that it is these heartfelt prayers of the students that bring Bhagavan to the Stadium every year on January 11th and which has brought Bhagavan here today.

In the context of the prize-giving function today, I should like to relate a story.

More precious than diamond

Once a saint, who happened to go on a pilgrimage, had reached the outskirts of a village and as it was getting dark, he decided to settle down for the night. Just as he was about to fall asleep, a villager came running to him and shouted, "Oh SAINT! Where is the precious stone, give me the precious stone". The saint got up and asked, "My dear friend: Which precious stone?" The villager replied: "Oh saint, last night Lord Shiva appeared in my dream and told me that if I were to go to the outskirts of the village at dusk I would meet a saint who would give me a precious stone and so I have come here". The saint rummaged his bag and pulled out a large stone and said to the villager: "Friend, I think this is the stone Lord Shiva must have meant. If you want it, you may please take it, it is yours". The villager gazed at the stone, for it was a large diamond, probably the largest diamond in the world, for it was the size of a man's head.

The villager took the precious stone and ran back home. That night the villager could not sleep. He tossed and turned on his bed the whole night. The next morning at the crack of dawn the villager ran back to the saint and said: "Oh Saint! Please take back the diamond. I don't want it anymore." The saint asked him: "If you don't want the diamond, what else do you want?" The villager replied, "Oh Sadhu, please give me the wealth which makes it possible for you to give away the diamond so easily. Please give me that sense of sacrifice. That alone is what I want. Only then will I have the inner peace and be wealthy forever."

The sacrifice

In the same way Bhagavan is giving us these prizes today and whatever Bhagavan's hand touches attains the value of DIAMOND. Yet, let us come to the realisation, which the villager did, that there is something beyond these transient things. Let us pray to Bhagavan today to bestow upon each and everyone of us the virtue which is most prominent in HIM, His sense of sacrifice—the quality which enables HIM to give, give and go on giving. Let us pray to Bhagavan to instill this quality in us and then we can all confidently say, "Yes, we really did receive the prize from Bhagavan on the Prize distribution day".

Speaking of the virtue of sacrifice, I am reminded of a small incident from which I think we can all derive a lot of inspiration.

A young boy's offer to Bhagavan

A few years ago at the time when preparations were being made to begin the construction of the Super-Speciality Hospital, Bhagavan seemingly had less time to devote to the students. Day and night He was busy with matters relating to the new hospital. Every evening immediately after darshan Bhagavan would call a group of doctors for an interview and He would discuss with them matters relating to the new hospital, even the most minute details, as this was to be a model hospital. Bhagavan would come out of the interview room only after the evening bhajans had commenced and thus the students did not have much of an opportunity to interact with Bhagavan during this period. Previously after the evening interview Bhagavan would come out and speak to the students and guide them, but this wasn't possible at that time as Bhagavan was extremely busy. There was one very young student of Bhagavan who could no longer bear the pangs of separation from his mother Sai. He wrote a letter to Bhagavan one day and took it during evening darshan but unfortunately he was sitting a few rows back. When Bhagavan came to his side this boy got up and offered his letter to Bhagavan. Bhagavan stopped, leaned over and made a special effort to take this young boy's letter.

To say the least this boy was ecstatic. Then the darshan continued and as usual Bhagavan called a group of doctors for an interview. All the students were depressed as they felt they had been deprived of the love of their mother Sai yet another day. Then, after about five minutes, to everyone's utter amazement, the interview room door flew open and Bhagavan emerged in all His glory' holding a small letter in His hand, the letter of the young boy. Bhagavan called that young boy to come near and asked him, "Boy, should I read aloud what you have written to me in this letter, so that everyone may listen." The innocent boy replied. "Whatever you think or wish, Bhagavan" Bhagavan himself read the letter aloud so that all could hear. The letter was as follows:

Dear Bhagavan:

You have given so much to me and to every one here. You have provided free education for me and all my brothers and now I hear that you are constructing a BIG Hospital that will provide the most modern health care facilities to every section of the society totally free of cost. Bhagavan! I also want to be a part of your glorious mission but I am just a small boy and I don't know how I can contribute. Bhagavan, my parents are extremely poor but in spite of that they send me a little extra pocket money every month. I know it's due to their love and concern for me.

"Bhagavan! For the last three months I have not given my clothes to the dhobi. While all other boys were sleeping in the night I washed my clothes and thus I managed to save a little money. Bhagavan! I have also resisted the temptation of toffees, chocolates and all other things and thus managed to save a little money. Bhagavan! I offer this 100-rupee note to you. I feel ashamed and small to give you so little but even if this money can be used to buy a small brick for the foundation of the new hospital, I will be the happiest child in the world.

Your loving Son."

You know the twinkle in the eye of a mother when her son does something that makes her feel extremely proud. Well, that twinkle was there in Bhagavan's eye. Holding the 100 Rupee note in His hand, Bhagavan said to that young boy. "My dear son, this is not a 100 rupee for Me, this note is worth millions and millions of rupees for Me."

What do we learn from this? In God's kingdom—Power, Wealth, position, status, these are of no importance whatsoever. God only looks to see whether our heart is pure. For, had God looked at the magnitude of one's sacrifice, would Lord Rama accept the jungle fruits from the hands of Sabari and relish them, would Lord Krishna accept the banana peels instead of the bananas from the hands of Vidura and feast on them and would Bhagavan leave aside a group of highly educated doctors in the interview room and come and spend the time with this young boy? God only searches for our love and devotion.

I would like to conclude with a small thought. Just before the war Arjuna was full of doubt but after receiving the Divine message of Lord Krishna all his doubts vanished, his delusion was removed, he regained his memory and he told LORD KRISHNA: "KARISHYE VACHANAM TAVA" "I will do as you tell me". The same principle holds good for our sports meet as well. Bhagavan guides us, inspires us, and mentions to us how the sports meet should be conducted. From then onwards all the students, right from L.G. to P.G. level, spare no efforts in fulfilling Bhagavan's wish, even if it means foregoing sleep, food and comfort. The students don't mind at all. The work done is thus transformed into worship because in everyone's mind there is only one thought and that is to please Bhagavan.

During the Sports Meet we learn so many things. For example, you would have seen the "GATEWAY OF INDIA" in the stadium on January 11th. Many people commented that from a distance it did not look as though it was made of cloth and canvas but looked as though it was a real monument. This was done entirely by the students alone. Why is it that these students spent so many sleepless nights to achieve such perfection? For one reason alone and that is when Bhagavan cast his eyes on this monument, Bhagavan's face should radiate a smile. The students will then know that their job is done well.

During the Sports Meet we learn how to cooperate with one another. It is a rather difficult task to direct a programme comprising more than 1000 boys. It requires a lot of patience and coordination. These lessons which we learn at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan cannot be learnt anywhere else in the world. The Sai System of Education is an integrated approach which strives at achieving perfection of the body, mind and soul of each student and the Sports Meet is a classic example of this approach.

I would like to conclude with a small prayer.

Bhagavan, throughout the Sports Meet our guiding principle has been "KARISHYE VACHANAM TAVA". Please give us the strength to follow this not only at the sports meet time but throughout the year and throughout our lives so that we may not only be your messengers but we may be your very MESSAGE. "

Let the children, even grown-up boys and girls, touch the feet of the father and mother every morning before the daily tasks are started; it will generate a reverential atmosphere in the home. Five minutes in the shrine room and namaskaram for parents—let this be the daily routine. The upanishads recommend this as the basic requirement of our culture: 'Matru Devo Bhava, Pitru Devo Bhava, Acharya Devo Bhava.'

—**Baba**

Colourful Sports Meet in Vidyagiri Stadium

Over the years, thousands of parents and numerous devotees from all parts of the world have got used to witnessing in January a spectacular festival of sports and cultural presentations by all the students of the Sai educational institutions at Prasanthi Nilayam, Brindavan and Anantapur (Girls). The most striking feature of these annual events is the variations in the programmes from year to year and the enthusiasm with which the students vie with one another in offering displays that will delight Bhagavan and the immense gathering that fills the galleries and grounds of the vast Vidyagiri amphitheatre.

It was no surprise, therefore, that in this year's Sports and Cultural Meet, which began on January 11, an exceedingly colourful and pleasant programme was presented by over two thousand students, from the tiny tots of the primary school at Prasanthi Nilayam, to the undergraduate and postgraduate students of the three campuses. The children of the primary school and the girls of the Anantapur college impressed Bhagavan so much with their performance that Swami presented them with special Cups on the prize-giving day (January 14th).

It was a cool and delightful morning when devotees started streaming into the Stadium well before the scheduled hour (7 a.m.) when Bhagavan was to inaugurate the programme. The galleries and grounds were a riot of colour, with men and women from all over the world filling all the seats and waiting for the arrival of Bhagavan. A salute of guns heralded the entry into the Stadium of Bhagavan in His gleaming motorised chariot (resembling a traditional ratha). The huge gathering greeted Bhagavan with cheers as He got down from the chariot, dressed in a shining white robe, and showering His benedictory smile on the vast concourse of devotees and students. Bhagavan's chariot was preceded by four pairs of motor cycle riders, both boys and girls, from the Institute. As Bhagavan walked towards the Santhi Vedika, the Institute band and children of the Higher Secondary School, doing vigorous Bhangra dances, led the procession, with Sai Geetha, shining in its richly caparisoned robes, heading them all.

At the Santhi Vedika, Bhagavan was received by the Vice-Chancellor, the Registrar and Physical Instructors of the Institute. Bhagavan was accompanied by the Chief Guest of the day, Lt. Gen. Surendranath, G.O.C., Southern Command. 'Bhagavan affectionately caressed Sai Geetha.

A group of students dressed in sparkling white uniforms presented a guard of honour to Bhagavan before he went up the stage and took his seat.

A helicopter flying above the ground dipped low to drop flowers on Bhagavan as He reached the Vedika.

Bhagavan lighted the lamps on the stage to mark the inauguration of the Meet.

A young boy from the Secondary School dressed in Punjabi costume offered flowers to Bhagavan before the commencement of the March Past.

The march past

The March past commenced exactly at 7.10 a.m. The first group was that of boys of the Higher Secondary School dressed in white and green. As the leader dipped the flag in salute to Bhagavan, the Chancellor of the Institute, the students turned their heads to the right as a mark of respect to Bhagavan, and resumed their march straight after passing the stage. Every group did likewise, all marching in fine order. The boys of the Secondary School were followed by girl students whose turnout was equally impressive. The students of the Anantapur College followed wearing different patterns of uniforms denoting their different "houses". They were followed by the students of the Junior College for Women, Anantapur. Students of the Brindavan and Prasanthi Nilayam campuses brought up the rear.

After the March Past, Bhagavan, as Chancellor, was requested to hoist the Institute Flag, which was brought with due ceremony by six bearers to the solemn tunes of the Institute Band. Bhagavan hoisted the flag and released some doves and balloons to mark the formal inauguration of the day's events. Then the "Olympic" oath was taken by all those participating in the sports.

The "Olympic" Torch was lighted by Bhagavan and two runners carried the torch to the top of Vidyagiri where the "Olympic Flame" was lit. The Hill presented a magnificent spectacle with the array of statues of Jesus, Shiva, Buddha and Zoroaster, and the titanic 65-foot figure of Hanuman on the top.

Fine display by girls

The morning's programme consisted of a variety of physical feats by students of the Secondary School, including a tug-of-war contest, which ended in a draw. Among the physical feats were lifting of a car by three boys, a boy hanging upside down from a cross-bar carried by two motor cycle riders, a motor cycle rider with a pillion rider going over a plank carried on his breast by a student, a boy stopping the movement of two motor cycles pulling on opposite sides, jumping from the top of a moving car, and a boy holding eight ropes tied to motor cycles and staying his ground while the vehicles tried to move away.

These feats were followed by a series of feats on bicycle and monocytes by the girl students of the Anantapur Campus, criss-cross speeding of motor cycles and riding in various striking

formations. There were also a variety of colourful dances and formation drills, which revealed superb coordination and strenuous practice. The last item was a massive group dance by hundreds of girls wearing different colourful uniforms (blue, yellow, pink and green) and displaying attractive group movements with Japanese fans, hula-hula hoops and colourful ribbons. The rhythmic movements were suggestive of the waves of the ocean and the blowing of wind.

"Love of the mother and the motherland"

After a thrilling exhibition of feats on the go-kart, a low-based speed-car capable of making turns at 360 degrees, the piece de resistance of the morning fare was presented by the students of the two campuses of the Institute and the boys of the Secondary School.

This programme, which occupied a whole hour, was based on the theme "Janani Janmabhoomischa swargadapi gariyasi" (The mother and the Motherland are greater than heaven itself). The opening scene presented the message of Rama to Vibhishana and Lakshmana, who appealed to him to stay in Lanka and rule the kingdom there, that one's mother and Motherland were greater than Heaven itself and that in no circumstance would he give up his love for Ayodhya, whatever the attractions of Lanka.

A variety of scenes from the history of India were then presented from the days of Ashoka to the present, to project the historic cultural unity of India, the variety of its arts, the sacrifice of the freedom struggle and the progress being made since Independence. The programme called for a great deal of planning, coordination and cooperation, as it involved the participation of over a thousand students, training them in various folk dances, arranging for background music and providing special make-up for hundreds of participants playing different roles, including those of folk dancers (men and women).

The over-all effect of the programme was edifying, as it sought to inspire in the audience (no less than in the participants) a deep love for the Motherland and an appreciation of its millennial spiritual and cultural heritage. The highlights of the spiritual items were a rendition of part of Swami Vivekananda's address to the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, a pageant of sages and saints like Tukaram and Thyagaraja, and scenes from the life of the Shirdi Sai Avatar. At the end of the programme, Bhagavan went down from the stage and stood in the midst of the immense array of participants for a memorable photograph.

In the afternoon, the children of the Primary School presented a variety of group formations in colourful uniforms, executing a series of exercises which called for complete concentration and coordination among the hundreds of participants. The grace and charm of these performances delighted Bhagavan and everyone present.

On the 12th evening there was a short but pleasing programme of dances by Bal Vikas children from Vizag, who depicted in quick sequences the manner in which "Sankranti" is observed in Andhra Pradesh. The realistic performance of two boys draped in the dress of a Sankranti Ganga

bull was very much appreciated. Bhagavan blessed the "bull" while a photograph was taken with Swami and all the participating children.

On the 14th morning, Bhagavan distributed prizes to the winners and runners-up in the sports and games at a pleasing function in the Poornachandra Auditorium. Bhagavan gave a discourse after a speech by 16-year old Neilankh Jha, a student of the XI standard, who spoke on what prize the students should seek from Bhagavan—the gift of the spirit of sacrifice.

On the 14th evening after Bhagavan's discourse the Bal Vikas children of Madras presented a dance drama 'Meera' depicting the single minded devotion of Meera Bai who sang her way to merge with Lord Krishna after passing through gruelling experiences of trials and tribulations.

The songs were particularly very melodious and pregnant with meaning and the children put up a superb performance which captivated Bhagavan and vast multitude of devotees that witnessed the programme. Bhagavan posed for photo with the children and complimented them on their performance.

Do not hesitate to practise humility and obedience, discipline and compassion; give up pride at your status, wealth, scholarship or official position. "Can I, a big officer, a rich merchant, a great scholar, a man highly respected in society, descend to this level of clubbing with this sorrowing man? Do not ask such silly questions. Everyone with those qualifications of which you boast will disappear with death or sometimes, sooner. The Ananda that you give and the Love that you share will be your lasting possessions.

—Baba

FROM PSYCHOTHERAPY

From Psychotherapy to SAICotherapy

Several years ago, after driving a taxicab on the New York City night shift, I finally arrived at the Divine Lotus Feet of the Lord in Prasanthi Nilayam. During a stay of a couple of months, our beloved Bhagavan granted an interview in which I had the opportunity to ask Swami what I should do with my life. I had been enrolled for a year in the School of Social Work of New York University, and to add to my confusion, I was just previously involved in a modern psychoanalytic program at the Philadelphia School of Psychoanalysis. New York University had been very difficult for me. Though I had received good grades, I just did not seem to fit in. My open love for God, for Baba, was not acceptable to my supervisor at the field work agency, nor to those granting social work degrees.

In the light of my difficulties, I asked Baba, "Should I continue going to the graduate school?" Baba replied, "Yes!"

Feeling unsettled about Baba's short response, I countered with, "There are two schools, Baba, which one?"

He smiled, saying: "Both."

"Two schools, Baba?" I asked in utter bewilderment.

"Two are better than one," He responded, and laughed.

Little did I know then that it would be another eight years and two more graduate programs in social work and modern psychoanalysis before I would receive the necessary credentials, by Swami's Grace, and be able to start a private practice in New York City.

"See me in everyone"

Now another eight years have passed, and recently when asked how we should practise psychotherapy, Bhagavan Baba stated quite succinctly, "See Me in everyone." Seeing Swamiji in everyone inevitably leads to loving Him in everyone, loving God in everyone. There is a great healing power in Love. Swami demonstrates this each and every day. When we Love each other as God, God has the opportunity to nurture, to heal, and to allow us to grow and help others grow into who we really are. Hence, Bhagavan Baba says "Love all, serve all. This is the way to God.

Here is an example of how the practice of Swami's teachings in the psychotherapeutic setting works. The names and places of the individuals have been changed in order to protect the confidentiality of the therapeutic relationship.

Arthur had been raised in a good Jewish home in the suburbs outside New York City. His grandfather had been a well-known Rabbi whose message, both on the radio and in writing, was the universality of God in all religions demonstrated by the religious individual through love, faith and service to humanity. In spite of his extraordinary heritage, Arthur had not made a conscious connection with God yet.

In high school, Arthur had been very popular, and in college he was considered highly intelligent especially in business courses. After college, Arthur married and settled in northern New England in the U.S.A. He and his wife opened a lucrative clothing store in a well-visited tourist town. Together they had a child. For several years all was well. Then, tragedy struck. Arthur's sister contracted leukemia and within two years passed away. They were close in age and very dear to each other. Soon after this, his father passed on suddenly of a heart attack while driving his car with his mother during a journey up north to visit Arthur. His mother survived, but suffered for several months in the hospital with multiple fractures and then hepatitis. She recovered, thank God but Arthur was beginning to feel very bad. The burden of disasters in his family was weighing heavily on his mind. Somehow Arthur blamed himself for his father's death and his mother's injuries. Deep depression and confusion were beginning to set in. His family business began to suffer, too, and then the clothing store burnt down! This was 'the final straw on

the camel's back'. Under the tremendous strain, Arthur was hospitalized, too confused to perceive the events around him with any clarity. He feared everything and everyone. To make matters worse, his wife left him, and with their child, returned to her parents.

In the following years, Arthur was hospitalized three more times. Each time psychiatric medications were administered and some form of psychotherapy was attempted, but it 'only provided some superficial, temporary relief. Following each hospitalization, Arthur soon regressed to a state of mind even worse than before. On several occasions his mother tried to help him. She sent him money to live on after his bankruptcy and begged him to come home, but he refused. Arthur had now become actively psychotic. He believed the government was trying to kill him.

Within a short time, Arthur was homeless and living on the streets. The winter came and temperatures were well below zero. At night it would drop to -20 degrees Fahrenheit and Arthur would walk through the night in order not to perish of the cold. He survived the winter, somehow, and found a room to live in temporarily. His mother continued to send him money. This is when I heard of Arthur's plight.

A friend of mine, Jay, had gone to high school with Arthur. They had been good friends. Jay's heart was heavy with Arthur's grief. Through it all Jay had kept in touch with Arthur's mother, but Arthur was fearful of everyone by now. In Arthur's mind, we were all the enemy. His mother called me. "My son is lost. Can you help me get him back?" she pleaded. I had just returned from India after a visit to Bhagavan Baba and I had the full confidence that whatever was asked of me, He would do. So, I asked for the details, and we—Arthur's mother, Jay and I, arranged to make the eight-hour journey to Arthur the next available weekend.

Upon our arrival I met Arthur. I was introduced as a friend of Jay's. Arthur was very thin and showed the signs of having aged many years past the forty-year-old son who was now sitting with his mother. His teeth were black and decayed, and he had a constant headache from the infection. I knew right away, one more winter in this northern, frigid town and Arthur could be lost to us forever.

Arthur, his mother, and Jay met alone. Together they spoke until Arthur once again began to trust them. While they spoke, I prayed that he would trust me, too, and that God would help him this moment. As I waited in the distance, I noticed Arthur look at me several times. After about an hour I was reintroduced to Arthur as someone who might be able to help him.

Arthur asked me a few questions about who I was. I said I was a social worker and I thought I could help him. I stayed away from the doctor part. His experience with doctors in the past was not too good. Arthur began to talk. I listened with every ounce of my professional training behind me, but more importantly I continued praying. Jay and Arthur's mother were praying, too. I gave him all I had that moment. "Swami, please say the right words to Arthur through me. Swami, please love him through me. Please Swamiji, love him so deeply that he may feel it, and

want to come home." We talked for more than an hour. God heard our prayers. Arthur decided to return home with us.

This was only the beginning. In the following months I met with Arthur in his home twice a week. Week after week Arthur would go over and over again what had happened to him through the years and ask me: "Why did this happen to me?" What was I to tell him? Should I say "It was your karma—your past." How ludicrous that seemed, for this answer, though true, could never offer the consolation and love Arthur so sorely needed. Instead, I simply sat with Arthur and listened, asking him the right question at the right time in order to help him continue talking, and telling me the emotional story of his life. However, what is more important all this time I followed Swami's dictum. "See everyone as me."

As the weeks and months progressed, Arthur poured out his heart to me. He began to improve. Slowly his depression began to lift. Each time I sat with Arthur in his home, I followed Swami's prescription "See everyone as Me." Seeing Arthur as Bhagavan Baba, the love naturally poured forth, and then I truly began to love Arthur as a desperate soul, a God soul, in need of love, in need of light, as we all are. Ever so slowly, Arthur's confusion began to be dispelled.

At this point, let me interject. Within the professional psychoanalytic community, as a psychoanalyst, visiting a person in their home to give therapeutic treatment is not generally acceptable. The patient is supposed to come to the office according to both the classical and modern psychoanalytic positions. However, this process with Arthur was not psychoanalysis. It was a SAICOanalysis. God was in charge here and I only hoped to be the cooperative party. In my estimation, requiring Arthur to come to my office in New York City would have been a serious threat to the process of treatment. First, Arthur's family did not have a car, nor could his mother drive, to make the hour's journey from his home to my office. Second Arthur did not want to be in therapy. He mistrusted all therapists owing to his past hospitalizations and his experiences there. He only wanted a friend, a friend who would and could listen. So I visited his home as a friend, never mentioning to him that I was his therapist also. Swami has never limited our desire in helping someone to time place or circumstance. Only, if we have the desire to help, He will surely provide the opportunity.

Arthur continued to tell me the highly emotional story of his life and I continued to listen. Praying for Swami's grace, I used all I knew from my professional learning, but most importantly, I used all that Swami had shared with us through the years to help Arthur.

One year passed, then two. Every week I saw Arthur. He continued to improve. Then, one day he thanked me for being his therapist. I thanked Baba, and continued to see Bhagavan Baba in him and love Him with all my heart.

One day Arthur said: "I feel such peace with you. What is it that you do?" Then I openly shared with him some of Swami's teachings and meditation. He wanted to learn to meditate and together we closed our eyes. Following the breath, we breathed in thinking "so" and breathed out thinking "Hum". I told him it means "I am God." Together we entered the peace of mind that surpasseth

all understanding. Thereafter, Arthur began to pray to God and on that day I felt his grandfather's gratefulness.

Two more years passed and Arthur continued to improve. I now saw him every other week. Occasionally while he would talk I would ask him what he thought the reason was for a particular occurrence in his life and the way he thought about it. He would give me an answer, and then I would ask him if he would like to know what my thoughts were about it. Usually he did, and so I would share with him my understanding of his experience. In this way, the therapy began to include some interpretations of his thoughts, feelings, words and actions. Thus, I was hoping that, as Swami teaches, they could all gradually come into alignment with one another. Throughout, I continued to see Arthur as Baba, to love Arthur as Baba. Arthur began to hold a steady job and to write a book about the story of his life.

Before returning to the physical presence of our Beloved Bhagavan Baba here in India, I told Arthur I was going to leave for three weeks. He asked: "Where are you going?" With the confidence that Arthur would somehow understand, I replied, "I am going to India to see God." He asked, "Who is God in India?" Continuing to see Swamiji in Arthur I responded, "My spiritual teacher, my Master, Sathya Sai Baba." Arthur followed: "Pray for me, pray to Baba for me. I will continue to meditate."

In my heart of hearts I know that it is only God, Bhagavan Baba Himself, who heals all beings. As long as we cooperate and encourage the process of love, that God has instilled in us, to come forth in the form of loving and serving all, then people like Arthur all over the world can be lifted out of their torment, beyond the mental dilemmas that imprison the Divine Mind, be healed, and grow into their true God Self, too. Through following Swami's teachings of seeing Him in everyone, we are holding to the highest truth. All is God. When we combine ancient Truth with current therapeutic interventions, transformations of mind and character can take place in the SAI-cotherapeutic setting by the Grace of God.

—Dr. Allen S. Levy, Ph. D., New York

AVATAR VANI:

SANKRANTI SANDESH

Prema and the Triple Purity

Embodiments of divine love!

He who recognises that the Atma in him and in all beings is one and the same dwells in the constant presence of God, whether he is a householder or a renunciant, whether he is alone or in a crowd. Everyone has to recognise the divinity that is inherent in all human beings.

The sage Narada declared: "Love is the embodiment of ambrosia" ("Prema amritasya swarupah"). In the mundane world, man considers the four "Purusharthas" (the four goals of life) as the means to Liberation (Moksha). This is not correct. Dharma (Righteousness), Artha

(material wealth), Kama (the satisfaction of desires) and Moksha (Liberation) which are considered the four aims of human existence, are not all. There is a fifth aim for mankind which transcends even Liberation (Moksha). This is "Param Prema" (Supreme love). This Love Principle is Divine.

Love and God are not distinct from each other. God is love and love is God.

It is only when the truth of this Love Principle is understood that the meaning of human existence can be realised.

*The Sai Lord is the embodiment of
Love, who taught the Love Principle,
proclaimed the equality of all beings,
and revealed the preciousness of humanness. (Telugu poem)*

(Cheers)

In a home where three persons live, if they have harmony amongst them and cooperate with each other, verily that home is heaven itself, where divine bliss reigns. If, on the contrary, the three persons lack harmony and adjustment, dislike each other and behave as enemies, there can be no hell worse than that.

Purity in thought, word and deed

Heaven and hell are dependent on the conduct of people. The body is a home wherein reside three entities called mind (manas), speech (vaak) and limbs (organs of action). True humanness consists in the unity of thought, word and deed. In Vedantic parlance, this unity was described as "Trikarana Suddhi" (Triple purity). True liberation (moksha) consists in giving expression in words to the thoughts which arise in the mind and to practise what one says. The ancients considered this triple unity as a form of yoga. "Manas ekam, vachas ekam, karmanyekam mahatmanam" (Those whose mind, words and deeds are in complete accord are high-souled beings). "Manas anyath, vachas anyath, karmanyanyath durathmanam" (The wicked are those whose thoughts differ from their words and actions).

Hence every man should strive to achieve unity in thought, word and deed. That is the hall-mark of humanness.

This profound truth is proclaimed by the Vedantic pronouncement that the body is a temple in which the eternal Atma is the Indweller. The Veda is dualistic. Vedanta is monistic (Advaita). The essence of Vedanta is the triune unity of thought, word and deed. In this unity, true bliss can be experienced. It will also demonstrate the spiritual basis of divinity.

Precept and practice

There are today countless numbers of scholars who expound the Vedanta and they have numerous listeners. The outcome of it all is precious little. This is because there is no practice of the teachings of Vedanta. All study of Vedanta is of no avail if the precepts are not practised.

People have to find out what are the easy methods of putting into practice the precepts of Vedanta. The easiest way is to cultivate harmony in thought, word and deed.

*Can the world's darkness be dispelled' by talking about the glory of light?
Can a diseased man's afflictions be relieved by praising panaceas?
Can a destitute's poverty be relieved by listening to the greatness of wealth?
Can a starving man's hunger be appeased by descriptions of delicacies?
(Telugu poem)*

Rather than listening to a ton of precept, it is better to practise an ounce of teaching.

Selfless service the means

What we have to practise today is something very easy and very subtle. The spirit of service is the royal path to be followed. How is this spirit of service to be cultivated? The Gita lays stress on the word "Suhrid" (friend). Who is a true friend? Can he be utterly selfless? Will he help you without expecting any return? Whether it be one's mother, husband, wife or son, they love you for their own selfish reasons. A totally selfless friend cannot be found in the world. It is hard to find anyone who renders service totally without self-interest. God alone is totally selfless as friend and benefactor. (Cheers). God has been described as "Suhrid" - a friend who is your alter ego. God seeks no reward of any kind. There is no trace of self-interest in Him. God alone can be utterly selfless and loving, expecting nothing in return.

The royal road

If you ask a friend where he is residing, he will give a certain address. But this address relates only to the residence of the body. But the true residence of one is his Atma (the Self). This Atma is the embodiment of Love. Therefore, you have to dwell in Love and live in Love. You must dedicate your life to that love. If you devote your life to the pursuit of impermanent things, you will only get ephemeral things. You must seek what is lasting and permanent. What is it? It is the injunction of the Lord (Bhagavadaajna). When you take to the royal road of following God's injunction, you will realise all your desires.

You must remember, however, that these desires only bind you the more you cherish them. The bonds get reduced when desires are reduced. There must be a limit to desires.

Cultivate vairagya

Similarly there must be restraint in developing attachments. There is grief when a person dies in a family. Is death the cause of grief? No. It is the attachment to the dead person that is the cause of grief. The process of getting rid of attachment has been described in Vedantic parlance as "vairagya" Gradually attachments should be eliminated. In the journey of life the less luggage you carry the greater the comfort you will experience.

It may be asked: how is it possible to reduce attachments and desires in worldly life? The answer is carry on your business or other activities in a spirit of dedication to the Divine. All actions

should be done with the conviction that they are dedicated to the Lord. This is an easy path to follow. Consider all actions as actions performed by the power of the Divine, whether it be seeing, or hearing or speaking or doing. Without the power of the Divine, can the eyes see or the ears hear?

The Divine source

The primary requisite for man is to realise the divine potency in him that is the source of all the faculties and talents in him. This is true whether one is an atheist, a theist or an agnostic. No one in the world can get on without this energy. It may be called by different names. Names are not important. The energy is one. It is this divine energy which directs mankind on the right path. Men should strive to recognise the presence of the Divine even in small things.

In his speech earlier today Anil Kumar spoke about the Sai Organisations. The Sai organisations are carrying on their activities with devotion and dedication. But they do not try to find out what should be the ideal to be achieved. "Are you engaged in this work for your own satisfaction or for the satisfaction of the Divine?" This is the question they should ask themselves.

Who is a true devotee?

In this context an incident from the Bible may be recalled. Once a devotee went to Jesus and asked him: Oh Lord! What is the power by which one can protect oneself? Jesus replied: "Son! When you love God, that power itself will protect you".

In the Bhagavad Gita, Arjuna asked Krishna "What should one do to earn the love of the Lord?" The Lord replied: "You simpleton! You imagine you are loving God. The truth is God is seeking a true devotee."

Crores of people all over the world are in quest of God. But where are they searching for Him? In my view, the very idea of a quest for God is mistaken. There is no need for you to search for God. God is omnipresent. He is everywhere. Devotees imagine they are searching for God. This is not true. It is God who is in search of devotees. (Cheers) "Where is the devotee to be found who is pure in thought, word and deed?" God is searching for such a devotee.

You need not search for (God. God is nearer to you than your mother and father. You yourself are divine. How can you go in search of yourself? This is the mistake you commit. When everything is permeated by the Divine, who is the searcher of the Divine? It is because the world has lacked men who could proclaim this Vedantic truth with authentic experience that it has sunk to such degrading levels.

"Love all: serve all"

It is needless to search for God. Verily you are the Divine. Strive to realise this truth. There is a simple and easy way. Have the faith that every human being is an embodiment of the Divine. Love everyone. Serve all. The best way to love God is to love all, serve all. (Cheers).

You must love everyone because God is in everyone. Every human being is a manifestation of God. On the cosmic stage every man identifies himself with the form and name given to him. But he does not realise what is his true form and name.

Last night you witnessed the film in which Anjalidevi acted the role of Sakkubai. In the film she appeared as Sakkubai and not Anjalidevi. But both are one and the same person. God takes on a human form and appears as a human being. But when the human being recognises his basic divine nature he becomes the Divine. As long as one thinks he is a mere human he remains a human. But when he considers himself as Divine with deep conviction, he will be transformed into the Divine.

God and the cosmos

Hence, thoughts and feelings determine what you are. Change your thoughts. If you give up your worldly outlook and view the world from the spiritual point of view, the world (Vishwam) and the Divine (Vishnu) will become one. Therefore, change your viewpoint. Instead of altering his vision (drishti) man wants to change creation (Srishti). No one can change creation. It is one's vision that has to be changed.

If you wish to experience oneness, you have to see the cosmos through 'the glass of spiritual oneness (Ekatma-bhava). Otherwise, the world will appear as a bewildering multiplicity because you will be seeing it through the glasses of the three Gunas—Satwa, Rajas, Tamas. Put aside these three glasses. Wear the glass of "Ekatmabhava", the feeling of unity in Spirit. Love is one. "The Supreme is One though the wise call it by many names."

Swami and devotees

The Divine has to proclaim this unity when God comes in human form and lives and moves among human beings. The Divine has no likes or dislikes. He has no distinction of "mine" and "thine". He is beyond praise or censure. How, then, should the Divine (in human form) conduct Himself? Everyone should understand this. Many bemoan the fact that Swami does not speak to them despite their frequent visits. "Is Swami angry with us?" they ask. These are not mental aberrations. They are due to total ignorance. Such questions arise in their minds only when they have not understood Swami's real nature. I have no antipathy towards anyone. I do not hate anyone. All are mine. And I belong to everybody. (Cheers). But in dealing with devotees, I have to behave like a doctor who prescribes a specific diet for each patient. For instance, there is a patient suffering from diabetes. He should not consume sweets. If a devotee feels, "I enjoy sweets, why should the Sai Mother prohibit me from eating sweets?" The answer is that it is for his own good. If Swami did not have the patient's well-being in view, He would let him suffer by giving him sweets. It is out of love for the devotee that the Sai Mother denies sweets to him. Swami adopts these different regimens in the interest of curing the devotees' ailments.

Students and swami

There are others with a different kind of grievance. For instance, the students often complain that Swami does not talk to them because He is angry with them. I have no anger towards anyone. Whether you believe it or not, I do not know what anger means. But, occasionally I appear as if I

am very angry. This is unavoidable because without such assumed behaviour on my part, the students will not heed my words. I tell them to behave in a certain way. Some students heed my words and try to act up to them. Some others go against my injunctions. In such a situation, I have to ensure respect for my words. Of what use is it to speak to those who attach no value to my words? I don't intend to devalue my words.

Truth is the life of the plighted word. My words bear the imprint of truth. I cannot depart from truth. I don't speak to those who attach no value to my words. This should be realised by those who complain that Swami does not talk to them. When people heed my words, I am ready to help them in every way and confer happiness on them. I do nothing for my own sake. This is my truth.

FOR YOUR SAKE

The Super-Speciality Hospital has been built at the cost of many crores. Was it for my sake? Similarly, the University has been established by spending crores of rupees. Then for whose sake? Is it for my sake? This magnificent hall (attached to the Mandir) has been erected to protect devotees from heat and rain. Am I sleeping in this hall? Everything I do is for your sake. I am surprised that you do not recognise this. Can devotees be so lacking in intelligence? There is no trace of selfishness in me anywhere. I have no fear of any sort. Only the guilty man is racked by fear. I have done no wrong to anybody and so I have no fear. But I am subservient to devotees. (Cheers)

Not realising this truth some people imagine that Swami is angry or ill-disposed towards them. Get rid of such mistaken feelings. Be convinced that whatever Swami tells you is for your own good and act up to it. I gain nothing by your good behaviour. I don't lose anything by your misconduct. Because I love you, I do not want you to suffer from the consequences of your misconduct.

Turning to God's love, let me make it clear that 99 percent of devotees do not understand what this (Prema) means. This love is construed in a worldly sense. This leads them astray. The attachment between husband and wife, mother and child, between friends, between kith and kin, all are loosely described as "Prema" (love), but these attachments are the result of temporary relationships and are by their nature transient. Prema is "Trikalabadhyam" Love is that which lasts through all the three categories of time—the past, the present and the future. Such love can exist only between God and the devotee and cannot apply to any other kind of relationship.

It is not easy for you to comprehend the true nature of God's love. You are aware only of worldly attachments which are subject to ups and downs. What is liable to such changes cannot be called love. True love is unchanging It is Divine. Love is God Live in love.

Embark on this path of love. You are liable to feel elated over trivial pleasures or depressed over petty losses. God's love is permanent and unvarying. Try to understand that love. How is it to be done? By cultivating the feeling that whatever happens to you, whether pleasant or unpleasant, is for your own good. When you have that firm conviction, the value of God's love for you goes up.

Spread God's name

Most people feel the boundless joy of God's love as long as they are in the presence of Swami. But this feeling evaporates once they are in the environment of the outside world. You must see that the same sacred environment exists wherever you may be by carrying your devotion wherever you go and spread the Divine message to every nook and corner of the country. Chant the name of the Lord wherever you are, in the village, in the street, in every home and in your speech and songs. (Cheers). This is the way to ensure that your love of God remains unshaken and unabated.

God derives no benefit from this, as He has no desires. He wants nothing. It is only for your own good. "Uddhareth Atmana Atmanam" ("Elevate yourself by your own self-effort"). Failing to recognise this truth, many people imagine that Sai Baba is holding Akhanda bhajans and celebrating various festivals to glorify his name. They are utterly foolish persons. Sai Baba seeks nothing from anyone. You improve yourselves. Become better. Experience your bliss. Make your lives sublime. Utilise these festivals and devotional activities for this purpose.

Sathyam, Sivam, Sundaram

Embodiments of love: As love is verily your form, manifest it in every way. Share it with others.

The Lord is the Indweller in the heart ("Hridayavasi").

*Sarvabhoothadharam Santham Sarvanamadharam Sivam
Satchithananda Roopam Advaitam Sathyam Sivam Sundaram
The sustainer of all beings, Peace incarnate
The bearer of all names, Sivam
Embodiment of Sat-Chit-Ananda, the One without a second
He is Truth, Goodness and Beauty.*

The Greek philosopher Plato—who was the teacher of Aristotle, under whom Alexander studied—declared three things as fundamental verities: Truth, Goodness and Beauty. These are the same terms as "Sathyam, Sivam, Sundaram" used by the Indian sages to describe the Divine.

Thus in all religions and philosophies through the ages, these three have been declared as the forms of the Divine Atma. Truth is the form of the Divine. Love is the form of the Divine. Righteousness (Dharma) is the form of the Divine.

The mother and the motherland

The first impulse that emanated from man was love (Prema). All other things came thereafter. Every child that is born develops immediately love for the mother. Every child tries to recognise at the outset the mother and the father. In the same manner every individual should recognise the land of his birth and his cultural heritage (Samskriti). One's nation and one's culture should be revered as one's parents. The nation is one's mother. One's culture is the father. This profound truth was proclaimed by Rama when he declared: "The mother and the Motherland are greater

than Heaven itself." Love the mother. Love your country's culture. These are the two primary duties of every man. They should be the main aims of life.

When people follow this path of truth and righteousness, love will sprout naturally in their hearts. All knowledge and scholarship are of no avail if there is no practice of virtue. Practise at least one of the teachings and experience joy.

Embodiments of love: Devotees from East and West Godavari, Guntur and Krishna districts rejoiced in the celebration of what they described as the Golden Jubilee of the Sai Movement. There is no need to seek a reason for experiencing joy. 'Sarvadaa sarvakaleshu sarvatra Harichintanam" (Always, at all times and in all places contemplate on Hari). Make every moment a holy day. Invest every word with the power of a mantra (sacred formula). Sanctify the ground you tread on. Make this the mission of your life. Without wasting a single moment, use all the time you can find to spread the message of the Lord's name to every nook and corner of India (Cheers). Today we are witnessing corruption, violence, wickedness and malpractices everywhere. The basic reason for all these is selfishness. Insatiable desires are at the root of these evils. By chanting the Lord's name, desires can be reduced, while legitimate wishes get fulfilled.

Sakkubai prayed and yearned to go to Pandharpur for darshan of Panduranga. She endured all kinds of troubles and indignities and earned the Lord's grace. How can you get God's grace without undergoing trials? You know what severe processes gold goes through from the crucible onwards before an ornament is made. There can be no happiness without pain. When you desire the welfare of someone, you must be prepared to let him face the ordeals which are necessary before he can experience what is good for him. Pleasure and pain go together in this world. In the Gita the Lord says He is both the Kshetra (the body) and the Kshetrajna (the Indwelling Knower).

What people have to learn today is to give up attachments to the things of the world and seek the love of God. When one cultivates the love of God, renouncing worldly things becomes as simple as leaving hold of a hand-kerchief. Clinging to property is difficult. Giving it up is easy, when people have understood the meaning of God's love.

Let people, wherever they may be, in villages or towns, cultivate faith in God, develop love and share it with one and all. Then they will experience ineffable bliss. Liberation will not come through meditation or penance. Love is the only means. When you render service with love, it will become meditation, penance and all else. Love is the fifth "Purushartha", the supreme goal of life. Love is also the panacea for all the ills that afflict society today. Hate is the cause of all ills. Hence hatred should be banished, as declared by the Gita.

Don't give room for any evil feelings in your heart, which is the seat of God. Dedicate your minds to God. In due course, you will merge in the Divine and become one with God.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan: "*Bhaja Govindam*". Swami then addressed a few words to the devotees from Andhra Pradesh exhorting them to carry the message of Namasmarana to every place in Andhra Pradesh and make this their main task in life.

**From Bhagavan's Discourse in the Poornachandra Auditorium on the evening of
January 14, 1995**

A Theatre for Human Values

“Are you staging a drama?” Swami asked me shortly after arriving for the summer Course in 1993 with 18 United States College boys, “Yes Swami”. I replied, and received His permission to rehearse the musical drama we had prepared. Twice a day we met at the auditorium to polish a performance worthy of Him. Throughout the rehearsal days, Swami asked about our progress at the Hostel where we took our meals with His students.

We know that Swami wrote, produced, directed and acted in plays as a young boy and He is deeply interested in promoting Dramas. He was interested in every aspect of our performance. He instructed me to expand the narrator's introduction before every scene to ensure that everyone in the audience would understand with ease. He sent me to Bangalore to find costumes and He also provided us with all the technical support we needed. After attending a rehearsal, Swami told us the time and the date of the performance, and just before the curtain went up, He came back stage to give us the joy of His encouragement. At that time, He also remarked that a small button was missing from a boy's shirt and another boy's jacket had been misplaced! We were being reminded that no detail is too small to warrant our attention. Not one! To do means to do thoroughly.

The Lord's words are very precious. When they are directed specifically to you, they are like seeds that grow in their own time and at their own rate. You don't forget them. They need only to be watered with remembrance to become fragrant flowers. So, when I returned to Swami two months later, I put together a set of new songs for a musical drama in case Swami gave permission for another play in His presence. For a moment, it seemed that everything possible was completed. Nevertheless, His words, “Are you playing drama”? frequently returned in my thoughts.

In February, 1994, I was asked to make an EHV presentation to parents whose children attend a local elementary school in New York. The talk was scheduled in response to the queries of these parents who were concerned that values were not part of the curriculum. Following the meeting, the principal took me through the classrooms. The greater part of the building, she said, housed another school recently started for city children (ages 12 to 18) with talents in the performing arts: drama, dance, and music, both vocal and instrumental. As she spoke, Swami's words sounded strongly within: “Are you playing drama?” “Are you playing drama? So I asked for and was given a tour of the performing arts school, as well as an introduction to the principal, certain that here was an opportunity to be looked into. It took many weeks of countless cancelled appointments before I could meet and talk in detail with the principal and the drama teachers about developing an EHV theatre. The result of all these efforts was a 3-months trial in which I was given a drama class to teach using EHV materials. Not being a licensed teacher and not having any training in the field, this was most unusual. It was time to do as much homework as possible! I did, however, have some training and experience in asking His help. I called on Him regularly and with little effort on my part, outside help came from a few devotees in the field of theatre and we were all thrilled to have the opportunity to develop this project. The school enthusiastically accepted the introduction in September of a course in THEATRE FOR HUMAN

VALUES in which children would perform for other children in schools, nursing homes, hospitals and, if good enough, on cable television.

At an interview in the summer of 1994, I was able to present the plan for a Theatre for Human Values to Swami and He gave me enthusiastic encouragement to continue with it. He also gave me permission to bring another group of students to the Summer Course 1995 and to perform another musical drama. So, the work done with music was not time wasted!

On returning home for the September session of the school, I was most surprised to learn that the auditorium and many classrooms had just been flooded and would not be operable for this school year. This was not what I had expected, to say the least! A similar experience had occurred the year before when a programme combining EHV and service which Swami told me to continue with, was cancelled due to structural problems that closed the school building. The lessons from both the experiences were the same. His words are precious. "Continue", He said. It is our duty to listen very carefully and follow His instructions remembering that the plan is His, not ours. It is now so very clear that the initial disappointments were only an overture to the opening of the curtain for a better and more effective drama to begin. Swami tells us:

"Your duty is to abandon. Abandon all your plans, even the best ones. Abandon all the theory you cherish, the doctrines you hold dear, the systems of knowledge that have cluttered your brain, the preferences you have accumulated, the pursuit of fame, fortune, scholarship, superiority. These are all material objectives. Enter into the objective world after becoming aware of the Atma. Then you will realize that all is the play of the Atma."

The Lord's "Play" is now unfolding as other options open in more varied, and far reaching ways:

The first of a series of educational theatre scripts is now being completed for broadcasting on international short wave radio beamed to all of the English-speaking world. These planned scripts will be for children and by children and will contain Baba's universal values and teachings presented in play form with music. The idea is to present them as a series of lessons in theatre form that will both instruct and please the listeners.

In addition to the radio series, a Theatre for Human Values is now developed here in the United States as part of a new project to present to Swami for His 70th Birthday.

All over the Sai world at Conferences, Bal Vikas children present cultural programmes, most frequently with Indian cultural stories and music. From now through September 1995, the U.S. Regional Conferences will focus the Bal Vikas Cultural programmes on the lives of those in our country who have inspired us by their ethical and spiritual examples. Each programme will consist of a 15 to 20 minute musical play written far in advance of the Conference to permit careful planning. The performance will be American in both play content and music so that it can easily be presented to schools, community organizations and cable TV. Preferring the cheap and tawdry, the media here have largely forgotten those who shaped and uplifted us. These inspiring heroes of noble character and high values, well-known or little known, need to be

remembered and emulated. All of the performances will be videoed and we will then have them edited into one master video presentation for Swami on His 70th Birthday. All the plays will be kept in script and video form as a Sai library to be useful for different regions both within this country and outside, providing an example of working in harmony together to present His Message to an expanding audience.

During an interview in September 1994, Swami said to a 13-year old boy, after speaking to him about his studies and friends, "You and Your generation are the people of the Golden Age." Bal Vikas Children, teachers and parents throughout the world can now help bring about that Golden Age as they develop a Theatre for Human Values that is relevant to their respective cultures.

The theatre that Swami developed as a boy was important and beautiful and inspiring. We now have the opportunity to spread His message through His Bal Vikas children who will learn and grow as they follow the lord's lead. Perhaps, if it is His will, an International theatre library of scripts, music and videos can be kept in Puttaparthi that would be accessible to all.

"Are you playing a drama?" the Lord asked, Yes Swami, we are and certainly we can see opportunities developing before us. In a much larger sense, however, we have always been, we are now, and we will continue to be playing the parts He assigned to us in His Divine Drama. No matter what course our lives take, let us remind ourselves that the drama is His drama. The players, the script, the directions, the sets and the time frames are His and His alone. Remembering this, we will play our parts happily and well because our thoughts are centered only on Him.

*Sai shrinks to a lingam held in His Hand.
The cosmic vastness we cannot understand,
Though we see His Form, though we say His Name
His mystery we can never explain
Guides He has sent to show the right way
And every being has a role to play
So Came Jesus, Buddha, Krishna, Rama
The world is naught but His Divine Drama*

—Hal Honig, New York

AVATAR VANI

"Let His Grace Dissolve Selfishness"

"Let us pray to Swami on this Mahasivaratri that His grace dissolve the selfishness that contaminates our minds. Let His grace eliminate the ego and desires that bind us. Let His grace take us to the ultimate phase of mind where peace, love, and God consciousness is all that remains", observed Dr. Michael G. Goldstein, Central Coordinator for the Sathya Sai Seva

Organisations in America, in a moving address to the vast gathering in the Poornachandra Auditorium on Mahasivaratri Day (February 27).

In the course of His address, Dr. Goldstein said:

The great spiritual heritage of India has culminated at the Divine Lotus Feet of our Lord, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Before our Lord took human form, Mahasivaratri was celebrated in India while the rest of the world barely acknowledged this very holy day. Now the Sri Sathya Sai Centres all over the world are observing this sacred time. In all languages and in all nations the great spiritual heritage of India is glorified by Swami's devotees. Our Sai brothers and sisters are singing bhajans and hymns to God in Italian, German, Russian, French, Spanish, English, and many other languages around the clock and around the world.

Swami seems to take pleasure in the vast array of geography represented by the presence of so many countries. Nevertheless, Swami's Message transcends the differences between religions and nationalities. Swami's Message is the timeless and universal truth of our purpose for being, the spiritual essence of our being, the joy and glory of our being.

Uniqueness of Sai avatar

Has there ever been a saint or prophet who has inspired so many devotees in distant lands?

Has the Lord, Himself, in His various incarnations, ever permitted so many to take part in His Divine Drama? Never has such greatness been manifested in this world. Men have never seen the mystery, magnitude, and magnificence that is being manifested by Bhagavan Baba.

Tonight, on Mahasivaratri, our chance to discover, to experience, to realize the Divine Truth is greatly enhanced. We look for truth everywhere but it resides in our own hearts. The universe emanates from our own hearts. The truth is very simple. It can be expressed in so many ways. Each of us might turn to our neighbor and say to him or her: "I am you. You are me. We are part of Swami whom we revere. He is Love. Love is God. That is Truth."

We are not these bodies nor are we the minds. We are the Atma residing in these human vehicles. We must discard the artificial separateness that we have learned from the world and, instead, listen to the inner voice, the Conscience, our Master. That is Truth.

An auspicious occasion

On this great day of Mahasivaratri, the strength of the mind's waywardness is at its lowest ebb. With Swami's Grace, let us all use this auspicious occasion properly to our spiritual advantage. On the night of this small moon which is about to disappear, let our delusion and our lunacy also disappear. We must overcome the vagaries, attachments and illusions of the mind. We want to surrender control of these minds and bodies to the Divine Indweller.

We must forget the past, stop worrying about the future, and end our preoccupation with how we are perceived by other people. We want to learn from the mistakes of the past so that we do not

repeat them but we do not want to permit ourselves to be immobilized by regret or remorse. We want to plan sensibly for the future but not to the neglect and detriment of the present. We want to serve all of our brothers and sisters with love for love's sake. We are not concerned with reward or recognition.

We must terminate the insidious conspiracy between the senses and the mind that links us to and encumbers us with insatiable desires.

Manifest your divinity

Just as Swami is manifesting His Divinity in greater and more tangible ways, he is expecting us to acknowledge, realize, and manifest our Divinity in more tangible ways. He is telling us what is good. He is showing us what is good. He is expecting us to give His Divine Teachings life by living them.

When we learn to live Swami's teachings diligently and consistently are adopting the spiritual way of life and putting aside the worldly waste of life.

Swami has stated on a number of occasions that His devotees must have firm faith reflected in thought, word, and deed that the Lord is the doer. We must permit every thought, word, and deed to be dictated by our inner voice, of Truth. We must learn to watch the clouds of worldly events come and go in our sojourn through life, remembering always to be undaunted by the weather outside. We must live inside ourselves, not outside in the world.

When Swami founded the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning He gave to the world a unique learning environment where the establishment of values and the development of character have the greatest emphasis. Swami built, staffed, and commenced services in the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medicine in a miraculous fashion. Swami announced what would be and that which appeared to be impossible came to pass.

Swami's words teach us and His examples inspire us and demonstrate what is correct.

Education and health

Now, Swami is teaching the societies of man what should be done with the basic institutions of man. He is giving free education and healthcare. Education and healthcare are not commodities to be purchased. The duty of society is to offer them to all people regardless of race, nationality, religion, or economic circumstance.

Is there anything more valuable than education and healthcare? Yes! Water! Now Swami has undertaken to provide water freely to multitudes of people who are living in areas where the earth is parched. Water is the elixir of life. Swami is giving life to these unfortunate people. Swami is doing what must be done. Swami is doing what nobody else was able to accomplish.

The most important and fundamental lessons are taught by Nature in the school of this world. Nature is an expression of the Will of God and a reflection of His infinite Glory.

Everyone is a student in this academy of life. Everyone is a spiritual aspirant because it is the destiny of man to merge with His Creator. Some of us acknowledge this and consciously apply ourselves to accomplishing the goal of Self-realisation. Others live and let things happen to them, without any conscious goal, purpose, plan, or understanding of life.

All of the lessons that are prerequisite to our graduation, to our moksha, are in the all-inclusive curriculum of the school of nature. This great spiritual occasion, Mahasivaratri, where state of mind and phase of moon are linked, is a great example of an important lesson from the Divine School of Nature.

The process of self-enquiry

Effective self-inquiry provides us with insight regarding our own nature. All of us, at all times, are experiencing many transitions. We are constantly changing from one stage to another in every aspect of our lives. Let us consider some of our spiritual transitions.

In our youth, we envision the Lord as the Creator and Master of the Universe. We appeal to him for protection and to help us with our worldly problems.

As we grow and our ability and desire to commune with God progresses, our conscience grows stronger. When we reach spiritual maturity, we recognize that we are one with our conscience. We realize that our conscience is our true identity and that our conscience is a reflection of God.

We might describe these spiritual transitions in this manner:

1. First we believe what we are taught.
2. Then we begin to experience the truth of what we are taught.
3. As we experience the truth, we begin to identify ourselves with that truth.
4. Ultimately, we become living embodiments of that truth.

God's plan of service

As Sai devotees, we are not "otherworldly" like some utopian philosophical or religious points of view. To the contrary, Swami has taught us that we must act in this world according to the dictates of our conscience from an attitude of selfless love. That is God's plan for us. That is our duty. That is our identity and that is the purpose of our lives. These minds and bodies were created by the Lord to serve others so that they also will recognize their inherent Divinity.

When we have the inclination to speak, we should ask ourselves about the source of our ideas. Do they come from the selfless depths of wisdom to which we all have access? Or do they come from the selfish ego with which we are all burdened. When we have the inclination to act, we

should ask ourselves about the source of our motivation. Are we guided by our conscience? Or are we motivated by selfish desires?

Let our sadhana enhance, expedite, and illuminate our spiritual journey. Let us not become diverted by regarding our sadhana as an end unto itself. We should not forget the meaning of spirituality. We must change our outlook and our attitude. Our outlook must be to perceive no evil, to perceive only what is good. Our attitude must be to love all of God's children.

Swami says that many people complain that they have performed their sadhana and are not realizing any spiritual benefits. Swami says that these people act primarily from body consciousness and not God consciousness. When we act, we must act for God, with God, and as God. We must surrender our actions to the Lord. According to Swami, that is the easy path to liberation, to think of God constantly and surrender all of our actions to Him.

People claim that they love God. Swami tells us that it is more important to be sure that God loves you. Swami said that Peter once asked Jesus how he could earn his love. Jesus said to Peter, "You should love God in all People". Swami then went on to say that even in bad and cruel people, there is love. We must look through the outer sheath and then only love exists.

Banish doubts

We must not permit doubts to weaken our faith. Swami says that people nowadays are believing what they read in the newspapers but they do not believe the holy scriptures or the words of great people. Based on our faith in God, based on our level of spiritual understanding, based on our understanding of ourselves, we must put aside all doubts and make the decisions that lead us to our spiritual goals. Other people can be helpful but they cannot accompany us on our inner journey. Realization of spiritual truth is not the result of group interactions or programmes of any kind.

Realization of spiritual truth occurs when we are prepared to receive this truth. We are prepared when we have strengthened our faith, when we have made a conscious decision and commitment to achieve the Divine purpose of human life, and when we are engaged in deep self-inquiry and are living lives that transcend ego and selfish desires.

Spirituality effects transformation in ourselves. What is this transformation? Whence have we come and where are we going? At first we are immersed in the darkness of the world. We are blind to spiritual truth. Through our experience and the prompting of our heart we begin to see the truth. We see the truth in nature. We see the truth in the deeds of good people. We see the truth personified before us in the Divine Presence of Swami. The more we see, the more we understand. Soon we have more than mere physical vision. We develop spiritual vision.

Ultimately, this spiritual transformation entails the change from ignorant preoccupation with the body and ego to selflessness, detachment, and equanimity which results in Divine wisdom, love, and joy. In the end we merge with our Maker.

The prayer to Swami

Swami exhorts us not to settle for the perfunctory and commonplace, not to follow our foolish and narrow minded impulses. He exhorts us to follow our spiritual aspirations, to reach up high to the very stars and to dig deep into the very depths of our hearts. Swami advises us to use the power of thoughts. Meditation is stopping thoughts. That is almost impossible. It is much more effective to use the power of good thoughts. We must fill our minds with God. We must contemplate His beauty, noble attributes, goodness, and love. Swami says that this constitutes genuine prayer.

In this manner, let us pray to Swami on this Mahasivaratri. Let His grace dissolve the selfishness that contaminates our minds. Let His Grace eliminate the ego and desires that bind us. Let His Grace take us to the ultimate phase of mind where peace, love, and God consciousness is all that remains.

Whenever we look into the eyes of our neighbour, let us silently remember "I am you. You are me. We are part of our beloved Swami. He is love. Love is God. That is Truth!"

AVATAR VANI:

SIVARATRI SANDESH

Idol Worship and God's Omnipresence

*One kind word pleases everybody.
Why, then, should you be miserly in soft speech?
By pleasing words all beings are happy,
Therefore speak lovingly always
Why be chary in the use of kind words? (Sanskrit sloka)*

Embodiments of Love!

Pleasing speech confers immense joy on man. There is no scarcity of pleasant words. Hence everyone should speak sweetly to all.

*There is an atomic particle subtler than the atom
There is something vaster than the vastest you can imagine
The atom is in the immense and
The immense is in the atom.
The Atma is in the atom as the Spirit.
(Telugu Poem)*

The entire phenomenal universe is a manifestation of the atom. The water you drink, the air you breathe, and the sounds you hear are all composed of atoms. The five basic elements (space, air, water, fire, and earth) are all made up of atoms and pervade the universe. The Cosmos is the embodiment of the five elements. For this reason, the ancients regarded the universe as a manifestation of God.

Long before men started exploring the secrets of the atom and discovering the nature of atomic energy, even before scientists began to understand the nature of spirituality, Bharatiyas worshipped the

Earth (Bhumi) as divine. Because the five elements were present in the Earth, they adored the Earth as Bhudevi, the Earth Goddess.

Moreover, they worshipped water as Ganga Devi, recognising the divine element in water. The Fire God comes next. The fourth is the Lord of Wind (Vayudeva). The fifth is "Shabda Brahman", the Divine as sound. Thus, all the five elements were considered manifestations of the Divine and worshipped as such by the Bharatiyas, Outsiders who did not understand the profound significance of the worship of the elements, treated them with levity.

The worship of forms

Every atom has a form. There is no object in the universe without a form. The form is an expression of the Divine ("Vigraha" or idol). Members of other faiths considered idol worship as irrational. They ridiculed idol worship as a form of superstition, but they made no attempt to explain the worship of the formless.

Every person begins to learn about all objects only in relation to their forms. People could not conceive of God as omnipresent, who is in every object and in every individual. Some were able to conceive that the atom is present in every object and everywhere. But it was only in the seventeenth century that atomic physics came into existence. But long before this, the child Prahalada realised the omnipresence of the Divine. He told his father: "Do not have any doubts that the Divine is present here and not there. He is omnipresent. You can find him wherever you seek Him."

What Prahalada declared millennia ago, the scientists of today are discovering, namely, that the energy that is present in the all-pervading atom is divine.

I point my finger at the mike and tell you: "This is a mike", After you have seen the mike you don't need the finger to point it out. I point to a flower and say: "This is a flower". After you have seen the flower, there is no need for the finger to point it. Likewise, idols were used to point out God. Until God-realisation comes, idols are essential. After God-realisation there is no need for idols.

Why worship idols

If a girl before her marriage is asked to describe her future husband, how can she do it? She can describe the husband only after the marriage. Likewise, after worshipping an idol and gaining experience of divinity by such worship, one would be able to describe one's experience of God. Before worshipping God and gaining spiritual experience, how can anyone say anything about the nature of Divine? Hence, it is necessary to develop faith in idol worship. It should be realised that every object is a manifestation of God. Every atom is divine.

Respect for the national flag

Some people ask whether it is not foolish to worship an inanimate inanimate figure as God. This question is born of ignorance. Today ninety crores of Bharatiyas hoist the National Flag and revere it. Before the Flag could attain this status, many sacrificed their all for the freedom of the country. Many suffered long terms of imprisonment. They went through all this suffering so that they could have their own flag in a free country. On August 15th or January 26th, the National Flag is hoisted all over the country and revered as the symbol of national freedom. In the same manner people in other countries revere their respective national flags. Moreover, people respect even their party flags.

Is this flag animate? Has it any vitality or power in it? When you enquire like this you discover that it is the faith in the flag that makes it adorable.

Likewise, if the question is asked whether a stone idol that is worshipped has any life or consciousness in it, they will find the answer from the example of the honor done to the national flag. How does a square yard of cotton cloth made into a flag acquire its value? The value is derived from the fact that the flag is a symbol of the victory achieved in the freedom struggle. That victory has no form. The flag demonstrates the achievement of that victory. Without the flag how do you demonstrate the victory in the freedom struggle? Take another example. There is a 100-rupee note. It is lifeless. But you take good care of it because it represents wealth. All people seek wealth. Money as such has no qualities like goodness. But the possessor of money has qualities. Money is a symbol of power.

The fragrance emanating from a flower has no form, but the flower has a form.

Take love, for instance. It has no form. But the mother who exhibits love for her child has a form. If there is no mother, how can there be love"?

Omnipresence of God

The idols that are worshipped are the answers to those who go about asking, "Where is God?" The truth is God is present in every atom. Every atom represents the power of the Divine. Every atom deserves to be worshipped. All objects in Creation have to be respected. Men have to cultivate this feeling of reverence for all things.

But, believing that the physical body is permanent and is all in all, men are wasting their lives in the pursuit of the ephemeral and the transient. There can be no action without the body. Without action there can be no fruits. Hence the body is at the base of everything. The body is a form ("Vigraha"). The mother is a form. The preceptor is a form. All are forms ("Vigrahas"). The term vigraha also means an idol that is an object of worship. But these "Vigrahas" have a certain value. It is through them that we can Realise the Divine. It is impossible to conceive in this world any kind of worship ("Aradhana") without a form. Worship of the formless is misconceived. It is these misguided persons who preach against idol worship.

Worship of nature

In every religion there is a distinct form for worship. For example: Nature (Prakriti). Nature has the power of attraction. It contains all the five elements. It is from Nature that we get our food. Nature is the source of all minerals. Nature is the sustainer of man in ordinary life. That being the case, what is there wrong in adoring Nature? Should we not be grateful to that which provides so many things for our needs? That gratitude is a form of worship.

Every man is composed of the five elements. Man cannot exist without these elements. Is there no obligation to express one's gratitude to them?

Nature has the power of attraction. This is called magnetism. Nature has immense magnetic power. Every object is affected by this magnetic power. The object also gets magnetised in the process and acquires magnetic power.

The power in idols

Today scientists are trying to understand this power of attraction in Nature. Take, for instance, a temple. Thousands of people go to the temple for worship. The magnetic power in the earth extends to the idol in the sanctum. The thoughts of the worshippers are also attracted by the idol. Thereby the power of attraction in the idol gets intensified. The rituals performed for the idol also enhance its power of attraction. This process can be noticed if a couple of nails are kept near a magnet. After two days it will be found that the nails also have been magnetised. In the same manner when worshippers go to a temple the power goes forth from thousands of worshippers, the power or attraction in the idol gets immensely intensified. The idol surcharged with this power is able to energise the worshippers.

Thus, in this world there is no object without this power. Atomic energy is present everywhere. It is only when the true character of this atomic power is understood that the power of the Divine can also be understood.

Easwara's wealth

"Sankara" is made up of the two words, "sam" and "kara". What does "Sam" mean? "Sam" is that which is all-pervading like air. The air is filled with bliss. "Sankara" is one who offers this bliss to all. "Nityananda", everlasting bliss, "Brahmananda", Supreme Bliss, and every kind of bliss is conferred by Sankara.

There is the term "Easwara". It refers to one who is the embodiment of every form of wealth and prosperity ("Aishwarya").

"Aishwarya" is not confined to material wealth alone. It includes also the wealth of health, of intelligence, of physical prowess. Aishwarya represents this omnibus opulence, including the bliss (Ananda). "Easwara" is the one who confers every kind of opulence.

What is the form of this Ananda? Experience alone is the form of this bliss. This bliss can be experienced only by God realisation and not by any other means. Bliss is all pervading, but is not visible. For that reason, its existence cannot be denied.

Divinity (Easwaratwa) is all pervading. By losing faith in the Divine, turning into unbelievers, moving away from bliss, men are becoming a prey to worry. This is totally wrong. A life without faith is like water poured on a sieve, Bliss must be secured through faith.

Divine energy in man

The Divine is omnipresent. All of you are forms of the Divine. All of you are endowed with electro-magnetic energy, atomic power, heat and other forms of energy. The magnetic energy is the most important power in man. From this magnetic energy comes electrical energy. The strength of the electrical energy is related to the strength of the magnetic energy. When the electrical energy and the magnetic energy come together, the divine power operates. This divine power does not come from outside. It is within human beings. Our very form is divine. That is why I address you all as "Embodiments of the Divine Atma." (Cheers). By failing to recognise this truth, people are going in search of God here and there. God is everywhere. Make every effort to recognise this fundamental truth.

The search for truth

People talk about "the search for truth" (Sathya-anveshana). What is this search? Truth is everywhere. Consider this example. Your eyes see the mother, the child, the wife, the cook, and the daughter-in-law. The eyes are the same but they see different persons with different emotions. The search for truth means seeing everything in its own true, specific nature. All the persons may be feminine and the eyes that see them are one and the same. But to find out the truth one has to determine how he should view each person in relation to that person's state.

Consider, again, the role of the tongue. The same tongue may indulge in falsehood or stand for truth. The same tongue may revile at others or praise them. The tongue's role in the quest for truth is to determine when a lie may be uttered or the truth should be spoken, when blame or praise is justified.

Truth resides in you. It is the appropriate application to specific objects which determines what is true.

Hence, if you want to discover the Divine who is omnipresent there must be a change in outlook within you. When you realise your own inherent divinity, you will be able to recognise the divinity in others.

Idols and devotion

Idol worship should not be regarded as a meaningless exercise. It is a good practice because on the basis of the idol the higher consciousness is attained. In a home, there are pictures of grandparents and great-grandparents. The present generation has not seen them. But they offer garlands to the pictures and revere the ancestors. Is there life in the pictures? Do they exhibit any

love? Do the pictures by themselves reveal any relationship? Not at all. But the pictures are revered out of the feeling that they represent one's ancestors. If such a loving feeling did not exist, the pictures will not be kept in the house. Likewise it is the attachment for an object that inspires respect and reverence. This is termed devotion. This devotion should be shown towards all objects because the Divine is in everything, in every atom. It may be difficult to cultivate such devotion. But once its rationale is properly understood, the practice of devotion will become easy.

There have been controversies and doubts about this in the past. For instance, a school of philosophers known as Charvakas used to deride idol worship. But later on, they also recognised its value. They realised that everything in the world has a form, from the atom onwards, and that everything with a form was an idol ("Vigraham") fit for worship. What is the form of water? Here in this tumbler is some water and its form is derived from the tumbler. Likewise air acquires the form of the balloon in which it is confined. Similarly when the body is filled with Divine energy, the Divine acquires the human form. The all-pervading Divine thus acquires the form in which it manifests itself. Perform your worship to the Divine with awareness of the truth that the Divine is omnipresent and is therefore in the idol that is worshipped. And then you are bound to have a vision of the Divine.

The truth about the omnipresence of the Divine was evident to the Gopikas who sang in praise of Krishna: "O Krishna! How can anyone know your mystery? You are subtler than the atom and vaster than the vastest thing in the world! You are present in myriad of beings in this vast universe in innumerable forms. How can we ever know you?" (Poem) "You are a thief along thieves, a good man among the good. You manifest the qualities of the object in which you dwell. You are everything".

Infinite forms of the Lord

Those who have studied the Vibhuti Yoga in the Bhagavad Gita will know the infinity of forms which the Lord assumes. All forms are His. If one has faith that the Lord is present in the atom, one will have a vision of the Lord even in the atom. But if you make a distinction between different objects, treat some as pure and others as impure, you will not get that vision. Till the realisation that everything is permeated by God comes to one, he must worship an idol as a sacred symbol. A sculptor creates an idol out of a rock. Because of the form given to it, it is installed in a temple and worshipped. In fashioning the idol, the sculptor chisels away many chips of stone. The chips may proclaim verily their kinship with the idol worshipped in the temple. They may say: "You and we are one. The only difference is, you have a form and we have none."

Thus, the Divine exists both in the form and in the "formless". It is because this concept of the Universal is not understood that faith has declined.

Faith is at the root of spirituality. If you believe that God exists, He exists. If you have no belief, so far as you are concerned God does not exist.

When you believe in God, you develop faith in the divinity of all things. Faith is the basis of worship. Worship leads to oneness with the Divine. The sense of separateness will persist as long as there is no God realisation. Separateness ends with Realisation.

Science and Vedanta

Scientists are tending to realise the basic unity of the energy that fills the universe. Vedanta describes that Unity as Brahman (the Supreme all-pervading Absolute Consciousness). The terms used are different, but in substance they are saying the same thing; namely, that the One subsumes the Many.

With regard to divinity, there is no meaning in making a distinction between the Divine with form and the formless divinity. How can you conceive of the Formless Divine? You cannot avoid idol worship until you have experience of the Divine within you. Ramakrishna Paramahansa once told a disciple, who asked why he (the disciple) was not able to see God, whether he yearned for God with the same intensity with which he sought many worldly things. If he did so, he would certainly have a vision of God. When a similar question was put to Buddha, he said that without indulging in speculation about God if one practised truth, righteousness and non-violence he would have the highest experience.

The ways of Swami

Many people who have some questions regarding Swami do not realise the ways of the Divine. They look at all things from the worldly point of view. They should look at things from the Divine point of view. Change the angle of your vision. When you practise seeing the world from the point of view of the omnipresence of the Divine, you will get transformed. You will experience the power of the Divine in everything in creation. You cannot hide anything from God. Many imagine that Swami does not see what they are doing. They do not realise that Swami has myriad eyes. Even your eyes are divine. But you are not aware of your true nature. When you have faith in yourself, you will have faith in God. Realise that there is nothing beyond the power of God. Love God with that supreme faith. Then you will be drawn towards God. It needs purity. A magnet cannot attract a piece of iron covered with rust. Similarly God will not draw to Himself an impure person. Hence, change your feelings and thoughts and develop the conviction that God is everything. God will not give you up when you have this conviction.

Today is Sivaratri, the Night of Auspiciousness. This is the occasion for cherishing auspicious thoughts and praying for auspicious action and conduct in life. You must get rid of narrow and petty feelings.

Mind, body and atma

Man today has lost the spirit of sacrifice. Three things are essential for every man: love of one's country, sacrifice, following the godly path of spirituality. One is a true human being only when he has these three qualities. To know is the function of the mind. To act is the duty of the body. To remain as the Eternal Witness is the function of the Atma. Mind, body and Atma together constitute humanness. The Divine is present in all three.

God has provided everything for man's good in the world. But there is one condition that has to be observed. The results of your actions will be according to their nature, whether they are good or bad. Men today want to reap the fruits of good deeds without performing good deeds. This is impossible. Nor can they escape the consequences of their evil actions. God is only a witness.

At least from now on, develop good thoughts, do good actions and redeem your lives. You have to start with the Karma Marga, the Path of Action, and end with Jnana Marga, the path of knowledge. In between there is the Upaasana Marga, the path of Worship. This is the path you have to follow today. For this you have to get the conviction that God is omnipresent. When you have that conviction, you will not indulge in falsehood or practise deception, you will not abuse others or cause harm to them, you will acquire all virtues. This is the purpose of observing Sivaratri as a Sacred Night. The night vigil should be dedicated entirely to contemplation of God.

Develop the firm conviction that God is within you and that you are Divine. Love is God and God is Love. Live in love and make your entire life a saga of love.

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

From Bhagavan's discourse in the Poornachandra Auditorium on 27.2.1995

AVATAR VANI

Noble Mothers Breed Noble Sons

Embodiments of love!

This entire cosmos is under the control of God. God is subject to Truth. Truth is governed by the noblest persons. These noble beings are embodiments of the Divine.

Students! Today you must all become messengers of peace and security to the world. To prepare yourselves for this role you have to cultivate the spirit of sacrifice. Only the individual who cherishes sacrifice and renounces pleasures can be qualified for a life of sacrifice. It is only when the distinction between this renunciation (of pleasures) and acceptance (of a life of sacrifice) is rightly understood can one experience the joy of sacrifice.

Even if the soil is fertile, if the seed is of poor quality, it cannot grow into a good tree. On the other hand, if the seed is good but the soil is unfertile, a strong tree cannot grow. If children are to become culturally refined young persons, the parents should have the refinement of culture. When the parents observe exemplary conduct based on culture, the children will also imbibe these practices. As Dr. Sushila Nayyar observed (in her speech earlier), students have to cultivate simple living and high thinking. Students must learn to lead simple lives. At the same time their ideals must be of the highest order.

There are many examples of people who have led simple lives with high ideals.

Putlibai and Gandhi

Gandhiji's mother, Putlibai, was a lady who believed in the two principles of truth and right conduct. She adhered to the practice of taking her morning breakfast only after hearing the first call of the cuckoo. One morning, the cuckoo's call was missing for a time and Putlibai did not take her breakfast. Seeing this the young Gandhi went to the backyard, cooed like cuckoo and came and told his mother that she could now take her breakfast. Putlibai, who could easily guess the trick her son was playing, felt very sad about his behaviour. She thought: "What sin have I committed that such a son should be born to me? There is no use blaming you for what is the result of my own sin. How sinful am I that I gave birth to an untruthful son." Unable to bear her grief, she slapped the boy on the cheek and went inside.

That very moment Gandhi took a vow "I must never again utter an untruth in my life. What life is it that causes grief to a mother? In a country in which everyone is enjoined to revere the mother and father as God, I have caused grief to my mother by an act of deception." From that day he resolved only to speak the truth and never indulge in falsehood.

Mothers of those days were women of great piety and noble character. They practised virtue and set an example to the children. Only from wombs of such noble women were born sons of high character.

The mother of Adi Sankara, Aryaamba, was a high-souled woman. Hence; Sankara could achieve greatness and world fame. Vivekananda was another illustrious figure. Adhering to the instructions of his mother, he led an exemplary life and achieved name and fame. Their lives shine in the pages of history as examples for mankind.

As is the seed, so is the tree. Similarly some are born with noble character and some are born differently. These differences are the result of their careers in previous lives.

Chaitanya's prayer

Once Chaitanya went to Puri and prayed to Lord Jagannath: "Oh Lord of the Universe! Lord of Life! Master of my body! Lord of Creation! I am not concerned with surrender and salvation. I am incapable of doing Yoga or Dhyana. Nor am I interested in mundane pleasure. I only desire one thing. Give me the all-consuming love for you. With that love I can accomplish everything. Without your love, of what use are all the pleasures of the world, all the talents and powers one can command? Of what avail is scholarship or intellectual brilliance? I must earn the love of the Lord. Confer that love on me, Oh Lord!"

By revering their parents and following their noble examples, many great men achieved glory and fame in the past. If today we do not have highminded youth, it is the parents that are responsible. (In this context, Bhagavan related at length the story of Ishwara Chandra Vidyasagar, the great scholar of Calcutta, who was inspired by his mother to educate himself for

a career of dedicated service to the people). Swami said: His mother told Ishwara Chandra: "True education must lead you to God. Academic education must help you to serve society and promote the welfare of mankind. You must be an example to other men and lead an ideal life." Despite their poverty, the son followed the mother's advice and by his own diligence got a degree. In due course, he got a job, pursued higher studies and attained a position of eminence. Having accumulated some money he approached his mother and asked her whether she wanted anything. She said: "I have no desires. I only want you to earn a name as a man of good character, dedicated to the service of the nation."

The three wishes of Vidyasagar's mother

The son pressed her again after some time to indicate what she wanted by way of Jewels or clothes. She told him: "I am now past the age for wearing Jewels or flaunting gaudy dresses. However, I desire three ornaments about which I shall tell you later on. "After a period, having saved some more money, Ishwara Chandra asked his mother: "What are your three desires?" "The first one", she said, "is a primary school for the children of our small and backward village. The second one is a small village hospital for the local population. My third desire is that you should not sell your knowledge, nor feel proud about it. Cultivate humility and consider yourself the servant of all. Service is the pathway to leadership. These are the three ornaments I seek."

Carrying out his mother's wishes, he established a primary school in the village, a hospital for the villagers and dedicated his entire life to the service of his fellow-men. He became famous as Ishwara Chandra Vidyasagar, known for his knowledge and spirit of service. He became well known as a speaker who attracted large audiences of men and women. His talks were ennobling and inspiring, summoning the people to a life of sacrifice and service.

A young officer learns a lesson

Once, a senior officer was keen to listen to Vidyasagar's speech and set out for the place of the meeting by train with a suitcase. On alighting at the station, he called for a porter to carry his suitcase. As no one appeared, an old man who had got down from the same train offered to carry the suitcase. From the simplicity of the old man's dress, the officer took him for a poor villager and allowed him to carry the suitcase up to the place where he was to stay. After depositing the suitcase, when the old man was about to leave, the officer offered him a rupee for his labour. The old man declined the money and said that what he had done was in a spirit of service and not to earn money. After thanking him the old man (who was none other than Ishwara Chandra) told the young officer before leaving: "Your practice does no credit to your education. After so much education you are not able to attend to your own needs. You have made yourself unfit. Humility is the ornament for education. Education without humility is no education at all. Self-conceit is also not an index of good education. Arrogance and attachment are bad qualities, which you must get rid of."

Later in the day large crowds were assembling at the place of meeting. All were eagerly waiting to welcome Vidyasagar. As Ishwara Chandra got up on the stage, he was profusely garlanded. The young officer was in the audience. He saw the speaker on the stage and wondered whether he could be Vidyasagar: "Is he the same man who carried my suitcase in the morning?" He felt

ashamed of himself. "What a shame that I should have treated with disrespect such a venerable person out of my pride and arrogance!" The officer felt that he had learnt a good lesson that day that humility is the true hall-mark of real education.

Ishwara Chandra Vidyasagar was in the habit of examining his faults, if any, and trying to correct them. But students today entertain bad thoughts or do wrong things and justify their behaviour by the specious argument that "to err is human." They should realise that because they are human they should observe right conduct. They should not take to bad ways. Bad conduct is utterly unbecoming of one who calls himself human. The natural qualities of a human being are good thoughts and good conduct. Students should strive to live in this manner.

Mothers and sons

The world has witnessed any number of great personalities who have led ideal lives. Today mothers who brought up such noble beings are becoming rare. Parents often tend to encourage the improper behaviour of their children rather than correct them. Parents today are primarily responsible for their children going astray.

Swami then related the moving story of a mother and son who had become as refugees from Burma and how the son starved himself to feed his mother from the food he was getting by begging. One day when a house owner offered to give him food as he was starving, the boy said he would not eat the food there, but must carry it home. He fell down in front of the house and the owner heard the feeble words coming from the boy's lips: "First mother, then myself." With those words, he breathed his last."

Such examples of filial and maternal affection are becoming rare these days because of the trends in modern education. Maternal love has vanished. Filial duty is absent. What a testimony to the tragic results of modern education! There is no reverence for elders, no recognition of obligations to parents. Selfishness has become the bed-rock of life. The nation is a prey to all kinds of ills because of this all-pervading selfishness.

There was a time in the past when men were prepared to sacrifice their all for the sake of the people and the welfare of the nation. Today this spirit is absent. Selfishness is rampant. The educational system is responsible for this situation. Education should make students service minded, not job-seekers. Parents have also a duty in this regard. They must reform their children by setting the example themselves.

You must be prepared to make any sacrifice for the sake of the nation. Welcome sacrifice, banish pleasure seeking. Discover the joy to be derived from sacrifice.

Example of national leaders

When Bharat got her independence, Nehru was the Prime Minister and Vallabhabhai Patel was the Home Minister. Dr. Sushila Nayyar was then the Health Minister. It was at that time she came to see me in Delhi. Later in 1962, she came to Puttaparthi together with Vinoba Bhave. Since then she has been associated with Swami. Vallabhabhai used to tell Sushila Nayyar:

"Sushilaben! You lead a simple life. As a Minister you should appear more impressive." Patel used to tease her in this manner.

Vallabhabhai's daughter used to live with him. She was an exemplary daughter. She used to spin the yarn from which the clothes were made for her father and she used to make a sari for herself out of the old dhotis of her father. The national leaders of those days were ideal leaders. They fought for the freedom of the country. In those days, it used to be said that the white rulers were oppressing the black natives. Alas! Today the black natives are oppressing the natives. In those days there were men who were prepared to sacrifice their all for the nation. Today we have men who are prepared to sacrifice the nation for their self-interest. What kind of leadership is this? Whither have ideals fled? What we need is devotion to God, which will fill us with the spirit of sacrifice. Only then can real humanness prevail. Sacrifice is the key to immortality. Today people seek nectar in intoxicating drinks. Is this a mark of culture? No. Sense-control comes first. Life is a challenge. Meet it.

Crusaders for peace

Students should become crusaders for peace in a country riddled with conflict and disorder. Sanctify your education by a life of dedicated service. I told the girl students yesterday that Duty and Discipline should be like two body-guards for Devotion.

All of you should set an example to the nation in leading a life marked by Devotion, Duty and Discipline. I bless you all that you should become worthy servants of the nation.

Example of sushila nawar

I have seen Sushila Nayyar on several occasions. Recently she came to Brindavan and stayed there for two days. After the passing of Gandhiji, she has been working in Gandhigram with dedication. She has faced many trials and tribulations. Whenever she comes to Swami she experiences peace and joy. She is working hard to promote the activities in Gandhigram, Swami's grace has been available to her in plenty in this mission. She need not worry on this account. She is far advanced in age (96). Despite the infirmities of age, she is actively engaged in social service. What ails our young people that they are not attracted to social service? The only service they are rendering is to feed themselves. But the body is given for the pursuit of Dharma (Righteousness). If it is not used for this purpose, why have it at all? Don't bother to fatten your body. Rather, you should wear it away in the service of others. It is through such service that you should redeem your lives.

Develop devotion to God through meditation and contemplation. Take a pledge to render service to your fellowmen.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the song "*Bhajana binna sukha santhi nahi*". The entire audience joined in singing the bhajan.

(From Bhagavan's discourse in the Poornachandra Auditorium on 15.2.95)

“Develop Good in You”

**"You have nothing to do with the good and bad in others. Instead of wasting time, it should be utilised to discard the bad and develop the good in you." —Baba
(Sandeha Nivarini)**

Negative feelings that we have about things, people and events soon obtain a power of their own within us. Such negativity attaches itself to thoughts and, when something recalls them, it returns along with them. We get so used to having these feelings that we fall into thinking their cause to be something outside us. When our own negativity is 'projected' outwards, we then seem unable to change it. But it actually has no existence apart from their origin in our minds.

Negativity may be deep-seated, such as when it first arose early in life, and we may not even normally recognise bad thoughts and feelings for what they are. Such negativity drains us of the will to act in the right way, which in turn depresses the spirit further: like a 'black hole' in space that increasingly draws energy into its own emptiness.

Refraining from expressing such negativity of feeling or thought is beneficial, provided it is dealt with internally and not simply 'repressed' (i.e., not stored up emotionally in the form of fixed reactions, ideas etc). If not examined and worked upon, it can continue to lurk and spread subconsciously, later arising as bad dreams, in unguarded words or uncontrolled behaviour and so on. It can cause many types of self-destructiveness. Positive emotions, however, are probably less often 'subconsciously repressed' like that.

The force of stored negativity, when worked out and released in the right spirit, converts itself into constructive energy. There are many good ways of working consciously to tap this from a self-examination and meditational reflection to outward techniques found in group work therapy and other interpersonal situations. The test of their rightness and effectiveness must be how much non-attachment or equanimity is achieved.

I sometimes see how the same incident has appeared alternately to me as negative and positive. What I felt strongly against—like bad behavior by someone—I may later realise, in the light of reflection or new information, was a well-intentioned act instead. This can also work in reverse. I usually put such instability in my judgement down to insufficient detachment in making it—which means some sort of self-attachment.

When, for example, adult men some times run like unruly children to snap up a front place at darshan, or I hear a self-important person harass ashram workers into giving the privilege of a prominent spot, it is a test of my detachment. My reaction may need to be examined to see whether or not it is founded in unselfish love or only in my own desires. Maybe that person was hoping for a last chance to ask Baba something on behalf of some desperately-ill person.

Winning or losing before challenges or before goals we have ourselves set are prime motives for the pro and con attitudes that upset our balance of mind. Rudyard Kipling stated the ideal of detachment in his famous poem "If": "If you can meet with triumph and disaster, and treat these two impostors just the same".

Self-scrutiny

Bhagavan Baba repeatedly points out that thinking of oneself as being a non-attached witness gives insight and that the rule to follow here is to discover one's own errors and not those of others. The absence of the negative and positive attitude, of like and dislike, dependency and excitement, is non-attachment. This achievement surely cannot come suddenly by some simple technique of ignoring the world around us, for such self-knowledge arises from the struggle with many various experiences in life.

The motivation to avoid negative emotions is seldom strong until we really become convinced of their dangers. The effects of feelings, whether in ourselves or others—and especially over the longer term—should therefore be observed.

We can all note how, once we dwell on a negative feeling that has arisen in us, it can extend itself to other areas and to new events—both to real and imaginary situations—if it is not checked by conscious effort. This is what I find Baba often refers to when He reminds us to 'forget the past'. This may happen with all sorts of doubts that come up, unless attempts are made to see things from both the pros and cons, both the plus and the minus sides. This makes for even-mindedness and helps us to wait until further information or inspiration may be come to settle unanswered questions. But if a doubt persists, then put the doubt itself under the microscope to see how it may be unfounded or false.... Rather than seeking chiefly to pursue it further. This rational method of 'doubting-of-doubts' often shows up the irrational in a conclusion to which we may have jumped or in facts that we may have blown up into imaginary significance. This can give control of the mind without simply having to give up one's judgement and it also helps regulate the feelings.

One aid to developing detachment is making 'self-observational' notes in a spiritual diary that can aid in self-reflection (and also reflect progress!). To reach correct insights and fruitful self-development, observation must be repeatedly guided by the right questions and inspired by ideas from spiritual literature, which provides the background 'theory' and a helpful framework for one's personal experiences.

Seeing being and doing good

Being 100% free from negative or bad thoughts is doubtless best, but in my case that is still just an ideal, for they can still pop up again and again in subtle different ways. If I try to discriminate by examining and continually aiming to resolve or counteract and reject those that are negative, I am already underway in detaching myself from negativity.

The goal of positive effort to see the good in everyone and in all situations often raises the objections: "How can I see good when there seems to be only bad? Or to ignore and deny the bad or to see good where the opposite is the case is naive or plain foolish!" In response to this I note some ways in which negativity can sometimes be converted into its opposite:

1. Do not confuse the person with the action: We may unavoidably observe a person's action as being bad without also thereby seeing the person as bad. To think a person bad is usually to lay stress on certain actions while forgetting many others. One also ignores their potential for changing to the better later on. Though the gap seems great between us, I must not develop an entrenched prejudice in my mind. The danger is that I might get into the habit of misjudging the other.

It is fair enough to recognise the difference between good and bad behavior, but however much I know, I always only see some of the observable part of another's many-sided life. Our negativity in judging others causes us to act in less helpful ways - even aggravate things when we could just as well have looked on the bright side and brought out the good in the other. This doesn't mean that I must always go on humoring or even associating further with another.

2. Re-programme negative thought pattern: It is unpleasant and bad for us to dwell on life's ills, the failings of others or the madness of the world. Newsmen who continuously attend to the evil horrors of this world have repeatedly to fight against cynicism... an unenviable occupational hazard. Similarly with everything that dejects, depresses, disappoints, discourages, disgusts, disheartens, dismays.. and on and on throughout whole dictionaries of ills. It is easy to moan about any number of relatively trivial things. Better to be on the lookout for the good and thus to 'make good', as they say. Baba has often pointed out the difference between the optimist and the pessimist.

3. Do not let injustice pass or untruth fester: Seeing good cannot mean closing one's eyes to the truth. Though we must see the good in all, we are bound sometimes to experience wrong and real injustice, or even worse. The situation and our consciences may call upon us to speak out and to act, maybe even forcibly. This need not mean that we act from negativity... such as when we think, speak and act with the genuine aim of correcting things, lessening ill consequences, selflessly helping a victim or intervening fairly so as to avert repetitions. Sometimes, to know a wrong, even a minor one, and not to speak up or act is untruth, whether towards oneself, others or both. This can weaken self-confidence and disturb peace of mind, causing negativity in the shape of festering frustration or bitterness. But great care and circumspection are doubtless needed to react appropriately to such challenging situations.

4. Wait experience and examine before judging: We may think a person's act to be bad when in fact it is good. The goodness always lies in the intention or motive and never simply in the actual result. What may seem to be done for bad reasons may, if we could see into the heart of the doer, have been done out of a high motive or may just have been a misguided effort. A well-meant action is morally good, even if it turns out 'badly' in fact due to the doer's ignorance of certain facts or lack of skill. We are very often misled into misjudging events by our own ideas, as deep

reflection always proves. Others' glaring weaknesses, if seen with inwardly asserted patience and courtesy, may in time be more understandable when we learn more about what lies behind them. The feeling of aggravation may then be supplanted by understanding. Yet sometimes we do reach unavoidable conclusions and are in no doubt about another's ill intentions. Without trying to deceive ourselves we may. If even minded, still see other goodness in that person.

The main thing seems to be that we should rather examine ourselves and our own motives whenever we think we can judge another person's deepest motives. By adopting some conscious distance from our thoughts we may gently overlook what we cannot condone or agree with in others.

5. Direct thoughts to higher things: Good and bad are our subjective associations to things arising from our desires and expectations, they are not objective qualities in things nor do they have ultimate validity. This applies both to pleasure and pain and even to illness and suffering. It follows that thinking about or meditating on whatever relates to the higher reality is affirmative of everyone and everything as it leads away from the distinction of good and bad upon which negativity depends.

—Robert Priddy, Oslo

Service as Sadhana

"A wave of service, if it sweeps over the land, catching everyone in its enthusiasm, will be able to wipe off the mounds of hatred, malice and greed that infest the world"

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba

1995 has been dedicated as the Year of Service for the Sathya Sai Organisation. Various service activities are being planned by the Sai Organisation to encourage everyone to become actively involved in selfless service. It is therefore of advantage to recall some of the teachings of Swami on selfless service including the benefits gained from it, and then use a quick method to assess whether a person has the capability and readiness to be involved in selfless service. Some suggestions on how to prepare for and carry out the selfless service, follows.

It is to be noted that volunteers have the right to withdraw their services from the charity at any time, and the charity has the right to refuse an undesirable volunteer.

How to prepare

1. Carryout a soul-search as to why you are not involved in, or why you are not doing more in the service area.
2. Allow an inner urge to build up within you for involvement in service. This urge will motivate you and create enthusiasm for service work.

3. Find out all you can about the service activities and focus on the one you will be comfortable with.
4. Discuss with the charity or Sai Organisation the type of work involved, the starting and finishing times, the specific or general duties allocated to you, transport arrangements to and from the work, etc. If you are not happy with any aspects raise them at this time.
5. Decide on how much time you can devote to service. This is one of the most difficult decisions to make, especially for those having full-time jobs. A large number of people shy away from selfless service with the excuse that they cannot find the time to do it. For those who are motivated and enthusiastic the time to devote to selfless service would probably have been found by either reducing leisure time, sporting activities, watching TV or video and gardening, or by reviewing and rescheduling other priorities.
6. When a verbal agreement with the charity or Sai Organisation is made, ensure that you stand by the agreement. If you are unable to comply with any aspects, then do give advance notice so that alternative arrangements could be made.
7. In carrying out the selfless service activities, always be punctual, responsible, reliable, fully committed to the work, and a team player. In addition, be versatile and carry out whatever tasks need to be done instead of sticking to the allocated task.
8. Follow the instructions from designated members of the charity or Sai Organisation. Any comments made by them about a volunteer's poor effort or negative actions should be construed as sound advice for improvement, and not as a personal attack on the volunteer.
9. When in doubt, always speak up. This avoids any misunderstanding which may arise from time to time.
10. There may come a time when a volunteer ceases to enjoy being a volunteer. This may arise through the death of someone with whom the volunteer has had close dealings, or for some other reasons. In such cases, it may be desirable for the volunteer to take time off from selfless service work to 'recharge his/her batteries', and later return to resume the work.

—Subramaniam, Sydney

High ideals are inspired by Dharma. The forefathers imbibed them along with the breast-milk of their mothers. Therefore, their practice of Dharma was pure, praise worthy and productive of the highest good. It was believed in those ancient days that the festive feeding of the hungry, provision of houses for those without shelter, the construction of temples, the digging of tanks and wells, were all conducive to the happiness of man. Good men who propagated such ideals were discovered and gathered, fostered and fended; entire villages were ear-marked for them and cultivable land allotted for their upkeep. The cool comforting moonlight of the fame of these

leaders and guides has lasted even unto this day, providing unshakable examples of love, compassion and wisdom in the service of humanity.

~ Baba

*The one whose heart is compassionate
Who is adorned by the Jewel of truth in speech,
Whose body is dedicated to the well-being of others
What can Kali do to him?*

(Sanskrit sloka)

Embodiments of divine love!

For everyman, the body, the tongue and the heart are the elements which constitute humanness. This is the purport of the Sanskrit sloka.

A sacred and pure heart, speech wedded to truth, and a body dedicated to the service of others, with these three attributes a man can have no trouble from Kali (presiding deity of the present aeon). Purity of the heart, truthfulness in speech and a service devoted body constitute what is called "Thrikaranasuddhi" (the triple purity of body, speech and heart).

*Sai seeks from you good qualities,
friendliness towards mankind,
The spirit of sacrifice,
Eschewing of selfishness and
Rendering service to society,
This is the offering Sai desires from you.
And this is verily the wealth you should offer to Sai.*

(Telugu Poem)

This is the wealth Sai expects. Good qualities, friendship towards all, selfless service to society are what Sai seeks from you.

Students! Teachers! Educationists!

In this world of moving and non-moving objects, man is carrying on his life with two desires. One is "Preyas" (material prosperity). Although there are all kinds of objects in the world, man seeks first of all things which will please his senses. Deriving pleasure from time to time through sense-organs is described as "Preyas". This "Preyas" is not enduring. It is like a mirage. Sensuous pleasures are momentary and leave a trail of pain behind. However, most people seek only such fleeting and unreal pleasures. From the learned to the illiterate, all seek only these sensuous pleasures. Indulgence in sensual pleasures leads to bad practices and bad conduct.

"Constantly entertaining bad thoughts, playing a game of blind man's buff, strutting about with a perishable body, as soon as one's accumulations from past lives are exhausted, giving up this make believe existence, the poor player meets with his death, carrying with him the consequences of his good and bad deeds" (Telugu Poem). Is this the life one should lead. Can this be the purpose of life?

This verily is not the life a true man should lead. One should manifest his full personality. How is this personality to be developed? The first requisite is elimination of the ego. Only when the ego is destroyed, does a man's personality blossom forth.

Man today seeks primarily sensual desires. Secondly, he desires "Shreyas". "Shreyas" means overcoming the demands of the senses and achieving that spiritual bliss which is represented by the term Sat-Chit-Ananda (Being-Awareness-Bliss). All actions aimed at Atmic (Spiritual) bliss are related to "Shreyas".

The one who seeks "Preyas" (Sensual Pleasures) is concerned with the body, while the one concerned with the Atma seeks "Shreyas".

Today ninety-nine percent of the population are involved in sensual desires and not in spiritual bliss. Education today is mainly concerned with sensory pursuits. All occupations are related to the achievement of sensual desires. All enjoyments are related to the senses. Even the acquisition of wealth is for enjoying trivial sensual pleasures. The involvement with 'Preyas' thus is connected with pleasures of the body, the mind and the senses. There is doubtless need for some concern about physical comforts. "Even the body is essential for the realisation of Dharma" (says the scripture). The demands of the body have to be satisfied. Society has to be served. Family responsibilities have to be discharged. The body is the basis for all these. But this should not be the ultimate goal of life. The former relates to the external phenomenal world and is concerned with worldly desires. Together with this, there should be the yearning for a higher spiritual life. ("Shreyas")

The pursuit of "Preyas" (worldly desires) is negative. The quest for "Shreyas" is positive. Without association with the positive, "Preyas" is of no use, however much there may be worldly goods. It is only when one yearns for "Shreyas" (spiritual bliss) that even "Preyas" leads to fulfillment.

Worldly knowledge is not to be ignored or neglected. It is undoubtedly necessary. Secular knowledge is for the enjoyment of this world. Brahma Vidya is for the enjoyment of other worldly bliss. While acquiring secular knowledge, be keen about realising spiritual truth.

The senses and the spirit

Good qualities are the key to experiencing spiritual bliss. Love towards all one's fellow-beings and service to society are essential. These three contribute to the sublimation of human existence.

There is a conflict between sensual desires and spiritual yearning in human beings. The senses are so powerful that they are able to delude by their attractions even profound scholars. In spiritual parlance this power is described as an inimical force ("Viruddhashakti"). In science this is called magnetic force.

thoughts in a man's mind have this magnetic power. From magnetic energy is derived electrical energy. Electrical energy is the source for the power of light and for atomic power. Atomic energy is present in thoughts and in speech. Thus, magnetic energy is the basis for all forms of energy. It is the energy that accounts for speech, for singing and all other activities.

The power of this energy was recognised from ancient times. India is the nation that recognised the divine source of this energy, experienced its power and propagated the truth about it to the whole world. You must feel elated that you have taken birth in such a glorious land. You must feel proud that you are a son of Bharat.

The glory of Bharat

For this land of Bharat, the great Himalayas are the frontiers. The Himalayas convey the message of peace and security for every man. The Himalayas proclaim the message of purity and irremovable firmness.

The land of Bharat is watered by the Life-giving Rivers Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati. These are the arteries of the nation.

And then, you have the Bhagavad Gita, the Upanishads and Brahma Sutras. These three sacred texts teach the philosophy of work, worship and wisdom. The Ramayana and the Mahabharata teach how to sublimate human life. In the Ramayana, Rama is an ideal hero. The Ramayana teaches that every individual should lead an ideal life.

It is said about the Mahabharata that what is not in it cannot be found elsewhere. "Bharat" is made up of the two words 'Bha' and 'Rati'. 'Bha' means effulgence, illumination, enlightenment. 'Rati' means taking pleasure' Bharatians are a people who delight in illumination and enlightenment. The concept of Bharat is thus full of significance.

Bharatians, who are the inheritors of a great heritage, are today leading meaningless lives, lacking peace of mind, as they have become slaves of the senses.

Every student should understand what is his duty even now, because life is fleeting and one's days are numbered.

Students: Do not get involved in metaphysical riddles as to whether the world is real or only Brahman is real. Try to realise the truth about yourself. Ask yourself the question? "Am I real or not?" The answer comes: "I am real." How long are you real? As long as life lasts. What is Reality or Truth? The answer is: That which remains unchanged through the three categories of time, past, present and future is truth. The world is constantly changing, if that is the case, how can you say that the world is not unreal? You are part of the world. The world contains you.

There are two words. 'I', and 'Mine'. 'I' is associated with the concept of oneness ("Ekatvam"). 'Mine' is a social concept. 'I' represents the individual. Who is this individual? It is not connected with the body. 'Mine' is a collective concept. You describe many things as 'mine'. But "I" stands alone. Being associated with the One, it stands for the Atma. "Ekaatma"—the Atma is one. 'Mine' is associated with the things of the world.

Where does the `I' ("Nenu" in Telugu and "Aham" in Sanskrit) exist? Wherefrom did the "Aham" originate? Vedic scholars and spiritually realised persons declared that the source of "Aham" is "Hridaya". What is the meaning of "Hridaya"? In the worldly sense it refers to the physical heart in the body. But this is not what the term "Hridaya" signifies. "Hridaya" and 'I' are one and the same. The Shrutis gave the name "Hridaya" to `I'. Where is this 'Hridaya'? It is assumed that it is in the body. Where is the `I' presumed to exist in the body? 'I' is not part of the body. You say, "This is my body". 'My' is separate from the body. 'My' therefore, is not a part of the body. It follows that `I' is not part of the body. If you understand the nature of 'I', you will understand the whole world. 'I' is in all beings. Everyone uses the 'I' to identify himself or herself. The `I' is the omnipresent indwelling entity. When the 'Hridaya' is identified with the 'I' it is equally all-pervading.

"Hridaya" and the mind

Man today has a narrow conception of the 'I' and 'Hridaya' because he misconceives the relationship between the container ('Upadhi') and what is contained (the indwelling Atma). How is this misconception to be removed? At the outset, there should be an enquiry into the nature of 'Hridaya'. All you students are here (in this hall). If 'Hridaya' referred to the physical heart, your 'Hridaya' should be here. But when you think about your parents, in one moment your thoughts turn to Hyderabad. Another moment, you think about Madras. What is it that `goes' to Hyderabad or Madras? What is it that experiences these feelings? You may think it is the mind. The mind is inert (Jada). When you understand the mind properly, you will realise it is not the mind that is involved, it is the `Hridaya' that is at work, and the mind merely follows it like a shadow. There can be a shadow only when there is a real object. The mind is only the shadow of 'I'. Wherever the 'I' goes, the mind follows. When the `I' is still, the mind will not move. Understanding this truth is real education for students. This is what is involved in the quest for truth ("Sathanveshana").

The quest for truth should embrace all things. For instance, when you see a flower, you should try to know about its name, how it came into existence, etc.

The heart and the senses

You hear some good news which delights you. You also hear some sad news, as well as some harsh abusive words. You hear words of praise and blame. All the words were heard by the ears. But when happy news was heard the heart felt elated. When sad news was heard the heart shrunk in sorrow. The heart got enraged when the ears heard harsh words about you. You were filled with joy when you heard words of praise. What is responsible for these varied responses, though all the words were heard by the same ears? The ears are inconscient by themselves and incapable

conveyed by the ears. Thus, the senses are by themselves inconscient (Jada). How can the operations of these senses be deemed as "Sathya" (Truth or Reality)? How can the experiences resulting from these "negative" senses be considered as Truth? When the senses are unreliable, the reactions produced by them are equally unreliable.

It is by enquiring along these lines that man can overcome sorrow.

Waking and dream states

The basic cause for the occurrence of feelings like hatred, jealousy and anger is the body constituted by the five elements. As long as the body remains, it will be subject to these types of feelings. For instance, all experiences derived through the senses and the mind occur during the waking state. How long do they last? When you go to sleep none of these experiences is present. Even the mind is absent, as it were. There is no consciousness even of breathing. In the dream state you are not aware of the life process. But there is a kind of perception in that state. Is that perception by the physical eyes? You are lying in bed with closed eyes. Which are the eyes that perceive in that state? What is the body that moves about in that state? What is it that receives impressions from outside or experiences grief? It is clear that the experiences in that state are different from the experiences in the waking state. The experiences in the dream state are real as long as the dream lasts. The experiences in the waking state are real in that state. There are no dreams in the waking state and there are no perceptions of the waking state in the dream state. But you are present in both the states.

"I" and the atma

In both the states the "I" is one. The experiences in both the waking and dream states are of the same "I"; only the states are different. Hence, the Reality or Truth is that which remains in all the states. The "I" was present in the dream state. It is now present in the waking state. This continuity in the past and the present characterises the Atma. It is wrong to identify the "I" with the body.

Over the ages, by identifying the "I" with the body, its true nature has been grossly underrated because of ignorance, perversion and false attachments. The truth is this "I" is subtle and incomparable. It is beyond change. This is the characteristic of divinity. Men have to recognise their inherent divinity.

In the conflict between the materialistic path (Preyomarga) and the spiritual path (Shreyomarga), people are deluded into following the former. They are ready to sacrifice their lives for sensory pleasures. Should they not dedicate their lives for higher truth?

Be exemplars of "shreyo-marga"

The power of "Shreyas" (spirituality) can confer boundless bliss. Hence you should pursue "Shreyas" rather than "Preyas". Those who are after sensuous pleasures do not readily listen to the words of those who advise them to give up their evil ways. On the contrary, they try to drag others down to their level.

The one who pursues the spiritual path not only benefits himself but promotes the well-being of others. He is like the incense stick which consumes itself in the process of spreading its fragrance while burning.

Hence, our students should be exemplars of the "Shreyo Marga" (the path of spirituality). Learning for "Shreyas" or spiritual upliftment, is true education. Students should avoid imitating the silly practices of persons who sport a long hair or go about in "bell bottoms" and "drainage pipes". Students should use their discriminating power in deciding how they should act. They should try to spiritualise their will power.

They should realise the infinite powers latent in man. It is these powers which have enabled men to invent the most wonderful kinds of machinery. Men are, therefore, more valuable than the most precious things in the world. It is man who imparts value to things by the changes he makes in them, as in the case of diamonds or a work of art.

In the spiritual field, man is enjoined at the very outset to know himself. He should not be a slave of the senses. Nor should he follow others like sheep. "Be a ship and not sheep". A ship serves to carry others and cross the Ocean.

Scientists and the cosmos

Consider the miraculous manner in which various organs in the body, the heart, the lungs, the stomach, the eyes and the tongue, function. Can this marvellous human machine be made by any human being? Students should realise how the divine functions in the body, making the organs carry out their different functions. What the scientists have discovered is an infinitesimally small part of what exists in God's creation.

Students should realise that time lost is lost forever. Hence time should not be wasted. Moreover, you should realise the power which time wields over men. For instance, it was the impending bad time in store for him and his family which led a lover of righteousness like Yudhishtira to engage in a game of dice in which he lost everything. Sita similarly was a victim of the misconceived desire for the elusive golden deer. When disaster is impending, the intellect gets clouded.

The lesson from such episodes is clear. Avoid wrong actions and deluding desires. Don't harbour evil thoughts.

Consider the body as a vessel, wisdom as a rope and use the vessel to draw the nectar of divinity from the well of spirituality. Not otherwise can immortality be attained.

Good use of holidays

Students: After the end of the academic year, you will return to your homes and spend your vacation well with your parents and brothers and sisters. This is good. But you must be always on your guard during these two months. Some of your old friends may try to influence you. Don't

Devas churned the Ocean of Milk, first came poison. They did not give up the churning till they got the nectar (Amrita). Regard your heart as the Ocean of Milk and the intellect as the Mandara Mountain. Using your yearnings as the churning ropes, carry on the churning by reciting the Lord's name. Do not mind if the first thing to come out is poison. Go on churning till you get the nectar of divine bliss. When you study the Gita, you will note that it begins with "Vishada Yoga", the Yoga of distress. But ultimately, Arjuna experiences the Vishwaroopa, the Cosmic Form of the Lord. Utilise your holidays in the best manner possible. Lead exemplary lives so that you may justify your studies in this Institute. Unfortunately many students misuse their great opportunities. Experiencing the Divine is more valuable than all the wealth of the world, as Saint Thyagaraja pointed out. Try to render whatever social service you can selflessly and with dedication. You are bound to get God's grace. Yearn for God's grace and not the worldly "grass".

Dr. Hanumanthappa honoured

Now about our Institute. Since its inception we have had four Vice-Chancellors. All of them have served the Institute without any desires in a spirit of dedication. The first Vice-Chancellor was (Prof) Gokak. After his first term, when he was due to retire, the University Grants Commission allowed him to continue for another term to build up the infant University. This extension was given as a special case. After two more years he was given another special extension on the same grounds. As long as he remained he served the Institute honorarily without any remuneration. Then came (Prof) Saraf. He was a member of the U.G.C. Board. He had held important positions in the Government. He also served the Institute with dedication, deeming Swami's grace as the highest reward. The third Vice-Chancellor was (Prof) Sampath. He had been Director of the Indian Institute of Technology at Kanpur and was Deputy Director of the Madras Institute of Technology. He is an authority on Computers. In my view he is a computer himself. He also served the Institute honorarily. If Vice-Chancellors were to be paid on U.G.C. scales, they would have to be paid Rs. 15,000 or so per month. None of the Vice-Chancellors received any salary and they served the Institute in a spirit of selfless service. Because of Government regulations they had to retire at the end of their term. Then came

Dr. Hanumanthappa. He used to look after the Commerce Department when the Sathya Sai College was started in Brindavan. At that time he was an M.Com. degree holder. Later he did his Ph.D. and was appointed Vice-Chancellor of the Bangalore University. He served there for many years and was eager to serve Swami's University. He completed two years as Vice-Chancellor on March 4th. He also served the Institute in an honorary capacity expecting no remuneration.

Uniqueness of Sai Institute

In this way, our University from its inception has benefited from the dedicated services of Vice-Chancellors who had no self-interest. Although they served honorarily, our Trust felt that it has an obligation towards them. The Trust has established a tradition of honouring the Vice-Chancellors in an appropriate manner. This University has been fostered and developed by a succession of Vice-Chancellors in different ways. Our University does not collect fees of any kind from the students. You are aware about the agitation of the students in Delhi and Madras

scenario in the educational field is like this: the teachers agitate for higher emoluments. The students demand a reduction in college fees. How is it possible to meet both the demands? There has to be a balancing of the teachers' claims and the demands of the students.

In our University we have got over this problem by taking no fees from the students. Elsewhere heavy donations are demanded even for admission to the K. G. Class. Here everyone is admitted free, without regard to creed or nationality. No fees of any kind are collected from the students. The Trust is managing the Institutions with due regard to these factors.

Unlike students in other Institutions, our students are extremely well behaved and there is no danger of any kind of indiscipline. Students who are so well looked after here should conduct themselves well when they go out into the world so that they bring a good name to the Institute. They will be guilty of treachery to the Divine if they appear to behave well when they are here and misbehave when they are outside. Apart from betrayal of God and their teachers, they will be guilty of betraying their own selves if they do so. Do not be guilty of this self-destructive crime. Instead, you must proceed from self-confidence to Self-realisation. Swami's only desire is that students should be taught on proper lines so that they may lead ideal lives. Our Vice-Chancellor has completed two years of service. He has contributed to various developments in the Institute. We (in the Trust) have a duty to honour him. (Swami then fastened Gold Wristlets a round the wrists of Dr. Hanumanthappa, as the audience cheered). Students! It is a reward for all the good you had done in many previous lives that you have been able to get an opportunity like this. I adjure you not to waste this opportunity (as unfortunately many have done before). You may act as you like, lead the kind of life you want, but you should not go against what you have learnt. Those who live up to the ideals of the Institute are near and dear to us wherever they may be. Those who betray the ideals of the Institute are as good as dead. Do not lead unworthy lives like street dogs. Be grateful to your Alma Mater. I do not seek anything from you. But you have to cherish the sense of gratitude for what you have received here. I bless you all.

Bhagavan concluded his discourse with the bhajan, "*Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahi.*"

—From Bhagavan's discourse in the Institute Auditorium
at Prasanthi Nilayam on March 5, 1995

AVATAR VANI:

SIVARATRI SANDESH:

God: the Trinity and the Cosmos

Embodiments of love!

The tongue is the cause of prosperity or poverty. The tongue, again, is responsible for promoting friendship and kinship, for attachment and bondage, and for death and liberation.

determines one's fame or ignominy. The tongue determines your friendships and relationships.

The entire creation is based on three processes: Srishti (creation), Sthithi (sustenance.) and Layam (dissolution). The cosmos is kept going by these three processes (Karmas). Should there not be a director for these processes? You cannot have in this world an action (Karma) without a doer (Karta). The doer and the deed go together.

Who is the doer? What is this action? What is the fruit of the action? It is only when these three are properly understood can the secret of creation be recognised.

Three divine agencies

It is easy to criticise the Lord's "leelas", but it is difficult to understand their inner meaning. Our life should be devoted to understanding the ways of the Lord.

In this understanding, the first aspect to be recognised is "Srishti" (creation of the cosmos). What is involved in this process should be understood. For instance, if a giant bridge has to be constructed, a large number of engineers and other personnel are required. Besides a chief manager, there will have to be engineers and men working under him. It is only their combined effort that can build a bridge. In the same manner, for the creation, protection and merger of the cosmos, three principal agencies are required. The principal authority responsible for creation is known as Brahma. He is in charge of all that is related to creation. Next comes protection. What has been created has to be fostered and protected. The authority responsible for this function is called Vishnu. After growth inevitably there comes the stage of dissolution. There is an authority, responsible for laying down the rules for dissolution and enforcing those regulations. This authority is called Easwara. Thus there are three authorities who share functionally the responsibility for creation, protection and dissolution. There must be someone who presides over these three functionaries, like the Prime Minister in a Cabinet. Brahma, Vishnu and Easwara are presiding deities for three different functions. There is a supreme authority presiding over these three. This supreme authority was called by Bharatiyas as "Bhagavan". Members of different faiths have given different names to this authority. The term that is most widely used in this context today is "God". Bhagavan refers to the One who governs all the three functions of creation, protection and dissolution.

God and the cosmos

In the word "GOD", you have three letters: G, O, D. "G" refers to "Generation" (or creation). "O" refers to "Organisation" (that is, keeping creation going). "D" stands for destruction. "GOD" combines the three aspects of generation, organisation and destruction. When people refer to God, they regard Brahma, Vishnu and Siva as each a God. God is the one who wields authority over all the three. This Divine entity pervades the entire universe in the form of atoms. "Subtle as the atom, vast as the vastest in creation, the Atma pervades everything as atom." (Telugu poem)

Hence, the Divine is called Atma. This Atma pervades everything and is present everywhere. This all-pervading Atma is the Eternal Witness. This role may be illustrated by a simple

some who are talking and some others who are moving about. The light has no connection with all these different activities. The light is only a witness. Likewise, the Sun is shining. Using the sunlight different people are carrying on different activities. The sun is totally unaffected by either the good or bad actions that are being done by different persons. Each is accountable for his actions. But the sun shines as a witness to all that is happening. Without the sun, none of these actions is possible. The sun is thus the agency that enables the actions to be done but he is not the dispenser of the fruits of those actions. He is only a witness. The doers have to reap the consequences of their actions. Brahma, Vishnu and Easwara are responsible for enabling the actions to be done, for furthering their fruition and for determining how the fruits should be enjoyed. These three deities have to be propitiated for favours in these respects. That is what has been done on Sivaratri night.

Propitiating the deities

How are they to be propitiated? The methods are indicated in the nine forms of devotion: Shravanam (singing), Vishnusmaranam (Remembering the Name), Vandanam (prostration), Archanam (worship of images), Padasevanam (worship of the feet), Dasyam (service), Sneham (friendship), Atmanivedanam (total surrender).

Today we have to acquire the favours of these deities. With their friendship we can face any troubles just as, if we have friendship of a person in power, we can overcome troubles in life. These deities will help to alleviate the consequences of our actions if they are properly propitiated. For this purpose, the chanting of the Divine name is essential. Equally meditation and penance are necessary. All forms of worship are designed to please the deities.

These deities lay down regulations for observance by the world in respect of their specific functions. These regulations are like the traffic rules and guideposts and the road signs that indicate to people using the roads how they should behave.

For instance, there is Brahma. As Creator he lays down the laws relating to actions and how the consequences of these actions affect people in their lives from birth to death. In addition, he also effects changes in the administration of these rules. On the basis of this function, the Brahma principle is operative everywhere. The very term 'Brahma' means "pervading". The pervasiveness of the Brahma Principle is cosmic.

"Vishnu" also means that which is all pervading. The Vishnu Principle permeates everything. Wherever the creation principle of Brahma is present, there the sustaining principle of Vishnu is also present.

Where there is protection there is also punishment. This means where Vishnu is present, Easwara is also present.

Where is the Supreme Divinity? It is omnipresent. But not recognising this truth, people pray to God in various ways. These prayers are not to God. They are prayers addressed to the guardian deities of the Lord. These guardian deities examine the merits of each case and make their recommendations to God.

Hence, God is a permanent Witness. He has no attributes, he has no specific form. He can assume any form. The attributeless Divine has attributes also. A pot is made from clay. The clay is formless, but the pot with form is made from it. There is no pot in the clay, but there is clay in the pot. Likewise, the Divine is everywhere. The Divine is in forms and is formless. He is with and without attributes.

Dharma and adharm

How do men relate to God? There is "Chitta" in man (the heart). There is a recording deity known as "Chittagupta". The good and bad actions done by one are duly registered in the heart and taken into reckoning by "Chittagupta". The results of these actions are given a concrete form and the fruits are made available to each according to his deserts. The Divine cannot offer what is not there. He will not take away what is one's due. He lets the respective deities carry out their functions according to the rules. Hence he is called the Embodiment of Dharma. The Lord will not interfere in the functions of the different deities. He lets Brahma, Vishnu and Easwara carry out their respective functions according to the cosmic laws. As He remains a Witness, He is described as the Embodiment of Dharma and Truth.

Today everyone interferes with every other's function. This causes the breakdown of the natural order. This is described as the reign of unrighteousness and untruth. This is the difference between the reign of Dharma by the Divine and reign of Adharma by the mundane rulers.

The Divine is verily the form of Dharma (Righteousness). Hence Rama is described as "Vigrahavaan Dharmah" (The embodiment of Righteousness"). Even if you are unable to worship the form of the Divine as Righteousness and Truth, adhere to Righteousness and follow Truth. "Sathyam Vada, Dharmam Chara" ("Speak the truth, observe Dharma")—these are the Vedic injunctions.

Surrender to God

The cosmos is governed by the three principal deities. I am letting you into a secret. So far as Creation is concerned, propitiate Brahma and establish links with the deity. As regards protection, establish links with Vishnu (by propitiating Him), With regard to destruction, establish association with Easwara (Siva). However if your heart is totally pure, you can establish direct connection with God. You need not approach the lesser deities. For this, there is a way. That is the way of total surrender. Through surrender you can establish a direct link with God, heart to heart.

All the bhajans and chantings that are done now are related to the lesser deities. The Divine mystery is incredibly marvellous. It is not easy for ordinary mortals to comprehend these

this trouble? Why is He acting in this manner?"

The answer may be got from a Puranic story.

The Bhasmasura story

Once Easwara gave a boon to Bhasmasura as desired by him, namely, that whatever he touched should be reduced to ashes. Immediately on getting the boon he lost his sense of gratitude to Easwara. He wanted to place his hand on Easwara himself! Easwara could not protect himself. He went to Vishnu, who has the duty of being a protector. Even as protector Vishnu had to observe the laws of Dharma. He could not punish Bhasmasura straightaway. He staged a drama. He assumed the form of a most beautiful damsel, Mohini. On seeing her, Bhasmasura's passion was aroused. He ran after Mohini. Mohini told him, "You perform all that I do, I shall marry you." Bhasmasura readily agreed. He had no sense of discrimination or of gratitude. Mohini started dancing and Bhasmasura kept pace with her. In the course of the dance, Mohini placed her hand on her head. When Bhasmasura did the same, he was reduced to ashes. His hand was his undoing. This episode shows that even in discharging the duty of protection, the divine has to observe the code of Dharma.

It should be recognised that the ways of God are governed by cosmic laws ("Shasanam"). Even the Divine cannot act against these laws.

God and the cosmic code

Men today violate the code of moral behaviour. But the Divine cannot act against His own moral code. So, on different occasions, God waits for the appropriate time to enforce the code. On that account, you cannot say God is powerless or incompetent. God is omnipotent, but that does not mean He can act arbitrarily. He acts according to the cosmic code.

God is not like a lecturer who teaches a lesson and leaves the classroom. God is like a physical director who teaches by his own example. That is why I say: "My life is my message". (Cheers) God teaches by demonstration.

Today some people carry on propaganda to cast aspersions on the actions of the Divine by misrepresentation and misinterpretation. They declare: "God punishes you, God persecutes you." This is totally misconceived. It is not God's business to punish you or harass you. The punishment and the persecution are consequences of your actions. God is the giver of the fruits of your actions. He is like a postman who delivers letters in different homes. In one house the letter brings grief. In another the letter causes joy. Is the postman responsible for joy in one home or the grief in another? It is the message contained in the letters that is responsible for the different reactions.

In the same manner, the Lord is an impartial witness. He merely hands over the fruits of each one's actions according to their deserts. In case the consequence is unpleasant God may interfere to get the pain reduced by proper propitiation. That authority He has.

The three presiding deities over creation, protection and dissolution are the Trinity—Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. But there is a fourth entity—the Overlord ("Sironayakam"), who is above these three. He is God. He can overrule the Trinity. How? By mitigating the magnitude of the consequences of Karma. He can counteract any kind of situation. That is the Divine prerogative of God. He can create anything protect anything. He creates and brings about its dissolution.

Therefore, God should be regarded as having control over Generation, Organisation and Destruction. To realise God, you have to surrender yourself completely. When the surrender is total, a direct link with God is established. Without such surrender propitiating the lesser deities is a waste of time.

Causes of doubts

When one surrenders, according to the circumstances, the devotee becomes subject to some doubts and mental agitation. For instance, in the Ramayana, when Rama and Lakshmana were going in search of Sita, suddenly Lakshmana felt tired and told Rama that he was fed up with the: search for Sita and would like to go back to Ayodhya to have a more comfortable time. Rama smiled and said: "Let us proceed. I shall explain everything later." How did Lakshmana, who previously had declared that Rama was everything to him and that he would not live without Rama even for a moment, suddenly develop this attitude? How did this concern for bodily comfort arise?

After they had walked some distance, they sat under a tree. That moment Lakshmana felt the pangs of repentance. He realised his mistake, clasped Rama's feet and said: "Brother! Forgive me for what I had said. I cannot understand how this bad thought came to my mind. What is the reason?" "Rama then replied: "Lakshmana! The region through which we passed recently was the haunt of Surpanakha. Surpanakha used to rest under the tree there,. That place was surcharged with all her evil qualities. Those vibrations aroused in you the bad thoughts. The moment you came out of the place, your inherent good nature asserted itself."

The lesson of this incident is that people will have to be careful about their association with certain places or persons. Eschew bad company. Be away from places where evil qualities are rampant. The vibrations from a place affect persons who frequent them.

Here you have Divine vibration. Elsewhere you have demonic vibrations. Recognise the difference between these two kinds of vibrations. Realise that association with good people ultimately leads to God-realisation. You must understand that God's grace is related to your good actions. When your conduct is good, God's grace comes direct to you.

"Where is God?"

People ask, "Where is God"? But, even without knowing it, a so-called unbeliever believes in God.

matters. God had no meaning for him. His agnosticism was a product of the environment in which he grew up. The local leaders took him to Meenakshi temple, whether he was inclined to visit the temple or not. During the visit, the leaders who were with Nehru praised the ornaments worn by the Goddess and told him that the diamonds and gems in the jewels on the idol were worth crores of rupees. After listening to them, Nehru remarked "Why is it that these valuable gemstones are placed on a valueless idol?" After that he was returning from the sanctum. He did not notice the door and he hit against it and stumbled. At that moment, he cried out: "Oh! My God!" This shows each one has his own God and refers to Him as "my God".

Thus, even without being conscious of it, all have some faith in God. The reason is that God is in everyone. That divinity manifests itself without one's knowledge. Faith in God is natural to man. Doubts about God are artificial exercises of the mind.

Spirituality calls for the removal of the animal qualities in man and developing his divine qualities. This is the duty of all spiritual aspirants. Qualities like slander, back-biting and speaking ill of others are subhuman qualities. You must learn to respect the divine in everyone, while carrying on your duties.

The path of direct realisation of the Divine consists in total surrender to the Divine, as exemplified by Lakshmana in his surrender to Rama. He told Rama that after his surrender he had nothing that he could call his own and he existed only to carry out Rama's will in every matter.

Thyagaraja, who once for a brief while entertained doubts about Rama's capacity to relieve him of his troubles, later extolled the limitless power of Rama, which enabled Hanuman to leap across the ocean and which accounted for Lakshmana's total surrender to Rama. (Swami sang the kirtanam of Thyagaraja in praise of Rama's prowess, which evoked the adoration of Lakshmana, Bharata and others).

Likewise, how can anyone determine "Sai-shakti"? Here are people from Argentina and Australia. Are they dull-witted? Are they not intelligent and affluent people? What is the meaning of their coming to Swami? If Swami did not have the power why would they come? This one fact is enough to show how they recognise the truth about Swami (Cheers.)

To recognise divinity there is no need to master the scriptures, or study the Upanishads. A single visible experience is enough.

The nature of divinity cannot be described or defined. It is beyond description. What is needed is development of faith in the Divine, through weal and woe. In the pursuit of the Divine, perseverance is essential. The quest should not be given up in any circumstance. Either God should bless you or you should forget yourself in thinking of Him. People today lack such determination and perseverance. Part time devotion can only receive part-time grace.

young as students. Remain unflinching in your faith.

You did bhajans all through the night. But that is not enough. Contemplation of God should be kept up always at all places. Whatever work you do, dedicate it to God. Divinise every word and action.

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

**From Bhagavan's discourse in the Poornachandra Auditorium on the morning of
February 28, 1995**

Homage to a Sai Centre

A Sai Centre is not merely a meeting place for Sai devotees to come together occasionally, do bhajans, perhaps meditate for a while, and then disperse. It can be a source of inspiration and spiritual illumination and a joint experience to commune with the Divine.

The following poem by Allan E. Rolleston, Sydney, published in a recent issue of "Sai News Australia," paying tribute to a Sai Centre in Sydney, shows how to make the centre a "window which will give the larger view, melting our limits to the illimitable and turning the finite to infinity."

A desire greater than our own
Compelled the birth of this little centre
And like everything that is born or created
We feel it has been brought down from above
into the vision of our eyes.

Giving us a beam of light to focus on Earth's
Uncertain paths, compelling us to reach out
And touch the painful and sad experience of others.

We readily acknowledge our own mortal ignorance,
But what knowledge we gain, we share gladly
In the daily flow of our lives, leaving the footprints
of eternity impressed in the hilarious and hectic
Procession of modern life, for others to see and understand.

This little plot of land is touched by the living infinite
Giving beauty and delight, our eyes seeing immortality
In the midst of our own mortal poverty.

Arrived on the frontier of eternity.
All in us turns to vastness of the Spirit
And all our thoughts stretch into infinitude.

We drink from the breast of the mother of the worlds.
The endless spiral of ascent begins and we
work to reach that glory for which we are made.
And to assist us we receive the ministrations of a
Group of beautiful men and women

As we grow into this larger self .
These sweet beings see a greater world,
And we are made to feel the beating life in all creation;
Persuading us to gently invade with our happiness and peace
To touch grief, love, anger, unspoken hopes,
And so calm the ocean of torment.

Tissue and nerve are transformed into sensitive chords
Making our bodies function with a finer mode,

Releasing things unknown by our earthly sense,
And unseen till now, by our outward minds,
We sense joys that have never flowed
Through our mortal limbs,
We see lovelier scenes than Earth, also happier lives
And a consciousness of beauty and bliss.

What we sensed we begin to actually see,
and what appeared separate is now one,
So we draw all creation into our embrace.
The grandeur and greatness of the soul increases
Our search for the mystic meaning of our birth.
And of all the things that crowd around our hearts,
We are looking for that window which will
Give the larger view, melting our limits to the
Illimitable and turning the finite to infinity
Each Sunday is a spiritual romance and we are
Helped to yield and awaken to a new closeness
And a unity between all things.
While there, one can be wider than the world
We cease to drift as on a raft
We awake to truths once inexpressible.

Human Values in Management

The initiative to introduce Human Values in Management started about one year ago, with Swami's blessing, to explore ways to introduce the five great values of Love, Peace, Right Action, Truth and Nonviolence into the British work place. The small group who explored this called a meeting of devotees who wished to carry on this exploration. The concept and the task were introduced at this meeting and a series of workshops ensued. Two working parties were set up to tackle the broad issues from two directions

The Top-To-Bottom groups were to concentrate on the issues as seen from a management perspective

The Bottom-To-Top groups were to concentrate on the issues from the individual worker's perspective.

This first report is on the work of the Top-To-Bottom group during its first year, the lessons learned and to suggest the way ahead.

We set out to explore what the introduction of Human Values into a company would mean from the management viewpoint and how these changes could be made attractive to them as a way of adding a new spectrum of quality in the running of their businesses.

Our aim was also to develop a manual of HVM which would be the basis of a programme of change which could be adapted as a practical handbook for managers. It was also assumed that a group of committed facilitators from the HVM initiative would be available to aid a company to make the change to a more value based operating system.

The TTB (Top-To-Bottom group) working party was made up of about 12 core members who had a range of management and systems experience. We met once a month and reported to the wider group every three months.

The meetings

During the initial meetings the agenda was quite wide ranging as individual members of the group set out their viewpoints on the issues involved, how and in what order they should be tackled. This also helped to give us an opportunity to get to know each other and to establish a constructive way of operating as a group. Our initial way of maximising our time together was to set a task which each would work on and then feed back to the group at our next meeting. An example of such a task was to agree on the main components of any business operation and then apply each of the five values to each of these. The hope was that through discussion we might

group were able to complete this 'homework' and a lot of fruitful discussions came during the feedback. Individual members of the working party also produced detailed papers on various aspects of the task in hand. These too led to fruitful discussion.

However, as we progressed, two major factors emerged concerned with how the group operated and these changed the nature of the monthly meetings. The first of these factors was that we found that the most fruitful work emerged when the discussions were allowed to follow a non-preset direction which seemed to flow intuitively. To put it another way we felt that the more we were willing to let go of imposing rigid control on the topics for discussion the more we were inspired to arrive at insights which were of greater value and depth than before.

The second factor which emerged was that the outputs from the meetings seemed less concerned with how we felt others should implement Human Values in Management and more with the real benefits which we, as individuals, were gaining; we were growing in understanding and were more able to implement what we had learned in our own work places. In other words, we found that the direction of the working party had moved from its original remit to set out how managers should introduce our suggested way of operating to a situation where we were being led to improving our own approach to how we worked and to introducing HVM in our own work places and practices.

We felt, as a group, that the more we were willing to give up control of our outcomes and to leave it to Swami to operate through us then the more productive our work became. We also felt that we should feed this conclusion back to the main group and to suggest that the best way forward was for other groups, such as ours, to be set up throughout the country in the confident expectation that they too would benefit from Swami's guidance. We did this at the last meeting of the main group which was held on 2nd October 1994. The process is now under way to set up these groups. The existing TTB group will, of course, continue and we are more than willing to facilitate the new groups if requested. However, as we have learnt from this past year, we will not be facilitating but just act as Swami's instruments.

Swami has always told us that if we wish to effect change then we must start with changing ourselves and the first year of this initiative has been a graphic example to us that this is manifestly true. "We are not living we are being lived".

Bottom to top group: (the individual worker's perspective) progress evaluation:

The scope of this monthly group was agreed from the first meeting, to include people who work at home (e.g. Freelance people and housewives).

Many of the first discussions focussed on how to manage relationships with colleagues at work, especially where the individual felt he/she was discriminated against because of being different in some way (race, culture, colour, beliefs).

threatened by it.

Gradually the group began to focus more and more on personal and family issues, especially problems of parents and children, and we realised that if we could manage to put the values into practice at home we can deal with most problems at work.

The emphasis throughout was on examples from our experience rather than theorising.

The impact of the project on the group members was experienced in terms of support from like minded people attempting to put the values into practice.

This conclusion was reached through group discussion.

—Aime Levy, U.K.

Sai at Kodai

Divinity descends,
in summer forest,
green
violet mists
unveil
A Love Serene

From Dawn's red
glow comes
a figure clothed
in Light
Sri Sathya Sai Baba
Our Soul's Delight

A trail of Angels
at his Lotus Feet
Chant songs of Love
where earth and
blue heaven meet

The Lord has come
in answer to our
fervent request,
to restore
Peace, Truth, Love

In him all our
worries and fears
are dissolved
As he moulds us
to see God's goodness
in All

His Soothing lakes,
crystal mountain
streams
reveal a fountain
of Love in our
hearts, unseen

Over the hills
of Kodai
Precious Swami
Jewel of Bliss
Sings:
Union with GOD
Is the only
True Happiness.

—Ki Burke, Manhattan Center, N.Y.

Living becomes a glorious experience only when it is sweetened by tolerance and love. Willingness to compromise with others' ways of living and co-operation in common tasks, make living happy and fruitful. Certain modes of behaviour have been laid down and proved beneficial by centuries practice. These have been observed with modifications to suit the conditions of today. We are developing in each department of life, but it is a pity that we are not developing the unique qualities of human beings. Develop the Atmic Awareness, the Consciousness of the Divine and the acquisition of Divine attributes. Expand love and understanding.

—Baba

VIDYAGIRI SAMACHAR:

Bhagavan's Advice to Students

A memorable discourse, which combined the exposition of profound spiritual truths in Swami's own lucid manner, with practical words of advice on how they should conduct themselves after

Institute of Higher Learning, to a special meeting of staff and students in the Institute Auditorium on March 5.

The meeting derived special significance from the fact that the occasion was utilised by Bhagavan as Chancellor to present gold wristlets to Dr. Hanumanthappa, Vice Chancellor, on the completion of 2 years in office, and to instill in the students, or, the eve of the end of the year, a sense of gratitude and devotion to the Institute for all that they had derived from it during their studies. Besides the staff and students there were a few select invitees.

Bhagavan Baba was received by the Vice Chancellor on arrival at the Auditorium at 7.30 a.m. and was led to the tastefully decorated stage, headed by a group of Vedic Chanters.

Welcoming the Chancellor and others, Dr. Hanumanthappa described Baba as "a grand designer 'Who' is a physicist, a chemist, a biologist, a doctor, an engineer, a sculptor and a master-craftsman". After referring to the progress made by the Institute, during the academic year in various fields, including research, Dr. Hanumanthappa pointed out that the Institute was gaining the esteem of universities in the world as a model for promoting a system of "integral education" based on Sai philosophy of education which combines academic studies with spiritual pursuits. Students going out of the Institute carry a great responsibility for conducting themselves in a worthy manner, upholding the Sai ideals of Sathya, Dharma, Santhi, Prema and Ahimsa. He said that as a part of this year's 70th birthday celebration of Bhagavan, the Institute, with the permission of Swami, proposed to publish a "Homage Volume" with 70 articles by eminent men of letters and devotees, to organise an International Conference on "Education for 21st century—the relevance of Sri Sathya Sai System of Education", to conduct one orientation programme on "Sai Philosophy of Education and Education in Human Values" for about 1500 teachers, selected on an all-India basis.

Bhagavan then delivered His discourse (published separately).

After the arati was offered to Bhagavan, prasadam was distributed to the gathering.

Bal Vikas Children set an Example

Mr. John Behner writes from San Salvador:

It is no longer unusual to hear Bal Vikas children giving advice to their parents. In one home where three children were in the Bal Vikas class, the youngsters advised their father to suspend the purchase of a television set because it might interfere with their studies. We are seeing that teaching human values works wonders with the children's attitudes and character. Throughout Region II, from Mexico to Argentina, the Bal Vikas programme has been running since about

Coordinator of Education for the region is a former Bal Vikas child. With her leadership, an ambitious programme for bringing Human Values Education into the public eye was carried out during 1994, the year of Education. Nine regional seminars were held in different countries, starting with Costa Rica, where the Ministry of Education has asked for follow up seminars in 1995. Then followed a public human values meeting in Barquisimeto, Venezuela. More than 200 professors watched as the Bal Vikas drama stole the hearts of everyone present. There followed a private presentation to the Ministry of Education in Caracas. Seven countries were chosen for three-day seminars, one day for presenting the programme and two days for workshops showing teachers how to use the five techniques and the three methods. Teachers were so enthusiastic that they would attend the workshops even on Saturdays and Sundays. Guatemala had six hundred teachers show up the first day. In

Panama the first lady of the Republic sent an emissary who was very interested that the Human Values programme be made available at all levels of the educational system. In the Dominican Republic there were representatives from Puerto Rico, Cuba and Miami present. Other seminars were held in Colombia, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay. In Brazil there are several human values books translated into the Portuguese language. In the other countries Spanish versions of the Human values programme were given free to the participants. As part of the Education year activity, devotees from several different countries participated in the translation of the Human Values Journal from the U.S.A., and this is being published as a biannual magazine, called Sai Education. The fifth EHV manual with songs on cassettes was also distributed for Bal Vikas teachers.

EHV in El Salvador:

The impact at the Ministry of Education level of the Human Values programme is becoming more noticeable, especially in El Salvador where the Minister of Education is Swami's devotee. She has introduced values education at all levels despite the opposition of a left wing teacher' union. In Argentina, the Education Ministry has asked for a pilot programme in which five schools will be adopted and the teachers trained by Sai devotees. Bhagavan's plan of transformation is unfolding silently before our very eyes. It is our children, full of self-confidence, that are in the forefront, dancing, singing, and acting their way into the hearts of everyone.

AFTER THE KOBE EARTHQUAKE:

`A New Beginning'

The Kobe earthquake in January was one of the worst experienced by the Japanese. Describing how Sai devotees reacted to the disaster, the editor of "Kan-Sai Light", the journal of the Sathya Sai Organisation of Japan, wrote in the March issue of the journal:

It was 5.46 a.m. Tuesday, January 17th 1995 in the land of the rising sun. People were beginning another day, moving into their routine when it started - first a murmur from under the

Babaaaaaa, save us! Baba help, help was all I could hear myself screaming. With me was a unison of voices crying out for the entire 40 seconds like the chanting of "Om". In under a minute our lives were turned upside down, houses were burning, there were bodies scattered in the rubble and remains of the city of Kobe and Awaji Island. The great Hanshin Earthquake had made its mark.

My husband and I were trapped in our room because a closet had landed right on top of us. I still feel stifled whenever I think of it. Clothes and things bearing down on us and the heavy wooden closet doors suffocating us. It was a while before one of us could manage to break loose of the pressure. The miracle is yet to come. Our Title girl, only seven and a half months old, was all by herself in the living room, shrieking in terror. We could hear her but felt helplessly trapped. She has been blessed and granted a new life too! There were so many glasses in the cabinet that smashed to smithereens, TV, tape deck, dining table, chairs etc; everything was thrown out of its place flying across the room, yet Swami was there to hold her and she has come out of this experience completely unharmed. This is no coincidence, because glass was scattered everywhere except as mall circle, like she was under an umbrella, I believe Sai's umbrella of Divine Love.

We managed to get out and ran down ten floors. At the bottom it was shocking to see the entire lobby of the building blown away, considering it was newly constructed year and a half ago. Around the area where we live all the small houses had collapsed, there was smoke and dust everywhere. People were just standing on the street in a daze, full of fear. At the time of the earthquake, power, water and gas went off in an instant. Since it was early in the morning, those who escaped were dressed in pajamas and it was cold out on the street, especially for the children and elderly people who were still scared from the most unexpected experience. Kansai area, where the Great Hanshin Earthquake hit was never exposed to such a shock at any time on such scale. Therefore the surviving refugees are still going through a tough time accepting the facts of the disaster.

Baba sent a message to all of us—"Do not worry, not one devotee will be harmed". Truly, no one has come to any physical harm. Our homes have been damaged and possessions destroyed, but our lives are intact and we have our Lord to thank. It will be a long time before the city of Kobe returns to its original functioning. Right now, some areas have water and electricity supply but gas for cooking and hot water for bathing are not available. Kan-Sai Light's office survived too. The computer, research materials and the February issue which was completed order. Baba had given us His Divine the night before the earthquake are all in blessings to continue this work. Dear readers, pray for the souls of all those who have passed away in the disaster. Mother Earth has acted in a just way, let us learn to live with nature rather than abuse it.

Experience of this type makes us realize how important it is to live every moment of life in the right way. Swami says, "Past is past, future is not sure, live in the present. Time wasted is life wasted". These words never made more sense. How easily we depend on tomorrow wasting a perfect present. Let this earthquake serve as a reminder of His power and glory to realize that He

A Date with Destiny

Do we realise that we have a Date with
Destiny every moment in our life?
Do we also realise that Destiny is 'Kaala
Pur-usha' and all have to bow to his will?
Let us remember that the Great Architect
decides whether your foolish dreams become yours
Whether they will be broken clay shattered to dust,
leaving a trail of tragedy and tears.
It played its trick on me one day not long ago,
When I was bathing in my glossy bathroom
I am now ninety-one years and soon entering ninety-two
In the twinkling of an eye it happened;
I lost my balance and fell prone with a thud
Bhagavan held me in his Loving Arms
and saved the family from a grim tragedy
Reminding us that the Lord is the Master of
Time and we have to bow to his will
I now go on chanting His divine name and
awaiting his final call to merge in his lotus feet

G.K.D., Prasanthi Nilayam March, 1995

A Lesson from Brazil

Among the overseas countries from which large numbers of devotees have been coming to Bhagavan in recent years, Brazil, in South America, is notable. This year witnessed a large group from Brazil who were given an interview. Among them was an impressive bearded devotee, a retired teacher who wished to serve Bhagavan in any capacity assigned to him. He said that his family had grown up and he and his wife had no domestic responsibilities to discharge. A life-long student of Vedanta, he was deeply attracted to Bhagavan's teachings, especially His emphasis on the spiritual oneness of mankind and the equal validity of basic truths of all religions.

state, with an area of over 3 million square miles and a population of 200 million, it was gratifying to learn that since the international conference in Rio de Janeiro some years ago on global ecology, Brazil has been going through a sustained process of "greening". He referred with enthusiasm to what has been achieved in one State, Prana, as a result of the determined efforts of an architect, who was the mayor of the State's capital, Curitiba, for three terms and who has now been elected Governor of the state.

EHV Project for Latin America

While thinking about the 70th Birthday celebration of Bhagavan Baba, we felt that Swami would like us to organise a project for spreading and deepening knowledge of the Sathya Sai EHV Programme in seven countries of Latin America.

The Central Council of the Sai Organisation of Latin America made plans for five members of the Educational wing with experience in the SSEHV programme to visit Uruguay, Colombia, Guatemala, Chile, Brazil, Panama and the Dominican Republic. Each country organised a public conference about the SSEHV programme and a training course for teachers.

The Sai Organisation in each country showed its devotion to Swami in every single detail of all the work that was done. Besides conducting the meet in beautiful conference halls, with educational devices, a book on the SSEHV programme was given to every person that participated in the conference.

The number of participants in the different countries ranged from 40 to 540 persons. The courses were accepted with enthusiasm. There was always the wish to continue with this work so that the children would grow in their character. The meetings were held in very different places, schools, universities, police school, army club, a rebuilt church and even a Templarian temple. For Swami, every place is His place. He filled all places with His energy.

At the beginning there was some anxiety as to how it would turn out. There was a lot of deliberations within the Sai Organisation in each country regarding the teams of teachers that were going to participate. The Central Council sent five teachers from Mexico, Venezuela and Argentina. We prayed to Swami to be with us at any moment and He was there. While each meeting was going on we grew in the conviction that we were only His instruments. The SSEHV Programme was fulfilling the expectations of gents and teachers. Swami was reaching us in this way.

As the meetings were primarily concerned with education; there were not many, occasions to speak, about Swami's, spiritual message as such. But the people's curiosity brought up questions about Him. On those occasions, the groups turned into Satsang where the only important theme

So many Sai brothers and sisters were participating in the events, so many hearts wishing to serve. I felt very deep in myself Swami's grace in the possibility of witnessing His presence in so many different corners of the world, that Swami says is His mansion. When one travels around the world doing His work there is no doubt that the world is His mansion.

We were realizing that it was not we that were giving and receiving. It was He himself who was the giver and the one that was showering His grace over all of us, letting us share all this love that we feel for Him.

As our hearts open more and more, our surrender to Bhagavan also grows and we feel a little closer to Him. Please, beloved Baba, don't ever allow us to separate ourselves even for a single moment from this wonderful path that You have shown us and that which takes us straight and fast to oneness with you.

—Daniel Coifman, Argentina

Wondrous Trees at Prasanthi

Charles Penn was an ardent devotee of Bhagavan all his life and never spared himself in Bhagavan's service. A few weeks before he passed away in February 1993, he wrote an article for a new magazine called "Sai World", devoted to children and youth. The article testifies not only to his devotion to Bhagavan but also his deep concern for the younger generation and his desire to turn their minds towards God. Writing under the Caption, "Wondrous Trees at Prasanthi", Charles Penn writes:

There are wondrous trees at Prasanthi Nilayam. Perhaps you have seen them or will see them when you arrive there. I wonder whether you know that two of the trees are quite different from all the others.

Under one tree you meditate. It is called the "Wish-Fulfilling Tree". When you pray deeply for something very special to come true, Baba may make it come true. Sometimes your wish does not appear to be granted. At least not as you prayed for, but in a manner the Lord knew was the best for you. Sometime later you might feel to ask Him again, but you are a long way from that "Wish-Fulfilling Tree". When at home you could find your own tree and meditate under it and make other wishes, asked with love of God in your heart.

The other tree is very different, and the only place to see it at Prasanthi is in the beautiful and very interesting Spiritual Museum. It is painted on a wall. Looking for it is a grand experience. This unique tree is known as the "Upside Down Tree".

It should not be difficult to find. The roots of the tree are all in the air, the branches and leaves are all in the ground. You may never guess what it means. I'll tell you. You are looking at yourself. To simply explain: when you and I and everyone else were born, our interest was fully attracted to Planet Earth. Our attraction deepened. In time our full and only interest was people, places, and things. We gave no thought to our Creator, or cared where we came from. We "placed" our head in the ground and our feet in the air.

Now that we know of Sathya Sai Baba, turning our thought, mind, and love to Him should be our moment to moment endeavour. We turn our "Upside Down Tree"—our own Divine Self—so that it reflects our Inner Light for all to witness.

When you are young, your Light is able to shine ever so brightly. When older, this could become more difficult to accomplish, especially should one never meet the Avatar Sai.

The Road to Prasanthi

"Show me the road to Prasanthi"

A Pilgrim asked me once.

His tongue was dry, for he had asked thousands more the way,

He had argued long and loud;

For they showed the road that led to ivory towers

And castles in the air,

And higgledy-miggledy counters that dealt with plots

In Heaven and In Paradise

Or battle fields where brain clashed with barren brain.

They had misled him into many an alley blind,

Thick with tangling arguments

They sent him along dark corridors of hatred and of fear,

Taking their words as true, he had waded through vales of tears

Deafened by conflicting cackles of clamour and of claims

At every crossroad he passed, he said, the canvassers of traffic

Did fill his ears with cynical spite.

His head was free of ego cargo;

His ears tingled, he said, with consecrated song,

He longed to know the road to Prasanthi

He knew it was his journey's end.

There was a glint in his eye

And a thirst in his throat

And a groan, hiding inside his chest

A pang, a pain, a pull,

A chronic homesickness

Show me the road to Prasanthi
I am much in need of rest—
I was happy, for he knew that he could get
Where Swami's Presence is,
There, fear is afraid to show itself
And grief is out of bounds.
"Show me the road to Prasanthi"
They gave me, he said, a map of the route
But, how can a map show me the Truth?
O! The agony on his lips,
The question in his eyes!
"Why seek a road," I asked him.
"Your feet are for securing foot hold
Not for trudging mile after mile
Behind every shadow show.
Roads take you along many a bend and bump
And, make you follow diversions galore
Through bleak and barren land
With trails of dust suffocating thick.
The road is littered with tolls and jolts,
Segmented into mine and thine"
"Show me the road to Prasanthi
The sun is setting, quick, quick," he said.
I told him, "Dear Friend, you are already there!
Wherever you are, 'tis Prasanthi'
Listen...His laughter you can hear!
Open your eyes, His Glory is clear
In starry sky, flowery field, the crimson cloud
The baby prattle, the murmuring stream
Stay, Don't stray; Be still, Don't will.
When you rise and start to walk, stay,
Swami says—That is the word,
You are the Sathya of the Sai,
The I whom Time cannot declare as, was or is;
There is no they or we, no terminus,
No then or now; you're simply IS.
Know this, you have reached Prasanthi
Without moving a single step

—N. Kasturi

An unprecedented gathering of devotees from all parts of the world participated in this year's Sivaratri Celebrations at Prasanthi Nilayam, and received the bounteous blessings of Bhagavan Baba on February 27th and February 28th.

Precisely at 7 in the morning Bhagavan came out for the darshan which was eagerly awaited by the thousands of men, women and children who filled the vast new mandap and overflowed to the grounds outside. (Devotees will be happy to know that Bhagavan, out of His abundant love, has authorised the extension of the new Mandap to the open space in the north so as to provide shelter for more than two thousand. This extended mandap will be ready by the end of May).

On reaching the Mandir, Bhagavan was greeted by the Institute choir, reciting in unison three Ashtakams—Lingashtakam, Bilvashtakam, Sivashtakam (each containing eight slokas) in praise of Lord Siva. The hymns stirred the hearts of devotees. These were followed by devotional songs in different languages, to the accompaniment of the Institute orchestra. At the end of the music programme, Bhagavan arranged for the distribution of prasadam to the gathering. Then came a welcome announcement that Bhagavan would inaugurate the Sivaratri festival in the evening with a divine discourse in the Poorna Chandra Auditorium.

The Auditorium was fully packed well before Bhagavan arrived. After invocation and a speech by Prof. Anil Kumar, Bhagavan delivered His discourse (published in our March issue). Swami then lit the Akhanda Jyoti to mark the beginning of the night-long vigil and the non-stop singing of Bhajans by the students of the three campuses all through the night.

The next morning, Bhagavan arrived at 6 am and delivered another discourse to crown the Sivaratri celebrations with an unforgettable message. (Bhagavan's discourse is published separately in this issue). Bhagavan then blessed the prasadam to be distributed to all the devotees—consisting of sugared rice and tamarind rice. Bhagavan personally ensured that every devotee got the prasadam.

Altogether, the celebrations were one of the most memorable holy occasions in Prasanthi Nilayam.

Embodiments of Divine Love!

"Maanam hithvaa priyo bhavathi" The man without egotistic pride is liked by everyone.

"Krodham hithvaa na sochathi" The man without hatred is free from grief.

"Kaamam hithvaa aarthona bhavathi" One who has given up desire is free from worries.

"Lobham hithvaa sukhi bhavathi" Overcoming greed a man becomes happy.

When you rid the mind of impurities, humanness turns divine.

The world is confronted today with many problems. On the one side there is fear of war. On another side, there is fear of famine. On a third front there is the lust for power. On the fourth side, selfishness is rampant. There is discord between man and man, between one caste and another, between one nation and another. What is the reason for this? Society is riddled today with conflicts because morality has been banished and humanness has been forgotten.

Control of desires

No man filled with greed, fear and anger can achieve anything in this world. Greed comes first. Excessive desires degrade man. You cannot give up desires entirely. But there should be a limit to them. When they exceed the limits a man goes astray. Desires are dreadfully dangerous. To-day's enemy may become tomorrow's friend and vice versa. But desires are perpetual enemies. They haunt man ceaselessly. The Gita declares desire as the eternal enemy of man ("Nityashatru") Hence desire has to be kept under control.

Becoming a prey to peacelessness, man seeks the Divine by various means. But why is he unable to realise his desire? What is the cause of his sorrow? Is it due to unfulfilled desire or the failure of his efforts? Is he miserable because he has not got various possessions, or failed to win a lottery? Lamenting over such trifles, man today is forgetting his divinity.

These are not real troubles at all. The real cause of sorrow is attachment to the body, identifying one's self with the body. All sorrow arises from the feelings of "I" and "Mine". It is essential at the outset to reduce attachment to the body ("deh-abhimanam").

Desires are a source of pleasure for man, but they are also the cause of his grief. The mind has to be brought under control. Even thousands of men cannot hold back a fast-moving train. But the train comes to a stop the moment the brake is applied. The same applies to the vagaries of the mind. When the mind is controlled, all sorrows will cease.

The Divine Atma, which dwells in the heart of every human being, is not recognised by man because it is covered by the clouds of desire. The splendour of the sun is revealed when a wind drives away the clouds that hide the sun. Likewise, when the wind of love blows away the clouds of desire in the heart, the ego ("I"-ness) and possessiveness (sense of "mine") are driven

feelings of "I" and "Mine" (Ahamkara and Mamakara).

Uncontrolled desire can bring down anyone, even the deities presiding over human destiny. However intelligent, scholarly or powerful a man may be, he may succumb to desires. Hence everyone has to be vigilant in controlling desires.

Attachment and sorrow

Even a man of great prowess like Arjuna became subject to the feeling of attachment—"my relatives" "my teachers" etc. He was a prisoner of the feeling of "mine". "Swa", "Swajana", "my people", "my Kinsmen"—this sense of attachment made him throw away his Gandiva (bow) on the battlefield, overcome by grief. This kind of attachment may plunge anyone in feeble-minded grief at any place, at anytime and in any situation. Hence it is essential to keep all attachments under control.

"Prema" (Love) should be shown not only towards God but towards all beings in creation. Love is a powerful force. No other power excels it. Misunderstanding the nature of love, men are falling a prey to suffering. This is the result of misguided expressions of what is considered love.

God's love

Men today worship God for the fulfillment of desires relating to this world and the other. This is not true love. People pretend to love their kith and kin and friends out of purely selfish considerations. This is only attachment and not love. Only that can be described as love which offers itself without any expectation of recompense. In the Gita, Bhagavan has been described "Suhrid" a true friend. Without expecting any return, accompanying you like a shadow, God fulfils your desires. Even a mother in loving her son, may have expectations that he would take care of her in her old age. God has no such expectations. "Suhrid" defines the utterly selfless love of the Lord.

The nature of Divine love is not rightly understood by most people. For instance, even a great woman like Draupadi did not understand the ways of the Lord. Once, during their exile, while she and Yudhistira were strolling in the Himalayas. Draupadi asked Yudhistira with tears streaming from her eyes, "Dear Lord, you have taken such good care of your subjects, you fed the starving and relieved the needy, you always adhered to Dharma, Why should you be subject to this present suffering? You are the very embodiment of Righteousness. We are leading the life of a destitute here. Why should this happen to you? Have we forfeited God's grace? Is there anything wanting in our devotion?"

Dharmaja's advice to Draupadi

Smilingly, Dharmaja replied, "Draupadi! Look at the Himalaya Mountains. How beautiful are the peaks! I am filled with joy looking at those mountains. They do not serve me in any way, but still they fill me with joy. The beauty of Nature gives me joy. Beauty is bliss. That bliss is nectarine, there is no joy equal to the enjoyment of the beautiful. When you look at a flower, you derive ineffable joy, though the flower renders you no service. Nature is the vesture of God.

from seeing it and for no other benefit. Likewise, God should be loved in a selfless spirit. I love Krishna regardless of what difficulties I have to suffer, because that is the way I love him. I have no interest in the transient pleasures and possessions of the world. True bliss transcends the fleeting pleasures experienced by this perishable body. Draupadi! Do not seek these pleasures relating to the body. Seek the Divine feet of the Lord, which will confer enduring bliss. Do not grieve over petty difficulties. Concern yourself with the means to experience God. All other things are valueless."

The bliss derived from experiencing the Divine has been extolled by the Vedic seers and sages from ancient times. It is holy, eternal, ineffable and infinite. It is the bliss of oneness with God.

The yugas and the divine

To enable mankind to realise this infinite bliss, the Lord makes His descent from age to age. The Kritayuga began in the month of Vaisakha. The Treta Yuga began in the month of Magha. Dwapara Yuga began in the month of Margasira. In the Gita, Krishna declared that among the months He is Margasira. Kali Yuga started in the Chaitra month. This is according to the lunar calendar.

What is the meaning of "Yuga"? Yuga means divinity. The divinity of the Yuga is derived from the Divine. Thus the Yuga originates from the Divine and merges in the Divine.

"Yugakrit" is one of the names of the Lord. It means that the Lord is the creator of the Yugas (aeons). "Yugadi" refers to the commencement of the particular yuga. The Lord is also the sustainer of the Yuga. He is the very embodiment of Time. That is why He is the master of Time and hence He is worshipped as "Samvatsara" ("Samvatsaraya namah") Salutations to the Lord of the year.

The "Yugadi" day, which is associated with such sacred significance, is being observed as merely the beginning of a new year. The day should be regarded as Divine in origin.

Hari's name in Kali Age

The Kaliyuga is considered a dreadful aeon and the presiding deity, the Kali Purusha, is viewed with fear as the source of difficulties and trials. This is not so, "Namasmara" is a mitigating factor at all times. For the Kali Age, there is no greater panacea for all troubles than chanting the name of Hari. This truth is forgotten by people today. Instead of Hari's name, they dote over "Siri", the Goddess of wealth. The worshippers of wealth far exceed the worshippers of Hari. People should remember that if God is the source of all things, He alone should be remembered at all times.

The year that commences today is named "Yuva". "Yuva" means those in their youthful age. It implies that it is a transitional stage between childhood and old age.

People are worried about what is in prospect for the world in this New Year. Those who make all kinds of dire predictions for the year are not doing any good. The New Year Yuva, according to astrology, commences in Saturn (Shani). But Jupiter (Guru) is well disposed. He is the ruler for this year. When the ruler is good, why worry about the ministers? He presides over all the other planets. Hence, there is no room for any fear. The world will no doubt experience some troubles, ups and downs. Such things have happened in previous Yugas also, as in Krita Yuga, Treta Yuga and Dwapara Yuga. Were there not wars in Dwapara Yuga? There is no need to attach special significance to the Kali age. There were wicked men even in Krita Yuga and there are good men in the Kali age. It is not the Yuga that matters. It is the heart that is important. If people's hearts are pure, what does it matter what the Yuga is? People must strive to purify their hearts. The heart is called "Hridaya". "Hrid-daya" signifies a compassionate heart. People must transform their stony hearts to compassionate hearts.

The year Yuva will experience a mixture of good and bad events. There will be some serious mishaps. There will be grave disorders. There will be many political crises. Hence each one should concentrate on protecting oneself by purity of heart and mind. Your preceptor or your deity or your scripture will not serve to take you to your goal. You have to make the journey yourself. Others can serve as guide-posts but they cannot take you to your destination.

Each one, therefore, has to chalk out his own path to reach the goal, "Strive to safeguard your Atma". If you adhere to righteousness you can face any ordeal. Strive to earn God's Grace.

Young people must be very much on their guard this year. They must control the vagaries of their minds and not give way to anger or envy. Anger and envy are pernicious diseases. Envy has grown to alarming proportions. It is less curable than cancer.

Rama and Yama

Men often ask: Who is God and who is Yama (the Lord of Death). The answer was given by Purandaradasa in one of his compositions. "Who is Rama for you and who is Yama? For the unbelieving Ravana, Rama became Yama. For the believing Vibhishana, Rama was God. For Surasena who had no belief, Krishna was Yama (the cause of his death). To Akrura, who was a believer, Krishna appeared as God. To the believing Prahlada, Narayana was the saviour. To the unbelieving Hiranyakasipu, Prahlada's father, Narayana became the destroyer. Rama and Yama are not distinct from each other. According to one's beliefs, Rama becomes Yama and Yama becomes Rama. One's feelings make all the difference in the role of God as protector or slayer.

"To those who say 'Yes'. He is 'Yes, to those who say, 'No', He is 'No'. 'Yes or No' comes from others' mouths. But He always remains 'Yes, Yes, Yes,' ("S.S.S." _ Sri Sathya Sai)" (Telugu poem) For God there is no 'Yes' or 'No' These are echoes of your own feelings.

Therefore, whatever the year and whatever the difficulties you confront, develop compassion in your heart. Develop your meditation on God. With faith in God you can achieve anything.

Ingratitude—the worst sin

Many strange things are likely to happen in this New Year. Ingratitude is rampant. Not only are people forgetting all the good that is done to them, but they are doing harm to those who have helped them. History provides a bitter example of such ingratitude. You are aware of Ghori Mohammad who invaded India several times and plundered the country. At last in one encounter with Rana Prithviraj, he was defeated and captured by Prithviraj. Prithviraj pardoned him and let him off. Later on, by nefarious methods Ghori caught Prithviraj. Then he decided to put an end to Prithviraj's life. At that time, the Divine intervened, in answer to Prithviraj's prayers, and an arrow released by Prithviraj went straight to Ghori's neck and severed his head. Thus the evil-doer was punished by the Lord.

The lesson is clear. Don't harbour ill-will towards anybody. Don't do any harm to others. Get rid of doubts and develop faith in God. People today are filled with doubts of every kind.

By truthful speech, by generous hands, by listening to what is ennobling, people must overcome the untoward happenings of this Kali age. It is by these means that human life can be redeemed.

What is the purpose of life? It is not eating or sleeping. It is to lead an ideal life. Every human being has to accomplish certain aims in life which are in tune with humanness. You have to realise that the Lord is the Indweller in all beings and experience unity in diversity. The entire creation is present within the human body. This is the mystery of creation. The human body is a marvellous creation. Every organ in the body discharges its specific function and nothing else. Only the Divine can create such a wonderful organism. The Atma is the Master within the body. Never betray the Master. Be grateful to God for endowing you with such a marvellous body.

Bharat's universal message

India was the teacher for the whole world from ancient times in the spiritual field. It gave to the world the glorious universal message: "Let the peoples of all the worlds be happy".

Indians today have forgotten this ancient message and have not recognised their own inherent divinity. The ancient sages knew what power there was in the human being because of the presence of the Divine within. They radiated effulgence as a result of their Yogic power. All of it comes from God. The power of the Divine is infinite and indescribable.

People should pray for the blessings of Divine grace. They need not worry about the prospects in the New Year. With God's grace they can overcome any situation. People speak about the affliction caused by the nine planets. In fact, people are plagued by only two planets—egoism and possessiveness (Ahamkara and Mamakara). To free themselves from these two all that men require is divine grace.

Cultivate unity. Give up pride and ostentation. Develop the courage to face any situation, the courage that is based on faith in God.

Strive for the welfare of all people in all countries. Humanity is one irrespective of race, creed or color. Dedicate this year to the development of a universal outlook.

The divine mother

This is the lesson Ramakrishna Paramahansa taught towards the end of his life when he was suffering from cancer. He could not take any food. At that time, Swami Vivekananda came to the Master and asked him why he should not pray to the Divine Mother to enable him to take food. Ramakrishna Paramahansa replied: "I did ask the Mother and she gave me her answer. "When I am taking my food through so many mouths, does it matter if I don't eat through your mouth?" Ramakrishna felt ashamed on getting that answer. The lesson he learnt was that all bodies belong to the Divine Mother.

God-realisation

In the Gita, Krishna says that the divine as Vaishwanara enters all bodies and helps to digest every type of food. Only the Divine can perform this kind of function. Whatever the kind of food you eat, it is digested, converted into blood and circulated to every part of the body. Only the power of the Divine can do this. Develop faith in this truth. Very soon you will experience the bliss of God-realisation. The experience will come only if you act in the appropriate manner. But, failing to act, people blame God for their troubles. God is utterly blameless. Only your lapses are reflected in your actions. There are no flaws in God and no one is competent to blame God.

God-realisation is not a time-bound process. Some one went to Ramana Maharshi and asked him how long he should sit in meditation. The Maharshi said that he should meditate "till he is not aware that he is meditating at all." Similarly the love of God should become a spontaneous act. With such love, one can face any situation in life with confidence derived from the consciousness that the Divine is within.

Duty of youth

Do not worry about the predictions made for this year in the almanacs. If you put your faith in God, you can overcome all troubles. Youth in particular should cultivate this faith. It is a pity that Indian Youth today are lacking in love of the Motherland. Becoming bookworms is not education. It is more important to put into practice at least a fraction of what you have learnt.

Think of God. Love God. Realise that there is no truer friend than God. 'Merge your love in His love.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the Bhajan: "*Prema mudita manase Kaho: Rama, Rama, Ram!*"

—From Bhagavan's discourse in the Poornachandra Auditorium on April 1, 1995

Install Ramarajya in Your Hearts

*What can Kali do to the one
Whose heart is filled with compassion,
For whose speech truth is the ornament,
And whose body is dedicated to serving Others?*

Embodiments of Divine Love!

A tranquil mind, a truth-filled speech, and a body dedicated to service—one who has these three qualities is described as the embodiment of "Tripudi" (the Triple purity). Such a one is the noblest of human beings.

Tulsidas was the great one who proclaimed that human life is redeemed when every talent and every moment are utilised by humanity for realising the Divine. To God all objects in the universe are alike because they are manifestations of the Divine. The scriptures declared about this Divine manifestation: "Sarvam khalvidam Brahma" "All this verily is Brahman".

Hence, whoever worships the Supreme Lord should also worship Prakriti (Nature or the Phenomenal universe). He should love Nature and adore Nature. Nature is not different from the Supreme Self (Paramatma). Nature is the effect and God is the cause. Nature is the expression of this relationship between Cause and Effect.

Goodness is a synonym for God. Hence, it is only by contemplating on the qualities of God that human existence finds fulfillment. The body of a human being who does not think in this way is merely a lump of clay.

God's words, actions, thoughts are always pure, selfless and infinitely precious. The truth of this is illustrated by an episode from the Ramayana.

Once, while proceeding to Mithila; Rama sat on a stone in the sage Gautama's ashram. That very moment, a woman emerged from the stone. However, Rama did not feel proud that by a mere touch of his feet, the stone had turned into a woman. On the contrary he felt sad that his feet had touched the wife of a great sage and thereby he had committed a wrong. This shows that God dwells in the minds of sages.

God indulges in dramatic acts like these to demonstrate His omnipresence in the universe and to teach the world the greatness of Nature.

Another episode reveals another aspect of the Divine.

Rama and Hanuman

For all the mighty deeds done by Hanuman and great help rendered by him, Rama asked him: "Hanuman! What reward can I give you? Apart from expressing my gratitude to you I cannot give you any fitting recompense. The only way I can show my gratitude to you is that whenever you think of me at any time in your life, I shall appear before you." Rama was showing his gratitude to Hanuman in this manner.

This indicates that the primary duty of man is to be grateful all his life to the person who has done him a good turn.

Man has to realise his divinity and look at all Nature from the Divine point of view. Instead, man looks at everything only from the mundane point of view. The body is indeed perishable. But it is also the means for realising the imperishable Truth. This means, all speech should be about the Divine. All actions should be godly. Every thought should be about God.

That is the appeal which Thyagaraja made to his mind: "Oh mind, think always about Sri Rama." (Bhagavan sang in His own mellifluous voice Thyagaraja's song in which he said: "Oh Kaushalya, what penance did you perform to enjoy the privilege of calling Sri Rama affectionately as a mother and showering your kisses on the divinely beautiful child Rama. What penance did Dasaratha perform to call Sri Rama to come to him?") Thus Thyagaraja was chanting Rama's name all the time and singing his glories. This is an example to the world.

Rama the ideal

Rama is the supreme exemplar of how people should conduct themselves in the world, how a country should be governed, how the integrity and morality of human beings should be protected. High-minded actions, ideal qualities and sacred thoughts are basic foundations of character. Rama is the very embodiment of these three attributes. This means that every human being should cultivate sacred thoughts, right actions and good qualities. Rama demonstrated by his words, thoughts and actions how such a life can be lived. Rama acted up to the ancient injunction: "Speak the truth. Practice Righteousness". Eschewing harsh words, Rama pleased everyone by his sweet speech. He countered harsh speech by others with his composure, patience, sweetness and smile. He never pried into the affairs of others, never took notice of their faults, never indulged in ridicule, and never caused any pain to others by the way he spoke to them. It is essential for everyone to follow the example set by Rama and cultivate his many noble qualities and do righteous actions. People should entertain sacred thoughts.

God and man

Man is an image of the Divine. The Lord has declared in the Gita: "My Spirit is the indwelling Spirit in all beings". God is the indweller in all human beings. Today, in the pursuit of power, men are prepared to commit any kind of crime and to inflict any kind of harm on people to achieve their ends. Rama, on the contrary, gave up the kingdom and, to honour the pledge given by his father, chose to face the ordeals of life in the forest as an exile. He demonstrated to the world that one should never go back on his plighted word. Rama gave up the throne and

supreme importance of Truth was what Rama wanted to hold forth to the world. One should never go back on one's pledge even at the cost of one's life.

The plighted word

Today, however, men go back on their words from moment to moment. They indulge in falsehood at every step. Promises are forgotten. How can the Rama Principle flourish in such a human environment? The Rama Principle is remote from such an atmosphere.

God will be in proximity only to those persons whose thoughts, ideals and deeds are in accord with Rama's. Rama was a man of his word, but man is the very reverse. It may be asked: In this situation how is it possible to say that in human beings there is divinity? Not at all. In such human beings there is either animality or demonic nature. Whatever sadhanas one may perform or however much one may recite the Lord's name, God will not judge one by these criteria. What is the transformation in one's heart? If there is no transformation of the heart, of what avail are spiritual sadhanas?

Man is not a mere creature of flesh and blood. He is the embodiment of the Spirit (Atma). It is only when man recognises this truth that true spirituality will be evident to him. Concentrating all the time on the physical body as the only reality, time is wasted on external observances. The body should be regarded as a temple of God. To consider it otherwise is a sign of foolishness. Only he is a true human being who recognises the indwelling divinity within the shrine of his body. The scriptures have declared: "In the temple of the human body dwells the individual Self which is the eternal Self."

In this context, it may be noted that even scholars and intelligent persons tend to get confused over this matter. People who go to endless trouble to acquire positions, power or reputation do not care to devote even a small fraction of that effort to earn God's grace. The lesson taught by the story of Rama is different. Tulsidas said: "Rama! I am helpless, poor and crippled." Why did he say he was a cripple ("Angaheenudu")? He has hands and legs, head and everything else. Nevertheless he declared that he was a cripple. What is the inner meaning of this? "What is the use of having hands when I am unable to serve you, oh Rama! What is the use of having eyes, when I am unable to see you? So, I am verily blind." Tulsidas declared that limbs that are not used in the service of the Lord are as good as lost.

Purandaradasa also sang in the same manner. "Alas, even when they are endowed with eyes, they do not see your glorious form! Even when they have ears, they do not listen to the songs in the praise of the Lord."

Men use their eyes to look at the attractions of the world and not the charm of God. As long as man is fascinated by the phenomenal world (Prakriti,) he cannot comprehend the Divine. Even the most eminent persons are subject to this weakness. This is a mark of the powerful influence of the Kali age.

yearning for God should be nourished. Qualities such as back-biting, spreading scandal and searching for the faults in others are not human but demonic. People should cultivate good thoughts, good words, good hearts and good conduct. This is the way to God. That man is redeemed who follows this path.

Rama's lesson to Lakshmana

History is full of examples of men who used force and fraud to come to power. There are examples from the communist countries. In Muslim countries also there are examples of persons who did not disdain to imprison or kill their kith and kin to seize power. But Bharat has generally been free from such deeds. This is the result of Rama's glorious example.

Once, while moving about in the forest, Rama and Lakshmana sat under a tree. At that time, they heard the neighing of horses and the cries of elephants at a distance. Rama asked Lakshmana to find out how horses and elephants happened to appear in the forest. Lakshmana climbed a tree and noticed Bharata coming with a huge army. Immediately he exclaimed: "Brother! Get ready for battle. Take up your bow and arrows." Rama smiled at Lakshmana and said: "Why are you so excited? Do not be hasty. Calm yourself. What has happened?" Lakshmana replied: "Bharata is coming with an army to kill us." Rama said: "Lakshmana! What a serious mistake you are making? It is impossible for any scion of the Ikshvaku clan to think of such a preposterous idea even in dream. Because we two were not present in Ayodhya when Bharata and Shatrughna returned to the capital, they are now coming to see us." Rama sought to pacify Lakshmana.

Lakshmana replied: "What is this forbearance and sympathy on your part? If they merely wanted to see us, will they come with a huge army? No. They are coming only to slay us."

Rama said: "Lakshmana! You are too much dominated by Rajasic tendencies. You seem to be attached to kingship. Why worry? Bharata is coming. I shall ask him to crown you as king. You may go with."

The glory of Rama's sandals

Even as Rama was speaking thus, Bharata came rushing towards Rama, fell at his feet, crying: "Rama! Rama! Rama!" and said: "I am not competent to rule over Ayodhya. To reign over the kingdom Ramchandra alone is worthy as the eldest son (of Dasaratha). You alone are fit to rule over the kingdom properly and establish Rama Rajya. Please return to Ayodhya." Thus pleaded Bharata.

As Bharata was entreating in this manner, Rama looked smilingly at Lakshmana. "Compare your feelings with the expressions of Bharata", he said.

Sage Vasishta also joined in the appeal to Rama to return to Ayodhya. But Rama did not yield to Bharata's entreaties and, acting according to Vasishta's directions, offered his sandals to Bharata and asked Bharata to perform the coronation for the sandals (padukas).

You must recognise the inner significance of this episode. People generally regard the sandals as objects to be despised. But Rama taught a different lesson about them. Rama treated the kingdom and the sandals on a par. "I don't want a crown. Enthroned my sandals."

Acting on Rama's injunctions, Bharata performed the coronation of Rama's sandals and spent his time peacefully, contemplating on Rama.

Rama on rulership

Rama taught Bharata how government should be carried on. "Have as your ministers only persons of character and virtue, who are tranquil in mind and devoted to truth. Don't have as ministers anyone lacking in these four qualities. Moreover, they should possess self-confidence, practise righteous conduct, and be capable of giving proper advice. These are essential prerequisites for wise administrators. Give no place for selfish persons. There should be no room in the government for persons animated by self-interest. Nor is that all. Don't allow anyone given to vices like gambling and drink to wield authority. Entertain only those who command the esteem of the people and who are respected and loved by the people. You must have daily conferences with three or four such ministers. Your talks should be in private and no outsider should know anything about them. It is only when such secrecy is observed that the nation will prosper. You will then be able to ensure peace and prosperity to the nation. Moreover, you must send out as envoys to other countries ambassadors who are totally loyal to the king and not time-servers who practise duplicity. Only such men can convey to the king truthful information."

Rama did not stop with that. (Swami said that the women devotees should not take it amiss). Rama told Bharata that he should not permit women to take part in affairs of state. Women have their estimable role in household affairs, but they should be kept out of state politics. "Don't employ women as ministers. The reason is: a nation's honour is based upon its women. It is only when women maintain their respect and honour that the nation will be respected. It is not proper for women to cheapen themselves by roaming in public places."

How to establish Rama Rajya

Such were the sacred precepts of good administration which Rama taught to Bharata. How does the situation in the country today compare with Rama's conception of an ideal government? The state of things today is 700 percent contrary to the ideas and ideals of Rama. How, then, can Rama Rajya be established here?

If we desire to establish Rama Rajya, there should be harmony in thought, word and deed. This applies not only to Bharat but to the entire world. All countries should have governments which conform to this principle of triple purity. Only then, the people also will reflect the character of the rulers.

Today, the people reflect the vices of the rulers. If a minister prefers one bottle, the man in the street asks for two (drinks). How can such citizens establish Rama Rajya? They can do so only if there is a complete transformation in their mental attitudes. Despite all the teachings they

entitled even to utter the name "Rama". What, then, is the meaning of talking about Rama Rajya. It will be only Rama Rajya in name, but in reality it will only be Ravana Rajya.

Respect for parents

If you really value Rama's ideals, you should practise them. You may say that the high ideals of Rama are beyond your competence. But there is one thing which you care do: Rama carried out the words of his father ("Pithruvaakya paripaalana"). How many today respect the words of the parent? If the father asks the son. "Son, where are you going?" the son replies: "Shut up and keep quiet in your place." Few have any respect for the words of the father. There is no need to speak about respect for the mother. Such unworthy sons are ruining the world. Mothers are shedding tears over the behaviour of such sons.

This state of things should change. The sacredness of parents should be restored. Young people should cultivate pure thoughts and lead unselfish lives.

Children who disregard their parents will be treated likewise by their children in due course. Partly the parents are to blame for the way they pamper the children. Children of today are worse than even Ravana's children, who obeyed him to some extent.

People who acquire knowledge or wealth are making no use of it to help others. They are following a dog-in-the-manger policy. This is not the way to follow Rama's example.

Today people celebrate Rama's birthday as a festival, but do not practise Rama's ideals. Enshrine Rama's ideals in your heart. Without it, there is no meaning in celebrating Rama's birthday. You must follow the example of a noble and ideal person. This is the right meaning of devotion.

People talk about devotion. Does mere participation in bhajans constitute devotion? No. It is all a stunt. True devotion calls for the practice of at least one of the teachings that you learn. By following at least one good lesson, a man should lead an ideal existence.

Remember that the lessons taught to Bharata by Rama are ideal lessons. After instructing Bharata regarding the principles of good government, Rama told Bharata: "You must revere the parents, the preceptors and all elders. If any person misbehaves within your kingdom, do not punish him. Banish him. That will be punishment enough."

Here I wish to explain what is meant by punishment. There is no need to beat or abuse the erring person. Stop talking to him. What is the use of talking to a person who is going astray? I do not want to waste my words on such a person. I attach great value to my words. They may not know it, but I know their value. None of my words has any selfish motive. Everything is for the welfare of all. If one has no such broad outlook and is only concerned about his personal interests, what is the use in talking to such a person? As long as one remains self-centered, he cannot understand the Divine.

The reign of dharma

At the outset, understand what is Rama Rajya. It is the reign of morality, of truth and virtues. "Rama Rajya" means that which engenders happiness ("Ramayati"). There should be no ill-will towards anybody. No one should be harmed. That is Rama Rajya. When such feelings arise among the people Rama Rajya will come into existence of its own accord.

It is with such feelings that Tulsidas extolled Rama. His Ramayana is suffused with his deep devotional experience: He exclaimed: "Rama! I have no abilities of any kind. I have practised no system of yoga. I have not developed any method of meditation. I have no possessions of any kind. I have only one thing and that is my love. I love you for love's sake."

Spiritual practices of various kinds, including japa, yoga and the like, will not lead you to God-realisation. I do not suggest that you should discontinue these exercises. The devotional activities are better than many other useless pastimes. But, if you want to get near to God and to experience God, you have to transform the heart. As you sow, so shall you reap. Sow the seeds of love and reap the fruit of love. Sow the seed of immortality and reap the fruit of immortality. Today you want sweet fruit, but you sow poisonous seeds. This is thoughtless action.

Some people say that they are too weak to scale spiritual heights. But you have the strength to commit sins and do wrong actions. The strength required for good or bad actions is the same. In fact, it is more difficult to commit sin than to be good and meritorious. To utter an untruth is difficult. To speak the truth is easy. Speaking the truth calls for no effort. But to declare what is not true as true calls for considerable ingenuity. Uttering an untruth is therefore more difficult. Equally, cheating is more arduous than being honest.

Many devotees tell Swami that they are caught up in the coils of "Samsara" (family and worldly life) and are unable to break away from it. But what is the truth? Is it you who are clinging to "Samsara" or is it "Samsara" that is holding you in its grip? Has "Samsara" any hands to hold you? You have hands and you are holding on to worldly life. "Samsara" is not holding you. It is a paradox for you to say that Samsara is holding you in its grip when the truth is otherwise.

It is excessive attachment that is the cause of man's troubles. Do everything as an act of offering to the Divine. Without faith in God man ceases to be human.

Devotion and diversion

Devotees who attend bhajans turn their looks this side and that side without concentrating on the bhajans. If they are not interested in the bhajans why should they come at all? (In this connection, Bhagavan related an incident in the life of Ramakrishna Paramahansa when he slapped Rani Rasmani at a gathering of scholars and worshippers. All people were astonished at Ramakrishna's action. Rani Rasmani felt humiliated. Ramakrishna explained that he found Rani Rasmani thinking about her court affairs while sitting in the religious gathering. This was highly improper and hence he slapped her. Swami said it was equally improper for devotees to sit in

entertain bad thoughts? People speak about "Satsang". What is "Satsang"? It is not mere assemblage of ten devotees. "Sat" refers to that which exists in all the three categories of time—past, present and future. The term applies to the Divine. "Satsang", therefore, means association with the Divine.

Each word has profound sacred meaning. But common people do not relish such interpretations. They enjoy what is trivial and pleasing to the ears. I do not want to please people in this way. The truth has to be taught. Some day or other people will understand it. Worldly sayings may please people for the moment but they are of no value spiritually. God is pleased with the inner feeling and not the external show. But most people are interested only in the external and do not bother about the inner feeling. If you break the branch of a tree and plant it in the sand, will it grow into a tree? It must be planted in soil where it can strike roots. Similarly, the feeling must arise in the heart and get deeply rooted in it. Then, the fruits will appear in the external world. Therefore, cultivate the feeling inside and enjoy the fruit outside.

Such wise teachings were taught to the people in the reign of Bharata and Rama. When we speak of establishing Rama Rajya, let not Bharatiyas imagine that it is relevant only to Bharat. The whole world needs the advent of Rama Rajya. What this means is that the rulers should have three qualities. They are: righteous conduct (Satpravartana) good counsel (sadalochana), good qualities (Sadguna). There should be a combination of all the three. Today good counsel is a rarity. As for good qualities, the less said the better. High-souled persons, who represent harmony in thought, word and deed, should fill the seats of power. There should be no place for the wicked who think one thing, speak another thing and act in a different way.

Devotees should fill their minds with sacred thoughts. At least from now on, banish all bad thoughts, Turn your minds towards God. At least install Rama Rajya in your hearts. When this happens, the world will experience Rama Rajya.

Fill your minds with the ideals of Sri Rama and try to put them into practice as much as possible. This will cost you nothing. You do not have to perform any asanas or go to the forest for practice. Staying in your homes, attending to your duties, purify your hearts.

(Bhagavan concluded His discourse with a new bhajan: "Rama jayam! Raghurama jayam! Raghavajanaki Lokamayam." The entire Sai Ramesh mandap reverberated with the full-throated singing of the bhajan by the huge gathering in the hall. Bhagavan also sang His favourite bhajan: "Prema muditha manase kaho Rama! Rama! Ram!")

—From Bhagavan's discourse in Sai Ramesh Mandap, Brindavan, on April 9, 1995

Human life is extremely precious. There are five sheaths in the human body: Annamaya, Pranamaya, Manomaya, Vijnanamaya and Anandamaya Kosas. Of these five sheaths (the food, vital, the mental, the integral awareness and bliss sheaths), man has in large measure the Vijnanamaya Kosa (integral awareness). This Vijnana (Awareness) is not present in other beings. For this reason man is regarded as supreme among all living beings. He has qualities and capacities not present in other creatures. Hence human birth is considered exceptional. Moreover, man alone has the capacity to recognise the past, the present and future and to take note of changes occurring over time.

Moha and moksha

There is one common quality present in all living beings: Moha or attachment. 'this quality is present equally in human beings. But man alone has the competence to overcome this attachment (Moha) and attain liberation (Moksha). The Maya (illusion) which envelops man drives him to take to wrong courses. Maya has three qualities: Satwa, Rajas and Tamas (Purity, Passion and inertia). Through these qualities man tends to forget his divinity and humanness and behave like an animal. The three qualities of Maya and the three forms of Moha combine to make man a demon. The three forms of Moha are desire for wealth, attachment to the wife and attachment to children. These three make man a slave to attachment (Moha). The man who conquers these three desires can transcend Moha. When Moha declines, Moksha becomes attainable. Liberation is the elimination of Moha (attachment). Everyone should strive to bring under control these three desires.

Population and spirituality

In earlier times, the world's population was around 100 crores (one billion). At that time the number of persons engaged in spiritual pursuits or in the quest for liberation was sizable. Today the world's population has grown, the seekers of liberation have dwindled. With the growth of population, spirituality should also grow pari passu.

Man has two essential organs: Head and heart. Pravritti (interest in the external) arises from the head (the mind), while Nivritti (interest in the internal) arises from the heart. What we are witnessing is an excessive growth of thoughts arising in the head. This means that involvement with the external world is growing from minute to minute. But internal feelings are not developing with steadiness and purity.

Aeons change. The world is changing. But man's heart is not getting transformed. Man is growing, but his heart is not expanding. It is only when the heart widens that humanness will find fulfillment.

Why is the heart of man not broadening at the present time? The reason is the secular education that is prevalent today. This educational system is diverting man's attention towards the external world. The student concentrates his attention on worldly and technical knowledge. He devotes no attention to knowledge of spiritual and ethical importance.

True devotion

All pose as devotees. All appear to be spiritual aspirants. But when you enquire into their actions, you find they are shallow and pretentious. The proverb says: "When troubles come, think of Venkataramana (God)." Similarly these so-called devotees think of God when they have troubles, but forget Him when the troubles are over. True devotion should be firm and unwavering, unselfish and free from any expectation, of reward. Devotional activities should be unaffected by any kind of troubles and tribulations, by censure or praise. That alone is devotion (Bhakti). It is when a man develops such devotion that he would be able to experience the Divine. Students today are completely lost in studies which are worldly, ephemeral. Spiritual knowledge is ridiculed. Spirituality is treated as a kind of hysteria.

The sadhu and the students

Once an ochre-robed person was going in a bazaar. Schoolboys and college students followed him, talking flippantly about him. He took no notice of them. He was proceeding from one village to another. The students indulged in all kinds of abusive language with a view to provoking the mendicant. But the mendicant walked on and sat under a tree on the outskirts of the village. The students went on railing at him and exhausted all their stock of abuse. As they were silent, the mendicant asked them, "children: have you any more words to be used against me? Come out with them even now, as I have to go to the next village". One insolent youth among them asked: "What will happen when you go to the next village?" The mendicant replied: "Child, I will do nothing. Praise or blame attaches only to this body and not to my Self. But, there are in the next village a large number of people who have high regard for me. if you indulge in your abuses of me there, the villagers will thrash you. To save you from this experience I am informing you in advance". On hearing this, the students had a change of heart. They felt: "In spite of all the abuses we levelled at him, this noble being was totally unaffected, did not lose his temper and taught us the right behaviour". They prostrated at the feet of the mendicant and craved for his forgiveness (Kshama).

To forgive is divine

Forgiveness is a quality that every man should possess. That forgiveness is Truth itself, it is Righteousness, it is the Veda. It is the supreme virtue in this world. Hence, all people should develop the quality of forgiveness. People should remain unaffected by what others may say. A true man is one who overcomes the ups and downs of life with fortitude. One should not recoil before reverses of fortune. One should bravely face them and overcome them.

Whoever aspires to win the grace of God should cultivate at the outset the quality of Kshama (Forgiveness). It is a divine quality. Man is permeated from head to foot by the six mortal vices: lust, anger, greed, attachment, pride and envy. His heart is the source of qualities like sympathy, compassion, non-violence and peace. The very term, "Hridaya", means the place (Hrid) which has "Daya" (Compassion). People get agitated over trifles. They should not dissipate their energies in this manner. There are innumerable talents latent in man, of which he is unaware.

Narada wanted to teach Sathyabhama the supreme greatness of some human qualities of which she was not aware. He brought about a situation in which Krishna was to be weighed in a balance and reacquired by Sathyabhama by offering in the other balance. All her jewels and wealth could not tilt the balance in her favour. Ultimately she prayed to Rukmini to come to her rescue. Rukmini came, prayed to Krishna, saying that "if it is true that God submits himself to a devotee who offers with love a leaf, a flower, a fruit or some water, let my Tulsi leaf turn the scales against Krishna." The esoteric meaning of this prayer is that the body should be considered as a leaf, the heart as a flower, virtue as fruit and the tears of joy flowing from the devotee's eyes as the water offered to the Divine in a spirit of complete surrender. Tears should be shed only for God and not for anyone else. Whatever one's grief one should not shed tears. Tears may flow out of joy, or enthusiasm or ecstasy, but not from a feeling of sorrow.

Narada enacted the entire scene to demonstrate to Sathyabhama what glorious qualities Rukmini possessed and the greatness of her devotion. He told Sathyabhama: "The Lord will not succumb to wealth. He will yield only to goodness. Rukmini is a supremely good woman. Follow her example". In this manner Narada humbled Sathyabhama's pride.

Human values

Man is endowed with limitless, latent abilities, which will manifest themselves at the appropriate moment. Every devotee has these unseen and unknown abilities. Man contains within himself all the powers and all the substances that exist anywhere in the cosmos. All objects in the world, including gold and diamonds, derive their value from man. Man- is more valuable than all the things of the world. Unfortunately, today, the human being, who is inherently divine, is devalued and degraded. Human values are born with man. They are not got from outside. Man in his ignorance is not aware of these values. When man sheds his ignorance, he will experience his divine nature.

Experiencing God

People want to see God. How can they do it? Are they able to see themselves? They need a mirror to see themselves. Nature is the mirror in which the image of God can be seen. A mirror needs a mercury coating to be able to reflect an object. To see God in Nature the mirror has to be coated with the mercury of love. Love (Prema) is vital for everything. Today, in the place of love we have hatred, aversion instead of compassion.

What is the inner significance of describing God as "HRIDAYAVASI" (Indweller in the heart)? He resides in the form of compassion (Daya) in the heart. If there is no compassion it is no heart at all. (Swami advised the students to avoid excessive speech and not to give way to anger.)

Ten steps and 100 steps

Everyone should realise that God is with him, beside him and around him all the time. Mukundan (who had addressed the gathering earlier) said that "If you take ten steps towards Bhagavan, he takes hundred steps towards you" But whither should you take these ten steps? No

wickedness, will I take hundred steps in that direction? (Cheers) No. Your steps should be in the direction of what is good. What is good? The steps should lead upwards spiritually. So, if you ascend ten steps, I shall help you to climb a hundred steps. You should move in the right direction not the wrong one. To the extent you yearn and pine for God, God will pine for you a thousand fold. You can have no conception of God's concern (Tapam). Your pining is "Tamas", God's pining is tapas (penance) The difference between the two should be understood.

Kuchela and Krishna

God offers you in return manifold what you offer to Him. This is what Kuchela told his wife. He went to Krishna to ask for many material gifts. But on seeing the Divine face of Krishna, he forgot all his desires. On his return to his native village he found that big mansions had sprung up at the spot of his old dwelling. Kuchela's wife came out, finely dressed and wearing many ornaments, and greeted her husband with the remark: "Lord: See what wonderful things Sri Krishna has given us: What things has He given to you?" Kuchela looked at everything and said: "I did not ask Bhagavan for anything. I did not speak to him about our domestic situation. Is it necessary for me to say anything to the omnipresent, all knowing Lord?" Kuchela then described in detail to his wife how Krishna had received him in His palace and how He hugged Kuchela to His bosom and showered His love on him. "How can I describe His loving kindness? Is there anyone like him who can confer all prosperity on one after receiving a fistful of parched rice? He is Love incarnate and Love is He." (Swami recited a poem).

Today the devotee behaves differently towards God. He goes with a mountain of desires to the temple and offers a small coconut. This is not what you should offer to God. What you should offer is a pure, unsullied heart. If you offer little, God gives you much in return. This means that some kind of offering should be made to God.

Draupadi offered a grain of rice to Krishna with devotion and Krishna, in return, appeased the hunger of thousands (of Durvasa's disciples). God needs nothing for Himself. Whatever you offer is for your own sake.

What God seeks

Today, Kerala celebrates the beginning of the New Year. Keralites prepare a variety of edibles (aviyal, poriyal etc) to be offered to God as prasadam. The offering is only placed in the shrine. But it is all consumed by them later. If God were to consume the offering, it is unlikely, that any offering (Naivedyam) would be made at all. What you have to offer to God is your heart. What God seeks is a heart filled with love. There is nothing greater in the world than such a heart.

We are celebrating the advent of the New Year. But what we should celebrate is the coming of every new moment. A year is made up of seconds, minutes, hours, days and months. Why wait for a whole year? Greet every new second as a new moment for celebration. Contemplate on God every moment as your life-breath.

conferring joy on them, and in activities which will please God. Subject all that you do to the test of divine pleasure.

Although the New Year is celebrated by Andhras, Tamils and Keralites on different dates, the year is only one. How often have these festivals been celebrated? What has been achieved thereby? Nothing! How far have people earned God's grace? How are they enjoying it? Without seeking answers to these questions, people cannot have God-realisation, however long they may be with Bhagavan. The Gopikas prayed for proximity to Krishna in whatever form He manifested Himself—as a flower, or a tree or a mountain or the sky. They were totally innocent of spiritual exercises of any kind. They dedicated all their actions to Krishna. Developing such love in your hearts, you should sow the seeds of love in the hearts of people who are bereft of love today. Water the hearts with love, grow the plants of love and enjoy the harvest of love.

(Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan "*prema mudhitha manase kaho*")

—From Bhagavan's discourse in the Sai Ramesh Mandap, Brindavan, on April 15, 1995

AVATAR VANI:

TAMIL NEW YEAR MESSAGE

“God, Man and the Cosmos”

*Trees yield fruits for the benefit of others,
Rivers carry water for the use of others,
Cows give milk for the good of others,
The human body is given for serving others.*

(Sanskrit Sloka)

For the benefit of others, trees yield fruits. Likewise, for the benefit of others in the world, rivers carry water. Cows, without consuming their milk, take the trouble to produce milk for the benefit of others. Man also, without considering his own personal interests, should use his body for the benefit of others.

"Sareeram Aadyam Khalu Dharma Saadhanam" The body is the primary requisite for the achievement of Dharma (Righteousness). The body has to discharge a variety of functions for the sake of the family, the society and the nation

"Ahameva Akshaya Kaalah", says the Lord in the Gita. "I am the indestructible Time". This Time is not a momentary phenomenon. It is the embodiment of eternal and infinite Time. The sages called this Time as "VATSARAH". This name signifies the presence of the Divine as the Time - Spirit in all human beings. Moreover, God is the basis for all that happens, either through instrumentality or by direct intervention. He is the basis for what is permanent and what

been called "HETHU" (the Cause). "HETHU" means that God is the primal cause of everything. He is also the eternal witness. He is the authority (Pramanaswarupa) for everything. Hence He is described as omnipresent, having His feet, etc. everywhere. Time is the basis for everything.

The year (Samvatsara) is also called VIKSHARA. All objects in the world are subject to the process of creation, growth and decay. But the name Kala-Swaroopa was given to the Divine, who is not subject to birth, growth or decay. This changeless Divine is called "Vikshara". Since the year is associated with "Vikshara", God is the embodiment of the year ("Samvatsara Swaroopa").

Sathya and dharma

For the proper utilisation of TIME, which is Divine, the Vedic texts laid down basic injunctions for mankind. Among these, foremost are "Sathyam Vada: Dharmam Chara" ("Speak the Truth, Follow Righteousness"). This aphorism has a pre-eminent position in Bharatiya culture. Likewise, we have the injunctions: "Esteem the father as God: Revere the mother as Divine". The Vedas proclaimed these aphorisms to be followed by the whole world.

Truth (Sathyam) is the basic goal of human life. Bharatiya culture has revealed how this goal is to be reached. Bharatiyas today have forgotten this culture. From immemorial times, Bharatiyas were engaged in the quest for Truth. Everything is encompassed by Truth.

The quest for Truth is linked with the pursuit of wisdom (Jnana). For the acquisition of wisdom, purity of the intellect (Buddhi) is essential. If the intellect is not pure, the senses are likely to go haywire. Purity of the intellect is in fact, essential for every purpose. Sadhanas performed without purity of the heart will be utterly useless, like food cooked in unclean vessels.

Bharatiya culture and the Vedic texts have proclaimed the glory of spiritual bliss (Ananda). The Atmic principle can be understood only in relation to this concept of Bliss. What is the Atma? Who has seen it? What is the proof for its existence? To answer these questions, here is an illustration. Today is a Friday, the 14th of April. Who told you these particulars about today? The day did not announce this when it began. You derive this information from a calendar or an almanac. In the same manner the proofs for great spiritual truths are provided in the declarations of the Vedas. It is only the spiritual principle (Atma tattvam) that reveals the oneness of the universe. The entire cosmos has emanated from the Atma.

The human being is called "NARA" in Sanskrit. "NARA" means "ATMA" (the Self). "NARA" is made up of two syllables: 'NA' and 'RA'. 'RA' (RAH) means that which is perishable. NA-RA means that which is not perishable. This means that man (NARA) is subject to changes in bodily form, but is essentially immortal. He is full of bliss.

But today people are oblivious to this true nature of man. Human values are also forgotten. People are behaving either like animals or like demons. It is only when people recognise their real human nature and pursue spiritual values, they will realise their sacred divinity.

For all these, devotion is fundamental. Does devotion mean meditation, japa, or observing various austerities? No. Anything done with expectation of reward gets tarnished by the desire for fruits and cannot be deemed real devotion. Devotion has been defined as desireless love for the Lord. Any prayer to God for fulfillment of a desire cannot be called devotion. God should be loved for His own sake. Love should be fostered for its own sake.

True devotion is a combination of selfless service and love. This is illustrated by an episode from the Mahabharata.

Dharmaja's love for Krishna

Dharmaja, the eldest of the Pandava brothers, ceaselessly adored Krishna. While living in the forest or when he was in Duryodhana's court witnessing the dishonouring of Draupadi, or when Abhimanyu was killed in battle, or when the infant Upapandavas were killed (by Ashwathama)—in all these situations Dharmaja used to love Krishna with perfect calmness. He used to feel: "Krishna! These joys and sorrows are twins that always go together. Hence there is no need to get elated or depressed. I cannot swerve from my allegiance to your divinity. My love for you is for your own sake and not for the sake of the world. My love is the bond that links you and me. It is like a bridge that connects the Omni-Self and the individual Self."

Such sacred and divine love is being abused today and consequently the results are bad.

You hail this year as new, but it is not new at all. Nor is man (Manava) a new arrival on earth. "Ma-nava" means that which is not (Ma) new (Nava). When man himself is not new, how can the year be new? Time is divided into night and day, weeks and years on the basis of the revolutions of the earth and the moon in relation to the sun. In truth, man should regard every moment as new, every day as new. Man is governed by these changes, but God is unaffected, God is changeless.

It is only when such sacred truths are understood properly that real devotion will arise in people's hearts.

Fill your hearts with love

For the growth of crops water is essential. But the crops cannot go up to the sky in search of water. For the sake of the crops, the clouds come down and provide water for them. When you pray to God for His own sake, He will take care of everything. Flowers do not invite the bees, but the bees go to them in quest of honey. When we develop the nectar of love in our hearts, God will come to us, like the bee, to drink the nectar. If, on the other hand, you have a plastic flower, no bee will come near it. Likewise only when we fill our hearts with the nectar of love will the Divine enter it.

Today there is perpetual discord between man and man, community and community, village and village, caste and caste. What is the reason? The absence of unity and feeling of

one Divine Self that resides in all beings.

I often tell the students that the one truth proclaimed by all the 18 Puranas is: "It is meritorious to help others; it is sinful to harm others" (Paropakarah Punyaya; papaya parapeedanam") The term "Paropakara" should be properly understood. It is not merely rendering help to others in one form or other. The term "Para-upa-kara" means: "Bringing (Kara) to the proximity (upa) of God (Para)". Purely mundane forms of help cannot be described as "Paropakara". They are gross, external and worldly. True "paropakara" consists in bringing your life close to the divine. That is "Punya" (merit). "Punya" does not mean going on pilgrimage or giving gifts. Punya means taking your life close to God. This calls for the recognition of the Divine in all beings (*Ekaatmabhaava*). "*Para-peedanam*" means failing to see the Divine in all beings. That is sinful (Papa).

Growth of selfishness

Man has progressed a great deal in the physical and scientific fields. But with regard to morality and spirituality man has declined considerably. The reason is the deep-rooted growth of selfishness over the centuries. The entire human life is permeated with selfishness. This selfishness should be brought under restraint. Only then human life can be meaningful. Man should look at the world from the Divine point of view. Life is full of ups and downs. All these are transient. Man should use what is temporary (the body) as the base for realising what is eternal, the Atma. These are inter-related.

The nature of God

People should endeavour to understand the Atmic principle. What is the Atma? Where is it? These questions were raised by a king. Where is God? Where does he cast His looks? What does He do? Few in his court could answer these questions. He then summoned a sage and asked him: Where is God? He replied: Like butter in milk, He is everywhere, "Where does God cast His eyes?" asked the king. The sage lit a lamp and asked the king. "In which direction does this lamp shed its light?" "It sheds its light in all directions", answered the king. The sage observed: "Likewise, God is effulgent and sees everything everywhere. There is no particular direction for God's vision. He is all-seeing and omnipresent".

The king then asked: "What work does God do?" The sage said: To answer this question I have to assume the role of the preceptor and you should accept the role of the disciple. Are you prepared for this?" The King said: "Yes". Then the sage said: "In that case, you better come down from the throne and sit down, while I sit on the throne." When the king sat down the sage remarked: "This is what God does. He brings down the mighty and elevates the humble; He can make the poor rich and the rich poor. He can do anything. He is all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-pervading. These are true characteristics of God. He is all-pervading like butter in milk. He is all-seeing like the light of a lamp which sends out its rays all around. God is also all - powerful. He can do anything.

theist or an atheist. People may judge things as good or bad according to their own predilections. But for God all things are the same. In this world nothing will appear bad if one views it from the Divine point of view. Seen from the worldly point of view, there will be differences of good and bad.

Bliss is within you

To experience the Divine, one has to perform good deeds. The Divine is present in every being as consciousness (Chaitanya). This consciousness is also described as Sat-Chit-Ananda (Being-Awareness-Bliss). "Sat" means Truth, that which is true and unchanging in all the categories of Time, past, present and future. That Truth can be cognised only by truth. "Chit" means total awareness. To have total awareness you have to have a total vision. You must have complete love to get that vision. To see an object in its totality, and not partially, is total awareness. It is only when there is total awareness of Truth, you can experience the Bliss Divine (Ananda). Ananda is that which is unchanging. To experience Ananda you have to fill yourself with bliss. How is this to be achieved? Where is Ananda? Is it in this phenomenal world? You imagine that if you get a certain object you will be happy. But after getting it, how long does the happiness last? A student thinks that he will be happy if he passes his examination. After passing the examination, he wants to continue his studies. After completing his studies, he is again unhappy because he has no job. After getting a job, he is anxious for a promotion. And so on, at every stage happiness is only momentary, but desires are endless. Bliss cannot be found in worldly objects. The source of enduring bliss is within you. There is no meaning in searching for it elsewhere. Turn your external vision inwards. Close your eyes and try to see within. In this process, bliss will emerge from within you.

God and the world

Some teachers declare: Give up the world and take hold of God. Do these teachers follow what they preach? No. They are very much in the world and still preach in this manner. It is not possible to give up the world. The world also is a manifestation of God. Unfortunately, people go on looking at this Divine manifestation but do not see it as such. All that you see is a form of the Divine. Do not see it as different from God.

The intellect and the mind

In this world, you have to give due recognition to the physical and the phenomenal. From the worldly point of view today is the beginning of a new year in Tamilnadu. This relates to the sidereal year. The lunar New Year began on April 1. The lunar and sidereal years are not opposed to each other. The moon is not a self-luminous planet. He shines as a result of the sun's light. When sunlight does not fall on the moon, there is darkness on the moon's surface. The moon is the presiding deity for the mind and the sun is the Lord of the eyes. The Vedas have declared, "The moon came from the mind of the Cosmic Person and the sun from his eyes". The sun and the moon are not separate. The same light comes from both. This truth has to be recognised. The sages have declared that the sun presides over the Buddhi (intellect) and the moon over the mind (manas). If you succumb to the mind you will be deluded (by Maya). Follow the Buddhi and you will become a Buddha (The Enlightened One). Buddhi (the intellect)

the Buddhi. The mind receives the light indirectly from the Buddhi. It is inconscient (Jada). It is enveloped in the darkness of ignorance. Man today is inclined to follow the mind rather than the intellect. Hence he is caught up in ignorance, because the mind has no luminosity of its own it is only when the light from the intellect illumines the mind that man can make a safe journey. The intellect has been described as capable of going beyond the reach of the senses ("Buddhigrahyam atheendriyam"). Hence man should be guided by the intellect. Below the intellect is the mind. Below the mind are the senses. Below the senses is the body.

Consider the relationship between the body and God. The hands, the eyes, the ears, the mouth and the nose are organs in the body; all these are limbs of the body. The body is a limb of Society. Society is a limb of humanity. Humanity is a limb of Nature (Prakriti). Nature is a limb of the Divine. This is the integral relationship between the human body and God. The indweller in the body (Dehi) and God are one. The body is a moving temple. Without the indwelling spirit, the body is only a corpse fit to be burnt or buried.

Man has to be sustained by faith in the power of God. Without that faith Karna, despite all his prowess, died ingloriously. Arjuna was victorious because of his faith in Krishna. Man should recognise the divinity within him and should be guided by the Divine charioteer.

Develop love for God. That love will take you to God. Observe three maxims in life: Love of God, fear of sin and morality in society. Then, in all situations, God will stand by you.

Every moment is auspicious if you dedicate your actions to God. If your mind is pure, other things do not matter.

(Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the song: "*Bhajan bina sukha santhi nahi*".)

—From Bhagavan's discourse in the Sai Ramesh Mandapam on 14-4-1995,
Tamil New Year Day

WE ARE ONE

As I sit quietly for darshan
A warm Indian dawn filled with voices
Raised in praise and hushed expectancy
Arises before my mind's eye.
The body sits overlooking the South Pacific ocean,
A vast Australian sky lightening at dawn.
There is a hush, "Swami! Swami!"
A brilliant orange orb rises slowly, gracefully,

It rises to its fullness, filling me with its
Golden light of love and peace.
"O let this radiant moment last forever,"
I whisper in urgency.
Sweetly, clearly comes the gentle reply,
"Let darshan be your whole life;
Make your home a Prasanthi Nilayam.
Do not yearn for the physical presence;
Yearn and yearn only for the divine presence,
The Divine reality Sat Chit Ananda
Do not let darshan end here;
Let darshan be endless;
Sathyam Jnanam Anantam Brahma.
Think Swami, eat Swami, sleep Swami,
Hear Swami. See Swami and line Swami.
Merge all your senses in thoughts of me
And you will experience me as the
Taste, smell, touch, sight and sound
Of all your day; there is nothing else;
Only in delusion did you experience else.
Open your heart and experience me
As the breath of the wind in the trees;
Feel me in the life-giving rains,
Hear me in the songs of the birds,
Touch me in the softness of the child's cheek.
See me as the light of the sun
By day and the moon by night.
The light of your meditation lamp
Is me, that light is you; WE ARE ONE
Immerse yourself in love to open your eyes
To my presence and follow my footprints
From your meditation seat into your home,
Follow me down the streets of your life
Catching glimpses of me throughout the day.
If you lose sight of me;
Again fill your heart with love
And the footprints will reappear:
By filling your heart with love,
You will become nearer and dearer
Until you stand in the full glory
Of my divine presence; become me
By becoming one with divine love;
So Hum I AM THAT I AM and in love.

That which you have always been
Always are and always will be:
Divine Love, Prema:
OM SANTHI SANTHI SANTHIH."

—**W. Perret, Sydney**

The Lord is the unseen foundation on which your life is built. He is the source, sustenance and strength. Without His will, no leaf can turn, no blade of grass cart quiver. What firmer foundation can you desire than this? Once you know that the Lord, the Omnipotent Power, is the mainspring of your life, there will be no fear any more. When you suspect the strength of the foundation of a house, you are afraid to enter it; when you suspect the skill of the manufacturer, you are nervous to ride in the car. Bhishma and other Bhakthas as well as Sankara and other Jnanis, knew that the Lord is the Aadhaara, and so they had no fear at all. But, that faith has not taken root in man today and so, this has become an age of Fear and Anxiety, of Ashanti.

—**Baba.**

“Restoration of moral values”

*Knowledge enhances man's status;
it is a Hidden Treasure.
Knowledge confers Joy, Fame and Happiness;
it is the teacher of teachers,
It is one's kinsman in travels abroad;
it is a third Eye for Man.
Even kings adore Knowledge and not Wealth;
without Knowledge one is an animal.*

(Sanskrit Sloka)

Students! Teachers and, Lovers of Education!

In this work-a-day world, knowledge is the adornment for man. It is hidden wealth. It is the basis for fame, happiness and comforts. It is a teacher for teachers. It serves as a relation when one goes abroad. It is like a third eye for a man. Such sacred knowledge qualifies the person for honour at the courts of kings. It is more precious than riches. A man without such sacred knowledge is verily like an animal.

Embodiments of Love!

Just as when a child is born, he is able to recognise his mother, likewise every student should recognise his Motherland and its history and culture. The Motherland is the land of his birth. The nation's culture is like one's father. Without understanding the country's culture one cannot understand the true state of the nation.

Bharat's culture is unexcelled. Bharatiyas were known for their adherence to Truth and Dharma (Righteousness). Justice was their life-breath.

Bharat's culture represents the eternal verities which are unaffected by the ravages of time or the vicissitudes of history. Students should realise that if they cherish Truth and Righteousness, the nation will get automatically protected. Success seeks Truth and Righteousness and not wealth or possessions.

Loss of values

Students should acquire human values, in addition to their scholastic, intellectual and other attainments. It is the decline in human values that accounts for the degradation of human beings, in the country today.

Technology has made great strides in modern times. The advances in other fields need no mention. The revolutionary advances in technology have brought about many changes in national life. The most important change is the decay of morals. All spiritual and ethical values have been undermined. Moral standards have collapsed.

Hence, students today should be more concerned about good qualities than about knowledge. Society can progress only through men of virtue. Every student should have the welfare of society in view and have service as the ideal.

What is education? It is not mere acquaintance with books. Can mere ability to read and write be regarded as education or even the acquisition of degrees? True education is associated with the ideal goals of life. Today all ideals have been perverted. "Qualities like compassion and goodness have been replaced by unrighteous conduct. The ancient teachings have been given up. Education has gone astray". (Kannada poem)

India gave the message of peace to the world in ancient times because of its spiritual leadership. Then, as well as now, the Bharatiya message has been: "Let all the people everywhere be happy."

Who are to blame?

Who are responsible for the failure of the educational system? The parents at home, the teachers in schools and colleges, the leaders of society have failed to set the right examples and hence the students have gone astray. The parents at home tell the children one thing and act differently themselves. Teachers likewise teach one thing and act differently themselves. Leaders also preach one thing and practise another. Students are intelligently observing these double standards. They are induced to take to wrong courses by this divorce between words and deeds. Obviously, the eiders are setting a bad example. The parents are not anxious to see that their children develop good qualities and lead ideal lives. Their affection for children is natural but it should not be, as in the case of Dhritarashtra, such as to encourage the children in evil ways. It is only if children are corrected and punished for their misconduct that they will learn- to behave properly in society.

Every student today wants to lead a comfortable life. But they have no idea what comfort really means. They argue that comfort consists in eating, drinking and leading a free and easy life. But spending one's time in this manner is unworthy of a human being. The preciousness of human life has to be realised. To lead an animal existence is unbecoming for any student or anyone else. The first need is self-restraint and control of the senses. Only then can true bliss be secured. This alone will confer true freedom."

Freedom and unity

Freedom does not mean living as you please: True freedom emanates from the Spirit ("Swa" "Tantra"). The goal of self-realisation can be attained only through self-control. Knowledge of the Self, control of the senses and Self-realisation constitute true freedom.

Bharatiyas got freedom (from foreign rule) but have not achieved national unity. Unity is essential for achieving anything, as has been declared in the Vedic saying: "Let us live together, strive together, impart to others what we have learnt and lead a life of harmony and unity".

courage. But, because of absence of unity among them, the country became a prey to foreign conquerors. Students should therefore learn the lesson of unity. The Nation's progress and good name are dependent on the behaviour of the student. Hence, their conduct should be exemplary. Today's students are the future leaders of the country. From now on, you should develop good qualities and cherish ideals of service to the nation. Become heroes in action and plunge into society for service, with self-confidence.

Today, people talk about egalitarianism, a new social order and so on. There is no need for a new social system. We need only boys and girls of high character. Only they can save the country and not those who indulge in subversive activities. Humanity is one. If you strive, to serve the country unitedly, Bharat will make enviable progress. If all the ninety crores of people in Bharat act as one, Bharat will stand forth as an ideal nation.

The ancient virtues

There are many things about Bharat's achievements in the past which you should know. What did humanness mean in the ancient times? "Forbearance was esteemed as the highest quality. Adherence to truth was the strictest form of penance. Maternal love was deemed the sweetest feeling. Charity was esteemed greater than life itself." (Telugu poem) All these have been forgotten, alas, under the regime of our rulers today. Bharatians are unaware of their own past greatness and strength.

What glory was there in the past! What spirit of sacrifice! What sense of justice! What devotion to Dharma (Righteousness)! All this is forgotten today. Why? Because of limitless selfishness. Only when selfishness and hatred are given up can we enjoy peace. Humanness calls for harmony in thought, word and deed. Today this harmony is totally lacking.

The educational process should aim at developing character and not merely intellectual abilities. Of what use is it to get a Doctorate without character? Education should have a practical bias which will make the student useful for himself and society. Students! Pursue your studies with the welfare of society in view. Develop love towards the Motherland, realising that the mother and the Motherland are greater than heaven itself. You owe so much to Bharat. Do your duty by Bharat.

Bharatmata (Mother Bharat) is greatly concerned about the state of her children. You must be good and become ideal students. You must win fame for the country. You must share in the prosperity of the nation with all others. To whatever country you may belong, cherish love for your country. "All are one. Be alike to everyone." Don't give room for differences of race, creed or nation. There is only one race, the race of humanity. There is only one caste, the caste of spirituality. There is only one language, the language of the heart. There is only one God, the Supreme Divinity, that is present in all beings and permeates the entire cosmos. The Divine is present in every atom. Everything in the world is composed of energy and matter. Einstein called it "Supreme Power". Bharatians described it as "Divine Energy" (Divya-Shakti).

survive.

Machines and man

Students! There are many here who have come to study science. Scientists have invented many new kinds of machinery and instruments. But the scientists have not recognised that there is one machine which exceeds all other machines put together. The scientists have produced satellites which go round the earth and spacecraft that can land on the moon. They are harnessing solar energy. They have made atom bombs and hydrogen bombs. There is one machine that is more powerful than all these. That is the human body. Man is the maker of all these machines. The marvellous powers of the human body are not fully recognised by any one. You should examine your own potentialities. It is man's potent power that has created all the wonderful machines. All the powers in the world are within you. The outside world is a reflection of your inner being. Students should recognise this truth. Various scientists are being praised. But all powers are within you, electrical power; magnetic power, the power of light and fire and radiation. Every human being is a computer. Every individual is a mini-generator. Every person is a lamp and a radio station.

Tension, temper and peace

Our ancients knew the secret of enjoying peace. Today even, a tiny tot suffers from "tension". Where there is tension there is temper. Tension and temper are jointly, destroying humanness. How can peace be found? Peace has to be found within each of us. You are the embodiment of peace and truth. You are the embodiment of love. Instead of realising the truth about themselves students are engaged in studying various subjects, thereby missing the main object of education. Just as the most complicated and expensive machine cannot work without electric power, the human machine cannot work without divine energy.

Students! You have a powerful machine in your body. Activate it with Divine energy. You have all the power you need within yourself. Being unaware of it, you misuse it. You should not waste time, which once lost cannot be recalled. Utilise all your learning for the service of society. Experience the life Divine, by putting into practice a fraction of what you learn from the Gita. Practise any one of the human values. Prema (love) is the basis for all the values. Action with love is right conduct. Speak with love and it becomes truth. Thinking with love results in peace. Understanding with love leads to non-violence. For everything love is primary. Where there is love there is no place for hatred.

Humility and discipline

Make right use of the period of youth. Banish conceit. Respect your parents and elders. Cultivate humility and discipline. A boy is judged by his behaviour and a man by his manners. A devotee is judged by his discipline. In these summer classes you must try to understand how to realise Divinity, how to lead a spiritual life in the work-a-day world, and how to render service in the best way possible and how to lead an ideal life.

connotations. Life itself is culture. What is done from moment to moment is an expression of culture. Having been born in this sacred land of Bharat you should learn to behave in such a way that you please Bharatmata. Mother Bharat is deeply distressed not only over the conduct of students but all others in this nation. No section of the people is behaving properly. Even in the field of spirituality, the Motherland has cause for grief. The garb is changed, but not the qualities.

Treat the Motherland as the mother and our culture as the father. Students today have no patriotism. Students must be prepared to give even their lives to protect the Integrity and honour of the Motherland.

We are unaware of the 'significance of being Hindus. What does Hindu mean?

H *STANDS FOR HUMANITY*
I *FOR INDIVIDUALITY*
N *FOR NATIONALITY*
D *FOR DIVINITY*
U *FOR UNITY*

It is when all the five qualities are present, we have a real Hindu. Of these humility is most Important.

Students! Make best use of the next ten days and try to practise what you learn.

You have listened today to the addresses of the Chief Minister and the Education Minister of Karnataka. You must try to imbibe the ideals they have set forth before you and live up to them. The Chief Minister has been deeply concerned about the state of the nation and of Karnataka for many years. Even now he is keen to do some lasting good to the country. Well-meaning persons are always confronted with obstacles. These troubles only serve to ennoble them, just as a diamond gets added value from more cuts.

Students should face all the challenges of life and serve the country well.

(The meeting concluded with the singing of the National Anthem)

From Bhagavan's discourse at the Inauguration of the Summer Course in Indian Culture and Spirituality in the Brindavan Campus Auditorium on May 20, 1995

AVATAR VANI

“Nearness to God”

Vedaahametham Purusham Mahaantham

(Bhagavan began His discourse with recitation of this sloka).

In ancient days the sages, who were doing Tapas and finally had a vision of the Reality, declared that they had realised the Divine, whose effulgence was that of the sun, beyond the darkness of ignorance. They also taught that God is the embodiment of Truth and had to be experienced as such. They declared that one who does not see this Truth is akin to an animal. That is why there is the saying that one who is revelling in untruth is only an animal.

Truth issues from love (Prema). In this world there is nothing greater than love (Prema). The more you love, the more blissful you become. Divinity is the embodiment of love. Love shines as the eternal truth in every one's heart. However, it will be dormant in the heart of the selfish. Love (Prema) shines only in the heart of the person who is selfless. Love cannot co-exist with ego and pomp. Love is the royal path that can take you to the highest state of the Divine.

This love has to be experienced and shared with all. When love is directed towards the ephemeral world it is "Anuraga" or attachment. When it is directed towards God it is true love. Worldly experiences confer only temporary happiness. Love towards the Paramatma (the Supreme Self), who is eternal and changeless, will confer eternal bliss. Every individual should know the difference between Prema and Anuraga. Many people profess that they love God. But, in reality, not even one in a million loves God in the true sense of the term. They may love God for securing some selfish material benefits. This is not true devotion at all.

True devotion

What is devotion? It is not merely offering several types of worship or going on pilgrimage. Unalloyed and true love for love's sake alone constitutes devotion. True devotion is the love flowing from a pure heart unpolluted by selfish motives. Love is the intimate bond of relationship between the devotee and the Lord. There are nine types of devotion. But they are not equal to Prema (Pure Love).

All the 18 yogas mentioned in the Bhagavad Gita, such as Jnana Yoga, Karma Yoga; Vibhuti Yoga etc., are contained in Bhakti yoga. There is nothing beyond this. Do you want to realise God? Do you want to tread the spiritual path and redeem your life? Then, it is enough if you pursue the path of pure love (Prema Marga).

Power of love

There is no power greater than love (Prema) in this world because it is selfless and pure. Though several yogas are available for practice, each and every yoga contains an element of selfishness. But 'Prema' is free from selfishness. It is only because of the absence of such selfless love that chaos, conflicts and confusion are prevalent in the world. One who is interested in the welfare of humanity should practice this principle of true love. The life of an individual bereft of love is a sheer waste.

Sages spent their time in the forests amidst wild animals. They lived amicably side by side with them. The animals did not harm these sages. What is the reason? The sages had no weapons at all. They had the sole weapon of love. With this weapon they were able to tame the wild animals. But, in these days, while calling themselves human beings, men are behaving worse than animals. The reason is rank selfishness. Whatever they think, say or do, selfishness is the basic motive. The result is they are not able to enjoy peace.

From truth to peace

How is peace to be got? When you plant the seed of Truth in the heart and make faith take deep root, with the rain of chanting God's name, peace blossoms, yielding the fruit of Liberation. Therefore, every human being should sow the seed of Truth in his heart. The deeper the root of faith goes down, the stronger will be the tree of life. You must provide water for the flourishing growth of the tree by means of singing the glory of God (Bhajan and Daiva Chintana). Only then the flower of Santhi (peace) will bloom and from this the fruit of liberation will be attained.

Human life has four stages. It can be described as a four-storeyed mansion. Any structure can be safe and sound only when the foundation is strong. Celibacy (Brahmacharya) is the foundation for the structure of life. The first floor is the stage of Grihastha (householder leading a married life). The second floor is Vanaprastha (preparatory to Sanyasa) and the third floor is Sanyasa (Renunciant).

This year is called 'Yuva' (Youth). Youth should develop strongly the foundation of celibacy so that when they reach the other stages they can be ideal persons. They should develop 'Love' (Prema) towards God. This is the only way to build their strength.

People think that the world is separate from them. The entire universe is in the heart of each individual. "Viswam Vishnuswarupam". The Universe is but a manifestation of the Divine, which is within the heart of every individual. Vishnu is the cause and the universe is the effect.

The three states and the three worlds

There are three states of consciousness in man—the waking state, the dream state and the deep sleep state. All the three states are in every individual. The three governing powers in these states are Vishwa, Tejas and Prajna respectively. The Gayatri mantra OM Bhur Bhuvah-Suvah is related to these three. We think that Bhuloka is the world that we live in, Bhuhvarloka is swarga and Suvhaloka is beyond that. This is not correct. All the three worlds are in our heart only. The outside world we see is the material world formed of inert matter. You may ask how this can be called inert when there is a lot of movement. The world that you see is "Bhu" and the power that causes the movement is "Bhuvah" or Pranashakti (Life Force) which can be termed as "Vibration". It is the force of vibration that activates all the limbs of the body. When air is pumped into a tyre we see this force in play which causes the tyre to bloat. The Life Force or 'Praana' is Bhuvah. Because of the 'Prajnana', which is inside, the Life Force is able to cause the vibration and activate the limbs. The source of 'Prajna' is Suvaha, or Radiation. When you

The three potencies

It is the existence of these potencies in man that makes human birth very precious. But its value is now being ruined by people getting immersed in fleeting sensual pleasures. Humanness is entirely forgotten. It cannot be acquired by learning from a teacher or studying textbooks. It is born with the human being. It is there in everyone. People are not able to understand this truth today.

"Punya" and "papa"

The Vedas are infinite and human life is limited. How to master the infinite within the short span of one's life? Keeping this problem in view, Sage Vyasa codified the Vedas into four major divisions and named them RIG, YAJUR, SAMA and ATHARVA Vedas. Rig Veda is Mantra-swaroopa (consisting of Mantras). The Yajur Veda is a compilation of rituals or Yajus and the Sama Veda is a compilation of riks set to music. In order to maintain the health of the individual and ensure the protection of the country, the 'Atharva Veda' was compiled. Sage Vyasa, who codified these four Vedas and wrote 18 puranas, finally gave one stanza as the essence of all the Puranas, namely, "It is meritorious to render help to others. It is sinful to cause harm to them." "Paropakara punyaya, papaya parapeedanam". The inner meaning of the declaration by Vyasa should be understood by everyone. 'Para' means Brahma, 'Upa' means nearness and 'Kara' means 'go'. So this term 'Paropakara' means "travel towards the Atma and go nearer the PARAMATMA". Chanting the name of God or doing other forms of worship will not help you to go near God, though they are good deeds. It is only by selfless service you can get nearer to God. This is real 'Punya'. "Paapaaya Parapeedanam". According to worldly interpretation, this means that it is a sin to hurt others. But there is an inner meaning for this. 'Para' means "Atma". 'Peedanam' means 'Hurting'. The same principle of Atma is in everyone. You should not hurt the Atma. What is meant by this is that you should realise the oneness of the Atma in all. If you do not realise this and act contrary to the principle, it is 'Hurting'. You are considering the bodies which are different in form as different from you. To do so is 'sin'. You must only see the 'Atma' in all. There are many bulbs of different shapes and sizes here in this hall. But the electric current that makes them shine is only one. The "*Atma-tattwa*", the principle of Atma, is the one current that activates all the bodies which are like bulbs of different hues and shapes. "To see diversity is 'sin' says Vyasa. He taught the world to see the one in the many. You should follow this principle and develop 'Prema', the principle of love, towards all. When there is Prema there is no grief.

You need not waste time in trying to study all the sacred texts, as they are innumerable and your life-span is very short. All that is needed is to cultivate the "*Prema tattwa*" (Love principle). There is no greater power than this in the world. It is the supreme among all virtues.

Real love is beyond the three categories of time, past, present and future. Love towards God, the permanent changeless entity, alone is fit to be called Prema.

In the Gayatri Mantra, the unity of body, mind and soul is depicted in the first line as "Bhur-Bhuvah-Suvaha". The next line "Bhargo Devasya Dheemahi" means: "Throw away the darkness." "Dheeyo nah Prachodayaath" means "let the effulgence of the Divine dispel the darkness of ignorance." Gayatri is pervading everywhere. It consists of three deities, Gayatri, Savitri and Saraswati. Of these, the first one is master of the senses. The second is the teacher of truth and the third is the master of speech (Vaak). Hence it is a Trinity of the senses, the mind and speech. Gayatri is hailed as "Chandasam mathah", the Mother of all Vedas. Gayatri has five faces and is the embodiment of all deities. (Sarvadevata Swaroopam). Description of the glory (stotra) of Dhyana (Meditation) and prayer (prarthana) are all contained in the Gayatri Mantra. When does a prayer become meaningful? It is only when you stabilise your mind and turn it towards God. The basis for this is to meditate, pray and experience. It is essential to achieve harmony in thought, word and deed. Gayatri is teaching this great lesson.

Meaning of upanayanam

Every small word or phrase in a mantra has immense inner meaning, it cannot be dismissed as superstition. Modern education has ruined our ancient Bharatiya culture. You should know the meaning of the mantras. People want the fruits of meritorious deeds but they indulge in sinful action. How can you get good results when your action is faulty or sinful? Youth today must pledge themselves to speak the truth, develop love and have unshakable faith in God. They will then be able to establish peace in the world. This is the significance of Yagnopaveetham (the sacred thread ceremony). Upanayanam is a Samskara that makes a boy fit for pursuing the highest wisdom. There is no difference between one child and another at the time of birth. All are born out of the mother's womb only. This is the first stage of life (Sudra). The second stage is getting the upadesha of Gayatri at the time of Upanayanam, when the boy becomes a Dwija or twice-born. He is then purified. The third stage is Vipra, when one has mastered the study of the Vedas. The fourth stage is Brahmana when he actually realises the Brahman through the knowledge of the Self. One becomes a Brahmana not by birth but only when one realises the Supreme Brahman. One becomes a Brahmana by action and not by birth.

Develop love of God

Prahlada said that a father can be proud of his son not at the time of the son's birth but only when the son attains fame as a good man. It is only then that his birthday can be celebrated. Those of you who have had this sacred teaching of Gayatri today are very lucky. On this very auspicious day, you have all taken a second birth. You must forget the past. The present is, very important. From today onwards you must develop love of God and get a good name. Though God is the creator of all beings, you must understand that while God created mud and water, it is the potter that is responsible for creating a pot by mixing the mud and water. Similarly God has created 'chaitanya' (consciousness) and 'jada' (matter). Your father and mother have together given you your body and brought, you up. It is, therefore, your duty to make your parents happy. If you don't please them, or if you ignore them, you cannot be happy. You must develop love for your parents, study well, imbibe the sacred culture of Bharat and lead noble lives as ideal sons of your parents. Gayatri will protect your body, make your intellect shine and improve your power of speech. That is why Gayatri is considered to be very important for this second stage of your life,

upanishadic prayer: "Sahanavavathu Sahanou Bhunakthu Sahaveeryam Karavaavahai". ("Let us grow together, live together and develop love together.") From such living, you get divinity. Unity leads to purity and purity to divinity. Where there is no unity, you get enmity and hatred.

Revere the parents

Today is Easwaramma day, the day of the Matrudevata (Mother Goddess). All mothers are goddesses. That is why in Bharat, people follow the maxim: Esteem the mother, the father, the teacher and the guests as God.

Once when Sita was teaching how to worship God, Rama intervened and said: "Oh simple minded one! Who is greater in the world than the mother and the father? They know our difficulties and needs. They are able to understand our feelings. They are able to fulfill all our wants. Having such known entities who take interest in your welfare, why should you go after unknown entities?" At all times, the parents are there looking after you. You have to worship them. The mother can be compared to the earth and the father to the seed. Unless the seed is sown in the earth the plant will not sprout. You cannot ignore the father and mother who are responsible for your birth and growth. Even if you become the Prime Minister you must remember you owe your birth in the world to your mother. You must develop humility and discrimination as a mark of education. You should not discard love of God at any time. If you forget God, you are not human but demonic. Money, beauty and youth will not last long.

Nowadays, people are not getting rid of attachment and arrogance even in old age. I composed a drama when I was young under the title in: "CHEPPINATLU CHESTHAARAA?" ("Do you do as you say?"). Now I have to ask: "Cheppinatlu Chesinara?" ("Have you done as I told you?") If you go on concentrating on your family alone till death, what is it you derive finally? None of these people will come with you on your final journey. It is the love of God that will come with you even after death. Develop love and sanctify your life with that Prema principle. Chant the Gayatri morning, noon and evening. You do so many things. Why don't you chant this Gayatri? I bless all of you that you may sanctify your life in this way, making it useful and meaningful.

(Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the Bhajan, "*Prema Mudita 'Manase kaho: Rama! Rama! Ram'*")

—From the Divine discourse of Bhagavan on 6.5.95 in Sai Ramesh Hall, Brindavan

AVATAR VANI:

SUMMER COURSE IN BRINDAVAN

Experiencing the Divine

Students!

illumine the effulgent Atma by the light of any other knowledge. It is a sign of ignorance to embark on a search for the Atma principle which is all-pervading, effulgent and unchanging. No individual tries to search himself in the world outside. Similarly, is it not sheer ignorance to search for the Atma when he himself is the Atma?

Bharat has been propagating this sacred truth over many aeons. Bharat is the birth-place of spiritual enquiry, generosity and righteousness. It was the home of peace and non-violence. Nowhere else in the world can be seen that interest in the pursuit of Truth which Bharat had. The seven great sages were born in Bharat. It is the land which gave birth to the Adikavi Valmiki and the great codifier of the Vedas, the sage Vyasa. It is the sacred land where Lord Krishna delivered His message. It is the sacred land where Rama established Rama Rajya. It is the most sacred land of the Buddha. From ancient times, Bharat has never been bereft of people revelling in righteousness and charity and dedicated to the contemplation of God.

Faith and enquiry

In the contemplation of God there can be no difference of caste or creed, no distinctions based on age or language. It is open to everyone. Like food for the body, God is vital for the mind. In the practice of devotion there may be some ludicrous exercises. But even in such exercises, there is a spiritual undercurrent. For instance, a student may pray to God for passing in his examination. A litigant may pray for success in his dispute. Why go so far? Some people pray even for securing a seat in a bus! In this manner Bharatiyas have looked to God for help in trivial and serious matters. This may be regarded as a form of craziness or a kind of religious delusion, or even foolishness. Whatever people may say, each one is entitled to his madness. Each has a right to his beliefs, his faith and his appetite. No one has the authority to deny their right. Their beliefs are their business.

However, beliefs may, require some basis. The discovery of a bridegroom does not decide the marriage of a bride. Finding some money will not ensure the launching of a business. Other accessories are needed for the purpose. By merely learning the alphabet, one cannot start writing letters. Letter writing calls for knowledge of words and sentences. Likewise, knowledge of worldly matters will not enable the understanding of God. Spiritual knowledge is also necessary. The acquisition of spiritual knowledge calls for enquiry into truth.

The cosmos and the Divine

To start with, every man has to understand the nature of the universe. He should also understand the life principle. Only those who understand the nature of living beings in the Universe can know the secret of the Divine.

From ancient times, wise sages and scientists have been investigating the secrets of the Universe. Galileo discovered some facts about the movement of planets. The earth is going round the sun at the rate of 18,000 miles per second. It completes the round in 365 days. Who is responsible for the earth's motion? Why is it rotating? On what basis is it revolving? We find that

the cause of seasons, which enable man to raise food, etc. Whatever the Divine does, whether it is something small or great, it is for the good of mankind. There is a power at work about which we are ignorant. This was described as the Ajnata Shakti (the unknown power). The ancients called it the power of God (Divya Shakti).

Another scientist, exploring the secrets of Nature, came to the conclusion that understanding the powers of Nature means understanding God. The great scientist, Einstein, discovered the convertibility of matter and energy and declared that energy is convertible into various forms but cannot be created or destroyed.

Science and spirituality

Students who perform experiments in the laboratory should bear in mind an important truth. They know that water is made up of hydrogen and oxygen. But who created hydrogen and oxygen without which there can be no water? Thus water is based on hydrogen and oxygen. Likewise nothing can exist without a basis. Science is concerned with substances that are liable to change. Spirituality is concerned with the basic unchanging entity.

The term spirituality is bandied about in various ways. We talk about culture and spirituality. Culture was defined as "a way of life." In Sanskrit parlance, it is called "Samskriti" or the refinement of behaviour. It was declared that for this refinement of behaviour spirituality is the means. What is spirituality? People regard various rituals and forms of worship as spirituality. Spirituality is concerned with the spirit of love. Science is engaged in "split of love". The splitting process in Science results in changes. The "Spirit of love" in spirituality is permanent and unchanging. Hence, culture grows out of the spirit of love. There can be no culture without love. Spirituality implies a power that is associated with love.

Einstein felt that the unchanging power that underlies energy may be described as divine. But he could not go any further.

Discovering God

However, many spiritual seekers undertook various exercises to discover God. At one time, some aspirants approached Buddha and asked him whether he had any awareness of God. On this issue, Buddha remained silent. Later on he told his disciple: "Son, there is no meaning in having controversies over the unknown. Don't go into such questions. Divinity is not perceptible. It is beyond human comprehension, not within the reach of the mind or speech. However, the Divinity that I know has three forms: Truth, Righteousness and Non-violence. I consider these three as the embodiments of Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara. First of all, follow the truth and act according to Dharma. Lead a life of non-violence. This is true spiritual sadhana".

Truth is God. The Vedas declared: "Speak the Truth; follow Righteousness". There is no greater divinity than these two. Where truth reigns, there Divinity is present. Where Righteousness is prevalent, there the Divine exists as Dharma.

Kingdom and choosing to live in the forest, that Vasishta hailed him as the very embodiment of Dharma. To honour the promise given by the father, the son was prepared to undergo such an ordeal. He sacrificed everything for truth. He ceaselessly practised Dharma. He was regarded as God incarnate. Any one who adheres to Dharma, whoever he may be, is verily the embodiment of God.

In our own times, some people approached Ramakrishna Paramahansa and put him the question: "Swami! Have you seen God?" "Oh yes, I have seen Him". They then asked: "In what form did you see Him?" "I saw Him just as you are seeing me," declared Ramakrishna Paramahansa. "How is that possible?" they asked. "This is possible. You do not have that intense yearning needed to see God. You take endless trouble to acquire possessions. You shed tears over petty matters, you weep night and day for the sake of riches. Have you shed a single tear for God?" (Bhagavan recited a poem of Jayadeva in which he declared that if a fraction of the trouble which people take for the sake of the family and wealth, were to be devoted to God, they would have no fear of death) Ramakrishna Paramahansa told them: "You are totally absorbed in worldly desires. How can you experience God?"

The apparent and the invisible

Atheists, the Charvakas and the scientists want to have direct perceptible proof for the existence of God. They ask: "How are we to believe in something which is not visible to the eye, and cannot be grasped by the hand?"

Scientists who demand such proofs should be considered extremely foolish. For instance, you see an individual. His height is 5 feet 6 inches. You can measure it. His weight is 63 Kgs, as shown by the weighing machine. His complexion is fair. He has a baldhead. All these are evident to the eye. Is this the truth about him? Yes, so far as the external measurements and appearances are concerned. But the man has qualities which are not apparent and beyond measurement. He has kindness, determination, spirit of sacrifice, compassion, all of which are not visible to the eye and cannot be measured. You cannot notice them even if he is dissected. On this account can it be said that he does not have them? It is these qualities which make him a useful being. It is the invisible qualities which lend meaning to the visible features. It follows that what is not apparent provides the proof for what is apparent.

"You fool! Realise that what is not apparent is that which makes you suffer the consequences of past actions"
(Poem)

To deny what is not perceptible by the senses as non-existent is foolish. Equally, to consider the apparent as the only reality is foolish. For example, you see a tree full of branches. The scientist sees it and says that is the truth. But the spiritual Jnani looks at the roots, without which the tree cannot exist. The one who looks at the branches will not see the roots, the one who looks for the roots will not bother about the branches. The question arises: Which are more important, roots or branches? If the roots are there, the tree will remain even if the branches are cut. But if the roots are gone, the tree will not survive. It is the unseen roots which enable us to see the

phenomenal Universe. It is because of that power that we are able to perceive the universe.

Here are some more examples: You have the fragrance (of a flower). You have love. Fragrance has no form but you enjoy it. Can its existence be denied because it is not visible or can be touched or tasted? Likewise, love has no form, but the mother who shows love has a form. Fragrance has no form but the flower which exudes it has a form. Similarly, bliss (Ananda) has no form, but there is a form for the Divinity that confers bliss. What is that form? It is a form beyond comprehension by the senses. It may be associated with anything.

Forms of God

Yet another example: Air has no form. What is the form of water? Water is visible. Air has no form but you can experience its presence. When does air acquire a form? When a football or a balloon is filled with air, it acquires their form. Water assumes the form of the container. Likewise, whatever the form in which the devotee worships the Divine, God appears in that form. What is the reason for this? The feelings of the devotee endow the form for the Divine. This is called "Bhavaroopam" (the form caused by the feeling). Meditation (Dhyana) is the means by which the form is experienced. Whatever the feeling (about the form) which the devotee cherishes, God assumes that form (for him). The Lord appears in the form that you envisage. Divinity cannot be defined in this way or that. That is why it is said that God has myriad feet, myriad eyes, a myriad heads and He encompasses everything in the cosmos. He is omnipresent.

Everything in the universe, from sub-atomic particles to the biggest star, has a form. It was this fact that impelled the ancients to worship the earth as a Mother (Bhu-mata). Some scientists ridiculed this adoration as a superstitious worship of mud and stone. They asked what is the meaning of worshipping mud and stone? The answer is: "That mud is the source of our food. The air (over the earth) is enabling us to breathe and live. The sun is enabling the crops to grow. Hence, no one is entitled to ridicule the worship of Nature. It is proper to worship those who help us. What help the five basic elements are rendering to mankind? Without these elements, there will be no world at all. What, then, is the loss in adoring them?"

Worship of symbols

Some others ask: "Apart from the five elements, you are worshipping stones. How can these stones be treated as God?" The answer is: "You crazy one! Everything is an embodiment of God. Why should not they be worshipped?" "They have no qualities. They have no consciousness. Why do you worship something which is inert and inconscient?" In answer to this, mention may be made of an appropriate example. On August 15th, the National Flag is hoisted and it is honoured in various ways. Why is the flag respected? It is a piece of cloth, made up of threads. It has no virtues. It is inconscient. It sways if there is wind. Otherwise it is still. Why is respect shown to such an object? Because it is regarded as a symbol of the freedom that we gained after a struggle. Divinity has to be regarded in the same manner. You have to place your faith in some symbol. In every country, its national flag is honoured. If a flag can be

has no consciousness? The Divine consciousness is universal.

In our daily life, there is an object of general worship. It is wealth. People offer worship to Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth and prosperity, in elaborate rituals. People even consider a hundred rupee note as sacred and press it on their eyes before placing it in the pocket. What is this hundred rupee note? It is made from some pulp. What virtue or merit is there in it? Both theists and atheists value the note for its value as currency.

People worship the photo of the father or the grandfather after they have passed away. The reason is that the picture is a reminder of one's ancestor. Similarly, the worshipper of a stone idol is entitled to say: "Doubtless, it is a stone. But the stone bears the image of the God I Worship." The devotee's devotional feelings are imprinted on the idol.

If one goes about enquiring in this manner, he will realise that God is present in everything. No one is qualified to criticize another's beliefs and practices. You may keep out of them if you like. But you have no right to interfere in other's beliefs.

The quest for truth

Although there have been a variety of beliefs, the ancients laid stress on what they called the quest for truth. What is the rationale of this quest? The reason is that Truth is one. Here is an example: With the same eyes a man sees his mother, his wife, his sister, his child, aunt and several others. The eyes that see are one and the same. But the perspective from which the mother, the sister and all the others are to be seen calls for "anveshana" (enquiry into 'the truth about what is seen'). The mother has to be viewed as a mother, that is, with filial feelings. This is the search for truth. You cannot treat all alike. You can see them with an equal eye, but the feelings will vary.

Likewise, we have the five senses, each has its own functional role. Enquiry into truth calls for an understanding of what is true and false. A distinction has to be made between an apparent fact and the real truth. For instance, seeing a flat piece of ground one may say the earth is flat. In a limited sense this is a fact. But when the nature of the earth is explored, it is proved to be a globe. Moreover, apparent facts are liable to change. A man who is seen wearing certain clothes today, may be seen in a different dress tomorrow. Facts relate to momentary appearances. Truth relates to the unchanging reality. It is changeless in all the three categories of time-past, present and future. That is Divinity. What pertains to the individual is subject to change. But what is opposed to both the permanent and the changing is false.

"God is one only"

In spirituality, you have insights into such truths. This has been termed "the secret of truth" Why should there be any secrecy about truth? There is a secret within this secret. That is why the Vedas declared: "The Truth is one, it is described variously by the wise". The Vedanta declared: "Brahmam is only one, without a second" (Ekameva advittheeyam"). Why did they not stop with saying that Brahmam is only one? Why should they go on to say, "There is no second"? It is to

only One and not two" all room for doubt is eliminated. In this manner the scriptures reveal profound truths.

The scientists also conducted numerous experiments and came to the conclusion that there is a unique power, without calling it God. People can call it by any name. But the substance cannot be altered. There is water in this tumbler. That water is given different names in different languages. The names vary but the water remains the same. Likewise, different people adore the Divine under different names and forms. But one thing is common to all of them. God exists. There is only one God. He may be worshipped in different names and forms.

Without God there is no universe. It is essential to enquire into the nature of God to strengthen one's faith. For instance, when you examine a piece of cloth you find that it is made up of threads, which are made out of cotton. Cotton is the basis. Threads and cloth are changes in form.

Purity and truth

A child believes whatever the mother says because of faith in her words. The faith may be ascribed to innocence. But in that innocence there is the transcending of ignorance (Amayakatvam). Jesus used to say: "How happy would I be if only I could be a child for some time in a day!" In that childlike innocence there is freedom from all the lies and deceptions of the world. That is purity of mind. In that purity dwells truth. Today we are discarding that purity and leading a polluted life.

Students! Don't get involved in controversies about Divinity. Recognise that there must be a basis for everything. Nothing can exist without it. What the scientists have found so far is an infinitesimal part of the totality of knowledge. They are making much of it. But he who knows everything remains calm and quiet. The argumentative man knows little.

If you mean to be a true scientist, you must first learn to control the senses and develop love. There is nothing greater than love. God is love. Love is God. Live in Love. Develop Love. It has to emanate from the heart. It expresses itself as kindness and compassion. Today people behave without compassion.

God has been described as the "Indweller in the heart" ("Hridayavasi"). It has been said that a heart filled with compassion is a shrine of the Divine. When you develop that compassion, you will have the vision of God.

The Divine is omnipresent, He is inside and outside, everywhere God is in the air you breathe and the words you utter. The Divine is in sound as "Shabda Brahman". The radio waves are all-pervading. They represent the power of the Divine (Divya Shakti). It is the same power that manifests itself as magnetism, electricity, and atomic energy. You have to realise the limitless Divine powers latent in the cosmos.

of the Lord confer bliss and immortality.

Need for discrimination

Students! You are not being respected for your education, nor for your personality. You are being respected for your conduct. When a man's behaviour is good, he is respected without any enquiry. Did not Rama confer His grace on Sabari and Jatayu without their asking Him? But Rama did not respond to the entreaties of Dasaratha. Even the sages in the forest who were earnestly praying to Him were not recognised by Rama. The Divine alone knows when and whom to bless, for what reason and where and in what form. You have to seek the Divine's grace in the right form, at the proper time and place. This calls for discrimination regarding time and circumstances. This is mostly absent today. This discrimination is called "Constant Integrated Awareness". It is described as "Prajnanam Brahma", the humanness that is the Divine Itself.

The four great pronouncements in the Vedas are: "Prajnanam Brahma"; "Ayam Atma Brahma"; "Aham Brahmasmi" and "Tat twam Asi". They proclaim the oneness of the Atma and the Omni-Self. I once asked a student: "Who are you?" When a question is asked the reply must be well considered and must be related to one's practice, reflecting one's deep conviction. Remembering what Swami used to say, the student replied: "I am you and you are me." I thought this boy had gone very far! "Is it so?" I asked. "Yes", he said. "In that case, you go to that shed and give darshan to the devotees and come back", I said. Who will see him? If you say, "I am Swami and Swami is I". Will anyone took upon you as Swami? If that feeling is fully and genuinely within you, you will appear so to others. But if you only mouth the words but don't live up to them, it is no use. Practise and realise the truth.

Supremacy of Bhagavatam

Today the Vice-Chancellor requested Me to speak to the students about the Bhagavatam during the summer course. Knowledge of the Bhagavatam is essential for the boys because it expounds the childhood deeds of Krishna. By understanding the Bhagavatham well, you will become better human beings ("baagavuthaam"). All the fruits of sadhana are contained in the Bhagavatam: Ba=Bhakti. Ga=Jnana. Va=Vairagya (renunciation). Ta=Tattwam (the Truth). Mu=Mukti (liberation). Bhagavatam is the quintessence of all the Shastras, it is the goal of all paths. I have decided to dive in the next ten days all the essential stories in the Bhagavatam in a manner appealing to the young. It is not enough to listen to these stories. You must put into practice the lessons they convey. Therefore, eat and digest Bhagavatam, purify your hearts and serve society.

Bhagavan concluded with the Bhajan: "*Hari Bhajan bina sukha santhi nahi*".

—From Bhagavan's discourse on the afternoon of 20-5-95 in the Kunwar Ba Auditorium,
Brindavan

Bhagavan Baba's five-day visit to Bombay in May was an unforgettable experience for lakhs of devotees who had been eagerly looking forward to it for over three years. "Ecstatic" is the one word that would describe the feelings of the large crowds who gathered at the various functions arranged for Bhagavan in connection with the Silver Jubilee of "Dharma Kshetra".

Bhagavan arrived at Bombay on the 10th by a chartered plane. He was accompanied by a small party of members of the staff of the Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, Brindavan Campus and a few select devotees.

A ceremonial reception was accorded to Bhagavan at the M.I.D.C. Junction of Mahakali Caves Road. Bhagavan and His party went to Dharmakshetra.

In the evening the huge crowd at Jalan Mandap sang Bhajans from 5 P.M. Swami was received with 'Swagatham' by devotees. From Jalan Mandap Swami proceeded to Shanti Deep where He blessed the beneficiaries of the service activities.

After welcome speech by Dr. Ramesh Thakkar, Dr. D.R. Mehta, former Deputy Governor, R.B.1. and present Chairman of S.E.B.I spoke about the efficacy and high efficiency of Jaipur Foot. There was a demonstration of this artificial limb. Swami distributed wheel chairs, sewing machines and Braille watches to the handicapped.

Swami graciously witnessed a music programme, "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" by Bal Vikas students. Group songs in Telugu and Hindi were sung as an offering to Bhagavan. The day's function concluded with instrumental music by four talented Bal Vikas children.

On May 11, there was Nagarsankirtan in the morning, starting from M.I.D.C. Junction of Mahakali Caves Road, in which thousands of devotees participated. This was one of the outstanding features of devotional activities during Bhagavan's visit. The vast multitude of nearly ten thousand people marched in an orderly manner to "Sathya Deep", where Bhagavan gave darshan to them from the top balcony. This continued on all the four days of Swami's stay at Bombay.

Swami inaugurated the new auditorium "Jnana Deep", in the new school building adjacent to "Sathya Deep". Swami then visited the school, blessed the teachers and watched an exhibition of 'spiritual games' at the school.

Swami then proceeded to "Santhi Deep" where He addressed the elite of Bombay (consisting of top industrialists, professionals, judges, doctors, social workers and scientists). Sri. Indulal Shah in a brief talk, extended a hearty welcome to all. Mr. Justice Bhagavati, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, spoke about the huge drinking water project undertaken by Bhagavan's central Trust in Ananthapur District. Sri Nani Palkhivala spoke briefly about the

discourse to the gathering.

In the evening, Bhagavan witnessed a cultural programme presented by Bal Vikas children at Nehru Centre near Gandhi Maidan. A former Bal Vikas student gave a solo dance performance enacting scenes from Rama-charitamanas with background music provided by Anup Jalota, Jagjit Singh and Kavitha Krishnamurthy; well known playback singers. The programme was compered by Harish Bhimani, who was a reputed participant in the T.V. version of Mahabharat. The second programme was a drama on the theme "Mind and Intellect", enacted by 110 Bal Vikas children.

Swami then came out to give darshan to thousands of devotees waiting in the Gandhi Maidan.

On May 12, there was Nagarsankirtan in the morning in which several thousands participated.

Later, Swami was led in procession by students of Dharma Kshetra School and Bal Vikas children. He blessed the teachers, parents and children of Sri Sathya Sai Vidya Mandir and distributed prasadam. Later Swami blessed the Sai Trust Members and devotees assembled in Sathya Deep.

In the evening, Swami visited "Santhi Deep" and blessed the teachers of the school where Sri Sathya Sai EHV is imparted. Bhagavan gave a discourse to the teachers and distributed prasadam.

Later, Bhagavan addressed a public meeting convened in connection with the Silver Jubilee of the inauguration of Dharma Kshetra. Sri K. K. Mistri of Sathya Sai Trust and Sri L. R. Rao, President of the Maharashtra State Sri Sathya Sai Seva organisations and Dr. Suresh Dalal, Ex. Vice-chancellor SNDT University Bombay and MS University Baroda, spoke.

Late in the evening, Bhagavan witnessed a display of fireworks near Santhi Deep and Sathya Deep. After the fireworks, there was. a delightful presentation of "Krishna Ras" by Bal Vikas children of Bombay in the lawns of Sathya Deep.

On May 13, the programme for the day started with "Nagarsankirtan" with several thousands of devotees participating.

At 8.00 a.m. Swami witnessed a programme, "Life is a Game", in which as many as 2500 Bal Vikas children took part. The children's performance was very much appreciated by Bhagavan, who blessed them. Then, Swami left for Vashi by car to inaugurate the new Sathya Sai Mandir in that New Bombay Township. Rev. Fr. Orlando, Angel Charities, Vashi, delivered the welcome address and Bhagavan gave his Divine discourse (details of which will be published separately).

In the evening, Swami left for Santhi Deep and blessed more than 500 students drawn from 94 colleges in Bombay. Nimesh Pandya welcomed Bhagavan and requested Swami to distribute

guidance programme. (The Awareness Programme arranged by ATASH SECURITIES consisted of elocution, essay writing and quiz competitions. The students qualifying for the final round will be taken to Prasanthi Nilayam on a study tour.) One student, Miss Sowganthika Rao, spoke.

Swami blessed the students and gave a discourse in which He exhorted the students to develop love for the Motherland and serve their country selflessly.

On May 14, Swami gave darshan to over ten thousand devotees who came to Sathya beep, completing their Nagarsankirtan. Swami addressed the members of the Study Circle Group and blessed them with prasadam. Later in the morning, Swami addressed a public meeting convened by the famous Champion cricketer and Sheriff of Bombay, Sunil Gavaskar, to felicitate Bhagavan on entering the 70th year of His Advent in November this year.

A citation inscribed in a gold plated plaque was presented to Bhagavan spelling out the glory of the Avatar.

THE CITATION STATED:

A WORLD REDEEMER

You are the Master of Yoga THAT unites all creeds into a Religion of Love. In your Divine presence the rich and the poor, the poet and the politician, the sinner and the saint live in close harmony.

Helping to change the earth into a heaven you are the seer that knows life from the very root, making it branch into many a graceful blend. You are the fountain of pure love that pours turning the desert sands into a paradise.

Indeed you are a unique purifier, who has, since the declaration of your Mission at the age of 14, relentlessly been engaging yourself in bringing about a monumental spiritual transformation in man and mankind at large. You have established man's identity as a reflection of the Divine.

You have shown by your example that the character of man lies in the unity of thought, word and deed. It is, therefore, not surprising that every spoken word of yours has found fulfillment in action. In the field of education your University, in the field of medical sciences your Super Speciality hospital and in the field of service to mankind the supply of clean drinking water in villages, and that too, all free of charge for all mankind irrespective of caste, colour and creed, have become the beacon-lights in India and abroad. Whilst others think, you act; indeed your life is your message.

On the 70th year of your Advent, the citizens of Bombay extend their heartfelt felicitations to your Holiness and pray humbly that the guiding light of your Holiness will help to restore Mother India to its Pristine Glory.

Gavaskar also presented a cricket bat autographed by several international cricket players from Australia, Africa and West Indies.

Sri Nusli Davar, Chairman and Managing Director of Atash Industries (India) and Justice P.N. Bhagavati, Trust Member, spoke. Nana Chudasama, World Chairman, Giants International, offered felicitations to Bhagavan. Sunil Gavaskar also spoke on the glorious mission of Bhagavan.

Bhagavan then delivered His discourse. The meeting concluded with singing of National Anthem.

Bhagavan later blessed the Seva Dal members of Bombay and Maharashtra State before leaving for the airport on his return to Bangalore by chartered flight.

Bhagavan arrived at Brindavan at 6 p.m. on the 14th. A large gathering of devotees greeted Him on arrival.

Group Upanayanam at Brindavan

The Easwaramma Day Celebrations in Bangalore this year were made memorable by the performance of Upanayanam for seventy Bal Vikas children in the Sai Ramesh Mandap, Brindavan, on May 6th in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Baba.

The impressive and sacred ceremony was arranged by the Education Wing of the Bangalore District Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, with the blessings of Bhagavan, in commemoration of Bhagavan's 70th Birthday this year. The Bal Vikas Gurus, the 'vatus' and their parents were doubly blessed by the Presence of Bhagavan at the Brahmopadesam Ceremony and the distribution of Prasadam by Bhagavan to all of them.

The day's programme began with an auspicious play of Nadaswaram music in front of "Trayee Brindavan" early in the morning. Around 8 a.m. the 'vatus' with their parents went to "Trayee Brindavan" to greet Bhagavan. They came out and went in procession, headed by Bhagavan, to Sai Ramesh Mandap. Bhagavan was received with Poorna Kumbham and Vedic chants by Pandits. The vatus and their parents took their allotted places in the hall for the sacred ceremony of initiation to the life of a celibate (Brahmacharya). Bhagavan went round blessing the sacred thread held by each vatu for wearing after receiving the Gayatri mantra. After the priests had initiated the vatus in the mantra, Bhagavan blessed them and their parents by showering the sacred Akshata (Turmeric covered rice grains) on all of them. They offered Padanamaskar to Bhagavan.

how the children should conduct themselves after receiving the mantropadesham (details of Bhagavan's discourse are published separately.)

After the distribution of prasadam, the vatus, with their fathers, went round "Trayee Brindavan" in solemn procession paying their homage to the sacred abode of Bhagavan. It was a heart warming sight to see the vatus in their yellow dhotis going round with their Brahmadas in their hands.

That evening, the Bal Vikas children from Bangalore district presented an interesting cultural programme in the presence of Bhagavan in the Kalyana Mantapam under the title "Sri Hari Pada Vaibhavam." The children enacted four scenes depicting the sanctifying role of the Lord's feet in four yugas. Starting from the sanctification of Emperor Bali by the Lord's foot in the Vamana Avatar, the scenes depicted Rama's purification of Ahalya, Krishna's dance on the hood of the serpent Kaliya and offer of a garland of pearls at the feet of Bhagavan Baba by Kanya Kumari at the confluence of three seas at Cape Comorin. The children played their parts well and Bhagavan appreciated their performance.

On 8th May, the Bal Vikas children had the privilege of leading the morning bhajans in Sai Ramesh Mandap in the presence of Bhagavan. On the 9th the Bal Vikas gurus distributed garments presented by Bhagavan to 400 children, who had come from various slum areas in Bangalore where the Bal Vikas gurus are carrying on service activities. On 10th May, the Bal Vikas Gurus and children arranged for 'Narayana Seva' at Orphanages and slums in different parts of Bangalore.

Recognise the Divinity that is manifested in the Cosmos. All things in Nature observe their laws with undeviating regularity. The sun, the moon, the seasons observe their respective laws. Man alone violates the laws of his being. Animals obey their Instincts and have their seasons for regulating their lives. Man is the exception. He needs to be taught the rules of right living (Dharma). He has to cultivate morality and integrity. There is only one way by which this can be done. It is by the spiritual path. Without spirituality, man cannot discover the light within him.

—Baba

Karnataka Chief Minister Lauds Bhagavan's Mission

The summer school for the students of the Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning conducted at the Brindavan Campus was inaugurated by Bhagavan Baba on the morning of 20th May at the Institute Auditorium.

The Chief Minister of Karnataka Sri Deve Gowda, in his inaugural address on that occasion, paid glowing tributes to Bhagavan Baba for the great service to mankind that He is doing apart from restoration of the sacred Indian Culture and human values correcting the damage done in

education of the highest standard totally free of cost from K.G. to P.G., a parallel to which could be found nowhere in the world. The Super-speciality Hospital established by Bhagavan is another example of His compassion and interest in provision of medical aid of the highest standard free of cost to the people without distinction of any sort. He extolled the recent scheme of Bhagavan for providing supply of pure drinking water to villages in backward areas at a cost of several hundred crores, which is being executed at a fast pace.

The invitees, guest and students filled the Auditorium even at 7.00 a.m. on 20th May. The approaches to the Auditorium were gaily decorated with buntings and festoons. A special covered space was provided to facilitate the public to watch the proceedings on the close circuit TVs and amplifiers to hear the discourses. The Auditorium itself replete with paintings of scenes from all religions presented a bright and colourful spectacle for the occasion.

Bhagavan Baba arrived at the Auditorium at 8.30 a.m. accompanied by the Chief Minister of Karnataka and the Central Trust Members and group of students chanting Vedas. Bhajan was going on in the Auditorium and Bhagavan ascended the stage after blessing all those assembled both inside and outside. Bhagavan took his seat with the Chief Minister and Education Minister of Karnataka State seated on either side.

After the invocatory prayers, the Vice-chancellor requested Bhagavan to light the lamp as a mark of inauguration of the Summer Course. He then extended a hearty welcome to Bhagavan, the Chief Guest and all others. He gave a brief account of the activities of the Institute highlighting the conduct of the Summer Course in Indian, Culture and Spirituality as a unique feature of this Institute. He described the great service rendered by the Chief Minister to the nation in various capacities and requested the Minister of Higher Education, Sri Manjunath to speak a few words before the Inaugural address of the Chief Minister.

The Chief Minister, in his address made reference to the value system of education which was in vogue in ancient times and said that Bhagavan Baba as the Divine Avatar was restoring the system apart from spreading His concept of universal love to all which has brought people from all countries of the world to His fold without distinction of caste, creed, religion or nationality.

He made reverential mention of the Institute of Higher Education and the Institute of Higher Medical Sciences established by Bhagavan to provide free education up to P.G. Level and provide highest type of medical aid to the poor entirely free of cost which is unparalleled in the world. By catering to the vital needs of the poor villagers in backward districts in bringing supply of clean drinking water to them Bhagavan has set an example to be followed by all States. He added that he himself was striving to serve the poor and sought Baba's blessings to do the same successfully He made special mention of a scheme introduced by him to create a corpus fund of Rs.100 crores, the interest from which will be utilized to reimburse the cost of treatment of poor people for heart and kidney operations. This was a pioneering effort in the country by any State and he sought Bhagavan's blessings for the success of the scheme. Bhagavan Baba then

exhorted the students to imbibe the great human values and patriotism, traditionally reflected in Indian Culture. (Text of Bhagavan's Discourse appears separately.)

The Summer Course provided a valuable opportunity to the students especially the freshers to be exposed to the treasure of ancient spiritual wisdom of India. In the morning session from 8.30 to 10.30 every day several outstanding personalities from all walks of life gave enlightening talks on the greatness of Indian Culture and Spirituality which has served as a beacon light to all the countries of the world in the past. The decline in the moral standards in the country of late especially in the educational institutions was regretfully pointed out. At the same time, the establishment of the Institute of Higher Learning by Bhagavan was hailed as a great step in the restoration of the glorious moral and ethical standards that were obtaining in ancient India and turning out graduates with an integrated human personality who will be the torch-bearers in spreading the Sai Message of universal love.

With the singing of the National Anthem, the function came to a close.

Apart from the alumni of the Institute, past and present and members of teaching staff, eminent guest speakers participated in the morning sessions.

Among the guest speakers were:

- 1) Dr. G. Venkatraman, Eminent Scientist and Hon. Professor of the Institute.
- 2) Dr. Safaya, Director, Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences.
- 3) Sri Ashok Singhal, President, Vishwa Hindu Parishad.
- 4) Sri G.V. Subba Rao, former Head of Dept. of Energy, U.N.O.
- 5) Lt. Gen. Chibber, (Retd. Army General)
- 6) Maj. Gen. Mahadevan (Retd. Army General)
- 7) Prof. Sampath (former Vice Chancellor)
- 8) Sri V. Srinivasan, Member, Central Trust and Chairman, W. S. Group of Industries.
- 9) Sri T. G. Krishnamurthy, State President, Sri Sathya Sai Organisation, Tamilnadu
- 10) Sri A. N. Haksar, former Chairman, I.T.C. and Member Board of Management of R.B.I.

The evening sessions used to start with Bhajan and after chanting of Vedas by select students, summaries of morning talks were given by 3 students and one staff member or student of the Institute used to speak before Swami delivered His Divine Discourse. Swami gave stimulating stories from Bhagavatam highlighting the extraordinary devotion of some great devotees that would inspire the students to emulate and get benefited. Swami gave the stories of Dhruva, Ambarisha, Prahlada, Jadabharatha, Akura and others from the great devotional Purana Bhagavatam.

On 27th (Saturday) evening there was a drama presented by a group of students from U.S.A. under the direction of Mr. Hal Honig with the caption "Time to Care". It was a well-conceived drama acted with great talent. It depicted the case of two youngsters who were given to the modern ways of materialistic living without any care for morality, and how they were

for photos with them at the end and materialised two rings and put them on the hands of the two youngsters who acted the role of the persons who were transformed, and blessed all of them.

On 29th there was a music programme by the students of the Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning in which the boys sang devotional songs in Telugu, Kannada, Hindi, and Tamil including some Quwali songs.

The Vice chancellor, Dr. Hanumanthappa gave a resume of the proceedings of the entire Summer Course at the valedictory function on 30th May.

Bhagavan in his valedictory address exhorted the students to practise some of the teachings imparted in the Summer Course.

With this, the ten day long Summer Course came to a close.

The Veda Purusha Honours Vedic Pandits

As part of the year long celebrations being conducted by the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations, Bangalore, during the 70th Year of the Avatar, an auspicious function was organised at Brindavan on May 26, 1995 with Bhagavan's grace.

70 priests from different temples at Bangalore, along with their spouses, were invited to receive Swami's Grace at Brindavan. The Sai Ramesh Hall was attractively decorated. At 7.30 A.M., Swami entered the Sai Ramesh Hall to the accompaniment of Nadaswaram. He moved around the place where the priests and their spouses were seated in an orderly fashion and showered His grace on the couples, honouring them with Vastra (dhoti and sari for each couple) and Mangala Dravya (other items indicating auspiciousness for the couples) and gave Padanamaskar to each couple. Throughout the function, eminent priests from important mutts from Bangalore, like Sankara Mutt, recited Vedic mantras (Purusha Suktam, Sri Suktam, Swasti Vachanam etc.) and the Sai Ramesh Hall reverberated with rhythm of Vedic hymns. All the priests were thrilled to have the darshan of Swami (whom they adore and worship in their respective temples), His sparshan (Padanamaskar) and also sambhashan. Swami accepted their worship, by being present till the Vedic recitation was over. He graciously permitted all the priests and their spouses to circumambulate the Trayee Brindavan—the holiest shrine where the Lord in Human Form dwells, thus fulfilling their innermost yearnings.

While the programme to honour the pandits was originally limited to 70 couples, around 94 priests with their spouses participated, many on their own; such was their intense desire to see their Divine in Human Form at Brindavan. Thousands of devotees present in the Hall felt extremely blessed to be there on that auspicious occasion.

The Quest for Atmajnana

The Universe is full of energy or power. The Divine Power is all pervasive. Just as sugar is present in sweets, the Divine is present in everything. That is why God is called the "essence" (Rasa) of everything in the Universe (Raso Vaisaha). Though the Divine is in everything and everywhere it is not easily cognisable. The seed sprouts and grows into a tree. The child grows into an adult. This is evidence of Divinity, which is the life force stimulating the growth.

You enjoy the sight of the mighty mountains, the big rivers, the vast ocean and the dense forests. Who is the creator of all these beautiful manifestations in Nature? God is the basis for all these. Though it is not possible for most people to realise the existence of God as the eternal Truth, yet a few have acquired this highest wisdom, the wisdom of the Atma. Having experienced the Divine they have given to the world the bliss that they have enjoyed.

Physical knowledge does not help you to march towards the goal of realisation, though it may make you a scholar. The Rishis did penance by way of spiritual sadhana to realise the Divinity within.

There are certain qualities which are necessary to acquire Atmic knowledge. One should adhere to truth, right conduct and have a spirit of selfless service. He should have the attitude of caring only for the welfare of humanity and strive to make them happy by serving them. The purpose of education is only to breed such good qualities.

Students should acquire spiritual knowledge along with secular knowledge. They should delight in the well-being of all creatures. (Sarvabhootha hithe rathaha) They should also cultivate total awareness. "Paripoorna Jnanam" or total knowledge is essential to acquire the qualities of good conduct, unity and purity which leads to Divinity. Education should foster human values such as Truth and right conduct.

Buddha taught that Truth, Right conduct and non-violence constituted the most sacred qualities. You consider Ahimsa as merely not hurting others. This is not the whole truth. Speaking too much, working too much, harping on the mistakes of others are all acts of violence (Himsa) and should be avoided. These result in the wasting of energy, which causes harm to oneself. You must observe restraints in eating, talking, sleeping, working, and all actions in daily life.

Human beings make attempts to know God. They are confused about the meaning of the words used in spiritual parlance, like 'Jeeva' and 'Deva', 'Atma' and 'Paramatma'. Vedanta has explained these terms, but still they are not fully clear to many people. Unless you have the right attitude you cannot understand the Divine. God has been described as smaller than the smallest atom and bigger than the biggest thing in the Universe. 'Anu' is 'Atom' and signifies the 'Atma' 'Anu' is also Brahman (the Supreme Absolute). This Atma is in every being, however tiny it might be.

Whatever, the size of the container, the water is the same in taste and quality. If you understand this principle you can easily understand the truth that the minute atom and the mighty Universe contain the same Brahman. The divinity is the same in all. God is everywhere.

Once a disciple asked a sage about this. The sage asked him to get a cup of water and some sugar. He asked the disciple to mix the sugar with the water. Then he could not see the sugar, which was dissolved in the water, nor could he feel the sugar with his hand. But he was sure he had himself put it in the water. In order to know the truth of its existence in water, he was asked to taste a little of that water when he could experience the sweetness of sugar. It was pervading in the entire quantity of water.

In the cosmic context, the Atma is the sugar which is present in every being. Just as sugar cannot be seen or felt while in water, you are not able to see or feel the Atma. Sugar has no form in the water. So also the Atma or Paramatma cannot be seen, but has to be experienced. This is cosmic consciousness and is infinite. It is in the form of consciousness in human beings.

In the Gita, Krishna says "Beejam maam Sarvabhoothaanaam" (I am the seed in all beings) The seed is "Anu" and the tree is "Mahath". The 'Anu' is contained in the tree and the tree is in the seed too. Divinity as the seed is there invisible under the earth and is also pervading externally in the tree, branches, leaves, flowers etc.

When you are asked, "Who are you?" You may first give your name, then your profession and address, etc. All these descriptions pertain only to the body and physical features. They are subject to change. You may change your name, profession and nationality. But the Atmic principle in everyone is changeless and eternal. Things pertaining to the world are like rivers while the Divine is like the ocean. The moment rivers merge in the ocean they lose their names and forms.

You have to acquire "Atmajnana", knowledge of the spirit along with, worldly knowledge. People refer to Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheshwara. No one has seen their real forms. Brahma is the creator. The essence of creation is in everyone. Thy physical bodies of your parents have this essence and they are both the cause of your birth. They bring you up and protect you. This is their aspect of protection. If you worship the mother, you worship God. The child has to be given education and brought up properly. This is done by your father and so he is 'Vishnu', the sustainer, Maheshwara is a giver of boons. He grants boons easily as He did to Bhasmasura, who immediately sought to use his power against Maheshwara himself. Power has to be used with discrimination. By respecting the teacher who imparts this discriminatory knowledge you respect Maheshwara. That is why the Vedas declare "Treat the mother as God, the father as God and the Preceptor as God". This is the basis of Bharatiya culture.

A true son should seek the Truth. He should not leave this pursuit for selfish reasons. That is why "Sathyam vada; Dharmam chara" ("speak the Truth; follow Righteousness") has been the

You should have unshakable faith in the Divine.

Scientific knowledge is subject 'x' to continual change, while spiritual knowledge is changeless and will help you to realise the Eternal Truth. Todayman does everything out of selfish motive to satisfy self-interest. The scriptures declare: "Dharmamoolam Idam Jagat". ("The whole cosmos is rooted in Dharma or righteousness".) This is the Truth. The planets, the sun, the moon and the stars are all moving in a set pattern according to their Dharma. You must understand this harmony and unity. In the world today there are more than 550 crores of people. Not one is identical with another. Who is the author of all this complex but orderly creation? It is difficult to comprehend the Creator. Scientists have explored a small part of creation. But they have made no attempt to understand the Creator. One should know the Mooladhara or the basis for the whole of creation.

Students should not waste time or energy in wrong pursuits. They should cultivate 'Sat sanga' not in the worldly sense. "Sat" is a part of "Sat-Chit-Ananda", the attribute of the Divine. You must always internally be in the company of God, who is the embodiment of Bliss. "Sat" is Truth. "Chit" is Awareness and Ananda is Bliss. The significance of this can be understood by a small example. 'Sweetness' is the essence of God. We sing in the bhajan "Mathurathipathe Madhuram Madhuram" "Oh Lord of Mathura You are Sweet." Sugar is sweet. God is like Sugar. "Sat" may be compared to sugar. "Chit" can be compared to water, because it is everywhere. It is necessary for the sustenance of life whether one is a prince or a pauper. If you mix sugar and water you get syrup. Likewise the syrup of Ananda comes out of the combination of "Sat" and "Chit".

Students! Always think of the Lord. Don't give room for selfishness. Engage yourself in service to humanity with a sense of sacrifice. This is the lesson you should learn from the ten-day course that you have attended now.

You must understand that matter combined with energy is God. Make use of the things in the world with the awareness that it is all God's creation and you should be grateful to the Divine for everything. Have everything within limits, including your desire for comforts. Even the five elements should be used within limits. Otherwise they will spell danger.

Students! Work for the peace and prosperity of society without selfish motives. You have to put these things into practice and shine as ideal students.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan, "*Giridhara Gopala*".

—**from the valedictory discourse of Bhagavan in the Institute Auditorium at Brindavan on
30.5.95**

The inextricable relationship between the devotee and the Lord, a relationship maintained by unassailable and unflinching faith on the one side and a continuous and loving care for the devotee on the other, was the central theme of the series of discourses given by Bhagavan during the ten-day Summer Course to students held in Brindavan from May 20th to May 30th. Bhagavan took up for each discourse one episode from the Bhagavatam to bring out illuminating lessons about the nature of devotion and significant role of the Divine in coming to the rescue of the devotee.

Although the Bhagavatam is primarily regarded as a Purana intended to glorify the various incarnations of the Lord, Bhagavan Baba showed it was equally a work glorifying the qualities of the devotee. Bhagavan chose a select array of devotees from the Bhagavatam for His discourses and related the stories in His own inimitable way. Among the devotees figuring in the discourses were kings like Ambarisha, child devotees like Dhruva and Prahlada, and immaculate devotees like Akrura. Altogether the discourses served not only to bring home the supreme message of the Bhagavatam to the students, but also to inspire in them the ideals of selfless service, reverence for parents and preceptors, and devotion to God and the Motherland.

The Krishna Avatar

In His first discourse of the Summer Course, given on the 21st, Bhagavan pointed out the four qualifications needed by anyone to understand the underlying significance of the Bhagavatam, which describes devotion as a bridge between the Divine and the devotees. They are:

- 1. Flee from evil company.**
- 2. Seek the company of the pious.**
- 3. Indulge always in meritorious deeds.**
- 4. Discriminate between the eternal and the transient.**

Soora, a king of the Yadava dynasty, had two sons, Ugrasena and Devaka. The former had a son, Kamsa, and the latter had only one daughter, Devaki. Kamsa had great affection for Devaki and considered her as his own sister and celebrated her marriage to Vasudeva with great enthusiasm. When he was driving the chariot of the newly-wed couple to take them to the bridegroom's place, an ethereal voice declared that the eighth child of Devaki would kill him. Kamsa, on hearing this voice, immediately unsheathed his sword and decided to kill Devaki on the spot to prevent the predicted catastrophe. Then at once Vasudeva gave Kamsa his assurance, that he would hand over all Devaki's newborn babies to Kamsa and appealed to him to spare Devaki. Kamsa relented and allowed them to go. The pious Vasudeva kept his word and handed over each child as it was born to Kamsa. On learning from Narada that the threat to his life might come from any one of Devaki's children, Kamsa killed six of them.

The Magadha Emperor, Jarasandha, gave his daughters in marriage to Kamsa, who harboured increasing hatred against the Yadavas, from whom he apprehended the threat to his life, and also

advent of Krishna.

God made His master-plan to punish the wicked and help the pious and pure devotees. Vasudeva's other wife, Rohini, was staying at Nanda's house away from Kamsa's tyranny. The Lord by His Maya Shakti transferred Devaki's seventh child to Rohini's womb. He was Balaram (who was always with Krishna after he grew up). He was also called Sankarshana (transferred from one womb to another).

The Lord incarnated as Krishna, the eighth child of Devaki, and both Devaki and Vasudeva had a vision of the effulgent form of the Lord, who directed Vasudeva to take the new-born child to Repalle (Gokulam), a village on the other bank of the Yamuna. According to the Divine Plan all the warders were fast asleep and the doors and gates of the prison, in which Kamsa had confined Vasudeva and Devaki, opened of their own accord, and the river in flood gave way, while Adishesha protected the child from the torrential rains as he was being carried in a basket by Vasudeva. No power can stand against the Divine Will. The child was exchanged with that born to Yashoda, without anyone knowing about it, due to Yogamaya.

The child brought by Vasudeva to his cell started to cry and immediately the warders woke up and informed Kamsa, who rushed to the prison. He seized the baby and lifted it up to kill it but the Baby escaped from his clutches, went up in the air, and announced that the slayer of Kamsa had taken birth and was alive somewhere else. Enraged by this, Kamsa started killing all new-born babies. He sent his demons to Repalle also, but Krishna, even as a tiny babe destroyed all of them.

Yashoda had vatsalya (maternal love) for Krishna at the physical level, while the Gopikas of Gokulam had real devotion which was symbolically demonstrated by Krishna, who used to go after their butter rather than receive that offered by his mother Yashoda. Butter here signifies the spiritual heart of the devotee, which Krishna shared as the Divine. Krishna demonstrated to the innocent devotees of Repalle His Divine Power, in several ways.

Ambarisha's Devotion

On the 22nd May, Bhagavan narrated the story of the great devotee, Ambarisha. Swami traced the ancestry of Ambarisha and made special mention about his father Nabhaga, who was rewarded by Lord Shiva for his attitude of detachment to worldly things.

Ambarisha was pious and devout and adhered firmly to the truth. He performed a yagna with such great devotional fervour that Lord Narayana was pleased to bless him with "Sudarshana", which means "good vision", and which manifested as a wheel of prosperity, peace and security to his kingdom. On sage Vasishtha's advice, Ambarisha performed another yagna called the "Dwadasi Vrata". An important rite to be observed in this vrata was that the king must start a fast on the day prior to Dwadasi (the twelfth day after new moon) and break it at the start of Dwadasi and feed all the people. As the moment of breaking the fast was drawing near, the mighty sage Durvasa arrived and was received with all honours by Ambarisha. Durvasa agreed to the king's

and returned. As the auspicious moment approached when the king had to break his fast to fulfill the vow of the yagna, Durvasa did not turn up. On the advice of the sage Vasishta, the king broke his fast by faking a Tulsi leaf with water, and waited for the arrival of sage Durvasa to offer him food.

Durvasa, who was well known for his short temper, felt that Ambarisha had violated the respect due to a guest by breaking his fast before the guest had taken his meal, and in his rage created a demon to kill Ambarisha. Lord Narayana's "Sudarshana", intervened, destroyed the demon, and started chasing Durvasa himself. Durvasa went to Brahma and Shiva for protection. Both pleaded their inability to save him. He went to Lord Narayana himself, who said that He could do nothing as He was bound by the blemishless devotion of Ambarisha and suggested to the sage to seek the pardon of the king. Durvasa went to Ambarisha, who prayed to Lord Vishnu to recall the Sudarshana and save Durvasa.

The lesson of this episode is that God regards Himself as a servant of His true devotee. Students need to learn the lesson that it is not enough if they do good work, but should do so with humility and devotion. Ambarisha was the embodiment of humility.

The saga of Dhruva

In His discourse on the 23rd May, Bhagavan explained to the students the significance of the story of Dhruva, the young lad of five years, who did penance with single minded devotion and determination and was blessed with the vision of Lord Narayana.

Uthaapaada, the elder of the two sons of Manu, (who gave to mankind the Dharma. Shastra, the Code of Righteousness) had two wives, Suruchi and Suneethi. Uthama was the son of Suruchi, the younger queen while Dhruva was born to Suneethi.

Once both of the boys were playing in the garden. Spotting their doting father sitting on the throne, they rushed forward to sit on the king's lap. While Uthama sat on his father's lap, the five-year old Dhruva was prevented by Suruchi, who said that only her sons had the right to sit on the king's lap. Dhruva went to his mother Suneethi and sat weeping. When he started criticising his step-mother for her action, his mother silenced him and said, "Desist from criticising anyone. If you criticise others the defects pointed out by you will come to you. Accept everything as something good." So saying she advised Dhruva to go to the forest and do penance to secure the Grace of Lord Narayana, who was the only hope for the helpless. Dhruva obeyed his mother implicitly and proceeded to the forest without any fear and with full faith in his Mother's words that God was the only refuge for the forlorn. Having noticed this wonderful determination of the young boy who was ready to brave the perils of the forest with firm determination, sage Narada appeared before him and tried to dissuade him from undertaking a severe penance to earn the Lord's Grace. But Dhruva refused to go back and expressed his confidence that he would surely succeed in winning the Lord's Grace with his mother's blessings and his unshakable faith. This is the ideal, that today's students should learn. Narada was pleased

mantra, "Om Namo Bhagavate Vaasudevaya".

Dhruva did intense penance, giving up food and drink, and was reduced to a skeleton. He transcended his food sheath (Annamaya Kosa) and his Pranamaya Kosa (Vital sheath). He was saturated with the Lord's name, which he chanted with each breath ceaselessly. His mind sheath (Manomaya Kosa) was also dedicated to the Lord, driving away all other thoughts. His entire being was filled with bliss in the contemplation of the Lord. This is another ideal taught by Dhruva to students that meditation must be with total concentration on the Divine Form.

The Lord's advice

Lord Narayana appeared before Dhruva, whose radiance went on intensifying as the Lord was approaching him. Looking at the majestic form of the Cosmic Lord, Dhruva burst into ecstatic praise. He exclaimed, "O Lord! Till now you were in me and you have come out to grace me. Are you going to leave me?"

Lord Vishnu, who was astonished at the amazing wisdom of such a young child, patted him on his cheek and asked him to say what boon he wanted. Dhruva said, "Oh Lord, after having your Darshan and getting your Grace, I don't want anything else." The Lord replied, "Dhruva, you undertook this penance with one thought, namely, to sit on your father's lap, but now you speak differently. Your words and action are contrary to your thought. You must go back to your father with my blessings. He will receive you with full affection. You must rule the kingdom and then come to Me." The Lord also assured Dhruva that after ruling the kingdom for a long time he would occupy a most exalted position in the firmament as a star around whom the constellation of the Seven Rishis and other galaxies would revolve.

Dhruva, on his return to the kingdom, was received with ceremonial honours by his penitent and joyous father. Dhruva consoled his father by reminding him that all are forms of Narayana. Uthanapada entrusted the kingdom to the six-year old Dhruva, saying that a boy who could get the Divine vision and grace at that tender age, could rule the kingdom. He retired to Skanda Ashram, seeking realisation of the Divine.

Dhruva ruled for a long time very wisely and well, maintaining justice and peace. When his sojourn in the world came to an end, a celestial chariot came to take him to 'God's Abode'. He told the charioteer that God was everywhere and so the question of taking him to God's place did not arise. So saying, he sat down closing his eyes in meditation and merged in the Divine.

The infinite power of 'Bhakti (true devotion to the Lord) must be understood by all. It contains all the six qualities, namely, Bhakti (food), Rakti (desire); Yukti (Knowledge of how to love all), Anurakti (detachment) Virakti (cessation of desires) and Mukti (Liberation). When from the word Bhagavan, the root word, "Bhag", is taken and combined with "kti", which is common in all the six qualities, it becomes "Bhakti".

The story of Dhruva must teach the students the value of determination and devotion to God.

The example of Jadabharatha

On the 24th, Bhagavan narrated the story of the great devotee Jadabharatha. Bhagavan said: Priyavrata was the son of Swayambhuva Manu and brother of Uthanapada. Having realised the futility of mundane comforts, which are transient, he renounced his kingdom at the early age of 19 years and left for the forest in pursuit of realisation of the Atma. He had strong belief in the truth that the human body is given only for realising and experiencing the bliss of Atma. The students of those days sacrificed all comforts to pursue their studies, unlike those of the present day who hanker after materialistic pleasures. Priyavrata developed the steadfastness and mental tranquility and purity of heart. Emperor Manu, his father, was worried and tried to wean him back to the kingdom. He declined, stating that without realising his own nature and Reality he could not satisfy the people. Manu sought the advice of the sage Narada, who prevailed upon Priyavrata to agree to rule the Kingdom as a command from God.

After a few years, Priyavrata again felt that association with people and worldly objects constituted obstacles to spiritual sadhana. So he renounced the kingdom and returned to the forest. King Rishabha took over the reigns of the kingdom and ruled with a sense of detachment, while pursuing his spiritual sadhana for the realisation of Truth.

Bharatha, the son of Rishabha, was a righteous prince. He would not embark on any work without praying to God and seeking Divine Grace. Our country (Bharat) is named after this king Bharatha. Even though he was not attracted by worldly pleasures, he had a special attachment for a deer, which he was bringing up with great affection. At the moment of his death he was thinking of this deer and was born as a deer and later on had a human birth. Students should be careful to remember the Divine name and form always, so that even at the time of death one will have the Divine name on the lips and merge with the Divine.

In his new birth, Bharatha was immersed in Atmic consciousness from the very beginning and was totally oblivious to his physical existence. In this state he was caught by a band of brigands to be offered as a human sacrifice for their deity (Kali). He was totally unaffected by what was being done to him. Just as the brigands were about to cut off his head, Goddess Kali Herself appeared and rescued him and bade him continue on his righteous path.

Lesson to a king

Just then the king of Sindhu Savira (Rahugana) was going that way in a palanquin accompanied by some of his attendants. The servants carrying the palanquin were tired and asked Bharatha to help them in carrying it for sometime to relieve their strain. Bharatha took this also as a divine dispensation and assisted in carrying the palanquin. As he was very compassionate by nature, he was careful not to trample on any insects on the ground and swayed continuously and walked slowly while carrying the palanquin. The king became angry at the slow and swaying movement of the palanquin and asked his servants why they were going slow. He peeped out of the palanquin and found that Bharatha was the cause for the slow movement and rebuked him for walking like a corpse. Bharatha replied calmly: "It is not me alone. All of us are corpses. It is only the power of the Divine that is making us function." The King was on his way to meet

Bharatha. He got down and sat there listening to Bharatha's exposition about the Atma.

Because Bharatha had obtained the knowledge by his own experience, he was able to influence several kings and scholars with his expositions. Some of his teachings were:

- One should have sense control by which alone one could avert the danger of attachment to the physical.
- To have no attachment for mundane comforts.
- To reduce desires for worldly objects. Man must not try to propitiate God for achieving paltry worldly desires.
- One cannot escape the consequences of one's action despite intense meditation, pilgrimages or rituals.
- As is the heart so is one's experience.
- Everyone should, on his own, forge a path to get over his destiny.

Manu and the kings in his lineage were examples of enlightened beings described in the Bhagavatam.

Students should learn to serve society selflessly without expecting any return. They should combine spiritual sadhana with academic studies.

Trishanku and Vishwamitra

In His discourse on May 25, Bhagavan gave details of the story of Trishanku, the emperor who wanted to go to heaven in his physical body.

Trishanku, of the lunar dynasty, was a noble, pious king, but developed an irrational desire to go to heaven in his human body. His preceptor, Bhrahmarishi Vasishtha told him that his desire was like seeking to pack an unsuspecting dead body and taking it to heaven. Trishanku was adamant, but Vasishtha refused to help him in his unholy desire. The king approached the learned sons of Vasishtha, who had immense spiritual powers. They refused to help one who had defied -the advice of his own preceptor, their father. Finally the king approached sage Kaushika, who harboured an ill-feeling towards Vasishtha because of an earlier encounter with him. Kausika agreed to take up the case of Trishanku as a challenge. He performed a Yagna for the purpose of sending Trishanku bodily straight to heaven. At the conclusion of the Yagna, the gods did not come down to accept the offering. Enraged by this, Kaushika concentrated all the powers acquired by him by his penance on his flagstaff (Brahmadanda) to transport Trishanku to heaven. But Indra, the Lord of the celestial ones, blocked his path and Trishanku came hurtling down

proceeded to create a parallel heaven, with all its paraphernalia. Even today, it is known as "Trishanku Swarga" (In western astronomy, this is known as the constellation Southern Cross, consisting of four stars).

Consequences of Breach of Promise

King Trishanku had a son by name Harishchandra (not Emperor Harishchandra who sacrificed everything for truth). This Harishchandra had no sons and prayed to Lord Varuna (the Rain God) for a son, with the promise that he would sacrifice his son later to the same God. He got a son, Rahul. As he became attached to the son, he did not keep his promise and was afflicted by a strange disease. Rahul being afraid of the consequences of his father's failure to keep his promise, fled to the forest. He got the idea that his father's illness could be cured if someone else was offered to Varuna in his place. Seeing a Brahmin couple with three children, he asked them to offer one of the sons for sacrifice in return for a large herd of cows and other wealth. The Brahmin was attached to the eldest son and would not part with him. His wife was attached to the youngest son and would not let him go. So it was the middle son who was offered and this son preferred to die as an offering to God, rather than live without the love of father and mother. Rahul was taking this boy with him when on the way they passed through Kaushika's Ashram. The Brahmin boy, Sunaschepa, sought refuge with the sage. Pledging to protect him, Kausika asked one of his sons to go with Rahul, saying that the human body has to be offered in service to others. His sons ridiculed the idea and declined to comply with Kaushika's proposal. Thereupon the sage taught Sunaschepa a mantra to propitiate Lord Varuna. The boy chanted the mantra and Lord Varuna appeared before him and chided Harishchandra for agreeing to offer his son to Varuna and then going back on his word and offering someone else in his place. He said because of his breaking the promise, he would be consumed by the disease afflicting him.

Students should learn from this the lesson that they must not develop excessive attachment to anything and should always keep their plighted word.

Sage Kaushika himself was a victim of an unbecoming desire (when he was an emperor) to possess the wish-fulfilling cow of sage Vasishtha. Foiled in his attempt, he embarked on severe penances to acquire the title of Brahmarishi on a par with Vasishtha. He forfeited the fruits of his penances several times before he could earn ultimately the title of Brahmarishi from Vasishtha himself.

The all conquering faith of Prahlada

Bhagavan devoted His discourse on the 25th to the story of Prahlada, who remained utterly unshaken in his faith in Lord Narayana despite the ordeals to which he was subjected by his father, Hiranyakasipu, who hated Narayana as the slayer of his brother.

Hiranyaksha, the younger brother of Hiranyakasipu, was killed by Vishnu in his incarnation as Varaha (Boar). In order to acquire invincible power, Hiranyakasipu left for Mount Manthara to perform a rigorous penance. While he was away doing penance, his wife, Leelavati, was taken by sage Narada to his Ashram to protect her and the child she was carrying, from the onslaught

much attention to the teachings of Narada, the child in the womb absorbed them and started meditating on the Mahamantra, "OM NAMO NARAYANAYA" while still in the womb.

Brahma was pleased with tire penance of Hiranyakasipu and granted him the boon that he would not meet with his death either during day or night, either on earth or sky, either from man or beast or from the gods. With this boon, he became lord of the universe and decreed that he alone should be worshipped. When Prahlada was five years old, he was entrusted to the care of two teachers, Chanda and Amarika, both sons of the sage Kripacharya, with strict instructions to impart all demonic traits to the child and banish Vishnu's name from his mind. The teachers taught him about Artha (wealth) and Kama (desire) but abstained from teaching about the other two goals of human life, Dharma (Righteousness) and Moksha (liberation). But in spite of their best efforts, the teachers could not create a single negative thought in Prahlada's mind. He persisted in his own belief that Lord Narayana was the Supreme Master of the world to be worshipped by nine modes of devotion, beginning with listening to the glories of the Lord and culminating in total surrender of the self. Hiranyakasipu tried all means of gentle persuasion to, coax Prahlada to accept him as the supreme master and forget Narayana. Prahlada told his father that though he had mastered the entire external world he could not master his senses. Enraged at his son's unshakable devotion to his arch-enemy, Hiranyakasipu decided to put an end to Prahlada by all possible means. Prahlada was totally devoid of body consciousness and was always in a state of bliss chanting the name of Hari. He survived all tortures inflicted on him and came out unscathed. In utter exasperation, Hiranyakasipu finally asked Prahlada: "Who is this God that protects you? Where is he?" Prahlada, who had realised the omnipresence of God, told his father that God was everywhere in the cosmos, from the tiniest microcosm to the mighty macrocosm. He added: "One who is a slave to his senses cannot see Him. As long as you have ego and attachment you cannot see Hari, though He is within and outside every being." Hiranyakasipu then asked Prahlada: "Is He in this pillar?" When Prahlada said, "Yes, He is," Hiranyakasipu smote the pillar with his mace. The pillar split into two and there emerged from it the Lord in the dreadful form of Narasimha (half-lion and half-man). He seized the demon by the throat, placed him on his lap and tore his entrails with his nails.

Though everyone trembled at the sight of the awe-inspiring form of Narasimha, Prahlada stood beside the Lord cheerfully, in adoration. When he was asked by the Lord if he had no fear, Prahlada replied, "To me You are only the embodiment of Love. I believe in your Divine form of Love and not this physical form." Lord Narasimha then commanded Prahlada to take over the reigns of the kingdom, transform the demons into virtuous beings and then come back to His divine Abode. Prahlada requested the Lord to pardon his father and take him to heaven. The Lord granted the boon. Prahlada ruled over the world for along time with justice and righteousness.

Students must imbibe at least one quality of the great devotee, Prahlada, and practice it in daily life. You should always remember God and chant His name and have his Form in mind in any situation.

Krishna and the gopals

in Gokulam.

Bhagavan said: Balaram and Krishna were in the habit of taking the other cowherd boys with their cows for grazing in the forest near Gokulam. Once the gopalas engaged in merry making, in dancing and singing, quite unconcerned about the time, while the cows were out grazing. Suddenly they found that the cows had disappeared and they went in different directions to search for them. They found the cows grazing at a distant place and saw a fire blazing all around. The cowherd boys could not approach the cows. They cried in desperation, "Krishna, Krishna". When Krishna called the cows by their names, they responded, running towards him, crying "Amma". The cows could always recognise Krishna's voice and understand his call. The cowherd lads were terribly shaken by the sight of the advancing fire. Balaram and Krishna told them, "Why fear when we are, here?" Krishna asked them to close their eyes and not to open them until he gave the order. They always implicitly obeyed the command of Krishna, in whom they had full faith. When Krishna asked them to open their eyes they did so, and found themselves in the same place where they had been dancing, and it was cool all around. The fire had disappeared. Immediately they fell at the feet of Krishna and hailed him as the Supreme Lord.

When such miracles were performed they used to hail Him as God, but after some time they would revert to their old habit of calling him their friend. Even now people consider the Avatar as God only when miracles happen, but at other times they consider Him an ordinary being.

Krishna wanted to teach the Gopalas about the Atma. It was the rainy season, and dark clouds were hovering over the sky. There was lightning followed by thunder. Krishna said that the dark clouds represent the Tamasic quality in man, thunder the Rajasic quality and lightning the Satwic. Because of Tamo-guna you are not able to see the vast sky which is the Divine. Just as lightning shines in a dark cloud, wisdom (Jnana) shines beyond the cloud of ignorance.

A lesson for pandits

On another occasion, Krishna gave the Gopalas a sublime experience. The cowherd boys had taken the cows to the forest to graze. When they felt hungry, they asked Krishna and Balaram to give them food. Krishna said, "When you have the all powerful Being with you, why do you worry about food? There is a yagna being performed by some pandits nearby. All of you may go and tell them that you are hungry. They will feed you". Accordingly they went to the place and asked for food. The pandits told them that they could serve food only after the completion of the sacrificial ritual (Poornahuti). The lads returned disappointed and informed Krishna about it. Krishna asked them to go to the wives of the pandits who were cooking the food, and not to the pandits who could not recognise the nature of Divinity. Krishna asked them to go behind the yajnasala and ask the women to serve food. They went there and informed the ladies that they were Krishna's friends. While the pandits could not recognise the greatness of Balaram and Krishna, the ladies asked them with great devotion as to where Balaram and Krishna were. When told that they were nearby the ladies took all the food in their vessels to the place where Krishna was. They forgot body consciousness and were in ecstasy at the sight of Krishna. They made all

serving food to Balaram, Krishna and their friends. The pandits later realised that the God to whom they had been making their offerings at the yagna was Himself there in the form of Krishna. Krishna showed the form of Narayana to the pandits; who prostrated before Him. What was the use of doing yagnas without realising the God who was in human form available close by?

Nothing In the world is yours and you are just a trustee for the wealth which belongs to the Divine. Developing the feeling of 'mine' and 'thine' people get attached to the unreal and the transient and forget the eternal.

Devotion of the gopikas

The Gopikas were examples of true devotion. Krishna was five years old when He did the Rasakreeda—sporting with the Gopikas. There is nothing sensuous in this; it is the sacred Atmathathwa which the Gopikas experienced, that is, oneness with the Divine. They enjoyed the music of Krishna's flute as "Nadabrahman" (the Cosmic Absolute in the form of sound). Krishna gave them the essence of the music of the Vedas in his music and talked to them in the language they could understand.

The Gopikas had only the name of Krishna on their lips and the form of Krishna in their hearts. When Uddhava was sent by Krishna to teach them the shastras they said they had only one mind and that was given to Krishna and that they had no room in their mind for anything else: Uddhava read out the letter to them which Krishna had sent. The letter said: "I am always with you and around you. I am the Indweller of your hearts. Uddhava will pass on the message. Practise it." The Gopikas had no patience to, learn any lesson from Uddhava. Finally they said they wanted one message to be sent to Krishna and that was "Let Krishna come and make the flower of our hearts blossom." Uddhava went to Krishna and extolled the pure unalloyed devotion of the Gopikas.

Bhagavan told the students that they should understand the real devotion of the Gopikas. He said: "You should have full faith in and single-minded devotion to God."

Akrura's vision of the Lord

In His discourse on the 28th May, Bhagavan described the devotion of Akrura, who was sent by Kamsa, to bring Balaram and Krishna to Mathura, so that Kamsa could put an end to both of them.

Bhagavan said: Everyone in the world loves objects or persons or even God, for his or her own selfish purpose. No one loves God for God's sake. Man exists in three states—waking, dream, and deep sleep. In the waking state all his senses and mind are at work, while in the dream state only the mind is active, and in deep sleep everything merges in the Self and one enjoys bliss. Man should make efforts to experience the reality beyond all the three states.

would perceive Him as Narayana and Balaram as Adishesha. Akrura arrived shortly afterwards with an invitation to Krishna and Balaram to attend the Dhanur-yagna to be performed by Kamsa. Akrura was very devoted to Balaram and Krishna and so he informed them that Kamsa's invitation was only a part of his nefarious scheme to lure them to Mathura and kill them.

The Gopikas and Gopals tried their best to prevent Akrura from taking Krishna and Balaram in his chariot. They were not worried about any harm that might be caused by the evil-minded Kamsa. Their fear was that Krishna might not return from Mathura. Krishna told them, "We must go to Mathura to fulfill our mission. You are not the body. The Indweller in the heart is directing the whole show. That is the Atma. You are in Me. I am in you. Understand this truth and you will know everything."

After thus pacifying the Gopis and Gopikas, Krishna and Balaram left in the chariot, driven by Akrura. In the evening Akrura alighted near a river to perform his ablutions. While having a dip in the river he had the vision of Lord Vishnu reclining on Adishesha. On hurrying back he saw Krishna and Balaram sitting in the chariot unperturbed. Krishna asked Akrura what he had seen to make his face so radiant. Akrura was thrilled at the experience and praised them. He requested them both to 'stay at his house, but Krishna politely declined, promising to visit him after finishing his mission in Mathura.

The next day, while they were walking along the road, they spotted the royal washerman and asked him for some royal clothes. The washerman rudely replied that the royal clothes could not even be touched by low-born cowherds. Infuriated at this, Krishna stuck the dhobi, who fell down. They took some of the royal clothes, and went on their way.

Later they met an old hunch-backed lady, Kubja, who was providing scents and perfumes for Kamsa. She had a beautiful face but an ugly body, bent over in three ways. Seeing the two brothers, she was overjoyed and gave away all the perfumes to them. Though God never asks anything from anyone, if someone offers something He returns it a hundredfold. Krishna planted His foot on her feet, caught hold of her chin and lifted it up. Lo and behold! Her crooked back was gone! She shed tears of gratitude to Krishna for restoring her beautiful shape and prayed to Him to visit her house to accept her prayerful offerings. Krishna promised to do so after finishing his mission.

Parents freed

Kamsa heard of these exploits of the young lads and tried to send an elephant in rut, to kill them, but it was the elephant that was killed. Next Kamsa had two of his best wrestlers challenge them in combat. The wrestlers met with their end and realised that the Divine had come in the form of Krishna and Balaram. Then Kamsa ordered his troops to close in on them. But Krishna, in a trice, jumped on the platform where Kamsa was seated and rained severe blows on him till he dropped dead.

were confined, and freed them. Krishna reinstated Kamsa's father on the throne.

Later Krishna went to Akrura's house. Akrura referred to the inexplicable ways of the Lord in His various incarnations and said that he was greatly blessed, by Krishna's visit to his house. He hugged Krishna, who was well aware of Akrura's boundless devotion.

Students should develop devotion to God, such as this, Bhagavan stated. He said- "Whatever you do must be done as an offering to God; that in itself will be a penance to win the grace of God."

On the 29th May, Bhagavan narrated the episodes relating to Jarasandha and his encounters with the Yadavas and the creation of Dwaraka city by Lord Krishna. Bhagavan said; "People are generally hankering after academic education and worldly attainments, but forget the Supreme Power, who is the Basis for all knowledge and the entire cosmos.

Krishna brings back the guru's son

After Kamsa was killed, Nanda and Yashoda made arrangements for the education of Krishna and Balaram in the traditional manner, by sending them to a gurukula. In those days, even princes had to go to the ashram of a guru to study, and no distinction was made between the rich and the poor or high and low among students. Even though Krishna and Balaram had exhibited super-human powers in vanquishing Kamsa and other demons, they had to learn the regular lessons in Brahma Vidya from sage Sandeepani, in his ashram in the forest. They had to go to the forest and gather firewood for the Guru's household. All the students had to share the work in the ashram among themselves equally without any distinction. At the end of the educational course the students used to give "Gurudakshina" (offering to the preceptor). Krishna and Balaram asked their preceptor what he would like them to give. The teacher, who was quite aware of the Divine powers of Krishna, told Him that since He was the incarnation of the Supreme, He could do anything, and so he would like to have his only son, who had died some time earlier, restored to life, as his wife was very much attached to the son and was in great grief after his death. Krishna and Balaram chanted some mantras and brought the Guru's son back to life.

The Guru was immensely pleased and expressed his gratitude to Krishna and Balaram.

After they returned to their kingdom from the forest, Jarasandha, the ruler of Magadha, who had given both his daughters in marriage to Kamsa, and bore a grudge against Krishna, invaded the Yadava kingdom and caused considerable destruction. Krishna's strategy was to weaken Jarasandha after each encounter and finally destroy him. The followers of Jarasandha harboured hatred towards Balaram and Krishna and were harassing the Yadavas during yagnas. Krishna wanted to settle his people in a secure place. He had an island city constructed by Vishwakarma, the architect of the gods. That city was Dwaraka, a city of unmatched splendour and beauty. The Yadavas began to lead happy lives in the new place.

Here, students must understand the difference between the Yadavas and the Gopikas. The Yadavas considered Krishna as their relative, and were proudly proclaiming Krishna as their own

the world. In contrast, the Gopikas considered themselves as Krishna's worshippers, and were humble and devoted to the Divine.

Bhagavan concluded the series of discourses on the Bhagavatam with a stirring appeal to students to learn the following lessons.

- **Students should learn humility and obedience and serve society.**
- **If you have God's Grace, you can. progress fearlessly in the world.**
- **For this, faith in oneself or self-confidence is the foundation.**
- **You should cultivate Ekathmabhava or oneness of the Atma dwelling in all beings, as taught by Prahlada's example.**
- **Students should have determination, like Dhruva, to follow the righteous godly path.**
- **You should follow the discipline necessary to maintain the balance in life.**
- **Everything should be within limits, and excessive desires should be curbed.**
- **Following the examples of great devotees as a guide, you should strive as exemplary individuals leading ideal lives.**

The Blame is Mine

Sometimes, when it seems that life is not so kind,
When, tho' I try,
For me, there is no peace of mind,
I get to idly thinking:
"What's life all about...
This life...?"
But who can ever really work it out?
Who can ever really know
The reason why
Some are born to laugh
While others have to cry?

In my seeking mind:
"Do I not, in my way,
Create the chains that bind?"
The load I bear,
Why do I cry, constantly:
"IT ISN'T FAIR!
IT ISN'T FAIR THAT GOD
SHOULD MAKE ME SUFFER SO!"
But ...do I not reap the harvest
Of the seeds I sow?

Did I not choose this path
My restless feet have trod?
Why, then do I think it fair
To blame my God,
When, thru' my own transgressions
I have suffered pain?
THE BLAME IS MINE,
So ...I must make it right
Again!

Forgive me, God,
If, now and then, I do not see
I cause the tears that tremble
In this heart of me...
I, who back along the years,
Some other time,
(However large or small!)
Have done the crime

And so ...
With prayerful heart and mind,
I homeward plod!
This is MY cross to bear;
Forgive me, God!

—Grace Burford, Melbourne, Australia

Twin Operation Theater Complex for Sai Hospital

but remain in India to serve the people here, was given by Bhagavan Baba, after inaugurating an operation theater complex attached to the Sri Sathya Sai Hospital at Whitefield on June 3rd.

The new theater complex, built at a cost of Rs. 35 lakhs, will provide additional facilities for surgical operations in the fields of ophthalmology, Orthopaedics, ENT besides general surgery. In addition to an optical laser facility it is also proposed to have a Cornea Bank, shortly. With these new additions, the Hospital will have three operation theaters for surgery in various specialities.

After formally inaugurating the new complex and blessing a number of women with their new born babies, Bhagavan came to the Shamiana where a large and distinguished gathering had assembled for the occasion. Dr. S.S. Badrinath the well-known eye surgeon and Director of Sankara Nethralaya at Madras, was the chief-guest at the function.

The Medical Director, Dr. M. Balasubrahmanyam, formerly Director of the Jawaharlal Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education and Research at Pondicherry, who had been serving in the Whitefield Hospital after his retirement, presented a report on the growth of the Sai Hospital at Whitefield from its modest beginnings on August 28, 1976. During the past two decades, the Hospital has grown in several directions and has been rendering free medical aid to poor patients hailing from a number of villages in South Karnataka and the adjoining areas of Tamilnadu. With the blessings of Bhagavan Baba, the Hospital has been serving thousands of villagers and urbanites in an area within a radius of 78 Km around Whitefield. In 1994 the Patients came from 437 villages and towns around Whitefield. Starting with an initial complement of three medical and three paramedical staff, today the Hospital is served by sixteen visiting specialists who render free service in their different specialities. A large number of Sai devotees have been supplementing voluntarily the services of the paramedical staff. The maintenance of medical records has been computerised. The total number of patients attending the Hospital has grown from 1747 in 1977 to over 61,000 in 1994.

He then invited Dr. Badrinath to say a few words.

Dr. Badrinath said that it was the greatest and proudest moment in his life to sit next to Bhagavan Baba. Bhagavan's services to mankind stand unparalleled in human history. His message of love and peace, truth and righteousness is the hope for ailing mankind. He prayed to Bhagavan to enable him to serve society.

Bhagavan then delivered His discourse (Published separately in this issue).

The meeting concluded with the offering of arati to Bhagavan.

Health, Diet and Divinity

*Not By Penance, Nor By Baths in Sacred Waters,
Nor By Studying Of Scriptures, Nor By Japa
Can The Ocean Of Worldly Existence
(the cycle of birth and death) Be Crossed.
It Can Be Done Only By Service To Good People.*

(Sanskrit Sloka)

Man seeks to cross the ocean of Samsara by penance, pilgrimages to sacred shrines, scriptural studies and exercises in meditation. But all these are of no avail without service to good people. All these spiritual exercises are comprehended by seva (service).

For the achievement of the four main goals of life, (the Purusharthas of DHARMA, Right Conduct, ARTHA, acquisition of wealth, KAMA, fulfillment of desires, and MOKSHA, Liberation), health is essential. Without good health a man cannot accomplish even the most trivial thing. Hence, health is wealth.

Cause of disease

However, because of the influence of the Kali Age, man is a prey to all kinds of ailments and has no peace of mind despite the possession of every conceivable kind of wealth and comforts. There is no dearth of doctors. In spite of the availability of so many amenities, why is man afflicted with disease? Indeed, more than physical ailments, mental diseases are growing limitlessly. Mental sickness caused by tension and worry gives us so many bodily ailments.

Man today is afflicted with discontent. As one set of desires are satisfied, other desires go on cropping up. If desires are reduced, contentment will grow.

Moreover, because of the perversions of the Kali age, the five basic elements (ether, air, fire, water and earth) are polluted. The water we drink is impure. The air we breathe is polluted. The food we consume is polluted. As a consequence the mind gets polluted.

Matter and mind

Today 'Man has to understand the true relationship between matter and mind. When one is asked about the mind, he says, "Don't mind." When he is asked about matter, he answers: "It doesn't matter." By this sort of casualness, man is failing to understand mind and matter.

Only when man understands the nature of the mind he can recognise the true nature of humanness. What is the mind? It is not something negative: It is positive. It represents the power

capable of exploring the powers of the atom. The mind is capable of recognising the truth that is valid for the three categories of Time—the past, the present and the future. The mind is therefore very essential in man's daily life. It constitutes the very essence of life. It is the source of all strength. Man today is indifferent to the importance and the powers of the mind.

Search for happiness

Man is seeking happiness from birth to death. The search starts with education. But education does not confer happiness. He desires a job, but that does not make him happy. He then seeks marriage as the means to happiness. Happiness eludes him because the wife claims equal rights. Then he declares: "My life is a total darkness". What is the reason for this feeling? It is the ego that is the cause. As a man grows, his egoism also grows. One after another, desires go on increasing. Their fulfillment does not bring him the happiness he seeks.

Where is this happiness or bliss (Ananda) to be found? It does not exist in material objects. It is not to be found in physical pleasures. The truth is man is the embodiment of bliss. He is searching for it outside himself. This is the mark of ignorance. When he is the embodiment of bliss, how can he secure bliss outside himself?

Today, in spite of all his wealth, "man is unhappy. He is perpetually racked by lack of peace. Devotees come here" from all parts of the world. Each of them asks: "I want peace". Here are three words: "I", "want", "peace". "I" is ego. "Want" is desire. Remove the ego and desire you will have peace. Ego and desire have enveloped peace. When the covering is removed, peace will manifest itself.

Health and happiness

Man can lead a blissful life only when he enjoys health. Wealth can offer comforts but not peace. Wealth can provide a multi-storeyed mansion but not sound sleep. Wealth can provide bodily comforts, but physical comforts do not produce bliss. Air-conditioners and dunlopillo mattresses may give comfort to the body. But when there is no peace of mind, of what use are these comforts? The body is like a water bubble, the mind is like a monkey, don't follow the body or the mind, and follow the conscience.

Man today is not following the conscience. He is sticking to the body and mind which are useless. He must enquire into the problem, "Who am I?" He will discover that the body, the senses and the mind are all the instruments and he is their master. The master has today become a slave of his body and mind, which should be his servants. You are the soul. Make it the basis for all your actions.

Human values

Today man is forgetting his essential humanness. The first requisite is for man to realise human values: Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Love. For a bulb to bum, you need a connecting wire, a switch and electric current. For man, that current is Truth or God. It is energy. This divine energy has to flow through the wire of Dharma (Righteousness) reach the bulb of Peace (Santhi) and

living death for man.

Love expresses itself in many forms in relation to different persons, but is essentially one. Today love is tainted by selfishness, whether in relation to the mother, the spouse or the children or others. Man's selfishness is polluting the entire society. Attachment to others is natural. But there should be a limit to it. When this limit is exceeded, it becomes a disease. This is true in every case. Because of man's excessive desires, he is prone to diseases of every kind.

Head and food

The most common source of illness among people today is "tension". What is the cause of tension? It is indulgence in excesses of various kinds. Men must learn to moderate the hectic pace of living. Hurry, causes worry and worry causes disease. "Hurry, worry and curry (fatty food)" are the causes of heart diseases. Therefore the first requirement is control of food and head (the mind). When you control these two, there will be no room for illness.

Importance of the eye

Today the new operation theatre has been inaugurated in our hospital. Doctors know that in the eye there are billions of cells which react to light rays. If any of these cells are affected, the vision is affected. For man the eye is the most important organ for comprehending the Universe. Hence the eye has to be regarded as a sacred instrument. You cannot change creation, but by changing your vision you can get the proper view of creation. Here is an illustration. Once there was a king, who developed an acute stomach trouble. All the medicines administered by doctors were of no avail. He then approached a great yogi, who told him that for his stomach ailment he had to treat the sight. He should see nothing but green everywhere. The yogi left and the king ordered that all places in his kingdom should be painted green. Sometime later, the yogi returned and found that people were engaged in splashing green paint everywhere. When asked for the reason, they told him that they were carrying out the King's orders. The yogi went to the king and told him that to see everything green, all that was needed for him was to wear green glasses. It was absurd to attempt to paint everything green.

The vision of love

Similarly if we change our vision, we will experience peace. When people view the world with the vision of love, they will have peace. All diseases will be cured. Most diseases have their origin in the mind. Everything has a psychological basis. When a person feels that something is wrong with him, he develops an illness. A healthy mind is needed for a healthy body. But it is not enough to be physically healthy. Man needs God's grace also (Daivanugraham). To acquire God's grace you have to cultivate the love of God. Love has become today a kind of show. Genuine love should emanate from the heart. Start the day with love, spend the day with love, and end the day with love, that is the way to God. If you develop love, disease will not come near you.

Avoid excesses

physical power. What is the reason? Diet control. My weight has remained the same for over sixty years—108 lbs only. Proper balance must be maintained throughout life. There must be balance in respect of knowledge and several other things. Students pollute their knowledge by seeing bad things, listening to bad things and by bad thoughts. Their minds are perverted by addiction to films. They should learn, to lead pure lives. Only there they will experience bliss and health.

Embodiments of the Divine! Realise the value of health. Regulate your habits. Develop food manners, which are the mark of a true man. Similarly the good devotee is one who does his duty. Duty is God. Everyone has to develop the manners required in daily life. The manners should be such that they confer self-satisfaction. You should conduct yourself properly not for the sake of others but for your own sake. When there is self-satisfaction there will be self-realisation. For all these you must have self-confidence. Most people today have no confidence in themselves and are perpetually racked by doubts. In Jesus' time there was one doubting Thomas. But today all are doubting Thomases. Everyone doubts every other.

Health and bliss

For every man two things are essential: good health (Arogya) and happiness (Ananda). Health for the body and bliss for the spirit. With these two wings you can soar to any height. You need both the things, for which you must secure God's grace. To get God's grace, you have to engage yourself in sacred action. Bear in mind the three P's: PURITY, PATIENCE and PERSEVERANCE. With these three you are bound to acquire good health and bliss.

Bhagavan's example

You may believe it or not. But the truth is that these three are responsible for my Arogya (health) and Ananda (bliss). I am always happy. I should like to run but there is no place where I can do so. I can lift anybody at this age. This strength is present potentially in everyone. But it is being wasted. If the energy in everyone is properly conserved he can do anything.

The Whitefield hospital

The hospital here began in a small way with a single room. Over the years it was expended. Dr. Rajeshwari, mother of Srinivas, (former warden of Brindavan Hostel) worked hard to develop the hospital. She devoted all her earnings to the expansion of the hospital. She worked ceaselessly day and night. Ultimately she passed away in the hospital itself. The hospital was her home.

Thereafter Dr. Savitri has been carrying on the work. Savitri has been working tirelessly. She attends to everything herself. By her work for patients she is becoming a patient herself. She must take care of her health. Only when the doctor is healthy, the patient can be well cared for. As is the doctor so is the patient. Hence Savitri must take care of her own health. This is all the more necessary because the hospital is growing day by day. Srinivas is rendering every help for the hospital. There are others also who are serving the hospital in various ways.

The Whitefield hospital which began in a single room, has now grown into a big complex. The doctors have to meet the growing demands on their services. The number of patients coming into the hospital are growing all the time. All services are totally free. Not a paisa is collected from the patients. Such a free medical treatment is not given anywhere in the world. This applies to the Super Speciality Hospital in Prasanthigram. Elsewhere hospitals have become big business. In fact, in every sphere commercialization is rampant. Education is a business, music is a business, health is a business. The whole world has become a market place. Welfare services should be free for all. There are numerous, people who cannot afford the costs of medical treatment. Doctors should render free service to such persons. My words should not be misunderstood. Even in the earning of incomes there should be a limit. Many doctors lack determination. They join a hospital on a good salary. But after a month or so, when another hospital offers a higher salary they go over to the new hospital. How long are you likely to stay in the other hospital? When you go like this, you forfeit the confidence of hospital managements. Even workers behave in this way. They shift from place to place. The right thing is to stick to a job for three or four' years. Then your work will secure automatic recognition.

Doctors and patients

Doctors are obsessed with salaries. They should be more concerned about patients. When they concentrate on their patients, they will develop into excellent doctors. Inspire confidence in the patients. Then any medicine will work wonders. The patients will hail such a doctor as a “good doctor”. A “good Doctor” in due course becomes a “God doctor”. "Vaidyo Narayano Harih", it~ is said. The doctor is Divinity itself. Doctors should render service in this spirit. Service is God.

Very good work is being done in our hospital as well as elsewhere. Bharat would not be what it is without good people. Without meritorious people can the world experience light? There are good and bad people in the world. All should become good and develop into Godly men. The same Atma is present in everyone. Doctors should look after the patients with the same care they would show to their kith and kin. Then all would experience equal happiness.

—From Bhagavan's discourse in the Sri Sathya Sai Hospital, Whitefield on June 3, 1995

Selfishness is like a balloon filled with air. If you puncture the balloon, the air inside will combine with the air outside. When the ego is deflated, altruistic love takes its place. Love all and cultivate universal compassion. Love of oneself should evolve into Divine love, which is the highest form of love. We should, ascend from a lower state of love to a higher state of love, just as we ascend from a lower level of truth to a higher level of truth. It is only through altruism that you can achieve divinity.

—Baba

Not a leaf turns without reason, nor does an eyelid open or close without His will. When we learn to take everything that happens to us as God's grace, when we learn to rely on Him and on Him alone, our lives move around the Lord as the earth moves around the sun, with perfect peace, ease and order. Sai is in complete command. It is for us to listen with care and follow His lead and let the results rest with Him.

We all have had the experience of meeting someone unexpectedly after having thought of that person, or of having an idea simultaneously with someone else. Life gives us many different so-called co-incidences. All are familiar with these experiences which can become important factors in shaping the direction of our lives. Believing that a first Law of Creation is perfect order, the idea of co-incidence fades away and we see events as acts of Divine Will, or as "Sai-incidence". He alone is the Doer. It is His Divine play in which we are each given our role to enact.

How his cancer was cured

Over the years, when wondering how to proceed, I have felt guided to new service projects by paying attention to the Sai-incidences that He has sent my way. Several years ago at an interview with Swami on work that I should be doing, He added at the very end, "Hospitals". The result was an effort to develop a support programme for children undergoing surgery. There was a lot of research and a proposal which never materialized as the hospital involved moved its pediatric surgery elsewhere. The results of our efforts are His and His alone. Although two hospital visiting projects involving teenagers have been developed, I felt that something more was needed. I asked to be shown the answer. At that point, a Sai-incidence resolved the problem. I was introduced to a doctor working at the largest cancer hospital in New York City who told me the following inspiring story: Not long ago, Mr. Williams, the President/CEO of a large international corporation, was diagnosed with terminal cancer. An intensely active man, now confined to a hospital bed, Williams lost all interest in living and was in a state of deep despair with little spiritual support that he could relate to. One day he received a visit from an acquaintance who challenged him to make good use of the few months left to him. Williams agreed to do what was suggested.

Every morning, he purchased a large quantity of flowers and spent hours visiting patients in the hospital, offering a flower to each one. The patients were very happy. Mr. Williams was happy and he then began to add words of good cheer: The flowers helped all concerned. They were a symbol of love and caring. Mr. Williams surprised himself and his doctors by living for several years. Most importantly, he found a peace and joy he had not known before.

Service in hospitals

When the doctor finished telling me his story, I knew that here was a Sai-incidence to be followed through on. I asked the doctor if I could do the same with his hospital, but he said that there were now lots of visitors and that a needier hospital would be better. We searched and finally located the largest hospital in New York dealing with Aids cases, including a floor for

and certainly no one to visit them. That this hospital was the correct choice was confirmed at a first interview with the volunteer Director who was listening to Shiva chants and had recently heard about Sathya Sai Baba. To date a first group of volunteers have been trained who will give to each patient both a flower and a Sai quotation as part of their friendly visit. The volunteers consist of high school students, adults who are new to the teachings of Sathya Sai Baba as well as Sai devotees. In addition, a musical entertainment group is now being formed. By following through on the Sai-incidences the Lord reveals to us how new and effective ways of service can be developed.

Monitoring delinquent teenagers

Another example occurred at a devotee's wedding to which I had been invited. By "chance", I was seated at the same table as a New York Juvenile Court Judge. We had ample opportunity to talk about the serious lack of guidance and proper education. Judge Henry was clearly a man dedicated to giving troubled teens another opportunity to change their ways. We met several times and talked about the absence of human values in both home and school. The Judge felt that mentoring was an essential ingredient in transforming these first offenders. The lack of a good example, of a proper role model, allows for no choice other than to follow the destructive path of their peers.

Having volunteered as a mentor for 15 years, here was a new and important opportunity to serve. The Judge invited me to visit his chambers and spend as much time as I wanted in his court to understand the problem. I learned a lot and through his auspices became involved with two organizations that he works with in his effort to rehabilitate these teenagers rather than send them to prison. He has had good success.

Now there is a small mentoring programme as well as values classes for younger teens. A different approach has been taken with the older teens all of whom have spent time in prison and are out on parole. Several of these boys have come to the bi-monthly meetings that serve as an introduction to the teachings of Sathya Sai Baba. Perhaps most interesting of all is the appearance of a young poet who has the great gift of having found his own voice. The opportunity to mentor such a potential leader is indeed Swami's gift to me. The next step is to develop a full mentoring programme with adults as well as Sai young adults who can be particularly effective here.

As these concluding words of this article were being typed, I received a phone call from the principal of an elementary school that I have worked with using high school students to tutor the younger children. The principal asked if I would be interested in expanding this small programme to include the beginnings of a high school mentoring programme that would go far beyond the present tutoring. That is absolutely perfect and surprising. It is a Sai-incidence within a Sai-incidence although it might best be seen as a Sai Leela!

is needed is an army of Sai role models to develop, under the banner of the Lord's love, a new generation that will "Be Good, See Good and Do Good."

Swami says that "Service is the most "effective form of prayer". When in search of new creative opportunities to serve, pray to Him, ask Him, He will guide you and show you where the greatest need can be found. He will lead the way and He will hold all the results in the palm of His Divine hand which showers His benediction on mankind.

—Hal Honig, New York

AUM - the Name Of God

Life is a mighty river and desires constitute its water. Thoughts are the innumerable little waves in this river. Aspirations are the crocodiles that abound in it and illusions are its whirlpools. Only a yogi can cross such a terrible river, as he alone has gained control over the modifications of the mind.

The flow of the water in an ordinary river may increase or decrease but the river of life with ever-multiplying desires as its water has no decrease. It may become so wide as to be a boundless expanse of uncontrollable, turbulent waters. To cross such a river, a boat is absolutely necessary. 'AUM' the name of God is the boat that takes you across the river. The ancient Rishis had crossed the turbulent river of life with the boat of 'Pranava' with ease. 'Pranava' has the power to save the world from 'Pralaya' (great deluge).

—Baba

Sai Prema

I looked into Your eyes
And I saw such loneliness,
But prema flows from Your heart
To heal the wounds of life.

There are tears as You look
To the group with longing,
To keep us all in your Being
And brush away all pains.

There is such readiness
To forgive and take,
The thorns and the weeds

From our souls.
Your coming from age to age,
Is a blessing and a warning
That the time has come
To change all our cravings.

From being human to being God
From man to superman
And then to journey
From star to star

**Mrs. Domingo L. Reyes,
Prasanthi Nilayam**

The Divine Dispeller of Darkness

Embodiments of Love!

The human body, constituted by the five elements is the combined product of the five elements. These five elements are derived from the Divine. But man today is not aware of the truth about these elements. Man can accomplish many things in this world: he can be a great scholar, a great warrior, a ruler of rulers, a great astronomer or an astronaut on the moon, but can he control his senses and make his mind tranquil and steady? (Telugu Poem) Neither charity, nor Yajna, nor Tapas, nor wisdom, nor the practice of ancient Dharma, nor adherence to truth or any discipline will be of any avail without self-control. (Poem)

Embodiments of the Divine Atma!

Water is getting scarcer every day. What is the reason? Because of the decline of morality among men water is getting scarce in the world. For human life morality is the life breath. Morality makes humanness blossom. Because morals have been lost, avatar is getting scarce.

Today people are propagating philosophy (Vedanta) in various ways. This propaganda is exciting the minds of the people. It is perturbing the hearts of people. Life is filled with doubts. Man today does not require an ideology (siddhantam). He needs sense control. Without control of the senses, a man cannot become spiritual. This was proclaimed by Saint Thyagaraja in his song wherein he said that without peace of the Spirit there can be no happiness for any one, whether he is a Vedantic scholar or an aspirant. Only through self-control can a man experience peace. But man is engaged in a futile search for something he does not know. The world is full of such aimless seekers. They are forgetting the Eternal Reality in the concern for transient worldly objects.

Man today is dominated by selfishness. Insatiable desire fills his whole being. The numbers of such persons are growing without limit. How can they achieve anything great in life? Their daily round of activities consists of reading newspapers, watching video programmes and listening to the Radio. Every moment their attachment to castes, creed and parochial interests is growing.

Men today must learn to lead lives inspired by morality and sacrifice (seela and tyaga). Human relationships today are governed by friendship or enmity. The cause for either feeling is the mind. Hatred is bred by each one's thoughts. This may be seen from the hatred of Ravana towards Rama, of Shishupala and Dantavakra towards Krishna and of Kauravas towards Dharma, who was an "Ajatasatru", incapable of hating anybody. There is no need to worry about the enmity of others towards you. You develop your friendly attitude towards all. Ignore the abuses of others, because they serve only to diminish your sins and transfer them to the reviler. When a man praises another, the merits of the latter accrue to the former. Deem the critic as your friend, not the one who flatters you.

One's actions determine one's future. Actions are of three kinds: Thoughts are one kind, giving expression to them is another. Acting according to one's words is the third. The mind is responsible for thoughts the tongue for speech and the hands for actions. The combination of thought, word and deed represents the human state. These three account for man's pleasures and pain. Recognising this, one should understand that he is accountable for his actions. No one can escape from the consequences of his deeds. But anything can be achieved through God's grace. Hence man should strive to win God's grace. The results of one's actions are realised over different periods, of time. In some cases, the results are immediate, as, instance, when one slips and sustains a fall. In some cases, the results occur after a few minutes or hours. For example, the food you take in the morning is digested after two hours. When you sow a seed in the ground, it takes some months or years to grow into a tree and yield fruits. Some fools imagine that they can get away with bad deeds because the consequences are not immediate. But the consequences are bound to occur some time or other.

Karmas and grace

There are three types of actions: Sukarma, Vikarma, Akarma. Sukarma relates to good actions which produce good results. Vikarma relates to bad actions which have bad consequences. Akarma relates to the fruits of actions in previous lives. The suffering of good people like Sita, Harishchandra, and Nala and Damayanti has no basis in their actions during their lives, but are the results of previous karma. People who may have done no actions of any kind in their present lives may still suffer from the consequences of their actions in previous lives.

The effects of past deeds can be mitigated by earning God's grace. The means of securing Divine grace is to cultivate qualities like truth, righteousness, love, compassion, and forbearance. With these qualities life becomes a beautiful garden and a joy forever. For the man filled with bad thoughts and actions, life is like the dark and filthy Vaitharini River (called Styx in Greek mythology). Each one has to judge for himself the nature of his life. Each one is a witness unto himself. A bad man may pass off for a good man from his external appearances but he knows within himself his real nature.

God is beyond all praise or criticism. He is Being-Awareness-Bliss (Sat-Chit-Ananda). He blesses even the one who derides Him. When Kamsa, who ceaselessly hated Krishna, died at the Lord's hands, his blood flowed towards the feet of Krishna. Likewise, Shishupala, who used the vilest abusive epithets against Krishna, was slain by Krishna, but his spirit merged in the Lord because he remembered the Lord always out of his hatred. (Swami recited poems from the Bhagavatam to illustrate the language in which Shishupala reviled Krishna).

Fools who indulge in flippant remarks about Sri Krishna know nothing about the inscrutable ways of the Lord. Everyone has to face the consequences of his actions, though he may not know how when or where these consequences may occur. Man can reverse the consequences of bad actions by performing good deeds and invoking God's help.

Today is Gurupoornima. The real significance of Gurupoornima does not consist in worshipping the guru (preceptor) with some offerings, but getting rid of the darkness of ignorance, "Poornima" refers to the full moon, but the full moon symbolises the mind filled with delight. There is close association between the mind and the moon. Gurupoornima signifies the elimination of all darkness and evil from the mind. The true Guru is in our heart. Purify the heart to let the Divine dwell in it.

The vision of God

Do not forget God. What you should forget is the mundane world. God is omnipresent in all forms, everywhere, as declared in the "Purusha-Sukta". It is foolish to search for God, who is within you and outside you. When Ramakrishna Paramahansa was asked whether he had seen God and could show Him to them, he replied: "I have seen God. But how can you see God if you don't pine for him in the same manner in which you pine for your wife and children and wealth? Pray to Him, yearn for Him and be prepared to sacrifice everything for Him. Then you will experience the vision of God."

God cannot be perceived by the spiritually blind, just as a blind man cannot understand what is meant by the whiteness of milk. God is infinite bliss. He is formless, but He can assume any form He wills. How can anyone attempt to describe the nature of God?

Contemplate on God with a pure heart. There is no greater spiritual exercise. But, as long as men are attached to worldly objects they can make no progress in the spiritual field. (In this context Swami related the story of the experience of Radha and other Gopikas who wanted to go down in a boat from Mathura to Brindavan. They rowed the boat all through the night, but found to their astonishment that the boat had remained where it had been. They then discovered that they had not untied the rope which kept the boat bound to a post on the bank).

Develop detachment

The first need is to develop the spirit of sacrifice and get rid of attachment and possessiveness, then, the yearning for God grows. All are entitled to receive God's grace according to their merits. It is like drawing upon a bank according to what you have deposited with it. There are three ways of getting money from a bank. One is drawing on your deposit. In spiritual terms, this means realising the fruits of your past actions. The second means is raising a loan on the security of your assets. This corresponds to the grace you get by your current good deeds. The third means to get money from a bank is to have a good surety for the loan you wish to raise from the bank. Spiritually, this corresponds to securing God's grace through the medium of a guru (preceptor) (cheers). Who is the guru? He is the Divine dispeller of the darkness within you. The Divine Trinity (Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheshwara) have been described as gurus. This implies that the Divine should be regarded as the supreme preceptor, who can destroy the darkness of ignorance.

Install God in your heart

impart a mantra and stretch their palm for money. This is not what is meant by "Guru". Install God in your heart. The vibrations that emanate from the heart will elevate you spiritually and confer divine wisdom. This wisdom has been defined as Prajnana—Constant Integrated Awareness. To acquire such wisdom you have to keep your mind pure as a mirror, using "shraddha" (earnestness) as a cloth, dipping it in the water of Prema (Love) and wiping the dust on the mirror (in the form of bad qualities). This wisdom cannot be acquired from books. It has to be got through self-examination and self-correction.

"Gurupoornima" is an occasion for cleansing the mind to make it absolutely pure. It is not enough to praise God. You have to love Him. You have to become love itself so that you can love the entire Universe. I address all of you as "Embodiments of love". When you become embodiments of love, you can love all.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan: "*Prema mudita manase kaho! Rama, Rama, Ram!*"

—**From Bhagavan's discourse on July 12th, in the Sai Kulwant Mandap of Prasanthi Mandir**

AVATAR VANI:

Significance of Worship of the Lord's Feet

God is immanent in the entire cosmos like oil in sesame seed and butter in milk. Just as the seeds have to be crushed to get the oil and the milk has to be curdled and churned for getting butter, sadhana has to be done to realise God. Nine forms of devotion have been indicated in the Bhagavatam. If one follows any of these paths, he can experience the Divine.

Prior to the commencement of this meeting, the Jyoti (sacred lamp) was lit (by Swami). No other thing signifies divinity as this sacred effulgent flame. It always goes upward. It can be kept anywhere. Everywhere it is lit it dispels darkness. Since ancient times the people of Bharat have been observing the sacred custom of lighting a lamp at the commencement of any auspicious ceremony. They have been worshipping the jyoti as it dispels darkness and is a symbol of the effulgence of wisdom. Such a sacred custom, which is an immemorial part of Indian culture, is ignored today. People indulge in practices which are contrary to such traditions. If you understand the significance of this custom and the spirit behind the lighting of the lamp, you can understand Divinity.

In order to light the jyoti you need four things: a container, oil, wick and a match-stick (fire) to light it. For dispelling the darkness, you need these four. Similarly for dispelling the darkness within you, you need the Jyoti of Wisdom. Ravana was a highly learned person, who had mastered all the Vedas and Vedangas. In spite of such erudition his heart was in pitch

powerful and was noted for his valour and his capacity to wield missiles charged with the power of Mantras. But these were of no avail against the power of the Divine. Likewise, Hiranyakasipu, who had mastery over the elements, was a victim of his ego.

Only by the light of the Divine lamp inside can you blossom as a worthwhile person. Inner purity is the greatest wealth that one can acquire. The inner purity is the wick in the container of the heart. Devotion is the oil and Divine Grace is the fire with which the lamp of wisdom can be lit. The prime requisite for achieving Divine Grace is to have harmony in thought, word and deed. (Referring to the inscrutable ways of the Lord when He wished to protect His devotees, Bhagavan described the incident in the Mahabharata in which Krishna made Draupadi fall at the feet of Bhishma and secure his blessings for saving the Pandavas from the pledge Bhishma had taken to kill the Pandavas or die in battle the next day. Bhishma lost the fight stricken by Arjuna's arrows.)

One cannot apprehend the ways of Divinity. It is only by unsullied devotion and adherence to Truth that one can realise God, who is the embodiment of Love and Truth. If you follow Truth you can sanctify your life.

To earn the grace of the Divine, the easy way is surrendering at the Feet of the Lord. The feet, which were washed by Brahma, the creator, the feet which were worshipped by Bharata through Rama's sandals, which ruled the kingdom of Ayodhya for 14 years, should be your object of worship.

There is so much power in the feet of the Lord which you cannot understand. The feet form the basis for not only the physical frame of the body, but also for spiritual and ethical purposes. The significance of each limb of the body is explained in Vedanta. The five senses of the body represent the five elements (sound is aakasa, touch is air, vision is fire, taste is water and smell is earth). In the Purusha Sukta the body of the Divine, is described in detail. The four varnas in society are represented by four parts of the Cosmic Person—Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras (the working class). It is the feet that support the entire body, comprising the other three classes. So the feet are an important part of the body. The real significance of the feet is not properly understood by all. The Vedas proclaim the unity of all classes of people by describing them as limbs of one body. The Vedas declare that the same Atma is present in all beings (EKATMA SARVABHOOTANTARATMA).

The Vedas proclaim the importance of the feet. Even in ordinary life we advise a person who has harmed another to fall at the latter's feet and beg his pardon to escape legal action. There is a close link between the different parts of the body. When one walks on the road if the eye sees a thorn, the legs avoid treading on it. When the foot is injured, the eye sheds tears. There is such close co-ordination in the physical body. Similarly in the body of the Divine the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras form an integral part. If a Sudra is in trouble, the Brahmin should be concerned. When such feelings develop in the world, there will be peace and harmony in society. Everyone should realise this and foster unity.

Embodiments of love:

The Prematattwa (Love Principle) is within you. What you are practising now, as love is not real love. It is only affection out of attachment to the body (Anuraga). Real love is unchanging. The feeling of love to the Divine is real devotion emanating from the heart.

You are doing a lot of sadhana. You should do this with purity of heart. The greatest sadhana will be chanting the Name of the Lord and doing service to one's fellow beings who are the embodiments of the same Atma that is in you. Whatever you do, do it as an offering to the Divine. What is the use of sending thousands of rupees and carrying the Padukas if you do not understand their inner significance and have purity of heart? The external objects serve as symbols for beginners, just as a child learns words with the help of pictures. After understanding the significance, you must concentrate on Divinity without external aids such as these padukas.

Worship the Padukas thinking all the while of the Lord's Form. Develop Love of God and share it with all.

(Bhagavan concluded with the Bhajan "*Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare!*")

From Divine discourse on the evening of 8th July, at Sai Kulwant Mandap, Prasanthi Mandir

AVATAR VANI

Manifest Divine Qualities

*Why should one be born at all on earth?
If he will not lift his hands in prayer to Siva,
Chant the name of Hari with his tongue,
And is not filled with compassion and love for Truth?
He is a curse for the mother who bore him (Poem)*

This is a poem by Potana. It was blossoming from the flowers of his heart. It is the essence of the three yogas (Karma, Jnana and Bhakti). It signifies the Karma-traya (the three-fold action in thought, word and deed). It shows the royal path to Liberation.

"Chethularanga Sivuni Poojinchadani" (If one will not worship Siva with his hands") refers to the Karma-marga, the path of action. This is the first among the three yogas expounded in the Upanishads. This is- the first chapter in the Bhagavad Gita.

"Noru novanga Hari Keerthi nuduvadani" ("If one will not chant the glories of Hari with his tongue") refers to the second step. This is the Bhakti yoga preached in the Vedas and the Upanishads. This is the Bhakti yoga extolled in the Gita.

"Dayayu Sathyamu thaa thanuvedeni" (If he does not cherish compassion and truth") refers to the primary duty of man to cherish in thought, word and deed, truth and compassion.

Only he is a true man who has all three qualities. The Upanishads define man as one who has full faith. Today, people instead of adhering to this sacred path, are ruining their precious human life by taking to wrong ways.

True ornaments of man

"Truth is the ornament for the neck". "Charity is the ornament for the hand". "Listening to sacred scriptures is the ornament for the ears". What other ornaments does a man need if he has these three (Sanskrit saying).

The ornaments which people wear today are a source of fear. But if the ornaments of truth, charity, and listening to sacred discourses are worn, there is no cause for fear. This is called "Abhaya", fearlessness.

The most important element in man's existence is thought (sankalpa). As are the thoughts, so is the speech. As is the speech so, are the actions. The harmony off these three will lead to the experience of Divinity.

Love is the basis

Words come out of the heart. They should be filled with compassion. The heart is the abode of compassion. It is the source of love. Hence whatever, emanates from the heart should be, filled with love. That love should express itself in speech. The flow of, love in speech should find concrete expression in action.

The heart is the seat of the Supreme Self (Paramatma). The Ganga that flows from it is the river of Truth. Actions are the harvest that is reaped from the field watered by Truth. Hence, it is said that the high-souled beings are marked by harmony in thought, word and deed. Unfortunately, today people think in, one way; speak in another way and act differently. As a result, humanness has been degraded today. To raise it to its proper level, the triune unity of thought, word and deed is essential. This is the penance for our times. This is the means to realise peace. This is the truth. This is everything.

Manifest Divine Qualities

The cosmos was born out of Truth and merges In Truth This is the truth that is a manifestation. God is Truth. The human form is an expression of the Divine. Having emanated from the Divine, man should manifest his Divine origin by manifesting his inherent divine qualities. But man is behaving in a demonic manner.

Man has to rise above the animal nature. He has to express his divine potencies. For man has to acquire knowledge (knowledge of the Self): Atma is the all-pervading Universal Consciousness. It is immanent in everyone. Only as long as this consciousness is present in the

a corpse.

To experience the Divine within you all you have to do is dedicate all your actions to the Divine. No other spiritual exercise is necessary. This does not mean you give up other forms of worship like Japa. The basic equipment is that whatever spiritual exercise is done it should be performed whole-heartedly, with full concentration.

"Likhita Japa"

For instance, we have "Likhita Japam" (Bundles of notebooks in, which devotees had written the name of the Lord, thousands of times had earlier been placed, at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan). Today people write the names without thinking aloud the name of the Lord in their minds and uttering the names with their mouths. As you start writing the Name, you must first reflect on the Name in the Mind, and utter the name by the mouth, and then write the name with your hand. This is "Likhita Japa", the penance of writing the Lord's name. Some people, to complete the writing of the name a crore of times, resort to devices like using carbon paper to multiply the number of names written or cyclostyling what they have written once. This cannot be described as Likhita Japa. The name should get inscribed in the heart. It then becomes a kind of negative from which any number of prints can be taken.

Dedicate all deeds to god

Whatever you do, deem it as God's work. This can be applied to every ordinary act in daily life, whether it is sweeping the floor, or preparing chapattis or cutting vegetables. Every one of these acts can be turned into a spiritual exercise by the spirit in which you do it. To perform every act as an offering to the Divine is true devotion.

India and the world are today suffering from disorder and violence because people have lost faith in the Self (Atma-vishwas). They are fostering attachment to the body and ignoring the, Spirit. Man should not follow the senses which are wayward, the body, which is perishable, or the mind, which is fickle. He must follow the conscience, which tells him what is right or wrong.

From ancient times, Bharatiyas have adhered to the four goals of human life: Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha (Righteousness, wealth, Desire and Liberation). But all the goals were linked to Dharma, Righteousness. Wealth should be acquired by righteous means. Desires should be related to what is righteousness. When wealth and desires are associated with Dharma, Moksha (Liberation) is easily attained.

"Go back to your source"

Many devotees come to Swami and pray to swami to show them the way. What is it that is to be shown, to them? I tell them: "You crazy ones! There is no need for any new path for you. You go back by the way you came. You came from the Atma. You go back to the Atma".

days here. You will return to your homes. You go on, pilgrimages. But whatever places you may visit ultimately you return to your native place (Swasthanam). The free "Swasthanam" is the Abode of the Spirit (Swa+Sthanam). People who are not aware of the spiritual basis of life take to wrong courses.

Embodiments of love!

Undergoing many hardships, you have come here out of your devotion a faith to experience the bliss of staying here in spite of many inconveniences. You must carry with you the same blissful feelings when you go back to your homes. Today each of you is experiencing separately. But when you go back, by recalling this experience you feel the presence of all the others in your hearts.

Install the Divine in your hearts and carry on your duties with devotion and dedication. Remember the ultimate message of Vyasa that the whole purpose of life is to render help to others and avoid the sin of doing harm to others.

Righteous path

Sri Narayana Rao (who had spoken earlier) urged that Righteousness should grow in the world. Where is this Righteousness (Dharma)? It is in your conduct, your thoughts, words and deeds. Righteousness dwells in your heart. When the impulses arising from the heart are expressed in words that is Sathya. To put into action your words is Dharma. For all these Love is primary. Love in action is Righteousness. Love in speech is Truth. Love in thought is Peace. Love in understanding is nonviolence.

When you realise that God is in everyone, you will practice non-violence. God is one, though He may be worshipped in different forms and under different names. You may call him Rama or Krishna, Allah or Jesus, Hari or Sai (Cheers). Any Name can be uttered by any one.

Embodiments of love!

If you want to transform the world, to promote all round prosperity in the country, to make the prayer that "all people should be happy" become reality, develop faith in the Self. Never forget God. Without God there is no universe. Let the non-believers have their way. But they have no right to question the beliefs of others. To ask for physical proofs of the existence of experience like bliss or love or for subtle things like the fragrance of a flower is impracticable. To deny the reality of love on the ground that it has no recognisable form is meaningless. Love may have no form. But the mother who exhibits love has a form.

All beings are manifestations of the Cosmic Divine. The forms are different but the spirit that animates them all is One, like the current that illumines bulbs of different colours and wattage. Cultivate this feeling of oneness and do not be critical of any faith or religion. Dedicate your lives to the service of your fellow beings. Thereby you will be redeeming your lives.

Rama, Ram!"

"Sai Kulwant"

After the bhajan, Bhagavan spoke a few words referring to the munificent donation of Rs. 2 crores given by Sri Kulwant Rai, leading industrialist of Delhi, towards the construction of the magnificent new mandap in front of the Mandir, which could comfortably accommodate thousands of devotees.

He declared that the mandap will be named "SAI KULWANT"

From Bhagavan's discourse in Prasanthi Mandir on the morning of July 9, 1995

AVATAR VANI

Acquire Friendship of God

*Destroying pride man becomes endearing;
Destroying anger man gets rid of sorrow;
Destroying desire man acquires peace;
Destroying greed man achieves happiness.*

Embodiments of love!

As long as man is filled with arrogance, he cannot win any kind of respect from others. Egoism brings about a man's ruin. Only when a man gets rid of pride the people respect and love him. The first requisite for securing the esteem and love of the people is to root out self-conceit (Ahamkara).

The second is anger (Krodham). A man consumed by anger can never be free from misery. Anger carries with it a blazing fire. Anger is also described as 'Krodhagni', the fire of anger. As long as one is consumed by the fire, he cannot have happiness. To get freedom from misery, man has to get rid of anger. Anger is also the cause of depravity in man. It ruins him in various ways. It alienates him from his kith and kin.

For the decline in human qualities today, pride and anger are primarily responsible.

The third enemy of man pervades his entire being. It is insatiable desire. Man's entire life is filled with desires which are endless and ever mounting. Man can achieve peace of mind only by the conquest of desire (Kama).

The fourth enemy is greed or miserliness (Kama). When man overcomes greed, he can secure happiness. A greedy man cannot enjoy bodily, mental or spiritual happiness. The miser is like the

despises a miser.

Only when man gets rid of these four undesirable qualities can he experience peace and happiness. These four vices have no place in a true human being.

Man is the very embodiment of the Divine. This Divine Will is termed Prakriti (the cosmos). In every human being the Divine Will is present. Man has taken birth to give expression to the will of the Divine. The human heart should be an ocean of milk filled with compassion. The heart, in the core of which there should be this milk of compassion, is today filled with the four evil qualities.

The ocean of milk

The ancient sages had a vision of the Supreme Lord Vishnu reclining on the Ocean of Milk (Ksheerasagara) and adored Him in that form. And this was how Saint Thyagaraja described the Lord in his famous song beginning with the words: "Ksheerasagara Sayana! (Oh Lord reclining on the Ocean of Milk!)". (Swami sang some lines from the song.)

What is this Ocean of Milk? Is it anywhere on earth? On this mundane world with its material concerns, you cannot perceive this Ocean of Milk. Nevertheless, it exists. Where? In every human heart... In this heart Lord Sriman Narayana is resting. This is the reason why the Lord is described as "Hridayavasi" ("the Dweller in the Heart"). Every human heart is a shrine of God. In the Ocean of Milk in such a heart, no room should be given for crocodiles and whales in the form of evil qualities to dwell. Unfortunately, because of the influence of the Kali Age, the Ocean of Milk in the human heart has been turned into an Ocean of brine (Ksheerasagam) in which attachment and hatred dwell as crocodiles and whales. The salt in this Ocean is of man's making.

Today cities like Madras and Bombay are close to the sea. But can they make use of its water? No. Because it is saline.

Deities and demons

The ancient sages used to pray: "Oh gods, we welcome you. Oh Rakshasas (demons) depart from us". Who are these gods? These deities are: good thoughts, good feelings, and good behaviour. The sages prayed that such celestial beings should enter their minds. The demons whom they wanted to get rid of are evil thoughts, bad feelings and bad actions. This is an example for every one to follow in daily life.

In daily life, we consume good things and eschew bad things: We consume good food and defecate what is wholesome. This is a basic principle. You must give up the bad to provide room for the intake of what is good. This is the lesson from everyone's daily experience.

The good and the bad

taking in the bad and giving up the good. It is this which accounts for the prevalence of disorder and misery in the world today. Hence, the first need is to cultivate good qualities. Bad thoughts and bad habits have to be cast away. Not recognising this truth, man makes himself a prey to misery and discontent. Can you say that this misery and worry were caused by Providence? Not at all. Your own bad thoughts and actions are the cause of your misery. As you sow, so shall you reap. The seed determines the fruit. When man cherishes bad thoughts, bad results haunt him. When he has good thoughts, the results are also good.

Don't blame God

Those who do not recognise this fact, go about blaming God. They lament: "Oh God! Why are you inflicting these miseries on me? Why are you denying me peace of mind?" God is the Eternal Witness. He is the dispenser of the fruits of actions. He gives you according to your deserts. He is in no way responsible for your grief or happiness, (Swami sang a ballad which pointed out that a man sows a poisonous seed, while desiring sweet fruits. Unable to eat the poisonous fruit he blames God). This is the product of ignorance. It is opposed to the sacredness of human life.

Experiencing the Divine

Man's first duty is to practise good conduct. Such good conduct can ensue only from the contemplation of God. People must nourish sacred thoughts about the Divine in their hearts. This is not something which can be got from someone or somewhere outside you. It is within you. Divine is present within you.

Those who experience this Presence within them can experience a joy that is indescribable, wherever they may be. It is not enough if you are here. You must realise the sweetness of your presence here. A frog that is close to a lotus is totally unaware of its nectarine honey. But a bee comes from afar, and drinks the honey.

People should realise that time is fleeting and one's life span is melting away every moment like a block of ice. Man is nearing his end even before he realises his primary duty. What is that duty? It is to discover the purpose of life. Man seeks wealth, comforts, position and happiness. How are these to be got? Moving away from God's grace, man seeks all these kinds of worldly, happiness. Of what avail are these transient physical, pleasures? Thyagaraja sought to know wherein lay real happiness: is it in wealth or is it in the service of Lord Rama? If one is blessed with God's grace, what more does he need?

Hence, seek God's grace at the outset. Does real happiness lie in enjoying creature comforts? No. True happiness consists in manifesting all the potentialities in man. When you put into practice all the sacred thoughts that emanate from your mind you will realise true happiness. Most people do not practise the sacred impulses that arise in them with the result that they do not experience the bliss within them.

Ocean of Milk (Ksheerasagaram). But because of the invasion of bad thoughts and feelings, your humanness is vitiated. Humanness consists in harmony of thought, word and deed.

Rights and duties

Today devotees have come here from all parts of the world. Whatever your dress, your education, your habits, each of you has to realise one supreme fact. You are a member of society and as such you have to respect the social norms. You cannot behave as you please. All your actions have to be in accordance with the obligations to society. Your freedom is subject to the norms of society.

Society does not mean a large group of persons. Relationship with any other person is governed by social obligations which limit your freedom. Your right to wield the stick in your hand in a public place is limited by the right of others to use the public places. Your freedom is subject to your duty towards other fellow-beings.

Moreover, freedom ("Swatantram") has to be construed in the correct way. "Swatantram" consists of the two terms: "Swa" and "tantram". "Swa" means the Spirit. "Swatantra" means acting according to the dictates of the Spirit. The spirit will never cause harm to others. It is the Eternal Witness present in everyone and desires the welfare of one and all. Hence "Swatantra" or real freedom is related to the Divine Will.

Duty is related to one's obligations to society. Freedom is related to expressing the will of the Divine. The phenomenal world (Prakriti) is a projection of the Divine. Hence, it should be regarded as holy. Duty means recognising the sacredness of one's obligations to Prakriti. Each one must recognise that he (or she) is an image of the Divine and conduct himself on that basis. He alone is a real man who lives his life in this way.

Deeming the physical body alone as real, man goes after worldly objects and ultimately ends up in misery. Man must take to the spiritual path. This means that one should recognise the entire cosmos as an image of the Divine. Once one has this conviction, evil can never approach him. He experiences bliss at all times and everywhere. He desires that all should be happy:

Unfortunately, most people today do not cultivate such a broad feeling. They are immersed in concerns about themselves and their family. They should transcend these narrow feelings and have regard for society as a whole. They should deem service to society as service to God.

The illness and the remedy

The overseas devotees who have come here are affluent people. 'Why have, they come here? They are like patients who go to a hospital for their ailments. All of them suffer from some kind of illness or other, mental or physical. All are victims of some kind of mental illness. They have all come for the medicine of peace, joy, and happiness. Wherefrom is this peace to be got? It cannot be got from outside. It is within oneself. The disease has arisen within because of bad qualities. Every person's physical, mental and spiritual health is ruined by bad qualities; bad

Expel every bad thought as it arises in the mind.

You cannot relish food that is not tasty. Should you not try to impart sweet taste to your life which spans several decades? How to impart that taste? By constant contemplation on God. Life is made tasty by good thoughts and good actions. All those who wish to pursue the spiritual path must begin with getting rid of bad thoughts and bad practices and start transforming their lives.

People ask: how are we to cultivate a broad attitude? The answer is: get rid of the artificial barriers you have raised between yourself and others. These barriers create narrow and limited loyalties and prevent you from enjoying an all embracing bliss. Enlarge your horizon. Expand your vision. This is the true spiritual exercise for you.

Devotion of overseas artists

During the past three days, devotees from many countries have presented a blissful programme of the kind which cannot be seen anywhere else in the world. They would not have come on the invitation of any government. Even if they had come you would not have experienced the kind of bliss you have enjoyed here. This is an example of the relationship between an object and its image. It is because of the bliss within the artists, they could generate that bliss in the audience. They have come from their respective countries filled with devotion and in their singing and dance they completely forgot themselves. This kind of performance would not be possible by artists who expect rewards. The devotees did not come merely with art, but they came with their hearts. (Cheers) Their "art" is filled with "heart".

Some of them were oblivious to their bodies in their performances. They were forgetful of their native countries—whether Russia, or America, or Germany, or Africa. This is real "Samadhi" (the state of spiritual ecstasy). Samadhi is not falling into a trance or some state of unconsciousness. These may be caused by hysteria or antic of the imagination.

"Samadhi" means equal-mindedness; forgetting the body consciousness and being immersed in bliss (Ananda). These devotees demonstrated this "Samadhi" and shared their bliss with thousands of others. Not only did they experience this bliss themselves, but they shared it with all. Can there be a greater penance (Tapas) than this? What greater Sadhana do you need? "Udahareth Atmana-Atmanam", says the Upanishad. Raise yourself and share that experience with others.

Adherence to tradition

Those artists have been strictly adhering to the artistic traditions of their respective countries. In the Japanese dance yesterday, the priest (an old man) appeared to be shivering. He has all the strength, but when approaching the shrine and nearing the Emperor he displays extreme humility and reverence. They practise such supreme humility. Economically and technologically Japan is a highly advanced country. But see what humility and discipline they display!

self-forgetfulness was displayed by the lady who she sang and danced? (Cheers). What ecstasy in her heart made her experience such joy? She was completely lost in her song and dance.

The great transformation

No one can tell what kind of experience one can have in a certain place at a certain time and in a certain situation. Altogether, what transformation has taken place in all those who came for the Global Festival! They came for the first time. But the transformation that has taken place in them cannot be seen in many who have been coming here for years and years. Many of you have listened to countless discourses and have read a lot of books. But, what is the change in you? None at all. You have remained where you are. If we examine further, many seem to have gone back rather than going forward. Hence, devotees should strive to put into practice at least a fraction of what they have seen and heard.

The lives of these overseas devotees appear exemplary. Though they have learnt little, the joy they derive from it is great. This is what is great about them. There are many here who know a great deal, but who practise very little of it.

Friendship towards God

Of what use is all the reading of scriptures and epics? Very little of it is put into practice. The overseas devotees know only a few things. An American artist declared: "Baba is my great friend". This means that he had developed this friendly attitude even before coming here. How did he accomplish it? Friendship towards the Lord is one of the nine forms of devotion. In the process of developing devotion, starting with listening to the glory of the Lord, friendship forms the penultimate stage before utter surrender to the Lord ("ATMANIVEDANAM"). Every devotee must aspire to reach the stage of friendship (sneham). What kind of friendship is it? It is not something new. It is an old friendship. Only such friendship can bring about familiarity and intimacy with the Lord. You maintain formal relations with a friend. But, because God is an ancient friend, the devotee can experience an unrestrained intimacy (Cheers). When you recognise this truth, you can behave with natural ease and freedom towards God. You are free to confess your lapses to such a friend. You have to receive His counsel. You can then get your heart purified. Offering your sullied heart to the Lord is like presenting a soiled currency note to the Reserve Bank for getting a new one. A note which is not acceptable to others will be accepted by the Reserve Bank. Only God can accept it and replace it with a new one. Therefore, offer all your bad qualities to God and receive from Him all good qualities. Don't pass on your bad qualities to others.

Offer your ignorance

What is it that you have to offer to God? Not a leaf, a flower, a fruit or holy water. You have to offer yourself to God. Then you become one with the Divine. That is what God desires from you. Instead of realising this sublime truth people seek to offer their hair to Sri Venkateshwara to secure petty favours. What is it that Lord Venkateshwara lacks? Does the Lord need your overgrown hair? What is it the Lord needs? On the top of the head you have dark hair. That represents the Tamo-guna the quality of lethargy and ignorance. Those who go to Tirupati should

that you can offer to God. All you enjoy is from Him. Develop this conviction. Treat whatever good or bad that happens to you as coming from God. What you deem as bad may be like a bitter medicine prescribed by a doctor for your good. Consider all that happens, good or ill, pleasure or pain is for our good. Only then you will be able to nourish your good qualities.

Embodiments of love! Wherever you may be, in whatever condition, consider your hearts as an Ocean of Milk, the abode of God. God is omnipresent. When you lead your life with this faith, there is nothing greater than this.

The overseas devotees who were here during the past three days have converted their hearts into the Ocean of Milk and invited the Lord to recline on it. The older devotees should learn from them.

The world will come to Sai

Do not consider Sai Baba as a mere figure five feet three inches tall. His Presence will be felt all over the world. (Cheers). Wait and see. In a few days the entire world will come here. Therefore, at least from now on make the best use of the opportunity that has come to you and strive to redeem your lives. Because of proximity you have tended to take Me for granted. Yashoda was similarly misled about the true nature of Krishna and could not understand why He preferred the butter kept by the Gopikas to the butter offered by her. Krishna could be bound only by the rope of devotion. Yashoda had material affection but not the intense devotion of the Gopikas. The sense of dualism should go and there should be total identification with the Divine.

Cherish your culture

On this holy occasion devotees from many countries have delighted every one here by their presentation of the artistic culture of their respective countries. Wherever you may go do not give up your traditional culture. Devotees from outside who come here adhere to their culture: But Bharatiyas going abroad forget their ancient culture. What is worse they even forget their mother tongue. After years spent in Bharat, within a short spell of stay in the United States they get addicted to the American language. When I ask in Telugu young people who return after a short stay in the U.S. what they are doing there, they say: "I don't know Telugu". What is it that you have learnt? If you have forgotten your mother tongue, are you likely to remember your mother? Rama declared: "The mother and the Motherland are greater than Heaven itself." Therefore, wherever you may go, do not forget your ancient traditions. This is relevant to people of all countries. At the same time, unity should be cultivated. "Nations are many, the earth is one. Beings are many, but breath is one". This truth has to be recognised. All the resources of Nature like air are available to all irrespective of nationality or creed or race. This is the unity in diversity that has to be realised, Out of unity comes purity. All should seek to live as brothers and sisters. No one should criticise any nation, faith or culture. When you cultivate this broad outlook, your culture will be respected by others. It is this spirit of unity that the world needs to-day.

(from Malaysia) performed their unique dances. The young lads had such intense dedication to their culture. Indians going abroad tend to decry their traditional culture as superstition. (Bhagavan related an incident in which Prof. Max Mueller, attempting to get the meaning of a Vedic passage from an Indian I.C.S. trainee who gave his name as Chaturvedi, found that he was totally ignorant of the Vedas and had no respect for them. Prof. Max Mueller was sad that one born in India, with the name Chaturvedi, should have so little regard for the Vedas).

Glory of Bharatiya culture

Bharatiyas should realise what great respect is being shown by foreigners to our culture and spiritual heritage. The nation is going down morally and spiritually. The first need is to cultivate self-respect. Everyone should uphold the name and fame of Bharat. For this, they should have respect for the Vedas and try to acquire the same knowledge of the Vedas. To say the least, they should at least regard God as the indweller of the heart.

Embodiments of love! Cherish the heart as the temple of God and try to keep it pure and unsullied. Chant the name of the Lord to drive away all evil thoughts and impulses.

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

From Bhagavan's discourse in Sai Kulwant Bhavan, Prasanthi Nilayam, on July 11, 1995

Unique Music Festival for Global Unity

"Raso vai saha"

Bhagavan is the essence of all that is sweet and beautiful in the cosmos. It was eminently appropriate that hundreds of dedicated singers; dancers and artists from all parts of the world should gather in Prasanthi Nilayam to pay their homage to Bhagavan, in commemoration of His 70th Birthday, by a superbly coordinated Song and Dance Festival on July 9th and 10th, in which the diversity of the cultural programmes brought out also the underlying spiritual oneness of humanity.

That thousands of devotees from all parts of the world, who had gathered for the Gurupoornima celebrations, were in rapture all through the concerts of the two evenings testifies not only to the excellence of the performances but also to the devotees appreciation of the intense devotion to Bhagavan which had brought them all the way to Prasanthi Nilayam from their far-flung countries.

A dream come true

Describing the festival in "The Hindu" (of Madras) Mr. V. Srinivasan wrote: It was a dream come true a music festival encompassing the globe in its richness and diversity—

separate cultures, taking 132 days of painstaking preparation and 40 tonnes of equipment.

Living national treasures of music, masters and dedicated musicians, assembled to express the theme of global unity under the management of Takashi Irie, producer, director and head of the organising committee from Japan.

During the festival, the valley of Prasanthi Nilayam echoed with the sound of music, strategically broadcast over the campus through subtle sound systems to the strains of Beethoven, Bach, Rachmaninoff, Mozart, traditional Japanese art music, Indian classical and, of course, Sai bhajans, all based on the Universal primal sound of "Om," symbolising the unity of the Self with the Infinite. Serenity pervaded the entire atmosphere despite the frenetic pace at which the artists and stage managers, hosts and harried officials and a huge appreciative and eager crowd of music lovers and devotees, gathered together to pay homage through the medium of music and dance to Bhagavan Baba.

Beyond all barriers

Language, custom, colour and habit were not a bar to free interaction between different nationals, as the only "bond" uniting them was love and respect for others. The Japanese, who were the largest contingent; performed at the beginning and at the end. A "Shinto" purification ceremonial sung to traditional invocation ceremonies from the 17th century in the Imperial Court, marked the beginning, and a finely structured modern dance ballet invoking the oneness of "Paramatma" and "Prakriti"—the Union of Man with God—symbolising the theme of harmony and unity in light—played, with traditional instruments such as the "samison" and "koto" synthesised by composer and conductor Heigo Yoikouchi, complemented the festival.

Opera song collections from the U.S. rendered the theme of universal harmony. Tenor William Brown accompanied on the piano sang spirituals, setting a classical mid-point between the traditional operatic mould and Afro-Cuban soul. It was Paul Robeson at Puttaparthi, once again rendering "OI" man river".

The three "Gunas": "TAMAS", "RAJAS" and "SATWA", were recreated in Rachmaninoff's Prelude in G. Minor and music from Debussy and Mozart, by David Bailey on the Piano, Melanie Yorker on the flute and singers Stuart Jones and Sara John from the U.K. This was followed by folk songs from England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland with a final rendering of "When Irish eyes are smiling"—a heart wrenching, spontaneous and unstructured reminder of Sri Sathya Sai Baba's remark that "the World Music Festival is also a bhajan".

In "Peace in the Heat" words and melody were unified through the medium of dance, movement and stage scenery, 'the song themes were conveyed visually to give a picture of the spiritual truth that "All beings are one." It was presented superbly by the Sathya Sai Organisation of Germany with a complement of 20 dancers and 21 musicians.

and Malaysia; presented by the Lion Troupe of Muar Malaysia, exemplified fierceness, industry, purity, prosperity, holiness and protection of children, in different colours of the spectrum, set to traditional Chinese music, accompanied by drums, and with dancers moving from one pole to another, the distance between which was increased during the performance.

Russian folk songs and dances, accompanied by traditional guslys, zuleikas, okarinas and gamoshka were followed by the Kandyan dance and orchestra drums from Sri Lanka—an adaptation of a function held annually in homage to the Sacred Tooth Relic of Gautama Buddha in Kandy.

Australia and Papua New Guinea provided the day's counter-point (July 9) by rendering "The power of one in many" in the form of modern rhythmic devotional Western music including prayers and hymns from various religions in the country. The Didgeridoo, an aboriginal musical instrument, recreated the "Om" in letter and spirit.

On July 10th, Italy set the pace. The Prasanthi Symphony Orchestra presented the first symphony in the world on an Indian theme with sacred renderings from Mendelssohn and Rossini, including the "The Barber from Seville" World renowned Thai classical melodies for folk dances by the children of the Sathya Sai School in Thailand, the first primary school of the organisation to be established abroad.

The Sathya Sai Organisation in Spain, the third centre in the world to be established abroad, presented a traditional Flamenco dance symbolising "Isa" or Jesus Christ—the movement of the Universe or the play of life. The Philippines rendered "Life is God and God is Nature" through the nation's signature dance—the Tinkling.

India was represented by Anandan Sivamani from Tamilnadu whose superb interlude in percussion demonstrated that rhythm is the basis of existence. This was preceded by encore spiritual recitals from William Brown of the U.S., including "I go to the rock". His "What a beautiful city; Oh!" was chorused by a large part of the audience!

Bach and Mozart were brought to life by the Jamaican Steel Band, followed by traditional Indian bhajans from the Jit Samaroo Steel Orchestra.

The last item which was the *piece de resistance*, was the combined effort of all the 298 participants to present the finale a global unity theme song that Unity is Divinity! The rendering of the song with interludes in languages, was centrepieced by Baba to whom the traditional Arati was performed by a venerable African delegate! What marked the two-day festival, the first of its kind, was the sense of oneness, of belonging, the utter simplicity of the presentation and rich variety of music that makes the beginning of a consciousness that Prasanthi Nilayam, in course of time, will become a centre of the art, music and dance-talent available in the entire world."

Ecstatic response from devotees

programmes and appreciated the varied nuances of the music and dance from so many different cultures will be evident from the perceptive and laudatory comments of a devotee from Australia, Mrs. Sybil Primrose. The following excerpts are taken from a long review received from her:

The theme of 'Global Unity' gleamed and sparkled like a mufti-faceted jewel through every phase of preparation and every aspect of presentation of this unique World Festival of Music. It was a wonderful inspiration for all concerned.

Singers and musicians had spent many hours preparing their especial contribution, both before coming to India, and after arriving at the ashram. Rehearsals were fitted in the two days preceding the festival, stage props, settings, movements and sequence were organised and choreographed, and colourful costumes prepared so that everything was appropriate and correct for the purpose. Japanese devotees, whose Sai Organisation leaders had initiated the whole programme, co-ordinated lighting and sound systems with assistance from students of the Sri Sathya Sai, Institute, did full justice to the show itself, and enabled devotees to experience it 'live' in the Poornachandra, or view and hear it simultaneously through T.V. monitors located at either side of the magnificent hall, or in the Mandir compound. Devotees who participated can tell stories of their many adventures in bringing instruments and equipments to India, or locating their requirements here, including an almost desperate, but at the last minute successful attempt to find and tune a grand piano.

Great credit is due to the performers, stagehands, lighting and effects assistants, and all helpers behind the scenes, before, during and after the Festival. But, above all, our grateful thanks are due to Brothers Hira and Irie from Japan for the overall co-ordination and production: They were filled with devotion to Bhagavan and derived boundless inspiration and strength from Him.

From an audience viewpoint it was obvious that no effort had been spared and no detail overlooked, in order to make this a uniquely outstanding occasion for all. Swami's physical presence in that audience was the richest blessing of all!

The most outstanding feature of the festival was the way each region and country captured and portrayed the 'essence' of the culture and traditions they represented. Sound and colour, movement and stillness, melody and rhythm, and harmony in exuberant and sophisticated skills and aerobatics, abounded. A master of Ceremonies, Brother Hira, and different comperes introduced and explained the programme as it proceeded.

Bhagavan honours Russian singer

Among the notable items were Folk Dances and Songs from Russia. Love of their vast land could be felt through music played on unique musical instruments of that, country, the strong voices of the singers, and their joyful dancing. The music and songs gave a sense of the many splendours of this ancient country, and also a sense of the mixture of fortitude and poignancy

the audience of devotees, (as the Chinese Lion Dance had done), and they demanded not just one, but two encores. All the performers followed the lady lead singer; who danced and sang for the sheer joy of it. Later it seemed as if Swami acknowledged this, when He manifested and adorned the lead songstress with a beautiful gold necklace. Swami personally bestowed on each performer a souvenir trophy a silver replica of the Sarva Dharma Stupa at Prasanthi Nilayam.

On the 10th evening, the sweet Innocence of the team of children from the Sathya Sai School of Thailand dancing in their bright jewel-coloured costumes melted our hearts. With their melodies played on traditional instruments to back them, these young dancers portrayed devotion and respect, (and perhaps some awe) for their Supreme Guru, seated in front of them, as they danced with meticulous care, freshness and easy mobility. The thousands of devotees watching could sense some of their delight and excitement at participating in such a momentous occasion.

Perhaps the most unusual and novel item was the Steel Pans Concert from the West Indies. The Steel Orchestra using highly polished shining steel pans, played a selection of pieces including some classical music favourites. At one point the players showed the audience the inside of their steel pans to indicate that the notes came from the skillful playing or striking of the metal, and not from any notes or strings inside the pans.

"Divine Rhythmic Vibrations" was the title of the concert presented by an Ensemble from the University of Ghana, representing Africa. Dancers and drummers dressed in national costume performed six pieces with an overall theme of honour to ancestors, praise, to God and Creator, and affirming His Presence in man. Their last item, "The Power of the Talking Drums", asserted the vital energy and rhythms that sustain life in Africa.

Trophy for Primary School in Thailand

Enjoyment was crowned and complete for all of us, as once more we watched Bhagavan walk to the -stage and present the second evenings performers with a trophy to mark this occasion. Whilst everyone else received trophies the dear children from Thailand waited quietly, a shining example of patience, selflessness and trust. Loud applause burst from the audience when Bhagavan Baba presented a large trophy for His school in Thailand itself.

Gratitude to Bhagavan

Everyone was immensely grateful to our Beloved Lord, for this Festival; performers and participant supporters, for the chance to express through music their, devotion and love for Him; and the audience for the chance to sit somewhere not too far from Him and watch the show in His honour. We were all richly blessed.

Arati was offered and Bhagavan left. This two-evening event seemed deeply significant in many ways, on many levels. As I moved slowly out with the crowd, I felt uplifted, full and deeply grateful too.

The Bud and the Blossom

A beautiful little child was dancing in great abandon
on the lawns in front of the Sai Guest House
She was humming a tune "Sai Hamara" and raising
her little hands in prayer
The devotees sitting in the shade of the tree in front of
the Ganesha temple watched the child with great delight.
They were whispering to each other in wonder who could
have taught the tune except Baba
After a while the child stood for a long time near a
blossom watching it with great delight
She touched its soft petals with her tiny hands and felt its softness
Unable to control her ecstasy she burst into a song:
"Mind to Mind - Heart to Heart - Soul to Soul
She knew not who taught this song
But it contained all the wisdom of the world.

G. K. Damodar Row, Prasanthi Nilayam

Historic Gurupoornima at Prasanthi Nilayam

"Gurupoornima", the Sacred Full-Moon day in July dedicated to the worship of the Guru, is a holy day in Prasanthi Nilayam to which devotees all over the world look forward as the auspicious day when they can get their spiritual batteries charged by the blessings of Bhagavan and His message on that day. This year's Gurupoornima celebration became historic and memorable on account of several significant celebrations associated with it.

The placing of 3700 pairs of Padukas by devotees from Andhra Pradesh at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan on July 8, afternoon was followed the next-morning by a ceremonial presentation of hundreds of bundles of "Likhita Japam" notebooks by devotees from Andhra who had performed this spiritual exercise as an offering to the Lord.

Then came the historic "Global Unity Music Festival", on July 9th and 10th, in which devotees from 137 countries offered a unique music and dance programme on the theme of Global Unity (A description of this festival is published separately).

took place on July 12 morning when Bhagavan inaugurated the massive drinking water project for the Anantapur district by pressing a button, which simultaneously activated the water pumps in Bukkaptnam and released water for the pipes in the village.

Presentation of padukas

Large groups of devotees from all over Andhra Pradesh started gathering in thousands to participate in the programme of offering Padukas at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan even from 5th July onwards. An endless stream of overseas devotees from all over the world also started pouring in for participation in the Global Unity Music Festival scheduled to be held on 9th and 10th July. Prasanthi Nilayam was humming with activities reminding one of the annual birthday celebrations.

The Andhra Pradesh Sathya Sai Organisation had erected arches around the Prasanthi Nilayam complex heralding the presentation of 3700 Padukas at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan to mark the 70th year of the advent of the Avatar. Many farmers from far-off villages who were on their maiden visit to the Nilayam; were among the Paduka bearers. The magnificent Mandapam around the Mandir was colourfully decorated with festoons and buntings, while the illuminations for the Mandir presented a glorious spectacle at night.

On the afternoon of 8th July, all the paduka bearers came in procession to Prasanthi Mandir to the accompaniment of devotional music, drums and bhajans. As they entered the newly erected front gate, embellished with exquisite architectural designs, with the Pranava symbols at the centre, Bhagavan was already at the Mandir giving darshan to the vast multitude of devotees. It took nearly an hour and a half for all the Paduka bearers to enter the Mandap and settle down.

Dr. Narsinga Rao, President of the Andhra Pradesh Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, explained how the movement for offering Padukas at Bhagavan's Lotus Feet gained momentum to such an extent that even people from remote villages came forward to participate in it with enthusiasm. He expressed his gratitude to Bhagavan for having given them this great opportunity to place the Padukas on the auspicious occasion of Gurupoornima at the Lotus Feet of the Jagadguru.

Bhagavan lighted two lamps and occupied the special ornamental chair brought by the Andhra Pradesh devotees. He was greeted with cheers by the vast crowds as He sat on the chair.

"This sun will never set"

Dr. Goldstein, Co-ordinator for the Sathya Sai Centres in America, said that U.S.A. was only one of the 137 countries in which Bhagavan Baba, the Avatar of the age, was worshipped and His teachings practised by way of service to humanity. He described Bhagavan as the Sun of Wisdom that has arisen to dispel the darkness of ignorance among mankind and affirmed that "this Sun will never set".

of the Lotus Feet and of Padukas. After the discourse, Bhagavan went round the devotees (3/00 couples) who had brought Padukas and blessed them with Padanamaskar. It took nearly two hours for this gracious benediction by Bhagavan. Prasadam was also distributed to all the paduka participants.

On the morning of 9th July, Bhagavan came in procession, accompanied by Veda chanting boys and Nadaswaram Music and inaugurated the new imposing Mandap, which He graciously named as "SAI KULWANT" in recognition of the single contribution of Rs. 2 crores given by Sri Kulwant Rai, Industrialist from Delhi, for the construction of the Mandap.

Andhra devotees' offerings

Bhagavan then blessed the huge gathering of devotees assembled inside the Mandap. After going round, Swami sat on the peacock throne provided by Andhra Pradesh devotees. The A. P. State Co-ordinator, Sri Narayan Rao spoke about the service activities carried on by the organisation in the State. He spoke in praise of Bhagavan's mission in Kali Yuga and offered on behalf of the Andhra people, a golden crown, a couple of gold and pearl necklaces, gold bracelets and a pair of golden Padukas. He prayed to Bhagavan to make Dharma walk on four feet in Kali Yuga instead of standing on one foot as is described in the Puranas. He further offered to Bhagavan bundles of notebooks in which Andhra devotees had written the name of Bhagavan as "Likhita Japam" totaling 154 crores.

Bhagavan then gave His discourse in which He enunciated the royal path to liberation through devotion. After the discourse, Prasadam was distributed to all the thousands of devotees assembled inside and outside the Mandap.

Bhagavan, later in his discourse, mentioned that the note-books which contained the Divine names will be kept to a special Stupa to be erected near the Gopuram at the main entrance where 108 crores of names collected by Sri Subramania Chettiar of Tamilnadu will also be housed.

Bhagavan Inaugurates Massive Drinking Water Project

July 12, 1995, has become a historic date for the people of Anantapur district, when Bhagavan Baba inaugurated the massive Drinking Water Scheme for the chronically drought stricken people of the area. The day became the more sacred because it was Gurupoornima Day.

The 'Sai Kulwant' was lavishly decorated for the occasion. On the rostrum in front of the Mandir a working model of the Drinking Water Project, with a map indicating the scope of the project, the locations of bore-wells, summer tanks, etc. was displayed.

the Mandap.

A special music programme for the occasion of Gurupoornima was provided by the students of the Sathya Sai Institute and the Secondary School. Hymns in praise of the Guru and Bhagavan were chanted and devotional songs in different languages were sung in chorus to the accompaniment of the Institute's orchestra.

Sri K. Chakravarthi, the Coordinator on behalf of the Sathya Sai Trust for the Water Project, spoke expressing gratitude to Bhagavan for helping them to complete the first phase of the project in time and graciously consenting to inaugurate the supply of protected water to Bukkapatnam and several other villages around it. He requested Sri Kondal Rao, Secretary, Panchayat Raj Department, and Technical Advisor for the Project, to speak about the project.

Scope of the project

In the course of his speech, Mr. Kondal Rao said: 'on this auspicious occasion of Gurupoornima, we have assembled here to receive the light and life from Bhagavan. More importantly, Bhagavan is giving the water of life to so many people in villages of Anantapur district today.'

As most of you may be aware, Bhagavan had, during the Birthday celebrations in November 1994, graciously agreed to provide funds for drinking water supply schemes. He also said that the Government should address themselves to the need to provide safe drinking water to all the villages in Rayalseema area as this area suffers from periodic drought. Later when He expressed his resolve to provide adequate funds for drinking water schemes in Anantapur district, which had already been formulated and kept ready for execution, we came here and submitted the schemes.

Bhagavan's guideline

Bhagavan gave us the guideline that we should come up with long term solutions for the scarcity and fluoride affected villages. He also said that we should convey water through pipes from reliable sources so that safe drinking water should be available throughout the year.

In accordance with the guidelines we reviewed our proposals and submitted different types of schemes. Broadly speaking they include the following: Direct pumping of water from Pennahobilam balancing reservoir after treatment; pumping water from infiltration wells on the river beds of the Chitravati balancing reservoir at Parnapalli; pumping water from other infiltration wells on the Penna and Nagari river beds at various places in the district; pumping water from the Tungabhadra High level canal when water flows in the canal for about 5 to 6 months in a year and store it in summer storage tanks so that water can be supplied throughout the year from such storage tanks after treatment. Where water from Tungabhadra high level canal or balancing reservoir or any other river cannot be conveyed, we have resorted to sub-surface water through bore-wells.

The infiltration wells in the Chitravati balancing reservoir will provide water for a number of villages in Muddigubba, Kadiri, Tadipathri, Dharmavaram and Puttaparthi areas.

There are seven storage tanks forming part of Sri Sathya Sai Water Supply Project. These tanks vary in size from 30 acres to about 100 acres and are located at Anantapur town and other places such as Konakondala. These tanks will provide water for Anantapur town and quite a number of villages. The construction of all these tanks has almost been completed and it should be possible to lay pipes and make them functional by October of this year. It is the chief merit of all these schemes that they will provide clean, pure and fluoride free water throughout the year.

The total length of pipes to be laid of various sizes ranging from 600 mm to 80 mm diameter under these schemes will be more than 2500 km. It is indeed a massive work and Bhagavan's directive is that they must all be completed and commissioned before November. The total period available for execution of these schemes is hardly 8 months, as work was started only in March of this year. I dare say that no one except Bhagavan can undertake such a task. Conventional organisations will take at least three years to complete all these works. Given Bhagavan's grace and blessings, there is nothing impossible.

Bhagavan's grace

It has indeed been heartening to see that from the word "Go", work has been progressing at good speed. There has been very close co-ordination of all the agencies involved-in this project, the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust, the Government of Andhra Pradesh and Larsen and Toubro, who have been designated as a prime agency.

Gratitude to Bhagavan

I would like to express my grateful thanks to Bhagavan on my own behalf and on behalf of the Government of Andhra Pradesh for having so generously come forward to provide drinking water to a chronically drought-affected area of Anantapur district.

Before I formally pray to Bhagavan to inaugurate the Protected Water Supply scheme today, I would like to say that this is a unique project, the like of which has not been attempted anywhere else in the country by any other organisation or Trust.

For inauguration of the scheme we have provided for a remote control button operating on VHF. When the button is pressed here, the pump and motor at Bukkapatnam village will get activated and water will flow into the pipelines. There is also a model of the Protected Water Supply scheme kept here to be lighted as a symbolic inauguration of the schemes in various other villages in the district."

Bhagavan lighted the lamps on the Mandir Verandah, amidst cheers from the huge crowd, and pressed a button. Within two minutes, the response from Bukkapatnam came by telephone thanking Bhagavan for the inauguration of the project and confirming that water supply had commenced.

Prasadam was then distributed to all the devotees inside and outside the Mandap. The function came to a close with Arati to Bhagavan.

In the evening, the main Gurupoornima function was held at the Sai Kulwant Mandap itself. Bhagavan came at 4 p.m. and gave darshan to all devotees.

After invocation by chanting of Vedic hymns, Sri V. Srinivasan spoke about the significance of Gurupoornima. He said those assembled had the unique privilege of paying homage to Lord Dakshinamurthy Himself in the form of Bhagavan Baba. He referred to the "Global Unity", Music Festival which was the first of its kind to be attempted anywhere in the world, and expressed gratitude to Bhagavan for making the festival a memorable event in the lives of all the devotees. Leading musicians from several countries came of their own accord, attracted by the spiritual magnet of Bhagavan, and offered their talents at His Lotus Feet. Though many of them were not devotees of Bhagavan when they came here, they are going back as devotees. Such great transformation can be done only by Bhagavan by His weapon of Love.

Bhagavan then delivered His Gurupoornima Message (published separately).

Those who have not understood the real nature of the sky will mistake it as a dome of smoke and dust; the nature of the soul is mistaken too, through non-awareness of Reality, to be enclosed and embodied as the intellect, to be involved in activity and enjoyment of the results of activity, to be caught up in the two bonds of joy and sorrow, embroiled in happiness and misery and also in bondage and liberation. It is natural that the soul which is under the influence of duality cannot perceive the highest truth. Space is one but as a result of the diversity of vessels, it sees to be enclosed in the home, the pot, the building and the canvas. There is only one space which exists in all These 'containers'—houses, lakes, hills—which are made up of shapes and forms with distinct names attached to them and different modes of behaviour and uses. Individuals too have different names and forms peculiarities and specialties of behaviour; but just as the string passing through each head holds them all together, so the super-consciousness in all individuals is also one and the same.

—Baba

Embodiments of love!

Man today spends his life fully preoccupied with worldly concerns. Owing to attachment to the body, he forgets his true nature, is immersed in the affairs of the world and involves himself in misery. He regards the body as permanent and makes bodily comforts his goal in life. These are the things which every individual experiences in daily life.

If anybody accosts a person and asks him, "Who are you?" out of his identification with the body he gives his name in reply. In answer to further questions he introduces himself as a doctor, a farmer, or student, or the like. When the enquiry goes further, he identifies himself with his nationality as an American, an Indian, a Pakistani or so on. When you examine these answers deeply, you will find that none of them gives the truth. He got his name from his parents. It did not belong to him at birth. His identification with one or other of his professions is not true because he is not the profession.

Body, jiva and atma

What, then, is the truth about him? "I am the Atma. That is my true Self." That is the truth. But people identify themselves with their names, professions and nationality and do not base their lives on the Atma. No driver of a car identifies himself with the car. Likewise, the body is a car and the Atma is the driver. Forgetting one's true role as a driver, one is identifying one's self with the body, which is only a vehicle.

This truth is emphatically brought out by the Gayatri Mantra. "Dehabudhyaath Daasoham" "In the context of the body, I am an instrument, a servant." "Jivabudhyaath Thadamsah". "In the context of the Jiva, the individual soul, I am a spark of That (the Divine)". "Aatmabudhyaath Twameva-aham" "In terms of the Atma I am you". When one views one's self from the Atmic standpoint, one is identical with the Divine. "I am you and you are me."

Three-storeyed mansion

Every man has thus three aspects. Our life itself is a three-storeyed mansion. The Brahmacharya (celibate) stage is the foundation of this mansion. After that, the stage of Grihastha (householder) is the first floor. Then you have the Vanaprastha (retirement from the life of a householder) stage as the second floor. Finally, there is the stage of the renunciant (Sanyasa), constituting the third floor. Thus, Brahmacharya is the foundation for the other three stages of life. The safety and security of the other three floors depend on the strength of the foundation. (Viz. Brahmacharya). Hence, Brahmacharya is the basic foundation.

But, unfortunately this vital fact has been forgotten by people. They feel happy on seeing the super-structure. But the whole edifice may collapse at any time if the foundation is weak. When you feel happy at the sight of a tree and its flowers and fruits, you must be concerned about its roots. The unseen foundation is the basis for the visible mansion. The invisible roots are the basis for the visible tree. Likewise, the invisible Vital Force (Prana) is the basis for the

principle which confers all the potencies for the Life Force (Prana). It is because of the power imparted by the Atma that the Life Force is able to activate the body. The body inherently is inert. It is made up of different kinds of material substances.

Three potencies in man

In the Gayatri Mantra the first line is "Om Bhurbhuvassuvah". This mantra is assumed to refer to three worlds, the earth, the middle world and Heaven (or Swarga, the land of the gods), "Bhu" refers to the body. It is made up of the five elements (Pancha Bhutas). These five elements constitute Nature (Prakriti). There is an intimate relationship between the body and Nature. The same five elements that are in Nature are also in the body. "Bhuvah" is the Life Force that animates the body (Prana-Shakti). Even if the Life Force exists, without Jnana (Awareness) the body will be of no use. It is on this account that the Vedas declared: "Prajnanam Brahma" ("Constant Integrated Awareness is Brahman"). It is by the presence of Prajnana that the Life Force is able to animate the body. The body represents inert matter. The Life Force operates in the body as a vibration. This Vibration derives its power from Prajnana, which finds expression in radiation.

Therefore, the body, the Life Force and the Prajnana are all within man. The entire cosmos is present in miniature within man. It is because of these three constituents that we are able to see the cosmos and experience many other things. Every potency is within us. The external is a reflection of the inner being.

It follows from this that true humanness (manavatvam) is Divinity itself (Daivatvam). Hence, the Vedas declared that the Divine appears in human form. Every human being is inherently Divine, but owing to his attachment to the body he considers himself a mere man.

How did this human body get animated by the Life Force? Whence has this Life Force come? It is from the Atma-Shakti (the power of the Self). Making use of this power of the Self, the Life Force carries out all activities.

Triple aspects of Gayatri

Who is "Gayatri"? Gayatri is not a goddess. Gayatri is the mother of the Vedas (Gayatri Chandasam matha). "Gayantham thrayathe ithi Gayatri". "Gayatri is that which redeems the chanter of the mantra". Gayatri is present wherever the mantra is chanted.

Gayatri, however, has three names: Gayatri, Savitri, Saraswati. These three are present in everyone. Gayatri represents the senses. It is the master of the senses. Savitri is the master of the Life Force (Prana). Many Bharatiyas are familiar with the story of Savitri who brought back to life her dead husband, Sathyavaan. Savitri signifies Truth. Saraswati is the presiding deity of Speech ("Vaak"): The three represent purity in thought, word and deed (Trikarana Shuddhi). Although Gayatri has three names, all the three are in each of us as the senses (Gayatri), the power of speech (Saraswati) and the Life Force (Savitri).

the world with five faces? No. In the Ramayana, Ravana is said to have ten heads. If really he had ten heads, how would he be able to lie in his bed or move about? This is not the inner meaning of this description. He is said to be ten-headed because he was the master of the four Vedas and the six Shastras. Likewise, Gayatri is described as five-faced. The five faces are: "Om" (the Pranava) is the first face. The Pranava Principle represents the eight different forms of wealth (Ashta-Aishwarya). The second face is: "Bhurbvhuvas-suvaha". The third is: "Thath-Savitur-varenyam". The fourth is: "Bhargo Devasya dheemahi". "Dheeyo yo nah prachodayaath" is the fifth face. When the Gayatri mantra is understood in this way, it will be realised that all the five aspects of Gayatri are within each of us.

Power of Gayatri mantra

The Gayatri mantra has all the three elements which figure in the adoration of God: description, meditation and prayer. The first nine words of the mantra represent the attributes of the Divine, "Om Bhur-Bhuvas-Suvah Thath Savitur Varenyam Bhargo Devasya". "Dheemahi" pertains to Dhyana (meditation). "Dheeyo yo nah Prachodayaath" is the prayer to the Lord. The mantra is thus a prayer to God to confer all powers and talents.

"Sarvaroganivaarini Gayatri": Gayatri is the reliever of all diseases. "Sarvaduhkha parivaarini Gayatri": Gayatri wards off all misery. "Sarvavaancha phalasri Gayatri": Gayatri is the fulfiller of all desires. Gayatri is the bestower of all that is beneficial. If the mantra is chanted, various kinds of powers will emerge in one.

Hence the Gayatri mantra should not be treated casually. In our respiration process the sound of Gayatri is imbedded. That sound is a reminder of our true form. In the breathing process, there is inhalation and exhalation. In the Yoga-Shastra inhalation is termed "Poorakam" and the exhalation is called "Rechakam". Holding the breath is called "Kumbhakam". When air is inhaled, the sound that is produced is "So-o-o". When it is exhaled, the sound is "Ham-m-m" "So-ham", "So-ham". (Bhagavan demonstrated how this happens while breathing in and out). "So" is "That". "Ham" is "I". "I am That" "I am Divine". Every breath proclaims this. The Vedas declared the same thing in the pronouncements: "Tat Twam Asi" ("That thou art"), "Aham Brahmasmi" ("I am Brahman"), "Ayam Atma Brahma" (This Atma is Brahman).

Don't imagine God is somewhere is remote from you. He is within you. You are God. People want to see God. "Sathyam Jnanam Anantam Brahma", say the scriptures. Truth is God. Wisdom is God. Both these are present everywhere. They transcend the categories of time and place. Truth is that which is valid at all times past, present and future. That truth is Gayatri.

Gayatri is thus the indweller in the heart (Hridaya). "Hri-daya" contains the word "Daya" meaning compassion. There is compassion in every heart. But to what extent is it shown in real life? Very little. All the while only anger, jealousy, pride and hatred are displayed. These evil qualities are not natural to man. They are opposed to human nature.

bases himself on the body is an animal. One who follows the Atma (the Self) is divinely endowed. One who relies on the body, the mind and the Atma is a human being. Humanness is the combination of the body, mind and Atma. Man should strive to ascend to the divine and not descend to the demonic or animal nature.

Parent's duty

From today onwards parents should teach their children stories with morals. You all know in what a chaotic condition the world is today. Disorder and violence are rampant everywhere. Peace and security are not to be found anywhere. Where is peace to be found? It is within us. Security is also within us. How is insecurity to be removed and security secured? It is by giving up desires. In the language of the ancient Bharatiyas this was termed "Vairagya" (giving up attachment). This does not mean giving up home and family and retiring into the forest. It is reduction of wants. As a householder limit your desires to the needs of the family. As a student stick to your studies. As a professional, adhere to the duties of your profession. Do not indulge in excesses of any kind.

In the practice of the Gayatri mantra, one should realise that everything is within one and thereby develop confidence in the Self. Man today is racked by numerous troubles because he has no confidence in the Self. The aspirant on the spiritual path is bound to face the troubles caused by the "six enemies", lust, anger, greed, infatuation, pride and envy. He has to overcome them.

Call to students

Students! On an auspicious occasion like this, you should consider how you can lead an ideal life. Through faith in God, you have to sanctify the body. Without the body, you cannot experience the mind and the intellect. To achieve your ideals, the body is the instrument. It should be kept in proper condition. While the body is an instrument, the user of the instrument is the Self. All sense organs function because of the Atma. The Atma is the Witness to everything. It is also known as Conscience. The Conscience derives its sanction from the Divine. It is a fragment of the Divine.

Every human being is a spark of the Divine, as declared in the Gita. The human being is essentially divine, but tends to forget his divine origin. The Gayatri mantra is enough to protect the person who chants it, because Gayatri embodies all the Divine potencies. It is an essential requisite for the young because it ensures a bright and auspicious future for them. The young students are the citizens and leaders of tomorrow. Hence, they should develop pure and noble thoughts. The parents also should foster such a development.

Nearness to God

The Upanayanam ceremony is over. The Gayatri mantra has been imparted to you. You are wearing the sacred thread with three strands tied in one knot. The three strands represent Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara. They also represent the past, the present and the future.

qualities and acquire virtues.

Students! The Vedas have emphasised three duties: Esteem the mother as God, the father as God and the preceptor as God. Bear this injunction in mind. Gratitude to your parents is your foremost duty. This is the lesson taught by Sri Rama.

Love your parents and remember God. When you please your parents and make them happy, your entire life will be filled with happiness.

Chant the Gayatri as often as possible. If you chant it while you take a bath, your bath gets sanctified. Likewise chant it before taking your food. The food becomes an offering to the Divine. Develop heartfelt devotion to God.

(Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan: "*Bhajan bina sukha santhi Nahi.*" The vast gathering joined Bhagavan, in singing the bhajan in chorus.)

—From Bhagavan's discourse in the Sai Kulwant Mandap,
Prasanthi Mandir, on August 23, 1995

AVATAR VANI:

Gokulashtami Sandesh

*There is no greater penance than contentment for securing happiness.
There is no worse disease than insatiable desire.
There is no greater virtue than compassion.
Peace is the highest spiritual discipline.*

(Sanskrit Sloka)

Embodiments of love:

Divinise every act

There is no greater penance than tranquility (santham-peace). Peace is the foremost prize for man. Peace confers beauty on sages. Peace is the fascinating charm of the Divine. Without such peace there can be no happiness, declared Thyagaraja (the composer-saint of South India).

There is no greater happiness (santhosham) than being contented. Man seeks happiness in various forms. But there is no happiness equal to peace (Santhi). Thyagaraja sang in the same strain, declaring that without peace there can be no happiness. There is no greater happiness than that derived from contentment (santrupti). What greater heaven is there than contentment?

"There is no worse disease than desire" Contemporary man is afflicted by endless desires. These desires are the cause of innumerable diseases. There must be a limit to desires. Today

desires, man is affected mentally and this gives rise to many bodily ailments. Hence everyone should try as far as possible to keep a check on desires.

"Na dharmo daya samah" ("There is no virtue equal to compassion"). What is dharma? Compassion is the highest dharma. A heart filled with compassion is the temple of the Divine. Every man should have a compassion filled heart.

There is a lesson every man should learn. There is the potency of a mantra (a sacred declaration) in every word. Every plant has medicinal properties. Every human being is precious. A true individual is one who knows and lives up to this truth.

People, today do not recognise the value of being human and the preciousness of time.

You spend the whole day in hectic activity. Do you call this living?
You eat three times a day. Does this constitute living?
Do you think that living consists in sleeping comfortably?
Do you regard indulgence in gossip as the aim of life?
Did God give you life for these purposes?
Knowing what is merit and what is sin, you are indifferent to them.
Is this the way you spend your life-time?
At least from now on, learn to lead a truly human life.

(Telugu poem)

The divine energy

The cosmos is a creation of the Divine. It is surcharged with energy. This energy is not localised at a particular point in space or in time. Though this energy is all-pervading, man is not able to recognise its divine nature. As he cannot recognise it, he presumes that it does not exist. Electrical energy is present all the time (in the electrical installations). But its presence is recognised only when a bulb is switched on. Likewise, though God is omnipresent, His divine effulgence will shine only in those who adore Him with a pure heart.

Man today is unable to understand what is life, what is its goal, what is one's duty and what should be one's aim. Time is moving fast like a whirlwind. Man's allotted span of life is melting every moment like a block of ice. Man's life ends even before he is aware of his duty. What is his duty? Every individual has some aspirations, some ideals to be realised and some sacred paths to be trodden. He makes no effort to pursue these aims. What is the goal and purpose of one's life, what is its secret? Man hardly puts these questions to himself. He is content to devote himself to sensuous pleasures. This is not what he should do; it is not the aim of life.

Every individual should manifest a divine ideal in his life. This ideal should absorb his entire life and activities. Alas! Man today does not follow this sacred path.

Thoughts and deeds

of his inner being. This can be illustrated by a simple example. When one wants to build a house, he plans in advance how the different rooms should be located. These ideals are later incorporated in blue prints. The thoughts come first and then they are given concrete forms. Similarly when you want to write a letter, you first think of what you should write and then commence to write.

Thoughts lead to action. There can be no action without thoughts (Sankalpa). Hence, it is essential to entertain sacred thoughts. Everyone should realise that all the sorrows and miseries of modern man are due to his bad thoughts. Every man thinks that someone else is responsible for his troubles. This is not so. You alone are responsible for the good and evil that befalls you. You blame others because of your weakness.

Valmiki's transformation

The KENOPANISHAD has proclaimed this truth beautifully. "Brahmavid Brahmaiva Bhavathi". ("The knower of Brahman becomes Brahman himself") Whatever you aspire for, whatever your yearning that you become yourself. When Valmiki wished to write the Ramayana, he first meditated on all the qualities of Rama and then alone he could commence his epic. Because of the constant repetition of the name of Rama and continuous meditation on the Rama Principle, he shone with the effulgence of Rama. It is one of the miracles of Rama that the highwayman Ratnakara could become the author of a great epic.

When you meditate on the effulgence of anyone, a part of that effulgence enters into you. Such was the case with Prahlada. By constant chanting of the name of the Lord, devoting all his thoughts to Narayana, he was filled with the power of the Divine and experienced ineffable bliss. He could face with utter equanimity all the ordeals to which he was subjected by the minions of his father. (Swami sang a poem from the Bhagavatam in which Pothana describes how Prahlada chanted only the names of the Lord while the Rakshasas were tormenting him). Prahlada had no sense of fear. The effulgence of Vishnu shone in his face.

A spark of the divine

Man today should reflect on his true nature. The Lord declares in the Gita! "The individual on earth is a fragment of my Eternal Self." The import of this declaration is: "Oh foolish man! Don't think you are only a composite of the five elements. You are a fragment (Amsha) of Myself".

A branch is a part of a tree. A child is a part of the mother. The branch cannot survive without the tree. The child cannot survive without the mother. Man is a fragment of Madhava (the Supreme Self). Hence man cannot exist without Madhava. But, it may be asked, "is not man surviving today?. How is he doing that?" But what kind of life is he leading? Is he living as a human being? No. He is living as an animal (Cheers). If he were aware that he is a spark of the Divine, why is he a prey to suffering? Does God have any worries or troubles? None at all. "He is in eternal bliss, the bestower of all happiness, the embodiment of all wisdom." (A Sanskrit sloka) If you are a fragment of that Divine, why should you be a prey to all this suffering? When

You must take a pledge from today to lead a godly life.

Consider also how this has been treated in other religions. In the Bible, God is described as omnipotent and all encompassing. Moses was always meditating on God and dedicated his entire life to God. Because of this, Moses acquired the effulgence of the Divine. Jesus Christ declared repeatedly: "I and You are one."

A very great scientist, Charles Darwin, was so much devoted to his teacher, Henslow, that he became the very image of his preceptor.

Such feelings should arise in the hearts of every one. Today, people's feelings vary from moment to moment. The result is men lead mindless lives. Having taken birth as a human being, having realised that one is a spark of the Divine, one should lead a godly life.

Quest for perfection

There was a great (Italian) violin manufacturer by name Anthony (Stradivarius). He used to take a whole year to produce a single violin, perfect in every aspect. Once a friend asked him: "Anthony, if you take one year to make a single violin, how can you make a living?" Anthony replied: "Brother! God is the embodiment of perfection. In harmony with His perfection, I must make a perfect violin. If I do not make a perfect violin, I shall be a traitor to God. God is fullness, total perfection. If you want to please God, your thoughts, words and actions must be entirely pure." That is perfect, and this must also be perfect.

It is in this spirit that some of the great figures in the western world worshipped and served God.

God is all perfection. Hence, in worshipping Him, the feeling should be total. God should not be worshipped in halves and fractions. The devotee should achieve total involvement with the Divine. Quantitatively there would be a difference between God, who is the ocean of Love and the devotee whose love is a drop in that ocean. But the quality of love is the same.

The gopikas' devotion

Whatever you do to please God must be in harmony with the perfection of the Divine. Your words should be absolute truth. Your actions should be totally God-Oriented. All thoughts should be divinised. It should be realised that God is the Indweller in all beings. Because man has failed to realise this truth he leads a double life and is a prey to troubles and worries. Only by leading a godly life can man redeem himself.

The Gopikas are perfect examples of total and pure devotion. They were totally absorbed in Krishna. They ignored the message brought to them by Uddhava. They told Uddhava that they were so totally immersed in the adoration of, Krishna that they had no time or inclination to do anything else. They had totally identified themselves with Krishna.

have wrong notions about Krishna's sports with the cowherdresses. His sports were those of a young child with his brothers and sisters. By his sports Krishna moved the hearts of the Gopikas. The Gopikas saw the image of Krishna in every creeper, every flower and every plant. When Krishna was away from Gokulam, the Gopikas went to Brindavan and appealed to every creeper and flower to let them know where Krishna, who had stolen their hearts, was hiding himself. (Swami sang the song of the Gopikas describing Krishna and appealing to the creepers to let them know that He was not hiding amongst them). The Gopikas had only one image, before them, that of Krishna. They had only one vision, that of Krishna.

The nature of true love between the devotee and God cannot be understood by the unbelievers—the atheists. Only the loving devotee can experience the effulgence of the Divine. The man without love is lost in dialectical controversies, with the result that bitterness develops over arguments.

The human and the Divine

The incarnation of Krishna proclaimed the doctrine of divine love, as manifested by the Gopikas. Man today is like an earthen pot filled with nectar. His body may be made of clay, but his spirit is eternal. The Divine has to be experienced through the body. Hence, human birth should not be treated as something trivial. Human life is worth living, it should be cherished as something precious.

But such a precious gift is being treated as dirt today. It is essential to realise the value of human existence. What is the goal of human life? It is to go back to the source from which we came. Our duty is to return to our primordial, original home.

All of you who are here have come from different parts of India and the world. After your stay here, you have to go back to your native places. Likewise human beings have come to the planet earth as pilgrims. They have to return to their original home. You have come from the Atma. You have to go back to the Atma. You have come from the Brahman (Supreme Self). You have to merge in the Brahman. You have incarnated as a spark of Brahman. You have to become the Brahman. That is the ideal. That is the goal. In between there may be many impediments. You should ignore them. Have unshakable faith. That is true devotion.

Love is God's gift

Devotion does not consist merely in different forms of worship. It is dedicated offering of yourself to the Lord with unsullied love. You have come from the Divine with love. You have to base your life on that love. That love is a gift of the Divine. You must treat it as Divine property and not as your personal possession. As long as you entertain the sense of personal property, you can never understand the Atmic principle.

The feeling of 'I' and 'mine' is the root cause of all man's troubles. Attachment and possessiveness cannot be totally eschewed. But there should be limits for them. Insatiable desires

contentment. They had only one desire: the yearning for God.

People are often affected by the deluding power of Maya. Even the Gopikas once doubted whether a little boy like Krishna would be able to lift the Govardhan Mountain to give shelter to the denizens of Repalle from a heavy downpour. Devotees should not give way to doubts. Faith in God should be firm till your last breath.

Embodiments of love!

The triple purity

You celebrate what are regarded as the birthdays of God coming as an avatar. What is the secret of these birthday celebrations? Every Avatar comes to uphold or testify to a certain ideal or purpose. Avatars come for establishing "Dharma" in the world (as declared in the Gita). What is "Dharma"? There are various "Dharmas" (Codes of conduct) relating to celibates, householders, renunciants and others. These "Dharmas" are related to one's stage in life. True Dharma is that which sustains one. ("DHARAYATI ITI DHARMAH"). Man is sustained by three factors: the body, the mind, and the tongue. The hands represent the body, thoughts represent the mind and speech represents the tongue. The acting in unison of the body, the mind and the tongue is "Dharma". Thoughts, words and actions should be in harmony. That is the mark of a true human being. This basic truth is valid without regard to place, nationality, language or religion. It is applicable to people everywhere, at all times. Those who observe this triple purity are the redeemed. They are the salt of the earth. They are the upholders of righteousness. To such adherents of Dharma, God is a constant companion, keeping close to them at all times and places. Today, people have to cherish and uphold this "Dharma". Instead, they are deluded by attachment to the body to sacrifice purity in thought, word and deed.

(To illustrate how attachment to bodily relations affects one's judgement, Bhagavan related the episodes in the Mahabharata which preceded the Kurukshetra battle and the conduct of Arjuna on the battlefield. Arjuna had vigorously opposed Krishna's attempts to hold peace parleys with the Kauravas as a futile exercise. But when he saw his preceptors, cousins and other kinsmen ranged against him on the battlefield, he was despondent and did not wish to fight. It was then that Krishna taught him that the Spirit is immortal and bodies are perishable and one should not give way to bodily attachments in the performance of one's duty. The body has to be taken care of, but not excessively. It should be dedicated to the service of God.)

The delusion of separateness

One may claim to surrender all his wealth, kith and kin and power and position to God. But this is not real surrender. One must realise: "I am in You, You are in me". God is one. The sense of separation between God and the individual should go.

Even Yasoda, though she had experienced numerous examples of Krishna's divinity, could not realise the oneness of Godhead, because of attachment to the body (owing to the delusion caused by Maya). She complained about the worry caused to her by Krishna, who refused to eat

Krishna to a tree to prevent him from going round houses. Episodes such as these are intended to teach lessons to devotees about the ways of God. The Divine is in every individual, but one's realisation depends on one's own efforts. The Divine shines according to the degree of one's spiritual awareness. To manifest the full effulgence of the Divine, one has to adhere to the path of Love. Only through Love can the Supreme Divine be attained.

The love of God

God cannot be got by hatred, anger or jealousy. It is because these three evil qualities are present in people that you see in their faces the marks of misery. On the contrary look at the faces of Dhruva, Prahlada and Narada. You see extreme brilliance on their faces because they are filled with the love of God. There should be no mark of sadness on the face of one who has faith in God. This was the case with Valmiki. His face was full of radiance—a radiance derived from one who is the embodiment of Love (Rama).

All of you should strive to promote your effulgence and bliss by seeking oneness with the Divine. This is the primary duty of man.

(Bhagavan sang two songs in which He bemoaned the plight of human beings who were more concerned about their food than about God and who mastered all the texts but did not sincerely worship God). This was the message which Adi Sankaracharya wished to convey in his famous hymn, "Bhaja Govindam". Everyone should realise the transitoriness of life and turn his thoughts towards God early enough in life. The challenges of life should be faced with fortitude and firm faith in God. That is the Supreme quality of humanness. Its grandeur and power should not be belittled. Faith in God should never be given up, whatever, one's scholarship, position or power. That is the summum-bonum of life.

Today people have forgotten the eternal verities and are immersed in selfishness. The true meaning of "Swartha" is dedication to the Self and not petty selfishness.

Universal message of the Gita

This is the Supreme message of the Bhagavad Gita. It is not a message intended for one individual or one nation. It is meant for all mankind. It is the word of God, the Eternal Wisdom, the Cosmic Director, Playwright and actor, all rolled into one. The unbreakable bond between the One and the Many should be properly understood.

Whatever you do, remember the omnipresence of the Divine. Do every act to please God, out of love and not out of compulsion. Divinise every act. The Lord declares in the Gita: "Having been born in this transient and unhappy world, worship Me."

Krishna called upon Arjuna to stand up and face the battle, reminding him of what was in store for the evil-minded Kauravas. He adjured Arjuna to have full faith in Him and do his duty. Then Arjuna declared, "I shall do as you bid me" ("Karishyevachanam thava").

Arjuna to rise and fight the battle which would end in the complete destruction of the Kauravas and the wicked quartet, Duryodhana, Dussasana, Kama and Shakuni.

The great teaching of the Gita is: "Put your trust in God, carry on your duties, be helpful to everyone and sanctify your lives". Dedicate all actions to God. That is the way to experience oneness with God. God is in you. You are in God. This oneness is the basic truth. Chant the name of the Lord and render social service in a spirit of selflessness and devotion to God.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan, "*Govinda Krishna Jai!*"

**From Bhagavan's discourse in the Sai Kulwant Mandap on
Gokulashtami day, 18th August, 1995**

GLORIOUS AUGUST IN PRASANTHI NILAYAM:

A Memorable Month: Celebrations Galore

Coming events, says the proverb, cast their shadows before. But in the sacred land of Prasanthi Nilayam it is a different story. Coming events cast their radiance before them. How true this is was experienced by thousands of devotees from all over the world who watched with inexpressible joy and boundless gratitude a whole series of sacred celebrations, which had been got up by different groups of devotees as their special offering to Bhagavan in connection with this year's Seventieth Birthday Celebrations in November.

German children's superb play

The first of these events (on August 15th) was a superb dramatic presentation, by a group of Bal Vikas children from Germany, of an allegorical theme, "Transformation through love". Based on the well-known process of caterpillars turning into butterflies after living in a cocoon for some days, the play depicted a bunch of caterpillars (little girls in green) hopping on the ground, revelling in consuming grass. Among these, there were two who were not totally absorbed in eating grass or competing with each other to reach a mountaintop where there was nothing. The two, Freddie and Sunshine, are attracted to each other by love. While Freddie is away to join the race to the mountaintop with the jostling caterpillars, Sunshine gets into a cocoon and emerges as a butterfly. Searching for Freddie, she finds him brooding over his condition and tells him how she became a butterfly. Freddie also gets into a cocoon and gets transformed into a butterfly. The two dance in joy and convey the great tidings to the other caterpillars how they can transform themselves into butterflies.

The whole theme was presented with such beauty and charm that the audience was thrilled. The two main characters spoke in such a perfect style that the message was clear. The background music was pleasing and in harmony with the theme. The costumes and stage settings

have been transformed through love. Altogether, it was a highly commendable performance and Bhagavan, who watched the play with intense interest, blessed the entire cast and accepted their Arati.

On August 16 and 17, two Telugu films were screened in Poornachandra Hall, which were great hits in their time! "Bhakta Ramadas" and "Sathya Harishchandra".

Gokulashtami

The great event in August is Krishna's birthday. Bhagavan as Sai Gopala blesses the cows from the Gokulam and expounds in His discourse the varied aspects of the life and message of Sri Krishna.

This year, the celebrations acquired a new grandeur as they were held in the vast, magnificent Sai Kulwant Mandap, which was filled with thousands of devotees from all parts of the world.

The first to greet Bhagavan on the auspicious morning, as Swami, wearing a pleasing yellow robe, came to the central arch in front of the Ganesha Idol, was Sai Geetha in all her glory; draped in richly caparisoned blankets and wearing glittering golden ornaments on the forehead. Bhagavan caressed His beloved elephant, which had grown from a small baby two decades ago, into a gigantic figure. It was a thrilling sight for one and all when Sai Geetha embraced Bhagavan with her trunk and tenderly rubbed His cheek, while Swami lovingly patted her. After giving some fruits to Sai Geetha, Bhagavan turned to the fine procession of well decorated cows brought from Gokulam with Nadaswaram music and the chanting of Vedic hymns by students of the Sai Institute. Each cow was escorted by a couple of students. About fifty cows enjoyed the privilege of being blessed by Bhagavan and lovingly treated to a meal of fruits from His divine hands.

After the offering of Arati to Bhagavan, prasadam, blessed by Him, was distributed to the entire gathering.

In the afternoon, well before 4 p.m., Sai Kulwant was packed to capacity with devotees eager to listen to Bhagavan's Gokulashtami Sandesh. After Swami's darshan rounds, the meeting began with Vedic invocation. Swami's discourse was preceded by speeches by Dr. Sandipan Chatterji (Professor of English) and Nielankh Jha (XII standard). Recalling the holding up of the Govardhangiri by the young Krishna, to protect the village folk from a huge downpour caused by Indra out of chagrin, Dr. Chatterji referred to an incident in which Bhagavan came to the rescue of a plane which had to crash-land on its belly. The plane and the passengers were saved by a miracle.

Bhagavan, in the course of His discourse, explained the nature of devotion to God and how the Gopikas were perfect examples of total devotion (Details of the discourse are published separately).

Mass weddings in the Nilayam

August 20th became an unforgettable day in the lives of one hundred and twenty brides and bridegrooms drawn from villages in Anantapur District for a mass marriage ceremony in the presence of Bhagavan. The marriages were arranged by old students of the Sathya Sai College for Women as a 70th birthday offering to Bhagavan. They had collected the funds for the function from among themselves and requested Bhagavan to celebrate the weddings in the Nilayam. The Sai Kulwant Mandap was beautifully decorated for the occasion with flags, festoons and traditional floral decorations. The old students who are all members of the "The Messengers of Mother Sai", went about with great care and devotion to select the young couples to be married and secure the dresses and other presents to be given to them with the blessing of Bhagavan. Swami deeply appreciated the noble initiative of the "Messengers" and arranged for priests, Nadaswaram music, and other necessities to have the marriages celebrated in a sacred atmosphere.

On 19th August, Bhagavan gave wedding clothes to the grooms and saris to the brides to be worn on the occasion of marriage.

Early in the morning the strains of Nadaswaram music heralded the auspicious start of the day's programme. The marriage couples, wearing their new saris and dhotis, came in a procession from the Kalyana Mandapam (Old Mandir), accompanied by their parents, and headed by the Nadaswaram troupe. The couples were directed to their respective places in the Sai Kulwant Mandap by the "Messengers" each one of them taking charge of one couple. Bhagavan, who arrived at 7 a.m. in the Mandap, gave instructions to the priests as to how the marriage ceremonies should be conducted. The simple artless village belles and bridegrooms, who had been brought together in the presence of Bhagavan, could not have imagined that their wedding would be celebrated in such a sacred atmosphere with the blessings of the Avatar of the Age. The bridegrooms were directed by the chief priest to tie the mangalsutram round the brides' neck, while the appropriate mantras were being recited by the priests. After this historic ceremony was over, Bhagavan went round the long rows of married couples, sprinkling the sacred yellow rice (Akshata) on them and blessing them individually. The newly weds then went round the Mandir in single file, while Bhagavan blessed them as they passed by Him. The memorable function concluded with Arati to Bhagavan.

Bhagavan blessed old couples

After the "Messengers", it was the turn of the wives of the staff of the Sathya Sai Institute and the women teachers of the Secondary School to make their special offering to Bhagavan.

They chose for their celebration 70 poor aged couples from Puttaparthi and the neighbouring villages of Karnatanagappalli, Brahmanapalli, Bukkapatnam, Kothacheruvu, Yenumulapalli, Erankapalli, Locherla and others. The male spouses of these couples were sixty years or above.

"Shashtiabhda-poorthi", when the aged parents go ceremonially through a second wedding. These old village couples, who could not dream of such a celebration, were supremely blessed when they were chosen for this second wedding in the presence of Bhagavan.

On the 21st morning, the couples came in procession from the Kalyana Mandap to the Sai Kulwant Mandap, where Bhagavan was already there with the priests to bless the "second wedding" with due ceremony. After the couples had taken their seats, plates with saris and dhotis, mangalsutram and some sacred articles used for daily worship, were individually blessed by Bhagavan before they were presented to each of the couples.

The priests started chanting mantras as in regular wedding ceremony. The old men were instructed to take the mangalsutram from their respective plates and tie them round the necks of their devoted spouses. For these artless village couples, it was a dream come true and their eyes were filled with tears of joy and gratitude as Bhagavan went round them sprinkling sacred rice on them and blessing them. Sweets and blankets were also distributed to the couples.

As the couples went round the Mandir in a procession, many could not resist the urge to take Padanamaskar and express their boundless gratitude to Bhagavan. Swami was so much moved by their spontaneous devotion that He permitted them to offer their namaskar to Him. Later Bhagavan remarked in the Mandir about the devotion of the innocent, unsophisticated village couples.

Sweets were distributed to all the devotees before Bhagavan was offered Arathi to mark the conclusion of yet another joyous and memorable celebration.

Kanya puja for 150 girls

This was followed by another interesting function the next day (August 22) when 150 girls were brought to the Mandap for a traditional "Kanya Puja", performed by unmarried girls. Seventy five girls in the age group 6 to 8 were selected from the primary school in Puttaparthi and 75 girls, between 12 to 15 years, were chosen from the Easwamma High School for the Puja.

The girls were well dressed for the occasion and wore marigold garlands. The "Kanya Puja" started with Ganapati Puja. Gowri Puja and concluded with Katyayini Puja. Each girl ("Kanya") was presented with a plate containing clothes, bangles and articles for worship such as turmeric and kumkum.

Each plate was blessed by Bhagavan before it was presented by the staff ladies to the "Kanyas". The puja was directed by the priests. After its completion, Swami went round all the Kanyas and sprinkled akshatas (sacred rice grains) on them and blessed them. Sweets were distributed to the girls. Bhagavan gave them an early lunch in the canteen.

Upanayana mahotsavam

Bhagavan in the Sai Kulwant Mandap. The celebration had been organised by the Mahila Vibhag of the Sri Sathya Sai Samiti of Hyderabad. On the initiative of the President of the Mahila Vibhag, Mrs. Lalitha Umapathi Rao, as many as 560 boys, with their parents, were brought from Hyderabad and neighbouring areas for a mass Upanayanam ceremony in the Divine presence of Bhagavan.

Elaborate arrangements had been made for getting the ceremony performed according to the prescribed procedure. It took nearly an hour for all the "Vatus" to come in procession from the Kalyana Mandapam to the Sai Kulwant Mandap and to take their place in the Mandap.

After invocatory chanting of hymns by students, the function began with instructions by the priests to the "Vatus" and their parents to perform Ganapati Puja. Bhagavan was going round the long rows of "Vatus", instructing them as to how to follow the ritual procedure announced by the priests.

After the main ritual of being initiated into the Gayatri mantra and wearing the sacred thread was over, Bhagavan went round the entire mandap to bless the "Vatus" and their parents and shower "Akshatas" on them. The function lasted nearly three hours and Bhagavan was on His legs all the time.

Bhagavan then delivered His discourse, explaining the significance of the Gayatri Mantra and the importance of the Brahmacharya stage in the life of a man. (Details of the discourse are published separately).

All credit goes to the members of the Hyderabad Mahila Vibhag for arranging such a prodigious programme and carrying it out with such conspicuous success. But all this was possible because of Bhagavan's boundless Grace and continuous guidance and encouragement.

The entire series of functions, which were watched by thousands of devotees, revealed to them the boundless grace of Bhagavan and how the devotion of devotees expresses itself in different forms of loving service to their fellow-beings.

Sai, it's You!

*Who comes running when we call,
Who is there to help us, if we fall,
Who is the sweetest God of all?
Sai, our Lord, it's You!*

Who is the One who helps us see

*That the whole world is one entity?
Sai, our Lord, it's You!*

*Who is the sweetest, who is the best,
Who helps as through many a test,
But loves us far more than the rest?
Yes! Our Lord, it's You!*

—Latha Swaminathan, New Jersey, USA

Transformation through Love

The whole story started with a dream—and then the dream became a reality, In the Divine Presence of our beloved Lord.

Around Christmas, a friend of mine, Lucia, had the following dream: She saw the Bal Vikas group from Munich, just arrived in Prasanthi Nilayam, and Baba asked immediately for the drama they had prepared, and which He wanted to see. Three months later, in March, Lucia told me her dream when I met her at a Sai-workers meeting. I was immediately fascinated by this idea, and it seemed that Swami wanted to give a sign to us through this dream.

For over seven years I am running the Bal Vikas classes in our Sai Centre, and in the last few years I often wished that Swami should call all the children to His Divine Presence. I never thought of a drama performance, and the last thought I could have had was that I was going to do it! I saw many children's performances at Christmas in Prasanthi, in the last few years, but never in my life could I imagine doing it myself.

Shortly after hearing the dream, Phyllis Krystal came to Munich, and I spoke to her about Bal Vikas and the problems we had with some children, because some of them had a really difficult individual process; then I told her also about that dream and the idea to go with the whole Bal Vikas group to see Swami and may be to present a drama.

Suddenly Phyllis got her special sign from Swami and she almost cried out: "Giesela, I've got my special sign from Swami. I think He wants you to come with all the children. It may be healing for the children." I was deeply touched by her strong reaction, and deep inside I knew that it was to come true. But later, doubts came again, and when I told other devotees, they thought I was crazy. So that I sometimes myself thought that it is all imagination and it would be better to be silent. But when Swami plans something, nothing can come in His way!

Swami, in which I asked Him if we really should and prepare a drama. He took the letter immediately. From then on, He took all letters we sent to Him through devotees concerning our coming and the drama. Those were dear signs to me. My experience with Swami is, over the years, that whenever He takes a letter from me I can be sure that whatever I've asked is confirmed through Him.

The next step was to ask all the parents if they were willing to come with their children in summer to India. I was absolutely surprised that nearly all parents agreed. For some, it was a problem with money and others had already planned other holidays—but even that was not an obstacle. Up to the last minute, Swami took care of everything and made it possible for all to come.

Then I had a dream: The Bal Vikas group was just arriving in Prasanthi; Swami was happy to see us and asked how long we would stay, how many children had come.... Then we asked Him if we could perform the drama we had prepared. He said He would love to see it, but, being very busy, He had to think when that could be. Then He told me the exact date when He wanted to perform the drama, and in the dream it was clear to me it would be the last day before the children left.

Now, a stream of signs and support and help came from everywhere. Whenever there were doubts in our heads, Swami sent signs: dreams, help from others, money for the costumes, the right people in the right moment. Here, I have to mention Jochen, because he did all the designs for costumes and the decorations. He had been- active for 40 years decorating and was just the right person for us. He worked day and night and even postponed his operation he should have had in July.

Many devotees and others had given every free minute for stitching the costumes or other help. For all who participated, it was a real sacrifice or tapas and selfless effort. We all were held together through Swami's overflowing love, which was so present. But the more intense the whole process became, the more the "washing machine-process" started within everyone, and so, it was also a big cleansing process for the whole group. We didn't have an official invitation or a "yes" from Swami—so it was a real test of faith—to be fully prepared and follow that guidance. But also to let go everything and not expect anything.

Before we could start the work, we had to think about what the drama should be. One morning in meditation, it came very clear to me: TRANSFORMATION THROUGH LOVE and I remembered the drama, which I'd done some years ago in our Sai Centre. The message of this drama was so strong that nearly everybody cried. We worked it over and over, at least five times, added new things, crossed out old things, and with the help of some good friends it was translated into beautiful English.

So, the whole work could only start in the beginning of June. Hardly two months were left for the whole preparation. The children were so busy with school and exams that we could only

date of our departure came closer, we had the feeling nothing was ready—neither the costumes nor the practice with the children!

The next problem was how to transport all the costumes and the decorations. Finally, we got 12 big aluminium containers. Normally, they would have been very expensive to rent, but when the owner heard about our story, his heart melted and he gave us the containers free of charge, for all the time in India. The airlines also were helpful and didn't charge any overweight. The whole transport was no problem.

Then this unforgettable pilgrimage started on the 31st July, with 17 children, 43 adults and 12 big aluminium containers. For the children, it was such a beautiful experience for all of them to be together on that journey. On the way to Prasanthi Nilayam they all were together in one bus, singing Bhajans, all the time. We adults followed them in another bus and in taxis. Everything, till now, was going on smoothly.

When we reached Prasanthi, the test started! The first test was that the Seva dal members didn't allow us to enter the Ashram. They sent us from one gate to the other and back. No one wanted to let us in. We had to run here and there to get permission to go in, with our two buses and four taxis. Then the next test came: no rooms available! But the group was wonderful and just accepted! Then the miracle happened. After my husband and I had done all the formalities at the public relations office, which took us nearly two hours, the man from the accommodation office, to whom we had spoken in the beginning, came again—very very kindly—and said that we could get 10 rooms, all in R5. R5 is surrounded by a lot of noise from all the workers and working machines, who are building the new houses all round. Because they work day and night, no one could sleep. It was an ordeal for some of us! Again, the group was wonderful in accepting all as a gift from Swami, imagining that He was hammering our ego into pieces through this noise. The next test was that we didn't get a shed for our rehearsals. Then we did not get any official sign from Swami. No permission for the drama. He took all our letters—but nothing happened. We had to wait and accept and again we had to let go all expectations and desires. We had to go through our own transformation first—before we could perform the drama with that message. And it was so important to wait. We needed the time for ourselves, to really get comfortable here—to let go all the stress and to realize that we were here because of Swami and not because of the drama.

But the moment we felt we were all happy just being here without performing our drama and without opening the 12 aluminium containers, Swami changed everything. During one darshan I wrote a letter to Swami in which I asked Him, in case He still wanted us to perform the drama, He should show me what I should do, to whom else I should talk, because I didn't know what to do.

Swami took the letter, and the miracle happened! After darshan, I met all the people who could tell me what to do. I did everything what was told to me. Indulal Shah came in the right moment and after talking to him we got the EHV building for practice and Indulal Shah spoke to

1995. But the children had their flight booked for the 14th August. So Baba asked the group, through Indulal Shah, if we could change our flights. What a question! If the Lord wanted us to change our flights, it was a test in confidence to trust Swami's planning and change our own plans. And also to trust that there would be enough flights available a few days later for so many people.

Now the whole energy was back in the group, and we started with the rehearsals. They were held for days in the EHV building, then Swami gave us permission to use Poornachandra for the next four days. Now His grace and blessing was really pouring on us nearly during every darshan. Swami was talking to us. He came to nearly all rehearsals, showering His infinite love and compassion over us. He granted us two interviews, during these six days of preparation, where He gave so much attention and love to every child. What was very important for Swami was the title of the drama.

When He asked me the first time about the title, during darshan, I told Him that the title was: "You will become a beautiful Butterfly". (I had changed the title from "Transformation through Love" to "You will become a beautiful Butterfly" because some people told me it was not the appropriate title, "Transformation through Love", for a drama—it sounds like a lecture. So I changed it.) But Swami wanted the original title! Because that's the message. He didn't agree with the second, so I told Him, when He asked me again, "Transformation through Love." He said, "Correct."

Over and over again He asked me and others about the title—till it was clear for all of us—that it is our mantra—that's the most important on our way. Through asking over and over and through repeating it again and again, He wrote with golden letters this title in our hearts. And often we had the opportunity in the group to practise it. Through the nearness with Swami, He drew us closer and closer to His heart. During the rehearsals, we really had the feeling of living together with our Lord in one house. He said, when He showed my husband all the rooms in the Poornachandra which we could use, "Everything is yours." And it was like that! The girls had a special room to dress; also, a table for make-up was there. Everything we needed, we got.

And Swami came so often, watching us, speaking to us, asking for the costumes and decorations—showering His love over us, and taking away any fear or nervousness! Till the last rehearsal, we had never done the drama in one going—because we worked all the time on special scenes. So, we really didn't know how long the whole drama would be.

When we started the last rehearsal, everything went wrong. The wrong music, the light on the wrong place, the children at the wrong place.... I think I was the most nervous one. I was nearly exploding. Then Swami came and brought peace for all of us, and it seemed to flow. Suddenly in the middle of the drama, no more children came on the stage; no light worked, nothing worked anymore. I got so angry, and emotional, because I thought, behind the stage they were all sleeping and not concentrating. So, I ran behind the stage full of anger—ready to

in all His sweetness and love, holding a Sari in His hand. He smilingly asked if I wanted a Sari! I was melting away, forgetting all my anger and forgetting even the play, like the others sitting at His feet and enjoying His divine presence. He then gave us all Padanamaskar and distributed saris to the women and sweets for the children.

After this sweet "divine confusion" with our beloved Sai Krishna, the play went well; everybody was happy. And yet we didn't know how long the play was. But everybody was so calm and at peace. Even I was so calm the whole next day that I knew—He would make the play, no one else; and it was like that.

The children were wonderful. They had never been so good. The music and light was in the right place. Everything flew! After the play, Swami came behind the stage and told us how much He liked it. He again and again repeated: "Very, very, very good. Very, very happy". He distributed sweets to all and showered again and again His beautiful Love over us.

It was such an unforgettable experience for all of us, for all our lives! So much blessing and grace from Swami. And we thank Swami from all our hearts for this precious gift, of the overflowing Grace and Love we received and I always will remember His saying: "Be always ready when my grace is coming!"

Jai Sai Ram

Gisela Sebastian, Prasanthi Nilayam

Sai School in Zambia! A Model for Africa

The Sri Sathya Sai School in Zambia, set in fourteen acres of beautiful grounds with 380 pupils, is the first Sathya Sai School outside of India. It derives its name, inspiration, and authority from Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Whose permission and guidance were sought about everything relating to the school before it was opened. It is managed by the Sathya Sai Central Board of Management, Zambia.

"Study the system, build the school in one year, and start with three classes" was the Divine command. This happened. We sold everything and used the money to build the school, assisted by some well-wishers. It all comes from Swami anyway.

The essential structures were completed in one year and, by June 1991, it was opened to the public for admissions With three Primary classes, and three Secondary classes for boys who had all failed in their grade 7 national examination.

low-income families, so many pupils are on scholarships provided by the Sathya Sai Central Board of Management and well-wishers with Swami's Grace, no tuition fees are charged; only nominal auxiliary contributions are made and, even then, some are exempted. There is an open admission policy, irrespective of race, colour, religion, creed, class, or income. Value orientation to Primary and Secondary Education is taught, and the Sathya Sai EHV programme is integrated into the teaching of every academic subject and all co-curricular activities. Unity of faiths is professed and emphasized, home-community links are fostered, and in Both Primary and Secondary Schools, emphasis is placed on service activities.

Very happy and full parental cooperation exists, with 100% attendance on Parents' Open Days. This in itself is a remarkable feat when many parents do not speak English and some have not even been to school. Of course, we also have sons of the Chief Inspectors of Police, Ministers, Mayor, Inspectors of Schools, M. P.'s, police and army officers, and professionals, but no preferential treatment is given to them.

A large ministerial delegation from the office, of the Vice-President, including the Deputy Minister of Educational Development, came on an inspection of the school in order to assess the SSEHV value-oriented Programme. They were so impressed that they wrote in their official report: "We recommend the building of Sathya Sai Schools all over the country."

The Vice-President and about sixteen Councillors, on another tour of the school; marvelled that there was "no graffiti, no rubbish, not a single broken window, and the fifty-one pupils' flush toilets were so clean that you could almost eat in them." He wondered how some boys, who had indulged in vandalism in other schools the previous year, could have changed into "such angels" in one term at the Sathya Sai School—only Swami's grace!

Remarkable results

The first national results for Grade 9 produced 99% passes with thirty distinctions, and last year there were 100% passes, fifty-one distinctions, and 121 merits. These were all results from boys who had failed in their Grade 7 national examination and were classified as "drop outs". Swami said, "Give them a chance." We did. This is the only school in Zambia- and probably in the world—which accepts only "failures." To get 100% passes with dozens of distinctions can only be due, to Swami's Grace and His unseen influence on the students and the teachers.

The characters of these boys, drawn from 12 schools where they had previously studied, has changed dramatically. Boys whose behaviour was deplorable and disgraceful, who were on the expulsion list, are now among the "prefects" and the best-behaved boys in the school. Mothers cry and say, "We don't know how to thank Sathya Sai."

Boys do Nagarsankirtan daily around the campus, attend bhajan sessions twice daily singing in Sanskrit, Bemba, English and French. They maintain excellent punctuality and attendance records and set such good examples around the school that they were awarded several

eight-year-olds say, "Don't worry, Baba will help."

Parents happy

The parents' joy knows no bounds. Their sons who were "drop outs" three years ago, will be sitting for the national "O" level examinations next year with hopes of going to college. Most of them are on scholarships. A "Sai dream" has come true for many a poor, struggling mother.

Their comments are invariably similar, "Thank God, my son has changed. He is so polite and well-behaved, studies hard and sets a very good example at home—even helping his mother to clean the house." This is unheard of in a male dominated society—only Swami's Grace.

One bank manager, who took his seven-year-old son away from another school because of bad behaviour, says, "My son is so good now and so studious and can sing in four languages (Bemba, Sanskrit, French, and English) that he feels that he is much better for me, for I only know two." He says, "I have heard that Baba has a beautiful University and, if you are a good boy, you can go there. One day I'll go there."

Boys from Grade 1 to Grade 11 clean their own classrooms, the environment, the teachers' rooms, the auditorium, and the toilets—and they sing bhajans while doing so. Where else would you get sixteen to eighteen-year-olds to clean toilets when there are cleaners to do it, and sing devotional songs while doing so? Only Swamis Grace.

EHV workshop

Last year the Minister of Education asked the Sathya Sai School SSEHV faculty to conduct a workshop for fifty-eight Head teachers from all over the region. Later, they sent three teachers from each of their schools to another workshop. The Ministry of Education has asked the Sathya Sai School to conduct a pilot scheme for some schools in the locality.

Parents, teachers, and Government officials have accepted the SSEHV programme because of the changes in the behaviour, work, and character they see in their children.

Interest in Baba

On the day the Sathya Sai National best results appeared on National Television and National news, the whole country knew about Swami in a positive way—unsolicited. Noun everyone is asking, "Who is this Sai Baba?" All parents and officials are told from the beginning that, for us, He is God Incarnate, and that we follow a policy of unity of faiths, but that we do not force our beliefs on them.

The President of Zambia had declared Zambia a Christian Nation and, while we have children professing different religions in the school, the parents have seen that there is no indoctrination, no evangelisation, no conversion, no Sai Baba Church, only the religion of love. Our school motto is "Love all, serve all."

That the transformation of their children is taking place through love, resulting in spiritual, moral, environmental, and academic excellence, testifies to Swamis Grace.

—*Genevieve Kanu, Ndola, Zambia*

The purpose of the ancient religions of India is to plant the seeds of love in the human heart, so that they may sprout into saplings of endurance, and blossom into, tolerance, yielding ultimately the fruit of peace. The pinnacle of Indian thought is non-duality, experience of the One, negation of duality. Some countries proceed towards the ideal of individual' freedom, others aim at state sovereignty and the suppression of the individual's right to freedom. But Bharat has, from time immemorial, sought to infuse in the individual the conviction that he can be free only when he realises his identity with all... not only with the inhabitants of his own state, or people who use his language or are of his own colour and creed. Expansion is the key to happiness, and love is the unfailing key to expansion.

Man is a kin to all that is the teaching of "Sanathana Dharma"— "the rules of the Ancient Wisdom".

—**Baba**

Bhagavan Inaugurates New Hostel for Boys

Inaugurating a new spacious hostel for boys of the Sai Higher Secondary School on July 23rd, at Vidyagiri, Bhagavan commended the generous donation given by the Bhandari brothers of Indore for the construction of the building. In a brief talk after the ceremonial opening of the building, Bhagavan said that men who made money in a big way did not have a charitable disposition, while those who were generously inclined did not have large funds. Those who had both money and the spirit of generosity were very few.

Bhagavan arrived at the building by the eastern entrance and cut the ribbon at the door leading to the spacious prayer hall where already the students, the members of the Bhandari family and some special, invitees had assembled. Bhagavan lit the lamps in the prayer hall and gave darshan to the Bhandari family members, who were in full force.

Dr. Sivasankar Sai, Warden of the hostel, welcomed Bhagavan and others present and expressed their deep gratitude to Bhagavan for inaugurating the hostel, which was a boon to the Secondary School boys.

requested Him to bless them all so that they would prove worthy instruments of Swami in their lives.

Mr. J. K. Bhandari, Managing Director of Alpine Industries, Indore, expressed his gratitude to Bhagavan for giving them an opportunity to serve Bhagavan in a humble way.

Bhagavan Baba in His discourse exhorted the students to be grateful to their parents to whom they owed everything in their life. He deprecated the practice of people hopping from one job to another, lured by offers of higher salaries. Loyalty to an employer will bring its own reward in due time. Education is for elevation and every student should develop devotion to work and see that he gives full value for the salary he receives.

The function concluded with Arati to Bhagavan. Sweets were distributed to the children.

*As in the sesame seed oil exists,
As in milk ghee is present,
As fragrance resides in a flower,
As the juice exists in a fruit,
As fire is latent in a faggot
So Is the Divine immanent in subtle form*

Embodiments of divine love!

Oil is present throughout the sesame seed. Ghee is present in every drop of milk. Fragrance is present in an invisible form in a flower. A fruit is filled with sweet juice. In every piece of wood fire is latent. In the same manner the Divine is immanent in the entire cosmos in a subtle form.

God is present not in some country or some body. Like vision in the eye and hearing in the ear, God is present in the mind as Consciousness (Chaitanya). The cosmos is the visible manifestation of the invisible Supreme Self.

While the Divine is in such close proximity to him, man in his ignorance goes seeking God everywhere. The Divine is effulgent in every man as Sat-Chit-Ananda (Being-Awareness-Bliss), the Cosmic Consciousness.

Reflections of the sun shining in the sky can be seen in the oceans, rivers, the lakes and in wells. Though the reflections are varied, the sun is one alone. The Divine is present in man like the unseen thread which holds a garland of gems together. The entire cosmos is permeated by the Divine and is the visible manifestation of the Divine.

Nothing in the world, no object, no human being, no creature can be found wherein God is not present. Though man appears in the world in different forms, speaking different languages, his essential humanness is common to one and all. There is only one race, that is the human race. God is only one. He is Sat-Chit-Ananda.

Just as a seed sprouts and grows into a plant wherein a flower blossoms, so does the Divine seed grow in the heart of man and blossoms as a flower, Sat-Chit-Ananda. Just as it is natural for a seed to become a fragrant flower, so is it natural for man to experience the bliss of the Divine (Sat-Chit-Ananda).

There are many evidences to demonstrate the Divinity that is inherent in man. But few men are ready to make the sacrifice that is required to experience this Divinity.

The ancient sages regarded human life as full of fragrance to be enjoyed. They considered life as full of nectarine sweetness. When man is oblivious of this sweetness, he ceases to be

Only through sacrifice can man realise the eternal Divine. But, immersed in selfishness, man fails to recognise this truth.

Tyaga and "Bali"

A synonym for the word "Tyaga" (Sacrifice) is "Bali". The term "Bali" has several meanings such as: Offering, dedication, sacrifice and a tax levy. What is meant by "tax"? "Bali" means that which has to be given as an offering in human life. But the ancients regarded "Bali" as offering a living object as a sacrifice. This is not the proper meaning of "Bali". "Bali" is the recognition of the Divinity in man.

People pay a water tax to the authorities who make available water at their dwelling from a distant source. Likewise people have to pay dues for the electricity supply which they receive. What is the "tax" you pay to the Divine for implanting divinity in you when you consider yourself to be remote from God because of your involvement in worldly affairs? You pay for small amounts of water supply and electrical energy. But what do you pay for the heavy downpour of rain which you get from Providence? God fills the tanks and rivers with water. He provides man with the life-giving oxygen in the air he breathes. The sun illumines the whole world by his light. What is the tax we pay for all these services? The offerings we make to God ("arpitamu") is the tax. That has been called "Bali". One should not be frightened by the term "Bali". It means only offering ones self to the Divine.

Emperor Bali's greatness

In making such an offering, Emperor Bali was supreme. He was the grandson of Prahlada. Emperor Bali was dedicating his entire life to God. He was a great devotee. Moreover he excelled in acts of charity. He made his subjects rejoice. He never went back on his plighted word. He was full of such great virtues. Emperor Bali took good care of his people; promoting their welfare and endearing himself to them.

Bali's father, Virochana, was also a godly ruler. Thus from Prahlada to Bali the whole line of rulers were filled with love of God. They were influenced by the Divine power. Originally Prahlada's father, Hiranyakasipu, was Lord Vishnu's gate-keeper. Whatever their differences in behaviour and attitudes, all three (Prahlada, Virochana and Bali) were equally inspired by devotion to God.

In spite of the strong opposition from his preceptor, Shukracharya, (to Bali giving an offering of land to Vamana as promised by him), Bali was firm in surrendering to Vishnu all that he had. He told the preceptor: "Guruji, what is the use of my possessing anything which is not of use to God? The seeker is God Himself. God has really no desires. But to redeem us from the consequences of our past deeds He creates situations which call for offerings. When the infinite Divine appears in the role of the seeker of favours, what greater blessing can there be than making the offering to the Divine? I do not seek any greater blessing than this. I am ready to offer my mind, my body and my life itself to God. There is no greater fortune than this."

This is the meaning of surrender. God does not ask for any offering of wealth or position. God is said to be pleased if a sincere devotee offers a leaf, a flower, a fruit or even water. What is this leaf? It is the body. The heart is the flower, the mind is the fruit. The water that is to be offered is that from the tears of joy shed by the devotee. This is what God expects from you. The Lord tells you: "My dear man! The body does not belong to you. Who gave it to you? It is a precious gift from God. It is inert like a leaf."

Eradi referred to the Gayatri mantra: "Om! Bhur-Bhuvas-Suvaha". In this mantra; "Bhur" refers to the body, which is made up of material substances. It may be compared to a leaf, (which is also a material object). "Bhuvah", refers to that which activates the inert body. That Life Force (Prana) operates as vibration. "Suvah": What is the basis for the Life Force? It is "Prajnana". The Upanishad declares: "Prajnanam Brahma". The Prajna operates through radiation. "Suvah" refers to this power of radiation. Humanness is made up of these three constituents: Radiation, Vibration and material inertness.

The flower to be offered to God is a pure heart free from all taints and evil tendencies like lust, anger and pride. The fruit to be offered is a mind free from all bad thoughts and feelings. It should be filled with the sweet juice of goodness. The water that should be offered to God is the water that flows from the eyes out of joy in experiencing God. Tears are of two kinds: tears born of grief resulting from attachments; tears spontaneously arising from Ananda (blissful experience of the Divine). Make God your life-breath, the sweetness of your existence.

Bali's sacrifice

It was with such sacred feelings that Emperor Bali offered himself to the Lord appearing as Vamana, People make all kinds of offerings to God. But the greatest of them all is to offer oneself. That is what Bali did. He declared: "Oh Lord! I am offering to you the heart which you gave me. What else can I offer you? Please accept my offering at your feet".

Bali is such an example of supreme sacrifice. Thus he pleased God. God has no desires because He contains within Himself everything. Whatever He does is only for the good of the devotees.

The supreme quality of Emperor Bali is his spirit of sacrifice. He taught the people of Kerala the lesson of sacrifice. He also demonstrated that when it comes to upholding one's plighted word, one can disregard even the advice of one's preceptor. Nothing should be allowed to come between a devotee and the Lord. Bharata, Prahlada and Bali are examples of devotees of the Lord who set aside the Vedic injunction regarding reverence for the mother, the father and the preceptor in their allegiance to the Divine.

Bali recognised that not a blade of grass moves without the power of the Divine in it. "No one knows the supreme power of God's will. He permeates everything in the cosmos from an ant to Brahmam. Men are ignorant of this truth," declared Bali (Swami recited a Verse from the Bhagavatam).

Significance of Onam

Emperor Bali surrendered himself totally to the divine, under his reign, all the subjects were happy and led godly lives. Saddened by the thought of having to go away from his people, he told them: "Dear people! I cannot be without you and you cannot be without me. Every year I shall appear before you and give you joy." Onam is the day on which Bali fulfills his promise.

Waking up early in the morning, taking a bath, wearing new dresses and worshipping God mark the celebration of Onam. What is the significance of wearing new clothes (Vastra). Vastra is one of the names for the heart. Wearing new clothes (Vastra) means purifying the heart. When the heart is pure the Divine elects to dwell in it. There is no meaning in wearing new garments if the heart remains impure.

Hence, the heart has to be kept pure. The ruler must be worthy of the subjects and the subjects must be worthy of the ruler. Harmony between the two is vital.

It is not easy to understand the ways of the Lord. Even the ancient sages felt that God's ways are inscrutable and that His attributes are beyond reckoning and praise. The Gopikas declared: "Oh Krishna! How can we know your true nature? You are subtlest among the subtle and vaster than the vastest. You are omnipresent. How can we know you?"

All belongs to God

The sages, probing the mystery of the Divine, came to the conclusion that God is everything and no one can claim anything as one's own. By this attitude they were able to realise the Divine. However, because of the influence of Kali Age, today everyone claims everything as "Mine". Indeed, nothing belongs to anyone. Men are immersed in the false and foolish concept of ownership. Possessiveness is rampant in every thought and action. And this leads to the inflation of the ego. Egoism has to be utterly eradicated. Possessiveness should be banished. Divinity should be installed in the heart. Be aware that all things belong: to God "You came with empty hands and you depart with empty hands". All that was got or spent in between are mere passing clouds.

Emperor Bali taught this profound truth that nothing belongs to anyone; all are gifts from God.

Bali was a great devotee. Devotion has five qualities-and nine paths to adore the Divine. These nine paths begin with listening to the glories of God (Shravanam) and end with complete surrender ("Atmanivedanam"). Bali taught his subjects the profound truths about devotion.

From then to our own times, the Kerala people have been celebrating Onam as a festival dear as life itself. They greet the festival with ineffable joy. Not for the delicious dishes prepared on the occasion. It is the holiest of the holy days for them. They should come together to chant the Lord's name. (Bhagavan sang a poem which glorifies how a holy festival day should be celebrated: By chanting the Lord's name, by listening to the stories of the Lord and by playing

for proximity with God and experience the bliss of His grace within you. All other days are days of mourning. The Divine is within each one. When one seeks this inner vision there is no greater experience:

The Keralites have retained their faith in God despite conditions not conducive to theistic beliefs. Their devotion is deep and firm. As worshippers of Padmanabha, their devotion stems from the depths of their being.

Embodiments of Divine Love! Realise that you are not separate from God, who is the very embodiment of Love. God can be attained only through Love and not by any other means.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with an ecstatic singing of the Bhajan: "*Prema muditha manase kaho: Rama, Rama, Ram!*"

From Bhagavan's discourse on September 5, 1995, in the Sai Kulwant Mandap, Prasanthi Nilayam

Baba—the Motivator and Inspirer

Sometime back there was a lively debate on a significant topic, "whether we are more cultured with the progress of civilisation?" conducted at the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning Auditorium at Prasanthi Nilayam. Though the final verdict delivered by the panel of judges was in favour of those who argued for the topic; the views expressed in the course of the debate by those who advanced their arguments against it were also highly appreciated.

Culture and civilization are the products *of* centuries of human endeavour at bettering the substance and conditions of living in general. However, if the growth accomplished in economic terms by the progress in science and technology alone is construed as an index of progress—either in the cultural or the civilisational sense—we are certainly mistaken. The fact that scientific and technological accomplishments have made life more comfortable and enjoyable is unquestionable. Facilitated by a tremendous explosion in the field of knowledge, the problem of distance has been overcome to such an extent that the world has become a global village. People in different walks of life with a variety of cultural backgrounds have begun to know each other and appreciate the basic foundations of their different cultures and civilizations. However, the same development has resulted in materialism gaining an upper hand over all the other more valuable aspects of human life. We no longer care for values that should have governed our social and individual conduct. On the other hand, it is evil practices like corruption, falsehood, selfishness, unrighteousness, red-tapism, nepotism etc., which govern human living today. In order to bring man out of this state of moral crisis, Bhagavan Baba has started a chain of educational institutions across the country with the sole motive of turning out truthful,

society.

Through His many discourses on festive occasions and at meetings of students and the staff He has emphasised that 'Education is for life and not for a living'. In order to make every student participate in all sorts of institutional and other celebrations, Bhagavan assigns to each student a role that suits his physical and mental capacity and thereby grants a sense of fulfillment to every student. Any number of opportunities are made available to them, as selfless, dedicated and loving service is the motto of life at the Institute, Hostel and Mandir. The way Bhagavan motivates the students, staff and administrators to live an exemplary life and the way He inspires them and encourages them to carry out their allotted duties with zeal and enthusiasm is unique. By His references to the profound wisdom of the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Itihasas and various other ancient scriptures, He infuses in the students an awareness of the infinitely precious spiritual heritage of Bharat.

Bhagavan has, in fact, created a very powerful environment of spirituality in the entire valley of Puttappathi which permeates through all the educational institutions as well. Apart from education being free at all levels, the residential system in a way revives the ancient, Gurukula system in a modern context. The total development of every student is taken care of by keeping a number of resident teachers who live in the Hostel along with the students. Above all, Bhagavan Himself misses no opportunity to play the role of "Gurunaam Guruhu" (The Teacher of teachers) by His regular meetings with students and teachers in the Mandir and elsewhere. Students are reminded to follow the Indian tradition of respecting and revering the mother, the father and the Guru, while teachers are enjoined to regard the entire student community as Prema Putras and their own children as Kama Putras. Love for parents, humility, respect for elders, selflessness, commitment to truth and service are described by Swami as the qualities that education should promote. Moreover, if the educational process fails in its task of bringing out the divinity which is latent in man, it is more a burden than a boon to the community.

Bhagavan constantly devises some service activity or the other to provide opportunities to students and staff to render service. By advising the students on their personal, physical, academic, economic and various other problems Bhagavan takes care of them as their father, mother, friend, philosopher, guide and above all, as God incarnate.

*Dr. R. Gangadhara Sastry,
Prasanthi Nilayam*

AVATAR VANI

GANESHA CHATURTHI SANDESH

The Esoteric Significance of Vinayaka Worship

With your elephant's trunk

*With the tingling of your anklets,
And your prodigious belly,
Looking like a dwarf,
But capable of bestowing all knowledge,
Oh Son of Parvathi!
Hail! Lord of the Ganas.*

Bharatiyas' festivals are pregnant with spiritual significance. Unfortunately Bharatiyas today give importance only to external rituals and observances, ignoring their inner meaning and eternal values.

"Parvati tanayaa Ganaadhipa!" "Oh son of Parvati! Lord of the Ganas." In these terms the Vedas extolled Ganapati. Who is this Parvati? Who is her son? What is the relationship between mother and son? Few Bharatiyas care to enquire into these questions. The Vedas proclaimed: "Oh Ganaadhipa!" Who are these "Ganas"? Are they celestial hosts or demonic (Asura) beings? They are celestial beings. Where are they? Are they wandering in the external world or are they present subtly in human beings. He (Vighneshwara) is called Ganadhipati because he is the Supreme Lord of the Ganas. The Ganas are the embodiment of the organs of perception (Jnanindriyas) and of action (Karmindriyas). The mind is the master of these ten senses. The presiding deity of the mind is called Indra as he is the Lord of the Indriyas (the senses). The master over the mind is the Intellect (Buddhi).

What does the name "Ganapati" signify? "Ga" means "Buddhi" (or intellect), "Na" means "Vijnana" (wisdom) as Vighneshwara is the Lord of the Intellect and Wisdom, he is called "Ganapati".

It follows from this that what are called "Ganas" are parts of the human body. The individual (Vyakti) is a part of creation (Srishti) Hence, Divinity, of which the cosmos is a projection, is immanent in the human being. "Vigatho nayakah Vinayakah" ("Vinayaka has no master over him"). This means that Vinayaka is a totally autonomous and independent deity. He has no Lord above him. In the world, any individual or authority has someone superior above him. But Vinayaka has no overlord.

The worship of Vinayaka has been in existence from times immemorial in Bharat. The Rig Veda, the Narayanopanishad and the Taittiriya Upanishad have passages referring to Vinayaka. It is embedded also in a Gayatri mantra.

*"Thathpurushaaya Vidmahe
Vakrathundaaya dheemahi
Thanno Danthi Prachodayaath"*

This mantra indicates that Vinayaka's divinity is glorified in this Gayatri mantra. Hence, "Ganapati" signifies an all-pervading divine potency.

In everyday parlance, Ganapati is described as the son of Parvati. Parvati represents Prakriti (Nature). Man is a child of Nature. Hence every human being is a Vinayaka. He is a spark of the Divine Siva-Shakti, the union of the Lord and Nature. Everything in the world has emanated from Nature (Prakriti). All things are aspects of Nature. It is to reveal this sacred truth that holy festivals are observed.

Elephant head and Mooshika

How does it happen that Vinayaka has the head of an elephant and has a mouse as his vehicle? The mouse is called "Mooshika" (in Sanskrit). It is a sign of night, which signifies darkness. The mouse is a symbol of darkness. Because Vinayaka has control over darkness he is described as the rider on a "Mooshika". He is the one who dispels darkness and sheds light on the world.

The mouse (Mooshika) is also a symbol of the sense of smell. The mouse moves about following the direction of the smell ("vasana"). Vinayaka is the one who has mastery over "vasanas", that is, desires and ignorance (represented by "Mooshika").

What is meant by describing the mouse ("Mooshika") as the vehicle of Vinayaka? It means that Vinayaka rides on the "Mooshika", representing desires (vasanas) and ignorance (darkness).

Vinayaka is one who drives away all sorrows, difficulties and miseries. He is the enemy of all obstacles. He will not allow any obstacles to come in the way. He is the destroyer of obstacles. He confers happiness and peace (on his devotees). He is the master of all these powers (Buddhi and Siddhi). What is this Siddhi (fulfillment)? When there, is purity of mind you achieve peace (which is Siddhi). Vinayaka is thus the Lord of Buddhi and Siddhi (the Intellect and Self-realisation). Hence, every human being should acquire control over the mind.

Food offerings

Every festival is celebrated by various culinary preparations. For Vinayaka Chaturthi, these preparations are of a special kind. The edible offerings to Vinayaka are totally free from oily substances. Vinayaka is offered only items cooked through steam. What is the reason? According to the science of Ayurveda (the ancient Indian system of medicine), food cooked through steam is easily digested.

Moreover, the Vinayaka festival, which is celebrated in the month of Bhadrapada, falls in a month when sesame and jaggery come to the market after the harvest. The sesame seeds are powdered and mixed with rice flour and jaggery and cooked in balls which are offered as "Naivedyam" to Vinayaka. Jaggery ("gur") is a cure for several ailments relating to phlegm and bile. The sesame seeds have the power to cleanse the lungs and improve the vision. These balls of sesame and jaggery are thus noted for their medicinal properties for curing both external and internal ailments.

spiritual significance. Every word they spoke, every step they moved, every food they consumed had spiritual significance.

The lord of learning

Vinayaka is the Lord of all learning (Vidya). Does learning mean bookish scholarship? No. Everything pertaining to the cosmos is included in the term learning (Vidya). Walking, talking, laughing, sitting, eating, strolling, thinking—every kind of activity is related to learning. Vinayaka is the master of every kind of learning. Today learning is identified with acquisition of information. But apart from knowledge of the physical world, we have many other kinds of knowledge relating to chemistry, the fine arts and other skills.

Vinayaka is the master—of every kind of knowledge. Learning is related to the intellect (Buddhi). It is not mere scholarship. Familiarity with books is not knowledge. One's entire life is a continuous process of learning. Any process of enquiry is related to learning. But basically our enquiry should be concerned with finding out what is transient and what is permanent. This is true knowledge.

Worshipped by animals

Hence, today students worship Vinayaka with zeal. Vinayaka is not the one who merely comes to the aid of those who read their books. He helps everyone at every step in life's journey. He is readily accessible. He is pleased with an offering of flowers of no value ("Jilledy" flowers). It is said that any one who eats these flowers will become insane. Such flowers are offered to Vinayaka. Vinayaka is also worshipped with an offering of green grass.

What is the inner meaning of these kinds of offerings? It means that earlier Vinayaka used to be worshipped even by animals. His face is that of an elephant. His vehicle is a mouse. These are symbols from the animal kingdom. They indicate that Vinayaka is worshipped even by birds and beasts.

Vinayaka is thus worshipped by all beings and is Lord over all beings. He does not belong to one country or one nation or one period of time. He is related to all places and all times.

Puranic stories

There are scriptural texts which testify to all this. But some of them are quite fanciful. For instance, in one Puranic story, it is stated that once Siva and Parvati were playing a game of dice. For any game there has to be an umpire, who has to declare who is the winner. Siva and Parvati agreed to have Nandi (the divine bull) as the umpire. Nandi is a favourite of Siva, as he is Siva's vehicle. Although Siva lost the game, Nandi declared him the winner. It is stated that Parvati was indignant over Nandi's partiality for Siva and cursed him that he should die from an incurable disease. Thereupon Nandi fell at the feet of Parvati and pleaded for forgiveness. "Mother! Forgive me. Should I not show at least this amount of gratitude to one who is my master? Is it not humiliating for me to declare that my master has lost the game? To uphold his honour I no doubt uttered a lie. But am I to be punished with such severity for so small an offence?" Nandi

for his lapse. She told him. "The Chaturdasi day in the month of Bhadrapada is the day when my son's birthday is celebrated. On that day you have to offer to my son what pleases you most (green grass)". This means that one atones for one's sins when one offers to the Lord what is most pleasing and enjoyable to him. For Nandi the most enjoyable and relishing food is green grass. As directed by Parvati Nandi worshipped Ganapati by offering green grass. Nandi was then relieved of his dreaded disease. His health improved and by the grace of Parvati he was redeemed

This incident is the basis for the practice recommended for pilgrims to Gaya, Benares and other places that they should give up something they love most as an offering to the Divine. This means that they should give up something which they like most and not something which they do not like. Whether it be a fruit or a vegetable, what you should choose to give up as an offering to God is what you like most. This means that you give up consuming thereafter that vegetable or fruit. This practice has been prevailing from ancient times among pilgrims going to Benares, Prayag or other sacred places for a holy bath in the Ganga or Yamuna.

Offer to God what you like most

Today many people go to Prayag (Allahabad). What is the real meaning of Prayag or Kashi? The scripture declares: "The human body is a temple in which the Indweller is the Eternal Self." The body is the temple in the centre of which the Ganga of Wisdom (Jnana) is flowing. In this Ganga of wisdom the two rivers of Bhakti (Devotion) and Shraddha (Earnestness) (represented by Yamuna and Saraswati) merge and the point of h conjunction of the three is known as Prayag. Hence, the Divine should be offered what is most pleasing to one.

Unfortunately today this ancient traditional practice has been reduced to a fashionable formality. Pilgrims going to Prayag are asked by the pandas (priests) to give up what is most pleasing to them. Some of the pilgrims ponder over what they can easily give up and mention the names of these vegetables and fruits. They give up the bitter gourd or something else which they don't like. This is not proper. People should offer to give up what they relish most as the best offering to the Lord. But when they offer something which they don't like, the Lord is seated in the heart declares: "Be it so!" As you have not offered what is most dear to you but what you dislike most, the Lord also offers to you what you dislike most. The reward for such dubious offerings to God is that instead of health you get disease. If you offered what is good, will not God give you what is good for you?

This is illustrated by the example of Harishchandra. He made an offering of what was most dear to him, namely, Truth (Sathyam). He was prepared to give up his kingdom, his wife and son and sell himself in bondage to uphold Truth. Truth is God. God is Truth. Where there is Truth there is God. Therefore adore Truth. Make all your offerings truthfully. Thereby you will reach the abode of Truth. As is your offering so is your reward. This is the truth demonstrated by Vinayaka.

anyone. However, apprehending that if Vinayaka accompanies anyone, he will cause trouble, he is given a food offering and kept in the corner of the house. But Vinayaka is not a lover of sleep like Kumbhakarna (Ravana's younger brother). Seeing his big belly people imagine that he is slothful.

Gajasura and Siva

There was once a demon by name Gajasura. He was a demon King. He performed severe penance. Easwara appeared before him. Easwara is easily propitiated, and he gives readily whatever one prays for, without examining whether it is right or wrong to confer such a boon. He gives whatever the devotees pray for. This was what happened in the case of the demon, Bhasmasura. He prayed to Siva to grant him a boon that whomsoever He touches by his hand should be reduced to ashes. Siva granted the boon. Immediately Bhasmasura wanted to test the power he had received by trying to place his hand on Siva Himself! Ultimately Siva had to be saved from Bhasmasura by a stratagem of Vishnu who made the demon place his hand on his own head. He was then reduced to ashes.

Likewise, Gajasura also performed penance and prayed to the Lord. Easwara appeared before him and asked him what he wanted. Gajasura said: "Lord! You must merge in my stomach," Siva granted the boon and lodged himself in the demon's stomach. Parvati, not finding Easwara, went out in search of her Lord and could find him nowhere. She went to her brother, Vishnu, and appealed to him to trace her missing Lord.

Vishnu knew that Siva was in the habit of granting boons indiscriminately and getting into difficulties. He told her: "Parvati! I know what has happened. Be calm. You go to your abode. I shall bring Easwara there."

Vishnu took Siva's Nandi and decorated it to appear like a performing bull. Assuming the role of a bull-performer, Vishnu led the bull to the city of Gajasura, playing on a pipe all the way while the bull danced to the tune. The bull was dancing to the music of the Divine embodiment of all mysteries. Gajasura was intensely watching the performance of the bull and its master. Pleased with their performance, Gajasura asked the bull trainer, "What do you want?" The latter said: "You should not go back on your word. Will you grant me what I want? You are Gajasura, a great king," "Yes", he said, "give me Easwara who is in your stomach, said Vishnu. Only Vishnu knew this fact, none else. Gajasura immediately fell at the feet of Vishnu and said: "Swami! This secret is not known to anybody except yourself. I will keep my word even at the cost of my life. But there is one condition. My head should be worshipped by, all and Easwara should wear my skin". Vishnu agreed to it. That is the reason why Easwara wears an elephant's skin. The head of Gajasura is worshipped as Vinayaka's head.

These are some of the Puranic stories relating to Vinayaka. They are only stories. But such stories have been related to turn people's minds God-ward.

all. Vinayaka is not separate from us. The indwelling Principle in our hearts is the Divine Atmic Principle.

Acts to please god

What is it that you should offer to God? Is it an unripe fruit or a ripe fruit? You should offer only a good ripe fruit. Likewise, you should offer your good thoughts to the Divine. That is the supreme significance of the Vinayaka Chaturthi festival. Without realising this, people install a mud idol, decorate it with meaningless flowers, make offerings of useless things and seek the most valuable things from him. What kind of bargain is this? You should offer to the Lord what is most sacred. Look at the example of a cow. It is offered all kinds of grass and other fodder. But it offers in return the most nourishing milk. Even the cow offers to man something pure and holy. But what does man Offer to God? He keeps the pure things for himself and offers the impure to God. This is not right. You should offer to God what will please Him. You pray to God to give you all kinds of things. How are you entitled to ask for them? Only if you offer to God what will please Him. If you do not perform acts which will please God, how do you expect God to do things that will please you.

Therefore, at the outset you have to do things which will please God. Then God will offer what will please you. This is one of the truths to be learnt from the Vinayaka festival.

Vinayaka is the Lord of life. Men should learn to shed selfishness and cultivate love of the Supreme Self. This is the inner truth about Vinayaka. Vinayaka should not be considered as merely an elephant-headed deity riding on a mouse.

Similar mistakes are made about other deities. For instance, Saraswati is represented as a Goddess riding on a swan. Saraswati is the Goddess of Speech. Speech is based on the inhaling and exhaling of breath. In this process of respiration, the sound "So-Ham" is produced and when it is repeated regularly, you have the sound "Ham-So"—which is identified with a swan. The inhaling and exhaling process is the chariot on which the Goddess of Speech moves.

The inner meanings of the terms and symbols used in Vedantic parlance have to be properly understood.

Everything is for your good

The best way to please God is to act according to His injunctions. For instance, I advise students not to indulge in excessive talk. Carry out your duties. Contemplate on God. Is all this advice being given for God's sake? No. Whatever Swami tells you is for your own good. Recognise that everything is for your good. (Swami recalled in this context a story in which there was a minister to a king who was in the habit of declaring that whatever happened was for one's-good. Once the king cut his finger while slicing a piece of sugarcane. Seeing the bleeding finger of the king, the minister remarked that the cut was for the king's good. The king got so angry that he committed the minister immediately to prison. Even then the minister remarked that the prison sentence was for his own good. A few days later the king went, alone for hunting in a forest and was resting

sacrifice for the tribal goddess. When the king was about to be beheaded, it was noticed that the king's finger was mutilated and such a mutilated person could not be offered as sacrifice. The king was freed. He remembered the minister's words and realised that the injury to his finger had saved him from death. He straight went to the prison and asked his minister how he could declare that the prison sentence was good for him. The minister replied that but for his being confined in prison, he would have accompanied the king and the tribals would have chosen him in the place of the king for their sacrifice).

The lesson of this story is that one should learn to welcome everything that happens as for one's own good. Recognition of this truth is the means to acquire God's grace. Develop the firm conviction that whatever God says or does is for your own good.

This is what all the Bharatiya festivals seek to teach. Underlying every festival is a profound spiritual message. Unfortunately present-day students, caught up in modernity, are unable to comprehend this truth. They are obsessed with trifles and do not realise that education is for the purpose of leading the good life and not for earning a living. Yearn to lead an ideal life.

Consider Vinayaka as the Indweller in your Heart. He is constantly warning you against what is bad. You ignore the warning and get into trouble. How much will you benefit if you "follow the Master" within you. Your conscience is the Master. Above all, heed the dictates of the Divine. That will be your best safeguard.

Vinayaka is one who has all the five elements under his control (Swami incidentally referred to Arjuna's penance for acquiring the Pashupata Astra from Siva and explained how he overcame the powers of the five elements by the power of his penance). He is the embodiment of all potencies. He has no superior above him.

In our bhajans, the first prayer is addressed to Vinayaka. The bhajan starts with "Om", the Pranava. It is the combination of Pranava with Vinayaka which serves to redeem our life.

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

From Bhagavan's discourse in the Sai Kulwant Mandap on August 29, 1995

Moments to be cherished

*Sitting in the darshan ground,
With a hush of silence all around,
I waited for my Lord
To bind me with His Divine cord*

To transform our poor lives.

*I was enchanted seeing Him.
Around Him was a halo dim.
It grew bigger and bigger
To manifest the universal Giver
I thought, holding out my letter
Of hope that was better.*

*He came along my line,
Took my letter with a sign
That showed He knew the contents
And promised to cover my life's rents.
Tears flowed out of my eyes
Each said, "it's 'cause of love that's Sai's".*

*He, placing a hand, said, "Padnamaskar".
He glided away, lifting His robe.
Looking down watching the globe.*

D. Sai Bindu, (XI Standard)

Ascent to Sai

*By earth's multi-attachments grounded
The caterpillar, senses surrounded,
Spins for itself a separating web
A tomb from which its present life will ebb*

*This chamber ends not in darkest night
It is a womb from which life takes to flight
New colours, new wings, new worlds to explore
The butterfly more beautiful than before*

*Cleanse attachment-clouded cataracts soon;
Begin now to spin detachment's cocoon
Start dying to separate forms of you and me,
Ascend to Sai, His bonds alone set you free*

*Dying to strangers who people this dream
Dying to desires that tarnish the scene*

Dying to my will that Yours intervene

*Awaken to clarity, radiant sight,
Awaken to Him, all Bliss and Delight,
New colors, new wings, new worlds to explore
His halo of Love, yours for evermore*

Hal Honig, New York

Whom the Students Adore

Hope

*What is this world so full of nice?
Everything bad except things which are nice.
Things like anger, jealousy and greed,
Things like hatred, which should never breed.*

*But still there is something known as hope,
This is the only thing on which we can hops.
So let us not waste oar lives as gutter,
But do our best and hope for the better.*

The Call

*A cry of agony passed through my ears,
A cry which I had not heard even in my fears.
But I realised that it, was the call of the seers
To the God who wipes off everyone's tears.*

*For a great catastrophe had befallen the earth.
There took place the disappearance of mirth.
Of violence and untruth there was no dearth,
Which influenced the cycle of birth and death.*

*The Lord came to the earth in answer to their call
For the benefit of seers, sages and all,
So He awakened the hearts of big and small,
And, thus saved the earth from a disastrous fall.*

Blessed Day

*The great dawn arose and then began a day
A day so pleasing, so beautiful and gay
There we sat on the Darshan ground
Waiting for SAI to make us spellbound.
He came! Oh! He was immersed in Bliss
A sight which one should never miss.
He walked, He smiled and all trees swayed
In the rhythm of the wonderful music played.
He cast at all a loving glance
Which made our joyous hearts to dance.
He gave a twinkling and a charming smile
His words appeased us all the while.
The Darshan was over and our eyes were wet
Oh! this most blessed date We shall Never Forget.*

—Priya Man! (IX Standard)

You must carefully consider the behave with you, in the same way you should first behave with others consequences of your speech and action. In whichever way you want others to honour you, or to love you or to and love and honour them. Then only will others honour you. If instead, without honouring and loving others you complain that they are not treating you properly, it is merely a wrong conclusion.

—Baba

How Sai Came to Mexico

In 1973, we came for the first time to India in the hope that Swami would grant His permission to us to print some of His books in Spanish. At that time, He said, "They are yours, it is your duty; do it". Having obtained this blessing everything started to fall into place when we met a lady from Venezuela who was bringing "Man of Miracles" by Howard Murphet, already translated into Spanish, for Swami's blessings. She insisted upon handing this over to Him but Swami was not taking it. These events kept us together. Until finally she reasoned and told me: "You are going to publish Swami s books. I have one to be published; so take this translation." And that is how the first book in Spanish came about. After this, little by little, other books by and about Swami were also published.

On that same first trip, without having planned it, we also asked Swami if we could open a Sai Centre, of which we had no idea. Swami gave us the simplest instructions. He told us that ladies should sit on one side and gents on the other. He told us a good smell would appear and

by word of mouth only, began to fill up the extra bedroom of the apartment where we lived and which we used for bhajans. From there we had to move into the living room, then to a larger house. We followed the simple instructions that Swami, gave us and passed them on. Other devotees started doing bhajans in their homes too, not only in Mexico City but in other States of Mexico.

In 1985 (when there was a tremendous, in which many people lost their lives but there were no Sai victims), because there were so many of us gathering together, we finally moved into a rented house that is dedicated as a Sai Centre. We had always followed Swami's advice to hold the meetings in our home. He has always made it a point not to waste money. This and the golden rule of having to do the least with money in Sai centres has been the foundation, along with those first few simple words for the forming of Centres throughout Mexico. Also in 1985, we started publishing a translation in Spanish of "Sanathana Sarathi", exactly in the format of the English one, under the name of "El Eterno Conductor". This monthly publication keeps us up to date on Swami's speeches and events in Prasanthi Nilayam. We distribute it and another magazine called "Sai Wisdom" (Sabidoria Sai) throughout Latin America and other places where there are Spanish speaking people.

In 1990, working together with Argentina, we finished translation of all of Swami's works. This was the best way to make Swami's message known to the Spanish-speaking people.

At the present time more and more people have taken interest in. Bhagavan Baba and are coming to our Centres to obtain information. Many take interest and stay on.

—*Luis Muniz, Mexico*

Bhagavan Baba and a Banker's Ordeal

Do all Karmas as actors in a play, keeping your identity separate and not attaching yourself too much to your role. Remember that the whole thing is just a play and the Lord has assigned to you a part; act well your part; there your duty ends. He has designed the play and He enjoys it.

—**Baba**

"Gopal Rao, how is the strike in your bank?"

"Swami, it has-just started," I replied.

"Stand firm with courage, Don't yield," Swami directed.

It was early in March, 1972, Swami was on his way to Bangalore after visiting Delhi. During the brief stop-over at Hyderabad, Swami graciously came out of the plane and gave Darshan to a few devotees waiting outside the airport.

It was the longest strike and unprecedented in the annals of bank history. It started as a total strike, with everyone from the watchman upwards participating. For the first time, branch managers also struck work.

The strike was on an unconventional issue. The Andhra Bank Employees Union (ABEU), which is a Union of workmen, had got the Officers' Association (ABOA) to merge with it and then claimed the right to speak for the entire staff. The Bank Management, of which V was the Chairman, said that we would deal with an Association of Officers or with individual Officers for their problems and not with the Workmen's Union. The issue had nation-wide repercussions and the Andhra Bank was hardly the appropriate forum for settling such an issue.

After serving for 13 years with the Indian Bank and with the Bank of Baroda for 26 years, I became the Chairman of the Andhra Bank in June 1968 at the instance of the Reserve Bank of India, which felt the need for a competent banker, preferably an Andhra, to pull the AB out of a difficult situation. Before taking charge, I sought Swami's blessings in Puttaparthi—the wisest thing I ever did. He asked me to accept the challenge. I am certain that all that happened during the next five years could be accomplished only because of His benign protection and Grace.

The Bank's position was quite appalling. There was stagnation in deposit growth, advances and profits—large advances had turned sticky. The Bank was overstaffed to suffocation with peons, watchmen and clerks. Matriculates and non-graduates dominated the clerical and officer-cadres. The Employees' Union was very powerful, with the Management yielding all the time. In 1966, the Management was forced to sign an agreement with the Union under which all vacancies in the Junior Officers' Cadre had to be filled by promotions from the clerical cadre on the basis of seniority alone and that too with heavy preference for matriculates and non-graduates. This agreement proved to be a millstone round the Bank's neck.

At the very first meeting of the Board, I told the Directors that all my decisions would be governed by the Bank's interest and nothing else. To the Officer staff at their annual meeting I outlined my objectives for the Bank: Increase in deposits from 39 crores to over 100 crores, trebling of branches from 115 to 345, and opportunities for advancement to deserving members of the staff. By Swami's Grace, these goals were actually realised before I completed my term.

The Union lost no time in confronting me with a demand that any member of the sub-staff (peons, watchmen etc.) who produces a Matriculation Certificate should be promoted as Clerk without any test or interview and whether there was any vacancy or not. No other bank had done this. I could not allow the AB to be converted into the Peon's Bank of Andhra! So, in November, 1968, within four months, the Union brought on a strike on this issue which lasted 30 days. The bank could function because the Officer Staff co-operated. There was unexpected support for us from the Regional Labour Commissioner unasked and the Union had to call off the strike.

which lasted 109 days. After the 100th day, I approached Swami for the first time with my bank's problems. In His omniscience, Swami told me that everything would be settled in a few days for, at that very moment, our Union Secretary was being taken to task by their bosses in the All India Bank Employees' Association (AIBEA) at Bombay for embarking on an agitation which the Management could withstand for 100 days! The AIBEA intervened at my request and made our Union sign an agreement on our terms.

At this stage Swami warned me that the next agitation would come from the top (officers). In January 1972, the Union decided to have the Officers' Association merge with itself, so that it could have the entire staff of the Bank under its control. The Union notified the Bank that unless we agreed to discuss with them all matters concerning Officers, a work-to-rule agitation would be launched from February 28 to March 8. We refused to recognise the Union's right to represent Officers and said we would discuss Officers' problems only with an Association of Officers or individually. A new Association of Officers was formed on 26-2-1972 with the Management's active support.

Swami's advice

On 1-3-1972 the Union gave notice of a total strike from 9-2-1972. We said the strike was illegal. This was later upheld by the Government of India's Conciliation machinery. I met the Union Labour Minister in Bombay and briefed him about the situation. He agreed with our stand. Throughout the long struggle that followed, he never wavered in this view, much to the discomfiture of the AIBEA.

This was the stage when Swami asked me at the Hyderabad Airport "to stand firm with courage" and not to yield. This assurance gave me the strength to face all the problems that arose after the strike began.

The historic strike began on 9-3-72 with the closure of almost all our 210 branches. We took a firm resolve that, come what may, we would not allow the bond of trust between the Bank and its depositors to be broken. Throughout the strike, we gave wide publicity to our stand.

It was a Sit-in-Strike. We called each Officer separately and assigned him to one of our numerous City branches to help re-open them. Those who said they were on strike were led out and kept out of the Bank's premises for the duration of the strike. With the cooperation of the rest, our numerous branches in the twin cities (Hyderabad and Secunderabad) started functioning, after remaining closed for a week. The resumption of work by these Officers from the Central Office proved disastrous for the Union.

The tempo of the agitation was very high, with abusive slogan-shouting etc. There was no communication between the Central Office and mofussil branches. Mail and even telegrams were not allowed to be opened.

managements kept the Clearing house in Hyderabad and mofussil closed throughout the strike. There were demonstrations in our premises, in our Main Branch by the staff of the Reserve Bank of India. When the police took them away to book cases against them, the RBI staff promptly called off their strike.

There was moral support for us from the Chambers of Commerce in Hyderabad and the mofussil. The public wanted the matter to be settled once and for all; they were fed up with the Union's frequent agitations and did not want us to yield. The Union was getting isolated.

The reopening of more and more branches was resulting in large-scale dismissal of branch agents. By 28th March their number rose to 26 and by the end of the strike to 42. We were utilising the services of the newly formed Officers' Association, whose membership quickly rose to 200. The Bank obtained Civil Court injunctions against striking employees in important towns to prevent anyone from obstructing service to the Bank's customers.

As the strike was getting prolonged, a number of branch agents were resuming duty by re-opening their branches. Workmen employees also started resuming. They had no pay from 1st of March. They wanted the strike to end but the Union would not oblige.

On the 41st day I sought Swami's guidance at Brindavan how to break the stalemate: Swami's response was: "Who brought on the strike? They or you? Let them find the solution. You go back."

"No work, no pay"

The prolongation of the strike must have been causing great concern for the AIBEA. Normally they could bring the banking industry across the country to a halt with one call but this time they were dealing with a bank which had practically no branches outside Andhra. Employees of other banks in States where AB had no exposure, were not willing to lose wages and to shout slogans against an absentee bank. The principle of "No Work; No Pay" introduced in banks for the first time, was proving very, effective as a deterrent.

During April the second month of the strike, there was Call Attention Motions in Parliament every week on the strike which were answered by the Labour Minister and the Minister of State for Finance alternately. They had to say each week that dozens of branches of AB were being re-opened and that finally, only three branches remained closed—those at Calcutta, Cuttack and Ahmedabad.

The main hurdle for the AIBEA to end the strike was the fate of the 42 Branch Agents whose services were terminated. Having accepted them into membership they could not abandon them to their fate. The AIBEA tried to get the Indian Banks' Association to intervene but we told them we would deal with the situation ourselves. All we wanted from them was the strict enforcement of "No Work; No Pay".

regretted my inability to leave Hyderabad at that juncture. The Finance Secretary, who was calling, sounded threatening but I told him that the threats could have no effect on one who did not very much care for the job. The fact was Swami had told me earlier not to leave Hyderabad.

I called a Press Conference on May 8th (a Sunday) and criticised both the Labour Minister and the Minister of State, Finance, by name holding them responsible for prolonging the strike and causing serious agony and inconvenience to the public, by not doing their duty. Their own Officers had declared the strike "Illegal" but no prosecutions were allowed to be launched against the Office-bearers of the Union for reasons best known to the Ministers. This was prominently featured in all the important newspapers all over the country with bold headlines: "Andhra Bank Chief accuses Union Ministers".

The next day, the Labour Minister informed me over the phone that the AIBEA had left it to him to decide the issue as he thought best and the strike would be called off with immediate effect. A day later, the AIBEA officials and the Bank's General Manager had a meeting with the Labour Minister and accepted a Memo of Advice detailing the terms on which the strike should end. They were: (1) The Labour Minister to arbitrate on the main issue whether a Workmen's Union can take in Officers also as members (2) "No Work; No Pay" for those on strike; nine officers to be treated as on suspension; Management to review their cases and impose punishments where felt necessary subject to review by the Labour Minister; the rest of the 33 Officers whose services were terminated to be taken back.

A helpful strike

In retrospect I was shocked when the realisation dawned on me that at that stage of its development, the Bank needed such a strike. Swami knew what was good for the Andhra Bank and the country. The strike had a cathartic effect and brought about a mass transformation in the minds of the staff. After this experience, the Officers and other staff worked with a zeal which was unknown in the Bank. The Management could get back its power to promote or recruit direct on merit. The millstone was removed.

The results for 1972, the eve of the Golden Jubilee of the Bank, turned out to be the best in the 50 years of its existence, even with only six months in which to achieve them. There was a spectacular rise in deposits, advances and profits.

The strike acted as a catalyst for the Government of India and the banking system too. They stopped worrying every time there was an all India bank strike, even for a day or two. The principle of "No Work; No Pay" had come to stay in the Central Government also. Bank Chairmen could deal with the AIBEA in a more relaxed atmosphere.

Swami's grace and devotees' faith

A few months after my retirement I called on Mr. Khadilkar, the Labour Minister at Delhi. He said, "They say you saved the Andhra Bank", to which I replied, "You stood by us throughout. You saved the Bank." "It is not that I say it; the Finance Ministry says it", said Mr. Khadilkar.

told Mr. Khadilkar.

As soon as the strike was over, I sent a telegram to Swami expressing my profound sense of gratitude for His Divine help and guidance. Without opening the telegram, Swami gave it to a Director of the bank sitting opposite, saying, "Open it. It is from Gopal Rao, to say the strike is over".

It is difficult to explain the Bank's results in 1972 in a rational way. But Swami's comment was: "No explanations—only experience it". I have used the expression "Swami's Grace" many times in this narrative but Swami says, "Grace flows only when there is FAITH".

I retired from the Andhra Bank on 26th June 1973 and left the same night with my family for Prasanthi Nilayam, where I have been ever since at Swami's Lotus Feet. In the 1974 Republic Day honours, I was awarded "Padmashri", perhaps the first banker to be so honoured. It is all Swami's Grace.

Did not Swami say: "Act well your part. There your duty ends. He has designed the play and He enjoys it".

*K. Gopal Rao,
Prasanthi Nilayam*

EHV: Bhagavan's Gift to Children

It was not merely Bhagavan's boundless love for children which prompted Him to launch the Bal Vikas programme more than quarter of a century ago. Bhagavan was well aware that the foundations of moral and spiritual development have to be laid at a very early age so that the edifice of a truthful, righteous and selfless life can be built on them.

The missing factor in secular education was sought to be filled by Bhagavan through His "Education in Human Values" programme, which grew out of the earlier Bal Vikas movement. By covering children from the age of 6 to 15, the EHV programme has filled a serious gap in the educational system. It has helped to produce a new generation of young men and women who are committed to the five great human values—Truth, Righteousness, Love, Peace and Non-violence—and who are well equipped to play their proper roles in their families, their communities, their nations and the world. They stand out as examples in their respective professions.

The five basic Human values, Truth, Righteousness, Peace, Love and Nonviolence, are sub-divided into 84 values for the purpose of the Bal Vikas Education programme spread over nine years. These values embrace the core messages of all religions. The Bal Vikas course

12, and 13 to 15.

The pursuit of Truth is one of the most important aims of education. The task before Bal Vikas teachers is to make the children realise their true nature. For this purpose children are taught to recite mantras and prayers and practise "silent sitting" as a means of developing their inner perceptions.

The second value—Right conduct—is an essential component of a well-integrated personality. The value of right conduct is taught by making the child cultivate three basic skills, namely, self-help skills, social skills and ethical skills.

From the sub-values of these two values, the child cultivates respect for parents, elders and teachers, brotherliness, friendliness, humility, honesty and fair-play. The development of these qualities results in the elimination of bad tendencies and instinctive urges such as ambition, greed, pride, jealousy and anger. This process helps the child to experience PEACE of mind, the third value.

The fourth and most important value is Love, which is the undercurrent of all values. There are many aids to cultivate love among children such as telling stories of Avatars, saints and prophets, listening to the epics, participation in devotional group singing and visits to holy places. It is also possible to awaken the child's psyche through an appreciation of beauty in Nature, pictures of saints, films of their lives. The love of God as the unifying principle of all festivals is stressed. Love for God is expressed in h Love for His entire creation.

The fifth value is Non-violence. Non-violence as defined by Bhagavan signifies extension of Love to the entire creation and includes subtle points like saving of water, energy, tune and even speech.

The real cause of violence is proliferation of desires. The only way to practice non-violence is to minimise desires. Children are encouraged to do small acts of service with love and humility, ignoring all social or economic differences. These are the seeds sown under the nine-year course for Bal Vikas students in the age group 6 to 15.

From 1969 to 1983, at the end of fifteen years, there were 50,000 students studying in 2700 Bal Vikas classes with the help of 3500 Gurus. Now, at the end of twenty-five years, we have over 1,00,000 students in 4000 centres in India and over 8000 honorary Gurus. The programme has thus reached every district in India.

The Bal Vikas programme has laid a strong foundation for the seva activities of Sri Sathya Sai Organisations. Over the years, students from Bal Vikas, who completed the courses in the three groups, have become a source of sevaks who participate in the various activities of the Sai Organisation and are the backbone of the organisation. Some of them are now important office bearers and are engaged in various activities such as Seva Dal, Bhajan singers and Bal Vikas

EHV abroad

In overseas centres, parents, who have a variety of problems with regard to their teenage children, have been attracted to the Bal Vikas or Education in Human Values programme as the most effective means of inculcating respect for human values among the young. The internationalisation of Sathya Sai Education at community centres is striking proof of the universal acceptance of the Sai message. Transcending the barriers of nation, language and culture, the philosophy and technique of Sri Sathya Sai Education programme are making their impact on various countries in all the continents. Several Governments and private schools have adopted the Sri Sathya Sai Human Values programme as part of the moral or civil science curriculum, there are 1007 Bal Vikas / EHV centres attached to 1600 overseas Sathya Sai Centres.

Several years ago Bhagavan Baba declared: "My task is not merely to cure, console and remove individual misery. There is something far more important. The important task of a mango tree is to produce mango fruit. The leaves, the branches and the trunk of the tree are useful in their own way no doubt, but the main aim is the fruit. So, too, the removal of misery and distress are all incidental to my mission. My main task is the re-establishment of Dharma in the hearts of all people."

In this Divine mission, the Bal Vikas Programme has a vital role to play. It is not an activity but a movement as part of the Divine mission. All devotees have a role to play in the Bal Vikas Programme. The Gurus, parents, students and others concerned have to join hands to manure, water and nurture the seeds of moral values implanted in the children. In due course, the nations of the world will enjoy the fruits in the form of dedicated citizens who will serve their respective countries as well as mankind as a whole.

Sarla I. Shah,
Joint National Education Co-ordinator,
Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, India

Ganesha Chaturthi and Onam at Prasanthi Nilayam

Devotees streaming into Prasanthi Nilayam every day of the year have made it a festive place all the time. Nevertheless festivals like Ganesha Chaturthi and Onam have an appeal of their own not only because of the special darshan which Bhagavan gives to the devotees on such occasions, but also because of some special programme or other which is got up to enliven the festival and make it more enjoyable and memorable.

number of overseas devotees. There was a slight drizzle in the morning, but that did not deter the devotees from assembling early enough for morning darshan.

Bhagavan walked in gracefully at precisely 7 a.m. and after going round the darshan lines took His seat in the swivel chair under the awning in front of the Ganesha idol in the Mandir verandah. Immediately the Institute orchestra started their special musical programme, including well-known hymns in praise of Ganesha and some special songs in praise of Bhagavan in different languages. This was followed by a few bhajans and the distribution of Prasadam blessed by Bhagavan. The morning's function concluded with Arati to Bhagavan.

In the afternoon, Bhagavan gave a memorable discourse in the Sai Kulwant Mandap, giving new interpretations to the worship of Vinayaka.

The Ganesha festival was simultaneously celebrated in the various hostels where different kinds of idols had been installed by the students for worship on five successive days. On the last day, September 3, the different groups of students brought their Ganeshas in procession to the Mandir and marched past in front of Bhagavan, singing bhajans and shouting "Moriyas" full-throatedly. Bhagavan blessed the boys as they passed, carrying their Ganeshas for immersion in the Chitravati. Bhagavan was obviously pleased with the bubbling devotion of the boys and the enthusiasm with which they were celebrating the festival.

After Ganesha Chaturthi, it was a great occasion for Keralites to celebrate their national festival of Onam in the benign presence of Bhagavan as they had done for quarter of a century. The Sai Kulwant Mandap received the Kerala touch in the decorations for the festival, coconut bunches and coconut leaves being prominent everywhere. One overseas devotee went into raptures over the way the Keralites celebrated the festival, remarking how "colourful and spiritually moving" it was. "Banana trees, mango leaves, palm fronds, brightly coloured flags and pennants decorated Sai Kulwant Hall and the Poornachandra. Silken Umbrellas stood gracefully on every wall, one was held by the Emperor Bali centuries ago when he encountered the dwarf Vamana, who was an avatar of Lord Vishnu. According to the people of Kerala the turnout for this year's festival would have been greater but for a strike of private buses. On 5th and 6th (September) Keralites had special seating for darshan. On the 5th evening there was a special cultural event in the Poornachandra auditorium put on by the Bal Vikas children. The programme included a dance drama about Krishna holding up the Govardhan Mountain, a folk dance and a solo performance with kavadi by a young man whose artistic skill earned for him a reward from Swami in the form of a medallion presented to him on the next day."

On the 6th morning 36 weddings were performed in Sai Kulwant Hall. The brides, dressed in typical Kerala white saris with golden border, were brought in procession to the Hall headed by a group of young girls carrying lighted lamps. Among the bridal couples there were two Muslim couples, for whom the marriage ceremony was performed by a Muslim priest from Kerala. Bhagavan went round the couples three times first to distribute mangalasutrams, second time to distribute saris, and the third time to confer His benediction on them after the wedding.

In the afternoon, there were three speakers before Bhagavan's discourse. Mr. Natarajan, President of the Kerala Sai Seva Organisation, Mr. Justice Eradi and Mr. Wellington, a former Minister in Kerala. Later in the evening there was a cultural programme in the Poornachandra Auditorium.

Why Fear

*When your day is grey,
And you see no other way,
Fold your hands and pray,
You will hear Him say
"Why fear when I am here?"*

*When your eyes are full of tears,
And you are enveloped with fears,
He will say: "My dear,
Why fear when I am here?"*

*When you have no other go,
And your mind sways to and fro,
Pray to Him; His grace will flow,
Assuring you: "Why fear when I am here?"*

*When the six enemies pull you down
A hand will pick you up soon,
A protective hand and a kindly face
Telling you softly: "Have my grace;
Don't fear when I am near."*

P. Mahalakshmi, (XI Standard)

"Hand in Hand"

*The golden gates of dawn open
To welcome the Great Lord Divine
Who walks along with His arms open
Beckoning to us, saying, "You all are Mine".*

*He has come at last, the Leader of all,
To beckon us all with His clarion call
To find ourselves within His proximity
And to live our lives in stability.*

*Not to throw anyone into brimstone,
Has He come, but to melt the hearts of stone.
He has come as an answer to many cries,
And to save the wicked from many lives.*

*He has come with no shining swords,
His weapons are His loving words.
Let's hold on to His marching band,
And tread with Him. His path hand in hand.*

S. Premlatha (XI Standard)

See Good

I open my eyes, And what do I see?
God in man, in bird, in tree,
God in every stick and stone,
For everything is God alone.

He's in each tiny beetle, In soft furry cats,
In snakes and in spiders, in monkeys and rats,
The sun, the moon, the faraway star,
Everything, Baba, is what you are.

You're the air that I breathe, The water I drink
The blue of the sky and the cloud, rosy pink.
Alcove and behind me, in front and beside,
There's nowhere, from Baba, that I can hide.

I close my eyes, And what do I see?
Everything; is God in me.

—Deirdre Nest

On your land, you can grow food as you like, or you can be idle and let it lie fallow. You owe yourself the cause of ruin or progress. The tools are in your hands; you can learn the skills and break the shackles and escape, but if you decide to spend life in slavery and bondage, who can save you? Do not blame fate. The status in the present life is decided on your actions in the previous life.

*Bad deeds never yield good,
Good deeds never breed bad.
Neem seeds never yield mangoes,
Mango seeds never breed neem.*

—BABA

Avatar Vani

Render Unto the People what is Theirs

Embodiments of Love!

"SARVE BHAVANTHU SUKHIHAHA". "Let all people be happy!" This is the primal call of Bharatiya Culture. All people in the world should *live* happily and comfortably. Bharatiya culture has handed down this call from ancient times that no one should experience suffering or sorrow.

This sacred land of Bharat has shown, from ancient times, to the rest of the world, not only the path of Spirituality but also the ideals to be pursued in the fields of Social, Ethical and Moral values. Forgetting these eternal verities, Bharatiyas have become victims of disorder and discord because of total preoccupation with worldly pursuits. Because of the advances in Science and Technology, people seem to be content with physical comforts, oblivious to their Divine heritage.

A Nation's well-being or troubles are dependent on the actions of the people. Actions are related to men's thoughts. If the Country's condition is not what it should be, what is the reason? Men's thoughts and actions are not what they should be.

Human values should predominate in men's thoughts. Human life has no meaning without these values. To be a true human being, one has to practise these values in daily life.

There are two organs in man which are of unique importance: the Head and the Heart. All that emanates from the Head is related to the physical world. In vedantic parlance, this is called externalism (Pravritti Lakshanam). These external activities include—studies, moving about, earning and spending and ultimately passing on. All these relate to the mundane and are not enduring reality. Qualities like kindness, sympathy, compassion, truth and forbearance arise from the Heart. These are described as "Internal Traits" (Nivritti Lakshanas). Of the two tendencies, the external and the internal, it is not good to follow the external (Pravritti). The quest for truth means understanding the difference between the two paths. This quest embraces every kind of action—seeing, speaking, doing etc. For instance, the eye sees the mother, the son, the daughter, the daughter-in-law and others. The quest for truth means understanding how each of these different persons are to be viewed, though it is the same eye that sees all of them.

Similarly, the Tongue is prone to speak the truth or utter lies or indulge in delusions. The quest for truth means that the differences in the role of the tongue should be properly understood. For instance, Scientists look at the branches, flowers and fruits of a tree and study the different aspects and draw their conclusions. There are others who realise that the branches, flowers and fruits are sustained by the roots which are below the ground. The persons who searched for the roots were esteemed by our ancient Vedic seers. The Vedantins thus teach things which are unknown to the scientists. Science teaches things which are not dealt with by the Vedantins. The real quest for truth consists in combining the explorations of the scientist and the spiritualist. Branches cannot exist without roots. But roots without branches are useless. Both are interdependent. Likewise, everyone should recognise the integral relationship between the external and the internal. Only then one can know the whole truth and base his life on it.

The world is passing through many changes. Whatever power functions in the Cosmos are present in the individual. You find waves of energy in the world. You also notice the rays of light illumining the world. Radio waves also fill the atmosphere. Laser beams are also present. Invisible X-Ray Waves are also present. While these are given different names, all these radiations are different manifestations of the same energy. The ancient sages had explored these

different forms of radiations and experienced the bliss to be derived therefrom. They were able to accomplish many things on the basis of their knowledge of these powers.

For many millennia, the exploration of these energies has been going on. The first Scientist to know about them was Hiranyakasipu. He had total control over the five elements (Panchabhutas). But, his son, Prahlada, taught a few lessons to his father. "Oh father! You have conquered all the worlds in a trice. But you have no control over your mind". Churchill (the British Wartime Prime Minister) pointed out the same truth when he observed: "Man has conquered many things. But he has made no effort to know himself".

Scientists today have explored everything, but have not understood their own reality. Of what use is all other knowledge if you do not know the truth about your own self. That is why Vedanta summons man to embark on Self-Knowledge.

Everyone should seek to know his true nature, his motives and his consciousness. Man is endowed with all potencies and all forms of energy. Man has limitless magnetic energy in him. Possessing all these powers, it is a pity that man regards himself as weak. Energy and matter are not different. They are present like the tree that is latent in a seed.

People do not comprehend the preciousness of human life and all its potentialities. Men should learn to lead a moral life. When one's thoughts are pure, one's life becomes sacred and blissful. No room should be given for bad thoughts and bad actions.

From earliest time, Bharatiyas had sought to base their lives on noble ideals. Today, Bharatiyas are asking, "Where is God?" The truth is: "You are God".

With regard to the Drinking Water Project, people have been praising Swami in laudatory terms. Swami is not happy with these eulogies. Nothing is mine. All these are gifts from devotees. They have taken the form of water. To demonstrate the exemplary character of this devotion, I launched the water project. I am only a trustee. I am a postal runner. Whether the messages delivered by the postman are pleasant or unpleasant, only the recipients can know. Hence, it is not right to attribute to Swami responsibility for anything. God seeks nothing. What you have to offer to God is only your love.

There are in the world many great men and wealthy men. There are any number of ashrams and temples. Wherefrom are these ashrams and temples getting funds? They come from the earnings of the public. Hence, such funds, received from devotees, should be utilised for the benefit of the devotees. Whether be an ashram or a temple or a wealthy person, their income comes from the labours of poor persons. If the poor did not do the work, how could the rich become rich? It is their labour which has enabled the rich man to acquire wealth. Hence, what has been acquired from the labours of the poor should be used for their good. Therefore, the authorities of ashrams or temples in any area should use their resources for providing education or medical relief or other amenities in their areas and make them happy. This is true sacrifice.

Many devotees offer all kinds of ornaments for the idols in temples. For God the only ornament is Love. No other ornament can fittingly adorn God. Hence, instead of offering ornaments, it is better to use the money for the benefit of "Narayana" in the form of needy human beings.

It is not good to look to the Government for everything. People should come together and try as far *as possible* to, get their requirements met by their own co-operative efforts. Only then they will become one human family. All, indeed, are brothers and sisters and should work together in this spirit. How do you expect Government provide-all amenities? They have to get the money from public. It is better to let the people use their money for their own benefit along proper lines.

This kind of mutual co-operation in all endeavours has been commended by the Vedas from ancient times. The Vedas have declared that sacrifice is the only means to achieve in mortality. It is necessary to devise means to ensure that the resources of ashrams and temples are used solely for the public good.

There is the problem of maintenance of the facilities created by the Water project. If, for instance, a pipe put up in a place fails to work, there is no meaning in waiting for the official machinery to set it right. The villagers themselves should arrange to get it repaired. Why should not there be such unity and cooperation among the rural folk? Most of our troubles are due to lack of unity and co-operation among the people. Only unity can ensure the prosperity of the people.

Let unity prevail. Let the affluent sections realise that their wealth comes from the labours of the masses. There is no need to glorify what I have done. I have given back to the people what has been given by them. I have given to you what is essential for you. Nothing is mine. If anything can be called mine, it is you (cheers). You are my greatest property. If you are happy, I am happy (cheers). If you pursue the right path, that is my food. When you are united, I feel happy. Therefore, do not speak about what Swami has done. Swami served to you what you offered to Him. I have nothing in my hands. People will call them empty hands. But this nothing is everything. (cheers)

During the past few days, the people have been enjoying the music concerts and dance programmes. In the past these fine arts were patronised by rulers. Today the word art has lost its real meaning. Real art should emanate from the heart. Artistic expression should reflect what is in the heart. All arts like music, painting, dance etc. should be developed as sacred activities. You experienced joy when you witnessed the concerts. That joy came from the heart. By promoting such arts, the people can experience perpetual joy. Hence people should encourage such sacred arts, which are part of Bharat's great cultural heritage.

The Vedas have held forth the message of people living in amity, striving together for common ends and sharing the fruits of their co-operative efforts. Equally, they have proclaimed the omnipresence of the Divine. The cosmic form of the Divine encompasses every being in the universe. Forgetting this fact, ("Sarvam Vishnumayam Jagat"—the Divine is immanent in the

Cosmos), people search for the Divine. Every human being is a spark of the Divine. Hence, there should be no ill will towards anyone.

People wish "Happy Birthday". For whom is this birthday? It is only for the body, which cannot experience happiness. Do not follow the body, which is perishable, or the mind, which is like a mad monkey. Follow your conscience.

Human life is based on the body (actions), the mind (thoughts) and the Atma (Consciousness). The body has to be kept in a sound condition. It has to be used for the service of others. Put into practice Vyasa's motto: Help ever; Hurt never. This is my advice to everybody.

This body (of Swami) will enter on its seventieth year on the 23rd. As far as I can remember, I have not done all these years any harm to anyone in any form (cheers). Even the idea of causing harm to anyone has never entered my mind. Because of this, in spite of my seventy years, I appear like a small boy. As I don't find the time or the opportunity, I don't run, but I can do so. Wherefrom has this strength come? There are three factors responsible: three P's. First P, Purity. Second P, Patience. Third P, Perseverance. If you develop these three qualities, you can also acquire the same strength.

Today, most people lack purity. Whether you believe it or not, I must tell you that there is no trace of self-interest in me. I am keen to do something or other for this or that person, but I have no concern about myself. Develop this attitude and you will experience your Divinity.

So far, I have not stretched my hand to seek anything from anyone. I ask for only one thing: pure love. That is God. Only the love of God is true love. All others are merely different forms of attachment. There is no greater achievement or ideal than love of God. Dedicate every action to God. Work will be transformed into worship.

Whether people believe it or not, it is a fact that I have never known what it is to worry. Persons working in the Super Speciality Hospital have asked me: "Swami! The Hospital is costing two crores of rupees a month. The Institute of Higher Learning is being run without getting anything from the Govt. or the students. How are these being done? Swami appears to be totally free from worries. Why 'should there be any worry? If you are engaged in work for the public good, there is no room for worry. It is purely an aberration of the mind. I have no such worry. I am engaged in good work. Where, then, is cause for worry? If you are not doing good work, you have to worry.

Therefore, embark on good work with faith. You will have no worries. Develop love! Fill your hearts with love and share it with all beings, thereby experience bliss:

Regard the entire world as one family. That is the message of Bharatiya culture. Countries are building up arms for defence. But Bharat has believed in Dharma as the real safeguard for nations or individuals. Hence you should protect and cherish Dharma.

Atomic weapons should be given up. Prime Minister Narasimha Rao has been pleading for the abolition of atomic weapons. I agree with him. Bharat's most powerful weapon is "Dharma-astra". Let us adhere to Dharma. That will protect us.

Embodiment of Love! It is a blessing to be born in Bharat. There are doubtless troubles and difficulties. These have to be faced and overcome.

There is only one thing which you have to offer as a birthday gift. Develop love and live fraternally. Banish hatred and jealousy. Set an example to the world.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the Bhajan, "*Bhajan bina sukha santhi nahin*".

From Bhagavan's discourse in the Sai Kulwant Mandap on 17-11-95

"Man will be happy only when he is struggling along the path to God, just as a fish is happy while swimming in water. Work (Karma); Wisdom (Jnana); Worship (Bhakti) are the three paths to God, but because of desire (Kama), Karma is warped through anger (Krodha), Wisdom (Jnana) is befogged, and due to Greed (lobha), Worship (Bhakti) is ruined, but by developing love (Prema), man can conquer all these weakness."

"The toughest fiber of the fibrous armor of sensual desires which encompasses your mind is anger. When you get angry, you forget, mother, father, teacher, you descend to the lowest depths."

"When you are agitated by anger or hatred or agony drink cold water, lie down quietly; sing a few Bhajan songs. Or walk some long distance alone, fast, so that the pestering thoughts are driven into silence."

—Baba

SIXTH WORLD CONFERENCE

Onward to Global Unity

"A coincidence", says an Irish proverb, "is a miracle in which God wishes to remain anonymous". It is not a coincidence, therefore, that the sixth world conference of Sri Sathya Sai Organization should coincide with the celebrations of the 70th year of the Advent of Sri Sathya Sai Avatar. It is the Grand Design of the Avatar Himself. And, so, it is not surprising that the conference should lie suffused with a deep sense of gratitude for the Advent, and a compelling urgency for the devotees' fulfillment of its purpose.

A conference must have a theme. This one was oil Global unity and how this can be brought about through "SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION" of mankind.

The total number of delegates was 25,000. Of this figure 40% had come for the first time. Many delegates from overseas arrived in India in chartered aeroplanes, from Africa, Asia, the Americas, Europe and the Far East, singing bhajans in the deep blue sky as they flew across the continents towards the Abode of perfect peace—Prasanthi Nilayam. In her characteristic style, the host country, India, did justice to her name and historic role in the Mission of Sri Sathya Sai Avatar by ensuring that a huge army of delegates represented her. The ashram was certainly bursting with excitement and varied activities its early its the commencement of November.

The International Chairman, Sri Indulal Shah, placed the Organization's seal on the significance of the conference when he said at a preview meeting: "This is the most important conference in the next twenty-five years. As such, you Central Co-ordinators, Chairpersons of Councils and Co-ordinating Committees must be well equipped and prepared to communicate with devotees in your respective countries the recommendations of this conference".

Growth of centres

In his keynote address, Sri Indulal Shah reiterated the purpose and uniqueness of the conference and the Organization. Outlining the Organization's growth and development, he revealed that the first World conference which was held in Bombay in 1968, saw hardly any overseas centres. By 1976 the centres had grown to 600 in 45 countries. In 1995, the Sixth World Conference has registered 1700 centres in 137 countries including China, Russia, Iran and the Middle East.

Sri Indulal Shah reminded delegates that Bhagavan Baba is the prime motivator in their lives. As such, they have a special obligation to Him anti should therefore reflect on the significance of their association with the Organization. "Bhagavan Baba does not need any help", he asserted emphatically. The truth of this assertion is evidenced by the fact that "millions of people have crime to Him directly and, therefore, have a special relationship with Him". The logical conclusion that follows is that the organisation is not a publicity forum for Bhagavan Baba. If anything, "it is devotees who need it in order to share in divine love. Hence those who join the Organization and working its wings do so with the objective of becoming better human beings".

In his view the Organization should be seen "as an instrument for learning, experimenting and experiencing universal love which Bhagavan Baba wants us to understand and live by. This is the reason, perhaps the only reason, why Sri Sathya Sai Organization is unique....."

It is clear from the theme of the conference, that the main thrust of the organization in the next five years is the Spiritual Transformation of the Individual through the implementation of five values in our daily lives so that, as he put it, "We enter the next millennium free from the ill effects of the present one"

This is not to minimise the importance of the well-conceived and proven Spiritual, Educational and Service activities of the Organization. On the contrary, these should continue with greater intensity and momentum. But, its he clearly and succinctly pointed out, "The organization take a

monolithic character so that all our energies will be spent on this INDIVIDUAL SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION of every devotee associated with it."

Tasks for the three wings

The conference was given the task of determining and directing how this noble and Fundamental objective can be realised within the framework of the three wings of the organization. The tasks envisaged for the three wings were as follows.

Spiritual wing: To consider how to make activities more compatible with the cultures of different countries without diluting the spiritual essence. In particular to look into the following areas: 1. Public interaction through devotional singing, meditation and public meetings; 2. Spirituality anti Religion—implication and practical applications; 3. Study circles—how to make them relevant and interesting with the object of understanding Sri Sathya Sai Teachings; 4. Sathya Sai centre administration—duties; and responsibilities of office bearers and providing orientation to newcomers.

Educational wing: To examine problems and discuss solutions in relation to: 1. Sathya Sai Spiritual Education in Human Values for Children (Bal Vikas); 2. Sathya Sai Human Values programme in the community for adults; 3. Implementation of EHV programme for youth for spiritual transformation and future leadership.

Service wing: To suggest action programmes for: 1. Service programme with Sai centre and in support of the Spiritual and Educational Wings; 2. Fostering increased participation of devotees in service activities; 3. Service programme as part of Sai movement for Education of Human values; 4. Involvement of the Community in service programmes for benefit to the needy.

To consider these twelve thematic scheme of activities, twelve Committees were constituted charged with the responsibility of examining thoroughly and objectively the problems, actual or potential, that are inherent in each of the three wings, and of making recommendations that will stand the test of time in the context of implementing the five human values in the next five years.

In order to assist the committees in their deliberations, specific issues were identified and listed in a "White Paper" for use by the Convenors of Committees. Delegates were, however, urged not to confine themselves to this paper, but take into account other matters which they considered pertinent and applicable in the light of experience.

The Convenors and their teams employed sound discussion and management techniques in the conduct of their meetings. On the other hand, the participants exhibited sound factual and organizational knowledge, critical judgment and originality of thought—the combined effect of which was the production of a 19-page pamphlet of practical and manageable decisions and resolutions.

Prime Resolutions

Spiritual Wing: To promote love and harmony between and among centre; Reflect the unity of all faiths in whatever is done in Sai Centres; Informative, interesting and relevant study circles; Personal example as the best way of spreading Bhagavan Baba's message.

Educational Wing: "Sai Spiritual Education", instead of the name Bal Vikas, will now be used; International guidelines supplemented by national guidelines reflecting the local cultural and religious traditions to be prepared; Sathya Sai EHV is for children, EHV is for adults; Establish Youth Wings or Young Adult programme, at National, Regional and Centre levels.

Service Wing: Service should cater for a real need; Activities should be planned and personnel trained; Motivate service workers; Involve the community in service programmes; Investigate ways of minimising the destruction of the earth and its resources.

A very high degree of professionalism and purposefulness in the organisation of the conference was evident. Directives were clear and to the point. The chain of events and consultative processes leading to the concluding session and valedictory Divine Message were shining examples of how International conferences should be conducted. For example, delegates received the agenda and discussion papers after their arrival at Prasanthi Nilayam. Neither caucuses nor interest groups were formed with a view to scoring points or to satisfying ideological or personal ambition. The discussions were conducted in an atmosphere of utmost congeniality, sobriety and frankness, befitting the sanctity and sacredness of the mission of Sri Sathya Sai Avatar.

A New Era

Delegates have been aware all along that they had not been called to work out strategies on how to proselytize in order to create a Spiritual empire. They welcomed gladly the emphasis on self-transformation through the inculcation of the Sathya Sai Human Values ideals, for their benefit and the rest of humanity, as a pre-requisite to global unity. For it is only through this spiritualization of individual lives that a new era of global unity can be realised. There is no other remedy: And in their willingness to become instruments for this noble and glorious ideal, their respective countries' delegates, in a symbolic gesture, presented their national flags to Bhagavan Baba in a colourful march past at Hill View Stadium, on the morning of 23rd November.

Thus by accepting the conference theme unequivocally and by making positive recommendations towards its realisation; also by submitting themselves to the Divine will of Bhagavan Baba, delegates have given themselves the marching orders to lead the world, by precept and example, to a new age of harmony and progress based on spiritual transformation at all levels.

—Victor Kanu

Love and Sacrifice will save Mankind

*The embodiment of all forms ever tranquil,
Bearing all names ever auspicious, sivam
Sat-chit-ananda rupam advaitam.
Sathyam, sivam, sundaram*

*More effulgent than the sun,
Purer and whiter than snow,
Subtler than the firmament
Immanent in all beings
There is no particle without the self
The cosmic consciousness
Is within you and you are the brahman
What more can I tell you,
The good people gathered here*

Embodiments of Love,

Truth (Sathyam) has manifested itself in the cosmos. Without Truth there can be no universe. Everything has emanated from Truth. "The Lord created everything out of truth. There is no place anywhere without truth. That is the pure absolute self." (Telugu poem)

All wealth, all pleasures come from Truth. The Vedas, the Upanishads and all scriptures have their origin in Truth. Truth is the proper abode of God. Truth and God are inseparable.

Truth is God. The Upanishads declare: "Raso vai Saba" (God is all sweetness). This means that God is present in subtle form everywhere, like sugar in sugarcane and butter in milk. Although it is difficult to have a direct perception of God, His presence can be experienced in many ways. The sweetness in sugar, the sourness in lime fruit, the bitterness of the margosa leaf, all testify to the presence of the Divine. When you see a mountain or a waterfall or a forest you feel happy. All these proclaim the presence of the Divine. Light shines, the stars twinkle, the sun blazes, the planets revolve in their orbits. All these phenomena are manifestations of the Divine. By understanding the nature of aflame you can understand the nature of fire. By examining a drop of water you can know the nature of the Ganges. Likewise by understanding the true nature of humanness (Manavatwam), you can understand Divinity (Daivatwam).

Despite all the activities in which man is engaged from dawn to dusk; he has no understanding of his true nature. He identifies himself with the body, the senses and the mind, forgetting that his true self is beyond all these. They are only instruments. Vedanta calls man to know himself. The insignia by which a man is identified in ordinary life are not the indicators of one's true self. There are two entities in a man-the body (deha or kshetra) and the indwelling Spirit (the dehi or Kshetrajna). To know the Kshetrajna is to know one's true self.

The trinity and the three gunas

In this human body, constituted by the five elements, God dwells in the form of the three gunas. Bharatiyas adore the Trinity—Brahma, Vishnu, Maheshwara. The Trinity is not embodied beings. No one has ever seen them. Nor is it possible to experience them in any way. The Trinity dwells in the human body as the three gunas: Satwa, Rajas and Tamas. The three qualities are forms of the Divine. Brahma is responsible for creation. The process of creation is subtle and cannot be perceived by any of the senses. This transcendental process is taught by the mother. All are creations of the mother. Hence, the Upanishad declares: "Revere mother as God". The mother is to be adored as Brahma, the Creator. Revere the mother, serve the mother and trust the mother. This symbolises worship of God.

Next comes the father. He protects the child, takes care of his upbringing and leads him to God. This protective function is attributed to Vishnu. The father symbolises Vishnu as the protector. Hence the injunction: "Revere the father as God". Thus the mother and the father are images of Brahma and Vishnu.

Then there is Easwara. He is called Bolasankara. He gives whatever one prays for. He never says "no" to any suppliant. Such an embodiment of truth cannot be hidden. To experience this embodiment of auspiciousness (Siva), Tamas is the means. The tamasic quality is usually associated with slothfulness and indolence. But this is not the proper meaning of Tamas (as an attribute of Siva). Siva's role is to lead man on the right path to realise his divinity.

The Trinity, in the form of the three gunas, is present in every human being. This is borne out by the scriptural aphorisms: "Easwaras-sarvabhoothanam", (the Divine dwells in all beings), "Isavasyam idam jagat" (the Lord is the indweller in the cosmos). When the significance of the three gunas is understood, the nature of the Trinity can be understood

Body, mind and conscience

God is not somewhere outside. He is the indweller in the body. Sin is the result of one's own actions. Hence it is folly to seek God elsewhere. Man wants to know all about the world and ventures to explore outer space. But he is unable to know his own true nature. How is he to know his self? The self is called conscience. The spiritual quest means making use of the vibrations from the conscience to understand the Truth. Today man follows only the body and the mind and becomes a prey to all kinds of troubles.

Man has to discover his divinity. The answer was given by Rama in the Ramayana. Without troubling to find out where God is, it is enough if one worships the mother and the father who are the living embodiments of God. By pleasing and acting according to their wishes one can get their blessings. To ignore the deities one can get their blessings. To ignore the deities who are directly visible, in the form of one's parents, it is a delusion to search for an invisible God.

Rama exemplified this truth when he told king Janaka that without the consent of his parents he would not consent to wed Sita although he had won her hand by lifting Siva's bow. Similarly, when Bharata and Vasishtha came to the forest to appeal to Rama to return to Ayodhya

to rule over the kingdom, Rama firmly declared that he had to fulfill the pledge given by his father to Kaikeyi and complete his term of exile in the forest. Honouring the words of the parents is the highest virtue. This has to be observed by one and all.

Brahma and Vishnu are therefore to be worshipped in the physical forms of one's parents. The two deities have no forms. The forms seen in the paintings of Ravi Varma are the products of his imagination. They have no basis in reality.

The formless divine has to be experienced in the respiratory process which proclaims the oneness of the individual and the cosmic Self in the sound "SO-HAM". In breathing in' with the sound "SO" and breathing out with "HAM", the life-breath is declaring: "I am God", "I am God".

Lust, greed and anger

For Bharatiyas, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Bhagavata are the most sacred texts. The Ramayana points out the disastrous consequences of lust (kama). The Mahabharata teaches that greed (lobha) brings utter disaster. The Bhagavatam shows the consequences of hatred (krodha) towards God (Hiranyakasipu's example).

The world reveres Rama but despises Ravana, Why? Rama is the repository of all virtues. He is described as "Sarva bhoothahithe ratah"—one who rejoices in the well-being of all living creatures. He was the fountain of all wisdom. He exemplified the quality of equanimity in all situations. Ravana was the embodiment of arrogance. His lust and pride destroyed him.

Lust, greed and anger are demonic qualities. When Satwa, Rajas and Tamas are cultivated in the right way, they can help man to realise his higher nature.

Love and sacrifice

Embodiments of Love!

You have supreme duty to revere the mother and the Motherland. Wherever you may go or work, never forget the Motherland. Students today should follow the good teachings of our ancient sages and seers and lead ethical lives. "Let us live together, strive together, and bear no ill-will towards each other". This was the message of the Vedas. Let your love embrace the whole world. Treat all mankind as one family. All nations should be happy and prosperous.

You must realise that life is like a two winged bird. The two wings are Love and Sacrifice. With these two you must aspire to reach the supreme goal.

What is it that men should do to promote the welfare of society? People claim to render social service, but their motives are self-centred. On the contrary, they should be conscious of all that they owe to society and render service in a spirit of selflessness. They should recognise their identity with society. You should recognise your true spiritual reality and 'engage yourselves in helpful activities.' Make service the badge of your life.

Dedicated service

In this conference, people from many countries have taken part. What is the foremost message of this conference? Rendering -service whenever it is needed, you must be prepared to dedicate your life for service. You can become a leader only when you are filled with the spirit of service.

Today you pray to a river: Oh river! overflow with water. Don't pray to the river. Address your prayers to rain. When the rain responds, the rivers will get filled automatically. Likewise, when you serve society as the Divine, automatically your desires will be fulfilled.

Swami belongs to you

Devotees expect all kinds of things as a result of their devotion to God. Today, on the seventieth birthday of this body, you have to take note of one thing. Swami needs nothing. Do not offer even a small robe. Swami belongs to you. He is not separate from you, nor are you separate from Swami. This is an inextricable relationship. Promote the well being of the backward and poor villages.

You must have listened to the list of offerings of gold ornaments by some devotees. What is the ornament for Bhagavan? Only bliss. Love is the ornament. He is Beauty itself. Why cover Him with a shower of jewellery? A sculptor carves a beautiful idol. Why submerge that beauty under clothes, jewels and garlands? All these are artificial. Natural beauty alone gives real joy.

Auction of ornaments

Don't take the trouble to bring such ornaments. You should not entertain such thoughts at all. Let not the devotees feel otherwise. Bhagavan has told the Central Trust to put up for auction on this stage itself all the ornaments given by devotees. The money raised thereby should be used by the Trust. These jewels should not be taken even to Prasanthi Nilayam. I have not sought anything from anybody. But I will be happy with any kind of service you render. Spend your money to help the needy. Assist in the provision of water. Meet the educational needs of the people and provide medical relief. Do everything for the good of society and not for the sake of an individual. Have the nation's welfare in your mind.

Health, knowledge and life

In addition to jewels, offerings of money have also been made. All these funds will be used for the completion of the drinking water project. The water problem of Rayalaseema will have to be completely solved. This is a dry area. There is not enough water to drink. How can trees be grown in such an area? But without trees the people cannot have a sufficient supply of oxygen. Water, therefore, is essential for life. I had been considering this problem for a long time. For health, the heart is important. For knowledge, the head is important. For the body, water is essential. All these three should be provided free. They should not be commercialised. All these come from God.

Like oil for a lamp, Love is essential for life. Without oil or love, darkness will prevail. Render loving service to all. Recognise that the Divine is within you and you have all the potency for great deeds.

From today; our organisation should from day to day and encompass the whole world: Set aside private interests. Let welfare of society be your primary concern. Wherever you may be, in whatever country or place, take part in the service activities there.

Serve Darira Narayana

Today devotees from 137 countries have gathered here. How much work is being done in these countries? That is the test. In all countries there are people who are hapless. They are embodiments of "Daridra Narayana" (God in the form of the poor). What need is there to serve Sriman Narayana? He has a host of persons to serve Him. You must serve the "poor Narayanas", who have no body to serve them.

Sow the seeds of such noble thoughts, let them grow into giant trees and let people take shelter under them. This is the only birthday gift I seek from you. Your welfare is your gift to me. Become exemplary persons. When you return to your countries froth this conference~ you must develop your centres without hindrance, from day to day. Make good use of the Divine Trinity in *you*. Recognise the Divine in your mother, father and preceptor and revere them. Develop the conviction that the Divine you adore, who is your favourite deity, is within *you*. That Divine is "Sathyam, Sivam, Sundaram" (Truth, Auspiciousness and Beauty). Plato (the Greek philosopher) declared that Truth, Goodness and Beauty are God. Irrespective of the country, these three are the eternal verities. With these truths in your hearts, embark on service and bring a good name to Bharat.

Rayalseema should be ensured water supply all through the year. Today it is a "Rayalseema" (a stony region). This region grow must be transformed into a "Rathnalaseema" (a region glittering with gems). This is the collective responsibility of the people concerned.

Make yourselves into a garland and I shall be the thread holding all the flowers together. Consider yourselves the children of one mother, belonging to the human family. Do not give room for differences of race, creed and nationality. All belong to the caste of humanity, the religion of love and the language of the heart. The same object, water, is called by different names in different languages. Likewise God is one, whatever the name that is used-whether Allah, Jesus, Buddha or Rama, have that faith. Don't criticise any religion. By developing this universalism, bring joy to Bhagavan.

Many overseas devotees greeted me in the morning with "Happy Birthday". I am always happy. It is enough if you are happy. True happiness consists in union with God.

From today you have to take to a new path. You must spend your lives in harmony, co-operation and mutual esteem. See the. Divine in all things. That is the source of true and lasting bliss. It can be got only through Love.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with His favourite bhajan, "*Prema muditha manase kaho: Rama! Rama! Ram!*"

—From Bhagavan's discourse in the Vidyagiri stadium on 23-11-95

BHAGAVAN'S BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

Impressive Demonstration of Global Unity

"*GLOBAL UNITY IS HERE*". Those four words sum up the foremost impression produced by Bhagavan's Seventieth Birthday Celebrations in a Prasanthi Nilayam which had been transformed into a Celestial City for the great occasion.

Preparations for the celebrations had been going on all over the world since 1993 and the grand spectacle witnessed in November 1995, in Prasanthi Nilayam was the culmination of what thousands of devotees had been eagerly looking forward to as a prelude to the great changes expected in the new millennium.

A whole array of new buildings had come up within the Prasanthi Nilayam Campus to accommodate overseas devotees and a vast number of sheds had been erected in all available open spaces in and outside the Nilayam to meet the needs of 25,000 delegates from all over the world. Every building in and around Prasanthi Nilayam received a face-lift and the Mandir, with its enlarged Mandap, was a glorious sight at night with all its Illuminations.

The Sathya Sai Seva-Organisations all over the world had adopted 1993 as the year of Spirituality, 1994 as the year of Education and 1995 as the year of Service, corresponding to the three wings of the organisations. The Sixth World Conference of the Seva organisations provided a forum for delegates from all the countries to come together to take stock of the work done in the three fields and formulate programmes for future work under the Divine guidance of Bhagavan Baba.

At Prasanthi Nilayam the tone for the celebrations was set even as early as August, when a mass marriage of 120 couples, mainly drawn from the villages of Anantapur District, was conducted in Prasanthi Mandir. The old students of the Anantapur Women's college had made all arrangements for this and Bhagavan blessed all the couples with gifts of clothes and vessels.

Gifts galore

This was followed by a special function to bless old couples and young girls; distribution of sewing machines and tri-cycle rickshaws to handicapped men and women; manufacture and supply of artificial limbs to the maimed; installation of Hanuman idol over an underground chamber housing the Nama-Likhita Japa books, written by thousands of devotees. Paduka

worship by 504 couples and offer of pearl-and-coral set golden padukas to Bhagavan was yet another function arranged by the Sai Paduka Trust, Tamilnadu.

During the latter half of October, Bhagavan was tirelessly engaged in distributing new clothes to students, teachers, staff, doctors and others. Bhagavan distributed thousands of saris to women devotees from overseas countries. Bhagavan has often declared that His hand always gives and has never stretched for receiving anything (except letters from devotees!). This was evident from the variety of things Swami distributed, including wrist watches and other souvenirs.

The celebrations in November were heralded by the global Akhanda bhajan on 4/5th November. An endless stream of devotees started pouring in daily from then on and it swelled to nearly two lakhs on 14th November, when "The Spirit of Unity" concert programme arranged by the Bharat Cultural Integration Committee was inaugurated by Bhagavan in the Poornachandra Auditorium.

Elaborate arrangements have been made to provide loudspeakers and T. V. screens at the Kulwant Mandap and outside to enable the vast crowds to watch the programmes in the Auditorium. The entire Prasanthi Nilayam premises, were specially decorated with several arches of floral designs, besides arches in traditional temple design, erected at several places by different state units.

A feat of both North Indian and Carnatic music, dances and jugalbandhi concerts of high standards was provided in which top artists in the respective fields participated with fervour and devotion. All the artistes gave of their heart inspired by the presence of Bhagavan. Bhagavan blessed all the artistes and materialised a gold chain and ring for two young artistes.

Water project inaugurated

On the 17th, the concluding day of four-day Festival, the Prime Minister Sri P. V. Narasimha Rao, was present. Bhagavan delivered a discourse, calling for national unity. On 18th morning, in a joyous function at Poornachandra Auditorium, the Prime Minister inaugurated the supply of pure drinking water to Anantapur town, by pressing a button, when the pumps in town were activated by remote control and water started flowing in the taps at Anantapur. A message was received on the telephone, which was, amplified on the public address system, so that thousands of people gathered could hear. There was a working model of the water project on the stage. A report on the Drinking Water Project was given by Sri K. Chakravarthy. Technical details of the project were spelt out by Sri Kondal Rao, Engineering Consultant of the Andhra Pradesh Government, who expressed his gratitude to Bhagavan, but for whose sustained interest, the work could not have been completed in such record time. The Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh spoke expressing his gratitude to Bhagavan.

The Prime Minister then spoke in Telugu, on the magnitude of the project which had been carried out by the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust to provide drinking water to lakhs of villagers.

Bhagavan then addressed the gathering and made special mention of the co-operation extended by the State and Central Governments in executing the project. He made a powerful plea for making rivers national Property controlled by the Centre, so as to eliminate inter-state disputes.

Bhagavan then went to the Vidyagiri Stadium, when Annandanam and Vastra Danam were arranged for 15,000 persons. Food and clothes were distributed by students and staff.

World Conference

In the afternoon the Sixth World conference of, Sri Sathya Sai seva Organisations was inaugurated by Bhagavan in the Sai Kulwant Mandap. Sri Sathyanarayana, All India President and Dr. Goldstein presented reports till the activities of the Organisation. Over 8000 delegates from as many as 137 countries were present and there was scarcely any room left in the Sai Kulwant Mandap for others. They were seated outside and occupied almost the entire space between the Mandap and the Gopuram.

19th November was celebrated its Mahila (Ladies) day. Starting from Omkaram and Suprabhatam and Veda Parayanam in the morning it was entirely ladies' affair. The Conference in the Poornachandra Auditorium commenced with Veda chanting by ladies. The Warden of the Anantapur College Hostel, Smt. Jayalakshmi Gopinath, in her welcome speech, expressed gratitude to Bhagavan for having generously permitted the celebration of 19th November as Ladies' Day. She said they had arranged For Go-danam (Gifting of cows) to be done by Bhagavan. The cows to be gifted with their calves were brought by students of the Institute, and Bhagavan gave away the cows to a number of pundits. The function went on for over an hour, as 70 cows had to be brought one by one. Thousands of devotees witnessed the grand procession of the cows headed by Sai Gila, for whom Gaja Puja was clone.

In the afternoon the Poornachandra Auditorium was almost entirely occupied by ladies except for a small enclosure earmarked for men. At the meeting three students spoke about the significance of Ladies' day and offered their obeisance to Bhagavan on His 70th Birthday. Smt. Padma Kashtagir spoke about the rule of women in the, Sai Mission. Bhagavan then gave His Divine discourse, highlighting the role of women as mothers in moulding the lives of children on right lines. (Details of the discourse are given separately). This was followed by a cultural programme exclusively by lady artistes arranged by Anjali Devi and P. Sushila.

On 20th November, Bhagavan blessed in the Mandir, Vedic Pundits who had been reciting the Vedas in the Mandir from the 18th. There were nearly a hundred of them from the Andhra area.

Blankets from South Korea

In the afternoon, a pleasant function was got up in Sai Kulwant Mandap in connection with the gift of 1000 beautiful blankets in attractive colours to the Super Speciality Hospital by Sai devotees front South Korea. Dr. Safaya spoke on the unique performance of the Super Speciality Hospital and thanked the devotees for their welcome gift to the Hospital.

Bhagavan delivered a discourse in which He laid emphasis on the need for sacrifice and selfless service as the best form of worship. Swami said He would never say 'Thanks' but would say 'Santhosham'.

Body scanner for hospital

On the morning of the 21st, Bhagavan visited the Super Speciality Hospital and inaugurated the "Whole Body CT-Scanner" in the Department of Radiology. The SOMATOM PLUS 4A can perform a full 360-degree scan in 0.75 seconds. This CT Scanner also features a 5.3 MHU X-Ray tube.

Swami inaugurated the sophisticated Vitreo-Retinal Services which herald a new era in the care of eye patients. Bhagavan also opened the MEDLARS and the installation of the Micro Art Station. With the opening of such a facility in the hospital, research work and the DNB Programme have access to information regarding various references on any, particular subject through satellite communication.

Bhagavan proceeded to open a magnificent exhibition for which the hospital staff, led by the Director, Dr. Safaya, along with some students of Swami's University, had worked day in and day out for a fortnight to make this dream come true. The exhibition presented a beautiful exposition of the life and mission of Swami with rare photographs of Bhagavan, carrying inspiring captions. The huge hospital module constructed with thermocol was a delight to behold. In another hall, there were eye-catching exhibits on preventable diseases along with a section on Dietetics. Swami spent a few minutes with His students who had not slept for many days giving final touches to the exhibition.

In the evening the valedictory session of the World Conference was held. Sri Sathyanarayana, the All-India President, presented a report on the deliberation of the conference. He said 8000 delegates from 137 countries had participated in the conference. Twelve topics were discussed and about 1600 delegates had spoken during the three-day sessions. He prayed to Bhagavan to permit the Seva Dal workers to do Prasanthi Seva in greater numbers and expressed his gratitude to Bhagavan for His Grace in the successful conduct of the conference.

Sri Jagadeesan of Malaysia stressed the importance of leaders adhering to the nine-point code of conduct in daily life. Mr. Justice Bhagavathi spoke about the necessity of meticulously following the guidelines given by Bhagavan. Mr. Leonardo Gutter of Argentina spoke about the spiritual awakening in the Latin American countries due to the impact of Sai teachings and specially EHV. Dr. Goldstein prayed to Swami to give His Divine message. Swami then delivered His discourse in which He gave important advice to the members of Sathya Sai Organisation.

On the 22nd, the Convocation of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning was held at the Vidyagiri stadium. Huge crowds of eager devotees filled the stadium long before the commencement of the function. (An account of the Convocation appears elsewhere in this issue.)

On 23rd November, even from the early hours of the morning people were trekking in their thousands to the Stadium to witness the historic celebration of the 70th Birthday of the Avatar. Precisely at 7.30 A.M. Bhagavan came in a gaily-decorated gleaming silver chariot, dressed in a white robe. Large batches of folk dance performers marched ahead. Seven hundred devotees dressed in yellow dhotis, marched in procession carrying Kavadis. Sai Gita, draped in richly

embroidered silken robe, headed the procession, with Veda-chanting boys following her. It was a magnificent spectacle for the vast gathering of devotees. A glider was circling over the stadium dropping flowers carol confetti over the Santhi Vedika.

Some devotees from abroad who were offering gifts in gold ornaments to Bhagavan were permitted to place them at the Lotus Feet. Bhagavan said that he did not accept any gifts but because they were being given with such devotion, he would arrange to auction the gold and give the proceeds to the Trust for Water Project. Several donations for the project were also offered totaling nearly 250 crores.

Sri V. Srinivasan, Member, Central Trust, announced the names of donors who had given 25 lakhs and above and prayed to Bhagavan to give His message.

Bhagavan then gave His discourse (given separately). After the discourse, Bhagavan distributed laddu prasadam to a few guests on the stage and arranged for the distribution of prasadam to one and all. Bhagavan desired the National Anthem to be sung and He himself led the gathering in singing the Anthem.

In the evening, there was a very pleasant music programme which Sunil Gavaskar and Alvin Kalicharan compared. Mono and party and other leading artistes took part in the cultural bonanza.

After the music programme, Bhagavan gave darshan to the vast gathering, seated on the Jhoola. The memorable birthday celebrations came to a close with a fine display of fireworks.

HOMAGE TO BHAGAVAN

Organisations have been inspired by Bhagavan, on the occasion of His Seventieth Birthday, to bring out special volumes of writings on the life and message of Bhagavan as a pious offering at the Lotus Feet.

All the volumes have been uniformly well produced and testify to the devotion and zeal of the devotees concerned. Foremost among these volumes are "Sai Vandana" published by the Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, "The Splendour of Sathya Sai", brought out by Prasanthi Society, Hyderabad, "Sai Vandana" published by students of the Brindavan Campus, "Homage to the Divine Legend" an offering by the Council of Management of the Sri Sathya Sai 'Central' Trust, "Trayee Saptamayee", published by the Warden of the Brindavan campus. Several overseas centres as well as the State units of the Sathya Sai Seva Organisation in India have brought out attractive volumes highlighting their activities. Most of these volumes carry excellent pictures in colour, of Bhagavan in His various moods. Quite a few books have also come out among which special mention may be made of Dr. Adivi Reddys "Uniqueness of Swami and His Teachings"; "Compassionate Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba" by Jogeshwar Gogoi, and "Sai Humour", edited by Peggy Mason, Sandra Levy and Dr. M. Veeravahu.

A review of these and other publications will appear in a subsequent issue of "Sanathana Sarathi".

Editor

AVATAR VANI

Hanuman: The Ideal for Mankind

Embodiments of Love!

Everything in the world has a value, but the value of the spoken word cannot be easily measured. By his words man can acquire every kind of wealth. By their words Rulers lose their kingdoms. By one's speech one can acquire friends and relations. By words one may make enemies, engender hatred and make himself miserable. Good words are a man's best kinsfolk. Nor is that all. It is one's speech which contributes to his progress in many ways. One's words are the root cause of one's prosperity, courage, bliss or even death. One's speech determines almost everything in one's life.

Hence one's speech should be sweet, wholesome and pleasing to others. "Anudvegakaram vakyam sathyam hitham prithikaram". ("One's speech should not cause excitement. It should be truthful, pleasing, and well-meaning"). Even truth should not be uttered in harsh language. It should be soft, sweet, pleasing and conducive to peacefulness. Hanuman was the supreme exemplar of such speech.

Hanuman was a dauntless hero who by his sweet and persuasive words promoted friendship between Sri Ram and Sugriva. He was tranquil, valorous, and virtuous. He was a great scholar in Sanskrit and proficient in many languages. He was the master of the Paisaachi language (the language of evil spirits). Sanskrit is the mother of all languages. It was esteemed as the language of the Gods in ancient times.

God and the cosmos

There have been different conceptions regarding the phenomenal world, some considering it as illusory ("mithya") and some considering it as real. The Vedic seers viewed the world as a projection of the Divine. From very early times many sages devoted their lives to the discovery of the Divine. Only a few persisted in the quest throughout their lives. Their ecstatic experience of the Divine is expressed in the PURUSHA SUKTA, which declares: "VEDAHAM ETAM PURUSHAM MAHANTAM". This means: "We have seen God. He is shining with the effulgence of a billion Suns. He is beyond the bounds of Thamoguna. His effulgence defies description." "ADITYAVARNAM TAMASAH PARASTHATH". "He is effulgent like the Sun and is beyond Tamas (the darkness of ignorance)".

The world is made up of the five basic elements (ether, air, fire, water and earth). The sages demonstrated that the Cosmos is the embodiment of God. The Vedas, the Upanishads, the Itihasas and Puranas also proclaimed the same truth. "*Sarvam khalu idam Brahma*". "All this is

verily Brahman". "Easwara sarvabhoothanam Isavasyam idam Jagat." "The entire cosmos is the abode of God. For experiencing this Divinity, detachment (Vairagya) is essential. Detachment does not mean renouncing health and home and retiring to a forest. True detachment means giving up worldly feelings and developing godly thoughts. The Reality is One only. "EKOHAM BAHUSYAM". The One willed to become the Many." The scholars declared: "EKAM SAT: VIPRAH BAHUDHA VADANTI ". There is One only; the wise call it by many names."

Advent of avatars and sages

To propagate this great truth to the world, from time to time many sages and saints and Avatars made their advent in Bharat. They had total knowledge of the Supreme Self (Paripoorna Brahma Jnanis). Why did such realized souls take birth in the phenomenal world? In the modern world it is essential for people to comprehend the truth underlying this. Although these realized beings have no need to take human birth, they elected to do so for the purpose of redeeming the people on earth by their teachings and actions. Unless they are total BRAHMA JNANIS, they cannot make others perceive the truth. Hence they come down in human form to dispel the ignorance of people in the world and reveal to them the highest wisdom (Prajnana).

KRISHNA was a Paripoorna-Jnani (One who possessed the Supreme Wisdom). Why did he take on a human body: "PARITHRAANAAYA SADHUNAM" (to protect the good). KRISHNA incarnated in human form to teach the highest truth to the pious and the godly persons who were tilled with good thoughts and performed good deeds.

The sage VYASA, who codified the Vedas, was a Paripoorna Jnani. Vyasa is Narayana Himself: What need was there for such a Realized Divine Being to make his advent on the earth? Vyasa incarnated as a man to elevate the ignorant and show them the path to a higher life. Suka (the son of Vyasa) was also a Paripoorna Jnani. He, as well as the others, chose to be born on earth for the sake of promoting the welfare of the world and not because of any karmic bonds.

The knowledge of the Supreme Self is associated with total freedom from egoism (Ahamkara). Those who have no taint of ego in them are totally free from the consequences of actions, regardless of what actions they do. Today there are in the world two types of Spiritual aspirants). One type of aspirants regard the cosmos as a manifestation of it God. The other type consider the cosmos itself as God. The difference between the two can be illustrated by an example. Many kinds of jewels are made from gold. Some may consider the Jewels as different from gold. Others may consider gold as the basic substance from which the jewels have been made. The Paripoorna Jnanis belong to the category of those who realise that without gold there can be no jewels. Those who consider the Jewels as more important than the gold, out of which they have been made, belong to the category of those with half-knowledge. The truth is that without gold there can be no ornaments. Ornaments can be of various kinds and may have various forms and labels. But gold has no specific name or form like the jewels.

God is without attributes, is eternal, infinite and immutable. Everyone born in the world has a form and name. But the divinity within him has no name or form. The individual with name and Form is filled with egoism and possessiveness. This egoism and possessiveness are the cause of

one's pleasure and pain, happiness and sorrow. Hence everyone must strive to curb these two tendencies.

Guru and the disciple

Once a disciple went to a preceptor and requested him to impart to him the Supreme Knowledge of the Omni-Self (Brahma-tattwam). The guru gave him a mantra and asked him to recite it continually without any selfish desire. The guru told him that after he has done this whole-heartedly for a year he could come and receive the knowledge of the Self (Brahma-Jnana). The disciple came back after a year duly carrying out with devotion the instructions of the preceptor. Filled with the hope that the preceptor would impart the Supreme Knowledge, the disciple had a sacred bath and was on his way to the preceptor.

Unaware of the presence of the disciple, a maid was sweeping the ashram premises and the dust from the ground fell on the young man. Immediately, he lost his temper, as he felt that his purity after a sacred bath had been sullied by the dust that fell on him. He was angry with the maid for allowing the dust to fall on him. He looked at her with anger. The maid was filled with fear.

The disciple went in and offered his salutations to the guru and said: "Guruji! I have been waiting for a year to secure your grace. The time is now ripe for realising it. I am eager to receive the Supreme Knowledge from you." The preceptor said: "You are not yet competent to receive that knowledge. You have the qualities of a snake. You got angry with a girl who unwittingly caused some dust to fall on you. How can Brahma-Jnana be imparted to one who has not even this amount of forbearance? Go back and practise the sadhana for one more year."

At the end of the second year, when the disciple was about to come to the ashram, the preceptor instructed the maid to see that as she swept, all the dust fall on the disciple. The maid told the guru that on the previous occasion the disciple had been angry with her, and this time if she repeated the offence, he might beat her. The guru told her to do as directed by him. In accordance with the directive of the guru, she let the dust fall on the disciple in full measure. Enraged at her conduct, the disciple went to beat her but refrained from doing so.

He then went into the ashram and paid his respects to the guru. The guru told him: "You have not yet acquired the competence to receive the knowledge. You are exhibiting the qualities of a dog. Come back after ridding yourself of these animal qualities."

At the end of the third year, the disciple was coming to the ashram after a sacred bath. Carrying out the instructions of the guru, the maid of the ashram poured some dirty water on the disciple. The latter calmly offered his pranams to the maid and said: "Mother! My salutations to you. You have helped to strengthen my forbearance so that I can be worthy of the preceptor's grace." Without getting angry with her, he told her that he would be always grateful to her for what she had done to him.

When he went in, the guru welcomed him and said: "Son! Today you have become eligible to receive the Supreme Knowledge."

The lesson of this story is that every spiritual seeker has to get rid of attachment to the body. But, that is not enough. The egoistic feeling should be totally eliminated. The sense of possessiveness should be expelled. Only then can one realise Divinity.

The preceptor drew the disciple close to him and imparted to him the Supreme Wisdom (Brahma-Jnana) and filled him with bliss.

Hanuman's humility

There are in the world today millions of people who recite the Lord's name. But while reciting the name, they do not realise the greatness and glory of the Divine name.

When Hanuman entered Lanka, the land of Rakshasas, the first friendly person he encountered was Vibhishana. All the Rakshasas in Lanka, who had not seen a monkey, were curious to know all about the simian visitor. They asked him: "Who are you? Wherefrom have you come and at whose behest? How did you enter Lanka?" Hanuman was unruffled. He told them "I am the servant of the Lord Koshala, Sri Rama," though he was very powerful. This means also that in any situation one should remain calm and unperturbed.

Hanuman and Vibhishana

How is this tranquility to be secured? When the heart is pure, peace is assured. Without purity of the heart peace is unattainable. Even if one appears to be at peace, it is only a pretence. When one has both purity of heart and peace of mind, one can achieve anything. There are three P's. The first P stands for purity. The second P for patience. The third P stands for perseverance. When these are present, one can acquire the grace of Sri Rama. This was amply demonstrated by Hanuman.

But Vibhishana was full of anguish. He told Hanuman: "Oh Hanuman! How lucky you are, how meritorious to earn the company of Ramchandra! I have not had that good fortune. I have been meditating on Rama's name for many years. But so far I have not got the Darshan of Rama. You have not only enjoyed the company of the Lord, but you are privileged to carry out the commands of Rama. Please tell me how I can secure such a blessing." Hanuman replied: "Vibhishana! It is not enough if you merely recite the name of Rama. You have to carry out the injunctions of Rama and engage yourself in the service of Rama. Only then you will experience the power of Rama within you." From that moment, Vibhishana resolved to participate in the service of Rama.

Nama japa and service

Today in the Kaliyuga, there are any number of persons chanting Rama's name. Chanting the name (Nama-Japa) is not enough. Whatever name you recite, you must also be active in the service of the form associated with the name. What is implied by the term, "RAMAKARYA" (service to Rama)? Rama is immanent in the entire cosmos. Rama is present everywhere. Hence, you have to take part in social service. By rendering service to one's fellow beings, rendering

help to the helpless and performing sacred acts of dedicated service, one becomes eligible for Sri Rama's grace.

Although Hanuman was highly intelligent, in matters relating to the Divine, he made no distinction between good and bad. He carried out implicitly whatever he was ordered to do. He did not care to enquire whether it was right or wrong. Why? Because he regarded whatever Rama said as Gospel truth (Veda Vakya). God's word is beyond question. Hanuman felt that he was not competent to sit in judgment on the Lord's words. "My duty is to carry out whatever Rama says." "KARTHAVYAM YOGAM UCHYATHE" ("Duty is Yoga") says the Gita. What is this yoga? "YOGAH KARMASU KAUSALAM" says Gita. "Yoga is excellence in the performance of duty. Hence you should embark on all actions in accordance with the Divine injunctions. Then alone you experience all kinds of knowledge.

Today everyone is racked by doubts: "To do or not to do." To meditate on God why should there be this doubt? No one filled with such doubt will be worthy of God's grace. You should not give any room for disbelief. Even if a person abuses you, you must seek to recognise the divinity in him. Every individual may have his own name and form, but the Divine is in everyone equally. This broad-minded view should be developed. There is no one in the world without the Divine in him. Hence service should be rendered to one and all with this conviction.

Self-realisation and the ego

Many hanker after Self-Realisation. But how can they have Realisation when they have no self-confidence? What does self Realisation mean? It is not discovering one's lineage and mundane identity. These relate to the body. But you do not belong to any family or clan. You are yourself. Even to declare, "I am God", implies dualism. It is difficult to comprehend the Divine Principle. The nearest approach to comprehending the Divine is to consider Divinity as all pervasive.

Embodiments of Love! All devotional exercises today appear to be a kind of business. This is not the way to relate to the Divine. Whatever you do, regard it as an offering to the Divine. "Who am I? I am yours"—this should be the attitude towards God. There should be no taint of self-interest in your actions. (SWAMI related how Rama taught to Kaikeyi the Vedantic message of egolessness as the means of Self-Realisation.)

Men are dominated by the feeling of possessiveness. But what is it that really belongs to them? They are only Trustees for their properties. Nothing really belongs to them. You imagine that the body belongs to you. But how much control have you over it? Can you live as you please? No. The body is not yours. Everything belongs to God. One can become a true devotee only when he has this feeling. "Nothing is mine. All belongs to you (God)". This should be the feeling of the devotee.

The difference in attitudes between the Gopikas and the denizens of Dwaraka consisted precisely in this. The Gopikas declared: "Krishna! We are yours." The people of Dwaraka developed pride and egoism over their kinship with Krishna. That egoism brought ruin on the Yadava clan. The

Yadavas boasted about their kinship with Krishna in various ways. The Gopikas had no such conceit. They were content to declare: "We are yours, Krishna!"

The difference in attitudes indicates the distinction between dualism and non-dualism. The non-dualist has no problem. "ADVAITA DARSHANAM JNANAM." "Perception of the one without the second is Supreme Knowledge." What everyone has to realise today is the omnipresence of the Divine. "SARVAM KHALU IDAM BRAHMA." ("Verily all this is Divine.") The unity of the body, mind and the spirit should be understood. No action can be performed without the body. Without action the eternal verities cannot be recognised. There can be no self-realisation without recognising the verities.

Hanuman's devotion

Hanuman was always engaged in the contemplation of Rama. Every hair on his body chanted the name of Rama. Hanuman is adored by devotees as an example of total devotion to the Lord. When some had doubts whether Hanuman could leap over the ocean to search for Sita in Lanka, Hanuman told them that Rama had given him the task and He would also give him the strength to accomplish it. This absolute faith was the cause of his success. When people entertain doubts as to their capacity to carry out the tasks assigned to them by the Divine, they will be weak and powerless. Hence, to accomplish anything, firm faith is essential. Doubts have to be expelled. Everything that happens should be accepted as for one's own good. That is the means to qualify for God's grace. To go on speculating over Swami's words is an insane exercise. Hanuman exemplified complete freedom from doubts. He had only two desires. To be dear and near to Rama (Swami related two episodes to illustrate how intensely he yearned to be always near to Rama. He had no use for any object, however valuable, which did not proclaim the name of Rama. He threw away the pearl necklace presented to him by Sita because the pearls did not recite Rama's name. Swami sang a ballad, in which Rama praised Hanuman as the greatest of devotees and embraced him. Rama declared: "Hanuman! No material object is fit enough to be given to you as a present. You live in the world of the Spirit. You have no attachment to the things of the world. Let you be present wherever my glory is sung.")

Hanuman was intoxicated by his devotion to Rama and was always in a state of ecstasy in chanting Rama's name. He was all humility in the presence of Rama. He was utterly fearless before Ravana. Before the Divine he was a suppliant. Before a Rakshasa he was a hero. Hanuman knew how to conduct himself in any situation. He was supremely intelligent. He stands out as an ideal for mankind.

Human action and divine aim

People today lead meaningless mechanical lives, with no ideals to inspire them. The purpose of life is to experience the Divine that is subtle and invisible like the roots that sustain a tree. Men today want fruits without considering the roots. The ancient sages searched for the roots to realise the fruits. Bharatiya culture was based on this concept for what is fundamental and primal. Today people target the basic truths and pursue the ephemeral. Worldly life is inescapable. But it should be lived with the ultimate goal in view. Human action and Divine aim

should go together. To forget the Divine is to descend to the level of the animal. A hero becomes a zero if he forgets God.

All over the world men are perpetually haunted by fears of every kind because they have not secured the freedom from fear which God alone can give. (Bhagavan sang ballad describing the fears experienced by man). God's grace alone can free men from fear. All should strive to secure Divine grace by developing firm faith in God. You may worship any form, chant any name, but have firm faith in God. Call the Divine by any name Rama, Krishna, Allah, Jesus or Buddha—all names are the same. The one Lord is adored by different names.

Devotion should not be converted into a form of business. You should not say you will offer something to God if you get a certain thing which you desire. God needs nothing from you. Everything belongs to God. You brought nothing with you at birth and leave the world with nothing. Only the Divine is with you. Hence, cherish faith in God.

People ask, "How is one to believe in something that is not perceivable? This is an absurd question. The qualities of a man are not perceived while the physical body can be seen. But the qualities are more significant than the physical features.

Likewise, faith in the Divine is more important than faith in the phenomenal world. God can be realised only through Love.

Bhagavan concluded His discourses with the bhajan: "*Prema muditha manase kaho: Rama! Rama! Ram!*"

From Bhagavan's Discourse in Sai Kulwant Mandap on 14-10-95

"You should become fruits which have to be offered to Swami. You should become the offering itself (Naivedya). You should become Swami's instrument. You should become the beloved of Swami. You should take each step in keeping with Swami's step. You should stand by Swami as His companion, like His shadow. I am in need of such persons. They are the very embodiments of my love. "They are I." "I am they." You should become such that you will foster the world in respect of the body, mind and spirit. You should behave in consonance with Swami's ideas and aspirations. It is only then that you will have given comfort and happiness to your parents, to the world and to SAI."

—Baba

"Who are you?"

If Baba asks me, "Who are you?" I will certainly want to say what's true, But what is "True" in my own mind is not SAI TRUTH for all mankind.

Should I respond, "I am You", although my blindness hides that view?...
Enough of this ego on my part! My answer should be from the heart.

So if He asks me, "What are you?" I hope my courage will say what's
true and my response, in Maya, would be "I am your stumbling devotee".

—Devotee

AVATAR VANI

When Women are Honoured

"Asthiram Jivanam loke" Life in this phenomenal world is impermanent. *"Yad drisyam tadnasyam"* Whatever is perceived is bound to pass away some time or other. *"Asthiram yavvanam dhanam"* Youth and wealth are transient. *"Asthiram daaraputraadihi"* Wife and children will pass away. *"Sathyam keerthi dwayam sthiram"* Only Truth and Fame endure.

Embodiments of Love! In this infinite universe, among the myriads of living beings, humanity is eminent. Among human beings, it is a privilege to be born as a woman. There are many examples to demonstrate the preeminence of women.

Was not Rama born as a Divine incarnation in Kausalya's womb?

Did not Lava and Kusa (the twins) become great because they were born to Sita?

Was it not Jijibai's loving care which made Shivaji great?

Was it not Putlibai's piety which made Gandhi a Mahatma?

All the great sages and saints, heroes and warriors were born to women who made them great.
Woman is the Goddess of Nature.

Gayatri, which enshrines the essence of the Vedas, is a goddess, venerated as Veda Mata (the mother of the Vedas).

It is obvious that feminine birth is estimable, adorable and sublime. The Veda also adores the feminine principle in various ways. Vedic rituals and practices accord a high place to women.

Feminine aspect of Divinity

The woman is adored under different names as Sathyavati, Anyavati, Angavati, and Nidhanavati. Sathyavati proclaims the truth that the Divine pervades the cosmos, God is not separate from Nature (Prakriti). Nature is a form of the Divine. The Veda testifies to the omnipresence of the Divine like the presence of butter in every drop of milk.

Next is Anyavati. The five elements are present everywhere in the universe: earth, water, fire, air and ether. These elements vary in subtlety in a progressive order. The Veda declares that even the five elements are manifestations of the Divine. This aspect of Nature is called Angavati.

The Anyavati principle points out which deity is responsible for what function and describes the deity's special characteristics. Easwara is described as Trisuladhari (the bearer of the Trident) and Trinetradhari (the deity with three eyes). Vishnu is described as the bearer of the conch, the discus and the mace. Krishna is described as one having the peacock's feather (on his head). Rama is described as the wielder of the bow. The Angavati ritual worships the different deities with their distinctive features.

The Nidhanavati ritual lays down nine different ways in which the Divine can be worshipped, such as listening, chanting the name, etc.

All forms of worship are presided over by these four feminine deities. Though the names are different, the goal is one.

Reverence for women

From ancient times the feminine aspect of the Divine has been worshipped in various ways. The Veda declares that where women are honoured and esteemed, there divinity is present with all its potency. Unfortunately today men consider it demeaning to honour women. This is utterly wrong and is a sign of ignorance.

"Stree" (Woman) is "Grihalakshmi" (the Goddess of Prosperity for the home). She is hailed as "Dharmapatni" (the virtuous spouse). She is called "Illaalu" (the mistress of the home) and "Ardhangi" (the better half). People gloat over petty titles conferred on them. But women have been conferred the highest titles which are valid for ail time. A home without a woman is a jungle.

Men should realise the high status of women and honour and respect them accordingly. They should not make women weep and shed tears. A home where the woman sheds tears will be ruined. Men should give an honourable place for women and lead a respectable life.

The archetypal woman is described as "Aadishakti" (the primal source of all energy) having a whole array of powers. She is hailed as the mother of the children of immortality ("Amritasyaputraha").

The trigunas

The word "Stree" is made up of three consonants, "Sa", "Tha" and "Ra". "Sa" signifies the Satwic nature of women. It represents also the triple aspects of experiencing divinity—Salokyam (vision of the Divine), Sameepyam (proximity), Sayujyam (mergence). "Ta" signifies the Tamasic quality. But this Tamasic quality is not indolence and slothfulness. It includes qualities like humility, kindness and modesty. This means that women begin with qualities like meekness

and modesty so that they may serve the family and society in the right spirit. There is a saying in Andhra Pradesh: Judge a house by its mistress.

"Ra" represents the Rajoguna. This does not mean pugnacity and querulousness. This quality signifies the preparedness of women, where necessary, even to sacrifice their lives for the sake of their honour and the honour of their family. Bharat's history is full of examples of women who fought valiantly and gave up their lives to protect their husbands and their honour.

"Stree" thus represents the combination of the three gunas. Woman, who should be highly honoured for these qualities, is being treated as a weaker vessel (Abala) and assigned an inferior status.

Women as rulers

It will not be out of place to mention here that women who have wielded power in Bharat or other countries have proved themselves to be exceptionally able and successful. There have been many kings in Britain but no one ruled the country so well as Queen Victoria. Her rule was marked by righteousness, prosperity and efficiency. There was no discontent during her reign. In more recent times, Indira Gandhi ran the Government with courage and consummate skill. She was prepared for any sacrifice in the interests of the country. Among Prime Ministers, she headed the Government for over twelve years. Many others had only brief tenures.

There are several organisations which are being run by women with great dedication and zeal for the benefit of the people. Valmiki extolled the sweetness of womanhood. What is the cause of this sweetness? The spirit of sacrifice is the cause, according to Valmiki.

The spirit of sacrifice

A mother is ready to sacrifice every thing, even her life, for the sake of her child. Such a spirit is to be found only among women. If a child is grievously ill, the father may say that the child may as well die. But the mother will try to save the child at any cost. It is for this reason, that woman is described as "Tyagamurti", the embodiment of sacrifice. Men do not have the same spirit of sacrifice as women. Men may present a heroic pose, but do not have the determination and perseverance to carry on the struggle to the end. Valmiki described woman as the embodiment of devotion (Bhaktiswaroopini). Man was described as Jnanaswaroop. The Jnani has limited access to the Divine mansion. But the woman devotee has access to the innermost apartments (cheers). The preeminent status accorded to women will be evident from all the ancient scriptures.

In this context the rote of women as mothers should be understood. The great hero, Shivaji, was moulded entirely by the teachings of his mother. Rama was taught by his mother Kaushalya to follow the sacred path of Dharma. The lives of the great show to what extent they were the products of their mothers.

Gandhiji became a staunch adherent of truth after a lesson he learnt from his mother, who could not bear her son telling a lie even to make her break her, fast. It is the mothers who make their

children take to the right path, not so much the fathers. Today, we find the fathers teaching the children to utter lies. For instance, when the telephone rings in the house, the father, who is in the house, tells his son to inform the caller that the father is not at home.

The practice of fathers allowing the sons to go astray has a long ancestry. It started in the Dwapara Yuga with Dhritarashtra, father of Duryodhana. Whatever evil deeds his son did, Dhritarashtra used to say he was a good man. Fathers who allow their sons to go astray are not real fathers at all. Prahlada observed: "Only he is a father who advises the son to seek God. Only he is a true guru who instructs the pupil about God."

The mother as teacher

Mothers in ancient days used to teach the children about right conduct, morality and devotion. The first preceptor for a child is the mother. For this reason, Bharatiya culture gave the first place to the mother among the four persons to be revered as divine: mother, father, guru and guest. The mother gets the first place because she beats the child in the womb for nine months and nourishes him with her own blood.

Even in mentioning the names of deities, the first place is given to the goddess; as in Sita-Rama, Parvati-Parameshwara and Lakshmi-Narayana and the reason for the feminine name getting priority is she is "Prakritiswaroopini"—the embodiment of Prakriti (Nature). The implication in this usage is that you should realise God through the propitiation of Prakriti.

In this world all things are transient. Only righteousness and good name endure. How is one to acquire a good name? By revering the mother. Never go against the wishes of the mother. The son who causes pain to the mother can never be happy. Hence, earn the blessings of the mother.

In this context, it should be noted that Russians observe December 8 as Ladies' Day. On that day the women have free time. The men have to do the cooking. The women go out to do service in hospitals and other places.

Parents' duty

Men and women have to understand each other so that they can live in harmony, in the family. Today people want to live happily but not to lead ideal lives. Parents, for instance, do not set a good example to the children. In the modern age, the father does not instruct the children properly and the children do not pay heed to the words of the mother. The vast majority of fathers today behave like Dhritarashtra. Where there are some good children, leading a pious life, the fathers rebuke them, saying: "Have you gone crazy? Don't take part in bhajans or social service." Parents who behave in this manner are like Hiranyakasipu, who could not tolerate his son worshipping Hari. Today *we* have many parents like Dhritarashtra and Hiranyakasipu, but few who encourage their children to adhere to righteousness.

Children today do not relish edifying works like the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Bhagavata. They waste their time on reading trash. Parents should see that children do not read bad books.

Avoid gossip

Now for a few words of advice to women. It is found that women are given to excessive talking. From today you have to take a pledge not to indulge in talking. Women are found talking not only in the auditorium but even in the bhajan Mandir. Men are fond of strolling around as they please. They observe no restraints as to where they should not go and what places they should avoid.

If women observe restraint in speech and men control their movements, it will be good for both.

Ladies' Day

If the nation has to prosper, improvement must start with the parents. Without peace and harmony at home, there can be no peace in the nation. This message should be propagated throughout the country on every November 19th, by observing it as Ladies' Day. You should teach people how to run their homes well and how to bring up children on right lines. You must deal calmly and tactfully with the men, if they are not cooperating. Though Ravana was evil-minded, his noble wife, Mandodari, tried to correct him as much as possible. She advised him strongly not, to keep Sita in Lanka, but to restore her to Rama.

From today learn to see the good in others and examine your own defects. Thereby you will benefit both ways. These who go about finding faults in others are like dogs which go after cast off shoes.

Call to women

Embodiments of love! Mistakes may sometimes be committed in the organisation. See that they do not recur. Buddha learnt the proper lesson through a single experience of seeing an old man, a sick man and a dead corpse. He understood the entire nature of human existence from this. People today have similar experiences over and over again. But their minds remain unchanged. Every experience should bring about a change. For years you listen to Swami's discourses. How, many have changed? How many have developed good qualities? Very few indeed.

Develop pure thoughts wherever you may be. Only then your visit to Prasanthi Nilayam at great expense would have served a purpose.

As today is a sacred day dedicated to women, they should change themselves and help to change the men and the children. They should develop the qualities of sympathy, compassion, love and sacrifice. Study the lives of our great women, who were models of patience, fortitude, compassion and sacrifice. I desire that you should take up the reins of leadership and bring peace and prosperity to the nation by leading ideal lives.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan, "Sathyam; Jnanam, Anantam Brahma".

(From Bhagavan's discourse in the Poornachandra Auditorium on November 19, 1995)

Prime Minister Inaugurates Water Project for Anantapur

It is the good fortune of the people of Anantapur that Bhagavan Baba not only provided the funds for the execution of a massive drinking water project, but saw to it that it was carried out in record time, observed Sri P. V. Narasimha Rao, Prime Minister of India, inaugurating on November 18, the Sri Sathya Sai Drinking Water Project for Anantapur town.

Sai devotees in their thousands had gathered in the Poornachandra Auditorium to witness the function. For security reasons admission to the Auditorium was restricted. Others were able to witness the proceedings on the T. V. screens set up in Sai Kulwant Mandap.

An illuminated model of the entire drinking water project was displayed on the stage. There was also a silver pot with a silver tap at the top.

Aver invocation by boys of the Sathya Sai Schools, Sri K. R. Prasad, Member of the Sathya Sai Central Trust, in his welcome address, wondered how to welcome Bhagavan, who was present everywhere at all times. "Our generation is fortunate" he said, "to witness many a miracle performed by Bhagavan of which this water project is the latest which will eclipse all other miracles". Bhagavan had spoken about this project during the last Birthday celebrations in November 1994. The massive project for supplying pure drinking water to 800 villages in Anantapur district has now become a fait accompli. This has been executed solely by the Sathya Sai Central Trust with the voluntary contributions from people of several countries. He extended a hearty welcome to the Prune Minister and other invitees.

Magnitude of the project

Sri K. Chakravarthy, Administrative officer in charge of the project to co-ordinate the work on behalf of the Central trust, gave details of the scheme and thanked the State and Central Governments for their full cooperation. He said the magnitude of the project could be seen from the fact that it involved laying of 2500 kilometres of large diameter pipelines, construction of balancing reservoirs, summer storage tanks, 125 ground level reservoirs and drilling of bore-wells. This formidable task has been achieved by Bhagavan's grace. The work was started in March 1995, and major portions have been completed by October. The few ground level reservoirs yet to be constructed will be completed by January 1996.

Sri Kondal Rao, Consultant on behalf of the Andhra Pradesh Government, gave the technical details of the project and commended the extraordinary zeal with which the work was done round the clock by workers and engineers solely out of love for Bhagavan. He spoke in appreciation of the stupendous work done by the E.C.C. division of Larsen & Toubro, who rose to the occasion. He explained how water from the Tungabhadra High Level Canal will be stored in and pumped from reservoirs with 400 HP pumps. He said seven summer storage tanks covering an area varying from 30 to 100 acres had been constructed to ensure unfailing supply during the summer months.

Trust for this magnificent gesture of supplying drinking water to 800 villages in a short time.

P.M.'s tribute to Bhagavan

The Prime Minister, Sri P. V. Narasimha Rao, said that it was the good fortune of people here to have Bhagavan Baba among them to help them to improve their lives, materially and spiritually. Mankind has always given first place to drinking water as the prime need for living. That is why we learn from history that the earliest settlements were established by people on the banks of rivers. Even the Vastu Shastra prescribes construction of dwelling places only where water is available. Good water and good air are primary requisites for living. But, in modern times we find that the ancient shastras are ignored and people construct dwelling houses and colonies indiscriminately wherever space is available. That is why we have come to the present pitiable state. In ancient clays the ruler, constructed tanks to facilitate collection and storage of rain water to be used for irrigation and domestic needs. Over the years the tanks used to get silted, resulting in curtailment of storage capacity. However, this is not a problem in Anantapur district where rainfall is meager. It is the good luck of the Anantapur people that Baba is here and has not only spent a great deal of money on the water project but also seen to its expeditious execution. It is a great scheme to provide pure drinking water to all villages bringing it from wherever water is available The Chief Minister has said that a similar scheme will be carried out in Kurnool district too.

"I am paying respectful tribute to Baba and to the people for their splendid achievement. The project is an example to the world. It is necessary that the people should also help themselves. I am happy to see that many people are offering their services to the people even after retirement.

"We are now in a position to offer help to other countries in supplying food. Bharat is giving the message of peace to the world. This project is a good example for others to follow".

Then the Prime Minister formally inaugurated the water supply scheme by pressing a button. Immediately the pump in Anantapur town started working and a message was received on the phone from Anantapur, expressing the people's gratitude to Bhagavan for conferring this boon on them.

Water flowed from the tap on the stage into the silver pot and was distributed to special invitees in silver tumblers.

Bhagavan then gave His discourse in the course of which he expressed His view that all rivers should be made national properly. (Details of the discourse are given separately).

The function concluded with the singing of the National Anthem by the entire gathering.

"The only hold that man has in this dreadful darkness is the name of God. That is the raft which will take him across this stormy seas darkened by hate and fear, churned by anxiety and terror."

The Bliss of Self-Realisation

*At nightfall the moon is the illuminator;
At dawn it is the sun who illumines;
Righteousness illumines the three worlds;
A virtuous son is the light of the family.*

(Sanskrit Sloka)

Embodiments of Love!

At night the moon is the source of light for us. During the day the sun sheds light and serves mankind. The three worlds are illumined by DHARMA (Righteousness). A virtuous son is a beacon for the family. From ancient tunes, Bharatiya culture has been illumined, fostered and inspired by didactic sayings of this kind.

It is purity of mind that helps to sublimate mankind, directs it towards God and enables it to manifest the inherent divinity in man. "What is perceived is liable to perish" (says an aphorism). That which is seen, that which appears to be real, is bound to pass away in the stream of time. All that is apparent in the phenomenal world is bound to disappear sometime or other. We should make every effort to know that which is invisible but imperishable. All external objects seen with the eye are bound to disappear.

Acquire the eyes of wisdom

It is not right that man, who is endowed with immense potencies, should be content with what is seen by the physical eyes. Such eyes are possessed equally by beasts and birds, as well as insects and germs. What then is the uniqueness of the sight given to man? It must be realised that it is difficult to secure human birth. Having acquired this privilege, human beings should not be content with what is seen by the physical eyes. Man should acquire the eyes of wisdom (Jnana netra).

It may be argued that even the physical eyes help man to acquire knowledge. The eyes see everything but cannot see themselves. Eyes which cannot see themselves, how can they see the mind or see Madhava (the Divine Lord)? To have a vision of the Lord, the physical eyes are not competent. One must acquire the eyes of wisdom for this purpose.

Limitations of the senses

The eyes are there, but when they develop a disease, the eyes are not aware of it. When the ears lose the power of hearing, they are not aware of the loss. The senses which cannot know their own state, how can they know God? The physical eyes can only serve to see external objects in Nature and examine their properties and explain them, but cannot recognize the Divine.

The external world is made up of the five elements (Panchabhutas: ether, air, fire, water and earth). The five senses are: transient, momentary and prone to disease. Senses, which are liable to become victims of the disease of attachment, how can they serve to recognise the Divine? Those senses which cannot recognise their own condition are enveloped in ignorance.

What is meant by the phrase "knowing one's self?" Does self-knowledge mean knowing one's lineage or profession? Knowledge of the Self transcends knowledge of the body, the senses, the mind and the Antahkarana (the Will).

Today people worship God in various ways. They pray to God: "Oh Lord! Let me have a vision of you! Free me from all my troubles". "When one listens to these prayers, one is tempted to feel that they arise only from ignorance. People who offer such prayers seem to have no idea of the nature of God. Who is God? The scriptures, the Vedas and the Upanishads, give the answer to this question that God is "Sat-Chit-Ananda". What you should seek from God, who is "Sat-Chit-Ananda", is "Sat-Chit-Ananda", and not trivial things relating to the world. All things are included in that Supreme Bliss (Ananda). What is happening today is people invoke the name of God but are really worshipping the devil. All mundane desires are associated with the devil and not with the Divine. The more desires are controlled, the more blissful one will be.

The vision of God

What, then, is the meaning of the call "know thyself". You have to get a vision of God. You have to experience the Divine. You have to converse with God. Man must realize God; see God; feel God; talk to God. This is religion. Without understanding this true meaning of religion, people regard various forms of worship and prayers as religion. "Realize is Religion". This means that to realize the eternal Reality is true religion.

Man is the embodiment of the eternal Truth. He is the embodiment of Sat-Chit-Ananda (Being-Awareness-Bliss). But he is unable to recognize his true identity because egoism and possessiveness, pomp and pride envelop man's true form of "Being-Awareness-Bliss". The man who is able to get rid of attachment and hatred, egoism and acquisitiveness, will recognize his divine nature (Sat-Chit-Ananda). The Divine within is covered by these tendencies like ashes over a burning charcoal. When the ashes are blown away, the fire will reveal itself.

"Sat-Chit-Ananda" is the true wealth of a human being. Everyone should try to secure this treasure by overcoming the dragon of self-conceit which is barring the access to it. Everyone has to think for himself how he is viewing this treasure.

Men appear to worship God, but in reality they are pursuing worldly objects. How can they expect to realise God? There should be harmony in thought, word and deed. The Divine whom you seek is within you. Your yearning for the Divine must be total and all absorbing.

People speak about Moksha (liberation). What is it from which they have to be liberated? Is it from family, wealth or position? No. Liberation from this is an easy affair. Liberation is from the senses of identification with the body. The body is only an instrument and not your true self. The body is a gift from God. It does not belong to you, but you have to protect it as an instrument given to you. Everything belongs to God. You have to treat it as a trust and not as your private property. It is therefore, your duty to make right use of the body and senses given to you.

God's ways are astonishing, inscrutable, and mysterious. God has made ample provision for all man's needs. He has also given to man much more in the form of luxuries. In addition, He has conferred on man the power to control all these things. God has told man: "You are free to use as you like all the things given to you, subject to one condition. You will have to face the consequences of your actions." This means that you cannot abuse the freedom given to you to misuse the things that are provided for you. When you misuse anything, you have to bear the resulting misery. When you make good use of anything, you will enjoy the benefits therefrom. You have to take note of the purpose for which you use your sense or the objects given to you. Any misuse of them will bring misery in its wake. You came with nothing into the world and leave it with nothing. What happens to your wealth or to yourself? Of what use is all other wealth unless a man realises the bliss of oneness with the Divine (Sat-Chit-Ananda)? (Swami sang a song, in which he lamented the plight of man who ceaselessly worked for feeding his stomach, forgetting God). All these pursuits are utterly worthless. Scientists who are exploring the moon are not trying to understand their own minds. Without understanding one's own true self; all other knowledge is meaningless.

The moon dispels the darkness of night. The moon shines through the reflected light of the sun. Moonlight is cool while sunlight is warm. The mind is like the moon. When the rays of the Atma fall on the mind, it acquires coolness. When the same rays fall on the intellect (Buddhi), it gets hot. Today there is more concentration on development of the intellect than on broadening the mind. Man, who has come from the Divine, should aim at the perfection of the Divine. (Swami gave the example of the famous Italian violin manufacturer Anthony Stradivarius, who took one year to make one perfect violin because he regarded the making of the violin as an offering to God, who is perfect).

All actions should be done wholeheartedly. This was exemplified by the total devotion of the Gopikas to Krishna. They were lost in ecstasy over the melodious music of Krishna's flute. They found in that music the essence of all the Vedas and the scriptures. (Bhagavan sang a song in which the Gopikas pray to Krishna to fill their hearts with the nectarine melody of his flute.)

What is the significance of the flute? It symbolises the human body. The flute has nine holes. The human body has nine openings. The body should be considered as the flute of God. It should be rendered completely hollow, so that the Divine may blow through it. Today the body is anything but hollow. It is filled with all kinds of desires. Only when the desires are removed, the body will be a fit instrument for the Divine to fill it with nectarine music. This is the process of surrender to the Divine. Then one gets intoxicated with the music of the Divine.

Pomp and pride have to be given up to experience the Divine. People talk about meditation. But how much of it is concentrated on God? Nor is formal meditation necessary when you realise that the Divine is within you. The purpose of meditation is to recognise one's unity with God. This realisation can come only when one removes the three-layered cloak that covers the Atma in the form of the three Gunas Tamas, Rajas and Satwa.

Trust everything as God's work, whatever your vocation or profession. By dedicating all actions to God, you sanctify every act in daily life. That is the message of the Vedas.

Offer love to God

People are used to making edible offerings to idols or pictures, but consume them after the ritual. These are not what should be offered to God. You should offer your Love to God as the food that God loves. Regard even this love as a gift from God. You offer to God what God has given to you. This was what Jayadeva said in a famous song. "Oh Lord! That heart which you gave to me, I am offering to you. It is only when one is filled with this feeling that one can become a complete devotee. There should be no sense of separateness. This was finely expressed by Pothana when he declared that his entire poem was inspired and composed by the Divine. Thereby his Bhagavatam achieved unique sacredness. The way Pothana described the Goddess Lakshmi's dilemma when she saw her consort, Vishnu, rushing in haste to the rescue of the lord of the elephants (Gajendra), how she was anxious to know where the Lord was going, but felt that it would be inauspicious to ask him, is one of the memorable passages in the Bhagavatam. (Bhagavan recited the poem with such verve that the entire audience burst into applause). Even Goddess Lakshmi may be swayed by fear on occasions, but the true devotee is always without fear. Ramadas expressed this fearlessness in one of his songs. That fearlessness stems from total surrender to the Divine. But today we witness only part-time devotion. The reward is also partial.

No danger from solar eclipse

The day after tomorrow, there will be a Solar Eclipse and people are filled with apprehensions about the effects of the eclipse on the world. There is no need for fears of any kind, because such events occur from time to time. The earth came out of the sun. The moon came from the earth. The moon sometimes comes between the Sun and the Earth. At those times the sun cannot be seen. This is the eclipse of the sun. When the sun, the moon and the earth are in one line, it is wrong to think that any disaster will happen to the earth. No dangers are in prospect. Such natural phenomena are part of the mysteries of creation. Scientists are keen to study the eclipse as an experiment. If they are preoccupied with experiments, when will they acquire experience? "When people are immersed in family life, what will they get from it? They will continue to suffer till the end of their lives" (Telugu Poem). If all your life is spent on experiments, when will you begin to experience life? When will you start putting into practice the knowledge you acquire?" There is joy only in practicing what you know, not in the acquisition of knowledge. The delight of the pudding is in the eating. Practise at least a fragment of what you have learnt. Cultivate love for God. Love is God; Live in Love.

Rama! Ram!" The entire gathering responded with full-throated joy.

From Bhagavan's discourse in Sai Kulwant Mandap on October 22, 1995

AVATAR VANI

Supreme Need for National Unity

Embodiments of Love!

In this vast world, in which countless human beings are leading miserable lives, pursuing endless desires and unattainable aspirations, the spirit of sacrifice is most essential. Trees bring forth fruits for the benefit of others. Rivers carry water for the use of others. Cows yield milk to benefit others. Likewise, man should share in harmony with other his qualities of goodness, compassion, forbearance and charity.

The earth follows its natural duty (Dharma) to make use of its five elements to produce sustenance for all living beings. Born on the earth, men are not following the example of the earth. It is not the creeds that men profess—whether Christianity or Islam or other religion—which lend value to their lives. The highest value is the fact of their humanness. All faiths combine to invest man with a unique effulgence.

The various talents with which man is endowed should be used for good purposes on the basis that individual good is linked to social well being. Man today has to go through transformation at three levels: First and foremost is spiritual transformation. Second comes transformation in the attitude towards society. The third change is at the individual level. When spiritual transformation takes place, there is an automatic change in the attitude towards society. When society becomes harmonious and prosperous, the individual also changes.

Threefold transformation

This threefold transformation is implicit in the term "SAI". "S" stands for Spiritual change. "A" stands for Association change. This is change in one's relationships with others in society. "I" stands for individual change (Cheers). "SAI" thus signifies changes at all three levels—Spiritual, Social and Individual. This triple transformation is what Sai desires. When this transformation takes place, the whole world will be prosperous and happy.

The question today is: How can spiritual transformation take place without changes at the individual and social level? The basis for all the threefold transformation is the love principle. This love has to be experienced by one and all.

How is individual transformation to be achieved? There are some bad habits among individuals such as smoking, drinking liquor, meat eating and gambling. These bad habits not only degrade the individuals but also inflict hardships on their families. These bad habits have to be given up

leads a moral life.

How should one's attitude to society be changed? One should give up talking ill of others, reviling them or ridiculing them, feeling envious of good people. Evil traits like these lead to loss of peace in society. People should develop friendly and loving attitude towards their fellow beings in society. To develop a sense of helpfulness, there should be the spirit of sacrifice. People should also cultivate the feeling of sympathy and understanding.

For spiritual transformation, the qualities that are needed are "Daya", kindness, love, forbearance and compassion. Bharat throughout the ages has fostered these qualities among the people. People today have forgotten these sublime qualities because they have lost the fear of sin, ceased to love God and do not observe social ethic. What greater misfortune can there be for the nation?

Love of God and fear of sin

Love of God should be a natural feeling in everyone. It is our immemorial heritage. When there is love of God, fear of sin follows naturally. Today fear of sin has gone and everywhere the most heinous crimes are being committed. In such a situation, how can there be morality in society?

How are we to transform this state of things? The Prime Minister, Sri P. V. Narasimha Rao, in his speech referred to the grave problems facing the country. Who is responsible for all the troubles, disorder and violence? We ("Maname") are responsible. The truth has to be recognised. People are blaming others for their own faults. If there is unity among the people, there will be no problems. Unity is strength.

Today righteousness has declined among the people. As the level of righteousness goes down, the water level also goes down! If good qualities arise in men, the water level will also rise.

What is the reason for the failure of timely rains and the shortage of food crops? It is the decline of morals among the people which is the cause of natural calamities. The people must cherish sacred thoughts. Then the people's aspirations will be fulfilled.

I have to utter a warning in the presence of the Prime Minister. Bharat achieved its freedom through the sacrifice of innumerable patriots, who gave up their lives. Freedom has been achieved, but not unity. Without unity, the nation is weak like the hand of a man who cannot use all his five fingers. We must achieve unity in every field.

Rivers and the nation

All natural resources of the country should be enjoyed equally by all the people, regardless of caste or community. There are many rivers in our country which flow across State boundaries. Bharat is not lacking in water or other resources. We have many perennial rivers and vast areas of fertile land. But these resources are not being fully used. The nation's perennial rivers like Kaveri, Ganga and Krishna should be treated as national property. Then there will be no room for interstate disputes (cheers). All river waters should be used for the benefit of all the people. It

is going to waste. If the Prime Minister endeavours to promote a national approach to the harnessing of river waters, the nation will prosper (Cheers). The states also are prone to put their claims against the claims of others. They should adopt a co-operative and fraternal attitude towards each other and behave as good neighbours. If this is done, there will be no shortage of food or water in this country. The people also should develop this co-operative attitude.

Public and government

It is well known that quite often, sections of the public adopt an adversary attitude towards measures taken by the Government. The people should recognise that these measures are taken in their interest. Moreover, the public should not remain idle, leaving everything to the Government. They have to do their duty. They have to live up to certain ideals. The body should be used for rendering help to others. The spirit of helpfulness must be fostered.

There is an old Sanskrit saying which declares: Charity is the ornament for the hand; Truth is the ornament for the throat; Listening to sacred lore is the ornament for the ears. These are the ornaments which should be valued.

Education, health and water

Swami had resolved from the beginning on the provision of three vital things for the people: For Health the heart is important. For Education the head is important; for the body, water is vital. I feel that these three should be provided to the people free (cheers). Today a heavy price has to be paid for medical care and for education. Even water has to be bought. A heavy capitation fee has to be paid for getting admission even in a primary school. Illness is incidental to human life. Doctors should be prepared to make any sacrifice to relieve the sick. Money should not be the primary consideration.

There are many educated students present here. They should take a pledge to serve society after finishing their studies. Instead of going after high salaried jobs in the cities they should go to the villages to serve the poor there and earn their love and gratitude. Only then their education would be worthwhile. Students should be quite content with modest emoluments in the villages, with which they can be more comfortable than with larger earnings in the cities. They can lead more healthy and happy lives in the villages.

The water project

With regard to the water project, it should be noted that much was accomplished in a short period. In the execution of the project changes had to be made in response to the appeals of people in different villages. Because of this, the entire project has not yet been completed. Some villages are yet to get water. This should not cause any disappointment. Whatever may happen, all villages will get water and the project will be fully carried out. The inauguration of the project by the Prime Minister does not mean that further work will be held up. We are prepared for any sacrifice to honour the plighted word. Work will be resumed from tomorrow and we shall see that by January the entire district is supplied with water. We will give no room for anyone to complain that he has not got water.

Embodiments of Love! It is a matter for gratification that today the Prime Minister, who belongs to Andhra Pradesh, has inaugurated the water supply scheme for Anantapur District. All of you should live in amity, without differences of any kind and offer your cooperation to the Government. Not only will the nation benefit from your unity, but you will be setting an example to the world. Give up hatred and jealousy, participate with love in measures taken by the government for the well being of the people. Love can achieve anything.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan, "*Prema mudita manase kaho: Rama, Rama, Ram!*"

From Bhagavan's discourse in Sai Kulwant Mandap on November 18, 1995

A MEMORABLE OCTOBER

Hanuman Idol for Prasanthi Mandir

October was a month of crowded events connected in one way or other with Bhagavan's Seventieth Birthday celebrations in November. The most memorable event was the installation on October 14th of a resplendent silver idol of Hanuman, presented as a birthday offering to Bhagavan by devotees in Tamilnadu, on the initiative of the Sri Sai Paduka Trust, of Madurai.

The month opened with a moving ceremony in Sai Kulwant Mandap on October 1, when Bhagavan Baba distributed to a large number of handicapped men and women artificial limbs, Callipers etc., which were made to size by technicians from Jaipur Foot Industries at the Nilayam itself. With these tailor made limbs, the legless or armless persons could use their legs and arms as normal persons. The artificial limbs are a veritable boon to the handicapped. The recipients were full of gratitude to Bhagavan and were blessed by Him.

On October 3, Vijayadashami Day, students of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning presented in the morning a delightful music programme of devotional songs in Sanskrit, Telugu, Tamil and Hindi to the accompaniment of the Institute Orchestra. After arati to Bhagavan and the distribution of prasadam to the large gathering of devotees, Bhagavan left for the new two-storeyed Trading Complex built behind Round Building No 1. (The Trading complex replaces the long row of shops south of the Poornachandra Auditorium where devotees used to make all their purchases. After cutting the ribbon at the entrance of the new building, Bhagavan went round all the shops in the two floors and exchanged a word or two with the Sevaks serving the customers in the shops. All the shops and the new building had been specially decorated for the occasion. Bhagavan blessed the staff and left after arati was offered by the mahila sevaks.

From there Bhagavan proceeded to the northern end of the Nilayam campus where a new row of well-designed three storeyed buildings had been constructed (on the site of a whole row of sheds) for accommodating seva dal volunteers coming for Prasanthi service and providing

workers.

The Sai Kulwant Mandap was lavishly decorated in preparation for a two-day festival on October 14 and 15, during which 504 couples were allowed to perform ritual abhishekam for the Padukas they had brought with them, and the formal "Pratishtha" of the silver idol of Hanuman in the Prasanthi Mandir was performed by Bhagavan. In the awning in front of the Vighneshwara Statue, two life-size portraits of Bhagavan were kept on either side of Bhagavan's swivel choir, while the Hanuman statue was displayed on a pedestal to the left of Bhagavan. The idol was profusely garlanded and attractively decorated for the occasion.

Before Bhagavan's arrival at 7.00 AM, the couples with their Padukas, were seated in orderly rows in both the wings of the Mandap, with all the paraphernalia for offering abhishekam to the Padukas as directed by the officiating priests.

The high priest began the abhishekam ritual with an invocatory hymn glorifying Hanuman and the Padukas. A solemn atmosphere prevailed in the magnificent hall as the devoted couples performed the abhishekam ceremony according to the instructions of the high priests. Nine different substances were used for the abhishekam (holy bathing of the Padukas) including milk, curds, sandal paste, honey, coconut water and Vibhuti. After that, Ashtotara archana was performed, reciting the 108 names of Bhagavan. For all the devotees participating in the function, the most thrilling moment was when Bhagavan went round all of them and blessed them individually.

The function concluded with the offering of arati to Bhagavan by the Mandir priest and Sri Subramania Chettiar, Chairman of the Paduka Trust. Simultaneously each of the couples offered arati to the Padukas.

In the afternoon, the devotees had gathered in the Mandap front 3.00 PM, to listen to Bhagavan's discourse. Bhagavan called upon the chief priest to chant the invocatory Vedic hymns. Sri Srinivasan, son of Sri Subramania Chettiar, expressed their gratitude to Bhagavan, on behalf of the Sai Paduka Trust, for the opportunity given to them to present the coral-and-pearl-Studded Padukas to Bhagavan and to have the installation of the Silver idol of Hanuman performed by Bhagavan Himself. He said the Paduka Trust had been set up to promote the sadhana of Namasmarana and Padaseva among the devotees.

Bhagavan then delivered His discourse, in the course of which He expatiated on the unique greatness of Hanuman as a devotee and servant of, the Lord. (Details of the discourse are published separately).

After the discourse Bhagavan blessed 40 blind students brought from Madras and presented them with clothes and wrist watches. This was followed by a programme of devotional music by Sri Ganesh and party.

studded with pearls and corals, mounted on a decorated van, were brought in procession to the mandap headed by a Nadaswaram group and Veda chanting and bhajan groups. They went around the Mandir and settled down in the centre of the Mandap. The golden Padukas were placed on the footstool of Bhagavan, who rested His feet on them. Sri Subramania Chettiar showered handfuls of gold coins on the Lotus feet of Bhagavan.

Bhagavan presented clothes to the Vedic pundits and materialised a special ring for the chief priest in appreciation of his meticulous chanting of mantras.

On October 20, Bhagavan distributed cloth for trousers and shirts to the students and teachers of the Brindavan and Prasanthi Nilayam Campuses. Bhagavan gave new clothes to the students and teachers of the primary and secondary schools and saris to the students and teachers of the Women's college at Anantapur on 21st morning.

On the 21st evening a function was arranged in connection with the giving away of 70 sewing machines to selected poor people from Vijayawada region and tricycle rickshaws for the handicapped. The Vijayawada Sathya Sai Organisation had arranged for the supply of all these items as part of the celebration of Bhagavan's 70th birthday. Bhagavan blessed the recipients of the sewing machines, individually. He personally saw to it that the handicapped persons were lifted bodily and seated in the self-propelling rickshaws with the help of seva dal members. The same evening, He distributed clothes to the staff members of the Nilayam and to other workers.

After the distribution was over, Bhagavan called upon Sri G. V. Subba Rao to address the gathering. Dr. Subba Rao spoke in Telugu about the uniqueness of the Sai Avatar and how Bhagavan Baba had inspired thousands of people to render service to humanity as a form of worship. Baba had attracted people from all over the world to His Abode of peace through His weapon of Love.

Bhagavan then gave an inspiring discourse on what is true devotion (Details are published separately). After the Discourse sweet prasadam was distributed to all devotees.

On 22nd evening, there was a huge gathering at the Sai Kulwant Mandap eagerly awaiting Swami's arrival and blessings for Deepavali. Bhagavan went round the entire Mandap giving darshans to one and all. A group of students sang devotional songs in different languages accompanied by their own orchestra. This was followed by bhajans and distribution of prasadam.

In the evening Bhagavan gave clothes to seva dal volunteers from Tamilnadu who had done Prasanthi Service and also to the people from Krishna district who had participated in the gift of tri-cycles and cawing machines.

Later in the evening Bhagavan arranged for an enjoyable display of fireworks, which was watched with joy by the huge concourse of devotees.

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

—Baba

AVATAR VANI

Fill the World with Love

*There is no worse disease than Greed;
No enemy worse than Anger;
Nor is there any Misery worse than Poverty;
There is no Greater Happiness than Wisdom.*

Among the numerous diseases prevalent in the world, the disease of greed (lobha) has grown beyond bounds. There is no disease worse than this. This greed undermines humanness and turns man into a monster.

The second disease is anger (krodha). There is no enemy worse than anger. It is possible to overcome external foes, but it is very difficult to subdue this internal enemy. Anger can destroy all human qualities and make a man forget his real nature. It is man's worst enemy.

There is no misery equal to poverty. Poverty does not merely mean lack of wealth. You have poverty of the mind, poverty in wisdom. This poverty also causes misery to man.

Man is ravaged by these three: Greed (or miserliness), anger and lack of wisdom. There is no greater source of happiness than wisdom (Jnana or the Higher Knowledge). Jnana is not confined to worldly knowledge. There are other kinds of knowledge—bookish, superficial etc.—of which the most valuable is practical knowledge.

Purpose of life

Everyone should strive to acquire that knowledge by which he can get rid of greed, anger and material and spiritual poverty. It is to achieve this purpose that you are participating in this conference.

At the outset you have to consider what is the purpose of life. "Is it for involvement in endless work or the eating and sleeping or indulging in gossip that the Divine has conferred this human birth?" (Swami sang a Telugu poem). The gift of intelligence is being used for many trivial purposes but not to understand the goal of life.

Society today is riddled with discord and disorder. The progress of civilisation has undermined morality and decency in all walks of life. Obsessed with worldly values, men have lost all concern for moral values. Selfishness reigns supreme everywhere. Even in the spiritual field, people seem to be more interested in themselves than in the welfare of society and the promotion of public good.

The delegates assembled in this conference appear to be concerned about the functioning of their centres. Why were these centres started? The primary objective of the Sai Organisation is to raise the human consciousness to the Divine by eliminating all animal tendencies. People do not seem to be aware of their true nature. Only those who understand their true selves can help to elevate others. The Upanishads have given the clarion call to mankind to wake up from their ignorance and go forward towards their supreme divine destiny of self-realisation.

The three paths of Sai

You have to engage yourselves in Seva (service). Service does not mean mere rendering help to others of one kind or another. True service means participation in social activities after ridding yourself of egoism and possessiveness and manifesting your qualities of compassion and kindness. The aim is the refinement of your own good nature rather than giving succour to others. There is a Sanskrit saying which declares that greater than penance or pilgrimage, meditation or worship, is service to good people.

In rendering service, there should be unity of heart, head and hands (the three H's). Only then service becomes sanctified. The significance of the three letters in SAI should be understood. "S" stands for Service. "A" stands for Adoration. "I" stands for Illumination (cheers). These three represent karma, bhakti and jnana respectively. Sai teaches these three. All the three concepts are equally important. Sai is a combination of the three spiritual paths, of Action, Devotion and Wisdom. Just as the Pranava sound is made up of the three letters "A", "U", "M" (OM), "SAI" stands for the triple forms of spiritual sadhana. In the Sai organisation, this threefold exercise has to be properly understood.

Fill the world with love

Sai sevaks have to develop the love in them, share it with others and fill the whole world with love. True love should be distinguished from attachments of various kinds. That love is a synonym for God. Love is God. Live in love. The love of God comes from the depths of the heart. Sai sevaks should understand this love and render service in the right spirit to all mankind.

People ask how they can experience God. The answer was given, by Ramakrishna Paramahansa, when he told a questioner that if he loved God with the same intensity with which he lured his wife and children he would be able to experience God.

Perform all actions as an offering to God. Do not make any distinction between your official work and your work in the Sai organisation. Spirituality cannot be divided into compartments. The Sathya Sai organisation was set up solely to enable members to manifest their love in all

of your oneness with the Divine.

Quality and quantity

The setting up of Sai Centres is not an exercise in numbers. The emphasis should be on quality and not quantity. The international President and the National President of our organisation have mentioned how the centres (Samasthalu) have grown. But has Fellow-feeling (Samatwam) grown to the same extent. Fellow-feeling; should grow. On the contrary, divisiveness is growing. I want quality, not quantity (cheers).

Promote harmony among members. You cannot avoid making; such distinctions as President, Co-ordinator, Member and the like. But these distinctions are functional and have no place at the spiritual level. God is present equally in all, from the president to the ordinary member. You should recognise this oneness. Positions, names and forms may vary, but the Supreme Truth is one. This spirit of oneness (Samatwam) should be fostered. Then there will be no jealousy or discord. Where there is oneness there will be no trouble.

Samatwam

Society today is racked by jealousy and hatred. Jealousy is a disease, which gives rise to hatred. Develop forbearance and goodwill. That is the cure for jealousy. I have often declared: "My life is My message". Often many have extolled me or derided me. I do not get elated by praise or depressed by criticism. I treat everything alike (samatwam). "Samatwam yogam uchyathe". That equal mindedness is yoga (cheers). What do I lose when someone criticises me? That is his opinion. It does not affect me. Those who criticise Baba are suffering from a disease, like those who reject a sweet because they suffer from diabetes. The fault lies not in the sweet but in the person who is unable to relish it. They know that Baba is engaged in beneficial activities and they want him. But because some of their selfish interests are not served, they turn against Swami. That is a malady. When you see the facts in this light, you will realise the truth.

Today you have to cultivate a serene equanimity that rises above these trifles. The development of equanimity is more important than the growth of centres. You should recognise the divinity in all. "The one Supreme Spirit dwells in all beings." Bulbs are many but the current that illumines them is one. Develop this spirit of oneness. Unity will lead to Divinity. Many who are working in the Organisation do not recognise the need for unity. Lack of unity breeds enmity and groupism.

The Organisation exists not for my sake but yours. When Swami administers what may appear as bitter medicine, it is for your own good. God is the physician for the ills of human existence. You may not relish the taste of His medicine. But whatever Swami does, says or gives, is all for your good.

Above all, unity is the foremost need of the hour. "Nations are many, but the earth is one" (cheers). All are denizens of the earth. All are children of Mother Earth. Recognise this truth.

In the realm of the Spirit, it is foolish to ask for proofs of direct external perception. The spiritual is subtle. It has to be experienced within. The Divine is present within us incognito like the Pandavas during the last year of their exile. Does the external form of a person reveal anything about his internal qualities? He himself may not be aware of all of them. He may be full of love or hatred. Can anyone perceive it? Without knowing his qualities, is it proper to judge him by his physical features?

You see this magnificent hall, but you do not see its foundations. Likewise, God is the basis, nature is the superstructure. The spirit is the basis, the body is the superstructure. The body is like a rose in which the spirit is present as invisible fragrance.

Always blissful

This conference should consider how the Sai Organisations can improve their service activities. I have nothing to gain from the organisation. I am always blissful. There is no need to wish me "Happy Birthday". I am always happy. Embodiments of love! Develop love, so that you may deserve this appellation.

The Tamilnadu President, T. G. Krishnamurthy said, that when Swami reincarnate as Prema Sai he should be given the privilege of serving Swami. Ayyaa! Take good care of what you already have. Why hanker after something in the womb of the future? The present is very important. Past is past. Don't worry about the future. Take care of the present which will determine the future. Do your duty now. Duty is God. Work is worship. This is the way to run the organisation on ideal line.

What is being inaugurated today is the search for the supreme truth about the Divinity within.

Birthdays

People have referred to the Seventieth Birthday. The body is constituted of the five elements, the five sheaths, the five life-breaths and the five senses. Up to one's fiftieth year, one may be described as experiencing youth (Yavanam). Youth-hood should be dedicated to purposeful activities. Youth is not related to age. Bhishma, who was 112 years old, was the commander-in-chief of the Kaurava forces. It is will power that determines one's age.

When one reaches sixty, it is a Bharatiya custom to perform "Santhi puja" for the purpose of subduing the six internal enemies (lust, pride etc.) On reaching seventy, a person attains the state of the Seven Sages, the Seven Oceans, the Seven musical notes, the Seven Colour. The seven colours come from the sun's rays. The sun's rays are eternal. The Seventieth year symbolises the attainment of the saintliness of the Seven Sages (Saptarishis who constitute the constellation of Ursa Major, the Great Bear). On attaining the eightieth year, you must become one of the eight planets (Ashtagraha). On reaching the ninetieth year, you have to acquire the strength of one of the nine planets (Navagrahas). On reaching the hundredth year one should merge in the ten indriyas (organs of sense and action) and get rid of the body consciousness.

Organisations. The spiritual path is the easiest to follow. The giving up of worldly desires is easier than clinging to them. Hold fast to God.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan: "*Govinda krishna Jai!*"

**From Bhagavan's inaugural address to the Sixth World Conference of Sai Organisations
on 18-11-95**

(After the function, it was announced that Bhagavan had graciously decided that the next day of the conference should be observed as Ladies' Day and all the proceedings should be conducted by the women delegates.)

"Work done for the welfare of the world is true penance (tapas), while work done for selfish propose is useless (tamas)."

—Baba

AVATAR VANI:

DEEPAVALI SANDESH

Fight the Forces of Evil

*Life in the world is impermanent;
Impermanent are youth and wealth;
Wife and children are not permanent;
Only righteousness and renown are enduring.*

Embodiments of Love!

In this phenomenal world, life is like a water bubble. No one can tell when, where and how this bubble will burst. One's youth and wealth are transient stages in one's life, coming and going. No one can predict when they will come and when they will pass away. Is there any reason for feeling proud about one's youth, which is purely transitory? It is not the unchanging reality. Wife and children are not permanent. They are like passing clouds.

They are like lightning flashes, bright one moment and disappearing the next. None of these is of a lasting nature. "DHARMAM KEERTI DWAYAM STHIRAM". The righteous acts performed by one and the reputation earned by one, these two alone endure forever, as long as the sun and moon last.

Embodiments of Love! The primary goal of a human being is to realise his inherent divinity and redeem his life by that realisation. Man's heart, which should be an ocean of milk, has been polluted so much by evil today that it has become an ocean of brine. The ocean of milk (Ksheerasagara) is regarded as the bed on which the Lord reclines. It is pure and white like milk. But by polluting his heart, man is a prey to all kinds of worries.

hatred, infesting the heart like whales and crocodiles, have turned it into an ocean of salt.

The tainted life of man has to be purified by expelling the pollutants within man. What is pure and sacred has to be taken in. This duty has been forgotten, if you want to fill the stomach with wholesome and delicious food, you have to empty it of what is impure. One cannot relish good food when the stomach is full of bad stuff. This is borne out by every one's daily experience. Hence every one should get rid of all the bad thoughts, evil intentions and bad feeling in him and fill the mind with good thoughts and noble feelings. All Bharatiya festivals have been designed to promote such lofty feelings and not for indulging in feasting and revelry.

Bharat's ideals

From ancient times Bharat has upheld high spiritual ideals and proclaimed the principle of universal well-being. ("LOKAS SAMASTHAS SUKHINO BHAVANTHU". "May the people of all the worlds be happy.") The ancient sages led lives based on these sacred ideals. These ideals have almost disappeared today. Immersed in endless worldly desires people have become strangers to the People today are keen to secure shortcuts for achieving anything. This is not so easy. "ANITYAM ASUKHAM LOKAM IDAM PRAAPYA BHAJASVA MAAM" (says Krishna in the Gita). "Having come down into this ephemeral and hapless world, worship Me." This world is impermanent and "a vale of tear" (ASUKHAM). Having taken birth in such a world, risen desire true and lasting happiness. When they do not get what they desire, they blame God. The world is governed by the rule: As you sow, so shall you reap. Only when you sow good seeds can you reap a good harvest. How can you hope to get sweet fruits by sowing poisonous seeds? If you want to enjoy good results, you have to perform good deeds.

Man today is dominated by selfishness and self-interest. Every action is based on selfish interests. Man has become a plaything in the hands of Selfishness. Consequently he has forfeited peace of mind.

Punya and papa

In life, everything has to be governed by restraints. These restraints should be for the purpose of directing life in the ideal path. Men desire the fruits of good deeds without doing good deeds and want to avoid the consequences of bad actions while indulging in them.

What, indeed, are meritorious (Punya) actions? Vyasa defined them as actions to help others. Causing harm to others is sinful. These are secular interpretations of the terms "Punya" and "Papa". Real "Punya" IS the endeavour to recognise one's true self. Although man is the embodiment of "Sat-Chit-Ananda" (Being-Awareness-Bliss) he is searching for them elsewhere. When man realises that the Bliss he seeks is within himself, that is "Punya" (Meritorious). This Ananda is within him and not in the external world. Whatever joy he may find in the external world is impermanent. "PAAPAYA PARAPIDANAM" ("To cause harm to others is sinful"). To realise that "The same Atma that is in all others is within me and is in all living beings" is "Punya". This "EKATMABHAVA" (spiritual oneness) is meritorious. To regard all beings as diverse in spirit is a sin. The sense of separateness is sinful. "That is full and this is full". This

real sin is to regard what is spiritually one as manifold and diverse.

Man is the embodiment of the Divine. All human bodies are animated by the same Spirit, like the current that makes all bulbs shed light. The Divine subsumes everything though invisible.

Realising the Divine

The Divine is omnipresent. The entire cosmos is permeated and sustained by this Divine energy. Everyone should endeavour to experience the Divine. Man must make the effort and lie is bound to realise the experience. The necessary sacrifice must be made. All the bad qualities have to be renounced the moment they invade the mind. True devotion means elimination of all the animal tendencies in man. Man should seek to realise the eternal Divine within him. That is the primary purpose of human life. All other accomplishments are valueless. Man should raise himself from the animal to the Divine. There is nothing great in earning a fortune. What one should seek is purity of the Self—that is the essence of human-ness.

Krishna and Narakasura

Today is described as Naraka Chaturdasi. What is Naraka? Whatever is associated with suffering is called Naraka. "KA" stands for bad qualities. "Naraka" means human life with bad qualities. That is a hellish life. How did Krishna deal with "Naraka"? Krishna is the Divine, one who attracts by His magnetic vibrations. These vibrations represent the Life Force. The Consciousness that animates the Life Force is known as Prajnanam, the source of radiation. When radiation and vibration are active in the body, you have the whole human being.

The bad qualities in man, in the form of "Narakasura", have to be destroyed. Krishna came to destroy these bad qualities. He enlisted the aid of Sathyabhama, who represents the bearer of Truth. This means that with the help of Truth, Krishna destroyed the bad qualities. Thyagaraja sang ecstatically about the glorious achievements of the Lord. On Deepavali day, people should pledge themselves to get rid of their bad qualities.

"There is no greater virtue than Truth." Truth is not limited to one nation or one people. It belongs to all mankind. Truth sustains the cosmos. Therefore Truth is God. Follow the path of Truth. Speak the truth. That is the foremost spiritual exercise.

Fight evil forces

Embodiments of Love! Your duty today is to destroy the demonic qualities in you. Evil thoughts and evil actions are rampant everywhere. You cannot remain a mere witness to these happenings. Placing your faith in God, you have to fight these evil forces as a human being. You have to demonstrate your human estate. You have to earn a name as a good man. That alone counts. All other acquisitions are worthless. Only a good man endures. Every moment of one's life should be devoted to practising righteousness (Dharma) and earning a good name (Keerti). Fill every cell in your body, with the spirit of Truth.

path of righteousness. Deepavali is celebrated today is a festival of lights, with the firing of crackers and display of fireworks. In olden days the ancients rejoiced over the destruction of the demon Narakasura and let off fireworks.

There is another meaning in the burning of crackers on Deepavali day. This is the rainy season. All kinds of germs fill the atmosphere. The smoke from the crackers destroys these germs. Thereby infectious diseases are controlled. The joy derived from the burning of crackers should really come from the elimination of bad qualities within one. For this, it is essential to meditate on God. Listen to Divine discourses. Participate in Bhajans.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the song: "*Bhijan Bina sukha santhi nahi!*"

(From Bhagavan's discourse in the Sai Kulwant Mandap on 23-10-95)

"You are the Atma, which is entangled in the body, a wave of Sathyam (Truth), Sivam (Goodness) and Sundaram (Beauty), playing on the Ocean of Sathyam (Truth), Sivam (Goodness) and Sundaram (Beauty), which is the lord."

—Baba

AVATAR VANI

Earn the Esteem of Society by Service

Embodiments of Love!

Human life is immensely precious. But this sacred life is haunted by troubles of various kinds in daily living. Life is like an ocean carrying waves of pleasure and pain. In his ordinary life man is driven by innumerable desires to seek worldly pleasures of various kinds. This precious life is rendered meaningless and worthless by the pursuit of these mundane desires.

The body is essential for living. Without it man cannot accomplish anything. Human life is a composite of body, mind, and spirit. But man today ignores the mind and spirit and wastes his life by preoccupation with the body alone.

The mind is the most important organ in the body. It is vital for doing anything. Man's life is based on the mind. The universe is filled with mental consciousness. The cosmos is rooted in the mind. The mind is a bundle of thoughts. Hence man has to purify the mind by sacred thoughts. Only when he has noble thoughts he can lead an ideal life. Out of thoughts are born the desires. Desires activate the mind. Hence it is necessary to keep desires under control.

Society tends to look askance at persons with physical disabilities. But limbs are not so very important. What is more essential is a pure mind. If all one's limbs are perfect, but if one's mind is impure, of what use are the limbs?

However, man can achieve what he desires, only if all the limbs in the body are in good shape. Man should make good use of all his organs; to lead an ideal life. Every living being has come into existence for a purpose. Hence everyone should strive to use his body for the purpose for which he has been endowed with it.

Through the body alone can Dharma be achieved, declares the scripture. The body is given to man to carry out his duties in life (Dharma). Men today tend to use the body for eating and sleeping, without recognising the duties they have to perform. Should men live like beasts and birds, with no higher aim than eating, mating and sleeping? There is in man an immortal spirit, whose presence should be realised.

Service and Humanness

People pursue various studies, engage themselves in various activities, but make no attempt to understand what is humanness. Of what use is knowledge, wealth and position if man ignores his essential eternal spiritual reality? Every man's life should be dedicated to the service of others.

*Na thapamsi na theerthanam
Na thanthrani, japaanapi
Samsara saga rothare
Sajjana sevanam vina*

"Neither penance, nor baths in sacred waters, neither rituals nor Japa (Chanting of the divine name) will help one to cross the ocean of Samsara (the ocean of worldly life) without service to good persons."

Whatever pilgrimages one may perform, whatever yagas and japas one may do, without using the body in the service of others no one can achieve liberation. Every one should be prepared to serve and be served. This body has been given so that one may serve others (Sever) and not lord it over them (Nayakatwam).

Service is the supreme aim in life. Everyone should seek to redeem his life by service to his fellow-human beings. Render service to the extent of your capacity.

How can anyone be called human, if being born a human being and growing in a human society, he does not recognise human values? You must see that you don't harm any living being. "He alone is a redeemed being who causes no pain to others and avoids pain to himself. (Telugu poem)

Those who are handicapped need not lament over their plight. They should develop good qualities. People today worry about their possessions, positions and associates, but not about their virtues. What is the value of riches, acquaintances and positions? There is need for a certain amount of material possessions. But excessive wealth is harmful. Of what use are fair-weather-friends who surround you when you have money and position, but desert you when you lose them? God alone is an unfailing friend, who is with you at all times and protects you. When you cultivate such an attitude you can face any situation in life.

At birth all are pure and innocent. But as they grow, they develop arrogance, pride and ostentation. But this is not proper. People should cultivate humility and discipline, which are the hall-mark of humanness. Humanness means harmony in thought, word and deed. The absence of this harmony is degrading. Men should learn to respect one another. The Divine is present in everyone. Strive to make others happy as far as possible.

Everyone should manifest his divine essence as a spark of the Divine. It is a fruit of many lives to be born as a human being. Man must lead an exemplary life. Education and wealth are good in themselves, but when they are misused they become harmful. The fault lies in the conduct of the persons concerned. Humanness consists in leading a life free from egoism and acquisitiveness.

Control of the tongue

Every man should recognise what it is to be human. He should realise that his tongue, eyes, ears and other organs are given to him to glorify God, not to disparage and cause hurt to others. Jayadeva exhorted his tongue to revel in singing the greatness of the Lord. This is the task before every one. He should keep his tongue under control, serve society with dedication and lead a worthy life. Life is essentially transient. Hence while life lasts, one must earn the esteem and regard of one's fellowmen. One should not waste one's life. It must be filled with bliss. This is the true path for everyone.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan: "*Hari Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahi*". The vast gathering joined Bhagavan in singing the bhajan with full-throated fervour.

From Bhagavan's discourse in the Sai Kulwant Mandap on October 1, 1995

A Gift of Peace to Former Yugoslavia

Is it yet another miracle of Bhagavan Baba? For a group of Sai devotees who had come from the new states—which, came into existence after the break-up of the former Yugoslavia—the states of Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (made up of Serbia and Montenegro) and Macedonia—to attend the Sixth World Conference of Sai Organisations, what happened in Prasanthi Nilayam was an unforgettable experience. This is the account, as given, by them to "Sanathana Sarathi".

We devotees from the new states (of Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, FR. Yugoslavia and Macedonia), all parts of former Yugoslavia found ourselves in Prasanthi Nilayam, for the occasion of the 6th, World Conference and Bhagavan's Birthday. Very often we spent our time together, although some of our countries are at war and some (Bosnia and Croatia) were heavily devastated, millions exiled and a great number of people perished.

We decided to plant a tree of peace together. Then a search for a tree began, as well as a place to plant it. Somehow we could not find neither a plant nor a place. We could not understand why.

But, everything was solved on the day of Baba's Birthday. A tender sapling of an olive tree was brought and we were given a place near the Hanuman idol in the small park in front of the Mandir.

On 23rd November, 1995, at 3 P.M. we gathered to plant, our precious tree. This was done to the accompaniment of Christian, Muslim and Hindu prayers and songs. Each member of the planting party poured water on the little olive plant with his or her own hands.

In the evening of the same day we heard incredible news concerning our warring countries. On the 22nd November; a peace treaty had been signed, in New York, and on the 23rd November; the sanctions were suspended.

Our Lord has chosen His own Birthday to give us this gift and we are happy that He made us instruments of His message of peace.

XIV CONVOCATION OF S.S.S.I.H.L.

Dr. Manmohan Singh Lauds Bhagavan's Global Mission

"In our own time, Bhagavan Baba, with his emphasis on Dharma, right moral conduct, and the fundamental unity of human relationship is preparing humankind for the new universal civilisation of love and brotherhood. The lamp lit by Bhagavan is no ordinary lamp. I am confident that the light it emits is powerful enough to reach every nook and corner of the world", observed Dr. Manmohan Singh, Finance Minister, Government of India, in his address to the Fourteenth Convocation of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, on November 22, in the Vidyagiri Stadium.

A vast gathering of devotees from all parts of the world was present in the Stadium, besides the candidates for the various degrees and the staff and students of the three campuses of the university. The magnificent amphitheatre, with its many galleries and the artistic stage, presented an impressive spectacle, while the statues of Hanuman, Siva, Jesus, and Zoroaster seemed to

celebrations and the Santhi Vedika had been specially decorated for the occasion.

Precisely at 3.30 p.m. Bhagavan Baba, the Chancellor of the Institute, the Chief Guest; Dr. Manmohan Singh, Sri S. B. Chavan, Union Home Minister, the Vice-Chancellor, Dr. K. Hanumanthappa, Members of the Governing Body of the Institute and Members of the Academic council, arrived at the Stadium and went in ceremonial procession to the Santhi Vedika. The Institute Band Troupe, in their gleaming white and red uniforms, marched in front. The Registrar, Dr. A. V. Lakshminarasimham, carrying the silver mace, led the academic procession.

After the Chancellor and others had taken their seats on the dais, the proceedings commenced with the chanting of Vedic hymns by students of the Institute. Bhagavan Baba, the Chancellor, declared the Convocation open.

Vice-chancellor's address

Offering his loving salutations to Bhagavan Baba, and welcoming the Chief Guest and others, Dr. Hanumanthappa said, "Nowhere else is a Convocation of this magnitude held, where people from the world around are present and where unity in diversity can be seen in real practice". Extending a welcome to Dr. Manmohan Singh, Dr. Hanumanthappa described his brilliant academic career and his career in the Government, culminating in his role as Finance Minister.

The Vice-Chancellor gave an account of the achievements of the Institute over the past fourteen years. The latest additions to its academic courses are a Master's course in Financial Management and an M. Tech course in Computer Science (Applied Optics).

Research projects undertaken by the Faculty and Research Scholars have been of local and national relevance. Their research articles have appeared in professional journals of national and international repute. The Vice-Chancellor said: "All these achievements are due to the inspiring guidance of the revered Chancellor, who is the Founder, Sustainer and Promoter of the ideals of this University". He offered the loving and respectful homage of the students, faculty and staff members of the Institute to Bhagavan Baba on the auspicious occasion of His 79th Birthday.

He expressed his thanks to the Ministry of Human Resource Development, the University Grants Commission and the All-India Council of Technical Education for the help, guidance and co-operation extended by them to the Institute.

Prof. U.S. Rao, Principal, Prasanthi Nilayam Campus, presented to the Chancellor, the candidates for various degrees to be awarded at the Convocation. 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 all the new graduates. Dr. A. V. Lakshminarasimham then presented the gold medalists and Ph.D. awardees to the Chancellor. Each one of them went up to the stage and received his degree and the medal at the hands of the Chancellor.

Dr. Manmohan Singh's Address

Dr. Manmohan Singh in his convocation address expressed his gratitude to Bhagavan Baba for having conferred on him the honour of addressing the Convocation. He commended the system of integral education attempted at the Sathya Sai, University. "It is in tune with the Greek and Indian thought that upheld the unity of body, mind and spirit of man. Education, as maintained by all these traditions, does not imply putting knowledge into the mind, but training the students to see things for themselves. Students should be trained to think for themselves in their quest for Self-realisation and social harmony".

He congratulated the new graduates for their privilege of studying under the direction and guidance of Bhagavan Baba, in a holistic programme of education with its emphasis on Sathya, Marina, Santhi, Prema and Ahimsa in the contemporary setting. "These are the very ideals which India and the world need to live up to, so as to build a new commonwealth of brotherhood and a world order free from the fear of war, want and exploitation".

The acquisitive society

Referring to the unprecedented changes brought about by scientific and technological knowledge, he said: This in turn has forced social, economic and political institutions everywhere to adjust and adapt themselves to the fast changing environmental conditions. Advancement in science and technology can eradicate chronic poverty, ignorance and disease, reduce drudgery and provide leisure for the pursuit of culture and the arts. However, the sheer rapidity of technological changes makes the modern world an uncomfortable and an unfulfilling place to live. People in advanced countries suffer from a feeling of social isolation and erosion of bonds of neighbourly interdependence. The advertisement-driven irresistible pressure for more and more consumer goods is contributing to the breakup of the family system, neglect of children and older people and increased mental stress among women who have to combine their maternal responsibilities with earning a living. The modern acquisitive society often prevents human beings from cultivating the warm, affiliative side of human nature. Furthermore, the ever-increasing demand for more and more material goods and services poses a serious threat to the environment and the ecological stability of our planet.

The spiritual vacuum

The sheer rapidity of change is breeding new feelings of uncertainty and insecurity among the people. There is an increasing distrust of governments as they fail to meet the rising 'aspirations of their people. The march of science and technology should normally weaken the forces of obscurantism and dogmatism. However, the growing feelings of insecurity, uncertainty and deprivation are encouraging the rise of religious fundamentalism of a perverse kind which claims an exclusive monopoly of knowledge and wisdom and emphasises uniformity rather than harmony. There is a spiritual vacuum. The world is highly dissatisfied with the existing order. Yet the new order is still to be born.

"We cannot disown the use of modern science and technology to improve human conditions; but we must evolve patterns of economic and social organisation and human behaviour which do not

with a new spiritual awakening so that increased material well-being and leisure are not wasted in costly excitements catering to the needs of the body, but become important means to rekindle the higher impulses both for self-perfection and social cohesion based on the dignity of the individual human being, compassion, tolerance, gentleness, truthfulness and non-violence. If successfully accomplished, this mission might enable India to make a powerful contribution to the evolution of a truly universal human civilization of the future based on reason and morality, a synthesis of science and spirituality".

Relevance of Baba's mission

It is in this regard, Dr Singh observed, that Bhagavan Baba's mission is of immediate relevance. "With His emphasis on Dharma, right moral conduct, and the fundamental unity of human relationship, Bhagavan Baba is preparing humankind for the new universal civilization of love and brotherhood." Dr. Singh concluded his address with Tagore's famous lines on the sort of future he desired for free India.

Bhagavan's address

Bhagavan Baba began his address with a song that extolled the glory of education. Education today is in a state of confusion. It does not promote the creativity of a student nor develop his character. It has become commercialised. Character, morality, integrity, and sacrifice are no more the outcome of education.

Bhagavan held out Sibi and Harishchandra as role models for the students. He wanted the parents and teachers to serve as exemplary models to students. A student should become a true Bharatiya or HINDU—full of humility, individuality, nationality, divinity and unity.

After Bhagavan's discourse, the National Anthem was played by the Institute Band, to mark the end of the Convocation.

In the evening at 6.30 pm. students of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning presented a play "Glory of Sai", in English on Bhagavan Baba's mission. It was interspersed with songs set to melodious music.