

A Happy, Holy and Blissful New Year

As we ring out the ‘old’ and ring in the ‘new’ we cannot help but recapitulate what a fantastic year the last one has been! February ’97 saw the celebrations of the Chinese New Year (for the first time in Prasanthi Nilayam) emphasising the message of **Unity in Divinity**. Just before the joyful Gurupoornima in July, we felt the youthful exuberance of the First International Youth Conference. In September, after the thrilling Paduka festival, in which a record number of 2016 couples took part, we had the installation of Sri Subramanya Statue on the 21st, followed by the most auspicious Golden Chariot Ceremony on the very next day when Bhagavan blessed all by giving darshan from atop the Golden Chariot as predicted in the *Suka Naadi*. In October there was the most auspicious *Veda Purusha Jnana Yajna Saptah* followed by *Vijyadashmi* celebrations, when the Sri Sathya Sai Drinking Water Project was handed over by Swami to the Andhra Pradesh Government. The sound and blaze of Deepavali (celebrated on 1st November) had hardly faded when we were all witness to yet another thrilling Birthday Celebrations (for Bhagavan’s 72nd Birthday on 23rd November ’97). In December, the Christmas festivities regaled one and all with music and drama, on the 24th and 25th. And there was more to come yet! Yes, the Sri Sathya Sai Unity Cup Cricket Match played on the newly built Sri Sathya Sai Hill View Stadium with world-class cricket players displaying their talents in the true spirit of the game. The ‘golden’ year came to a glorious end with the awarding of the pure gold Unity Cup by Bhagavan to the Captain of India XI, Sachin Tendulkar. So the year started with **Unity in Divinity** and very aptly ended with **Unity through Cricket**!

On the New Year Day morning every heart was overflowing with bliss during Bhagavan’s glorious darshan. A musical programme of devotional songs was presented by Sai Students. Then Bhagavan blessed all present with special New Year Message on Divine Love and then came the special New Year gifts (a beautiful and handy pocket telephone diary, a month-at-a-glance set of pocket calendars in a plastic cover and a book-mark-yearly calendar for 1998) and laddu prasadam for all.

We ring in the ‘new’ (1998) wondering if it will top the last year—and yet somehow knowing that with Bhagavan amongst us, it surely will! We wish all our readers a happy, holy and blissful New Year!

—K. K.

Another Glorious Christmas with Bhagavan

It is truly a gift from Bhagavan that we were able to spend the Christmas with Him. Christmas is traditionally spent with the Christ Child in the Four Corners of the world, but in Puttaparthi—which has become another Bethlehem, it has become uniquely holy and glorious.

The joyous season began when Swami was asked, “May we have a Christmas programme?” “Yes”, replied Bhagavan. “Very Happy! Very Happy!” His joy was so infectious that everyone just wanted to please the Lord. On the 14th of December, Swami was presented with the Christmas Programme. He read and approved it.

The clarion call went out. We need plays, music, directors, artists, seva dals, prop men, singers, musicians, childcare workers, children etc. Everyone was invited to participate in the miracle of Christmas '97 at Prasanthi.

The spiritual tone was set by the talk given to the overseas devotees by the Christmas committee Chairperson. The message was simply that it was important for us to work together in unity, with love.

For those who have not had this Blessed Experience, I want to share with them the incredible miracle that happens at Prasanthi Nilayam each Christmas.

Miracles Galore

To begin with, it is the only festival that takes place in Prasanthi that has no prior preparation. We start each year from scratch. Bhagavan Baba begins to fill our Christmas stockings, not with toys or sweets, but with daily miracles and enables the Christmas Programme to be completed in about seven days. It is a memorable experience for each of us as we get involved in the work.

What is the Christmas programme? We present a musical programme on Christmas eve. Now, that does not sound like such a great challenge. But, the music must be selected, and since there are no sheet music, the notes must be written for the instruments and as there are no written words for the singers so they are also hand written. When we have 500 singers, so many speaking different languages like Spanish, Italian, German, Japanese, Russian etc., they have to learn the songs in English and vice-versa. They have one week to practice and the director must teach with love, patience and determination to make the best concert they can for the evening. It is about a one-hour programme. Many voices from many nations, must all learn to sing together as one. What a great lesson for all from Swami who teaches us, *"We are All One; Be Alike to Everyone."*

The next event is a children's Christmas Play. This calls for the co-operation of many devotees. A play is selected and the children are auditioned. Then they need costumes, props, make-up, speaking voices, singing voices. All this is learned and created in one week, because Bhagavan is the doer.

Sai Baba throughout this week sprinkles on the devotees His "Ego Cleansing Formula, and Obstacle Course", and places these substances in a pressure-cooker of limited time to produce an intense cleansing, spiritual practice and gigantic learning experiences. Baba tells us, "My tests are opportunities for promotion. If you do not have many opportunities for promotion you should be worried. If you pass my tests, you become closer to God." The leaders of the Christmas Programme spend an enormous amount of time helping others through these tests, with love and understanding.

Bhagavan's Tests

What are the tests like here? For example, we have difficulty in selecting a play that is suitable for this setting. So one was being written and re-written, this was eating up time and delaying the work on producing the play. Instead of a week to select, produce and rehearse the play we had only five days. We had fifty seamstresses and 173 costumes to make in 5 days but we had no

sewing machines. The village people rented us their machines to help make this a beautiful Christmas for Sai. The lady in charge of the costumes went into the village to buy bolts of material, and asked the shopkeeper if she could get her stitching needles, thread and sewing machine needles. At that very moment the shopkeeper pointed to a man who just pulled up on his bicycle. He had two bags hanging on his bike, with thread stitching needles, and sewing machine needles. By the time the costumes were drawn and designed, materials purchased, the actual sewing was done in two and a half days. That is a miracle indeed. When there is an obstacle, we pray to Swami asking for His help, and it comes in mysterious ways.

SRI SATHYA SAI UNITY CUP

Bhagavan Sanctifies Cricket

December 30, 1997, has become yet another Red-Letter-Day in the annals of Sathya Sai Era. On that day, a one day cricket match of a kind never witnessed before in the history of cricket, was played in the Sri Sathya Sai Hill View Cricket Stadium in the presence of Bhagavan Baba by an India XI and International XI witnessed by an immense gathering and enthusiastic devotees, with the inspiring figure of saints and gods watching the scene from Vidyagiri Hill.

It was truly a unique event in cricket history.

The seeds for the historic Sri Sathya Sai Unity Cup Match were sown during Swami's 70th Birthday celebrations in November '95. Once the idea had been accepted and approved, probably during the sports meet in January '97, a few stalwarts like Sunil Gavaskar, Erapalli Prasanna, G. R. Viswanath, Alvin Kallicharan jointly rose to the occasion and spared no time and effort to ensure that the match went off without any hitch.

Within a short period of few months, the brown, dusty and rocky ground of Sri Sathya Sai Hill View Stadium was converted into a lush green cricket ground international specifications, with a true pitch laid and supervised by Sri C. Kasturi Rangan of Karnataka Cricket Association and having added facilities of a modern pavilion and viewing stands on the Eastern side (built in recorded time by ECC, the construction wing of Larson and Toubro Ltd.)

Bhagavan Baba visited the Stadium almost everyday for many weeks to see that everything was in perfect order for the great event. He paid meticulous attention to every detail relating to the day's programme. Among the arrangements for the inaugural ceremony was the march-past by students carrying the flags of various countries, headed by a group of students from the Secondary School in their gleaming white uniforms, playing marching tunes. Strenuous training for the programme was given by Air Chief Marshal N. C. Suri (Retd.) who saw to it that the marching was done with perfect precision.

A fore-runner match was played on 7th December '97 to check all systems and facilities (Reported in the December issue.).

Opening Ceremony

The big day arrived with a clear blue sky, mild sunlight and a cool breeze over the emerald green ground. Enthusiastic crowds had started pouring in from the early morning for the eventful day. After everyone had settled down in their places, Bhagavan arrived in His open white car a little after 8.30 a.m. Students of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning who were the hosts of the match, carried flags of 86 countries in front of Swami's car with the Institute flag being the last. When Swami had reached the Santhi Vedika stage, the students carrying the flags of different countries ran up the slope on the eastern hill side and put the flags in their respective stands. Next, a group of six specially selected MBA students ceremoniously carried the Sri Sathya Sai Unity Flag (a rectangular flag with the Sarva Dharma symbol in the centre and miniature flags of 124 countries on all the four sides). The flag was hoisted by Sri I. K. Gujaral, Prime Minister of India, amidst loud cheering and clapping. Then Bhagavan lighted the Unity torch-light, it was first carried by student athletes to the base of Vidyagiri Hill and from there it went up to the hill top with a specially made big white dove, which symbolised World Unity and Peace amongst all nations. The march was formally opened when the Unity Flame was lighted with the torch, lit earlier by Bhagavan.

The opening ceremony was special on two counts. Firstly, the lighting of the Unity Flame with the torch lit by the divine hands of Bhagavan Baba. Secondly, the hoisting of the Sri Sathya Sai Unity Flag by the Prime Minister in the presence of Bhagavan. Bhagavan Himself has said that lighting of the Unity Flame was very important. So far as the hoisting of the Unity Flag is concerned, it has been predicted in the *Suka Naadi* that the world consciousness would move towards overall goodness after the Yuga-Avatar gets such a flag hoisted at the end of 1997. Therefore all those who saw the unique opening ceremony of Sri Sathya Sai Unity Cup Cricket Match were witnesses to an epoch-making event in human history.

Apart from the Prime Minister, among the special invitees present on the dais were Sri Chandra Babu Naidu and Sri J. H. Patel, Chief Ministers of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka and Sri Lakshman Khadirgamar, Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka.

The Teams

The final composition of the India XI and International XI was as under:

India XI

Sachin Tendulkar (Captain)
Saurav Ganguly
Ajay Jadeja (Vice-captain)
Rahul Dravid
Sairaj Bahutule
M. S. K. Prasad (Wicket Keeper)
Sunil Joshi
Anil Kumble
Harvinder Singh
Venkatesh Prasad
Sujith Somasunder
Debashish Mohanty (twelfth man)

International XI

Arjuna Ranatunga (Captain) (Sri Lanka)
Sanat Jayasurya (Sri Lanka)
Shahid Afridi (Pakistan)
Saeed Anwar (Pakistan)
Aravinda D'Silva (Sri Lanka)
Sanjeeva Ranatunga (Sri Lanka)
Moin Khan (Wicket Keeper) (Pakistan)
Dougie Brown (England)
Saqlain Mushtaq (Pakistan)
Muthiah Murlitharan (Sri Lanka)
Chaminda Vaas (Sri Lanka)
Aminul Islam (twelfth man) (Bangladesh)

The Umpires were M/S Ramaswami, Parthasarathi and Murali.

The Match

The Captain of International XI won the toss and elected to field.

The highlights of the innings of India XI, who batted first, were scintillating knock of 77 by Ajay Jadeja and a steady 62 by Rahul Dravid. The 'icing on the cake ' was a quick-fire 88 by Sachin Tendulkar (which included 6 sixes and 6 fours). India XI piled up a good total of 289 in the stipulated 45 overs.

The international XI started well in their reply with the unique opening pair of Sanat Jayasurya and Shahid Afridi (the two fastest openers in One-Day Cricket) putting up 35 runs for the opening stand. But after these two openers were out, International XI lost some quick wickets and were at 153 for 5 in 22 overs. They were eventually all out for 165 runs in 26 overs. Their main scorers were Arjuna Ranatunga (64), Sanat Jayasurya (45) and Sanjeeva Ranatunga (19).

Bhagavan witnessed the whole India XI batting in the pre-lunch session and was back at a little past 2 p.m. to see the batting of International XI. Everyone present in the ground, including Bhagavan, thoroughly enjoyed this rare and unique cricket match, which was played in the spirit of **Unity** and **Universal Comradeship**.

The spectators were all wearing similar sun-shades and waving similar flags (with the messages, 'Sri Sathya Sai Unity Cup' and 'Life is a Game, Play it' colourfully printed on them).

Lunch packets containing sumptuous meal (including a sweet) and drinking water were distributed by students and Seva Dal volunteers during the break, after the India XI innings got over.

An entertainment song and dance programme was put up on the ground by colourfully dressed children of Sri Sathya Sai Primary School during the lunch-break.

The standard of the game and the spirit of complete harmony in which this match was played will surely linger for a long time in the minds of all who saw the match in Sri Sathya Sai Hill View Stadium and on Television (Doordarshan Channels No. 1 and 9).

Honouring of Invitees and Prize Distribution:

Special invitees and players of both the teams were given specially made big silver cups by Bhagavan during a glittering ceremony at the end of the match. Mr. Hanif Mohammed, Mr. Clive Lloyd and Mr. Sunil Gavaskar spoke before the prize distribution. They all appreciated the excellent pitch and ground and thanked Bhagavan for arranging such a wonderful match in Prasanthi Nilayam.

The following invitees were given a big cup each by Bhagavan.

Mr. Clive Lloyd, Mr. Hanif Mohammed, Mr. Zaheer Abbas, Mr. Syed Kirmani, Mr. Erapalli Prasanna, Mr. Alvin Kallicharan, Mr. G. R. Viswanath (all world renowned ex-players), Mr. Lakshman Khadirgamar, Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka, Mr. J. Y. Lele, Secretary, Board of Control for Cricket in India, Mr. C. Nagaraj, Former Secretary, Board of Control for Cricket in India, Mr. N. Venkata Rao, Vice President, Board of Control for Cricket in India, Mr. C. Kasturi Rangan of Karnataka State Cricket Association (who was the curator of the excellent pitch).

Next Bhagavan gave similar cups to all the players and reserve players of both the teams.

The exciting function came to a befitting close by Bhagavan awarding the 20 Kg pure-gold Sri Sathya Sai Unity Cup to the Captain of the winning India XI, Sachin Tendulkar, amidst loud cheering and thunderous clapping by everyone present. Thus the grand function came to a close.

Mr. Sunil Gavaskar was presented a cup by Bhagavan during the next morning darshan.

Game of Cricket and Game of Life

Bhagavan had very meaningfully selected the slogan, '**Life is a Game, Play it**' because of the similarities between the game of cricket and the game of life. In both, the game is played more with the mind than with the body. Both require very quick responses to unexpected situations and are based on sharp and timely decisions.

It happens that cricket has been selected by Bhagavan as the right game to be played at the international level in Prasanthi Nilayam, in His presence, because of its unique features involving leadership qualities, team-spirit, robustness, discipline, stamina, skill and adherence to proper rules and regulations to the game. It is felt that all these go a long way to ensuring an integrated and balanced educational system.

Life is a Game, Play it!
Life is a Challenge, Meet it!
Life is Love, Enjoy it!
Life is a Dream, Realise it!
Life is Awareness!

—Baba

Dedicate Your Lives to the Divine

*Faith, Daring, Courage and Intelligence,
Energy and Valour—wherever
These six qualities exist
Divine protection is assured.*

Embodiments of Love!

Vishvasam (faith or confidence), *Sahasam* (daring or determination), *Dhairyam* (courage), *Buddhi* (intelligence), *Shakti* (energy) and *Parakramam* (valour)—when a man has these six qualities, the Divine will stand by him in all his endeavours. In any age or at any place or in any circumstance, these six qualities are essential. No worry will haunt any man who has these six virtues.

These six qualities cannot be acquired by education. Nor can they be imparted by any preceptor. Nor can they be inherited from one's parents.

These qualities are secured only by Self-confidence (*Atma-vishvasam*).

The first among the six qualities is (*Vishvasam*). In our daily experience faith is evident from the simple act of posting a letter. No one will send a letter by post if he did not have faith in the postal department. The address and the postage stamp on the letter are unaffected by the distance. Likewise, God makes no distinction between those near to Him or remote from Him. One's faith should be properly addressed. The faith should be unwavering, total and free from doubts of any kind. The letter of faith has also to carry the stamp of Love (*Prema*). It should be self-less love. When the faith is associated with unselfish love, the prayers addressed to Bhagavan are bound to reach Him.

This kind of faith has become rare nowadays. Self-confidence is totally absent. How can one without confidence in himself have faith in God? And how can such a person hope for God's grace? Hence every man must cultivate firm faith.

Today in every field, firm faith is essential. Anyone who leaves home for his office sets out with the confidence that he will return home in the evening. No one will embark on an undertaking unless at the outset he has the confidence that he can do the job. Faith is thus essential for every activity in life.

The ancient sages accomplished many great things by their faith. Their achievements are cherished by people today even after thousands of years.

Unfortunately, because of the influence of Kali in the present age, faith is declining from moment to moment.

People change their beliefs constantly. Such changes are mental aberrations. They do not pertain to the Spirit (which dwells in the heart).

Human Values

Mankind has a history of lakhs of years. But humanity is yet to realise the greatness of humanness. After all these years, man is still unable to answer the question: "What are human values?"

Men study books, listen to discourses, experience gains and losses, joys and sorrows, but all these do not give them a firm hold on what is permanent in life. If they had acquired this hold they would have realised that the world is one family.

The Vedas taught the concept of one human family. The Vedas declared that the Cosmic Principle (*Brihath*) has no limit. It is infinite.

Mankind has also no bounds or barriers. In fact, there are no barriers between humanity and every other species of living beings like birds, beasts and insects and even trees. All of them belong to a single family of living beings.

In the Tree of Life, man appears in many forms—as animals, as birds and insects. In all these forms he experiences his divine essence.

You are all aware of the fact that Ganapati has two mothers, Gauri and Ganga. For every man there are four mothers. The first mother is (*Sathyam*). The second mother is Righteousness (*Dharmam*). The third is Love (*Prema*). The fourth is Peace (*Santhi*). Man must live in such a manner that he pleases all the four mothers. Man, however, has given up these four sacred mothers and adores four others who are adopted mothers. Who are they? Injustice, immorality, unrighteousness and falsehood—these are adopted mothers. As a result, man is prey to many difficulties. Man who ought to adhere to Truth, Right Conduct and Love, has become a creature of injustice, wickedness and untruth. As a result of abandoning one's natural relationships man is leading a polluted life and forfeiting peace.

In an earlier aeon Rama declared that the mother and the motherland are greater than Heaven itself. But man today has given up his natural mother and is adoring meretricious mothers. In no circumstance should he cause any pain to these four because that will result in greater suffering for him.

The six enemies

The creator has endowed man with numerous marvellous qualities. Besides the six virtues mentioned earlier man has also got six vices. The opposites of the six virtues are Desire (*kama*), Anger (*Krodha*), Greed (*Lobha*), Fascination (*Moha*), Pride (*Mada*) and Envy (*Matsarya*). These are known as the six enemies of man. They are part of creation. The mind is the master of these vices. Man tries to train the mind to overcome these vices. But this is not easy for all. The reason is that, being unaware of how to control the mind, man becomes an easy prey to its vagaries. Everyone should strive to find out how to use the mind in any situation, at any time and in any circumstance.

Men today are dominated by three evil qualities: anger, hatred and envy. These three qualities poison the mind of man. Consequently, every action of man gets poisoned. Every word he utters is venomous. All actions done by the promptings of the mind are tainted. All sensory actions are equally polluted.

The Power of Love

To transform these evil thoughts and actions into good ones, it is necessary to infuse love into all thoughts and actions. When the mind is filled with Love, all actions get suffused with Love.

Today man is totally unaware of what is meant by Love. Man equates desire with Love. He imagines that whatever he yearns for, is prompted by Love. This is not true love (*Prema*). *Prema* is totally free from desire. It is utterly selfless. It seeks no return. It is all—encompassing. It makes no distinction between friend and foe.

Forgetting this concept of universal selfless love, filling himself with selfish desires, man fancies that he is filled with Love. This is mundane attachment. It is quite apart from the Love that flows from the Spirit inside. Spiritual Love is boundless. It is free from feeling of hatred. It is capable of expressing itself in universal terms.

It is vital to fill the mind with Love and expel the six enemies residing in it. Every part of the body should be filled with Divine Love. That is the way to divinise man.

Many people imagine that to divinise man and make him Godly being is a superhuman exercise. This is not so. Divine Love is within the competence of man. It is natural to man. He is entitled to possess it. Divine Love should not be considered as something transcendental or alien to man. But men tend to degrade this love by giving it different forms and names and degrade themselves.

The defect lies in the perversion of Love and is not inherent in it. Convert anger into Love. Turn hatred into Love. To effect this change what is needed is a change of heart—filling it with Love. When the heart is filled with Love, the whole world becomes loveable.

The mind is restless and fickle. All troubles that afflict man stem from the mind. The thoughts arising from the mind are the cause of human birth.

Dharma and Seva

The Vedas describe man as *Manuja*. This implies that man takes birth to experience fulfillment of his desires. Hence, it is necessary for man to make his desires sublime. He should seek to know what can make his life ideal and exemplary. What can contribute to the well being of society? What is ideal for the whole world? Thinking over these questions, one should develop sublime ideas. People should not act in haste on every impulse of the mind. It is said that the body is a prerequisite for the achievement of righteousness. But it is important to note that man is endowed with a body to render service to others. The implication of the two dicta is that while discharging his duties, man should also render service to others.

There are many number of helpful services to be rendered by men in the world to day. We have here three types of devotees. There are those who are not conscious of their abilities. There are a second type of devotees who seek God alone and do not desire anything else from God. The third type are those who adore God as the embodiment of Truth and get their wishes fulfilled by their prayers to Him as the omnipotent Lord. God is one. But He can be worshipped under different names and forms by devotees.

The Seen and the Unseen

Man has no need to seek for anything outside him. He has the universe within him in his heart. He is potentially the Cosmic Being. He has in him the magnetic power of attraction. It is derived from the Divine. Every atom has this divine power. Men think that only what is perceived by the senses is real and what is beyond human perception is unreal. This is wrong. It is the unseen that contains everything. When you see a man, you consider his physical features as the only reality about him. But you can have no conception of his powers and talents which are not visible externally. He has Compassion, Love, the Spirit of Sacrifice, Sublime thoughts, none of which are apparent to you. For that reason, can you say that they do not exist? Likewise the secret of a man's actions may not be apparent. A flower, for instance, has fragrance, which has no visible form. The form of fragrances is to be found in the form of the flower. Without the flower there is no fragrance. It is said that love (*Prema*) has no form. But love has a form. The mother, who loves her child, expresses the form of love.

Likewise, everything has a form. But the ignorant, not aware of the truth, declare that what is formless is non-existent. There is nothing in the universe which is without form. For one to understand this truth, he has to realise that the Divine exists in the microcosm and the macrocosm.

Jesus' Message

There were controversies regarding Jesus. These differences were the cause of the ordeals he had to go through. But Jesus was prepared to face any trouble or penalty. He considered compassion as the supreme quality. At first, he declared he was a **"messenger of God."** Then, he announced: **"I am the Son of God."** Ultimately he declared: **"I and My Father are One."** You must take note of this oneness. You must proclaim your oneness and not your diversity.

Today people talk about unity but do not practice it.

In every discourse speaks about love. How many practice it? How many have tried to understand the Love Principle? Who has this Love? Love is not to be seen anywhere.

Purity and Divinity

Where there is Love there is no room for hatred. Do not be envious of anyone. When this evil quality appears, Love takes to flight. A pure heart is the abode of Love. Where there is Purity, there is unity. Unity leads to Divinity.

Today Purity is absent. How, then, do you realise Divinity? You must offer everything to God without any Desire. Dedicate your all to God. This was the teaching of Jesus. He considered everything as an offering to God.

When he was being nailed on the cross, people around were weeping. At that moment an ethereal voice declared: **“All are one, My dear Son! Be alike to everyone.”** Jesus declared: **“Death is the dress of life.”** Just as we change clothes, we change also our bodies. The bodies are vestures (for the indwelling Spirit). Hence bodies should be regarded as mere vestures. We should not worry about the body.

Buddha’s Advice

Buddha also, before he attained Nirvana, expounded his teachings clearly. His stepmother’s son, Ananda was in tears at that time. Buddha told him: “Ananda! You should not shed tears like this. Why are you weeping?” Ananda said: “I am grieving over your imminent passing.” Buddha declared: “I am not dying. Nor are you living. All have to give up this body. Therefore, you must not shed tears.”

How many heed such sayings? You must learn to lead ideal lives. That is the right way to observe the Birthday of Christ. Few care to observe the ideals of the great teachers.

You must realise that there is nothing more divine than Love. Love God. Live in Love. This is your duty. Fill your hearts with Love. You will then be free from all afflictions.

You may feel that you are suffering because of love. But that suffering is due to constricted love. When your love is all embracing there will be no room for suffering.

Towards the end of his life Ramakrishna Paramahansa was suffering from cancer of the throat. All the disciples appealed to him to pray to the Mother (*Durga Devi*), whom Ramakrishna worshipped, to relieve him of his malady. Ramakrishna said: “I have prayed to the Mother.” They asked him what the Mother’s response was. Ramakrishna said: “The Mother told me: When I am eating so many things with so many mouths, does it matter very much if you are unable to eat with your one mouth? Her words opened my eyes.”

All mouths are the mouths of God. The Vedas proclaim that the Divine has a myriad heads and a myriad eyes and myriad feet. This means that all heads are His, all eyes are His and all feet are His. God is infinite. Man is finite. The infinite Divine must be loved with boundless Love. God’s Love is limitless and undiminishing. It is ever pure and unsullied. You must serve everyone with a loving heart.

(Bhagavan then referred to the service activities of the old alumni of the Sathya Sai Women’s College at Anantapur. Bhagavan’s remarks are published separately.)

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with a reference to the crucifixion of Christ. Christ was the victim of envious persons who were opposed to His teachings and who levelled accusations against Him. Devotees of God should not mind the criticism of envious persons. All good people

have to face such troubles. They should treat everything as meant for their good. This is how the Pandavas looked upon all the troubles they experienced.

Yesterday and today the overseas devotees filled everyone with joy with their music programmes. God is a lover of music and enjoys music. Sainly devotees like Narada and Tumburu, who are always in the proximity of God, are always singing the glory of God. Nothing else can give so much joy as music. God revels in music. Music is therefore holy. It reflects the state of one's inner being. Singing the glories of God, render service to the people.

You will derive great joy when you sing and serve.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with bhajan: *“Hari bhajan bina sukh santhi nahi.”*

—(From Bhagavan's discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall on the evening of December 25, 1997)

SRI SATHYA SAI UNITY CUP

My Biggest Test

During my cricketing career I was fortunate enough to have played 125 Test matches for India. I had some success in some of them, big failures in a lot of them. But my biggest “Test” was to be asked to be asked to organise a match between an India XI and an International XI in Puttaparthi. The match had the sanction of the Board of Control for Cricket in India but the first problem was to get a date which would suit the Indians and the International eleven. Once the date was obtained from the Cricket Control Board in consultation with the players, the next step of contacting the international players started. The Australians and the South Africans were playing a Test in Melbourne on the same dates so they were unavailable, as also New Zealanders, whose season was on. The Englishmen were to embark on a tour of West Indies and so their players were not going to risk an injury before an important tour. The West Indies had finished a miserable tour of Pakistan and with the New Year just a couple of days away could not make it. That left the choice to Sri Lankans under Arjuna Ranatunga were keen, and after some initial problems with the Pakistani Cricket Board, their players were also released as soon as the theme of the match was over scored. The Bangladesh players even skipped a couple of days of their camp and Dougie Brown of England was so excited at being invited that he was happy to be in the reserves, if required.

So when the big day arrived it was thought that it would be an India XI versus an Asia XI game but Brown's enthusiasm was too much to overlook and it was the Bangladesh players who had to sit out.

The match saw the two fastest scorers of one-day centuries, Shahid Afridi of Pakistan and Sanath Jayasurya of Sri Lanka opening the batting together and that symbolised the theme of the match which is to bring unity among nations through sport. It was a rare sight to see Sri Lankans, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and an English player in one team.

The players were all praise for the hospitality and for the superb facilities at the ground. As for the ground no praise can be too high for Kasturi Rangan who prepared the ground like a billiard table and the pitch was one of the best ever in India. There were plenty of thrills for the immense crowd and they went back happy after seeing their heroes in action.

For the players, of course, it was a dream come true, to have the darshans and the audience with revered Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba and they went back home the richer for the rarest of rare experiences.

I was nervous because I had no idea what revered Bhagavan thought about the match. Next morning when Bhagavan presented me with a cup my nervousness was replaced with joy.

I may not have been a big success but I had not failed in 'my biggest test' in Bhagavan's eyes!

—Sunil Gavaskar, Prasanthi Nilayam

Sri Sathya Sai Unity Cup

Man's Life is like a Cricket Game,
Where you strive to hold your honour and name;
It's better, a good loser, to be
Than a bad winner, the world to see.

Take care and comply with the rules
As Cricket Stadiums are like schools,
With a smiling face, give and take
And your sportsmanship, never forsake.

Life is a game, so play it well;
You're the maker of your heaven or hell.
Love all; serve all, as you play your role;
Help ever; hurt never and save your soul.

More joyful than bread, butter and cream
Is the joy of working as a team;
Sports can unite and lift man up;
Long Live Sri Sathya Sai Unity Cup.

Now, nowhere on earth is to be found,
A Cricket Stadium and Holy Ground;
Is not this stadium God's unique gift,
Man, to transform and uplift.

If a glass cup were to fall and break

It's value, it would fully forsake;
But a broken cup, new or old.
Remains valuable, if made of gold.

—Chundrabhan Singh,
Prasanthi Nilayam

AVATAR VAHINI:

NEW YEAR MESSAGE:

Transform Yourself and Transform the World

The Cosmos is controlled by God; God is subject to Truth
That Truth is subject to the authority of sacred and noble beings.

Men today must become embodiments of Truth. They must have mastery over Truth.

The entire creation emerged from Truth (*Sathya*). Everything merges in Truth. What is there in the cosmos without its basis in Truth. This is the pure Truth of being (*Shuddha Satwa*) oh man. (Telugu Poem)

Every man has his origin in Truth. And he merges in Truth. He is the embodiment of Truth. When every individual recognises this truth, the whole world will be permeated by Truth.

What man should seek today is not pleasure. Nor is his goal sorrow. Man should bring under his control the source of pleasure and pain that awakens the wisdom in man. If you study the lives of great men, you find that it is out of trouble and pain that they derived wisdom. Without sorrow there can be no wisdom. It is pain that teaches many wise lessons to man.

Not realising the profound truth, man pursues pleasure endlessly. No doubt man needs to be happy. But how is happiness to be achieved? It is only when sorrow is overcome that man realises happiness. "Pain and pleasure are intermingled. No one can separate them. Pleasure is never alone by itself. When pain is relieved, pleasure is experienced." (Telugu Poem) Where from does pleasure come? When pain is got rid of, pleasure is secured.

In our country today the young boys and girls are the inheritors of the prosperity or poverty of the nation. The future progress of the nation depends upon them. Hence, these boys and girls are the true wealth of the nation.

It has to be realised that man is the architect of his own pleasure and pain. Hence he should face the equanimity whatever happens to him—good or evil.

God is described as *Siddhiswaroop*a—the embodiment of wish—fulfillment. He is also described as *Amogha*—One without limit or measure. This means that the power of the Divine is infinite. He is also known as "*Aprameya*"—the Immeasurable. Hence, everyone should treat

whatever happens to him as a gift from God. Pleasure and pain should be treated alike as Divine gifts. There is a unique joy in this process.

In daily life we tend to treat defeat, loss or grief as calamities. But, nothing occurs in the world without a cause. Hunger is the cause for eating. Thirst is the cause for drinking. Difficulties are the cause of sorrow. If man is to enjoy enduring happiness, he must discover the source of such happiness. The source is love (*Prema*). There is nothing greater than love in this world. Everything has a price. The price to be paid for enduring happiness is Divine Love. Without Love, no object can give you real happiness.

Hence, the primary wealth of man is Love. Everyone should seek to acquire this wealth. With this wealth anyone can enjoy enduring bliss.

We witness in the world all kinds of pains and sorrows. But none of these is permanent. Every term of pain is followed by pleasure. The experience of pleasure is refined and enhanced by the earlier experience of pain. Like the refinement of gold by melting in a crucible, pain divinises the pleasure that follows it.

The New Year or new month does not bring with it any new joy or sorrow. As Sandipan Chatterjee (who had spoken earlier) said every moment is new. Every second is new, because it heralds the march of time. A year is in fact a succession of seconds turning into minutes, days and months.

It is only when every moment is cherished as new, will the New Year become new.

The sacred way in which every moment is spent will determine the fruitfulness of the year.

Transformation

If you wish to lead a sacred life and have sacred experiences, you must engage yourself in sacred actions. The good and evil in the world can be changed only by the change in man's actions. Transformation of society must start with transformation of individuals.

This morning the students recited a Vedic prayer about students living together in amity and acting in unison but they did not mention the crucial passage in the prayer which declares: "*Let us live in harmony free from conflict.*" The Vedic hymn stresses that unity can come only when people live together without discord. Hence everyone should give no room for conflict or unrest but lead a life of harmony and love with others.

God is Love

God is ever love incarnate. His love permeates the world. The universe is termed *Vishvam* because of the Lord's presence in the entire cosmos. One of the names of the Lord is *Vishnu*. Etymologically the word refers to one who is present throughout the universe. God is the cause and the cosmos is the effect.

The Lord is also known as *Atma*, which means light or effulgence. The Lord is the dispeller of the darkness of ignorance.

Every word used in the ancient scriptures has profound inner meaning. This profundity is characteristic of the Bharatiya spiritual heritage. Very few are interested in exploring these profundities. Most people confine themselves to ritualistic worship for a brief time everyday. They do not even attempt to know what for they are performing these rituals. There is no meaning in performing these rituals without understanding the purpose and goal of life. The ultimate purpose of all spiritual exercises is to realise the Love Principle (*Love of the Divine*). To foster love is the purpose of all spiritual endeavour. In no circumstances should love be given up or ignored. Where there is love, there can be no hatred, grief or want.

Time is passing. You are growing in years. But there is little change in your attitudes. Purity of thought results in purity in knowledge and wisdom. Self-realisation can come only through spiritual wisdom (*Jnana*).

Task before students

Many in the world acquire wealth, fame and position. But what have they achieved in terms of the goal of life? Their failure is due to lack of understanding of the unity that underlies the apparent diversity. It is a mark of spiritual goodness to recognise the divine in everyone. Prahlada declares that you can find God wherever you seek Him. His father, Hiranyakasipu, was a great person because of his attainments. But he failed to achieve goodness because of his denial of the divine. Similar difference can be seen between Rama's goodness and Ravan's greatness.

The lesson for students today is that they should follow the sacred path of righteousness. They should work for the welfare of the society. Students should cultivate three qualities. They should cherish love for all living beings; they should cultivate all good qualities; they should acquire all useful knowledge. Love is the basis of these three qualities.

Embodiments of Love!

See that your love for God does not fluctuate according to whether your wishes are fulfilled or not. Remember that you reap the fruits of your actions, according to whether they are good or bad. Love of God alone can confer enduring bliss. Eschew bad qualities like hatred and envy.

Fill your hearts with Love

Today marks the beginning of the year 1998. At least from today fill your hearts with Love. Look upon all as God's children. Sri Krishna has declared that all human beings are sparks of Himself. This means that everyone should lead a Godly life. Everyone should express his love to some person everyday. Thereby the whole world will be filled with love.

Ponder for a moment on the phenomenon you are witnessing here today, with thousands gathered from all parts of the world. What is the reason? You are seeking to find something here which is lacking in your native land (cheers). What is that? It is Divine Love. You are missing it in your place. You have not found it in yourself. Hence you come here, like sick men going to a hospital. Now that you have come here, take back with you Divine Love. Fill your hearts with that Love. Carry it with you wherever you go like a sick man who carries his medicine with him. Let Divine Love guide you like the mariner's compass points ever towards the Divine. Dedicate all your thoughts and actions to the Divine. Thereby you will be divinising your entire life. It is

by leading such a godly life that our ancients left a glorious heritage. Boys and girls today should fill their mind and hearts with such sacred ideals and transform the entire society into a loving community.

Unity in Sport

You are aware that on December 30 players from many countries came to Prasanthi Nilayam to take part in a cricket match. All of them had taken a resolve to play the game in a sporting spirit, with a pure mind and with due regard to the rules of the game. They played the game in this sublime spirit. Not only did they enjoy the game, but they filled the large mass of spectators with joy. Our young students showed great interest in the match.

Among the spectators were large numbers of people from neighbouring villages and towns. Sports and games have a well-defined role in influencing young people. **Life is a Game, Play it! Life is a Dream, Realise it! Life is Love, enjoy it!** (cheers) **Life is a Challenge, Meet it!** People must be ready to face all ordeals in life. The capacity to face the challenges of life is given to man alone.

Sanctify all actions

Every act in daily life can be sanctified by dedicating it to God. By dedicating all thoughts to God man can achieve peace. There is no need to wait for suitable time for embarking on this exercise. The time is at your beck and call. Great people do not wait on Time. They make time their servant.

Endowed with a sacred body man is misusing it. Human life is like bamboo which has many knots in the form of desires for wealth, wife and children. These knots have to be removed.

From the New Year, you have to understand the true meaning of humanness and transform your life. You will then be true servants of the nation. Play your part in every field of public life, keeping your heart pure and unsullied.

Students! Remember that you are in a ‘*golden age*’ in your lives. Do not waste it. Do your duty. Love and revere your parents. Serve society. Adhere to the good qualities associated with right education. Be happy and make others happy.

From this New Year onwards, when students cultivate humility, reverence for elders and love towards all, I shall feel very happy.

At a meeting of the Central Trust yesterday, I told the members including Sri Indulal Shah, that I had no interest in property. Do not involve me in any connection with these properties. I do not wish to have any connection with money or property. My only concern is with my devotees (cheers). Telling them all this, I signed the papers.

“You are my property”

You are my property (cheers). When I have this boundless property, why should I have any interest in material assets? Students are my property (cheers). Nothing can give me greater pleasure than what I get from seeing the students lead ideal lives. That is the return I expect from

you. No fee of any kind is received from you for your education. But I want you to pay one special fee—that is love. When you offer that fee, you will be offering everything, as it were.

Lakshmana surrendered to Rama totally, declaring that he was offering his family and everything he possessed to Rama. Everyone should follow Lakshmana's example. He revered his elder brother's wife as his mother.

The eyes should see only what is good. The hands should be engaged in good actions. The ears should hear no evil and listen only to what is good. Talk only what is good. Think no evil. Think what is good. Do no evil. Do what is good. This is the way to God.

The eyes should see only sacred objects. The whole world will be transformed when your vision becomes holy.

Lead a good life

This is New Year Day according to the Gregorian calendar. We have other in different parts of the country. There is no need to bother about the year as such. Devote love for God, which will confer every blessing on you. This is exemplified by the life of Harishchandra. He sacrificed everything in the cause of truth. And ultimately he got everything by the grace of God.

On this New Year Day I wish you all every happiness and prosperity. The ancients used to bless those who came to them with long life of 100 years and good health. They wished the people long life so that they may lead worthy lives. Lead a long life, happy life, peaceful life, loving and Divine life. Redeem your lives by practicing Divine Love.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan: "Prem muditha manase kaho Rama, Rama, Ram!"

(From Bhagavan's discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall on the morning of 1-1-1998)

VIDYAGIRI SAMACHAR:

A Delectable Display at Sports Meet

The annual sports and Cultural Meet for the year 1997-98 for the three campuses of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School and Sri Sathya Sai Primary School, was held from 11th January to 14th January. The venues for the Sports Meet and for Price Distribution were Sri Sathya Sai Hill View Stadium and Sai Kulwant Hall respectively

On the inaugural day, January 11, Bhagavan Baba, the Chancellor of the Institute—arrived in the Hill View Stadium (looking extra special this year with the lush green cricket ground and filled to capacity with a big crowd of men, women and children who had occupied their seats very early in the morning)—at about 7 A.M., in His white open car, escorted by specially selected and trained motor-cycle riders from all the three campuses of the Institute (including two girl riders from Anantapur Campus) and from the Higher Secondary School. The motor cycle and car column was preceded by the Institute Band and the slow-march contingent.

On reaching Santhi Vedika, Bhagavan lighted the ceremonial lamps to inaugurate the Annual Sports and Cultural Meet.

Smartly dressed contingents of students of all the Sai institutions took part in the March Past, paying their respects to Bhagavan as they crossed Santhi Vedika, while the Institute Band and the Pipes-and-Drums Girls Band from the Primary School played lovely marching tunes.

After the March Past, Bhagavan hoisted the Institute Flag and released a bunch of colourful balloons and a pair of white doves. At 7:45 A.M. the Sports and Cultural Meet torch was lit by Bhagavan. It was taken around the stadium by a relay of runners in their colourful track suits, up to the base of Vidyagiri Hill. From there the torch was carried in the hands of a mechanically operated replica of Flying Hanuman. The big Sports Meet urn on top of the hill was then lighted with the torch, which had been lit by Swami earlier.

All the students took part in the Oath Taking Ceremony affirming that they would take part in all sports events in the spirit of true sportsmanship and fair competition.

The first to display their talents were the boy students of the Brindavan Campus. Their programme consisted of an amalgam of gymnastics, formations, balancing feats, and pyramids on speeding motor cycles and cars. In addition, they had also planned to conduct slithering, rappelling and Bungee-Jumping from a hot-air balloon. The slithering and rappelling events, wherein the specially trained students came down rapidly with the help of suspended ropes from the massive moving balloon, went off beautifully. Bungee-Jumping, which can be done from bridges, cranes and balloons, has become very popular in the field of adventure sports all over the world. The planned event was the first ever demonstration of Bungee-Jumping from a hot-air balloon in India. It was to be attempted from a height of 250 feet in nil wind conditions. But, because of strong wind, this feat could not be attempted.

Next, the spirit of National Integration was projected by the formation of a map of India by students and teachers dressed in traditional and colourful costumes of the various regions of India, to the accompaniment of an enthusiastically sung group song.

Girl students of Anantapur Campus were the next to put up their programme, which started with marching formations and was entitled 'March Towards Peace'. The second item depicted the coming of the Mughals to India and the fearless heroism and patriotism shown by Sivaji and his Maratha warriors in the face of the awesome Mughal power. Next to come was an imaginative enactment of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in which a large number of innocent men, women and children were brutally killed while they were holding a patriotic rally. The girls' programme ended with a graceful formation of the Indian tricolour with the Ashoka Chakra Emblem in the centre made with the help of small flags of the required colours.

Then followed the Prasanthi Nilayam boys' events which were put up together by the students of the Institute and the Higher Secondary School. The motifs of the events were 'Sports for Fun' and 'Unity through Physical Culture'. First of all, 'The Panthers' gave an excellent display of gymnastics and floor exercises. This was followed by a troupe of boys who juggled with rubber balls and plastic juggling clubs with expertise. Next to come was the event called 'Man versus Machine', which included 'Stretching between Cars', 'Car Stopping', 'Car Swaying', 'Truck Pulling' and 'Car Convoy Pulling'—and a few others like 'Pole Vault' (attempted for the first time in the Institute Sports Meet), 'Houdini Escape', 'Magic Knot' and 'Glass Sheet Shattering' (by a free fall). Most of the participants in these events, including car drivers and motor cycle riders, were Post Graduate students of the Institute.

An interesting and imaginative programme by School boys on stilts entitled '21st Century Easy Entertainment Company' was presented next. For the first time in the Sports Meet a few boy students of the Institute and of the Higher Secondary School on Roller Blades (also called 'Inline Skates') displayed their skill in various interesting items including jumping over obstacles and criss-crossing etc.

The Prasanthi Nilayam Campus Programme came to a befitting close with a vibrant colourful presentation called 'Festivals of India'. It had four parts namely, Krishna Janmashtami in Gokul, Muslim Pir Festival from the East, Baisakhi (depicted by a vigorous Bhangra dance from Punjab) and a pageant containing a boat scene, Kathakali dance and martial arts display from Kerala.

For all the three morning programmes, Swami went down among the participants at the end of each programme to bless them and to be photographed with them.

The afternoon programme was presented by Sri Sathya Sai Primary School students and girl students of Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School. This veritable extravaganza of colourful dresses, lilting music and graceful dances started at 3:45 P.M. a few minutes after Bhagavan's arrival in the Stadium and taking His seats in the Santhi Vedika. Four tiny-tots (two boys and two girls) from the Primary School went upto the Santhi Vedika to pay their obeisance to Bhagavan and to invoke His blessings for the smooth conduct of their programme.

The first item of the afternoon session was a colourful dance by schoolgirls to the accompaniment of the song "Dhanya Bhag Seva Ka Awsar Paaya". The next item was a 'leaf-dance' performed by young schoolboys; 'Unity of Religions' was depicted by quickly changing formations in which symbols of various religions were presented by the boys. Then followed a charming item by girls who released balloons of different colours and then presented a dance involving the little girls dressed up as flowers and butterflies.

The next item was a patriotic presentation in which boys released pigeons and formed a flag of India while the song 'Bharat Desh Hai Mera' resounded in the whole of the Stadium. The item that followed was presented by boys dressed in red shirts, pink pants and with yellow umbrellas. It was a display of various dance formations. After this, the girls presented colour-combinations of different flags. Boys came on once again, dressed in 'Pathani suits' and presented a vigorous kerchief-dance. The last item was an excellent presentation by older girls dressed in pink Punjabi-suits who displayed their skill in delicately handling blue tinsel-covered loops to demonstrate various striking wave-patterns. This item as well as all the previous items were thoroughly enjoyed by the appreciative audience who broke into repeated applause at the end of each item. With the close of the afternoon presentation, the curtain was rung down on the inaugural function of the Sports and Cultural Meet.

Finals of various field and track events and of indoor games were held on 12th and 13th of January. On the 14th morning the three-day meet concluded with the Prize-distribution Function held in Sai Kulwant Hall in the presence of Bhagavan and a large number of devotees. This function coincided with the Makara Sankranti Celebrations.

On the 14th January, Swami arrived in Sai Kulwant Hall at 7:10 A.M. led by the Institute Band and 15 flag bearing students with the Institute Captain K. Sai Rakesh (of II M. Sc, Maths) in front, carrying the Institute Flag. The Vice-Chancellor, Prof. G. Venkataraman, gave a short speech. Referring to the function as a two-in-one function (Prize distribution and Makara Sankranti Celebration), the Vice-Chancellor stated that sports should not only give joy but also enable us to see 'Unity in Diversity'. He quoted an incident from the Ramayana wherein Rama was unhappy that he had lost to Bharata in a game, while the winner Bharata was unhappy at having deprived his elder brother of victory.

Dr. Ravi Kumar, a faculty member of the Chemistry Department of Brindavan Campus, speaking next, said that one learns important lessons at Bhagavan's Lotus Feet every minute. He gave details of an incident wherein he had decided to put one of Swami's direct teachings into practice and this alone led him to victory and success. Bhagavan had once told Dr. Ravi Kumar that he must 'reduce weight to go up'. He started eating less and being less than 60 kgs, he and two other students were selected to go to Pune to learn flying. This was the result of following Swami's teachings: 'reduce weight to go up!' On 31st December '97, when Dr. Ravi Kumar was flying solo for the first time, he noticed that his aircraft was losing height. He prayed to Swami and by His Grace, landed safely. At the same time Swami was telling the Brindavan Warden what had happened in Pune and gave the reason for the loss of height by the aircraft. Swami not only showed His omnipresence but also ensured that no untoward happening came in the way of his faculty member.

Bhagavan then delivered His discourse on the significance of Makara Sankranti. (Details of Swami's discourse are given separately).

After His discourse Bhagavan distributed a big silver cup each to Prasanthi Nilayam Campus, Brindavan Campus, Anantapur Campus, Anantapur Junior College, Higher Secondary School and Primary School. He asked everyone to consider that these cups were meant for each and every student who had taken part in the Annual Sports and Cultural Meet. At the end, Prasadam was distributed to all present in Sai Kulwant Hall.

CHINESE NEW YEAR IN PRASANTHI NILAYAM

A Glorious Offering to Bhagavan

To celebrate the Chinese Lunar New Year for the second time in Prasanthi Nilayam in the presence of Bhagavan Baba was a dream come true for hundreds of Chinese devotees—men, women and children—who had come from six countries in the far East. This year's celebration on February 5th was on a grander scale than last year's and left unforgettable memories in the minds of thousands of devotees from all over the world who were in Prasanthi Nilayam. The 617 Chinese devotees felt inexpressibly blessed and returned to their native countries inspired by His message and benediction.

The bulk of the mainly Chinese devotees came from Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Japan. There were a sprinkling of representatives from Australia, Indonesia and USA. The aim of the celebration was to heed the call of Bhagavan to follow one's tradition, religion and culture. Each participant wore a heart rosette as a badge for this celebration. The heart, with a picture of Baba, served to remind the devotees that the greatest gift we could offer to Baba was a purified heart filled with love, compassion and unity.

Three days before the main celebration, Shed 24 and North block 7 became hives of activity. The Hong Kong devotees had brought 12,000 "hong bao" which are auspicious red paper envelopes, and many eager hands helped to fill them with sweets to be given as prasad. It was a delight to see the spirit of unity that prevailed among the devotees.

Chinese bhajan practices began almost immediately upon arrival. On one occasion, Baba asked several of those backstage if they had lunch. The delighted devotees just melted at this tiny example of Baba's love and chorused, "Oh Baba, we're so happy".

A troupe of lion dancers from Singapore had brought a new pair of shaggy Northern lions for the occasion. Such new lions are considered to have no "life" until their eyes were dotted. The team manager said that although the lifespan of the lions is 30 years, the pair dotted by Baba would be supremely precious and treasured for generations. All the troupe members were not devotees. But they too melted under the warmth of Baba's love. The instructor of the troupe became convinced Baba was responsible for a miracle! He and his wife had remained childless during six years of marriage, but once he made the initial agreement to perform voluntarily at Prasanthi

Nilayam, his wife conceived shortly after. The troupe was later to melt even more as Baba showered His Grace on them when He called them in for an interview the day after the Lunar New Year.

Although the first day of the Lunar New Year began on January 28, it was decided that the main celebration be held on the 9th day, February 5th, which is auspicious as it is the birthday of the Jade Emperor, who is also known as the Emperor of Heaven.

An early start to the Lunar New Year was made in Prasanthi Nilayam on February 4th. A beautiful Taoist altar on the Jade Emperor was erected on the field opposite the North Indian canteen and prayers were held from 8-9 at night.

After Darshan, many also made their way to the cultural exhibition organised by Singapore and Japan in the hall above the North Indian Canteen on the 4th and 6th of February.

A traditional Chinese altar had been set up by the Malaysians just inside the entrance. This drew many fascinated people who had never seen one.

The Singaporean exhibit depicted panels outlining in a time chart, Chinese history from 16th century BC to the present day. The other exhibits showed the customs of the Lunar New Year and the popular deities worshipped by the Chinese people.

Red banners over Prasanthi

By the big day, the Sai Kulwant Mandap had been transformed into a fairyland. The great pillars were swathed in red, each supporting two huge Chinese lanterns. Twenty giant banners, with Baba's most well known sayings, like "Love All, Serve All" in both English and Chinese, were hung from floor standing lotus lamps lining the path facing the verandah. Above, draped and swooped into curving bows were two red banners measuring 132 feet each. On each was a message reading "Swami, we love you" in seven languages: English, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Bahasa Indonesia, Telugu and Hindi. Peach blossoms being the seasonal flower for the Lunar New Year, two trees with silk flowers were placed next to Baba's chair, together with a pair of life-size cranes, which are considered auspicious symbols of longevity.

Morning procession

The morning of Lunar New Year started with Nagarsankirtan at 5.30 am. All the devotees took part. It was a wonderful sight because nearly everyone was wearing a traditional dress. Many women wore beautiful red embroidered suits with high collars. The crisp air of Prasanthi Nilayam soon resounded with beautiful bhajans sung in Sanskrit and Mandarin. Inside the Mandap, the devotees were allowed to sit in the front blocks, with bhajan singers seated closest to the verandah.

When the lights in the Chinese lanterns were turned on, it drew gasps of delight from everyone because it cast such a special pink festive glow on the hall.

Then came the moment everyone in the hushed hall had been waiting for. With a magnificent flourish of Chinese drums and cymbals, two "dotted" Northern Lions and a procession of dancers

in towering red headdresses glided down the aisle preceding Bhagavan Baba arriving for the morning darshan. It was a thrilling moment when Baba floated into the Mandap in his characteristic grace, wearing a broad luminous smile. His love and grace had united so many for this occasion that all were thankful. When Baba reached the verandah, He found a traditional Chinese altar set up the night before, behind his chair. Everyone was totally delighted when Baba lit the candle at the altar and launched the Lunar New Year celebration.

Sri V. K. Ravi, the Central Co-ordinator for the Sri Sathya Sai Organisations in Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Philippines and Brunei, thanked Bhagavan for allowing the devotees of the Far East to celebrate the Lunar New Year in Prasanthi Nilayam once again. He said that 1998 is the year of the Tiger signifying rajasic tendencies. It was a year of great uncertainties for the economies of the Far East. But "1998 is also the Year of Peace, and it is only through Baba's Grace that anyone can confront anxieties wearing the mantle of peace". He pointed out that, "the Indian and Chinese traditions are the two ancient cultures of the Continent. For the first time in the history of the world, there is so much interaction and mingling of the two traditions, happening here in Prasanthi Nilayam, in the Divine Presence. Is it not the love of Swami that has enabled these devotees, whose language is spoken in monosyllables, to learn and sing Sanskrit bhajans and further to translate them into Chinese and sing them in Indian ragas? This phenomenon is unheard of in history. There are hundreds of such Chinese Sai Bhajans now. Sai literature in the Chinese language is also available in the form of books and magazines and in commemoration of the Lunar New Year 1998 celebrations, the Chinese edition of Sanathana Sarathi has been produced in Singapore". He concluded with a pledge to Bhagavan that the devotees will try their best to follow Swami's teachings—especially Help Ever, Hurt Never.

"Bhagavan, of all your miracles, the greatest has been the transformation of the heart of your devotees. As a symbol of that, we have been wearing the heart rosette during our stay here in Prasanthi Nilayam. At every darshan, we pray to Swami to fill our hearts with Divine qualities. Today we offer the hearts filled with those qualities. Last year, the celebrations in Prasanthi Nilayam were hosted by Malaysia. This year's celebration is hosted by Singapore and with Swami's Divine blessing and permission, Hong Kong would play host for the celebrations in 1999."

GIFTS OF BHAGAVAN

Lee Han Siang from Singapore who spoke next, offered salutations to Bhagavan in Mandarin. Two Chinese families from Singapore and Hong Kong knelt to give Baba traditional New Year respects. The Hong Kong family offered sweets and a traditional book scroll signed by all devotees from Hong Kong. The Singapore family offered a scroll in beautiful calligraphy carrying over a thousand signatures from the participants and devotees of the organising countries. Another gift was a tiger scroll from North Korea, bought during a joint food seva visit by Malaysia and Singapore to that famine-stricken country. Finally, Mr. Wee Lin, the chairman of the organising committee for this year's celebration, presented Swami with the celebration's programme as well as copies of the Chinese translation of Sanathana Sarathi. There followed a series of wonderful Chinese bhajans. The words may have been strange to many in the Mandap but the tune was not, having come from familiar and much loved Sanskrit bhajans. Then, to the lilting tunes of Chinese melodies, dancers in fantastically huge headgear gave a short performance for Bhagavan. But it was the lion dancers that brought the most appreciative smiles

from Baba. Like an indulgent parent, He patted their heads approvingly after their performance when they had been "brought to life" through the dotting of their eyes. To the delight of the devotees assembled in the Mandap, He even opened their mouths wider to peep inside and Baba sprinkled vibhuti over their heads. Bhagavan Baba then gave his Divine Discourse. As Baba left the Mandap, the Far East devotees burst into a rousing chorus of two traditional New Year songs. It was an uplifting finale to a wonderful morning.

Cultural programme

The evening's cultural programme in Poorna Chandra Auditorium began with the ceremony of dotting the eyes of two Southern Lions, and these were presented as a gift to Baba. This was followed by a short but exquisite dance from Japan depicting spring, as the Lunar New Year is also known as the Spring Festival. The main item was the play, which centered around one of Baba's favourite bhajans, Bhajan bina Sukha, Santhi Nahi. It depicted two modern Chinese friends, one who followed Baba's teachings and drew strength from his cultural traditions and another, who was outwardly a successful businessman but adrift from his roots and deaf to spiritual values. Each faces a grave crisis and the play's message to Chinese devotees was to follow the teachings of Swami and to revive and respect one's cultural background and traditions which are rich in values. Only then can one climb the inner mountains of life successfully. Baba had showered abundant grace on the Far East devotees. And yet, more grace flowed the next day, bringing tears of joy to many. In the morning, all cast and crew members of the drama team were given padanamaskar. Then the word came: Baba would give padanamaskar to everyone in the afternoon! It was such a wonderful gift from Mother Sai. Only that morning, Baba had called them into the interview room. He gave diamond rings and gold chains to the bedazzled troupe. That afternoon, they pulled out all stops and gave the performance of their lives. They soon had Baba laughing like a child. The Mandap, normally so hushed and silent, rocked to the sound of uninhibited laughter at the antics of one particularly mischievous lion. It rubbed its shaggy muzzle into the startled faces of Baba's tiniest schoolboys seated in the women's section closest to the verandah. This drew gasps and excited shrieks from the normally dignified little fellows who scrambled after the lion for a closer look. And how Baba loved it! He laughed so broadly that His face turned pink

With a last burst of cymbals, the lion troupe ended their dance and knelt in a flourish before Baba's chair. Baba pulled them into a tight ring around Him and to the sound of thunderous applause, waited for the photographer to take the group picture!

After the offer of arati to Bhagavan the second Lunar New Year celebration at Prasanthi Nilayam came to a close, leaving pleasant memories in the minds of one and all.

—Carol Leong, Singapore

AVATAR VANI:

CHINESE NEW YEAR SANDESH:

Buddha's Gospel of the Good Life

Embodiments of Divine Love!

Man today is acquiring various types of knowledge. Among these he is learning how to live and act like lions and other animals.

What is the meaning of knowledge (*Jnana*)? It is not mere acquaintance with numerous books. Even the acquisition of information about all the objects in the world, animate and inanimate, is not knowledge. True knowledge is awareness of the relationship between the individual and the collective (*Samashthi*) and their oneness.

Men today do not recognise the nature of their humanness. How can they recognise their inherent divinity?

It is only when man is aware of his humanness that he will be competent to, recognise his divinity. How, then, is man to recognise his humanness! What is the means? Buddha undertook various enquiries to discover the Divine and came to the conclusion that it is only through mastery over his senses he can achieve this. Man has to make the right use of his senses for sacred purposes to realise his divinity.

"Samyak-Darshanam"

Hence, Buddha declared that the first requisite is *Samyak-darshanam* (Having the right vision). The implication of this statement is that, having been bestowed with the great gift of eyes, man should use them for seeing sacred objects and holy beings. But, on the contrary, by using his eyes to look at unsacred objects and evil persons, man fills himself with bad thoughts and becomes a prey to evil tendencies. What one sees influences the feelings in the heart. The state of the heart determines the nature of one's thoughts. The thoughts influence one's speech and one's life.

Hence, to lead a good life the first requisite is a pure vision. Man has to cultivate a pure and sacred outlook. As a result of looking at cruel, ugly and wicked scenes man leads an animal existence. The very first enquiry one should make is to ascertain what is pure, edifying and godly that he should see. Whatever he sees leaves its imprint on man. Few realise the effects of this.

Human life today is racked by anxiety, misery, unrest and troubles of various kinds. The root cause of all this is that man is witnessing what is repulsive, wicked and demeaning. For transforming one's life, the first requisite is a proper vision. The eye (*netra*) is comparable to a spiritual text (*Shashtra*) and one's vision (*drishti*) determines one's views of the Cosmos (*Srishti*). Hence to acquire the highest knowledge one has to purify the vision. This means one should avoid seeing what is obnoxious. One should strive to see only that which is sacred and pure. What man sees are like seeds sown in the heart. Evil scenes give rise to evil thoughts. Good scenes evoke good thoughts. When sacred scenes are implanted in the heart there will be no room for bad feelings or thoughts to grow in the heart.

Purity in Speech

This was the first lesson Buddha taught. Buddha wandered all over the country in search of spiritual peace and liberation. After many years of enquiry he came to the conclusion that the secret of spiritual wisdom was not to be got from scholars or by study. He realised that spiritual

understanding can only come from mastery of the senses. From developing sacred vision, man should proceed to *Samyak Vachanam* (sacred speech). Buddha declared that only sacred thoughts can lead to sacred speech. Buddha declared that the tongue should not be used recklessly to utter whatever one thinks. The tongue has been given to speak the truth, to expatiate on what is sacred and pure. The tongue has not been given to man to pamper the palate with delicious sweets. It is not given for talking as one likes. It is not to be used for causing displeasure to others. Nor is it to be used for indulging in falsehood. The tongue has been given to man to speak the truth, to be sweet to others, to praise the Divine and enjoy the bliss derived from such sacred speech.

There are people who devote their entire time to reading all kinds of books, without trying to put into practice what they learn from such reading. What is the use of such reading? Buddha spoke out against scholarship unrelated to the good life. He carried out a great deal of study and met many great men. He listened to many discourses. He realised that true knowledge could not be got by these means. He realised that a pure, unsullied consciousness confers the highest knowledge. True knowledge is derived from a pure inner consciousness (*Antahkarana*).

The Quest for Peace

This year (1998) is dedicated to Peace. How is this Peace to be achieved? The first requisite is purification of one's vision. The second requisite is the cultivation of sacred feelings within, which will be conducive to purity in speech. Harmony will promote a climate of peace. The well being of society is bound up with the transformation of the individuals composing it. Righteous individuals alone can build a righteous community. A pure mind is essential for pure thoughts, pure vision and pure speech.

The country today has plenty of persons who talk a great deal and display book knowledge, but do not practise even a fraction of what they have read or speak about. It is such people who are responsible for the lamentable plight of the nation.

Good actions and Sadhana

Buddha emphasised goodness in action (*Samyak-Karma*). The mark of good action is harmony in thought, word and deed. When there is no such harmony, the action belies what is said or thought.

Buddha went on to declare that good action is conducive to good spiritual progress (*Samyak-Sadhana*). Good deeds constitute genuine spirituality. Mere formal worship or ritualistic practices do not constitute spiritual striving. These religious practices are good in a way. But they do not constitute spiritual sadhana. True spirituality consists in the unity of thought, word and deed in all their purity and sacredness.

"Samyak-Jivanam "

Buddha declared that when spiritual striving of this nature has been completed, there is *Samyak-Jivanam* (leading a pure life).

This is how the five organs of perception (*Panchindriyas*) should be used to achieve the supreme goal of life. Good vision, good thoughts, good speech, good deeds and good spiritual endeavour are the prerequisites for a good life (*Samyak Jivanam*).

In this context, the meaning of spiritual striving should be properly understood. Essentially spiritual striving calls for the shedding of all bad qualities and the cultivation of good thoughts. Spiritual sadhana means cultivating good thoughts and undertaking good deeds.

To achieve happiness man embarks on acquiring various kinds of knowledge and pursues various occupations. He seeks happiness through marriage and having children and building a mansion for his residence. But is he happy thereby? No.

Buddha's message to Anandah

In his last moments, Buddha summoned his stepbrother Ananda to impart to him his final message. Ananda was the son of Gautami (Buddha's stepmother). Placing his palm on the head of his younger brother, Buddha said: "My dear child! I came to the world to teach (the Truth). If anyone asks, 'Where is God?' the answer is: He is everywhere'. Truth is God. Speak the Truth. Do not harm anyone. Recognise that the highest Dharma is non-violence (*Ahimsa*)."

What is Dharma? Is it celibacy or the duties of a householder or a renunciant or a sanyasi? These are transient obligations which have to be observed as incidental duties in the journey of life. The Supreme duty is refraining from causing harm to anyone. This truth is proclaimed in the scriptures in the exhortation: "Speak the truth. Speak what is pleasing (*Sathyam bruyaat; priyam bruyaat*)."

 Thus pleasing speech is declared as a supreme duty.

Buddha told Ananda that this truth was learnt by him from his own experience. He said: "When I left the palace, my father (the King) was told that I was doing a great wrong in renouncing the family. My parents, kinsmen and others tried to put pressure on me to return to the ties of family life. These wrong efforts on their side made me more determined to pursue the spiritual path. In the quest for spiritual peace several ordeals have to be overcome. Today I have found the Truth about life. What is it? The sanctification of the five senses is the way to Truth. If the senses are polluted, of what avail are spiritual exercises? When the water in a tank is polluted, all taps will only give polluted water. Your heart is the tank. Your vision and thoughts are impure. Your speech is foul. When the heart is polluted in this manner, the senses are bound to be sullied."

When the heart is filled with good thoughts and feelings, all that comes out of the senses—your speech, your vision, your actions—will all be pure. That was why Jayadeva exhorted the God-given tongue to use its sweetness to proclaim the glory of God by chanting the Lord's sweet names: *Govinda*, *Damodara* and *Madhava*. One should always speak sweetly and never use harsh words.

People today are immersed in worldly pursuits to secure transient pleasures but few are interested in spiritual pursuits which will give them everlasting bliss. When people experience spiritual bliss (*Atma-ananda*) all other forms of happiness will automatically come. People immersed in mundane pursuits have no time for spiritual matters. The Gita exhorts mankind to turn away from the ephemeral attractions of the misery-laden world and to seek the Divine.

You must realise the greatness and preciousness of human life. You witnessed the lion-dance earlier. The external trappings were those of lions but the persons who performed the dance were young men. It is not the external form that matters but the human element behind it. Flaunting the human form without displaying human qualities is meaningless. You must cultivate human values such as good vision, sweet speech, good thoughts and good actions, which constitute the good life. Only then you will be total human being.

After getting enlightenment under the Bodhi tree in Gaya, Buddha embarked upon his mission of preaching. Once two of his disciples were accompanying him. Buddha noticed that they were looking at some women who were bringing water from a river. Buddha chided them for their misconduct and expelled them from the Sangha. He said that while walking on the road the eyes should be concentrated on the road in front and should not go astray. (Swami condemned the habit of young men to look at cinema posters on roadside walls while going on bicycles. Such actions are often the cause of serious accidents.)

Buddha declared that the good life leads to liberation (*Nirvana*). This is the sacred consummation for a good life. In this state, a man is free from desires and actions prompted by them.

(Addressing the devotees who had come from overseas as well as those from all parts of India, Bhagavan said:)

Having taken human birth, all human beings should foster human values. In the Sathya Sai Organisation we have given the highest place to human values. It is only when human values are fostered that divine values can emerge.

Before his passing Buddha taught his stepbrother, Ananda, the transience of worldly pleasures and the meaninglessness of a purely mundane existence.

When Ananda started weeping, noticing the imminent passing of Buddha, the Enlightened One asked him: "What for are you weeping?" Ananda said: "I am weeping because your passing is imminent". Buddha told him that he should not worry about what happens to the body that is perishable and full of infirmities. He exhorted Ananda not to bother about the body or the mind, but lead a life based on the dictates of the conscience. Giving this advice, Buddha breathed his last.

Many high-souled spiritual leaders like Buddha have shown mankind the path they should follow for reaching the highest goal of life. Bharat has been the unique birthplace of many such saints and sages. Bharat has been the land of men and women known for their purity and holiness. It is the birthplace of sacred beings like Harischandra and others who adhered to the path of truth at any cost. These truths are valid even now.

The New Year

Today you celebrate the New Lunar Year. The year is described as *Samvatsara* in Sanskrit. This term is also one of the names of God. Hence the advent of the new year should be hailed as the advent of the Divine. Without recognising this divine significance of the new year there is no

purpose in celebrating it with lavish decorations and sumptuous feasts. It is not the feast that is important. It is the ideal that is to be pursued which is important. Today what is important is the quest for peace within, which can be got only by internal purity.

Human actions have been divided into five categories of which those prompted by the heart are the highest and others done with egoistic motives are inferior. Whatever is done should be done wholeheartedly so that it gets sanctified.

Restraint on Speech

(Emphasising the value of silence and speaking as little as possible, Swami said that since January 1 He had been restricting His speech to a minimum, confining His words to what was necessary. Swami went on to say:)

I am restricting my talking with others even in the interview room. What is the reason? I want to set an example to others by practising what I preach. My life is my message. I must show the way. Many do not understand my actions. But, when they do not understand, they should remain silent. But, instead they misinterpret my actions. That is a great sin.

From today, you must resolve to use your eyes properly, to see only the good. Why use binoculars to see distant objects? If your vision is impaired, do not lament over it. Consider even blindness as a blessing. If your hearing gets worse, do not moan over it. How much of the noise of the world is worth hearing at all? What use is there in listening to the cacophony of mutual abuse? Welcome the fact that you are saved from listening to such gossip.

Whatever your disabilities, look upon them as gifts from God. All things will turn out to be for your own good.

Advice to Devotees

Devotees have gathered here from Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Taiwan and Japan. You may have come with many problems and worries. Leave all of them here and return to your places with your hearts filled with bliss (cheers). Leave all your bad thoughts and feelings and fill yourselves with the peace and joy of Prasanthi Nilayam. Coming here with restless minds you should not go back in the same state. *Prasanthi* (Supreme Peace) is very valuable for man. Today peace is not to be found anywhere in the world. You find only 'pieces' (divisions) everywhere. Peace is to be found only here (cheers). Carry it with you. This is a place hallowed by the vibrations of numerous good devotees. Many noble souls have spent their lives here. Fill your hearts with their noble thoughts. Do not bother about what others may say. Develop self-confidence and proceed towards self-realisation through self-sacrifice. Ignore incidental troubles which are like passing clouds. Think about God alone. There is nothing more vital than that. Try to acquire Divine Love. *Love is God. Live in Love. The best way to love God is to love all, serve all.* All are embodiments of God.

Foster love. Adhere to Truth. Follow Righteousness. Achieve Peace. This is the special benediction of Swami on this day on all. Wherever you may go, speak softly and sweetly. Thereby you will earn the esteem of society. This is the most valuable reward you have to secure this New Year.

The Gift Swami Wants

You have presented many things as 'gifts' to Bhagavan. This 'Tiger Map' is one of them. That is not the gift I want. Hand over to me your 'tigerly' qualities. That is the gift I would like. The tiger is a cruel animal. Rid yourself of all cruel feelings and offer them to me. Lead the life of a useful, harmless, sacred cow. It gives nourishing milk in return for cheap grass.

Embodiments of Love! You have come here from long distances, undergoing many discomforts. Return with joy in your hearts and share your joy with the people in your places in an unselfish spirit. A life of selfless love will lead you to liberation.

Listening to your bhajans today gave immense joy to one and all. Community singing sets up vibrations which will cleanse the atmosphere.

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

—(From Bhagavan's discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall on February 5, 1998)

A RUSSIAN DEVOTEE'S EXPERIENCE:

Discovering the Divine

When I was asked to share my experience of Sri Sathya Sai Baba, I hesitated for a long time. Some devotees of Sai had private talks with Swami—I did not have any; others had beautiful presents (materialisations) but I only saw Sai Baba materialising vibhuti some metres away from me. Somebody experienced wonderful healings, and I only heard or read about them in books. Some people may tell a wonderful story how they came to Baba. My story is very meaningful only to me. I have never heard anything like that from anyone. My story is not how I came to the Lord but how I returned from Lord Sai.

As all devotees do, I dreamt about visiting Prasanthi Nilayam to be able to see Sri Sathya Sai Baba with my own eyes. And, of course, deeply in my heart I hoped for an interview and, if specially blessed, to bring home something as a memento from Baba. I was rejoicing when an opportunity for such a trip arose. I could imagine what I would feel when I see the embodiment of the Lord for the first time. So far I had only seen Him on video-films and knew from the experiences of the devotees who had visited Him, that Baba aroused most unusual feelings; some people could not see him on the first darshan because of tears, others because they were blinded by His appearance, as if they were looking at the Sun.

I came to Prasanthi Nilayam some days before Baba's Birthday celebrations in 1994. The ashram was overflowing with devotees. On that day, the 20th November, the evening darshan was cancelled, and instead there was a concert in the Poornachandra Hall. When I got in the concert had started and the hall was full. I was given a place on the floor near the passage way and not far from the stage. When the concert stopped, suddenly Baba stepped onto the stage from the

hall. I did not realise He was there. He blessed the actors and was giving them presents, brought from the wings. He was also photographed with them. Then He walked back to His armchair in the hall greeting His guests. The concert continued. This happened several times.

When I saw Baba for the first time, I did not feel anything special. I could not feel the Divinity! I just saw an adored, respected, distinguished person, for whom the concert was arranged. "Just like they celebrate jubilees of well-known stars or great state leaders"—the thought came. The next morning I had my first darshan, but could not overcome the 'human' perception of Sathya Sai. I was sitting near the passageway, Baba was walking along, and I was craving to see His gait, His every movement, His facial expressions. People were looking at Him with much love and adoration, stretching their hands to Him with letters and some objects or trying to touch his garment or His feet, asking Him about something. Baba was walking among this human sea: He was not at all a young man (being sixty-nine). He even seemed to be little round shouldered, with a kind, wise smile and calming movements of His hand—like a grown up who would calm his successively raging adoring children, surrounding Him. Peering at so well a figure from photographs and film features, I was also holding out a handful of letters, pleading in my mind to him to pay attention to me. But where were my tears of Love, the tremble of excitement, why was I not blinded by His light? After the darshan I noticed what was happening to me with a little surprise and sadness.

There was a celebration in Poornachandra Hall on 23rd November. Baba took the floor and spoke for more than an hour. Not knowing the language, I listened to the fast English translation but could understand only some words, as the translator was speaking very fast and my English is far from perfect.

Willy-nilly I switched to the purely external side of the event. I started watching the way Baba spoke. He spoke very fast and emotionally (it seemed), not always waiting for the end of the translation. I recollected somebody's comparison of it to a fast river flowing over boulders. And really the sounds of the unknown language and the manner of Baba's speech reminded me of that. Baba was joking much, it was clear from the laughter in the hall. Baba was wiping His face, it was hot for Him in this overflowing hall. I also felt hot...and weary sitting on the floor for so long in an unusual posture for me. To say the truth, I was waiting for the end of this event. I left with a feeling of dissatisfaction.

After that there were many darshans. During free time I could read. I was reading Bhagavad Gita and other books of Baba. When I thought about Him abstractly, I easily perceived him as God. But when He Himself was near to me, He again was a human being to me. I hoped for an interview, where everything should change; always something unusual happens there. But there was no interview. We were told that for the fifth month He did not invite Russians for an interview. We were lost in conjecture.

Another month passed; my duality of perception had not disappeared. One day there was a discussion in Poornachandra Hall, and Baba was going to give a talk? Anyway, I would not understand anything, not knowing the language. Just to watch Baba? I would better read His book, that way He could be nearer to me. All that grieved me, "Oh, Baba", I would think, "why, then am I far from you, and even now, when I don't see you, you are God to me without a

shadow of doubt; only with my mind I understand it, but when I see you, I see an ordinary man. Why do only I experience that and not my comrades?" In the end I wrote a letter to Baba, asking Him to rid me of this duality. At His next darshan Baba took my letter at once.

The great change!

Some days later everything changed! I cannot say what exactly happened in my consciousness. I was amazed myself. One morning some kind of illumination came upon me. When I opened my eyes I suddenly realised that the time was drawing near for me to go home. Shall I ever be here again? In my far away Russia I will go to satsangs, sing bhajans and with adoration look at the image of Baba on my wall. And here when by His grace I was near Him, I was wasting the precious moments. I was spending time so absurdly. I must absorb His closeness like a dry sponge absorbs moisture. I must remember His every moment, to be able after a long time to close my eyes and see again what I was a live witness to.

Those who visit Prasanthi Nilayam know that it is possible to get inside the temple if one tries hard enough, and sing bhajans in the presence of Baba. If one is 'lucky' at the picking of numbers for darshan, one may land a few metres from Baba's armchair.

Whether it was luck or Baba's will, after my morning 'realisation' I found myself quite near Baba's armchair at the bhajans in the temple.

When Baba sat down, I suddenly realised what grace was bestowed on me: I went through many births to be here now, to see the live embodiment of the Lord, to touch His garment, His feet, to get the blessings of the precious objects I brought with me and to sit as I was sitting at His feet, calmly watching Him. I had no doubt that He knew what was happening to me. I felt pain in my jaws, but could not loosen my teeth, for I did not want to start crying aloud. And so I was crying softly, without a sound.

After that my life changed. I was not walking in the ashram—I was flying. I felt so pleased, I found I was smiling all the time, though it was not always apparent. I was looking at Baba thinking within myself: Here is the Lord Himself coming, but how masterly He is pretending to be an ordinary man! Even His little coughs into His little fist touched me: "Does He feel as cold in the morning as we do?"

During Christmas I was listening to Baba's discourse without any tiredness, trying to remember His movement, intonation of His voice, joyfully feeling the change in me. I was being charged like an accumulator... for the rest of my life, because I did not know whether I would be ever again graced to see Him from so near.

It did not grieve me any more that I did not have an interview. The miracle had taken place! With this beautiful feeling I left for Russia.

—Vladimir Rabinov, Russia (From "The Splendour of Sathya Sai", Prasanthi Society")

From a Unitarian Church to a Sai Centre

The growth of the Sai movement in different parts of the world is an endless saga of devotion and dedication. Starting from small beginnings, with a handful of devotees gathering for Satsang in a Baba devotee's home, the movement gathers strength over the years, a large centre comes into existence and then it acquires a home of its own for its varied devotional and service activities.

The story of one such centre in distant Canada is related in a gripping manner in a souvenir published by the Winnipeg Centre on the occasion of the inauguration of its new building for the centre on Bhagavan's birthday last November.

What was for nearly a hundred years a Unitarian Church, built by an Iclander, was purchased and renovated by Sai devotees to make it a worthy habitation for their activities.

The earlier history of the church is described by Susan L. Van Dresser, with a profound sense of what it had meant for the Iclanding community for many decades. She writes:

The Canadian Unitarian congregation has been here 76 years and as we prepare to leave our 'little house', these walls remind us of what we are, what we have become, and where we are headed. They tell many stories, stories from long ago and far away, and stories, still unfinished, of the people and families who make up our congregation.

The land this church is built upon was only a piece of prairie far beyond the edge of town when an aging Iclander, Bjorn Peturrson, a religious freethinker, encountered an odd form of religion called Unitarianism. Encouraged by his future wife, Jennie Elizabeth McCain, he set about trekking across the prairie to find a congregation of like-minded freethinkers (if there be any such creatures). By 1891 this church had been 'gathered' (the word used when a church is founded) in Winnipeg.

Some forty years afterward, in 1921, the Icelandic Unitarians laid the corner-stone for this building designed by Olafur Peturrson. Stained glass windows used in the church previously built by the congregation were expanded for the new building and a specially constructed nook awaited our unique new organ (only two of its kind exist).

Our church has been the site of our religious services and a spiritual growth. And we have found ways of living our beliefs in sharing our church with the larger community.

During the Depression, our church was a soup kitchen: members of the congregation organized the Friendly Hour Meeting to provide meals to the needy in a warm, homelike atmosphere. Everyone, the jobless and the employed, the haves and have-nots, joined together, as equals, sharing the meal and fellowship.

During the Second World War, the women of the Unitarian Service Committee began collecting, repairing and sending mountains of clothing to Europeans left destitute by the war. Each shipment made to Europe measured in the tons.

During the great flood of the 1950s, our church was one of the three Red Cross emergency shelters in the city: volunteers from the church and the neighbourhood prepared meals and gathered supplies for people driven from their homes by the flood. The volunteers kept at their work 24 hours a day for three weeks, often in freezing temperatures.

After the Korean War, children in the church school adopted a deaf Korean orphan, supporting her for many years until she grew up and married.

Our church has seen the growth of people who have become leaders in our spiritual community. Our members have become teachers, religious education directors and ministers.

And while we have had a serious side, we have also laughed together. In fact, in the 70s you could have found a group here known as F.U.N., the Fellowship for Unlimited Nonsense (its slogan: "Organized, but not too much") sharing space and membership with the Social Responsibility Committee as it attacked issues of poverty and hunger, immigration and refugees, civil rights and nuclear waste management.

Grandparents bring their children and grandchildren. We come here, whether to sing or pray, to dance the Icelandic jig or find a friend.

These four walls have sheltered our attempt to live what is in our hearts and our minds. They have given room to our spiritual groping and growing, our celebrations, and our grief. These four walls have contained our lives with such grace, helping to strengthen who we are. When we leave them for the final time, we will remember this gift of our forebears. Let us learn to love its story.

God Waits

At the break of dawn, when the warmth of the sun fills my heart
I promise to be a noble soul whole daylong.
I shall not laugh at others' miseries
nor kill my thoughts by talking :
I shall see only the roses and not the thorns
I shall live for others and not for myself
I promised and promised till I realised
that there was darkness all around
I knelt down in prayer
I had not lived up to my promises
I cried in desperation
Then there was a voice from within:

"Today you failed, but there is tomorrow
I shall hold your hand"
Another tomorrow, and another one
Still God waits and waits
Till we become perfect,

—Soumya K., New Delhi

"Love walking on two feet"

It was Peggy Mason who 'introduced' me to Sathya Sai Baba, although as He says, He calls you when you are ready. I had to wait until I was almost 60, even though I had been searching for nearly 40 years. But, the moment came in November 1979 when I opened at random my copy of the Spiritual Healer Magazine, and there in front of me was Peggy's article: LOVE WALKING ON TWO FEET. Needless to say, it was an article about Sai Baba, and I was overcome when I read those famous words.

*There is only one religion, the religion of love
There is only one caste, the caste of humanity
There is only one language, the language of the heart
There is only one God and He is omnipresent.*

So, my 40-year search was over, thanks to Peggy, and I have headed this tribute LOVE WALKING ON TWO FEET, as I feel the same 'title' is very appropriate for Peggy herself. Over the years, I got to know her so well and I never experienced anything but Love. As we all know, Love is God, and that is what I found with Peggy, just endless Love, even when parts of her life may have been very difficult and tiring.

It was Ron and Peggy who got Swami's blessings to start the UK Council in 1982, and that was a real starting point in bringing everyone together. There were only five of us on the original council, all picked by Swami, and needless to say those five included Ron and Peggy. I was appointed President, but position did not come into it and we all worked closely together motivated by Love and the desire to serve everyone.

A shining example

From the very beginning, Peggy was a shining example of Love-energy with no ambitions for power or position, only the desire to serve Swami and to spread His divine message. And very soon after that she started her quarterly magazine which went all over the world and had 2400 subscribers by the time she passed over a few weeks ago. What a wonderful achievement and how hard she worked! As she wrote so often in the editorials, she would receive 30 or 40 letters a day, some of them ten pages long. And she worked round the clock, staying up till 3 or 4 A.M to cope with the correspondence. I am sure she answered every single letter, even though some must have been what I would call 'rather tiresome'.

But, that was Peggy, someone motivated by Love, God's energy, and if you allow yourself to be motivated that way, you can do anything. In my humble opinion, she did just that and I will always have the greatest admiration for all her efforts. Apart from that, people from all over the world would just turn up at her house, ring the bell and invariably she would take them in and spend 2 to 3 hours just talking about Swami and His teachings. Who else would do that, particularly when you know she was well into her eighties?

Peggy's book, SATHYA SAI BABA, THE EMBODIMENT OF LOVE, is a classic and will live for ever. Needless to say, it was one of the first books that I read and learnt much from it. Also, on a few occasions, when Peggy and I would be up on the platform for a question and answer session, I could cope with most of it, but when some of the erudite questions came, Peggy would respond and she was absolutely brilliant. It made me realise how little I knew about the ancient religions and beliefs. She seemed to know everything.

Well, We have 'lost' a wonderful friend, but she knew that her time had come and now she is happier than she could ever have been on the earth plane. She is in the hands of God, which she has always been, but during the earth life, we all go through many experiences when our faith is tested. Peggy survived all that and came out of it as a shining light, the reflection of the divine energy which shone out of her at all times. May God bless her and may we thank God for bringing Peggy into our lives.

—Lucas Ralli, U.K.

Overcoming Self-doubt

It was May 1994. After three blissful weeks near Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba in the beautiful resort in Kodaikanal in South India, my husband, Charles, and I followed Him back to Brindavan, His ashram outside Bangalore. Here we were to spend the remaining two weeks of our visit.

I was experiencing an extraordinary time. In fact, I had been in a state of bliss for the last six months, ever since Swami most compassionately guided me out of a prolonged period of inner turmoil.

This inner disturbance had originated unexpectedly at a time when I appeared to be quite peaceful, happy and content. Nothing seemed to be breaking my tranquility beyond a minor surface ripple here and there. Then, during inner-view one morning, Swami suddenly asked me to accept a task for which I felt totally unequipped. Much to my consternation, this task kept presenting itself in my mind over and over and I rejected it again and again, pleading incompet. One day I would say, "Oh, Swami, you know that I am not sufficiently skilled even to consider this work, let alone doing it." The next day I would feel ashamed that I presumed to tell Swami what I could, and could not do. I would promise to accept the challenge and humbly prayed for His forg. This flip-flopping went on relentlessly, day in and day out, for a whole year. My peace,

happiness and contentment soon vanished into nothingness. I felt as if I was locked up in a torture chamber.

It was not that my faith and trust in the Divine were weak; that had never been a problem. But my faith in myself appeared to be very shaky indeed. After decades of earnest and deep pursuit of the spiritual, I had felt that my goals had become spiritualized, but I did not realize that I was setting them only from my limited human perspective. As soon as the Divine Self challenged the narrowness of these goals by assigning a larger and more encompassing task, my ego rebelled by diving into these agonizing escapades of self-doubt.

When the pain of the constant ups and downs eventually became unbearable, Swami knew that I was ready for another phase of His teachings. Sweetly, yet firmly, He undertook the unenviable job of showing me how to overcome the destructive doubts that had so suddenly overwhelmed my mind. Patiently He reminded me time and again that I was the Atma, the spark of God, not the body. The Atma did not depend on external knowledge or sophisticated thought processes to manifest its Divinity. But, once recognized as the true identity, the Atma required the ego's total surrender in order to reflect its divine nature of Sat-Chit-Ananda (Being-Awareness Bliss).

Learning the lessons

The specific lessons which Swami knew I needed to learn were spread out over a period of fourteen months. One of the most important ones was that which enabled me to comprehend and consciously experience the essence of Sat (Being), which He defines as...the existence principle, the IS that is the basic truth of the universe...immortal existence, that which persists in the past, present and future, unaffected by time...the existence we know in the very depth of our being...

Swami granted this tremendous boon while guiding me to systematically recognize and strip away all thoughts, activities and desires that did not relate to the Atma, the Divine Self. They clouded my vision, He pointed out, covered up who I was in truth and so prevented me from seeing the unlimited attributes that were a natural part of my divine heritage. Purity of thought, word and deed; purity of motive; purity of selfless love; these were the eternal prerequisite in the quest for pure and timeless existence.

As a result of this experience I finally grasped that living in this true state of being was the indispensable requirement for experiencing Chit (Awareness), which, according to Swami, is....knowledge, awareness, universal knowledge, which illumines and reveals itself as well as all else...free from egoism or the desire to possess...the state of consciousness, unaffected by gusts of passion, And, I was suffused with Ananda, which Swami speaks of as genuine and lasting joy....ecstasy...absolute (and)divine bliss...blissful equanimous balance...The simplicity of this truth is awesome.

I had occasionally experienced Sat before and gained some valuable insights into truth, but somehow I had never understood as clearly as I did now, the oneness, even sameness, as I had assumed. Sat includes Chit as well as Ananda, and experiencing one is experiencing all three.

Beyond the ego

In my ignorance I had always thought it necessary to work on what seemed to be my personal faults and inadequacies one at a time. Now I began to question that approach, and I saw how it actually kept me focused on the negative and illusionary. I perceived that the better way might be to concentrate all my efforts and will power on striving to stay above the ego level of body-consciousness with all its pitfalls, limitations and illusions, so that I might dwell steadily in the reality of Being, ever aware of the sufficiency and competence of the divine Self. To achieve this, I had to keep the senses firmly under control and maintain the mind in a state of purity and calm, directing it to single-mindedly centre on the Atma, instead of the body. For, only then when the consciousness is clear and the mind is still, without desire, can the heart fathom the Divine within itself and by surrendering to it, become its instrument.

This, however, is more easily said than done. It was only slowly, very slowly indeed, that I learned to implement this transforming truth more and more frequently in my life. As a result my inner turmoil began to decrease and I felt calmer. But all was not well yet.

And soon Swami pointed out why. He acknowledged that currently I was controlling my thoughts well and now new desires were entering my mind. But had I cleaned out the mind's storage areas? During meditation one morning He showed me, in what seemed like a video running off on my inner screen, all the concepts, seemingly lofty ideals, plans, aims and other mental possessions which my ego had diligently collected and harboured over the years. As they passed before my inner eye, I recognized them all as either gross misconceptions of truth or attachments that were blurring my vision of the Divine. Some of these mental possessions I had been suspecting as worthless for some time. Others, however, I had polished and cherished over many years with great fondness, if not reverence, and I found it hard to wipe them out as mistakes or undesirable obstacles. But Swami was firm. He made me understand that all of them represented extra luggage, useless and distracting burdens to my true Self.

Living in the present

With these lessons Swami enabled me to let go of the structure that had seemingly held together my worldly identity. Now I had nothing left to look back on, nor anything to look forward to. And this, it dawned on me, was exactly where I was supposed to be. The present moment, Swami teaches, is all we ever have. We must learn to use it to the fullest, to further our spiritual purpose of being.

After this, perhaps once-in-a-lifetime mental house-cleaning I felt empty, hollow, and for a while I had the eerie feeling of being afloat. But then, out of the blue, my whole being began to be filled with joy and peace and a consuming desire to please Swami in any way I possibly could. If that meant accepting the task He had appointed for me, I knew then without any doubt that, with His Grace, I could do whatever He asked of me.

So, here I was now, six months later, seated in Sai Ramesh Hall in Brindavan, happy and perfectly content, enjoying to the utmost every moment, near Swami's form. I was studying Swami's Gita Vahini, my most favourite book, while waiting for His darshan. As I pondered over the meaning of what I was reading I got deeply engrossed in it, losing awareness of place and time, as well as the commotion around me.

Keeping off doubts

Suddenly I read, "Do not admit doubt into you". These words are the beginning of a paragraph on page 88. I had read this paragraph many times before and derived much insight from it. But now, as the words sank in, I became aware of some precipitous twitching within me and in no time at all my seemingly dormant ego became very aggressive, launching arguments that clearly revealed rapidly growing doubt in my mind. I was startled. What could have brought on this unexpected attack? It did not take me long to find out.

You see, with the exception of a few direct glances, which always informed me that Swami was going to bless Charles in some way, He had up to the point, never smiled or looked at me, or in any other way acknowledged my presence when I was physically near Him. The stark contrast between my inner experience with Swami and His external treatment of me jarred me again, as it had during previous visits. If my inner experiences were all true, would He not give at least some small indication that would confirm them while I was near Him on the physical plane? It was this lack of personal confirmation from Swami that had fed most of my inner disturbances during the last two years. How could I ever be certain of anything that happened inside me without that confirmation?

Now I was experiencing the truth of Swami's words in the remainder of the paragraph..."Want of faith or steadiness is not as destructive as the venom of doubt. In its operation and consequence, it is like the; tubercular bacilli. It is born in A-jnana and it penetrates into the cavity of the heart of man and breeds there. It is the parent of disaster..." I felt the venom of doubt attacking my every thought and contaminating it. Sadness spread inside me and depression followed in its wake. Not a trace was left of that wonderful state of bliss I had been enjoying until just a short while ago.

Swami made a big circle around me during darshan, leaving me in the fangs of the infectious disease roiling inside me. I had to fight back tears all morning and was silent for most of the time between morning and afternoon darshan. The thought that my close relationship with Swami on the inner level might be nothing more than soap bubbles of my imagination was so painful that I knew I could not bear it for long. My life derived its meaning, purpose and direction from these inner experiences and had done so since childhood, decades before Swami's form entered my life. The voice that was already guiding me then had no form and I called it Divine Love. As soon as I became aware of Swami's presence on Earth, the voice merged with the image of His form.

During the afternoon waiting period, prior to darshan, I finally managed to marshall all my determination and quieten down my ego. As stillness returned to my inner scene, immense joy and gratitude began to well up. And suddenly something like an explosion took place in my heart. There was an enormous burst of light that appeared to fill everything in and around me. Simultaneously I knew with absolute certainty that it did not matter one bit if Swami's form never acknowledged the presence of my body. That had no impact whatsoever on the truth that He was in me and I was in Him and we were One! With overwhelming clarity and sweetness the words rose from my heart, "Sai and I are One, I am Sai! Sai and I are One, I am Sai!"

"Sai and I are one"

I will never be able to describe fully the state of bliss that accompanied this experience. "Sai and I are One, I am Sai", kept vibrating through me uninterruptedly all through darshan into the evening and through the night. When I awoke the next morning it continued as naturally as I was breathing. I was saturated with happiness and peace, neither desiring nor needing anything at all, not even attention from Swami's form.

During the waiting hours before darshan I was again able to concentrate effortlessly on the text of Gita Vahini and the passage of time went unnoticed. When Swami appeared "Sai and I are One, I am Sai" rang through me so vibrantly that I felt it must be heard everywhere. Swami walked past without looking at me but that did not stop the song in my heart, nor cast a shadow over my joy. I was aflame with the Love and Peace that are not caused by, not depend on, anything external.

My eyes followed Swami's form over to the men's side, until He was hidden from view by one of the big pillars in the Hall. As I was waiting for Him to re-emerge, I saw Charles walking down the aisle towards the exit. Immediately I became very alert. Charles had not been feeling well that morning and I was wondering if he was looking for help. I tried discreetly to catch his attention, but he did not look up. At that moment I felt a hand on my shoulder. It belonged to the supervisor of the ladies' Seva Dal. She asked me if the gentleman going out was my husband. As I nodded confirmingly, she made a sweeping gesture with her hand, saying, "Well, get up, it is an interview!"

The interview

I was at that point so far removed from wanting Swami's attention that I did not comprehend! So she repeated "Interview, Interview, get up!" I was dazed. The ladies around me helped me to gather my book, pen, purse and cushions and I got up. When I stepped out of Sai Ramesh Hall, Charles was already walking up to me. He told me later that he would never forget the expression of shock he saw on my face.

Many wonderful things happened during that, our first, interview. Swami manifested a beautiful ring for Charles and healed an old spine injury, which had been causing Charles much pain in recent years, with just a gentle brush of His hand. He blessed us both far beyond what we could have dreamed of and talked with us in such a way that we were awed to realize how closely He was monitoring and guiding our lives.

Using the japamala

Swami had called in only a few other people. He made Charles sit right next to Him throughout the interview and, while we were in the main room, He talked almost exclusively with Charles. At one point Swami lifted Charles' japamala over his head, massaged it in His hand and asked, "How do you use it?" Charles took the japamala back and demonstrated how he was doing japa, "I am the servant of Sai, I am the servant of Sai". Swami, taking the japamala from Charles, shook His head. "No, no, don't say that. Say, "Sai and I are One, I am Sai'. For you are Sai!"

At Swami's words I felt an electric shock-wave rush through my body.

He was now repeating verbatim the mantra He had placed in my heart the previous afternoon upon the final dissolution of doubt that had poisoned my mind. And this, after He had already confirmed to everyone present, right at the beginning of the interview, that I had the qualifications needed to accomplish the task He had placed before me long ago.

The experiences of that interview capped the lessons Swami had taught me during the preceding two years. Since that time no doubt has ever again entered my mind and my happiness and inner peace have remained intact. My gratitude to Sai, my Beloved Lord and Teacher, cannot be expressed in words.

—Edith M. Gregory, U.S.A.

At first, God stands at a distance watching your efforts. He is like the teacher who stands aside while the student writes the answer to his questions. When you shed your attachment to the material world and turn to doing good and serving others, God comes encouragingly near. He is like the Sun-God who stands waiting outside the closed door, like a servant who keeps his place. He does not announce His presence or knock at the door. He simply waits. But when the master opens the door even a little, the Sun rushes in at once and drives out the darkness. When you ask God for help, He is right beside you with hands held out to help you. All you need is the discrimination to pray to God and the wisdom to remember Him.

—Baba

AVATAR VANI:

SANKRANTI SANDESH:

Promotion of Unity: Students' Duty

*Before desiring anything one must make himself worthy.
Charity (or generosity) qualifies one to get a good name.
Adherence to Truth qualifies one to attain Heaven.
Character makes one fit to enjoy happiness.*

For doing anything in the world one must have the competence (*yogyatha*). For the practice of Righteousness (*Dharma*) one must have the competence (*yogyatha*). According to his fitness, man embarks on righteous action.

To achieve fame man must qualify himself to deserve it. It is by one's generosity (*danam*) that one achieves a good name.

By Truth alone is Heaven realised.

Character is the root cause of all happiness for man.

Hence, to get happiness, or go to Heaven or to earn a good name, one must acquire the requisite worthiness.

Significance of Sankranti

This festive day has been celebrated from ancient times as a day of fulfillment and joy. Every festival is a social occasion, arising in society, flourishing in society, and promoting the well being of society. Every festival has been designed to promote the welfare of society. With social changes, festivals also have undergone changes.

Today's festival is an extremely important one for Bharatiyas. It is a festival to celebrate the glory of the Sun-God.

The Sun moves every month from one sign of Zodiac to the next.

Sankranti—meaning 'sacred change'—occurs every month as the Sun moves from one house of the Zodiac to another. But special sacredness attaches to the movement of the Sun to Capricorn (*Makara-Sankranti*).

*The Sun appears cool
The day gets shortened
And is made pleasant by chill wind
On the fields lit by moonlight
The crows caw over the grain heaps
While the farmers sing in joy
Over the golden harvest.
The flowers express their joy
By putting forth their petals
While in every home, filled with grain,
the people welcome the advent of Sankranti*

(Telugu Poem)

On *Sankranti* day the farmers rejoice over the fullness of the granaries in their homes with the newly harvested crop.

Uttarayana

When the Sun enters the sign of Capricorn, he begins his northward motion. The sun shines in every human body illuminating the '*six chakras*'. Of these *chakras* (spiritual centres in the body) two are most important: the *Hridaya Chakra* and the *Sahasrara Chakra*. The *Hridaya Chakra* has eight petals. God is the Lord of the eight-petalled *Hridaya Chakra*. These eight petals are regarded as eight consorts of the Lord. In this context the Lord is adored in the form of the Sun. The world cannot survive without the Sun. The solar system is derived from the Sun. Hence the Sun is worshipped as Divine.

The ancient sages adored the eight petalled Divine centre in the heart and thereby reached the *Sahasrara Chakra* and enjoyed supreme bliss.

The *Sahasrara Chakra* has a thousand petals. Each petal carries sixteen phases (*Kalas*). Thus the *Sahasrara Chakra* is said to represent of 16,000 gopikas, while the eight petals of the *Hridaya Chakra* are adored as the eight consorts of Krishna.

The syllable 'go' in the word 'gopikas' has four meanings: The Veda, the cow, the earth and the faculty of speech (*vaak*). The gopikas derive their different attributes from these different meanings. They chant the Vedas, protect the cows, nourish the earth and proclaim the glories of the Divine by their speech.

The five elements

In making an offering to Krishna, the mantra that is used is: "*Kleem Krishnsaya Govindaaya Gopijanavallabhaaya Swaaha*". It is interesting to explore the full significance of this mantra. '*Kleem*' means the earth. It is the first element. '*Krishnaaya*' signifies water. '*Govindaaya*' signifies Fire (*Agni*). '*Gopijanavallabhaaya*' signifies Air (*Vaayu*). '*Swaaha*' signifies Space (*Akaasa*). The mantra thus represents all the five elements in the cosmos as manifestations of the Divine. The Cosmos cannot exist without these five elements. They are all pervading. It follows that there is no place in the Cosmos where God is not immanent. The Gopikas, through this mantra, taught the world that God should be adored as the omnipresent Divine everywhere in the Cosmos. Hence in every atom, in every particle, the Divine is present all the time.

The ancient sages reached the thousand petalled *Sahasrara* through the adoration of the Lord in the eight-petalled lotus of the heart. They used all their God-given intelligence for this spiritual goal. But modern man is using his intelligence only for worldly ends. The sages considered cultivation of virtues and good qualities and righteous conduct as true education.

What do the eight petals of the heart represent? They are: Love (*Prema*), Truth (*Sathyam*), Forbearance (*Sahanam*), Sacrifice (*Tyaga*), Compassion (*Daya*), Beauty (*Sundaram*) and Bliss (*Ananda*) and Peace (*Santhi*). To realise the Bliss of the Divine, all the other qualities have to be fostered. God is the embodiment of all these eight attributes. Sacrifice is the most important of them.

The Chakora bird is the example for man in the pursuit of purity. It will not drink any water except what rains from a cloud in the sky. It sees in a dark rain-bearing cloud the Divine form of the Lord. Man should seek to see and experience the Divine in every object and every being. Students should experience the Divine in all their studies and sports. It has been well said: *Life is a game, Play it!*

The Power of Love

Life must be permeated with love. Through Love, Truth can be realised and a righteous life can be lived.

The ancients attached the highest value to good character. They considered that if character is lost, all is lost. Today people consider that if wealth is lost all is lost. They attach no value to character.

Men should strive to lead a virtuous life. The gopikas provide the supreme example of how to lead a life dedicated to the Divine. The episode of Uddhava's mission to the gopikas and their reaction to it as described in the Bhagavatam shows what true and one-pointed devotion to Krishna meant for the gopikas. They had totally surrendered their minds and hearts to Krishna.

This day marks the entry of the Sun into the sign of Capricorn in his northwards journey (*Uttarayana*). Bhishmacharya, lying on a bed of arrows after he fell wounded, waited for the commencement of *Uttarayana* to give up his spirit to the Lord. He lay on the bed of arrows for 56 days. This signifies the sacredness of this day. This is the moment for filling one's heart with divine feelings.

The God Within

There is no need to seek for God in a temple, mosque or church. He is enshrined in every human heart. Unfortunately people go on expensive pilgrimages to all sorts of places forgetting that God is the dweller in their hearts.

Why should Indian students go abroad for studies or for jobs? It is better to earn ten rupees within India than ten thousand rupees abroad. This craze for going abroad is utterly meaningless. It is better to lead a good life within India than pursue the mirage of careers abroad.

In this context, it is good to remember the teachings of the sage Narada on devotion. Narada is misrepresented as one who revelled in promoting discord. This is totally wrong. He expounded the highest truths about Devotion (*Bhakti*) and taught how man should realise oneness with God through intense devotion.

Unity in Diversity

What people need today is the yearning for unity in diversity. Human beings are like the limbs of the body of society. They are integral parts of society. Society is a part of Nature and Nature is a limb of God. Hence the integral and organic relationship between the individual and God through Society and Nature should be properly understood.

The body is important in the spiritual process. The Gita has declared that the body (*Kshetra*) and the indwelling Knower (*Kshetrajna*) are one. Hence men should engage themselves in sacred actions which will promote the welfare of society and uphold its reputation.

To transform society the first requisite is individual transformation. Purify your heart. Then society will also become pure. You should adhere to truth like Harishchandra, prepared to face any ordeal. Never go back on your plighted word.

Advice to Students

Students! You have participated in many games. Prizes are awarded to winners in sports. But do not aspire for prizes given by others. Seek the reward of self-satisfaction (cheers). You must have the feeling: "I have done my duty." Duty is God. Work is worship.

Today the wardens approached me and said that Swami should distribute prizes to the winners in the sports events. I did not agree at the outset to distribute. A prize is called *bahumati*. The meaning of *bahumati* is 'multi-minded'. When a single mind can play so many monkey tricks, what is the result of bestowing 'many minds'? There is a saying that a bachelor is equal to a hundred monkeys. I do not like to confer prizes which unsettle the minds of the students. j

What is the prize that should be awarded to the students? *"You are good! You are good!"* That is the award that you should earn from Swami. Many prize-winning students look forward to getting Padanamaskar at the Feet of Swami when they receive the prizes from Swami. Yesterday I allowed all students to offer Padanamaskar because they were willing to forgo receiving of prizes (cheers). It is their spirit of sacrifice that has enabled them to get this benediction from Bhagavan.

From Self-Confidence to Self-Realisation

The spiritual edifice is built on the foundation of Self-confidence. The walls are made up of Self-satisfaction. Self-Sacrifice is the roof. Self-Realisation is fulfillment in life.

Students! Fill your minds and hearts with these sacred spiritual truths and go out into the world to spread the spiritual message in every street and every alley.

The world today is in utter confusion. Unrest and fear stalk the world. To eliminate this disorder and fear you have to instill devotion among the people.

Today the world lacks righteousness and spirituality. The people are immersed in materialism and worldliness. They are after power and pelf. This is utterly wrong. Money comes and goes. Morality comes and grows.

You may carry on your vocational duties. But along with it, render social service. See the divine in the people whom you serve.

"Oh! My God!"

Even an agnostic occasionally invokes the name of God. For instance, on one occasion, Jawaharlal Nehru was visiting the Meenakshi Temple in Madurai. During the worship of the Goddess, Nehru noticed a large emerald adorning the idol. He enquired about the value of the emerald. He was interested in the value of the gem. But the devotees in the sanctum were meditating on the divine form of the Goddess. They were concerned about Divinity. Nehru looked at the idol from a worldly point of view. When he was informed that the ornament was worth several lakhs, spontaneously he exclaimed: "My God!" What made him think of God? Because, there is God in everyone. When expressing surprise at something one exclaims: "Oh! My God!" In this manner, people give expression to the Divinity within them unconsciously.

A Lesson to the Pandavas

Doubts about God may arise sometimes even among staunch believers. This may be illustrated from an incident in the Mahabharata. Once, while the Pandavas were in exile in the forest, Krishna visited them. Krishna was told that the five brothers used to take turns during night to keep a vigil over the activities of evil spirits and demons. One night an evil spirit appeared before the Pandava brothers and they had great difficulty in fighting it. In view of this, Dharmaja, the eldest of the Pandavas, tried to dissuade Krishna from participating in the sentry duty. Krishna, however, insisted on taking his share. During that period no evil spirit appeared. Then came Arjuna's turn and Krishna watched the scene from a distance. To Arjuna's surprise, no evil spirit appeared while Krishna was there. Krishna then explained to Arjuna that evil spirits were only a reflection of one's hatred and fear and when one is free from these, no evil spirit will appear or

do any harm. Krishna revealed that the Divine existed even in the so-called evil spirits and that if one gets rid of the evil qualities within him the evil spirits can do no harm. One's anger assumes the form of a demon. If you develop love, everything you confront will have the form of love. This was the lesson Krishna taught the Pandavas.

Students should eschew bad qualities like anger, hatred and envy. By manifesting love, they will enjoy bliss.

"Follow Your Dharma"

The essential message of the Gita is: Follow your Dharma. Do your duty without expectation of the fruits thereof. If you are a householder, perform your duties as a householder. Whatever your stage in life, act according to the duties appropriate to that stage. If everyone does his duty, there is nothing greater in life.

But there is one duty that is common to all stages—it is '*hridaya-dharma*' the duty dictated by the heart. Fill your hearts with love. Thereby you can accomplish anything. *Start the day with Love, Fill the day with Love, End the day with Love - this is the way to God.*

Cups for the Campuses

I am presenting to each campus of the Institute a silver cup. Accept it as my love offering to every student individually. Everyone should develop a sense of oneness with all. The world today suffers from divisiveness. Students should go out into the world and promote the sense of human unity. That will be the offering you can make to me. You are all my property. And I am yours. Let us share each other's Love (cheers). That is the true path of devotion. It is not ritualistic worship that is the true mark of devotion. It is the feeling of identification with God that is the essence of devotion.

During the recent Unity Cup Cricket Match one reputed cricketer observed: "I don't do any work on my own. Whatever I do, I regard as Swami's work. Because I was doing Swami's work, my work was taken care of by Swami. I was not attending to my work. After coming here, I received a telegram to the effect: 'Your task has been accomplished successfully'." He then announced that "while I was attending to Swami's work, Swami carried out my work." Likewise, if you do Swami's work, your work will be taken care of by Me. Dedicate every action to the Divine. The response will be equally Divine. This has been described as 'Divine Vibration'. That vibration will sustain and support your life.

(Bhagavan then handed over five mega silver cups to the representatives of the three campuses of the Institute, the Junior College of Anantapur, Higher Secondary School and a special cup to the children of the Primary School in appreciation of their superb presentation).

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan: "*Bhajan bina sukh santhi nahi*". But after the bhajan was over, Bhagavan made a short speech calling upon the students to take up social service in the villages after they go back to their homes. This is the way to make use of their studies and put into practice Swami's teachings. *"Instill in the villagers devotion to God. Practise what you preach. This is true service."*

—(From Bhagavan's discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall on 14-1-1998)

Spiritual Enquiry and Divine Grace

One summer in Kodaikanal, Baba was speaking to a group of His students. They were all standing outside, admiring the superb view of the mountains, the lush roses and other exotic plants and flowers that characterise the old hill station in Southern India. He often talks with His students—He gives them so much attention. He says that students are the future of a nation—and He is right.

He is always teaching. Never wasting a minute of time. He always finds the opportunity for a little story, a song, a gesture—and an endless stream of pure knowingness which He shares freely and lovingly with all. He will also sometimes materialise a wonderful object to make His point, then when it has served its purpose, He may dematerialise it or even change its structure into something completely new and different, to surprise, delight and ultimately educate.

On this occasion in Kodaikanal, Sai was chatting with the boys when He suddenly turned to pluck a leaf from a creeper that was growing nearby. Suddenly, before everyone's eyes, the leaf was transformed into a luscious pair of big juicy cherries. While everyone "ooohed" and "aaahed" with delight, Sai, smilingly popped a cherry into a student's mouth, whereupon it turned into a chocolate! I have got a photo of this delightful event, taken just after Sai transformed the leaf into the fruit. What a look there is on His face! As if to say, "Surprise!—Look what I've got!"

People ask me, "Why does He do it?" It is very important to have a full understanding, as full as we are capable of, of this matter. I can do no better than present what Sai Himself has to say about it. I also see the materialising as a way of planting a seed. It wakens us from our dream, it jars us out of our complacent, everyday existence. It makes us sit up and want to find out more.

"Many of you are under the mistaken notion that all My materialisations have a worldly significance. It is a gross mistake! Don't think like this. These (materialisations) are ladders that shall enable you to ascend to a bright and ideal future. So long as you are in possession of such sacred objects, only pious thoughts will be generated in you".

"Miracles are an innate part of Me. I was with them. They were not acquired after birth through yogic practices. That is why Swami uses not only these powers freely, but extensively over a very wide range for the propagation of the objective for which He has incarnated Himself on Earth. The Avatar is Omnipresent and Omnipotent. Baba's miracles show clearly that He is not bound by Time, qualities, and Nature. He is beyond everything. He is everything and everywhere. As the Indweller of the Heart, He is the Eternal Witness."

The light within

You see, once you have begun a process of spiritual enquiry, and you are sincere, trusting with faith, then the information, the knowledge you seek will come to you. I believe you attract it, but

also it is the Grace of the Avatar that it comes to you at all. Spiritual inquiry is the first step on the road to spiritual transformation. It causes the seeds in your Spiritual Heart to sprout. It is a road that will lead you unerringly back to your Spiritual Heart, the Universal Heart, the Indweller, which was inside you all along.

That is why He says that you do not need to jump from ashram to ashram, temple to temple, church to church, mountain to valley, in search of enlightenment or whatever you want to call it. Look at the word 'enlightenment'. You have the prefix 'en' which can mean 'to go into'. It comes from the ancient Greek language. Then 'lighten'. Among its many meanings, it translates here as a 'means of illumination'. The suffix 'ment' indicates a quality or condition. The meaning that you get from this combination is 'Going into the illumination within you, the Light within you'. It's as simple as that. You go into the: Spiritual Heart, the Universal Heart that is within you.

Cleansing the heart

The spiritual quest should not be embarked upon lightly or frivolously. Internal preparation is the best beginning. The cleansing of the heart is the first step. Then there has to be firm resolution that you will be able to confront the difficulties and burdens you are sure to encounter on the way. Practical advice in any undertaking!

Beloved Sai gave us a message in an interview. He said: "If only some would practise and change their thoughts, we would have a happy world. No 'heart to heart'. Teach them 'heart to heart'." Today, so many are trying to change their attitude. Do your part, change your attitude, criticise yourselves and change yourselves. Every day is a learning day for one on the spiritual path. Every day, take them... find your quiet time to contemplate and experience that Divine Energy within. The world is going to be a better place when everyone radiates Divine Love and Compassion. The true attitude is humility and a willingness to accept accusation, even though untrue and unjustified, silently without retaliation. Leave judgement to God. These are the golden rules.

Another message given by Sathya Sai Baba is that you should never put God in boundaries by saying, "My faith is the only way", or "My knowledge about the God is only way". This thinking will trip you up. To enjoy the sweetness of Sai Baba's teachings, one should possess the force of devotion and the untainted wisdom of a pure heart. The one with compassion is a giver, not a taker. When you believe in your existence, you will understand the existence of all things. Do not try to change the world, or others! Change your own mind. Religion does not exist in churches, mosques or temples; these places are meeting places for gathering in worship. Religion is in the mind. The Apostle St. Paul declared in his gospel, "Know that the Christ lives in me and thee".

Many paths to God

Some individuals, when they discover a certain path or faith or religion become so excited about it that they immediately want to go out and bring others in. Well and good, but it is far better to put up energy into doing a lot of work on yourself before you start trying to bring others to that path. In any case, how do you know it is right for them? There are many paths to God, Each finds his or her own way. All paths, if they are based on love and selfless service, lead straight to God.

"Develop the skill to swim across the waves of joy and grief, of pain and profit. Become a master of the art of being fully at ease, perfectly calm and unaffected, whatever may happen to the body, senses or the mind. Learn the skill of achieving and maintaining inner peace, the art of being ever aware of the inner reality. Do not count your tears of pain, do not pore over your grief. Let them pass behind. A diamond is just a dull piece of hard pebble. When it is cut skillfully, it becomes a multi-faceted flame of fire. A precious gem. Allow yourselves to be so treated that all your dullness will disappear and you will emerge as a resplendent gem. Realise that no special spiritual practice is needed to experience the Divine in you. Sanctify and recognise that in each being is the oneness of being a child of God. The whole world is one family."—Sathya Sai Baba.

—Mata Betty New Zealand
(From the writer's latest book, "Sathya Sai Baba - the Universal Heart")

An Unusual Interview

In His message to us, our beloved Lord Sathya Sai Baba tells those who have not found Him yet: "Take one step towards Me and I will take ten towards you". I would like to tell you about exactly such a case which I witnessed during my November trip to Puttaparthi. It was not my first meeting with the Lord. Life in this world, especially business life in the difficult situation that we find ourselves in Russia now, imposes such cares, trials and tribulations that one can be released from them only by physically coming to Bhagavan Sathya Sai and delving into the spiritual environment that one can find only in the Prasanthi Nilayam Ashram.

It happened that this time I had to go from St. Petersburg on my own and I thought that at least one of my Moscow friends might like to join me. None of them yet realised the importance of the fact that it was high time to step out on the spiritual path, though all of them heard, mainly from me, about the phenomenal occurrence in the history of humanity—the embodiment of God on Earth in the form of a man, Whose name is Sri Sathya Sai Baba. My closest Moscow friend (I'll call him 'M') heard rather much from me about the Lord. Nearly every time returning from India I would visit "M" at his home and tell him of my fresh impressions about the journey, leaving some books in Russian about Sathya Sai Baba. However he would listen politely but do nothing else: he did not show any interest and did not read a single book. I could not understand it knowing that "M" was an educated man with a subtle critical mind. He was a rather well known scientist and achieved nearly all-scientific titles: doctor of technical sciences, professor, inventor emeritus of the State, State Prize-winner. He knew me since we were students and could be sure that I would not say anything that was not true or overstate facts. From my information "M" knew about the fascinating cases demonstrated by Swami especially as I myself was a witness to some of them during three interviews. It was evident that phenomena that cannot be explained from the point of view of this world were taking place in Prasanthi Nilayam. These were not in accordance with the known laws of physics, chemistry etc.

At the present moment my friend has serious life problems: like many scientists in Russia he lost his permanent job; his health is far from perfect; he has harmful habits; smoking, drinking for several years. All that had a harmful effect on his health and state of mind; he was unusually in a depressed mood; he knew that ahead of him was old age with all its difficulties, illness, deterioration, loss of close friends. That is why I tried so hard to help him to discover for himself Sathya Sai Baba.

We are so lucky we live in the same time as He. Our country has become democratic enough for us to be able to go and see the Lord for ourselves and, if lucky, to have His interview. I thought it would be a great loss for anyone to miss such an opportunity.

Now, before going to India, I rang my Moscow friends, offering them an opportunity to go with me for 2 - 3 weeks. But all of them including my friend "M" politely refused my offer pleading they were too busy etc. I was surprised; but suddenly "M" rang me up saying that after talking it over with his wife he decided to go in spite of his financial difficulties. He told me later he persuaded his wife saying that possibly, after this trip he might stop drinking. His calculations showed that if he gave up drinking for half a year this would cover the cost of this trip to India. I

had explained to him no one was allowed to drink or smoke, or eat meat or fish in Prasanthi Nilayam. He agreed to obey these rules but would not read books about Sathya Sai.

We were given a room with all conveniences; besides us there were two young men: a Japanese from Osaka and a German from Berlin. On the second day of our stay in the Ashram I gave my friend three of the last editions of the quarterly magazine "Divine Love" my Sai friend Sophia gave me when she learned "M" had not read anything about Sai Baba yet. On the third day before going to bed my friend at last opened one of the quarterlies and started looking through. He would choose only those pages where Swami Himself speaks, and being transfixed, continued reading through the night in the bathroom, so that the rest of us could sleep undisturbed (after 9 o'clock people in the Ashram are supposed to go to bed).

Next morning at Darshan I got the second row and managed to keep a place behind me for my friend. Usually it is not allowed and a Seva Dal on duty did not like it but I managed to persuade him. "M" came half an hour before Darshan when the first ten rows were filled, but seeing me he successfully got through to the third row. At Darshan Swami passing us made a sign with His hand three times looking straight at "M" and me. First I thought it was for me and understood it as a blessing. It made me very happy as any look or sign of attention from Swami is very exciting and pleasant for us all. After Darshan my friend took me aside and started with great excitement telling me that last night he saw Swami in his dream and spoke with Him. This was a very unusual dream, he could see everything very clearly and remember everything as if it was real. "M" was very agitated and confused; he could not understand whether it was a usual dream cast by what he had read or it was something he could not fully comprehend.

Below is the dialogue between him and Swami as related by "M". Swami was sitting at the rostrum in an auditorium where "M" usually delivers lectures for students, and he was sitting opposite Swami at a table like a student.

Swami: "You wanted an interview—you will have it now. You always liked double lectures (2 x 45 min without a break): you will now have such a period yourself. You may ask Me questions".

"M": "Not everything is clear in religions. They divide".

Swami: "All religions were written for the time when people were primitive and so they were expounded in the language and concepts of that period. A blind belief and miracles were required. Look at Moses who was taking Jews from Egypt showing miracles. Each time requires its form. Temples were constructed but the real temple must be in one's soul. You did not want to read books about Me, but you studied mathematics: first 2 x 2, then further, then physics. From the simple to the complex, but all the knowledge is held up by the highest knowledge that is God. Gradually one goes from intellect to spirituality; one needs intellect to live in this world. You started reading about Me for the sake of your friend. Your friend is My channel. He brought you here and did it selflessly. Do not worry about material things—You have a good intellect. Just imagine that man's life in a cosmic scale lasts only one hundredth part of a second, so what difference does it make where you live: in a palace or in a hut?"

"M": "Where can I find strength?"

Swami: "If you have spiritual strength, then physical strength is not important. Your programme was to go swimming in the sea (this is exactly what Alexander and his friend were going to do: to spend 3 days at the coast for swimming). Go or you will be sorry. One must do everything sincerely, nothing should be done under compulsion. You have a good intellect and it's not necessary for you to stay here long. You have to decide".

"M": "How shall I live now? May be I should become a monk or work out an algorithm of my future actions?"

Swami: "If you put bread into the mouth of a hungry man, then he will never learn to earn it himself. One can't work out algorithm for the whole of one's future. That is why you are given a choice in your life. I give you a trial and watch what choice you will take. On that depends whether you pass your test or not. If there was no choice, you would be slaves, and I don't need slaves. You should find a spiritual path by yourself, everything depends on you. You should not expect any gratitude for whatever you give".

"M": "What concrete steps should I take to come to spirituality?"

Swami: "Let us take an example of water—it is a substance. One may pour it into a vessel; they may bring it to you in a restaurant in a crystal glass or you may pour it into a gold goblet. But the best of all is to go to the source, the spring and drink it from there. The spring is in your heart. It is forgotten; you must yourself converse with God. What should you do? You must gradually change yourself morally for the better. You have bad habits. Start with getting rid of them. You have already become better; less proud. Pride is making you blind. Alcohol dries up your brain—that is the worst, it's an obstacle to God. Smoking dries up your body. It hinders your development".

"M": "What then?"

Swami: "Act according to the criteria of Truth. One can clean the puss out of the wounds like Mother Teresa or help people, but if you are proud then everything is in vain. If you want you may bring people the knowledge about Me, but do not be a lecturer. Nothing should be done without sincerity, one should not be lazy. Your wife is more spiritual than you, she is more compassionate. Both of you still have an opportunity to come to Me—your life span is not finished yet".

"M": "I can't understand: is it a dream or not? I am waiting with my group for an interview".

Swami: "The cleverer a man is, the less faith he has. There are no miracles in the world, only a level of knowledge. For you to believe, tomorrow morning at Darshan I'll make a sign by moving My hand three times like that (and Swami showed how He will do it). That's the end of your double time".

Next morning during the Darshan Swami confirmed that it was not a dream by moving His hand three times. Swami repeatedly said that no one can see Him in a dream without His will. It is

truly surprising that for each person Swami finds an individual way of helping him in his spiritual growth at the right moment; and giving this amazing interview, Swami expressed His Love to my friend as He always does.

OM SAI RAM

—Alexander, St. Petersburg

MEMORIES OF AN OLD STUDENT

What Swami Means to Me

To lose one's mother in one's childhood is indeed a great misfortune. But to enjoy the love of a thousand mothers in the form of Swami's love, particularly in one's boyhood days, is a supreme good fortune. I have had experiences of both.

I very vividly recall when for the first time I had Swami's darshan. It was a pleasant morning in December, 1968. The sun had not quite cleared the mist that hung thick in the air, when I entered the sacred precincts of Brindavan. We walked through a path lined by gulmohar trees until we came to a gate which separated a large and attractive bungalow from the outer grounds. We had come early to secure a vantage (!) point and were not disappointed. There were hardly a hundred devotees present. Men and women sat on either side of the walkway leading to Bhagavan's abode. The chirping of birds and the occasional chatter of monkeys seemed to emphasise the solemn silence that was notable in the ashram. I had a fresh lotus in my hand to offer to Swami when I took my seat among other devotees.

Around 9 A.M. there was a flurry of activity and following the direction in which all eyes were turned, I saw what I felt to be the very soul of beauty in a dark red robe and a halo of crinkly hair. The first emotion which surfaced in my young heart was one of indescribable joy. My eyes were glued to the graceful figure gliding down the inner courtyard. I was so overcome with joy that it was only after Swami Himself had snatched the almost crumpled lotus from my hand that I noticed My Father whispering to me: "Do not offer that crumpled lotus to Baba."

I cannot contain my delight when I recall that it was my heart that He snatched (in the form of the lotus) that day.

It was the same tree-lined avenue during my second visit on the 20th of July, 1974. The gulmohar trees were in full bloom. Swami was coming down in His graceful and loving manner. Fifty of us, new students, stood expectantly as Swami walked past us. Swami walked amidst us pointing to a boy here and a boy there. The warden was noting down the names. Swami's index finger pointed in my direction and, joy of all joys, I knew I had been selected to join Swami's hostel. Swami then asked us to go into a room in his bungalow. He came after darsan and enquired lovingly about our names and native places. He then invited us to have lunch with Him the next day.

It has always given me great joy to think of Bhagavan as my mother. While the mother who gives birth to a child looks after its physical well-being, Swami ensures our well-being in all aspects.

Another memorable episode relates to the year 1976. Swami was returning from His trip to Bombay and all of us, students and a few elders, were waiting in the inner courtyard of Brindavan to greet Him on arrival. Swami's jasmine-white Benz limousine noiselessly glided into the compound. Swami alighted from the car and blessed us with a sweet smile that seemed to indicate some special message for us. With a twinkle in His eye, and delight in His voice, Swami said: "Boys! small boys! I have good news for you. I have brought medicine for all of you short boys to grow tall!" The news itself seemed to add a few inches to our stature! Swami's enthusiasm and joy were infectious. Swami then described to us how when a group of Ayurvedic experts prayed to Him for an interview and Swami granted their wish, Swami had placed before them this 'problem'. "Many of my boys are short. Can you give me some medicine which will make them grow tall?" (The very thought that Swami should have thought of us during the hectic schedule at Bombay brought tears to our eyes.) The doctors were overjoyed at this chance to serve Swami and prepared a 'medicine' and gave it to Him in the next couple of days. Swami had personally brought it with Him. The 'medicine' was in the form of a sweet and Swami directed that we should start taking it from the very next day. That night, the Hostel Warden called all of us into the dispensary and got our heights accurately measured, as instructed by Swami. Immediately after Suprabhatam the next morning, we were all given the medicine with a glass of milk. Swami asked us whether we had taken our 'dose' of medicine that morning and was happy to learn that we had done so. We took the medicine for fifteen days. On the fifteenth day, in the evening, our heights were measured again. The warden asked us to go through the measurement procedure again and after satisfying himself, went and placed the report in Swami's hands.

When Swami came out for darshan next morning, He gave us a beautiful smile, called us to the front and patted us. Swami was very happy. Every boy who had taken the 'medicine' had grown taller! The number of inches added varied from 1/2 an inch to 2 1/2 inches! Swami felt 'proud' like a mother that the medicine had worked a miracle. We all bowed at Swami's feet with tears of joy for we knew that the 'medicine' was only an excuse. It was His will which had helped to add to our stature in so short a period.

When one is with Swami, miracles never cease. Another unforgettable experience occurred in 1985. The gong had sounded for the lunch session on the 26th of June 1985. I was busy preparing a spray reagent in the chemistry laboratory to spray on a plate. The spray reagent was prepared by mixing equal proportions of concentrated sulphuric acid and acetic anhydride. While I was mixing them, suddenly due to the excessive heat caused by the mixture, the whole mixture spurted and splashed into my eyes. I shouted: Sai Ram! Sai Ram! This and the sound of glass breaking (I had dropped the atomiser) brought one of my colleagues who was working in the adjoining room to my table and with his help, I went to the sink to wash my eyes. Due to some repair work along the water pipe-line the water had been shut off in that line. So we had to rush to another tap at the other end. During this process, the concentrated sulphuric acid and acetic anhydride mixture had been in my eyes for full 2 1/2 minutes. I flushed the eyes thoroughly with water. But...the world which I had seen so clearly a few minutes earlier was invisible to me. I thought that it may take some more time for me to recover. But things seemed to get worse and

when Swami passed by my side that evening I could only hear the rustle of His robe. The eye doctor who examined me said: "I am afraid the cornea might have been damaged. I shall examine it tomorrow morning". I sent an appeal to Swami who very graciously sent three packets of vibhuti to be taken three times a day for three days. So i started taking this vibhuti that night itself. The eye doctor examined me for a long time the next morning and then told me that by Swami's grace, my cornea was still intact.

After two days, that is, by the time I finished the three packets of vibhuti, I could see very clearly.

That evening Swami came to me and very lovingly asked, "How are your eyes?" My eyes replied by sending a stream of tears to wash His lotus feet.

That was how I got my physical sight by the grace of Bhagavan. But how shall I thank Him for giving me over the years the spiritual vision that has sustained me in loving and serving Him?

—Dr. Ravi Kumar, Brindavan

My Life - My Sai

Unknown and unseen yet,
He stood at every cross-road;
To me the correct path,
He always showed.

I was groping in the dark,
A light came from Him;
I did not falter,
Simply followed Him.

Both children went abroad
Depression shook my wife;
Swami's touch in darshan,
Brought back her normal life.

I retired suddenly,
Without proper preparation;
He assured: "Do not fear!
This is my creation".

"Put ceiling on desires"
Commanded He;
I obeyed Him
He took care of me.

Now my body carries cancer,
A terrifying disease;
Yet He keeps me carefree
My mind is at ease.

I try not to ask for anything
He knows my "Karmic reserve;"
He controls all my desires,
Gives me what I deserve.

I do not know His mystery,
Nor His means and ways;
He knows my weaknesses
And holds my hand always.

My ego always told me,
My rank should be high.
He put me where I belong,
He is **my Sai**.

—Arun Mitra
Jhargram, West Bengal

Solemn Sivaratri in Prasanthi Nilayam

This year's Sivaratri festival was celebrated with due solemnity in Prasanthi Nilayam on February 25 and 26 with devotees from many countries participating in the night-long bhajans which were sung mainly by students from the campuses of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning.

The celebrations began in the morning of February 25 with a programme of devotional songs on Siva rendered by the students of the Institute. All the boys of the Secondary and Primary Schools also joined enthusiastically in the recitation and made it a thrilling experience for the huge concourse of devotees who listened with rapt attention.

Bhagavan then blessed the prasadam to be distributed to the devotees while Bhajan songs were sung by the students and Bhajan Groups.

In the afternoon, Bhagavan came to Sai Kulwant Hall at 3:30 p.m. and gave Darshan going round the huge congregation of devotees hailing from different nations and following different faiths.

Bhagavan signalled the Veda chanting group of students to the dais and the meeting commenced with their Vedic recitation. Bhagavan's Divine Discourse on this sacred and holy occasion was preceded by short speeches by Dr. G. Venkataraman, Vice-chancellor of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, and one of the faculty members Dr. Sandipan Chatterji.

Dr. Venkataraman at the outset said that we are all worshipping Bhagavan as Lord Siva and offered salutations to Him as Siva or, the holy day of Sivaratri. He referred to the celebration of a series of festivals round the year. "To those who may be wondering why so many different festivals when we say that there is only one God, Bhagavan has explained that a teacher in a school is a teacher to students, husband to his wife, father to his son, and so on depending on the relationship to each one. Similarly the relationship between man and God has different aspects". He said that Mahatma Gandhi described God as "indescribable power". Bhagavan has given unique interpretation for the English word 'God' as Generator, Organiser, Dissolver. These are done by the different agencies in the material world by one God who is playing the different roles in respect of the entire universe. Some people depict Siva as a form of terror. It is not correct because Siva means purity, auspiciousness and beauty Sathyam, Sivam, Sundaram. He is described as Dinanath, Vaidyanath etc. Siva played the role of the saviour of the entire universe by swallowing the poison that came out first while ocean of milk was churned to get Amrita by Devas and Asuras. Siva is the destroyer of all evil. When people get together even for a good purpose, problems caused by ego confront them and Siva with purity helps to solve the difficulty. The speaker gave example of great devotees of Siva like Kannappa who was prepared to give both his eyes to the idol of Siva when he saw how the eyes of the idol were afflicted. Great saints like Adi Sankara too had to face problems which were got over by surrendering to Lord Siva with full faith. The speaker in conclusion said that Bhagavan is here before us as the embodiment of Love and compassion walking through endless long lines of devotees granting them padanamaskar and blessings. On this holy day our thoughts should be on the Compassionate Lord.

Dr. Sandipan Chatterji made mention about the importance of good company that one should keep. The real good company is one's conscience which is our master and God. He referred to the vagaries of the mind which are responsible for people straying away from righteous path. On this auspicious occasion we should get to the stage of mindlessness which is desirelessness. This will lead us to the stage of coming face to face with God. Bhagavan has given us a golden offer saying: "Leave all the burdens of mind with me, then you will have the taste of real freedom". The speaker concluded by saying "We must have the feeling 'We are all One' on this holy occasion and pray to Bhagavan that our mind should be still keeping vigil through the night not to divert our thoughts away from Bhagavan".

Bhagavan then gave His inspiring discourse on the significance of Sivaratri and the spirit in which it should be observed.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the Bhajan "*Siva, Siva, Siva anaraada*" which marked the inauguration of the night long Bhajan. Students of Anantapur and Prasanthi Nilayam Campuses continued the Bhajans throughout the night with undiminished vigour with a large section of the gathering participating with full devotion. On the 26th early morning at 5:45 A.M. Bhagavan came to Sai Kulwant Hall and after going round the huge gathering of devotees,

conferred His blessings on the eager and expectant devotees with another inspiring discourse. (Details of Discourses given separately)

Prasadam (sweet and tamarind rice) was distributed to all the devotees with blessings of Bhagavan who was overseeing the distribution till the entire gathering both inside and outside the Hall received the prasadam. The unforgettable event came to a conclusion after Arati to Bhagavan.

—K.S.S.R.

Grace of God

If you must bring the power from the power-house to your residence to illumine your place, you have to put up poles at regular intervals and connect the house with the power-house with cables. So too, if you must win the Grace of God, do sadhana at regular timings and connect yourself with God by the cable of Smarana (remembering the Lord).

—Baba

The Guru of Gurus

I was married into a family of people who discussed yoga at morning tea, talked about Upanishads and consciousness at mealtime and, at teatime their conversations centred on the lives of Sri Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi. I felt hopeless and inadequate as a daughter-in-law of a household where thousands of books peered at me from the cupboards and shelves mockingly. I felt they were reminding me of my ignorance of the Vedas, Upanishads, Yoga and the Bhagavad Gita. My equipment was limited to the knowledge of the Sanskrit language and an unquenching thirst for reading stories and novels both in English and Kannada. However, there was an inner yearning that I must study systematically the Vedas and Upanishads or at least the Gita and assimilate their teachings. But I could hardly find time with the duties of a housewife, mother, wife and more than anything else playing hostess to an unending stream of visitors and guests whom I greatly respected as they were from amongst great freedom fighters, philosophers, politicians, Vedic scholars, seers, saints and religious heads. Perhaps my prayers were answered, may be in 1969, when Dr. V. K. Gokak took our family to see Sri Sathya Sai Baba at Brindavan, Whitefield, Bangalore. I was in the background when Mr. Gokak, Dr. R. R. Diwakar and others had a dialogue with Sri Sathya Sai Baba for more than two hours. I listened and I was so thrilled that I could follow what Baba was explaining especially the Upanishadic philosophy. It was a revelation, because till then Upanishads to me were only books but suddenly I realised that they were so relevant to our daily lives.

I listened and I was enlightened as I felt as if somebody, may be an ancestor of our own family lineage, was here speaking to us knowing everything about each one of us. He looked at us so lovingly and said, "I will come to your home".

The most enchanting thing about Baba at the first encounter was his soft voice so appealing and reaching out to our hearts not like sharp arrows but like feather-like petals of a flower! The voice was soothing, the words were simple but penetrated our psyche, never to be erased. Somehow Baba must have sensed my inner craving to study the Vedas and Upanishads and not to speak of the Gita and the Indian epics—Ramayana, Mahabharata and the Bhagavata.

In 1970, I was attracted to Baba's idea of passing on to young children including mine, the precious heritage of Indian culture and spirituality. I was one of the few women from Bangalore who dedicated themselves to study and teach slokas, inner significance of festivals, telling moral stories and organising cultural programmes for children of the age group 5 to 14 years or so. It was a great period of time when I felt I was a student at the feet of Sai, learning the a, b, c of Indian culture and spirituality.

I was amazed at the response of the children and their parents and the immense satisfaction I felt by teaching the prayers and telling stories to so many young hearts stretching out their necks and ears to listen to the childhood pranks of Arjuna, Krishna and Rama. I can't forget the days when Sri Mathoor Krishna Murthy had a spell-bound audience of children at my home when Bal Vikas classes started in February 1970, while narrating the episodes from the Mahabharata. How can I forget the visit of Baba for the first anniversary of our Bal Vikas at home? The children enacted Bharat Milan with the background music in Sanskrit. It was a cool evening when the lawns of our garden had the distinguished visitors along with Baba and they silently watched the children enact the moving scene of Bharata taking Rama's footwear on his head back to Ayodhya. As a Bal Vikas guru, I gained a lot of knowledge along with tremendous faith in Baba, as one who could grant happiness of the mind and also instill self-confidence in me.

Another unique privilege I had was of attending almost all summer courses in Brindavan and Ooty. I was able to bathe in the raindrops of wisdom showered by Baba. I took down notes meticulously and they have been imprinted in my heart, so that I could share them with other gurus of India and other countries of the world. I was a student at the first summer course blessed with a badge from Baba's own hands and then on as a teacher, leader, observer, invitee and guest year after year. His discourses were simple, direct and interspersed with many life illustrations and little stories. I learnt not only the content, but imbibed quite a number of skills in teaching from His discourses. It was an experience of fulfillment to listen to the discourses. I listened to Him with rapt attention in Brindavan, Dharwad, Bangalore, Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Hyderabad, Rajahmundry, Ooty, Kodai and many rural areas of Karnataka and of course Prasanthi Nilayam. His voice like silver bells ringing could give solace and joy to the thousands of listeners although many could not follow the language. His words could drive away depression, and the negative thoughts from our minds. I could feel the inner transformation that was on, by the darshan, sparshan and sambashan with Baba.

"Life is joy, we have to live it" He said. It means life is not to despair but to enjoy, if only I am not attached and be only a witness. He said: Do not go abegging for bliss, it must spring from your heart." Then on, my outlook towards life changed. Bliss is within me and I have to experience every second of my life which is the essence of existence with awareness and bliss. Life is full of challenge but I know Baba is there to help.

Working for the EHV programme was another great experience in my life. As an educationist and teacher, education in human values became a passion and my special subject of study. I could comprehend what human values are and was able to communicate to several people the interpretations conveyed by Baba in very simple and lucid manner.

I realised that even if I had studied for several years and referred to umpteen number of books or discussed with great scholars, I wouldn't have absorbed or internalized the meaning of the abstract concepts like Truth, Righteous Conduct, Love, Peace, and Non-violence. I was blessed by Baba and elders to "go ahead" and to conduct workshops for teachers on Education in Human Values in India and abroad. It is said when knowledge is put to use, it becomes wisdom. It is very true about this process of my learning and teaching Education in Human Values.

Sitting among devotees in the rows for Baba's darshan, I have learnt great spiritual lessons of life. Men and women come to Baba with great anguish and sorrow. I have seen people in agony but getting all strength to face it after meeting Baba. Some people come for solace from the core of their being. After seeing them, I felt my own problems were very insignificant and trivial. I deem myself fortunate to be in Bangalore so that I can travel to Prasanthi Nilayam quite often and also visit Brindavan frequently. I have remained in the Sai fold whether I am in Sai organisation or not. I feel I am a worker of Sai having a role to play in this world by serving humanity in distress and delusion. I have an inner urge to share Baba's words with others whenever an occasion arises. I am grateful to Baba for enabling me to be a messenger of human values in New Zealand, the USA, the UK, Australia and Singapore. I know I am trying still to come out of ignorance, I have not reached the goal of ultimate reality. My own failings are there, but Baba with His boundless love for humanity is taking me along. He is our leader and mentor always marching ahead and telling us: "Follow Me".

Since 1970 I have trekked a long path, to quote Robert Frost:

*"The woods are lovely, dark and deep
But I have promises to keep
Miles to go and miles to go before I sleep."*

I cherish the following words of Baba as the guiding light illumining my path:

1. God doesn't reside only in temples, he is all pervading. Don't sit in the puja room, the whole universe is your puja room.
2. The values are born in the conscience of man.
3. Being is one, but Becomings are many.
4. The meaning of Bhajan is to do service.
5. You are not the body but you're divinity itself.

I have survived because of these teachings in the dense forest of life and because of the immense kindness and mercy of my mentor, Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

—Shanta Diwakar

The Matter with Man

What 's the matter with man?
Matter's the matter with man
Nothing else, only that?
Well, also mind the mind.

Where do I start?
Pay no mind to matter
Then matter you will not mind
Peace of mind you will find.

What next do I do?
With matter and mind no concern to you
Be smart and follow your heart
That's really quite an auspicious start!

—**Hal Honig**

Santhi is full of spiritual feeling and the wisdom that is the natural accompaniment of bliss. Genuine santhi is won by the control of the senses only. Then it can be called prasanthi. The experience of that stage is as a stream of peace. Calming the mental agitation that surges like waves, levelling the swirls and whirls of likes, dislikes, love, hate, sorrow, joy, hope, despair, santhi is earned and maintained without disturbance. Santhi is of the nature of the Atman. The Atman is imperishable. It does not die like the body and mind. It is universal, it is subtle and its very nature is knowledge. So Santhi also partakes of these characteristics. Knowledge of the Atman destroys illusion, doubt and sorrow. Hence, Atmajnana confers the steadiest santhi, and with it holiness and happiness.

—**Baba**

AVATAR VANI:

SIVARATRI SANDESH: II

The Message of Sakkubai's Devotion

*God created the Cosmos out of Truth;
The Cosmos is sustained by Truth;
Without the glory of Truth what can flourish?
This is the cardinal truth, behold all ye!*

Truth is valid for all times-past, present and future. This truth protects life and sustains it.

The inner significance of Truth (*Sathyam*) has to be properly understood. *Sat+e+yam=Sathyam*. "Sat" means life. "E" means food (*annam*). "Yam" means Surya (the Sun). Food is derived from

the Sun. Food sustains life. For the preservation of life food is essential. "*Bhikshaannam deharakshanaartham*". "The Lord offers the gift of food to protect the body." When this basic truth is forgotten, food becomes scarce for the people. When food is scarce, life begins to decay. Hence, the entire survival of the world depends on the Sun.

The significance of the term "*Sathya*" can be sought from another angle. "*Sa*", "*ta*", "*ya*" are three syllables in it. When the word is read in the reverse order we have "*ya*" "*ta*", "*sa*" This would mean that through the disciplines of "*yama*" "*niyama*" and others, when "*tapas*" is performed, one can experience the manifestation of "*Sathya*" (the embodiment of truth). This means that by the control of the senses (*yama*, *niyama* etc.) *tapas* (penance) has to be performed to realise Truth.

"*Tapas*" means the unity of the three *gunas* (*Satwa*, *Rajas*, *Tamas*). The absence of harmony among the three qualities results in "*Tamas*" (the dullness of ignorance).

The integral unity of feelings in the heart, the words spoken by the mouth and the actions done by the hands represents the unity of the three active principles in man.

Feelings are related to thoughts. Only when the thoughts are good can the feelings be pure and sacred. Pure results are the outcome of pure thoughts. Here is a story to illustrate this:

Sakkubai and Namadeva

Once Sakkubai complained to the Saint Namadeva that somebody was stealing the cow-dung cakes she was making everyday. Namadeva asked Sakkubai: "How do you identify the cowdung cakes made by you?" She replied: "I always recite the name of the Lord whatever action I may be doing. The cow-dung cakes I prepare bear the trait of the name I chant". She ran up to her home and brought a dung-cake made by her. She placed it close to the ear of Namadeva. The dungcake was chanting the name of God: "*Ranga! Ranga! Panduranga!*" Namadeva heard these words coming out continuously from the cake.

Namadeva wondered whether this was real. Even the great men of those days could develop doubts of this kind. Sakkubai was asked to prepare another dung-cake. She brought some dung and made it into a cake, while chanting the words: "*Ranga! Ranga! Panduranga*". Namadeva tested that cake by keeping it close to his ear. Once again he heard the words, "*Ranga! Ranga! Panduranga!*" issuing from the dung-cake.

He realised that the power of the Lord's name was beyond all reckoning. Man's thoughts remain forever, outlasting his human existence.

Prior to this episode, Namadeva used to be known as Vamadeva. From that day, he started chanting the name of the Lord. Namadeva was the younger brother of Jnanadeva. Namadeva was ever blissful chanting the Lord's name.

By reciting the Lord's name any difficult task can be accomplished. One becomes what one thinks. (*Yad bhaavam thad bhavathi.*) Hence people should see that their thoughts are pure and good. Human life is the expression of one's thoughts. When an enquiry is made into what is most

important for man, the general answer is: life is most important. Some others may declare wealth is most important. But Sakkubai was not of this view. She declared that the most important thing for anyone is the name of the Lord. It is God's name which promotes the fame of a person.

Thought Waves

In this context, the importance of thoughts should be properly understood. Thoughts arising in the mind fill the atmosphere with waves of energy. Like radio waves, they are present everywhere. We are able to listen in Puttaparthi to a broadcast from Delhi. How did the radio-waves reach here from Delhi? By entering the ether in space.

Likewise, thought waves are equally powerful and sacred. Hence our thoughts should be sublime and sacred. No evil ideas should affect our thoughts. Evil thoughts inevitably lead to evil actions. When cruel thoughts enter the mind, men behave like cruel animals. When, instead, there are good and loving thoughts in a man, they divinise the man and make him do good and sacred acts.

Hence, every man's heart should be filled with love, compassion and kindness.

When bad thoughts fill the mind, even ostensibly good acts result in bad consequences. Hence, the primary requisite is to make one's thoughts good and holy. Unfortunately, today, because of the influence of the Kali Age, men's thoughts go astray and men lead a bad life. People should realise that there is no greater blessing than leading a pure life. By chanting the Lord's name men can cross an ocean of troubles. God's name is the boat for crossing the ocean of mundane existence.

In the term, "*Sathyam*" the "*Yam*" refers to Surya. Surya, the sun, is the sustainer of life on earth. The sun is also the deity presiding over the vision. If your vision is sacred, your life will be sacred.

Among other meanings of "*Sathyam*", one is "*Brahmam*" Truth is God. There is nothing in the world where Truth is not present. Today people are oblivious to the greatness of Truth. People lead a life based on falsehood. The result is that there is widespread starvation.

In ancient times, people led their lives based on the constant repetition of the Lord's name. The power of the Lord's name could be seen in the fact that even the cowdung cakes made by Sakkubai, while reciting the Lord's name, chanted the name of *Ranga*.

Chant the Lord's Name

Every person should remember and recite the Lord's name whatever action he may be engaged in. The Divine pervades the cosmos. Hence whatever you may see or say or do, the Divine is present in it. But the Divine is subtle-not perceivable or graspable. You should not conclude from this that there is no God. Air is not visible or holdable. But can its existence be denied? Without air one cannot live for a moment. Air is only one of the five elements. All the five elements are essential for life. They constitute the basic stuff of the universe. Their very existence proclaims the power of the Divine. How can the existence of God be denied by anyone? God does not mean any particular form. All forms are His.

"*Sat-Chit-Ananda*" is manifest in man as supreme bliss - the bliss Divine. This bliss is present in man as his spiritual essence. Man has no need to go after trivial pleasures when he has this eternal bliss within himself. He will experience this bliss when he gets rid of the attachment to the body born out of delusion and ignorance.

Krishna's Response to Sakkubai's Devotion

Sakkubai was one who had realised this truth and was in continuous contemplation of the Lord's name. Recognising the intensity of her devotion, Krishna assumed her form and sent her to Pandaripur. You can see the greatness of Bhagavan's love for the devotee. Assuming the devotee's form, the Lord performed all her domestic chores and enabled her to go to Pandaripur. God sees to it that the devotee is not exposed to calumny. He saw to it that no one pointed the finger of criticism at Sakkubai for her absence from the house. He himself assumed the form of Sakkubai and did all the household work. Sakkubai went to Pandaripuram and merged in the Lord there.

The power of faith is incalculable. With faith any difficult task can be carried out. This truth cannot be understood in worldly affairs.

It must be recognised that chanting the name of the Lord is highly sacred and efficacious. It serves to remove the impurities in a person. It promotes good and sacred thoughts. When the heart is filled with truth and love, only "positive" thoughts will arise.

There is no meaning in reciting the name of Rama or Krishna once in a year. How often do you take your meals for the sake of the body? Does not the mind require to be fed equally? Contemplation of God is the food for the mind. To feed the belly and starve the mind is like decorating the chariot but starving the horse. To keep the chariot of the body moving, it is necessary to feed the horse of the mind.

The body is taken care of openly in innumerable ways. The mind needs to be fed in private. No one can notice the chanting of the Lord's name. No one can rob one of the benefits it confers. Possessing this valuable capacity, man should not fail to make full use of it. You strive so much to earn wealth. Do you take the same trouble to experience God? Should you not spare sometime for thoughts of God?

Walking on the road, a man may see a temple and make formal signs of worship. What are they worth? Worship should stem from the heart. Think of God in your mind and offer your worship in silence. Sakkubai had set an example to the world by her intense devotion to God. Even Namadeva became her disciple after seeing her exemplary devotion. He began chanting the Lord's name continually. He taught the people that reciting the Lord's name is the means to experience God.

Jnana and Namasmarana

Once Namadeva and Jnanadeva were going through a forest. For Jnanadeva everything was a manifestation of Divine Wisdom (*Jnanamayam*). He believed that through knowledge anything could be achieved. As they were going along they felt thirsty. They saw a derelict well. There was some water deep at the bottom of the well. Jnanadeva took the form of a bird, flew down to

the bottom and drank the water to quench his thirst. Jnanadeva could assume any form because of his spiritual powers. Namadeva said: "I don't need to assume any form. My God is within me. I can secure His nearness without my going to Him." So saying he sat under a tree and started reciting the Lord's name. The water in the well rose and overflowed so that Namadeva could quench his thirst easily.

The true devotee should be able to bring God near him, without his having to go in search of God. If he is filled with love for God, that love will attract God towards him.

Cosmic Magnetism

The world is full of magnetic power. A flower which attracts you has that magnetic power. The attachment between husband and wife is a sign of magnetic power. Magnetic attraction is the basis of all human relationships. The honey in a flower is the magnet that attracts a bee to the flower.

Everything has some magnetic power which endows it with the power of attraction. Divine love is the most powerful magnet in the universe. The gopikas were intensely attracted to Krishna by the power of this love. They declared that they would be attracted to Krishna in whatever form He might choose to manifest Himself—as a flower or a tree or a mountain, or the ocean. To merge in the Divine you may assume any form or resort to any means. God assumes many forms according to the needs of the situation. He cannot be confined to any particular place. All forms and names are His. Hence, by whatever name or form the Lord may be worshipped, His reality is one and the same. Some refer to God as Easwara, who smears Himself with vibhuti (the sacred ash). But vibhuti does not mean ash alone. It applies to every glorious attribute of the Divine. It refers to every potency of God. Easwara means one who is the treasure-house of all that is precious. Therefore, it is impossible to measure or define His attributes.

This infinite Divine can be realised only through love, which is all-powerful. The devotee's love for the Lord is like the love of a child for its mother. This love-bond is inextricable.

The lesson of Sivaratri is that devotees should foster good and sacred thoughts. They should be filled with godly thoughts. They should seek to become one with the Divine by reflecting on their inherent divinity. If you constantly chant the name of God, God realisation will come in due course.

Whatever other things they may possess, men suffer from lack of peace and bliss. These two can be got only from God. It is for these two that men should pray to God and not for anything else, because God alone can give them. When these are secured, all other things will come of their own accord by the grace of God. People should yearn for God. All other desires are worthless.

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

—From Bhagavan's discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall on the morning of February 26, 1 998

The Power of the Lord's Name

*Whether He is described as Cosmic Consciousness (Chaitanya)
 Or the Indwelling Knower (Kshetrajna)
 Or the Supreme Wisdom (Jnana)
 Or the Ego or the Supreme Lord (Easwara)
 Or as Vishnu or Brahma
 Or the Primordial Energy
 Or the Bliss Divine (Ananda)
 Or the Abode of the Divine (Parmapadam)
 Or as the Atma or as Sat-Chit-Ananda
 All are various names and forms of the Supreme Self which is nameless
 The Cosmos is permeated by Hari
 Nothing can be found in the Universe without the Divine in it.*

Embodiments of Love!

Every human being seeks to enjoy bliss. He aspires for a blissful life. Whether he is a scholar or an artist, a wielder of power or a man of status, he yearns for bliss. Every man strives from dawn to dusk for acquiring bliss.

Bharatiya culture and tradition have proclaimed the greatness of this bliss (Ananda). But man is enveloped in two screens—the phenomenal and the spiritual. His vision is affected by the material outlook and the spiritual outlook. Unable to harmonise the two, man regards them as distinct from each other. The unity of these two represents the true Atmic principle.

Considering the material world of physical objects as the only reality, man loses himself in the pursuit of material objects. But, if the truth about these material objects is fully explored, it will be found that they have no reality at all. They have only momentary and temporal reality. They do not have the stamp of permanent reality. They do not confer enduring bliss. To realise lasting bliss, man has to make the requisite effort.

The Quest for Bliss

"Sat-Chit-Ananda" (Being-Awareness-Bliss) pervades the entire universe. Every living being, from the ant onwards, is seeking this bliss, not man alone. For all living creatures, this bliss is the life-breath.

The scriptures have dealt with this problem of bliss in various ways. They have proclaimed "Sat-Chit-Ananda" as the primary principle.

The existence of the Universe as a fact is affirmed by numerous persons. But a blind man is not aware of its existence. However, hearing what others say about the world, he also believes in its existence. He is not aware of its existence from his own personal experience.

People today speak about "Sat-Chit-Ananda" as a reality after hearing about the statements in the Vedas, Puranas and other scriptural texts. Such persons have no personal experience of "Sat-Chit-Ananda". Even the scholars who expound this concept are merely relating what they have learnt from books, but have no direct experience of this bliss.

Every man should seek to know what Sat-Chit-Ananda means. Only then he will realise his own true self. Because of the delusion caused by the phenomenal world, man regards "Sat-Chit-Ananda" as distinct from himself. This feeling arises from his attachment to the body. Everyone should find out "Who am I?" When he has found the answer to this question, there will be no need for him to understand what "Sat-Chit-Ananda" is.

As long as man identifies himself with the body and his physical attributes, he will be in quest of "Sat-Chit-Ananda". When a man has discovered the true nature of the "I", he will not go after any other thing. He will realise that he is the embodiment of Sat-Chit-Ananda.

Every individual is an embodiment of Sat-Chit-Ananda. "Sat" God; "Chit" the Jiva (individual self). The unity of "Sat" and "Chit" is "Ananda" (Bliss).

Mental Afflictions

The human body is a prey to many ailments. Man regards all of them as bodily ailments. But not all of them are entirely related to the body. Purely bodily ailments can be treated by medicines. But most ailments in the world today have their origin in the mind. The aberrations of the mind set up reactions in the body and cause various diseases. The main cause of many human ailments is rooted in the mind.

The mind and the body are interrelated. The influence of the mind on the body is of a negative character. This negativity is antagonistic to the experience of bliss.

Bad thoughts and bad feelings arise in the mind. At the same time, there are also good thoughts and good feelings. It is only when bad thoughts and feelings are weeded out that man can have good health. Many diseases have their origin in the thoughts that fill the mind. Bad thoughts cause indigestion, affect the heart, bring about variations in the blood pressure; worries are the cause of many mental diseases. Diabetes and pulmonary diseases are traceable to mental causes.

Aspects of Liberation

Every man is in search of liberation (*mukti*). For whom is this liberation sought? Is it for the body? Is it for the mind or the intellect or the senses? When these questions are examined, the answer is that at the outset, liberation has to be secured for the mind, the intellect and the senses. Man has to liberate himself first from the vagaries of the mind. Freedom from illness is one kind of liberation. Man loses peace of mind on account of various troubles. To get rid of this condition and secure peace of mind is another kind of liberation (*mukti*). Consuming food to get rid of the pangs of hunger is another kind of liberation. To be rid of the trials and tribulations of daily life is another aspect of liberation. All these types of liberation have to be secured while one is still alive. It is wrong to imagine that liberation is a state that is to be attained after death.

The various kinds of liberation to be secured today relate to the physical. These troubles are bound to exist as long as one is attached to the body. All of them arise from the "negative" thoughts in man.

The liberation men should seek is peace of mind. If peace is got, all else can be got easily. How is peace to be got? By leading a godly life.

Power of Love

All forms of worship are of no avail if one's heart is full of "negative" feelings and one's mind is filled with "negative" thoughts. All actions performed by the different sense organs - the eyes, the ears, the tongue etc. get polluted when the mind is filled with "negative" thoughts. The six evil qualities in man—lust, anger, greed, delusion, pride and envy—are his well-entrenched enemies. To get rid of these wicked elements and to install good qualities in their place, the only means is the fostering of the love principle (*Prema-tattwa*). When man's heart is filled with love, all that he does will be "positive". All good deeds come out of love. Sat-Chit-Ananda arises from love. Compassion and kindness are born out of love. All the sublime human values have their origin in love. When one is filled with love, he needs no other spiritual or ritualistic practices.

The Atmic principle is the basis for the body. All activities in life should be linked to the Atmic principle. Man should discard attachment to transient worldly pleasures and pursue what is eternal and everlasting.

The Five Sheaths

When man constantly remembers that he is the embodiment of Sat-Chit-Ananda, in due course he will experience that bliss (*Ananda*). Man is covered by five sheaths—the *Annamaya*, *Pranamaya*, *Manomaya*, *Vijnanamaya* and *Anandamaya Kosas*. The first is a gross sheath and each following sheath is subtler than the preceding one. Man has to proceed from the gross to the subtlest sheath of bliss. The *Annamaya* sheath is the body. It is perishable, but as long as one lives, the body should be kept in good health. The duties relating to the physical have to be carried out. What keeps the body going are the vibrations from the vital sheath (*Pranamaya kosa*). These vibrations are controlled by radiations from the mind (*Manomaya kosa*). Beyond the mind is the *Vijnanamaya kosa*, which accounts for "constant integrated awareness" in man. When this state is reached, man can proceed next to Ananda without much effort. Experience of bliss will be automatic.

It should be evident from this that humanness has been conferred on man so that he may ascend towards his divine destiny instead of wallowing in mundane pleasures and miseries. Thereby he will demonstrate his superiority over beasts and birds.

Holiness of Festivals

All Bharatiya festivals are designed to lead man towards God. They are intended to make people meditate on God. Unfortunately, today, instead of thinking about God, people indulge in feasts on holy days. Festivals should be devoted to contemplating on God and experiencing the Divine.

Today we are celebrating Sivaratri. "Sivaratri" means "Auspicious darkness". At least on this day one should chant Siva's name all through the night. At least on one day in a year chant the name

of the Lord. Devotees are expected to keep awake this night by chanting the sacred name of Siva. Keeping awake in any other way is purposeless. Spending the night reciting the Lord's name sanctifies one's life. In the *Gita*, the "*Sthithaprajna*" is described as one who keeps awake when others sleep and for whom the daytime when others are awake serves as night. The inner meaning of this is that the *Sthithaprajna* (the realised person who is in a state of constant integrated awareness) contemplates on God when others are oblivious to God.

The main thing about which all should be concerned today is how to get rid of the negative thoughts in their minds. The six cardinal enemies of man—the six basic vices—have found their abode in the hearts of human beings. There is no room in their hearts for love or kindness. The foremost task is to fill the hearts with love. Then their entire life will be transformed and every act will be suffused with love. This love is "positive" and man should strive to foster the positive qualities. Being human, men should develop positive qualities like compassion and forbearance.

Today human life is wasted in the pursuit of sensuous desires. All of them are negative in nature. Instead, men should entertain positive desires, which are natural to human beings. Divinise every desire and every action.

Mundane pursuits, which have been with men over many lives, have to give way to divine pursuits at least in this life. Many do not realise the divine potencies that are in them. They have the capacity to do good or bad actions. By doing good acts they will experience bliss. Help ever, hurt never.

Bhagavan's Example

Everyone should strive to manifest the bliss that is natural to him by fostering his loving nature. Peace lies in that bliss. All of you should know one thing. Although I am now seventy-two years in the present body, I have never had any negative thoughts. Consequently I have had no ailments of any kind. I am always in a state of bliss. But, sometimes, to correct others I use harsh words. They are not "negative" words. They are filled with love. If you examine my heart, you will find it resemble a ball of iron. But from the worldly point of view, it will be soft as butter. No illness can affect my heart. I am engaged continuously in work from the moment of waking to the time of rest at night. I meet devotees, collect letters from them, give them interviews and confer joy in one way or other on one and all. Every official anywhere has a weekly holiday. But I have no holidays at all (cheers). I am always active, whether I am here or elsewhere. Can you point out anyone who has been continuously active for seventy-two years? (cheers) I have not desired a day of rest at any time. I am always restful. How is this possible? Because I have no negative thoughts. I have no attachment to the body. This body exists for your sake. When you are attached to the body you need rest. Whatever I do or say, it is all for your sake, not for my sake.

The Lord Seeks Devotees' Love

People have to lead their lives based on a recognition of this truth. There is only one thing I seek from all of you. Fill your hearts with love. Offer that love to me. I don't ask anything from anyone. It is enough if you develop love and share it with others. It is only when you are happy that you can make others happy. What is happiness? It is union with God. By chanting the name of God you will experience happiness.

Good and sacred acts like worship, japa, meditation are useful for sanctifying time. But they are not ends in themselves. They are tinged with worldliness. But what is needed is "positive" action, dedicated to the Divine. Then you will be free from disease. Only by having pure thoughts you can be hale and hearty.

Have no ill-will towards anybody. I have no hatred for anyone. Hence no one hates me. All are love-filled beings for me. I desire that all should be blissful. It is because of this universal feeling in me that all are coming to me. If, on the contrary, I had been self-centred, would people from all parts of the world come here? I am utterly selfless from head to foot. There is no trace of selfishness in me. Any such feeling you may notice in me is only on your account and not for my sake. I have no desires except that everyone in all the worlds should be happy (cheers). All should become good. All should be loving and blissful. What more do I need?

Love and Faith

Man deserves to enjoy peace and bliss, but does not make the necessary effort to get them. If he cultivates love and faith, he will acquire peace and bliss. Without these two, his effort is as fruitless as a letter which has neither a stamp nor the proper address.

With love and faith in Swami, you can accomplish any task you undertake. Observe three maxims: Love of God; Fear of Sin; Morality in Society. To develop love of God you have to see whether every act of yours pleases God or not. When you please God, you will have no fear of sin. When these two are present, morality in society will follow naturally.

All the ills of the world today are due to absence of fear of sin and decline in love for God. Decline in respect for human values has undermined world peace.

When the Lord's name is chanted from the depths of the heart, it turns into the nectarine music of Krishna's flute, which charmed even the cows of Brindavan. The melody that flows from the devotee's heart confers ineffable bliss.

Bhagavan's Love for All

Love and faith are the cardinal principles for redeeming human life. My life is my message. I have love for all. I have affection even for those who commit wrongs and for those who dislike me. I have no ill-will towards anyone because of my love for all. And therefore the whole world loves me. The root cause of my love is my esteem for all (*Vishvasam*). The basis for the esteem is adherence to the path of Truth. Divinity is the basis for adherence to Truth. Thus this Divinity is the primal source of universal love. All should practise universal brotherhood. Out of fraternity will be born Divinity. Then, humanity will manifest its glory. Men will behave like ideal human beings.

Embodiments of Love!

Try to understand my doctrine of Love. I often address you as "embodiments of the Divine Self". You will be true embodiments of the Divine only when you develop divine love. The only being worthy of love in this world is God. All others are only objects of transient attachment. On this sacred Sivaratri day, develop love for the Divine and redeem your lives. Manifest the Divine

within you. Continuously chant the Divine name. Do every act with love. That is the highest spiritual sadhana. The way of love will transform the world. Love is God. Truth is God. Peace is God. This is the message of Sivaratri. Understanding this, dedicate all actions to God and render selfless service to the people to redeem your lives.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan: "Siva, Siva, Siva anaraada".

—From Bhagavan's discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall on the evening of February 25, 1 998

The Triangle of Spiritual Life

Based upon Baba's teachings, the mansion of spiritual life should have *Advaita* (non-duality or oneness of all existence) for its foundation, *Prema* or Universal Love as its walls, and *Seva* or selfless service to all as its ceiling. The synthesis of these three aspects of spiritual life may also be considered as the Triveni of Swami's teachings. In India, Triveni Sangam or Prayag is a famous pilgrim centre, especially for Hindus, for having their purificatory bath. Devotees gather in their millions, especially during the Kumbha Melas, to have a holy dip in the confluence of the three sacred rivers of Yamuna, Ganga and Saraswati. According to Baba, *Karma* (the path of action), *Bhakti* (the path of devotion) and *Jnana* (the path of wisdom) correspond respectively to the aforesaid rivers. As Baba emphasizes the need for the integration of these three paths, the appropriateness of calling this synthetic approach to spiritual life as the Triveni of Swami's teachings, becomes self-evident.

Alternatively, spiritual life as advocated by Baba may be conceptualized as an equilateral triangle with *Advaita* as its base and *Prema* and *Seva* as the two sides as illustrated in the following diagram or paradigm.

The first step in the spiritual process is to recognize the Oneness of All. Swami's scheme of spiritual life as depicted in the Triangle envisages that one should, first of all, be well established in *Advaita* or non-dualism which essentially means that there is one and only one Universal Conscious Energy (*Vishwa Chaitanya Shakti*), also mentioned in the scriptures as *Prajnanam* (translated by Swami as Constant Integrated Awareness), which is also called God or *Brahman*. *Advaita* further propounds that all names and forms, including all objects, beings, thoughts, emotions and actions—in short all percepts and concepts relating to the external physical universe and the internal mental universe—are only different appearances or manifestations of that one God. This is why Baba repeatedly and strongly emphasizes the need for recognizing unity in diversity.

Love All, Serve All

If one's mind is filled with this conviction of oneness, then automatically love for all beings springs forth in one's bosom or heart, because to love is to experience oneness with all, in thought, word and deed. As a logical consequence, this love activates the hands to serve all. Thus, as indicated in the above diagram, Swami's scheme of life involves the grand, natural and sweet synthesis of the three paths of *Karma*, *Bhakti* and *Jnana*, Swami's three W's: Work,

Worship and Wisdom; His three H's: Hands, Heart and Head, as well as His three D's: Duty, Devotion and Discipline. According to Baba such an integrated approach accelerates spiritual progress culminating in *Atma Sakshatkara* or Self Realization (the apex of the triangle). A little reflection would further reveal that the five cardinal values of Truth, Righteousness, Love, Peace and Nonviolence are also implicitly subsumed in this triangle, together with Baba's oft-quoted twin maxims of sage Vyasa, viz., 'Help ever, hurt never'. (Among the five values, Truth corresponds to the base of the triangle, Love to the left arm, Righteousness and Non-violence to the right arm, while Peace corresponds to the vertex of the triangle, because Supreme Peace, *Nirvana* or *Prasanthi* is synonymous with Self Realization.)

Baba's exhortations

Given below are a few illuminating and inspiring extracts from Baba's messages delivered on different occasions on the vital topic of "Love All, Serve All":

- God is Love and can be won through the cultivation and exercise of Love. He cannot be trapped by any trick; He yields Grace only when His commands are followed— commands to Love all and to Serve all. When you love and serve all, you are serving yourself most, yourself whom you love most!
- I want only to initiate you into the spiritual path of Service and Love. Do not be ashamed that you have been asked to watch a heap of sandals, or carry water to the thirsty, or stand at the gate. The privilege and pleasure consist in the use to which you put your skill and time for helping others. You long to serve Me. Let Me tell you, serving those who serve Me gives Me as much satisfaction as if you were serving Me. Serving anyone is serving Me, for I am in all.
- *Grama Seva* is *Rama Seva* (service to villages is service to God)
- You cannot be a *Nayak* (leader) without being a *Sevak* (servant).
- You must be prepared to serve as servants for all your lives. Never think of being a leader. Without becoming a servant you cannot become a leader. You must first learn to follow before becoming a leader.
- When you lift your hand to serve, help, solace or enthuse, then your hand is lifted in prayer.
- Hands that help are holier than lips that pray.
- Seva is more fruitful than *japa*, *dhyana*, *yajna* and *yoga*, usually recommended for spiritual aspirants, for it serves two purposes: the extinction of the ego and attainment of *Ananda* (Bliss).
- Whatever talent a person has, should be dedicated to the service of the rest of humanity; indeed to all living beings. Therein lies fulfillment. All men are kin; they have the same likeness, the same build, moulded out of the same material, with the same divine essence in each. Service to man will help your divinity to bloom, for it will gladden your heart and make you feel that life has been worthwhile.
- A *Manishi* (ordinary man) gets transformed into a *Maharishi* (great sage) by engaging himself in selfless service. Truly speaking, the merit that could be obtained from service cannot be acquired even from the practice of rigorous austerities. Service brings human beings closer to each other and promotes affection and friendship. Without this friendship and feeling of love for one's fellowmen, one cannot attain intimacy with the Lord which among the nine forms of devotion to God is next only to *Atma-Nivedanam* (complete surrender).
- True service eliminates the ego; ostentatious service inflates the ego.

Living example

In this context, every reader who is familiar with Swami's life and teachings will wholeheartedly agree that He is the very personification of this Triangle of Spiritual Life. Baba is not merely the unique exponent but also the unequalled exemplar in the annals of human history in all the three respects— *Advaita*, *Prema* and *Seva* (Non-dualism, Love and Service). In fact, this triangle signifies the synthesis of the sacred and secular aspects of human life. It symbolizes the Trinity of Swami's Divinity and forms the cornerstone of His world-wide Divine Mission. It represents His *Swarupa* (Real Form), His *Swabhava* (Real Nature), His *Aachara* (Practice) and His *Prachara* (Precept). This is why He refers to His Name SAI as an acronym: S=Service (*Karma Yoga*), A=Adoration (*Bhakti Yoga*), I=Illumination (*Jnana Yoga*).

It is this message of His that the members of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organizations throughout the world are endeavouring to put into practice through the devotional, service and educational wings of their units. It is generally being acknowledged that they are doing a good job. They would surely be doing much better when most, if not all, of the members imbibe the basic principle of seeing the Unity (viz, Swami) in the diversity (of all beings). However, the common hurdle which confronts most devotees who want to follow in the footsteps of Swami in this respect is: How to see Divinity in people who have very offensively negative personalities? Swami's answer to this problem may be briefly stated thus: " Concentrate on the inner treasure of Divinity which lies buried within everyone, just as gold is hidden out of sight in a mass of rock until it is uncovered. And gradually with patient practice and perseverance, you will be able to ignore the outer crust of the personality, which conceals the Divinity." From this we have to understand that the difference between one person and another is only in the quantity of dust that covers the gold of Divinity inside. In this regard, after all it needs no extraordinary intelligence to grasp that the same *Chaitanya Shakti* (Conscious Energy) animates all beings irrespective of the differences in their *Upadhis* or vestures, especially in the light of Swami's simple example of one and the same current illuminating various types of bulbs and different kinds of electrical gadgets. Actually, if we probe deep into this subject, we would be convinced of Swami's dictum that there is no *Padartha* (matter) and that it is all *Parartha* (spirit). For, according to modern physics also matter and energy are not mutually exclusive and discrete entities, but they are mutually interchangeable and interchanging entities. This should remind us of His seven-lettered acronym (*Saptakshari*) **SAIBABA** = See Always Inside, Being-Awareness-Bliss-Atma.

Further, our ability to recognise the oneness of all would develop to the extent that we follow Swami's advice to see the good in others, but not their faults. For this we would do well to remember His simple analogy: "If accidentally the teeth were to bite the tongue and cut it, do people take a piece of stone and break the teeth? No. Why? Because the teeth belong to the same person to whom the tongue belongs. So too, since the one Lord who is in me resides also in others, it is improper to find fault with them."

—Dr. A. Adivi Reddy

The Truth behind Two Aspects of God

Saguna (with Form) and Nirguna (Formless) aspects of God create doubt in the mind of a sadhaka, whether they can both be true. It is like hardened ghee and liquid ghee. Ice and water are the same; water takes the form of the vessel which contains it. It is formless. But, yet, there is no distinction between ice and water. In sadhana, the saguna worship and nirguna meditation are like the right and left feet of the journey. During the saguna worship, the basic nirguna aspect of God has to be sustaining the mind; no description can exhaust the Glory, no word can approximate the Majesty. During the nirguna meditation, the faith that God does not diminish His Glory or Majesty by being with form, attributes and name must be the sustaining force. The final step, however, must be the right foot, considered auspicious, the nirguna step.

—Baba

When Puns are Fun

Baba has said that no act or word of His is without significance. Often, in joking fashion, He will appear to tease an individual by twisting the emphasis on a word. In an interview, on being asked his profession, a devotee replied that he was a lawyer. Pat came the response from Swami, "Lawyer or liar?" Amusing, but a definite warning to those who will listen, that one must be especially vigilant in the legal profession to hold to the path of truth.

Swami can take words that we use so casually in our everyday conversations and in His inimitable fashion, show us how meaningful these words can be.

Here are some examples.....

PUTTAPARTHI. When visiting the ashram to meet Swami, He tells us to leave our egos behind and come to Him with open hearts so that He can fill them with the love He has come to give. So when visiting we should PUT APART THE I.

PROPERTIES are not **PROPER TIES**.

PARENTS are given that name because it is through them that we have this wonderful chance of life on earth. For the sacrifices they have made for us, we must **PAY RENT** to them.

COMMUNIST. When a question was asked regarding problems in communist controlled Europe, Baba's response was **COME U NEXT**. Not long after that, communism was made a thing of the past in much of the continent, including the USSR.

PEACE. People clamour, "I want peace". But they won't let go of the "I" (ego), or "want" (desire). "I" and "want" deal with the outside world. **PEACE** is inside, **PIECES** outside.

DIAMONDS. Why do you seek diamonds to give you joy? Seek instead the state of **DIE MIND** which will give you pure and lasting joy.

MODERN TECHNOLOGY is more aptly named MODERN TRICKNOLOGY. Knowledge must develop by balance into SKILL. Else it degenerates into KILL.

HEART is on the inside, ART is on the outside.

TELEVISION? It's TELE POISON.

STUDY to be STEADY.

REST is RUST.

ENCYCLOPAEDIA? Don't need it. We have SAICLOPAEDIA.

SIGHT must become INSIGHT. It should be tuned within and used to purify and clarify.

God is RESIDENT as PRESIDENT in our hearts.

The UNIVERSE is your UNIVERSITY.

The aim of study circles should be not INFORMATION but TRANSFORMATION. Not INSTRUCTION but CONSTRUCTION.

It is only from achieving real internal UNITY (of thought, word and deed) that we can broaden our minds and hearts to feel oneness of COMMUNITY.

Education should be for LIFE, not for a LIVING.

Renounce the MOMENTARY for the MOMENTOUS.

When a non-believer asserts "God is NOWHERE", he inadvertently accepts "GOD IS NOW HERE."

Become examples of DOING and not D O L I N G out advice.

Self lives by GETTING and FORGETTING.

Love lives by GIVING and FORGIVING.

Doctors need more PATIENCE, not more PATIENTS.

What is the use of a COMMITTEE? Just another excuse to COME TO TEA.

What is needed in today's world is not all this OPERATION but COOPERATION.

Students of today want to learn about everything but their own reality. They seem more concerned about the NEWS outside than the NUISANCE inside.

The PRESENCE of the Divine is preferable to the PRESENTS of men.

Swami tells His students:

Attach more importance to the avoidance of REMARKS than the acquisition of MARKS.

The Sai Power cannot be a subject for UNIVERSITY examination. It is a subject for UNIVERSAL examination. When a near and dear relationship with Sai is established, one can delve a little deeper into the Sai mystery.

DISEASE is the absence of ease, or DIS-EASE.

You are knocking at the wrong door, that of the objective world. That can give you only paltry PLEASURE, not permanent TREASURE.

EDUCATION which should serve to refine man's nature and make him a HERO is failing in its purpose, because in his conduct man is a ZERO. An education that does not develop humanness is an utter waste.

When a devotee came to Baba for His blessings on his impending retirement from Government service, Swami said RETIRE? I shall RE-TYRE you. Barely had he returned home from his retirement party, a notification on his appointment to another position arrived.

Today, out of love for petty possessions, brothers are prepared to sacrifice their fraternal feelings and carry their fight to the SUPREME COURT. Lord Rama's way was different. He regarded his brothers as part of his own being and would not cause them the slightest pain. Thereby he took his brothers to the SUPREME STATE.

God can be known only by EXPERIENCE, not by EXPERIMENTS.

For Bliss, look to the DIVINE, not the WINE.

People today have made a business proposition of worship of God; spirituality has been commercialized. Seek to be a GOOD MAN. You can then become a GOD MAN.

PHILOSOPHY has been interpreted as the search for truth. However, truth is not something to be searched for. You only have to be aware of it, to experience it, to be it. Without it, PHILOSOPHY is but FULL-LOSS-OPHY.

Love will automatically make the heart BRIGHT with LIGHT and DELIGHT.

You have first to abandon IMMORALITY if you wish to attain IMMORTALITY.

—Compiled by Suman Govindan, U.S.A.

Bhagavan's Call for a New Way of Life

Embodiments of Love!

You cannot find in the entire cosmos any place or object in which God is not present. The Divine is present on the mountains. The Divine permeates the oceans. The Divine dwells in villages and cities. The Divine is omnipresent.

Man's Unlimited Potentialities

Only those who recognise this truth can redeem their lives; they alone can achieve the goal of human existence. The powers of the Divine are limitless. Every living being in the world is governed by some limitations. Birds, beasts and insects are all taken care of by the Divine in respect of their essential needs like food and drink. Among all living beings, however, the life of human being is supreme as it is governed by morality and good conduct. The Divine has placed some limitations on the physical powers of man but has set no limits to his mental powers. Man can achieve whatever he resolves to achieve. He can even realise God. This divine power is given only to human beings.

Ignorant of his limitless divine potentialities, man suffers from various disabilities by considering himself as a human being.

Man today is soaring in the sky as a bird and moving in the ocean like a fish. He has been able to land on the moon. But unfortunately he is not able to live like a true human being on earth. This is indeed a matter for shame.

Man can accomplish anything if he surrenders to God. When he submits himself to the will of the Divine, there is no task he cannot accomplish.

Kuchela, a boyhood friend of Krishna, approached Krishna for help on the basis of his old friendship. How did Krishna help him? The Bhagavata bears testimony to what Krishna did for Kuchela. The Ramayana tells the story of what Rama did for Sugriva after the latter became a friend of Rama and sought His help. Sugriva was able to regain his kingdom. What did Vibhishana get after his constant remembrance of Rama and the ordeals he experienced in Lanka? Relieving him of his troubles, Rama crowned Vibhishana as the ruler of Lanka.

Once a devotee totally surrenders to the Lord, the Divine goes to any extent to help the devotee. An insignificant little stick, by association with fire, burns brilliantly. A drop of water held in your palm evaporates in a trice. But when it is cast into the ocean, it becomes one with it. If man wants to achieve highest human potentialities, he has to achieve proximity to God. He has to merge in the Divine. Then he can manifest his true nature.

Not realising the true nature of the Divine Principle, man wastes his time on rituals and religious practices of various kinds. God cannot be realised through such practices. It is only by loving God and getting close to Him that one can realise one's aspirations. Swami does not disapprove

of sadhana practices. They are good activities for using time sacredly. But without service to Godly persons, they are of no use for realising freedom from the cycle of mundane existence.

Devotees' Offerings to the Lord

In the field of devotion, there is room for making certain offerings to God. God utilises the acceptance of such offerings to reward the devotee a hundred-fold. Devotees should recognise the significance of such acceptance by the Divine. For instance, the Lord asked Kuchela what he had brought for Him. The Lord as Vamana asked for three feet of land from Emperor Bali. In the Rama Avatar, He went to Sabari and asked her to appease His hunger. All that Sabari could offer to Rama were a few sweet berries collected from the jungle. In the Krishna Avatar, the Divine child went to the gopis saying He was hungry. All that they could offer Him was some watery butter-milk. During the difficult days of their exile in the forest, Krishna went to the Pandavas and asked Draupadi for food. That day all the food had been consumed and barely a leaf remained in one of the vessels. Krishna was more than satisfied with that one leaf and saved the Pandavas from the wrath of Durvasa who had been sent by Duryodhana to subject the Pandavas to the ordeal of feeding Durvasa and his numerous disciples. When Krishna's appetite was satisfied, Durvasa and his disciples felt fully appeased and did not turn up at Pandavas' hermitage.

It is to shower His grace on the devotees that the Lord seeks small offerings from them. What does He need from any one when the whole cosmos is contained in Him?

It is the Lord who protects one and all in innumerable ways. There is a simple way to secure the grace of God. You must get near to God. Surrender yourself to Him. Become one with Him. Instead of following this easy path, man today immerses himself in petty desires and keeps away from God.

Sanjay Sahani and Ruchir Desai (faculty members who addressed the gathering earlier) spoke about God's love for the devotees. There is no trace of selfishness in it. But, because of their own selfish natures, they attribute selfishness even to God's love. This is merely a reflection of their own nature. God's love is not a reflected love. It is love pure and simple. A reflected love carries the taint of the original. That is not the case with the Divine love, which is pure and unsullied.

The nature of pure and unselfish love may be illustrated by the story of Laila and Majnu. Laila was the daughter of a very wealthy person. She fell in love with Majnu, but her parents did not approve of her marrying a poor young man like Majnu. Laila did not wish to displease her parents. She was a girl of noble character. She prayed to God to find out whether Majnu loved her. She sent two of her maids to Majnu to ask him whether he could offer his blood to save Laila from a grievous ailment. Majnu immediately cut an artery and sent a glassful of blood to Laila. Moreover, he sent word through the maids, that he was prepared to give his entire life to save Laila. His only wish was that she should survive. When the maids conveyed this message to Laila she realised how much Majnu loved her. She observed: "I was thinking only about my love for him. I did not realise how much he loved me".

Devotees should realise that God also likes to test the depth and sincerity of the devotee's love. He seeks to find out whether the devotee is filled with love of God, how intense is that love and so on. He tests the devotee's love in various ways.

One should not be content with making offerings to God. One should love God intensely. One should pine for Him. One should lose one's self in the love of God.

How to Get Liberation?

People aspire for liberation (Mukti). They have no idea what constitutes liberation. Man seeks liberation from the ills of the body, the senses, the mind, the intellect and the Antahkarana (internal motivator). All these are no doubt necessary. But liberation in the ultimate sense consists in liberation from the cycle of birth and death. This means that one should redeem one's present life so that one is free from rebirth.

Most of the people's diseases today have their origin in the mind. Desires and worries are the cause of many ailments of the heart, the kidney etc. You can test the truth of this statement in a simple way. I have no diseases of any kind. I am hale and hearty. Lead a life of courage and you will be all right. The moment you start feeling your pulse out of suspicion that it is weak, you will find it weak. It is your mind that is the cause of the weakness of the pulse. Many diseases are allowed to grow entirely due to mental factors. Men should pray to God for freedom from rebirth so that they will not have bodies which are bound to be afflicted with diseases.

There is no need for rigorous spiritual exercises to secure freedom from rebirth. Pure love of God is enough. This is exemplified by the gopis. Immersed always in the love of Krishna, they were always happy and contented.

Change Your Way of Life

We are today celebrating Yugadi—the beginning of yet another new year. Many new year days have come and gone. Do you expect the New Year to bring you new happiness? Are you imagining what New Year portends for you? New years do not offer you prosperity and pleasure. This New Year day will be like any other day. Many people eagerly expect something to turn up on this day. This is utterly futile. The calendar merely tells you that a new year has begun.

What we should be concerned about is not a new year but a new way of life. We must seek to secure a new source of joy. But unfortunately we do not think about this. We speculate on what the New Year signifies. We have to look to ourselves and not to the succession of years for changes in our lives. Think within yourself about your condition. Turn your thoughts to God. Then you will realise what you desire.

No one tries to find out how to surrender to God. The whole world belongs to you. You must declare to God, "I am yours". This is the truth you have to understand. You must be ready to offer to God whatever He asks of you. What is it that God asks from you? First of all, He says, "Give up your desires". You must give them up immediately. He calls upon you not to immerse yourself in worldly pleasures. Cultivate love for all. That will redeem your life. That is the sacred path you have to follow. That is the essence of the four goals of life. People have no clear idea of what Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha (the four goals) mean? They think that Moksha

(liberation) is something which you attain after death. But, in fact, liberation can be attained here and now. Moksha means "Moha-kshayam", the elimination of "Moha" (or attachment). People are not ready to give up attachment to wife, children, property etc. You have a duty to protect your family. But you must not be immersed in concerns about them.

What is "Dharma"? Not the obligations relating to the various stages in life or the various vocations. "Dharma" means harmony in thought, word and deed. People equate charity with "Dharma". That is not correct. Dharma calls for sacrificing your bad thoughts, feelings and actions.

Embodiments of love! Realise that love is the most important quality in human life. It is not love for kith and kin that is precious. It is love for God that is most valuable.

Swami's life and message are not properly understood. Swami has no worldly desires. Whether you believe it or not, I am always "positive" from head to foot. There is nothing "negative" in me. Devotees suggested to me that they should be allowed to organise "poor feeding" on Yugadi. Should this be done only on one day in a year? You must feed the poor on all days. You must have the broad outlook. With a broad heart you can do many superhuman things. Strive to get close to God and surrender your all to Him.

The name of the New Year is "Bahudhanya". This name suggests that the year will witness an abundance of food grains. There may be an abundance of food-grains. But are you consuming them properly? No. Are the food-grains distributed to the poor and the needy? No.

Our ancients gave the different years good names such as "Prabhava", "Vibhava", "Sukla" and so on. (Swami went on reciting almost all the 60 names in quick succession) (cheers). Sometimes the priests predict bad developments in a year. This is intended only to make the people undertake propitiatory ceremonies which will bring in income to the priests. Can the mere expenditure of money ward off evils? No. Your troubles will go when the heart is purified. Your sincere prayers will help to relieve your troubles.

There must be a transformation in the hearts of the devotees. They should not continue to remain in the same rut for years. They must benefit from the grace of God's love.

People talk about the New Year, but do not care to develop new feelings and new attitudes. They must develop new ideas and new enthusiasm. If they are all the time depressed, when will they learn to express the joy of good living? They must exude happiness. That is the mark of the Divine within. Happiness is union with God. God is eternal bliss. Get rid of your evil tendencies and fill your hearts with love of God. You will become one with God.

I am ready to give you all happiness. Are you prepared to receive what I wish to offer? Banish all worries. They are temporary like passing clouds. Do not allow any one—whether it is the father, the mother or the preceptor—to come between you and your duty to God. This is the lesson taught by Prahlada, Bharata and Emperor Bali. Their allegiance to the Lord transcended all other obligations. God takes care of such devotees. Surrender yourselves to God and dedicate yourselves to the service of mankind. You have my blessings. Foster love and serve society.

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

—From Bhagavan's Discourse in Sai Ramesh Hall, Brindavan, on March 29, 1998

(The Hall was lavishly decorated with flags and festoons and floral arches currying Yugadi greetings to Bhagavan. A huge shamiana had been put up north of Sai Ramesh Hall to provide accommodation to the large number of devotees who had come especially for the New Year Day. Special arrangements had also been made for the distribution of prasadam and providing free lunch to all the devotees. The Karnataka Sai Samitis and the Seva Dal members spared no effort to make the celebration a memorable one.)

A LEAF FROM THE PAST

Bhagavan's Excursions in the Himalayas

Prof. N. Kasturi was fortunate to travel with Baba to many places in India. His first-hand eye-witness accounts of these journeys are not only interesting, but inspiring and illuminating also

We reproduce below from his book "loving God" an account of Baba's visit to Sivananda Ashram at Rishikesh and the 'mind blowing incidents' at the Vasishtha Guha (cave) revealing His Divinity and Majesty.

After a few days at Madras, we flew into Delhi and motored to Rishikesh where the Ashram of Sivananda was awaiting Baba's arrival. At Sivananda Ashram too bhajans were regular features in the timetable. The bubbling flood of Ananda that streamed from the Guru transformed the Homage into a hilarious hour. We were surprised by one refrain after another. Sivananda Maharaj when he led the bhajan had a childlike artless way of involving every participant in the singing. This filled us with elation and expectancy. He taught deep lessons on spiritual truths in his own intimate way. "Rama! Krishna! Govinda!" the first line may become "Diamond, Necklace, Govinda" in the second and "A-B-C-D Govinda" as the third. The point sought to be emphasised was the Universal Absolute, inherent in all aspects and concepts.

On my first night at Rishikesh, the sacred spot on the Ganga, I gained a victory which had eluded me for over nine agonising years. I must admit that I had fallen a victim to snuff during my years at the Royal City of Mysore. The preparation of a dark variety of capsules which when pressed between thumb and index finger became flavourful snuff to be inhaled and enjoyed was an art known only to a few families there. It was an aristocratic aromatic acquisition. My friend Swami Siddeswarananda, the poet Puttappa and many others of that generation were devoted to that exciting device for mental arousal. For over three decades, the vice led me by the nose. When I yielded to the impact of Baba, I decided, like Sindbad, to overthrow the old man who was riding on me. But he sat astride firmly. Baba often spoke sharply within my hearing on the habit. But luckily only in general terms. He spoke disparagingly about a few persons whom I knew, and condemned the weakness which prevented them from wriggling out of the dirty dusty snuff habit. I felt glad that He had not blacklisted me, by name. When I joined the Rishikesh party I

armed myself with a pound weight of the precious stuff bought at Madras, so that I could happily nose around the snuffless region.

That crucial night, Baba came over from the cottage in the Ashram complex which was allotted for His stay into the dormitory where I and five others were settling down for rest. I had prepared my bed and was enjoying the stretching of the limbs, when Baba appeared, followed by Satchidananda and Sadananda. He came near my cot and turned the pillow over to expose the snuff-box cosily resting there. I shivered in remorse. I remembered the centuries old ritual, which Hindus observe when they reach pilgrim spots. They give up a bad habit that is dearly loved. Baba looked at me sternly. He said only one single word, "Dirty". I took the box and threw it far into the thick night. I clenched my teeth to lock my sobs in. I took an explosive vow, touching Baba's feet. 'No more Swami! I am giving it up from this moment!'"

Baba gave me a soft pat on the shoulder. I bent under the cot, dragged out my leather luggage box and took hold of the one pound tin of the disgusting stuff and was about to cast it into the bushy under-growth when two renunciants in ochre robes snatched it from my hands. They said (they were evidently not a part of Sivananda Ashram) they were getting their supplies of the 'Jnana Choornam' (the powder that promotes the intellect) from New Delhi, which was too far away. Hearing the noise, Baba turned back and laughed. Satchidananda and Sadananda too laughed. I have not inhaled that rajasic poison since. It was indeed a pity that what I, a householder, threw to the winds was caught and treasured by those Sanyasins!

Swami Sadananda was, prior to his entering the monastery, a Professor of History at the Presidency College, Madras. He had come to Puttaparthi earlier on the New Year Day of the Tamils. Baba had taken us both to a spring that gurgles from between the rocks in valley lying to the west of the Mandir. Saivism, a school of philosophy and worship, that highlighted the Siva aspect of Godhead, was his favourite subject of study, and Baba had prodded him to explain the significance of the Linga. Baba explained that it represented the Emergence of the Cosmos from the formless as well as the Mergence of Cosmos into the formless. "The Sun appears as a huge red disc when it rises and when it sets," said Baba.

"This is a revelation to me on my New Year Day," the Sanyasin said. "It is now many years since you celebrated New Year. You were in the midst of family then. Now you are in the Sai Family. So, here, take this" Baba said, while waving His palm. An 'Obbattu', a sweet dish traditionally prepared in Tamil homes on New Year Day was resting on that palm-hot, fragrant with ghee, thick, circular, with a sprinkle of sugar! My mouth watered, the ascetic Ananda held out his hand. Seeing my plight, Baba waved again, to project a second 'Obbattu' for me too. Since I am basically a Tamilian, born in the Malayalam region, who lived in the Kannada area, for 32 years before sailing into the Sai (Telugu) harbour, I could claim many New Year Days as mine. As joint receivers of Baba's New Year Obbattu and joint teachers of History, Sadananda and I stuck together at Rishikesh like identical twins. Swami Sivananda was the very embodiment of equanimity. In the midst of vociferous pleadings and protestations from visitors and inmates, he was being pushed around by his disciples in a wheeled chair.

While returning from a long day's stay at Garhwal Palace on the right bank of the Ganga a few miles upstream, Baba entered, quite on His own, the Vasishtha Guha (the cave named after

Rama's Guru, Vasishtha) to bless the hermit who had made it his oratorio and laboratorio. When he came to know that I hailed from Kerala, that I could speak Malayalam and that I had received initiation into the Ramakrishna Paramahansa fold from his own Guru, Tarak Maharaj (known as Mahapurushji) he welcomed me wholeheartedly. My heart-strings became taut when I chided myself for telling him these three points from my bio-data. "He was a monk who had given up name and home, who had vowed to adore all as equally divine. What right had I to vivify his memory by relating events and ideas he had laboriously disowned?" I asked myself. I remembered how Bodhi dharma, the founder of Zen creed, was known as a saint who was silent in seven languages. My Malayalam might arouse in that Swami a flood of memories of his native Kerala, of Trivandrum and of the royal temple of Anantha Padmanabha.

Even while Purushottamananda in that cave at the northern-most point was being thrilled by the memories of this shrine near the southern-most point of India, Baba asked us to leave, and the doors of the cave to be closed. He laid Himself on the lap of the seventy-year-old saint. Baba's body was bathed in divine brilliance and appeared far

too large to be contained by the lap or even the cave. Rays of unbelievable splendour spread in all directions from Baba's face and body. Purushottamananda was lost in ecstatic trance. His two disciples were too surprised to understand; they were overwhelmed with the mystery. I surmised that Baba was conferring a unique Vision. Later, Baba explained that He had vouchsafed him the Darshan of Padmanabha as installed, since childhood, in his heart. "It was Jyotirpadmanabha", He said Jyoti meaning Light.

After a minute or two, Baba rose and sitting by the side of the septuagenarian, called him by name and slowly brought him into the consciousness of space and time. Baba sang a song on Rama, composed by Thyagaraja and when He concluded, He waved His hand and materialised from the air a rosary of sparkling sphatika beads for Purushottamananda.

Thirty-eight years ago, Purushottamananda had written to his Guru (and mine), "All is False. I cannot rest satisfied until and unless I come face to face with the Truth". I believe he came face to face, that evening, with the Truth. Five years later when he left his body behind and merged in that Truth, Baba announced his departure to me at Puttaparthi. It was a few minutes after the emergence of the Lingam from Baba's stomach where it grew for days. It was Mahasivaratri. Baba told me that his body would be buried with the Sphatika Rosary on the chest. (It was!)

The incidents at Vasishtha Cave were literally mind blowing. When we were allowed in, we hung on every word that Baba uttered and gathered every signal of adoration that emanated from the aged monk-the rising eyebrow, the twinkling eye, the smothered gasp, the folded palm, the smile that shone atop the beard. Baba told him of his early trials at the Cave, of his struggles to light a fire and of his amazement, one morning, to find a package of match boxes hiding in a corner. Baba confirmed "I placed it there for you". The monk sat up at this surprising revelation. The attendant monks explained that for many years they were using fire-stones to get the spark which they would nourish, feed and foster into flame. They too were aghast at the discovery that Baba was aware of their Guru, of his travails and his needs. "He knows all: He is all" they exclaimed. Man has no means to identify what cannot be accounted for, explained or measured. He can only sit silent, dumbfounded in deep dismay.

I was unable to travel in the Presence of Baba in the same jeep. The effect of the aura was well nigh unbearable. Baba must have realised our plight, for He filled the jeep with laughter by a continuous shower of pleasing parables, mostly on the Cavity of the Heart where the Lord loved to dwell. He brought us down to the dusty earth when He spoke of "bed-bugs" which forced the gods to take refuge on Himalayan snow, or the azure ocean wave, or the lotus bloom!

Before we left Rishikesh, Sadananda requested Baba to advise the inmates of the Ashram on sadhana and spiritual life. Baba told them that indifference springs naturally where life is too regulated and too safe. He wanted the monks to feel fresh and free every moment, welcoming 'today' as a reward for yesterday and as a rehearsal for tomorrow. On the morning of our day of departure, Swami Sivananda insisted on accompanying Baba on a round of the campus. Baba had restored his health by daily doses of the sacred Ganga. When Baba bent from the lowest stone step to fill the cup from the river, the Ganga became by His will sweet fragrant nectarine remedy, which the monk took from His hand. He was gratified delightedly. Baba's stay at Rishikesh was thus punctuated with silent but supreme happenings revealing His sovereignty.

AVATAR VANI:

From Negative to Positive

Students, Teachers and Doctors!

The whole world is a stage and every individual is an actor. How should the actors conduct themselves? The primary goal of every actor should be to carry out his duty in the part assigned to him (or her). He should set aside his individuality. How?

During the recent festival, the students enacted a play. One student played the role of a municipal chairman. In that role he had to behave as a municipal chairman and not exhibit his individual talents. These should be given a backseat. He should act his part well. However, who is the director of the cosmic drama? It is the Divine. Every human being is a manifestation of the Divine Will. He has taken birth as a human being to fulfill his duty. He has to manifest his humanness. Every individual has to play his role well and acquit himself worthily.

In the drama of life, there is a mixture of good and bad. Humanness is present in this mixture. Of the two—the good and bad—one is known as "maarakam" and the other is known as "taarakam". "Maarakam" implies that one acts on the basis that nothing belongs to him and that whatever words he utters or whatever action he does all belong to God and nothing is his own. He plays his role in this spirit, ascribing nothing to himself. "Taarakam" represents the attitude of the actor, who is conscious of the role he is playing and does not forget his individuality in his actions. He does not consider himself as merely acting a part but regards himself as the doer. The difference between the two is that while the former realises the temporary nature of the part he is playing and is not attached to the things connected with the role, the other ("taarakam") develops attachment to the role he plays and does not wish to part with things connected with the role. In

the concept of "maarakam" there is no sense of possessiveness. But in "taarakam", one is attached to what he considers as his.

Modern man suffers from the sense of possession. This is a negative attitude. He is obsessed with the idea of "my" and "mine". He attaches excessive importance to the body, forgetting the most precious Atmic principle that is within it which will give him enduring bliss. The reason for this attachment is the failure to use the senses properly and to become a slave of the desires prompted by the senses.

The eyes, the ears and other sense organs should be used only to perceive sacred things. They should not be used indiscriminately to enjoy whatever pleases them. This is the reason why Swami advises people not to see evil, speak evil or hear what is evil, but to see what is good, hear what is sacred and speak what is good. These may seem simple maxims, but they are full of profound significance.

In this context, people should constantly discriminate between "negative" and "positive" actions. All bad and unwholesome actions are "negative" in character. They should be eschewed altogether.

Students should realise that what matters when they sing bhajans is not the tune or the conduct of the songs, but the genuineness of the feeling with which they sing the bhajans. When their hearts are pure and full of deep devotion, the bhajans will be full of feeling and will appeal to the hearts of the listeners. What ensues from the heart is "positive", while what comes from the mind is often "negative".

Human birth is a God-given gift which should be used with due care. It should be filled with righteous acts. Unfortunately, today men misuse all their God-given talents for unholy purposes. The mind should be filled with good thoughts, the heart with compassion and the hands should be engaged in selfless service.

Man will be caught up in "negative" behaviour as long as he identifies himself with the body. The moment he considers himself the master of the senses, his actions will be "positive". Mastery of the senses leads to "liberation". Liberation is not something to be achieved in after-life. The striving for liberation must start early in life and proceed continuously. Another term for liberation is "emancipation". That is true freedom—freedom from bondage to the senses. This means that you must carry on all duties without attachment to the fruits thereof. Today all actions are performed with attachment to the results. For instance, students pursue study of the bio-science with a view to become doctors. There is per se nothing wrong in this. But when they become doctors they should be primarily concerned about the welfare of their patients and not in their earnings.

Even in rendering social service, there is often an element of self-interest that vitiates the quality of your service. Instead of being a "positive" act of selfless love, the service becomes a "negative" act carrying the taint of self-interest. No permanent joy can be derived from such "negative" activities.

Students must begin sanctifying their actions from their days at school. They must cultivate good company as part of their education. This is the way to get near to God. The final stage is "Saayujyam", becoming one with God.

Life is filled with bondages of various kinds—from hunger and poverty to ignorance and disease. To strive for freedom from these bondages is spiritual sadhana. It means giving up those actions which bind you.

It is not always easy to get the answers to spiritual questions. There is a story to illustrate this. Once there was a king in Kapila, who was putting questions to various scholars in his kingdom. He was not satisfied with their answers and so turned them away from his court. A shepherd, who heard about this, came to the king and said he was prepared to answer any questions put by the king. The king was surprised at his claim and said that if he failed to give a satisfactory answer he would be beheaded. The shepherd agreed to the condition. Then, he told the king that they should exchange places in keeping with the new situation, in which the king would be the learner and the shepherd would be the teacher. The king transferred his robe to the shepherd and sat at his feet, while the shepherd put on the king's robe and sat on the throne. He then asked the king to put his questions.

The king's first question was: "What does God do in this world?" The shepherd answered: "He makes a millionaire a pauper and a pauper a millionaire. Till now I was a poor man. Now I have been made a king with a seat on the throne. From being a king, you are now wearing a shepherd's clothing. This is what God has done."

The king was fairly satisfied with the answer. His second question was: "Whom does God favour? Who is the recipient of His grace?" The shepherd pointed to a light and said: "The light from the lamp sends its rays in all directions. Likewise, God, who is embodiment of all effulgence, sees in all directions and showers His grace on all. He does not see in one direction alone." The king was pleased with the answer.

While the shepherd was wondering what the king's third question would be, the king addressed him as "Swami!" and said: "Where is God?" The shepherd brought a cup of milk and asked the king: "Can you say in what part of the milk there is butter? In every molecule of the milk there is butter. Likewise, God is all pervading. What is it that you have to do to see the butter in the milk? You have to make curd out of it, churn it and then the butter will rise to the top. Likewise, God, who is everywhere, has to be enshrined in the heart, turned into curd by good deeds and churned by sadhana. Then there will be direct experience of the Divine."

The king was totally satisfied with the answers of the shepherd. He gave away half of his kingdom to the shepherd and declared that wisdom was to be found more among the common folk than among scholars. There is nothing great in mere scholarship as such. To give intelligent answers to questions out of wisdom gained from daily life is what matters.

Today very few people understand the difference between the "positive" and "negative" aspects of life. Whatever attracts the mind is "negative". Desireless actions are "positive".

The discharge of duties in a spirit of detachment is the basic obligation of everyone from a student to a scholar. Thereby you can manifest the divinity within you. But, if you cannot recognise your humanness, how can you recognise your divinity? The first requisite is purity of heart and a mind free from all desires.

You may or may not believe it. Here is my body. It has a mind, intellect etc. exactly like that of any of you. But I am aware of the workings of the monkey mind. I have no desires in my mind. I do not let myself be caught by the wiles of the mind. It is natural for the mind to behave in that way. I do not get trapped by it. I am not attached to the body or the mind. I follow the conscience.

Here is the body of mine. You may touch any part of it. You will receive positive vibrations from it. There is no trace of the negative vibrations anywhere in my body. No negative thoughts enter in my mind. Sometimes I may appear to speak harshly. But it is not for my sake, but for correcting others. Although seventy-two years have gone by, yet I entertain no desires. I have had no desires at any time.

The way my life is spent from moment to moment is remarkable. Every one of my actions is "positive" and not "negative". My whole body is "negative". But all my thoughts and actions are "positive". There is no disharmony between my thoughts and actions. In fact, this has been the case from the age of nine. In this village (of Puttaparthi) there was a Karnam (Village Officer) named Subbarao. He was the richest man in the village. He owned most of the lands here. All the villagers used to be afraid of him. Swami was a short lad at that time. The Karnam was given to bad ways. Swami called all his young friends together, taught them various songs, and asked them to go round the village singing the songs. The boys told Baba: "Swami! The Karnam may beat us up". Swami assured them: "He has no authority to touch any of you. No one can object to your singing the songs". Swami taught them how to sing the songs tunefully. The boys did not know the meaning of the song. On the first day, when the boys sang the songs in front of the Karnam's house, the Karnam went inside. On the second day, when the boys repeated their performance, the Karnam went inside, brought some mangoes, distributed the fruits among the boys and asked them not to sing the songs. He asked them: "Who taught you these songs?" They all shouted: "Raju. Raju taught us all the songs."

One day the Karnam invited Raju (the young Baba) to come to his house for tiffin. Raju told him: "I don't want your tiffin". The Karnam was furious that a young fellow should speak like that to him.

In those songs I was teaching what was appropriate to those times. The song condemned those who went after women of ill-fame and warned that such persons would be shunned by society and forfeit the respect of everyone. The boys were afraid to sing the song. The strong words used in the song were necessary to teach a lesson to those who misbehaved. To correct people who were leading bad lives, I used to compose poems and write plays even from those early years. I am always in the habit of living up to what I preach. I do not preach what I do not practise. Whatever I do is of a "positive" character. I have no desires of any kind.

I have often declared that "students are my property". A student also said earlier: "Swami! we are your property." This is true. But there are properties of different kinds—those which are valuable and those which are not. As long as students consider themselves as my property, they should lead ideal lives. You should not become useless garbage. You should stand up as high mountains. It is for this purpose that I am training all of you. Many students are not coming upto my expectations. They are not understanding my message. Some day they will understand it. There is no trace of the negative in me. Everything is positive.

Pay heed to my advice. Talk as little as possible. Some students tell me that their parents want them to get married (after finishing their studies). I won't advise you not to get married. If you wish to marry, do so. But, I will not force anyone to marry against his will. Each one should consult his conscience and decide.

Do your duties to your family. Do not let your children do what you consider is wrong. In the Mahabharata, Dhritarashtra failed to correct his eldest son, Duryodhana, and the result was disastrous for the entire Kaurava clan. Vidura reminded him that if only he had taken firm action to restrain Duryodhana, the family could have been saved.

—From Bhagavan's Discourse in the Institute Hostel on February 15, 1998

A SHORT STORY:

Out of the Mouth of Babes

As Anjali lay in bed, she thought about Swami's birthday, which was coming soon, and what would be the nicest gift to give Him, Who held the entire world in His hands. Even though she was thousands of miles away from Him, she could feel His love all around her. She reflected over how tirelessly Swami took care of everyone, yet the people never showed any gratitude. "I wonder how patient I'd be if I were in His place," she thought aloud.

The moonlight was streaming into her bedroom window, and the world outside was asleep and quiet. As she gazed outside, a bright, lonely star high up in the sky caught her eye. "Is that You, Swami?" she asked the star. "Are You up there watching over us?" She sighed and said, "Poor Swami, He must be so tired trying to teach people to behave themselves." Anjali gazed at the star once more. All of a sudden, she felt herself being drawn into the star like a magnet....it was pulling her in. She felt herself land on something as soft and fragrant as a rose petal, and as she looked around, she could see the Earth at a distance. She realised, to her amazement, that she was sitting on the palm of Baba's hand. She looked up and stared right into Baba's beautiful smiling face. Baba had taken a huge form, surrounded by a brilliant aura of love, and was now bending over her, whispering something—"I will show you the world through My eyes. You will understand the Truth behind everything."

Anjali looked back at the lovely Earth far at a distance. Suddenly she got a jolt, and then felt an ocean of love and waves pouring forth from her and embracing scenes that passed before her eyes. "Swami, the Earth looks beautiful. I can see everything with Love and Compassion."

"Yes. If only man would understand how lucky he is to take human birth, he would treat his fellow beings with the same love that you now feel, for the love that you now feel radiates from Me and its light envelops the entire world to ultimately flow back to Me."

Anjali thought about this for a minute. Then she asked, "My parents tell me 'do this' and 'do that', and they get tired after a while. But You teach the whole world, Swami. Don't You ever get tired?"

"No, My eyes are always on My children, day and night and every second. I keep watch over all of you. I have come to make man understand the Truth, that he is God and that he is born on the Earth for the purpose of realising this. Besides, all of them down there provide me with much entertainment", He said with a laugh. "But, Swami, don't You ever have to punish anyone?" queried Anjali. Then His face grew serious. "I do not punish anyone. Through man's own wrong doing he will receive retribution, and through his good deeds he earns merit. My love and grace pour forth. It is up to man to earn them through merit or reject them through demerit. Some seek my guidance and listen to me...others don't," He ended with a sigh.

Anjali sat quiet for a while, digesting all of this information. Then she asked hopefully, "May be if You shouted at them, or spoke louder, then they would listen, wouldn't they?" "Well, they can hear two voices: Mine, and their egos'. They can hear My voice coming from their hearts, but many choose to listen to the voice of their ego instead," Swami replied.

"What is 'ego', Baba?"

"How shall I explain it to you, My innocent child? Let's see....Ego is when people think to themselves 'I am the best', 'I know everything', and 'I am right and others are all wrong'. It is when God tells you to do one thing and you do the opposite because you think you know better. Ego makes man selfish and greedy." Swami pointed to a war scene back on the Earth. "Look at the way they are fighting. Each side thinks I that it is right, and refuses to listen to the other I when their opinions differ. They immediately begin to fight, as if fighting will solve all of their I problems. Many die, and sorrow descends on all sides," said Baba sadly.

Anjali watched the horrible scene for a minute, then noticed something. "Why is there a grey cloud around the war, Swami?" "Well, when many egos clash, the scene is enveloped in a grey aura," replied Swami. Anjali noticed something else, and pointed it out. "Look at those pretty cows grazing in the pasture over there, Swami. They have a pink cloud around them."

"Do you know why? Pink is the colour of eternal love. The few who are surrounded by pink understand My message, and are closer to Divinity. Animals follow their Dharma and do not need to be taught how to behave. The only trouble is teaching man the lessons of life," explained Swami.

Anjali pondered over this. Then she asked, "Swami, do you love some people more than others?" "No, little one, I love all of you equally. You see, I separated Myself from Myself in order to

have someone to love and someone to love Me. But humans have forgotten to love God", replied Swami.

Swami looked so sad that Anjali felt doleful as well, and she hastened to reassure Him. She stood up on His palm, and hugged His thumb. "I love You very much, Swami."

Love shone in Swami's eyes with the glow of a million stars, as He looked at her. "Yes, I know, Anjali. That is why, I am talking with you. Man has to become as small and pure hearted as a child like you and listen to Me. Then he will learn to love both God and his fellow beings." At this point, try as she might, Anjali could not stop a large yawn from escaping her.

"You must be sleepy, My child, I shall send you home now," said Swami, gently stroking the little girl's hair.

"But Swami, you must be even more tired than I am. Why don't You take a nap, and I watch the world for You," replied Anjali.

"Little one, your parents will miss you. But perhaps some day, I'll be able to close My eyes and sleep while you keep watch on the world for Me. That would be a lovely birthday gift," said Swami, smiling sweetly.

Anjali readied herself to go home. Then she turned around and asked, "Swami, I just have one more question. When You look at me do I have a grey or pink cloud?"

"My precious, you are neither grey nor pink. You are far beyond the colours that your eyes can perceive. In truth, you are Me and I am you"

—Alka Pradhan Class X Ohio, U.S.A.

The Heart and the Mirror

A mirror though clean may not reflect your image if it is not having the mercury coating behind it. So also the heart may be pure, but there should be coating of love behind it to facilitate reflection of God.

—Baba

Spiritualism

It's an open door where others close,
A smiling face that says He knows,
A peacefulness that draws you near,
An open heart and a listening ear.

It's a brilliant star from a long lost age,
That helps to turn each bright new page,
It's lovingness that comes from within,
That brings us forth when it is time to begin.

To send our Light both far and near;
To seek, to learn, to tell, to hear.
To find the peace and state of mind
We'd long thought Man had left behind.

And with this knowingness inside
There's nowhere else for us to hide,
But take our worth and thank in Grace,
To try and heal this Earth, our place.

And should we stray along our path,
Sai's hand will guide us to the task,
So never fear-it shall be done,
In Peace and Love and Light we pass; Amen.

—Peter Mills

Desire comes from attachment

Deliverance comes from detachment

—Baba

SSS EHV in the U.K.

In a world torn asunder by greed, selfishness, hatred and violence, the Sai Avatar has come to re-establish the values of Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Love for the moral regeneration of mankind. Sri Sathya Sai Education in Human Values (SSS EHV) Programme is one of the important tools of this transformation. Most of the countries of the world have already introduced it in some form or the other. Mrs. Carole Alderman, U. K. SSS EHV National Convenor, reports about its progress in the U. K.

Since the two new U.K. SSS EHV Workbooks were blessed by Swami a year ago, the EHV Programme bearing His name has made great strides. It is fast getting recognition in educational circles at all levels.

The Programme was adopted for the U. K.'s multi-cultural schools. Clear, simple, ready-to-use lesson plans were produced with the help of various experts who turned up by Swami's grace and volunteered—help exactly when needed. A whole values curriculum for Primary Schools with an

Introduction containing the philosophy, psychology and methodology together with fifty-two lessons, was completed in only twenty months.

Many schools throughout the U.K. have bought these books as a resource for their Personal and Social Education classes, Religious Education or for use in Morning Assembly. A few schools have already agreed to pilot the Programme, so that we can monitor progress. Further educational aids are being produced, such as song tapes, laminated A3 posters of quotations, certificates of merit which are awarded when pupils have gained a number of points for good conduct, and SSS EHV badges for pupils attending extra-curricular "Values Clubs". Trained personnel are offering their support and services free as assistant teachers to help schools get started.

The SSS EHV team in the U.K. are working at three levels: Government, both national and local; intermediate lobbies and forums; and at grass-roots by getting the books and thus the programme, directly into schools with the approval of the appropriate bodies. Indeed, this often happens when parents take the books themselves to their child's Head Teacher and ask for them to be assessed with a view to taking on this Values Programme which they want their child to learn.

The SSS EHV books/programme have been very well received generally. For example, the Vice Chairperson of the "Values Education Council", a powerful lobby with forty charities in its membership and which works closely with the Government, reviewed the SSS EHV books, saying, "....a programme which emphasizes what is most significant in personal and social development: the ability to listen; the importance of story; the aesthetics of poetry and music; a focus on the voice of care and social justice. It is an impressive collection of activities. The Introduction to the Programme is inspirational with its clusters of values related to peace, those related to truth, and those related to love. The format, however, is practical with the objectives clearly stated and activities in line with those observed in many Primary Classrooms."

Although the Workbooks are for ages 6-9 and 9-12 for Primary Schools, several Secondary Schools have also asked to start the Programme as a new book—one of four—has been produced for young teenagers aged 12-13 which awaits Swami's blessing.

The new U. K. Government are keen to introduce values into education, as is the Chief Executive in charge of the curriculum, and some of the new values initiatives complement SSS EHV. Some do not! So it is important that we work for better understanding of SSS EHV and, with Swami's continued grace, a value system with a sound foundation will be generated throughout the U. K. and the world.

Surgery with a Smile

My son Vijay had been complaining of severe headaches intermittently right from the beginning of the year 1997. The intensity and frequency increased during the months of July and August 97. Once or twice these headaches were accompanied by vomiting as well. Most of the times

these occurred during late nights. Under doctors' advice Dispirin or other painkillers were given to the patient.

On August 16, an eye specialist at the Mohinder Hospital was consulted and he suspected something wrong in the brain and advised an immediate C. T. Scan of the brain. The hospital which carried out the C. T. Scan advised further MRI Scanning as they suspected a tumour in the brain according to the C. T. Scan. An MRI was done at the Sehgal's Nursing Home and the MRI report confirmed a tumour in the brain. Dr. Ravi Bhatia, Neurosurgeon at Apollo Hospital was consulted then and he confirmed the tumour and that an operation was to be performed on the patient at the earliest for the removal of the tumour in the brain.

Vijay was admitted in Apollo Hospital on Aug 21 and the operation was scheduled on the 23rd. Nearly 40 years ago, my mother's younger sister was operated upon for benign brain tumour, but she was not cured and died within three years. This thought was uppermost in my mind and I was not at all happy about the operation. Yet there was no other go as all the leading Neurologists had advised an early operation.

On Aug 23, 1997 the moment Vijay was taken into the O. T. at 7:30 a.m., I got inside the prayer hall in Apollo Hospital along with a portrait of Sathya Sai Baba got by me at Brindavan, Whitefield in June 1996, and started praying intensely, taking rests in between. Strangely, I was repeatedly praying to Baba that the operation should go on well, but there should not be any tumour.

The team of doctors came out at around 1:30 p.m. The Chief Neurosurgeon was sweating and looking perplexed. He said the operation was successful and he was surprised to see no tumour where there ought to be one and instead there was a lesion. He said he had scrapped some pieces out of it and sent them for biopsy. I was the only believer of Sathya Sai Baba in the midst of all my relatives. My wife believed in Shirdi Sai Baba only. And I know for sure, Baba had answered my prayers. It must be He who must have removed the tumour, the presence of which had been confirmed by all scan reports and doctors! Later on August 27, the biopsy report was released and it said that the specimen given was not sufficient and the doctor advised further investigation. In the meanwhile, Vijay again started getting headache and he started pestering me to take him to Baba at Puttaparthi and I decided that I must take him to Baba. Well, who was I to decide? It was Baba's decision because everything started working for me. My cousin Sri K. V. Krishnamurthy at Bangalore, an ardent devotee of Baba and also a Seva Dal had fixed an appointment with Dr. Verma, formerly head of NIMHANS at Bangalore on 20th September 97.

On the evening of 16 September 97 I took Vijay by air to Bangalore. On the night (early morning of September 17 at about 2:00 a.m.) my cousin Sri K. V. Krishnamurthy, his wife Indra, and son Mahesh took us in their car to Puttaparthi. Strange are the ways of Baba and as many devotees have experienced and confirmed. My cousin had gone to Puttaparthi on many occasions in their car, but still on the early morning they missed out the route to Puttaparthi and detoured via another village. In between, the car headlight also did not function. So by the time we reached Puttaparthi, completely exhausted, Baba's early morning Darshan was already over. So, we all thought we should have Darshan only in the evening at around 4.00. However a Seva Dal known to my cousin, suggested that I stand along with my son Vijay (who was at that time suffering

from headache) at the exit point through which Baba might come out for going to cricket ground, which was under preparation during that time. Within about ten minutes, Baba came out in His new BMW, and as He came near to the place where we were standing, He looked up with His hand in a blessing posture and particularly smiled at my son Vijay. I could feel the enormity and intensity of the love in His face and that very instant my child Vijay shouted in joy, saying, "Papa, my headache is gone". There was no physical touching for my son. His direct eye to eye contact was all that happened and the miracle indeed worked. Of course, the miracle had already happened at Apollo Hospital, New Delhi. This was only a subsequent confirmation of that.

In the evening when we went for Darshan, my son had a letter for Baba in which he had requested to cure him of his headache. After collecting a few letters from some of the women devotees, He came straight to where we were seated as if He knew we were there and collected my son's letter through me. My cousins were immensely delighted, because my visit to Puttaparthi proved fruitful. We returned the same day to Bangalore. After two days, we took Vijay to Dr. Verma as per appointment. He heard the entire case and we also told everything about our visit to Baba. He examined the boy thoroughly and came out with his advice. These were his exact words: "Baba is the Greatest of all Surgeons. He is the Surgeon of Surgeons. He has cured this young child. The child will not have any problem any more. Even if headache does come sometimes, ignore it as a common headache."

My son Vijay at that time was only 13. He never spoke of Sathya Sai Baba before. Yet now he does not leave for school without lighting up an agarbatti before Baba's portrait. Even though he had missed three months of school, he has caught up with his studies and whenever he smiles, I can see Baba's smile through him.

What other proof is needed to show Baba loves and cares even when we do not think of Him but do our duties with utmost devotion?

—V. Krishnan New Delhi

The Healing Touch

I flew into the Prasanthi Nilayam airport on August 14th, 1997. It was a great relief not to have to go from Bangalore by taxi.

Two days later, I handed Baba a letter that I'd brought for someone. He reached out to take it and said, "When are you going back?" "September 4th, Swami," I replied. "Long time very, very happy", He said. I felt so good inside that He 'd acknowledged my being there.

A couple of days later, I noticed I was not feeling well. I started perspiring. I continued to fan myself with my hand fan, but that did not help. Something was wrong. Possible fever? I contacted a doctor in the Ashram that evening. He gave me a couple of tablets and suggested I go to the hospital to have a check-up.

Next day, Thursday, the 21st, I went to the hospital and met the doctor. The diagnosis was: fever and diarrhea. He gave me medication for five days. But my condition did not improve. I went back to see the doctor on the 26th. I told him I felt terrible! I was not getting any better. He gave me a form to go to the hospital lab and have my blood checked. Next day I got the lab report. He read it and stated, "You have Malaria". "What!" I said. This really frightened me. Half way around the world with Malaria! He told me not to worry, "I will give you some medication and you will be all right in about five days". Well, that was encouraging. But I did not feel well in five days! I continued to get worse. I could hardly walk without perspiring more! Now I was really getting scared. It's August 30th and time for my departure for the U.S. is September 4th. What am I going to do?

I was in a state of grave concern. How am I going to fight the battle in all the airports with custom lines, immigration lines etc. I do not see how I can possibly do it!

On the morning of 3rd September, I went to Darshan as usual. But this time I was praying for help. I felt desperate. I told myself, "If Baba comes anywhere within 10 ft., I am going to approach Him and tell Him that I am terribly sick with Malaria and what am I going to do. It was 7:30 a.m. He came up the verandah area and was coming in my direction but at a left angle, and He was then about 6-8 ft away. I said to myself, "This is my only chance to ask Him." I crawled on my knees towards Him. He stopped and looked at me while I was trying to say what I thought I would say. I was all choked up and in a state of despair. The only words that could get out of my mouth were, "Baba, I have Malaria." "Malaria?" He said, as He touched my shoulder 2-3 times and walked away. I then sat back on the edge of the verandah and continued to watch Him walk in that beautiful and graceful manner. He stopped and talked to, I believe, a Prime Minister and then another person and so on. I was not paying any particular attention to my body since I was so absorbed with watching Baba in this close proximity. He so much stirs the hearts of people! What a blessing!

I then focused on myself and noticed that I was feeling much, much better! By 8:00, i.e., half an hour later since Baba had touched me, MY MALARIA WAS GONE! My perspiring had stopped. My weakness had gone away, and I was smiling, not being sure that all this was real!

I thanked Baba in my mind. What a wonderful gift I received! I have read many books which tell about Baba's healings, but I had never in the world thought I would ever be a witness!

I am ever grateful to Sathya Sai Baba for all that He has done for me, since my meeting Him 11 years ago!

—Paul Buscaino Culifornio, U.S.A.

The Story of the Christmas Guest

When I was a child I loved to hear

This story my Grandma told each year,
She told it in her native tongue,
And I was very, very young...
But yet this story seemed to be
Filled with wonderment for me,
For in my childish heart there grew
The dream that I might see Him, too,
For He might call on me this way
So I must watch for Him each day...
And that is why "The Christmas Guest"
Is still the story I love best—
And retell it to you now,
For I can't help but feel somehow
That children everywhere should hear
The story Grandma told each year...
For Christmas Day is doubly blest
When Jesus is our Christmas Guest!

It happened one day at the year's white end,
Two neighbours called on an old-time friend
And they found his shop so meagre and mean,
Made gay with a thousand boughs of green,
And Conrad was sitting with face a-shine
When he suddenly stopped as he stitched a twine
And he said, "Old friends, at dawn today,
When the cock was crowing the night away
The Lord appeared in a dream to me
And said, I am coming your guest to be...
So I've been busy with feet astir,
Strewing my shop with branches of fir,
The table is spread and the kettle is shined
And over the rafters the holly is twined,
And now I will wait for my Lord to appear
And listen closely so I will hear

His step as He nears my humble place
And open the door and look in His face"
So his friends went home and left Conrad alone,
For this was the happiest day he had known,
For, long since, his family had passed away
And Conrad had spent a sad Christmas Day
But he knew with the Lord as his Christmas guest
This Christmas would be the dearest and best,
And he listened with only joy in his heart,
And with every sound he would rise with a start
And look for the Lord to be standing there

in answer to his earnest prayer
So he ran to the window after hearing a sound,
But all that he saw on the snow-covered ground
Was a shabby beggar whose shoes were torn
And all of his clothes were ragged and worn

So Conrad was touched and went to the door
And he said, "Your feet must be frozen and sore,
And I have some shoes in my shop for you
And a coat that will keep you warmer, too"
So with grateful heart the man went away,
But as Conrad noticed the time of day
He wondered what made the dear Lord so late
And how much longer he'd have to wait,
When he heard a knock and ran to the door,

But it was only a stranger once more,
A bent, old crone with a shawl of black,
A bundle of faggots piled on her back,
She asked for only a place to rest,
But that was reserved for Conrad's Great Guest...
But her voice seemed to plead, "Don't send me away,
Let me rest for a while on Christmas Day"...

So Conrad brewed her a steaming cup
And told her to sit at the table and sup
But after she left he was filled with dismay
For he saw that the hours were passing away
And the Lord had not come as He said He would,
And Conrad felt sure he had misunderstood...
When out of the silence he heard a cry:
"Please help me and tell me where am I",
So again he opened his friendly door
And stood disappointed as twice before,
It was only a child who had wandered away
And was lost from her family on Christmas Day
Again Conrad's heart was heavy and sad,
But he knew he should make this little child glad,
So he called her in and wiped her tears...

And quieted all her childish fears
Then he led her back to her home once more
But as he entered his own darkened door,
He knew that the Lord was not coming today
For the hours of Christmas had passed away...
So he went to his room and knelt down to pray

And he said, "Dear Lord, why did You delay,
What kept You from coming to call on me,
For I wanted so much Your face to see"
When soft in the silence a voice he heard,
"Lift up your head for I kept My word-
Three times My shadow crossed your floor-
Three times I came to your lonely door-
For I was the beggar with bruised, cold feet,
I was the woman you gave food to eat,
And I was the child on the homeless street".

—Adapted from an old German legend by Helen Steiner Rice

Karma and Grace

There are three types of karma: past, present and future. Present karma must continue. It is like the carriage behind which is a trail of dust. If the carriage stops, the dust will settle on it. A doubt might be that the carriage cannot forever continue so as to be ahead of its dust. But the carriage need not always travel on a dusty road. It can get on the surfaced highway where there is no dust. The highway is equivalent to the grace of God. There is a difference between the benefit of grace and the benefit of bhakti, of devotion. A patient with a pain is given a sedative which dulls the pain. But grace is an operation that does entirely away with pain. Make no mistake; grace does entirely away with karma. It is like a medicine which is labelled, 'good until 1968'. If used in 1973, the medicine is entirely ineffective. The body is the bottle, the karma in the body is the medicine. God puts a date on the 'medicine'; so it is not effective.

—Baba

The Teacher of Love

I would like to share with you my joy and love which I have been receiving from the Great Teacher of Love, Sri Sathya Sai Baba and to tell you a little about my spiritual path which united me with Bhagavan.

Serving in the army for 21 years I did not think much about God, but when I was retiring the time to change my way of life came, and I started to review the life I had lived so far. I then realized that my life did not differ from many people of my profession and my sphere of activity. I saw my life as very poor indeed and felt tremendous surge within me in my soul. And beginning with 1992, I started on my search for the truth, trying to understand what a man is.

I enrolled in the course for healers in the town of Blagoveschensk and touched spiritual foundation of life; I felt a veil was being lifted from my eyes. For the first time in my life I

realized that there was more than just material existence; there was a boundless ocean of spiritual life that was the basis of this material existence which I took as the only and ultimate life.

Since that moment when I understood by my own experience the indissoluble link between everything in the world, beginning with a small thought in one's head to one's actions, encounters etc., I came to the conclusion that everything is ONE and there are no coincidences—everything is under the law of cause and effect: "What one sows that shall one reap."

From that moment on I am happy and full of joy as I have started consciously creating my own destiny; I see the subtle connection between each thought and feeling and their results on this planet Earth. Every man I meet has become my teacher, bringing knowledge to me, and I have finally realized that life is a game and each one of us is playing this game on the earth.

The course in Blagoveschensk I have mentioned was organised by a centre called "Sathya" (but it had no connection with Sathya Sai Baba) so at that time knowing nothing about the Lord I was going my way. I followed Porfiry Korneevich Ivanov, a great Russian saint, and studied Agni Yoga (Living Ethics), trying to put the teachings into practice. My life was becoming wider and so much more joyful; and I clearly realized the presence of some Forces helping man on his path of evolution.

The great moment of my life came in June 1994, when I first heard from my friend Alexey such words: "Avatar Sathya Sai Baba is living on Earth." My friend gave the address of Sai Centre in St. Petersburg. Reading the information about Sathya Sai Baba, the way He is directing us in our spiritual search, I very much liked its simplicity and wisdom. When I first visited the Centre I saw beautiful portraits of Baba, wonderful joyous people full of hospitality and I felt in my heart that this was my family. My friend and I sat down under the portrait of Sathya Sai Baba and when I closed my eyes and addressed the Avatar, with my inner vision I saw the Sun and two doves: one was flying to me and the other to my friend Alexey.

I understood that studying Christianity and other religions was not by chance. Gradually joy, happiness and gratitude to Sathya Sai Baba started overflowing from my heart and expressing themselves in poetry. My heart started singing: Love, Joy, Beauty, Peace, Oneness have become the words sounding in me like a bell.

Since 1992 I was being trained in my dreams. I understood then that a dream is also a life in another world and started working on dreams. Led by Sathya Sai in dreams I was shown my shortcomings and what I should work at. I had a burning desire to go to the Lord to India but my circumstances would not allow me to do it and later I realized that God is everywhere and in everyone.

I would like to share some experiences of meeting the Lord:

On the 13th April 1996 I left St. Petersburg for Yaroslavl by train. I was reading "Sai Messages for You and Me" by Lucas Ralli and was in a festive mood because the next day, 14th April was Easter Day. I woke up at 1:20 a.m. and saw Baba before me, as if He was appearing from fire. Smiling He entered me and I hear myself saying against my will the following words: "I am

Baba". Then Baba comes out of me and says: "I am Baba". These actions became faster and in the end I do not remember how many times this marvel continued, but when I came to my senses, my head, throat and chest were in sweat, as if after a sauna, whereas the lower part of my body was cool.

But I know that there are no miracles, only a certain level of knowledge. This experience gave me food for thought. Realizing the great Mission of Sathya Sai Baba, I started spreading His teachings first among my friends and relatives, giving them Sai literature and sharing experiences other people had with the Lord. In May-June 96, I went to a village called Betta far away in the south where we decided to organize a small Sai group. It is a beautiful place - the sea and mountains of the Northern Caucasus (Krasnodar region).

My friends from St. Petersburg equipped me for this so-called "expedition" with beautiful portraits of Baba, brought from His Ashram, with Vibhuti, the sacred ash, with tapes of His golden voice, fragrant sticks and literature - in short, all that was necessary.

And we started our Satsang in this place called Betta getting together nearly every evening for a month. First we would read Sai lessons from the book "Summer Showers in Brindavan" and then sing bhajans finishing with Arati. We were amazed at the marvels that started happening with members of our little group.

First of all we got tremendous joy from communicating with the Lord. Baba would come to each member of the group in a dream. Some people could see Him with closed eyes and one of the group, Loudmila, would every time have a vision of a young Indian lady sitting among us and watching what was taking place at our Satsangs. She would bring a beautiful big chalice with fire or sometimes with white and blue petals of a louts flower and would give some instructions to the five men in white sitting in a circle in a lotus position. Sometimes, Baba would come in the form of dancing golden Siva. The whole month of our Satsangs was filled with such revelations and knowledge that none of us can ever forget them.

As for me on 17th June I was born again when the Teacher of Love opened my heart and I merged with Him. This is how it happened: In my dream I see Sai Baba sitting on a sofa; He is looking at me with love and tenderness; realizing that it is dream I run into His arms and at that moment I enter through my heart into His loving eyes. I was not sleeping then and was experiencing an indescribable feeling in my heart. I melted into His eyes and saw boundless Cosmos, realising that all my life was but a moment. I melted into the grace and love of God and realized that I was Atman.

That is why I have now surrendered my life to the Great Teacher and there is no greater happiness for me than to see more and more new people understand who Sathya Sai

Baba is and what bliss we are given being born here and now.

I am infinitely grateful for the grace of the Lord for all the literature and information that is available for people wishing to follow a spiritual path. And the great Avatar welcomes each of His sons and daughters who with open heart and joy put into practice His messages and

teachings. We are the happiest people because at our time the Great Teacher is here on Earth—the Teacher of Love, Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

—Samson Russia

GURUDEV VANI:

The Wise and the Envious

Students! You are the inheritors of Truth and Righteousness (Sathya and Dharma). Different persons are propagating these two principles in different ways. Truth and Righteousness are eternal. They remain unchanged through all the three categories of time—past, present and future. It may be asked: What is the need to propagate ideals which are ever-present and permanent? But, the Lord declared in the Bhagavad Gita: "Whenever there is decline of Dharma (righteousness) and a resurgence of Adharma (unrighteousness) I incarnate Myself." Righteousness is imperishable. It is the practice of Righteousness that declines, not Righteousness itself. It is like the sun being covered for a time by a cloud. The sun is not apparently visible. But it is always there and shines again when the cloud moves away. Truth is the sun. Its effulgence is Righteousness. Truth and Righteousness are inseparable. They go together. They are inseparable like matter and energy.

The Sun of Truth illumines the world with the effulgence of Righteousness. It is the foremost duty of young people today to uphold Truth and Righteousness. Students ask today: What is our duty? Most of them feel that it is the job that makes the man ("Udyogam Purushalakshanam"). What then about unemployed? Are they not men at all?

Righteousness is not related to gender. It is the manifestation of unity in thought, word and deed. The same unity is the characteristic of Truth. Truth concerns utterance. Righteousness pertains to practice. Nowadays precept prevails over practice. Practice is all-important. When Righteousness is not practised, it appears as if it has decayed. But Righteousness cannot decay or disappear.

Today students should consider it as their primary duty to foster Truth and Righteousness. It is easy to talk about them, but putting them into practice is difficult. (In this connection Swami related a story about an episode during the reign of Emperor Akbar in Delhi).

Akbar had a very wise minister named Birbal. Birbal could always give satisfactory replies to the questions of the Emperor. Seeing how much the Emperor relied on Birbal, other ministers and dignitaries in the court were envious of Birbal. The Commander-in-Chief of the army, who was one of this group, seized the opportunity of Birbal's absence from the durbar hall one day to tell the Emperor: "Your Majesty! Here we are so many of us with considerable experience. Please consult us also. Why do you ask Birbal for everything?"

On another day, Akbar came to the audience hall and enquired about Birbal. The Commander-in-Chief said Birbal was away and informed the Emperor that he was ready to answer the Emperor's questions. All others also got up and said they were prepared to do so.

Akbar got up and put the first question to the assembled dignitaries. He warned them that their answer should satisfy him. The first question he put was: *"In this world which is the best flower?"* The Commander-in-Chief replied that the rose was the best flower. Other ministers mentioned the names of jasmine, champak and other flowers. The Emperor was not satisfied.

He then put a second question: *"Which milk is the best milk?"* Once again, there were a variety of answers, none of which satisfied the Emperor.

He then put the third question: *"What is the sweetest thing in the world?"* Many replied: Jaggery. One said honey. Like that there were varied replies.

The Emperor then passed on to the fourth question: *"Which leaf ranks highest among leaves?"* The assembled men gave different answers. Akbar was not satisfied.

By this time, Birbal entered the hall. Akbar then put him the four questions.

Q: *Which is the best flower in the world?*

Birbal: The flower of the cotton plant is the best. From the cotton flower, we have cotton, out of which yarn is made and clothes are woven. The cotton flower is therefore of lasting use to mankind. Other flowers are only of temporary value and are useless when their fragrance is gone.

The second question was: *Which is the best milk in the world?*

Birbal said: The mother's breast milk is the best, because it nourishes the child.

The third question was: *What is the sweetest thing in the world?*

Birbal replied: Sweet speech. Through sweet words you can transform any person and give great joy. Men throw stones when a crow caws. But they listen raptly to the sweet call of the cuckoo. Sweetness in speech is sweeter than anything else.

The last question was: *"Which is the best leaf in the world?"*

Birbal said: The betel leaf is the best, Your Majesty. Betel leaves are offered on all auspicious occasions like weddings. The betel leaf is considered sacred and auspicious. Other leaves like plantain leaves have no special value at all.

Everyone in the audience was amazed at Birbal's intelligent answers, which pleased the Emperor. Akbar told the gathering that none of their answers had satisfied him. Akbar expressed his appreciation of Birbal's replies. The courtiers realised why the Emperor valued so much the words of Birbal.

—From Bhagavan's Address to Students and Staff of the Brindavan Campus at "Trayee Brindavan" on March 19, 1998

The Wonder of Colusa

Rice is the dominant crop grown in the rich Central Valley north of Sacramento, California's state capital. Given the sparse population (5,000) in the nation's most populated state (30,00,000) it is a most unlikely place for the manifestation of the Divine Power of our Lord and Holy Grace, Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Acre after acre, mile after mile, a verdant sea of rice plants splashes across the plains punctuated by an occasional grain silo—multi-storey storage bins capable of holding millions of pounds of precious grain.

Nestled in this riot of rice is the postage stamp sized community of Colusa. As the road weary traveller approaches this drowsy town not posted on most maps, we are struck with one incredible topographical feature—a mountainous up crop from the flat, fertile plain. Mountains in the middle of nowhere!

It was not until my first trip to Puttaparthi that the full impact struck me of the striking similarity between this little hillock of jagged rocks and the Nilgiri mountains. Mini Nilgiris are in "Baba's backyard" at Colusa.

Sai Devotees

"Blessed are the humble and the meek for they shall inherit the earth", said the young master, Jesus. Home owners, Ami and Ram, his wife, are humble as pie. Ami is South Indian; Ram from Fiji and would be termed Sudra if America had a caste—I call them "working class".

There is nothing extraordinary about them in appearance or their home, an average ranch-style stucco building on the corner of a shade tree block. What goes on behind closed doors is a unique phenomenon!

Devout as most Hindus are, Ami and Ram are Shirdi Sai Baba devotees, conducting regular puja to their venerated Saint in a hallway closet modified for this express purpose. Many pray to God; few get unequivocal replies.

Miracles in Colusa

At first they suspected a leaky pipe in the wall adjoining their Shirdi Shrine and the bathroom plumbing, but a professional plumber soon dispelled their supposition and the cause of the water ponding in the closet continued to elude them.

This was the fist of a barrage of divine portents that would awash the house in a flood of spiritual energy. Next, to the family's amazing delight, their Shirdi Sai portrait began manufacturing the Indian spice, turmeric. A friend introduced them to their beloved Swami's new form Sri Sathya Sai Baba, and presented them with a small photo, which when placed in the closet shrine, wasted no time in manufacturing a salty, somewhat sulfuric tasting grey powder which they later learnt was Vibhuti. Soon the word spread through the eastern community and in a trice the home

became a focal point—a Mecca—for people of all faiths. Several people brought religious portraits and photos, many of which are mysteriously energized.

I witness

When I peered into the closet shrine, I was flabbergasted. But, before telling you what I witnessed, dear reader, I will preface my narrative with my brief biography.

Raised and schooled in the States with studies in science and engineering I am a stickler for empirical evidence—I must taste the pudding before testifying to its flavour—a popular philosophy subscribed to by the faithless minions.

Three general types of phenomena are manifesting in Colusa: water, vibhuti and honey. As an assembly of devotees began chanting the Garland of 108 Precious Gems, i.e., 108 Names of Sri Sathya Sai Baba, atoms in a water tumbler became agitated and, as if in ecstatic joy, started shedding holy tears, overflowing the glass and diverting into a collection pan. A photograph of the Lord's Lotus Feet, no bigger than the size of Sanathana Sarathi, hanging on the closet door, glazed with rippling wax-like coating, drips a golden viscous substance that looks and tastes like honey. A smaller Virgin Mary and a Baby Krishna give out amber sweetness. The centre piece of the closet shrine is a small photo of Swami, Embodiment of Love. An aluminium foil dam has been constructed around the photo to contain the copious quantities of vibhuti emanating at that focal point. House owner Ami, bless his generous soul, dispenses water, vibhuti and honey. Of these god-given gifts, vibhuti does not deplete, water and honey are finite. On one occasion, dispensing approximately 1/2 teaspoon per person, Ami handed out over 600 "doses of Vitamin G". That same day, wife Ram had cooked for 100 and had food left over after feeding the large contingency from Los Angeles.

To accommodate the droves flocking to their home, Ram and Ami converted their family room into a shrine. Photos of saints, avatars and deities grace a long wall from floor to ceiling. Vibhuti, like celestial moss, clings to the great trees in the spiritual forest, which are too extensive to document here. But, for the benefit of those of you who will never venture to the other side of the world to see this perpetuating Leela (why travel to see a stone, when the mountain is in India), I will share the most dramatic happenings.

The Lord's Feet are giving darshan in the most enchanting way—a huge, thick golden honey comb has encrusted a large portrait of those feet that came from heaven to walk among men. So brilliant does it glisten that my first impression was that it was metallic. A portrait of Shirdi Sai Baba, the length of one's fore arm, standing humbly, hands folded in front, with a piercing gaze is also exuding sweetness. One tiny foot is leaking the Lord's Nectar in a pretty plume. In this Holy Hall of Fame, Jesus with the Bleeding Heart stands with one unpunctured hand raised in benediction; from the Heart that loved all humanity flows a magnificent amber cascade of calcified honey. A little figurine of Goddess Lakshmi makes *Kumkum* as does her neighbour baby Ganesha.

Implications

In an interview with the Great Giver, a group asked Swami, "When are You coming to America?" and His reply was "I am already there—in Colusa". I am relating this story to you as I heard it from Ami and Ram.

Cast a stone into a still pond and ripples circumference outwards to lap the shore. In the two years since Swami's miracles began, thousands have pilgrimaged to the Sai Shrine. Untold numbers have yet to hear the clarion call, but, in a country paving the Information Highway I can assure you, dear friends, it is only a matter of time before the news is awash the internet.

Swami talks about the sorry state of human values that exists globally as a result of mankind practising ego-centricism rather than humility, and soot-caked chimneys dimming the lamp light of spiritual fundamentals. I see the Colusa experience as a lodestone of promise, where a power beyond the grasp of Western physics is exhibiting a selective intelligence—the "pudding" needed to prove to every Doubting Thomas that God exists, not in myth, but in fact.

—Kip Finn

The Two Eyes of Man

The ancient sages proclaimed two eternal verities: "Sathyam Vada; Dharmam Chara" (Speak the Truth; Adhere to Righteousness). These were regarded as the two eyes of man. Today man has lost these eyes and is helpless.

—Baba

MASS UPANAYANAM AT 'SUNDARAM':

A Double Blessing

For 138 young "vatus", who were initiated in the Gayatri Mantra at a beautifully organised mass Upanayanam ceremony in "Sundaram", the headquarters of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations in Tamilnadu, the entire experience was memorable in many ways. They felt the benedictory presence of Bhagavan Baba from the moment they went in a procession on the morning of February 15th, to the accompaniment of Nadaswaram music and the choral recitation of the Tamil hymns from the "Naallaayira Prabandham" by a large group of devotees. The procession started from a Vinayaka temple in Raja Annamalaipuram with a mahila bhajan group heading it, while the vatus and their parents and relatives joined the procession. A large-size picture of Bhagavan was carried to "Sundaram" where elaborate arrangement had been made for the mass Upanayanam ceremony.

All the vatus and their parents were seated in orderly rows under a huge shamiana in front of "Sundaram". A specially raised platform was erected for the high-priest who conducted the entire ceremony with scrupulous thoroughness, ensuring earnest participation of all the vatus and parents. Arrangements had been made for each of the participating families to have the assistance of a trained Seva Dal member to help in the due performance of the entire ceremony as directed by the high-priest. When the time came for the imparting of the Gayatri Mantra to the young vatus by their parents, everyone was thrilled to join in reciting the mantra in unison as instructed by the high-priest.

Bhagavan Baba had sent through Sri V. Srinivasan, Member of Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust, a benedictory message to be read at the function.

A greater blessing was in store for the vatus when they were all taken to Prasanthi Nilayam to be blessed by Bhagavan in Sai Kulwant Hall. Bhagavan asked the boys to recite the Gayatri Mantra and He was immensely pleased when they chanted it in a chorus with absolute clarity and fervour. Swami allowed them to take Padanamaskar and distributed prasadam to all of them.

For the vast gathering in the Sai Kulwant Hall the episode was yet another powerful reminder of how Bhagavan was inspiring the younger generation with the spiritual and cultural values of the nation. Truly it could be said of this memorable occasion:

*Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive;
But to be young was very heaven!*

ABC of Good Conduct

Adapt, adjust, accommodate.

Be good, do good, be kind, be compassionate.

Control anger by forgiveness and love.

Do to others as you would wish them do to you.

Envy not others.
Forget and forgive.
Give, give. This is the secret of abundance.
Hate sin, but not the sinner.

Industrious nature destroys evil tendencies.
Jealousy is a canker, therefore kill jealousy.
Keep company with good virtuous people.
Love all, love the Lord in all.
Morality is the gateway to eternal bliss.
Never insult, backbite or vilify.
Obedience is a greater virtue than reverence.
Purity leads to God-realisation, therefore be pure.

Quench your spiritual thirst by reading scriptures.
Return good for evil.
Share what you have with others.

Truthfulness is a fundamental virtue.
Unite, co-operate and collaborate.
Virtues are the ornaments that adorn life.
Wander not in sensual pleasures.
'Xamine your heart and remove all evil traits.
Yield not to temptations.
Zealously endeavour to be simple and humble.

—Compiled by S. Arjuna Raja

Bhur Bhuvah Suvaha

God manifests in man in three forms described as Bhur Bhavah Suvaha. Bhu is the material form (Padartha). Bhuvah is Spandana Sakthi or Prana (Life Principle). Suvaha is the form of Prajna. Prajna Sakthi is the radiation which through vibration (Prana Sakthi) gives the material form represented by the body. God manifests in all these three forms. The body is a combination of water, iron, lead, phosphorus and other things which are but inert matter. The body is inert but is made to function actively through vibration or the life Force. Prajna Sakthi is conscience. It occupies a special place in the body. God, in the form of conscience, activates the body. If man only understands this truth of spirituality, he will never indulge in bad deeds. The functioning of the body is itself a mystery.

—Baba

Being Near Sathya Sai Baba

From countries all over the world, people come to a small place in India, called Prasanthi Nilayam, "the abode of peace", to observe and be near the Avatar, Sathya Sai Baba, that again, like Krishna promised 5000 years ago, has descended upon earth to restore Dharma. Normally, we all think that we have to come near to Him for one particular reason or another, so that He really can see us and pay attention to us and thereby better hear our prayers. Maybe by seeing us face to face He can cure our disease, fulfill our long-cherished desire or fix all the problems that have become so enormously unbearable back home. But is this the only way to get attention from the Lord to sit in first line at Darshan in Prasanthi Nilayam? That is a question that should be contemplated upon at least once before going there or while staying in the Ashram.

Sai Baba Himself has said so many times that people come to Him for so many reasons, but very few indeed do come for that which He has descended upon the earth to give humanity. We can never understand Him, He has warned us, but can we understand that mysterious thing He wants to offer us? To make it short, Sai Baba has revealed that what He offers, the solutions to all our difficulties, is Self-knowledge. So, don't we know ourselves good enough? Are we not the only ones that know our own needs and longings, our pleasures and difficulties? That could be, but the one we think we are, the person we know, is not the one Sai Baba teaches us that we are. The individual that has travelled so far to be near Sai Baba, the person with likes and dislikes, with hopes and fears, with desires and attachments is no other than the person Swami wants us to get rid of. We are born with one reason, He says, that is to die. He does not refer to our physical body, because to die physically is the easiest thing to do. What has to die is the ego, the mind, our tendencies that have been clinging to us life after life, not wanting to let go, and that may not seem quite easy. But remember, the world is just like a film, Baba says, and having seen the film once we know the story and we don't need or want to see it over and over again. Same with the world. Why come back again and again to the same show?

Rather, we should pay attention to the screen on which the film is played, that is to say, to our own Self. May be we already have tried that, gone to courses to live out the 'real me', tried psychotherapy, tried to get in touch with our deepest feelings, anger, sorrow, happiness and so on, and live them out in the moment they arise. This is the only way to cling to the false, because identifying with feelings and thoughts is no better than identifying with the body. As many great teachers have taught, these misperceptions are the cause of all sorrow the biggest illusion is to think oneself as separate from that which is, from the only thing that always has been and will be.

To think that these tendencies are ourselves is to believe that there are two Selves, one that can be known and one that is knowing. As we can agree that we can know or look at our own thoughts, see our own feelings, there must be one that these *vruttis* or actions is pertaining to. We should turn our attention towards That. Since mind, as the Gita says, is part of *prakriti*, matter, it can be turned towards *purusha*, spirit, and That which is beyond both these, but it can never experience the Real. Mind can only experience the external world, *Atman* can only be what it is. By asking ourselves "Who am I?" we can only layer by layer disclose what we are not, *neti neti*—not this, not this, as the scriptures say. The paradox of creation is that the seeker can gain its goal only by losing itself.

If we want to be near God, we have to pay attention to Bhagavan's teachings, try to absorb them and then practise them. His teachings are based on the understanding that God is in everything, everything is in God. What the body is for the individual, *jiva*, the world is for God. To be near God is thus not equivalent to be in Puttaparthi. To be near God is to be near your own heart, the essence of being. When we move from the circumference to the centre, we will find that Sathya, Truth, like Sai Baba, the Divine Mother and Father, is everywhere. It is the only thing Which is. Why should we ask our Lord for small things when He can give us the only thing worth having, *Atmajnana*, direct experience of the True Self? Why should we try to get in first Darshan line, why should we pray to Swami to look at us, why should we expect this or that only to get more disappointed when it does not happen- when we know that nothing but God's Will can happen? What is meant to be will be, no matter how much we try to prevent it. What is not meant to happen can never happen, no matter how hard we try to make it be. If we could only be at ease in that conviction, totally surrendered to God, nothing can be difficult, nothing is to be gained, and nothing is to be lost. Peace is inside, it can never be attained by gaining this or that in the world. Peace is nearness to God and can be attained *in* the world but not of it.

The *Avatar* descends upon the earth, guides us, gives us directions in life, gives us His love, shows us how to do service to society, not because He needs our help or the world needs it. He will let us do *seva*, let us spread love, let us use this world because we need it. We need this to perform our highest duty—to transform ourselves, and thereby transform the world. We need God, and that is all we need. It is truly a divine gift to be able to closely experience the *Avatar* of *Kaliyuga*, our present age, but unfortunately, being physically near does not, although it may in certain instances, grant one realisation of the truth that the Avatar is proclaiming. We can come nearer to God wherever we are in the world by praying to Him that His Will may happen, praying, not for a task equal to our strength, but for strength equal to our task. We can come nearer to God by giving up, one by one, our desires and wishes. Only God knows what we need, only He can see the full divine play that we are all part of, only He knows everybody's present, past and future, so why ask for small things that we think will make us happy instead of asking that it may happen whatever He thinks is best for us? Life itself is a pilgrimage, Swami says, and without stops we are travelling through night and day, womb to tomb, pleasure and pain, tears and laughter. But when the road ends, and the pilgrimage is over, the pilgrim sees that he has only travelled from himself to himself, and that God Who led him into the journey was all the time with him, in him and around him.

—Anne Irene Larsen Oslo, Norway

Man and the Cosmic Process

Man's study of the universe led to his understanding several 'truths'. He realised that nothing around him was permanent! Even the mountains crumbled to dust by decay through millions of years. *Sthira* and *chara* (permanent and changing) are relative terms measured on the time-scale of our lives. Man found that ultimately all matter comprises atoms and molecules which come together in a definite pattern for a brief period of time. The solid cube of salt disappears in water;

even solid rock comprising different combinations of atoms-minerals disintegrates due to prolonged chemical action and new minerals are formed in place of the old.

Plants take up water, metallic and non-metallic ions from the soil, oxygen and carbon-dioxide from the air and with the aid of sunlight build molecules of carbohydrates, etc., which go to form the cells. The leaves die after they perform their functions, decay and the elements are separated to seek new sites and new combinations. The concept embodied in the ancient Indian term '*Jagat*' (meaning flux or change) for the world is also confirmed by the modern science!

Everything is in a continuous state of flux—the stars, the nebulae, the sun and the planets! Each is relatively real. Viewed from the scientific view-point, name and form by which we may describe objects are all temporary descriptions of certain combinations, real and valid in relation to a certain time and place. As Baba so often says, everything has a certain relative validity depending on time, place and circumstance!

Although man's quest for understanding the phenomenal world was based on his deep urge to know the 'how' of things, he began soon to ask about the 'why' of the phenomena taking place around him. Baba has said, "There is a deep urge in man to visualise the One behind the many; scientists seek to find the law that will explain all sources of energy and all forms of matter." Elsewhere Baba expressed this in thrilling poetry: "You feel that there is something behind and beyond all this fleeting fantasy; but you are unable to grasp it and realise that it is the same entity that underlies the entire universe. You are one with the most distant star and the least little blade of grass. You shine as dew on the petals of the rose; you swing from star to star; you are part and parcel of all this manifestation." This cosmic vision of man, the real *Vishwarupa Darshan*, is possible only when he realises his intimate relationship with cosmic phenomena.

"Creativity" too is a unique field of man's activity, a consequence of his intelligence. For the first time in the evolution of life, there emerged an animal which was not a helpless victim of circumstances. The Dinosaurs, which lived 150 to 180 million years ago roaming on the earth, disappeared apparently when food supply became scant and they could not adjust to drastic climatic changes. But man can live in the icy Arctic or the burning desert. He grows his food without dependence on whimsical Nature; he develops hybrids to provide increased yield. He has created machines and robots and hundreds of gadgets using natural resources. He has activated, sustained and interfered with natural processes using his intelligence. The magnificent achievements of science and technology are tributes to his ability to alter his environment to suit his needs! But this ability to shape his destiny has led to the inflation of man's ego and inordinate pride of possession. He has developed an unquenchable thirst for enjoyment of products of his creativity. These strong desires are the root of the feelings of anger and hatred, when his attempts are thwarted by others. Related feelings such as envy, jealousy, greed, pride, etc., have also become aggravated.

But, man is afflicted with another dilemma; he cannot possess anything permanently! He finds that he too is a victim of change; his body decays like other material objects. "Scepter and Crown shall tumble down; Dust thou art and to dust thou returnest." His quest for long life has led him to the discovery of cures for diseases and also to increase his span of life. He is now on a search to prolong the life of the cells that constitute his body!

Therefore man is unhappy; the more he enjoys, the more insatiable the craving becomes. Man's unique gift, memory, the foundation for his intelligence, is also responsible for his misery. He "looks before and after and pines for what is not." Baba has penned this lucidly: "You multiply grief by recollecting the past and picturing a lurid future. You fill the present moment with dread, recapitulating the past and reflecting on coming events." Thus in spite of all the enormous strides in the development of his mental faculties and the extraordinary creations of his intellect (or because of them!) man has no peace of mind.

Genuine scientific thinking leads to wonder and faith in a super-mind which controls and regulates this phenomenal world including man. The "creation" cognisable through our senses is really a continuous rearrangement of atoms and molecules in which is embodied a principle of consciousness. Although we have not admitted consciousness in minerals, their origins in which specific atoms come together in pre-determined positions in a well-defined and distinct geometric fashion, perfect in architectural design, cannot take place by sheer accident. Wherever, whenever the individual mineral crystallises, it always has the same architecture. One cannot but postulate the role of an invisible omnipresent Architect guiding the atoms.

Consciousness becomes increasingly manifest in the plant and animal kingdoms. Creativity being a product of intelligence, we must admit that the Cosmic Process is the result of the activity of a Super-intelligence, of Supreme Consciousness. We can now grasp the import of Baba's saying, "It is the same Entity that underlies the entire Universe." The Upanishads declare thus: "For the fear of Him the sun burns and the wind blows!" It is the same Supreme Intelligence that controls the fusion of atoms releasing tremendous energy in the sun, without which life would be impossible on this planet. Baba makes the distant star our kin! We share the same hydrogen atoms that occur in the distant star; we carry them in the cells of our body; we take them into our system through the water we drink. We are all part and parcel of this Mysterious Manifestation, the Universe!

Man's troubles arise because he thinks that his intelligence is personal to him alone. This goads him to selfishness and possessiveness. But, this is a wrong notion. If only he could remember constantly that his intelligence is but a ray of the Supreme Intelligence which governs the Universe he could feel one with the Cosmic Process or *Ishwara*. Baba reminds us, "God is shining, announcing Himself through you. He is expressing Himself through every thought, word and deed that emanates from you"! "Who granted you the chance, the intelligence, the success? The Lord—He chose, He prompted. He executes."

This realisation should also help man to accept gracefully and gratefully the inevitability of death and decay! The realisation should also lead to the decline of possessive feelings which lead to grief and misery. With this attitude, man can withstand "disasters" with greater equanimity and detachment. Baba says, "Man has to manipulate Nature, live in Nature, live by Nature, always dedicating his activity to further the glory of God, resigning himself to worshipful activity, unconcerned with the fruits of his activity for they are in the hands of God; leave the rest to God!"

When this state is achieved, no longer do we become subject to the vagaries of the mind, goading us to indulge in possessive feelings. Then we realise that our Creativity is part of the Cosmic

Process, in fact *Ishwara*, creating in and through us. We are actually co-sharers in the cosmic process. Our intelligence will then be in tune with and merge in the Universal Intelligence; this is *Samadhi*. When this feeling is constant and steady, it is *Sahaja Samadhi*, Sameness of Intelligence. Thereafter we will be aware all the time that our individual activity emanates from the Cosmic Intelligence.

Only then we will be able to "liberate" ourselves from the dualities of pleasure and pain, sorrow and joy, which are inevitable when we believe that our activity proceeds from and is limited by our body and mind. We are neither the body nor the mind! Baba says, "Who am 'I'? 'I' is the most frequently used word; it recurs many times a second in conversation. "I said, I saw, I heard, I have this, I am the king, I am a ryot, I am a child, I am *pundit*, I am tall, I am lean, "but who is this 'I' that has these attributes and possessions? The *Upanishads* declare that 'I' is not the personalised individual. This is a delusion. It is not limited to the body which it inhabits. It is the most universal of categories—it is the Eternal, the Absolute, and the *Param-atma*. It is the Omnipresent Universal Consciousness—*Sat-Chit-Ananda*.

When we realise the identity of the 'I', we can grasp the Truth that this phenomenal world is pervaded by the Divine. Then, we can recognise the wisdom of Baba's advice, "The dog will stop barking at its own shadow in the stream, when it knows that it is not another dog, but is only itself. All are shadows, and so whom are we to hate and whom are we to prefer?" That is the attitude of the wise. "Give up attachment, give up entanglement—*tyaga* or renunciation that alone can grant freedom", say the Vedas. "Renounce the idea of being separate, see in all beings yourself and yourself in all beings. That is the highest renunciation, the renunciation of the sense of ego which makes you cling to this temporary habitation, this bundle of bones and flesh, this shell with a name and form".

The constant feeling that we are one with the All-pervading Supreme Consciousness is the mark of the *Jivanmukta* (liberated soul). To obtain this sustained feeling, we need the rational approach. Baba says, "Use the stick of intelligence and throw it at the problem of 'you and the world'. That will bring down the fruit." Science, which initially attempted to understand the phenomenal world through the rational approach, was inevitably led to speculate as to the Basis of all this creation. Now, it has reached the same conclusion, intuited by Bharat's sages and seers, that the Basis is the All pervasive Supreme Intelligence or Consciousness, that the phenomenal world is also an expression of that Ultimate Reality, cognised by observations conditioned by the senses. *Sakara* and *Nirakara*—the Formful and the Formless—are actually two levels of observation rather than two different phenomena. Thus we see that science too leads us to an identical conception of the Reality.

If a more intellectual understanding or a deeper rational cognition that we are part of the Supreme Consciousness were sufficient to attain liberation, then every scientist would be a sage. No. Liberation is possible only by purifying the impulses, by constantly remembering that the body and the senses are only instruments for the Creativity motivated by Cosmic Intelligence. Baba says, "Recognising the immanence of the Divine, one has to dedicate all acts to the Divine. What is an act, when you analyse it deep enough? It is the manipulation of the Divine, by the Divine, for the sake of the Divine, through the skill endowed by the Divine; there is no 'I' or 'mine' in it, except the Universal 'I' and the Divine My."

Such an understanding of ourselves in relation to the world will lead us to expand ourselves and envelop the universe through love. We will realise that individual intelligence is but a ray emanating from the same Source, the Supreme. Difference in the nature of the bodies and related tendencies will become less valid and important.

Together with the exercises to understand Reality through Reason, we must carry out spiritual exercises to eliminate the domineering influence of the senses. Baba says, "The first step is the control of the senses, the second is the control of the emotions and impulses. The third is the mastery of balance and equipoise, the next is the regulation of breathing and the movement of the vital airs, the next is the prevention of outer influences from deviating the mind, the next is one pointed attention on one's own progress, and we come to real *Dhyana* or meditation on one's Reality, which easily leads to its realisation in *Samadhi*."

We may conclude this essay by also attempting to understand the *Avatar* through this rational approach. The *Avatar* is Reality embodied in human form. Baba has often said that He is God, we are also God. The only difference is, Baba is conscious all the time that He is God; we are under the illusion that we are mere men, because of the influence of the inherited tendencies or *samskaras* of the many lives we have been through. He has said often that His body too will fade away like ours. The basic difference is, His "Intelligence" is the Supreme Intelligence. *Ishwara* is only an aspect of the Immanent Reality known as *Parabrahman*. Baba's powers of "Creation" which we term 'miracles' can be explained by the fact that in Him creation is instantaneous with *sankalpa* or volition. For a mere human being, creativity involves several steps, such as mentally conceiving the idol, and removing the extra stone through much effort. In Baba's case, the entire act is telescoped, as it were, without the several intermediate steps. Raynor C. Johnson, in his book *Imprisoned Splendour*, says: "Just as man's highest creative achievements are at present indirect—embodied in art, sculpture and architecture, with all their beauties of line and form, rhythm and colour—it may well be that the world of Nature, wholly or in part, is the direct creation of higher intelligence and higher creative minds than ours" (p.398). It is not difficult to conceive that the *Avatar's* "Mind" is the Universal Consciousness. Awareness of the past and the future is natural to such a Mind. Baba is the All-pervasive Intelligence which manifests in each of us as intelligence.

Baba has given this key to His reality, as much as ours: "Nothing is wrong with you; 'where there is a will there is a way' is eminently true. At first the will is your own which has to be strengthened by the thought of God until you convert it into the Almighty Will of God. You are not weak and helpless. Every strength and power is within you. God-Vision is yours that very instant when you *will* it with concentration. Why you don't? Simply because you do not choose to... Trust in and submission to the Supreme Will in all circumstances means the vision of truth, vision of the root principle of all creation. 'If God wills' means only if you assert your own all powerful will. The solution therefore is to awaken the inherent power and splendour of your soul. Do it. You are verily the immortal Truth; the great, deathless and changeless Reality."

—From *The Greatest Adventure* by Dr. M. V. N. Murthy

Man, Truth, Love and God

It is only from Truth that the entire creation has come out.

There is nothing in the world without the basis of Truth.

This is Shuddha Satwa (Pure goodness).

Behold ye people!

(Poem)

God is Sathya Swaroopa (embodiment of Truth). You find that human nature is a combination of Sathya and Dharma. When man is not able to comprehend his own human nature, how can he know the Divine? Everyone should, therefore, make efforts to know the human nature. It is Nirmala, Nishchala, Nisswartha (blemishless, unwavering and unselfish).

God in Man's Spiritual Heart

God is in every human being residing in his spiritual heart which is on the right side of the body while the physical heart is on the left. It is only a single seat sofa and not a double seated sofa or musical chair. So, God is close to everyone being seated in the spiritual heart. When you realise this, you will have the feeling of blissful happiness. The heart is the seat of compassion and God is embodiment of compassion. While so, man cannot have hatred towards any being at all. Man has to make efforts to progress on the path of Truth and Righteousness.

God has no consideration of caste, age, sex or nationality. Take the elements earth, water, fire, air and ether. Have these elements any distinction of caste or nationality? They are embodiments of the Divine. You should never misuse the elements or waste them.

Names and forms are many but the Atmic Principle is one. You should understand this. This is the fundamental law of Nature. Though names and forms vary, there are some common features in all. Hunger is common to all, though the types of food are many. In a hospital there are many different types of patients. All are not given the same food. For instance, diabetics will not be given sugar or sweet preparations. World is a hospital. The humanity is suffering from different diseases, physical, mental and psychological. Three-fourths of the diseases are only psychological. What is the treatment needed? It is only "daiva chintana", filling the mind with the thought of God. You should never separate God from you. A man with dual mind is half-blind. We should practise the principle of oneness. There is only one God spoken of as many. Unity in diversity should be comprehended. Human quality should reflect Divinity. You should curb animal thoughts and breed Divine thoughts. There are two types of persons. Those with animal and human qualities always show hatred, jealousy, greed and anger. The other type with human and divine qualities will always be happy, peaceful and full of love. They will always adhere to Truth. Without such quality, spiritual pursuits will be of no avail. You should always say to yourself "I am human, I am not animal". Jealousy is rampant to a considerable extent amongst people today. This is the root cause of anger, hatred and other evil qualities. If a person owns a car and travels in it, don't be jealous. Satisfy yourself that you have your legs to help you walk. If one is in a big house, don't get jealous. Be contented and happy with the dwelling place you have, though small. You should thus kill jealousy. Jealousy is contrary to human nature. It is

artificial and not pertaining to heart which is natural. Virtues and vices are reflections of your good and bad thoughts. Physical heart is on the left side while the spiritual heart is on the right. This will help you in the right direction. It is compassionate. But man breeds desires which contaminate the heart. These should be checked and restrained to a limit. The body and all the sense organs have limitations like the temperature, B. P., capacity to see, hear etc. Veda says "Na Sreyo Niyamam Vina". We should observe discipline in life.

Limitations should be observed in everything. If you have enough minimum resources like food, shelter and raiment you should be satisfied. To maintain bodily health and get enough energy for your day-to-day activities you should take food. You should not indulge in overeating causing indigestion. If you exceed limit in anything, it may lead to dangerous consequences.

If you realise that God is residing in your heart, you will not dare to indulge in bad activities at all. The evil qualities are only acquired and are not in you. You are embodiment of only love and compassion. The bad influences are just like passing clouds which obstruct the vision of the sun. Though the vision is blocked the sun is always shining. When clouds clear you can see the sun in its full effulgence. Similarly, the veils of ignorance covering the heart must also be cleared. One should cultivate patience which is not commonly done in the present day life. Haste makes waste, waste begets worry. So one should develop patience to avoid worry. Our mind is compared to the moon; when thoughts arise it is eclipsing the real nature just as the moon is eclipsed by the shadow of the earth. If you keep the heart pure of the malaise of evil qualities, you will have no worry at all. You should not allow wicked thoughts to stick to you. In a pond, along with lotus flowers that bloom, you have leeches also thriving, which suck your blood. Lotus cannot sustain without water. So also human life cannot sustain without love. But you should not let the leeches of worry breed in your heart of love. You can travel in a boat on the surface of water but should not allow water to enter into the boat. You should not allow the attachment to worldly objects enter into your boat of life.

You are all embodiments of God. God is all-pervasive. You cannot classify some as divine and some others not divine. All are reflections of the same Atma which is common to all. This Atmic Principle is also Sun-principle and Truth Principle (Surya tattwa and Sathya tattwa). When one follows Sathya, Prema will be the reflection. When you walk on the road, your shadow may fall on bad patches like drains, garbage, etc., but you are not affected by it. You should proceed unmindful of the path of the shadow. So also you must follow your heart with good feelings unmindful of obstacles that may appear to come in the way. You should practise truth. You should be grateful to a person that came to your rescue in times of crisis. You should not forget the help done by others. There are two things that you should forget. Forget the harm done by others to you as you will then be harbouring vengeance to retaliate. Secondly, forget the help you did to others as that will make you expect reward from them and result in disappointment when it is not forthcoming. By observing these two norms, the purity of your heart will be maintained.

"I am Atma, You are Atma"

Adi Sankara said, "There is no mother, father, no relatives or friends. The only reality is 'you'. Therefore, be careful and awake to the Reality." You should not worry about the family as these are passing clouds. Vyasa was a great sage who gave the eighteen Puranas, Itihasa and Brahma-Sutra. But when his son Suka left the house in pursuit of Brahma-jnana, Vyasa ran after him

shouting "Oh son! Stop. Do not go away". Suka stopped and told his father, "I am not your son. You are not my father. I am Atma, you are Atma. Why are you under illusion?" So, you must gradually give up all attachments and turn only to God. Having love in your heart, when you put on the Divine glasses everything will be Divine!

You are filled with worries throughout your life. Birth is a worry, life itself is a worry, family, child, failure, sickness, old age, death, mystery are all worries. These are all imaginary and psychological. You say "My body, my mind, my hand, and my worry." Does this not mean that you are separate from worry? It is your own creation. You are only one. You are Atma, the Truth. Truth is God. There is only one God who is described in many ways. Everyone should realise this Truth by spiritual sadhana. This involves sacrifice—Vedas declare that you can attain immortality, not by any means other than sacrifice. You have to develop the spirit of sacrifice. Tyaga (sacrifice) is yoga. Doing your duty efficiently is yoga. Throughout life you should go on doing your duty without aspiring for results. When you give to others, you should have the attitude you are not the giver and the other is not the receiver. It should be considered as an opportunity that is offered by the Divine.

Develop love. Follow Truth and Right Conduct (Sathya and Dharma). You will shine as the Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara. You should not feel you have no powers. You should have self-confidence which will lead to self-satisfaction which in turn encourages self-sacrifice resulting in Self-Realisation. You must ensure that your self-confidence is unshakable. What is self-confidence? Self is Atma. This is conscience. Because of senses it is not realised. It should be associated with higher consciousness and not the consciousness which pertains to the senses. Man should try to realise the supreme heights of consciousness. Consciousness is uniformly present in all. It is "chaitanya". When people turn towards the worldly objects which are transient, they pursue the negative path. When they turn towards the Self, it is positive path.

Human Values and Nirvana

The human body is constituted of the five elements, five sheaths, five vital airs (pancha bhutas, pancha kosas and pancha pranas). Man has also got five faculties—Sathya (Truth), Dharma (Righteousness), Santhi (Peace), Prema (Love) and Ahimsa (Non-violence), which are termed human values. Having been born as a human, it is a pity that one does not realise these values. Anger, hatred and lust are not human values at all. These are animal qualities unbecoming of a human being. With truthful thoughts one can become a good person. But one without thoughts becomes a 'Sadhu', wise person. He will always be in peace. Thoughts are the root cause of Asanthi (lack of peace). First of the human values is 'Sathya' or Truth. If this is absent, you lose one part of the human nature. If you don't follow 'Dharma' you lose two parts. If you lose 'Santhi' you lose three parts and when you have no 'love' you have lost the entire human nature and the body will be one with all limbs amputated.

Sathya, the first value, is like the head and one who fails to follow Truth will be a headless torso. Dharma is like the shoulder and one without this will not be able to do anything having become handicapped. (He loses Bhuja-balam). One without Santhi is akin to a man without stomach. How can one take food, which is essential to provide energy for living when there is no stomach? If you lose these three, the life is without love and becomes valueless. Love is essential for life. One without love is only a living corpse!

Nowadays, you find hatred rampant everywhere. There is no love. The seat of love is the spiritual heart on the right of the body. Nobody bothers to recognise this. The absence of love leads to absence of unity. When there is no unity, there is no purity and without purity, divinity cannot be realised. Now what people generally do is to breed enmity and narrow feelings of community. If there is love, the divisive feelings of community and enmity will not be there. Even when one greets another as "Hello", it is of low calibre and is only artificial and superficial not coming from the heart. If you want to develop love, you must go on adding to your circle of friends, loving and serving all. It should be expansion and not contraction. It may extend to cover the entire humanity. "Ekatma Sarvabhoothantharatma". The one Atma is there in all beings. This is the basis of the Brahma tattwa, (Principle of Divinity). When love is lost everything is lost in life.

*Love in speech is Sathya
Love in action is Dharma
Love in thought is Santhi
Love helps in the consummation of these three values.*

Embodiments of Love! You are struggling only to acquire ephemeral worldly attainments such as wealth, fame, status and position.

To foster human values, you have to control your senses. Merely studying scriptures, undertaking pilgrimages and meeting saints will not help you to achieve realisation. Buddha did all these spiritual exercises but could not achieve the goal. Finally he learnt that one has to turn his vision within with the help of the eye of wisdom to attain Nirvana.

Buddha proclaimed that the word 'man' should be interpreted thus:

M - stands for Maya, which has to be controlled and got over.

A- stands for Atma—understand the Atmic Principle

N - stands for Nirvana—attain Nirvana.

When you get over the illusion of 'Maya' and understand 'Atma', you get 'Nirvana'—liberation. Therefore, Buddha preached sense control and eradication of desires as of primary importance. He advocated good vision, good speech, good hearing, good action, good thoughts as essential for human beings.

Whatever sadhana one may do, it will be wasteful if there is no sense-control. You should know the divinity that is immanent in everyone. Though many are aware of this truth, they do not follow this in practice. For example, though everyone knows that one should speak the truth, they tell lies to escape from a problem or to have success in business. If you tell a lie to escape from a temporary problem, later on you will have to face a bigger permanent problem. You should control this temptation of telling lie to get over a temporary situation.

Take the example of Harishchandra. He sacrificed his kingdom, wife, son and everything and he himself served as a slave in a crematorium. When Vishwamitra gave an offer to Harishchandra that he would give all his possessions if he told just one lie, Harishchandra flatly refused to

deviate from Sathya even if it cost his life. That is why Lord Shiva appeared before him and blessed him giving him back his throne, revived his dead son back to life and restored his wife and made him rule the kingdom with renewed fame. Because of his extraordinary adherence to Truth, he is even now remembered as "Sathya Harishchandra".

Nowadays people resort to telling lies fearing that they may get into trouble otherwise. Why should you fear to speak the truth? You have to fear only when you commit mistakes. Today there is fear rampant everywhere. Life is fear-stricken! You should practise Sathya and Dharma. If you practise these, you need not fear. Whenever you are not able to utter the truth, you may desist from speaking and keep silent.

Once a sage was doing penance in quest of Truth. One day Lord Shiva wanted to test this sage. He came in the guise of a hunter who was chasing a deer. The deer passed through the place where the sage was seated. A little while later the hunter approached the sage and asked him whether he had seen the deer that passed in that direction. The sage was in a dilemma. If he spoke the truth, the deer would be slain by the hunter. If he did not speak the truth, he will be infringing the code of conduct. So he prayed to the Lord to show him the correct path to save him in such a situation. Suddenly vibration occurred in his mind and he told the hunter "The eyes see something. But they can't speak. The tongue speaks but cannot see. Under these circumstances, what can I say?" Lord Shiva appeared before him in his true form and blessed him with liberation.

So you should not utter untruth simply to escape a situation. If there is difficulty, be silent.

Conscience and Consciousness

Conscience is limited as an adjunct of the body. How does this merge with consciousness? You have a balloon with air inside. If you go on blowing more and more air into it, the walls become thinner and finally it bursts. Then the air inside merges with the air outside. This is merger of the limited air, finite with the infinite.

You go on expanding your love. Don't confine it to your own circle of kith and kin. Then finally the merger with infinite will occur. This is liberation.

*Start the day with love,
Fill the day with love,
End the day with love,
This is the way to God.*

Just as sugar, which is sweet, when mixed with water, tea, coffee or anything imparts sweetness to the dish, Prema (Love) also is sweet (madhuram) and will impart its sweetness to your words, actions and thoughts. Love is the foundation, Truth is the wall, and Santhi is the roof of your life's mansion. Truth based on love is the best Dharma.

Love is there in everyone naturally. Instead of directing it towards your wife, children and relatives, direct it towards God! By this diversion you will get whatever you want. The heart is

given by God. Offer it to Him. You need not have any fear. Surrender your body to Him as this is also a gift of God. Every action should be underlined by Prema (Love). Do seva with love. You must cultivate the feeling that you belong to God.

God is your Old Friend

You need not glorify God because that may keep you at a distance from God. God is not new. He was there before your birth and He will be there eternally. Where is the need to glorify Him? You must take Him as your old friend. When you acquire friendship newly with a person you speak to him with respectful words. When he becomes an old friend you treat him with liberty and privilege. Consider God also as an old friend, so that you can enjoy the liberty and be free with Him.

Devotees think that they can please God by describing His glory. This is not true. You can melt His heart only with love. Plant the seeds of love and let the water of good qualities flow on the dry land so that the seeds will sprout and fed by rain of love grow into a tree sheltering all.

Embodiments of Love!

You are all basically embodiments of love only. There is no one in the world without love. One will love at least his own kith and kin and another may love money. Anyway, the basis is love which is divine. You are a combination of love, peace, truth and God. You are mutually related to one another through the bondage of love in spiritual path. You must uphold Dharma by Truth and Love. "A seed to sprout should be sown in earth or field. Sow the seed of love in the field of your heart. It will grow as a tree and yield fruit of bliss" (poem.) Prema tattwa is Jnana tattwa and Dharma tattwa. Understand and practise it.

(To be continued in the next issue)

— From Bhagavan's Discourses at Sai Shruti, Kodaikanal, April 1998

The Root Cause of Sorrow

Desire arouses expectations (Apeksha). These expectations relate to the senses. When the expectations are not realised, disappointment turns into anger. The anger gives rise to mental aberrations (Sammoha). These aberrations lead to the loss of memory (of what is right and wrong). With the loss of memory, the intellect gets destroyed. When the intellect is destroyed, everything is lost. Thus, Kama (sensual desire) is the root cause of all ruin, infamy and sorrow. Hence it is essential to control desires and lead a life of self-restraint.

—Baba

AVATAR VANI:

SRI RAMANAVAMI SANDESH:

Potency of Rama's Name

Sweeter than sugar,

*Tastier than the cream from curds,
Growing in sweetness like honey,
As the name is chanted,
Verily it is nectar itself.
Meditate, all ye, on the sacred name of Rama!*

Embodiments of Love!

Rama is the friend of the universe. He is its protector. He is its patron-saint. To comprehend the nature of such a unique ideal personality is not quite easy.

It is easier to count the waves of the ocean than to describe the qualities of Rama.

Ramchandra is the Indweller in all beings. The cosmos is one vast mansion. Humanity is one family (or community). Only the person who recognises this relationship between the cosmos and mankind can understand the Rama Principle.

The earth lies at the feet of every human being. It is the same firmament that is above every person. All breathe the same air. The water that people drink is the same for all. Only those who recognise this unifying principle will seek to understand the Rama Principle.

The Vedas taught two kinds of Dharma (codes of right conduct). One is termed "Pravritti" and the other is termed "Nivritti". "Pravritti" (the outward path) is related to worldly activities. It prescribes the qualities needed for leading the life in the mundane world. "Nivritti" (the inward path) teaches knowledge of the Self (Atma jnana). One who knows the difference between the two is dauntless.

"Pravritti" indicates how any particular task should be performed. "Nivritti" (the inward path) indicates in what state of mind the work should be done.

For example, when a person is hungry, "Pravritti" tells him to eat food and appease his hunger. "Nivritti" teaches what kind of food he should eat, what is good for his health and what is injurious, and how it should be consumed. "Pravritti" and "Nivritti" are thus related to what is external and what is internal.

All that you see, all that you hear, all that you think is related to the "Pravritti" path. The "Pravritti" path creates confusion in the mind, disturbs the intelligence and prevents one from pursuing the right path. "Pravritti" tends to turn man away from God.

Ravana's Lament

Life is a kind of struggle. You have to face conflict of opinions. But Ayodhya is a place free from strife and controversy. No enemy could enter it. The human heart is the symbol of Ayodhya. All conflicts and divisions arise in the mind. It is the mark of "Pravritti" (the outward path) that it generates conflict and brings about alternatively union and separation. Because of this fact, man today is a prey of unrest and is bereft of peace. Ravana is an example of such a person who ruined his life in this way. He was perpetually following the "Pravritti" path. Unable

to conquer his desires he sacrificed his sons. Unable to subdue his desires ("vaanchalu") he ultimately ruined his entire clan ("vamsa"). With no control over his passions, he forfeited his kingdom itself. In the final reckoning, this was the lesson Ravana gave to the world: "Oh people of the world! Failing to control your attachments like me, unable to limit your desires like me, do not ruin yourselves as I have done. Ultimately I am also leaving the world. What remains in the world? Only infamy. All the renown goes to Rama. Therefore, strive to earn good reputation. Do not give room to ill-fame." That was the lesson Ravana taught. The Rama Principle destroys all sins and redeems life. Everyone should seek to realise the Rama Principle.

Rama moved about in the world as an ordinary human being. He exemplified the ideal life. Yet all considered him as an ordinary human being. But, do ordinary people live like Rama? Rama was one who, while appearing to lead the life of an ordinary man, led the life Divine. He demonstrated the ideal life of a spiritually realised person.

Today the world needs the message of the Ramayana. Why? Because children do not heed the words of parents. Parents do not set worthy examples to the children. Preceptors do not teach the right course of conduct to the disciples. The disciples do not offer the due respect to the teachers.

Today businessmen, administrators, rulers and citizens are all tarred by the same brush. The world is replete with discord. People have forgotten the great message of Rama. They have poisoned life at its source. They have forgotten the Divine, with the result that they are immersed in misery.

Prayers to God

How do people address their prayers to God today? They pray for bodily comforts and mental peace. These desires are natural. But there is something unnatural about the way it is done. Prayers are offered to the image of the Lord of Serpents in stone! They pray: "Oh Lord of Serpents! Remove my troubles." But when the serpent appears before them as alive cobra, they use the stone idol to kill it.

Today this is the plight of the Divine. Who can determine what is the nature of Divinity? None can do it. The nature of the Divine can be determined only by the Divine and not by anybody else. Thyagaraja recognised this truth in his song, "Oh Lord! How can anyone decide what you are?" Thyagaraja went on to derive the name "Rama" from the two letters "Ra" and "Ma" in the two mantras associated with Vishnu and Siva (The two mantras are: Namō Narayanaya and Namah Sivaya). The two mantras, without the syllables "Ra" and "Ma", become meaningless. "Ra" and "Ma" are thus the life-giving letters in the two mantras.

Power of Rama's Name

Rama's name is thus the life-giving essence of the two great mantras. The term "Rama" has another esoteric significance. It consists of three syllables: Ra + Aa + Ma. "Ra" signifies Agni (the Fire-god). "Aa" represents the Sun-god (Surya). "Ma" represents the Moon-god (Chandra). The combination of the three letters constitutes the Rama name. "Ra", representing the Fire-god, burns away all sins. "Aa", representing the Sun-god, dispels the darkness of ignorance. "Ma", representing the Moon-god, cools one's temper and produces tranquility. The name Rama has the triple power of washing away one's sins, removing one's ignorance and tranquilising one's mind.

How is the profound meaning of this sacred name to be imparted to mankind? This can be done only by the Divine coming in human form and demonstrating to mankind the power of the Divine. Rama's name signifies the harmony in thought, word and deed. Rama demonstrated this harmony by his thoughts, words and deeds.

The Rama Principle embodies numerous powers and potencies.

The Ramayana is not a sacred text to be used only for ritualistic reading ("parayanam"). The Rama Principle is all pervading like the Cosmic Spirit. In olden times people used to say that their inner secrets are known only to the Indwelling Rama Spirit (Atma-Rama). The Self is called "Rama". Rama means "one who pleases". How can you give a specific form to one who pleases or delights?

The Human Destiny

In the Divine epic of the Ramayana there is a special profound message. That message is: man must lead the life of a human being, men must seek oneness with the Divine. Man should harmonise the three qualities in him (Satwa, Rajas, Tamas). In every human being all the three natures—human, divine and demonic—are present. But most men today ignore their humanness and divinity and foster only their demonic nature.

Man, in fact, should strive to manifest his divinity, and not display his weakness or his demonic qualities.

Rama chose to go to the forest to fulfill the pledge of his father, and thereby subjected himself to many difficulties. It may be asked: Did he go to the forest under any compulsion or out of his own resolve, or with a sense of dissatisfaction, or merely to comply with his father's pledge? No. Rama set out for the forest with the same sense of serenity and joy with which he looked forward to his coronation. Rama demonstrated the spirit of equanimity. He showed that pain or pleasure, profit or loss, victory or defeat were the same to him. In human life pleasure and pain, happiness and sorrow alternate all the time. It is not a good quality to welcome pleasure and turn away pain. You must welcome sorrow in the same joyous spirit in which you greet happiness. Happiness has no value unless there is also sorrow. That is why it is said: "Pleasure is not secured by pleasant measure". Pain is needed to secure pleasure. Rama demonstrated to the world the truth of this concept.

In every act Rama set the example. In individual conduct, in the discharge of duties to the family and in fulfilling the obligations to society Rama demonstrated the ideals to be followed.

All should begin with fulfilling the obligations of the individual. The duty of the individual is to manifest the divinity within him. As an individual Rama revealed the divinity in him by his ideal conduct.

Brahma's Benediction

When Valmiki completed his Ramayana, Brahma declared that his epic would last as long as the mountains stand and the rivers flow. The inner meaning of Brahma's benediction is that the Ramayana will be cherished as long as men (mountains) and women (rivers) exist on earth. The

Ramayana will last as long as human society exists. People should acquire the capacity to comprehend the eternal truths embedded in the Ramayana. Ignoring the eternal truths of the Ramayana, Bharatiyas are wasting their lives in the pursuit of worldly concerns.

We celebrate this day as the birthday of Rama. How are people celebrating the day? They perform some special puja. They adorn themselves with sacred marks. But, for doing these things should you wait for the birthday of Rama? No. Whatever your age is, at all times and in all places, you must be engaged in thoughts of Rama.

Valmiki, after completing the composing of the Ramayana, summoned the sages in his Ashram and asked them who were there capable of propagating the immortal and sacred epic to every nook and corner of the world. The sages were nonplussed. They declared: "Guruji, we are old men. We are at the end of our span of life. We are incapable of conveying the Ramayana to the length and breadth of the world". Valmiki was downcast. At that stage, the twins, Lava and Kusa, arrived on the scene. They told Valmiki: "Guruji, we have been listening to what all has been spoken here. We are prepared to convey the Ramayana to every place." The sage was immensely happy.

Lava and Kusa

Lava and Kusa were princes of royal blood. They carried in their hands tambourines. They set out on the great task of propagating the Ramayana, chanting the slokas all the way. Are there any today who will undertake such a task? Many will fear being mocked at by the public. Even persons who may wish to do bhajans in public are afraid of being jeered at. Devotees should be able to transcend such considerations. Why should anyone, who is doing something holy, be afraid of public ridicule?

People should be prepared for any sacrifice for the sake of the Divine. The joy to be derived from chanting the Lord's name is ineffable. Without the constant remembrance of God, there can be no experience of the Divine.

Whatever the name that may be chanted, when it is done wholeheartedly the fruits of it will be certain. Everything should be done with a pure heart.

Three Mothers and Rama

The Ramayana story is replete with ideals. During my recent visit to Madras, I spoke about the story of three mothers. Kaushalya, Rama's mother, Anjanadevi, the mother of Anjaneya (Hanuman) and the mother of the sage Agastya. When the three met, Kaushalya asked Anjaneya's mother, "Mother! Who are you?" She replied: "What! Don't you know? My son is well known to the whole world, Hanuman. Hanuman is present wherever Rama's name is uttered. Rama and Hanuman have inseparable attachment to each other. They are one soul in two bodies. I am the mother of that Hanuman. He leapt over the mighty ocean to Lanka."

On hearing these words, Agastya's mother observed: "Whatever your son did is not anything so great. Your son leapt over the ocean. My son drank the ocean in a gulp. I am the mother of Agastya."

Both then told Kaushalya: "You are the mother of Rama, whose name enabled Hanuman to leap over the ocean and Agastya to drink the waters of the ocean."

As they were engaged in this conversation, Rama came there and remarked innocently: "How is it you mothers are waxing eloquent about me?" Though he was the incarnation of the Lord Narayana Himself, he moved about as if he was a simple son. He told them: "Hanuman could cross the ocean because of his intense devotion. Agastya could drink the ocean because of his intense penance. I was in no way responsible for their accomplishments. I am not so great as all that. I am an ordinary human being. The name given to me is the source of all power. I am only an instrument. It is my name that helps to accomplish everything. This name is filled with all potencies. This body of mine moves because of the power of the name. Therefore, regard me as only an instrument."

After Rama left, Kaushalya observed: "Mothers! My son speaks as if he is an ordinary being. But he is the reservoir of all knowledge and there is nothing he cannot accomplish."

Mother and Son

Kaushalya, who had this opinion of Rama, felt differently when Rama came to tell her that he was about to leave for the forest to fulfill the pledge given by his father to Kaikeyi. The mother was full of joy at the prospect of the coronation of Rama. Rama told her: "Mother! I have come to give you some happy news. I am not only the Lord of Ayodhya; I am now the Lord of the whole jungle in the country. I am getting ready to reign over the forest."

Kaushalya could not understand the implications of Rama's statement. While she was wondering what it was all about, Lakshmana came there. Lakshmana always followed Rama like a shadow. Likewise Shatrughna always accompanied Bharata. Lakshmana and Shatrughna were the children of mother Sumitra. But they were full of humility and attached themselves respectively to Rama and Bharata.

Rama's Advice to Lakshmana

Lakshmana was greatly agitated as he entered. Addressing Rama, he said: "Brother! Your calmness is no doubt a great virtue. But not in affairs like this. The whole world is looking up to you. For the sake of one individual you are embarking on this undertaking. I cannot accept this. I shall destroy Dasaratha and Kaikeyi and crown you king this very moment."

On hearing this, Rama said: "Lakshmana! Don't get agitated. Calm yourself. This calmness (santham) will protect you. It is your glory and greatness. Forbearance is the supreme virtue. It is the crowning quality of the sages. Therefore, calm yourself."

Kaushalya and Sita

Lakshmana then related to Kaushalya what all had happened. Hearing the whole story, Kaushalya collapsed on the spot. When she recovered consciousness, she declared: "Rama! I cannot live for a single moment without you. You are prepared to carry out your father's words. I cannot stand in your way. But I appeal to you to take me with you."

Rama then told her: "To a wife her husband is verily God himself. You cannot leave your husband in any circumstance. Your husband is everything for you. As long as he is alive, you cannot leave him. He is now plunged in sorrow over my impending departure. You cannot leave him. You must serve him and offer him solace."

Sita came there soon after. She was no ordinary woman. Daughter of Emperor Janaka, she was known as "Vaidehi", a person with no attachment to the body. Listening to Rama's advice to his mother, Sita burst into laughter and remarked: "You teach one thing to your mother and the opposite to me. When I said I wanted to follow you, you tried to dissuade me. You advised me to devote myself to the service of your aged parents. But, when you met your mother, you asked her to treat the husband as God. Are you not then a God for me? Is there one rule for one woman and another for another woman? Moreover, you are called Ramchandra. Chandra means moon. I am the moonlight for you. How can the moon be in the forest and the moonlight be in Ayodhya? The moonlight must be with the moon. Therefore, you must take me with you."

Rama's Dilemma

Rama had to pacify the demand of the mother and the wife in the softest manner. After pacifying them, Rama set out for the forest. In his wanderings in the forest, seeing the demonic atrocities of the Rakshasas, Rama felt that he had been ostensibly sent in exile really to deal with these evil forces. "The Rakshasas are hindering the sacred activities of the ascetics. I must destroy the Rakshasas so that these sages will be left in peace to practise their austerities", thought Rama. One problem arose in his mind in this context. In destroying the Rakshasas, is it proper to kill women? Rama had received the answer to this question from Vishwamitra when as a young lad he had been taken by the sage to guard his yajna and he wanted to know whether it was right on his part to kill Thataka, a demoness. Vishwamitra assured him that there was nothing wrong in killing a wicked person even if she happened to be a woman. To protect the pious, the righteous and the holy persons engaged in sacred activities there was nothing wrong in destroying even women. When Rama asked the sage whether there had been any precedent in this respect, Vishwamitra related the case of Prahlada's son Virochana, who killed the demoness Manthra who was committing many wicked deeds against the rishis and their families. There is nothing wrong in repudiating one's mother, father, husband or preceptor if they come between the devotee and God. When Kaikeyi came between him and his devotion to Rama, Bharata utterly denounced her. One must be prepared to sacrifice everything for God.

Role of the Avatar

The Rama Principle is infinitely potent. The powers of the Divine are immeasurable. God comes down in human form to redeem mankind. Birds and beasts act according to their natural instincts. Man alone tends to violate the laws of Nature and act against the laws of Dharma (right conduct). It is to teach and punish man who goes astray that the Divine comes in human form. He teaches the highest ideals and leads an ideal life to set an example.

Embodiments of love! God incarnates for the sake of redemption of mankind and not for His own sake. He needs nothing. He has everything. He comes down to tell humanity its divine origin and to exhort men to return to God by following the Love Principle. Through love you can achieve anything. It is this message that has to be understood today: the role of the Avatar in leading mankind through love to a godly life.

There is no use in observing Sri Rama's birthday once in a year and being satisfied with a good feast. Every moment marks the Lord's advent, because human beings are being born continually. Every human being is an incarnation of the Divine. The Divine dwells in every being. Therefore, dedicate every moment to the thoughts of God. When you do this, in due course you experience the Divine. You will be free from delusions and you will be divinised. Man is born to merge in the grace of the Divine and not to immerse himself in mundane pleasures.

Let each one carry on his or her duties. Dharma protects its protector and destroys its destroyer. Strive to proceed from the human to the Divine.

Embodiment of Love! It is not possible to describe the boundless attributes of the Rama Principle. The name of Rama has been adored for aeons. Humanity has been in existence for many lakhs of years. Unfortunately, humanity is yet to realise its true nature. What is this nature? It is the Principle of Love. Human life should be suffused with love and rounded off with love. Life should be given up with tears of joy and not tears of sorrow.

This is a sacred day. Remembering its sacredness, you must all make your lives sublime.

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

—From Bhagavan's Discourse in Sai Ramesh Hall, Brindavan, on April 5, 1998

The Golden Ray

What is in repeating the God's name, we may say
Unaware that it has the power to brighten our day
Let us practise and discover the truth in our own way
That Namasmarana is a Golden Ray!

Swami says, we pick any of the God's names
In effect, they are all the same!
But we need to repeat it in our mind's frame
To earn His grace and win the game.

—Latha Swaminathan New Jersey, USA

The Path of Nirvana

There is no place without God and there is no form without the Divine. Whether one is in a forest or in a town, on a mountain-top or in a valley, wherever one may be, one is not helpless.

(Substance of the Telugu Poem with which Swami began His discourse.)

Embodiments of Love!

Men today strive in various ways to acquire knowledge of the Self (Atma-Jnana). But this is not true knowledge. It may well be called ignorance. Whatever one's scholarship or one's spiritual practices or one's quest for gurus, one cannot acquire spiritual wisdom without understanding one's true nature.

Men today cannot understand their humanness; how can they recognise their divinity? Only after comprehending his humanness can a man recognise his divinity.

Triple Purity

Recognising this truth, Buddha embarked on his spiritual quest. He studied all the extant scriptures of different faiths. He met many holy men. He visited numerous holy shrines. All these exercises gave him no satisfaction. What was the reason? All external, physical and ephemeral activities are valueless.

The first requisite is purity in the use of the five senses of perception given to man. Buddha declared that men should cultivate at the outset "Samyak-drishti" (the right vision). This means that the eyes should not be misused for looking at all sorts of things. Your vision must be pure and sacred. See no evil; see what is good. A sacred vision is that which looks only at divine and sacred objects. Your vision must originate from the heart. Bad thoughts and bad feelings pollute the vision.

Man today has lost the fear of sin, the love of God and observance of social morality. This accounts for all the ills of society today.

Pure vision leads to pure thoughts. Pure thoughts result in pure actions. Purity in action is essential for human existence. Purity in thoughts and purity in speech must lead to purity in deeds. This is the triple purity hailed by the sages. When this purity is manifest, human life gets redeemed. The principle of "Help ever, hurt never" becomes the governing principle of daily life.

Pure vision naturally begets purity in speech by the refinement of the heart. Pure words must come out of the depth of the heart, which is a fountain of compassion. Constant examination of the purity of one's vision, speech and action is a spiritual exercise. It is this which helps to refine the heart.

Buddha and Ananda

Once Buddha had an encounter with Ananda, the son of his stepmother. Buddha had attained the stage of Nirvana (Self-Realisation). Watching Buddha in this state, Ananda burst into tears.

Buddha was about to give up body. Ananda was in grief over the thought "What will happen to us? What is our future?"

Buddha summoned Ananda to come near him and said: "Ananda! This is not a time for grief. I am about to achieve Nirvana. You should also seek Nirvana. Looking at the dead, the living lament over death. But who are the dead? Death awaits the living in due course. Where there is birth, there is also death. "Only the Divine (Purushottama) is free from birth and death. He is eternal, with no beginning, middle or end. He is the Eternal Witness" (Telugu poem). Except for the Divine, birth and death are natural to all human beings. Why, then, do you weep? You also must strive to achieve liberation."

Sanctify the Senses

Man today is ignoring the state of his heart. He abuses the five senses without regard to the consequences. The result is he is a prey to all kinds of sufferings. If the five senses are used properly man will experience only what is good. All rituals and spiritual exercises are of no avail if the five senses are not used properly.

Moreover, men must seek what is permanent in life and not cling to what is transient and perishable. The body is impermanent. The Atma is eternal. People should realise the infinite divine potencies in man. The Divine is present in man as conscience, which is a spark of the Cosmic Conscience. The conscience transcends the five senses. When the senses are sanctified, the conscience manifests its divinity. It can then experience its oneness with the Universal Consciousness.

This was the path pursued by Buddha. He began with control of the senses. He was filled with pure and sacred feelings; with a pure heart, he achieved Nirvana. Purity of the heart is more important than all rituals and penances. Develop a vision that will broaden your heart and enable you to help others and not hurt them. Dedicate all actions to God. Tyaga (sacrifice) is real yoga (oneness with the Divine). To enjoy things (bhoga) without sharing with others is a disease (roga). The Vedas have declared that immortality can be attained only through sacrifice and not by any other means.

Good speech is as essential as good vision. Avoid all kinds of gossip. Keep your speech confined to what is godly and sacred. Engage yourself in service to others. Pay no attention to other people's defects and faults.

Listen to pure and sacred words. People misuse their ears listening to scandal and gossip. This evil tendency should be eliminated by listening to the glories of God. Such listening (shravanam) has been accorded a primary place among the nine paths of devotion.

Purify your Heart

What is it that you should observe on this New Year day? Many such days have come and gone. But how far has there been a transformation in the heart? Many years have come and gone. But your hearts remain unchanged. The first task is to purify the heart. You should not be content with celebrating the New Year as a festive occasion. To enjoy a feast you do not need a new year. The New Year should be marked not by a feast but by the awakening of new and pure

thoughts in the heart. Of what use is it to be concerned only about eating from dawn to dusk? What is the purpose of life? It is not eating, sleeping and dying. You must control the senses and use them for sacred purposes. The power of the senses is derived from the Divine. The small human eye enables to look at stars billions of miles away. Wherefrom is this power got? It is from the Divine within you. Hence, everyone should always think of God, whatever one may do. Then, one will be free from bad thoughts. Man must manifest his humanness by transcending the animal nature.

Realise your inherent divinity. Regard the whole world as your field of action. You have come as a pilgrim to this world of action. Ensure that your pilgrimage proceeds on right lines.

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

—From Bhagavan's Discourse at "Sai Shruti" Kodaikanal on April 14, 1998

Bhoga and Tyaga

The Isavasyopanishad declares that whatever pleasures (bhoga) one wants to enjoy, one should do so in a spirit of renunciation (tyaga). In daily life, enjoyment and renunciation do not go together. The renunciant (tyagi) is not interested in enjoyment of sensual pleasures. The Bhogi (the pleasure-seeker) will not think of renunciation. In such a situation, how is it possible to combine enjoyment of pleasures with renunciation or sacrifice? It is in this context that the Isavasyopanishad has declared that when every action is free from the sense of egoistic doership (Ahamkara) and all enjoyment is free from attachment or desire, there will be no difference between enjoyment and renunciation. Hence any enjoyment associated with ego and attachment will be enjoyment without sacrifice. When ego and attachment are absent, the actions are free from self-interest and hence are tantamount to acts of sacrifice.

—Sathya Sai Baba

Buddha Poornima at Brindavan

Another Memorable Day for Buddhist Devotees

With the blessings of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the Buddhist devotees celebrated the Fourth Visak—Buddha Poornima Day in Bhagavan's Divine Presence at Whitefield on May 9th and 10th 1998. The event was hosted by Thailand with the co-ordination of Sathya Sai International Buddhist Secretariat, which is chaired by Sister Nandini Samarasinghe from Sri Lanka. A large number of Buddhist devotees participated in the event; they were from Japan, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Indonesia, Nepal, Taiwan, Malaysia, Australia, New Zealand, Denmark, Bahrain, South Africa, Germany and Thailand.

Sai Ramesh Hall and the surrounding premises were decorated with yellow flags, Buddhist symbols, the five-coloured Buddhist flags as well as beautiful lightings depicting the artistic traditions of Thai styles. An exquisitely beautiful altar of Lord Buddha was put up on the stage in Sai Ramesh Hall by Thai devotees. This special altar showed the significance of Buddha: It had Lord Buddha's statue in the centre, behind which were three golden leaves, signifying his Birth, Enlightenment and Death. Against this altar was a magnificently beautiful religious Thai screen.

On the 9th morning, a seminar on Inner Peace and the Teachings of Lord Buddha was held in Sai Ramesh Hall. Five speakers from—Nepal, Japan, Sri Lanka and Thailand expounded on various aspects of Buddhism. A large number of Buddhist devotees participated in this seminar. In the afternoon, devotees from Buddhist countries were blessed to lead the Bhajan and they sang with all their hearts to their "Buddha" Sai.

On the May 10th morning, Bhagavan was greeted by a procession and drum music played by a group of children from Northern Thailand as He emerged from "Trayee Brindavan" in all His glory. The Thai dancers were in their traditional costumes with their special tribal long drums. The dancers and rhythmic beatings of the drums conveyed the greetings of the devotees to Bhagavan and welcomed Him to the festival in Sai Ramesh Hall. Behind Swami, two Bhikkus (Buddhist priests) walked side by side and then came a group of white-clad Buddhist devotees. After the conclusion of the dance, Bhagavan was greeted by the prayer: "Buddham Sharanam Gachhami", sung by Thai devotees. Bhagavan then moved to the stage and sat on a special chair brought from Thailand. This wooden chair was specially carved and made so that when Bhagavan sat in that chair, He looked like a king on the throne. It gave immense joy to the assembled devotees to have Darshan of Bhagavan in that particular throne-like chair. Then Thai-led Bhajans were sung while Bhagavan sat on the "throne" for a while and then moved among huge throng assembled in the hall giving Darshan. After Bhajan, prasadam, was distributed to devotees. At ten o'clock Buddhist ceremony celebrating the Buddha Poornima Day was conducted by seven Buddhist monks, five from Thailand and two from Sri Lanka. The monks chanted prayers to mark the event and to bless the participants. Food then was offered to the monks. At lunch a special Thai menu was served in the overseas canteen for participants.

In the afternoon, Bhagavan arrived at four o'clock for the afternoon programme, taking His place behind the desk from where He would give His discourse. Bhagavan was then greeted with devotional songs in English and Thai. The songs gave praise to Lord Buddha and to Lord Sai and ended in the prayer: "Buddham Sharanam Gachhami, Dharmam Sharanam Gachhami, Sangham

Sharanam Gachhami.” The singing came to an end at 4:15 when Mr. Hira from Japan introduced the four speakers of the afternoon. He also introduced the distinguished guests such as the grand daughter-in-law of King Rama IV of Thailand, and a member from the first family of Sri Lanka. Mr. Hira emphasized that amongst the five important missions for which Bhagavan had incarnated, one of them was the unity of faiths. He said, "Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba is the only Avatar in the history of mankind who has taken upon Himself this stupendous task of restoring, reviving and re-establishing all major religions of the world. At the 1997 Buddha Poornima, Bhagavan mentioned that lack of unity and discipline was the main cause for the decline of Buddhism. But today there are over 4,000 sects of Buddhism. It is with these sacred and holy intentions that Sri Sathya Sai Organisation has undertaken the programme of unity of faiths, in which not only Buddhists or Christians but all religions can find satisfaction and fulfilment. Buddha Poornima is the direct proof of Sai's universality. It is this universality of Sai which is accelerating the unity of faiths. He has the vision that the 21st century will be the century of Sathya Sai or the golden century when the world will be one at His Lotus Feet.” The other speakers moved the gathering by their speeches and Sister Puntip Nitising, chairperson of the organising committee of the event, gave vote of thanks to everyone concerned and specially to Bhagavan who had allowed Buddhist devotees to celebrate this event in His Divine Presence. After this, Bhagavan blessed the audience with His divine discourse (Text given separately).

When Arati was performed, Bhagavan lighted another candle to be used for "Vien Tien" ceremony. Vien Tien is traditional Thai ceremony of circling around any significant holy symbol of Buddhism, i.e., Buddha Image, Pagoda or Dharmachakra (wheel of dharma) for commemorating and paying respect to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. The main candle, lighted by Bhagavan, was shared by all. Participants then lined up to form rows and moved behind the monks as a procession to circle around at a specially made and beautifully decorated Dharmachakra for three rounds. Carrying a candle, participants sang "Buddham Sharanam Gachhami.” The ceremony ended with the prayer "Loka Samasta Sukhino Bhavanthu" for peace in the world. It was a spectacular and moving ceremony put up by Thailand and joined in by other Buddhist countries. At night, there were many coloured lights twinkling on Dharmachakra, buildings, trees, expressing the joy of the occasion. We pray that Swami will bless us to remember this occasion and the universality of Sai not only in Buddhism but in all religions.

Chaining the Monster

During one discourse, Swami spoke of a jinn which appeared before a magician as soon as he uttered a formula. It demanded that the master keep it busy with some assignment or other, for, as soon as one work is accomplished and there is no second to keep it engaged, it would gobble up the magician himself. The poor fellow was at his wits' end and in mortal dread, for the devil completed the toughest job in a trice. In despair, he devised a plan to escape from the maw of the monster. He planted a tall pole and ordered the demon to climb up and, as soon as it reached the top, to slide down. It exhausted the poor devil so pitifully that it surrendered to the master, promising unquestioning obedience and no gobble. Swami elaborated on the underlying lesson of this story.

The mind is the demon that can never be quiet. It is a tool designed and donated to us, but it has usurped the role of the master. Swami told a vast gathering, "I shall disclose to you a trick to put the demon in place. Seat it on the upper lip, in the centre, right under the nose. Give it the job that can never end, so long as life lasts. Let it watch the ingoing breath, wait a little and watch the outgoing breath. The Atharva Veda (X1-4) Verses on Prana run thus: " Praise be to you, Breath, when you come; and praise, when you go. When you stand up and when you sit still, to you, praise! Praise to you, Breath of life, breathing both in and out! To your tossing this side and that, to the whole of you, Praise!"

The mind can best be engaged in this task, but, Swami makes the mind happier and more elated by sanctifying the inhalation and exhalation which it has to watch, by means of a profound mantra Sohum; Sohum (He I), Sa Ahum (He is I; I am He). The breath is reminding us that we are not disparate individuals but each I is identical with He. The inhalation is accompanied by an unheard So and the exhalation by an unheard Hum. The Gita describes people who adopt the Sadhana of Sohum through the breathing process as Pranayama Parayanah (those who resort to the sublimation of their breath).

But Sohum is tainted with a trace of duality, of a concept of two (He and I). Swami exhorts us to inhale He (So) and exhale or eliminate I (Ahum) with every breath. This is, according to Him, the very purpose of alternate intakes and outgoings. Verse 29, Chapter IV of the Gita refers to persons who 'sacrifice' the inward vital tendency in the outward and the outward in the inward and thus counter the tendencies towards the opposites. The result achieved is the reciprocal equalisation of life-breaths. 'He' merges in 'I', 'I' merges in 'He' and the One is experienced, with no shade of a second. "I am in you; you are in Me. We cannot be separated," declares Swami. The mergence is the Yajna, the valedictory victory of life. When this is consummated, there is neither So nor Ahum. Sohum casts away the vesture of duality and shines in the unique glory of OM. Meditation on Om is meditation on the Absolute.

—From Pathway to Peace; by Prof. M Kasturi

Control of the Mind

For the mind-tree, Ahamkara is the root. Prana is its life, Sankalpa its branches and Vasana is the seed.

Control of the mind is essential for any person who seeks happiness and success in life. But for a Sadhaka (spiritual aspirant), a well-controlled mind is the very basis of his effort. Yoga is a scientific system of self-culture which aims to control the mind, senses and physical body. The perfect coordination of the subtle forces within the body results in the calmness of mind, increase in energy and sound health. Raja Yoga deals with purification and control of the mind. This king of all Yogas is also called Ashtanga Yoga (Yoga with eight limbs, namely, self-restraint, religious observances, posture, restraint of breath, abstraction of senses, concentration, meditation and super-conscious state). The first limb, called Yama, is the practice of Ahimsa,

Sathya, Asteya, Brahmacharya and Aparigraha (non-injury, truthfulness, non-stealing, celibacy and non-covetousness, respectively) in thought, word and deed. The next step is called Niyama, with observance of purity, contentment, austerity, study of religious books and worship of God with self surrender. The successive rungs are called Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhayana and Samadhi. The practitioner of this Yoga achieves great success in his ideal living in the society and gradually progresses towards spiritual perfection.

The author's source of knowledge of the subject is the famous commentary on the Bhagavad Gita by His Holiness Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj and the three great books written by Swamiji, namely, *Mind-its Mysteries and Control*, *Conquest of Mind* and *Thought Power*, all published by the Divine Life Society, Rishikesh. These books deal with the nature of the mind and thoughts, functioning of different aspects of the mind and the practice of mental discipline.

In the Verse 34 of the Sixth Chapter of Srimad Bhagavad Gita, Arjuna expresses his difficulty to practise the Yoga of equanimity described by the Lord. Arjuna states that he finds the mind to be always restless, turbulent and unyielding. It is as difficult to control it as to control the wind. The Lord then comforts His dear devotee in the next verse by pointing out that the restless mind can be restrained by practice and dispassion (Abhyasa and Vairagya). Abhyasa is the constant effort to keep the wandering mind steady by meditation on the Self (the Absolute Reality). Vairagya is the indifference to sense objects, achieved through constantly looking into the evil in them (Dosha Drishti).

Principles in the Human System

The physical body, the astral body, Prana (vital force), Buddhi (intellect), the lower mind (instinctive mind which desires sense contact), the higher mind (the spiritual mind) and the spirit are the seven principles in the human system. Only those people who develop right intuitive discrimination power (Viveka) have the manifestation of Buddhi as pure reason in absolute form. The gross aspect of practical reason with its own limitations is generally found in worldly minded persons. Intuition is the channel of communication between man and the spirit and its operation is above reason. Prana is the vital force (life energy) and it links the astral and physical bodies.

Prana has two aspects, the physical prana which manifests as breathing and the psychic prana which vibrates in the Chitta (the sub-conscious mind) creating thoughts. Will is the centre of ego and it directs the mind and prana to all parts. The will power (the Divine Shakti) is developed by concentration and auto-suggestion. The sub-conscious mind (Chitta) is a store- house of submerged experiences which can be brought to normal consciousness by psychic effort. The functions of Chitta are Smriti (memory), Dharana (grasping) and Anusandhana (investigation). When a mantra (divine formula) is repeated, it is memorised by the Chitta. Chitta has two layers, one for emotion and the other for memory. The motive power of emotion helps in our spiritual evolution. But we must bring emotion under control, otherwise we will be carried away by it. The field of Chitta covers ninety per cent of the mental process. It works continuously even during sleep.

With the help of sub-conscious mind we can change our vicious nature by concentrating on the virtuous qualities that are opposed to the undesirable ones. By mentally denying that we have

fear, we can cultivate the ideal of courage (Pratipaksha Bhavana). The Chitta is our constant companion and sincere friend. The sub-conscious mind comes out with the solution of a problem when conscious mind fails to do so.

For the mind-tree, Ahamkara is the root. Prana is its life, Sankalpa its branches and Vasana is the seed. This tree can be cut only with the axe of Brahma Jnana (Knowledge of the Absolute). The destruction of the mind (Mano-nasa) is the dissolution of the lower mind with the help of the higher mind. Mind is a bundle of thoughts and habits. It is a collection of desires, ideas and feelings gathered from different objects. The mind has no independent existence as it is born of illusion (Maya). It is always associated with some object and asserts itself as "I" in the body.

Since mental impressions are formed by associations, arbitrary names of persons and locations without any associations are easily forgotten. The power of grasping and memorising declines in old age due to degeneration of cells. Practice of Raja Yoga enables one to retain these mental faculties even in advanced age.

Fixing the Mind on the Self

The natural habit of the mind is to move externally as the senses seek their respective objects in the outside world. The yogi withdraws the mind and fixes it repeatedly on the Self. Even when he abstains from all sense-objects, the longing for them in the form of subtle desires will remain. The subtle Vasanas (latent tendencies) are finally destroyed only when the aspirant attains the knowledge of the Self. Each sense is influenced by two currents of attachment and aversion (love and hatred). It is attracted by a pleasant object and repelled by a disagreeable object. The Sadhaka controls these natural currents through discrimination and right enquiry (Viveka and Vichara) and rises above the sway of currents. Thus, he frees himself from the clutches of his Samskaras (the latent impressions of his past actions of merit and demerit).

The senses are superior to the body. The mind without which the senses cannot function is superior to the senses. The intellect endowed with faculty of discrimination is superior to the mind. The intellect draws its light and power from the Atman (Self), which is Supreme Reality.

—Methil Prabhakaran

The Lock and the Key

A lock opens when the key is turned right, and it closes when the key is turned left. Thus, the same key performs both locking and unlocking functions. In man, the heart is the lock. The mind is the key. When the mind is turned Godward, the heart develops detachment. When the mind is turned towards the world, the heart develops attachment. Thus, both detachment and attachment result from the way the mind functions. When the mind is directed towards Prakriti (Nature or the phenomenal world), bondage ensues. When you turn your mind towards Divinity, you experience Ananda (bliss). "End the mind" means turning the mind Godward. All you have to do is to dedicate every action of yours to the Divine. Then everything becomes easy and a source of bliss.

Dimensions of the Mind

Some Questions:

Why is the mind so elusive and fickle? What are the factors that influence it? Can we slow down or switch it off? What is its real nature? What exactly is mind and what stuff is it made of? Can we teach the witness attitude to our mind? Answers to such questions concern not only the spiritual aspirant, but the common man also. Dr. John S. Hislop, an ardent devotee of Baba, and a few other devotees asked these questions directly from Bhagavan Baba. Some relevant portions of this face to face, intimate and illuminating dialogue are given here for the benefit of our readers.

Hislop: This car in which we are driving has certain natural factors that are neither good nor bad. If moving, it has speed and momentum. In like fashion, what are the natural powers of the mind?

SAI: This mind does not have any powers. The only power is Atma Shakti, the power of the Atma. Actually, the mind does not exist. There is no mind. The moon is lighted by the sun. What we see is the reflected light of the sun. What we take to be the mind is the reflected light of the Atma shining on the heart. The reflected light is taken to be the mind, but that is just a way of looking at it, a concept. There is just the sun and the moon. (The reflected light is not the third object). In another way, mind cannot be compared to a car. A car has a form. Mind has no form, mind has no existence of its own. Mind can be said to be woven of desires. The Atma shines on the heart, whether heart be pure or impure. If the heart is purified and if the strongest desire is for God, that is best.

H: My mind and intelligence are in operation at this very moment, regardless of the subtlety or coarseness of quality. Baba says that the only power is the Atma power. So why do I not see as Atma, that Atma that is in operation through the mind intelligence complex at this very moment?

SAI: The Atma in its purity will be seen when the hindrances to clear vision are removed by spiritual practice, by Sadhana. Real Sadhana is not just sitting in meditation. Meditation is constant inner inquiry as to who am 'I', what is loving and what is harsh. Meditation is thinking on spiritual principles, searching out the application to oneself of what Baba says, and so on.

H: I have the conviction so strong that it is into the marrow of my bones that life is one, and that other beings and myself are one. The Atma is that One and it is fully here at this moment, and I am constantly engaged in Sadhana; so the question remains, 'Why do I not actually experience that unity as no other than myself?'

Levels of the Mind

The mind functions at six different levels: (1) The Ordinary Mind, (2) the Super mind, (3) the Higher Mind, (4) the illumined mind, (5) the Intuitive Mind and (6) the Over Mind. Man can comprehend his real human nature only when he understands these states of the mind.

An internal enquiry has to be made to understand this. This calls for turning the external vision inward. When this is done, it realised that the physical body is inert. The mind is a reflecting mirror. The Buddhi (Intellect), Chitta (Will) and Ahamkara (Ego) are aspects of the mind. All these are subject to change. But they are based on something that is unchanging. The first conclusion to be drawn from internal enquiry is that there is an unchanging divine entity in man.

From this realisation, one proceeds to the awareness of a Cosmic Divine. This realisation comes out of the recognition that the Divine Consciousness experienced by the individual is also present in all other individuals. This is the Cosmic Power. The all-pervading Divine Power is one and the same. There is no second power. Bodies may be multifarious like electric bulbs. But the energy that makes them shine is one. When this truth is realised, you have the awareness of the Cosmic Divine.

At present, all man's endeavours and enquiries are limited to exploring the physical, the vital and the mental. The journey ends there. Man has proceeded only up to the mind. But he has to go beyond it in the Over Mind.

How far can the mind take you? It can take you up to the extent of ending the physical world (Jagat). The mind is needed for understanding the variety of physical objects and phenomena in the world. But as long as man confines himself to the power of the mind he remains as human being. But, to rise to a higher level, he has to become "Amanaska"—one who transcends the mind. He should progress towards the Super Mind.

The Super Mind is related to the subtle body (Sookshma Sarira). In the subtle body, the senses, the mind, the intellect, the will, the ego and the physical body are absent and only consciousness is present (Chetana Sakthi). One has to proceed further to the Causal Body (Kaarana Sarira), the state of the Higher Mind. The next higher stages are the Illumined Mind, the Intuitive Mind and the Over Mind.

This means that man possesses within himself all potencies. Man's powers are limitless and astonishing. Nothing in the world is beyond his comprehension. —Baba

SAI: Your conviction of unity is an idea, a thought. It is not experience. For instance, your wife has a chest pain. Do you have a chest pain? If not, where is the unity? The unity of the life must be experienced—not idea or thought without experience.

H: Now! Swami has to say about experience! If Sadhana and conviction do not bring that unity as real experience, then how can one get it?

SAI: With steady Sadhana, no special effort is needed to try and get the experience of One. Just as with ourselves in this car, we need only concern ourselves with the careful driving of the car,

and in due course we will arrive at Anantapur. With correct and steady Sadhana, in due course, the actual experience of One will naturally come about.

H: Swami, it is not possible to tell Death to wait for a convenient time. In respect of death, in what state should the mind be?

SAI: That we feel that only oneself will not die is the greatest wonder. Flowers bloom and give perfume before dropping, whereas man, when his end is approaching, has only a long face. He should be like a flower, and should do something good and bright when dying. There are two things to remember: Death and God. And there are two things to forget; any harm done to us by others, and any good we may have done to others. For to hold these two would be to reach for future results, and there will be future consequences if these are held in the mind. Whatever we think, or put in mind, we experience the reaction. Of course, death should be held in the mind always, for then much good action will result, and much harmful action will be avoided.

H: The mind is said to be dangerous. What does that mean?

SAI: It is the same mind that can liberate or enslave. The mind is like a snake with long poison fangs. When the poison is removed from the fangs, then the danger is removed. In like fashion, when desire disappears, the danger of the mind disappears.

H: But it is always said that all troubles arise from the mind?

SAI: From desires.

H: Then one should control one's thoughts?

SAI: Thoughts and desires are not the same. There are many thoughts that are not desires. If thoughts go deep into objects, desires arise. If there is a desire, there is a thought. But not all thoughts are desires. Dark clouds bring rain, but there can be clouds without rain. God's grace is in drops like rain. They accumulate and then there is a torrent. If there is a very strong desire for God, even bad thoughts just pass through the mind and are not held on to. Desire directed to God brings the discrimination. Intelligence, which is discrimination, is not the mind, nor is it thought. Intelligence is direct Atma Shakti, a direct force of the Atma.

A Visitor: How is one to handle bad thoughts arising from envy, hatred, laziness?

SAI: No use resisting or fighting thoughts. If suppressed, they are always ready to spring forth at weak moments—like snakes in a basket; if the cover gets loose or is removed, the snakes spring forth. The way to overcome bad thoughts and impulses is by having thoughts of serving the Lord, good conversation with wise people, good actions and words. The weight of good acts and thoughts will bury the seeds of bad actions and thoughts. Both good and bad thoughts and impulses are like seeds in the mind. If buried too deep in the earth, seeds so rot and waste away. Good thoughts and deeds bury bad seeds so deeply that they rot and pass away and are no longer ready to spring forth.

H: Swami, when thoughts are troublesome, I say, 'Thy mind, Swami; it is not mine,' and that particular thought stream stops.

SAI: The mind does not know anything. So-called education is just book knowledge. Hand in hand with knowledge must go philosophy. Philosophy is not religion, it is love for God. It is cultured by reciting the Name, singing Bhajans, thinking spiritual thoughts, desiring union with God. Union with God—as the bubble upon breaking, finds itself the whole ocean. From the cultivation of philosophy comes will power. Without will power, knowledge is useless.

H: Swami, in the West, will power is thought of as a quality one is born with.

SAI: Will power is brought about by philosophy. Will power is the direct manifestation of the Atma Shakti.

H: In the West, great value is given to mind. It is felt that unless one develops a skilful mind, one cannot gain success in life. For instance, I needed to develop skill of mind to get an education and earn money to travel and see Baba.

SAI: You came to see Baba because of the heart, not the mind, isn't it? The viewpoint that there is a mind is useful up to a certain stage, university, science and so forth. But after a certain stage, science falls away and philosophy comes to the front. Heart is then used instead of mind. The other day, someone mentioned the illustration of the mirror. As one moves away the image grows smaller and smaller, although actually, the image has not changed at all. The same happens with the world. As one turns to God with stronger love, the world recedes, appearing smaller until it can hardly be noticed at all. Really, there is only the heart.

H: The belief that we are self-willed, separate beings moving about in the world—what is the cause of this illusion?

SAI: The whole mirage, the whole thing, arises from the 'I' thought. From identification with the body, all complications arise. Since it is the mind that has woven this web of identification with the body, it is the mind that must now turn and seek one's true nature through inquiry, discrimination, and renunciation.

H: Swami has said that the mind need not be dangerous. But with all the trouble it has brought about, it seems to be very dangerous.

SAI: The mind creates no harm and gives no trouble as long as it is not merged with the body senses. For instance, the mind has a thought of theatre. No harm. But if mind picks up body and carries it to the theatre, then it becomes involved with the picture, the people, the emotions, the concepts, and peace is lost. The mind should not engage itself in the body senses. Body senses should serve the needs of the body only. Mind should be engaged in five mind senses, which are: truth, concentration, peace, love and bliss. As long as the mind is so engaged, all is well and the person is happy and peaceful. Physical objects have a temperature potential. If breathing is fast body temperature rises. If objects subject to temperature are added to fire, the fire burns more

fiercely. That which is subject to temperature may join with that which is subject to temperature. Mind, however, has no temperature. God is without temperature. So mind and God may merge.

H: In this, Swami, what is the definition of 'mind'?

SAI: The whole complex, ego through intelligence may just be called 'mind'.

H: Whenever the mind falls away from necessary work, I call it to attention and keep it engaged in repeating, 'Sai Ram, Sai Ram'; is this all right?

SAI: Quite all right.

H: When the mind is not engaged in any particular work, where should the attention be kept?

SAI: Between the eyebrows. That is the eye of wisdom, of Siva.

H: The flow of thoughts interferes with concentration. How to diminish thinking?

SAI: The habit of thinking is long standing. Even if the habit is broken, there is a slow cessation. For example, a fan continues to revolve for a time after the switch is turned off. But the train of thought can be changed. One train of thought can stop another. The best way is to divert the train of thought to a spiritual topic. This attraction to God is spontaneous. It is turning back to the source; all other attractions are self-imposed. The fish is placed in a gold and jewel vase of greatest value, but it has no interest in gold and jewels; it wants only to get back to the sea. Man comes into his limitation from his home; he is really of the nature of God, of this Ocean of Delight, of Rama, of He who attracts. The soul attracts us. Rama was God, the Ocean of Delight in human form. Everybody wanted to be close to him, to look at him.

H: Well, Swami, perhaps if one were to follow thought inwards to its source and observe the source of thought, one might then have quiet mind? In affairs of the world, thought is both necessary and practical. But when there is no need to be thinking, the mind still keeps on going with all sorts of idle thoughts; whereas one would be much better off if the mind would just be quiet.

SAI: That is really the wrong way to approach the matter. The nature of the mind is restless, just like a rat whose nature is always to nibble at something, and just like a snake whose nature is to be biting at something. The nature of the mind is to be occupied. And, even when still, like the feathers on a peacock, there is a shimmering, an apparent movement in the mind. Like an aspen tree, even on a still morning its leaves seem to tremble and move, it is the nature of the mind to dwell upon things. So, the proper method to deal with the mind is to direct the mind's activity towards good deeds, good thoughts, repetition of the name of the Lord, and not allow it to aim at harmful objects, harmful thoughts and deeds. In that way, mind's natural tendency to be occupied will be fulfilled and yet it will keep out of mischief. Another essential for keeping the mind away from harmful activities is work. Man is made to work hard, and if one is working hard in service to the Lord in one way or the other, the mind will not have time to be occupied with useless, random thoughts. And if there is no outside work, then the work of spiritual endeavour should go

on, in the way of meditation, recitation of the Name, reading good books, talking with good people, and so on. One might find it difficult to surrender to God, but every man surrenders to time, and time is God. Day by day one's life is shortened and one surrenders his life to the time; time conquers one's life and that time is God. Therefore, first there is work, then wisdom, then love, and the time will come in a person's life when work itself is love, or work itself is God.

H: But Swami said the other day that if the mind was quiet and receptive, then perhaps Swami would come into the mind and speak.

SAI: If the desire to communicate with Swami is sufficiently intense and strong, then the mind will be sufficiently quiet for Swami to speak; but the problem is that we do not have that intensity in our lives.

H: The Buddha's way of slowing down the mind is given much attention in Burma. Swami must have a better way?

SAI: The Buddha's way of watching the breath as it enters and leaves the nostrils is just the beginning just for a few minutes before the meditation begins. There is no 'better' way to quiet the mind. There is only one way. Sitting in meditation, the question often comes up, 'How long to sit'. There is no answer. There is no particular time. Meditation is really an all-day-long process. The sun shines, and the sunlight falls here and there. What is the difference between the sun and the sunlight?

H: There is no difference, Swami.

SAI: In the same way, all is God. Thoughts, desires, all are God. All thoughts should be regarded as God.

H: But Swami, there is still the puzzle of how to slow down the activity of the mind.

SAI: Really there is no mind; it is a question of what is desired. With God as only desire, all will be well.

H: But in meditation there is this fast rush of thoughts and ideas through the mind. Does not this need to be slowed down so that there may be quiet in meditation?

SAI: Yes, the mind must slow down. At certain stage it will come to a stop. If desire in meditation is turned towards union with God, the mind will naturally slow down. No method should be used; no force used. Desire should not be too fast, too strong. Even desire for God can be too hurried, too feverish. Start early, drive slowly, reach safely. It is possible to be too lazy. Fast, then slow is also bad. The process should be steady.

H: Where do thoughts come from?

SAI: They come from food and environment. If you have Satwic food and have desire for good, only good thoughts will come.

H: Where do thoughts go?

SAI: They go no place. Because thoughts do not flow through the mind. The mind goes out and grasps and gets engaged in thoughts. If desire is for God, the mind does not go out. But the best way is not to have the problem of getting rid of thoughts. The best way is to see all thoughts as God. Then only God-thoughts will come.

H: Swami says that it is the Atma that is unlimited power, yet in one's daily life, the mind gives the experience of being a sort of relentless power.

SAI: The mind is passive, yet it seems to be active. It is active only because the Atma reflects into it. It sometimes seems to be stronger than Atma. Iron, in its nature, is not hot; it is cool and passive. The iron is heated in fire. Is it the iron that burns, thus creating the heat? No, it is the heat that is put into the iron by the burning coals. The heat is added to the iron. Yet, when hot, the iron seems even more than the burning coals.

H: The mind has the tendency to plan ahead. No doubt this is a wrong activity?

SAI: In ordinary life, one makes plans and carries them out. This has to continue, with purity, and without harm to others. At length, a spontaneous divine thought will arise without planning. Such divine impulses will continue.

A Visitor: How can I tell what is right thought?

SAI: Here, in the Ashram, you can ask Swami. In America, pray for the answer, then make inquiry in an impersonal way, and in half an hour you will have the answer. If you know what is right, don't ask. Do it. That is confidence, God power. Put aside all relationships. Is the work right, regardless of who is involved?

H: What are the acceptable mental functions?

SAI: First, find out what is right and what is wrong. If right, do that which satisfies you. If unsure, do no thing until sure.

H: A source of confusion is about everything being a creation of the mind. A creation of whose mind?

SAI: It is the mind.

H: But Swami, how could that be? Is my mind creating the war and all its horrors? I do not find such actions in myself!

SAI: When you think of the world, it exists for you. When you do not think of it, it does not exist.

H: When I do not think of the world, it is not in my consciousness! Does the war exist only according to my consciousness of it? But there was a beginning to it. How could that beginning be due only to my mind?

SAI: At your stage, it will not be possible to grasp this. As long as the mind exists, it is not possible to comprehend the mind and its activity clearly. When thoughts cease there will be no mind. Mind is a bundle of thoughts. Do not follow the thought. Then the world will not develop for you. But these are just thoughts. If you now follow these thoughts and go to America, they will bring about the world for you.

H: Does Swami mean that one should just be a witness to the thoughts going through one's mind and not do anything about them?

SAI: Exactly. When the mind is destroyed (i.e. when there is direct seeing without an intervening thought process), then coming into being of the world will be clear to you. There is only God, God only. Hold to Him. Hold closely to Him, and the matter of the mind will be resolved.

**—From Conversations with Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba and My Baba and I by Dr.
John S. Hislop**

The Moon and the Mind

Mahasivaratri is dedicated to the disintegration of the aberrations of the mind, and so, of the mind itself—through the worship of Shiva, God. It falls on the eve of the smallest moon of the year, as the waning of the moon is the symbol for the waning of the mind.

The moon as well as the mind whose deity it is, each has sixteen phases. On Mahasivaratri, fifteen of these have disappeared, and there is just a streak of the moon in the sky. The new moon that follows will not even have a streak visible.

—Baba

Witness Attitude

Transform the mind into an instrument of progress for liberation. Clarity of mind can be earned only by withdrawing it from external objects and teaching it through meditation to concentrate on the One behind the many, you are liberated from the coils of delusion. Egoism is the doctrine that binds; but ego as the reflection of God in you liberates. However, many trials and tribulations come in the way, look upon them as an unconcerned witness, with detachment and do not let your mind be affected. Teach it this witness attitude.

—Baba

The Game of Musical Chairs

For our life to reach its inherent destiny, as a flower blooms in due course or as a fruit ripens in season, our notion of limited self must surrender to the inherent divinity of the pure mind. Baba likens the situation to the well known parlour game of musical chairs. In this particular version

of the game, our ego (our notion of the self) must vacate his (or her) throne in our mind so the Divine may in turn occupy the chair. When occupied by the ego, the mind is a flux of desire and thought, but when the Divine occupies the “chair”, the mind is pure and quiet.

—Dr. John S. Hislop

A Quantum Jump

According to Sai, when the mind is transmuted from thought and desire to Divinity, our speech and action become the direct unhindered expression of the Divine Will. All actions then originate from the consciousness of God than from the individual mind. Thus Sai tells us that a pure mind is a mind that is surrendered to God and bereft of all notions of self. The transformation necessary to acquire a pure mind is no less than “Die man! Be now God!” The transformation from a busy agitated human mind to the purity of a divine mind is to represent a quantum jump, not an incremental progress.

—Dr. John S. Hislop

AVATAR VANI:

EASWARAMMA DAY MESSAGE:

Greatness of Mother's Love

*No one brings any wealth with him from his mother's womb,
He carries nothing with him when he leaves the world,
Even a millionaire can eat only ordinary food,
And cannot subsist on a diet of gold,
One may wax arrogant over one's accumulated wealth,
But nothing of it will accompany him,
And in the end the wealth may fall into the hands of thieves
Or go to the State,
Realise that the only thing that is permanent is the spirit.
What else can I convey to you?*

From ancient times, it has been the practice in Bharat to revere the mother as god. From the outset, the Vedas have declared: "Revere the mother as god, father as god and preceptor as god. If they are gods, for what purpose are they gods? In the ordinary course of daily existence, they are gods for worldly purposes. For the human body the mother, father and preceptor are to be deemed as divine. But, for the pursuit of life the Divine is the only God. There is another Sanskrit saying which hails God as mother, father, kinsman, friend, wealth, knowledge and in fact the Supreme Lord of everything. This means that for the spiritual life, God is everything.

The mother and father are residents of the home. The preceptor dwells in his Ashram. But God is the indweller of the heart.

Only God can reside in the heart. It is true that mother, father and preceptor are divine, but they are not entitled to dwell in the heart. They have to be revered, adored and made happy. God alone deserves to be worshipped. "God is nearer to man than his mother, closer than even the father. To give up such God is a heinous sin. This is the truth proclaimed by Sai." (Poem)

Importance of Mother's Blessings

It was part of the ancient tradition that when the son wished to set out for the battlefield to secure victory or go to forest to perform penance, he would first go to his mother and seek her blessings. Dhruva, a six-year-old child, took his mother's blessings, set out to the forest to perform penance and realised the vision of the Divine. Arjuna prostrated before his mother to get her blessings prior to his leaving for the battlefield. The mother told him, "May victory be yours." Duryodhana also went to his mother, prostrated before his mother and sought her blessings for victory in the war. The mother told him, "Where there is Dharma, there will be victory." This was Duryodhana's mother's blessing for her son. Duryodhana then went to his preceptor and sought his blessings. The preceptor said, "Where there is Krishna, there is Dharma. Where there is Dharma, there will be victory." Therefore, victory can be ensured only where Dharma and the Divine are present according to the mother and the preceptor.

In those days, what the mother declared proved prophetic. Whenever a mother conferred her blessings on her son, the Divine was present there to declare, "May it happen so." Besides mother's blessing, Divine grace is also necessary.

Hence every son should make every effort to please his mother. Without keeping his mother pleased, the son cannot achieve anything in the world. The son should have those qualities which enable him to please his mother. At the same time, the son should also strive to win the Lord's grace. Without earning God's grace, the mother's blessings alone will be of no avail.

After the end of the Kurukshetra war, Krishna went to see Gandhari, the mother of the Kauravas. Dhritarashtra, the father of the Kauravas was also in deep sorrow. Gandhari spoke to Krishna in great anger and anguish "Krishna, the Pandavas and Kauravas are sons of brothers. What is the reason for your animus against the Kauravas and your partiality for the Pandavas? You continually protected the Pandavas but you did not save even one of my hundred sons from death. Why this discrimination by you?"

Krishna smiled at her and replied, "In your indignation and anger you are using words recklessly. The fault is only I yours. Although you had hundred sons, have you seen any of them? How can children not at all seen by the mother hope to get the grace of God?"

The more one strives to give joy to the mother, the more the motherland will rejoice. The mother and the motherland go together.

When Pandavas were about to leave for battle, Kunti pronounced a special blessing on them proclaiming that victory would always be on the side of those who stood for Dharma. She said that great warriors who went to fight with valour were blessed by their mothers with protective amulet (Raksha Kavach). In the case of the Pandavas, Kunti declared that the benediction "Sri Rama Raksha" may serve as amulet for them on the battlefield. This shows how important a mother's blessing is for the success and welfare of the children.

It is to demonstrate to the world the importance of reverence for the parents and the need to receive their blessings' Swami also makes it a point to visit the Samadhi of the parents of this

body twice a year. In reality, Swami has no filial love for parents as such, but Swami adheres to this practice to serve as an example to the world.

Mother Easwaramma's Presence

Now it is 30 years since the mother of this body passed away. But she is continuing to move about in her physical body around Swami. Three boys sleep in Swami's room. They have also witnessed her presence. I am telling this today because the life of ideal mothers has permanent significance.

In Prasanthi Nilayam, Swami takes breakfast after Bhajan and proceeds to His place in Poornachandra Auditorium. Early in the morning one day, mother Easwaramma was standing at the door in her usual form. I asked her, "Why did you come?" She said, "Swami, I have come here with a prayer to You. You are omnipresent and omniscient, but You have to control one thing"! "What is that?" Swami asked. She said, "Devotees and students offer handkerchiefs to You. But, heeding my prayer, please do not receive handkerchiefs from everybody. The times are not good. The handkerchief may be tainted with poisonous stuff. In the usual course, You use the handkerchief to wipe Your nose and mouth. So, You may receive handkerchief only from those on whom You have confidence and trust as good devotees. Do not accept from all and sundry."

Mother's love lives on for all times, long after her passing away. Twice she appeared in the night. The boys sleeping in my room noticed her presence. Those boys had not seen her at any time. They wondered who the old lady could be. The key of the lift was in their hands and there was no staircase leading to the apartment. How did she manage to come here? When the boys asked this question, Swami woke up. I went near her and asked her why she had come again. She replied, "I cannot live without seeing You often. The moment I see You, I feel happy." After saying so, she gave me some piece of advice, "Swami, all persons describe themselves as devotees. But no one can tell who are real devotees and who are fake. Totally dedicated devotees will be ready to carry out anything You ask them to do, but there are others who come for their own self-interest. By coming to You they get their desires fulfilled and forget You thereafter. In this matter, You should be very careful."

Swami replied, "I shall take due care. There is no need for you to tell me." After hearing this, she laughed and left the room. I am conveying to you this episode as direct testimony to the greatness of mother's love. She might have given up her body but she is always with Swami. She said, "I have performed many sacrifices for Your sake and have done many kinds of pujas. I realised the proof thereof. For 40 years I was with You. My life has its fulfillment."

Kondama Raju's Devotion

Kondama Raju was the grandfather of this body. He was also like my mother. He had two sons. The father of this body was Pedda Venkapa Raju. His younger brother was Chinna Venkapa Raju. Two sons of his deceased brother, Subba Raju and Venkatarama Raju also lived with him. When all the four were together, the family was large and there was a desire to have division of property. At that time, this body was eight years old. Kondama Raju summoned the sons. They told him, "At this stage, you cannot live alone. So, you can stay with each of us by turn." He

replied, "I don't want to stay with any one of you. You can take your share of the property. Leave Sathya with me. It is enough. If Sathya is with me, everything is with me."

From then onwards Swami was staying with Kondama Raju. He was a great devotee and lived up to 116 years. Due to his deep devotion, he recognised the truth about Me. Swami was entering His 9th year. At that time there was no one near us. He closed the door. I was then preparing food. Swami knew the art of cooking well. People from the neighbourhood used to come to our house to take food prepared by Swami. While I was in the kitchen, Kondama Raju came uttering "Sathya, Sathya" and held both My hands. He said, "These are not hands. I consider them as Your feet. I have one wish to make to You. Before I pass away, You must pour water into my mouth at the last moment of my life." Swami gave him this promise.

After that, he lived for 19 years. He used to visit the new Mandir after it was opened both morning and evening.

Kondama Raju was in the habit of coming early in the morning. Swami used to sleep outside the Mandir on the sand. Expecting His grandfather, Swami would cover Himself completely including face. I did not want him to know that I was awake. Assuming that Swami was asleep, the grandfather would touch Swami's feet and leave. He had an embarrassing feeling that others might have a mistaken impression on seeing a 116-year-old man touching the feet of a young boy. As soon as Kondama Raju left, Swami would get up. Gopis used to sing a song, "O Krishna, can anybody wake up a person who is pretending to sleep? How can anyone open the eyes of a person who has deliberately closed his eyes?" Like that, I used to keep My eyes shut and pretended to be fast asleep. This was one of the leelas I used to perform.

The time for fulfilling the promise I had made to Kondama Raju was fast approaching. In those days, I used to drive the car myself. I was going to city in Morris 200. Kondama Raju called Swami's mother Easwaramma and said, "Come here. Swami is coming. He is coming for my sake. My last moment has come. Therefore, please bring a tumbler of drinking water." He then asked her to put a few Tulsi leaves in the tumbler. He asked Swami to sit on the cot. He said, "Swami, the sky may come down but You will keep Your promise. The ocean may dry up but You will not go back on Your word. To fulfill the pledge You gave 30 years ago, You have now come." Swami broke into laughter. Kondama Raju said, "Don't try to deceive me through Your laughter. Take this tumbler and drink a little of the water and pour the balance into my mouth."

Then he related a story. "Dasaratha performed Puthrakameshti Yajna to get four sons. Lord Narayana Himself took birth as his son. Adishesha was born as Lakshmana. The conch and mace manifested as Bharata and Shatrughna. Although he had four sons, no one was present to administer water to him at the time of his passing away. Swami, You have taken birth in my Ratnakara lineage in Apasthamba Sutra and Bhardwaja Gotra. All these are the signs of Divinity. This means that the Divine is born in my family. Now fulfill at least this prayer of mine. Do not refuse."

Swami replied, "I have come for this very purpose." When I started to pour water into his mouth, he protested saying, "You must first drink a little and pour the remainder in my mouth." Swami drank a little and poured the rest in his mouth. He then turned to his daughter-in-law and said,

"Easwaramma, the fame and power of your son will spread all over the world. The whole world is changing. Lot of people from foreign countries will come. Be on the alert. Do not give room for the delusion that this is my son and my child. He belongs to all. Swami belongs to everyone. He is not related to one family only." He placed his hands on Swami's feet and breathed his last. Even he keeps coming to me from time to time. He told me, "I have no further rebirth. By my association with You, my life has been redeemed. With Your Grace, I have become immortal." He used to come from time to time and warn me against what was happening in the Mandir. "No one can touch You and there can be no danger to You from any quarter. Because of my past physical association with You, I am saying this. It is more a prayer to You." Even now Kondama Raju and Easwaramma keep coming and talking to Me.

A Divine Comedy

In Prasanthi Nilayam, there was a devotee who had serious heart attack. Swami left the body to protect him and went out of His body at 2 a.m. and did not return to the body till 3 p.m. next day. The boys who were sleeping downstairs and those sleeping in Swami's room started crying. Along with them Chiranjeevi Rao went and brought Dr. Alreja. The doctor has great devotion to Swami. He has been in Prasanthi Nilayam for the past 40 years. He came and examined Swami's pulse. There was no pulse at all, no movement in the body. He started weeping. He remarked that there was no sign of life in the body. Then Chiranjeevi Rao observed that it was not unusual for Swami to go out of His body now and then and that he had seen it. He told the six boys not to speak about it to anybody. The six boys were a good lot. These boys took M.B.A. degree in Swami's institute and had training in Delhi. They did not want to leave Swami. Despite Chiranjeevi Rao's appeal, the boys could not contain their grief. At that moment, I got up with a smile and asked what the matter was. I asked them, "What is this drama you are enacting?" They replied, "Swami, who is playing this drama? Is it You or we?"

There is a boy named Srinivas. He has passed Engineering and M.B.A. and is staying with Swami. He remarked, "It is not our drama, Swami, but it is Your drama." Then Swami said, "Many people are waiting outside. I must go out for Darshan." From early morning till 3 p.m. in the afternoon I had not taken even a sip of water. They requested me to drink at least a cup of buttermilk or porridge. Swami said, "I am not used to it." Swami took His bath and went out. This kind of thing used to happen now and then. All the boys staying with Me know about it.

Goodness vs. Greatness

There are mothers who are worried when their children take to spiritual path. They hardly realise that it is the fruit of many past lives which accounts for children taking to spiritual path. Mothers should rejoice over such a development rather than worry about it.

Many parents desire that after the education of their children is over, they should get married, get a good job and achieve high position in life. Out of their love they want their children to achieve greatness. Swami's love is not like that—Swami wants them to achieve goodness. What is the difference between greatness and goodness? A good man sees divinity even in a human being. A great man sees the human even in God. Ravana was a great man who had performed great penance. He was very powerful. But seeing Rama in human form, he considered him as a mere human being. On the other hand, Rama was different. He saw the Divine in all beings. That is the mark of goodness. It is better to earn a reputation for goodness than be known as a great man. All

that you find in a great man is only selfishness. But, in a good man, you find total selflessness. Therefore, all of you should strive to become good men. Revere your parents. Give them joy. Show your gratitude to them.

Students' Concern for Swami

Some students prefer to stay with Swami. The students know that at Kodaikanal Satyajit made a declaration in public even when his parents were present there, "I am coming out with my doubt in the open. You must all forgive me. All sorts of officers are coming to Swami. They seek fulfilment of desires and go back. Many business people also come to Swami. They also refer to Swami about their difficulties and go back after securing relief. People with ailments come to Swami and they leave after getting cured. We students have come to Swami. Many of them benefit from the free education given by Swami and leave the Institute. Who is taking care of Swami? Nobody seems to be concerned about Swami's well being. Many times Swami falls down. Once when Swami slipped and fell down, a pillar fell on Him. Swami did not care for it. The boys were very much worried in the night. It is necessary that someone should always be with Swami. Only when one or two people sit with Him, Swami takes some little food. When He goes alone for lunch, He eats very little."

My attitude is to eat whatever the students eat. I don't want to eat separately. Swami came to Brindavan from Puttaparthi and took the students to Kodaikanal. Swami used to eat only Ragi and groundnut chutney. At Kodaikanal all were eating together. Swami also took His meals in their midst. If I were to take Ragi, boys may not like it. If I want them to eat Ragi, they are not used to it. So Swami started eating rice food which students take. Swami likes only Ragi; because He stopped taking Ragi, He lost 6 kg in weight during 20 days' stay at Kodaikanal. In Puttaparthi, Satyajit was in the habit of taking My weight now and then. He used to plead to Swami to get on to the weighing machine. When Swami was in Puttaparthi He weighed 108 lbs. At Kodaikanal, when weight was taken, it showed reduction by 6 kilos. Swami weighed less than 100 lbs. Satyajit said, he was greatly worried. I told him that he should not speak about this in public. Satyajit said "I offer my entire life to Swami." Swami said that he should not say such things in public. But Satyajit spoke with courage and boldness. At that time, Indulal Shah, Chairman of World Council and others were present. All of them congratulated Satyajit on his speech. This is a point about which no one has cared for Indulal Shah said, "Even though I am a member of Central Trust I have not thought over this point. This is a grievous lapse on our part. Hereafter, we will bear this in mind and act accordingly."

God as Mother

It is clear each devotee has his own ideals and aspirations. But those who are imbued with a feeling of reverence for their mother will always have good feelings. One day Satyajit was concerned about surgery done for his mother's fractured leg. As far as I am concerned all persons are good. But there is something special about this lad Satyajit. He used to take Swami's permission and massage her leg every day. He wanted to do this to relieve his mother of her pain. At Brindavan, I was lying in bed. He came and started massaging My leg. I said, "I have no pain in My leg." He remarked, "Swami, if You have pain You will not speak about it. You keep moving about irrespective of the pain." Swami then observed, "I am used to this." He said, "In massaging Swami's feet I am rendering service to my mother."

He left for Puttaparthi and was staying in the Hostel. He closed his eyes. He experienced that he was massaging Swami's feet. He observed, "With this experience, how can I be attached to the world?" Swami remarked to him, "Don't speak in that way. Be silent and carry on your duty." He passed his M. Sc. After that he joined the M.B.A. course. I told him, "You have already got a P. G. degree. Why do you want to join M.B.A.?" He replied, "I can stay with You, Swami, for two more years. That is the reason."

In this manner, each student has his own desires. There are any number of students imbued with such feelings. Those who develop taste of maternal love adore God as mother. Many boys go out into the world and get caught up in worldly affairs because of their actions in previous lives. Students should feel "Having discovered God, we do not need anything else. God will take care of mother, father and everyone else." They should develop that firm conviction. Without that faith they can have no happiness. At Puttaparthi a Reddy from Nellore brought the Film 'Pahlada' and showed it to the students. The actors were small boys. The film showed that while drinking poison Pahlada was chanting the name of Narayana. His father had Pahlada thrown from a mountaintop by two Rakshasas, Chanda and Amarkha. As he fell he chanted the name of Narayana and Narayana held Pahlada in His hands. The father wanted him to be bitten by serpents. As he chanted the name of Narayana, the serpent did not bite him. The father tried to get him crushed under the feet of an elephant. As Pahlada uttered the name of Narayana, even the elephant became Narayana and did him no harm. All this was shown in the film; but Satyajit said, "I have experienced all this directly. I don't need to see a film. I only want Sai Narayana" (cheers). It is only because of merit done in previous life that such experiences came to a person from childhood.

The other day I asked him to participate in Bhajans. He said he would sit under an Ashoka Tree and participate in the Bhajans. Swami does not impose His Will on anybody. He told Satyajit, "You may do what pleases you."

In this manner, many students are imbued with noble feelings. Some students appear as supreme devotees as long as they are in the college. But the moment they leave the college, they go astray. Their speech and their actions are bad. Hence I often tell them as I did at Kodaikanal "Cultivate good speech. Develop a good vision (Samyak Drishti). This leads to good thoughts. Good thoughts make a person listen to what is good. By listening to good thoughts one is impelled to perform good actions. Good actions lead to liberation." Satyajit strictly adheres to Swami's ideals. He will not look at anybody. I asked him, "What is wrong if you see persons with good feelings or to see others." He replied "I have no use for such good feelings or to see others. I want only feelings about Swami within me." Swami then said, "Please yourself."

Noble Mothers, Noble Sons

Some students are like this. All the boys who came to Kodaikanal this year were exceptionally good boys. How lucky they are cannot be described. I took care of everyone, of all their needs. If there are more such boys, the world will improve vastly. It is only when individuals improve that society can improve. When society improves the country improves. Improvements must start with individuals. The individual, the collective and the world together constitute the Divine.

Noble mothers give birth to noble sons. Mothers should also feel lucky to have noble sons. Kondama Raju used to tell his daughter-in-law, "Easwaramma, you have no idea of your great good fortune. You are not an ordinary woman. The Lord Himself is with you. What a lucky woman you are"! Easwaramma was the daughter-in-law of Kondama Raju. Has there been any instance of a father-in-law adoring his daughter-in-law? He used to say, "Easwaramma, your name has been vindicated. Easwara's mother is Easwaramma" (cheers).

This was the way they praised Easwaramma. Kondama Raju was one of those rare persons who could perceive the Truth. Those who cannot recognise the Truth will never be able to understand it. They are like a blind man who cannot see the sun even during the day.

Those who are on the spiritual path and who have love for their mother can accomplish anything in the world. Many grown up men belittle the role of their mothers saying that they might have done them some good in childhood. They feel proud about their job and position. But they forget to whom they owe their position.

(Before concluding His discourse, Swami related the story how Adi Sankara got the blessings of Mother Parvati as a young boy of seven years while doing worship to the goddess in the absence of his father. After getting the blessings of the goddess, he achieved great distinction in mastering all the Vedas and scriptures within a short period).

You have to offer your heart to God as He is the Indweller of heart while father and mother are only dwellers in home. Respect your parents with the Divine in your heart. Tasting the sweetness of your mother's love, offer your love to her and enjoy life.

(Swami concluded His discourse with the Bhajan, "*Prema Mudhita Manase Kaho.*")

—From Bhagavan's Discourse in Sai Ramesh Hall, Brindavan on May 6, 1 998

AVATAR VANI:

BHAGAVAN'S KODAIKANAL DISCOURSES: II

Man, Truth, Love and God

*God shines with effulgence in the universe and the universe shines in God.
This is the friendship between the Creator and the creation.*

(Telugu Poem)

The universe is the effect and God is the cause. No one can fully understand the relationship between the Creator and the creation. The whole world is a combination of cause and effect. The universe is a manifestation of Divinity. All the animate and inanimate objects of the world are divine. (Vishwam Vishnu Swaroopam) Though the forms are multifarious, all are essentially divine. We are not able to understand divinity, as we are carried away by the external physical appearances.

Because of unlimited desires, man is suffering from unnecessary anxiety and gets frustrated with disappointment due to unfulfilled desires.

Divinity is the mixing of positive and negative. The world is positive and man is negative. What the modern man wants is good results having done bad deeds. How can you get mangoes while you have sown the seed of lime? As is the seed so is the tree, as is the tree so is the fruit. When a child is born there is no chain of gold or diamond or gems around the neck. But Brahma provides the invisible chain (Kantha Mala) of results of past actions good and bad though no one may be aware of this. Human quality has become rare amongst people now; and animal quality is predominant. Man is wasting the precious gift of human life in unworthy pursuits.

The Basic Alphabet

Many people undertake spiritual Sadhana in order to realise divinity. If they don't understand human qualities, all these efforts become exercises in futility. Without learning the alphabet, how can one pick up the meaning and usage of words, phrases and sentences? Develop human values and unflinching faith in the Divine. The basic alphabet is to know the human quality. Only after mastering this can you do other Sadhanas. Even great saints, poets and seers don't understand divinity and tread on the wrong path. They subject themselves to selfish pursuits and blame God when their aspirations are not fulfilled.

Even the great saint composer Thyagaraja, when he was once subjected to misery and suffering, doubted whether the Shakti or power of the Lord had diminished. On reflection he realised that the defect was only in his devotion and not the power of the Lord, who had helped even a monkey to cross the ocean, the army of monkeys to build a bridge across the sea and Lakshmana to serve Rama for 14 years and Bharata to worship Rama's divine sandals (padukas). People should understand that there is no pleasure without pain and pain is only an interval between two pleasures. Whenever you get painful experience you should have the firm faith that it is the foreboding for something good you will be enjoying in the near future. (Swami narrated the story of Manickavasagar, a minister with the Pandyan King, who was sent on a mission to buy horses but was so influenced by a saint that he turned his attention Godward resulting in spending his time and money in renovating a Shiva temple. When the king summoned him back and put him in prison, Manickavasagar was not at all sorry but started composing poems on Lord Shiva which were appreciated by the Lord Himself. These are still shining as "Thiruvachakam", the most famous prayer to God sung even today in all Shiva temples of Tamil Nadu.

When you spend your time in thinking of God chanting His name, you will never come to grief. Follow the dictum "Sathyam Vada: Dharmam Chara" (speak the truth, practise righteousness). You are bound to have success always. Truth is common to all countries and all times. If you follow truth, which is God, you will invariably do only righteous work. Divine love will flow to such persons. This will ensure your doing sacred work. There cannot be love without Dharma and Dharma without love.

God is in your heart. Wherever you go and whatever you do, it is known to God even if you think none has noticed it. People start worrying about petty temporary things which are passing clouds and sometimes falter in faith and devotion. This is not correct. You should never give up

devotion. Your good work will beget God's grace without fail. Sin or merit comes only from your own deeds, not from outside.

Follow the Conscience

God is in you only in the form of conscience. Follow the conscience. Some do not do so because of bodily attachment. Gayatri Mantra starts with "Om Bhur Bhuvah Suvaha." Bhu represents materialisation-body. Bhuvah represents vibration or Prana (life force). Suvaha represents radiation—Prajnana or Atma. All these three radiation, vibration and materialisation are in the human body itself. Prajnanam is constant integrated awareness. You are all Brahman.

From ancient times, this sacred Bharat has been proclaiming to the world the universal prayer "Loka Samasta Sukhino Bhavanthu"—let the people all over the world be happy. Just as the same electric current passes through all electric gadgets of various types and sizes, so also Atma is common in all beings. Stars are many, sky is one; cows are of many colours, milk is one; jewels are many, gold is one; beings are many, breath is one; countries are many, earth is one. Therefore you should comprehend the One in many, the unity in diversity.

You should stop worrying. Discriminate between good and bad. Do not harm anyone. Then you can have peace. Follow the conscience. That is the Divine in you. You are endowed with the precious gift of body with the sense organs and limbs. It is given to you to discharge your duties in the world. You have to do Sat-karma (good deeds) only. You should do things that are acceptable to God and not to please humans. 'Sat' means God. You should have company of God or proximity to God. 'Chit' is awareness. The combination of 'Sat' and 'Chit' gives Ananda—divine bliss. 'Sat' is sugar and 'Chit' is water. If you mix them, the names of sugar and water go away and you get syrup. 'Sat' is Atma and 'Chit' is body (Deha), both combine to make up the person. 'Sat' is Sivam and 'Chit' is Parvati. So, the combination is Ardhanareeshwara—half male and half female. Every one of us is Ardhanareeshwara.

Fill up the tank of heart with love. This will flow through the taps of all sense organs and also the five Pranas (vital airs). We refer to humanity as mankind. Does this not imply that as a human you should radiate kindness?

The Essence of the Puranas

Sage Vyasa gave the essence of all the eighteen Puranas as "Paropakaraya Punyaya, Papaya Parapeedanam." In this, we generally take it that Paropakara means helping others. Para means God, Upa means near, Kara means do, make efforts. The import is that you should make efforts to be near God. It is meritorious. "Papaya Parapeedanam" means to see the many in One is sin. How can you avoid this? You have to see the One in many or unity in diversity. This is the correct thing to do. That is to say—help ever, hurt never, perceiving Atma in all. If you are not able to do any help, sit down quietly and do no harm. See the divinity in all and do sacred activities. Don't waste the elements nor misuse them. Being bound to the world with attachment to worldly objects is negative approach. Make positive approach turning towards Divinity. The difference lies only in turning your mind. Turn to world' you get bound—turn to God, you get liberated. God is without birth and death and is an eternal witness; you must strive hard to earn the love of God. One who receives the love of God will be earning the love of all. If you realise Love is God, you will not get attached to worldly things. No one can take the wealth of the world

with him when he dies. This is a truth we have seen throughout the history of mankind. Many great kings, emperors, saints and seers have left without taking anything. When you are born you don't bring anything with you. Render service in divine awareness. In order to lead a fruitful and meaningful life, render service to mankind which will take you nearer to God. (Swami cited the example of football game where the six players on either side go on kicking the ball till it is sent to the goal. The goal of life consists of two posts—secular and spiritual. You must see that the ball does not go beyond the posts. It should be hit within the two posts. You are born as human with the goal that you should not be born again. You must live within the frames of secular and spiritual pursuits. Then only you will be attaining liberation. The six bad qualities (Arishad-varga) lust, anger, greed, desire, pride and jealousy are on one side and good qualities truth, right conduct, peace, love, non-violence and sacrifice are on the other side. The game is between these two teams. Another lesson we learn from this game is that the football is kicked as long as it is inflated with air. If it is deflated, you take it in your hands).

You should say to yourself, "I am not man, I am divine; I am not body, I am Atma." The body is like a dustbin of all foul matter and flesh and bones. You are "awareness" or Chaitanya. The instruments are negative and work through positive divinity. Tread along the divine path so that you can get peace. Let us experience peace and share it with others. Then we will be liberated and the world will be happy.

Bhagavan concluded the discourse with the Bhajan "*Hari Hari Hari Hari Smarana Karo.*"

(To be continued in the next issue)

—From Divine Discourse at "Sai Shruti", Kodaikanal on 18-4-1998

AVATAR VANI:

BUDDHA POORNIMA SANDESH:

The Essence of Buddha's Teachings

*Firmament is the garment of the Divine,
Stars are His eyes,
The melody of His laughter fills the Universe.
(Poem)*

There are many non-believers in God who were ruined in life, but there are none who believed and failed in life.

Embodiments of Love!

In ancient times, many spiritual aspirants went out in search of knowledge of the Self and studied scriptures and visited holy places to acquire experience of the Divine. But they could not get the wisdom they sought. Even though they recognised the distinction between the animate and the inanimate they could not get spiritual illumination. True enlightenment is attained by the awareness of the identity of the One and many (Vyakti and Samashthi). In spite of the passage of

time, man has not been able to recognise his reality. Knowledge of the Self cannot be got by the study of scriptures or from preceptors or by the grace of great men. Brahman cannot be seen in the external world. It should be experienced only in One's heart.' It is a mark of ignorance to seek the Self in the outside world.

Seek the Self within

For 26 years Buddha sought the realisation of "the Self by studying scriptures, meeting sages and saints and listening to their teachings. He found that by these means he could not experience reality. He realised that the knowledge of the Self has to be gained through an inward search. We stopped the outward quest and gradually experienced knowledge of the Self from within. He then declared:

*Buddham Saranam Gachhami,
Sangham Saranam Gachhami,
Dharmam Saranam Gachhami.*

Through his enlightenment, he discovered the importance of Dharma and wanted to make it the basis of society. Buddha realised that self-realisation cannot be attained through penance or prayers or austerities. At the outset, Buddha emphasised the importance of developing good vision (Samyak Drishti). Good vision leads to good thoughts, good speech and good action.

Next he laid stress on association with good people. The company of the good leads to good deeds. The four rules to be observed are - cultivate good company, avoid association with evil persons, do meritorious deeds always, and remember what is transient and what is eternal.

Good company does not mean merely association with good people. 'Sat' refers to the Divine. What is required is to seek the company of God who is the source of all bliss. When one's thoughts are centred on God, one's feelings, speech and actions get sanctified. (Samyak Bhavam, Samyak Shravanam and Samyak Kriya). This leads to the purity of the inner sense organs. Purity in thought, word and deed is the requisite for experiencing the Divine. This triple purity is considered as the essence of humanness.

Buddha recognised this Truth and experienced bliss. His mother Mayadevi had passed away nine days after his birth. After the death of his mother, Buddha was looked after by his stepmother Gautami. She fostered Buddha with boundless love. To perpetuate the name of his foster mother for the love she bestowed on him, he was called Gautama.

Buddha relied entirely on his own inner quest to experience his reality as he found that scriptural texts and preceptors were of no use.

Conquest of Sorrow

There are many in the world who preach spirituality but none of them has any experience. What is the use of studying books without personal experience or practice. Each one should make his conscience his preceptor. When the time of Nirvana was approaching, Buddha noticed that his step-brother Ananda was shedding tears. He beckoned Ananda and told him "Even till today, the world is not recognising the reality. There are thousands who experience sorrow at the sight of dying persons. But they make no effort to find out what experience is in store for the dead. I

know the Truth about it. I am merging in that Truth. To shed tears at this prospect is not justified. It seems to me that you are grieving over the exalted state that is impending for me. No human being should shed tears over the moment of death of any person. Tears are associated with the Divine and should be shed only for the sake of the Divine and not for trivial matters. You should shed tears of joy. Grief is not a proper state for man. Hence no tears of sorrow should be shed."

Here is an illustration from our daily experience—while going in a bazaar, if a person sees someone crying he asks him, "Why are you crying?" Other passers—by also question him. If in the same bazaar another person is going about in a jolly mood, no one goes to him to enquire the cause of his happiness. Happiness is considered to be natural condition of man. He seeks it all the time. Sorrow is repugnant to man. It is a weakness of man to give room to grief. By falling prey to grief in many lives, man is perpetually plunged in sorrow. For a person who has firm faith in God there will be no cause for sorrow. Those who give way to sorrow are persons who have not understood the Divine Principle. God is one. He appears to people in different names and forms. Failing to recognise that God is one, people suffer from many difficulties. They worship God as Allah, Buddha, Rama, Krishna, Jesus etc. These names have been given after their advent in the world and these are not inherent in them. The names are of passing significance.

All that is connected with body is temporary and transient. What men should seek is enduring bliss. Happiness is union with God."

Man's Guiding Stars

Buddha prescribed five duties: good vision; good thoughts; listening to good things; good speech; good actions. These five-fold duties constitute true Sadhana (spiritual practice). Man is misusing the talents given to him by the Divine. He is giving free vent to the six cardinal vices like lust, anger and greed. They are not the gifts of the Divine. They have been fostered by the food people eat. They are animal qualities which have to be got rid of. People should speak the truth and avoid speaking what is unpleasant even if it is truth. The entire gamut of human life should be based on truth.

Bharatiya culture has placed the foremost emphasis on "Speak the truth; act righteously." Speaking truth is a supreme virtue for all people, anywhere. In any circumstance one should adhere to truth. Truth is God incarnate. Righteousness should accompany one like a shadow. When you have truth and righteousness as your guiding stars you can achieve anything in life. All powers are inherent in these two virtues. Man can realise bliss only when he turns his vision inwards. Only proximity to God can confer happiness. It cannot be had elsewhere, from anyone else.

It is a mark of ignorance to expect that some other person will give you happiness. Buddha felt sad that people should be subject to such ignorance. He practised many spiritual exercises and came to a certain decision. He decided to go to Gaya and experience bliss by his own ways. He found the source of bliss within himself. He realised it could not be got from outside. Every man's heart is the dwelling place of God. Hence everyone should take good care of it and cultivate it as the source of divine bliss.

Cultivate Sacred Feelings

As Buddha's teachings were not properly propagated, Buddhism steadily declined in this country. All religions suffer a decline because those who profess them do not practise them in their daily lives. People should practise what they profess. People should live up to the truths in which they believe. People do not act upon the truths they have learnt.

Unfortunately, people today have only outward vision. The external vision is characteristic of animals. You must sanctify your vision by turning it inwards. Then you can get rid of animal qualities and divinise your life. Hence, develop godly feelings within you. The divine dwells in the heart of everyone. You must enthuse those who entertain godly feelings. Such people should not be discouraged. Divine feelings arise in one only as a consequence of good deeds done in many lives. Only a sacred heart can experience the Divine. The pursuit of any object other than the Divine is a futile exercise - Worldly possessions come and go. But divinity comes and grows.

Embodiments of Love!

You have all come from many distant parts of the world. You have come to experience the joy of participating in the Buddha Poonima celebrations. You need not have come all the way from your distant places. Buddhi represents the intellect. That intellect must be used properly. Then you will realise what is implied in Buddhism. People talk about spiritual exercises and waste their lives. All these pursuits are waste of time. It is enough if you develop sacred feelings. Chief Sadhana consists of getting rid of bad thoughts and cultivating good qualities. Whatever pilgrim centre you may visit, try to shed your bad tendencies. Develop good qualities instead.

The Way to God

People speak about Nirvana. It is equated with Moksha or liberation. You must aim at achieving this liberation. Nirvana means experiencing bliss in the last moments of your life. Man does not realise what it is that he should seek and what he should reject.

There are three things required to be done in life. You should try to do good to those that have done harm to you. You must forget the harm done by others and also the good you have done to others. So you should forget what needs to be forgotten and remember those things which require to be remembered. What are the things you have to remember? The good that others have done to you. You must remember the good that has been done to you as something sacred. You must express your gratitude to them.

Make all your actions conform to righteousness (Dharma). Whatever actions you do remembering God will get sanctified thereby.

*See no evil; See what is good.
Hear no evil; Hear what is good.
Speak no evil; Speak what is good.
Think no evil; Think what is good.
Do no evil; Do what is good.*

This is the way to God (cheers). This is the essence of Buddha's teachings. When you are indulging in evil pursuits through your senses, how can you get peace? Peace should come from Hridaya (the spiritual heart) filled with compassion.

Embodiments of Love!

The Divine dwells in each of us in the form of Love.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the Bhajan "*Prema Muditha Manase Kaho Rama Rama Ram.*"

—From Bhagavan's Discourse in Sai Ramesh Hall at Brindavan on 11th May 1998

The Mission of Sai

My mission is to raise the consciousness of man to a level at which he neither rejoices nor mourns over anything. In that supreme state, one is going through re-birth and re-death each moment, for these acts are one and the same, emerging from the formless into form, merging from the form into the formless. Then, there is no success or adversity, no joy or pain. When the devotee attains this Oneness, his journey towards Me ceases. For, he will be with Me endlessly.

—Baba

Darshan

Each one crowded in the large compound
Before the temple
Waits for the moment
That will after his life.

Women, like flowers,
Spread on the floor of the temple
And on the other side, men,
Transforming body and soul
Under splendid white clothes.

When the doves have found their sitting place
On the sparkling chandeliers
And the babies behind the saris of their mothers
Are fed into sleep
Then He will come,
Then He must come.

The noise is dying and
Silence can be heard
Longing can be felt,
Tension is growing
Touching each heart.

Will He look at you
Smile at you, touch you,
Speak to you,
Invite you to His home?

As the wind wafts through the fields of grain
And makes each stalk bow its head,
So the heads of the crowd move
And a whisper hangs in the air:
He is coming!

Walking on feet, so young and chaste
As those of a virgin,
Who has never been touched,
He passes the gate
And moves towards one face.
Then waves of jealousy rise
And fall around the face,
Until He walks on,
Giving His attention to all

That sit there and wait for a look,
Want to see God,
Want to possess God,
Though He belongs to all.

And again He comes to a halt
And takes a letter
And you are alone with Him.
God stands before you
Summing up your life, your time, your goal
In one look.

But you feel only His love
Greater than the law,
Permeating your being,
Uplifting your soul,
Filling your heart with Ananda.
You'll never be the same again
That you've been.

And then He walks on—
And you are full to the brim with love,
Remain sitting,
Being blessed,
Being chosen,
Being loved.

—Edith Zelle

GIFT OF DARSHAN:

Darshan
Meaning and Significance

Ashok Sundareshan

Darshan—the moment when our eyes get blessed opportunity to see the Lord. Somebody said, “Man walking on moon is not so important when God walks on earth.” God whom the saints and seers described as beyond the perception of the mind and whose glory the Vedas declare as beyond the description of words, walks amidst us. Those few minutes when winds waft the melodious music and eager expectant eyes try to catch the glimpse of the glorious form, the Lord walks amidst us. With measured steps and majestic gait, He gives Darshan. The Lord goes with equally eager eyes to give Darshan to those blessed ones who are waiting for Him.

People who are sitting there, waiting for Him are of different kinds—some who are waiting under the agony of incurable disease, some who are immersed in round-the-clock business

matters and earning millions but finding a vacuum that squeezes their heart, some who have come just for Him, just to see Him, drink the beauty with their eyes.

For Him it is the same routine. It has been years since He started giving Darshan, taking letters, wiping tears, curing the diseased, despondent and desperate. The law of diminishing marginal utility doesn't exist with respect to Him. He gives every Darshan with the same love, the same interest, the same concern and the same compassion as He did years ago.

He walks slowly, majestically as if floating in the air, His feet hardly touching the ground. He walks between the rows of ladies and gents one after the other. He starts taking their letters, which represent their fears, cares, worries and problems, He being the universal recipient of problems and the universal donor of solutions. There sits a man dying due to cancer. The onslaught of the disease has reduced him to a bag of bones. He has lost all hope and is like a raft without a rudder, on a stormy sea. The Lord goes near him, gives a smile of assurance and materialises Vibhuti that will do what advanced radiotherapy cannot. The Lord moves on. There sits a young man, a victim of the ills of the society which has made him doubt the very existence of God. The Lord goes near him with a smile and pats him on his head. The man, for the first time in his life, feels what love is. Tears trickle down his cheeks, with his hands held in prayer, weeps and lays down his heart at the Lotus Feet of the Lord. The Lord moves on. There sits another man with a sarcastic smile across his face and with defying look. The Lord goes near him, and again gives the same smile across His face and moves on. After all He is the consummate actor who plays the role of the Lord and the role of His own creation who doubts Him. With a gesture of His hand, He invites a few for private interview. Their faces express the delight for the rare opportunity.

Then He turns towards the students. The way He walks, the way He talks, everything changes. An air of informality, familiarity and belongingness prevails. With a quip here, a pun there, the Lord moves on. He sees a boy sitting with a bandaged hand. The mother in Him, overflowing with love, asks, "What happened?" The boy starts, "Swami, during games..." Now the stern father takes over, "Careless! Careless! Always in hurry." To another boy, He gives an understanding smile which says, "I am always with you." To yet another boy, He gives a penetrating look that reaches the core of his heart, churns it and conveys, "I know what you did. I know, I know." Somewhere He looks at the dream world that He wants to establish—the world full of love and fraternity, without discord and hatred. He has a vision, and He being the Supreme One, takes the world there. He looks at His students, to whom He wants to give a significant part in His grand mission. He looks at them as future torchbearers, who, wherever they are, will be shining ideals and will follow His commands and principles. With that vision, He moves on.

Every Darshan is a revolution—a silent revolution. With every Darshan, the Lord takes the world one step towards Himself. He transforms many hearts, cures many diseases, gives hope to the forlorn and the forsaken. These five minutes which look so simple are crowded with events—significant events which have a bearing on so many lives. But, for us students every Darshan is an opportunity to transform our lives under the watchful eyes of Sai, Who is our mother father, teacher, friend and the Supreme Lord of our hearts. We can only pray to Him, "Beloved Lord, give us a clear and unclouded mind so that we may discern Your majesty. When

You try to mould us into ideal ones, make us respond to it. When You shower You Love on us, give us the proper frame of mind to receive it."

—From "Sai Nandana" 1995

How to be at darshan?

It is certainly not a place in which to intrude on Swami's mind with powerful prayer. The right thing is to sit quietly, as if in meditation, but yet not to meditate or concentrate on anything. It is rather like the "receiving" state as taught in Subud. The body should be as relaxed as possible, while the mind is quiet and open to receive the blessing Swami wants to give us with Darshan. The mind should be like the negative of a photographic film in the camera, sensitive and ready to receive whatever divine beam comes from the Lord.

I know that people of my acquaintance have received wonderful things by sitting in a receptive state in the Darshan line. An American woman I know, at her very first Darshan, received the baptism of divine love that left her sitting with tears flooding down her cheeks and with the knowledge that she had already received what she had come for. Another woman, this one from England, received a cure for her breast cancer from one powerful beam from Swami's eyes, without His speaking one word to her. There is, in fact, a long list of heart transformations, life transmutations and divine healings of men and women from many climes and lands, of people who have been "at Darshan," not only physically, but with minds open to receive the manna.

—From *Where the Road Ends* By Howard Murphet

How to be after darshan?

Always find a quiet corner after my Darshan, where you may enter the stillness and receive the completion of My blessings. My energy goes out from Me as I pass by you. If you proceed to talk with others immediately, this precious energy is dissipated and returned to Me, unused by you. Rest assured that whatever My eye sees becomes vitalised and transmuted. You are changed day by day.

—Sathya Sai Baba

AVATAR VANI:

MAHILA DAY SANDESH:

Glory of Womanhood

In this country of Bharat was born Savitri, the woman of chastity, who could fight with Yama, the God of Death and bring back to life her dead husband.

In this country of Bharat was born Chandramati, the paragon of virtue, who suffered the terrible ordeals of her husband Harishchandra.

Sita, the devoted consort of Rama and the divine daughter of Mother Earth, who demonstrated her chastity by coming out of blazing fire unscathed, was born in this Bharat.

Damayanti, also a woman of pristine purity and chastity who stood by her husband: Nala through thick and thin, was born in the sacred land of Bharat.

Embodiments of Love!

This Bharat is the land of sanctity and chastity which has given birth to such great women of exceptional character, who lent glory to Bharat as a nation of heroic women.

From ancient times, the presiding deity of Gayatri Mantra, Gayatri Devi, has been worshipped as the Mother of the Vedas, which are held as the most ancient and authoritative scriptures of wisdom. Gayatri Mantra originated in this Holy Land. The glory of this mantra has spread all over the world. The people of Bharat have worshipped Gayatri in several ways and have redeemed their lives. Gayatri has been worshipped in four forms: (1) Sathyavati (2) Angavati (3) Anyavati (4) Nidhanavati. All the four are equally sacred, and illicit limitless grace of the Divine.

The first one Sathyavati signifies the existence of Atma in every being just as butter is present in every drop of milk. It proclaims "Ekatma Sarvabdhutantaratma" (One Atma is present in all beings). There is one 'Sath' (truth) which is spoken of in many ways by the wise.

The second one is Angavati, which signifies the five elements present in all beings and also the five senses of hearing, touch, vision, taste and smell. There is nothing in this world which is not composed of the five elements. This Angavati is Pancha Bhuta Swarupa or embodiment of the five basic elements.

The third one Anyavati refers to the attributes of the different forms of the Divine. For example, Lord Siva is associated with trident, three eyes, etc. Vishnu is always described as having conch, discus, mace and so on. We call him "Sankhachakragadaipani". Ganapati is identified by his elephant face and big belly. He is first to be worshipped in all rituals. Saraswati is described as one with veena in hand through which she is teaching the Divine sound principle as Nadabrahma. Thus Anyavati signifies the different constituents of the forms of the Divine.

Nidhanavati, the fourth, teaches the nine types of worship, namely, Shravanam (hearing), Kirtanam (singing the glory of God), Smaranam (thinking of the names of God), Padasevanam (service), Vandanam (prostration), Archanam (worship), Dasyam (servitude), Sakhyam (friendship) and Atmanivedanam (surrender).

The world is symbolised by these four forms of Gayatri. That is why it is described as Nature (Prakriti), a female form (Stree). We refer to our native country as motherland.

Women Uphold Virtues

Bharat has always accorded a high place to women as the upholders of all social virtues. The very fact that in mentioning the names of the divine couples; like Vishnu and Lakshmi, Siva and Parvati, the name of the consort is given the first place as in Lakshmi Narayana, Uma Maheshwara shows what importance Bharatiyas attached to women.

People generally speak of women as the weaker sex. At last now Bharatiyas recognise that women cannot be considered as weak. The woman in charge of the home plays the main role in bringing good name and fame to the home. Not only in respect of individual homes, but also in the good name of the country and the world woman plays the main role. From ancient times, woman has been accorded a high place in the society.

The scriptures have ascribed seven virtues to women as a class. Sathya (truth), Prema (love), Dharma (righteousness), Santhi (peace), Sahana (tolerance), Ananda (bliss), Svanubhuti (spirituality).

The woman at home has been held in high esteem as "Grihalakshmi", the goddess of prosperity of the home. When her husband faces difficulties, the wife readily shares the burden and is prepared to do anything, undergo any suffering or even sacrifice her life of refinement and they for the of her husband and the family. It is the woman of the home who is behind the good reputation of the home. The woman is the embodiment of sacrifice. Though the male counterpart may also do sacrifice, it will be with selfish tinge while woman's sacrifice is absolutely selfless. Therefore, we should be proud of our women.

High Status of Women in Ancient India

If Bharatiya culture and morality have survived despite long periods of foreign rule, it is to no small measure due to the courage and fortitude of the nation's women. As the earlier speaker, Dr. Geetha Reddy, has pointed out, women shine as soldiers with the weapons of Sathya and Dharma. They will not normally tell lies. There may be occasions when a few of them may do so unknowingly. But, by and large, they as a class; uphold truth and righteous conduct. They follow the Vedic injunction, "Sathyam Vada, Dharmam Chara" (speak the truth and practise righteousness).

Once King Janaka conducted a discussion regarding the most suitable person who should confer honour on him as a scholar. Even though there were great sages and highly learned scholars like Yajnavalkya in the Assembly, he decided that Gargi was the fittest person from whom he should receive it. This is an example to prove how women have been held in high esteem from ancient times by ordinary citizens and kings too. While women were held in high esteem in ancient times, in later years there was a decline in their status, and even ascetics denied proper recognition to them. For instance, when sage Mathanga wanted to admit the great woman devotee Sabari into his Ashram, many of his disciples who were renunciants raised objection. But the noble Mathanga recognised the extraordinary merit of Sabari's chastity, sincere devotion and dedication towards pursuit of liberation, and admitted her in his Ashram. She finally proved to the world how devoted she was to Rama and how she got liberated after worshipping Him true to the teachings of sage Mathanga.

Women's Role in Home and Society

Because of the evil influence of modern education, people consider women as toys and tend to treat them as puppets. The women have very auspicious and noble qualities. But men consider them as cooks to be confined to the kitchen and the four walls of the house. What they forget is that-women not only manage the affairs of the family but also look after the health and well being of all the members of the household. The Government has now started conferring the honorific titles of Padmashri, Padmabhushan, etc. to its chosen citizens. But women have had more respectable and valuable titles of Grihalakshmi (the goddess of prosperity of the home)," Dharmapatni (devoted wife) Ardhangi (the better half) etc. They had these titles because of their good qualities and spirit of sacrifice.

Questions are raised like who will look after the home if women go to offices and who will teach her children if the mother goes to school to teach other children, and so on. Some say that though the woman goes to work to solve the financial problem, bigger problems may have to be confronted by her going-to work. But, in the modern world, it is necessary for the women to share the burden of maintaining the family with their husbands and so the women should also pursue studies as much as possible and take up suitable jobs to share the burden of the family. It will smack of selfishness if the males prevent them from going to work for which they have acquired the requisite qualifications. Women can control the whole world by themselves by virtue of their inherent qualities of love and spirit of sacrifice (Prema Bhava and Thyaga Bhava). Anger is alien to women and it is more rampant in men. Though there may be instances when a woman may give vent to anger, such occasions are few and far between while in men, the reverse is the case.

Savitri fought with the God of Death (Yama) and succeeded in getting her husband back to life. Can you find any instance in the scriptures or history where a husband was prepared to do sacrifice for his wife? If the wife is dead, he is ready to have a second marriage. Such unfair things are happening in the world in respect of women. That is why it was decided to celebrate not only 19th November but 19th of every month as Mahila Day.

Women devotees in Sai Movement are participating in large numbers enthusiastically in service activities such as helping the women of weaker sections to learn some useful trades like tailoring etc. so that they can earn some money for the family and also spend their time usefully. If such activities are taken up all over the country, the country will prosper. This sacred work is typical of the culture of our ancient country. Women are the heirs of our ancient culture. Culture means refinement. Women are the torch-bearers of refinement and they are toiling for the emancipation of the nation.

Geetha Reddy spoke about the exploits of great women in the battlefield like Rani of Jhansi who fought a terrific battle and gave up her life rather than surrendering to the foe when she was overpowered. She lived up to the teachings of the Vedas that only by sacrifice one can attain liberation. Even in this Kali Age, there may be some exceptional cases where women may not be following Sathya and Dharma. But mostly they live up to these ideals. However, they are not encouraged to show their ability. Even in the family, they have to face obstacles and confrontations. If women are given due recognition and encouragement, they will shine with brilliance in all fields and will serve the house, country and the entire world gloriously, contributing to the welfare of the entire humanity.

No doubt, there may be a few who may not be having good qualities characteristic of a woman. But in any class of society, this is inescapable. Take, for example, the orange fruit. In order to enjoy the juice you have to peel out the bitter portions of the outer skin and seeds. Even so, the fruit of human life has much bitter portions as outer skin. You have to remove this and weed out the seeds of bad qualities, so that you can taste the sweet juice inside.

If man also follows the example of the woman to imbibe sacred and sacrificial qualities, the world will definitely improve. They say "Udhyogam Purusha Lakshanam" (a man is known by his job), as though only males can do jobs. It is a misnomer. Women are also doing all types of

jobs equal to men. In fact, women work more sincerely and with dedication. Recently, Swami questioned a director of the Indian Telephone Industries when he came to see Swami about percentage of women employed in the industry. He said 99% of the employees were women and added that women did ten times better work than men. They don't stop or step out till the allotted work is completed. They have the work culture better than men. It is nowhere stated in any sacred text that women should only cook and not do work like men.

As a matter of fact, even man has to learn cooking and house-keeping to help his wife in times of need. Awareness is life. Awareness means total knowledge and not partial knowledge. This enthusiasm is full in women. Even men should make effort to learn everything. Women have hidden power immanent in them. You have to encourage them to exhibit their talents. (Swami narrated how an Army Commander, who makes all sepoys in the Army shiver before him, shivers before his wife when she confronts him after he reaches home. Similarly, the Principal of an institution before whom the students may shiver with fear, may himself feel shiver going down his spine when confronted by his wife for explanation why he came late.

God Makes no Distinctions

Generally, the term "Purusha" is taken to mean only males basing on physical form. It is not true. It represents the "Atma" or "Chaitanya" in all, which is in the body from top to toe. Purusharthas (prime goals of life) are four, namely, Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. This does not apply only to males. It is common to both males and females.

Actually, women follow the fundamental Dharma truly, while men act selfishly. One who realises divinity is Purusha. Swadharma means Atmadharma, not the Dharma pertaining to the body. This is explained in the Bhagavad Gita. This was the ideal followed by the ancients.

Artha does not merely mean wealth or money. It means wealth of wisdom. Both men and women have the right to experience non-duality which is real wisdom.

Kama is the desire not for worldly objects but for God.

Moksha is the fourth objective of life. Desire for Moksha or liberation is common to all, whether men or women. Moksha is Moha Kshaya or shedding of bodily attachment. Without following the senses or mind, if you follow conscience, you can progress towards Moksha.

In order to teach the subtleties of the scriptural texts and encourage women to play their role in society, 19th is fixed as Mahila Day. Dharma can be made to occupy its position in society and restored to its pristine glory only by women. But men also have equal right and they should participate in this mighty and sacred effort so that the country will prosper. Even if men don't actively participate, they should at least let the women do the work without interference.

Krishna declared in the Gita: "Ananyaschinthayantho maamyeh janah paryupasathe" (whoever worships me to the exclusion of all others), "thesam nithyabhiyukthanam yogakshemam vahamyaham" (I look after the welfare of such unwavering devotees). This is an assurance to one and all with no distinctions of any kind. Everyone should cultivate a similar sense of universality. The Divine is omnipresent. Differences based on caste, creed, sex or nationality

have to be given up. God has no distinctions. You should also practise this principle of equality. God is everywhere. You cannot restrict Him to your narrow limits as though He is confined only to the form contained in your small picture frame. It is a folly to think so. He has thousands of forms and names. When you are doing Sahasranama Archana (worshipping the thousand names of the Lord) you mention each of the thousand names and offer a flower. All are offered to only that one picture and not to thousands of pictures. All may refer to one God only. You may say Allah, Jesus, Rama or Krishna and so on. But all refer to only one God. If you say the form you worship is the only God, you are limiting the Infinite to a narrow finite entity.

You should give up all religious differences. There is only one religion, that of love. There is only one caste, that of humanity: There is only one language, that of heart. I spoke earlier of the four parts of Gayatri and five elements. All are divine. They have no caste or creed or any such difference. If you realise the unity, you get purity and divinity. You are forgetting this and breed feelings of enmity and community. God has no such distinction of community, nationality or sex. In ancient times, they did not have such differences. Do not give room for any such feelings. God is one and everyone in this world has equal right to enjoy His Grace.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the Bhajan “*Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahi*”.

—from Bhagavan's discourse at "Sai Sruthi", Kodaikanal on 19th April, 1998

Crossing the 'Bhava Sagara'

Virtues are the most effective means for purifying the inner consciousness of man at all levels. For, they prompt the person to discover what to do and how to do. Only those who have earned good destiny can claim their excellence in discrimination. And, adherence to this determination is the raft which can take man across the ocean of flux and fear, the Bhava Sagara. The man of virtues has a place in the region of the, liberated. Whatever the residual activity a person has perforce to engage himself in, the impact of that activity will not impinge on him, provided he is a man of virtues. He can merge in Brahman, the embodiment of Supreme Bliss.

—Baba

AVATAR VANI:

BHAGAVAN'S KODAIKANAL DISCOURSES III

Man, Truth, Love and God

*Discard bad company,
Associate with good people,
Do always meritorious deeds,
Discriminate between what is eternal and what is transient.
(Sanskrit Sloka)*

Embodiments of Love!

Today people are making efforts to know what happiness is and are enquiring only about the external objects of the world but no one attempts to know himself. It is of no use knowing about everything in the world without knowing about oneself. The whole world is based only on "I". When you ask someone, whether a millionaire or a pauper, "Who are you?" the answer will invariably commence with "I", I am so and so will be the usual answer. On further questioning one may say, I am a doctor or I am a businessman. The doctor refers to the work he does and the businessman refers to his profession. If you ask the name, the reply may come as Ramayya or Krishnayya. These are names assigned to the body. These are all transient. These do not represent the real "you". You are a permanent entity. Without understanding this truth, man is carried away by ephemeral things. He indulges in selfish pursuits only. He is of no use to the world. Everyone is born in the society and brought up by the society and is a limb of the society. Only when one works for the society one can be prosperous. Today everyone tries to live for himself without caring for the society.

Seek the Source of Bliss

You should not forget that self-confidence is the foundation of life. Just as you cannot build walls without foundation, you should lead a useful life based on self-confidence only. When this is firm, the superstructure of self-satisfaction and self-awareness may be raised leading to self-realisation or bliss which is the goal of life. When man has forgotten the foundation, how can he expect happiness or peace? Self is Atma. One must know this reality and discard attachment to the body, mind and intellect. Atma is the master, recognise this and be the mastermind! Don't identify yourself with your instruments. All the organs or the instruments of the body are propelled by the vibration which originates from Atma. But for this, man can't survive. It is a pity that man forgets this principle of Atma and is bereft of happiness. Men only pretend to be happy and smiling. But they are not really happy. God is the master of happiness and unless you identify with the Divine, you cannot be happy.

When you think of God and pray to Him, you should not ask for trivial things. You should ask for a thing that is not in you and is in God. It is bliss that isn't in you and God is the embodiment of bliss. So, you should pray for this only. People call themselves devotees and pray for fulfillment of their petty desires. They are not true devotees. God is described as "Nityanandam Paramasukhadam, Kevalam Jnanamurthim". So, you have to pray only for this bliss. If you enquire deeply, God is not away from you. Good and bad experiences emanate from you only. As you sow, so you reap. All resultant effects arise from the cause of your actions only. One who understands this truth alone can understand the Divine Principle.

In spite of many efforts and spiritual Sadhana, one is not able to attain realisation of divinity because the Vision is not good. Buddha investigated into this very deeply and found out in the end that mind is the stumbling block for progress towards realisation and became "Amanaska", that is, he eliminated the obstacles of the mind and attained Nirvana or liberation. He realised the Atma. How to get rid of this mind? You can do this only by directing your attention to the intellect and start discriminating as to what is eternal and what is ephemeral.

Discarding the pursuit of bookish knowledge, which is superficial, you must pursue discriminatory knowledge. In this, you should not discriminate for your own self-interest. You should have fundamental discrimination for the welfare of all. This is broadmindedness and

expansion of love. You should not have narrow outlook which is contraction of love. You say, "Hello" while greeting a friend. It is not reflecting your love. You should be hollow inside, that is beyond feelings and desires. You should proceed beyond mind. Buddha contemplated for six years before he could achieve this: "Buddhigrahyam Atheenathriyam". He went beyond the body, mind and intellect to realise the Atma.

Today man is only acting as actors do in a cinema. Everything is only pretension, tantamount to hypocrisy. The term 'Manava' referring to 'man' when analysed gives the meaning that man is one who overcomes illusion ('Ma' is Maya; 'na' is no; 'va' is conduct). What is Maya? It is to consider a non-existing thing as existing. When you walk, your shadow is following you. Every action has reaction, resound and reflection. Even your feelings and thoughts are reflected in your behaviour. So long as you are filled with thoughts, you cannot make any progress on the spiritual path. As I have explained in an earlier talk, the term "Man" itself has to be interpreted as M—Maya, A—Atma, N—Nirvana, that is, only when you overcome Maya you can realise the Atma and attain Nirvana or liberation. This can be attained only by self-confidence, meaning confidence in the Atma and not the instruments thereof.

Man, today, is beset with worries and appears crestfallen because of his attachment to body and worldly objects. He is devoting all his attention to his family, acquisition of wealth and fame. If he just devotes a small fraction of this attention to God, he can get everything. Why don't you have this faith in the All-powerful Divine? You are prepared to sacrifice for the sake of petty worldly things. If you do this for the sake of the Divine, you can get unlimited grace, by which you and your family and those for whom you care will have peace and happiness.

Bharatiyas have always said their prayer for the happiness and welfare of the entire world. This is the correct prayer which you should make to God. You are also part of the world and you will also enjoy peace and happiness along with others.

Cultivate Divine Thoughts

The term "Bharata" has a very sacred significance. 'Bha' represents self-effulgent light. One who strives for seeking the self-effulgent Atma is a Bharatiya. In music also, the term 'Bharat' has a unique significance—'Bha' indicates 'Bhavam' (feeling), 'Ra' indicates Ragam (tune) and 'Ta' indicates 'Talam' (beat). The combination of Bhava, Raga and Tala in harmony makes music pleasant to hear. Similarly, in all aspects such as moral, ethical and spiritual, divine thoughts should be pervading. This is the characteristic of the Bharatiyas.

God is Sat-Chit-Ananda. With the eternal feeling (Saswatham-Sat) you should seek Chit (spiritual wisdom). Then you get Ananda. You can get Ananda only from Ananda and not from a state of depression. You should worship the Lord with love as love is God and God is love. This gives you real happiness. Today people pretend as if they love while their inner feeling is not filled with love. "Yad bhavam tad bhavathi". As your feelings are, so will be the result. Now we find that feelings are different from expression. You do not know when this body will cease to function whether in childhood, boyhood, youth or old age. Death is certain. Though the body is like a garbage dump full of faecal matter, we have to maintain it in good condition because it is also the temple of God who resides therein. The body by itself cannot help you to cross the ocean of life. You have to surrender to the Lord. From dawn to dusk one is engaged only in pursuit of

ways and means to fill the belly. People waste their life in this way without making effort to have vision of the Divine. They stand in queue for a long time to buy a ticket for a movie or for travel in bus but they don't like to stand in the queue for Darshan of the Divine who can confer such great bliss on them as nothing else can.

You take the example of trees which bear sweet fruits for others but do not themselves take, cows that give milk to others but do not taste even a drop, rivers that provide copious supply of water for the people and animals and birds too but they do not take even a bit of it themselves. Man is only enjoying everything himself and is not doing anything for the society at large. Dharma protects those who protect it but will destroy those who attempt to destroy it!

Embodiments of Love!

You have got this precious human life as Divine gift. Do not waste it by seeking worldly pleasures. Pray to God and serve God by serving humanity.

Knock at the Correct Door

Adi Sankara was propagating Advaita Jnana all through his life. But he too emphasised the efficacy of prayer through his famous Bhaja Govindam verses. He said mere scholarship will not come to one's rescue at the time of death. One has to pray and worship God in order to get released from the bondage of birth and death. Devotion based on Prema Tattwa is essential for the emancipation of every human being. Advaita is to see unity in diversity. (Swami held a silver tumbler in His hand and said, the silver in this will be retained even after it is melted and made into a plate. The forms vary but silver is constant).

The Primordial Principle of Supreme Power is one. You may go on giving examples like jewels are many, gold is one; flowers are many, puja is one and so on. Though you offer different types of flowers to God, He likes only one flower that can never fade, that is the flower of your heart (Hridaya Pushpam). Since Hridaya is the altar of the Lord, this is what he relishes most. You need food, clothing and shelter for living. But you should not forget that the basis for all these is the Divine and constantly think of the Divine even when immersed in worldly work.

Pray to God with pure heart with a mind bereft of desires. Do not pray for the fulfillment of petty desires. Love God with a desireless heart. How did Sabari get the grace of Rama who gave her liberation? How did Jatayu enjoy the privilege of dying on the lap of the Lord? They did not pray for petty things. Instead of asking for a particular type of jewel like ring or chain, ask for gold. You can make any jewel out of it.

Forgetting the declaration and assurance given by the Lord you behave contrary to His direction: God proclaimed:

*Ask and it shall be given,
Search and you will find,
Knock and the door will be opened.*

You are not asking the right source. You are asking the world and not God, the Creator of the world. How can you get response? You are also not searching for the right thing. You are only

searching for wealth and position which are unworthy and transient. What door are you knocking at? You are knocking at the door of grief. How can you get Ananda? If you comply with the directions of the Divine correctly, you will get appropriate results. If you open the door of your heart and love God, you get what you need. Do not ask for any petty boon. Ask for God Himself. He can give you anything and everything you need. Pray for love of God. You will get love. Through Divine love you will have prosperity here and hereafter.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the Bhajan "*Prema Muditha Manase Kaho Rama, Rama, Ram*".

—From Bhagavan's discourse at "Sai Sruthi" in Kodaikanal, 20th April 1998

(Continued in the next issue)

RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES:

Sai's Mission of Unity

To try to convert others in matters of faith is very often not to respect them

Religion is generally thought to consist in many separate cultures: Hindu, Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, Islamic and so forth with many a sect and sub-sect (among the Christians, for example, Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, Methodist, Baptist, Evangelistic and so on into hundreds more differing or opposing cults). In *Sathya Sai Vahini*, Baba refers to this situation: "The seeming contradictions have to be interpreted as incidental to the need to inspire people with varied intellectual, moral, economic and social backgrounds."

We continually tend to forget that nothing in the world is as it appears to be, but Baba is constantly reminding us in various ways. He asked a devotee during an interview to identify the material in a ring he had 'borrowed' from a lady there. "Silver" was the reply. "No, it's not. You don't know. But I know!" said Baba. Probably the ring was made of platinum ('white gold'), but we are not told. This just shows how many of the simplest judgements even about ordinary things can be wrong. How much more room for error there is in considering more complex matters like human activities and beliefs! How then could we be sure that we have all the right beliefs or we alone can rightly interpret the scriptures or the reality underlying the world's appearances? Probably we should only be sure, at best, that our beliefs are 'right' for us at the time, but not whether this is so for others.

As Baba has said about devotion: "Though each interprets it differently, all interpretations are correct, for they are all based on actual experience which cannot be negated." Yet to know the difference between one's own actual experience and illusion or self-deception is not always so easy. There is a psychological condition which affects most people who are converted from previous state of uncertainty, disappointment or despair to a new belief of great optimism... whatever the kind of belief. People can react like this to religious sects that guarantee salvation, to political ideologies that promise utopia, to scientific 'theory' and to many other kinds of illusion.

Futility of Conversions

Baba teaches: "Each must interest himself in understanding the practices and beliefs of others" and "tolerate all kinds of persons and opinions, all attitudes and peculiarities."

The condition of new zealots is often like that of people falling in love, which makes them feel invulnerable to difficulties and doubts while feeling and reason seem at last to be in full harmony. The world looks rosy, things fall into a place like a solved jigsaw puzzle to provide an answer to everything. While this rosy honeymoon mentality lasts, it is usually futile for an outsider to try to inform or caution in any way which does not fully accord with a person's particular beliefs. He or she is all too happy no longer to be among those who don't know.

Only time and further educative experience can effect sobering changes of mind. For example, many famous thinkers converted enthusiastically to communism in the world depression of the 1930s (it then did genuinely seem to many persons devoted to humanity to promise a better world) only to be terribly disillusioned at some point later on. Dear illusions are eventually worn down or punctured to make room for a sounder faith, better practice and a new equanimity of mind which reserves judgement on matters known to be beyond human ken. According to Baba, "An unruffled mind is very necessary for every aspirant who is marching forward."

To try to convert others in matters of faith is very often not to respect them, and so adult re-education in matters of faith is mostly counter-productive. Moreover, the psychology of the converted shows how it is largely futile to try to influence people by preaching different beliefs to them. If others are not attracted by our own practice to do likewise, what is to be gained by persuasion? Mostly only a change in mere externals, words or the acceptance of certain alleged historical facts which may or may not be wholly right. Baba makes clear on numerous occasions how true spirituality has to be developed by oneself, not through imitation of others.

'Closed Thought' Systems

Social groupism or sectarianism is invariably involved in causing or maintaining their recruits' peculiar state of insulation from the world we live in. These movements usually preach some 'closed system' of thought: a view of the world which is set up as the one and only true explanation and means to human salvation. Such 'total explanations' mislead people into narrowness, exclusivity and even into forming totalitarian societies. A closed system can be further imposed by making it a taboo even to think anything critical, however constructive, true or necessary for real welfare it may be. All closed systems have a built-in arsenal of ideas to suppress any questioners: communism branded doubters as revisionists, some psychoanalysts and psychiatrists make criticism seem the result of a person's deep-rooted psychological conflicts, while various kinds of priesthood expel critics as evil-minded heretics or condemn those of other faiths to perdition. Such attitudes obviously cannot be squared with any religion of love.

Western educational systems are still today based firmly and increasingly on the scientific approach. Apart from a small minority of spiritually-oriented scientists, the dominant attitude remains one of narrow 'scientism': belief in materialism and the fact-focussed scientific method as the only possible standard of truth in any matter worth considering. This is also a self-

defensive closed system, the frequent doggedness of which shows how firmly people cling to beliefs once they are formed. The anxiety about losing one's convictions must be respected too, though any 'science' that is closed to rational critique is eventually doomed. This situation has arisen despite the famous 'spirit of science': seeking the truth and reserving judgement.

Some major world religious institutions and 'fundamentalist' sects insist that they represent the only truth or the way to salvation. They reject those who are all-inclusive and tolerant, as the perennial philosophy of Sanathana Dharma teaches. Concerning this, Baba has said: "The I or ego should not be moulded or enclosed in an 'ism': then, it becomes harmful as egoism." At the same time, of course, we must try to understand their right to undergo their own learning process, even despite intolerance. Sathya Sai has made it crystal clear that spirituality does not really exist where the practice of all-inclusive love is lacking.

Belief and Karma

All exchanges of opinion as to what is true and good are obviously not unhealthy. Though much criticism may be an expression of ego, envy or anger, there is a kind of critique which is constructive and is motivated by both good intentions and higher values. If it is not intended personally, but is directed instead at the best outcome of the matter in hand, those willing to put aside any pride or self-importance and listen may benefit.

However, the outlook and attitudes anyone adopts are surely influenced by many outward conditions interacting with the person's inner condition - all of which may be summarised as the karmic result of one's both worldly and spiritual inheritance. A strong ego also makes people choose to believe whatever suits them on almost any subject! In the light of this fact of life, it seems that to expect people willingly to accept corrective ideas and comments rationally may be mostly wishful thinking.

Self-transforming Teachings of Baba

Baba has said: "In India...there are, since ages, many faiths and many paths, reflecting all the urges of man which lead him inward and upward. Hence, there are manifold alternatives from which man can choose the one that suits his stage of spiritual growth and with his feet firm on that step, he can raise himself up to greater heights."

We are eager to share Sathya Sai's self-transforming and inspiring teachings with those who have not yet found the guiding star. The natural wish is to inform others for their sake, for ourselves, and for the world in general. But those who lack faith are not usually amenable to talk about Divinity, in whatever form or name. Talks that have even a tinge of moralism are patronising and are entirely wasted on others. This is so because: "Bhakti has to be realised by you in your own experience, though great souls can illumine the path a little for you by their examples," says Baba.

The eternal teachings of the Avatar are freely available for all to obtain and cannot ever be lost. Our job is not to advertise them or be preaching 'middlemen' but to apply them to ourselves. "People climb rostrums and shout 'Brothers' and 'Sisters' but that platitude remains a flatitude! As soon as they descend from the altitude, the sentiment melts into thin air," cautions Swami.

So as to practise as best as we can, we do have to understand Swami's teachings in relation to the confusing 'illusory' world with its countless variations, new encounters and unknown circumstances. It is in this that we may hope to contribute a little from each our culture and personal experience. By being sensitive to others' feelings and opinions, by talking agreeably without presumption and by listening with understanding rather than with the desire to influence, we may hope to be instruments of truth.

Swami says, "Gather wisdom from wherever you can acquire it; listen to the good things teachers of different denominations elaborate upon. I would advise you to weigh in your own mind, against your own experience, the teachings that you have heard. Listening should be followed and should be confirmed by reflection on the implications, the background, the reservations, the limitations of what you have been told."

—Robert Priddy

Showers of Divine Grace on Muddenahalli, Indira Nagar and Bagepalli

Muddenahalli

Nestled in the peaceful, serene and idyllic surroundings, Sathya Sai Grama in Muddenahalli is located at the foot of the historic Nandi Hills at a distance of about 55 km from Bangalore. Surrounded as it is by five imposing hills, this picturesque place is an abode of bliss.

Bhagavan Baba willed that an educational institution on Sai ideals should come up in this village which is away from the din and dust and maddening crowds of towns and cities. His grace descended on this place in the form of a fine array of class-rooms, dormitories, an auditorium, extensive play grounds, a sprawling farm and a dairy. Thus Sathya Sai Grama became the home of an educational complex; which is spiritually oriented. To crown them all, an exquisite and magnificent Mandir was built in 1994, which has invested the campus with the atmosphere of sacredness and divinity. 15th August 1994, was the red-lettered day for Sathya Sai Grama when Bhagavan graciously inaugurated the Mandir. Swami told the gathering of the students and teachers on that day that Devalaya (temple), Vaidyalaya (hospital) and Vidyalaya (school) were already there in the campus and now a spacious Bhojanalaya (dining hall) was necessary. He laid the foundation stone for the dining hall to the great delight of the teachers and students.

The construction of the dining hall with aesthetic beauty and modern facilities was almost complete by March 1998. All the residents of the campus started praying to Swami fervently to graciously inaugurate the dining hall, which can cater to about 600 members at a time.

16th May 1998 was indeed a memorable day in the annals of Sathya Sai Grama, Muddenahalli. Bhagavan Baba arrived in the campus at 7:55 a.m. on that day with about 20 M.B.A. students. This was His 25th gracious visit to this campus. This visit was specially significant as it synchronized with the Silver Jubilee year of the Institution.

Swami was accorded a devotional and rapturous welcome by the teachers and karyakartas. The weather was fine and a pleasant breeze was blowing when Swami arrived in "Premadeep," the magnificent Mandir, with entourage and whole atmosphere was surcharged with devotional fervour. Swami and the students accompanying Him had their breakfast, with Bhagavan Himself moving among the students to see that they were well served.

Then Swami proceeded to inaugurate the new dining hall. He admired the elegant workmanship and aesthetic beauty of the hall and remarked that it was not only a dining hall but a prayer hall as well. After moving about in the hall, Swami unveiled the plaque and went to the new kitchen and traditionally inaugurated it by boiling milk.

Swami then went to the old Mandir and to the Auditorium with the students and was there for some time and then proceeded to the Ganesha Temple. Swami had installed the Ganesha idol in the temple and inaugurated it in 1981. May be to enhance the potency of the idol, Swami went to the sanctum sanctorum of the temple, materialized Vibhuti and showered it on the idol. He stood beside the idol and received "Mangalarati". Swami was so blissful that it was a sight for the gods to see.

Swami then went to the dairy with the students and blessed the cows by touching them, reliving his role as Krishna in Dwapara-yuga. Then, He came back to "Premadeep".

Teachers of Sathya Sai Grama with the M.B.A. students gathered around His Divine Feet. Swami then spoke for about an hour and 20 minutes in chaste Kannada as to how God will take care of a devotee who surrenders to Him and offers all his senses to Him. The Divine Discourse was punctuated with illuminating parables and examples.

After this, Swami and the students had their lunch. Swami was moving around to see that the students ate well. After lunch, Swami showered special grace and love on the contractor of the dining hall and all other buildings in the campus by materializing a ring studded with nine gems for him.

Before leaving for Brindavan at about 1:00 p.m., Swami inaugurated the C.B.S.E. wing of the Institution. He gave Padanamaskar to ail the teachers and conferred on them the coveted privilege of having individual photos with Him.

Thus, Bhagavan conferred love, grace and benediction on Sathya Sai Grama and blessed the teachers and workers who have dedicated themselves to His service. This blissful and gracious visit of Swami to Sathya Sai Grama will be remembered by the inmates of the campus for a long time to come.

Indiranagar

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba paid a visit to Sai Darshan community Hall in H.A.L. II Stage, Indiranagar on the morning of Sunday, 31st May 1998, and spent about two hours in the delight of the thousands of devotees gathered for the occasion.

On arrival, Bhagavan was received with Veda Ghosha and Poorna Kumbha honours after which he went round Sai Darshan and blessed the devotees seated all over the ground of the Mandir. On entering the ground floor and taking seat on the altar, He was greeted with a special Swagatam song sung by the lead singers. The convener of the Indiranagar Sai Samiti, Sri S. N. S. Murthy presented a brief report of the Samiti. Sri Murthy mentioned that the Samiti was not only celebrating its 25th Anniversary during this year but this also marked the 10th Anniversary of Sai Darshan which was inaugurated by Bhagavan on the 4th November 1988. He made mention of service projects taken up by the Samiti to mark the Anniversary and prayed for Bhagavan's blessings and guidance in all activities.

Swami then delivered His divine discourse in Telugu for approximately half an hour. Following the discourse, Bhagavan blessed and released a few books of Sai Literature in Braille prepared for the visually impaired with assistance from Sai Darshan and other sources. These books will be made available for reference for the visually impaired. After this, Swami proceeded to the first floor of the building to witness a short play but not before giving Darshan from the two balconies to a large number of devotees gathered outside the Mandir and on the road sending them into raptures.

The play titled "Dharma-Prema Samagama" was enacted by the boys and girls from economically backward families who attend Bal Vikas and evening tuition programme in Sai Darshan. The play, written and directed by Smt. Nallu Ganapathy, attempted to depict the moving episode from Ramayana in which Bharata journeys to the forest where Sri Rama is in exile and succeeds in bringing back the sandals of Sri Rama for ruling Ayodhya. The episode, most feelingly brought on stage by the young children and set to beautiful music, was appreciated by all. Sri Rama's firm adherence to Dharma, Lakshmana's unflinching loyalty to Rama, Sita's devotion to Rama, Bharata's great love for his elder brother—all these elements were very well brought out during the course of the play. At the end of the play, which was warmly applauded by the entire assembly, Swami went to the stage and blessed the young artistes, the musicians, the director of the play and her assistants.

After receiving Naivedyam and Mangalarati, Bhagavan left for Brindavan.

Bagepalli

On 15th June, 1998, Bhagavan paid a visit to Sri Sathya Sai Prema Kutir, a service centre and also a Home for the Aged in Bagepalli. Established and run by the Sathya Dharma Samanvaya Trust with the enthusiastic support of Sai devotees of Bagepalli, it is situated in a six acre area adjacent to the highway, at midpoint between Bangalore and Puttaparthi.

The place was specially decorated for the sacred occasion. Bhagavan was received with traditional honours. He blessed the thousands of devotees gathered there and sat inside the Prayer Hall while the Bhajans were going on. Bhagavan then delighted the members of the Trust and invitees by taking lunch with them and left after blessing the assembled devotees. Nearly one thousand devotees were served lunch on this occasion.

The genesis for this service centre dates back to November 1980 when the devotees of Bagepalli started a camp to serve the devotees proceeding to participate in the 55th Birthday celebrations

of Bhagavan. The camp was put up in the make-shift tent on the highway and all the devotees travelling to Puttaparthi by buses, cars or other vehicles were greeted with Sai Ram and served with refreshments and coffee or tea. This service of courtesy was repeated in 1985 and 1990 for the 60th and 65th Birthday celebrations and recognised by Bhagavan Baba who blessed this camp and devotees by alighting en route on His journey from Puttaparthi to Brindavan and back on 30th November 1980 and 7th December 1980 respectively. Inspired by Bhagavan's advice, a Trust was formed and some buildings constructed for serving the aged and the sick. This Home for the Aged was inaugurated by Bhagavan Baba on 7th June 1996 and named by Bhagavan as "Sri Sathya Sai Prema Kutir". Since then the service to the aged and to devotees on their way to Puttaparthi on festive occasions has been continuing. Bhajans are also being conducted regularly.

Silence as Dynamic Sadhana

God can be experienced in the depth of silence only, provided, of course, one has developed the sensitivity for it.

Relatively few, indeed, are the Sadhakas (spiritual aspirants) who undertake silence as Sadhana (spiritual discipline). Fewer still, perhaps, recognize that Baba's principle of progressive dynamism is as much applicable to this subtlest of all Sadhanas as to the other more commonly practised spiritual disciplines such as Puja (worship), Japa (reciting the name), Seva (selfless service), and Dhyana (meditation on the name and form), etc. However, deep silence does not mean mere abstinence from talking as commonly understood. On the contrary, it means *Trikarana Mounam*—the silence of the mind (*Mano Mounam*), of the speech (*Vaak Mounam*) and of the body (*Kaya Mounam*). In other words, deep silence means a state of total and perfect stillness, in which we control not merely the faculty of speech, but also all mental dialogue and even the movement of the body—virtually what is known as the ineffable state of *Samadhi* or *Mahamounam* (Absolute or Supreme Silence).

Benefits of Silence

Besides the supreme benefit of ineffable bliss from the experience of communion with God, silence, according to Baba, confers on us other minor (but all the same worthwhile) benefits. For instance, silence is conducive to the avoidance of quarrels—"Mounena kalaham naesti." It protects one from a slip of the tongue which, as Swami says, is often more dangerous than a slip of the leg. The injury caused by the latter can be cured, whereas the damage done by the former is often irretrievable. Excessive talking leads to premature aging; it also results in loss of memory and keenness of intellect, while silence improves both of them. In addition to conserving one's physical and mental energies, it has a beneficial effect on the body, mind and heart, by giving the best relaxation, rest and even healing power. Sri Ramana asserts: "Public speeches, physical activity and material help are all outweighed by the Silence of Mahatmas. They accomplish more than others."

The following sayings of Swami on the merits of silence are worth remembering:

"Silence is the best Sadhana.... Nothing like silence to still the waves of restlessness of your heart...Silence is the speech of the spiritual seeker and the only language of the realized...He who has reached stillness and silence, both of which mean the nature of Pure Consciousness, will enjoy the highest peace and highest bliss."

Observance of silence contributes to a productive life as evidenced by the lives of all great scientists, poets and writers and philosophers. Even the busy honey-bee is most productive, not when it buzzes, but when it silently sucks honey from the flowers and incidentally helps in cross-pollination. More importantly, constant practice of silence eventually leads to concentration and peace of mind even in the midst of intense activity or even turmoil.

Climbing the Summit of Silence

In this context, it may be mentioned that except for the realized souls and Avatars like Krishna and Sai Baba, it is not easy or even possible for others to remain in the ideal state of perfect stillness or silence even while engaged in intense activity. Nevertheless, it is an ideal for us to strive for by regular practice. Baba encouragingly assures us that by "practising meditation in silence and solitude one can, in due course, establish silence and solitude in the heart, even in the busiest thoroughfares." In this respect, we may try to categorize people as follows, based on their position on the ladder leading to this summit.

At the lowest rung of the ladder are those who are addicted to sound pollution to such an extent that they consider silence for even a few minutes as a punishment. They are the ones who suffer from 'lingual diarrhea'. They are the chatter-boxes fond of blabbering non-stop, indulging in telling tales, hearing and spreading gossip. They need even to be lulled to sleep by the noise of television, radio or tape-recorder.

Such people, who are victims of both internal (mental) noise and external (physical) noise created by themselves and by other sources, should try to reach the next higher rung of 'inner noise, but outer silence', by following Baba's maxim "*Athi bhaasha mathi haani: mitha bhaasha athi haayi*", i.e., "excessive talk endangers the mind, while moderate talk engenders happiness." They should recognise that the reason why God has given human beings only one tongue with two lids (the row of teeth and the lips) for the two functions of tasting and talking, as against two ears (without any lids) for the single purpose of hearing, is to remind them that they have to talk less and listen more. At this second step, therefore, people try to develop 'outer silence' or *Vaak Mounam*, by avoiding external noise, but they are as yet unable to develop 'inner silence' or *Mano Mounam*, because of mental dialogue. Actually, the practice of outward silence helps reveal the constant, silent inner chatter between the mind and the ego that otherwise goes on undetected, when one indulges in talking and talking without respite.

This second stage corresponds to what Swami calls Bhoutika Bhakti which results in *lulling* the mind, especially during meditation, by excluding outer noise but not yet attaining inner silence. Such persons should try to ascend the next higher rung of both inner and outer silence which corresponds to what is termed Ekanta Bhakti by Swami. At this stage, stilling the mind by means of both inner and outer silence during meditation is the aim. According to Baba, "This can be realised only when you turn your mind inward, away from sensory objects and experience the pure Atma." At this level of *Mano Mounam*, whenever he is not engaged in meditation, the

aspirant should try to control not only the quantity of speech but also the quality thereof, by following Swami's advice to "speak softly, sweetly and lovingly" and to "speak obligingly, even if you can't oblige"; and also by adhering to the injunctions of Sanathana Dharma: "Speak the truth; speak the pleasant. Speak neither unpleasant truth nor pleasant untruth." Constant effort along these lines, together with prayer, Japa and meditation will, in due course, evoke the divine grace which enables the sincere spiritual aspirant to still his mind. However, the mind might yet remain in the realm of duality, listening to God's voice in the form of OM or something else.

At the next higher step of Ananya Bhakti, duality disappears along with the mind, resulting in the *Amanaska* state and the non-dual experience of Divinity everywhere. This is the summit of *Mahamounam*, Supreme Silence. Now the Sadhaka becomes a *Siddha* who has reached the peak of *inne*, silence despite outer noise. He has now attained a state in which he is able to act according to Krishna's memorable words to Arjuna, *Sarveshu kaaleshu maam anusmara yudhyacha*—"always remember Me and fight the battle (of life)." This also accords with Baba's oft-quoted maxim of Kabir:

Haath mae kaam, dil mae Ram!—"Work in the hand and God in the heart." Such a combination of inner silence with outer activity will result in the happy consummation of the synthesis of work, worship and wisdom as commended by Bhagavan Baba.

If anyone feels diffident about attaining this laudable goal, let him or her take heart and derive encouragement and enthusiasm from the following inspiring words of Bhagavan Baba:

"Silence is the beginning of the art of communication. Learn to live in silence for some moments everyday. Just sit in complete silence and listen for the voice of God. You may not physically hear the voice, because God can speak to you through silence, and you will become aware of God's message, even though you hear no voice. So let your mind rest in God in those moments of silence and then the thoughts will come into your mind. But be patient, and do not necessarily expect immediate results. Success will come provided you persevere. Know always I am with you, even when you hear nothing. For, I am you and you are Me; so how is it possible that we cannot communicate? Just think about these things and do not give up easily."

—Dr. A. Adivi Reddy

The Treasure of Aakasa

One of the principles of straight living is the practice of silence. For, the voice of God can be heard in the region of your heart only when the tongue is stilled and the storm is stilled and the waves are calm. There will be no temptation for others to shout when you talk to them in whispers. Set the level of your tone yourself; as low as possible, as high as necessary to reach the outermost boundary of the circle you are addressing. Conserve sound, since it is the treasure of the element Aakasa, an emanation from God Him-self.

~ Sathya Sai Baba

Watch in Action

A pioneering effort by a Group of Students at the University of Toronto

On the street, I once saw a small girl cold and shivering in a thin dress, with little hope of a decent meal. I became angry and said to God: "Why did You permit this? Why don't You do something about it?" For a while, God said nothing. That night, He replied quite suddenly: "I certainly did something about it. I made you!"

Believe it or not, there are streets in Canada where such a small girl does exist. Seeing the suffering of these children on the streets of Toronto (Canada), a group of students at the University of Toronto was inspired.

This student group entitled "WATCH," based exclusively on service to under-privileged children, has been a great success since it began operation in November 1997. As an official organization at the University of Toronto, WATCH stands for "Watch your Words, Actions, Thoughts, Character and Heart," as Sri Sathya Sai Baba says.

The Real Meaning of WATCH

From the very beginning, WATCH took a bold step by serving inner-city children (ages 5-19) in one of the most troubled areas in Toronto. The 500 children we serve weekly are deprived of the bare essentials—showers, warm food and clean clothing. Approximately 98% of the children come from low income and single parent families. From our experience with these children, we have realized that although they ask for toy trucks, dolls, chocolates or candies, what they really want is that we share our love and time with them. For example, every week the younger children approach us on our way home asking for a hug, and the immense joy that they derive from this simple act makes it difficult for us to leave the children behind.

On our first encounter with these inner-city children, many of us were disheartened with the lack of respect we received from them. As we were leaving that evening, one of the children came running to us and said, "I am sorry if some of us were rude to you but many people like you have come here before and never came back again, so how can we trust anyone." This boy's statement touched the hearts of each and every one of us and it was at that moment that we decided as a group not only to watch our words, actions, thoughts, character and heart, but also to watch these children like our own brothers and sisters.

Ideals and Principles

Most WATCH members are university students between the ages of 18-22 years. This group is composed of various religious, ethnic backgrounds, languages, cultures and traditions. This vast disparity contributes to the organisation's strength. With a modest beginning of a few members, WATCH's membership has expanded rapidly and has now surpassed. Fundamentally, this group's foundations are based on "Love All, Serve All; Help Ever, Hurt Never." In addition, WATCH also provides opportunities to other organisations at the university to participate in this challenging programme. Participants are exposed to the harsh realities of life and experience a sense of fulfillment of knowing that they can make a difference in the lives of young children.

Routinely, EHV stories are shared with the children as well as stories from the Chinna Katha. Such stories with moral values have proved not only to be fun, but very inspiring for children. For example, on one occasion, when we were teaching the kids how to make pizza (a delicacy they often crave for), these morals learned from the stories were displayed. As the slices were distributed, one girl accidentally dropped the slice on the ground. Immediately, another girl offered half of her own slice to this girl. When asked what prompted her to share, she replied, "Sharing is what you taught us in last week's story."

On the occasion when we were helping the children with their homework, we asked a ten-year-old girl to read out a passage aloud for everyone. Her face turned red in embarrassment as she whispered to one of our members "I do not know how to read." She began to cry, afraid that everyone would laugh at her. One of the WATCH members assured her that no one would laugh at her, rather we would teach her how to read. Immediately WATCH took action by creating a literacy programme for training children in reading, writing as well as public speaking. At the end of the year, a competition was held and we were amazed at the improvements these kids had made. We realized that what these kids needed was just someone who could believe in them and give them a chance.

A senior official from the University of Toronto who attended the competition to monitor the activities of WATCH was so impressed that she recommended to the University that we be provided with all the resources and facilities we require to serve these children to the best of our ability. She too now is an active member of WATCH.

For the upcoming year, WATCH has organized a dental hygiene camp (as the Canadian Government does not provide free dental care), and a basketball training camp that the children requested. In addition, all WATCH members are being trained in C.P.R. (First Aid) to ensure maximum safety for the children.

In conclusion, all our members are thrilled with the principles and ideals of WATCH. They often ask us where do we derive the inspiration from to carry out these projects. In turn we reply... "Sathya Sai".

—Neilank Jha / Praveen Muruganandan

God is Omnipresent. So, do not act differently when you are away from My Presence. Be always and everywhere conscious of the Presence. Be vigilant, even while engaged in little tasks. Maintain silence in the recesses of the heart as well as outside. The Gita says that God's hands and feet are everywhere. You can hear His foot fall, only when no other sound hinders. God, out of His infinite grace, assumes the form that the devotee yearns for. He is purity. He is supreme wisdom. He is ever free, ever merciful. Develop the awareness of God, see Him and serve Him in every living being.

—Baba

Yearnings of a Rosebud!

Let me, Lord, a rosebud be,
A thing of beauty for all to see,
With fragrance and petals bright,
A budding in Thy gracious light.

Quench my thirst with Thy morning dew,
Deliver my scent to many, not few,
Keep me glowing in the evening sun,
And let my love touch everyone.

Lord, I am youthful, grant me grace,
And ease my thorns with Thy sweet embrace,
When night has fallen, Thy light I shall seek,
Unendingly guiding all who are weak.

The heavy pour of rain I'll bear,
For bloom I must into a flower fair,
Let me then, Lord a rosebud be,
A light shining forth in victory.

—Elaine Ong

Guru Poornima at Prasanthi Nilayam

The holy festival of Guru Poornima was celebrated at Prasanthi Nilayam on 9th July 1998 with devotion and dedication in the Divine Presence of the Eternal Teacher, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Sai Kulwant Hall, the venue of this celebration, was beautifully decorated for this sacred occasion with banners, buntings and festoons. The entire surrounding area of the Mandir complex was provided a festive look with buntings of many colours.

The Hall was full to its seams much before the arrival of Bhagavan in the morning. Devotees thronged the entire area around the Hall, and still many stood near the Canteen Gate.

Bhagavan came to the Sai Kulwant Hall at 7.00 a.m. and delighted all devotees both inside and outside the Hall by His Darshan. The programme started at 7.20 a.m. with Bhagavan's permission. After Omkaram, the students chanted slokas from Guru Gita to offer their homage to the Universal Teacher, Bhagavan Baba. The chanting of Sanskrit slokas with the accompaniment of music filled the entire atmosphere with devotional fervour. The singing by students was so full of Bhava that it appeared they were pouring out their heart in words to express their gratitude to their divine guru, Sri Sathya Sai. This was followed by Bhajans. The students and devotees sang with devotion filling the atmosphere with divine name.

While the Bhajans were continuing, Bhagavan Baba blessed the Prasadam for distribution to all the devotees. Bhagavan Himself supervised the distribution of Prasadam, so that it reached all devotees. To the delight of devotees, Bhagavan entered the rows of devotees and distributed Prasadam so that they could get close Darshan of Bhagavan and also receive Prasadam from His divine hands. The great compassionate guru thus not only distributed Prasadam, but Ananda also to all the devotees, some of whom had come from far off countries. Bhagavan continued distributing Prasadam for about half-an-hour to give Ananda to the devotees.

In the end, Mangalarati was offered to Bhagavan. Before the function came to close, an announcement was made that Bhagavan would bless the devotees with His Divine Discourse on this sacred occasion at 4.00 p.m. in Sai Kulwant Hall.

In the afternoon, Swami came to Sai Kulwant Hall at 3.15 p.m. After His usual round of Darshan among the devotees, Swami came to the dais and sat down in His chair. There was a spontaneous applause from the devotees who were eagerly waiting for Swami's discourse.

The programme started with the chanting of Veda Mantras by nine students of primary school. Thereafter, Dr. Sandipan Chatterjee introduced the two speakers of the evening, namely, Sri V. Srinivasan, Member, Central Trust, and Sri B. N. Narasimhamurthy, Warden, Sri Sathya Sai Hostel, Whitefield.

Pointing to the multitude of people who had come from all parts of the world to pay obeisance to the Universal Guru, Bhagavan Baba, Sri V. Srinivasan wondered whether it was Guru Poornima or Birthday Festival. Sri Srinivasan recounted the achievements of man in the 20th century and referred to the victories achieved by him, namely, conquering space, landing on moon, eradicating diseases, mastery over deepest oceans and lofty mountains. "In spite of all these

achievements, man has been fighting a losing battle in comprehending and conquering himself. His naked selfishness, unbridled greed, and cut-throat rivalry have led him to the brink of self-destruction. Man is now floundering; he does not know what to do. Avatars incarnate to protect the righteous and destroy the wicked. But Sathya Sai Avatar has incarnated to protect man from himself—from his own animal instincts. Why do the multitudes of people flock to Prasanthi Nilayam? No invitation has been sent to anyone. They come because man becomes human only in Prasanthi Nilayam. With the aid of His limitless love Bhagavan has helped humans to become human again." He said, "The greatest miracle of Bhagavan is His all-encompassing love and compassion by which He transforms and transmutes everyone." He referred to the incident of 8th July when Bhagavan held the candle of a lady on the stage of the Australian Play "Simple Living, High Thinking" in His own hands to enable her to take Bhagavan's Padanamaskar. He emphasised that the lessons given by the play about simple living and high thinking should be learnt on this sacred occasion, so that we can dedicate our lives fully to Sai Bhagavan.

The second speaker, Sri B. N. Narasimhamurthy, also narrated several incidents about Bhagavan's love and compassion.

He told how compassionate Bhagavan once held the baby of a woman devotee in His own hands to enable her to take Padanamaskar. He also narrated the incident of a devotee from whose pocket Bhagavan took his letter because the devotee's hands were dirty and he would not give his letter to Bhagavan with his dirty hands. Sri Murthy referred to a few incidents from the life of Bhagavan when Bhagavan Himself was asked to reveal His identity. Bhagavan's father Pedda Venkappa Raju asked the question from Bhagavan when He was 12 years old, and Bhagavan replied, "I am Sai Baba." Similarly, at a later date Bhagavan was asked this again in a gathering, to which Bhagavan replied, "I am a man among men, I am a woman among women, I am child among children. Alone I am God." Recently when Bhagavan was in Kodaikanal, He asked the students to tell, "Who am I?" When nobody could give a correct answer, Bhagavan said, "I am I."

After these brief speeches, Bhagavan blessed the multitudes of devotees with His divine discourse (Text of the discourse given separately) and concluded it with the Bhajan "*Hari Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahi.*"

As a grand finale to the day-long celebrations of the Guru Poornima festival, a delightful musical programme was held in the evening at 6.00 p.m. in the Poornachandra Auditorium. Famous classical singers Begum Parveen Sultana and her husband Ustad Dilshad Khan made a devoted and dedicated musical offering. At the end of the programme, Bhagavan came on the stage and materialised a gold chain for Begum Parveen Sultana and also honoured all the Artists with saris and garments.

Holy Confluence of Cultures at Prasanthi Nilayam

Apart from the main celebrations of Guru Poornima in Sai Kulwant Hall, a large number of cultural programmes were also organised at Prasanthi Nilayam on this holy occasion. Several

countries of the world put up joint cultural programmes as also many State Sathya Sai Organisations of India and their Bal Vikas children presented dramas and other cultural items. Prasanthi Nilayam thus became a confluence of cultures of the world. Presented below is a glimpse of this grand cultural extravaganza.

Ashada Ekadashi: *Dance Drama (5. 7.98)*

The holy festival of Ashada Ekadasi was celebrated at Prasanthi Nilayam in Sai Kulwant Hall on the morning of 5th July 1998 in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Baba. This festival symbolises man's journey to God, as the Varkaris on this day start their long journey to Pandharpur in Maharashtra to pay their homage to Lord Vithoba, who chose Pandharpur as His abode for the child devotee Pundalika. The festival was organised by Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, Maharashtra, in which about 100 adults and 35 Bal Vikas children took part.

Bhagavan Baba came to Sai Kulwant Hall at 7.00 a.m. and delighted the throngs of men, women and children by His Darshan. The programme began with an invocation to Panduranga and Vitthala, the invocation song having been rendered by expert singers. Soon after this invocation song, a party of traditional singers and dancers (Varkaris) in white dress and white cap entered the Hall. They sang and danced with music and the whole Sai Kulwant Hall echoed with their song 'Vitthala Jai Panduranga'.

After offering a Tulsi Mala to Bhagavan, Bal Vikas children conducted the programme through impressive dialogue. While one of them narrated the story of Tulsi, other Bal Vikas children enacted the whole story in which Tulsi plant comes out of the ashes of Brinda. Lord Vishnu was pleased with Brinda's purity and granted her a boon that her name would remain forever and she would be worshipped as Tulsi. On the day of Ashada Ekadashi, lady devotees carry Tulsi plants on their heads on their way to Pandharpur. Along with this story, the Bal Vikas children in green and red dresses presented a song and dance sequence on Tulsi while carrying Tulsi plants on their heads.

Bal Vikas children also presented a tableau on Pundalika, who served his parents as living gods on earth. When Lord Vitthala knocks at the door of Pundalika, he offers a brick to the Lord to stand on because he is busy serving his parents and cannot attend to the Lord immediately. This small skit along with a song adoring parents and recalling the Vedic injunction 'Matru Devo Bhava' effectively brought out the message of reverence to parents.

The children then exhorted all the devotees gathered on this holy day of Ashadha Ekadashi to take a pledge to become torch-bearers of Bhagavan's mission of world transformation by putting into practice His divine message of Sathya, Dharma, Santhi and Prema in their lives. The pledge was read out by a Bal Vikas child and was repeated by the entire gathering.

After the concluding song in praise of Vitthala, Bhagavan blessed the children who participated in the programme.

Sant Eknath: *Drama on the life of Sant Eknath (5. 7.1998)*

The same evening, i.e., 5th July 1998, Bal Vikas children of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, Maharashtra, presented the drama "Sant Eknath" in the Poornachandra Auditorium at 6.00 p.m.

After invocation to Lord Ganesha and the opening songs in Hindi and Marathi in praise of Lord Krishna, the play opened with a dialogue between Lord Krishna on one side and His divine consort Rukmini and most ardent devotee Radha on the other side. Both Rukmini and Radha complain to Lord Krishna that He has been absent for 12 long years and has passed this time as a servant of Eknath, the saint of Paithan. Lord Krishna explains that Sant Eknath is one of His dearest devotees and the Lord has no hesitation in serving His devotees. In order to convince Radha and Rukmini, Lord Krishna asks them to see the life story of Sant Eknath.

Thereafter significant incidents from the life of Sant Eknath were presented by the Bal Vikas children in vivid detail, which brought out the message of Eknath most effectively. His journey to Devagiri, his devotion to his guru Janardan Pant, his deep study of scriptures and his ability to earn the grace of his guru by his diligence and devotion—all these incidents were brought live on the stage.

Some remarkable incidents highlighted Eknath's teachings. The incident of feeding the poor untouchables by Eknath on the Shraddha of his forefathers not only showed his love for the poor, but also brought out the hollowness of the rituals if not performed with sincerity and devotion. Similarly, the incident in which some untouchables are incited to spit on him 108 times showed how impeccable was his forbearance. Finally, the incident of quenching the thirst of a donkey by the Ganges water brought from Kashi for the Abhishekam of the lingam at Rameshwaram showed what true devotion means.

All the incidents were beautifully depicted and the message contained in them was clearly brought out. At the end of the play, Bhagavan Baba came on the stage and blessed the children and also materialised a gold chain for the child artist who played the role of Eknath. The programme came to a close with offering of Mangalarati to Bhagavan.

Matru Devo Bhava: *Drama on the Life of Ishwara Chandra Vidyasagar (7. 7.1998)*

On the evening of 7th July, the Bal Vikas children from the State of West Bengal staged a drama entitled "Matru Devo Bhava" in Poornachandra Auditorium.

The first scene shows the professors of Sanskrit College conferring the title "Vidyasagar" on Ishwara Chandra for his unique distinction of mastering grammar, literature, Alankaram, Smriti, Shruti, Darshanas, Vedanta and the Vedas before reaching the age of 20.

The subsequent scenes depict how Vidyasagar was influenced and moulded by his mother Bhagavati Devi. Vidyasagar requests his mother to accept some ornaments, as all through her life she had to sacrifice only due to poverty. On his insistence, his mother asks for three ornaments - first, a primary school for the children of the village. The second ornament demanded is a small hospital and the third ornament is an assurance from Vidyasagar that he will not sell his knowledge nor feel proud about his education, cultivate humility and will consider himself as a servant of all.

A few other incidents show his total devotion to his mother. He is prepared to resign his job to honour his word to his mother to reach home. He even swims the river on a stormy night to reach home to fulfill his mother's command. In yet another scene it is shown that his mother has distributed all the six blankets sent by Vidyasagar among the poor villagers and she herself is spending the cold winter night near the hearth.

In an interesting incident, a man is seen getting down from the train on a small station where he has come to meet Vidyasagar and listen to his lecture. He wants a coolie to carry his small briefcase, but there is no coolie available. Seeing his plight Vidyasagar offers to carry his briefcase. When he wants to pay, Vidyasagar refuses. When the man comes to know that the man who carried his luggage is none else but Vidyasagar himself, he feels sorry and ashamed. Vidyasagar tells him to do his work himself, as his mother had taught him.

Vidyasagar's contribution towards emancipation of women is one of his greatest achievements. In a scene, a nine-year-old girl is being beaten. She had been married to a 75 year old Brahmin and becomes a widow after his death. Seeing the plight of child widows he advocates widow re-marriage. On being blessed by his mother, Vidyasagar consults scriptures and finds directions in support of widow re-marriage.

In the last scene, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa goes to the house of Pandit Ishwara Chandra Vidyasagar to bless him for his spirit of sacrifice and declares that Vidyasagar is a Siddha Purusha, although he might not have done any Puja, Japa etc. He says that Mother Kali has sent him as Vidyasagar is not only an ocean of knowledge but an ocean of compassion (Daya Sagar) also. He has divine love for humanity and Love is God. Swami Ramakrishna then declares in the end that Vidyasagar's devotion to his mother would be written in words of gold.

Simple Living High Thinking: Musical Medley (8. 7. 98)

A delightful musical programme entitled "Simple Living High Thinking" was presented by Region VIII countries (Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Singapore) to show how man should start his journey from the state of distraction to the state of inner peace by following the age-old dictum 'Simple Living High Thinking', as exemplified by Bhagavan Baba in His own life.

The play depicts how man keeps on postponing good things for tomorrow as he gets entangled in the mire of materialism. He is caught in the whirlpool of life dominated by the demons of conflict and war. God sends him many reminders in the form of saints and prophets, yet he does not take one step towards God, so that God would take 100 steps towards him.

Teachings of Bhagavan Baba leading man towards the divine path were beautifully depicted through songs, music and visuals. The messages of Bhagavan 'Love All, Serve All', 'Hands that serve are holier than lips that pray', 'Control Your Senses', 'Respect and Love Your Motherland' were very effectively brought out by the singers.

Peace not Pieces: Dance Drama (8. 7. 1998)

The second presentation of the evening was the drama "Peace not Pieces" by Region VII countries (Australia and Papua New Guinea).

The play opens with a fictitious singer and song writer Harry being interviewed by the press who want his story. Harry has made a comeback into pop music with the unlikely combination of rock music and spirituality. The reporters are out to get his story and what has inspired his radical change of style. Undaunted by the crowds of reporters, Harry leads two reporters off to his room for their pre-arranged interview.

In response to their questioning, he informs them that his inspiration comes from India in the form of his Guru, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, a great spiritual teacher who teaches love, peace and other spiritual and moral values. The reporters are totally confused by all these strange names and ideas and Harry obliges them with a screening of a video to help them comprehend.

Inspiring incidents from the life of Bhagavan are then brought live on the stage most vividly. They depict Bhagavan's amazing childhood, the wonder of His miracles and above all His teachings. All these incidents are beautifully enacted by members of the Australian team who demonstrate villagers of Puttaparthi talking about incidents from the life of the young Sathya Narayana Raju against the backdrop of a village scene. Such incidents include His refusal to eat non-vegetarian food in His home, giving food to beggars, plucking a variety of fruits from a tamarind tree, getting the villagers together for singing of devotional songs, revealing Himself as Sai Baba by casting down jasmine flowers that spell out His name "SAI BABA" as they fall on the ground.

As the village scenes are progressing, Harry's hyped-up business manager bursts into Harry's dressing room, where the interview is taking place. He gleefully informs Harry of a proposal he has in his hand for Harry to endorse a product that will make them millions of dollars. Harry calmly informs him that they already have millions and he will do the endorsement provided a trust is set up for the money to go to charity. The manager leaves in amazement and confusion at Harry's decision.

The play finishes with Harry on stage with his youth group band who give a stunning performance that has the audience clapping loudly and Swami heading for the stage and manifesting a double diamond ring for the lead singer and handing out garments for all the cast and supporting crew.

On stage there was much merriment as Swami in His abundant love held the torch from a lady devotee in His own hands to allow her to take Padanamaskar.

Valmiki: *Dance Drama on the life of MaharshiValmiki (11.7.1998)*

On the evening of 11th July 1998, the Bal Vikas children of Hyderabad presented a dance drama entitled "Valmiki" in Poornachandra Auditorium at 6.00 p.m.

The play opens with Ganesha vandana, Valmiki vandana and Sai vandana. Two dancers present flowers at the lotus feet of Bhagavan whose grace is invoked by the song "Manav Roopa Madhav Roopa, Sadguru Sai Prem Swaroopa."

In the opening scene Valmiki is shown as a hunter and dacoit. Soon he comes across a saint in his jungle resort. This meeting becomes a turning point of his life. He receives jnanopadesha and mantropadesha from the saint. But instead of japa of "Rama, Rama" he starts chanting "Mara Mara." He performs rigorous penance and even loses body consciousness. Dust accumulates on his body and ants make a Valmik (ant-hill) on his head. By japa and meditation the dacoit turned penitent achieves the goal of life. He receives the blessings of Maharishi Narada who declares that he would be known as Maharishi Valmiki and would compose the epic story of Rama in verse.

In the following scenes, the story of Dasaratha and Rama is narrated and Sita comes to stay in the Ashram of Maharishi Valmiki, where her two sons Lava and Kusa catch the Ashwamedha horse of their father, king Rama of Ayodhya. The rest of the story of Ramayana is told in many scenes in quick succession.

The play ended with prayers at the lotus feet of Bhagavan for his blessings. Bhagavan then came on the stage and blessed the children.

AVATAR VANI:

BHAGAVAN'S KODAIKANAL DISCOURSES: IV

Man, Truth, Love and God

*The company of good people will be very hard to get
While you have a lot of wicked ones all around the world
There are pebbles available in plenty
But precious gems and diamonds are extremely rare to get.*

Embodiments of Love!

In this universe, there are lakhs of species of living beings, but the human is the noblest and the highest species. If man loses money, he can get back; if he loses a friend he can get another; if he loses his wife, even then he can re-marry and have another wife; if he loses his share of land, he can get another, but he cannot get back the body once it is lost. Man does not realise the high value of precious human life and is misusing it in many ways. You must realise that once a night is passed, it won't come back. Once the river merges in the ocean, it cannot come back. When you eat a fruit, you cannot get it back in its original form. Man is not knowing his own value. He has several capacities and faculties. The first gift that a man possesses is Mathi—intellect. The second is Sthithi—position. The third one is Paristhithi—circumstance and fourth is Gathi—destiny. These constitute his Sampatti—possessions.

Man's Precious Possessions

All things that are happening to man depend on his destiny alone. Mind is based on our own conduct and it shapes our destiny. Mathi should be sound. Everything else depends on Sthithi and Sampatti. When one understands this, one can know one's destiny. Everyone has to maintain the mental balance to act properly.

Suppose a person has a knife in hand. He or she can cut vegetables, cook food and consume it to appease hunger. On the other hand, if the person cuts the throat of another person it will lead to disastrous consequences. You must know the proper method to use any material. You must be aware of the different types of Shakti (power) that you are gifted with.

Human life can be compared to a big clock containing three needles (as the clock has hour, minute and second hands) representing years, months and days. They are moving in perfect union and they decide your life-span. In spite of having these three regulatory factors man is not leading a good life. Thirty days make a month and 12 months make one year. You must know how to pass every day in the best possible way without wasting the precious time. You must also know that everything happens according to the Divine Will.

The Divine cannot be expected to act according to your thoughts or desires. God is fully aware of the needs of the family, country and world at large, and confers the requisite benefits at the appropriate time. Let us take an example of how one gift of Nature proves beneficial to some people; while it is not so for some others. Suppose a marriage function is being celebrated in one house, the family prays for the rain to stop to facilitate them. At the same time, a neighbour who has cultivable land, that is dry, prays for the rain to continue to pour in torrents to facilitate his cultivation of the land. God is impartial and will not submit to a particular individual's needs. He weighs the needs of all and maintains a balance.

The Common Malaise of all Mankind

Generally all people are suffering from an incurable disease. It may be in a lesser degree in some while more severe in others. The difference is only in the severity but all are suffering from this. It cannot be cured even by expert medical treatment by experienced doctors. This disease is 'ego'. Where is the need to be egoistic for an ordinary mortal? When you consider your position in comparison to the entire world you are just an infinitesimal speck. In the world map, India is a small country and Tamil Nadu is a part of this. In Tamil Nadu, Kodaikanal can be spotted only as a tiny dot. In this what is your position as an individual? When you analyse in this manner, you will find you are one of no consequence at all. If you think you are so big inflated with ego, it is only sheer ignorance. If one identifies himself with divinity, there will be no room for ego. All are divine in this world and you are also one of the several billions of people. When you realise this truth, where is the scope for ego? It is due to ignorance that one feels egoistic and faces lots of problems because of this.

Thoughts lead to Karma (action) and create feelings which contribute to Sheelam (character). Character makes a man deserving to be termed really human. So, one must develop character by having sacred thoughts and good deeds. For this, the primary requisite is control of mind which is the source of thoughts.

The term for thought in Sanskrit is 'Sankalpa', which means it is arising from heart, the seat of God (Sam). Saalokya, Saroopya, Sameepya and Sayujya are all related to this "Sam" which is synonymous with "Sat." Sat is changeless Truth (Saswatham). When thoughts are good and based on the Divine, the Stithi or state of man will be good. 'Sampatti' does not mean worldly or physical comforts. It comprises of Sat Vichar and Sat Sankalpa (good inquiry and good thoughts). Such good thoughts based on the changeless Truth will come only from merits acquired in previous lives (Poorva Punya). This human birth itself is attained after innumerable lives of lower species. While so, why should you venture to commit sinful deeds? It is your bad vision of the external world which makes you commit sins. So you should develop Samyak Drishti (good vision). You should look upon the world as the manifestation of the Divine (Vishvam Vishnu Swaroopam). World is the effect for which cause is God.

The whole universe is a phenomenon of cause and effect. It is foolish to look only at the external world considering it as mere Jada (matter). You must see the reality behind the entire creation. If you see with divine vision everything will be divine. (Sarvam Vishnumayam Jagat).

You see Anil Kumar wearing glasses (spectacles). They appear to be an obstacle to his eyes but they help him to see more clearly. Similarly, if you wear glasses of love, you will be able to see the Divine in everything though they may appear to be obstructing like the spectacles. The main life principle is Prema or Love without which there will be no love between mother and child, husband and wife or between friends. Love elevates the individual from human level to divinity. Now man limits his love to his own kith and kin and other possessions thus making it narrow. It should be expanded to cover all fellow beings. If love occupies the single seated chair of heart, there will be no room for jealousy, hatred and other such evil feelings.

Queen Madalasa's Lullaby

The great queen Madalasa used to sing lullaby to her children inspiring them to realise the Atma which was their reality and cast off attachment to body. Even while the children were in the cradle, she taught them Atmajnana. She sent her three children to the forest to learn scriptures when they came of age. By the time she was about to send her fourth son also, her husband intervened and prevented her from doing so pleading that if he also was sent away there would be no heir to the throne. She pleaded with her husband that she was only teaching them the Principle of Atma based on Omkara, the Primordial Sound to make them aware of its greatness which is hailed by people of all the seven worlds. She said she was singing not lullaby of world which was negative but the Truth related to God, which is positive.

Harmony in Thought, Word and Deed

You have to stick to Dvaita-twa (Divine Consciousness) even while you are engaged in worldly activities. In spite of lapse of millions of years man is not yet able to understand his reality. How can he realise Divinity? If you develop human qualities you can easily realise Divinity. Veda teaches "Sathyam Vada: Dharmam Chara" (speak the Truth, adhere to Righteousness). Now people kill Truth and ignore Righteousness. Santhi (Peace) and Prema (Love) are reduced to narrowest limits. All the four Sathya, Dharma, Santhi and Prema must be put in unison for the world and humanity to thrive. If you study how these lights here are functioning, you will find that the current passes through the wire and illuminates the bulb. Sathya (Truth) is the current, Dharma is the wire, and Santhi is the bulb; when the current flows to the bulb it burns brightly.

This light is love (Prema). You will see that Sathya, Dharma, Santhi together form the constituents for Prema.

In ancient days they used to say, before taking food, Annam Brahma (Food is God), Raso Vishnu (Water is God) and Shakti Easwara (Energy is God). They used to offer such prayers conceiving food, water and energy as the three aspects of God—Brahma, Vishnu and Easwara.

The gross portion of the food nourishes the body (Kayam), the subtle portion nourishes the mind (Manas) and the more subtle portion nourishes the power of speech (Vaak). Thus all the three constituents Mano, Vaak, Kayam—Mind, Speech and Body are sustained by food. All these three combine to make the full personality of man. Harmony in these three, thought, word and deed makes one a Mahatma. Disparity in these three makes a man Duratma (wicked person).

*Manasyekam vachasyekam
Karmanyekam mahatmanam
Manasyanyam vachasyanyam
Karmanyam duratmanam*

In the latter, the current of Sathya is absent; so it will not shine. When there is harmony, current will not fail. You have a main switch in a house which controls all other switches. If it is put off, lights will go off. In the body, the main switch is the heart; when one has love in the heart all one's thoughts, words and actions will shine brightly with love. Therefore, you should fill the heart with love and share with others. When you fill the tank of heart with truth and righteousness all limbs of the body and sense organs functioning as taps will radiate the same truth and righteousness. Love is selfless and self is loveless-ness. Love gives and forgives; self gets and forgets. When love is underlying your activity everything will be perfect.

Embodiments of Love!

Develop love in the main switch of the heart. That is real Sadhana. This Prema Shakti will achieve anything. Love is the essential basis for spiritual path. The other Sadhanas like meditation, japa etc. are all good but without love they are of no use. What is meditation? It is required for every action—walking, talking, writing, reading and even sleeping. You have to concentrate for everything. Life is a race. The saying is "slow and steady wins the race." This is quite apt for the race of life. Haste makes waste and waste makes worry. So you should go slow and steady without faltering or wavering. Whatever you do, and even when you talk to someone consider it as doing God's work. If you practise this way, you can have peace.

*Shreyohi joanam abhyasath
Jnanath dhyanam vishishyate,
Dhyanath karmaphala thyagah
Thyagath santhiranatham.*

Lord Krishna says in the Gita that the sacrifice of the fruits of action is superior even to jnana and meditation. From sacrifice comes peace immediately.

People talk of yoga. Patanjali has defined 'yoga' as control of mind and senses. Water has the nature to flow down while fire in a pit goes upwards. Worldly desires are like water and pull you down. They are negative.

Positive wisdom is that of Atma which is like fire. If you understand this truth, you will not be after worldly desires. The body is given to you to do karma and realise God. By subjecting body to pain by fasting, etc. you cannot gain anything. You have to keep the body trim to realise the Divine. You must practise the Sadhana of unification of thought, word and deed. If you achieve this with love in your heart, it itself is a good penance. Do everything as offering to God and to please God. There is no greater worship than doing your duty with love as offering to God. God is infinite and vast. Do not limit Him into a small frame. Widen your vision. Make your love expand to cover the whole humanity. Realise all beings as divine. Then you realise all are one.

Go on adding I plus you, I plus you and it will become 'We'. Then go on adding We plus We—We are all one. All are children of God. This is brotherhood of man and fatherhood of God. The Gita says "All beings of the world are part of My Eternal Self." All beings are therefore eternal. All are manifestations of the Divine. Though forms are different, Atma is one. The Prema Tattwa (Principle of Love) should be developed. God is Trigunarahitha (Nityanandam Paramasukhadam). Why attribute qualities to God? Love is the most essential nature of the Lord. It is not an attribute. Practise love in speech, feeling and action. If everyone practises love, there will be no agitation in the world. Hatred will be eliminated.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the Bhajan "*Bhavabhaya Harana*."

—From Bhagavan's Discourse at "Sai Shruti", Kodaikanal, April 21, 1998

One God, One Goal

"Moksha" does not mean attaining some divine state. Divinity is within you. All you have to do is to manifest it. That which does not exist, will not come forth. That which exists will not go away. Everything is present here and now. Hence, there is no need for any search or for any Sadhana. Whatever you do, do it as an offering to God. Do not make a distinction between "my work" and "God's work". When you make a division, you give rise to enmity, because of differences. When there is enmity, there is no room for Divinity, Purity and Unity. When you install God in your heart, there is no room in it for anything else. But today's aspirants treat the heart as a musical chair. They go on from one "Swami" to another and shift from one kind of Sadhana to another. Of what avail is this kind of merry-go-round? It is a waste of time and of life itself. One heart, one thought, one God, one Goal. Whether you utter the name of Allah or Jesus, Buddha or Zoroaster or Guru Nanak—it is all the same.

—Baba

Quest for Truth

*Neither by penance nor by bathing in sacred rivers
Nor by study of scriptures nor by japa
Can the ocean of Samsara be crossed
Without serving godly men.*

(Sanskrit sloka)

Embodiments of Love!

Man adopts various means to achieve liberation (from the bondage of mundane existence).

Penance is performed for whose sake? It is for one's own benefit and not for the good of others, nor even for the Supreme Self. In the performance of japa (recitation of the Lord's name), it must be noted that it is done for one's own satisfaction and not for the welfare of others. What is it one should do to secure redemption from the cycle of worldly existence? Chanting the Lord's name or performing sacrifices or doing other rituals will be of no avail. You have to render service to your fellow human beings.

Service is True Worship

Service is the highest form of worship and the best penance. Seva is the most important form of reciting the Lord's name. Money that is lost can be earned again. Lost friends may be got back again. Even the loss of a wife can be made up by remarriage. But, if the present body is lost, it cannot be got back again. Hence, the body is highly sacred.

For what purpose should this sacred body be protected? The body has to be protected because verily it is the primary means of achieving Dharma.

Human birth is a rare privilege. It is highly sacred and sublime. Having been born as human beings, if men do not realise the preciousness of human life, what is the use of being born as human? Man is endowed with the gift of memory. Reflection is natural to him. The search for the meaning of life is an admirable quality. It is as a result of this search that man's creative faculties have resulted in great achievements in the fields of science and in other fields of knowledge. But, owing to their failure to use the intellect properly and on account of misdirected search, people are lost in different kinds of enquiry. One person sees a tree. He sees only the branches and not the roots. Another sees the roots and not the branches. This is not the right way to find out the real truth about anything.

Churning the Ocean of Heart

Real enquiry into the truth calls for an enquiry both into the nature of the branches and the nature of the roots and of the tree as a whole. The scientist looks only at the branches. But the student of the roots is a Vedantin. Whether one is a scientist or a Vedantin, the pursuit of truth, calls for a study of the branches, the roots and the tree integrally.

There is an illustration for this from the scriptures. The Rakshasas (demon's) and the Devas (gods) churned the Ocean of Milk (for getting nectar from it.) The first product to come of the

churning was the dreadful poison, Halahala. Not deterred by this outcome, they continued with the churning of the ocean. In the process? Lakshmi (the goddess of prosperity), marvellous beings like Airavatha, the divine elephant, and finally Amritam (nectar) came out of the ocean. How could they secure all these? Because of their persistence in their efforts.

Men today should turn their hearts towards the search for truth. The human heart is a symbol of the Ocean of Milk. If in this ocean, the rope of wisdom is used for churning the heart, some disappointments and failures may occur. Without succumbing to these failures, if man continues his efforts, he will secure precious things like truth, righteousness, and justice. Qualities like forbearance and compassion will also emerge.

Man should endeavour to cultivate qualities like tolerance, love, sympathy, righteousness, justice and truth. People do not give any importance to this quest for truth. The search for truth is being directed towards worldly objects, which are ephemeral and worthless. Men should really dedicate themselves to the quest for the truth that is eternal. All arts have originated from the search for truth.

Signs Indicating Divinity

In this search for truth though God may not be realised, there will be indications pointing to the Divine. How does this happen? For instance one may point to the Pole Star (Dhruva Nakshatra) as the star that is seen above the branch of a tree. As a matter of fact, there is no connection between the branch of the tree and the Pole Star. The branch, however, indicates the direction in which the Pole Star is to be seen. Likewise, all our directions, all the words we utter, all our behaviour, all that we see are all related to the search for the truth. All of them testify to the existence of God.

For instance, we look at the vast ocean. We feel happy on seeing its vastness. We see a high mountain. It arouses a feeling of joy. Looking at a densely wooded forest, your heart is gladdened. These are all signs of the discovery of truth. Though you do not see God in them, they indicate the presence of the Divine in them.

A big tree grows from a small seed. A chick comes out of an egg. One being is born from another. A flower gives fragrance. You get butter from milk. All these are facts discovered in the search for truth.

Immanence of God

The whole cosmos functions on the basis of three types of activity. These are what we experience in our daily life. One is the act of creation. The second is sustenance of creation. The third is the dissolution of what is created. Creation, sustenance and dissolution are all happenings of everyday experience. We witness them everyday. All of them testify to the existence of the Divine who is the embodiment of Truth. Without realising basic truth people are engaged in controversies about the whereabouts of God. It is easy to raise questions about God. But it is difficult to make the search for God. Why? God is the truth of all truths. He is present as truth even in untruth. He is bad in badness and good in goodness. He is the merit in the meritorious and the sin in the sinful. It is in this context that the Gita declares that the Lord is present as the essence ("Rasa") in all things. God is the sweet essence in the syrup. There can be no syrup

without sugar. Likewise God is immanent in all objects. He is like butter in milk fragrance in a flower the good element in every object. This is the significance of the scriptural dictum: "Rasovai Sah" (He is the essence of everything).

God is immanent in everything in the cosmos like sugar in syrup. This is not visible to the eye. It has to be experienced.

Creation, sustenance and dissolution go on according to the predetermined laws. The Vedas have described the master of these three activities as God. It is reaffirmed by the Upanishads. The Quran, the Bible, the Granth Saheb (of the Sikhs) all these have described how the presence of God can be inferred from various indications.

There is nothing in the cosmos that is not subject to these three processes. None can deny this truth. A philosopher or a scientist; an engineer or a doctor or anyone else has to accept this fact. The master of this process is called God.

What does GOD: signify? "G" stands for generation (or creation). "O" stands for organisation (sustaining the creation). "D" stands for destruction (or dissolution). All these three aspects can be noticed when we examine any object. All the three processes take place according to the will of the Divine. The entire cosmos is encompassed by these three processes.

Five Sheaths of Human Body

How is one to realise this truth? All impulses of man arise from the heart. When the heart is kept pure, all our thoughts, words and actions become sweet. When the heart is dedicated to right purposes, all our actions become righteous and our life gets redeemed. All that is good or bad in us emanates; from the heart. Good and bad are seldom separate from each other. They are inseparable. Happiness is not a separate state. It is the consummation of suffering.

The oneness of the Divine subsumes everything. Humanness is the means to realise this oneness. The scriptures have declared, the same Divine Spirit dwells in all beings.

The human body is encased in five sheaths: Annamaya Kosa (the sheath of food or physical sheath), Pranamaya Kosa (the vital sheath), Manomaya Kosa (the mental sheath), Vijnanamaya Kosa (the sheath of wisdom) and Anandamaya Kosa (the sheath of Bliss). Among the five sheaths, Vijnanamaya Kosa (the sheath of wisdom) is present only in man and not in other beings. Man should realise the preciousness of this gift of wisdom sheath. It should not be misused. Man is endowed with so many noble and estimable qualities that he should not be treated as a being of no account.

Forgetting all his immense potentialities and treating the physical as most important, man is leading a meaningless life.

It is not the physical (Annamaya Kosa) that is really important. As long as life is based on the physical alone, man can have no peace.

Science and Spirituality

The sage Narada, who was proficient in 64 branches of knowledge, suffered from the lack of peace, so he went to Sanat Kumara. He appealed to him: “Swami! Dispel my ignorance and teach me the way to attain peace.” Sanat Kumara said, “Narada! There is no field of knowledge in which you are not proficient. You know all the methods prescribed by the Vedas, Upanishads and Shastras. But all this knowledge has not conferred any happiness on you. All this knowledge is concerned with the phenomenal world, which is transient in its character. You cannot secure peace till you gain knowledge of the Eternal.”

The same truth is declared by the scientists when they say that where science ends spirituality begins.

Science is concerned with all the phenomena in nature. It furnishes what is required for the physical body. It is doubtless essential to take care of the body. But the body should not be deemed as the sole truth. However, one should devote all efforts to its maintenance and comfort. All achievements are dependent on the body. Even the Divine can be realised through the body. But the body is not yourself. It is only an instrument for realising God. Moreover, the Supreme Atmic Principle (Paramatma) is immanent in it.

Love: Man's Divine Quality

There are many vital things to be achieved in the world. For all of them the primary basis is love. What could be accomplished by love and goodwill was demonstrated by one of the Prime Ministers of the U.K. named William Gladstone during the reign of Queen Victoria. He was described by his biographers as a noble man, who discharged his duties with love and with a spirit of sacrifice.

Man has many sacred qualities like love and sacrifice, but he does not put them into practice wholeheartedly. There is divinity in every man. Without recognising this divinity, man is wasting his life on mundane pleasures. Man is the most valuable creation in the world. All things, however precious, derive their value from man. In man, the most divine quality is love. Love is God. Live in Love. Cultivate love for all. This vast world calls for large hearted love. Then humanness will become manifest. Troubles and difficulties are incidental to human existence. But they will pass in due course. What are permanent are the values we cherish.

Bharatiya Culture Rooted in Divinity

In the world, every country has its own ideals and aspirations. Every country should adhere to its “Dharma”, its traditional values. When a country disregards its ideals, it goes down as a nation.

The culture of Bharat is a glorious one. It has survived the vicissitude of five thousand years in history. A huge Banyan tree is sustained by the fact that its roots go deep down into the earth to preserve it. In many countries, their ancient culture has vanished long ago. But only Bharatiya Culture has survived from the distant past to the present (cheers). What is the reason? The divine roots of that culture have gone down to the core of the earth and established themselves firmly. It is that divinity which is sustaining this culture.

The culture of Bharat should not be considered merely as a catalogue of ideals. It is a perennial source of inspiration and example. In spite of other changes, it has remained the same. The perennial message of this culture is not properly recognised.

Despite the remarkable progress in science, peace is eluding the advanced countries. What happiness can there be when there is no peace? Churchill once observed that man had achieved many victories but had not conquered his senses. Prahlada conveyed the same lesson to his father. If a man has no control over his mind, what is the use of all other conquests?

Control of the mind is the first requisite. It can be achieved only by pursuing the spiritual path and not by any other means.

God is the only Guru

What is the significance of the Guru Poornima, which we are celebrating today? People consider a person who imparts knowledge as a preceptor. But most of them are mere teachers, not preceptors (gurus). There is only one guru and He is God (cheers).

Many who describe themselves as "gurus" collect contributions from their disciples on this day. The letter "Gu" signifies one who transcends all attributes. "Ru" signifies one who has no form. Only God can be regarded as one who is beyond attributes and forms. In another sense, the term "Guru" means one who dispels ignorance. Most so-called "gurus" are engaged in worldly activities. In the Kali Age even spirituality has become a kind of business!

People should understand the distinction between worldly love and spiritual love. Worldly love is based on the desire to receive. Divine love yearns to give. God's love goes on giving. This is the true mark of divinity. It is a sign of purity. Spirituality is opposed to the ways of the world. Worldly activities cannot always be avoided. But if whatever is done is made an offering to please God, it gets sanctified. Whatever you achieve, treat it as a gift from God. You will then realise your true humanness.

True humanness consists in the unity of good conduct, good thoughts and good speech. Never depart from truth. Let love flow freely from your heart.

Mind's Role in Health and Disease

At a recent meeting in Bangalore, a devotee said: "I am constantly bathing in the river of life flowing in Bangalore." But where is this river of life to be found in Bangalore? He indicated that he considered the drainage water in the city as life-giving river. It flows on forever and is never dry. It is no wonder that people bathing in such "life-giving" rivers are full of diseases.

What are the causes of the maladies afflicting people today? Impure air, polluted water, adulterated food-stuffs, etc. Nor is that ail. Even the minds are polluted. These mental ailments are the cause of man's degradation. Most of the diseases are caused by aberrations of the mind. Ninety per cent of the diseases are psychological. Constant thinking about one's health is also the cause of many diseases. A heart specialist, who was constantly examining heart patients, was worried about his own heart. Ultimately he died of heart attack. Another doctor, who specialised

in treating digestion disorders ultimately died of gastric troubles by worrying about his own digestion!

The mind has thus a vital role in one's health or illness. That was why the sages declared: "The mind is the cause of men's bondage or liberation." When the mind is directed towards sacred things, everything in a man's life becomes sacred. In such a state, all that you think, see or hear becomes pure and sacred.

The heart is like a lock with the mind as the key. Turn the key towards God, you develop detachment (cheers). Turn the mind towards the world, you get attachment. Our minds should not be immersed in mundane concerns. Deem everything in the world as divine.

True Yearning for God

Once Vivekananda went to Swami Ramakrishna Paramahansa and asked him: "Have you seen God?" "Yes", said Ramakrishna. "In what form?" asked Vivekananda. Ramakrishna replied: "I am seeing Him just as I am seeing you." "Why, then am I unable to see Him?" Ramakrishna explained that if he yearned for God with the same intensity with which he was yearning for many other things, he would be able to experience God. Ramakrishna said that people shed tears for relations, wealth and many other things, but how many shed tears for God? Ramakrishna advised Vivekananda to yearn for God With all his heart and soul. God is then bound to manifest Himself to him.

If we are keen to experience the Divine, we must devote ourselves to the Divine. Men go through various troubles for the sake of wealth, relations, position and power. If they were to devote a small fraction of that time to thoughts of God they would experience freedom from the fear of death. If you think only of world, how can you get peace and bliss?

Concentrate on the love of God. Although one's mother, father and preceptor are to be adored as divine beings, they are not God. God should be worshipped as mother, father, preceptor, kinsman and friend. Father, mother and preceptor dwell in their respective abodes. But God dwells in your heart. Love the Lord who resides in your heart. All other objects of love are impermanent. What is the use of education if you have not learnt to worship God?

What does the worship of God mean? Practices like meditation, japa and penance are all tainted by selfishness. True worship of God consists in seeking union with God by realising one's own divinity. With every breath man proclaims that he and the Divine are one in the Mantra "So-Ham", expressed through inhalation and exhalation.

Men must recognise that the body becomes a sacred shrine (Kshetra) because the indweller is God (Kshetrajna). To know that God is the indweller will free a person from all bad qualities.

Egoism is the worst enemy of man. Possessiveness (Mamakara) is another evil trait. Both these should be banished as they are at the root of all vices. When the two evil traits go, man becomes divinised.

God Seeks only Love

By developing love, one sees the Divine in all beings. It is like wearing coloured glasses. If you see the world through the glasses of love you will see love everywhere (cheers). The glasses and the vision must be in harmony. Only with the eye of love can you use the glasses of love to see the loveliness of the world.

There is no greater spiritual path than the path of love. It is through love that such noble qualities as kindness, compassion and sympathy are fostered.

Embodiments of Love!

You are carrying on a variety of spiritual exercises (Sadhanas). God does not seek your Sadhanas. Nor does He seek your devotion. He seeks only your love.

A Devotee and a Servant of God

A short while ago, K. R. Prasad, a Member of the Sathya Sai Central Trust, came to Me. In the course of our talk he asked Me, "What is the difference between a Bhakta (devotee) and a Dasa (servant of the Lord)." I told him: "Dasa is one who seeks to serve the Lord using his body for the purpose. Bhakta is one who is always thinking about God wherever he may be. The devotee is one who 'always and at all times contemplates on God' ('Sarvada Sarvakaaleshu Sarvatra Hari Chintanam'). Dasa is always thinking of service to God."

Sankaracharya and Padmapada

Sankaracharya had five disciples. One of them was pure-hearted. The other disciples were keenly studying the Shastras, the Upanishads and other texts. They were also learning logic and grammar. One day, Sankaracharya was teaching these disciples the principles of logic. One of them was primarily concerned with service to the guru; he regarded himself as a Dasa of the guru. He was engaged in gathering clothes of the guru after the morning ablutions, take them to the Ganga, wash them and dry them and bring them back to the Ashram. Thus he was totally involved in attending to the personal needs of the guru. He kept the guru's clothes clean, chanting all the while the name of the guru. Once, on his way back from the other bank of the river, he did not realise that the Ganga was in spate. As he was crossing the river, it rose up to the level of his neck. He looked around, but had no fear whether he would be washed away by the swelling waters. His only worry was how to take the clothes to the guru even at the cost of his life. Placing the clothes on his head and chanting the word, "guruji! guruji", he continued wading through the river. Because of his intense devotion to his guru, at every step he took there was a lotus-shaped stone on which he could place his foot. He thereby earned the appellation "Padmapada." Sankaracharya called him and imparted his teachings to him. He told Padmapada: "Service to the guru is a great virtue. You have adored the guru as God. Guru represents the Divine Trinity and is the Supreme Self."

Today, the scriptural saying that the Guru is Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara should be understood not in the literal sense, but in the sense that God alone is the real guru. Sankara taught Padmapada that individual preceptors should not be worshipped as gods. Then, he imparted to Padmapada the sacred truth.

The other four disciples used to treat Padmapada previously as an ignoramus. After receiving the teachings from Sankaracharya, Padmapada could repeat the entire Vedic texts at one stroke. He became a good exponent of Vedanta, better than many scholars.

One day Sankaracharya summoned Padmapada and asked him to whom he was preaching and what message he was giving to them. Padmapada burst into a hymn in praise of Siva and said that Sankara was the inspiration for all his teachings and all his discourses were an offering to Sankara. Who is Sankara? Sankara is one who is free from Sanka (doubts).

No one should have any doubts about God. The doubting man can achieve nothing. With total faith and total love, you can accomplish anything.

It should be realised that proficiency in fields like music, literature and the arts is secured by the grace of the Divine. All fine arts are gifts from God. Nothing can be claimed as one's own achievement. The recipient of God's grace will lack nothing. He will have no troubles and he will commit no wrongs because he has surrendered to God. The person who considers God as his all becomes himself one with God. Hence, direct your minds towards God.

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

—From Bhagavan's discourse on Guru Purnima, July 9, 1998 in Sai Kulwant Hall at
Prasanthi Nilayam

Where to Seek God

God is all pervading, but, yet, we have some scientists who assert, "We have searched all outer space, we have looked for Him on the moon; no, He is nowhere to be found. He does not exist." They do not know what to seek and where, still, they have the impudence to assert that it is not found. Is God an occupant of an identifiable body or form? Has He a habitation and dwelling that is traditionally His? God is all this and more; He is in all this and beyond. He is the inner motivator of the very scientist who "denies" Him! Man himself is God; all matter, even in the moon, is suffused with the Divine Presence. To search for God with the instruments in the laboratory is like trying to cure pain in the stomach by pouring drops into the eye! There is a technique and a special instrument for that purpose which the past masters in that science have developed and spoken about. Equip yourselves with a clear eye through detachment and love, sharpen your sense of discrimination so that it has no prejudice or predilection; then you can see God in you, around you, in all that you know and feel.

—Baba

MODERN MEDICINE:

A SICKNESS INDUSTRY

Treating Human Sickness

Drugs cure the body only if their physical attack on the disease is supported by the force of the Spirit

Notwithstanding the triumphs of modern allopathic science, it is sad but obvious fact that treating disease has become a sickness industry. That industry has now become a most profitable and secure investment, with both a guaranteed market and an easily manipulated tax-funded provider with unlimited funds. Medical student training has the ultimate aim of producing doctors whose basic tool is a prescription pad. The populations of the western world are now effectively being commercially farmed where the human carcass is unique, being the only one that has a commercial value when diseased. Medi-business is rivalling agri-business.

Commercialisation of Human Disease

Modern western medicine has become increasingly restricted where the body is seen as a collection of unrelated parts. Each part is then divided into yet more sub-divisions with allocated specialists. Little discussion occurs between doctors who attend their own specialised conferences and even less occurs between doctors and dentists. However, the latter are still placing corroding toxic metals into teeth that would not be permitted anywhere else in the body. Humans are being exposed to a mixture of toxic chemicals, gases, heavy metals and the multiple side-effects of allopathic drugs. At the same time, they are being starved of vital nutrient minerals and vitamins, due to depleted soils and the loss of ancestral wisdom concerning food preparation and nutrition. The subsequent chronic ill health and misery result in a prolonged, frequently expensive and difficult search for someone who is capable of identifying and treating the underlying causes.

Hospitals in western countries are being forced into adopting the American model where they have to be run at a profit and patients become clients. Doctors, nurses and equipment become running expenses which have to be minimised to ensure a positive bank balance. The most profitable procedures are endorsed and those that are not profitable to the establishment or the drug industry are forbidden. Their doctors and nurses are working so hard that they have little time left to question what is happening and even less time to do anything about it. They therefore tend to sink into an unquestioning routine of treating symptoms and doing what has been decided by others to be acceptable.

What can a doctor do in the face of all this commercialisation of human disease? A human being is not just a collection of body parts to be fixed or replaced. Healing has to equally involve physical, mental and spiritual aspects or, like a three-legged stool with one weak leg, it will not withstand the weight. Our concentration on the carcass has imposed restrictions that will forever prevent us from really helping our patients. We are, however, resonating energy within a body that "follows us around" like iron filings stuck to a magnet. The underlying energy fields act as templates for the more dense layers, as in Ayurvedic five Kosas or, sheaths with the Atma or soul at the centre. This is surrounded in turn by the intellectual, mental, neural and physical sheaths. In like manner to the pattern of iron filings, the material substance can be made to change its shape, as the magnet is bent or the body's internal resonating environment is distorted or, literally, by mind over matter. Every element and even every thought has its own specific resonance or sound, with some being harmonic and others disharmonic to the body or mind.

These barely understood resonances cause distortions that manifest as disease at physical level but originate at very subtle ethereal levels.

This field of bio-resonance medicine cannot be understood in terms of allopathy but has been known in Germany for 40 years as the discipline of electro-acupuncture according to Voll (EAV), and uses electro-dermal testing instruments. Sound can now be eliminated by the computerised production of the mirror image of the sound. Similarly, the toxic resonance of a substance can be eliminated from the body by a homoeopathic "mirror image" fed into its distorted internal environment. German instruments can now even create these resonances to match a patient's specific disharmonic vibrations. Indeed, physicists are now able to digitally record some of these subtle resonances which are also present in the healing herbs and minerals that have been used for millennia by Ayurvedic doctors and herbalists. Sadly, even this field is now being threatened by the medical industrialists, with plant "fingerprint" patenting and the introduction of international standards legislation. This legislation could eliminate the traditional practitioners and their suppliers who are unable to pay for the sophisticated testing.

Unless an illness or injury is purely physical, treatment has to include mental and spiritual needs. This becomes even more relevant with chronic illnesses such as cancer. Tumour destructive therapies will continue to fail, with the majority of sufferers dying from the disease, despite everything done to destroy the tumour, until doctors address the "environment" in which tumour grew. Surrounding every tumour is a human being without hope and cancer can indeed be a socially acceptable form of suicide as a means of escaping from an intolerable situation. Conversely, tumours can disappear once the real underlying problems are identified, effective treatment given and above all, if the patient is given hope. There is no such thing as false hope. However, doctors do give false no-hope messages by telling their patients that they have only a few weeks or months to live.

Doctors and Drugs

What has Sai Baba given us to help those who are struggling to get away from this obsessive body-consciousness? He says, "Medicines are useful as long as the body consciousness is uppermost. The best is to use our will force to heal having Swami's force behind us." He says, "Dharma is love and truth in action. In the Dharmic life you should keep your promises and never forget them," which applies to the often ignored doctors' and dentists' Hippocratic Oath. This includes the words, "I will give no deadly medicine to anyone if asked, nor suggest any such counsel." "Medicine is one of the arts imparted to man by God's common Grace. Drugs cure the body only if their physical attack on the disease is supported by the force of the Spirit." Where has the art of medicine gone when western doctors, wishing to use safe, cheaper and effective but unapproved or "unscientific" therapies, risk professional attack and loss of license from medical boards with vested commercial interests? Notably, so-called scientific medicine has had an embarrassing habit of changing every 10-20 years, as newer drugs are marketed or medical fashions change. Traditional and reliable forms of healing have continued for centuries or even millennia.

Doctors have a perfect opportunity to do loving service. Sai Baba has said, "You should be courteous and well-mannered." However, how often has medicine become a business where every client is seen across a desk, is briefly questioned for five minutes, given a drug prescription

and shown the door? How many patients do we actually touch? How many do we really listen to in the haste to get finished? How many times has a patient given us a hug? How many times has a small child spontaneously climbed on our lap to be examined? Would we even be able to continue to practise allopathic medicine if the supply of drugs suddenly stopped? This could well happen if the imminent year 2000 computer crash creates chaos in the drug industry. Homoeopaths, herbalists and naturopaths would still be able to help, and many patients are already choosing these remedies. Those who have studied the principles of Ayurveda would be able to help.

We could also consider sharing these words with our patients: "The consciousness within us that has manifested in the form of Bhagavan is the only efficient doctor. Submission of the body and mind to it is the surest way of healing oneself. Most of us do not know the existence of such a force within us and we do not allow this force to play its part. The body can be rendered free from most of the illnesses by allowing the consciousness instead of the mind to take charge of the body." We do not need double-blind placebo-controlled studies to find out what works. Sai Baba has told us what to do. "Take time to sit by the patient as you would sit by your brother. Hold the patient by the hand and look into his eyes with compassion." What beautiful simple instructions! He has also instructed us: "Love all - serve all, spend every second of your life usefully and well. Render service to others, engage yourself in nourishing the sick, but when thus engaged in service, do not think either of the result, or the act of service, or the person to whom it is rendered. The service is made holy if you ignore both the good and the bad and keep on repeating the mantra silently in your heart." For instance, it only takes a second to add the letters ASR in tiny letters on a prescription or a label, but "Aum Sai Ram", accompanied by the thought, not only benefits the patient but also gives an opportunity for Namasmarana and a recognition of who is the Doer.

When asked why a Super Speciality Hospital was necessary, Sai Baba replied, "Hospitals are for those who still believe in doctors and drugs." As doctors, we have a unique chance to serve and need to thank those patients who, by still believing in us, also give us a chance to help the indwellers of both carcasses on their journey back from whence we all came. That patient's disease and our involvement could be the means by which Sai Baba is reminding "old acquaintances" of their purpose here. However, the vehicle has still to be looked after or, while someone's life is taken up dealing with their physical ailments and pain, precious time may be wasted at this stage of an all-important inner spiritual journey home.

Health is not just absence of disease. It is the presence of spiritual, mental and physical well being. Significantly, there are also three levels of healing. The lowest is to treat symptoms. The second is to relieve pain. The highest is to help someone on his path to a higher destiny. The nature and skill of the Dharmic doctor would not only involve all of these levels of healing but would also have an awareness of their significance.

Every cell in the human body is God; everyone has God as the source. God is the doctor, seek Him, rely on Him, you will be free from diseases. God belongs to all, He is universal.

—Dr. M. E. G. Dfrey

Search for Happiness

Man has to pay attention to three basic duties in his quest for happiness: (1) He should forget what he has to forget, namely, the world around him and its tantalising pleasures (2) He has to reach where he has to reach, namely' the goal of the Divine, the Presence of the Almighty and (3) He has to give up what he has to give up, namely, material desires and pursuits. When the mind is turned towards God or goodness, it becomes human. If it is turned towards evil thoughts and wicked egoism, it becomes demoniac. It is not good for man to be constantly engaged in exciting things, exciting food, talk, books, films, games, sights and sound. They are passionate things that disturb and agitate the mind.

—Baba

We Humans

Oh Lord!

We have always been praying to you
bowing our mud-filled heads in front of your various manifestations:

We have always bowed to you whenever you appear as a stone statue of Lord 'Ganesha'
but we never bother to do anything
about poaching for ivory
when the self-same Ganesha's head is shot with bullets
and so many other tiny Ganeshas orphaned in jungles.
We never bother to stop circuses
where the same Ganesha is made to obey commands,
and is beaten mercilessly and starved...
Oh Ganesha, we are sorry
we never recognize true significance of your head

We worship God-incarnate, 'Matsya-Avatar'
but always freak out when fish-curries and fish-fries
are served on dining table
and never bother to do anything
to stop poaching of dolphin, whale, shark, sea lion, seal and others.

We have always been praying to you: as 'Gopal'
and bow our heads to the herd of cows surrounding you, as 'Shiva'
and revere 'Nandi', the bull faithfully sitting in front of you...
but we never bother to do anything
to stop merciless slaughtering of 'Mother' cow
for getting beef or leather
or we never feel its agony when its dearest calf is separated

and starved to death in front of its eyes.
The self-same 'Nandi' which witnesses buckets of milk poured on its master Siva
dies here, when infant, craving for every drop of its mother's milk
which is its birth-right ...
And if it survives this treacherous starvation
it has to pull carts—overloaded with all sorts of material
under scorching sun and round the clock

...the end again is like our 'Mother' cow's
...in slaughter-house!
The same 'Nandi'-foams keep dripping out of its mouth
it is thirsty and hungry
but we don't have mercy
Overloaded beyond limits,
its urine drops wet the ground and it drags itself
where...towards its master Siva?
Siva only knows...!!

We have always taken pride to boast about loyalty of Lord 'Hanuman'
but never bother to do anything
when these self-same Hanumans are misused...

either someone catches them, starves and beats them
mercilessly at improper places
so that they perform desired feats to entertain us
on roads or at the circuses
or they end up being victims of the experiments in
the labs which are much worse than
Hitler's chambers for torturing and killing Jews.

These labs which resemble the hell where a few of us are performing
some troublesome, inhuman experiments in the name of helping science...
Many Hanumans are tortured there—they are given shocks
they are exposed to radiation
they are made victims of various diseases artificially-
rabies ,cancer or AIDS, to name a few...
Psychological experiments are performed
to know their emotional imbalances
because they are the creatures very similar to homo-sapiens.

Oh Rama, where are you?
in this hell-like place many other creations of Lord Almighty are tortured...
Rabbit...
Mouse...revered as vehicle of Lord Ganesha
Squirrel...gentle and swift helpers to Rama, in building the bridge
Cat...
Guinea pigs...
Dog...which is worshipped as 'Khandoba'
or favorite creature of Trinity God, Dattatreya.

There is more to the misery of dogs:
Civilisations are not able to respect this creation of God...
Theoretically they are declared as the most faithful friend of mankind
but still their species has to become extinct
for that reason they are either poisoned on the roads and streets
or they are dragged with tongs and chains...with bleeding mouth,
broken spine, twisted neck or limbs mutilated...beaten cruelly...
...to be electrocuted in stinking killing chambers
where death is horrible...

Wait

There is Lord Krishna saying in the *Gita*...

"Every living creature is my embodiment, so dare not hurt anyone..."

or Jesus saying "Do unto others as you want others to do unto you..."

Forgetting what Prophet Mohammed did out of compassion...

Killing was a far off thing, he even did not want to disturb the sleep of a cat
which was fast asleep on his precious robe, and so he cut that piece of robe...!!

Kabir openly rejects violence involved ,n killing animals for food:

"Islam never supports or orders any violence or torture to any other being..."

But we have turned a deaf ear to Gita, Jesus and Islam...

Else,

how the sweet, innocent goats are mercilessly bled to death—
either in the name of sacrifice to goddesses like Kali, Durga...
or for meat?

how those lambs or sheep, who give us wool when alive—
get a ruthless, horrible death as reward from human beings...?

how hens are either turned dead for tasty chicken-plates
or tortured to lay eggs artificially?

how would our conscience allow us to shoot dead a horse
that has honestly and ceaselessly run for us,

for making us winners of the gamble and now, either it is old or injured?

how could we entangle musk-deer in metal hooks, snatch the musk
and leave them severely injured, only waiting for death?

how could we think of snatching freedom of birds,
torture them, cage them just for our pleasure?

for every bird that reaches alive into a cage
three others have already died a horrible death

how could we poach creatures like rhinoceros
just because we can earn millions out of their horn?

how could we think of

wearing a fur-coat

or enjoying fur-toys, fur-bags and other fur-articles

when thousands of docile and loving creatures like rabbit, yak or reindeer
have to bear a death full of agonies

...their skin is peeled off when they are alive and conscious?

We...so-called 'humans'...can we imagine bearing at least a fraction of this pain...
either being borne by ourselves
or that we witness our kith and kin being tortured in the same way...
as WE, 'humans', torture other creatures...?

Oh Lord... Can you still bear more
the agony of your children
in labs, zoos, circuses, stud-farms, poultry, dairy or slaughter houses
or for shooting films or even on sea-shores?

Countless crocodiles, tigers and lions, bears and monkeys, birds and apes,
leopards and elephants, horses and dogs, cows and calves, camels and deer...
The list will never end...

In the name of material and industrial progress, how many forests have we destroyed?
and every time, how many creations of the Great Creator have been wiped out?

Oh God!
You have given everything to humans
but where is the humanness of humans?

—Chinmayi Bhatt

The Three Pillars of Peace

Detachment, faith and love—these are the pillars on which peace rests. Of these, faith is crucial. For, without it, Sadhana (spiritual practice) is an empty rite. Detachment alone can make Sadhana effective and love leads quickly to God. Faith feeds the agony of separation from God; detachment canalises it along the path of God; love lights the way. God will grant you what you need and deserve; there is no need to ask, no reason to grumble. Be content, be grateful whatever happens, whenever it happens. Nothing can happen against His will.

—Baba

Sai Cure

At an informal gathering one of the group asked Baba: “Swami, what is the secret of the cure that many afflicted persons experience in Your presence?” Baba said simply and instantly, “It is My experience that I am one with every sentient thing, every human being. My love flows out to everyone for I see everyone as Myself. If a person reciprocates My love from the depth and purity of his heart, My love and his meet in unison and he is cured of his affliction. Where there is no reciprocation, there no cure.”

Awakening

I believed religion was simple, once upon a time . . .
Bhajans and Mantras with all other rhymes,
I mistook this for religion, not caring for more,
I wasn't aware of a heart with love to pour.
God was watching; listening, teaching and smiling,
Moulding my journey with His special kind of guiding;
A beggar, a leper or a decrepit old man
God is all this and more, so holy and divine.
The veils have lifted and now I see the light,
Everything seems so real, the world now seems so bright.
Consider me an instrument, this is all I pray,
In helping those in need, in the right kind of a way;
Help me dissolve my ego
For I really want to let it go,
I pray I live for someone
For I want to be one with the ONE!

—Regina Ramdas

MAN'S SPIRITUAL HERITAGE

Dharma and Cosmic Harmony

Dharma is nothing but the motiveless and natural flow of devotion to God by which the Spirit attains Supreme Contentment.

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba defines Dharma as "that which holds and influences sublimation of the creative energy embodied in every creature." The word 'Dharma' comes from *Dharitri* which means 'to support' or 'to hold together'. Dharma holds together those actions in the universe which contribute towards Cosmic Harmony. For people to live in mutual love and cooperation, we have to believe that we are all divine and are internally connected to each other and have to strive towards our common goal of uniting with God. Through intuition and insight, man can harmonise the opposing forces within himself to attain Supreme Consciousness. Sanathana Dharma has its divine origin in the depth of man himself. In reality, it is synonymous with the word 'religion' which comes from the Latin word 'religio', meaning 'to integrate' or 'to yoke the body, mind and spirit.' The Vedas, which are Divine Revelations, were the earliest expressions of Sanathana Dharma. Their seers and sages, living in the highest awareness of consciousness, through intuitive perception, realized that only through inner unity with the Divine could they obtain outer unity with all. It is this central Principle of 'Unity in Diversity' around which revolves all the rich symbolism of the Vedas. Other primordial traditions of the ancient world, including the cultures of Egypt, Sumeria, Persia, Assyria and Greece were also based on the recognition that there is only one Truth which is inherent in all things and yet transcendent, and which cannot be limited to any particular name, form and personality. According to Buddha, personal relations must be brought into harmony with the universal norms.

The Buddhist motto was 'Rely upon the law, not a person'. Greek philosophers like Pythagoras, Plato and Plotinus had also developed philosophies based on the Perennial Religion of India.

Decline of Dharma in Modern Age

Faith in the spiritual values of Sanathana Dharma or the Perennial Philosophy (as it later came to be known) such as love, truth and peace, however suffered a rapid decline in the 17th century, the Age of Reason, when the growth of materialistic and rationalistic approaches to life led to the separation of Western philosophy and science. Religion, in much of the world, especially the Western world, become institutionalised and decadent in the name of power and wealth, thus losing its true meaning and purpose of being the intuitive guide for man's spiritual integration. Today, the word 'religion' brings to mind the image of a set of rigid dogmas and ceremonies including ritualism bound by codes of conduct based on religio-political systems.

This decline of faith in the Perennial Philosophy is explained by the Vedic doctrine of the cosmic cycles and the periodic creations and the destructions of the universe. Four Ages or Yugas of civilization are envisioned: The Sathya Yuga (The Golden Age in other traditions), the Treta Yuga, the Dwapara Yuga and the Kali Yuga. Each period progressively decreases in duration and also sees a diminution in the observance of Dharma. In the Golden Age, Dharma was observed in its fullest and life was characterised by simple outer living, greater energy being directed to seeking Divinity. In the Kali Yuga, last in the cycle and the one in which we live presently, society has reached its extreme point of disintegration. The Vishnu Purana says that this is the only age in which property and wealth determine social standing and external worship is confused with spirituality. That is why Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the Kali Yuga Avatar who embodies the Universal Principle of Dharma, has descended on the earth to remind man of his divine spiritual heritage. He says He is here, not to create a new religion but to show that the seeds of all religions reside in Sanathana Dharma and it is this that has drawn thousands of devotees of different faiths to His feet. He is telling us that a culture based merely on statutes and ethics cannot truly lead society towards its ultimate goal.

In a remarkable address on His fortieth Birthday, on November 23, 1968, our beloved Swami emphasized how He had come to re-establish the age-old Vedic Path for man who is steeped in darkness. He said: "The Vedic Dharma is the great grandfather, Buddhism is the son, Christianity is the grandson and Islam is the great grandson. If there is any misunderstanding between them, it is but a family affair. The ancestral property, of which all are co-sharers, is the same."

Archetypes of Supreme Consciousness

The 'gods' of the Vedas and other religions did not represent images or anthropomorphic entities created by man to be worshipped blindly. On the contrary, they symbolise the various archetypes that exist in the Supreme Consciousness. Archetypes represent the pattern of wholeness and the inner subtle order that God formulated when He created mankind. In Vedic cosmology as well as in other ancient religions the Sun, for example, represents intelligence and the light which illuminates the dark interiors of our psyche and helps to integrate our true nature. The Gayatri Mantra is an invocation to the Sun (Savita) to allow us to transcend the physical, mental and astral planes (Bhur, Bhuvah, Suvaha) in order to reach the Dharmic plane of Buddhi to become enlightened beings. The god Indra, as another example, represents the Principle that controls our senses (Indriyas) which pertain to our ordinary level of waking consciousness. Therefore, what

we see or is manifest in the outer world has its psychic archetype in the subtle inner world. Respect for all things stemmed from the belief that the external diversity of the sense world had its origin in the oneness of the All-pervading Self. This truth paved the way towards an inner psycho-spiritual integration. The Western psychologist, Jung, has said that we are all connected to a much greater archaic collective unconscious mind that produced universal symbols and processes which we all share. He said: "Dharma is nowhere save in the mind. The transformative function shows how right the East is in assuming that the complex experience of Dharma comes from within the unconscious " *It is important for us to realise that it is this inner world of archetypal sense elements that creates the outer world of perception.* In the Golden Age of ancient religions, the lower hemisphere did indeed reflect the projections of the inner Dharmic world, thus enabling people to live in the oneness of relative peace and harmony.

'Sacrifice' or 'Yajna', another fundamental concept represents an inborn quality of Dharma in which all of life is considered as an offering into 'the Fire of Oneness'. The whole world is believed to be born of an action: 'the Sacrifice of god Brahma'. Sacrifice is in reality the inner offering of the ego to the Divine through surrender.

Dharma in Human Psyche

In ancient days, the differences that existed in The natures of men corresponding to the various spiritual levels of their being reflected in four-fold division of society, in which man performed his Dharma (duty) by using his inner characteristics to evolve towards the common ultimate goal of liberation. While in human terms, one particular duty (Dharma) may seem inferior or superior to another, Yogi Sri Krishna Prem says: "On deeper analysis, it will be found that perfection is only in the Whole... and all are necessary to the working of the Cosmos." That is why Lord Krishna warns Arjuna in the Gita that attempting to perform a Dharma contrary to one's innate nature is replete with danger. It is like building one's life on a function which is undeveloped and therefore inferior, and does not contribute towards Dharmic Harmony. This four-fold division, however, later degenerated into the oppressive caste system based on power and wealth, reflecting the ego-based inner divisions that exist in man, perpetuating disunity in society and the oppressive domination of one caste over another. This is why Buddha said: "Not by matted hair, nor by lineage, nor by birth is one a Brahmin. He is a Brahmin in whom there is Truth and Righteousness."

The passage of Dharma in the human psyche is reflected in the Vedas which postulate a universe which is in constant motion. The word *Jagat* or world refers to the moving thing, whether in the physical, mental or emotional levels of experience. It distinguishes two sorts of motions: one which is in harmony with the cosmic norm or the Rita or the other, which sets a strain in the psychic continuum resulting in disharmony and distortion. These two are respectively termed as Dharma and Adharma. Adharmic action, which creates such a strain in the psyche, results in a compensating effect called Karma. The Cosmic Order or pattern exists in us as the seven levels of experience, each being a separate component of the one psychic matrix which is the whole universe. Through this seven-fold Principle, man evolves spiritually to union with God. The lower three principles of matter, life and mind belong to the phenomenal world ruled by Karma and the ego. Beyond these is the Realm of Intelligence or the Home of the Eternal Laws or Dharma. This realm along with the Absolute of Being, Consciousness and Bliss form an integral part of each other, representing the Transcendent four-fold Godhead or the Causal Realm. It is

the Dharmic Realm or the seat of intuitive wisdom which is responsible for integrating the three lower with the three upper realms thus enabling us to see ourselves as part of the Divine Self and the Divine Self as residing in all. The Divine Archetypes live in this highest Abode of Perfection. That is why Swami says: "Dharma is not imported from somewhere outside. It is your own genuine nature and your Uniqueness...which makes a man out of an animal." The Atman, at the head of this hierarchy, is the Light which reflects on the world of sense and Manas. The pure Manas or individual Ego is the very crux of life, on which depends our Divine freedom. It plays a pivotal role, in that when it reflects the Atmic Light on the Buddhi, it produces Dharmic Harmony within us. But when it reflects that Light on the world of sense alone, it becomes the lower self or Kama-Manas. This is why man sees the world in two ways: one is the mode of unity and interconnectedness of the different elements; the other is the mode which stresses separation and mutual independence of things. In most of us, unfortunately, the downward pull towards the lower Manas of senses is extremely strong, thus we only reflect a partial manifestation of our True Harmonious Higher Self. As long as we do not see the Truth as an all embracing whole, we have to struggle beyond the ego and the intellect by using the voice of conscience, which is a manifestation of the Buddhi on the lower scale and is the bridge leading to the Higher Self. Only when the Manas is totally united with the Buddhi will the resultant intuitive knowledge or Vijnana become the guide for all our activities, feelings and thoughts. It is then that one begins to feel 'a tension of the heart' upwards towards God, discovering what Father Teilhard De Chardin has referred to as the 'Divine Milieu,' brought about by a transformation that takes place at the very perception of being, when one begins to seek that which is greater than oneself.

Harmony Within and Without

In the Gita, Arjuna's Karmic thinking and existential anguish find new ground in the realisation that Dharma is the ontological basis for any action and that his liberation lies in the recovery of the whole social and conceptual scheme which is determined by his inner nature. The Gita says: "At the heart of all movement is the knower of the fields and Dharmas." After seeing the Cosmic Vision, Arjuna regains the knowledge that he is a part of the Cosmic Rhythm and Law. On seeing boundless forms, within which are gods, Brahma (the Creator) and the psychic archetypes or subtle forms of all the things he is familiar with on the earth, he realises that it is this Being that maintains the Eternal Dharma. Thus, standing firmly in the 'Satwa' or the vantage point of insight he says, "Destroyed is my delusion". This insight, which operates at a deeper level of being, brings to him a complete understanding and fullness of perception when the ego has finally surrendered to the Divine Will. It is this insight that confers on a man the status of which Buddha referred to as 'Anagamin' or one who is born no more. Having transcended historical space and time. He gains freedom from the world of illusion and is eternally united with his Divine Self. Arjuna feels a tremendous outpouring of reverence and love for His Beloved Lord, Krishna, the Avatar and the Sustainer of all. This is not the love of the desire nature, but the Love that is rooted in the Buddhi. Faith has taken a quantum leap; not faith of the esoteric religion, but Faith which is a reflection of the Divine Harmony within. All this is, however, only a Vision, after which Arjuna returns to the world of forms, equipped though with the unitive knowledge of Dharma. The total transmutation of his personality, however, can take place only when he learns to live entirely in the Reality, especially when the relationship of his individual self, society and God is integrated. The passage of Dharma involves the sublimation of one's thoughts and impulses arising from one's primitive instincts within into beneficial acts with a sense of

collective good. However, man's urge to maintain his ego-driven individual identity is what has over the ages led to moral evils and sufferings which have manifested themselves at all levels of life and in society at large.

True Dharma is, therefore, beyond mere ethical and moral rules of conduct, duties and obligations to the society. Einstein, the great physicist, while talking on the subject of humanism, once reflected on the shortcomings of the ethics and duties of society. He said that even though Aristotle was one of the greatest Greek philosophers, he had declared slaves as inferior beings who were justly subdued and deprived of their liberty. Aristotle despite his extraordinary intellect, lacked the insight to free himself from the traditional prejudices of his culture and society. Thus Einstein cautions us that care must be taken "not to make the intellect our God." He also said, "Though the intellect has a sharp eye for methods and tools, it is blind to ends and values." When Lord Krishna told Arjuna, "Give up all Dharmas and seek refuge in Me," He was sending mankind the message that the truly liberated being is one who is carried beyond the ethical distinctions of good and evil which are based on the ego and is free from worldly attachments and temptations to sin. Only when harmony of the society or the outer life reflects the harmony of our inner Divine status can we say that Dharma prevails. In the simple but profoundly beautiful words of the Bhagavata Purana, Dharma is nothing but "the motiveless and natural flow of devotion to God by which the Spirit attains Supreme Contentment.

— Indira Pradhan

Vanquishing anger!

One sage came from the Himalayas and declared, he had conquered anger. He met his friends and told them that he was totally at peace and that he had no anger in him at all. One of them asked him, "Sir, have you conquered anger?" "Yes, I have controlled," came the guarded reply. That person reiterated, "Sir! You of all the people! Have you really conquered anger?" "Yes, it is true," came the gruff reply. "What Sir! It is really impossible to believe. How could you conquer anger?" asked the man for the third time. "Ai! Can't you understand when I have said so?" came the hot reply. "Sir! When this is the case, how could you have conquered anger?" asked the man for the fourth time. "Are you out of your senses? I told you that I have conquered." So, while saying that he had conquered anger, he lost control over anger due to repetition of words. If words were not expressed, anger might have cooled down. Due to lack of patience, anger emanates. There is no other remedy for anger. Only cultivation of patience is the answer. If you cultivate patience, then anger will automatically subside. If darkness has to be expelled, light has to be brought. Similarly to expel anger, patience has to be fostered.

—Baba

Krishna Janmashtami at Prasanthi Nilayam

The holy festival of Krishna Janmashtami was celebrated at Prasanthi Nilayam in Sai Kulwant Hall on 14th August 1998 in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Bhagavan came to Sai Kulwant Hall, the venue of the celebrations, at 7.00 a.m. and blessed the vast gathering of devotees with His Darshan. After taking a round of the Hall, Swami came to the dais and permitted the starting of the programme.

The programme started with chanting of Omkar and Krishna Vandana by the students. The devotees were immersed in devotional fervour when the students chanted Sanskrit Slokas melodiously with music to pay homage to Lord Krishna on the auspicious occasion of Lord's birthday, so that "Krishnam Vande Jagatgurum" became the echo of each heart. After the Vandana Slokas and Sanskrit Bhajans, the students started the Hindi Bhajans beginning with "Giridhara Gopala, Hey Giridhara Gopala" in praise of Lord Krishna, in which the entire audience participated.

While the Bhajans were continuing, all eyes turned towards the main gate of the Hall from where exquisitely decorated Sai Geeta heralded by musicians entered the Hall at the head of the procession of cows from Gokulam escorted by students dressed as cowherds. Bhagavan also proceeded towards the gate to bless and feed Sai Geeta and the cows. He showered His love on them again and again while feeding them. The devotees were filled with delight when Sai Avatar took the role of His Dwapara Yuga Avatar of Lord Krishna as Gopala.

Bhagavan then blessed the prasadam for distribution. Though the programme concluded with the offer of Mangalarati to Bhagavan, yet Bhagavan kept moving between the rows of devotees to supervise the distribution of prasadam which continued up to 8.20 a.m.

While prasadam was being distributed, an announcement was made that Bhagavan would deliver His Divine Discourse on this auspicious occasion in the Sai Kulwant Hall at 4.00 p.m. in the afternoon.

In the afternoon, Bhagavan came to the Sai Kulwant Hall at 3.30 p.m. and delighted the eagerly awaiting devotees with His Divine Darshan. There was a spontaneous loud applause from the devotees when at about 3.45 p.m. Bhagavan came to the dais and sat in His chair.

With the permission of Bhagavan, the programme started with the chanting of Mantras pertaining to Ganesha Vandana, Saraswati Vandana, Guru Vandana, Surya Vandana as also Gayatri Mantra by six students. Thereafter, Dr. Sandipan Chatterji introduced the first speaker of the afternoon, Prof. G. Venkataraman, eminent scientist and ex-Vice Chancellor of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning.

After offering his salutations at the lotus feet of Bhagavan, Prof. Venkataraman emphasised the great significance of this day's celebrations when the birthday of Poorna Avatar, Lord Krishna was being celebrated in the Divine Presence of Poorna Avatar of Kali Age, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Dwelling on the concept of Avatarhood, he said, "God is formless. Yet once in a while He assumes form. He descends to the level of man so that man may ascend up to the level of God." This act of Compassionate Lord was analogous to a mother's act of bending down to lift her child. But this did not, in any way, diminish the divinity of God.

Referring to Lord Krishna's role as a messenger of the Pandavas in the court of Dhritarashtra, Prof. Venkataraman said, Krishna very well knew that Duryodhana would not listen to His proposals for peace, yet Krishna would leave no stone unturned when peace was at stake. War was to be resorted to only after exhausting all avenues of peace. This message of Lord Krishna was absolutely relevant for present times, when peace in the world had become so fragile.

This, he said, was the human aspect of Krishna which had to be understood. Talking in the same vein, the learned speaker narrated an incident relating to Bhagavan Baba to reveal the human aspect of the present Avatar. During Bhagavan's Kodaikanal sojourn, one day Bhagavan was walking between the rows of students when they were being served food. A little boy noticed Bhagavan coming towards him and finding the floor a little dirty before him, he cleaned it with his hand. Bhagavan saw and admired this gesture of the little boy, but told him that his hand had become dirty, so he should wash it. The boy went to the washbasin and found the tap too high for him. Bhagavan who was following him lifted the boy in His own hands, opened the tap and helped him wash his hands.

Prof. Venkataraman narrated a beautiful incident from the life of child Krishna which is potent with meaning. One day, Krishna was playing with His mates on the banks of the Yamuna. His mother Yashoda asked Him to place a pot of water on her head as she was to carry water home. But He did not listen to her. However, when she came back, Krishna was there in the house to lift the pot of water from her head. Unable to understand this mysterious behaviour of her child, Yashoda asked Krishna why He did that. In His remarkable reply, Krishna said, "I have come to remove the burden from the heads of my devotees, not to increase it." The present Avatar's mission was exactly similar to that. All types of devotees come to Bhagavan Baba and He removes their burdens and alleviates their sufferings.

In the end, Prof. Venkataraman had a word of caution for the devotees. Meera dived deep in the ocean of Bhakti and got rare pearls. She would not allow them to slip away from her hands. But here, he said, we were fortunate that Bhagavan Himself was giving the pearls in our hands. But we should not throw them away in ignorance, assuming them to be pebbles. We should make the best use of this rare opportunity offered to us and redeem our lives, he exhorted.

After this, Dr. Sandipan Chatterji made a brief speech. At the outset, he pointed out that in India the child form of Bhagavan had received extraordinary attention, which was particularly true about the divine character of child Krishna. When this divine child revealed His divinity by raising Govardhanagiri, many still doubted because of their illusion. But not finding any other way to save themselves from torrential rains, they came under the mountain. And when the rain stopped after three days, even mother Yashoda doubted how Krishna would come out when the mountain was placed on the ground again. Like Lord Krishna, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba was holding the Govardhanagiri of Love and Truth and was giving a clarion call to the entire mankind to save themselves from the deluge of delusion. So, people from all parts of the world were flocking towards Prasanthi Nilayam. If we could cast away our doubts and place our firm faith in Bhagavan, we could redeem our lives.

Dr. Chatterji recalled the teachings of Bhagavan that the real Prasanthi Nilayam was our heart. If inner peace in our hearts grew, it would radiate and make the world happy. So, we should

rededicate our lives to the teachings of Bhagavan of living in love and loving all. This would make our life purposeful and divine.

After these two brief speeches, Bhagavan gave His Divine Discourse at 4.15 p.m. and concluded it at 5.20 p.m. with the Bhajans "Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare" and "Govinda Krishna Jai, Gopala Krishna Jai" (Bhagavan's discourse has been given separately). The programme came to a close with offer of Mangalarati to Bhagavan. Before departing for His residence, Bhagavan raised both His hands to shower His blessings on the devotees.

AVATAR VANI:

BHAGAVAN'S KODAIKANAL DISCOURSES: V

Man, Truth, Love and God

*Without charitable disposition,
Not following the principles of righteous conduct,
Devoid of compassion and love,
Man is ruining himself.*

(Telugu poem)

Embodiments of Love!

In this wide world amongst the vast humanity, we find three types of people: Pushti Jeevas, Samashti Jeevas and Pravaha Jeevas.

Classification of Jeevas

The first type, Pushti Jeevas, are those who, because of the meritorious deeds in the past life enjoy the grace of the Divine, though they do not engage themselves now in auspicious rites, study of scriptures, contact with saints, undertaking pilgrimages etc. The merit of past life makes them always happy in the company of the Divine. They dance in delight experiencing Divine benediction. Just as you don't have need for firewood after the cooking is finished, these people don't need any spiritual Sadhana as they have already attained the goal of all Sadhana. You may not find this type of person doing any spiritual exercise. But he is leading a true life and experiences Brahamananda, Nityananda, Advaitananda and Paramananda. There is no need for such a person to undertake any spiritual pursuit.

The second type, Samashti Jeevas, read a lot of scriptural texts and are keen on earning name and fame as scholars. Since they become proud of their scholarship, they do not make themselves fit to be recipients of Divine grace. When one goes on reading till the end of one's life, where is the time for practising the ideals? They may participate in seminars and meet noble souls, but they are far away from God's grace because they have no time to think of God and enshrine Him in their hearts. This is the plight of this second type of persons termed as Samashti Jeevas.

The third type, classified as Pravaha Jeevas, are always engaged in mundane activities in pursuit of physical comforts and worldly pleasures. They do not think of God and think that they are capable of achieving whatever they want. At least, wicked people think of God in some difficult situations. The Pravaha persons have no chance of realizing the Divine at all. They are born

again and again. They have no chance of liberation. Some may have good feelings latent in them. But they don't join Satsang, don't adhere to good conduct and righteous action, though some may be conscious of the Divine residing in the heart. There is a small story to exemplify some exceptional cases of this type of persons.

There was a family of wife and husband, of whom the wife was very devoted to God and was always in thought of the Divine. She was worried that her husband never uttered the name of God even once. She believed in the truth that uttering the name of God was the best way to get liberation and it was a boat to cross the ocean of life. She was praying to God entreating Him to show mercy on her and make her husband utter God's name. She even questioned the Lord as to whether it was her misfortune to have such a husband, and as Compassionate One could He not transform her husband to be a devotee like her. The same night when she was contemplating on such entreaties to God, she heard her husband suddenly utter "Rama, Rama" in his sleep. Her joy knew no bounds when she heard her husband utter Rama's name, which he had never done before. She thought that her prayer to God was answered. She got up earlier than usual in the morning and decorated the entrance to her house with Rangoli and arranged for Mangala Vadya to be played. When the husband got up, he was surprised to see the decorations and auspicious music, and was wondering whether it was a festival day. When he asked his wife the cause for this extraordinary arrangements made by her, she said that all along he had never uttered God's name but the previous night he said "Rama, Rama" in his sleep. So, she was profoundly happy and decided to celebrate this event in a befitting manner. On hearing this, the husband got perplexed and exclaimed, "Have I let out the Lord enshrined in my heart so carefully all along? What a pity!" So saying, he breathed his last.

Start Sadhana at Early Age

In this way, Pravaha persons may not be uttering God's name or doing external worship but may have the thought of God enshrined in their heart. Some among the modern youth are singing Bhajans and participating in Nagarsankirtan. Looking at this, some elders are questioning, "Why should these youth take up this sort of activity at this age? They should do this only after they retire from service in their old age." This is totally wrong. Remembering God and chanting His name should be done without break always, at all places and in all situations (Sarvada Sarvakaleshu Sarvatra Harichintanam). There is no restriction of time or place for chanting Divine name. You can't say when, where and how the end will come and the mortal coil will have to be cast off. You will not be able to chant the name at that moment. (Swami sang a song to convey that it was impossible to think of God when the messengers of death were tightening their noose around your neck, the body was taken out and the wife and relations were crying. Only the good deeds that you have done previously would come to your rescue. So, you should start doing meritorious deeds from early part of your life).

There was a priest in a temple, who by virtue of his long experience used to hold the Arati in one hand and ring the bell with the other hand. When he passed away, a new priest succeeded him. But this priest could not do both the things simultaneously. If one hand was handling the bell to ring, the other hand could not wave the Arati. If Arati was done properly, the bell could not be made to ring. This was due to lack of practice. So, the practice of chanting God's name should be started from early age. You may be aware of the way a soldier in the Army has to take training in all aspects before he can be fit to take part in active service at the front. Anyone joining the

Armed forces whether a dhobi; cook or sepoy has to qualify compulsorily in two things. One is handling the rifle and the second is the marching drill. Whatever may be one's avocation in the Army, one would have to undergo these two parts of the training. Similarly, in the spiritual field one should compulsorily undertake two things, namely, love of God and service to the society. These are the two prime components of divine life. They help in the realisation of the Divine. You have to take up the practice in early age so that you can have the realisation before you leave the world. You do not know when the end will come. You should be prepared for it at all times. The photographer asks you to be ready when he takes your snap and gives you time to steady yourself. But the Divine cameraman will not give you any notice. You should be always ready to meet the situation.

God Dwells in Devotees' Heart

If you engage yourself in Bhajan and Daivachintanam (Kirtanam and Smaranam), you will not be caught unawares. Suppose you have a master who has an Alsatian dog at the gate and he himself is at the first floor, there are two ways of reaching him. One way is to befriend the dog and enter into the house, and the other way is to call out the master from the ground in loud voice so that he will come out and allow you to come in by controlling the dog. Maya is the dog. God is the master. Either you should control the Maya or chant His name and sing His glory so that He will come down. We have to treasure Him in our heart as that is His altar.

Draupadi prayed to Krishna when she was humiliated in Duryodhana's court. She said, "Oh, Dwaraka Vasa, Brindavan Sanchara, help me." She could not get the response and she became tired. Finally she pleaded in faint voice, "Oh Hridayanivasa! Will you not come to my rescue?" Immediately Krishna saved her from the trouble. On a later occasion, she asked Krishna why He took such a long time to respond when she was in distress and prayed to Him sincerely. Krishna responded, "You said Dwaraka Vasa, Brindavan Sanchara etc., I had to respect your words and so I had to go from your heart all the way to Dwaraka and Brindavan which are so far away and I don't have a plane to go fast. When you said Hridayanivasa where I am actually residing, I came to your help instantaneously."

So, everyone should install the Divine in the heart in full faith. It is not correct to think that He is only in mosque, church or temple. The seat of God is devotee's heart. That is why the Gita says "Pasyannapicha Napasyathi"—though he sees, yet he is not conscious of God in the heart. Everything you see outside is only a reflection of the inner being. "Sarvathah Panipaadam thath Sarvathokshi Siromukham." All feet, hands, eyes, heads are all His. What does this mean? It means He is in every being.

One devotee was asking God, "You say You are in me, above me, below me. How is that You are not protecting me?" God answered, "I am always in you, around you. Don't look for Me externally." The devotee asked, "Are You behind me really"? Replied the Lord, "My shadow is your body." When the devotee turned around to see whether God was behind, he could not see Him. He asked, "Are You speaking truth? I don't find You." God replied, "When you turn back, I too have to turn back. So, you could not see Me. You have not understood the truth." Supposing you stand before a chair; the chair is in front of you. If you turn around, the chair is at your back. God manifests according to your Bhava (feeling). When you pray, "Can't you hear my prayers?" you visualise Him hearing with His ears When you pray "Can't You see my suffering? You see

His eyes only when you pray. Why don't you stay with me?" you hear His footsteps. You have to maintain perfect silence. The ancient seers spent their time in listening to the voice of God which is Pranava. Even now you can experience this. Close your ears gently. You will hear the sound "Om" from within God proclaims, "Oh devotee, you are seeing with physical eyes and listening with your physical ears. Be in utter silence. You can listen to the footsteps of God." Such holy paths have been shown by great devotees. One who doesn't understand this is in ignorance.

Lord Krishna and Surdas

Surdas, a great devotee of Krishna, once went after a woman and followed her to her home. Her husband chastised him saying, "What for have you been given eyes? Is it for this unholy pursuit of another man's wife? Why don't you concentrate on God?" Immediately Surdas got enlightened and pierced his eyes with thorns of a lime tree close by. He proceeded to Dwaraka to Krishna's temple. On his way, he was about to fall into a well. Krishna came in the form of a cowherd boy and caught hold of his hand and asked him, "Where are you going?" Surdas said, "I am going to Dwaraka." Krishna said, "I shall show you the way and lead you." Next day they rested in a wayside hut. Krishna wanted to go, but Surdas won't leave Him. He put his hand over the boy while sleeping and asked the boy to put his hand on him. Because of this divine touch, he was released from all his sins. (Sparshanam Papanasanam) Then Krishna told Surdas, "I am Krishna to whom you always pray. I played this drama to show you My form." He touched Surdas's eyes and he got back his sight and beheld the divine form and got into blissful ecstasy. When Krishna asked him to retain his vision, Surdas said, "I have seen You. I don't want to see anything else with these eyes. I don't want sight. Many people have eyes. Have they seen You? Many have ears they are not fortunate to hear Your melodious music. I want only Jnanachakshus (eyes of knowledge).

Krishna kept His hand on the head of Surdas and the latter merged with the Divine. No one can know when God will bless! You must consider everything as God's gift and take with pleasure. (Swami referred to the story in which a king cut his finger and the minister said, "It is for good." The king got annoyed and ordered the minister to be sent to prison. The minister accepted it with a smile saying, "It is also for my good." Later on it was proved true because when the king went alone to a forest for hunting, he was caught by tribals to be given for sacrifice. Because the king was not having perfect body with a portion of the finger absent, he was saved. Later, the minister said if he was not in prison, he would have accompanied the king and could have been sacrificed).

Whatever God does is for the good of the devotees. He is selfless. When you have the wish-fulfilling tree in your backyard, why do you go in search of fruits? Pure thoughts of love should flow from you to God. Then love of God will flow to you. When you post a registered letter to another person, the proof of this letter having reached the addressee is the acknowledgement slip you get. The proof of sincerity of your love will be the flow of God's grace to you.

With intense longing for God's grace you must wait patiently chanting His name ceaselessly. You will surely perceive God's form manifesting before you.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the Bhajan: "*Hare Rama! Hare Rama! Rama Rama Hare Hare! Hare Krishna! Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare!*"

—From Bhagavan's Discourse at "Sai Shruti," Kodaikanal on 22. 4. 1998

(To be continued)

JAGAMANTHA BABA MAYAM

See Always Inside

While we regard Lord as omnipresent, in practice we are looking for Him everywhere except in our heart

All Names and Forms are Mine

We all sing about Swami in the Arathi song after every Bhajan session, saying, "O Swami! You are our Mother, Father, Guru, God and indeed Everything; certainly You are All." He too says about Himself thus: "I am everything, everywhere, ever.... Antha Sayi Mayam, Jagamantha Baba Mayam—the whole universe is filled with Sai Baba. Anu Vanuvu, Kana Kanamu, Kshana Kshanamu Sayi Mayamu, i.e. every atom, every cell and every moment is filled with Sai." Revealing the secret behind the creation of the universe (or the projection or manifestation of the universe, as Swami would prefer to call it), He says pithily: "I separated Myself from Myself in order to love Myself." Again, "All names and forms are Mine—not merely the names and forms of all gods and goddesses' but also of all things both animate and inanimate."

Man's Common Failure

However, to be honest to Swami and true to ourselves we must confess that most of us fail to recognize Him in all names and forms, due to our undue obsession with their outward appearance and behaviour. Based on our differential attitude and approach to others in glaring contrast with how we behave towards Swami, it becomes quite evident that few of us, if any, are really able to see Sai in all. This indeed is man's common failure.

The Recipe

But then, how to see Swami in all? In His compassion and love for us, He has given us the answer beautifully by way of a simple, yet profound acronym of His own Name: SAI BABA, as meaning See Always Inside...Being Awareness Bliss Atman. This Saptaksharee Viswa Maha Mantra (great universal seven-lettered formula) urges on us to see always inside everything and everyone including ourselves, to find the same Sat-Chit-Ananda-Atman beneath and behind the misleading facade of all the transitory names and forms. On the contrary, we are invariably prone to see always outside, with the result that instead of seeing the underlying unity, we are misled into seeing the superficial diversity. Baba often quotes the Sanskrit definition: "Pasyathi ithi Pasuh," meaning "that which sees outside is an animal". Bhagavan wants us to overcome this tendency to look outside, which we have inherited from our past lives in the course of our evolution from the animal to the status of Homo sapiens. At best we may deserve to be called

cobblers whose concern is only with the outer skin or hide. Swami asks, "Will there be a fool who will go round the city begging for food when tasty and nutritious food is available to him in his own house? In the same manner while sacred peace and happiness are present in your own heart, is there any meaning in your going in search of them everywhere else except in your own heart? It is foolish to seek Paramatma everywhere except in your own heart. While we regard Lord as omnipresent, in practice we are looking for Him everywhere except in our heart."

Some Analogies

Swami gives many analogies to impress on our minds the truth of this unity in diversity. To mention but a few: jewels are many, gold is one; pots are many, clay is one; waves are many, sea is one. Again He asks us to understand that just as one and the same unseen electricity is activating all the various gadgets like fans, bulbs of different shapes and colours, refrigerators, electronic appliances and what not—even so one and the same invisible Vishwa Chaitanya Shakti (Universal Conscious Energy) called God is animating all manifested things, including the minute atom in which also there is energy and activity.

In addition to His acronym mentioned above, Swami gives what He calls 'Oka Chinna Udaaharana'—one small example, which for us has a great message. Says Swami, "Suppose you are walking along a street in front of the house of a bitter enemy of yours. And your eyes happen to alight on a picture of Swami hanging on the wall of the verandah of that house. What do you do then? Do you hate that Swami's picture just because it happens to be in your enemy's house? No. On the contrary, you will automatically raise both your hands and salute the picture and then go your own way. Similarly, Swami has His abode in the core of the body of every being, including those whose appearance and behaviour may be loathsome to you. If only you apperceive this Omnipresent Swami in everybody and everything, you will hate none. Even as you saluted, albeit unintentionally, your enemy's house also, while saluting Swami's picture, you will at least mentally salute the Swami in every being, ignoring the undesirable characteristics of the external appurtenances or trappings. The only difference is that whereas you can see the physical Swami or His picture with your physical eye which sees always outside, you can see the Omnipresent Swami with only the inner eye which sees always inside. Every man and woman is endowed with this inner eye. But being engrossed all the while in using only the physical eye for seeing outside, people have neglected to make use of the inner eye. Wake up now at least, relieve the inner eye from atrophy and make use of it to have Darshan of the Omnipresent Swami inside everybody and everything."

Through the above beautifully simple analogy together with His acronym, Baba has blessed us with the *modus operandi* for achieving the same-sightedness or Samadarshan depicted in the Gita as follows:

The wise look with an equal eye upon a Brahmin, endowed with learning and humility, on a cow, on an elephant, and even on a dog and an outcaste. (V: 18)

Without achieving Samadrishti, based on the clear recognition and the genuine feeling that God is in all, any talk of selfless, universal Love will be merely a child's prattle. And, "Love all, Serve all" will remain a cliché and a slogan rather than an ideal to strive for. We should note that while appreciating the work being done by the Seva Dal and other volunteers of the Sathya Sai

Organization, both in His Ashrams and elsewhere, Swami often exhorts them to improve the quality of service. And the quality can be improved only when there is a genuine feeling that the person being served is not 'parudu' (other man) but Paramatmudu (God) as taught by Baba. Then alone does work become worship (instead of being mere social service), when Manava (man) is considered as Madhava (Lord). And this becomes possible only when we follow the SAI commandment to 'See Always Inside'. We know how the late Mother Teresa exemplified this attitude in her service to the destitute of Calcutta. In this connection, it is edifying to note that if we 'See Always Inside' according to this SAI BABA acronym, it will lead us to another important SAI acronym, namely, Service-Adoration-illumination. In other words, when we 'See Always Inside', we shall be seeing BABA in all, and therefore we shall be motivated to render Service to all in a spirit of Adoration to God, resulting in Illumination, i.e., Jnana or wisdom.

Conclusion

So, only if and when we follow Swami's commandment to see always inside, to discover the one Self behind all names and forms, and to act in accordance with that discovery, shall we find the fulfillment of our lives here and now. Only then shall we be in a position to spontaneously exclaim and proclaim, "O Lord! Having moved into the mansion of Thy Omnipresence, I know it is Thee alone I love, manifested as parents, relatives, friends, nay even as foes, as all creatures and all things irrespective of their outward appearance and behaviour! By loving Thee alone, my heart has expanded to love the many, to embrace Thee in All!"

—Dr. A. Adivi Reddy

Worship with Pure Heart

No one can shake truth, no one can install untruth. No one can understand My mystery, the best you can do is to get immersed in it. The mysterious, indescribable power has come within the reach of all. No one is born and allowed to live for the sake of others. Each has his own burden to carry and lay down. No water will come in the tap if the pipe is not connected with the regular supply system. Have you connected your act of service with the reservoir of love in the heart? Are you doing it with good consciousness or is it merely a superficial ceremonial routine act for pride and publicity? Diagnose and rectify. No worship can succeed unless the heart is pure and the senses are mastered.

— Baba

Gurudev Vani:

True Education Fosters Human Values

*Daivaadheenam Jagatsarvam
Sathyaadheenamtu Daivatham
Tath Sathyam Uthamaadheenam
Uthamo Paradevatha*

The whole world is under the control of God; God is subject to truth. Truth is subject to noble souls. Such noble people are the embodiments of Divinity.

Students, Embodiments of Love, Teachers and Promoters of Education!

Today people have not understood Divinity, have not understood the meaning of God and are wasting their bodies, their time and all precious things in life. Human values do not depend on education alone. They depend more on culture. What do you mean by culture? Culture means giving up one's bad conduct, bad behaviour, bad deeds and cultivating good thinking, fostering good sentiments that lead to good actions.

The state of the whole world depends on human activity. When the actions of the people are noble, the country is equally noble. The people's behaviour and conduct depend on their thoughts. Thoughts depend on the mind. Good thoughts are the basis of human values.

Good Thoughts Yield Goodness

As human values are not practised, the world is in a mess. The head and the heart are two important organs in every human being. Thoughts that arise in the head are worldly and fickle. They are influenced by the external activities. Reading, writing, eating and earning are all outward activities. They are the products of the head. All sacred feelings arise from the heart. Sacred qualities like compassion, love, sympathy, forbearance and truth emanate from the heart. They are all called inward qualities. The world is nothing but a combination of external and internal tendencies. Just as a sapling grows into a huge tree giving you flowers and fruits, likewise if thoughts are sacred they lead to actions that yield the fruits of all goodness.

Man is a combination of three entities: the body, the mind and the spirit (Atma). First comes the body. It is the instrument of action. The mind thinks. The conscience is the Atma or spirit which exists as consciousness. So, human life is a combination of these three aspects: action, thinking and consciousness. If the body functions independently without consulting the mind and the spirit, the activity will be animal activity. If the mind acts independently without coordinating the body and the spirit, the activity is likely to be demoniac. If the spirit acts independently, the actions will transcend the body and the mind.

The true mark of a human being is goodness. Goodness is not a product of academic education. Can bookish knowledge be called true education? Without spiritual knowledge and wisdom, can a person be called educated?

Education for Cultivating Values

Education must inculcate respect for human values like truth and righteousness, love and peace. Education is for life. Life is for man. Man is there for society. The society is there for science. And the science is meant for spirituality. The spirituality is there for the nation. And the nation is part of the world and the world is for peace (cheers). Today everyone wants peace. In fact you can attain and acquire peace out of human values only. For peace and happiness human values are most important. Bereft of human values, man can never be in peace. With out understanding this principle man tries to acquire education. Man today considers that receiving information is

education. It is not information that confers human values. Modern education makes a man machine a computer. Greatness does not lie in becoming a computer, but a composer. You have to acquire education to make your life ideal. Modern education tends to make men selfish. There should be a limit even for selfishness. Every student must necessarily cultivate human values. The Government, by establishing educational institutions in every village and street, think that the education in the country has progressed.

What are the qualities of education? Virtues, good intellect, adherence to truth, devotion, discipline, duty are essential qualities. Education must teach these things. Students have to learn these things. "What is the progress in modern education? In fact, students try to ruin those who are responsible for their food. They harm those who help them. They make fun of those who teach. This is the 'progress' in modern education." (Poem) Students have to foster obedience, humility and human values and attain Divinity. This is true education. The modern students are not understanding what is true education. As a result, society is polluted. Truth and other human qualities have been distorted, perverted altogether. Sanctity and sacred quality of human nature is fast disappearing. The practice of righteousness, compassion are viewed as bad practices. Do you call this 'progress' in education? No. You should express human values by practising righteousness and cultivating compassion. "With good education, you will have culture, when you have culture, that is true life. If you have good education, you will be happy. When you are happy you will be peaceful. When you have good education, you will be in good company. When you are in good company, you will have good qualities. When you have good education, your life will find fulfillment. Thereby, you can attain liberation." (Poem)

Students should adhere to the twin ideals of Truth and Righteousness (Sathya and Dharma). In this world there is nothing greater than Truth. You should become embodiments of Truth. In your daily life you should follow the path of Truth and realise the Divine. You have to water a sapling to get fruit and seeds. Love, which is natural to human beings, should be watered with faith to sustain it. We should make an effort to attain peace in the true sense of the word. The peace which we get today is momentary. We cannot call it peace in any way.

Bharat: a Cherished Land

In the modern world, Bharat stands for all that is sacred. Since ancient times it has been a model and an ideal for the rest of the world. There is Truth in the air of Bharat. There is Dharma in the dust of Bharat. There is love in the sands of Bharat and there is compassion in the water of Bharat. Forbearance is the core of Bharatiya culture. In order to enjoy and experience these values, even foreigners have decided to come and settle down in Bharat. In ancient times Bharatiyas were determined to follow the principle of sacrifice. They were dedicated to righteousness and truth. Having been born in the sacred land of Bharat, you should not forget this important aspect. If you go through the history of this sacred land, you will certainly understand that Bharat never tried to invade or conquer any country. They had to resist foreign invaders. Bharatiyas stand for selflessness. They were never selfish at any point of time. Bharatiyas never coveted the lands of others. The history of Bharat is one long saga of sacrifice.

Emperor Harishchandra was prepared to give up everything for the sake of Truth. Emperor Sibi sacrificed his own flesh and blood to save a dove. Bharat has given birth to men and women who stood for sacrifice. Modern students are trying to change this land of sacrifice, a land of spiritual

practices into a land of pleasure seekers. But all pleasure is transient. You should seek the bliss that is enduring by realising your inherent divinity.

Yesterday an American boy came to Swami. Bhagavan asked him: "How old are you"? The boy said. "Seven years," Swami asked him: "How do you know?" He said, "My mother and father told me." Swami said, "It is only one that has become seven. One plus one plus one ... comes to seven. Without one there cannot be seven. All numbers come out of one. Truth is one, scholars call it by many names. Names and forms differ but Divinity is one and the same in all. First have faith in yourself. Without self-confidence, you cannot have faith in yourself. Then how can you have faith in others? Let this Vishvas (faith) become your Shvasa (life-breath). Let our education become true education. Education that is not practised is bookish knowledge. You should have love for your country also. Rama said, "Motherland is greater than heaven itself." That spirit of patriotism is very important.

**—From Bhagavan's Discourse in Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning Auditorium
on 10th August 1998**

Education for Life

The educational process has not received proper attention from thoughtful persons. The institutions which ought to have been temples of Saraswati (the goddess of learning) have become temples of Lakshmi (the goddess of wealth). The ideal held before the tender, innocent, unselfish children is a lucrative job rather than a life of peace, contentment and love. Narrow loyalties, contest and competition are polluting the minds of children. Parents, teachers and all interested in the progress of mankind have to take note of this situation.

Teaching and learning have both become mechanical routines. They have lost the freshness and joy which vitality alone can give. The value of the teaching process lies in raising the level of consciousness of the learner, in heightening the sense of wonder and awe in emphasising the unity of one with all. The destiny of a country is decided by the ideals implanted by the teachers in the minds of boys and girls entrusted to their care. Educators must pay attention not merely to the material and intellectual progress of the pupils but, even more, to their moral and spiritual progress. Education should help man to live a meaningful life. It should not direct all efforts to provide a livelihood.

—Baba

AVATAR VANI:

KRISHNA JANMASHTAMI SANDESH:

Truth and Love Shape Dharma

*God is the embodiment of love.
If you don't understand even a fraction of that love in this world,
How do you expect to realise truth and fulfill your ambitions?*

Embodiments of Divine Love!

Peace, friendship, self-less service, sweetness, synonyms of the basic principle of love. The more a man develops love, the more blissful he will be. Man aspires to be blissful. What is the reason? Man is born out of this bliss. He lives in bliss. He ends in bliss. This bliss is Divine. Though this Divine quality is latent in him, man searches for it outside. Bliss does not have a separate existence. Man strains himself thinking that he would be happy by learning. He makes every effort to take up a job, to be happy. Thinking that he would find happiness in it, he struggles hard to occupy exalted positions. He thinks that he would be happy by becoming a householder. In spite of all these efforts, he is far from this happiness.

Of all the attributes and names of God, Sat-Chit-Ananda is the most precious. To attain such a bliss! one has to follow the path of Sat-Chit-Ananda. Sat is the truth which remains the same in all the three worlds and in all the three periods of time. Chit means total awareness. Out of this total awareness, you can attain Divinity. Where these three principles, Sat-Chit-Ananda exist, there is supreme bliss, Brahmananda.

Why does God Incarnate?

Man embarks on many spiritual pursuits to attain this bliss (Divinity). But they all give him temporary satisfaction, not lasting bliss. They are all worldly pursuits. Once you give up these external paths and take to inward path, you attain bliss. Those who want this eternal, supreme, absolute bliss should follow this path of Sat and Chit. In order to reach this blissful state, one has to follow the path of truth. Truth is God. Truth is all pervasive. Truth is beyond time and space and all reckoning. Once you follow this truth, naturally you can attain God, who is the embodiment of truth. This is what the Veda means, when it says, "Uddhareth Atmanaatmanam." You should work for your own emancipation. You should know your truth. Investigate your own heart. There lies real bliss. All physical paths confer temporary satisfaction.

Man has four primary objectives in life. They are Dharma (Righteousness), Artha (Wealth), Kama (Desire) and Moksha (Liberation). These objectives give us worldly comforts and bring peace and enjoyment in our life. There is, however a fifth objective of life called Supreme Love. It is the principle of love that makes you love God intensely. One who understands and follows this sacred principle of love will attain liberation. What is liberation? Mukti (liberation) is that which would put an end to external pursuits. What is to be offered to God? This body which is the temple of God should be offered to God. This is called "Pindarpanam." This body is Pindamu; offering this to God is liberation. It only means, all the actions that we do with this body should be offered to God. This is the fifth objective of human life, i.e., the sacred ideal of love. To teach this sacred rule of love, to pass on the sacred love, to propagate this love, to make people drink the nectar of love, the formless God descends from Goloka to Bhuloka in human form.

The day of descent of God on earth is celebrated as the birthday of God. Why does He incarnate? God descends on earth to make humanity drink the nectar of love and enjoy the sweetness of Divinity. One who drinks this sweet nectar forgets himself and identifies himself with God and enjoys the blissful state thereafter. "Shariramaadyam Khalu Dharma Saadhanam," body is gifted

to perform sacred actions. We have to discharge our duties and sacrifice the fruits of our actions. We have to cultivate the principle of "Tyaga" or sacrifice and be far off from "Bhoga" or worldly pleasures. God is the embodiment of "Tyaga." The bliss which you get out of sacrifice is truly Divine. Those who want to enjoy the blissful state of God must give up the body attachment and turn inward. We should not spend all our time for our bodily pleasures. We do need to safeguard our body. What for is the body given? It is given to serve God. We have to offer our total love to God.

Divinity Goes by Character

The body is bound to perish at some point of time. Just for the sake of this fleeting body, we should not waste our time and energy. What we need is good character. The modern student tries to acquire only physical strength, friendship and wealth. But all these things are not important. Character is important. Without character, physical strength, friendship and wealth are of no use. It does not matter even if wealth or friendship is lost, but you should keep up your character. In the ancient days, Bharatiyas believed, "If wealth is lost, nothing is lost; if health is lost, something is lost; if character is lost, everything is lost." Due to the effect of Kali Age, people now say, "If character is lost, nothing is lost; if health is lost, something is lost; if wealth is lost, everything is lost." This is the modern trend. This is not the path, which we have to adopt. In order to foster character in man, Krishna taught in many ways and propagated the principle of love. The previous speaker, Dr. Chatterji, narrated the incident of Krishna lifting the Govardhangiri in order to protect the Gopalas and Gopikas from the torrential rain. When Krishna told them to come and take shelter under the mountain, which He had lifted with His small finger, the people were afraid to do so. They doubted His Divinity thinking Him only to be a small boy. (Poem) Human beings form their opinion based on the physical frame and physical strength. It is only the Divine that goes by the character and not by the physical strength.

Love of God is the Best Sadhana

We have to make an effort to know the difference between God's love and human love. God always gives and gives and never receives anything in return, but man always receives and is never prepared to give.

In every activity we have to enquire the principle of truth. One who recognises the truth will always live in bliss. Love is truth, love is life and love is the goal. Love is second to none, love equals love alone. Only through the path of love, you can reach the embodiment of love, which is God. It is not physical or worldly love. It is not "Pravritti Prema," which is external, but it is the "Nivritti Prema," which is eternal and Divine. You can win God's love, either by criticism or praise. When Dharmaraja was offering first respects to Krishna in the open court, Shishupala started criticising Krishna in many ways. Dharmaraja could not bear this. As he was listening to this uncharitable criticism, he could see the life principle of Shishupala merging in Krishna. This made Dharmaraja much more unhappy and dissatisfied. He started wondering how the life principle of a person like Shishupala could merge in the Lord. Dharmaraja requested Narada, who was by his side, to explain how such a thing could happen. Narada said, "O king! Criticism or praise relate only to the body, not to the spirit. Moreover, Shishupala criticised Krishna only out of love and not hatred; since he knew that the more he criticised, the sooner he could merge in Him. There is no mistake if you criticise God out of love. Even such criticism is a kind of praise."

Kamsa having come to know that he would die at the hands of Krishna, decided to kill Krishna and Balaram. Immediately, he called Akrura and commanded him to go and fetch Balaram and Krishna saying, "O Akrura, you are a good friend and devotee of Krishna, if you go, they will surely condescend to your request." Since he could not disobey the command of the king, Akrura went and met Yashoda and Nanda and told them that Kamsa was performing a yajna and wanted Krishna and Balaram to attend it. Yashoda and Nanda were not in favour of their children going to Kamsa's palace.

Gopikas' Love for Krishna

The Gopikas having heard of this surrounded Nanda's house and said Krishna should not go to Mathura, as He was their life and they could not live without Him. They raised objections in several ways. Krishna is the very form of mystery and wonder. He did not utter a word, since he knew that the Gopikas would not be convinced so easily. So he sat in the chariot and made it disappear with his Divine power. Until He reached the banks of the Yamuna, no one could see the chariot. As the Gopikas found themselves helpless, they returned to Brindavan. Gopikas had this intense love for Krishna, so they could see this love pervading all over. Whenever the hearts of human beings become barren, because of unrighteousness and lovelessness, in order to sow the seeds of love and in order to propagate the principle of love, God incarnates. The main mission of God is to develop the principle of love in mankind. Only when we get intoxicated and forget ourselves drinking the nectar of Divine love, we can find the path to liberation. In order to experience Sat-Chit-Ananda, we should tread along the path of truth. We should have the total understanding of the Self, then we will enjoy the manifestation of God Himself. God is not present in a foreign land, He is present in your body.

Twin Principles of Love and Truth Krishna once questioned the Gopikas around Him, "Who is the true victor?" One of them said, "One who emerges victorious in the battlefield is the true victor." "One who can face all the difficulties and troubles with steadfastness and courage is the true victor," said a few. In this manner, each of them gave different answers. Then Krishna smilingly said, "O Gopikas, whatever you mentioned are temporary in nature. None of them can be termed as a true victor. True success lies in controlling one's senses. Then one will be a victor. One has to control the senses. The senses belong to the body. Make this body a temple of God."

No one can describe God. Gopikas sang, 'O Krishna, can we understand You? You are smaller than an atom, mightier than the biggest. You are present in all the 84 lakhs of species always. Right from the atom to the entire cosmos, You are present everywhere.' It is impossible to understand God. We have to understand Him as the embodiment of love and recognise Him as the embodiment of truth. We should see that we follow the twin principles of truth and love. Then we will be able to control our senses. We cannot control our senses by spiritual pursuits or physical exercises. Only through the principles of love and truth, it is possible to gain control over the senses. The combination of truth and love would shape into Dharma. Therefore, speak the truth and follow Dharma. Once we awaken truth within us, we can see God. Ego and attachment are the cause for all misery. In order to give up these two, develop love. Under any circumstances, we should not give up love. Only through love, you can develop faith. Love is God, live in love. Gopikas prayed to Krishna thus, "In order to sow the seeds of love in our barren hearts, in order to see that there will be downpour of rain of love, so that the rivers of love

would flow continuously, O Krishna! Please play on Your Divine Flute. Earth, seeds, rain, river, trees, fruits, all are filled with love." (Song)

Offer Your Body to God

Having taken this human form, which is full of love, how is it that we have lost it? Because we make use of our love in the worldly sense. When does it become true love? Only when we offer our body to God. This is true offering. Many people offer different things to God, but a true devotee offers himself to God. Emperor Bali offered himself to God and he did not have rebirth. We should consider this body as the flower, which has to be offered at the lotus feet of God. Therefore, human life gifted to you has to be spent in doing good actions, and ultimately offered to God. Brahmins think that the word, "Pindarpanam" is connected with the obituary rites. But, that is not so; offering our body to God is true "Pindarpanam". This is true offering that gives us liberation. Once the body is offered to God, there is no attachment (Moha). Once attachment is gone, that is liberation "Moha Kshayam is Moksham". Those, who know this truth and conduct themselves accordingly, can enjoy bliss. Until we reach that sacred exalted state, we have to protect our body. We have to discharge our responsibilities.

Bharatiyas since ancient times have given top priority to sacrifice. They give utmost importance to Dharma. They hold the quality of renunciation in the highest regard and they welcome truth. Since ancient times, the hearts of Bharatiyas are full of compassion. I have told students many a times about Max Muller. He was also called "Moksha Muller", because of his noble qualities. Though he was a foreigner, his love for Bharat was beyond all limits. He wanted to leave his mortal coil in this sacred land. Many of his friends questioned him, as to what was so special about Bharat. He told them, "The air of Bharat has truth in it. There is Dharma in the dust of Bharat. There is love in the mud of Bharat. In the Ganga, there is sacrifice. There is no other country as sacred as Bharat. That which is not present in Bharat is not present anywhere else in the world." Having been born in Bharat, and being called Bharatiyas, we are not able to recognise the greatness of Bharat. We have to put in great effort so as to know the sanctity and greatness of Bharat.

Significance of Krishna's Pranks

One day Balaram brought a few cowherd boys with him and started complaining to mother Yashoda: "O mother, Krishna is always so hungry? He eats at home as well as outside like a glutton. Why should he eat mud? Today he started eating mud." Yashoda felt sad and was furious. She caught hold of Krishna's hand and asked: "Krishna, am I not serving you enough food? Are you not eating enough of butter in the neighbourhood? Why have you started eating mud?" Then Krishna started explaining: "O mother, to eat mud am I a child or a madcap?" (Poem) Though Krishna was only five years old at that time, by telling His mother that He was not a child, nor a madcap, He meant to indicate indirectly that He was the mighty Great One. Thus, Krishna conveyed many inner secrets. No one can understand in depth Krishna's Leelas. They have got some external implications and inner significance. But, today very few people know the inner reality. People are full of doubts. Mother Yashoda saw all the worlds in Krishna's mouth, but she herself doubted. What was the main reason? It was the feeling that Krishna was her son. It is the physical attachment that causes doubts.

One should attach oneself to the Atma. When the Atma merges in Atma, everything becomes unified. This Atmic relationship is spirituality. The body relationship is physical. Therefore, it was Krishna who clarified all the doubts, demonstrated and manifested Divinity in everybody. Though all incarnations are Divine, Krishna Avatar was special in this sense that He spent all his time smiling and smiling, full of love. At no point of time, He was angry. He was always smiling. This is the main quality of God. God has no trace of ego or pride or jealousy whatsoever. Such sacred qualities are present only in Sai Avatar again. (Cheers) In no other incarnation, this was noticed. Though Divinity is uniform in all the incarnations, each Avatar expressed Himself on the basis of the prevalent circumstances. So, you should develop full faith in God. Just as you have faith in yourself, have faith in God. Faith in yourself, faith in God. This is the secret of greatness. You are God, and God is you only. Why do you give room for doubts? In fact, these doubts will ruin you. So, give up all these doubts. Develop love, follow the path of truth and experience Divinity. This is true Sadhana, this is true spirituality.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the Bhajans, "*Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama, Rama, Hare, Hare...*" and "*Govinda Krishna Jai, Gopala Krishna Jai...*"

—From Bhagavan's Discourse at Prasanthi Nilayam on 14th August 1998

SRI SATHYA SAI INSTITUTE

Welcome to New Vice-Chancellor

At an impressive function held in the Institute Auditorium, Sri S. V. Giri, the new Vice-Chancellor of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning assumed charge of his office in the Divine Presence of the Revered Chancellor, Bhagavan Baba on 10th August, 1998.

Bhagavan Baba came to the Institute Auditorium at 3.00 P.M. along with Sri S. V. Giri and the outgoing Vice-Chancellor Prof. G. Venkataraman in procession led by students chanting Veda Mantras, and was offered traditional welcome of Poorna Kumbha.

Dr. Sandipan Chatterji, faculty member of the Department of English, welcomed the august gathering, which included dignitaries, journalists and distinguished guests. Paying warm tributes to the outgoing Vice-Chancellor, Prof. G. Venkataraman, Dr. Chatterji thanked the Revered Chancellor for giving the Institute such an illustrious son of India as Vice-Chancellor. Welcoming the new Vice-Chancellor, Sri S. V. Giri, Dr. Chatterji said that Sri Giri had vast experience as a senior officer both in the State and Central Government and had resigned his job as Central Vigilance Commissioner to serve in the mission of Bhagavan Baba.

Narrating a story how stones were turned into diamonds by the words of a celestial being, Dr. Chatterji delineated how Sri Sathya Sai Education was a diamond-making exercise and every student who came out of the portals of this unique Institute was transformed into a shining diamond. Sai education was not only a unique experiment, but a unique experience.

Sri Deepak Anand, a second year MBA student, speaking on this occasion, said that for those who aspire for peace, love and solace all the roads lead only to Puttaparthi. Quoting a verse from Tagore's Gitanjali, he said Prasanthi Nilayam was the real heaven of freedom where the mind was without fear, where knowledge was free and where the words came out from the depths of truth. Expressing deep gratitude to Bhagavan on behalf of the students, he said every student considered himself extremely fortunate to have Bhagavan not only as Chancellor, but father, mother, friend, philosopher and guide. In the end, he prayed to Bhagavan for His blessings, so that all His students should become worthy instruments of His Divine Mission.

The next speaker, Prof. G. Venkataraman, who laid down the office of Vice-Chancellor, said his three years of tenure had been a glorious period. He expressed deep gratitude to the Revered Chancellor for His guidance and thanked the teachers and students for their cooperation.

Prof. Venkataraman spoke at length to point out how unique Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning was not only among the universities of India, but of the entire world. He said he had seen universities all over the world, but had not come across a university or deemed university like this, where not even a single day of work had been lost due to any cause whatsoever, and where the problem of student indiscipline was unheard of, where community service was not only taught but put into practice, and, to top it all, where the Chancellor of the university spent time with students everyday (and everyday meaning every day).

Looking at the track record of this Institute since its inception, it was not surprising that educationists the world over were getting interested in the Sai System of Education and teams from various countries had been coming to this Institute to study its system of education, said Prof. Venkataraman.

He said, " The reason for all these achievements of the Institute is not far to seek, and the sole reason is our Revered Chancellor, Bhagavan Baba. Is there any Chancellor in any part of the world who knows most of the teachers and a good chunk of students as Swami does? Is there any Chancellor like Swami, who is concerned about student welfare every single minute?" Prof. Venkataraman asked.

Prof. Venkataraman dwelt on the subject of Science and Spirituality and said that though with the help of science and technology man could walk on the moon, yet he could not live in harmony with his fellow beings. Quoting many famous scientists of this century, Prof. Venkataraman said that morality and character are extremely important for all scientists. As Swami exhorted, Science and Spirituality were like the two wings of a bird and both were equally essential. Prof. Venkataraman concluded his talk by telling the students that they were extremely lucky to receive education directly under the loving guidance of Bhagavan Baba. It was the students' duty to live up to Swami's ideals and serve Mother India and not to look for opportunities for going to foreign countries.

Sri S. V. Giri, the new Vice-Chancellor, expressed his gratitude to Bhagavan Baba for giving him this opportunity to serve Him. He said, as Education Secretary to the Government of India he had visited many universities, but none of them had this uniqueness which made this university a role model for all to follow. Stressing on the need for positive action, Sri Giri gave

the example of Hanuman and enumerated his qualities, like wisdom, courage, strength (physical, moral, spiritual) fearlessness, forbearance etc. and urged the students to follow him as their ideal.

He regretted that though the Government was spending hundreds of crores on education, rural development, etc., yet the progress was not adequate because the country lacked people with sterling character and leadership qualities, which this Institute was imparting to the students with the all-pervasive Divine guidance of Bhagavan Baba.

Sri Giri said, "I was a member of IAS, which was a mirror image of SAI. So, I already had some Sai in me. But, now I have shed IAS and fully merged in SAI."

Sri Giri emphasised that students should note that duty, discipline and diligence were the hallmarks of a true human being. He concluded his speech by offering pranams at Bhagavan's lotus feet.

After these brief speeches, Bhagavan honoured the outgoing Vice-Chancellor with gold bracelets and a shawl and the incumbent Vice-Chancellor with a shawl. Bhagavan then gave a scintillating discourse and concluded it at 5.00 PM. with the Bhajan, "*Prema Mudhita Manase Kaho.*"

The function concluded with National Anthem followed by distribution of prasadam.

Bhagavan Blesses Alike and Muddenahalli Schools

Thousands of students from Alike and Muddenahalli schools experienced ecstatic moments at Prasanthi Nilayam as Bhagavan Baba blessed them with His Gracious Presence on the 10th and 11th of September on the occasion of the celebration of the 20th Anniversary of the two Institutions run by the Lok Seva Trust coming under the direct control and guidance of Bhagavan Baba.

The entire alumni of both the institutions numbering about 2500 arrived at Prasanthi Nilayam on the 9th. On the 10th morning the staff of the Institutions greeted Bhagavan as He emerged from the Poornachandra Auditorium with Poorna Kumbha and other traditional honours. Bhagavan came in a procession headed by a Nadaswaram troupe, a choir of Veda chanting students and a group of students performing Bhangra dance.

Bhagavan was greeted with thunderous applause as He arrived in Sai Kulwant Hall, which was almost fully occupied by the students from Muddenahalli and Alike. There was a programme of devotional music in the morning session.

In the afternoon, there was a mammoth meeting of all the students and staff, besides the general public. Sri Gangadhara Bhat, President of the Loka Seva Trust, in his speech traced the growth of the two institutions, which owed their inception to the dedicated labours of the late Narayana Bhat. Later Swami took over the two institutions from the Loka Seva Trust. Under Swami's guidance the institutions made rapid strides towards becoming premier institutions in Karnataka. He expressed their gratitude to Bhagavan for having given them the opportunity to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of their coming under Bhagavan's aegis. He recalled how Bhagavan generously took over the management of the two institutions when they were in great trouble and helped them to grow into the present huge dimension.

Sri B. N. Narasimhamurthy, at present Warden of the Brindavan Campus, who had been originally deputed by Bhagavan to look after the institution at Muddenahalli, explained how the Institutions had been nurtured by Bhagavan to shine as the best in the State. He spoke about the uniqueness of the Sai Avatar and His role in transforming men to realise their spiritual destiny by dedicating their lives to the service of humanity. He explained how Bhagavan inspired students to develop their character, will power and determination. It was His inspiration that enabled the teachers of these institutions to work with dedication and devotion. After this, Bhagavan gave His Divine Discourse and emphasised the need for ideal educational institutions like the ones at Alike and Muddenahalli, which can invest the students with new moral and spiritual qualities.

In the evening there was a cultural programme relating to the exploits of Krishna entitled "Sri Krishna Vijayam". After Swami came and took His seat, the performance commenced. The artists with their glittering and gorgeous costumes, lively and quick dances and fascinating acting impressed the audience. Swami was obviously pleased with the performance of the young students. He went to the stage, materialized two glittering rings in a flash and put them on the fingers of the two small boys who had played the roles of Krishna and Balaram. It was indeed an electrifying moment for all the devotees who had assembled in the vast auditorium. Swami blessed all the boys who had played different roles.

On the 11th afternoon the meeting commenced with Veda chanting followed by short speeches by two students, Karthik of Muddenahalli and Pavan Kumar of Alike. They expressed their gratitude to Bhagavan for having given them the opportunity to study in the schools under His divine guidance.

Sri B. N. Narasimhamurthy, Warden of the Brindavan Hostel, spoke explaining in detail how Bhagavan was engaged in service to mankind day in and day out and was concentrating mostly on moulding the students into ideal citizens. He made special mention of the compassion of Bhagavan in giving Padanamaskar to all the 2500 students and teachers from the two Institutions who had come all the way for the celebration of the 20th anniversary in the Divine Presence. He said that when he was mentioning to Swami what a great strain this was for Swami, Swami replied that it was not Shrama (strain) but only Prema (love) and added: "What if even I lose My body for the sake of My devotees?" Such was the infinite compassion of the Sai Mother. He added that Swami had the affectionate heart of a mother combined with the powerful voice of a lion. He concluded with a prayer that they should have Swami's form before their eyes, His Name on their tongue and serve Him by serving mankind. Bhagavan then gave His discourse (printed separately). The celebrations came to a close after Arati to Bhagavan.

Levels of Consciousness

The Spirit (Atma) when it is associated with the physical body is called Annamaya Purusha. This is the state of ordinary consciousness. When the Spirit is associated with Vital Consciousness (Pranamaya Kosa), it is known as Pranaswarupa (Life Consciousness). When the Atma is associated with mental consciousness, it is known as Manopurusha. The fourth consciousness transcends the human senses. It is called Atheetha Manasatvam—Transcendental Consciousness. The Vedas and the Upanishads have described this state as Brihat and Rita. It transcends human limitations and comes close to divinity. It is called Super Mind. The Atma in this state is called Vijnanapurusha. Above this state is the Anandamaya Purusha—the enjoyer of Bliss. It is a state of super consciousness, which expands in due course to merge in the Universal Consciousness.

—Baba

AVATAR VANI:

VINAYAKA CHATURTHI SANDESH:

Glory of Vinayaka

*Conquering conceit one becomes endearing,
Conquering anger one is free from regrets;
Conquering desire one becomes prosperous,
Conquering greed one becomes happy.*

Embodiments of Divine Love!

As long as a man is conceited and egoistic, no one will like him. Even his wedded wife and his own son, even if they may appear to respect him externally, will not be happy with an arrogant man. As long as a man is filled with ego, he is unlikely to be really happy. Therefore, at the very outset a man should get rid of his ego (Ahamkara).

"Krodham Hithva Na Sochathi." As long as a man is filled with anger, he cannot experience joy. He is bound to be miserable. Only when man subdues anger will he be able to experience happiness. As long as one is filled with insatiable desires, he cannot feel really wealthy. The moment man gives up desires, all riches will come to him.

As long as a man is greedy, he will be a stranger to happiness. When man gives up greed, he will feel endowed with all riches.

The Atom and the Atma

The whole cosmos is based on the atom (Anu). Whether an object is microcosmic or as vast as the cosmos it is based on atomic power. Few can realise fully the power of the atom.

The atom is constituted of energy in all its forms. The words you speak, the objects you see, the sounds you hear, the activities you undertake are all based on the power of the atom. Every moment of every being is based on atomic power. All experience is derived from the energy of the atom.

It has taken scientists thousands of years to discover this truth. But this was recognised by the child Prahlada a long time ago. He declared emphatically: "Do not doubt that He (the Lord) is at one place and not at another. You can find him wherever you look for Him." Prahlada did not conduct any experiments or explorations in space. To the pure of heart, the truth reveals itself spontaneously.

"Subtler than the subtlest and vaster than the cosmos, the Atma (spirit) is the atom and atom is the Atma." This truth was recognised by the child Prahlada as a student. When this truth is recognised, the whole cosmos will be seen as permeated by the Divine, as a manifestation of the Divine.

In every object there is the power of the atom. You cannot find any object or any place in which the atom is not present. All objects are composed of atoms. All forms of energy are manifestations of the atom. The whole earth is made up of atoms.

In this world, every human being is a kind of small generator (of energy). The magnetic power in him becomes electrical energy. It is because of this energy that man is able to walk, see, hear and do many other things. The heart in every man is like a radio station. The energy in every being is based on atomic power. There are light waves. These generate magnetic energy. Recognising the connection between matter and energy, Einstein affirmed their convertibility.

These findings of the scientists confirm the Vedantic view that the Brahman (the Divine) permeates the whole cosmos. Only the terms used are different. The scientists declare that the cosmos is constituted of atoms. The Vedantins declare that the cosmos is permeated by the

Divine (Brahmamayam). What the scientists and the sages declare is the one truth, called by different names.

Lord of Wisdom

Take the word "Ganapati." "Ga" represents Buddhi (the intellect). "Na" signifies wisdom (Jnana). "Ganapati" is the lord (Pati) of the intellect and wisdom. To worship the intellect and wisdom is one form of worship of Ganapati.

Ganapati represents the combination of much energy. Because of this, the name Ganapati is appropriate for him. Nor is that all. He is the lord of all the celestial hosts (Ganas). Hence he is hailed as Ganapati.

He is called by another name, Vinayaka. There is no master above him. He is the master of all.

Another name for him is Vighneshwara. This name means that he is the lord of every form of wealth (Aishwarya). He is the embodiment of all forms of wealth.

When we explore the inner meanings of all the attributes associated with his name, we find that he possesses all powers. They include the all-pervading cosmic vibrations, the power that is latent in all animate and inanimate objects, the effulgence of the all-pervading Light. He is the energy that animates every being. There is electro-magnetic energy in every body. Nature is the embodiment of the same energy. This energy may assume different forms, but its essential character is one and the same. A lighted bulb, a fan that is revolving, and many other things working through electrical power depend on the same kind of current. The energy may manifest itself in the form of light, heat or magnetic energy, but it proclaims the power of the Divine that is the source of all energy.

The Cosmos and the Divine

The electro-magnetic energy in man expresses itself in the form of radiation. It is also called reflection of the "inner being". The power of sight, hearing, speech, digestion and movement of limbs is derived from this energy. Water also contains this energy. In fact, the entire cosmos is permeated by this divine energy. On the basis of this, Vedanta declared: "Sarvam Khalu Idam Brahma" (Verily, all this is Brahman). Recognising this, the Vedas declared: "Sarvam Vishnumayam Jagat" (The cosmos is permeated by the Divine). Hence there is no room for making any distinction between Ganapati, Vishnu, Siva, Shakti or man. In all human beings, humanness is present equally. It manifests itself externally in various forms. This is only the external manifestation of nature, not its internal essence. The inner aspect is present in all beings in a subtle formless substance. That is atomic energy. Several means were employed for harnessing this energy for various purposes.

Offerings to Ganesha

On this auspicious day of Vinayaka Chaturthi, what is it that we offer to Vinayaka? All offerings to Vinayaka are free from the use of oil in their preparation. Boiled rice is made into balls which are filled with 'til' seeds and jaggery. They are then mixed with rice flour and cooked. In this offering, there is no trace of any cooking oil. Hence, the offerings are called oil-less edibles.

What is the significance of such preparations? It is found that oil-less edibles are easily digestible. The 'til' seeds serve to keep down the bad effects of phlegm, bile and wind in the body. The jagger in the preparation is conducive to improvement of the vision. All these preparations are intended to promote health and are not designed to propitiate the Divine. The energy derived from these edibles is conducive to the promotion of longevity.

Vinayaka is known for his high intelligence. The very sight of his figure gives joy to many. The form itself is extraordinary. He has a big belly, beautiful tusk, penetrating eyes, handsome ears; all these are harmoniously balanced to produce an attractive form.

The Elephant-faced Deity

What, it maybe asked, is the reason for endowing the deity with an elephant's head? The elephant is well known for its high intelligence. Among animals it has a prodigious size. No other animal is cast in such a big mould. The elephant's foot encompasses the footprint of the lion, esteemed as the lord of the animal kingdom. In the jungle, hunters follow the footprints of the lion to trace it to its lair. But if an elephant has walked over those footprints, they are totally erased.

Moreover, the elephant is the pathfinder for human beings. In a forest covered with dense bushes, humans cannot easily find their way. But once an elephant has gone through the jungle, its trail becomes a path for others to follow.

All these traits of the elephant show that in the journey of life one can find one's way if one has the intelligence of the elephant.

Because he is endowed with the form of an elephant, Ganapati is associated with the quality of intelligence.

Primacy of Vinayaka

Once, Parvati and Parameshwara, parents of Ganapati and Subramanya, wanted to test their intelligence. They summoned the two sons and told them to go around the world to find out which of the two would do it quicker. The elder of the two, Ganapati, did not stir from his place. The younger son, Subramanya, mounted his peacock and set out on the round-the-world trip. With a great deal of effort he completed the trip and was approaching his parents. Seeing him from a distance, Ganapati circumambulated his parents and claimed himself to be the winner. The mother, Parvati, told Ganapati: "Ganapati! Here is your brother who has gone round the world. And you have not stirred from this place. You have made no effort at all. How can you claim that you have gone round the world? How can I regard you as the winner?" Ganesha replied: "Mother! The cosmos is the combination of matter and energy—the unity of the father and the mother. When I go round you I have gone round the world itself as you are the parents of the cosmos. There is no place where you two are not present. I see your omnipresence. By circumambulating both of you I can claim to have gone round the cosmos." The moment he heard these words, Easwara was astonished at the high intelligence of his son. He had recognised the truth about his Divine parents. Easwara then said: "Vinayaka! You are an exemplary son for one and all. Let the world worship you first before they offer worship to me. I am not as intelligent as you are. We are your parents but not more intelligent than you."

(Swami then sang a song in which Parameshwara described all his attributes and his form and declared that in spite of all these he was not equal to Ganapati). Easwara declared: "I have many attributes but not your intelligence. Hence, before offering worship to Me, let all people worship you. This is the boon I confer on you."

Easwara is a parent who conferred such an honour of a higher status than his own to his son. Hence, Ganapati represents no commonplace principle. He is the embodiment of all potencies. He is the abode of every kind of intelligence. The goddess of wisdom (Saraswati) dwells in his belly. Nothing untoward can happen wherever he is present.

Ganapati occupies the position of one who is the source of all prosperity. Moreover, when he is invoked before any undertaking, there will be no impediments to its completion.

Today every kind of people—the wealthy, the wise, the scholars and the common people—worship Ganapati. Students, with a view to securing the grace of goddess of wisdom and ensuring that there is no hindrance to their studies, place their books before the idol of Ganapati and worship him.

Bharat and Bharati

The name of our nation, Bharat, is derived from that of Saraswati, the goddess of all knowledge and wisdom. Some people wrongly attribute the name Bharat as one derived from the name of Bharata, the brother of Rama. This is not so. Among the names mentioned in the hymns in praise of Saraswati is Bharati. With reference to music, the word "Bharati" is significant. Good music has to combine Bhava (represented by the letter "Bha"), Raga ("Ra") and Tala ("ti"). The feeling, the tune and the rhythm have to be combined to produce good music. Every music concert begins with a song in adoration of Ganapati like "Vaathaapi Ganapathim Bhaje!" This shows that by worshipping Ganapati proficiency in any sphere is achieved.

Ganapati is not only the lord of various activities but is the presiding deity for all auspicious functions. He can make even inauspicious occasions auspicious. He is always engaged in conferring boons on all. He is the giver of prosperity and intelligence. With the grace of Ganapati any desires can be realised.

How to Pray?

In praying to Ganapati, you should not ask for trivial things like passing in examinations or getting jobs. You should only pray: "Oh Vighneshwara! Please see that there are no obstacles in what I want to accomplish. I am worshipping you for this purpose."

Today few persons understand the true spirit of the Ganapati Principle (Tattwa). They are concerned about the outer forms and ignore the inner esoteric meaning. This applies to the way many festivals are celebrated. The birthday of Rama is celebrated without understanding the qualities represented by Rama. To be real devotees of Rama, people should cultivate his qualities. To be a true devotee of Krishna, you must be ever in bliss like Krishna. If you want to be a devotee of Sai, you must be full of love (cheers). Love all, Serve all.

Sometimes Swami may appear as if He is not showing His Love. This is only an external appearance for the moment. Pots, however different they may appear, are essentially made of clay. All golden ornaments are essentially gold in substance. Similarly, all actions of Swami are essentially filled with Love. You must cultivate this kind of feeling. You must love God with full faith.

The Ganapati Principle is pregnant with meaning. His story itself is unique. In the Bhagavata, Pothana declares that the stories of the lord are extraordinary; they are sacred for all the three worlds; they confer all blessings on the listeners and are constantly contemplated upon by saints and sages. This applies to all deities. Every aspect of the Divine is a mystery. Whatever the Lord says is full of significance. It is pregnant with sacred meaning.

Obey the Lord

Sainath (a member of the university faculty who had spoken earlier) said that when someone wanted to leave, Swami told him: "Wait!" But he was in a hurry, bought his ticket, and he left (Prasanthi Nilayam). But he had to wait for a long time there, yet he could not get what he wanted. If, instead, he had waited here, it would have been better for him. After waiting for a long time, he came back. Swami told him: "Ayya! When I told you not to go, why did you go?" There is a latent meaning in whatever I say. Some persons tend to treat My words lightly.

Here people are seated in rows. I move between them. As I move along, various people address various appeals to Me for this or that. Swami tells them: "Wait. Wait. Please sit down." They assume that this means that they should go on sitting and waiting after everyone else has left. I merely ask them to sit down when they get up from their places. "Wait, wait, don't be hasty" is all that I mean. Instead of understanding this properly, they take it to mean that they are asked to wait after all have left. They continue to sit even after the volunteers ask them to leave. This is utter foolishness. They should understand words in their proper context and behave appropriately. They must understand the context of time, place and circumstances and behave in the correct manner.

Devotees worship Vinayaka in different ways. They address the deity, describing his white robe, his moonlike complexion, his four arms and his ever-smiling face and pray for the removal of all obstacles. Some misguided non-believers interpret the same hymn in a perverse manner.

God's Omnipresence

The true devotee sees the Divine in everything. Ramadasa sang about the Lord of Bhadrachala, "Oh Rama! You are everywhere in the universe."

The power of the Divine permeates every atom in the cosmos. How is this to be recognised? The Divine is effulgent. (Swami sang a ballad, which compared the seven notes of music to a fortress in the heart of which dwells the Divine). The devotees envisage the Divine in different ways and express their adoration in various forms.

Abhimanyu (the son of Arjuna) knew how to make his way through a military formation (Padma Vyuha). But he did not know how to get out of it. The path to God lies through love. With love,

you can go anywhere. Love is God. Live in love. Start the day with love, fill the day with love, spend the day with love and end the day with love. This is the way to God.

Love Begets Love

How is this love to be fostered? Only through love you can foster love. There is no other way. For a plant to grow, you have to use manure and water. Students should realise that to foster the love of God, they have to apply the manure of faith and the water of love. Only thus can the plant of devotion grow. Never forget God. God alone is everlasting. That is the only Truth. Your parents will pass away some time or other. But God will remain forever. God is eternal. Always adore God. In addition, love your parents and all others. Your love for God should be steady and unwavering. That love is God. It is the very form of Ganapati. That love is present in all beings. You are all manifestations of the Divine. Consider yourselves as Divine. There is nothing wrong in that. In terms of the body, you are a human being. But spiritually you are Divine. Lead your life with the awareness, "I am Divine"(Aham Brahmasmi). Rama once invited Hanuman to come near him and asked: "In what manner do you worship me?" Hanuman replied: "Swami, from the viewpoint of the body I am your servant and you are my Lord. Mentally, I consider that I am a spark of your divinity. But in terms of the Atma, you and I are one. We are not two at all. Both of us are one." People worship the Divine in all these three ways. But ultimately they have to realise the third stage. Bodies are different but the Atma (the Self) is one only. This is why the sages declared: "The Absolute is One. But the wise call it by different names" ("Ekam Sat, Viprah Bahudha Vadanti.")

People look upon the Vighneshwara festival as some routine affair. But Vighneshwara embodies all the forms and all the powers of all the deities. It is not enough to worship Ganesha once a year. We must worship him always.

We must think of God every moment of our lives. It is in that spirit that everyone is enjoined to offer all actions as designed to please the Divine. Do what you please. Go anywhere you like. But do everything with the feeling that it is to please the Divine. Whatever you do, do it with the feeling that you are doing it for the pleasure of the Divine. Thereby you will accomplish all your desires. You will experience bliss. See the Divine in everything.

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

**—From Bhagavan's discourse on Ganesha Chaturthi day at Prasanthi Nilayam in
Sai Kulwant Hall on 25.8.1998**

GURUDEV VANI

Knowledge without Practice is Meaningless

*Speech is the cause of prosperity
Speech secures friends and kinsmen
Speech brings about bondage
Speech can also lead to certain death.*

Embodiments of Love!

The power of speech gifted to mankind is very important and majestic. It gives him all the wealth. So, we should talk sweetly and softly in an acceptable manner. Only such sweet talk will give us all the affluence and prosperity. Words can win many friends and relations and even kingdoms. We may have a few relations, but with our sweet talk, we can develop good relationship with the entire world. Sacred talk will give us all the education and elevate us to exalted positions. But we should also know that words spoken with bad thoughts and bad feelings will not only lead us to bondage, but can also lead us to death. Both good and bad are present in the words we utter. For the one with sweet words, the universe itself becomes a mansion. He will feel the bond of fraternity prevailing everywhere. So, words form the basis to make you feel the humanity as one caste and the universe as one mansion. To attain Divinity, one has to take to spiritual path. Good words coupled with humility will take you to higher levels.

Divinity within and without

The whole world is one, though you may find multiplicity. In this world of plurality, there is the underlying principle of unity. Of all the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, the most important number is 1. All the other numbers are mere modifications of number 1. 1+1 becomes 2. 9-1 becomes 8. Thus 1 forms the basis for all the numbers. This is the unity in multiplicity. This unity is the Truth. The Vedas say: "*Om Ithyaksharam Brahma*", the syllable OM is Brahman. Divinity is not separate from OM. Out of this unity, the world has emerged. But, you do not understand this truth and take to different paths, with aspirations and ambitions. In fact, there is no difference between the world and the Divinity. Just as different limbs form a complete human body, in the same way, human beings are like the limbs of the society. Society forms a limb of the entire humanity. Humanity forms a limb of Nature and Nature is a limb of the Divine. Therefore, humanity, society and Nature are all the limbs of the Divine. "*Sarvatha Paani Paadam, Tath Sarvathokshi Shiromukham Sarvata Sruthimalloke Sarvamaavruthya Thistathi.*" All the forms belong to the one and the same Divinity. The Vedas also declare that there is Divinity within and without (*Anthar Bahischa Tat Sarvavyapya Narayana Sthitha*). The grain is Divine, the husk is Nature. This is the relationship between the Divine and the world. The Gita says, "*Mamaivamsho Jeevaloke Jeevabhootha Sanathana*", which means all are the sparks of the Divine.

In the modern world, every individual wants something or the other. Do you think a person loves an object for the sake of the object? No, he loves it for his own sake. Similarly, a person loves another for his own happiness. So, in this world whatever man does is for his own sake. There are very few individuals who see unity in diversity. But, there are many who see diversity in unity. Only the lives of those who see unity in diversity are sanctified. In order to understand this underlying principle of unity, you need a Guru (preceptor). In modern times, we call them teachers.

The Noblest Profession

Today, some people say that one takes to the teaching profession when one has no other alternative. It is a mistaken view. The teaching profession is the noblest of all. The teacher has got all the capacity to mould the careers of the students committed to his care. Bal Gangadhar

Tilak struggled hard for the freedom of this country. One day, a friend of Tilak questioned him: "Tilak, you have been working hard for our Independence. After Independence what post would you like to take up? Will you be the Prime Minister or hold some other portfolio?" Tilak smilingly replied that he would never give up the sacred teaching profession for a ministerial post. He said, being a teacher he could train a number of students as ideal leaders of this country. He considered the teaching profession as the noblest. What are then the qualities required for a person who has taken up such a noble profession? A teacher should have sacred feelings and undertake sacred actions. He should never entertain bad habits. What is the reason? It is quite natural for the students to follow their teacher.

A teacher is one who shapes the future of students. So, a teacher should never indulge in bad habits like smoking, drinking and eating non-vegetarian food. Students observe the habits of their teachers. If the teacher himself indulges in these bad habits, he will not have the right to advise his students to leave these vices. Not merely this, a teacher should never utter a lie, and should never resort to stealing. A teacher should speak words born out of sacred feelings. Virtues, Good Intellect, Truth, Devotion, Discipline, Duty these are the attributes expected of a teacher. Only then, the students will be able to emulate him. We cannot estimate the contribution of a teacher to the society. It is he who can build the society or ruin it. A teacher carries with him many responsibilities. He should have a good mind to discharge these responsibilities.

Depend only on God

You all know that 50 years ago, the young and the old of this country struggled hard for Independence, giving up all their properties and belongings. What do you mean by 'independence'? It means, you do not depend on others. Do you find such a situation today? It is fifty years since this country attained Independence. Though 50 years have passed after Independence, we continue to depend on others. We have taken loans from many countries. When you are indebted to many countries, how can you say you are independent? If you are truly independent, you should never depend on others. If you are in need of money, does it mean that you should take loans from others? No. You have to reduce your expenditure, pomp and show. Only then you can save money. But, Bharatiyas have not understood their present position and continue to take loans. Gradually, this will lead to a position wherein you have to struggle for independence for the second time. During British rule, we suffered a lot and ultimately attained Independence. But, if we continue to take loans, we will again be under the control of others. So, we should not resort to taking loans.

Students today should be totally independent. They should enquire into the true meaning of the word '*Swechha*' (independence). '*Swa*' + '*Ichha*' = '*Swachha*'. '*Swa*' means Atma. So, the Will of the Self is called '*Swechha*'. Therefore, following the Conscience is true '*Swechha*'. But, students today do not understand the true meaning of this term and roam about in the streets and behave as they like, in the name of '*Swechha*'. Students should exercise control over their movement, speech and life. Only then they can work for the progress of this world. Right from the tender age, students should strive to attain '*Swechha*' in the true sense of the term. That is the reason, I always say "Start early, Drive slowly, Reach safely." You do not need to follow anyone else, follow your Conscience. That is '*Swechha*'. You should never be a slave.

There is a small story to illustrate this: When the King of Darapur expired, his young son was coronated. Being so young, the prince was immersed in many doubts. He went on thinking as to how to run the administration. He was not able to know who was good and who was bad. He did not know whom to approach for guidance. He thought that he should keep up the reputation of his father and grandfather. One day sitting in the palace, he noticed groups of people moving across the royal street. He enquired as to where they were all heading to. He was told that they were going to listen to the discourse of a noble soul. He too joined them incognito. He thought he could get his doubts cleared by the saint. He sat in the congregation and heard all the sacred teachings. He was extremely happy. People returned to their homes at the end of the discourse. But, the King remained there. As the saint also got up to go, his shawl got entangled to a nail of his chair. As a result, the shawl got torn. Immediately the saint brought a needle and thread and was trying to put the thread into the eye of the needle. The King in disguise was watching all this. He said, "Swamiji, you are trying to stitch an old shawl, please leave it aside and accept the new shawl which I have brought with me." The saint said, "I don't want a new shawl; if you really want to help me, help me in putting this thread through the eye of this needle." The King did accordingly. Then the saint stitched his old shawl, turned to the King and said, "Listen to me, I don't like to depend on others. I want to lead an independent life. Man should never be dependent on others. We should depend only on God." With these words, all the doubts of the King were cleared. He realised that God is the basis of all, and only through self-confidence, he could achieve what he wanted. He went to his palace and began following the dictates of his conscience. He did not consult anybody, nor did he seek advice from others. He became more independent. He developed an attitude to distinguish between the ephemeral and the permanent.

Practice what You Learn

The saint also told the King, "You may be a man of wisdom, but if you don't practice, you will be like a donkey carrying dirty clothes." You should not become like that. Try to practice at least one or two good principles in life. Not merely that, we should help others to put into practice what little they know. Education, which is not put into practice becomes unsacred. What is the use of receiving degrees, if they are not helpful to the society? Serve the society, share your knowledge with others. *"The best way to love God is to Love All and Serve All."* What is the use of receiving degrees, if you sit idle at home and keep applying for jobs without serving the society? Many graduates only apply without any reply! What is the use of leading such a life? At least, till you get a job, serve the society. Go to the villages and serve the needy. In fact, one who serves (*Kinkara*) is greater than the leader (*Shankara*).

Having known the Truth, what is the use if you do not follow it? Ravana had 10 heads, which symbolise 6 Shastras and 4 Vedas. He was a master of 64 types of knowledge. He built the city of Lanka in gold. In terms of learning, he was on a par with Rama. But, what is the use of all this learning? He became a slave to his senses. As he could not control his desires, he not only ruined himself, but also his entire clan. The Lanka was completely reduced to ashes. Ultimately, Ravana repented in the end. He said, "Though I was the master of all knowledge, I did not put it into practice. O people, do not get ruined like me. Though I had all the wealth, I could not enjoy anything because of excessive desires."

Of the three brothers, Ravana, Vibhishana and Kumbhakarna, Ravana symbolised Rajo Guna, Vibhishana symbolised Satwa Guna and Kumbhakarna was the embodiment of Tamo Guna.

Every man has these three attributes in him. These originate out of the human mind. Kumbhakarna, who stood for Tamasic quality, spent his entire life in eating and sleeping. Ravana, who symbolised Rajo Guna, was responsible for the destruction of the Rakshasa clan. It was only the Satwic Vibhishana, who could get the grace of Rama. So, man should not give room to Rajasic and Tamasic qualities in him. Ravana constantly worshipped Easwara. It is not enough if you worship God, you should put His words into practice. You should give up all wicked qualities.

When Ravana was about to breathe his last, Rama summoned Lakshmana and told him, "The one of great penance and wisdom is going to die. You go and listen to his last words." Obeying the command of his brother, Lakshmana went close to Ravana and listened to his words carefully. Ravana said, "I achieved whatever I wanted, but only three of my wishes remain unfulfilled. I wanted to convert the salt water of the sea surrounding Lanka into sweet water. I wanted to make those who suffer in hell enjoy the comforts of heaven. I wanted to connect hell and heaven with a ladder. But, I went on postponing them and ultimately could not accomplish them." Lakshmana returned to Rama and told the last words of Ravana. Rama smiled and said, "Lakshmana, what is the use of repenting in the end? The moment he wanted to do good, he should have done so immediately." Some people think twice before they undertake any action. That is called '*Purvataapam*'. There is another category of people, who act in haste and repent for their mistakes at the end. That is '*Pashchatapam*'. It was Arjuna, who had this '*Purvataapam*'. Before the commencement of war, he said, "Krishna, how can I bear the sight of my kith and kin being slain in the war? My head is reeling, I don't want to be here. Let us go home."

Valmiki described Ravana as wicked and Rama as noble. What is the difference between these two? Rama sacrificed everything and became an ideal for everybody. The blissful state he had at the time of getting ready for coronation was very much the same when he was asked to go to exile. That is the spirit of equanimity at times of pleasure and pain. Rama put into practice the education he received, whereas, Ravana merely accumulated knowledge without practising it. Ravana could not digest all that he learnt. As a result he suffered from 'indigestion'. Greatness lies in putting into practice, not merely in learning. Students! Whatever you believe to be good, do put into practice. Both teachers and students play an important role in laying the royal road for the future. If you spend your time in acquiring knowledge, without having faith in God, your life will be useless. Neither the penance nor the Japa can take you across the ocean of Samsara. You should serve the good people.

Talk less, Work more

You should not waste your time. "*Asthiram Yauvanam Dhanam, Dharmam Keerthi Dvayam Sthiram*", youth and money are temporary; truth and good name are permanent and eternal. So, we should uphold Truth and Goodness. There is no God other than Truth. Truth is the same in all the three periods of time. What is the difference between Truth and Fact? You may put on a coat today and wear a different dress tomorrow. This is not Truth, it is only a Fact, because it is subject to change. But Truth always remains the same. The Gita refers to Truth as '*Ritam*'. So, Truth is not reporting what you see, hear and experience. What you see and hear is worldly truth. It is not truth in the strict sense of the word. It is only External Truth (*Pravritti Sathyam*). But the Internal Truth (*Nivritti Sathyam*) remains the same in the past, present and future.

Students! See that the words that you speak are sacred. "You cannot always oblige, but you can always speak obligingly." That is enough. Try to speak sweetly and softly. I have told you many times, "Talk less, Work more." The one who talks excessively cannot work. The one who works will not talk. What is the reason for your not remembering all that you read? It is excessive talk. By talking less, your memory power will increase. Not merely this, your Atmic power will also improve. Whatever you hear, try to recapitulate, and then put into practice—*Shravanam*, *Mananam*, *Nidhidhyasanam* (listening, recapitulation and contemplation). These three are very essential. *Shravanam* can be compared to cooking in the kitchen, *Mananam* can be compared to bringing the food to the dining hall and serving it. *Nidhidhyasanam* can be compared to the eating process. When all these three are unified, you will have health and happiness. So, if you want to lead a life of contentment, you should recapitulate and practice whatever you have studied. Today, we find bookish knowledge everywhere, which is nothing but superficial knowledge. This superficial knowledge is of no use. You should be thorough in practical knowledge.

Teachers, Embodiments of Love!

In order to shape your students into ideal citizens, you should lead ideal lives. Students are the future leaders of this country. How will you bring about transformation in students? First, let there be transformation in you, then try for transformation among students. If you tell your students not to smoke without yourself giving up smoking, will they listen to you? No. See that you do not have a questionable character. Only then you will be a good teacher in the strict sense of the term. You should have very good habits. You should speak softly and use sweet words. You should talk to students with love and should encourage them. You should groom the students into ideal citizens.

Motherland is Greater than Heaven

Students should not crave for city life. They should live in their own villages and try to develop them. Today, the culture of Bharat is found only in villages. We should sustain it. But, students run after urban life, leaving behind their villages. What do they do in cities? They lead a life full of vices. In cities, you do not find fear of sin and love for God. Once you have Love for God, then there will be fear of sin. Naturally, there will be morality in society. So, first develop love for God. With this love for God, you can achieve anything in life.

Great leaders like Winston Churchill and Kennedy first served in the Army and worked for the welfare of their countries before they occupied exalted positions. When it comes to serving your country, you should be ready to take up any task. You should know that the safety of the country is important. "*Janani Janma Bhoomishcha Swargadapi Gareeyasi*", Motherland is greater than the heaven itself.

After the death of Ravana, Vibhishana fell at the feet of Rama and said, "Swami, I never aspired to be the King of Lanka. I only wanted my brother to give up his bad qualities. I pray to you to take over the kingdom of Lanka." All the Rakshasas also came and prayed to Rama that he should become the King of Lanka. Lakshmana also supported them saying, "O brother, Bharata is already ruling over Ayodhya. Even if you return to Ayodhya, you may not be crowned as King. So, I request you to take over this kingdom and transform all the Rakshasas. Lanka is full of golden mansions. Where else can you find such a beautiful place? I will be very happy if you

rule over this kingdom." Then Rama lovingly took Lakshmana close to him and said, "Lakshmana, how could you get such a silly desire? Just because your mother is ugly, can you call any other beautiful woman as your mother? Even though my country is poor compared to Lanka, I still consider it as my mother. Lanka may be full of gold, but I don't want it." Students should develop this kind of love and faith towards their country. The teachers should inculcate such spirit of patriotism in students. You should declare wholeheartedly with a sense of pride that this is my country, this is my mother tongue. But, modern students do not have such a type of national feeling. The moment they receive their Engineering and MBBS degrees, they start applying for Passport and Visa. This is not the right attitude.

Unity is the Greatest Wealth

Students! The sacred feelings that emerge out of your heart should be exported, and you should import all the good that is outside. You do not need any Passport or Visa to do this! You should know the truth that everything is within you. You do not need to crave for anybody, not even for God, because you are all sparks of the Divine. You have got Divine qualities and Divine powers. Without the Divine power in you, you will not be able to study and secure good marks in your subjects. So, everything is within you. You are the embodiment of Peace, Love and Ananda. You are the embodiment of God. Have full faith in this truth. When you lead your life with full faith in God, you will never be put to difficulties. "Life is a Challenge, Meet it; Life is Love, Enjoy it; Life is Energy, Skill it, and do not kill it." When you skill this energy, there will be perfect balance in whatever you do. Once you have this balance, you will have Insight. Due to the absence of Insight, you develop Outlook. Whatever you see outside is from within. So, develop inner view.

Students! Having learnt all these sacred qualities here, you should join hands and together work for the welfare of the society. There is no higher wealth than unity. Unity should be the aim of your life. Only through practice, you can achieve this. If all the 95 crore people of this land of Bharat develop this sacred quality, "I and You are One," you can very well imagine the sacred heights it can achieve. Treat everyone with brotherly love. The mother beats the child, when it commits a mistake. Later she fondles the child with love and affection. She beats the child for its own good in such a way that the sound is more but the pain is less. Similarly, if anyone commits a mistake, punish him. Only the sound should be heard, but he should not feel the pinch of it.

God does the same. Punishment given by God is only for protection. Doctor removes the ulcer from the stomach by cutting it open with a knife. Just because he uses a knife, can you call him a wicked person? No. He does it for your own good. Similarly, God punishes you only out of Love. Love lives by giving and forgiving; self lives by getting and forgetting. So, there should not be even a trace of selfishness in you. Do anything with Love, the result will certainly be good. Love is God, Live in Love. Talk to your friends with love. Help them in times of need.

Swami's Classmates

I will give you an example from my life. When this body was in Uravakonda, studying in 6th Class, there used to be E.S.L.C. examination. We three students, Suresh and Ramesh on either side and Myself in the middle, used to sit on the same bench. They were dullards. At the time of examination, they approached Me for help. They said, "Sathya, we cannot study without you. Some way or the other, you should help us in the examination." I will never say 'No' to anyone. I

said, I would certainly help. I told them the questions that would appear in the next day's examination and taught them the answers too. E.S.L.C. was a public examination. My Examination Reg. No. was 6, whereas the numbers of Suresh and Ramesh were 60 and 600. You can imagine it yourself, how far our chairs were placed from each other. It was not possible for them to copy. They said that they would not take the examination. Then I told them, "Having studied the entire year, it is not proper on your part to skip the examination. You must appear for the examination, whatever may be the outcome. Have unflinching faith in Me, I shall take care." Though it is not supposed to be done, there is nothing wrong when you are doing it for a good cause.

The duration of the examination was two hours. The stationery was supplied by the teachers. I completed My answer paper in just 5 minutes. Then I took some more papers from the invigilator and wrote the answers in Ramesh's handwriting. After completing it, I took another set of papers and wrote the answers in Suresh's handwriting. I also wrote their names on the answer sheets and kept them with Me. I had already told them not to get up, before I got up from My chair. At the end of two hours, when the final bell rang, the examiners started asking the students to surrender the answer sheets. All the students got up and I silently went and placed all the three answer papers on the table. All of us came out of the examination hall. Nobody raised any objection. After 10 days, when the results were announced, only we three got first class. The teachers were surprised how Ramesh and Suresh also got first class. They questioned them in the class, "How could you write so well?" The boys said, "We wrote then, but now we don't remember."

There was no scope for any doubt. They could not have copied from Me, since we were seated far from each other. All the three answer papers had different handwritings. Then where was the scope for doubt? I told them, "I never let down those who have reposed their full faith in Me. There are a number of people who ruined themselves for want of faith. But there are none who got ruined with faith in God. There may be up's and down's in between. But finally they emerge victorious."

Due to many changes that took place at Uravakonda, I stopped attending school. All the teachers and the students started coming to the residence to see Me. I gave them whatever they liked. The owners of the house could not bear all this and sent a telegram to the parents asking them to come and take Me. I boarded the bus to Puttaparthi. All the boys also wanted to come to Puttaparthi. Then I told them, it was not possible to reach Puttaparthi by bus, as there were no proper roads. The buses could reach only up to Dharmavaram or Penukonda. There were no roads to Puttaparthi 60 years back. So, I told them not to come.

When I was in school, I used to lead the prayer. Everyday from the dais, I would sing a song emphasising the unity of all religions. Everyone including the teachers would join in chorus blissfully. When I left the school, there was none to lead the prayer. There was a Muslim student by name Abdul Gaffur. He had a good voice and could sing well. The next day he was asked to lead the prayer. The moment he was on the stage, he remembered Me and started crying loudly. Then all cried and the prayer was cancelled.

When I came to Puttaparthi, Ramesh and Suresh could not bear the separation from Me. One should not do like this, but Ramesh went on crying, "Raju, you have left us, you have left us, I cannot live without you," and fell into a well and died. The second boy went on repeating, "Raju, Raju, Raju ..." and ultimately turned mad. He was taken to a hospital in Bangalore. His father came to Me and prayed, "Swami, he is Your classmate and my only son. Please come and give him Darshan at least once." I went to Bangalore, saw him in a mental hospital. The boy was continuously repeating "Raju, Raju ..." and was not looking at anyone. I went up to him and said, "Suresh, I am Raju, I have come for you, look at Me." Hearing this, he lifted his head and saw Me and closed his eyes permanently.

The same Ramesh and Suresh were born as Jack and Jill. When I was in Paatha Mandir (Old Mandir), these two puppies were with Me. It was I who christened them. One used to sleep near My feet and the other near My head. They never used to sleep at night. They used to bark at any person at sight. They were always with Me.

One day, the Rani of Mysore came to Me. As there were no proper roads to Puttaparthi, she alighted from the car at Karnatakapalli and walked the rest of the distance. The driver had his dinner in Puttaparthi and was returning to Karnatakapalli. I called Jack and asked him to accompany the driver and show him the way. Jack walked in the front, and the driver followed. The driver was surprised as to how a dog could show him the way. Then I said, it was not DOG that was showing him the way, but the inner being, GOD.

Next morning, the driver started the car, not knowing that Jack was sleeping under it. The wheel of the car ran over the back of Jack and its backbone broke. Jack dragged his body across the river, wailing all the while. A washerman named Subbanna, a respected person in the village, noticed Jack and came running to Me. He said, "Swami, Jack is coming, wailing in pain." I came out. Jack came close to Me crying loudly, fell at My feet and breathed his last. After three days, Jill also died. The Brindavanam that you find behind the Paatha Mandir is the Samadhi of these two dogs.

Swami only Gives

Ramesh and Suresh had very noble feelings. One day in the school, the drill master said that all the boys should join the scouts. I am telling you the truth. I did not have even a single paisa with Me. That was the position then. I could not ask for money at home since their condition was also poor. If one had 10 rupees, one was considered very rich in those days. If one had 100 rupees, he was equal to a millionaire! The drill teacher said that we should get a khaki shirt, khaki knickers (shorts), a belt, a whistle and a pair of boots. How could I get all this? I was in Kamalapur at that time. Knowing that I did not have money with Me, Ramesh asked his father to get him two pairs of khaki dress stitched. We were all of the same height then. He packed a knicker, a shirt and a pair of socks and wrote on it, "Raju, if you don't accept it, I will commit suicide. You are My life. You must accept this. Our friendship must develop this way." I removed that paper and put another, and wrote on it, "If our friendship is to develop, there should be no giving and taking. We should give and take only Love. There should be no material transaction. So, I will not accept this." The boy felt very sad.

I used to compose excellent poetry in those days. I speak in simple language to make the translator's job easy. Otherwise, I can speak in a lofty style. There was a businessman, named Kote Subbanna. He had brought a new medicine, called 'Balabhaskara' for sale.

He requested Me to compose a song on the efficacy of that medicine, which, he said, would serve as a good advertisement, so that it would be sold well. Then I composed a beautiful song. Hearing that song, he lost himself in ecstasy and got some sweets prepared at home and brought them for Me. The medicine was sold in large quantities because of the advertisement. He was overjoyed and bought two shirts and two knickers for Me. I said to him, "Are you paying the price for the song I composed? I will not accept this." He cried and said that he would not take them home. Then I told him that he could as well give them to some beggars on the street.

Right from that tender age, I never received anything from others. I only give and give and give, I never receive. But only for one thing I stretch My hand and that is pure Love. Love is not your property. Love is God's property. So, I am asking you for My own property. You are misusing the Love given to you; therefore you are suffering. You have to surrender your Love to God in order to be happy. Thus as a student, I always helped others and made everybody happy. Being Sai Students, you should also make others happy. Never make anybody suffer. "*Help Ever, Hurt Never.*" Develop this quality.

God Boys and Good Boys

There are other things which the students should take care of. Some students get the homework done by their brothers or sisters. This amounts to cheating their teacher. This is not correct. Students should do the homework themselves. They should develop good qualities. Good qualities will become God qualities. During the British rule, children were addressed as 'God boys'. Later on due to the effect of Macaulay's system of education, 'God boy' became 'Good boy'. After some time 'Good boy' became 'Goodbye'. Later on, even 'Good' was removed, only 'Bye-bye' remained. 'God boy' has come down to the level of 'Bye-bye' due to the effect of modern education. You should remain as 'God boys' and 'Good boys', and never come down to the level of 'Bye-bye'. You should set an ideal through your education and conduct.

I might have caused you a lot of inconvenience by speaking for such a long time. Now, you may go back to Muddenahalli and Alike, discharge your duties and attain success in your endeavours. I visit Muddenahalli now and then, but it is almost 12 years since I last visited Alike. Now I will certainly go to Alike. I will also take some of the college boys with Me. From Puttaparthi, I will go straight to Mangalore. I will make you all happy there. Be always happy, happy, happy...

[Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajans: *Hari Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahi... and Vahe Guru, Vahe Guru, Vahe Guru Ji Bolo...*]

—From Bhagavan's Discourse at Prasanthi Nilayam on 11th September, 1998

Onam in Prasanthi Nilayam

The Onam celebrations in Prasanthi began this year on 2nd September when thousands of devotees from Kerala arrived in several buses, vans and other means of transport travelling from long distances to celebrate this holy festival in the presence of Bhagavan Baba.

The inaugural cultural programme on the 2nd evening in the Poornachandra Auditorium commenced with a devotional music concert by Sri Kumar and party. The devoted artist sang specially selected songs tuned to five Ragas. The Ramayana Krithi in Sanskrit, "Bhavayami Raghuramam" composed by Swathi Tirunal Maharajah was rendered superbly enthralling the huge concourse and eliciting the appreciation of Bhagavan who materialised a ring studded with emerald and put it on the finger of the artiste. This was followed by an excellent exposition of Kathakali dance depicting the unique feelings of friendship between Krishna and Kuchela long after their days in Gurukula. Prominent artists of the Cochin Cultural Centre put up this performance. Bhagavan presented silk clothes to all the artists.

On 3rd September, there was the traditional and Panchavaadyam music early in the morning by players from Kerala who greeted Bhagavan as He arrived for Darshan. In the evening there was a cultural programme by Bal Vikas children depicting the role of the mother not only as the natural mother who bears the child, but also in the roles of Veda Mata, Bharat Mata, Go Mata (cow), Loka Mata and finally as Sai Mata. They also depicted the role of the mother in shaping the lives of Shivaji and other great personalities' culminating in Easwaramma's role in Bhagavan Baba's life. A music programme by Radhika Tilak and Ramesh Narayana followed this.

On the 4th morning, the entire premises of Prasanthi Nilayam and Sai Kulwant Hall presented a typical festive spectacle reminiscent of Kerala's festive occasions. Bhagavan Baba was greeted with Veda chanting, Nadaswaram music, folk dances and Panchavaadyam as He came in procession to Sai Kulwant Hall and was given traditional honours including Poornakumbham. Bhagavan inaugurated the day's festivities by lighting the sacred lamps on the stage. The programme commenced with the singing of the famous Pancharatna song of Saint Thyagaraja "Endaro Mahaanubhaavulu," followed by the song "Rama Neelamegha Syama." A group of Bal Vikas children presented Vasantha Vilasam celebrating the arrival of Spring. An artist with appropriate accompaniments recited Jayadeva's Ashtapadi. Bhajans by the Kerala Sathya Sai Organisation members followed. After Arati to Bhagavan and distribution of Prasadam, the morning function concluded.

In the afternoon, there was a public meeting, which commenced with Vedic prayer by students from Kerala. Two students of Sri Sathya Sai Vidyapeeth of Srisailam spoke briefly in English and Malayalam. Mr. Justice V. R. Krishna Iyer gave an eloquent though short speech commenting on the free medical aid and education offered by Bhagavan, which was unparalleled in the world. Bhagavan then gave His Divine Onam Message (printed separately).

There was another cultural programme in the evening of 4th when the Bal Vikas children of Ernakulam and Malapuram districts presented short dance dramas exhibiting their admirable histrionic talents. The students of Sri Sathya Sai Vidyapeeth, Srisailam presented "Markandeya", which was very well got up with fine settings. The students displayed extraordinary skill in

dance. The one who acted as Siva and did the Rudra-tandava was outstanding and received appropriate blessing from Swami who materialised a chain for her. After Arati, the memorable festivities came to a successful conclusion.

The appreciation of Bhagavan manifested in His Grace when He agreed to give Padanamaskar to the entire group of devotees and Seva Dal volunteers from Kerala, who had done commendable service during the festivities.

Only Your Smile

Give me, my Lord, only Your smile
And I'll float in the air
Like a feather,
So light, so white
So full of delight

Give me, my Lord, only Your look
And my heart will start
Dancing and singing,
So light, so bright
So full of delight.

Give me, my Lord, only Your love
And I will merge with You
In a moment of ecstasy,
So full of light
And eternal delight.

—Dr. Edith Zeile

Vyakti

The sun derives its energy and effulgence from the Divine Cosmic Source. It is the same Cosmic Source that accounts for the power of the human mind and the marvellous power of the eye to see the most distant star. With this power of sight, man is able to see the entire creation. There is no greater power than this. This boundless power is being recognised and exercised by each according to the level of his development. Because of man's ability to manifest the divine boundless Cosmic Energy, man is described as a manifestation of the Divine (VYAKTI). Humanness lies in manifesting what is hidden and invisible to man.

—Baba

Subjugate Your Ego

*Sarva Roopa Dharam Santham,
Sarva Nama Dharam Sivam,
Satchidanandam Advaitam,
Sathyam Sivam Sundaram.*

Ellaarukkum Enndey Aaseervadangal!

My Blessings to All!

Embodiments of Love!

In this world, you do not find peace and happiness anywhere. Though man is himself the embodiment of Peace and Love, yet he is not able to experience them. Even though he has these sacred qualities in him, man is not able to understand this truth, and is carried away by delusions. As a result, he is subjected to endless troubles. In order to experience Divinity and to find peace and happiness, you do not need to search elsewhere. In order to have a vision of your True Self, you need to understand your true identity.

What is that which conceals the Truth from man? It is only the mind. The clouds which originate from the rays of the sun, cover the sun itself. When a strong wind blows, the clouds get scattered and then you can see the sun. Just as the clouds cover the sun, likewise the mind covers the Atma from which it has originated.

Embodiments of Love!

No other creature has the Divine power that is present in man. But he is not able to comprehend the Divine power latent in him. What is the way to know this? Once you develop friendship with God, you will realise all your powers. The Gita describes God as '*Suhruth*', which means one who is totally selfless; one who does not expect anything in return; one who does not harm anybody and one who is the embodiment of Love. Man usually expects rewards for the help he renders. But God is the only One who considers the welfare of humanity as His happiness and does not have any expectations whatsoever.

Desires are Limitless

Bad qualities like hatred, anger and desire are responsible for restlessness. The worst enemy of mankind is desire. In this world, an enemy today might become a friend tomorrow and the friend today might become an enemy later on. But according to the Gita, desire always remains an enemy to mankind. So, one should keep desire under control. The desires are capable of ruining not only mankind, but also gods like Indra and Chandra. One can never satisfy one's desires. Vedanta has compared desire to fire and to the ocean. Fire will never be satisfied, whatever the quantity of firewood you may put into it. The Gita has given the epithet, '*Analam*', to fire, which means that it can never be satisfied and keeps asking for more and more. Similar is the case with the ocean. It keeps accepting any number of rivers that merge in it, and yet remains the same. Ocean and fire have no trace of satisfaction. Therefore, limitless desires are compared to these two.

Love for God and World Peace

The whole world is like a book, read it well. Nature is the best teacher. There are lots of things in this world to be known. You cannot find God by going through a book or by undertaking spiritual Sadhana. By constantly reading books, one becomes a book oneself! All that is contained in '*pustaka*' (book) is stored in the '*mastaka*' (head). Reading books will only increase your doubts. The more intelligent you are, the more you get doubts. Developing compassion is the real Sadhana. Only when you lead a life full of compassion, you will be able to see God, the embodiment of compassion.

Embodiments of Love!

Since ancient times, Bharat has stood for the peace and security of the entire world, spreading the message of spirituality. You should work for the peace and prosperity of the country. Whatever work you undertake, do it for the welfare of the society. Universal peace depends on the peace of the society, which in turn depends on the peace of the individual. So, the individual, the society and the universe are interrelated and interdependent. But, today man is bothered about himself and not the society.

Today, people who talk of peace, but actually cause restlessness in the society are on the increase. Though they are endowed with intelligence, they act in a perverted manner. In what way can we help such people? The only way is to open their 'Eye of Love' (*Prema Netram*). Only through the 'Eye of Love', we can visualise world peace. Without working for the welfare of the society, how can you attain world peace? It is impossible. All wealth and prosperity cannot confer true happiness. People say, America is a land of prosperity. What is the use of all this affluence? They do not have peace of mind. Bharatiyas are the embodiments of Peace. They may not have such comforts, but have love for God.

"Of all the time one spends on children, friends and worldly pleasures, acquiring wealth, power, name and fame, if only a fraction of it is spent for contemplating on the Lotus Feet of the Lord, one can even escape the mighty doors of hell, the abode of Yama (God of Death)." (Sanskrit Poem)

God, the only Saviour

In ancient times, kings ruled over their kingdoms in a righteous manner. The very name of Emperor Bali instills fear in the minds of the people. But, Bali was the very embodiment of compassion. He was an ardent devotee of Lord Vishnu and he upheld the principles of righteousness. God loved him, since he had these three sacred qualities. It is enough if you have 'Vishnu Bhakti' (Devotion to Lord Vishnu). Only devotion can make you free from misery. Prahlada always chanted the name of Hari.

*"Narayana Bhaja Narayan,
Narayana Bhaja Narayan, Narayan,
Thanu Mana Ranjana, Bhava Bhaya Bhanjana,
Asura Nikhandana, Narayan."*

In spite of all attempts to push him down from mountains, drown him in the oceans, trample him under the feet of wild elephants, to get him bitten by poisonous snakes, he repeated Narayana's name. Only the name of Narayana helped him to overcome all these troubles. Only devotion will make you forget all your problems and experience bliss. Sakkubai, the great devotee of Lord Panduranga, continuously chanted the name of Panduranga in order to overcome the troubles caused by her husband and mother-in-law. Gora Kumbhar forgot all his worries singing the name of the Lord. Such is the power of the Divine name.

What man needs today is bliss. *Dukha Nivritti, Ananda Prapti* (alleviation of misery and attainment of bliss) should be the sole aim of man. For this man has to make friendship with God. In this world, you may have many friends. But all of them can only say, 'Hello, How are you? Goodbye', nothing more! God is not like that. *He is always with you, in you, around you, above you, and below you.* Since man is distancing himself from God who is the true and eternal friend, he is subject to sorrow. Today, man is after money and power and does not think of God. How long do money and power last? They come and go. That's what Sankaracharya said, "*Maa Kuru Dhana Jana Yauvana Garvam, Harathi Nimeshast, Kaalah Sarvam,*" which means money, power and youth are momentary and will not last long.

*"Bhaja Govindam, Bhaja Govindam,
Govindam Bhaja Moodha Mathey,
Sampraapthe Sannihithe Kaale,
Nahi, Nahi Rakshathi Dhhukrun Karane."*

"Your studies will not come to your rescue in the end, so chant the name of Govinda," said Adi Sankara. God is the only refuge and only He can come to your rescue in the end. So, develop faith in God. He is the only saviour.

Emperor Bali and his Ego

All the world that you see with your naked eyes is only apparent truth. All that you see is *Pravritti* (external), but there is a basis for this. That is called '*Nivritti*' (internal). The unseen roots are the basis for the tree, which is seen. For buildings, foundation is the basis. Today, you are bothered about only the building (body), and not the foundation. Body is the temple of God. But, what is the nature of this body? "*It is full of dirt and diseases. It cannot cross the ocean of Samsara. So, O man, never think that this body is permanent. Surrender yourself at the Lotus Feet of the Lord.*" (Telugu Poem) How long will this body remain? "*Body is like a water bubble; mind is like a mad monkey; so do not follow the body; do not follow the mind; follow the conscience.*" This is the principle of Atma. But man follows the body and the mind, leaving the conscience. No doubt, for the earthly sojourn, the body and the mind are necessary, but you should not give undue importance to them.

Emperor Bali did undertake all the sacred activities, but he had in him two bad qualities, ego and pride (*Ahamkaram* and *Abbimanam*). Even Arjuna had these feelings during the Mahabharata war. He began his address to Krishna uttering the syllable, '*Sva*', which means '*Svartha*', '*Svajana*' (I and My people). This is called '*Moha*' (attachment). As long as man does not give up this '*Moha*', he will not get '*Moksha*' (liberation). All your education and jobs will not follow you at the end. All these are passing clouds. That is why the Gita said, "*Anithyam, Asukham Lokam,*

Idam Praapya, Bhajasva maam" (As the world is temporary and full of misery, think of God continuously). Keeping God, who is eternal, in your heart, you should lead your life in this temporary world.

Once Bali performed a Yajna, by name '*Sarvajit*'. Lord Vamana also attended the Yajna. Emperor Bali welcomed Him and paid his respects. Till then, Vamana did not ask for anything. In fact, He was planning how to subdue the ego of Emperor Bali. In this world, for any work, people plan in advance. But God's plan is not an ordinary one. God always thinks of the future and plans accordingly. Vamana went to Emperor Bali and asked for three footsteps of land. But his preceptor, Shukracharya warned him against giving what Vamana asked for, since he knew who Vamana was, and the purpose for which He had come. Then Bali said, "Guruji, the hand of the giver is always on the top and that of the receiver is at the bottom. When God Himself comes to me and asks for something, His hand will be below that of mine. That is enough for me." Even there, we find a trace of ego.

What is the inner meaning of the inhalation and exhalation processes, i.e., '*So-Hum*'? '*So*' means 'That'(God); '*Ahum*' means 'I'. The sum and substance of this is, we have to take God into us ('*So*' - Inhalation) and leave out *Ahamkaram*, i.e., ego ('*Hum*'- Exhalation). This is called '*Hamsa Gayatri*'. This inhalation and exhalation process goes on continuously for 21,600 times in a day in us. This means, you welcome God into you and drive out ego from you as many times. So long as there is ego in you, you will never be happy. No doubt, Emperor Bali was a great devotee, but he was also egoistic. Ego is a bad quality for a devotee. Only through love, peace, humility and courage can you overcome ego.

God came down in order to destroy the ego of Bali and distribute Love to the entire world. Bali was granted a boon that he should be allowed to come and visit his people on this day, every year. That day is celebrated as Onam. Be it an emperor or an ordinary person, one can attain God only through Love.

Follow your Conscience

Many lights are glowing in this hall. Some people are listening, some are dozing. The light is unaffected by all this. It is a witness. Similarly, in the broad day light, some do good, and some do bad. The sun remains unaffected by your deeds. Your bad actions can never harm God. Your good actions will never make Him happy either. Be it good or bad, you will have to reap the fruits of your actions. God is '*Jyothirmayudu*' (Embodiment of Light). So He has nothing to do with your good or bad. He is just a witness. He is present in everybody as conscience. That is why I keep telling:

*Follow the Master,
Face the devil,
Fight to the end,
Finish the game.*

Who is your Master? Here, conscience is your Master. So, follow your conscience till the end of your life. Never give up in the middle. Once you have Love in your heart, you can accomplish anything. You should not have hatred towards anybody. We should love even those who hate us.

As a result, there will be transformation in their '*Hridaya*'. '*Hri*' + '*Daya*' = '*Hridaya*', which means the heart should be full of compassion. *Humanity* is also called '*Mankind*'. So, man should have compassion in his heart. But, today there is no compassion, only fashion exists. So long as fashion is there, compassion does not find a place, because '*Hridaya*' is a single chair, not a double sofa nor a musical chair.

'Life is a game play it'. The difficulties, the pleasures and pains, the profits and losses come and go like passing clouds. The very name of the world is '*Ja-gat*', which means that which comes and goes. In this world only God is permanent, everything else is transitory. But, we go by this changing world, forgetting God. As a result of this, we suffer.

Embodiments of Love!

God is not separate from you. He is in you. But, you are distancing Him from yourself. Out of the fire comes the ash, but it covers the fire itself. Once you blow the ash away, you can see the fire. Similarly, there is the fire of Divinity in you, but it is covered by the ash of worldly desires. In order to see God, you do not need to undertake any spiritual practices, all that you have to do is to get rid of ignorance. God is more close to you than even your own mother. You are distancing yourself from such Divinity. That is ignorance. In order to get rid of this ignorance, you should develop Love.

You are God, this is the teaching of all the religions. Christ initially said, "*I am the Messenger of God*." There is always a distance between the Messenger and his Master. After some time, Christ said, "*I am the Son of God*." Here the relationship with God has increased. After a few more years, Christ said, "*I and My Father are One*." Then comes the Holy Ghost. This is what Bharatiyas described as '*Dvaita*' (Dualism), '*Visishta advaita*' (Qualified Non-dualism), '*Advaita*' (Non-dualism) and the state of '*Turiya*'. Even in Zoroastrianism, it is said, "*I am in the Light, the Light is in me, and finally, I am the Light*." You should know the Truth that you are God. You are a human being in form, but truly, you are God. You are not the body, the mind, the senses, the intellect, you are You only. When I say, this is My handkerchief, that means, the handkerchief is separate from Me. Similarly, when you say, this is my body, the body is separate from you. Then who are you? The body, mind and senses are your instruments. You are the Master. So, master the mind and be a Mastermind. Understand this truth and conduct yourself accordingly. Then you will not suffer at all. In times of difficulties, you should think of God more and more, like Prahlada. You should love God more and more. Love has no limits. No one can describe Love. So Love is God, live in Love. You are the embodiment of Love. Yet you suffer because of your attachment to the body.

The Horse and the Chariot

What is this body? This body is temporary and is bound to perish at any time. Death can come at any point of time, be it in childhood or in youth or in old age. Why do you attach so much importance to such a body? So long you are alive, you have to maintain your body in good shape. Body is like a chariot meant for travelling. Mind is like a horse. Man today keeps the horse behind the chariot. As a result of this, he is travelling in the reverse direction. The horse should be always in front of the chariot' which means we have to give primary importance to the mind and next to the body. But, today people all the time feed only their body and not the mind, with the result that the horse is becoming weaker and the chariot heavier. How can a weak horse

pull a heavy chariot? Just as you feed your body thrice a day, your mind also should be fed likewise. Prayer, meditation or chanting of the names of God is the breakfast for your mind. Gayatri Mantra says, "*Om Bhur Bhuvah Suvah...*" '*Bhur*' means 'Materialisation' (body), '*Bhuvah*' means 'Vibration' (life force), '*Suvah*' means Radiation (Prajnanam). These three are present in us. The same teaching is given to small children at the time of 'Upanayanam' (Thread Ceremony). Such sacred teachings are being forgotten today.

In ancient times, all these were put into practice; now practice is replaced by fashion. Only through practice, one can get happiness. What we need is practical science and not platform speeches. All the platform speeches are out of bookish knowledge, which is of no use to us. We need to have practical knowledge. Devotion bereft of practice is useless. *Embodiments of Love!* In a family of three persons, if there is no unity among them, there will be unrest. Similarly, if there is no unity in our thoughts, words and deeds, we will be totally restless. So, we should harmonise these three. Let it be any name, constantly chant that name. Always have the feeling that I am God, I am God. Then you become God. As you think, so you become. This is what is called "*Brahmavid Brahmaiva Bhavathi*" (the knower of God becomes God himself).

Practice of Tyaga and Forgiveness

All have devotion, all are sincere, but there is no sacrifice. '*Bali*' means sacrifice. Emperor Bali could attain Divinity through his devotion and sacrifice. Bharat is the birthplace of people of great sacrifice like Emperor Bali and Emperor Sibi. A pigeon sought the refuge of Emperor Sibi on being chased by an eagle. Sibi granted refuge to the pigeon. The eagle argued that the pigeon was its prey. Then Sibi said, "O eagle! I will give you the flesh of my body equal to the weight of this pigeon," and he started chopping his own flesh. He made such a great sacrifice for the sake of a small pigeon. Such emperors were many in number in Bharat. We should follow the ideals of such noble souls. Since ancient times, Bharat has been the centre of all spiritual wealth spreading the gospel of peace, happiness and security to the rest of the world.

The mind is nothing but a bundle of desires. If you separate threads, cloth disappears. Similarly, if you remove desires one by one, the mind ceases to exist. In ancient times, this was referred to as '*Tyaga*' (sacrifice). Today, many people talk of '*Tyaga*' (sacrifice), but in fact are immersed in '*Bhoga*' (pleasures), which results in '*Roga*' (disease). In order to get rid of this '*Roga*', one has to cultivate '*Tyaga*' and love for God.

*Start the day with Love
Fill the day with Love
Spend the day with Love
End the day with Love
This is the way to God.*

Embodiments of Love! Emperor Bali served the people of Kerala and sacrificed everything, including his body. That is why he has attained such an exalted position, not possible for others. The devotion of the people of Kerala is unparalleled. At one time, Kerala was considered to be a Communist State, but people have been going to the Padmanabha Swamy Temple then and now in large numbers. They get up early in the morning, have their bath, apply sandal paste on their

foreheads and offer their prayers. There is no change in their devotion. Parties may come and go, but the 'Hridaya Party' (Party of the Spiritual Heart) is permanent.

A Muslim should become a true Muslim; a Christian should become a true Christian and a Hindu should become a true Hindu. You should have full faith in your religion and lead an ideal life. That is true '*Bhakti*' (devotion), true '*Mukti*' (liberation).

To attain '*Mukti*', practice the following principles: Forget all the harm done to you by others and the help you have done to others. Then you will have peace in your heart. If someone has done harm to you, do not be revengeful. If someone has hurt your feelings, the best way to alleviate your suffering is to forget and forgive. Forgiveness is very important. It is Truth, it is Dharma, it is Veda, it is non-violence, it is happiness, it is heaven itself. This forgiveness is everything in all the worlds. So, cultivate this sacred quality of forgiveness. This is possible only by developing Love for God.

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajans "*Prema Mudita Manase Kaho...*" and "*Subramanyam, Subramanyam...*"

—Form Bhagavan's Divine Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall on 4th September 1998

Bhagavan Blesses Paduka Worshipers

Sri Sathya Sai Paduka Pratishta Mahotsav was celebrated in Prasanthi Nilayam from 8th to 12th October 1998 with full devotional fervour. The entire premises of Prasanthi Nilayam was tastefully decorated with beautiful flower gates, grand arches and huge cut-outs of Devi and Ardhanareeshwara, which were illuminated at night.

On the 8th morning, Sri Sathya Sai Paduka Trust presented nine cows to Bhagavan in the Sai Kulwant Hall. The fully decorated cows were brought in a procession and offered at the lotus feet of Bhagavan with Vedaghosha.

The next day, i.e., 9th October saw the installation of the idol of Veda Mata Gayatri Devi in Prasanthi Nilayam premises opposite Round Blocks by Bhagavan Baba. The Gayatri idol was brought to the venue of the installation in a procession with Mangalavadyam and Veda chanting. The procession reached the venue at 8.00 a.m. where a beautiful little Mandap had already been constructed for this purpose. Bhagavan was received with traditional honours of Poornakumbham and Veda chanting. The idol was set in final position after the Divine hands of Bhagavan placed the plate engraved with Srichakra and Navaratnas (nine types of gems) at the base. The idol was charged with Divine Power when Bhagavan placed His hand firmly over the hand of the idol. This programme came to a close at 9.25 a.m. with offer of Mangalarati to Bhagavan.

Sri Sathya Sai Swarna Adhitya Paduka Rathotsavam was held in the afternoon of 10th October in the Sai Kulwant Hall. There were unprecedented crowds of devotees who stood even outside the Hall to witness the grand spectacle of Bhagavan ascending the golden chariot. Bhagavan Baba came to the Sai Kulwant Hall at 3.00 p.m. The Swarna Aditya Ratha was already stationed in the Sai Kulwant Hall premises. The devotees went ecstatic with devotional fervour when Bhagavan Baba ascended the golden chariot at 3.55 p.m. amidst the chanting of the Bhajan "Bolo Jai Jaikar Sai Nath Ki". The chariot was pulled up to the central pathway in Sai Kulwant Hall by the Paduka Trust Members amidst the chanting of Veda Mantras and Bhajans.

Sai Kulwant Hall presented a grand spectacle on 11th October when the main function of worshipping the Padukas of Bhagavan Baba was performed by 3006 couples in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Baba. Bhagavan came to the Hall at 6.55 a.m. and was welcomed with traditional honours of Poornakumbham and Veda chanting. Bhagavan then inaugurated the programme by lighting the sacred lamps on the stage. The worship of Sai Padukas was conducted under the direction of the chief priest Sri Jayarama Sastrigal who not only chanted the Mantras but explained the meaning, purpose and effect of each ritual in clear terms. This was also translated into Hindi and English simultaneously. After Ganesha worship, Brahma and Saraswati were offered Puja with the Seed Mantras which the Paduka worshippers were directed to recite in chorus. Gayatri Japa was also done before worship and Abhisheka of the Padukas with nine different materials, which included milk, curd, honey, rose water, sandal paste and Vibhuti. While the Puja was going on, Bhagavan went round the rows of Paduka worshipping couples seated in the entire length and breadth of the Sai Kulwant Hall and keenly watched the proceedings and blessed the worshippers.

The Arati at the conclusion of Paduka Puja presented an unparalleled sight when all the 3006 couples rang bells and waved Arati to Bhagavan at the same time. No doubt it would be treasured forever in the memory of all those who witnessed this grand spectacle.

In the afternoon of 11th October a public meeting was held in the Sai Kulwant Hall in which three speakers delivered brief speeches before the Divine discourse of Bhagavan Baba. Sri Srinivasan, the son of Sri P. S. A. Subramaniam Chettiar, President, Sri Sai Paduka Trust spoke first to express gratitude to Bhagavan for giving His consent for holding this festival in Prasanthi Nilayam. He explained the increasing popularity of Sai Padukas, which had increased to 3006 from barely 108 in 1993.

After this, Dr. Lakshminarayana from Salem spoke about his personal experiences of Bhagavan's grace in the treatment of his patients

Dr. D. J. Gadhia of the U.K. then emphasised the importance of Paduka worship by saying that millions of those devotees who could not come to Prasanthi Nilayam could get the grace of Bhagavan by worshipping His Padukas.

At 4.25 p.m. Bhagavan Baba showered divine nectar on the devotees by giving a scintillating discourse (given separately). The programme concluded with offer of Mangalarati to Bhagavan.

On 12th October, an impressive Paduka procession was taken out from Shed No. 23 to Sai Kulwant Hall accompanied by Nadaswaram Music and Vedaparayanam. All the Paduka worshippers were carrying the Padukas with great reverence on their heads chanting "Sai Padam Sai Ram" continuously. Swami was standing in the verandah of the Mandir waiting to bless them. They came and sat in rows occupying three-fourths area of the huge Hall. Swami went round the entire gathering sprinkling Akshata (sanctified rice) on all the devotees to the accompaniment of Vedic chanting by the Pundits. After Bhajans and Arati the function came to a close.

The meeting in the afternoon commenced with Vedic chanting by students. Sri Sandipan Chatterji spoke about the significance of the Paduka worship and its impact on the devotees. Referring to the devotion of Bharata, who worshipped the Padukas of Rama for 14 years, Sri Chatterji exhorted all devotees to follow the example of Bharata in worshipping the Padukas of Sai Ram.

He was followed by the Chief Pundit of the Paduka Prathistha and allied Yajnas, Sri Jayarama Satrigal who enthralled the audience with an inspiring talk on the greatness of the Paduka worship and uniqueness of the Gayatri Mantra quoting from the Vedas, the Ramayana and the Krishna Karnamritham.

Then Bhagavan gave His Discourse (to be published in a forthcoming issue of "Sanathana Sarathi"). Mangalarati was offered to Bhagavan at the end of His Discourse.

With this, the celebrations of the Sixth Anniversary of Sri Sai Paduka Pratishtha Mahotsav came to a close.

—K.S.S.R.

God in Human Form

People cannot stand the Lord in superhuman form. It is only when the Lord comes in human body that people are able to approach Him and learn to love Him even a little bit. But one should not make the mistake of thinking that is all there is to the Lord. For instance, the aeroplane flying high in the sky descends to the airport. But one should not think that the plane is the ground machine because one sees it on the ground. Once it has taken on its load of passengers, it again zooms up high into the sky. In like fashion, although the Lord has made a landing here on the earth, so to speak, He is not limited by His human form.

—Baba

FESTIVALS AT PRASANTHI NILAYAM

Grand Dasara and Deepavali Celebrations

Dasara and Navaratri celebrations started at Prasanthi Nilayam on a grand note on 25th September. Bhagavan Baba came to the fully decorated Sai Kulwant Hall at 7.00 a.m. and took a round of the rows of the vast gathering of devotees to shower the bliss of His Divine Darshan on them on the auspicious Navaratri day. After a brief round of Darshan, Bhagavan ordered the distribution of Prasadam. Mangalvadyam started at about 7.45 a.m. Then at 8.00 a.m., all eyes turned towards Veda chanting Pundits, who came to the Sai Kulwant Hall in a procession followed by a group of Veda chanting students. They all came to the Mandir and received the blessings of Bhagavan before getting ready for starting the Veda Purusha Saptah Jnana Yajna.

Veda Purusha Saptah Jnana Yajna

Soon after that the venue of the programme shifted to Poornachandra Auditorium, where Veda Purusha Bhagavan Sai inaugurated the Saptah Jnana Yajna.

The ceremonial lighting of the sacred fire was done by rubbing two pieces of wood against each other by the Pundits amidst the chanting of Veda Mantras.

After the fire was lit, the priests sat around the beautifully decorated Yajnashala and started the Yajna. (While the Yajna was continuing, an announcement was made that there would be Divine Discourses by Bhagavan during the seven days of the Yajna in the Sai Kulwant Hall daily at 4.00 p.m.).

While some Pundits sat near the Vedi and performed the Yajna by putting Ahutis (offerings) of ghee and other sacred articles in the sacrificial fire amidst the chanting of Veda Mantras, some other Pundits were engaged in performing Suryanamaskar, reading the sacred epics, worshipping Siva, Devi, Ganesha and performing other related rituals.

At 11.30 a.m. Arati was offered to Veda Purusha Bhagavan Baba by the Pundits. The first day's Yajna programme concluded at 12.00 noon.

The auspicious day of Vijayadashami, 1st October 1998 marked the completion of the Veda Purusha Yajna with Bhagavan offering the Poornahuti (final offerings) in the sacred fire. In the end, Bhagavan showered His blessings by sprinkling sacred Yajna water on all devotees inside and outside the Poornachandra Auditorium.

Feast for the Soul

While the performance of Yajna continued for seven days in the morning, Bhagavan delivered His nectarine discourses in the evening. Bhagavan also showered His love and blessings on a galaxy of speakers by permitting them to make a brief speech before His Divine Discourse. Thus, while the Yajna fumes and Vedic chants sanctified and spiritualised the atmosphere, the Divine Discourses and other speeches provided a veritable feast for the soul. (Bhagavan's Divine Discourse of 25th September has been given separately in this issue, while the other discourses will be published in the forthcoming issues of "Sanathana Sarathi".) A summary of the speeches made during this period is given here.

On 25th September, the first speaker, Prof. G. Venkataraman, referred to the concept of God as Energy Principle and Divine Mother (the source of all cosmic and Atmic energy) and said, man was a unique combination of these two forms of energy, although the energy of consciousness (Atmic energy) was supreme and limitless. This was what Lord Krishna said in the 13th Chapter of the Gita, he said.

The second speaker, Sri Y. Arvind, a 2nd year MBA student, Prasanthi Nilayam Campus, spoke about the love and grace showered by Bhagavan Baba on His devotees during His daily Darshan, which was a boon craved even by the gods of the highest heavens.

The first speaker of 26th afternoon was Sri Sandipan Chatterji, a faculty member in the Department of English, Prasanthi Nilayam Campus. He quoted Swami Ramakrishna Paramahansa to say that people were not serious about spirituality, and they ran to God as a last resort when they were defeated in life. Using the analogy of an ocean and a river, Sri Chatterji concluded, "God waits for man as an ocean waits for the river for complete merger."

The second speaker, Sri Deepak Anand, a 2nd year MBA student of Prasanthi Nilayam Campus, referred to Lord Krishna's proclamation in the Gita that when righteousness declines, God incarnates to save humanity. Sai Avatar had incarnated for this very purpose. He emphasised that we should realise and utilise this rare opportunity to sanctify our lives.

The third speaker, Sri Ram Parsuram, a 3rd year B.Sc. student from Brindavan Campus, narrated a dream when God appeared before him and told him that that was the last day of his sojourn on earth. Though he pleaded with God to grant him extension, God refused to oblige as he had already got 20 years, which he wasted in "kite flying", i.e. frivolous activities. So, he decided to make the best use of every second of his last day. The speaker then concluded that human life would be sanctified if man lived every moment of his life as if it was his last moment.

The first speaker of 27th September Sri Sanjay Sahani, a faculty member of the Department of Commerce, Brindavan Campus said that Sai Education was being extolled by several individuals and organisations for various reasons. But according to him, the greatest merit of Sai education was that it was God-centred.

The second speaker, Sri Ashish Sud, an M. Sc student of Prasanthi Nilayam Campus, said that by performing the Veda Purusha Yajna, Bhagavan Baba wanted us to sacrifice our evil thoughts in the sacrificial fire. Describing Yajna as the fool-proof divine postal system, Sri Sud said that in this system the sacred fire was the letter box, the offerings were the contents of the letter, the Vedic hymns were the address and the stamp on the envelope was the faith of the performer. When all these were present, the letter was sure to reach God, who would bless humanity with peace and prosperity.

The third speaker of the afternoon was Sri Madhusudhan Naidu, who narrated a story about Lord Narayana and Narada to emphasise the value of chanting Lord's name in all circumstances. To give an example of how the name of Lord saves, he narrated a real life experience of his aunt who shouted 'Sai Ram' in panic when the bus in which she was travelling tumbled down a hill. As soon as she said 'Sai Ram', the bus became stationary in front of a tree and all the passengers came out safe.

On 28th September, there was a pleasant surprise in store for the huge gathering of devotees when a Primary School student Bhaskar came to address the huge gathering with the blessings of Bhagavan. His courage, confidence and conviction won the hearts of one and all. The young speaker reminded the audience that they were living with the all powerful Avatar, Sri Sathya Sai, whose glory and splendour was unmatched. Bhagavan materialised a gold chain and gave it to the young speaker as a token of His love.

The second speaker, Sri Ruchir Desai, a member of the Faculty of Commerce, Brindavan Campus delineated the value of faith to earn the grace of the Lord. To illustrate this, he narrated the real life story of a Bal Vikas guru who suffered from a severe heart problem, but did not lose faith in Bhagavan, and Bhagavan cured her heart problem in a dream to the surprise of the doctor who examined her before and after the dream.

The third speaker was Sri G. V. Subba Rao, who had a distinguished career in the United Nations before he came to Bhagavan. Sri Subba Rao narrated several personal experiences as instances of Bhagavan's grace on him. He also explained the meaning and significance of Sai Gayatri. In the end, Sri Subba Rao referred to the mega public service projects undertaken by Bhagavan and prayed for Bhagavan's blessings so that we could imbibe His noble qualities of service and sacrifice.

On the 29th afternoon Bhagavan came to Sai Kulwant Hall at 3.50 p.m. There was a heavy downpour of rain just before that, and there was a similar downpour of Bhagavan's love on another Primary School student of Sri Sathya Sai Primary School, Madhusudhan whom Bhagavan permitted to address the vast gathering of devotees as the first speaker of the afternoon. Madhusudhan's speech was heard not only with rapt attention, but was also

appreciated by the audience with loud applause and by Bhagavan Himself who materialised a gold chain and gave it to him with His blessings.

The second speaker Sri T. Ravi Kumar, a member of the Faculty of Chemistry, Brindavan Campus, narrated several incidents from his life how Bhagavan shows the concern of a human mother while giving at the same time the protection of a divine mother. Narrating an incident about the students' journey to Kodaikanal, he told that the windshield of their bus broke during the journey. When the bus reached Coimbatore after repairs, Swami had arranged a sumptuous lunch for them there, and when they reached Kodaikanal at 12 o'clock at night, they found that Swami was waiting for them like a doting mother.

The last speaker of the afternoon Sri B. N. Narasimhamurthy, Warden, Brindavan Campus said, it was futile for man to try to understand the Avatar, as Bhagavan Himself has said, "Do not try to understand Me; experience the Divine and enjoy the bliss." Referring to an old incident of 1968, the speaker revealed how Bhagavan had Himself corrected Prof. Kasturi to say that the entire 'universe' was His mansion and not the entire 'world' as Prof. Kasturi translated Bhagavan's speech in a public function.

The first speaker on 30th September Prof. G. Venkataraman explained the significance of the Veda Purusha Yajna by saying that this Yajna assumed importance because it was willed, organised and performed by Bhagavan Himself for peace in the world, and also that it was performed in the year 1998, which was being celebrated as the year of peace. He said true peace could be established only on the foundation of Sathya, Dharma and Prema.

The present Vice Chancellor of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, Sri S. V. Giri was the next speaker. Explaining the significance of Navaratri, Sri Giri said the nine days of Navaratri were devoted to the worship of Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati. While Durga denoted the principle of energy, Lakshmi symbolised power and prosperity and Saraswati granted intellectual illumination. So, the day of Navami marked the culmination of nine days of penance, dedication, devotion, intellectual illumination and mental purification.

Joyous Deepavali at Prasanthi Nilayam

Deepavali, the festival of lights, was celebrated with piety and gaiety at Prasanthi Nilayam on 19th October 1998. Bhagavan came to Sai Kulwant Hall at 3.15 p.m. and gave the bliss of His Divine Darshan to the devotees. Before giving His Discourse on this auspicious day, Bhagavan graciously permitted Prof. Venkataraman to make a brief speech, who explained the inner and deeper significance of Deepavali.

After Bhagavan's Divine Discourse (given separately) and the distribution of Prasadam, there was a superb display of fireworks and crackers. Devotees, particularly students, who also fired the crackers, had real fun. There was display of lights at night in the entire premises of Prasanthi Nilayam.

Light the Lamp of Wisdom

*In this supremely sacred land of Bharat, forbearance is the highest wealth,
Of all forms of rituals, the most important one is adherence to truth and integrity,
The sweetest of feelings in this country is love for the mother and the motherland,
In this land, character is more important than life itself.
Such sacred principles have been totally forgotten,
And in the name of freedom
People lead a perverted life imitating the Western culture.
Just as a mighty elephant is not aware of its own strength,
Bharatiyas are not aware of the greatness of their own culture.*

(Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of Love!

All the festivals of Bharat have an inner divine significance. In Bharat, the festivals are celebrated to prove the immanent divinity in humanity. Deepavali also teaches a sacred inner meaning to humanity. No other element in this world is as significant as light. It is light that shows us the way by dispelling darkness. It is because of light that man is able to attend to his daily duties.

Light Signifies Divinity

The flame of a lamp has two significant qualities. One is to banish darkness; the other is a continuous upward movement. Even if a lamp is kept in a pit, the flame is directed upwards. The ancients have taught that the upward movement of the flame denotes the path of wisdom and divinity. However, the external light can dispel only the external darkness, but not the darkness of ignorance in man.

When Hanuman set Lanka ablaze, though there was light all around, Ravana's heart was filled with darkness. Ravana was no ordinary person; he belonged to the lineage of Brahma. He was the brother of Kubera, the god of wealth. He had a brother, Kumbhakarna, who was very powerful. He had a son by the name Indrajit, who conquered the mighty Indra, the king of gods. He was the master of four Vedas and six Shastras. Such a powerful and highly educated Ravana could not get rid of the darkness of ignorance.

Dispel Inner Darkness

Ignorance is the cause of birth and death. One with ignorance is born again and again (Punarapi Jananam Punarapi Maranam). But, the one with wisdom has neither birth nor death.

God has neither birth nor death.

He is eternal;

He has no beginning, no end.

He is the Atma.

That is Jnana Jyoti (light of wisdom). (Telugu Poem)

If you want to light a lamp, you need a container. You have to fill it with oil and place a wick in it. You need a matchbox to light the wick. Only when you have all the four accessories, you can light the lamp. This lamp dispels the external darkness. Similarly, to dispel the darkness of ignorance, you need to have Vairagya (renunciation) as container; love as oil; one-pointed concentration as wick and Tattwa-jnana (spiritual wisdom) as matchbox. You must have all these four before you can light the lamp of wisdom.

Renunciation is a must for every spiritual aspirant. Renunciation does not mean leading a life of seclusion, leaving wife and children. Giving up evil qualities is the real renunciation. That is the real Tyaga (sacrifice) and Yoga. So first and foremost, develop detachment. Even detachment has to be within certain limits. Extreme detachment will lead to danger. It is impossible to live in this world giving up everything. So, lead your life with equanimity.

Once Gopikas prayed to Krishna thus: "O Krishna! Your mother is trying to catch you to chastise you for your mischievous deeds. You don't need to run hither and thither to hide yourself. There is a place, which is beyond the reach of your mother, that is our heart. Our heart is filled with the darkness of ignorance. So, enter our heart and banish the darkness of ignorance."

Narakasura and Pragjyotishapuram

What is the inner significance of Deepavali? The capital of the kingdom ruled by Narakasura was known as 'Pragjyotishapuram'. The name consists of four syllables: *Prag*, *Jyoti*, *Sha* and *Puram*. *Prag* means before, *Jyoti* means light, *Sha* refers to forgetting. The inner meaning of this name is that the inhabitants of this city have forgotten the ancient and eternal light (*Atma Jyoti*). Narakasura, the king of Pragjyotishapuram had totally forgotten the Atmic Principle, identifying himself with the body, leading a life full of darkness of ignorance. One has to develop attachment to the Self, not to the body. Attachment to the body is the main cause for all sufferings. One who travels towards ignorance is Naraka and the one who travels towards wisdom is Nara, the human. To travel along the path of wisdom one needs to develop sacred thoughts, sacred words and sacred actions.

God does not like to kill the wicked Himself. So, Krishna devised a master plan to kill Narakasura. As Narakasura was very strong both physically and mentally, Krishna decided to weaken him gradually by subjecting him to fits of anger. The modus operandi was to provoke Narakasura and when he would come chasing in a fit of anger, Krishna would withdraw. Anger is the main cause for man to lose his physical and mental powers. If one gets angry, one loses the energy obtained from the food partaken over a period of three months. When Narakasura lost all his strength due to his anger, Krishna made Sathyabhama kill him. God has His own master plan for everything because He is the master of everything.

Narakasura committed many sins in his life. He imprisoned thousands of women and tortured them. They were the sixteen thousand Gopikas. They could neither live nor die. Such was their pitiable condition. After Narakasura was killed, Krishna freed them from prison and asked them to return to their respective homes and lead a peaceful life. But all the Gopikas fell at Krishna's feet and pleaded that it would be impossible for them to live in dignity in their homes after being prisoners of Narakasura. They said, Krishna was their only refuge and prayed that He should

take care of them. Krishna agreed to take the responsibility of protecting them. Then Gopikas sang in praise of Krishna thus:

"O Krishna! It is impossible to describe Your glory in words. Even Brahma, the Creator, cannot understand You. We have been longing for Your Divine grace. Listen to our prayers and protect us. You freed Devaki Vasudeva from prison. You saved the honour of Draupadi and protected the Pandavas. You removed the poverty of Kuchela, You turned ugly Kubja into a beautiful woman. You freed sixteen thousand Gopikas from prison."

(Telugu Poem)

It is the ignorance that makes one suffer. Only the external world is seen, but not the Atmic Principle. Human being is like a bridge between the seen and the unseen. That which is seen is bound to perish. It is the unchangeable and the eternal wisdom that is important, not the transient world.

When Narakasura was killed, all those who suffered under him were overjoyed. Having led a life of darkness till then, both internally and externally, they celebrated the occasion by lighting lamps.

Significance of Lighting Lamps

There is significance in lighting lamps. The flame of one lamp can light the whole array of lamps. That one lamp symbolises the Param Jyoti (supreme effulgence). The others symbolise the Jivan Jyotis (light in individual selves). Deepavali is celebrated in order to teach this truth to the world. People celebrate this festival by bursting firecrackers signifying the victory of good over evil.

The inner meaning underlying the Bharatiya festivals should be rightly understood. On each festival day people have a sacred bath early in the morning and wear new clothes, keep their houses and surroundings clean. Thus the festivals teach us the importance of internal and external cleanliness. The Vedas declare, "*Antar Bahischa Tat Sarvam Vyapya Narayana Stithaha*", God is present within and around. So, one has to be pure both internally and externally. It is the water that helps to keep your body clean. But it is love that keeps your heart clean. You should celebrate the festivals in full realisation of their inner significance.

As man has no purity of heart, he has become the cause of all the restlessness in the world. What is the reason of all suffering? It is the polluted mind. Never blame the world for your suffering; blame yourself. "*Yad Bhavam Tat Bhavati*" (As is the feeling so is the experience). If your heart is pure, you will find purity everywhere. So, purity of heart is essential. Only when you have purity of heart, you can attain wisdom. In the absence of purity, you will be immersed in ignorance and restlessness.

Travel into your Heart

Ignorance leads to suffering. We do not know what is ignorance. We should try to know what we do not know. That is the true Sadhana. It is only through effort that man can achieve anything. Even a small ant can travel miles together if it makes an effort, but a bird cannot move even an inch if it does not make an effort. Man can accomplish anything if he puts in effort. He is able to

travel lakhs of miles into space spending crores of rupees. But he is not making an attempt to travel even half an inch into his heart.

Yantra Mantra Tantra

He is undertaking space travel with the help of Yantra (machine). It is the Mantra that is important, not the Yantra. Hiranyakasipu could even reach the Pole Star with the help of Yantra, but what is the use? It was child Prahlada who could win the grace of God with the help of Mantra. The power of Hiranyakasipu was related to Yantra; whereas, the Prahlada's power was related to Mantra. Yantra may fail, but not the Mantra.

Yantra, Mantra and Tantra, all the three are latent in human beings. We are repeating the mantra 'Soham' 21,600 times a day. 'Soham' means 'I am God'. There is no better Mantra than this. Human body is the Yantra. Who is responsible for making the heart beat? Who is responsible for digestion and blood circulation in the body? The eye, which is not even an inch in size, is able to see the stars, which are millions of miles away. The eardrum, which is small in size, is able to receive sounds from far off distances. Television and telephone are within the body. Having been endowed with such a powerful Yantra, the body, and the sacred Mantra, Soham, it is a shame if we do not work for the redemption of our life. Hridaya is the Tantra, breath is the Mantra and body is the Yantra. Though all the three are within man, yet he is in search of them outside.

Man is encased in five Koshas (sheaths): Annamaya, Pranamaya, Manomaya, Vijnanamaya and Anandamaya. The physical body is the Annamaya Kosha (the sheath based on food). Subtler than this is Pranamaya Kosha. Still subtler is Manomaya Kosha. Man today has progressed up to the level of the mind. The moment he progresses to the level of Vijnanamaya Kosha (wisdom sheath), he will experience Anandamaya Kosha (sheath of bliss). That is the non-dualistic bliss. "*Ekam Eva Adviteeyam Brahma*" (God is one without a second). That is the Atmic Principle. Just as the same current flows in different bulbs, the same Atma exists in all the beings. The culture of Bharat speaks of this unity in diversity. Unfortunately, in the modern age, unity is viewed as diversity. It is this mistake that puts man to suffering.

*Nations are many, but earth is one,
Beings are many, but breath is one,
Stars are many but sky is one,
Jewels are many, but gold is one.*

Once you understand this basic unity, you can understand the divine principle. You should not hate anybody. Hate your own anger. Do not fight with others; fight with your bad qualities. Give up your bad qualities. How is it possible? It is possible only if you surrender yourself to God.

Unity with God

Markandeya was the son of Mrukandu. He was to live only for sixteen years, but he was not aware of this. One day, he found his parents in a very dejected mood. When he asked the reason, they revealed that his end was approaching. On hearing this, he immediately rushed to the temple of Lord Siva, hugged the Siva Linga and started chanting His name. When the Lord of Death came and caste the noose, even Easwara was caught in it as Markandeya was holding fast to the Linga. Then Easwara manifested and burnt the Lord of Death to ashes.

It means once you are unified with God, there is no question of separation. How can this unification take place? For this you need not do any Sadhana. It is enough if you have total and pure love.

All the worldly Sadhanas are only to sanctify the time. Time is God. Do not waste time. Be happy. This is the Sadhana you should do. Never be narrow-minded. Expansion of love is life; contraction of love is death. Expansion of love is possible only if you have love for God. God can confer anything if you have love. There is nothing that He cannot give. God is always ready to give Himself.

"Ask and it shall be given. Knock and it shall be opened." But man does not ask, does not knock. He calls only demons and knocks at the doors of hell. You should call out to God wholeheartedly. You should knock at the door of liberation. The Moha (attachment) has to be reduced in order to attain Moksha (liberation). To reduce attachment, renunciation is very important.

Bhadrachala Ramadas has compared human life to a lighted lamp in one of his songs and has declared that when the oil of life ebbs away none will follow the departed. Do not depend on this ephemeral world. Depend only on God. God is the basis for everything. If you totally rely on God, you can achieve anything. Since you rely on Padartha (material world), you forget Parartha (spiritual knowledge) and Yathartha (the reality). All your material and secular knowledge is of no use in the field of spirituality. Give up materialistic thinking. Develop spiritual knowledge.

Pray to God, saying "*Tamasoma Jyotir Gamaya*" (Lead us from darkness to light) and "*Mrityorma Amritam Gamaya*" (Lead us from death to Immortality). What is the way to immortality? Removal of immorality is the only way to immortality. Give up all bad qualities such as lust, anger, greed etc., and install God in your heart. Do as I say.

*Some people do not listen to good words
though they are said wholeheartedly.
They readily pay heed to bad words.
Can such people ever know Me?
What is the use of all their education? (Telugu Poem)*

Ravana was the master of the sixty-four types of knowledge, but he could not receive God's grace. Since he did not put his knowledge into practice he suffered from 'indigestion'. That resulted in the sickness of sensual desires. Rama also learnt all the sixty-four types of knowledge and He put them into practice. Ravana was interested only in aggrandisement; whereas, Rama was interested in practice.

Life without the knowledge of the Self is useless, just as a tree without root, a tree without fruit and a fruit without juice. If you do not know your true identity, what is the use of taking a human birth? Know thyself and you will know everything. This is the most sacred teaching of all the festivals. Think of God. Constant contemplation on the Divine will free you from all worries.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the Bhajans, "*Hari Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahi...*" and "*Prema Muditha Manase Kaho...*"

—From Bhagavan's discourse at Prasanthi Nilayam on 19th October 1998

AVATAR VANI:

Offer Yourself to God

In order to deserve God's grace, your faith should grow. When you do not have faith, you cannot offer yourself.

Embodiments of Love!

For the human progress, mental strength and purity of heart are essential. It is only the mental strength and purity of heart that make the human Divine. Mind is the basis for the existence of mankind. Thoughts are responsible for the existence of mind. Human behaviour, whether good or bad, is based on thoughts. Human life is the result of thought process.

When a small pebble is thrown into a lake, the ripples spread all over the lake. Likewise, the 'ripples' that arise in the lake of the mind when a pebble of thought is thrown into it spread to all the senses. When the 'ripple' that arises out of a good thought spreads to your mouth, you speak only good words. If it is a bad thought, you utter only bad words. Similarly, whatever you see, hear or do depends on the thoughts you entertain. SO, the good or bad in a human being is based on thoughts.

The Divine Principle of Unity

Today, man aspires for God and contemplates on Him, but mere aspiration and contemplation are not enough to experience God. God is not pleased by contemplation alone; one has to totally surrender himself to experience Him. Once you surrender yourself completely to God, you and He become one. What are the spiritual pursuits to be followed to become one with God?

When fire and coal are placed apart, they remain as they are. Only when they are brought together and fanned, can coal get transformed into fire. Likewise, go closer to God and love Him wholeheartedly. Such nearness and dearness to God will ultimately make you one with God. This is what Vedanta declared, "*Brahma vid Brahmaiva Bhavati*" (the knower of Brahman becomes Brahman). The food eaten gets digested and its essence is supplied to all parts of the body. This means that the food partaken becomes one with the body. Similarly, you have to offer yourself completely to God. Only then you can become one with Him. All your thoughts should become divine.

Jeeva is Nara and God is Narayana. Both should become one. Nara means Atmic Principle. So, you are human only in form, but your nature is divine. It is only the Atma that moves about from top to toe. Whatever is thought, said or done is only due to the presence of the Atma. That is why Krishna said, "*Mamaivamsho Jeevaloke Jeevabhutha Sanathana*" (you are the eternal sparks of Myself). You are the reflection of God. The purpose of the spiritual pursuits lies in the unification of man with God. Mere worshipping of Padukas, chanting the name of God or

contemplating on His form are not sufficient to bring about this unification. These correspond to the outward path (Pravritti Marga). You should take to inward path (Nivritti Marga). Only then you can understand the principle of unity.

Significance of five Faces of Gayatri

This morning, Shastriji, while explaining the significance of Gayatri Mantra, described Gayatri as Pancha Mukhi (deity with five faces). What are the five faces? The first face is the primal sound 'Aum'. 'Bhur Bhuvah Svaha' is the second face. 'Tat Savitur Varenyam' is the third face. 'Bhargo Devasya Dheemahi' is the fourth face. 'Dhiyo Yo Nah Prachodayat' is the fifth face.

Who is Gayatri? "*Gayatri Chbandasam Mata*" (Gayathri is the mother of the Vedas). Gayatri has three names—Gayatri, Savitri and Saraswati. "*Gayantham Trayate Iti Gayathri*" (Gayatri redeems the chanter of the Mantra). Gayatri is the master of the senses. Savitri is the master of Prana (Life Force). Saraswati is the presiding deity of speech (Vak Devata Swaroopini). You have to unify your senses, life principle and speech and offer yourself to God.

You should also understand the meaning of '*Bhur Bhuvah Svaha*'. You are under the impression that they refer to the three worlds. All these three worlds are present in you and in every living creature. '*Bhuh*' refers to the body, made up of five elements (materialisation). The same five elements constitute the entire world. '*Bhuva*' refers to the Prana Shakti (vibration), which makes the body move. However, it is the presence of Prajnanam i.e., '*Svaha*' (radiation) that enables the Prana Shakti to animate the body. It is on this account that the Vedas have declared "*Prajnanam Brahma*" (Constant Integrated Awareness is Brahman). This Constant Integrated Awareness is present in man.

Man has these five elements in him. These five elements also constitute the world. What is the primordial basis for these elements? It is the primordial sound *Om*kara. On this basis, the Gopikas prayed thus: "Kleem Krishnaya, Govindaya, Gopijanavallabhaya Svaha!" "Kleem" means the earth. "Krishnaya" means water. "Govindaya" refers to fire, "Gopijanavallabhaya" refers to air. Svaha refers to ether (Akasa). Krishna's name encompasses the five elements. These five elements permeate the whole universe. In fact these five elements form the basis of life for the entire universe. These are essentially divine. That is why the earth is referred to as Bhodevi, water as Gangadevi, fire as Agnideva and air as Vayudeva.

Surrender with Pure Heart

There is no need to search for God elsewhere. He dwells in your heart. That is why He is called Hridayavasi (indweller of the heart). If someone were to ask you, "Where do you come from?", you may say that you are coming from a hotel or from your house. But actually you come from none of these places. You come from Hridaya. It is this Hridaya that is your dwelling place. Then where is the question of coming and going? Similarly, God neither comes nor goes. He is present all over, all the time. But in order to confer grace on a devotee He may manifest Himself. Just because God has appeared to a devotee in America, it does not mean that God has travelled all the way to America. He is present in America too. It is the devotion that makes God manifest Himself. Divinity neither comes nor goes. It is present everywhere. "*Viswam Vishnu swaroopam*", "*Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma*." There is no place where there is no God. All names and forms are His.

You should not have the feeling that God is the master and you are His servant. The individual (Nara) and the Divine (Narayana) are one. You should take to spiritual path in order to understand this principle of unity. Right from birth to death if you are immersed in duality, when will you experience the bliss of non-duality? A man with dual mind is half blind. So, you should make every effort to experience oneness.

In the morning, Punditji, while doing Abhisheka of the Padukas with milk, curd and honey, explained the significance of these offerings. All these spiritual pursuits are meant for the purification of heart. "*Chittasya Suddhaye Karmaha*", all the actions are aimed at the purification of heart. Purity alone is not enough to experience Divinity. With purity of heart you should offer yourself to God. You will not offer a faded flower to God. Likewise, the heart, which may be compared to a flower, should be fresh and devoid of impurities before it is offered to God. There is an ocean of difference between Archana and Arpitam. It is not Archana (worship), but it is Arpitam (total surrender) that is most essential.

True Meaning of Satsang

What is the meaning of Satsang (good company)? Sat is the name of Divinity. It is changeless in all the periods of time. It is eternal and is present in you. You have to understand this eternal principle. In order to do so, you have to be in communion with Sath.

As Punditji has said in the morning, milk is very happy in the company of water. The combination of water and milk can be termed Satsang. That is ideal friendship. When the milk is boiled on a stove, the water gets evaporated. Unable to bear the separation from water, the milk tries to jump into the fire. The moment you sprinkle some water on the boiling milk, it gets pacified (cheers). The milk is happy to be united with its friend. The same relationship exists between Nara (individual) and Narayana (God). God is very happy when the individual joins His company. But God feels very sad when the individual diverts his attention from Him, and gets immersed in worldly pleasures. Once the individual surrenders completely to God, He is happy again. Due to the effect of Kali Age, the individual separates himself from God. The individual may not feel sad, but God feels sad because His friend, the individual, is parting ways with Him.

God is the only permanent friend in this world. All the worldly friends can only say, "Hello", "How are you?" and "Good-bye", nothing more (cheers). God does not say, "Hello, How are you?" and "Good-bye". As long as you are in His company, you will be happy and He is also happy. But when there is separation from His devotee, though God may not express it, He feels sad. Why is the individual going along the wrong path? Why is he forgetting the truth? Why is he distancing himself from Divinity? Why is he losing his purity? Thinking so, God feels sad. Even this is for the devotee's sake, not for His sake. Whatever God says or does is for your own good.

Lakshmana is a superb example of the attitude of surrender. When Rama, Sita and Lakshmana went to the forest and reached Chitrakoota mountain, Rama told Lakshmana to put up a hut in a place of his choice. Hearing these words, Lakshmana felt hurt and bent down his head with grief. Noting this, Sita asked Lakshmana, "Why are you perturbed, Lakshmana? Your brother did not speak anything harsh. Why do you feel so sad?" Lakshmana said, "O Mother, have I ever had

any choice of my own? The likes of Rama are mine. I have surrendered myself to Rama. The command of Rama is what I want to carry out. While so, how can I withstand the impact of Rama asking me to put up the hut at a place of my choice? Does it not amount to separation from Rama?" That is the intensity of the feelings of a true devotee towards the Lord. Your thoughts should always be centred on God. The world is like a passing cloud. But the relationship between you and God is permanent and eternal.

Understand your Relationship with God

Gayatri Mantra consists of three parts. One is praise, second is meditation and third is prayer. The first nine words of Gayatri Mantra (*Om, Bhur, Bhuvah, Svaha, Tat, Savitur, Varenyam, Bhargo, Devasya*) correspond to the description (praise) of Gayatri. *Dheemahi* pertains to meditation. "*Dhiyo yo Nah Prachodayat*" is the prayer to God for the steady and pure intellect.

The Divine is first praised and meditated upon and then an appeal is made to the Divine to awaken and strengthen the intellect (Buddhi). So, first and foremost you should extol God. But, in what way? You should extol Him with a feeling of intimacy. The son will never shower lavish praise on his father when he asks for a new dress. Instead he demands rightfully. A devotee too has a similar right to demand from God.

Hridaya is the son of the Atma. From Hridaya the mind is born. So, the mind is the grandson of the Atma. And from the mind speech originates. So, speech is the great grandson of the Atma. In short, your Hridaya, mind and speech belong to the divine family and have got a share in the divine property. Therefore, your Hridaya, mind and speech should be in constant communion with God.

On this basis, Jesus said, "I am the Messenger of God" from the physical point of view. From the psychological point of view he said, "I am the Son of God." And with the feeling of oneness of the Atma, he said, "I and My Father are one." From the physical point of view, you may consider yourself different from God. In the mental realm, you should feel that you are the spark of the Divine. But from the Atmic point of view, you should realise that you are not different from God. You have to make every effort to realise this unity. You should not distance yourself from Divinity on the basis of body attachment. Without understanding your relationship with God, all your spiritual practices will be of no use. But once you understand this principle of unity, wherever you are, you are one with God.

The body relationship is only physical and worldly. It has nothing to do with spirituality. The master of the house is addressed in different ways by his family members. Son calls him father, daughter-in-law calls him uncle, and grandson calls him grandfather, on the basis of body relationships. You should never go by the body attachment. The body is full of dirt and diseases. It cannot cross the ocean of Samsara. O mind, never think that body is permanent, surrender to the feet of God. Do not get yourself bound by the body attachment. Develop attachment with the Atma.

In order to do so, engage yourself in sacred actions such as Shravanam—listening to the Lord's stories, Kirtanam—singing His glories, Smaranam—remembrance, Padasevanam—service to the Lotus Feet, Archanam—worship, Vandanam—salutation, Dasyam—servitude,

Sakhyam—friendship, Atmanivedanam—offering oneself to the Lord i.e., self-surrender. Friendship is the stepping stone to self-surrender. So, you should develop friendship with God and be a recipient of His love. You undertake many spiritual pursuits to obtain this love. In fact, you need not undertake any spiritual practices. It is enough if you remember the relationship between you and God.

The Divinity is one but it is responsible for the threefold cosmic process. These three aspects of God can be seen in the English word GOD. G represents Generation (Srishti), O represents Organisation (Sthithi) and D represents Destruction (Layam). God has all the three aspects in Him (cheers). Seeing the same God in all the beings is the true spirit of non-dualism.

You know that it was Adi Sankaracharya who propagated the principle of non-dualism. All the compositions of Sankara speak of nondualism. But, ultimately Sankara also entered the path of devotion. He sang the following verses:

*"Bhaja Govindam Bhaja Govindam
Govindam Bhaja Mooda Mathe,
Samprapthe Sannihite Kale
Nahi, Nahi Rakshathi Dukrun Karane."*

(O foolish man, chant the name of the Lord. When the hour of death approaches, it is only the Lord, who can save you and not your grammar.)

Even the man of wisdom becomes a devotee at one point of time. The greatest and the noblest path is the path of devotion. The word Bhakti (devotion) is derived from the root 'Bhaj', which means total surrender. Offering of total love is Bhakti. The worship and other rituals are only physical and worldly activities. You have to enter Nivritti (inward path) from this Pravritti (outward path).

When you learn English language, you start with alphabet. Then you join letters to make words. Then you join the words in the form of sentences. The atheists say, "God is **no where**". When the letter '**w**' is joined to the word '**no**', it becomes "God is **now here**." (Cheers) The aim of learning the language is to make sentences out of it. Similarly, the aim of worship and rituals is to understand the principle of unity. You start with one name and one form and ultimately realise that everything is one. It is the goal of spiritual Sadhana. It is the essence of spiritual Sadhana.

Surrender Brings Limitless Bliss

Worship of Padukas and observance of rituals, celebration of festivals are all different paths leading to the principle of oneness. All these rituals are essential till you realise that God is one. But you should not spend your whole lifetime in these rituals. At birth, you cry 'Koham'? 'Koham', which means 'Who am I'? 'Who am I'? You should not die: with the same question on your lips. Before you die you should be able to say 'Soham', 'I am God'. From dualism you should enter qualified non-dualism and from there you should proceed to non-dualism. Just as cotton and thread are present in the cloth, likewise dualism and qualified non-dualism are present in non-dualism.

Devotees read many sacred books and listen to discourses, but there is no transformation in the mind. All these sacred texts and teachings are like jewels. Merely adorning these jewels do not give you bliss. The bliss is within, you should experience it. Just as precious jewels are kept in an iron chest, likewise Atmic Principle is present in this human body. God has kept many valuable jewels in your body. But you are not making any effort to realise this. God says, "O mad cap, why do you entertain mean and low desires? If you give up desires and offer yourself, I will give you the most valuable gifts." When God is ready to give you the limitless non-dual bliss, why do you crave for limited happiness? Do not ask for mean things. Offer yourself to God, then God will grant you jewels of limitless eternal bliss.

But in order to deserve God's grace, your faith should grow. When you do not have faith, you cannot offer yourself. One who does not know himself in spite of all his education is foolish. With his limited knowledge he will enter into arguments, and will never be able to acquire total wisdom. If ultimately one has to die, what is the use of studying? One has to study to be immortal. The Vedas declared, "Srunvanthu Viswe Amruthasya Puthraha" (Listen O! Sons of immortality). Understand this and experience bliss.

God Wants only Selfless Love

You pay water tax to the municipality for providing water to you. When the current is supplied to your house, you pay the electricity bill. But God has given the sunlight, the wind, and the rains. What tax are you paying to God? (Cheers) Self-surrender is the tax you are expected to pay. All your troubles are of your own making. God always gives you everything good. But you are not receiving it.

*Some people do not listen to good words,
And instead pay heed to all bad words.
Such people can never understand Me.*

(Telugu Poem)

What is that you need to do to make God happy? You should go close to God and worship Him with a sense of surrender. This is for your own sake. God does not ask for anything. A child sits in the lap of his mother for its own satisfaction. When the child goes near its mother, she showers her love. When you want to be close to God, you do not need to go through sacred texts or undertake great spiritual practices. Rituals and reading of holy texts are only worldly actions. They are meant to give only external satisfaction, but one has to make efforts to experience inner satisfaction.

Embodiments of Love!

The letters that the postman brings give joy to some and plunge some in deep sorrow. It is the contents of the letters that are responsible for the joy or sorrow and not the postman. God is also like a postman. He gives you the fruits of your actions. "*Karmanubandheeni Manushyaloke*", Human society is bound by actions. When you follow Truth, you will be happy and prosperous. Jealousy will make you miserable.

Buddhi is governed by fate. Fate is governed by actions. Actions are governed by thoughts. If you do all the activities with sacred thoughts, you will be successful. Wicked thoughts and

wicked feelings confer only misery. If you do not have the grace of God, all the worldly powers will be of no use. You know what happened to the great warrior Karna, who had all powers, but not God's grace. You should strive for Divine Love. To acquire Divine Love, you should develop good thoughts.

Embodiments of Love!

You are happy that the number of Padukas is increasing year after year. It is quite natural to have such a feeling in the external world. But, I do not desire increase in numbers. It is the feeling that is important, not the number of Padukas. What God wants is pure love and steady mind, but those who have come for this Paduka Puja have not understood this truth. They have brought many eatables such as dry fruits, apples, bananas and sweets and kept them in the Poornachandra Hall thinking that I would eat them. Do they think I am Kumbhakarna? I do not even take meals, then what are these fruits for? The boys will have to work for 15 days just to separate them and in the meanwhile the fruits will become rotten. What I want is only your love. (Cheers) Some people have brought towels and bedsheets. I do not need them. If you want, you can give them in the hospital. Even that need not be done.

I do not desire anything. I want only one thing i.e., pure, steady and selfless love. There is no selfishness from top to toe in Me. When I do not have any desires, why do you bring all these? Chetty Garu is an ardent devotee. Yesterday he prayed that I should ascend the chariot. I do not have any liking for these things. Your heart is My chariot. (Cheers) Then where is the need for a golden chariot? Today, they have brought a Simhasana (throne) too. They do not inform Me about these things till they are brought to Prasanthi Nilayam. Do not bring any such things. I do not like them. I have already told you what I like i.e., Love alone. Do not bring any material objects hereafter. I want you to acquire wisdom. That wisdom leads you to liberation. To reach this state of liberation, offer yourself completely. It means just as the essence of food you partake of gets mixed in your blood and becomes one with your body, likewise let your Love be unified with My Love. Then you will become one with Me.

In the morning during the Paduka worship, Punditji spoke on the importance of unity giving the example of bees collecting honey. Honeybee collects honey from different flowers and stores it at one place that becomes the panacea for all diseases. Where there is Unity, there is Purity; and where there is Purity, there is Divinity. Understand the relationship between Unity, Purity and Divinity.

Pundits have been telling you these things, but you do not seem to practise even one or two. By announcing the presence of light, would ever the darkness be dispelled? By listening to the efficacy and grandeur of the medicine, will the disease be cured? To dispel darkness, you should light at least a small lamp.

You all know that Deepavali is approaching. With one candle, you can light all other lamps. That candle is Divinity and the lamps are individuals. It is only one Divinity that protects and sustains all. Light the lamp of Love in you. Even the worldly activities will become spiritual if you have Love. You can do your office work or business, you can also take care of your family; but whatever you do, do it as an offering to God. Let every activity be pleasing unto God. That is true devotion. Wherever you go, do not offer any material objects to God. You all know that

people go to Tirupati and offer crowns and jewellery to God in the name of devotion. All the jewellery hides the pristine beauty of the idol. Do you consider God poorer than you?

Offering jewels to God is a narrow-minded idea. Charity is the true ornament for the hand. Truth is the true ornament for the throat. Listening to sacred texts is the true ornament for the ears. Why do you need any other ornaments? Offering jewellery to God is nothing but pomp and show. Devotees should not make such offerings. You should offer only your pure love and sacrifice. The relation between a devotee and God is only Heart to Heart and Love to Love. By offering jewellery, you are making God also a beggar. You should always keep in mind that God is bigger, never a beggar (cheers).

Today we find many Swamijis going abroad whenever they are in need of money. It is a matter of shame; it is no spirituality at all. There is so much of restlessness in our country. First they should spread the message of peace in Bharat. Charity begins at home. Yesterday I told Srinivas to take back all that they have brought. Whatever they eat, they have brought for Me. I do not eat anything. I eat your love (cheers). I hear only good words. Offer only these two to Me. Do not bring anything else. Let love be the underlying principle in whatever you do. With love and devotion even a little Sadhana will yield great results.

Follow Me

Many people wonder that I look so young even at the age of 73. The reason is that I have three P's in Me. One is Purity, the second is Patience and the third is Perseverance. It is because of these three that I shall remain like this for any number of years to come (cheers). So, everyone should cultivate these three.

When Bhakti Meets Shakti

Give up all your mean and low desires and cultivate love for God. Dr. Gadia has prayed for good health and long life for Chettiar. To pray for the well being of everyone is a noble quality. But, well being cannot be obtained by recommendations. The noble feelings of Chetty Garu have made him the recipient of God's grace. His heart and My heart should unify.

Last week Allopathy, Homoeopathy and Ayurvedic doctors all sent letters to Me "Swami' we hear that there is going to be a very big function on 10th, Send Chettiar back to Madurai immediately. He may not live till 10th." I am making it public today; even Chiranjeevi Rao and others know this. I said, "As a result of his Bhakti (devotion) I and My Shakti (power) he will certainly live." Though he is pretty aged and very weak, still he continues to come here with so much love. His devotion protects him.

Thyagaraja also had undergone many trials and tribulations. His wife died and his elder brother subjected him to many ordeals. His elder brother cast the idols of Sita, Rama and Lakshmana into the Kaveri River. Thyagaraja could not bear the separation from Rama and feeling frustrated said, "O Rama! Why am I being subjected to these ordeals? Is it because my devotion has weakened? Or has your power declined?" He felt that his devotion had not diminished. So, Rama's power must have got weakened. But pondering over it further, he realised how foolish he was to criticise Rama. He began to sing a song in praise of Rama's prowess: "Without Rama's power could a monkey have crossed the ocean? Or would the Goddess of Wealth have chosen to

be His consort? Or would Lakshmana serve Him or the supremely intelligent Bharata revel in revering Him and worshipping Him?" Thyagaraja ecstatically extolled the infinite prowess of Rama and blamed his own ignorance for having doubted Rama's prowess. Nothing is greater than the Divine power. Once you have the Anugraha (divine grace), what harm can the Navagrahas (nine planets) do to you? So, work for God's grace and surrender to Him completely. There lies the true bliss.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the Bhajans "*Prema Muditha Manase Kaho*" and "*Subrahmanyam, Subrahmanyam.*"

—From Bhagavan's Discourse at Prasanthi Nilayam on 11th October 1998 on the occasion of Sixth Anniversary of Paduka Pratishtha Mahotsav

Sai Our Favourite God

Far far away in Puttaparthi you stay,
Serving and watching your children who stray.

You bring peace to our hearts when we call your name,
Receiving your love and grace is a wonderful game.

We hear you sayings wherever we go,
But putting them into practice is very very slow.

Baba, dear Baba, you are in our hearts,
No being in the world can tear us apart.

Vibhuti and rings you give the more fortunate,
Rest of us can only pray to you, dear soul-mate.

Your miracles make our faith so strong,
To be with you and for your sparshan we long.

Swami, you help us through our difficult days,
We cross every hurdle because of your grace.

With a smile on your lips and your hands raised in blessing,
You take away our fears but keep us guessing.

For we are sure the day is not far,
When we all will be blessed with your Padanamaskar.

Baba we wished we lived close to you,
Enjoying every minute the sweetness in you.

How can we forget our Dear Omnipresent Lord,
That you are among us as Our Favourite God!

Placed at the Lotus Feet of our Beloved Bhagavan Baba

By SSE Group III Students, Sri Sathya Sai Centre of Scarborough, Toronto, Canada

AVATAR VANI:

NAVARATRI SANDESH:

Worship God as Energy Principle

*Truth is your true mother and Wisdom the true father,
Dharma is the true brother and Compassion the true friend;
The true wife is Peace and the true son Forgiveness,
These six are in fact the true relations of man.*

(Sanskrit Sloka)

Embodiments of Love!

In this world, every individual has a mother. The entire humanity has also one mother and we should try to know her. This mother is Truth. Those who follow this mother will never face any problems in life.

This mother, Truth, remains the same in all periods of time, in all the three worlds and transcends all the three attributes—Satwa, Rajas and Tamas. Physical mother may die or go to some other place. But, this divine mother, Truth, remains one and the same beyond time and space to every individual. It is therefore necessary that every person must follow such a noble, divine mother (Truth).

True Relations of Man

Who is the father? Wisdom is the true father. Wisdom is not ephemeral, mundane, physical, secular knowledge. *Advaita Darshanam Jnanam*, Wisdom confers the experience of non-duality. So, Truth and Wisdom are the true mother and father of man.

Dharma is the brother. Dharma may vary depending upon time, country, religion and tradition. However, Dharma is loved by the entire humanity irrespective of caste, creed, nationality and religion. This brother is the very embodiment of love. On this basis, the Vedas gave utmost importance to Truth and Righteousness. In the great epic Ramayana, Lakshmana personified the Principle of Dharma. When he fainted in the battlefield, Rama lamented saying that he could get a consort like Sita, a mother like Kaushalya, but not a brother like Lakshmana. Rama said, His Divinity blossomed because He had a brother like Lakshmana.

Compassion is the true friend. In this world, a friend today may become an enemy tomorrow. But, there is no greater friend than Compassion.

Peace is the wife. Peace is the precious jewel of saints, and is the royal path in the spiritual field.

Forgiveness is the son. There is no greater quality than Forgiveness. It encompasses all the good qualities like Truth, Righteousness, Non-violence and it is the essence of all the Vedas.

Therefore, for every individual, the true relations are Truth, Wisdom, Righteousness, Compassion, Peace and Forgiveness. The whole world is full of agitation and disturbance because of lack of these sacred qualities.

Embodiments of Love!

You should always remember your true mother and father. You cannot exist without them. The whole creation has emerged from Truth and merges back into it. There is no place where Truth does not exist. It is the good fortune of human beings to have this eternal Truth as their mother. But, today humanity does not follow such a sacred mother.

Worship of Divine Mother

You worship Devi (goddess) in these nine days of *Devi Navaratri*. You consider Devi as your Divine Mother. This Devi is called *Sathya Swaroopini*, which means she is the embodiment of Truth. So, worshipping Truth amounts to worshipping Devi. If you understand and follow this truth, you will be successful in every field. The Vedas also proclaim this Principle of Truth. There are many in this world who chant the Vedas. Many have gone through the sacred texts. But they do not seem to follow the right path. In fact, when we tread on the right path, only then we will know the true meaning of the Vedas and the sacred texts.

Since ancient times, the sages and saints undertook many spiritual practices in their quest for Truth. They were determined not to give up till they had the vision of Truth. Ultimately, they declared to the world that they had seen God, who is all brilliance, full of effulgence and is beyond the darkness of ignorance. They also declared that God is not far off in a distant land, but is present in the human body.

The saints had the vision of God, who is *Chinmaya* (full of effulgence) in the body, which is *Mrinmaya* (made of clay). So, we should not underrate the human body and use it for mean and worldly pleasures. Body is the temple of God. This body may be compared to an iron chest. Just as the precious jewels are kept in the iron chest, so also God is present in the human body. So, the body has to be maintained and made proper use of for the sake of the precious jewel, the Atma. You get jewels only from the earth. Similarly, you have to search for the jewel of the Atma only in the body, which is made of clay.

Let us investigate what comes in the way of experiencing the Atmic Principle. Ego and attachment stand as obstacles in our path. Only when you give up ego and attachment, you will have purity of heart, which in turn will lead you to the experience of Supreme Wisdom. The more you develop attachment, the more restless you become. Ego is much more dangerous. It has become an incurable disease in human beings. So, you have to keep ego and attachment under control and engage yourself in the quest of Atmic bliss.

Forms and Manifestations of Shakti

During these sacred nine days (*Navaratri*), people go through the sacred texts such as *Devi Bhagavata*, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. People also worship the deities *Durga*, *Lakshmi* and *Saraswati*. Goddess *Gayatri* has three aspects. They are: *Gayatri*, *Savitri* and *Saraswati*. *Gayatri* is the presiding deity of our senses. *Savitri* is the presiding deity of the Life Principle. *Saraswati* is the presiding deity of speech. All these three are within the same Principle of Truth. *Gayatri Mantra* begins with "*Om Bhur Bhuvah Svaha*". '*Bhuh*' means Materialisation (Body); '*Bhava*' means Vibration (Life Principle); '*Svaha*' means Radiation (Atma).

Dr. Venkataraman, the previous speaker, said that the matter could be converted into energy and vice versa. From a scientist's point of view, that is true. But, in My view, matter and energy do not exist separately. Matter is energy and energy is matter. These two are inseparable and interrelated. In fact, there is no matter in this world; wherever you see, you find only energy.

During these nine days, Goddess *Shakti* (Energy Principle) is worshipped. Truth, Righteousness, Peace, Forgiveness are all the expressions of the Principle of *Shakti*. Truth is the primal cause. There is nothing other than this. All faculties of energy are present in this Truth. So, consider Truth as your mother and follow it. The Vedas proclaim, "*Sathyam Vada; Dharmam Chara*", which means speak the Truth and follow Righteousness. Unfortunately, today people do not follow this. On the contrary, they follow *Asathya* and *Adharma*. This is the cause of all suffering. Ancients gave utmost priority to Truth and Righteousness. Before undertaking any work they enquired if it was right or wrong. They followed the dictates of their conscience. But today such an attitude is lacking.

Many people say, they are in search of Divinity. Once you follow the path of Truth, you will find Divinity everywhere. A small example: The same eyes see the mother, daughter, wife and sister. Here you need to enquire as to what kind of feeling you should have towards each. This is the quest for Truth. Mother should be viewed with reverence and respect, daughter should be considered as a part of your own being. In this way, you should enquire and understand the Truth.

How to Know the Atmic Principle?

If you just go by the direct evidence of what you see, you will never know the Truth. All that you see is bound to perish. There are many things, which cannot be perceived by the naked eye. In spiritual path, everyone wants direct evidence (*Pratyaksha Pramanam*). But direct evidence cannot constitute the entire Truth. For example: You see a person who is four feet five inches tall, weighing forty-five kilograms and fair complexioned. All these can be seen by the naked eye. But you cannot go merely by these physical qualities. You should also take into consideration the unseen qualities in him such as love, compassion, anger, etc. It is utter foolishness if you go by the physical form, which is direct evidence. It is not possible to see the direct manifestation of God. Truth is everywhere. Dharma is everywhere. God, who is the embodiment of Truth and Righteousness, is everywhere. So, you should practise Truth and Righteousness and enjoy the bliss.

For everything, conscience is the witness. If you do not follow the conscience, everything becomes unsacred. The Atma is the eternal witness and that is conscience. The Atma is

everywhere. It is in every individual and every creature. It has no form. It is attribute-less, eternal, ancient, unsullied, immortal. Who can understand such an Atmic Principle? You speak of Truth and consider whatever you see and hear as Truth, but all this is limited to senses. But the Atma is beyond senses. Then how to know this Atmic Principle? You do not need to search for this elsewhere. Turn your vision inward. The Vedas said: "*Pashyannapi Na Pashyathi Moodho*," he is a fool who sees, yet does not see. All that you see is Divine, but you mistake it for Nature. The one with Atmic vision will see the entire Nature as Divine. But if you have the worldly view, you can only see the world. "*Viswam Vishnumayam*", Vishnu pervades the entire universe. Names and forms may vary, but the Atma is uniform in all. To understand this unity, you have to turn your vision inward. There is no separate path to know God other than knowing one's own Self.

Expand Your Love

There is no human being that has no hunger for food. Similarly, you should also have hunger for God. Some people may call it madness; that is their madness. Each has his faith, conviction and experience. No one has the right to criticise others.

It is only the body that has birth and death, but the Atma has no birth and no death. It has no beginning and no end. It is the all pervading eternal Brahma. Who is Brahma? He is not the one with four heads as described in books. Brahma is vastness. You find only Brahma wherever you see. This expansion of love is God. The feeling of 'my body' is contraction of love, which is death. So, you should expand your love. Your love should not be limited to your family and relations.

In mathematics $1+1+1+1$ becomes 4. The number increases or decreases depending on whether 1 is added or subtracted. But in spiritual mathematics, Atma+Atma+Atma results again in Atma. It does not increase or decrease. The first name of Atma is 'I'. The Vedas declare: "*Aham Brahmasmi*" (I am Brahman). This 'I' is the first name of God. It is possible to know this 'I' only by following the path of Truth.

In this world, only Truth exists, there is no falsehood. If you find falsehood, the mistake lies in your *Drishti* (vision) and not in the *Srishti* (creation). If you put on blue glasses, the world appears as blue in colour; if you put on red glasses, you will find only redness all around. The defect lies with the colour of the glasses, but not with the world. The very principle of creation is Divinity. "*Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma*," so revere everyone as Brahman. Love everyone as Brahman. Then there will be no scope for hatred or enmity. What is the reason for all agitation in this world? It is the lack of equanimity. Only through equanimity, you can develop love.

Embodiments of Love!

In these seven days of Yajna, we have seven modes of worship. We call it '*Saptaham*' seven-day event. What is the significance of having a '*Saptaham*'? This number 'seven' is very significant in Numerology. In music, we have *Sapta Swaras* (seven notes). There are seven oceans, seven Rishis, seven colours and seven worlds. They are all within us. There is nothing beyond you. It is foolishness to think that God is separate from you and search Him outside. You are God. But since you identify yourself with body, you are not able to understand this Truth. Body is like a

water bubble, and mind is like a mad monkey. Why do you rely on these two? Follow your conscience. Only then you will have self-satisfaction.

Who is Dasaratha?

Atma symbolises '*Hridaya*' (spiritual heart). God dwells in '*Hridaya*'. '*Hridaya*' is the centre of Love and Peace. Only sacred qualities should emerge out of '*Hridaya*'. But instead animal qualities like anger, hatred and jealousy emerge; then you are a beast, not a human being. Such a heart is a dwelling place for animals, not God. If you conduct yourself with peace, love and compassion, you are God. The Navaratri worship has been started in order to foster sacred qualities in us.

You would have heard the name of Dasaratha. Who is he? He is not the king of Ayodhya. Dasaratha refers to one who has control over human body that has got five senses of perception and five senses of action. The master of these ten senses is Dasaratha. This body is a chariot and Dasaratha is the master of this chariot. He had three wives. They signify Satwic, Rajasic and Tamasic qualities. He had four sons. They signify the four objectives of life: Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. What is the capital of Dasaratha's kingdom? 'Ayodhya', which means it is a place where no one can get into. It signifies '*Hridaya*', where no wicked qualities can enter.

Know Thyself

The entire universe is within you. The mountains may appear smooth from a distance, but once you go near, you will know the truth. It is the distance that lends enchantment. As long as you think that Kailash, Vaikuntha and Swarga are at a distant place, you will be crazy about them. Actually all of them are in your '*Hridaya*'. Your happiness is heaven and your misery is hell. The concept of hell and heaven is introduced in order to see that you do only good. Heaven and hell are not separate; they are in your mind.

What is the cause of misery? Your own actions. Buddha did penance for six long years. One day he opened his eyes and said, he had caught hold of the thief. Who is the thief? It is the mind. He realised that mind was the root cause of all suffering. If you control your mind, you will never suffer.

Churchill said, "Man has conquered everything, but he has not conquered himself." Man is trying to know everything without understanding his true Self. Know Thyself, then you will know everything. This is what the Upanishads said, "Try to know and experience That by which everything is known and experienced." That is Atmic bliss, which is eternal and supreme. True happiness lies in union with God. If you are with the world, you will never get happiness.

Human heart can be compared to the Ocean of Milk (*Ksheera Sagara*), but today it has become Ocean of Salinity (*Kshara Sagara*). Lord Vishnu dwells in the Ocean of Milk, which means He resides in our heart. But if we make our heart '*Kshara Sagara*', then whales and sharks (bad qualities) will enter. Human heart should be pure, only then Lord Vishnu can reside in it. If you understand God, you will not search for Him outside. God is with you, in you, above you, below you, around you. There is no one nearer than God. God is nearer than your physical mother. So, worship God as your mother, who is the embodiment of Truth.

Banquet of Bliss

I begin My discourse with a Sloka or a poem and conclude it with a Bhajan. Do you know what they are? The first poem or Sloka is like a plate, the discourse can be compared to the various delicious items that are served on the plate, and the Bhajan in the end is like a plate covering the delicious items. Do not treat this as a *Mandhu* (medicine), thereby taking only a little of it. Treat this as a *Vindhu* (banquet) and partake of the delicious items that I serve to the maximum extent. Experience and enjoy this banquet.

Students! Embodiments of Love!

You have to learn many things in daily life. First know the mistakes in your life and try to correct them. Love is essential to become a complete human being. If you follow the path of Love, everything becomes Love.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the Bhajan, “*Prema Muditha Manase Kaho...*”

—From Bhagavan's discourse at Prasanthi Nilayam on 25th September 1998

*I separated Myself from Myself,
so that I may love Myself.*

*See in Me yourself,
For I see Myself in all of you.*

*You are My life, My breath, My soul.
You are all My forms.*

*When I love you, I love Myself.
When you love yourself, you love Me.*

—Sathya Sai Baba

Fill Your Heart with Noble Feelings

*This Motherland of ours gave to the world
Noble souls renowned in all the continents.
It is the land, which ousted the
Foreign rulers and achieved freedom.
This Bharat is reputed for its scholarship.
It is the sacred land, which stood forth
As the exemplar in the realms of music, literature and sacred lore;
Born in the land of Bharat, noted for its fine arts and natural beauty,
Oh devotees! It is your bounden duty to foster
The glory and prosperity of the Motherland.*

(Telugu Poem)

*Divinity is more resplendent than the sun,
Purer than the purest snow,
Subtler than the sky and space,
And is immanent in all living beings.
Divinity pervades the microcosm and the macrocosm.
God is unattached, though He is present in all.
You are in Brahman and Brahman is in you.
In fact you and Brahman are one.
What else is to be conveyed?*

(Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of Love!

Bharat is the birthplace of spirituality, righteousness, charity, non-violence and peace. Adherence to these qualities as observed in Bharat is not found elsewhere. It is the birthplace of Sapta Rishis (seven sages) and the first poet, Valmiki. This is the sacred land ruled by the very embodiment of Dharma, Rama. This is the land where the Song Celestial, the Gita was sung by Krishna. It is the land where the oneness of the individual soul and the Cosmic Soul was proclaimed. There is no other land like Bharat, the land of sacredness, righteousness and peace. Truth permeates the atmosphere of Bharat. Compassion pervades the dust of Bharat. Love fills the Ganges of Bharat. Forbearance dwells in the heart of man in this land. Such noble, divine, unique qualities are manifest in Bharat alone.

Divine Magnetic Power

God is all-powerful and all-pervasive. "*Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma*" (Verily all is Brahman). An enquiry into science and spirituality will reveal that both affirm the same truth. The existence of God is visualised by science in the form of electric, magnetic, laser, radio, heat and light waves, which are all pervasive. This is the direct evidence for the existence of God. Divinity is present in the food you eat, the water you drink and the air you breathe. There is no place in this world devoid of magnetism. What is a magnet? It is not merely the one that attracts iron filings; everything in this world is suffused with magnetism. Mother is a magnet for the child and vice-

versa. Similarly, husband and wife are attracted to each other. Grass is the magnet for the cow. Flower is the magnet for the honeybee. When we investigate on these lines, it is evident that everything is governed by the principle of magnetism. Vedanta declared, "*Ramayathi ithi Ramah*", that which attracts is the Principle of Rama. The magnetic power acts as the link between that which is manifest and that which is unmanifest. The philosophers term it Divine magnetic power, whereas the scientists term it Bio-cosmic or Super Power. Therefore, scientists as well as Vedantins experience the same Divine power in different names and forms.

In this visible fleeting world, there are many mysterious powers unknown to man. These are referred to as transcendental and hidden powers; not all can understand them. Every creature is endowed with divine power. That is why I always address you as Divyatma Swarupulara (embodiments of Divine Atma). Doctors are unable to comprehend the secrets and mysteries of the human body. Take, for example, the tongue. There are 40,000 taste buds in the tongue. There are 25,000 buds that generate heat in the tongue. The eye, which is hardly an inch in size, can cognise 13 crore types of light rays. There are millions and millions of cells in your body. Each cell is divine and contains your complete form. Is it not awe-inspiring? Whose creation is this? This is the transcendental power of Divinity.

Experiencing Omnipresent Divinity

It is foolish to consider Divinity to be non-existent. Those who are not able to understand this transcendental power deny the existence of God. Do not pretend to know what you do not know in reality. No one has any right to deny the existence of God. "*Munde Munde Mathir Bhinnah*" (opinions differ from person to person). Each has his own faith.

*'No' is the reply for those that say 'no',
'Yes' is the reply for those who say 'yes',
'No' and 'yes' pertain to you,
But for Sai it is always 'yes', 'yes', 'yes'. (cheers) (Telugu Poem)*

People tend to deny the existence of all that is formless. The fact that radio waves are invisible does not mean that they are non-existent. The programme that is being broadcast at the Delhi Radio Station can be heard anywhere, if the radio is tuned to that frequency. Human body can be compared to a radio. It has to be tuned to the formless God in order to experience Him. Human body is a computer, which has so many hidden secrets. The mind is like a television set. Many names and forms are displayed in it. Body is a generator. The sum and substance of all this is that all powers are latent in man.

Einstein showed that matter could be converted into energy and energy into matter. Energy is all encompassing. Newton said, energy could neither be created nor destroyed. However, energy could be converted from one form to another. Philosophers explained this in varied ways.

*God has neither birth nor death,
He has neither beginning nor end,
He is present everywhere;
He is the eternal witness.*

(Telugu Poem)

Modern scientists are not able to comprehend this truth. What they have known and understood is just a fraction of the totality. What is awareness? It is total understanding. Total understanding denotes knowing and experiencing the omnipresence of Divinity.

The Prime Minister Vajpayee, who spoke earlier, has made a mention of the efforts being made by the people to attain Moksha (liberation). What is the meaning of Moksha? Moha Kshaya is Moksha (Absolute detachment is liberation). What does this mean? Air mixes with air, fire mixes with fire, water mixes with water easily. Similarly God is the very form of Light. Become light yourself. You will become one with the cosmic light. God is formless. In order to merge in the formless God, you have to give up identification with the body. Concentrate on the principle of Atma. When you are always attached to the body, how can you realise the Atma, the Cosmic Principle? Concentrate on the Atma. Only then your conscience will merge with the cosmic consciousness. This unification is called Saayujya (merger with the Divine).

"*Ekatma Sarvabhoothantaratma*", the same Atma dwells in all beings. There is only One, but has been attributed by different names and forms. Only One exists. Zero gains value when one precedes it. World, life, sun, moon, sky and everything else is zero. Only ONE is the hero, that is Divinity. Man (who is inherently Divine) becomes zero if he forgets God. (Cheers)

Embodiments of Love!

God is not separate from you. You are God. Enquire and understand this truth. If the whole life is spent in research and experiments, when are you going to practise? Individuals may differ in names, forms and attitudes, but the Atma remains unchanged. Water is referred to by different names in different languages. It is called 'neeru' in Telugu, 'pani' in Hindi, 'tanni' in Tamil, 'vari' in Sanskrit. Names vary, but water remains unchanged. Similarly, God has different names and forms, but the Atmic Principle remains the same. This Atma is common in one and all, and is termed conscience, which has originated from consciousness. Be it theist, atheist, theist-atheist, atheist-theist, all have to admit this fact. Be it a Bhogi (one of worldly pleasures), Rogi (one of disease), Yogi (one with equal-mindedness), Viragi (one of detachment) or Anuragi (one of attachment), Atmic Principle is the same in all.

The body can be compared to a colour balloon. Balloons differ in their size and colour, but air within them is one and the same. The same air is present inside as well as outside the balloon. The air within the balloon can be compared to conscience and the all-pervasive air to consciousness. When more and more air is blown into the balloon, ultimately the balloon bursts and the air within (conscience) merges with the air outside (consciousness). Similarly, expand your love so that the balloon of your body attachment bursts and the conscience within merges with the consciousness outside. The difference between conscience and consciousness is only in quantity, not in quality.

The power of attraction is divinity. A small example: Thousands have gathered here today. Who has invited you? Has anybody sent invitations to you? No invitations have been sent. Then how have you come here? Your love for Swami is the main cause. (Cheers). Nobody has brought you here by force. You all know this. People are brought in lorries for political meetings. In spite of

repeatedly requesting you not to come, you still come here. Attraction of love is Divinity (cheers). This is the divine magnet.

Here is a similar illustration from the Ramayana. Janaka resolved to give his daughter Sita in marriage to one who could lift the Siva Dhanus (bow) as done by his daughter. As Sita was Bhujatha (daughter of Mother Earth), she had the magnetic power inherent in her, which enabled her to lift the Siva Dhanus effortlessly. It was only the divine magnet Rama, who could lift the bow and string it. This divine magnet is present in one and all, the difference lies only in intensity. This intensity can be developed only through love. Cultivate the sense of unity that I and you are one. Experience the bliss of unity. God is in you. You are God. When you recognise this truth there will be no scope for doubts of any kind.

Praise and censure are reflections of the inner being. A virtuous one never criticises others. It is only the mean who indulge in such unsacred activities. The colour you see depends on the colour of the glass you wear. Wear the glasses of love, and you will see love all around. The mistake lies in your vision, not in creation. Do not attach importance to criticism. If someone criticises you loudly, it goes into the thin air. If he accuses you within, it goes back to him. Is he criticising your body? The body is inert. Is he criticising the Atma? The same Atma dwells in both. It amounts to criticising one's own self. One who realises this fact is the true seeker of truth. Man does not recognise hundreds of faults present within him. But he tends to point out the most insignificant ones in others. The bad in you is reflected as the bad in others. Correct yourself in the first instance. Only then your mind will become pure. So, develop sacred thoughts.

Man has got many powers in him. Here is a small example. When I went to East Africa, Dr. Patel, a great devotee, gifted a hairbrush made of iron to Me. When I comb My hair, it automatically gets attracted to the hairbrush. Even boys have witnessed this. Today I am making it public, so that you will understand the existence of divine magnetic power in Me (cheers). It is this power that has attracted all of you here. My love is my greatest property.

*"Love is My form,
Truth is My breath,
Bliss is My food.
My life is My message,
Expansion is My life.
No reason for love,
No season for love,
No birth, no death.*

Love Lives by Giving

The Divine power has neither birth nor death. I do not feel elated when praised nor depressed when blamed. I treat these dualities of life with equanimity. I am happy both in pleasure and pain. There is only love in Me. My love lives by giving, giving and giving (cheers). It never receives. This is the difference between My love and the worldly love, which believes in receiving alone. That is why My love is ever expanding. A small seed becomes a gigantic tree with many branches and fruits. All of them have their origin in the seed. Likewise, out of love

has emerged the creation. Love is God, live in love. Develop love. Love everyone wholeheartedly. Only when love is manifested, you will attain self-realisation.

In the first instance, develop self-confidence. Self-confidence is the foundation. Self-satisfaction is the wall. Self-sacrifice is the roof. Self-realisation is the mansion (of life). Everything is contained in the Self. Self means Atma, the Spirit. With this Atmic Principle acquire spiritual knowledge. The power in spirituality is limitless. The power of love far exceeds the power of the atom bomb. It transforms even those who hate. Develop such sacred love. Only then there will be harmony among Bharatiyas. Chavan, who has spoken earlier, has mentioned that violence is rampant everywhere. The wicked thoughts in men are responsible for this. Once man develops love, there will be no hatred in the community. That is why I tell the students repeatedly:

*Start the day with love,
Fill the day with love,
Spend the day with love,
End the day with love,
This is the way to God.*

God is the primordial cause for Creation, Organisation and Destruction. The same Divine power assumes different names and forms. For example, we have only one Chief Minister for Andhra Pradesh. Every department is governed by a minister, who is under the direct supervision of the Chief Minister. Similarly, the whole world rests upon three basic activities: Creation, Organisation and Destruction. The creation aspect is governed by Brahma, organisation by Vishnu and destruction by Siva. This division of powers is essential for the smooth functioning of the world. The collective aspect of the three is God. The word GOD comprises three letters - G, O, D. 'G' stands for Generation, 'O' stands for Organisation and 'D' stands for Destruction. These three aspects of Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara constitute God.

None can deny the existence of God. If someone argues saying that there is no God, tell him that he has no right to question your conviction. God may not exist for those who deny His existence, but He exists for those who have faith in Him. One may say 'God is **nowhere**'. Take the letter 'w' away from the word '**where**' and join it to '**no**', which will make it, 'God is **now here**' (cheers). All this is word building.

Understand Divine Principle

Man is wasting his life with narrow-minded feelings. He is concerned about himself and his family alone. This is contraction of love. Consider the whole world as one family. That is expansion of love. Different countries are like different rooms in the mansion of the world. Consider all those that live in these rooms as your brothers and sisters. When you develop such relationship with your fellow human beings, you will not hate anybody.

Embodiments of Love!

Try to understand the principle of Divinity. In this world there is none else other than God. Some may say that the world consists of matter and energy. Truly speaking, there is only energy, no matter. Whatever matter you see will be transformed into energy after some time. (Showing His handkerchief Bhagavan said) This is a cloth, it is made of threads. Threads are made from cotton.

So, cotton, thread and cloth are one and the same. Similarly, name and form vary, but there is only one fundamental principle, that is Divinity. Today there are many to criticise those that do good, but very few involve themselves in good actions.

Students! Boys and Girls!

You are the emancipators of Bharat and the world. You are the leaders and the pleaders of the future. Develop the quality of leadership. "*Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavanthu*", let the whole world be happy. Vajpayee said "*Sarva Bhootha Hithe Rathah*", aspire for the welfare of all living beings. Everybody should be healthy and happy. That is My true birthday (cheers). Many people have wished Me 'Happy birthday'. Convey that wish for those who are not happy. Where is the need to wish for Me when I am always happy?

Prahlada has said, a father rejoices only when the son earns a good name in the society, not on the day of his birth. Who is 'Manava'? Manava is the very embodiment of God. 'Ma' means ignorance, 'Na' means without, 'Va' means to conduct oneself. So 'Manava' means one who conducts himself free from ignorance. You are Awareness embodied. Act according to the name you bear. It is not enough if you bear the name of Thyagaraja or Rama; you should live up to their ideals.

There are divine powers in the food that we consume. Every student must take a balanced diet. Orange juice, tomato juice, lime juice and apple juice are very good for health as they have a good deal of acid content in them. Leafy vegetables contain vitamins as well as iron and hence are of high nutritive value. Body should be healthy. With a healthy body, you can undertake any task.

My Birthday Message

You do not need to search for God anywhere. God is immanent in every inch and every hair of your body. That is why when Sita offered her pearl necklace as a token of appreciation, Hanuman bit the pearls of the necklace and threw it away, as it did not resonate with the name of Rama. On being questioned by Sita as to why he had acted in such a manner, Hanuman replied: "You go by the value of the pearls, whereas I listen to the holy sound of the Lord's name. Any jewel bereft of the name of Rama is as good as a stone for me. Every hair of my body is suffused with the name of Rama". Therefore, divinity pervades every cell, every hair of Bharatiyas. It is for this reason that many foreigners like Max Mueller desired to be born and die in this sacred land. Having been born in this sacred land of Yoga and Tyaga, it will be a pity if you do not adhere to these sacred values. Lead the life of a true Bharatiya. Set an ideal for others and make everyone happy. This is My birthday message.

This is the birthday of this body. Truly speaking, I have no birthday. Since all of you have assembled here, I am celebrating this day as birthday. This birthday is not important for Me. The day when all of you are happy is My true birthday (cheers). I desire nothing. I will be happy when you imbibe Prema, Tyaga and Yoga and experience divinity therefrom. I wish that you all live an ideal life in peace and security. On this auspicious day, fill your hearts with noble feelings and chant the name of God.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the Bhajan, "*Prema Muditha Manase Kaho...*"

—From Bhagavan's Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall at Prasanthi Nilayam on 23rd
November 1998

I Am in You

Be pure in words and deeds and keep impure thoughts away. I am in every one of you and so, I become aware of the slightest wave of thoughts. When the clothes become dirty, you have to give them for wash. When your mind is soiled, you have to be born again for the cleansing operations. The dhobi beats the clothes on the hard stone and draws over it the hot iron to straighten the folds. So, you too, will have to pass through a terrain of travail in order to become fit to approach God. See me as resident in everyone. Give them all the help you can, all the service they need. Do not withhold the sweet word, supporting hand, the assuring smile, the comforting company, the consoling conversation.

—Baba

GURUDEV VANI:

INSTITUTE'S XVII CONVOCATION:

Fuse Spirituality with Education

*Bharat has men who are capable of educating
even the ancient sages about the essence of scriptures;
Men who have sacrificed their lives for the uplift of society;
Men who have immense administrative capabilities.
Bharat has many such eminent personalities.
Alas! Of what use are such men in Bharat
if they have no awareness of the wail of the oppressed?
When will they respond to the heart-rending cries of the poor?
(Telugu Poem)*

Students! Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached. The need of the hour is men, who set an ideal by their valour and courage in the battle of life, and not men who pursue the physical, ephemeral, fleeting pleasures.

Education in Ancient India

Students! Investigate into the concept of ideal education propagated by the ancient sages. They enthroned righteousness and welcomed truth. They enshrined valour and courage. You should emulate such people, who strove for the glory of Indian culture. In fact you are the true inheritors of the legacy of Indian culture. You should resolve to uphold Dharma and work for the welfare of the country.

Science and technology have progressed by leaps and bounds over the past 200 years, yet no sanctity has been attached to them. This has stimulated development in human civilisation, but not within man. Absence of human values will lead to decline in spirituality. Develop the strong faith that body has been gifted to uphold human values. Since ancient times, Bharatiyas have stood for peace, forbearance and forgiveness. A study of the history of Bharat will reveal the fact that many invaded Bharat and plundered its wealth, but never has Bharat invaded any foreign land on its own. Bharatiyas have considered divinity and purity as their two eyes. In such a sacred land, justice and righteousness have been consigned to flames, resulting in trials and tribulations, turmoil and unrest on a large scale.

Education does not mean mere bookish knowledge. Knowledge acquired should be put into practice and shared with the rest of the community. Does the ability to read and write make one educated? Does securing college degrees make one educated? If education is for a living, are not the birds and beasts living? There are millions of educated men and women all over the world, but what is the benefit accruing to their respective nations? None. They are utilising their education for selfishness and self-interest alone.

Embodiments of Love! Boys and Girls!

Eschew selfishness and self-interest and resolve to serve the society. *The eternal and long lasting values have disappeared into thin air. Good nature in men and women is on the decline. Ancient Aryan wisdom is frittered away. Western education is on the rise.* (Telugu Poem)

Bharatiya education makes one ideal and self-reliant. It inculcates the sense of sacrifice in man. Having called yourselves children of Bharat, you should keep in mind the welfare of Bharat Mata. Modern education enhances intelligence, not broad-mindedness. It makes the students stonehearted. True education is one, which instils compassion in you. Patriotism coupled with sacrifice; devotion coupled with love should become a part and parcel of your life. Education makes you humble. Humility confers deservedness; deservedness secures for you wealth as well as divinity and devotion to God. *In this sacred land of Bharat, forbearance is our best wealth; of all forms of rituals, the highest is the observance of truth and morality; of sweetness of disposition the greatest is maternal love; jettisoning the national ideal that honour is greater than life itself, what a pity people have fallen a prey to exotic practices! What can I say about the plight of Bharat! Like an elephant unaware of its strength, a/as! Bharatiyas have become docile today.* (Telugu Poem)

Modern Educational Scenario

Since ancient times, Bharat has stood as an ideal for the rest of the world. Unfortunately, we witness a different scenario today. We find educational institutions proliferating in every street, in every village. What is the gain therefrom? Absolutely nil. Humility, the hallmark of a true student, is not noticed. *Harm is done to those that help. Sense of gratitude is lacking. Teachers are made a laughing stock. This is the progress of modern education.* (Telugu Poem)

To realise the purpose of education, serve the society. Cleanse the country of all evils. True education is that which makes one a complete man. Only when one gets transformed into a complete human being is the purpose of education fulfilled.

Students! Resolve to make the best use of the education you have received. Respect and revere elders and set an ideal to humanity. Let your conduct befit the degrees you have acquired. There is nothing great in obtaining good marks, see that you do not invite bad remarks (cheers). In modern system of education, a student is declared pass, if he secures just 35% marks. What about the balance 65%? If a person completes only 35 out of 100 tasks assigned to him, can you call him a successful one? One should secure 100% marks. That is true education. Attaining high marks is not the aim of education. Education is meant to broaden the mind. Education and discrimination should go hand in hand. The prosperity of the nation depends on the progress you make in the field of education. The future of the nation rests on the students. *Moral and ethical values are confined only to books. Heart has become a dwelling place for evil qualities. Actions have become completely self-centred. This is the progress of modern education.* (Telugu Poem)

Education for Life

Education acquired should be translated into action. When you put your knowledge into practice, only then you become an ideal person.

Students! As I have told you repeatedly, knowledge can be classified into five categories: bookish knowledge, superficial knowledge, general knowledge, discrimination knowledge and practical knowledge. General knowledge and commonsense are very much essential. You should set an ideal by exercising practical knowledge and following the four Fs. The first F is 'Follow the Master'. Who is your master? Conscience is your master. So, follow your conscience (cheers). The second F is 'Face the Devil'. The third F is 'Fight to the End' and the fourth F is 'Finish the Game' (cheers). Play the game of life in the true spirit of sportsmanship. Students lack self-confidence. Confidence in the self is very essential. Lack of confidence in the self will lead to depression. Today 90% of the people are afflicted with depression. Depression will lead to weakness of mind. "*Na Ayamatma Balaheenena Labbyah*", a weak-minded one cannot realise the Atma. If you have confidence in the Self, you will never be weak-minded.

Bharat has stocked plenty of wealth for you. What is this wealth? It is the spirit of sacrifice, which can be acquired through service to society. Do not waste time. "*Karmanubandheeni Manushya Loke*", human society is bound by action. "*Sareeramadyam Khalu Dharma Sadhanam*", body is gifted in order to undertake righteous actions, not to eat, drink and make merry. Render service to others till your last breath. The essence of 18 Puranas can be summed up in one phrase: "*Paropakarah Punyaya Papaya Parapeedanam*". Help Ever; Hurt Never. Set an ideal, which is helpful and delightful to one and all.

Students! "*Janthoonam Narajanma Durlabham*", human birth is the rarest of all. Human life should be one of character good actions and good qualities. It should be dedicated to the service of society, not for amassing wealth. Education is for life and not for a living. One need not strive for money. If education is properly utilised, money will come on its own. Today educational institutions have become business centres.

Money has become our God; pride has become our creed; selfishness sits supreme in the minds of men; egotism has become our fashion; greed has become our beauty; Dharma has come to nought; compassion has sunk low; moral fervour is lost; hypocrisy has become the light of our life; love and kindness lie sick and diseased; modern education has blinded men with lust; life

has become a burden; minds have gone astray; delay no more, for delay is disastrous; fuse morality with education in sweet harmony; live up to the reputation as children of Bharat.
(Telugu Poem)

Moral values should be the underlying current in each and every action of man. Only when you have moral and ethical values, you deserve to be called children of Bharat.

Embodiments of Love!

“*Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavanthu*”, let the whole world be happy, has been the motto of Bharat since ancient times. Resolve to revive and rejuvenate the pristine glory of Bharat. Propagate these noble deals in every village, every street and every house. Observe unity in every activity of yours. Believe in the dictum, “Brotherhood of man and Fatherhood of God”. Do not feel jealous of anyone. Jealousy is an incurable disease. Praise and censure are inevitable for man. Only the tree that bears fruit is stoned. Likewise, only the good face problems. Do not attach importance to these trials and tribulations. Tree welcomes stoning because it is aware of the fact that people have recognised its value. Similarly, man should not feel dejected when he is censured. Treat dualities like pain and pleasure with equal-mindedness. Develop this broad-mindedness. Divinity blossoms in those with such a sacred attitude. All are the embodiments of God. Krishna declared: “*Mamaivamso Jeevaloke Jeevabhuta Sanathanah*” (All are sparks of My divinity). Do not consider yourselves as mere mortals. Have firm faith that you are divine. Only then you will be able to work for the emancipation of this country, and it will be restored to the status of teacher to the rest of the world.

As the Vice Chancellor quoted from the Taittiriyaopaniṣad, “*Matrudevo Bhava, Pitrudevo Bhava, Acharyadevo Bhava, Atithidevo Bhava*”, revere your mother, father, preceptor and guest as God. This was the teaching given to the students at the time of leaving the portals of Gurukul in ancient times. This act of benediction is termed Convocation today.

Education is the very form of God. The word 'education' has originated from '*educare*', meaning 'to bring out' or 'to elicit'. *Educare* has two aspects: that which relates to the head and that which relates to the heart. That which emerges from the head is Pravritti (external) and that from the heart is Nivritti (internal). Unless the head is empty (free from evil) it cannot be filled with good. Modern education relates to the head, but true education relates to the heart. Sacred qualities like compassion, truth, forbearance, love originate from the heart. Here is a small example. Physical features like height, weight, complexion can be seen by the naked eye, whereas there are innumerable qualities like compassion, truth, love which are unseen. Merely acquainting oneself about the physical features of an individual does not make one aware of his/her true personality.

Essence of Bharatiya Vidya

Hiranyakasipu's scientific achievements far exceeded those of the modern scientists. He could even reach the Pole Star, whereas the modern scientists have travelled only up to the moon. Prahlada cautioned his father Hiranyakasipu, “Oh! Father, you have conquered all the worlds, but not your senses.” The same sentiment was expressed by the Prime Minister of England, Churchill, “Man has conquered all, but he has not conquered himself.” On being questioned by a Westerner as to why he was in a pensive mood, Gandhi replied that he was ruminating over the modern educational system, which was making man stonehearted. Education should fill one's

heart with love and compassion. Two parts of hydrogen and one part of oxygen add up to make water. Greatness lies in sharing water equally, not making it. Everyone has an equal right on water. Today everyone is fighting for rights, but what about responsibilities? Students! You need not fight for rights. Discharge your responsibilities, rights will follow. Do your Duty. Duty is God; Work is Worship. What is your right? To make everybody happy is your right. Serve everybody and make everyone happy without expecting anything in return. Service is God. "The best way to love God is to love all and serve all" (cheers). "Speak softly and sweetly". "You cannot always oblige, but you can speak always obligingly". That is the essence of Bharatiya Vidya. Education does not mean "Twinkle, twinkle little star, how I wonder what you are!" All this is artificial education. True Bharatiya Vidya is one, which fosters spirituality and human values.

Students! Propagate the ideals of true education in the four corners of the world. Sacrifice everything for the sake of truth and tread along this sacred path. Truth is God; Love is God. Live in Love; Live in Truth. Imbibe these principles. Once you are along the path of love and truth, you will gain all wealth and wisdom. Be steady, do not waver. Students of our institutions should live up to these ideals and bring a good name to the institute. There is no institution comparable to our institution in this country. Business has overtaken education right from K. G. to P. G. in other institutions. But our institute is based on sacrifice. Foster this sacred quality of sacrifice. Offer education to your fellow beings free of cost. The Vedas declare: "*Na Karmana, Na Prajaya, Dhanena Tyagenaike Amrutatwa Manasuh*", immortality can be attained only through sacrifice and not through wealth, progeny or action. Be prepared to sacrifice. True yoga lies in sacrifice. First and foremost, make your parents happy. Make everybody happy and be an ideal. The Vedas declare:

*"Sahanavavathu, Sahanau Bhunakthu,
Sahaveeryam Karavavahai,
Tejaswi Navadheethamasthu,
Ma Vidhvisavahai".*

May the Lord protect and nourish us!
May we grow in intelligence and valour working together!
May we live in friendship without any conflict!

I wish that you practise and propagate these sacred ideals. Blessing you, I bring this discourse to a close.

**—From Bhagavan's Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall at Prasanthi Nilayam on 22nd
November, 1998**

73RD BIRTHDAY OF BHAGAVAN BABA

Glorious Birthday Celebrations

Gaiety, pageantry and devotional fervour marked the celebrations of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's 73rd birthday. The main function of which was held in the glittering Sai Kulwant Hall in Prasanthi Nilayam on 23rd November 1998 in the presence of huge multitudes of devotees from India and abroad and amidst a large number of dignitaries, including the Prime Minister, Sri Atal Behari Vajpayee and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, Sri N. Chandrababu Naidu.

Rathotsav and Narayana Seva

Actually, there were week-long celebrations, which commenced on 18th morning with Rathotsav (car festival) when idols of Lord Rama and Lord Krishna were taken out in a grand procession from the Mandir to the village temple with traditional accompaniments such as Veda chanting, Bhajan singing and Nadaswaram music. Gloriously caparisoned Sai Geeta led the procession with great glee as it had been fed by Bhagavan's divine hands earlier, who blessed the huge gathering assembled in the gorgeously decorated Sai Kulwant Hall with His Divine Darshan.

At about 10.00 a.m., Bhagavan went to the Hill View Stadium to bless the large concourse of people sitting in several long lines to receive Narayana Seva from the divine hands. They were nearly ten thousand in number and were given not only food, but also new clothes. The students who served food and truckloads of clothes to the poor also received Bhagavan's blessing.

Miniature "UN Assembly"

In the afternoon, there was an interesting programme by Sri Sathya Sai World Bal Vikas Students in Sai Kulwant Hall. The first item of the programme was a miniature "United Nations Assembly" in which "representatives" from different countries participated in a discussion on the topic "Restoration of World Peace in 21st Century". The students conducted the proceedings in a most exemplary and interesting manner and delineated the fact that Bhagavan Baba's message of Love and Peace had touched the hearts of millions of people in more than 150 countries of the world and Bhagavan's teachings were the best bet for the world to usher in a golden era of world peace. This programme was followed by folk dances by the Bal Vikas children of several countries in their traditional dresses. In the end, all the children sang a group song on peace, waved paper flags and chanted Santhi Mantra. Bhagavan Baba then gave His first discourse of the Birthday Celebrations to the delight of the multitudes of the devotees. The programme came to a close with Mangalarati to Bhagavan.

Ladies Day

Ladies Day was celebrated on 19th November. Right from Suprabhatam at 5.15 a.m., all the programmes during the day were conducted by the ladies. After Suprabhatam, there was a special Nagarsankirtan at 5.30 a.m. in which ladies in similar saris, earlier distributed by Bhagavan, went round the Mandir premises singing Bhajans. Many of them carried lighted candles in their hands, which presented a beautiful sight.

The main function of Ladies Day was held in the Sai Kulwant Hall with the arrival of Bhagavan in a procession at 6.45 a.m. led by a Veda chanting group from Sri Sathya Sai Primary School (girls section); bands of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning (Anantapur Campus) and Sri Sathya Sai Primary School (girls section). The Primary School and Secondary School students in colourful costumes danced all the way in the procession.

Bhagavan inaugurated the programme by lighting the sacred lamp. As soon as Bhagavan took His seat at the artistically decorated semi-circular platform in front of the Mandir, light classical Bhajans started in which many artistes took part. These included the famous music maestro Bharat Ratna M.S. Subbulakshmi, who sang a soul-stirring devotional song. Deepika, a child prodigy, then enthralled the audience with her melodious voice, while she sang a couple of beautiful compositions. The musical offering to Bhagavan continued with Begum Parveen Sultana, Smt. P. Susheela and P. Leela. One of the enchanting items of the function was Krishna Leela, a dance programme. Bhagavan then distributed chocolates to children of Primary School and others. After Bhajan and Arati to Bhagavan, the morning session concluded at 10 a.m.

In the afternoon, Bhagavan came to Sai Kulwant Hall at 3.30 p.m. Soon after this, Justice Padma Khastgir offered floral bouquet to Bhagavan on behalf of women devotees of India and Mrs. Sinclair on behalf of overseas devotees. This was followed by group songs by women of 100 countries in German, Italian, French, English, etc. The students of Anantapur Campus sang a song in Sanskrit and a Telugu song composed by Bhagavan in His early days.

Mrs. Nandini from Sri Lanka and Dr. Geeta Reddy from Andhra Pradesh spoke about the significance of Ladies Day, so mercifully and thoughtfully initiated by Bhagavan during His 70th Birthday celebrations. Dr. Jayalakshmi Gopinath, Warden of Anantapur Campus, spoke about the infinite power of Bhagavan and His Grace towards the women in particular which manifested in the establishment of Anantapur Campus. Mrs. Sarla Shah, Editor, "Bal Vikas" spoke about the Divine Principle of Mother Sai. Bhagavan then gave His Discourse (given separately).

In the evening, there was a very interesting cultural programme in Poornachandra Auditorium in which two ballets "Sita Swayamvar" and "Bhakti Nritya" were presented. Both the items were widely appreciated by the mammoth gathering. Bhagavan materialised a gold chain for the artiste who played the role of Rama and blessed all the artistes.

Values through Ages

On 20th November, thousands of devotees, invitees and delegates from all countries vended their way to the Hill View Stadium early in the morning to witness a very grand and spectacular pageant in which more than 2500 Bal Vikas students from India and more than 100 overseas countries took part. Bhagavan arrived at the Stadium at 7 a.m. and was greeted with prolonged cheers by the huge gathering of devotees who filled all the galleries and the open space.

In this International Rally by Sri Sathya Sai Bal Vikas Students thirty floats were arranged by different States of India and overseas countries to depict the theme of "Values through Ages". The floats beautifully summed up the teachings of all the religions so as to reaffirm the faith of man in values. It was indeed a magnificent effort by the Sathya Sai Bal Vikas Students from 1000 representative towns of the world to bring out the eternal message of the scriptures and spiritual masters.

Some of the themes of the floats were: Emergence of the Vedas (showing a sage in meditation receiving the Vedas), Propagation of the Vedas, Values in Upanishads, Gurukula System of Education, Values from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, Degeneration of Values in the Kali

Age, Teachings of the World Teachers: Buddha, Confucius, Zoroaster, Prophet Mohammad and Jesus Christ.

The last few floats were of special interest to the devotees as they showed the life and teachings of Kali Age Avatars. Incidents from the early life of Bhagavan Shirdi Sai Baba and His teachings were beautifully depicted in two floats. Another float showed a glimpse of the origin of Sathya Sai Avatar through the Bharadwaja episode. This was followed by a float on Bhajan as an international spiritual movement of Bhagavan Baba. A couple of floats showed Bhagavan Baba's humanitarian projects like medical service, vices and water project. The last float showed how Bhagavan Baba through Love and ceaseless service to humanity had brought home the message of Divinity through Unity.

Besides the floats depicting human values, contingents of children carrying placards followed every float giving the teachings of Bhagavan Baba as well as showing cultural items and dances from all parts of the world. The peace contingent in the end comprising children from 132 countries of the world presented a glimpse of unification of humanity, which is the chief mission of the present Avatar, Sri Sathya Sai Baba. This grand spectacle came to a close after distribution of Prasadam and Arati to Bhagavan at 9.30 a.m.

First Convention of Chairpersons

In the afternoon of 20th, the inaugural function of the First Convention of Chairpersons of Overseas Sai Centres from more than 150 countries was held in Sai Kulwant Hall. Bhagavan came at 3.30 p.m. The proceedings commenced with Veda chanting by students.

Sri Indulal Shah, Chairman of the World Council of Sathya Sai Organisations, thanked Bhagavan for having permitted this convention to be held in His Divine Presence and described how the centres in all countries were working for the transformation of individuals by serving mankind according to the teachings of Bhagavan. He said that the Sathya Sai Education in Human Values was spreading to all countries and creating an awareness in all people about the significance of human values. He called upon the Chairpersons to utilise the opportunity given by Bhagavan to take part in His Mission. After these initial remarks of Sri Indulal Shah, the convention was formally inaugurated by Bhagavan Baba by lighting the sacred lamp at 4.00 p.m. Dr. Goldstein, then invited Dr. Jum Sai to address the convention.

Dr. Jum Sai traced the progress of Education in Human Values (E.H.V) in Japan, Thailand, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Singapore. He said, Bhagavan Baba had chosen E.H.V. as a means for the transformation of mankind. Realising the importance of the programme, many countries of the world were now adopting the Sathya Sai Education in Human Values. The Institute of Sathya Sai Education in Thailand was imparting training to teachers in Value Education. He then read out the names of 17 teachers from different countries who had completed this training to receive their diplomas from Bhagavan Baba. There was a loud applause from the audience when they received their diplomas from the Divine hands of Bhagavan Baba.

Central Coordinator of U.S.A., Dr. Goldstein, then addressed the distinguished gathering and emphasised that Centres should put the teachings of Bhagavan Baba into practice, which was

their sacred responsibility. In the end, he prayed to Bhagavan for His blessings for the success of their efforts.

Bhagavan Baba then gave His Divine Discourse and concluded it with the Bhajan, "*Govinda Krishna Jai ...*" The programme came to a close with Mangalarathi to Bhagavan.

On the 20th evening, there was a cultural programme in the Poornachandra Auditorium in which the famous singer of U.K. Dana Gillespie entertained the vast audience with a fine selection of songs rendered in her wonderfully mellifluous voice, which could rise to the highest octave without losing the melody and the beat. The audience responded with appreciative applause for her excellent portrayal of even Sanskrit compositions. This was followed by a splendid performance of folk songs and dance by a Folk Group from Argentina on the theme "Divine Birth." The programme concluded with a song for peace by all the participants. "Man Vs God" and "Eternal Quest"

On the 21st evening also there was an excellent cultural programme, which presented three items. The first item of the programme was a very interesting drama entitled "Case No. 999: Man versus God", in which a suit is filed against God by a businessman who had to suffer losses because God did not send rain to his area. The drama showed that God did not punish anybody; any suffering caused to man was the result of his own actions. Where there was ego, hatred, jealousy and other evil tendencies, there was suffering and other calamities like drought. Where there was love, unity, compassion and truth, there was peace and prosperity. Then there was a brief but beautiful Australian Folk Dance.

This was followed by an extremely impressive performance by about 300 Bal Vikas children drawn from different countries of the world. The programme presented divine cosmic drama, "The Eternal Quest" featuring the Cosmic Play of God in Creation, Sustenance and Dissolution. It was depicted as though Time was showing to a young student, Shyam, the evolution of world with interesting episodes from various stages of evolution of man on this planet, Earth. After the drama, Bhagavan came on the stage, blessed the children and also materialised a gold chain for the boy who played the role of Shyam.

On 22nd November, the XVI I Convocation of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning was held in a glittering function in Sai Kulwant Hall. (Report of this programme has been given separately).

Grand Birthday Function

The blessed day of 23rd November fills the hearts of all Sai devotees with ecstasy and bliss when they come to Puttaparthi from all corners of the world to have the Darshan of their beloved Lord on the auspicious day of His Birthday. As in previous years, devotees from overseas and different States of India started arriving in Puttaparthi more than a week before the celebrations. And when 23rd November came nearer, it seemed the entire humanity was pouring into this small village. On the morning of 23rd November 1998, every inch of space in Sai Kulwant Hall as well as outside was packed with tens of thousands of devotees. Prime Minister, Sri Atal Behari Vajpayee and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, Sri N. Chandrababu Naidu occupied their seats before 7.00 a.m. as did other dignitaries. Bhajan singing started in the Hall at 7.00 a.m. A

few minutes later Bhagavan Baba wearing a white robe gracefully walked into the Hall in a procession with boys from the Primary School doing the Bhangra dance followed by Veda chanting students and the bands of both the Primary School and the Institute playing the Bhajan, "Govinda Krishna Jai..."

Bhagavan showered divine bliss with His Darshan on the devotees who were eagerly waiting for this divine moment since early hours of the morning. After Darshan, Bhagavan cut the birthday cake and took His seat at 7.15 a.m. Then the programme started with Bhagavan's permission.

Sri S. B. Chavan, former Home Minister, spoke briefly paying obeisance to Bhagavan on his behalf and on behalf of all those who were present on this happy occasion. He prayed to Bhagavan for guidance for the solution of the problems of violence and unrest, which had become widespread in the world.

Making an impromptu speech, Sri Atal Behari Vajpayee referred to the humanitarian work of Bhagavan Baba to remove the hardship and sufferings of mankind and said, sages in the past too had this as the sole aim of their lives. Bhagavan was showing the path of liberation to the humanity, he said, and advised the devotees to imbibe the teachings of Bhagavan in their lives.

After this, Bhagavan gave His nectarine discourse (given separately) on this auspicious occasion and concluded it with the Bhajan, "*Prema Muditha Manase Kaho...*" in which the entire audience participated with devotional fervour. Arati was offered to Bhagavan at 8.45 a.m. Prasadam was then distributed to all the devotees both inside and outside the Hall. Bhagavan gave Darshan to devotees for a long time and retired to His residence at 9.30 a.m. followed by the bands playing Bhajan tunes. All devotees were offered free lunch in the canteen.

In the afternoon of 23rd November, noted musicians of the country made their musical offering to Bhagavan on this auspicious occasion. The first to enthrall the mammoth gathering was the renowned Sarod artiste Ustad Amjad Ali Khan who was accompanied by his two sons and other supporting artistes. At the end of this enchanting programme, Bhagavan not only blessed the artistes, but also materialised rings for Ustad Amjad Ali Khan and his two sons.

The second musical offering was made by the Santoor Maestro Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma, who was also accompanied by his son, Rahul. They also received applause from the audience. Bhagavan also blessed the artistes and materialised a gold chain for the Tabla player.

This was followed by Bhajan and songs by Kavitha Krishnamurthi and party. The audience went into raptures when Ms. Krishnamurthi paid tributes to the Divine Mother Easwaramma in the song, "Easwaramma Tera Sai Yug Yug Ka Avatar" in her melodious voice. Bhagavan blessed the artistes at the end.

After this grand musical programme, an audio-visual show was held on a giant screen in the Sai Kulwant Hall to bring out the glory of 73 years of the advent of Sai Avatar. Thus, Bhagavan's birthday programme came to a happy and grand conclusion. Mangalarati was offered to Bhagavan at 6.20 p.m.

Valedictory Function of the Convention

On 24th, there was Darshan in the morning. In the afternoon, Bhagavan came at 2.15 p.m. and after going round the vast concourse of people took his seat and signalled the Veda chanting boys to chant the Vedic invocation heralding the commencement of the programme.

Sri Indulal Shah, World Council Chairman, in his speech, visualised that the day was not far off when the whole world would come under the umbrella of Sai family and said that this vision could be achieved only by transformation. He emphasised the necessity for the spirit of unity to be imbibed for realising divinity, which was within everyone. He expressed gratitude to Bhagavan for having blessed them to have the First Convention of Overseas Chairpersons of Sai Centres in His Divine Presence.

Dr. Goldstein then introduced Mr. Robert Bozzani of the Book Centre of U.S.A., who spoke about the impact of Bhagavan's teachings in the U.S.A. since the beginning of the Sai Organisation more than two decades ago. He said, it had taken several years for understanding Sai teachings truly and putting them into practice.

In the end, Dr. Goldstein spoke about the great impact that the Sathya Sai EHV Programme was creating in more than 150 countries of the world to transform people and bring about spiritual reformation among youth and the old alike. The members of Sai Centres should set ideals by practising the values themselves, he advised. He said that very soon the Sai movement would spread to the whole world.

Bhagavan then delivered His Divine Discourse, which went on for nearly two hours as He also answered questions that had been put to Him earlier by the members in the convention. With Arati to Bhagavan the function came to a conclusion.

Later in the evening, the second part of the cultural programme by overseas devotees was presented in the Poornachandra Auditorium. Famous Italian singer Antonella Ruggiero sang some soul-stirring songs. This was followed by a grand musical performance by Russian Folk Group. In the end, Grand Finale was presented in truly grand style by all participants singing the prayer song for world peace.

Thus, the memorable weeklong Birthday Celebrations came to a successful conclusion enthralling the thousands who had gathered from more than 150 countries of the world, besides innumerable devotees from India.

—KSSR

XVII CONVOCATION OF S.S.I.H.L.

Prime Minister extols Sai System of Education

"The Indian tradition believes that Truth or Sathya is God. As the Sai model of education affirms, the students of this university are not just students, but seekers of Truth. The divine

guidance of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba has, thus, elevated even education to the level of worship of God," stated Sri Atal Behari Vajpayee, Prime Minister of India while delivering his Convocation Address at the XVI I Convocation of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning on 22nd November 1998 at Prasanthi Nilayam.

Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning has the unique privilege of having the Avatar, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, as its Chancellor. One of the most important features of this Institute is its Annual Convocation, which is always held on 22nd November, the penultimate day of Bhagavan Baba's birthday.

This year, the Convocation was held at a glittering function in the gorgeously decorated Sai Kulwant Hall. The Hall was full to the brim with devotees, guests and dignitaries. In the middle of the Hall were the students and staff from the three campuses of the Institute, along with candidates who were to be awarded degrees.

Precisely at 3.30 p.m., the Academic Procession started from the Poornachandra Auditorium. The dignitaries that formed part of the procession were: Chancellor of the Institute, Bhagavan Baba, Vice Chancellor, Sri S. V. Giri, Chief Guest, Sri Atal Behari Vajpayee, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Sri N. Chandrababu Naidu, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Sri Bandaru Dattatreya, Hon'ble Union Minister for Urban Affairs, Smt. Prathiba Bharathi, Hon'ble Minister for Higher Education, Andhra Pradesh, Sri S. B. Chavan, formerly Home Minister, Members of the Institute Trust, Former Vice Chancellors of the institute, Members of the Governing Body, Deans of Faculties and Members of the Academic Council.

The Institute band troupe marched in front playing fine marching tunes. Registrar of the Institute bearing the Institute mace and two students carrying the emblem of the Institute led the academic procession.

When the procession reached the dais of Sai Kulwant Hall, the audience gave it a rousing welcome with a thunderous applause. After the invocatory chants by students, the Revered Chancellor declared the Convocation open.

Vice Chancellor's Address

Sri S. V. Giri, the Vice Chancellor of the Institute, welcomed the gathering. Introducing the Chief Guest, he described the different facets of the achievements of Sri Atal Behari Vajpayee. He said, "Firm in his political conviction, Sri Vajpayee is a veteran Parliamentarian and has the distinction of having been elected eight times to the Lok Sabha and twice to the Rajya Sabha. As the Chairperson of several Committees of the Parliament, Leader of the Opposition, Foreign Minister and now the Prime Minister, he has had a significant role in shaping the domestic and foreign policy of independent India. He is an equally well-known journalist and poet."

The Vice Chancellor then gave a brief account of the achievements of the Institute in a short span of seventeen years. In conformity with Bhagavan Baba's ideals of man-making education, the Institute imparted integral education. It endeavoured to combine, through its awareness programmes and thoughtfully designed curricular and co-curricular programmes, academic excellence with duty and devotion, erudition with purity and meditation. It imparted health

education through Yoga and service, social and national awareness through field and project work, and a sense of unity and world brotherhood through acquaintance with seekers of truth from all parts of the world.

The interplay of these elements had resulted in a healthy amalgamation of a finished product of a student with distinct character, self-confidence and love for the community. The whole country would stand to benefit if efforts were made to replicate at least some of the elements of the Sai System of Education.

On the academic side, the Institute was second to none. It had been promoting research programmes in diverse subjects. Thrust Area research sponsored by the All India Council for Technical Education had been carried out by the Departments of Mathematics and Computer Science, Physics, Chemistry and Bio-Sciences. The Department of Mathematics and Computer Science had developed a full-fledged Artificial Intelligence Laboratory. The Department of Physics had established a state of the art high power Laser Laboratory and associated infrastructure.

The Department of Chemistry had taken up theoretical and experimental approaches to anti-cancer drugs. The Department of Bio-Sciences had conducted studies on Bio-Technology of VAM Fungi of semi-arid tropical soils of Anantapur District. The School of Business Management, Accounting and Finance encouraged projects for dissertation in areas like Values, National and Rural Development. Two new courses—National Perspectives and Rural Development were introduced in the curriculum.

The Institute had also undertaken a project to upgrade its planetarium with indigenous know-how and expertise to make it one of the most advanced planetarium in the country by the year 2000 A.D.

Presenting Graduates to the Chancellor

Prof. U.S. Rao, Principal, Prasanthi Nilayam Campus presented to the Chancellor the candidates for various degrees at the Convocation.

The Vice Chancellor administered the Institute's pledge to all the new graduates. Dr. A. V. Lakshminarasimhamam, Registrar of the Institute, then presented gold medalists to the Chancellor. Each one of them went up to the stage and received his/her degree and the medal from the Chancellor.

Prime Minister's Convocation Address

Sri Atal Behari Vajpayee, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, began his address by expressing his gratitude to Bhagavan Baba for having conferred on him the honour of addressing the Convocation of this unique 'Temple of Learning'. He commended the Institute for imparting holistic education based on a deeper understanding of man and his purpose of being.

The Prime Minister regretted that even after five decades of freedom, the country was far away from good education system. The present-day formal education system had failed to build the character of students and strengthen their ethical and cultural foundation.

It was in this context, the learned speaker felt, Bhagavan Baba's emphasis on character building education and the efforts of the Institute under His guidance, in integrating worldly knowledge with spiritual values became relevant to the framers of a policy of our National Education. Sri Vajpayee said that students of Sri Sathya Sai Institute were better equipped to handle the complex challenges of the professional world and they were enabled to become better human beings with a finer, culturally richer character. In this regard, the learned speaker quoted Bhagavan Baba's famous statement: "Character is the hallmark of a man. A life without character is a shrine without light, a coin that is counterfeit, a kite with the string broken."

The Prime Minister emphasised the role of teachers in building both the character and the intellect of their students. He desired that teachers themselves should be men and women of creativity and character. They should develop a keen interest in study and research, adopt innovative methods of teaching and above all set a standard for the students with their own conduct.

Particularly in the present-day context of globalisation throwing up issues such as management of the economy, environmental protection and regional security, education stood in need of constant upgrading to understand these issues. It could not at the same time any more bypass the problem arising from the neglect of ethical, cultural and spiritual up-bringing of people. Sri Vajpayee pleaded that everyone must ponder over the question as to how to attain the ideals of education.

After this, Bhagavan delivered His Benedictory Address (given separately). The function came to a close with the singing of National Anthem.

Drama by Institute Students

The evening of 22nd November was made lively and bright by a remarkable drama by the students of the Institute in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Baba and other dignitaries including Sri A. B. Vajpayee, Prime Minister of India and Sri N. Chandrababu Naidu, Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh.

The drama entitled "Unity in Divinity" showed how teachings of spiritual masters and Avatars were relevant to real life situations of the present-day world.

The story revolves round a modern businessman Mr. Kumar who feels crushed due to his business and domestic problems. Significant events are then depicted from the lives of Swami Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Vivekananda, Kabir and Tulsi to show him the right path. His friend Rishi helps Mr. Kumar to overcome his crushing problems by giving him the essence of the teachings of Bhagavan Baba. Mr. Kumar acts upon the advice of his friend and recovers himself, his business, his father and his son. Thus starts his relationship with God.

Superb acting, impressive dialogues, soothing music and remarkable direction were the hallmarks of this drama.

At the end, Bhagavan came on the stage and blessed the students who participated in the drama. The programme came to a close with Mangalarati to Bhagavan.

Advent of Sai

This Sai has come in order to achieve the supreme task of uniting the entire mankind as one family through the bond of brotherhood; of affirming and illumining the inner reality of each being in order to reveal the divine which is the basis on which the entire cosmos rests; and of instructing all to recognise the common Divine Heritage that binds man to man, so that man can rid himself of the animal and rise to the divine which is his goal!

—Baba

AVATAR VANI:

LADIES DAY SANDESH:

Serve Parents Serve God

*This sacred land of Bharat is the birthplace of great women like Savitri,
who could bring her husband back to life;
Chandramati, who demonstrated the power of
Truth by extinguishing the forest fire;
Sita, who demonstrated her chastity by coming out of blazing fire unscathed;
And Damayanti, who burnt a demon to ashes by her
power of chastity and pristine purity.
In Bharat, there have been numerous such women,
who were proverbial for their chastity.
Bharat is the teacher of these virtues to the whole world.*

(Telugu Poem)

*O foolish man, why do you go seeking Brahman when He is right within you?
Look within and there you shall find Him. Do not forget these profound words of Sai.*

(Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of Love!

Right from the olden days, Bharat has given spiritual knowledge to the other nations, thus ensuring peace and harmony to the entire world. It is not only the kings that protect a country, but women of great chastity are also responsible for it. It is because of noble men and women that the country has been able to achieve peace and prosperity. All the prosperity and the good that we find in this land of Bharat is due to the strength and courage of women of virtue.

Rama's divinity blossomed under

*Kaushalya's loving care;
Because of the tender feelings and
austerity of Sita,
Lava and Kusa achieved name and fame;
Fostered with the love of his mother
Putlibai, Gandhi became a Mahatma;
The loving care of Jijabai made Shivaji a great warrior. (Telugu Poem)*

Mother Makes a Man Great

Sons become illustrious examples because of the goodness and greatness of their mothers. Mother is the very foundation for the entire world. One calls one's own country as motherland, not fatherland. Even the language is called mother tongue, not father tongue. This land is the birthplace of many noble sons, who got their goodness and strength from their mothers. In those days mothers gave their sons good guidance by being ideal themselves.

The welfare of the son depends on the mother. It is because of the love of the mother that the son becomes great and eminent. So the foremost duty of the son is to be grateful to his mother, respect her and serve her. Divinity is immanent in every being. But who is responsible for this divinity within? It is the mother alone. The mother, who bears you for nine months with many difficulties, is ready to sacrifice even her life for your welfare. You owe your existence to your mother.

Purity of Heart of utmost Importance

Since time immemorial, human being has been called 'Nada Bindu Kala Swarupa'. It is these three aspects that are responsible for the existence of humanity. What is the meaning of 'Nada'? It is the primordial sound 'Aum' that emanates as a result of the combination of Prana (vital force) and Vayu (air). The combination of body, mind and intellect is called 'Bindu'. Divinity that reflects in Buddhi (intellect) is called 'Kala'. So man is the embodiment of 'Nada', 'Bindu' and 'Kala'.

The Principle of Atma transcends all these three aspects. That is why the sages, while offering prayers to God, used to say, "*Nada Bindu Kalatheeta Namō, Namō*" (salutations to the One, who is beyond Nada, Bindu and Kala). These three aspects pertain only to Nature. The potter makes pots by mixing water and clay. But that does not make him the creator. It is divinity latent in man that enables him to perform the task. Spiritual knowledge helps us to undertake good actions and cleanse the mind. But that is not enough. The heart also should be pure. In the absence of purity of the heart there can never be purity of the mind and the intellect. We should not give scope to the creepers of bad qualities to entangle the tree of the heart. A creeper that goes on covering the tree ultimately smothers the tree itself. One should ensure that the creepers of lust, anger, greed and infatuation do not get entangled to one's Self.

It was lust that caused the downfall of Ravana, the one of great penance and the master of 64 types of knowledge. He not only ruined himself but also his whole kingdom. Without purity of heart, all the spiritual practices are of no use. That is why Thiruthonda Alwar said, "Oh! Lord, I worship You not with flowers, but with purity of heart." So, purity of heart is very essential for man.

Hiranyakasipu had total control over the five elements. Such an all-powerful one was ruined because he had the evil quality of anger. In spite of being a great warrior, Duryodhana, a king of kings, was ruined because of greed. His entire clan was destroyed. It was Moha (infatuation) of Dasaratha towards Kaikeyi, which was responsible for Rama being sent to the forest. Kaikeyi loved Rama even more than her own son, Bharata. But, Manthara poisoned her mind. Consequently, she not only lost her husband, but also the respect of her own son. Due to this delusion she not only earned a bad name for herself, but put the entire kingdom to shame. Today, no woman bears the name Kaikeyi, because she distanced herself from God. Similarly, no man bears the name Duryodhana. Ravana or Hiranyakasipu as they lacked good qualities and I developed hatred and enmity towards God. Hiranyakasipu was a great scientist. Ravana was a great engineer and it was he who invented the aeroplane. He had mastered the language of animals, birds and insects. He had so much to his credit. But does anyone bear the name of Ravana? No. People value purity of heart more than these achievements. It is the foremost duty of every individual to keep his/her senses under control. One can escape from the house on fire, but not from the senses, which are ignited by the fire of evil qualities.

Intellect is of four types: (1) Swartha Buddhi, (2) Swartha Parartha Buddhi, (3) Parartha Buddhi and (4) Niswartha Buddhi. One with Swartha Buddhi is always interested in his own welfare and fulfillment of his desires. One with Swartha Parartha Buddhi is equally interested in his own welfare as well as that of others. One with Parartha Buddhi does not desire anything for himself. Surrendering himself to God, he craves for His love alone. He believes that God is the indweller of all beings and desires for the welfare of the entire world (*Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavanthu*). One with Niswartha Buddhi has no sense of I and mine. The feeling of 'I' (body) is ego and the feeling of 'mine' is attachment. The root cause of all sorrow and suffering of man is this feeling of I and mine, by giving up which man can purify his heart. Purity of heart is the greatest achievement of human endeavour.

Divine Origin of Bharat

What is the difference between Nara and Narayana? Nara is one who is endowed with the three aspects: Nada, Bindu and Kala. Narayana transcends all these three. The former corresponds to Pravritti and the latter to Nivritti. Nivritti is the state of desire-less-ness. One who treads along the path of Nivritti surrenders himself completely to God. Such a man has absolutely no trace of selfishness. This sacred land of Bharat is the birthplace of many such selfless souls. Though you call yourselves the children of Bharat, you tend to be selfish and full of desires. This is responsible for leading you away from the culture of Bharat. The culture of Bharat is pure, unsullied and selfless. Only when the young boys and girls recognise and follow this sacred culture, can this country prosper. A nation bereft of noble men and women can never progress. *The country needs virtuous men and women. That is why I have established these educational institutions. I willed that out of these institutions should emerge noble boys and girls. In a short time, all of you will realise and experience this happiness. Wait for the golden moment.*

Discharge your duties sincerely. Do not forget your mother. In the world today there may be a wicked son, but never a wicked mother. You owe your blood, food and strength to your mother. What is the gratitude you are offering to the mother for the sacrifice made by her? She is the one who has fostered and nourished you. So, never forget the love of the mother. First and foremost

love your mother. Then love your father, teacher and God. The mother shows the father; the father shows the teacher; the teacher shows God.

This day is being observed as Mothers Day, Ladies Day. From time immemorial, mother is considered synonymous with God. The Goddesses Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati are worshipped as mothers. Saraswati is the Goddess of Learning. Another name for Saraswati is Bharati. Our country Bharat has derived its name from Bharati. There is a misconception that 'Bharat' refers to the name of Bharata, the son of King Dushyanta. In that case, what was the name of this land prior to Bharata? On enquiry you will know that this name has originated from God.

Purpose of Ladies Day

Today women are being looked down upon as mere workers in the kitchen. Women can study, undertake jobs, but they should not neglect their household duties. If both husband and wife go to office, who will look after the household responsibilities? If women go to schools to teach others' children, who will teach their own children? Mothers are responsible for the well-being of their children. They also show spiritual path to their children. So, never forget your mother. To set an ideal in this regard, I visit the Samadhi of My parents on My birthday. To inculcate this good feeling in the hearts of people, even Sai Baba has undertaken this sacred activity. Every individual should adore, respect, worship and love his/her mother. I have initiated this Ladies Day in order to foster respect and love for the mother. Not only the 19th of November, but the 19th of every month is being observed as Ladies Day in some States. Whatever may be the circumstances, good or bad, do not forget your mother. Due to the effect of Kali Age, people consider their mothers as mere cooks in the kitchen. Not only that, they have been degraded to the level of servants. This is the misfortune that has befallen on man today.

The beggar comes to the house and calls out, "*Bhavathi Bhiksham Dehi*" (Mother! give me alms). He cautions, "Oh! Master and the mistress of the house, in my previous birth I had not given alms to beggars. As a result I am standing at your doorstep today begging for alms. Do not commit the same mistake. I am a beggar for three births. In my previous birth, I never gave alms to beggars. In this birth, being myself dependent on others, I am unable to give anything in charity and as a result I will again be a beggar in my next birth. Beware! "Whom is he asking for alms? He says, "*Bhiksham Dehi*". 'Dehi' refers to the indweller (God). This body made of five elements is bound to perish one day or the other. The indweller has neither birth nor death and no attachment whatsoever. Truly speaking, the indweller is God Himself. So, the beggar addresses the indweller, not the master or mistress of the house. He asks alms from God. All have to ask alms from God. God can give us all types of alms—money, education, knowledge, intelligence etc. Whatever you have acquired from God has to be shared with one and all. Only when you share your wealth and knowledge with others will it remain with you forever. Sacrifice is very essential for man. It is the stepping stone to immortality.

Mother is prepared to give up her own life for the sake of her children. Mother is the very embodiment of sacrifice. That is why in this land of Bharat mother is given such an exalted place. Lord Rama said that the mother and the motherland are greater than heaven itself. Such an ideal of Rama is forgotten today. Mere chanting of Rama's name will not suffice; it is only when

you follow His command that you can be called a true devotee. The Ladies Day serves as a reminder that one should revere and love one's mother and never hurt her feelings.

Love and Worship your Parents

Sankaracharya posted two sentinels in his Ashram who went round repeating "Tasmat Jagrata Jagrata" (Beware, beware). It so happened that one day Sankaracharya was thinking of his worldly achievements and wealth of his Mutt. As he came to the doorstep, he heard the sentinels repeating, "Tasmat Jagrata Jagrata", which made him realise his folly. Then he declared:

*Janma Dukham Jara Dukham Jaya Dukham Punah Punah,
Antya Kale Maha Dukham, Thasmat Jagratha, Jagratha.*

"Beware! birth, old age and death are filled with misery." In this context the Vedas declare:
"Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached."

Students! Boys and Girls!

Always remember your mother's love. Do not hurt your mother in any way. You say, Swami's love is that of thousand mothers. When you are unable to comprehend and experience the love of a single mother, how can you understand the love of thousand mothers? If you are unable to please your mother, how can you make Swami happy? Swami will be happy when you make your mother happy. Swami does not want anything.

Many people wish Me happy birthday. You need not wish Me happy birthday since I am always happy (cheers). Give happiness to your parents, friends and relatives. God is the embodiment of Supreme Bliss and Wisdom; beyond dualities; One without second; Eternal, Pure; transcends the mind and the three attributes. (Sanskrit Sloka) How can you wish Him happiness? I often tell the students, "Happiness is union with God." God is pleased only when parents are respected. I do not desire anything. My happiness lies in you being happy and I also making your parents happy. Love and worship your parents.

Your welfare lies in the happiness of your parents. God showers His grace on those who make their parents happy. The respect and love you receive from your children depends on the respect and love you show to your parents.

Have you ever visualised Vishwaviraat Swaroopa (the cosmic form)? Earth, water, sky etc., can be seen in it. The universe is made of five elements and the same five elements are present in you. So, you are also Vishwaviraat Swaroopa. God is in you and in everybody. So, hurting others amounts to hurting God. Do not criticise and find fault with others. Love all, Serve all. Respect, adore and worship your parents. They constitute the real wealth of your life. The blessings of your parents will confer health and wealth on you. God comes to you on His own when you love and serve your parents.

Pundarika used to visit the temple of Lord Panduranga everyday. One day he was engrossed in serving his parents and hence could not visit the temple. So, Lord Panduranga Himself came to Pundarika. At that time Pundarika was pressing the feet of his parents. As Pundarika was busy serving his parents, he requested Lord Panduranga to take His seat and wait. So saying, he

passed a brick to the Lord as there were no chairs and sofas in those days. After attending to his parents, Pundarika offered his due respects to the Lord Panduranga. The Lord was immensely pleased with his devotion to his parents and blessed him profusely, saying, "God comes to you on His own when your behaviour is good. There is no service greater than service to parents. Consider service to parents as service to the Lord." We need not go to God, but should make God come to us. One can choose one's wife, but not one's parents. Only God chooses His parents. I wish that you obtain the blessing of your parents and set an ideal for the rest of the world.

Influence of Western Culture

Today, I do not see parents being accorded respect due to them. They are approached only in times of need and neglected later. There is a proverb in Telugu: the boat is set on fire, once it serves its purpose of taking you across the river. Similarly, parents are sought after only in times of difficulties. Once you are highly placed in the society and accumulate wealth, parents are forgotten.

Here is a small example. V. Ramakrishna was an I.C.S. officer in Madras. His wife was Durgamma. They sent their son to America for higher studies. A month later, Durgamma contacted her son over phone and enquired his welfare in Telugu, to which he replied that he had forgotten Telugu and could converse only in English. On hearing this, the mother was overjoyed and came to Swami to share the news proudly. I replied that a person, who forgot his mother tongue in a month, was likely to forget his mother too. There are many such students in the world today. They forget their parents once they go abroad.

There was an orthodox Brahmin who was hesitant to send his son abroad fearing that he might lose his culture. On the insistence of his son, he reluctantly consented to send him abroad and exhorted him to chant the Gayatri Mantra thrice a day. He warned his son that he would forsake him if he failed to do so and extracted a promise from him. But the son failed to keep up his word. He did not chant the Gayatri Mantra even once. He was absorbed in the Western culture. On many occasions the father asked him to return home, but the son did not pay heed to his word. The father, as a last resort, sent a telegram that his mother had expired. Immediately, the son rushed home and was received at the airport by the father, who told him that mother was brought back to life by the infinite grace of the Goddess. Then he took his son to the temple of the Goddess enroute home to offer their obeisance and gratitude. As soon as they entered the sanctum sanctorum, the son greeted the Goddess, "Hello Mother! How are you? Good morning!" On hearing this, father became furious and asked him to get out. This is how many people change their life style once they go abroad.

Please Parents, Please Swami

Our Jayamma (previous speaker) said that only Anantapur girls were good. What about our Prasanthi Nilayam boys? (Cheers) These boys are also good. She said that on many occasions the girls asked her to speak more and more about Swami and show them the way to please Swami. Even our boys here day in and day out are engaged in pleasing Swami and attending to His needs (cheers). Nobody is less or more, both girls and boys are equally good. There may be a few lapses here and there, but all those who have been nurtured and fostered in Sai Institutions are good. (Cheers)

It is not that you and I say, but the parents say. The parents feel that there is a transformation in their children after joining Swami's institutions. Parents should be satisfied, that is what I want. It is only then I feel satisfied. So, boys and girls should make their parents happy. You do not need to enquire what pleases Swami. Satisfaction of parents is what pleases Me. I do not require anything. When you make your parents happy I am also happy. I wish that you develop these qualities and set an ideal to the whole world. Do not try to satisfy Swami, make efforts to satisfy your parents. If your parents are not convinced about your views, try to explain the rationale behind them. Speaking harshly to them will not help them understand your views. Be calm and give them a patient ear. Only then you will be able to convince them. Try to inculcate sacred feelings; only then your study in this institute will fructify.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the Bhajan "*Bhava Bhaya Harana...*"

**—From Bhagavan's Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall at Prasanthi Nilayam on 19th
November, 1998**