

From Tecate

Hurried greetings from the plane, between the last two Sai Yoga Seminars, that trod kept me busy for the past six weeks non-stop the Voice that was heard 5000 years ago, on the field of Kurukshetra, is being heard again, the Leelas played then are being played again; the mahimas witnessed by mankind then are being witnessed again; Those who have eyes should see; those who have ears should hear. For the Lord is in our midst, to help us attain the Light, to protect us and guide on the Path.

Do we fully realise how blessed, how lucky we are to be living at the same time when He is walking on the earth giving us the chance to see Him, to hear Him, to touch His feet, to experience His grace and love. We must have done something very special, in our past lives to deserve all this. That is what the reader in the Bhrgu Samhita told me, at Bombay, "You came in contact with a Mahapurusha, due to merits of your past lives."

We should be congratulating ourselves, this day, when He has been 47 years on earth, for having chosen to come for us, and offer Him our love, our loyalty and our purified intentions. Jai Bhagavan.

—*Indra Devi*

I explored a Gem

It was 1969. I, as the chairman of Indian National Mineral Development Corporation, was assigned the additional task of production and development of gems in India and was prospecting for diamonds in the ancient, but world-famous diamond-ferrous region of Golkonda.

As the first head to come out to the exploration camps with lust I had an opportunity to live with the, mineworkers who traditionally have unlimited faith in their local deities and saints.

I was at their inspiration that my keen desire to have a 'Darshan' of Sri Sathya Sai Baba—which was lying dormant—drove me to the District Headquarters of Anantapur where Sai Baba was staying.

Lots of people from all over India were waiting for a glimpse of the great saint. Everyone was earnestly waiting for Baba's appearance.

Baba, clad in red silk, appeared on the scene to the delight of all present.

Slight and short, his hair stood up from his head in a big circular mop, jet black, crinkly to the roots like that of a blue blooded Fijian here. His eyes were dark, soft and luminous, and his face beamed as if with some inner joy.

He gracefully smiled showing his white and even teeth to devotees thirsty of his 'Darshan'.

After some time I was granted audience. This period of my interview with the saint was born inspiring and revealing.

He granted me the 'Vibhuti' as if from nowhere. He talked and juggled with a childlike innocence and without my confiding in him, he seethed to know the problem weighing on my mind.

When I was parting company with him he blessed me with words in Hindi 'Royal Seema Ko Ratna Seema Kar Do'.

This means transform the Royal Seema (the region known for its backwardness, poverty and famine recurrence) into the region full of gems and thereby blessed me to continue with the exploration for gems in that area.

I, however, returned with a feeling that I had already explored a gem.

Apart from his miracles, what impress us most are his teachings, which of course are not entirely new to the Indian mind.

He expounds on such matters as the meaning and purpose of life, man's true nature and the way he should strive in order to reach goal—the self realisation, the salvation from the eternal cycle of births and deaths.

His teachings are always clear, vivid and intensely practical. He preaches the philosophical ideas, the fundamental truths that are based on the recorded ancient wisdom—in the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Puranas and the extract of all these the Bhagavad-Gita. But he preaches with the confidence, conviction and authority of a Sadguru who himself has realised the truth, the real knowledge, and is now in a position to impart it in a simple style with so many parables, figures of speech, analogies and homely illustrations which can make the subject easy to be understood by the untutored minds.

Sai Baba believes that every man is a spark of divinity; every man is potentially god—formless god. All men are, therefore: one and the same.

The difference of colour, caste or creed is superficial. They are all of the one Atma principle and therefore should believe in universal brother-hood.

The ultimate object of every man is to realise God within himself. He should live in the world and do his duty but should not become slave to the world's allurements.

We all seek happiness but in the wrong places. So we get greater discontent, competition, pride and jealousy which makes us more unhappy.

Sai Baba stresses that love is essential for this worldly life as well as for self-realisation. Similarly Baba believes that Bhakti or devotion is the easiest and the surest way to that goal.

He advises us to lead a life of truth, penance, insight and right conduct, to have control over his mind and senses.

Sai Baba believes that all religions are essentially one. So he strives to show basic unity of all religions. He works for peace and harmony among various sections of society. He is very much conscious of the conflagration of hate and greed.

This conflagration can be easily put out by practising Sathya—truth, the grate peace, and Prema—the divine love.

To celebrate the birthday of Sathya Sai Baba with true spirit let Sai Baba's devotees concentrate on these four cardinal principles and imbibe them in the day-to-day living pattern.

After all these principles have equal relevance to Fiji as in India.

—*Shri Bhagwan Singh, High Commissioner for India, Fiji*

Believe, Strive, Succeed. This is the message of the sacred texts. But, the texts are not put to these uses by those who handle them and master them. They are read for disputative duels, for pedantic display of intricate scholarship, or, merely for worship, as holy tomes composed by our ancestors. They are seldom adopted as guides for living, or as life-belts for the perilous voyage in the stormy sea of life.

—**Baba**

In His Footsteps

*Master, go on, and I will follow Thee,
To the last breath, in truth and loyalty.*

It is time! Baba enters the private room of his residence. It is Darshan time in Brindavan! He will soon emerge out of the room and walk towards the gate, outside which have gathered hundreds of devotees, seated on the ground, tensely expectant, silent, and each one full of intense hope that Bhagavan will have a special word of solace... perhaps bestow on them some gesture of love and compassion... or even the much coveted interview!

The main gate is opened by a couple of volunteers. Baba comes out, a radiant smile on his handsome face. His light-shaded red robe and his magnificent shock of hair shine as if some divine, effulgent light is falling upon his exquisitely charming, slim figure. He stands outside the gate for a moment and casts his eyes on the large crowd of men, women and children. They have come from all parts of India and many from abroad. Baba's gaze has an electrifying effect upon them. One seems to be merged with some supreme power, a "mahashakti". The whole atmosphere is charged with love, "Prema". Baba is compassion personified. As he stands here surveying the devotees for a few minutes, his hands make a few significant gestures—perhaps of encouragement, solace and benediction. For Baba knows each individual among the crowd. He can probe into each person's inner depths, understand each devotee's needs and problems.

He is now moving towards the devotees seated in long, almost interminable, linesmen on one side and women on the other. A lady suddenly gets up and approaches him, and in a voice trembling with some deep agony oppressing her heart, whispers a few words to this incarnation of the Divine, who is now amongst us, to fulfill the solemn assurance he had given, ages ago, to Arjuna on the tumultuous battlefield of Kurukshetra:

Whenever there is decay of Dharma and rise of Adharma.
O, Bharat, then I embody myself age after age.

He listens to the lady. He knows what is troubling her. At once, he stretches slightly his right hand, makes a brief rotating movement with the hand, and a small quantity of sacred "Vibhuti" appears. He pours it into the woman's palm... There are tears in her eyes, not of sorrow, but of a deep satisfaction, "ananda". His divine touch on her head has expelled all her doubts and fears. They are tears of gratitude, of love.

A few steps.... Under the shade of the tree near the gate, he sees a sick child crippled by some disease. He makes a bee-line towards the child. The parents and other members of the family gather around him. Baba knows exactly what is wrong with the child. He is an Avatar—omnipotent and omniscient. Men must work out their "karma," but the Lord's grace is even more powerful. He knows best what to do in each case of suffering. His compassion can dissolve the effects of Karma, mitigate its rigours. Baba soothes the parents and relatives of the child by a few encouraging words, pats the child's head and the mystery of mysteries! He tells the parents all about the child's illness, again materialises the sacred 'Vibhuti' and applies it lovingly to the child's limbs.

The gloom that has enveloped the child's parents vanishes. Baba has been the bringer of anew hope, a strengthened faith in a power that is beyond our petty calculations. The Veda describes the Supreme as "aprapya manasasaha", beyond the utmost bounds of human intelligence and logic.

"God moving among men", I hear someone whisper to his neighbour. As he says these words, his eyes moisten. A flickering conviction, perhaps, but at the moment in Baba's presence, he is deeply moved. And so are hundreds of others. In Baba's mere presence, the atmosphere becomes instantaneously charged with a light and splendour "that never was on sea or land", a glory which can hardly be described in human speech. As He moves along between the two rows of devotees, many make desperate attempts to catch His eye or attract His attention. Eager, tear-filled eyes, faces drawn with pain, some nameless anxiety or fear, broken hearts, frustrated personalities, men and women groaning under the heavy burden of worldly cares and problems, guilt-conscious persons seeking divine forgiveness, aspirants of the spirit in search of a supremely self-realised being... others, anxious for some token of compassion and still others in grave need of some earthly benefit; they are all there. The Gita speaks of four kinds of "bhaktas"—"arto jijnasur artharthi jnani"—the man in distress, the man seeking knowledge, the man seeking wealth and the man imbued with wisdom. All these types are here and many more, the derelicts and the abandoned... sometimes those who come to see Baba merely out of curiositysceptics and atheists, wanderers who have assumed the garb of "sanyasins" to maintain

themselves without work, the waifs and strays of the world... He sometimes reveals an uncanny understanding of those who somehow do not fit themselves into the atmosphere of the place.

All eyes are focused on the slim, radiant, beloved figure. With folded hands they gaze into his eyes. He stops, before a group, the miracle of the sacred Vibhuti is repeated. His eyes soften with deep compassion as some old lady attempts to touch his feet. "No, Bangaroo," he tells her. "Bangaroo" is a favourite; word of affection with Baba. As he utters it to a devotee, it opens out unlimited realms of divine solicitude for the smallest of his devotees. It is the "open sesame" that opens the doors of one's heart; its sweetness lingers in the heart for days, it vibrates and reverberates in one's soul. Bangaroo is a Telugu word meaning "gold". When I first heard it addressed to me, many years ago, I felt as if I was lifted to the heavens. It has continued to haunt me, and whenever Baba utters the magic word to me, I am filled with joy and peace which seem to have no bounds. Attunes, Baba stands perfectly still, deeply absorbed in his own thoughts. He brings to my mind the figure of the Supreme Yogi—untouched by the waves of this worldly ocean. Only he knows what he is thinking about—the past, present and future of creation, and, perhaps, his long, unbroken lineage of himself from generation to generation: "Many are the births taken by me and you, O Arjuna. I know them all while you know not, O Parantapa." These are the words of Yogeswara Krishna in the Gita.

Baba is the consciousness that abides in eternity, a consciousness not erased or fragmented by the endless passage of eons, a consciousness that survives the universe's cataclysms and transformations. He is the ONE that remains while the many change and pass.

He walks sometimes briskly, hardly noticing the crowd, silent, detached, not even a smile at them. Not that he is indifferent. He knows when he should speak to particular devotees. His blessings are there—an integral, inseparable part of his "Darshan". Through unheard spiritual vibrations, unuttered words, Baba can bring about a silent transformation among the people. His very presence is a perpetual blessing. "When I first saw him," said an American devotee to me, "I was thrilled and uplifted beyond my wildest expectations." The divine ways are always unpredictable. God is inscrutable. He moves in a mysterious way to perform his wonders. Divine love transcends the ups and downs, the vicissitudes of human behaviour. There, certainly, is a hidden purpose in Bhagavan's ways His "Prema" is undiminishable. One of his most moving declarations is that though men disregard him, look upon him with doubt, are ungrateful and do not recognise him, his care, love and solicitude will never abate. Many offer garlands to him or other things. They beseech him for autographs. Sometimes if the devotee is lucky, the offerings are touches and given back. Flower-garlands are invariably flung with an enchanting smile towards the ladies. "Not for you only," he adds mischievously, "share the flowers with others." There are a couple of young men dressed flamboyantly, with hang hair and "side-burns", typical products of our decadent, hybrid culture. Baba has no patience with such youthful aberrations. He speaks sternly to them. Some bring gifts to him. "I do not want your offerings," he gently reprimands them, "offer your heart's purity to me. That is enough for me." He often tells people that he is not a 'taker' but a 'giver'. He is a veritable "Kalpavriksha"—the divine tree of wish-fulfillment. His generosity is as vast as the ocean. Baba's humour is sparkling. I remember when a lady complained to Baba about her son's poor progress at school, Baba without flinching an eye-lid told her, "Then the best thing is to attend school yourself." His jokes do not hurt. Nobody is happier than those of whom he sometimes makes fun. Baba's humour is like the soft

dimples of light that appear on the surface of a stream or river when the morning sun shines upon it. His humour has a radiance which belongs to soft and fragrant rose-petals, the iridescent rainbow which spars the sky, the cool showers of summer, the heart-warming smile of a child, the enchanting notes of bird-music... He is not always soft and gentle. When he sees among the crowd someone who has cried and had been forgiven "more than seven times" and who still continues to be refractory, his reprimand acquires a sudden sharpness. Even arts harshness is part of his divine mission, his ceaseless solicitude for his devotees. At shush times, he is hard as a diamond, yet basically compassionate and understanding; *Yajradapi kathorani, mridunam kusumadapi*.

Baba loves children. They sometimes break loose from their mothers or fathers and rush to Baba with a flower or a photograph to be autographed, by Bhagavan. Baba is always affectionate towards them. He pats them on their backs, and I have seen him giving them sweets which just happen to be in his palm at the moment! He does not mind children prostrating themselves before him although he is distinctly averse to "padanamaskars" by the adults when he moves among a crowd of devotees. This hampers his progress and disturbs him when he is engaged in some serious conversation with a devotee. He performs "aksharabhyasa" for the children, by writing the sacred syllable "OM" on the slate brought by the child and guiding the little hands of the child gently and lovingly over the letter. When old devotees come, he enquires about their welfare and sometimes calls them for an interview inside his residence. He has a soft corner for such devotees as have travelled long distances for his "darshans". He asks them to come and stand before the interview room in groups, talks to them at length and sends them away with "prasad". Baba loves people who are guileless and unsophisticated. These "interviews" (a word which cannot adequately convey what is really a deep communion between the Lord and His Bhaktas) whether in Brindavan or at Prasanthi Nilayam are tremendously significant. To the devotee it is a real "red-letter day" when he is face to face with the Divine. To be in the immediate presence of Baba, to pour out the deepest feelings of one's heart, to bathe in the aura of his divine love, is indeed a rare experience. It is a moment of rebirth of the spirit, a miraculous transformation for the individual. He who keeps up in his deepest being the memory of these precious minutes is indeed blessed. There is an expansion of consciousness, a resurgence of purest love, a clear awareness of the abiding values of life as the devotee stands in the divine presence, an intimate rapport with the deepest and divinest part of oneself. A spiritual "explosion" to use St. Martin's words, takes place, when our natural will is for a moment dispersed and annihilated by contact with the divine.

It is time to return to his residence. His return is a little tumultuous, the crowd eager to come closer to him. The lines are broken, and many people rush toward him. They know he is going back; they too must return home. When comes another chance? They want to touch Baba's feet, do "Padanamaskar", prostration at his holy feet. To an Indian devotee the touch of the feet of the "Guru" is an act of absolute surrender. There is a little confusion. Volunteers have to be vigilant; otherwise Baba would find it difficult to extricate himself from these numerous suppliants of his grace and blessings.

Now he enters the gate, quickly turns to the left and walks along the narrow path between the rose-garden, and the bougainvillea hedge towards the interview room. On the verandah outside are seated those whose stricken minds and sorrowful hearts await the touch of the divine healing

balm of Baba's love and understanding. Baba softly opens the door, enters, and beckons the devotees.... So he accomplishes his divine ministry day after day wherever he is.

—*H. Sunder Rao, Brindavan*

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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The Last Rites

Bharata was lost in thought for a long while; then, he pleaded with the Preceptor Vasishta, "Master! This is a duty that has to be carried out by the eldest son, and Rama is the eldest of us four. Now, you are proposing that I should carry it out. Is this just? Is this right? You have preserved the body, all these days; keep it so, for two or three days more. We shall proceed to where Rama is, Shatrughna and I, and bring him back with us. Please give us permission to do so."

Vasishta replied, "Son! You are a simpleton! Rama would not like to return earlier than the period which has been fixed. He honours the word, when it is once given. However much you might plead, Rama would not enter Ayodhya until the term of fourteen years is over. Therefore, give up that plan of yours; perform the obsequies of your father and later, you can do whatever you desire." Vasishta spoke in this strain again and again to convince Bharata of the futility of his idea.

Bharata found that he cannot avoid obeying the Preceptor. He agreed; the father's body was barged, and the rites, laid down in the Vedas preliminary to cremation were duly gone through. Meanwhile, urged by an irrepressible yearning, Bharata went straight into the apartments of Kausalya and Sumitra, and, falling at their feet, he prayed, "Mothers! No. You must desist from immolating yourselves in the funeral pyre of father, If you try so to do, I will not perform the last rites for him."

He secured from them the promise that they would not. Both of them were much impressed by his love and affection. They could not but comply with his request. They said, "Son! We shall act, in accordance with your desire. Then the body was taken and placed on the pyre of sandalwood piled on the bank of the Sarayu River. Bharata performed the last rites with scrupulous correctitude, evincing a faith in the Vedas which was a thousand times more than what Vasishta expected and foresaw. He gave away in charity, in the name of his father, the sixteen prescribed articles. He gave in plenty, in order to ensure peace for the father's soul, cows, lands, gold, houses, clothes, food, horses, elephants, coins, and other valuables. The recipients and others extolled throughout the land his generosity and filial piety.

But, the feudatory kings, the scholars and priests, and the common people could not reconcile themselves to the absence of Rama. That sorrow gnawed their hearts. That agony of separation caused pangs of pain every moment. But, they knew they were helpless; there was no way out. Rama would never give up the plighted word. He would not return, whatever the inducement; he would not come back to Ayodhya until the fourteen-year period was over. They had to accept

that fact. So, they hardened their hearts to bear with the agony and -decided to keep alive, awaiting his return, hoping to rejoice at the end of the term of exile.

The Assembly

Meanwhile, Vasishta, the Royal Preceptor, gathered the feudatory rulers, the vassal kings, the ministers, sages and monks, the wise men of the empire, and leaders among the people, and held a Conference. First, he administered words of advice according to the Dharmasastra, the canons of moral law, on the duties and obligations of rulers. He narrated, in the beginning, the entire series of events from the plot woven by Kaikeyi to the day when Rama left for the forest.

Then Vasishta dilated upon the high qualities of the deceased Emperor his adherence to Truth, his elevated standards of conduct, his high spiritual attainments, his regal splendour and his loyalty to Vedic injunctions, which made him a generous patron of countless Yajnas, Yagas and other ceremonial rites.

Vasishta then went on with the narration of the attempt made by the Emperor to celebrate the Coronation of Rama and the obstacles that came in his way, which resulted in the exile of Rama and the death of the Emperor himself through grief at the separation, from his dearly beloved son.

Anger and Grief

Bharata and Shatrughna who were unaware of these tragic developments at the Capital now being described by their Preceptor were overwhelmed with anger, as well as sorrow and a sense of shame. They bent their heads; their hearts were filled with contrition. Streams of tears flowed down their cheeks. The persons assembled before them could scarce lift their eyes towards them. Even Vasishta wiped his eyes which were fast filling with tears. The hall was saturated with gloom; a silence fell over the assembly; all men sat like stone images.

Bharata and Shatrughna could not any more listen to what Vasishta was narrating; they were too full of anger at Kaikeyi for her nefarious conduct. Bharata cursed himself that he was born of such a mother; he was so ashamed at this consequence of his own evil deeds in past lives that he could not lift his head or look any one in the face. They were anxious to leave the hall and get away.

Become the Ruler

Vasishta knew what their feelings were; he went near them and consoled them with comforting counsel.

"Son," he said, "there is no use lamenting over the past. What has happened has happened. Now, we must think and resolve upon what has to be done. Your father, I must say, was fortunate in all respects. Why grieve over him? Listen to me; bow your head to his command. He has granted you the authority to rule over this Empire. It is right that you accept his grant and honour his order. Your father agreed to be separated from Rama, since he could not bring himself to breaking his own plighted word. He gave up his life, since he had immense love and affection towards Rama. He died in order to redeem his promise; there is no doubt about that. He knew that honouring a promise, once made is more valuable than life itself. That is why he was ready

to face death itself rather than go back on his word. And, consider, Rama too went into exile in the forest with his wife in order to honour his word!

It is the glory of the Ikshvaku royal line that every one belonging to it would sacrifice anything, for the sake of keeping the word once given. That is the splendour which you share. You too must now act according to your father's word and accept the responsibility of administering the kingdom. May you attain all auspiciousness in that task. May success and prosperity attend on all your undertakings. I have ventured to advise you thus, only because of the affection and compassion I have towards you; or else, I would not have laid on your shoulder this heavy responsibility. I know you can maintain the fair name of your father; you have the administrative ability, the skill, and the courage needed for taking up this burden. Do not hesitate or doubt. Accept the charge."

It is a Punishment

Vasishta patted Bharata on his back, and blessed him. Bharata took in, his loving advice, and when the Preceptor finished, he rose quickly from his seat, and fell prostrate at his feet. He struggled to speak for he was in inconsolable grief; his lips were quivering; his throat was unclear. Words could hardly shape themselves on his tongue. He said, "Master! Are these words of yours really an indication of your love and compassion? No, in fact, you have no such love; you have no compassion towards me. For, if you had, you would have never agreed to place all this burden on me. You are sentencing me to this punishment, without compassion.

This empire that drove the holiest and purest person into the jungles, this empire that plunged the entire population into years of incessant tears, this empire that has lost its most righteous ruler, this empire that has brought eternal infamy to its ruling dynasty the Ikshvaku Line, this empire that has brought about the pathetic state of widowhood on mothers Kausalya Sumitra and the rest, this empire that has degraded itself in so many ways, you are *now* entrusting to *me*.

Alas, this is the consequence of the sins I have committed, the consequence of this unfortunate fellow being born from the womb of that embodiment of cruelty and hatred, Kaikeyi. Instead of inflicting this punishment on me, please earn some spiritual merit, by sending me to where Rama is. I can make my life worthwhile and save myself by engaging in the task of sweeping the paths ahead of him, to make them soft for his feet. I cannot remain in this place a moment longer."

Bharata fell at Vasishta's feet and prayed for permission to leave for the forest. At this, the Ministers of the State rose with folded hands, and said, "Lord! It is not proper to continue this state of affairs long; we are having a rag ruler now. You cannot escape the responsibility which the Preceptor is imposing on you. After Rama returns, you can act in the way you prefer, but, now, please accept our prayers. Protect the realm and promote the prosperity of the people. Take up the reins."

Mother's Counsel

Bharata did not reply to their importunities. He wanted instead leave to go to mother Kausalya and see her for a while. Vasishta readily agreed. Therefore, Bharata and Shatrughna went out of the Assembly, and made their way straight to the palace of Kausalya. They fell at her feet and Bharata told her, "Mother! Pray pardon this unlucky Bharata who has been the cause of all this

calamity, having been born, from the womb of that wicked woman, Kaikeyi. This cursed fellow is the source of the miseries of the realm. Give me permission to leave for the forest. I cannot walk or move about even a moment in this city of Ayodhya with head erect, after my master and Lord Rama has left it on account of me. This empire belongs as of right to the eldest son; this insignificant fellow has no kind of right over it. I do not need this burden, I shall not bear it. Bless me, so that I can leave immediately.” Bharata stood, waiting filled with grief.

Kausalya mustered courage and started to comfort Bharata. She said, "Bharata! Consider the circumstances of the times and give up your grief. This is no time for wavering. Rama is out there in the midst of the forest region. Your father is in Heaven. Your mothers, your kith and kin, your friends and well-wishers, and the subjects are sunk in deep sorrow.

All are now looking forward to you as their sole refuge and resort. Realise that all this has happened, since the times were not propitious and so the deeds of men were also crooked and shocking; take courage and decide. Obey the directions of your father. Bow your head to the command of the Guru, Vasishtha. Honour the petitions of the people. Act as the ministers are praying you should.

Kausalya's Affection

"Kausalya was holding his hands fondly in hers, while she was trying to persuade him to accept the authority of the monarch of the realm. Her words touched him with a strange softness, as if they were cool sandal paste over a burning heart. They were sweet to the ear, and very appealing to the heart. For, Kausalya had no word of condemnation for his mother who had caused this string of disasters; she entertained not even the least doubt regarding his loyalty; Bharata felt immensely happy and relieved, when he listened to her words. He was delighted beyond measure when he noted how broad her heart was and how sincere her affection towards him. He had not calculated even in his wildest dream that Kausalya would treat him like this, when her own son was an exile for fourteen years in the forest, and also pour out such plentiful affection on him, who was the son of another wife of her husband! What a difference, he wondered, between his own mother, Kaikeyi, and Kausalya! He could not gauge it by any unit of measurement. He found in Kausalya the completion and fulfillment of the love that fills the heart.

He folded his hands and implored, "Mother! Your words filled with tenderness and love are like a shower of cool rosewater on my lacerated heart. Perhaps, you mistook me for Rama! But, alas, I am not that pure-hearted Rama. I am Bharata, born of Kaikeyi; I have a crooked nature, inherited from her. I am mean, with no sense of shame. I am the enemy of Rama. You have taken me to be Rama and spoken so kindly, so affectionately. Your heart is so set upon Rama that you address every one, as you address Rama himself. I am speaking the truth, mother! Listen to me, and pay heed to my prayer.

Shall bring Rama back

Mother! Only those who are established in righteousness deserve to rule. When persons of devious intelligence and shady skills like me start ruling the realm, the earth will degenerate into a feature of the nether regions. Selfish pushers, narrow minded adventurers, greedy vultures, pomp loving personalities, self-centred individuals, persons suffering from chronic envy—these

do not deserve the right to rule. They harm the interests of the people whom they rule over; they undermine the foundations of righteousness. The kingdom will be ruined by them.

Only those who tread the path of virtuous conduct deserve to rule over others. I can discover only one such and he is Rama. I do not know of any other. Therefore, I shall leave this very instant; and clasping the feet of Rama, pray to him; I shall bring him back with me to Ayodhya. Grant me the permission; bless me, without further delay." Bharata prostrated before Kausalya, and waited for the answer.

Take Me Too

Bharata's words soothened the heart of Kausalya to a large extent. She said, "Son! In you I find surging forth the self-same feelings my Rama has. Looking upon you, I can bear the agony of separation from him. So, if you too proceed to the forest, what is to happen to us? If you declare that your going is inevitable, then, take me too. For whom have I to spend my days in this Ayodhya? Having lost the husband, and having become distant from the son, the wife has not yet dissolved herself in the agony of the loss. Go, secure the permission of the Guru, Vasishta; we shall enter the forest, and spend at least some time with Sita, Rama and Lakshmana. I can then end this life of mine." When she spoke thus, Bharata derived some consolation and presence of mind.

Thereupon, Bharata fell at the feet of Kausalya and Sumitra, and rose to proceed towards the palace of Kaikeyi.

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness

(To be continued)

Right Action

Tan times have gone away. Relations between man and God, man and the human community, and man and those entrusted to rule over groups of men are getting tainted by hatred and anger. The people of this land are accepting wrong as right, and discarding right as wrong; they are journeying blindly along wrong roads. And, they are proud of this too; they believe they are progressing!

Happiness and misery are the consequences of the attributes one cultivates and fosters—the three chief ones being Satwic, Rajasic and Tamasic. The Satwic is marked by light, clarity, wisdom, balance, and tolerance. The Rajasic is marked by activity, ambition, passion, and emotion. The Tamasic is marked by indolence, ignorance, inactivity; sloth, dullness. When Satwic predominates, one is happy; when Rajasic predominates, one is discontented. When Tamasic qualities are supreme, there can be no joy and no happiness. When the attributes pursue the path of attachment and pleasure, man is bound to the wheels of pain-joy, death-life. If they seek liberation and simplicity, they lead him to love, light and freedom from the wheel. Man is today caught in doubt and deviation; he does not know which road to follow, and with what determination. He loses his precious heritage, degrades himself, and denies his Nature which is really Divine.

People determine the nature of the Divine, through the categories of logic and dialectics. But, intellect cannot grasp it; reason cannot delve into it. For, both are shaped by one's prejudices and predispositions. We appreciate only that we like; we see only what we would like to see. "When prayer is answered and one gets what one desires, God is real; when they are not answered, God is a fake a figment of the imagination." Arjuna acclaimed Krishna as the omnipotent, omnipresent omniscient, God, when the foe was defeated, day after day. But, when his son Abhimanyu was killed in the conflict, he raved in his grief that Krishna had not guided him properly and guarded him efficiently. His mind wavered with every wind of fortune. To many, the mind is the master of the intellect also. One must be vigilant, and preserve the impartiality of the instrument called Reason or Intellect. Clarify Reason; then, it will reveal God everywhere, even in you. Once you accept God as the core of the Universe and yourself, have that faith strong and steady.

Of course, it is difficult in the atmosphere of 'faith-lessness' to light the lamp in one's heart and to keep it burning, straight and sturdy, without falter or flicker. Today, the wife has no faith in her husband, husband has no faith in his wife; sons doubt the father; father suspects the sons; students have no faith to the teacher, teachers cannot rely on their students; so, how can faith grow in one field only, the field of Religion? This calamity has happened since man has allowed his reasoning faculty to be blunted by passion and prejudice. Krishna says in the Gita, "I am Buddhi among the faculties;" I shall confer the discipline of Buddhi on you; He tells those devoted to Him. Reason is the instrument by which the mind has to be regulated and controlled; it should not be subordinated to the whim of the mind.

Talking of the Gita, I shall mention one problem that might confront you therein. Krishna declares, "Samoham Sarvabhutheshu": "I am equal in all beings." I behave equally with all, I have no love or hate, no partiality or prejudice. Joy and grief are brought on by you on yourselves, not by me, on you, through attachment or want of it." When such is His declaration, a doubt may arise in your minds, "Why did He also announce that He would be incarnating in every age, in order to foster the good and punish the wicked? How is it that He talks of good and bad men? Does it not mean that He likes some and dislikes others? Are not all part of Him? Are not the waves parts of the Ocean?"

Yes. All are parts of Him. The hand is yours; the fingers are yours; the nails are yours. Why then do you pare and trim the nails? Urine and faeces are in you, of you; but, yet, you have to get rid of them, to maintain health. Under certain circumstances, one has to cut off a limb in order: to save the body. In fact, the Kauravas were dangerous viruses that had caused a spreading wound; Krishna had to operate them off, through major surgery, with Arjuna as His 'assistant operator', in order to save the 'body politic' of Bharat.

When one is sunk in the slime of 'desire', one cannot distinguish with clarity between 'good' and 'bad'. In order to achieve this, the intellect has to be pure and clear, sharp and straight. There should not be the slightest trace of egotism, envy, or greed, in the make-up of man; for these will drag the arguments at a tangent. Vacillating minds, wandering eyes—these cannot help the intellect to decide correctly.

When one chooses a life-partner nowadays, the first consideration is paid to external beauty and charm. Next, the economic position is taken as the basis. How rich is he or she? How much does he or she earn? Questions like, how far are they educated, what is the social status of the families to which they belong are asked later. Carried off by mere external frills and foppery, people enter into wedlock, and get entangled in misery or a destructive family life. The family cannot be stable if it is built on a slender foundation. Prime importance has to be paid to the fundamental requisites of a good character, high ideals of tolerance and forbearance, love and service. When beauty fades or wealth wanes, the bond too becomes less strong.

It is the same with the God whom you choose, adore and yearn to live with. You should, not choose God for the benefits He can shower on you. Do not expect God to satisfy your worldly or material ambitions; and, when they are not realised, do not desert the Path towards God. "Baba! Appear in my dream this night!" you demand, and, if it does not happen, He is not Sai Baba, he is Rai Baba (Stone Baba); and, you go in search of some other God who will be at your beck and call. You must hold on to your faith, whatever might happen, success or failure, appointment or disappointment. When God who is your very core is irremovably fixed in your consciousness, there will be no room for elation or dejection. God is bliss, and when God is the undying spring in you, you will ever have Bliss.

Man has to engage himself in activity, for his upkeep, as well as for the sake of his happiness. But, he has to choose his activity, intelligently and without over-involvement in its consequences. Use the activity to earn what is really beneficial and get rid of what is really evil. Seek something supreme, something of the highest value, something that is beyond diminution and decline—that is true Bhakti. Bhakti is the Love and Longing directed to the attainment of such a goal. The means adopted for this are Karma; they are known as Karma Yoga. For, Karma becomes Karma Yoga, when activity is disciplined and demarcated with skill. True Love directed towards God can reveal His Reality and grant the Highest Wisdom or Jnana.

A tree has the trunk, and the trunk branches off, far and wide, into boughs, with leaves and flowers. Karma Yoga is the trunk for the tree of Life; the branches, leaves and the fragrant flowers symbolise the Bhakti Yoga; and the ripe fruit, the sweetness therein, that is the Jnana Yoga the Wisdom. If the tree yields no fruit, and if the fruit is not sweet then, it could as well not grow at all.

Bhakti can flow along two paths: Saguna Bhakti and Nirguna Bhakti. When you feel that God is far away, far higher, far beyond you, and when you plead for mercy, petition for Grace, and pray for boons, it is Saguna; you adore Him as Lord, and Master, as Guardian and Saviour. You go through the ceremonials of praise, propitiation, and prostration, submission and service. When you practise the discipline of seeing Him in all beings, as the core of every cell or atom, alive and aware, and experience your Unity with all Creation (for Creation is but His body and you are also in it and of it) then, it is Nirguna. The Nirguna is the contemplation on the Sugar; the Saguna is the adoration of some one Sugar Doll, which has caught your fancy and attracted your love and loyalty. Among the ceremonials, we have the Yajna, the chief feature described in the Vedas. An important rite to the Vedic Yajna is called Soma-pa. In order to grasp the inner significance of the Vedic or other ceremonials, one has to spend some thought on symbolism.

For example, let us take this Soma-pa itself. Pa means 'drinking', and so, the rite is generally supposed to indicate the drinking of a juice called Soma.

No. Soma means, the Moon; and the Moon cannot be swallowed or drunk by man. It also means the 'mind', "the changing mind, that waxes and wanes is never the same for long." That is why the Vedas say that the mind was mothered the moon. So, drinking the moon means the process by which the mind is controlled, made defunct and so harmless. That is the purpose of the Yajna, the Sacrifice—sacrifice the whims of the mind for gaining the realm of the Universal Eternal Truth. With the mind left intact, no Yajna is fruitful, for, it has a thousand tricks by which it can drag you into perdition.

Fix the mind on the Name (the Sound Symbol) of the Lord; then, it cannot wander away into the wilds. The Divine is the Flame of the Lamp ever burning in the altar, namely the Body. Keep the Flame safe from the gusts of wind, namely the gusts of passion and desire, that blow from all quarters in Nature. Sit in a quiet place, away from crowded groups of men or sensations or thoughts that distract. When you have reached the stage when you can be wholly engrossed in the Name and the Form it represents, isolating yourself from distraction is not required. But, that does not mean that you can parade your spiritual practices in the market place, as some crazy people do now. Do not yearn for approbation and appreciation from the public. Pray that God may approve, accept and appreciate your toddle and your prattle.

Cleanse your emotions; passions; impulses, attitudes, reactions. That is the essence of spiritual discipline, as laid down in all faiths. Examine your mind, your thoughts do not seek the faults of others; seek your own, for, it is the fault-ridden person who sees faults in others. The pure-hearted man sees only purity. Speak ill of none; and, if you slip into slander, repent and resolve not to give vent to the habit another time. Do not humiliate anyone; respect him for the good in him. Their grief at your behaviour will haunt you during your last moments.

Let every act of yours stand as your support when you quit the world. Let no single act be a drag, or a debit. Soak every moment in Love, that is to say, in God. Of what avail is it to spend hours in Dhyana, if, when you rise and move amongst men, you spread anger, inflict and cause resentment by your words and deeds? The Gita asks you to be 'sathatham yoginah', 'ever controlled, ever restrained, and ever yoked with the Divine'. So, be vigilant, be steady, be earnest. 'Sraddha-vaan labhathe Jnanam (The steady person earns wisdom). By vigilant care, a spark can be nursed into a huge conflagration; by the absence of careful tending, even a conflagration can be reduced to a sputter.

—*Birthday Discourse: Baba 23-11-73*

Sai Alchemy

The Borstal School, Visakhapatnam has been the centre of the Seva activities of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Dal of that City, since March, 1971, when the authorities welcomed the idea and offered their wholehearted co-operation, and help. The boys evinced enthusiasm to learn and sing the morning prayers and go round in the predawn hours inside the Campus, doing

Nagarsankirtan. Daily Bhajans are held at the School every Thursday; members of the Seva Dal, men and women, visit the School and hold talks during which stories from the religious texts of all religions are narrated. Bhajan sessions are held, with the inmates participating in larger and larger numbers. Occasionally, at the request of the wards, they stretch into Akhanda Bhajans, of six or more hour's duration. The school has gained an atmosphere of mutual love and help, as well as of sincerity and integrity.

A play on the Sai Baba of Shirdi, in which Hindu, Muslim and Christians students have taken up roles was successfully performed, with the blessings of Bhagavan, at four places in the City, to appreciative audiences, who congratulated the actors on their art and skill.

The members of the Seva Dal have coached six students for the Matriculation Examination. Students who attended the Summer Classes on Indian Culture and Spirituality, 1972, at Brindavan gave the inmates a series of talks on what Bhagavan had taught them, about Dharma and its applications in daily life. In March 1973; during the Annual Day of the School, the Samiti arranged for essay writing competitions, elocution contests and competitions in Bhajan singing. The subject set for the essay was 'Sri Sathya Sai Baba'. The judges had a hard time deciding on who were to be given the prizes, for, almost all the students had written sincere, simple interpretations of Baba and His Message.

Dr. M. S. Ramakrishna Rao, the Convener of the Seva Dal and the Medical Officer of the Borstal School, writes, "Boys who did not have even basic-school education surprised us by the clarity and depth of their knowledge of the philosophy and the values underlying religion. "The aim of life should be shattering the material bonds that bind us to the body, and purifying our mind, discover the Atman," writes one 'juvenile delinquent'! "The individual is the Atma, encased in the body," writes another.

"Sathya (truth) is the conviction that the soul is not the body, that the world too is not Nature as we see it, but, that everything is Brahman; Dharma is the attitude which has to be adopted whenever Karma is done so that the karma might not cause harmful reactions. Shanti means, the abode one reaches when he rises above the dualities like happiness and sorrow. Prema means the quality, which in its fullness helps man to become one with the embodiment of Prema or Love, namely, God." This is an essay written by a Student of the Borstal School.

Another boy has attempted an explanation of the word, Bhagavan. He writes, "Bha means, He who loves, rewards and teaches Bhakti, Devotion, Dedication and Surrender. Ga means, He who shows us the Gamyā (goal of life) and leads us towards it. Va means, Waridhi or Ocean of Compassion, which He is, for He saves us from the paths of sin and the consequences of sin. N means, either Nenu or Neevu. Taking it as Nenu (I), it means that He declares, 'I am in you'; taking it as Neevu (You), it means that He declares, 'You are in Me'. Truly, an original and illuminating exploration into the Reality that Baba is!

Another student with the spark of poetry in him, evoked by the love poured by Seva Dal members, started his essay with a poem on Baba:

Our nearest kinsman is this Lord from Parthi,

This God who saves is from tortuous grief.
He rescues His flock, which trusts in Him!
Let's dedicate our hearts to His Feet.
All Beings, all Lives, are in Him
And, He lives in them, through them.
He is here, there, everywhere,
He shines, He makes us shine,
Let us greet Him and His Name.

Dr. Ramakrishna Rao writes "We were sceptical of achieving any success at the School when we began; but, the omnipresent Sai has blessed the boys and the Seva Dal so much that almost all the boys as well on the way to moral rehabilitation and recovery, and to self-respecting citizenship."

Bhagavan is showering His Grace on the boys who strive to purify their intentions and accept the path of Love and Peace. Dr. Ramakrishna Rao, the Seva Dal Convener, writes that he was surprised when an inmate asked him whether messages given by Baba in dreams are reliable; he replied that Bhagavan has assured that they are genuinely His own. "He told me that Bhagavan had assured him that he would be liberated soon." The boy confided in the Doctor. And, sure enough, the most unlikely thing happened. He was under a sentence for murder; a near kinsman of the person murdered came forward to stand surety for the good behaviour of the boy, to the extent of Rs. 25,000! Inscrutable are the ways of Sai."

—*Ed.*

Cloud-blue Child,
Who among the Gopis danced
for sheer delight,
Art Thou come again,
to steal our hearts
with the music of Thy Flute?

Art Thou here again,
O Lotus-eyed,
to give us joy Divine
annulling me-and-mine?

Let us extol Thee, Lord!
And, enshrine,
in the Lotus of our hearts.

—*T.R.*

Sai Puja

1. Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba is frequently and popularly described as the remarkable Man of Miracles, possibly to impress on us, ordinary human beings, His superhuman powers and thus to attract us towards His Holy Feet for necessary cure of ailments and removal of all sufferings. Even admitting this art of Bhagavan's wonderful Leela, the background should not be lost sight of and we can certainly fetch much greater benefit on ourselves by receiving Him wholeheartedly and sincerely as the Avatar, God in human form, the real manifestation of Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara, of Sat, Chit and Ananda, of Sathyam, Sivam and Sundaram and cordially getting Him enthroned in our heart of hearts, and offering our Puja most devotedly. We continue to offer our constant prayers that He may generously dash before our inward eye and favour us by granting pure Bhakti, Ananda and Amrita. Let the body, mind and heart echo and re-echo simultaneously to the Bhajan—"Manasa Bhajare Guru Charanam...

2. Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba is the personification of Brahma—qualified and unqualified, i.e., Saguna Nirguna Brahma. He is the best representation of Vishnu's indefinable, indefinite all pervading indefinite Soul. He stands as Maheshwara in whom all opposites are beautifully harmonised, mixed up to confer the best welfare on the universe. Rishis with controlled senses and well versed in true Knowledge, staying in their cosmic foams get the flash of truth in the ever-wide open eyes. They see everything, hear everything and know everything. As the sky stretches out its unbarred and unprevented sight to the unseen and unknown, eyes of Rishis find God everywhere. The very fact that He is seeing everything, knowing everything and doing everything serves as a pointer to His presence at all times in all places. This fact is a great help to control our mind and to merge in Him.

3. Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the all pervading, infinite Soul, is endowed with hands and feet in all directions. He works through hands and feet of all creatures. He is endowed with head, mouth and eyes in all directions, so He sees through all eyes, eats and speaks through all mouths. He is endowed with ears in all directions. So hears through all ears. He exists enveloping everything in the Universe. He exists silently and secretly in everybody and is eager to be exposed and expressed and whatever exists in the universe is nothing but His expression, His manifestation. The same energy comes out through different containers as the same electric current flows in different lamps to serve different purposes. So also, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba is present in all our senses, minds and intellects and gets everything done. Our senses, minds and intellects are nothing but different instruments for His expression.

4. Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba is the fountain source of all qualities or forces or strength of all senses of all creatures. So unknowingly we impose upon Him qualities of all senses and consider Him to be endowed with senses. But he has no senses of His own. Without being attached in any way and without being visible He rears up, brings up all. Though He is beyond all qualities, He seems to be imagined as partaking of the qualities attached to them as if He is enjoying those qualities. Though power works with the help of instruments, power is absolutely different from instruments. So also Bhagavan no doubt creates, takes care and destroys, still He Himself remains absolutely unchangeable and non-involved.

5. Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba always remains inside and outside all creatures. He exists in movable and immovable. He is the innermost finest Truth, beyond the perception of all senses. So we cannot know Him nor can we recognise Him. He is all pervading, to he is the closest of

the close; farthest of the far away. Bhagavan being beyond the mind and intellect remains unintelligible.

6. Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba though imagined as separate entity is really inseparable and non-plural. Baba not only rears up creatures but also receives during destruction, i.e., everything merges in Him. He is the creator, caretaker and destroyer simultaneously. He is one undivided 'Tattwa'. Though He seems to be manifested in diverse forms, He is just one and the same. Though He seems to be non-functioning in creatures of the universe, still He is to be really felt and perceived as the only functionary.

7. Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba is the fountain source of all light, all brightness. The sun, the moon, planets and stars are luminous in His light only. It is impossible, nay absurd, for speech and mind to express Him clearly and adequately. That He is called Knowledge itself is only to express that there is no shadow of ignorance in Him. He is the known, knowledgeable and knowledge. He is the enjoyed, enjoyable and enjoyment. He is the seen, scene and eight. Though He is thus imagined in these three entities, He is the one, unique indivisible Paramatma, the Universal Soul.

8. Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba merge us in your pure blissful divine land which is beyond all contraries and contradictions beyond joy and grief, beyond summer and winter, beyond Satwa, Raja and Tamas—which is self-effulgent, where peace alone reigns, which is as wide, as unfettered as the sky above, undisturbed and unchangeable by waves, which is lovingly served by perfect devotees and which is accessible only by meditation.

9. Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba come, come as my honoured guest, appear and be enthroned in my heart of hearts. Devotee—loving as you are, be kind enough to accept this cordial invitation. On Thy Feet duly washed by my joyful tears permit me to place my own soul as flower offering and thus to make my life worth having.

10. Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba! This is my only request to Thy Lotus Feet that You lay Thyself down to rest on the soft lotus bed in my heart. I shall never let you leave me.

11. Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba comes, He ever comes in unimaginable beauty and in unparalleled sweetness just to attract all livings beings who ere always busy with personal name and fame. Even those who are averse get attracted with His charming beauty, get intoxicated with His sweetness. Somehow or other, once any one of the senses is set on Him, the rest will look after themselves.

12, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba! Oh, Sat-Chit-Ananda personified! Oh resort of the whole universe, Oh all-powerful, the fountain source of all beauty and of all sweetness, I prostrate myself on Thy Lotus Feet.

13. Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba! Favour me by standing before my eyes in your charming and alluring figure which pleases and satisfies the whole universe, so that I may silently drink your sweetness to my heart's content.

14. Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba! Thou art the mother, Thou art the father, Thou art the friend and the most intimate associate. Thou art the knowledge and all possessions—wealth and prosperity. Thou art the God of Gods. Thou art my all; my everything

15. Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba! Thou art the only shelter of the Universe, so whoever may pray to You in whatever form, You oblige the devotee by appearing in that very form before him to satisfy him.

16. Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba Thou art dearer than our own children. Thou art dearer than our fortune. Thou art dearer than whatever we have. Friends and relations are dear only because of your presence in them. In your absence all of them are discarded by us.

17. Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's presence in my friends and relations makes me dear to them; Thou art at the very root and base of all I know; I do not want to know nor need I know anything else.

18. Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba! Thou art the soul of souls. Thou art Intellect, intelligence. Human lives are your upsurges. The human body is your temple, human enjoyments are your Pujas, your Leelas in them; their sleep is Your Samadhi. Our moving about on feet is nothing but going round Your temple. All our words are odes to you. Oh Shambhu, our work is your worship. When the mind is pure and at perfect rest, the inner eye opens out to have a glimpse of Bhagavan's Leela.

19. Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba! Thou art Parameswara, the God of Gods. Thou art Bhuvaneswara—king of kings, supreme deity of deities. Pray kindly make Thyself known to us. Thy strength strengthens us, may iota of your knowledge, a drop of Your Ananda, be granted to us.

20. Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba! Thou art the personification of Brahmananda, giver of blissful joy; the end of all controversies; as wide and open as the sky above, the aim of Tat-Twam-Asi, standing witness of the pure and undisturbed intellect, beyond thought, word and deed, bereft of Satwa-Raja-Tamas. I devotedly prostrate myself at Thy Lotus Feet.

Jai Sai Ram, Jai Jai Sai Ram.
OM Shanti, OM Shanti, Om Shanti

—S. C. Das Gupta

Sathya Sai way to Realisation

The most profound TRUTH ever proclaimed is that the phenomenal world around us and including ourselves is nothing but an expression of Brahman. The Upanishadic seers, the Rishis, 'saw' this Truth intuitively and proclaimed it in their forest monasteries. The Avatars Rave tome again and again to proclaim and reaffirm this truth; the sages and saints, through their striving and experience have, obtained this vision, and have become jivanmuktas, or liberated souls in their very lives. Baba says that "Moksha" is mohakshaya or the decline of the illusion that the

phenomenal world is distinct from the ultimate reality. This profound truth has been a matter of faith, a matter of hope, realised by a few, who have been the beacons of this ancient Punyabhumi, Bharat, but is really impossible to comprehend and experience for most of us, We might understand it intellectually; but we cannot really believe in it through experience. God at best is a convenient "hypothesis." good and useful so long as it works! The difficulty is especially great in the case of the modern man who has been exposed to what is called scientific education, and has been initiated into "rational approach" to an understanding of the phenomenal world. In fact we have reached a stage when even the saints and the sages cannot really influence the majority of people. Religion has reduced itself to superstition and blind faith and hence shunned by the intellectual.

Even in our time Shri Ramakrishna, the great spiritual giant of modern India confirmed in his own life-time the truth discovered by the ancient sages, took it one step further and `demonstrated' through his own spiritual experiments that the God of all religions is the same, that all roads ultimately lead to the same goal. He awakened the God-consciousness in a select number of young men. The chief of them and his most beloved was Swami Vivekananda, whose dynamic leadership has produced the well organised mission proclaiming the truth of the Vedanta both to the West and the East: Ramana Maharshi, the great intellectual giant of the South, broke through the Gordian knot of involved arguments and set those who came to him and sought him, on the path of the supreme quest of 'I'; these who had the spiritual thirst were drawn and their spirits awakened. Sri Aurobindo, the Mahayogi of Pondicherry, has influenced intellectuals of modern India through his profound writings proclaiming the ancient truths of the Vedas.

Sai Baba of Shirdi was a Divine Phenomenon and His methods were unique. Unlike the sages of the past or of even the recent present, He influenced those who went to Him and those whom He drew to Himself, in a profound way, not merely intellectually, (in fact not intellectually at all, in many cases), but by direct proof of His omnipresence. The recorded stories of His Leelas speak of this and only this. His help and succour to devotees, His timely warning in dream of things to come His assuming different forms and later confirmations that it was He who went to help to a particular form, demonstrate the Vedantic truth that He is the immanent Being in all. He also demonstrated that He is the immanent being not only in humans but in animals as well; the dog that took away the roti or even the fly that tasted the offering to him is He! Shirdi Sai Baba thus "scientifically" demonstrated that the phenomenal world is the same as the absolute reality; the two are not different!

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba whose; life and message we have been fortunate to witness, is proclaiming only this Truth and the Shirdi method of "scientific proof" continues, on a scale even grander than before, appropriate to the needs of the times? The truth that He is Omnipotent, Omniscient, and Omnipresent is not only being proclaimed during the "interview" and discourses, but demonstrated every minute, every day, 365 days of the year ever since He started this MISSION of MERCY at fourteen years of age. Unlike the saints and sages, hundreds and thousands have Aeon drawn by His powers to cure, and to give succour, or even out of curiosity to see the Divine 'power' of creating things from "nowhere," and in the words of Munshi, "they come, they see, they are conquered."

To each one who comes, and who has the good fortune of the much coveted interview. Baba demonstrates the profound truth that He is the Immanent Being to all. He gives proof that He knows us through and through, mentioning even such secrets which we have treasured securely from others, reveals secrets not known even to us, and floods us in His Divine love and blesses us with His Grace; and His words ring in our ears, that He is with us and that He will be always with us to guide. "Why fear when I am here? Swami knows everything," He says "These is a radio station here," He points to His Heart and chuckles! For the first time, the God whom we have read about in the sacred books as the In-dweller is no longer a fancy of the poets, but is a reality, because Baba demonstrates that it is so. Of course, this feeling fades, and in most cases it takes time to make it an article of faith and in His profound grace, He continues to come in dreams, or through books or friends and perhaps by again calling us for interview, he strengthens and confirms the truth that "I am with you, behind you, in front of you". Initially we take Him as a friend and personal benefactor, but in due course He becomes the Mentor, the Guide, warning us from taking the wrong path, and transforms our hearts by purifying our thoughts. When the conviction deepens that He is watching you, we begin to prevent ourselves from relapsing to our old habits. This is the essence of the Sai way of transforming the individual! What draws us initially for a cure of physical disease eventually results in the more important cure of our mental diseases, and leads to our spiritual awakening.

Baba tells everybody that He is with them, that He is guiding them; He tells everybody their innermost secrets. Once when He was asked by journalists how He was able to do this, He said, "Don't think that I get into you to find out what is there and come out and tell you what is happening; I am always there and so I know what you are doing all the time. Even the slightest flash of mind is known to Me." If He is in you in me and in all those who go there or who do not go there, in hundreds of thousands of people irrespective of distance, then it only means that He is! Omnipresent.

Baba does not stop with this. He reminds us that you should not hate another because Sai is the inner core of the one whom you hate! If you hate the other, then you are hating Sai; if you injure another, you injure Sai. Thus the truth of His omnipresence is now no longer a fact of convenience for the individual to derive benefit from the Divine, but a force to erase the play of the emotions. If Sai loves me and you and him in the same fashion, how can we nurture hatred? He demonstrates what it is to love, and proclaims, "Start the Day with Love, Spend the Day with Love and End the day with Love," the greatest love-song that the world has ever heard!

What is initiated in the interview room, or elsewhere, or in a dream is now strengthened in His Divine Discourse when He proclaims, almost impersonally and casually the profound Truth which He proclaimed through the ages, either by Himself or through His chosen men. Rarely (and this also happens occasionally) He digresses and reminds us that He is the One who became the many! The truth is that not only is He god, but we are all—each one of us—also Gods!

The truth that Prakriti and Paramatman are not different but the same, that the absolute reality is masquerading as the phenomenal world around and within us, He expounds. True to His method, and in keeping with the needs of the present "Scientific Age," He also demonstrates this truth! Take the Leela of the stone being transformed into an image of Lord Krishna made of sugar candy, recorded by Howard Murphet in his book "Sai Baba, Man of Miracles." Baba asks the

learned geology professor, "What is this rock?" He listens to his prattle on minerals and chemicals; He asks him to think deeper still, beyond the molecules and atoms, electrons and protons. Then "Baba took the lump of granite from the geologist, and holding it up with His fingers, blew on it. It was never out of Dr. Rao's sight, yet when Baba gave it back to Him, its shape had completely changed. Instead of being an irregular chunk it was a statue of Lord Krishna playing his flute... Baba said, "Yon see? Beyond your molecules and atoms God is in the rock. And God is sweetness and joy. Break off the foot and taste it." In this wonderful 'Miracle' Baba demonstrated that the phenomenal world has an inner core of the Divine. He removed the veil of illusion that it was a mere rock, and revealed the very essence of the rock which is Brahman who is Sat-Chit-Ananda. "Don't think that nature is different and distinct from the Divine it is the same." He demonstrated. Dr. A. P. Narasappa records in his article in the August, 1973 issue of Sanathana Sarathi that Baba transformed a leaf into a small locket with a beautiful portrait of Narayana, and added that it corresponded to what he had written in his commentary in Garuda Purana. Dr. Narasappa concludes that this demonstrated that He can transform the leaf to the Divine. It also demonstrates that beyond everything, as the substratum of even the leaf is Narayana; the Reality hides behind the phenomenal world. In fact we do not see the gold in the jewel even though it is staring at us, because, we are looking only at the jewel and not its essence, that is gold. It is ignorance; Avidya.

At no time in human history has the profound Vedantic truth that the phenomenal world is Brahman been broadcast from the "house tops" (to use a familiar cliché), as much as today by Baba. True to the Purpose for which He has taken human birth, Baba is "drawing" people through their miseries to Himself, curing them, consoling them and counselling them reminding them of their lost heritage, demonstrating the Divinity of each, and paving the way for the World Transformation which He has assured is the Purpose for which He has come. It is our good fortune that we are participants in this great venture, the adventure into tire spiritual realms, within and without each of us!

—*Narayana Murthy*

The Helmsman

Wrecked on the shoals of Time;
A raft without rudder or mast
I flounder on the Isles of Grief.
Death, like a thief, swooped on my sail.
No beacon to guide, no compass to steer
To Thy haven of rest where Love abides.

Sun of my life, shine brightly.
Still the storm centre
Of my Insurgent mind.
Let Thy love be my beacon,
Thy grace, my rudder and sail.
Be Thou my helmsman and guide.

The New Order

THE world is passing through a complex crisis. The human mind is confronted with confusion on all sides; vision is obliterated; intellect is drowsy and clouded; mind is deflated; a thick veil of scepticism is shrouding everything. Men have lost purpose and perspective. Human conscience has not kept pace with the advance made by Science and Technology. Man has extended the horizons of his knowledge and multiplied his spheres of activity, but, he has been deprived of his most precious patrimony—the wisdom, accumulated through ages, relating to the ways of living in peace and harmony. Humanity is today a motley crowd, subject to sudden goads of passion, caught in confounded disorder, plunged in conceit and hatred, lust and greed, strife and war. The old order has been uprooted; the human values of Truth, Righteousness, Love and Peace enshrined in the Holy Scriptures have been devalued and very nearly lost.

It has therefore become necessary for God to incarnate in order to preserve and promote human values. He came to this land of Bharat, to herald a New Order of Integral Humanism, the Brotherhood of Man and the Fatherhood of God, to revive Dharma, and restore the values of Truth, Love and Peace. Sri Sathya Sai Baba is the Name that the Avatar has adopted, and He declares that He has come to demolish the walls that have divided mankind into separate pens and partitions and to achieve an integrated world, free from fear and distrust, revelling in Love and Harmony. Baba underwrites a classless society, bound together by the chord of common Divinity, which knows no disparity and injustice, wherein one owns nothing but has everything. Baba envisages Dharma in its twin aspects of Sathya (Truth) and Tyaga (Renunciation). This is the unique pattern of life He is weaving for us.

Baba is thus ushering an era, a millennium, wherein the hard-liners of dialectical materialism too find a haven for themselves. The multi-coloured, multi-religious, multi-cultured are all moulded into a World Community, welded by the maxims of Love, Truth, Beauty and Righteousness. The Religion of Love cannot be detracted by reason; knowledge cannot confuse it; wisdom plays the part of a purifier, a transformer of dross into gold, of the bestial into the human and into the Divine.

This alchemy of wisdom, Baba demonstrates from the Vedas—ever-green, eternally invigorating treasury of the great truths of goal, God, and the Universal Atma. Baba extols this Divinity in Man, and helps to unfold it, thus contributing to the manifestation of the dignity of man.

Baba is determined to contain the surging tide of materialism, which plunges man into the strains and stresses of egoism and lust. He condemns the reliance on empty arguments and dry reasonings, and the ways in which the fundamentals of Dharma are twisted for achieving personal advantage, and misleading the ignorant. Baba calls upon the youth of the day to rally to His call.

He transforms Youth, who throng to Him, for inspiration and instruction. To see the young intelligentsia, from all the States of India and from Overseas transcend all the familiar barriers. Eliminate all the usual boundaries, drawn by man for selfish ends, and fling aside divisive

persuasions and tendencies in order to rally round Baba and cling to His Lotus Feet and Imbibe His Love and His Message, is Indeed an elevating experience.

Baba lays the maximum emphasis on education in order to bring about the new Era of Integral Humanism. Baba seeks to rid the minds and hearts of people of evil and of ignorance. At present, education informs; it does not transform. Bookish instruction blunts the edge of the intellect, and dulls discrimination. It is an act of cruel injustice to the young students, a great disservice to mankind. Baba says that the tender, soft and sweet hearts and minds of the students must be made aware of the value of life, and the purpose of living. Life, He says, is not that transient, or that trivial, to be trifled with or gambled away. This is the period of life when youth has to assimilate the precious heritage, the valid ways, that history has stored for them. Baba calls on all who are interested in youth and the progress of the Human community to elevate education into a great big Sadhana, a national or country-wide Sadhana for the human community for the achievement of Love and Peace through Love.

Through education, youth should win the vision of Truth and Beauty, Baba says, (the Truth and Beauty that are enshrined within them,) as aspects of the Divine. He emphasises the value of self-confidence, that is to say, confidence in the Self, the Atma, which is a wave of the Universal Self. Sri Sathya Sai Baba is the first Avatar who has organised a movement for the regeneration of man and society, on a mass scale over the entire world. He beckons every one to hearken to His voice reinforced by His miracles and His Leelas; He wants us all to respond to the primordial urge of the Soul for Light, Love and Liberation.

We have only to surrender to Him, in our entirety. And, pray, "We are machines, Thou art the Operator. We are the House, Thou art the Indweller. We are the Chariot; Thou art the Charioteer. We do what Thou makest us do; we speak what Thou maketh us speak and we move as Thou maketh us move. Not we, not we, but, THOU, THOU, THOU.

—*Joginder Nath Joshi, Jullunder*

The Parents

The 'parents' of the Avatar are revered by the millions that are drawn by the Love, the Compassion, the power and the wisdom of the Divine whom they had the good fortune to confer upon mankind; but, they have also to bear great deprivations in return for this adoration which they seldom welcome. Their Son is far far distant from their ken, and when He enters upon His Mission of re-establishing Righteousness and correcting the habits and attitudes of individuals and society, they feel helpless, involved but not informed. When the Avatar starts the Task, even as a Child, as was the case with Lord Krishna or as in the case with Sri Sathya Sai, the mystery and the distance increase, and the helplessness becomes deeper.

Sri Peddavenkapa Raju, the 'father' was a pure pious person, devoted to his Son and devoted also to His devotees, whom he delighted to keep contented and comfortable, when they came to Puttaparthi. When he accompanied Bhagavan to Ayodhya, Prayag, Rishikesh and Badri, he

moved with devotees from all the States of India, in a very friendly and even fraternal spirit. Named after the renowned Sage, Venkavadhootha who had won celebrity centuries ago by his impeccable asceticism, he was imbued with a robust philosophy of life that stood him in good stead during the trials and triumphs of life.

Sri Easwaramma, the 'mother' was the symbol of Hindu motherhood, full of Love, Sympathy, and Tolerance. She was genuinely curious till the last, to grasp the significance of the Avatar she had given birth to, and to share, with the vast multitudes that adored Him, the ecstasy that the Avatar conferred on them. She was thrilled by the sight of the hundreds of thousands of eager devotees that gathered wherever Bhagavan went to listen to Him and to take His Darshan though her concern about her Son's welfare and health never deserted her; in spite of her faith in His being a Divine Incarnation. One could understand Kausalya and Yasoda, by watching her and her reactions. She was a Mother for all the lakhs of children of all ages and conditions, that came into the Presence of Bhagavan.

Now, the mortal remains of the 'father' and the 'mother' lie side by side under the same decorative dome erected over their tombs, built in a park to the East of Prasanthi Nilayam. On 23-11-72, addressing the vast gathering that had come to Prasanthi Nilayam, to celebrate His Birthday, Bhagavan said that He was proceeding to the Samadhi (the Twin Tombs) to lay wreaths on the tablets, in order to teach them their duty to their parents, the duty of revering them while alive and offering them sincere gratitude when they are no more.

"My life is My Message," says Bhagavan. This year, too, on the 23rd Day of November, Bhagavan drove to the Samadhi after the Flag Hoisting Ceremony, and laid wreaths on the tombs. The children of the Village and the students of the Srimati Easwaramma High School had assembled there; Bhagavan distributed clothes, sweets and other gifts, including toys and books, to them. Every act of Bhagavan is a lesson for erring humanity, and an inspiration for the Sadhaka.

—Ed.

When Sai Speaks

August 14th, 1973, was the greatest day of my life. Baba had told me the previous day that I had quite a few doubts on spiritual matters, and that He would talk to me the next day, at some leisure. On the 14th, He poured out His Nectarine teachings for about 45 minutes. What I learnt during those minutes served to fade out all that I had accumulated during twenty long years of study.

I do not have to mention my doubts to Baba. He knew them. I was blissfully stunned by the experience. Until then, I was feeling that people who referred to Baba as Easwara or Bhagavan were exaggerating, for, they were led away by the superhuman powers or blinded by implicit faith. But, after the blissful experience of August 14th, I am convinced that He is Easwara in human form.

To listen to Baba is a wonderful, experience. I felt that my consciousness was multiplied many-fold. While He was unfolding Divine knowledge, and loosening the knots of my heart, I felt that my ego was diluted into some Divine Medium. I felt completely dissolved—of course, blissfully so.

Baba not only spoke with power, but, He fed us with the power to understand.

I had another revelation, too. Whenever a meeting of two individuals takes place, what really meet are two separate psychological set-ups, each set-up confronting the other, with a complex of innumerable experiences, individual interpretations of those experiences, stored memories, sentimental attachments, biases, favourable and unfavourable dispositions towards various matters, and situations, and countless idiosyncrasies. These form the background, the source from which the words they use in the conversation originate. But, when Baba is talking to us, one is struck by the discovery that on His side, there is no such set-up at all! And, He gives us the power to get over the handicap of our own confused and disorganised set-up! His words fit into our being, precisely. His words are uttered, without the least trace of effort to synchronise with the idea to 'be conveyed or without any delay, caused by the desire to examine whether the meaning has been transferred. Wonder of Wonders! The words He uttered were being 'solidified' into their meaning. They formed a word picture for the ear; the picture could also be seen, smelt, touched, felt as though physical reality was projected. When He said that the 'air-conditioner cools the body, but, heats the head', I could see, hear and smell the air-conditioner; I felt the cold in my body and the heat, in my head. Similar were the projections, when He spoke on other subjects. The source of these words charged with this unfathomable power appeared to me to be miraculous and mysterious. Heel small even to gauge it, or to refer to it.

Patanjali in his Yoga Sutra describes Easwara thus: He is unaffected by any hindrance, by bondage to work, by the need to work, and the fruition of work. In Him rests the seed of all power and all wisdom. He is the Teacher of all Teachers, unlimited by time. He is Easwara; He is referred to by the Pranava, the OM. Baba is Easwara; I have no doubt on this.

During the talk, I could feel a shower of compassion, flowing out from Baba and I wondered how lucky I was to be blessed with this unique experience.

How can I express my gratitude, for, really, and truly, I feel I do not have separate existence? Babe has planted a tree, Baba has lent it the power of growth, Baba is watering it, Baba is cultivating it; the results are His expression... I am attached to Him, I am within Him, and I am of Him,

—*Dat Pethe*

Bal Vikas

Education confers humility, endows one with the authority to command; that will entitle him to affluence. With the help of this affluence, charity and compassion can be made fruitful, and by this means, happiness in this world and peace in the next can be won. Education is thus a great constructive force for mankind. But, reformers and reconstructionists have tinkered so much with the process of education that it has now, been reduced to a caricature of itself. The electiveness of the educational system, and the boons it could confer on man leave been ignored and neglected; the name is now liven to the art of collecting information of the objective world. The far more important task of transforming the nature of man into the divine is given up, as beyond its ken or beneath its role.

The difference between the ancient ideals of education and the modern practices is appalling. Today, the educational process is denied to the aspirant, if he fails to pay his fees; the teacher too feels that he has no duty to teach, if in a certain month he is not paid his salary. Students pay for being taught; teachers are paid for the teaching, they do. Money decides what is taught and how it is learnt. "Pay and receive; be paid and give" That is the bond between the teacher and the taught. "Love, reverence, affection" these have no place in the transaction. How then can education be fruitful? Gokak said just now that when teachers love the children, they will be rewarded by the love of the children who sit around them. Now they are loved for the sake of the money they bring, and so, the relationship is artificial and without roots in the heart.

The teacher and the, pupil will both be immersed in joy, only, when Love that does not calculate the reward binds them together. When material gain is the goal, the joy is based on matter and does not thrill the mind. It cannot be pure, steady and sincere.

As teachers of the Bal Vikas Classes throughout the country, you do not look forward to monetary or material benefits, and so you have ample opportunity to make the child's heart and intellect blossom, through the shining rays of Love. Let me tell you that most of the teachers of today have specialised in western types of training, and so, they have lost their moorings in our own culture, and so are unaware of the deeper springs of the spirit.

They have been rendered materialistic, worldly, and egoistic. They are caught up in the pursuit of sensual pleasure and to the earning of money wish that objective in view. They do not know that real education consists in helping the child to manifest the Divinity already latent in him. Remember that the children who come to you are all heirs to the richest cultural heritage that the world can give. They are the 'Children of Immortality' extolled as such in the ancient texts by sages and scholars of this land. Do not turn them into experts in mathematics, unable to add up a simple domestic bill; scholars in the geography of America, but, unable to direct a pilgrim, who desires to know in which direction Kashi lies; prodigies in Algebra who are helpless when asked to define the area of their own homes; past masters in drill and gymnastics, but, all at sea, when requested to sit in the Padmasana posture; proficient in botany, but, ignorant of the significance and uses of the common Tulsi plant, found in the courtyard of every Indian home! They can draw realistic pictures of dogs and foxes, but, their handwriting remains illegible scribble. How can we expect that Indian Culture will be preserved and fostered by these products of our

educational system? The teachers who have brought them to this pass, and the educational administrators who devised the system are both equally to blame.

Correction of these faults must start with the teachers; they must become aware of the high purpose of education, and the goal to which it must guide the children of the land.

I know that great enthusiasm prevails today among both the pupils and teachers of our Bal Vikas Classes, for the spiritual ideals cherished in this land since ages. Nevertheless, I must say that there is a great and urgent need for you, teachers, to receive training in the methods of child education. For example, when teaching the recitation of bhajans or poems or hymns, you have to pay attention to the correct enunciation of each sound, the correct pronunciation of each letter; for, otherwise, the meaning is liable to be warped out of recognition.

In olden times, teachers took particular care to explain to the pupils the origins and roots, of each new word, even of words like Sah, and Twam. They taught, not only the meaning of the word, but, delved into its roots, and opened up before the people a vast vista of related words and a huge expanse of meaningful vocabulary. Since words in Indian languages get transformed when written or pronounced in conjunction with other words, there is a duty cast on you to teach how they are to be separately recognised and identified.

Boys may write Ramunithoka pivarudu, itlaniye (meaning, "Rama's tail, Pivara spoke thus," which is absurd), instead of Ramunitho kapivaruditlaniye (meaning, "With Rama the lord of monkeys spoke thus," which is quite correct.) The word, Santha Pakodilu, which I once used to indicate the error involved when people desert the true path and pursue degrading objective pleasures, which I compared to the pakodilu (savouries) sold in santha (village markets during fairs and festivals), for, they attract by their colour and ruinous components and destroy health, Kasturi who did not know much Telugu, divided the word into santhapa and kodilu, making the meaning absurd, for kodilu means fowl, and santhapa, like pivarudu has no meaning at all, being a mere jumble of sounds! Unless training is given in reading aloud, with concurrent attention to the meaning of the words and phrases, such mistakes are bound to recur. The three R's are the skills most neglected today.

Writing has also to be taught well, for, the knowledge of the correct form of each letter has to be mastered by all. Or else, even here, a tiny slip might change a sublime idea into ridiculous jargon. 'Rishikoti' when written wrongly in Telugu, as a consequence of the omission of a single upward curve was once mis-shaped into 'bushcoat', and the whole sentence was rendered ridiculous thereby! Scrupulous care and steady attention alone can make the pupils avoid such errors.

One point I have to emphasise here is, that you should be careful, while handling some books being published for school use by so-called scholars at the present time, They cast doubt on the truth of the great epics, like the Ramayana, and assert that Dasaratha and Ravana did not exist in authentic history. They characterise them as representatives or symbols of opposing Cultures, the Aryan and the Non-Aryan, and sow the seeds of factionalism and hatred. By such writings, children begin to doubt the very foundations of goodness, truth and beauty; they are confused while deciding on right conduct and behaviour, right ideals and ways of living.

You must examine every story or account that you place before the children from the point of view of individual faith and social harmony. Does this lead the child to a better, a more harmonious, a more God-oriented life? —that is the question you should ask yourself. Prahlada has beautifully summed up this principle, in the verse he utters, in the Bhagavata, while advising his playmates on the disciplines that should be welcomed. "The study of books that describe the Glory of God is the study that is best worth-while. The preceptor who tells us about the Glory of God is the preceptor to be sought after and revered. The father who directs you to approach God as the father who deserves the reverence and obedience of the children, not the others."

Hills and mountains are overlaid with rock and boulder. The sculptor gathers them, and shapes each of them into something useful and beautiful, depending upon the nature and characteristics of the stone. Out of one boulder, the artisan might carve a huge mortar and pestle to be kept in the corner of the-kitchen of a populous home. Out of another, the sculptor might produce a rough hewn gargoyle being incorporated into a building as an eerie object to ward off the evil eye! A third stone might get transformed into a charming little danseuse to embellish the shelf of a museum. Another stone, catching the eye and attention of a skilled sculpture might be elevated into the idol of a Divine Manifestation, fit to be installed in a temple where it receives the adoration of millions for generations.

Though they were the progeny of one peak, each has a different destiny, depending upon the care and consecration bestowed on it by the sculptor. Teachers are the sculptors who shape the rocks into things of beauty and significance, of utility and inspiration. They study the pupils, their nature and equipment, and decide on their roles in society, their paths and the stages in their progress.

But, it must be pointed out that the sculptor or teacher is not the only factor, to be reckoned with, in the process of education. The mother and father of the child too have important roles in the process. The positive and the negative must both meet in order to produce the electric current; even God needs the yearning and the endeavour of the devotee to fulfill His Will to save him from perdition. You may have flowers, and a length of string and a needle too; but without the garland maker, how can the flowers become strung on the string? You may have a lamp, oil and wick; but, you can get light only when someone strikes a flame and lights the lamp. So too, the teacher and the pupil have to be brought to each other and encouraged to learn and teach, to share lovingly their knowledge and experience, by the parents, so that education might proceed and the child inherit the heritage left by its forefathers. The teacher must win the Reverence of the pupil by showering on him his Love; the pupil must win the Love of the teacher by showering on him reverence and affection. It is a mutual transaction, a sharing of the emotions of the heart. How can a proper congenial atmosphere for study and teaching be built on a foundation of doubt and hatred? Nowadays, the atmosphere is polluted by the teachers' fear and suspicion, and the hostility and audacity of the-students. There is no love to lubricate the relations between the teacher and the taught.

We have heard the Guru being praised as equal to God Himself. Gokak quoted the Sloka, where the Guru is referred to reverentially, as Brahma, the First of the Trinity entrusted with Creation, as Vishnu, the second of the Trinity entrusted with the Preservation and Protection of Creation

and as Maheshwara, the last of the Trinity, charged with Destruction and Dissolution. This description is symbolically correct, as we can see when we analyse the work which the Teacher or Guru is expected to carry out. The Guru sows the seeds virtue, of wisdom, and of faith in the heart of the pupil. He is therefore, Brahma, of the nature of the Creator. He is like the farmer who plants saplings in the well-prepared soil of his field. But, the farmer does not sit with folded hands thereafter. He takes incessant care to see that the saplings grow, vigorously and well, and he is vigilant to water the growing crops and feed them with fertilisers at the appropriate stages of growth. This is the role of Vishnu, so far as education and the educator are concerned. The Guru cannot sit back and silently watch the fate of the pupil, after the first few lessons. He has to guide the pupil at every step, foster and encourage good habits, sound reasoning and valid emotions, and act as Vishnu, the second of the Trinity.

The Guru has also the duty cast on him, to watch every step of the pupil, and warn him off, when he takes false step, or develops a bad habit, or entertains a deleterious doubt. Like the farmer who has to be vigilant against the growth of weeds or the upsurge of pests, the Guru too must be ever alert to destroy the pests of vice and the weeds of sloth and unsteadiness. The word 'teacher' cannot denote these high roles; it can mean only those who transmit information, and train in skills. I direct that Bal Vikas teachers should hereafter be known by the vastly more appropriate name, "Guru", so that you may be conscious always of the spiritual role which you have taken on, and its responsibilities, and value. You are the lamps from which these tender hearts must receive Light and Love. By your adherence to Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Love, you have to inspire these qualities in the children that come to you and the homes from where they come.

There are many who shiver at the prospect, when they contemplate the future of this great country. You should never entertain such doubts and fears for, you are the builders of that future and you know that it will be glorious. The Bal Vikas children whom you are guiding and inspiring will be the leaders of tomorrow, in this land. The virtues you implant in them, the counsel you are providing them, the examples you place before them will remain carved in their memories and transform their outlook and behaviour in the days to come. Ask any one assembled here whether they can bring back to memory the book that he read this morning; 95 per cent of this vast gathering will fail in this test. But, ask them to repeat from memory some one hymn or stotra or moral verse that their grandfather or grandmother taught them when they were little children sitting on the knees of the elders, and I am sure 95 per cent of you will be able to recite the sloka or stotra. The things learnt during those early years stick in the memory and, act subtly and silently on the growing mind to modify and purify the conduct of later years.

Some short-sighted critics declare that spiritual matter should not be communicated to children, for, they are, too young and inexperienced, to benefit by the instruction. But, if a thing deserves to be done, the sooner we set about it the better. The slogan, "Start early, drive slowly reach safely" apply not merely to journeys by road or rail; it applies also to the journey from Untruth to Truth, from Darkness towards Light and from Death to Immortality. The unrest, anxiety, fear and hatred that torment the world now is largely due to the neglect which kept off from the growing child the discipline that can regulate the passions and emotions of man. We post-poned this essential task of education, at our peril; for, when children are equipped with the discipline to secure balance, equanimity, harmony and peace they can no more be drawn into wild adventures and barren activities. You have to learn spiritual disciplines along with the information-giving

subjects of the curriculum. You have to earn the high Diploma which the Upanishads offer you, namely, Amrthasya Putra, Child of Immortality, along with the degrees M.A., B.Sc. etc, which help you to eke out a livelihood, up to a certain stage in life.

But, remember you cannot take up the threads of spiritual Sadhana all of a sudden after retiring from active service! You cannot learn spiritual Sadhana, when you are physically debilitated and overwhelmed by the approach of death. How can a man think of God, his Saviour when he himself is overcome by sorrow at the need to depart from this world and when all around him his kith and kin are weeping and wailing loud and long?

No. Every one must learn the secret of happiness which consists in refusing to shed tears for anybody less than God. You have won this human body, this human life, as the reward for many lives spent in acquiring merit. You have won this chance, this unique good fortune of being able to get Darshan of Sai, Plunging deep into the waters of this tumultuous ocean of Samara, you have heroically emerged from its depths, with this were Pearl in your hands—the grace of Sai. Do not allow it to slip out of your clasp and fall into the depths again. Hold on firmly to It. Pray that you may have It for ever and be filled with the joy that It confers. That is the way by which you can render this lucky, life fruitful.

Instruct the children of the Bal Vikas to revere their parents. This is the first thing to do. It is a simple act of gratitude, for those who endowed them with the material instrument for life. But, mere possession of the human body, however wonderful it may be, is not enough, for one's peace and joy. One must know how to unravel its mysteries and how to regulate one's own impulses and hangers. This process is accomplished by the Guru, and to the pupils must be instructed and encouraged to revere the Guru, in gratitude for the service he renders. Education must aim at providing the child, not livelihood, but, a life worth living. For this, the acquisition of skills in doing or reasoning is not enough. Faith in one-self and in the Divinity of oneself are absolutely essential. That is the precious treasure of wisdom, stored in our ancient scriptures and in the experience of the Saints and Sages of all countries and faiths.

There is one more point, which I wish to emphasise. Some teachers have asked me whether the Bal Vikas Classes can serve children of all faiths or whether they can admit only children of the Hindu faith. This question has arisen because the questioners do not know the very fundamentals of the Hindu Faith. There is only one religion, remember, and that is the religion of love; there is only one caste, and that is the Caste of Humanity. You must be careful not to encourage or entertain the slightest trace of 'difference' on the bases of religion, caste, creed or colour, in the Bal Vikas Classes.

Do not tarnish the spotlessly clean minds of the children by infecting them with a sense of distinction between one child and another. Impart instruction and inspiration equally to all. Select stories from the scriptures of all faiths to interest the children in the values of good life. Speak to them of the moral heroes of all lands, the Saints of all faiths. For, they are all of the same stamp. No Scripture enjoins violence or lays down untruth as a way of life. All religions extol Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Brotherhood, and Love. All Saints are embodiments of service, compassion and renunciation.

Do not compare the various manifestations of the Divine and pronounce judgement, declaring that Rama is greater than Krishna or Shiva superior to Vishnu. This line of thought is poisonous and harmful to the devout aspirant. You do not know your own self; but, yet, how dare you pronounce judgement on Personalities and Powers you have never experienced or understood. Rama is as unknown to you as Christ, and so, it is best to keep silent, and revere both with equal ardour. For, all are Manifestations equal the same Divine Effulgence.

I bless you that you succeed in the great task you have imposed on yourself, and that you will be able to light the way for the tender-footed children of this land into the glorious region of Everlasting Joy.

—*Bhagavan's Discourse Bal Vikas Teachers' Conference 3-1-74; Rajahmundry*

Of Whom All Scriptures Speak

With fiery tremor, my heart sighs His Name.
Silent, scarcely with breath, in profound rapture,
He appears ...All the sweetness of the World
in one tiny Form!
Graceful as a Dancer, He approaches.

No. My Lord!
Look not into my eyes
for, I am unprepared
for such Beatitude.
Today,
I'm too full.
You've filled my being,
with your Divine Presence.

Ah. But, near me, He stands, He—
around whom my very Soul revolves.
His Feet press the rose petals strewn
in tribute along His Path.
Tears of joy trace rivulets
down my cheeks;
suppressed sobs
knock at my lungs.
I gaze
at His Face;
every caress of my gaze
a fervent prayer
"Sathya Sai Baba"
"Sathya Sai Baba."

What prayer, more sublime, could I utter?

Small is His Form,
yet, mighty in manner is this
unassuming Lord.
Serenely He walks,
among the adoring, the doubtful,
the sincere, the skeptic, bestowing
His Grace, like sunlight, on all.

Upturned faces—
demanding, imploring, weeping, expectant,
complacent, desperate,
from all direction, they come,
across the globe, to see, to earn, to learn.
What?
Most do not know; some think they know;
who knows?

This Radiant Font of Goodness and Beauty
is God in human form.
This is He, surely, of whom all scriptures speak.
He moves among the people; tender as a mother's is that Face,
He pinches the chubby cheek of a child; He holds an old man's hand,
sacred ashes appear in His Palm to heal the old woman there.
Each heart is known to Him
Every wish finds its answer through Him.
In Him, all journeys end; all destinations merge!
And, PEACE IS KNOWN.

—*Denise Eversole, Santa Barbara*

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

49

The Son and the Mother

Bharata walked first and Shatrughna followed him. They were heavy with grief and resentment that Kaikeyi, putting her trust in Manthara, had brought about such havoc. They tried hard to suppress the anger that rose within them. At last, they entered the palace of Kaikeyi. They saw at the entrance Manthara herself, elaborately bejewelled, waiting to receive them. Shatrughna could not tolerate that sight; he dragged her down by the hair and rained blows on her. She bawled out, 'Ayyo', 'Ayyo', and when the sound reached the ears of Kaikeyi, she ran to the spot, and started raving Shatrughna for his action.

Taking advantage of the opportunity, Bharata let himself go, with uncontrolled audacity. He shouted at her, "Fie upon you, blackest sinner! You placed faith on this wicked woman's words and committed despicable sin. How was it that your heart did not break in twain, when this woman's disastrous counsel entered it? How could your tongue pronounce those banal boons? Did it not turn into ashes, when it uttered those abominable desires? With what face can you dare reside in this palace? Aren't you ashamed to move within its precincts? Alas! How did the Emperor place his faith on the words of a person so full of evil as you are? Blinded by lust, he agreed to barter away the son, in order to win the wife; the conspiracy you hatched was mean and fraught with misery. You polluted the pure heart of the Emperor; you set the Kingdom on fire; you have destroyed the dynasty and its glory; you have brought eternal disgrace on the Royal Line of Raghu; your crooked, poisonous heart has achieved all this ruin. To declare you as my mother is itself a dire sin.

How could you decide that, when you harm another, your son will attain good fortune? Are not the children of others as dear to them as yours are to you? Women who plan ill for others' children are only accomplishing evil for their own children. How did you miss this great Truth? Indeed, It must be due to the sins you have committed in previous lives.

No. All this is due to my ill-luck. Or else, why should the pure, the steadfast, the undefiled Rama, my beloved brother, and the crown of chastity and goodness, Mother Sita, wander about in the fearsome forest? O, what cruelty! How dreadful! Fie on you. That I have to speak to such a foul hearted person is itself the result of sins I must have committed in my past lives O, I wonder what dreadful sin I have committed to deserve this punishment, this disgrace, of being born out of your womb. Sinners get only sinners as sharers and companions; how can they be associated with by good men, men engaged in meritorious activity?

This Solar Dynasty is as holy, as pure, as the Celestial Swan, with no trace of blemish. But, really speaking, you are like your mother; she had her husband killed, in order to fulfill her ambition. You too have killed your husband, in order to realise your selfish wish. Can the younger son ever rule over the empire, overstepping the eldest son, contrary to the established practice of the Royal Line?

You did not get this fatal idea now; it was there, latent, as a seed, since the very beginning, or else, it would not have manifested as a giant tree, of a sudden. Endowed with such a wicked nature, you could have smothered me dead, as soon as I was born and saved me and this empire from all this misery. Of what avail is it now to bewail what is past? Alas. Your intelligence directed you to hew down the trunk and water the branches, your reasoning faculty prompted you to promote the lives or fish by baling out the water from the tank. I am unable to decide whether I have to laugh or weep, at your stupidity.

Instead of fouling these minutes conversing with you, I would rather proceed to the presence of Rama, and pray to him to come back to Ayodhya so that I can return with him. In case, he declines to return, I am determined to stay with him, as Lakshmana has done, and be happy serving him. I shall not look on your face again."

The Queen repents

Saying this, Bharata turned his back on her, and started off, with his brother. Kaikeyi ruminated on her erroneous action; she lamented at the turn her plot had taken; she felt that wicked plans by whomsoever entertained might grant only temporary happiness, but they are certain to pave the way to ultimate downfall; she found no metre of escape; she could not find words to express her remorse and sorrow; so, she stood petrified and dumb.

Kaikeyi got disgusted with Manthara. She realised the truth. She felt delighted at the righteous stand taken by Rama. And, she hung her head in shame at the recognition of her own sin; Bharata and Shatrughna went straight to the place where the Ministers, the Royal Preceptor, and the Leading Citizens of the Capital had assembled. All of them were awaiting their arrival, anxious to know what they had resolved upon, and silently expectant to listen attentively to what they were about to tell them

Resolve to Reach Rama

Meanwhile, Bharata fell at the feet of the Preceptor, and declared, Divine Master! I am telling you my most honest intention; please believe my sincerity, for, I am not hiding anything, I am opening my heart, without any reservations. The effect is harder than the cause; the metal that is extracted from the soil is harder than the soil, you know. Born in the womb of the hard-hearted Kaikeyi, I am indeed even more hard-hearted. Or else, how can you explain that I am still alive, despite the fact, that Rama is far away from me. Kaikeyi has transferred Sita and Lakshmana into the forest, she has sent her husband into heaven, plunged the subjects of this vast empire in sorrow and anxiety, and brought eternal infamy on her son. And, you are now demanding that I should rule over the empire and cover myself with lasting disgrace. I am not in the least happy over this; I do not deserve this at all. Will not people laugh at me in scorn, if I sit on the Lion Throne as Lord and Ruler when Rama is moving about in the jungle?

My reign will bring only harm to the people; for, my accession itself will be immoral and unrighteous. And, who will deign to honour a usurper and obey his commands? I too cannot punish the unrighteous and the immoral. With what face can I correct wrongdoers, when I myself have done mountains of wrong in ascending the throne that is not rightfully mine? People would certainly point the accusing finger at me, when opportunity arises, though they may keep quiet for some time, for fear of the reprisals that I might inflict using my authority.

The evil design of my mother has now become transformed into agonising head aches for me. I cannot wait even a single moment here, without seeing Sita and Rama. I am only communicating to you my terrible anguish; only the sight of Rama can cool my heart and cure my agony. No words of consolation or explanation can bring me solace, in my grievous plight. I have obtained permission from Kausalya and Sumitra. I have decided to proceed at dawn tomorrow, to the place where Rama is, at present. My sins however plentiful they might be; will be reduced to ashes, the moment the eyes of Rama fall on me.

Even if Rama does not speak to me, I shall be happy, taking his Darshan always hiding behind some tree, and following him, at a distance delighted at the chance. Elders who have gathered here! Pray for me, bless me that I may progress as a result of the Darshan of Rama. O Ministers! Give me permission to go to the presence of Rama. I am the slave of the Lord Rama. He is the Lord for all of us."

No one in that assembly, among the Ministers, the Feudatories, and the Leaders of the people could raise his voice in reply. They realised the depth of Bharata's remorse. They understood that Bharata had an unsullied heart and that he was refusing to be bound by the coils of the conspiracy his mother wove for him.

Universal Yearning

The chief of the Elders of the City rose from his seat, and said, "Lord We too shall come with you. We too find separation from Rama an insufferable agony. We do not care what happens to our lives, after our getting one chance to have his Darshan." He asked for this permission on behalf of every one gathered there.

Others too responded to the suggestion wholeheartedly and come forward with prayers that they be taken to Rama along with others. Within minutes, the news spread into every nook and corner of the vast City, and, every one—men, women, children, young and old—got ready to start! Who can dissuade whom? There was no one that day among the huge population of Ayodhya so cruel as to prevent others from proceeding to Rama for his Darshan. The mothers, Kausalya and Sumitra too set out on the journey with their maids.

Meanwhile, Kaikeyi overcome with repentance for her errors and her sins, communicated with Kausalya and prayed that she too might be allowed to accompany the queen. She pleaded that she might be permitted to pray for pardon, and join the others in their attempts to persuade Rama to return to Ayodhya. Kausalya who had a pure unblemished heart did not entertain the least doubt or deviation from right-consciousness; she sent word that she could certainly join her.

Towards the Forest

Bharata was informed that the entire City was on the move. He arranged through the Ministers that at least a few had to stay behind, in order to guard the City, without leaving it helpless. So, some were left behind. Vehicles were made ready before every house during the night itself, so that the inmates might join the trek, during the early hours. They were of all types and descriptions; practically everything on wheels was commandeered for the purpose. Food and drink for the entire mass of people were duly arranged. Like Chakravaka birds, the men and women of Ayodhya awaited the heralding of the dawn, so that they might journey towards their dearly beloved Lord. It was a night of ecstatic anticipation for the citizens; they spent it in contemplating on the Darshan that awaited them.

The army with the entire force of chariotry, elephantry, cavalry and infantry got ready to march with Bharata. Vedic scholars were directed by the Minister that, while to the moving chariots, they had to keep on reciting the auspicious hymns; they had also to take with them the ceremonial requisites for the ritual worship of Fire. Right on time, according to the calculations of the astrologers, the leading chariot for Bharata and Shatrughna, and the palanquin next in order for Queen Kausalya were brought before the palace. Bharata ordered that every one must occupy the chariot or vehicle allotted. And, allowing his chariot to move on with no one in, Bharata and Shatrughna walked on by its side, barefooted.

The Prince on Foot

People thought that they might walk in that manner only for some little time, for some short distance. But, they found that Bharata was in no mood to get into the chariot; however long the distance to be covered. Kausalya could not tolerate this; she said, "Son! I cannot suffer the sight of your walking such a great distance. Sit in the chariot at least for some time." At this, Bharata replied, "Mother! This is only to make amends for the sins I am burdened with. Do I suffer now while walking on the road, at least a fraction of what Rama and Sita are suffering in the forest, while they walk barefoot? When they are walking barefoot, it is highly wrong for me, their servant, to ride in a chariot. Pardon me for disobeying your command; permit me to walk as I am doing now."

Meanwhile, the Royal Preceptor, Vasishta and his consort Arundhati, who were seated in the preceding chariot, stopped their vehicle and witnessing the determination of Bharata, they prayed Bharata, at least to sit in their chariot and act as their charioteer. But, Bharata was adamant. He said, "I am the servant of Rama and I am bound only to his chariot. Until I get the precious chance to act as his charioteer, I shall not ride in any chariot nor hold the reins of any other steed. This is my vow." Vasishta desisted from any further persuasion; he was genuinely delighted at the love and reverence that Bharata bore towards Rama.

They reached the bank of the River Tamasa, at nightfall on the first day. The next day, they reached the bank of the Gomati. The Tamasa is a tributary of the Gogra River; while, the Gomati is a tributary of the Ganga. As soon as it was dark, the vehicles were stopped, shelters were provided for women, children and the aged; the Minister ordered the soldiers to distribute food to the people, systematically and with due respect. Really, throughout the journey, every one carried out the work assigned to each; with care and enthusiasm. They took good care that no one was put to any hardship.

Guha on the Alert

Resuming their journey with the dawn of the third day, they reached Sringerapuram when darkness fell on the land. The king of the Nishadas saw the huge concourse and the army on the march; he was perturbed, for, he wondered why Bharata was proceeding to the forest, and why he was taking with him the army with all its components. What was the significance of it all, he tried to solve the mystery. He discussed within himself the pros and cons of this unusual procedure. He argued within himself: "When the tree is poisonous, its fruit too is bound to be poisonous." He tried his best to foil the plans of Bharata; he directed his men to keep every boat sunk in the depths of the Ganga, and to deprive the prince of all means of crossing the river. He ordered that they should prevent the concourse from crossing over to the other bank, even at the cost of their lives.

And, the King, of the Nishadas stood ready with his bow and arrow, set to attack, willing to sacrifice his life in the cause of his beloved Rama, to in spite of the fact that the forces which Bharata was leading were far superior in strength than his own!

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness

(To be continued)

Rise, with the Sun

Before going for the summer Course at Brindavan, 1973, I hadn't travelled such long distances, into new cultural regions and among strange companion. I and my friend, Tamo Mlbang, were from the Jawaharlal University, Pasighat, Arunachal Pradesh (formerly. NEFA.) I was not quite well when we started and I wondered how I could withstand the long journey. But, all went well, and, we reached Bangalore on 24th May 1973.

I was surprised to see hundreds of people sitting cross-legged on both sides of the road leading to the Bungalow, where Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba was residing; the road too was decorated with a beautiful carpet of floral petals. I learnt later that they were all devotees anxious to have Darshan of Baba, who was expected to walk along the path in a few minutes, in order to grant Darshan and bless the devotees.

I found there, men and women from different States of India, and, in the Camp there were many belonging to the Hindu religion. There were also a few Christians and Muslims. They were curious to know where we had come from and what our language race and religion were. We told them that our race and Language were Adi, and that our religion was Donyi Poloism. But, for most of our questioners, our answers were un-understandable, in spite of our best efforts. These things are to be thought about by the younger generation of Arunachal Pradesh. Arunachal has no particular religion, no regional language, no vernacular as mother tongue, for the entire State. Even Donyi Poloism is confined to the Siang District.

While we grow culturally, we must be careful not to lose the essential unit of our culture and its basis in the culture of India we have to overcome the clash of tribal interests by means of strong over-all Love. Bhagavan told us that we have to foster the ideals of Love and Service; we have to develop strong character, and sturdy virtues. He said, "When wealth is lost, nothing is lost; when, health is lost, something is lost; but, when character is lost, everything is lost."

Actually, I did not like the daily routine of the Summer Course. It was a very difficult job for me to keep pace with it. I could not follow their way of praying to God, early in the morning at 4-30 A.M. I tried to follow the others on two mornings, but, I had to stop afterwards. But, later, I realised that it was cowardice to shirk one's duty and responsibility. The purpose of coming and joining the Camp was, I realised, to follow all the rules and regulations and derive benefit. Also I did not like to stand in queue for breakfast, lunch, tea and dinner. I was ashamed to carry the plate of rice from one place to another, and wash it after use. But, I saw many great persons doing so. Compared to them—I was only an ordinary student. Those great scholars did not feel shy. They did it gladly. I felt that my knowledge was not mature enough, to tell me my duty and make me bear my responsibility gladly. I came to know from Bhagavan Sathya Sai's Discourse, that self-help is the best help, that self-help leads to self-control, and then to self-confidence, self-sacrifice and self-realisation. He told us that Duty is God.

At the outset, I felt very isolated, and wondered how I was to spend a whole month there. But, as I began to mix with other students of India, my homesickness faded away and I began to think of

us all as be longing to one family. It was the Sai Family of Brindavan. My friendship with others strengthened. I came to know from Baba, that friendliness is Godliness.

I learnt the value of good character from the Summer Course. It is the only way to acquire the quality of humanity, on the four-fold principles of good human life, Sathya, Dharma, Prema and Shanti. The Summer Course is the reviver of ancient Indian culture and Civilization. It is the meeting place of the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Puranas, the Gita, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. The essence of all those books is imparted here to the young students of India. Gods and men meet here on the basis of divinity and humanity. We can also enjoy the bliss, in spite of our not belonging to Hinduism.

The gate of the Summer Course is open to all. It opens the path that leads to World Peace. It removes human ego, illusions, want of faith, untruth and a-dharma. It welcomes all religions and emphasises their unity. Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhist, Jains, and the Confucians are welcome to participate in this great Congregation. And, they would remain, as they are or become better followers of their own faiths. The Summer Course does not invite any one to become a Hindu or Christian. It is meant for the development of moral character and spirituality or the development of Dharma in the heart, and for the development of Prema and Shanti among human beings. It tells us that life is to be devoted to good Karma or activity. It emphasises the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man. It guides us along the path of self-confidence, self-help, self-control and self-sacrifice, leading to the ultimate Goal, Self-realisation.

Baba says, "God is One, but, He has different Forms and is known by his different Performances and Powers. He is named differently in different religions. Respect to God as known and worshipped in any one religion is respect to God as known and worshipped in all other religions." Sri Sathya Sai is a supernatural Being; He is the divine Light-giver; He is the Avatars of the Hindu Gods; He is now in the form of a Human Being.

I thank my friend Norbu Thongo who encouraged me to attend the Summer Course, held in the presence of Sathya Sai at Brindavan. I extend my heartiest thanks to Sri K. A. A. Raja, the Chief Commissioner of Arunachal Pradesh, and Sri P. S. Davey the Asst. Commissioner Along for giving me this great opportunity.

It is my prayer to them that in future also, they may try their best to help the boys and girls of the new generation of Arunachal to get the opportunity to attend such congregations and listen to such intellectual discourses and meet such Divine personalities, so that they can develop their character to build a glorious Arunachal, the Land of the Rising Sun.

Let not only the Sun rise; with it, let us too rise. Let us promote our self-religion by self-realisation.

—*Bidya Gadi, from 'Arunachal News'*

The All India Conference

MORE than 6000 delegates selected from the Office Bearers of the Sathya Sai Seva Organisations working all over India and 750 teachers of the Bal Vikas Classes run by the Mahila Vibhags of that Organisation in countless towns and villages, gathered at Rajahmundry, the famous place of pilgrimage on the banks of the Godavari River, on New Year Day, 74, to draw inspiration from each other and the elders of the Organisation, as well as to charge themselves anew with the spirit of devotion and dedication from the Presence and Counsel of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

The Conference lasted three days—the 2nd, 3rd and 4th days of January. It was highly fruitful in many ways. The delegates and teachers returned to their spheres of Seva, filled with enthusiasm, shining with a new vision of their role, and aware of their unique burden and responsibilities.

The Sathya Sai Seva Samiti, Rajahmundry, were able to provide very comfortable accommodation and congenial boarding for the vast gathering. In spite of the adequacy of local resources, prolific spontaneous and generous help was forthcoming from hundreds of Sathya Sai Seva Samitis and Bhajan Mandalis and Mahila Vibhags which have been holding aloft the bacon of Baba's Message all over the District. Thousands of devoted women and men assembled at the Navabharat Gurukul Complex, where the Conference was to be held, and within a few days, transformed the area by their material resources, skill and labour into a picturesque arena, equipped with a spacious pandal expansive enough to seat ten thousand listeners, a magnificently decorated stage and dais and a whole range of sheds, dining halls and kitchens, complete with bathrooms running both hot and cold water, and many other pleasant surprises for the incoming guests. The prodigality evident in the hospitality, and the atmosphere, of sincerity and humility maintained by the volunteers everywhere, left an indelible impression of gratitude and admiration, in the hearts of all who attended the Conference.

Bhagavan arrived at Rajahmundry by a chartered plane at 6.30 P. M., on New Year Day. When He visited the Conference Area soon after, the delegates were thrilled beyond words, for they had travelled long distances, braving the dislocation of train services and the cancellation of flights, the non-availability of petrol and the disruption of bus traffic, and they knew that they had been brought thither in time, only by the Grace of the Lord, moving amidst them. The Bhajans they sang, while filling their eyes and hearts with the nectar of His Charm, were extraordinarily ecstatic.

During the morning hours of the 2nd Jan., Baba inaugurated the "Sai Nilayam", a building where the activities of the Seva Samiti of Rajahmundry were to be centralised. Thousands of devotees who had arrived at the Town, in order to have Darshan, during the days when Baba stayed at the place gathered there and had Darshan during the hour-long Bhajan. Baba responded to the yearning of these multitudes, giving them the coveted Darshan, every day, more often than once, both at the bungalow in Gandhinagar where He stayed and at the Sai Nilayam. When the thirsty groups lined the roads across the Gurukul clamoured for Darshan, the delegates gathered inside were surprised to see Baba climb on to the roof of a car so that they could brighten the eye-outer and inner-by the sight that Divine Face, come to illumine the Path of Man to God. Thousands

had come from neighbouring Districts and States, and even from far-off regions, like the Himalayan tracts around Darjeeling, the border areas of Assam, and the interior villages of Madhya Pradesh.

The Sixth All India Conference of the Office Bearers of the Sri Sathya Seva Organisation was inaugurated by Bhagavan, at 4-30 P.m., on the 2nd January. Bhagavan entered the enchantingly decorated Auditorium, in procession, walking along a floral path, accompanied by the chanting of Vedic Hymns by a galaxy of celebrated Pundits from the Deltaic Region named Vedasima, and with a band of Nadaswaram artistes playing Welcome Music. The Bhajan, 'Om Sivaya ' rose from fifteen thousand throats and hearts; when Bhagavan lit the Sacred Lamp to mark the inauguration. This was followed by the song, Nandalala Yadu Nandalala. Then, a teenage scholar, Sai Ram Subrahmanyam, was introduced by Dr. S. Bhagavantam D. Sc., as a student of the Sathya Sai Veda Sastra Pathashala, Prasanthi Nilayam, and as capable of reciting the Vedas and expounding the meaning of the Mantras. He recited the mantra, Madhu vatha rthayathe, and gave the meaning and significance of the mantra, in clear simple Telugu. Sri D. V. Rama Rao, M. Sc., District President of the Sathya Sai Seva Organisations, East Godavari Dt., offered the homage of the various Units at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan, whom He described as 'the light of our eyes and the delight of our hearts'. He spoke of the Gurukul where the Conference was being held and of the atmosphere of dedication and service that pervaded it. The Founder of the Gurukul, Sri Ballayya then read a Welcome Address and presented it to Bhagavan.

Bhagavan then conferred the boon of His Divine Discourse emphasising the fundamental values of Sanathana Dharma, and directing all lovers of Individual and social progress to adhere to the twin ideals of Brahmanya and Brahmacharya—The pursuit of Self-realisation and the practice of Spiritual Discipline.

Then, Bhagavan called upon the State Presidents from each State in India to present short reports on the significant items of spiritual activity that were undertaken in each State during the year. State President Sri Sohan Lal spoke of the activities in Delhi, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh, and said that there are clear signs of the emergence of a Sai Era of spiritual regeneration, in and around the Units of the Organisation that are scattered all over the three States. Sri Arun Kumar Dutt, President, Calcutta City described the service activities by Seva Dal members in the Hospitals and Jails of the City as well as the good work done by Study Circles and Bhajan Mandalis. He announced that there was a proposal to open a Home for Old People, in order to alleviate their loneliness and distress. Dr. Chudasama, the President of Gujarat State spoke of the service rendered by the Samitis and Seva Dals during the recent floods, and announced that the Gujarati "Sanathana Sarathi" is now being subscribed for by more than 4000 devotees.

Justice V. Balakrishna Eradi, the State President for Kerala mentioned the classes in Sanskrit and in Telugu ran by the Samitis, the Free Eye Clinic run by the Calicut Samiti, and the Medical Relief Centres managed by several Samitis. He spoke of the dramas enacted by the Bal Vikas pupils at Prasanthi Nilayam during Festival Days, in the Divine Presence, in the Telugu language, which they had Learnt with eager care and steady application. Sri M. M. Pinge, State President Maharashtra also spoke of Telugu Classes, and of the Seva done by members during the drought period in the famine-stricken villages. He mentioned that the Seva Dal had adopted a

foreshore village near Bombay for intensive Seva work, and of the expansion of the School being run at Dharmakshetra for the poor children of the area into a Secondary School as well as a trades School teaching tailoring, wiring, carpentry and kindred skills. He spoke of the opening of a Hostel for College Students at Poona, as one of the means of infusing the Message of Bhagavan into the hearts of the younger generation, who are genuinely interested in the revival of the ideals of Sanathana Dharma.

Dr. Barua from Assam quoted the statement of Bhagavan, when asked for blessings for newly formed Samitis in Assam. "Why do you talk of publicity for the Sun? No one need be told, that the Sun has risen." He described how Assam is fast being saturated with devotion to Sai, and how Sai is awakening the hills and valleys the dormant spiritual urges once aroused and fed by the great Assamese teacher, Sankar Deva. Dr. G.V.L.N. Murthy, D. Sc, Patna gave a short summary of the activities of the various Units in and around Jamshedpur and Patna and the moffussil, and drew the attention of the gathering to the silent but steady revolution that is being wrought by the message of Bhagavan among all classes, of people.

Bhagavan called upon Mrs. Sundar Singh (Delhi), to report on the activities of the Mahila Vibhag; she gave interesting details of the work of the Vibhag in the Hospitals of the City, as well as in the Slum areas, besides intensive Seva work at the Delhi School for the Blind. Mrs. Sarala Shah gave an account of the work undertaken by Mahilas Vibhag at Bombay, especially the organisation of an expanding network of Bal Vikas Classes. Smt. Sudha Mazumdar, President, Mahila Vibhag Calcutta, then described the Seva that the members were privileged to offer, at the Rescue Home for Women, the Presidency Jail (Women's Section), and in the Menoka Centre for Village Uplift. Prof. Lila from Tamil Nadu spoke of the varied activities of the Mahila Vibhag, Madras City, —Study Classes, Tuition Classes for backward students of City Schools, bhajans and Classes in Orphanages, and Hospitals etc.

Dr. M. B. Sundara Rao, President, Karnataka State, reported that there has been a noticeable spurt in the Seva work of the hundreds of Samitis all over the State. He spoke of the Sai Prasad Centres ran by Samitis to provide food for the drought affected people in recent months; he described in very moving terms how a Seven-Day Continuous Bhajan Sessions at Gulbarga brought on the long-awaited rain, at the very last moment, when the Participants were on the edge of expectation. Sri G. K. Damodara Rao, President, Tamil Nadu spoke of a very successful Medical Camp conducted by experts in various branches of Curative Medicine at Coimbatore and of the successful Zonal Conferences held during the year.

Sri Brahmananda Panda, M. P., the President of Orissa State, confessed that a spirit of humility was overwhelming him, in spite of the fact that the Sai Organisation had spread into every nook and corner of his State, for, there is a vast deal of work yet to be achieved. Sri D. P. Sukla, President, Uttar Pradesh State, said that since his State was of enormous extent, with varying conditions of cultural and economic growth, the Organisation has gained foot-hold so far in only 22 out of the 54 districts; he appealed to Bhagavan to bless the people of the State and imbue them with ardour and enthusiasm. He spoke of the earnest activities of Study Circles and Bhajan Mandalis, and declared that preparations are ripe for the establishment of a Sathya Sai College at Meerut.

Sri M. P. Shet, President. Madhya Pradesh, detailed the activities of the Sathya Sai Education Society, and described the Rally of Bal Vikas Children, which brought together at Bhopal, more than 2000 pupils. He also mentioned the Conference of the Units of Madhya Pradesh at Chindwara. Sri V. Parthasarathy, Formerly Judge, Andhra Pradesh High Court, President of the Organisation In Andhra Pradesh, in his report spoke of the immense potentiality of the youth of Andhra Pradesh as evidenced by the Seva Dal activities at Visakhapatnam, Vijayawada and Hyderabad. He spoke appreciatingly of the Nagarsankirtan movement in the towns and villages of Pradesh, and said that in some districts, no member has missed the Nagarsankirtan even on one single day in the whole year. "We, of too older generation, have failed them, by not setting good example and providing brotherly leadership and guidance," he confessed.

Then, Sub-Committees to consider and draft recommendations for presentation to the Conference were formed with members drawn from all the States, and the Convenors of each was nominated by Bhagavan. Six Sub-Committees were, formed in all (1) Progress of the Organisation and its impact (Convenors Sri G. K. Damodara Rao and Sri B. Panda); (2) Co-ordination and Control of the Units (Convenors Sri Sohan Lal and Sri Chudasama); (3) Educational Programme and Spiritual activities (Convenors Dr. V. K. Gokak, and Sri Andan); (4) The Revival and Resuscitation of Dharma through Bal Vikas (Convenors Justice Eradi and Sri S. P. Shet); (5) Review of Rules and Regulations (Convenors: Sri V. Parthasarathy and Sri Rayaningar); and (6) Sathya Sai Seva Dal-Planning of Activities (Convenors Sri Rama Rao and Dr. K. K. Mistry).

While announcing the Sub-Committees and laying down some guide-lines for their consideration, Sri Indulal H. Shah of Bombay spoke on the Research Programme undertaken by the Scholars of Bombay University and the Kharagpur Institute on the Results of Bal Vikas Classes, and of the need to expand the educational activities of the Organisation in order to achieve soon the Ideal of a Sathya Sai University, as the instrument for the great Sai Revolution of the Spirit. He spoke of the importance of the year 1975 when the world will celebrate the 50th Birthday of Bhagavan and he exhorted devotees to plan a year-long programme of events, during which hundreds of Bal Vikas Classes, Bhajan Mandalis, Seva Dal Units, Social Service Homes, Schools and Colleges, Polytechnics for Farmers with Sathya Sai Farm, Trades Schools for Backward areas and communities and a host of other Institutions charged with the spirit of selfless Seva are offered at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan. The vast mass of delegates was thrilled when Sri Indulal Shah described an incident when the Secretary of the President of the Maharashtra State drove into an angry mob that sought to set fire to his car and inflict injuries on him and the members of his family, enraged at his being a Maharashtrian! He showed the leader of the mob, the picture of Baba that he had in his car and said that he was coming from Him and had to go back to Him again soon. Sri Shah said that the mention of Baba's Name had a dramatically soothing effect on the leader and the mob; and, they quietened down so much that he was able to continue the journey unharmed. When the Name can effect such profound transformation, what can we not achieve, with His Blessings, and His Guidance, Sri Indulal Shah asked?

The Conference of Bal Vikas Teachers for which more than 750 delegates had assembled from all the States of India met at 10-30 A.M., on the 3rd January, '74, Dr. V. K. Gokak, M.A., D. Litt., addressed the Delegates. He said that the Bal Vikas Classes perform a vital function in

educational reconstruction for the moral regeneration of mankind. "The child mind is tender and lends itself to be moulded; a sapling twisted will never straighten out. Our cultural heritage should be imparted to the child right from the start. Schools today are not shaping the behaviour pattern of the child; the child has to know the value of co-operation, instead of competition, perfection in preference to mere success, and of tolerance and kindness. The teacher must take up Bal Vikas as an essential supplement to the school curriculum. She must tell the children stories of saints and legendary heroes and adventures which they have now no chance of listening to, in the schools. Above all by radiating Love and inspiring Love, they have to make the statement, 'Heaven lies about us in our infancy' a real experience for the child," he said.

Bhagavan, in His Divine Discourse, elaborated on the triple functions of the Guru, as Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara and pointed out that the Bal Vikas Gurus (Bhagavan wanted that they should no longer be referred to as teachers, since their real work is that of the Guru) have to carry on the tasks of *planting* good habits and attitudes, of *fostering* them by vigilant care and *distracting* through the process of Love, deleterious influences and impulses. Bhagavan laid down the ideals that the Bal Vikas Guru must have and described in detail the methods to be adopted in handling classes.

At 4 P. M., the same day, the Convenors of the 6 Sub-Committees presented their reports to the Assembly. Suggestions like 'The Sadhana Camp that has been already enforced is a *must* for all Samitis.' 'The rules and regulations must be read and explained to members at frequent intervals, so that the objectives of the Organisations be ever kept in mind', 'The Sathya Sai University has to come about, the sooner the better; at least as a Women's University, with affiliated Colleges from all the states, in the first instance', 'A Summer Course on Indian Culture and Spirituality must be arranged for Teachers', 'Bal Vikas is of pivotal importance; there must be a Bal Vikas in every Village', 'Rallies of Bal Vikas Pupils at District, State and All-India Levels may be arranged', 'Unauthorised units indulge in misleading publicity and factional activity; such have to be discouraged and devotees warned against their tactics,' 'State Convenors have to be appointed for Seva Dal,' 'Identity Cards have to be issued to active trained members of Seva Dal' 'Reports of activities have to be sent for publication in the Bal Vikas and Seva Dal magazines being published from Bombay'—were made.

As requested earlier, the Bal Vikas teachers had placed in Bhagavan's Hands a few questions concerning their work, and Bhagavan graciously spent more than an hour, elucidating the principles of Bal Vikas, while answering the doubts raised by them. He said that children of all creeds are welcome to benefit by the Bal Vikas, and directed teachers to pay special attention to the basic ideals of all religions; He wanted the Saints and Sages, the legendary heroes of all faiths have to be placed before the children, and an atmosphere of Love and Mutual Co-operation encouraged. He directed that emphasis must be laid on character more than book learning. He wanted that the teacher must win the hearty co-operation of the parents in the task of manifesting the Divinity that lies dormant in the child. He exhorted the teachers not to be disturbed by the opposition or indifference of the authorities under whom they now serve, for the reason that they do not appreciate the service they do. He assured them that His grace will be ever with them to guard and guide. He urged them to develop Self-confidence and proceed fearlessly on the Path they have selected for self-realisation.

The Bal Vikas children from Amalapuram and Rajahmundry enacted a few playlets, chiefly on Jayadeva and Meera, and children also gave highly skilled Dance items, which were appreciated by one and all.

4th January was Vaikuntha Ekadasi, a holy day in the Hindu Calendar when, in previous years, Bhagavan created Divine nectar and blessed every one by giving It to each. At Rajahmundry, thousands milled around in the early morning hours to get the coveted Darshan, both at Gandhinagar and at Sai Nilayam and were amply rewarded. At the Conference, the delegates scoured the Nectar of His Divine Discourse, which they could treasure long, in their hearts and utilise to heighten their spiritual attainment.

The proceedings of the Conference started at 8.30 A. M. Bhagavan sharply reprimanded many delegates who walked into the Auditorium after the hour, fixed for the Sessions to begin. He cautioned them that first things must come first, and that the occasion should not be used to involve oneself in further entangling relationships. Bhagavan then gave His decisions on the suggestions made by the Sub-Committees the previous day. Bhagavan said that the State President can take the help of Zonal Convenors in the execution of his supervisory and advisory powers. He blessed the plan to start the Sri Sathya Sai University, with Colleges affiliated from each State; but, He wanted a cadre of trained teachers who can staff the Colleges and direct students along the path of universal Love and Righteousness. He directed that the Summer Courses be held in different States, and that selection of students be made through essay writing competitions. He approved the idea of starting Technical Trades School, and announced that an Agricultural College will be started at Rajahmundry, to train the ryots in modern techniques so that the vast resources of the delta be developed and the region converted into the "Annapoorna" of India. He approved the issue of identity Cards to the members of the Seva Dal, and the insistence that each member should engage himself in at least three activities, out of the large number of Seva items available. He encouraged Training Classes for Bal Vikas Teachers, and declared that, prior to the Summer Course for College students, He will Himself arrange a Training Course for such Teachers. He wanted that Sadhana Camps must be held by the Samitis every month, and that Conferences of Office bearers and workers be held frequently, at the District, Zonal and State levels. It was also announced by Dr. Gokak that persons desiring to contribute to the Educational Activities of the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust can pay the same to the account of the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust, The Canara Bank, Town Hall Branch, Bangalore, and not to any individual or any unit of the Organisation.

The final Session of the Conference met at 3-3,0 P.M., on the 4th Jan. Bhagavan held forth as an example to all, the sincere enthusiasm of the Volunteers who worked with ardour and intelligence for weeks to make the Conference a success. He said that the Organisers could not engage any paid labour, for the volunteers snatched up all chances to be of service, and to share in the joy of devoted co-operation. He spoke of the prayers addressed to Him to visit various parts of the country and of the yearning behind those prayers. But, He deprecated the collection of money in anticipation of the expenses; He declared that He disapproved the publication of Souvenirs with advertisements, with His messages in their midst. He said that it is improper to collect money under that pretext. He also said that when He leaves a place after a visit, people involve themselves in factions and misunderstandings among themselves; for, all those who have given donations do not get proportionate Grace; and they blame the Organisers for this! Baba

said that many mislead themselves believing that He takes residence with `rich' people. He said that all the worlds were His, and so, He had no need for others' riches; so, He does not recognise the distinction that people make between the 'rich' and the poor. For Him, the main consideration was the distress in which people were caught, the devotion they have attained, the service that they can render and the value of the example that they can hold before others. "I am beyond the ken of human intelligence and so, it is best you give up the attempt to understand Me," He declared. 'Conquer your ego; that is the best means to have Me shine in your heart,' He advised.

He wanted that the State President and the District President must set examples of Self-less Service to the workers in all the units and see that the rules laid down for the uplift of the Organisation are obeyed strictly. The rules are like the fence that guards the tender, saplings from being destroyed by sheep and cattle, He said.

Showering His unbounded Grace and Love on the vast gathering, Baba said: "You are all in Me; I am in every one of you. I can never keep, you far from Me; I shall ever reside in your hearts. You are Sai; Sai is each of you. You are all waves on the Ocean which is Sai. This is the sixth Conference. Five Conferences have passed by; that meant, the rule of the five senses should no longer be tolerated. This Conference begins the new era of controlled consecrated activities, dedicated to Self-realisation by the Individual and Peace for Society and mankind. The six-year-old child will heedlessly run about in the bazaar and get caught between trucks. This is a dangerous stage. Watch your Units carefully. See that the trucks, namely, jealousy, anger and egoism, do not come in the way of the progress of the Organisation," Baba advised.

Then, Bhagavan sang a few Bhajans, which the delegates sang after Him with tears of joyful gratitude flowing down their cheeks. Baba then moved amidst the delegates from each state sitting in separate enclosures; He allowed the delegates to have the pleasure of Padanamaskar and gave each the coveted Prasad. O, it was a great moment in the lives of every one who was fortunate to be present that day at the Rajahmundry Conference Auditorium. "We shall surrender our wills to His Will; we shall treasure His words in our hearts; we shall march along, with unfaltering steps along the Path He has marked out for us" that was the Faith carved on each face, as the delegates moved out, at the end of the last Session of the Conference at Rajahmundry. —Ed.

The Call Divine

Embodiments of the Supreme Atma! Look at the condition of the people of this ancient Land, Bharat today. Afflicted by multiplying worldly wants; with no faith in experiences beyond the sensual, scorning the sacred scriptures of their forefathers, weakened by fear, anxiety and lack of confidence in one's capacity to overcome these, having no knowledge of the Source of Strength and even denying the existence of a Source which can be tapped by prayer—they are delighting in untruth, injustice, and unrest. Steeped to anxiety and restlessness themselves, they do not allow others any rest or peace. Here, in days gone by, Karmakshetra was Dharmakshetra; the Field of Action was also the Field of Righteousness. But, now, declaring that Action and Righteousness cannot co-exist, these people are bringing disgrace on the very name of Bharat.

Of course, many lovers of the glory that was India are trying to revive it through means and methods their mental and intellectual resources indicate. But, unless one removes the disease from the root, no amount of care bestowed on branch, leaf and flower can save the tree. The pests are to be found deep down, inside the roots. They have attacked and impaired the two tap-roots of Indian Culture—Brahmanyam and Brahmacharyam. We must have again in this land the Brahmin, so known because he is bet on the path of Brahman, the Supreme Absolute. We must also have the revival of the ideal student life: earnest, humble, celibate, concentrated study. This Navabharat Gurukul, where we have assembled for this Conference is an example of student life, sought to be set on proper tines. The seekers of Brahman and the scholars of the texts on Brahman have lost their status and honour, because they did not live according to the truths they expounded.

Character, conduct, daily behavior, attitudes towards others—these are all—important, for, Dharma is essential Social Morality. The Shruti says, Dharmo Viswasya Jagathah Prathistah: On Dharma, the World is installed. Dharma endows man with joy and keeps away grief. Every being in the world whether it is aware of it or not is dependent on Dharma, for peace and happiness. All triumphs, whether acknowledged so or not, are earned only through Dharma.

Dharma is classified as general and special by the segos: general, including the virtues of truth, love, charity, etc. which every one has to cultivate and cherish; social, meaning those duties that are incumbent on one, as a result of his social obligations, professional status etc, like the special Dharma of the Brahmin householder to maintain the Sacred Fire through ritually prescribed ceremonials. The Vedas lay down the ceremonies; they speak of the intimacy between the Brahmin and the rites of fire-worship.

You are aware that, at the present day, both in India and outside, there is a wave of spiritual discontent surging in thousands of hearts and, as a consequence, we have eager groups who give up everything worldly and seek God and Godly preceptors. But, many do believe that this search concerns only the individual and that society need not get involved in their yearning or their endeavours. This is as foolish as saying that one need worry about lighting the inside of one's home; he has no concern with the darkness prevailing outside the walls of his residence. The individual and society are intertwined inextricably. There must be illumination for both. Ananda must surge out of the individual and fill the lake of society, and from thence, stream into the Ocean of Grace. Society is just a name for a group of individuals; but, it has no corporal body. Individuals are the limbs, that nourish and support the `corpus' called society.

Society shapes the individual, provides the arena for his development and sets the ideals he should plant before himself. When the individual is stronger, more intelligent, more service minded, and more efficient as a worker, Society benefits; when society is more aware of its role and of the need to cleanse that role with humility and wisdom, the individual benefits.

Sai has resolved to transform the individual and society by promoting this mutual regeneration by the action of one on the other; hence, the formation of this Organisation, and the establishment of its Units in all countries, for the sublimation of the human into the Divine.

I have however to tell you that the units of this Organisation have not advanced much in the task that is expected of them. You must identify the reasons for this and infuse into yourselves the needed enthusiasm and effort. Lay your hands on the true situation and discover the remedies for curing the malady that is diagnosed. Whatever is considered by you as good when done by others in your case, endeavour to do them in the case of those others yourselves. Do not advise, exhort and direct others, without yourself following that advice. Again, many of you get discouraged when you meet with cynicism or criticism.

One person came to me some days ago and asked, "Swami! Are all the many thousands who are concerned with this Organisation imbued with devotion and dedication, with full faith in the Vedas and Sastras, in the efficacy of righteousness and the Glory and Grace of God?" I told him that the very process of sharing in the activities of the Organisation and getting involved in its activities will induce faith and bolster devotion and dedication, and make them better sad more useful citizens and happier and more peaceful individuals. Then, I asked him, to which organisation he belonged. When he mentioned that he was from a political organisation that had a membership of about 5 million, I asked him, "Is every one of them a true patriot? Do they all tread the path without deviation? Are they dedicated to the Nation? Or to Power? Or to places of Profit? Why, I find that though you wear homespun as per the rules of your Organisation, you have as underwear, a banian manufactured in a foreign land? Your loyalty to the ideals of the Organisation which you serve is mere external show. "

Sathya Sai Seva Organisation has to be unique, in this sense, that it is free from the slightest taint of hypocrisy, and the attempt to rationalise faults and failings. In the name of Social service many institutions and organisations thrive in this land but, consider, for a moment, the social service that is rendered by the Sathya Sai Seva Units in this East Godavari District. Spontaneously, members have come forward in thousands to this place where the Conference was arranged and, offered their services freely, sincerely and efficiently, to such an extent that the Organisers have not spent a paise as wages for all this work—clearing this vast area, erecting these imposing sheds, laying down cables and pipes, and a host of other exhausting and expensive undertakings, so that the thousands of delegates that have come from all the States of India can have comfortable lodgings and satisfying boarding. They engaged themselves in this Seva with no desire for publicity; they simply followed a spiritual urge to do Sadhana in this form.

This is the genuine Karmayoga. Karma motivated thus will cleanse the mind, faster and better than other Sadhanas; the cleansed mind can reflect more clearly the Light of Wisdom; the Light of Wisdom will reveal the Truth and Man will be saved from the consequences of the ignorance haunting him. Self-less sincere service is therefore to be welcomed and practised. Each act of service is a step toward the Goal of Liberation.

The Objectives, Rules and Regulations that the Organisation has laid down for its own success have to be scrupulously observed by you all. Whatever the difficulties, whatever the reaction of others, bear calumny, criticism and neglect with courage; do not allow these to affect your equanimity.

The good that you do will guard you; have that faith rooted in your mind. Do not exult when your strong desire is fulfilled; do not be dejected when it is not realised. Faith must be built on stronger foundations. Believing one moment and doubting the next, is like living and dying alternately. Faith is the very breath of Seva; doubt is death. One who wavers is as useless as a living corpse.

When you join the Seva Unit and share in its activities, you are doing so not for the sake of Swami, nor for the sake of the people, but, for the sake of the Dharma which you have a duty to uphold and foster. Attachment to Dharma, practice of Dharma and its varied manifestations as Seva and Prema, can alone help transform Manava (Man) into Madhava (God). The destruction of the insidious poison of egoism is essential for the restoration of health and happiness of the mind. Unless you tap the inner spring of joy in your own Satchitananda Principle you cannot be established in Ananda. This is the best way for you to offer the highest possible Seva to the Motherland. For, India is since millennia the Yogabhumi (The land of Yoga,) Tyagibhumi (The land of Tyaga, Detachment), and Karmabhumi (The land of Godward-leading Activity).

Vivekananda asked Max Mueller, in London, when he met him at a Dinner given in his honour by that great Savant of Oriental Scholarship, "When do you propose to visit India?" And, the answer was, "How can I ever think of returning from India, once I reach that holy land? I would rather leave my ashes there, than come back. In the whole world, India is the Heaven." He also declared, "What is not in India is nowhere" by which he meant that what India does not teach is not worth learning. When those who have delved deep into the sacred scriptures of our land adore it like this German Scholar, how foolish are the sons and daughters of our Motherland to decry in their blindness her Glory and the Grandeur!

I find that even you, who have come here as delegates selected by the member, do not strictly observe the disciplines enjoined on you. What shall we then say of the rest? Remember. Duty, Discipline and Devotion, all three, are absolutely essential for every one in our Organisation. You may have Devotion, you may discharge the Duty entrusted to you. But, unless you are saturated in Discipline, the other two are useless. Many of you rushed forward when I walked along the passage this morning and tried to reach out your hands for touching My feet, falling over others while so doing. This is definitely an instance of devotion outrunning discipline. Discipline must regulate and control, not only your activities as members of the Organisation, but, every activity of your life.

I have been telling you since years: Duty is God, Work is worship. But, it is clear that you have not as yet taken this to heart; you have only received it into the ear. Duty involves loyal adherence to the rules and regulations framed for the efficient working of the Organisation. Look upon them with a pure vision, a steady mind, and an attitude of reverence in the heart. Do not talk ill of any one with contempt do not think of any one as low or mean. Christ declared, "All are One; be alike to every one." Hating an individual, or institution, or a religion is a low act. The Atma is immanent in every one; it is the spark of Divinity which gives him light love and joy.

Do not be content by addressing gatherings from platforms, "Brothers! And Sisters!" that becomes merely histrionic, unless you feel the Brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God.

When you have not felt in your heart the Ananda of realising that Isavasyamidam Sarvam (All This is enveloped in God), Isvarassarvaboothanam...." (God is installed in the heart of all beings), or Vasudeva sarvamidam (All this is God), you do not deserve to speak those words, while addressing others.

You long to receive from others gratitude love and respect; but, when the occasion arises for you to offer these you hesitate or refuse. This is wrong. For, this is no one-way traffic! Give and take. That is the rule. Assess in this Conference how far you have put into practice the rules framed in the Fifth All India Conference; examine where you have failed or succeeded only partially, and why. Unless this is done, gathering in Conferences like this is a mere waste of time, energy and money. The money could be spent to greater advantage in feeding the poor or helping them in some other way. With every Conference, you must arrive nearer and nearer the Goal. On side, it becomes misuse of time, money and energy.

All over the land, we have now Bhajan Mandalis, Study Circles, Mahila Vibhags Seva Dals and Seva Samitis, besides Schools, Libraries etc, studding the entire area. Certain of these who have strayed away into wrong lines, regardless of the ideals placed before them; they have to be guided back into the Path. More than everything else, Bal Vikas Classes have to be multiplied so that the children may be saved and trained, to shine as true inheritors of Bharatiya Culture. May the Culture of India which is fast going dry in the land of its origin be restored to its pristine power and purity through your loving and loyal efforts. I bless you that you may be endowed with success.

—*Bhagavan's discourse 4-1-74, All India Conference, Rajahmundry*

Sit quiet for a moment, and, inquire what is it that stays, and what is it that does not. You are now eager to learn about the news of the world, the changing fortunes of peoples and nations, of isms and movements; but, you have no thirst to know the conditions and conflicts within you, happening against the permanent backdrop of the pure, unaffected Atman, which is your innermost Reality. Know that; everything becomes known. Possess that; and all things are possessed by you.

—Baba

The Darshan at Dawn

In the darkness of the misty morn
Rise silent prayers from waiting a crowd,
Each, in the solitude of his own thoughts,
Waits and watches.

The sun bath not risen yet,
The mist still settles in the heavy air,
All around, Nature in her native glory

Waits and watches.

The doves are hidden in the niches,
Each, in her turn, bides her time,
As the lonely elephant
Waits and watches,

Anon, as from nowhere,
In the centre of the temple door
The Living God appears,
"Brighter than a thousand suns,"
Radiant in form, robed in red,
A halo of hair holding a beautiful face,
Slender in figure, of graceful import,
BABA stands before the silent crowd.

There is a stir in the air,
All hands are clasped in prayer,
Gently, softly He walks
A few steps forward,
To feast the fasting eyes
Of many a man, woman and child,

And casts an all-embracing glance,
As though drawing each soul to Him self,
Moving His hand in circles slow,
Palm upward, one couldn't guess why.

"Om Sri Sai Ram," "Om Namoh Shivaya"
Rise like a soft whisper from all around,
An awe fills the air, a bliss sublime;
All eyes are fixed on that form divine,
Hearts full to the brim, with love
That knows no understanding,
Eyes, overflowing with joyful tears,
Hands clasped together in ardent prayer
That one moment those divine eyes
May rest on each lowly form
And bless it in abundance.

The air is still, the distant hills
Stand in assiduous obeisance,
Peace reigns supreme, and then,
As though all good things must end,
The Radiant Form retreats
Toward the silver door,

A moment, and He is gone, —still
Leaving behind His Presence unseen.

Was it a command?
The mist lifts from the air,
The birds are aloft,
All nature hums with life,
A stifled shuffle of footsteps,
And the lingering crowds disperse.

—*Ratnavathi*

Acknowledgement

Consider all the Rules and Regulations decided upon by this Conference as framed for your own progress and welfare. I shall now tell you the main decisions taken. State Presidents will be nominated for those States which have no one so far; they can have Zonal Convenors to help them; the Summer Courses in Spirituality and Indian Culture earl also be arranged in the States in languages other than English, students being selected everywhere through essay writing competitions; such courses, can also be held for College Teachers with separate Scheme of Lectures; Training Classes for Bal Vikas Teachers will be arranged either at Prasanthi Nilayam or Brindavan.

The Sathya Sai University is to be established; as a first step, it shall be a Women's University; the Inauguration of Colleges in other States will be hastened. Trades Schools, Technical Schools and similar job-oriented Educational Institutions have also to be established as at Dharmakshetra. Hostels for young men on the model of the Poona Hostel can also be established. An Agricultural College will be started at Rajahmundry, under the Sathya Sai Educational Scheme.

Vigilance must be exercised by the State Presidents and District Presidents against Books, Pamphlets, and Bulletins being published by individuals and even some Samitis, which are commercial ventures and personal propaganda and not authentic spiritual publications. Some of these are published by persons who, when they are asked to stop such attempts, produce acknowledgement forms signed by me, on receipt of letters sent through Registered Post as 'permission' granted by me. I wonder how people can ever believe that a form signed can be interpreted as a sign of Grace and as leave given, for whatever the person wants to do! Some periodicals publish articles about all kinds of people, in the midst of extracts from my writings and speeches, and the publishers present as authority for this practice, acknowledgement forms with signatures.

Not only these. There are many others too who carry these acknowledgement forms with them and deceive people into believing that I have authorised them to establish and run institutions or build Mandirs or collect donations or behave in various other devious ways to satisfy their selfish ends. On receipt of the mail, I sign the forms, because, I know the recipient will be happy to get the signature. But, that does not mean, it cannot mean, that I approve whatever he does on the basis of that signature. To be misled by such tricks is indeed the height of foolishness. Those who put their faith in such cheats are only reaping the fruits of their own bad Karma. When such tactics are noticed, there is no need for you to report them to me; the State Presidents, District Presidents and other Office Bearers can warn devotees against them and announce that I never authorise or bless their acts.

Again, though I have spoken often against collection of donations, Samitis have taken to the publication of Souvenirs and the canvassing for advertisements therein as a substitute. My Message and extracts from Discourses and Writings are printed in between these advertisements. Such attempts must be stopped; what we should aim at is the cultivation of quality, not the progress in quantity.

Lastly, many who are in charge of the `Units of this Organisation are still not aware of its purpose and programme, its ideals and aims. Membership is to be considered as an Initiation into a Life of Sadhana, where through Prema and Seva, one conquers selfish desire and merges in the Universal. Do not develop more and firmer attachment; try to reduce your desires, and live a simpler life, with higher spiritual aims ever in view. Time wasted is Life wasted; Laziness is Rust, Realisation is Rest. Have Faith in the Path you have chosen. A man with a dual mind is half blind.

—Baba

What, exactly, is your DUTY? I shall summarise IT for you: (1) Tend your parents with love, gratitude and reverence. (2) Speak the Truth, and act always aright. (3) When you have a few moments to spare, Repeat the Name of the Lord (4) Do not cause pain or distress to any one.

—Baba

Advice i Discarded

"Go slowly on Sai Baba, because people here are very Catholic," I was advised, upon arriving after an absence of eight years at Mexico City where i had to conduct a Sai Baba Seminar. i didn't follow this advice, however ...and, luckily so. For, the two Public Lectures i gave on Bhagavan were received with unexpected enthusiasm by the audience that over-filled the Hall.

Before showing the Film, i introduced Kamala Devi, whose husband is with the Indian Embassy. A devotee of Bhagavan she was the only person who could testify to the truth of what i was saying. Her story which i translating into Spanish greatly moved the audience.

When Bhagavan gave her the interview, He told her not to worry about her son which quite naturally, she was doing then. "I just saved his life," He added. Not quite aware of what He meant, she returned to Delhi, to learn that her son was almost killed by a shot-put, when he was standing on the sports field; the metal ball was about to strike his head. At that very moment, some one pulled him away; the ball landed on his foot; the injury was not serious, though he was hospitalised nevertheless.

According to all the witnesses, the boy was standing all alone; there was no one around him. He did not step aside himself, for he had no knowledge of the ball coming in his direction. He had been pulled away, forcibly, by some one quite suddenly.

When they heard from Kamala about her interview and what Baba had told her about saving his life, the boy's heart was filled with gratitude and devotion. His faith was further strengthened after he saw a paralyzed boy cured by Bhagavan during His visit to Jaipur.

Since most of my students (nearly 300 of them) had seen the film and heard from us a great deal about Bhagavan, most of them wanted to touch the japmala He had given me and/or get a mantra. We set up an improvised altar in the corner, near the platform, with candles, agarbatti and flowers surrounding Bhagavan's Picture. I placed at His Feet the pearl japamala which He had given me for healing the sick, so that people used it, one by one. Kneeling down, they reverently kissed It; a few crossed themselves at the end of their prayers to "Mataji's God."

Belief in Baba swept the entire Seminar when several students reported in the Class later about the miraculous healings by the mala and the Vibhuti, one from a chronic headache, another from an excruciating back-pain, a third from a nervous tick and eye trouble, and so on.

Every one became eager to hear more and more about Bhagavan, for which I didn't need much encouragement. Thus, they learnt not only of the miracles of the japmala, the ring, and the Vibhuti-filled Kamandalu which never becomes empty (as Baba assured me, when He was placing it in my hands), but, also about many other miraculous happenings at our Yoga Center in Tecate, starting from the flood inside the House and ending with the fire inside it, both of which were stopped by Bhagavan.

On the last day of our October Seminar, a miracle took place. A young man dropped in at the time of the last minute goodbyes, photographing, book-autographing etc. Seeing that we were all busy, he walked into 'Baba's Room,' and sat down to meditate in front of Bhagavan's Photo, which three years ago started producing Vibhuti.

After a while some one came in silently from behind him, put both his hands upon his head, and left through the door on the side, permitting the meditator to see the stranger clearly in the candlelight, A few minutes later, a group of students from the Seminar walked in and switched on the electricity.

"Does he stay here?" asked the young man, pointing at Bhagavan's pictures, hanging on all the walls. Learning that Sai Baba is in India, and had never been here, at least in His physical form, the youth could not believe his ears. "But, he was here, only a few minutes ago; he put his hands on my head, which made me feel so very good and then he went out through the door on my right, passing so close to me that I could see his handsome features, dark skin, the crown of black hair and a long orange gown. Is there some one here who resembles him?" "No. There is no one like Him here," they answered in utter bewilderment.

Then, they told him who Sai Baba was. Quite shaken by the experience, the young man asked me for a mantra; he was still unable to explain all that had happened.

"Why didn't Baba come to me?" enviously asked some of the student devotees! "I would give anything to see Him that way," "Wait a little longer, for your turn," an old-timer assured, "and, your wish may be fulfilled. He has been seen here, in this room, by many. His presence is often acutely felt during meditation."

Hearing this story, my Mexican Class was glad to learn that one doesn't necessarily have to be a 'long-time devotee' in order to obtain Bhagavan's Grace.

I also told them about how we were once driving from Anantapur to Prasanthi Nilayam. Bhagavan had gone ahead of us, a few minutes earlier. We were rolling on a long lonely road far away from any village; our taxi stopped suddenly; the fan-belt got torn to shreds, and we could not continue the journey, "Bhagavan! We are in trouble," i informed Him; it was a `long-distance call'. No sooner had i spoken those words, then a car appeared; it was coming towards us. It stopped to inquire what the trouble was.

When our driver explained the situation, the man suddenly pulled out ...a brand new fan-belt (!) and gave it to him; we were speechless. "Do people here always travel with a spare fan-belt?" asked a surprised American woman. "Did you ever carry one? Or heard of any one who did it?" was my reply to such a question.

When we finally arrived at the Nilayam, the bhajans were already well, on the way and we sat down outside the temple. As soon as Bhagavan came out, He walked straight to me and asked what the delay was about. "We had car trouble," i answered. Yes... Yes. I know... the fan belt."

The last day of the Seminar, the leave takings, in the beautiful capital of Mexico is hard to describe—kisses, flowers, tears, requests for a soon return—all mixed in one emotionally high `good-bye scene' i was almost choked by the japamala which was being pulled from the neck from behind by people who wanted to touch it or press it against their lips, while i was sitting on the floor and autographing books.

"Didn't you tell me, i should go slowly on Sai Baba?" i asked the couple who had made this suggestion upon my arrival. They only shook their heads, witnessing all that was going on.

"You won, Mataji., they said..... " Not me, Baba did," was all i could say.

Jai Bhagavan!

—*Indra Devi, Tecate, Mexico*

Dawn of Dedication

The village of Kannamangala, a few miles away from Kadugodi, where Bhagavan often resides at Brindavan and where the Sri Sathya Sai Collage of Arts and Science and Commerce is situated, was the venue for the Inauguration by Bhagavan on 3rd February of His Movement for the Revival of Indian Villages, through the Service Programme undertaken by College Students. Sri. Pillaya, Muniraju and Sriramulu from this Village attend the College at Kadugodi; they persuaded the elders of the Village to adore Bhagavan, and this led to their yearning to know more about Bhagavan, His Love, His Message and His Power. At the present time, every homestead in the village is an altar, where Bhagavan is worshipped.

No wonder therefore that Bhagavan chose this village for Inauguration of the Sai Era of Peace and Prosperity. Within days of the announcement of His Grace, the village transformed itself into

a bevy of bedecked happy houses, with clean roads and lanes, displaying colourful festoons and banners. Students, the members of the Teaching Staff and wives of these teachers joined the villagers in the arduous but pleasant task of levelling, sweeping, and decorating the precincts of the village and the quadrangle of the Elementary School, where the Dais was erected.

Baba reached the outskirts of the Village at 4 P.M.; the Elders of Kannamangala, as well as many other Villages of the region welcomed Him with reverential homage. Baba walked along the flower-strewn roads and ascended the Dais, accompanied by the Professors of the College and Dr. V. K Gokak.

The pupils of the Bal Vikas Class at the Village sang Welcome Songs. Sri Ramaswami presented an Address of Adoration. Dr. Gokak then described to the huge gathering the Movement of Village Uplift that Bhagavan had resolved upon. Bhagavan has incarnated to restore Dharma, and re-educate mankind into the Way of Righteousness. He has therefore a multi-phased programme of spiritual renaissance, beginning with the toddlers and extending to people of all ages wherever they may be. He spoke of the Bal Vikas Class for the children, of the Seva Dal which serves the Youth, the Mahila Vibhag which nourishes the women and prepares them for social service and for teaching the children, and the Seva Samitis which organise study circles and Bhajan groups.

Bhagavan declared in His Discourse, "My intention in starting a College at the village of Kadugodi is not to provide one more institution which helps youth to acquire Degrees like B.A., B.Sc., or B. Com., and to wean them away from their native villages into City life (through the provision of jobs) and to impoverish them as well as the places they belonged to.

I want that the village youth who come to my College should be filled with Love, the Spirit of Service and Loyalty to the Parents and Parental Village. They must learn their own Reality as Divinity Itself and behave towards themselves and others as befits that Reality."

Baba referred to the need to repair the Temple in the village, and said, "The temple is the heart of the Village; it is not enough if brick and mortar are used to erect it; faith and devotion are needed to maintain it and keep it ever fresh and fruitful." Baba blessed the proposal to renovate the temple, as the first step in the Awakening of the Village to a sense of Reality.

He told the men, not to squander hard earned money, in drink and other wasteful harmful ways but, to share it with the members of their families and brighten the lives of children. He told the youth to form a Yuvaka Sangha dedicated to the ideal of Service to every one in the village, irrespective of caste or creed, economic or social status. He exhorted the women to foster the children in an atmosphere of honesty, purity and love, of work and worship. He told the villagers of the elevating effect of Nagarsankirtan in the hour of dawn, and of the efficacy of daily congregational Bhajan in the Temple.

Groups of elders are anxious that Bhagavan graciously visits their villages and inspire them with His Divine Message; they wish to benefit by the Service Activities of the Students of Bhagavan's College. Students of the College from Seegehalli, a village a few miles off from Kadugodi were

able to persuade Bhagavan to bless their Service Activities, by a Visit to that place, on Sunday, the tenth of February.

Baba exhorted the villagers here too to give up factions and sectional misunderstandings, and to work wholeheartedly for the uplift of the entire village, which is a unit in the national organism.

Surely, the Sai Era has dawned on Rural India. Nothing can impede or delay it; when Sai resolves, the problem is solved.

—*Ed.*

How far Materialism?

Dialectical or Plain Materialism, Historical or Practical Materialism: the words sound fine and rhythmic to the modern ear. But, these deal only with matter, either viewed through logical processes unaffected by other considerations or as affecting or affected by historical events or movements. The Universe is taken for granted. Matter or its present essence, Energy, is the be-all and the end-all.

Man has been trying to find out the very nature of the world around him, from the very day he appeared here as a rational inquisitive being. This pursuit will be with him till the end. Still, one thing is certain: whether man attempts to discover it or not, whether he catches a glimpse of it or not, the Truth of things will not change. In India too we have Charvakas, of the Materialist School, condemning all attitudes that went beyond the perceptible world and sticking firmly only to those items of knowledge that can be grasped through the senses. Sankara, the great philosopher and spiritual teacher, travelled on foot over the length and breadth of this land, calling on Charvakas and others to meet him in public philosophical debates, so that their shaky foundations could be exposed and the people led into the path of righteousness and liberation from ignorance. But, since materialism is an attractive doctrine, it did not completely lose hold on the minds of people, even in India, the Mother of Theistic Faiths and of Advaita. We can derive some satisfaction from the fact that they are waging a losing battle and that the number of people who recognise the superiority of the spiritual path is at least statistically greater.

The protagonists of materialist sociology, economics and politics are concerned only with the material plane, with satisfying the sensual cravings, the physical needs of man. They are struck by the seamy side of social life, the distress and the dirt, and they ascribe it to the greed and pride of one section of the people, forgetting that these and other vices are common in some form or other to all men. The Doctrine of Karma could not appeal to them, since they have no faith in re-incarnation of the soul, or even in the soul.

Inner peace, the sense of wonder at the handiwork of the Supreme Architect, the elation that one gets at the contemplation of the Universe and the Mystery that is its core—these Intimations of Immortality are neglected and denied by the materialist thinkers.

Life without the urge towards realising one's Reality is as barren as a flower without fragrance. The flower may look beautiful, with its variegated colour; but, it cannot attract even a single bee

to fructify it. If one has the eyes to see and the intuitive faculty sharpened effectively, one can sense the enormous energy and power that lie hidden and latent in a drop of dew or a blade of grass, placed there by the Universal Absolute during its Game of Manifestation. There is joy, there is power, there is play—everywhere, at all times. That is to say, there is Divinity everywhere.

For, Divinity expresses Itself as Love, as Virtue, as Vitality—at all times. Though man has today travelled millions of miles and planted his foot on the moon, what he has achieved is but a speck of dust on the limitless shore of the Ocean that is God. Man is still the slave of his own passions and desires. He falls a victim to weakening vices, he cannot control dire disease, he cannot create anew a flower or a fruit, or anything alive in his laboratory. He is unable to explain the nature of electricity though he knows a thousand ways of using it for his own comfort or advancement.

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba has reminded us that material advance is a trap which engulfs us into fear, anxiety, competition, hate. Inquiry into the Self alone can give Peace, Equanimity and Freedom from Fear. In words that are very sweet and satisfying, He calls upon us to look into the inner laboratory of the mind and discover there, by the process of discarding the temporary and the trivial, the Divine that is the Reality, on which delusion has settled like a thick fog.

I heard Him on the 23rd November 1973, telling us about the Truth, and calling upon us to purify our motives and character, so that the Truth might be reflected clearly in our consciousness. I saw Him moving among the thousands of pilgrims showering Love which inspired and comforted them. The atmosphere was charged with true devotion and reverence, and the discipline I noticed was spontaneous and sincere.

In His Presence, one realised the absurdity of the purely material approach to the problems of man. For, the material approach ignores the fundamental problem—Who is man? Why has he come as man? Where lies his destiny?

—S. A. Sheriff

Be like the Lotus, Born in slush, in the floor of a tank, it struggles through the water, in order to bask in the sunlight which it loves, which is its life. Spending its days and nights with the soil below and the water above it, it does not allow both to soil its beauty or wet its joy. You too have to live like the Lotus in this world, in it, through it, but not, of it.

—BABA

My Soul's String

Master mine, when in the spring
The fields are ripe
And the kites
Are dancing in the wind,

Let me remember this—
That my soul's string you hold
Now taut, now loose,
To prance, to soar, to fall
And falling, rise again.

Long ago, this sport began,
Part of your master plan.
When most I think I am free,
You tug! I wince Lord...
Release gently, wind the string,
Till I fall, fluttering at your feet.

—*T. Ramanathan Colombo*

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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Guha Meets Bharata

Guha alerted his community and all its members to be prepared for the imminent battle. Then, he got ready to meet Bharata, in order to discover whether he had come as foe, or as friend, or whether he was neutral, only a passing visitor who need not be worried about. Knowing that Bharata was a Prince of Imperial Lineage, he secured as offerings to be presented by him, large quantities of flowers, fish, flesh, and fruits.

He planned to discover the innate intent of Bharata by noting his reactions to the various articles that were offered to him. Roots and tubers and fruits were Satwic food; if he preferred them, he must be reckoned a friend. The flesh of slain animals is Rajasic food; preference for that type of food would mark out the "middle of the road" neutral, who is neither ally nor adversary. Fish, if accepted eagerly, would indicate a foe, for, they are Tamasic items of food.

Taking with him these offerings, Guha, the Chieftain of the Nishadas, proceeded to the presence of Bharata. Good omens greeted him at the very first step. His eyes fell on the Sage, Vasishta. He ran forward and fell at his feet, announcing himself by name. The Preceptor recognised him as the companion of Rama; he blessed the Chieftain, and, calling Bharata to his side, he spoke to him of Guha as the 'friend' of Rama.

As soon as those words fell on his ears, Bharata embraced Guha warmly, and showered questions on him, about his health and welfare. Bharata prompted him to relate to him how he met Rama; when Guha mentioned how Rama spent one whole night with him on the banks of the self-same river, Bharata showed great earnestness to listen to his description of that night; his eyes and ears were panting with thirst for the nectar of that picture and that narrative.

The chieftain of the Nishadas was all praise and adoration for Rama; he showed him the thatched hut he had prepared so that Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana could rest for a while; he told him of the conversation he had with Lakshmana during the night. On hearing all this, Bharata and Shatrughna could not stop the stream of tears flowing down their cheeks; they could not suppress the surging waves of sorrow. Watching them, Guha was convinced that they had genuine brotherly feelings towards Rama and that there was no trace of hostility in them. He was struck by their devotion and the sincerity of their dedication.

Pining over Brother's Hardship

Bharata had a close look at the huts constructed for the use of Sita, Rama and Lakshmana; he desired that they be tended with due care so that they suffer no damage. Following the orders of the Preceptor, Bharata performed the ceremonial bath in the holy river Ganga, along with his mothers. Bharata Asked Guha to take them to the place where Rama spent the night, pointing his finger to a heap of darbha grass that had been scattered by the wind, said, "Sita and Rama rested here, on this bed of dry grass that night." Bharata and Shatrughna prostrated before that holy spot. Bharata lamented, "Alas! My Lord, accustomed to sleep on a thick soft silken bed, how could he sleep on such hard stuff? Alas! How did that holy mother Sita bear all this hardship?" Overcome with grief, Bharata could not move from the place for a long while.

Rising, Bharata requested that he be shown the places which Rama, Sita and Lakshmana had rendered holy by treading on them. Guha took them to an Ashoka tree, under whose shade they sat for some time to eat a frugal meal of fruits. There too the brothers fell on the ground reverentially, knowing it to be holy ground.

Guha grasps the Truth

While they were moving round the places sanctified by Rama, Sita and Lakshmana, the two brothers suffered indescribable agony. The humility, reverence, and devotion they manifested touched the tender heart of the Nishada Chieftain. Bharata could not contain his anguish, when he contemplated the discomforts that Sita—Goddess Mahalakshmi Herself—the dearly beloved daughter of Emperor Janaka, the daughter-in-law of Emperor Dasaratha, and the Consort of Rama the Mighty, was enduring. Bharata disclosed to Guha that the inhabitants of Ayodhya City could not survive in that City any longer, for the holy couple, Rama and Sita had left it; they felt that Ayodhya had been transformed into a jungle, for it had no Rama in it; he said that he too could not bear their grief, and he too realised that Ayodhya was wherever Rama was; so, he explained, he had come with his following and with the inhabitants, to the sacred Presence of Rama.

Guha grasped the situation clearly now and gave up all the theories he had entertained, when he saw Bharata advancing with his army, with its four components of infantry, cavalry, elephantry, and chariotry, towards the jungle where Rama was. He opened his heart to Bharata and begged to be pardoned for the doubts he had framed in his mind about his intentions.

Bharata said that his fears were natural and that he had committed no wrong. For, the truth was, he was indeed a wicked barbarian! "I am the reason for the exile that Rama is going through," he said. "For that one crime, I deserve to be killed; he who kills me commits no sin," he groaned. When Bharata was condemning himself so harshly, Guha poured out his prayers for pardon.

"Bring Rama back!"

News spread in Sringerapur, the Nishada Capital, that Bharata had come to the bank of the Ganga. At this, the subjects of Guha hurried in groups to honour the brother of Rama. They fed their eyes on the beauty and majesty of the brothers; they praised them to their hearts' content; they prostrated reverentially before them. They also roundly reprimanded Queen Kaikeyi. They blamed the God of Destiny, Brahma, for being so cruel. They shed of profuse tears; they extolled Rama through manifold forms of praise. They prayed to Bharata and Shatrughna, (every one of them—men, women children, all) to bring back with them Rama, Sita and Lakshmana from the jungle.

Bharata was struck dumb, at this demonstration of extreme agony at separation from Rama! Tears rolled down his face. "Praying is my task; what happens to the prayer is dependent on the Grace of Rama. I am but a slave; who am I to exert pressure on Rama? Join with me in my prayer; pray from the depth of your hearts that Rama should return to Ayodhya. His heart will certainly melt at our agony. This is our Duty. Let your prayers help my prayers to succeed. Rama has come to save the world, and he will not refuse the prayers of the people. Bharata consoled and comforted the Nishadas and others in ways best suited to their needs and capacities.

Meanwhile, darkness fell on earth, and Bharata asked the Chieftain of the Nishadas to direct his people to go home. They ate the fruits brought by Guha, and, spent the whole night talking about Rama, and His glory.

Towards Triveni

When the eastern sky brightened to usher in the new day, Bharata instructed the Minister to awaken the populace; he bathed in the sacred Ganga, with his brother; the Mothers too finished their bath. Every one got ready to continue the journey. Guha, the Chieftain of the Nishada tribe, collected enough craft to row over, the large mass of people, the chariots, the horses, and other sections of the armed forces that had accompanied Bharata. The task of ferrying them across the Ganga was quickly and successfully accomplished.

After ascertaining whether all had been transported, Guha moved forward into the jungle, showing Bharata the way. The Brahmins, and the Preceptor Vasishta walked on as one group; the people of Ayodhya followed in one vast mass; units of the army followed behind, Journeying thus, Bharata reached the confluence of the rivers Ganga and Yamuna, the sacred Prayag, in the afternoon. Bharata had never walked so much on foot, and so, his soles became sore and they hurt with a burning sensation. Yet, Bharata plodded on, for, he felt his pain as recompense for the pain inflicted on Rama. He ignored it, for, he was conscious only of the pain Rama was undergoing at that very time.

Prayag is known as Triveni, for, the river Saraswati too enters the twin rivers at that holy place. Its sacredness is tripled thereby. They bathed at the famous confluence with due rites. The anchorites, hermits, celibates, sages, and monks of Prayag were delighted at the chance to fill their eyes with the sight of Bharata. They told among themselves, "O! He casts around him the same splendour as Rama; in fact, his appearance is just the same." Every one who looked at him could scarce indulge in a wink, lest the delight would be interrupted thereby!

Sage Bharadwaja

The inmates of Bharadwaja Ashram in Prayag learnt of the arrival of the two brothers of Rama, with contingents of his armed forces, and accompanied by their mothers, and ministers. Sage Bharadwaja sent his disciples to Bharata and invited the party to visit the Ashram. Interpreting the invitation as a command, Bharata and his entourage entered the Ashram.

The brothers prostrated before that Monarch of the Monastic Order. Bharadwaja raised them by the shoulder and drew them near with great affection, He gave them refreshingly cool drinks. He noticed that Bharata was sitting with his head bent in shame and fear, lest his share in the exile of Rama be revealed through questions that might be asked. Bharadwaja discovered the reason for his silence and nervousness. He said, "Bharata! You need no apprehensions; I am aware of all that happened. No one can control or direct the path of Destiny. Why pine over the boons that your mother demanded? No trace of wrong can be attributed to her for this; the Will of God induced her to ask such boons. Kaikeyi, I know, loves Rama as her very breath; so, the reason for the turn of her mind took is to be sought, not in any human field of thought and reason, but, only in the Divine plan. As the world judges events, Kaikeyi has done wrong; as the Vedas lay down, the Goddess Saraswati who presides over the tongue has done wrong; know that what has happened is in conformity with the will of the Almighty.

"You are Innocent"

Bharata! The world will enthuse over your spotless renown, and sing your praise. The Vedas will be valued more on account of such as you, exemplifying their teachings and demonstrating their efficacy. Do not hesitate! The son to whom the father entrusts the kingdom is thereby deemed deserving of the right to govern it. That relentless adherent of Truth, that High-Souled ruler, Emperor Dasaratha gave the empire to you, and ordered that you should act according to the Dharma of Monarchs.

The exile of Rama into the forest has resulted in a series of calamities. The entire world is sunk in sorrow on account of this event. Now your mother is repenting pitiably over the wrong she committed. But, you are untouched by wrong; you are innocent and blameless. No blemish can attach itself to you, now if you rule over the empire. In fact, Rama will be happy to know that you have taken up the reins of imperium.

I must also say that the mission on which you are now set is very laudable indeed. Your purpose is highly commendable. For, devotion to the Lotus Feet of Rama is the spring and source of all prosperity and progress. Bharata! I can boldly declare that there is none so virtuous, so fortunate as you. You have proved yourself worthy of being the dearly beloved younger brother of Rama.

Rama sanctified this, our Ashram, while on his way to the forest. That night, till the hour of midnight, Rama was talking to me mostly of you and your virtues. They proceeded with me to Prayag for the holy bath; they remembered you even while engaged in bathing! He felt very sad that he could not see you and Shatrughna, the day he left Ayodhya. I cannot measure the love that Rama has towards you.

"I am indeed blessed"

Besides, Rama is ever intent on assuaging the grief of those who take refuge in him. The entire world is his family; all are his kith and kin. I believe you are the `affection' of Rama, in human form, no less. What you feel as a blemish on your name is, to me, a lesson, an example, and an inspiration.

Bharata! You should not be weighed down by sadness. You are in possession of the Wish-fulfilling Gem! Why then should you lament that you are poor? It isn't proper that you should do so. The Darshan of Sita, Rama and Lakshmana is verily the fortune that awaits all spiritual endeavours. I secured that fortune; for, I feasted my eyes on that Darshan. I could speak with them; I was in their Presence and I could touch them too. I had the privilege and pleasure of being their host.

Perhaps, there was some balance of fortune still awaiting me; for, I have now this pleasure of getting your Darshan too. Ecstasy has now filled my heart. I am truly blessed.

Rama has exiled himself into the forest for the sake of us, ascetics living therein, so that our yearnings might be fulfilled and our holiness heightened. We are blessed, indeed."

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

Sai Family News

Letter from Sikkim

By the Grace of God, we have established a `Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samiti' at Singtan, in the District of East Sikkim, on the Birthday of Bhagavan. Since then, we are conducting Nagarsankirtan on every Thursday, and every Poornima. We start at 3-30 in the morning and close the Kirtan at 4-30 or 5. In the evening, we do Bhajan from 7 to 8-30, at the Mandir of Lord Siva. The Samiti has translated into Nepali the Message of Bhagavan found on the L. P. Record, which contains also the Bhajans sung by Him; this has become the precious possession of thousands of people in this region.

Seva Samiti, Murshidabad

We have received a Copy of the Annual Report for 1973 presented by the President Dr. Mrityunjoy Barman. The Report is unique in many respects, and can well be held as an example. It says, "Guided by the Divine Directives given by Bhagavan we tried to the best of our ability to follow the rules laid down after the 5th All India Conference held at Madras in 1971, for the working and conduct of the activities of a Seva Samiti." The Report reveals the scrupulous attention paid to these directives and rules. 20 Meetings of the Samiti were held in the year; Sadhana Camps were held at the `Sadhana Spots' of Bama-Kashyapa (Tarapeeth), and Jayadeva (Kendu-Vilwa). The Report is refreshingly plain-spoken while announcing the short-comings, involving the attendance of members, the organisation of Mahila Vibhag and Seva Dal, and the receipt of donations. No breach of any rule is condoned or concealed; the need for

self-examination and self-correction in order to achieve self-improvement through the Seva Samiti is emphasised on every page.

Letter from South Africa

Pictures of Baba have been printed in thousands and distributed to those who long to possess it; we have been ordering books also in plenty, in order to quench the thirst of thousands here for the message of Bhagavan. Baba has taken our country by storm. There has been a sudden religious awakening among all people here; in thousands of homes, Bhajans are sung every day by groups of devotees. Baba has blessed many with miraculous evidences of His Presence and Grace. Some homes have Vibhuti showering from His Pictures. Honey and kum-kum are issuing from His Pictures in many houses. Devotees know that He is with them and that they have been blessed.

In Durban and Peitermaritzburg, there are over 30 Bhajan Groups. From Natal, His Name and the Sadhana of Bhajan have spread to Transvaal and the Cape Province. Devotees from Lesotho and Zambia were also contacted by us, when we recently inaugurated the "Bhagavan Sathya Sai Foundation of South Africa." It has its Headquarters in Durban. Books containing Bhajans taught by Baba have been compiled and printed and widely distributed by this Foundation. Its main task is to open branches in other areas also and to guide, advise and help the Branches and coordinate the activities. Various social service activities are undertaken by the members, such as singing Bhajans in the homes of the sick and praying for their early recovery.

When Bhagavan's Birthday was celebrated on the 25th November, at Durban, over 2500 people attended. An 8 mm film of Baba taken at Whitefield by J. Bunwarie Maharaj was exhibited by him, and every one felt that Baba was present at the place and was showering His Grace on all. We pray that Baba will bless us with the strength and knowledge required to follow steadily the path of Sathya Dharma Shanti and Prema, laid down by Him for the salvation of mankind.

Training Camp, Meerut

Over 150 Lady Devotees dedicated to do Sadhana as Presidents of Mahila Vibhags and Gurus of Bal Vikas Classes, belonging to 10 towns in the District of Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, stayed in the Training Camp at Meerut for three days (26, 27 and 28 Jan, 74.) Besides discourses and discussions on the guide-lines for conducting Bal Vikas Classes in accordance with the Ideals laid down by Baba, model lessons for children as well as cultural programmes by children were arranged. Sri J. N. Kapoor, Vice Chancellor, Meerut University inaugurated the Camp and gave an illuminating speech on the methods of granting moral and spiritual training to children. An Exhibition of Drawings and Photographs depicting the Sathya Sai Revolution in Educational Ideals and Practice was also on view. Films on Bhagavan's Visit to Delhi, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh were shown.

Sai on Sadhana

Devotee: In the West, Sadhana is generally taken to be a process of self-improvement. But, that implies identification with the changing personality?

Sri Sathya Sai: First, there may be the urge to self-improvement. But, the next stage is inquiry, the inquiry into the reality of `this' and `that'. Seven-tenths of Sadhana is ENQUIRY.

Devotee: Sadhana as it is described, seems wrong, because it is a conscious effort aimed at getting a reward. It seems to me that Sadhana is real, only when it is spontaneous. That is to say, as when one naturally loves God. He cannot but help love God. And, he cannot help but make inquiry.

Sri Sathya Sai: It is as you say; but, you have not experienced the spontaneous love for God. It is still just an idea. You have a conviction that love for God, exists naturally in you. That conviction itself is the result of many lives spent in spiritual practice.

Devotee: I have the conviction so strong, that it is the very marrow of my bone that Life is One; that others, Swami, 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?

Sri Sathya Sai Baba: Your conviction of Unity is an Idea, a Thought. It is not experience. For instance, when your wife has pain in the head, do you have it too? If not, where is the experience of the Unity? The Unity must be experienced, not just felt as an idea, or entertained as a thought.

Devotee: Swami! If Sadhana and conviction do not bring the experience, how is one to get it?

Sri Sathya Sai: Through Steady Sadhana. Just as with ourselves now, in this car. We need concern ourselves only with the careful driving of the car; in due course, we will arrive at Anantapur, wouldn't we? With correct and steady Sadhana, the actual experience of the ONE will naturally come about.

Devotee: How does one really experience that he is the same as another? Because now, one feels for another through compassion. Compassion is idea, understanding it is not direct experience of unity. When some one hit a dog, Sai Baba of Shirdi had the bruises. That is the actual experience of Unity.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba: All is Diving. When you are firmly established in the fact of your Divinity, then, you will directly know that others are Divine. Compassion for others is felt so long as you consider yourself as a separate entity, as a consequence of the body-consciousness. The story of Shirdi Sai Baba that you have heard about is not fully correct. The facts are: a lady cooked and got ready a plate of sweets for Baba, and a dog ate them. The lady drove the dog away, with blows. The lady then carried another plate of sweets to Baba, who refused them, saying that He had eaten the sweets she previously provided, and His hunger was satisfied. The lady pointed out that this was the first time that she was offering the sweets; so, how could he say to the contrary? Baba said, "No." You offered them and while I was eating them, you have also beaten Me." Thus, He gave a lesson that He was omnipresent and that there was only ONE Universal Life.

Devotee: What does Swami mean by 'omnipresent'?

Sri Sathya Sai: Omnipresent means everywhere, at the same time, all the time.

Devotee: Swami says, that at a certain stage, in Sadhana, the exterior Nature ceases. How is that?

Sri Sathya Sai: There are ten stages in Sadhana, each cognised by sounds of various types, ranging through different vibrations—bell, flute, conch, OM, thunder etc. The tenth stage is reached when the senses are transcended. Beyond the senses, it is the state of Bliss.

Devotee: Is that State of Bliss experienced only for a time? What happens in the daily round of life?

Sri Sathya Sai: That state remains always. Then, it is always Bliss.

He thinks God, eats God, drinks God, breathes God, lives God.

Devotee: Does every one pass through these ten stages?

Sri Sathya Sai: No. One may go direct to the tenth, the transcendental state. Or, to stage six, or seven. Or not progress at all. It is not uniform for all.

Devotee: What should be one's attitude to these stages in Sadhana, as one encounters each stage one by one?

Sri Sathya Sai: The states change, but, the 'attitude' should be unchanging.

Devotee: But, what value should one give to the various states?

Sri Sathya Sai: The Sadhaka will not be satisfied, with any of the states. For, complete union is the goal. Desire remains strong, until the transcendental bliss is realised, and then, desire ceases. At that state, all is God. Thoughts, desires, all are God.

Devotee: These thoughts that stream through the mind, are they material?

Sri Sathya Sai: Yes. They are matter. All matter is impermanent.

Devotee: Where do thoughts come from?

Sri Sathya Sai: They come from food and environment. If you have Satwic food and desire only for good things and atmosphere around you, good thoughts only will come.

Devotees: Where do thoughts go?

Sri Sathya Sai: They go no place. Because, thoughts do not flow through the mind. The mind goes out and grasps, and gets engaged with thoughts. If the desire is for God, the mind does not go out. The best way is not to get involved in the problem, 'How to get rid of thoughts?' See all thoughts as God. Then, only God-thoughts will come. The entire mechanism of body, mind, intelligence, will work in a coordinated manner, for the benefit of the higher goal.

Devotee: Then, for whom should the entire mechanism be functioning?

Sri Sathya Sai: For the Atma. A small example: The earth turns on its own axis, but, at the same time, it is revolving around the Sun. The various faculties of man should do their own work, but, the Atma is the center of their Universe.

Devotee: Swami! How can one bring these faculties under the control of the Atma?

Sri Sathya Sai: When one realises that the Atma is the Reality, the ONE, then, everything will function smoothly. It is a question of surrendering all to the Atma.

Devotee: But, Swami has said, we should ask ourselves, "Who am I that I dare talk of surrendering my mind and intelligence to God? They do not belong to me. How can I surrender that which I do not own, and cannot even control?"

Sri Sathya Sai: It is not a question of surrendering or giving to some other one. One surrenders to oneself. Recognition that the Atma is one-self is surrender.

Devotee: Then, Swami means, that surrender is really a putting aside of that which one perceives as incorrect or false.

Sri Sathya Sai: Yes.

Devotee: I now understand. "Surrender" implies a person offering himself or his possessions to another person. But, really, it is more like the abandoning of ideas and concepts for which one has no further use, or which one sees as inadequate or wrong.

Sri Sathya Sai: Yes.

—*From the Note Book of An American Devotee*

Sivaratri with Siva

In spite of the fact that the Sanathana Sarathi made no announcement regarding the Presence of Bhagavan at Prasanthi Nilayam, on Mahasivaratri Day, (20-2-74), more than 20,000 devotees had gathered at the Nilayam, by dawn that day, from all the States of India and even from some countries beyond the seas. Bhagavan declared that these were indeed eminently lucky, for they

witnessed the ever-unique Manifestation of Bhagavan's Glory and Compassion and were blessed by Him beyond their most ambitious expectations.

Bhagavan vouchsafed the Darshan, for which the thousands yearned at 7-30 in the morning, appearing at the Porch on the First Floor of the Prasanthi Mandir, Himself opening the Silver Doors, with the Emblems of the Religions of the World. The sky echoed with the joyful clang of bells, the ecstatic Bhajans from the Bhaktas, the Recital of Vedic Hymns, and the Jais of the devotees. Dr. Gokak addressed the gathering on the significance of Mahasivaratri and on Bhagavan as The Siva who is adored by millions on that Holy Day, with fast and vigil. He echoed the feelings of the vast assembly and earned their gratitude, when he recited a poem that sprang from his heart:

O Fullness of Love!
O Effulgence of Spirit!
O Truth itself!
O SAI!

You are mine.
I know You belong to millions;
But, so far as You live in me
You are mine.
I am Thine.
I know Thou ownest a million others;
But, so far as I live in Thee,
I am Thine.

Hear my prayer!
Here's my prayer:
Guide my footsteps towards my Being;
Guide my darkness towards its Light;
Lead my mortality
To Immortality!
This is my prayer.
Grant that it be fulfilled!
Shanti, Shanti, Shantih!

Bhagavan in His Discourse spoke of the Brahma, Siva and Vishnu Principles, Brahma being the repository of the Rajoguna, Siva or Rudra of the Tamoguna, and Vishnu of the Satwaguna. He elaborated on the Vishnu-Tattwa, as the stage of the River, and of the Brahma and Siva-Tattwa as the Sea, from which the River emerges and into which the River merges. Vishnu manifests as Desa and Kala, as Time-Space, and as Causation; He founded the Sankhya School of Philosophy, while in the Avatar of Kapila. Bhagavan dwelt briefly on the Fundamental Categories and their numbers (Sankhya), and how Creation in its aspects of Being and Becoming depend upon the Principle of Numbers. He pointed out the "Dasangulam" mentioned in the Upanishads, and explained that this reference to "ten inches" was made about the Heart-site.

Creation or the Evolution of Life and of Breath, moved in multiples of ten, just as Time is measured as a year of 360 days and in 60 ghatikas and vighatikas of 60.

Referring to the Lingodbhavam that is a feature of Sivaratri, Baba said that Linga Meant (1) that which had neither beginning nor end (2) that towards which all beings move (3) that into which all beings merge. Sivam means Auspicious and Ratri means Darkness, which is Inauspicious, full of Ignorance, Fear, and Grief. One has to convert this Darkness which has overwhelmed man into Day, by lighting the lamp of Love. Bhagavan announced to the great delight of the gathering that the Vibhuti Abhishekam will take place during Bhajan, and that He would be explaining the significance of the Abhishekam and the Lingodbhavam during His Discourse in the evening.

At 11 A.M., Bhagavan proceeded to the Poornachandra Auditorium, in procession, with the Vedic Pundits, the Students of the Vedasastra Pathashala and others, along the floral path specially decorated for the Festival. After a short Bhajan Session by the mammoth gathering, Baba performed the ceremonial Abhishekam to the Silver Idol of Shirdi Sai Baba, and thrilled every one of the devotees with the inexhaustible stream of Vibhuti that fell from a small receptacle at the touch of His Divine Hand.

The Bhajan, OM SIVAYA, reverberated in the huge expansive Auditorium when the Abhishekam was in progress, to the recital of the Vedic hymns known as Namakam and Chamakam.

Bhagavan then out of an upsurge of spontaneous Grace came down the Dais, with the water sanctified by the ritual of Abhishekam, and sprinkled it over the heads of the vast multitude, Himself walking along the long lanes of the seated devotees. This was an unexpected and welcome addition to the good fortune of the devotees.

In the evening, Bhaktas gathered at the Poornachandra Auditorium for the meeting which began at 4-30 P.M. Sri. Nakul Sen, I. C. S., Former Governor of Goa, spoke on the Siva-Tattwa, as it is described in the Puranas and the Mahabharata, and of the connotations underlying the various Names by which Siva is adored in the Indian Scriptures. Sri Page, Chairman, Maharashtra Legislative Assembly, spoke on the Siva aspect of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, in mellifluous Hindi and described the Divine Excellences discernible in Siva as well as Sai. Swami Karunyanandaji of Rajahmundry gave an exciting account of the workings of Bhagavan's Grace, which he experienced in the inflow of dedicated service from thousands of men and women, which enabled him and his co-workers to make the Sixth All India Conference of the Organisation held at Rajahmundry in January, so successful. Bhagavan's Presence in their midst was a fact of actual personal experience for the Volunteers wherever they worked, during the Days of the Conference, either in the kitchen, or the dining sheds, or the Conference Halls or Committee Rooms or the Theatre.

Dr. Bhagavantam announced amidst cheers that Mr. Tarapore of Madras had gifted to the Sri Sathya Sai Trust the 5 acre property and the magnificent buildings thereon, hitherto called Abbotsbury, which is situated on the Mount Road in the heart of the City. Bhagavan, he said, had named the property "Sri Sathya Sai Sudha."

Bhagavan in His Discourse explained the symbolism of serpent-worship as the representation of the Kundalini Yoga, with its six chakras and the Sahasrara (the Raised Hood). The Lord of the Seven Hills is the Lord attainable by the Yoga Process of ascending through the Chakras. Venkateswara is the Lord who awards the Bliss of Merger to the aspirant who climbs over the Seven Hills or stages of Yogic Sadhana. Subrahmanya as the Serpent is worshipped in Temples. Not that the Serpent is the custodian of deadly poison, but the Serpent is the Symbol of the Vital Spiritual Energy that lies dormant in the nerve centres of Man, waiting for being awakened and used for uplift.

Baba said that Siva burnt Manmatha or Lust or Desire into ashes; and expressed his joy at the victory by applying that ash over His Body. Ashes are the ultimate destination of all things; they cannot fade or dry up or rot or evaporate or get polluted; so, they are the purest and the most lasting offerings one can make to God, more preferable than the traditional offerings of water, fruits, flowers or leaves mentioned in the Bhagavad-Gita. So, ashes are offered as the substance for Abhisheka; but, they should be ashes secured by the burning of the desires that infest man.

Baba exhorted the people to cultivate equanimity and compassion, the two chief characteristics of Siva, for God is most pleased when Godly qualities are cultivated and fostered.

Bhagavan then sang the Bhajans...Prema muditha manase kaho, Govinda Gopala prabhu Giridhari, and while He was singing the third Bhajan—Sivalinga mangalanga... Sivaratri Atmalinga, and repeating the line, Sivaratri Atmalinga, intimations of the Linga, that had formed in His Stomach, emerging into the expectant view of forty thousand eyes—came into the awareness of the gathering. Bhagavan sipped water a few times, and after a short spell of gasps and hiccups, a greenish Crystal Linga, an oversize Oval shaped Symbol of the Siva-Tattwa, of the emergent Time-Space-Causation Continuum, fell out of His Mouth, and was held by His Hand. Baba brought the Linga in His Hand before the lines of ecstatically thrilled Devotees, and as He walked slowly by, each face that saw the Marvel shone with the Light of supreme fulfillment.

With the Linga thus created out of the Divine Substance, (that Baba is) installed on the Dais before them, the entire Gathering burst into song in praise of the Siva in whose Presence they were. The Bhajan continued till Sunrise, the enthusiasm of the devotees increasing with every hour of night that rolled by.

Bhagavan gave Darshan at the Auditorium, as soon as dawn broke and Arati was performed to Him and to the Atmalinga of this Sivaratri. Bhagavan spoke of the Linga in some detail, explaining that it was "dasangulam" or ten inches in circumference, that it has the three-pronged Trisul of Siva, shining within it, that the colour of the brilliance of the prongs changed every ten minutes, indicating the importance of 'ten' as in the system of Sankhya, and that the Trisula represented wisdom covering the Past, Present, and Future.

He declared that the Lingodbhava, the Emergence of the Linga from the Divine Incarnation is a highly sanctifying event and all those who had come to Prasanthi Nilayam, in answer to the Inner call and witnessed the Emergence and the Brilliance had won Liberation from the round of Birth and Death. He wanted them all to cherish the Vision in their hearts and so live that they reveal in

thought word and deed that they have been blessed thus. "Never indulge in anything mean or low narrow or loveless. Live with a sense of fear that you might slip into error or wrong, that you might forget the Vision and the Lesson it teaches."

As a parting Message, Baba directed every one to shape their lives as befits the Poorna Chandra under whose inspiring shelter they had gathered, for the Poornachandra—the Full Moon—was the symbol of a calm cool collected Mind, bathed in peace and joy. He said that Sivaratri could be celebrated at Prasanthi Nilayam this year, since such comfortable and spacious accommodation was available with all facilities now. So, it was the duty and responsibility of every one to direct their auspicious thoughts on Sri Poornachandra who had constructed the Auditorium, while honouring the demand that the ideal of Poornachandra makes on their minds and hearts.

Prasad was then distributed to every one of the thousands; the atmosphere was rendered holy by the Assurance granted by Bhagavan and the Gratitude which it aroused in the hearts of every one.

The Grace of God

There are few forces in the universe that are so difficult to understand as that which is called the Grace of God. While it is easy for one to reject God's role in the universe altogether, it is not too difficult to accept the idea that there is something we call "God" which seems to control the major movements in the cosmos and which is tied up, in some inexplicable manner, with the life of man on earth. In this way the concept of God is placed at a distance and can be safely ignored; or, safely relegated to a well-defined role in religion, God may be appeased or recognized or admired without allowing any of His mysteries to confound the intellect and interrupt the everyday pattern of life that an individual follows.

But there is a force which when recognized, defies all our ordinary means of accepting or rejecting God, and which forces us to confront our doubts and beliefs, and to seriously question what is and what is not real in life. This force is the Grace of God, which manifests on earth by an act of Divine Will. It is not subject to or understandable by the laws and logic of the human mind; its appearance is not predictable, uniform or stable. It comes, it goes, leaving its mark upon man's history. How, then, may we approach this topic and find some direction or comfort in it?

The mystery of God's Grace attracts us because it is not subject to any of the known laws of mankind and because it defies the reasoning of the mind. How does this Grace manifest itself in human life? We witness it primarily in those whose hearts are turned towards God, or who seek Him in times of trial or severe illness. When all human forms of help, succour and success fail a man completely and he turns to God for help, and God answers him—this is the Grace of God. When one, frustrated by the ups and downs of worldly life, calls on the Holy Spirit to guide him, and the Spirit comes upon him and takes his life in hand—here again we witness the Grace of God.

Studying the lives of the Saints of any religion can fill you with examples of God's Grace. However, it is our incomparable good fortune to live at a time when the frustration, desperation and misery of mankind has reached such a peak that the Grace of God has descended on earth in human form, an act that brings awe and faith to anyone who truly witnesses it. The Avatar of Sathya Sai Baba may be "under stood" in many ways, and the role He plays on earth may be studied from now into eternity. But, by trying to understand Baba with the mind, one is bound to encounter many conflicts and difficulties. The subtleties of religion and philosophy are often barriers to our understanding, and it is the way of the world to constantly challenge our faith in God and religion by distracting the mind with questions, doubts and opposition. But, if one can only understand in the heart the amazing Grace, Love and Compassion that has placed Baba among us, there is no longer any reason to seek explanations of His mystery and His ways as He moves among men.

Baba is the full manifestation of that Love which is the source of all life. And, to understand this, one need only spend some time in His presence or take note of His words of guidance. In Baba's life, there is a complete absence of attachment and it may be easily seen that nothing that He does at any time is for His Own sake. Every word, every act and every breath of His is for the sake of "others"; for, with Baba, there are no others, as His vision does not see duality and distinction. God's Grace flows from Baba in a timeless and endless stream, unaffected and untouched by anyone or anything around Him. To the extent that one opens his heart to that Grace, one will be flooded by and filled with it; if, however, the mind holds the doors of the heart closed by cords of desire, attachment, doubt and greed, then little benefit will be experienced. As Baba has said, the Ganga awaits you: you may purify yourself in it, or picnic next to it; wash your clothes in it or wash your sins away in it. God gives you the free will to choose, but *He never closes the door*; His grace *always* awaits you, if and when you choose to receive it. Even if you do not choose to experience the Grace that Baba offers, it may be tasted in any name or form of God. God is not so narrow as to limit Himself; only the mind of man can stoop to such low levels. God awaits you, wherever you are, whenever and however you call Him with an open heart "God is Love, live in Love." Let us be worthy of God's Grace in this Divine form that has manifested before us by continuing to live up to the ideals that He holds before us. May the warmth of His Love loosen the bonds that hold us back from Him. In this way, may we know the mystery of God's Grace.

JAI BHAGAVAN!!!

The Task Ahead

The mind of man is a bundle of desires, always in agitation, ever on the run, in pursuit of objects and sensations. When man submits to its whims, he falls. But, he can master it, tame it and forge it as an instrument for achieving even Liberation from bondage to objects and sensations! It is said that the mind is the cause for both liberation and bondage. When I see a person helplessly enslaved to his mind, I get a picture of a dressed up doll squeaking and speaking through a talking disc attached and operated. He acts mechanically, as the strings are pulled by dominant

Desire; he talks as directed by that master; he thinks on lines that Desire lays down. Therefore, there is a great deal of artificiality and insincerity.

We know that the pictures in a film projected on the screen are each in its true nature, stationary. But, since they are projected fast in a series through a lamp, they appear as if the men and women are walking or fighting. The sound tracks supply the appropriate voices and noises at the appropriate time and so, it appears as if the men and women talk and sing. Though one knows that the pictures are projected on the screen in this manner, when one sees the film, one is moved into grief or joy, hatred or sympathy.

The mind is agitated and so, you too are led into passions and emotions. When the plank on which you sit moves, you too move; when the train runs fast with you sitting in the compartment, you feel that the trees too move with you. On the other hand, the mind makes you feel stationary, as the earth, though the earth revolves fast on its own axis and also around the sun. These are all tricks of the mind, hiding the truth and imposing its own illusions on your experience. Real Truth is different from the picture of Truth that the mind presents.

To ascribe the joys and griefs that one passes through in life to the nature of the Individual Soul is an act of ignorance. One has to dissociate one from the other. Elation and depression, pleasure and pain, joy and grief are modifications of the mind, not of the Jivi, the Individual Soul. It is the mind that reacts to external objects and events and pronounces them as desirable and undesirable, good and bad. This explains why the control of the waywardness of the mind is to be achieved.

He who masters the mind can direct his life straight and steadily on the path of Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Universal Love. He can become an Amrita-putra, a Child of Immortality. Becoming immortal does not imply that one can avoid death and continue living in the physical body for all time. It means only that his Name and Fame will shine in the memories of people, when his character and achievements are noble and beneficial. When your deeds are holy, coming generations would emulate them and offer gratitude for the example. But, if they are harmful, even your contemporaries will execrate you, and wish that you were never born.

In the Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, you have all the chances you need and all the direction and encouragement you want, to make your names cherished by generations. For, the Organisation strives to establish World peace and prosperity, promote Mutual Service in Society and cultivate Selfless Love in the Individual. You have only to share in its various tasks, gladly and with perfect humility.

What is the 'highest objective' for man? What is his most precious ideal? The Vedas declare, Sathyaannaasthi paro dharmah—There is no rule higher than Truth. This Mansion named Universe stands on the Foundation of Truth, Sathya. You are all members of the 'Sathya' Sai Seva Organisation; remember that 'Sathya' is My Name; It is the First and Foremost Ideal that has to shape and sustain all the activities of the Organisation, as well as every one of its members. Give Sathya the First Place in your Thought, Word and Deed.

There was a King called Sathyavratha, in ancient times. He was named so, because Truth was his way of Life, His Goal and His Guide. He derived great joy through the strict adherence to Truth. One day, of few hours before dawn, during Brahmamuhurtha (the Time dedicated for meditation on God) he proceeded alone through the Lion Gate of his Fort, in order to have a holy dip in the Sea, for the Day was a holy one marked out in the Calendar as sacred for such ceremonial baths.

While he was passing through the Gate, he saw a fair maiden with a halo of splendour going out; curious to know who she was and why she was making her exit at that early hour, he accosted her. She replied that she was the Goddess of Riches, Dhanalakshmi. "I have been long here, now, I desire a change. I do not stay in one place long" Sathyavratha told her, "Go! Go! I do not object, or obstruct." Presently, a charming masculine figure was seen quietly going out through the Lion Gate. The King asked him who he was and what errand was on which he was leaving. He replied, "I am Charity; when Dhanalakshmi has left, what do I stay here for?" The King allowed him to leave, and he moved on.

Within a few moments, another charming person was going through. The King found that he was Sadachara, representing Goodness in Social Behaviour. "How can good social relations be sustained without riches and the quality of generosity," he asked. "I am leaving, because the two are here no more," he explained. The King agreed; and he moved on. So too, the next emigrant too, Fame, lamented the disappearance of the other three and himself wanted to go. The King let him go. He said, "How can Fame survive the absence of Riches, Charity and Happy Social Life?" and the King felt he was right.

Meanwhile, a Person with overwhelming Splendour came into the gate from the Fort, with intention to leave the City. When asked who he was, he said, "I am Truth." At this, the King pleaded with him to stay in the City, the Kingdom, the Palace and the Homes of the People. He said that if he leaves, the loss would be irreparable, and life would not be worthwhile. At this, Truth decided to stay.

And, Fame returned to the Fort in a trice, for Truth is enough basis for Fame to flourish. And, Sadachara returned and grew. So too Charity and Riches came back and established themselves in the Kingdom. All the others were delighted to share the Glory of Sathya (Truth).

You too must take delight in sharing the Glory of this Sathya, that is, Myself. You are members of the Organisation bearing My Name and, so, you have to live every minute in the consciousness of that responsibility. Bearing a 'high class' name, you should not live in a 'low class' way. Rise into divinity do not fall into bestiality. Many rise only to get a better view of the lowly earth, as vultures do, when they fly high to get a wider view of the spots where carrion can be got.

Manava (Man) must achieve the status of Madhava (God). And, who is God? Truth is God, Love is God, Peace is God. Develop Truth, Cultivate Love, Establish yourselves in Peace—you are on the road to Divinity.

Become water, so that you can merge with water; if you remain oil, you cannot merge! So, develop Divine characteristics. You are now in His Hands, in God's Care, but, you do not realise

it; this kerchief is held by Me; if my hand does not hold it, it falls. So too, if God does not hold you, you fall. Whatever you do, wherever you are placed, believe that God has put you there for that work. Then, it becomes an education, a Sadhana. In this Conference, learn this lesson: take up the work allotted to you gladly, and carry it out to the best of your ability, for the greater Glory of God; Do not dedicate your lives to material goods, dedicate them to the Good and to God.

When the petromax lamp grows dim, you clean it with a pin; when it starts giving trouble, you pump vigorously, don't you? When that is done, it shines bright and gives good light. Consider the State Conferences held at more frequent intervals as 'the treatment with the pin' and the All India Conference, such as this, as 'the vigorous pumping process'.

The objects of both these Conferences are the same: the establishment of peace and harmony in the world, through the Organisation. For the Lamp that this Organisation is, the oil is Love; you know that, to light that lamp, you have to use a little methylated spirit. Well, Jnana (Wisdom) is that 'spirit: A little quantity of that is needed for Love to be steady and universal. And, there must be plenty of the oil of Love. Good company, good acts, good thought—these are of great help.

This is the Sixth All India Conference. Five Conferences have met and resolved on various plans and rules. What has been the progress? I must say we are very much in the same place—no advance at all. It is pardonable if a five-year child plays about and is drawn hither and thither by the five senses. The Sixth year (the Shashti-abda) warns you that you must now transcend the trammels of five senses and become free from both pride and depression, carrying out your tasks boldly, with faith and devotion. Every day, with every act, every thought, every word, you must approach nearer and nearer God. That will give you the supremest Bliss. That will confer true Liberation.

—*Rajahmundry Conference, Morning Session 4-1-74*

Treat me, not as one afar, but, as very close to you. Insist, demand, claim Grace from me. Do not praise, extol, or cringe. Bring your hearts purified and cleansed, to me and win my heart. No one of you is a stranger to me. What other task have I, than showering Grace? —Baba

The True Triumph

College which does not confer the knowledge of their Atmic Reality to the students engaged in the pursuit of various objective and material studies is as barren as a sky without the moon, or a heart without peace, a nation without reverence for law. Colleges in India have a greater responsibility in this matter, for, here, more than the material technological and scientific side of civilisation, emphasis was laid for centuries on the social, cultural and spiritual side. The goal of life and the ways of ensuring harmony were discovered here and propagated by saints and sages. The young men and women that emerge from the Colleges of India have to cleanse this land of untruth, injustice, violence and fear. They must spread the message of Peace, Tolerance, Righteousness and Service, and be exemplars of these qualities for the people.

You are not educated, if all that you have achieved is, the study of a ton of books. The body and the mind have to be illumined by the light of Love that emanates from the awareness of the Soul and its essential Divinity. Since education today deals only with the body and mind, and is unrelated to the Soul and the Spirit, the youth of the land is wafted hither and thither by every gust of passing, like rootless vegetation. Awareness of the Atma will grant unshakeable Power and Courage. The Vedas teach the means of securing this awareness, and drawing on it to meet the challenges of life. That alone can crown education with success. That alone can strengthen youth to encounter the problems of unrest and anxiety. The Colleges have to teach not only certain subjects, but, the subject-object relationship too. The process by which man can transcend this duality and cognise the Unity has also to be communicated, in order to render education complete.

Institutions where education is imparted today have no atmosphere of moral or spiritual value. Discipline is missing; honesty is at a discount; politeness and good manners are estimated as outmoded forms of behaviour; grab and not give is the rule; intolerance is held in high esteem. If a man is not equipped with detachment, virtue, tolerance and truth, how can he raise his head and proclaim himself a human being? Man has so degraded himself that he revels in untruth in an unashamed manner—his intention is different from his words, but still his actions belie his profession. Thought, word and deed are not coordinated. Deceit is the rule that guides. Man should redeem himself from this downfall he should not sacrifice his glory and his goal for the petty triumphs of the moment; if he does, he would only make himself cheaper than clay.

At the present rate and under present conditions, the future of India, once the Preceptor of Humanity, is grievously poor. Students must waken in time and decide to transform themselves into worthy instruments for the revival of the Grandeur of Bharat. They must grow straight, without any crookedness. They must grow as Indians on Indian soil, in the Indian atmosphere; they should give up the itch for aping foreign fashions of thought, speech and dress. Instead of delving into their inner reality and living true to it, they are now exploring the outer delusions and imitating the outer trappings of equally deluded peoples. They silence the Voice of Conscience and behave in exotic styles. The heart warns, the brain protests, but, the mind prods on. He who smothers the voice of God is as good as a living corpse.

Note the type of dress that is now considered fashionable—the weird bush-shirts and the drain-pipe pants. Note the side-burns and the weird moustaches and beards that besmirch the face of youth. Note the value attached to slovenliness and primitivity, to foulness and frivolity. No one can appreciate this trend, except those who are victims to it; disgust is the only reaction one gets. When the exterior is reeking with untidiness, how can the interior be tidy? How can harmony and honesty be installed in such a cluttered heart and in such a lumbering brain? Young people move about like clowns; they pay no attention to the seriousness of the task which lies ahead of them. When the parents, society and the nation yearn that they should become 'biggers', they revel as 'beggars', before the fashion makers of other lands, the ism-peddlers of other countries and the hysterics of other cultures.

And, every tick of the clock snips a length off the thread of life. Money when unspent remains in your account at the bank; but, spent is your life, whether wisely or unwisely. It marches relentlessly on. Use the present moment best, to sharpen your skills, to broaden your intelligence,

to expand your heart and, to master the technique of facing the challenges of life with courage and equanimity. That will be the reward you offer your parents for the love and sacrifice they have poured on you; do not offer them in return, an ill reputation, a ruined career, a damaged character. Make them happy and proud; win a First Class in your studies and a First Class in your character.

Do not despise the villages where you have grown; do not desert the parents, who have sacrificed so much for you. Live with them and make them happy. Also, love and serve every one in the village, as if it is an extension of your own family, as if all are your kith and kin. Do not be led away by the artificial brilliance and deceptive display of the towns; whatever, salary you may get from jobs in those places will be frittered in trivial pursuits; you cannot be free, fresh and pure in that atmosphere nor can you serve your parents and people. You will be a burden on others and a problem to yourselves.

I am depending upon you, students, for a great transformation in out-look, and great revolution. Students of the Sathya Sai College must lead this movement. The older generation can only talk; it is you who must act. You have to prove yourselves worthy of this College. Be disciplined; be sweet in manners, in speech, and in your relations with the less fortunate. Be grateful to your parents, your villages and those who strive for your welfare. Try your best always to earn a fair name for yourselves, for your College, and for your parents.

Do not be under the impression that you and I have come together only now and since you study in this College! You have come to Me for the sake of far higher triumphs, as a consequence of merit acquired in many previous lives. You and your teachers are destined to achieve tremendous tasks under My guidance, in the execution of the Mission on which I have come.

—Bhagavan's Discourse, Sri Sathya Sai College, Kadugodi 31-1-74

A Request for Poems on Bhagavan

An anthology of poems in all the Indian languages and in English on Bhagavan Sathya Sai Baba is being planned. It will be published and offered at His sacred feet on 23rd November 1975, His fiftieth birthday.

Poet-devotees desirous of contributing to the volume are requested to comply with the following requirements. They should send their bio-data. They should send one or two poems that are brief, for, space for about 75 lines will be set apart for each language. At the same time, a somewhat long poem will be considered for inclusion if it merits the same. Each poem will be published as set forth below: First, the poem will be printed in its language script. It will then be printed in Devanagiri script and after that in Roman script with diacritical marks. These three versions of the poem will be followed by a translation of the poem in English.

Therefore, while sending their biodata and poem, poet-devotees are requested to note that bio-data are required for preparing an introductory note on the poet. The write-up of the poem, received from the poet, will be treated as press-copy, when approved.

Poet-devotees are therefore requested to write on only one side of the page and in a perfectly legible hand, the poem in its original script, in Devanagiri script and then in Roman script with diacritical marks. These three versions should be written on separate pages. They should be followed by a translation of the poem in English, again on a separate page. The translation should be got typed.

The bio-data should consist of details regarding age, occupation, works published, honours received, etc.

All this material should reach the undersigned on or before 1st August, 1974. It will be deeply appreciated if the material is sent as early as possible before 1st August 1974.

A brief explanatory note will be sent to each person, asking for it, if he or she is not familiar with the Roman script with its diacritical marks and points.

Brindavan,
Near Whitefield R.S.,
Kadugodi P.O., Vinayak Krishna Gokak.
Bangalore District,
Karnataka State.

When darkness falls, a wayfarer seeks shelter in an inn. He stays there until daybreak. Then, he resumes his journey. He goes from place to place till he reaches his destination. Man should not immerse himself in this worldly life. He should regard this world as an inn.

—**BABA**

Full Circle? Or Half Circle?

You have joined the Study Class at Dharmakshetra, and are engaged in poring over all types of books and gathering information and instruction. But, what have you gained? Knowledge about what this author says or that sage teaches is not what your Study Circle must aim to acquire. Not information, but transformation; not instruction, but construction should be the aim. Theoretical knowledge is a burden, unless it is practised, when it can be lightened into Wisdom, and assimilated into daily life. Knowledge that does not give harmony and wholeness to the process of living is not worth acquiring. Every activity must be rendered valid and worth-while by its contribution to the discovery of Truth, both of the Self and of Nature. Of what use is it to know everything about Nature, if you do not know anything of the Self? Nature is only a projection of the Self, and so, unless the Self is known, knowledge of Nature is either distorted or deceptive. The Self is Atma, of which the entire Creation is composed and so, knowledge of the Self alone can quench the thirst of man.

You tell me that you have read the Bhagavatha Vahini and all the other Vahinis that I have written. Good. But, let me ask you, have you put at least a single direction given in them into daily practice? Question yourself calmly and decide to benefit by practising the processes mentioned in them. This is the proper plan of study—Reading, Reflection and Regular Application in Life. Study is WORK. Inquiry into the Value and Applicability of what is studied is WORSHIP; the Experience of the validity and value of the practice is WISDOM.

You must first learn about 'what others think you are'. They deal with you as a body, with a specific name and an identifiable form. Then, you must learn about 'what you think you are.' You are aware of your mind and its monkey tricks, its prejudices and preferences, its passions and pursuits. You are aware of your individual consciousness, of your version of 'me' and 'mine.' Learn about the mind as an instrument, which can harm you if used unwisely or help you, if used wisely. You have to learn about yet another 'you!' The YOU 'you really are'. For, you are neither the body, nor the mind. You are the embodiment of Purity, Power, Love, Bliss. The miserable little prison named 'individuality' has to be denied. You are free, but, you fancy you are bound and mope in the cell you imagine is limiting your vision. Seek the Truth that will set you free. It -is within you, feel it. Feel it. You are not the body, the mind, the intellect, the brain, the heart, the denotable diminutive ego. You are the Infinite Universal Absolute. You have to get yourselves established firmly, unshakably in this awareness. Paramahansas have that awareness. Every one of you can attain that state; it is your destiny, your duty to yourself. Merely finishing the study of book after book serves no real purpose. Practising one line from any one book is enough to save you from eons of darkness, of ignorance, and of yearning for Light.

Mere gymnastics will not do; the Bhagavad-Gita can be used as a Bhagavad-Gita (Messenger from God) if only you welcome it into your heart. Once a famous Pundit was expounding the Bhagavad-Gita (the Song of God) before a massive gathering; he gave an elaborate explanation of the Sloka (Verse) recounting the, Glory of the Lord, through the media of different epithets. The Lord, he said, is Kavi (He who knows the Past, the Present and the Future) Purana (the Ageless One, the Effulgent Light and Life-spirit in all beings), Anu-sasitha (He who lays down the Law which can regulate the Mind and lead it on to its Source and Sustenance, the universal

Spirit). The audience was amazed much at his unique encyclopaedic scholarship; but, that was all. He had no experience of the God whom he was delineating in such attractive colours. He had only learnt it from books, or, parrot-like from teachers.

You must be guarded against, the Pride that infects the Scholar who has mastered a certain number of ancient texts. Do not judge others as, inferior, because they do not participate in Bhajans, Nagarsankirtan, or your type of Study Circles. You can be very wrong, if you estimate a person's spiritual development, by mere externals. Inner purity cannot express itself through pompous show. Only He who dwells in every heart can know who resides therein: Rama or Kama (God or Mammon).

Of course, disciplines like Bhajan, Nagarsankirtan anti Japa are needed for cleansing the mind; to cure the terrible malady, of `birth-death', the external -medication of these Sadhanas and internal medication of Dhyana and Seela are both essential. External discipline is Dharma Vidya (the Acquisition of Righteousness as a Way of Living); internal discipline is Brahma Vidya (the Acquisition of Tranquility as a Perpetual Treasure). That is why the Vedas command, "Sathyam Vada, Dharmam Chara"—"Always speak Truth, Always do Right." This is the Way to God.

Every one of you is a pilgrim on that road proceeding at your own pace, according to your qualification and the stage reached by its means. The advice that appeals to one of you or applies to one of you might not be appropriate to another, who has travelled a less distance or reached a more advanced state. When I tell one person to follow one line of Sadhana, it is specifically for his benefit; do not take it as prescription for your benefit also, saying, "Baba told him thus; let me also adopt it." Each has a different make-up, mental, physical and spiritual. The doctor directs one patient to drink curds and prohibits another from drinking it. When a man is obese, he advises certain types of food; when he is lean, he advises other types. When doctors who treat diseases of the body have to prescribe such different remedies, how much more specific and personal must be the remedies for the complex and varied conditions of mental situations and spiritual yearnings and aspirations?

Unless you make earnest inquiry, you cannot discover the remedy applicable to your temperament and its problems. Study with faith and devotion. Delve into the significance and meaning of what you read; and, always have before you the goal of putting what you read into practice. Unless you do so the Study Circle will remain a half-Circle forever; it cannot be a full Circle.

And, pay attention to one other point also. Do not confine your Studies to this Circle and these Books. The whole Universe is a University for you. You can imbibe wisdom from .the sky, the clouds, the mountains, the rivers, the daily phenomena of sunrise and sunset, the seasons, birds, trees, flowers the insects—in fact, all Beings and Things in Nature. Approach these teachers with awe, reverence and humility; they will respond with their lessons. Do not worry that you have no mastery of Sanskrit; Samskara is enough equipment, for the University that lies around you. Sanskrit is the language of the ancient Scriptures and of Classical Literature; Samskara is the Language of the Heart, the refined medium of fruitful communion with Nature, in all the manifold outpourings of Divinity:

—*DharmaKshetra*

Sivaratri on a Mountain Top

On this mountain top in northern New York among the quiet woods, we have erected an altar of Baba, as a center for meditation and bhajan. We fasted the evening before Maha-Sivaratri, to the dawn following. Aware that 10.00 A.M. here was sunset in India, we sat in Bhajan until then. Then, we had special Puja and chanting of OM 1080 times. After that, the Garland of 108 Precious Gems was offered in group Japa. Then, all joined in singing Baba's Song, revealing His Advent: Manasa Bhajare Guru Charanam... The ceremony drew to a close, as each one sprinkled on, the sacred waters of the Ganga along with Vibhuti created by the Hand of Baba, all the time meditating on the Glory of Baba. (Letter from The POND, West Danby, New York)

Holy Tryst

I cannot bear to leave this place,
This Sanctuary of Peace and Grace,
Where blades and leaves breathe the Name.
He, whose benevolence drew me in
From the world of stress and strife and sin
Bade me return to my trust.
The Call of Duty beckons me;
My tasks are but half-complete;
I would love to tarry a little while,
And sing Thy hallowed Name
Till I feel stronger, surer.

This visit gave me solace
To face the frantic world;
Perhaps, I'll soon return
To keep my tryst with Thee.

—*Y. K. S., New Delhi*

WHERE ARE YOU?

Lord, where are You?
In me?
Or, I am in You?
But You are not in me;
For, a dark dread bums there.

But who brings me the yearning
in the morning sun?
Who whispers to me the silence
in the dying day?
Who sends to me the tender ecstasy
in a budding rose?
And who sails my heart away
in a floating cloud?
You?

The Presence pains me
with its absence.
The Time kills me
with eternity.
The Knowledge burns me
with unknowing.

Lord, absorb me unto futility
And make me futile,
So I may be I.
Lord, make me a bird,
A cloud, and a tree,
So I may be I.
Lord, touch me—a black granite—
chisel out a SAI
So I may be I.
But, Lord where are You?
So true, and yet so frail!
So near, yet so far removed!
So loving, yet so unmoved!

—*Bijaya Kumar Misra*

Mastering Time and Space

One evening, in the month of February 1973, we left Brindavan about 8 p.m. to return to Bangalore. There were five of us in the taxi, plus the driver.

The Bangalore Road is 'two lanes' only, for most of the distance, and it is surfaced. Some five or six miles away from Brindavan, we 'overtook' a bus. Our driver wanted to pass; so, he pulled over to the passing side, so as to 'appraise any oncoming traffic.

He saw the headlamps of a car, but, he considered it to be either stopped or coming slowly (as he told us afterwards). Therefore, he elected to pass the bus, thinking he would have plenty of time for the maneuver.

Our driver could not have been more mistaken in his estimate. The car was not stopping; nor was it moving at a slow speed. In fact, it was coming towards us, at a very high rate of speed.

At this point, in time and space, the simple process of passing a bus and `overtaking' it which our driver had ventured to initiate, suddenly escalated into a situation of terrifying potential. There came upon us the immediate and deadly threat of fatal head-on collision.

There were two inescapable aspects in the situation: One was the very high speed of the car that was approaching towards our car. The other aspect was, the dangerous lay-out of the road, at that particular spot!

The road was under repair. Alongside the passing lane, there was a high bank of rocks and dirt, covering the roadside. There was no possibility of the oncoming car being able to swerve off the road, in order to avoid the collision. We too could not take evasive action, for, the bus was on our left, and the high heap of road-repair material was on our right for some long distance. And, the approaching car was right in front.

Of course, at the moment of the impending crash, there was no time for this analysis of the circumstance and situation. The incident sort of exploded upon us, without warning.

There was a sudden flare-up, in our astonished eyes. The light from the head-lamps of that car struck directly into the windscreen of our car, O, at that point, the two cars could not have been more than a few seconds apart. We were stunned. Not one of us recollected Baba or called His Name!

We felt we were as bad as dead. We instinctively tensed for the crash. **** But, that very moment, something came to happen, that is without rational explanation. At *one moment*, the two cars were upon each other, about to be smashed in a fatal head-on collision. *The next moment*, the oncoming car was *behind us* proceeding in its direction, and, we were continuing to pass the bus, with the road clear ahead of us!

There was *no* crash! There was no lapse of time; there had been no possibility of a last-minute maneuver. One moment, the two cars were upon each other, about halfway along the length of the bus; the next moment, each car was past the other; each was continuing on its way, as if the other had not been in existence.

We were unable to explain to each other what had happened; we wondered what the reactions and thoughts of the people in the other car might have been. * *

The next day, we drove out to Brindavan as usual at about 8 A.M., so as to be waiting there for Swami to give Morning Darshan.

As soon as He appeared, I touched His Lotus Feet and said, "We want to thank Baba for saving our lives last night."

Swami smiled and said, "Yes. That was a close one. You were so shocked that not even one of you called for Swami! But, Swami saved you, anyway."

I said, "Baba! You must have altered Time and Space, in order to save us." Baba just smiled; He did not answer the implied question.

—*John Hislop*

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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No food; no sleep

IN this manner, Bharadwaja, the great Sage, praised Bharata for his manifold virtues and excellences. While speaking in this strain, tears of joy rolled down the cheeks of the revered ascetic. Bharata and Shatrughna had their minds set on Rama and his limitless Prema; they felt that they were indeed fortunate to be his brothers, but, the joy was immediately extinguished at the thought that they had been themselves exiled from the presence of that Embodiment of Love. So, they were plunged in gloom, in unbearable agony and inexpressible grief.

In a voice choked by anguish, Bharata said, rising-up from the prostration he offered to the Sage, "Master! You are aware of the Past, Present and the Future. You have spoken the very Truth. You are master of the Highest Truth. Rama is unbeatable in skill and power. I have resolved to utter in your Presence only the Truth. Rama knows the workings of the people's mind and what is now agitating them. I have at present no grief at the wrong committed by my mother. I have no fear that the people would blame me for the tragedy that has befallen them. I have no despair, when it is said that I am ineligible for heaven.

My father has earned high renown; though dead, his fame has spread over the entire World. When his beloved son, Rama departed from his presence, with Lakshmana, he gave up the bubble breath that very instant. He could not survive the bolt of that tragedy. There is no need, therefore, to be anxious any more about him. But, Sita, Rama and Lakshmana are moving about bare-footed. Donning the robes of ascetics, they sit on mats of kusa grass; they reside in leaf-thatched huts; they are dried by the sun, soaked by rain; they shiver in the cold and bear its pangs bravely; they are undergoing untold hardships in the forest; aren't they? Now, tell me, am I not the sole cause for all these hardships? It is this sad fact that is eating me up throughout all the hours of the day and night. Food refuses to enter my stomach; sleep refuses to close the lids of my eyes.

This crookedness of my mother's mind has become a dagger in my heart. The stratagem she devised for my installation on the throne has turned into a trap to ruin me. The agony that is gnawing me from within cannot be appeased, whatever is done. Nothing can cure it. It will end only on the day when Rama returns to Ayodhya. No other remedy exists to destroy this agony."

The monks who had gathered were delighted to hear these words from the Prince. Bharadwaja told him, "Son! Do not grieve any more. The moment your eyes fall on the Lotus Feet of Rama

the burden of grief which torments you now is certain to disintegrate and disappear." The ascetics too consoled and comforted him in various ways.

Hermit's Banquet

Meanwhile, the Great sage, Bharadwaja beckoned a pupil and directed him to bring roots, tubers and fruits to be placed before Bharata and Shatrughna. He also ordered his pupils to arrange for the supply of food to the aides, the ministers and courtiers, and the citizens of Ayodhya, all of whom had borne uncomplainingly many a hardship on the way in their eagerness to have the Darshan of Rama, and who were tortured in mind by the agony of separation from their beloved Rama.

Complying with that order most reverentially, the pupils quickly offered plentiful repast to every one who had come as guests. For the Princes—Bharata and Shatrughna—their Families, the Ministers and Courtiers, the Pundits and the Brahmins, hospitality was arranged on a rich elaborate scale. Everything was produced plentifully and perfectly, through the ascetic's, mysterious will power itself. Bharata was filled with wonder.

But, it must be said that not only the two brothers, Bharata and Shatrughna, the entire gathering of people from Ayodhya looked upon the pomp, luxury and profusion as mere trash! They were not charmed in the least. The scents, the bouquets of fragrant flowers, the juicy fruits and the variety and attractive display of dishes struck them with awe. The two resplendent seats specially set up for Bharata and Shatrughna defied all description.

When all was ready, the Sage invited every one inside the specially erected Hall, where they were to partake of the banquet. They entered that marvel of beauty. The Royal Preceptor and his consort were led to the high seats reserved for them, and they occupied them. The queens too entered the place, covered and cordoned off for their sake, and, bending under the weight of sorrow, they too complied with the command of the Sage.

At this time, the bright-faced disciples of the Sage brought in the Brothers, Bharata and Shatrughna, with all due honour, in accordance with the practice of that renowned Hermitage. The young ascetics stood on both sides of the passage; waving yak-tail whisks and reciting scriptural hymns. They approached the magnificent Seats set for them; but, as soon as they came near, they bowed their heads and fell on the floor; in respectful obeisance. They took the whisks from the hands of the pupils, and started waving them reverentially, standing one on each side of the Lion Thrones! They were adoring the thrones, instead of sitting in them! All present were surprised at this gesture, this homage offered to the empty Thrones.

The Lion Thrones

When the Sage invited them to occupy the Thrones, Bharata and Shatrughna fell at his feet and implored, "Master! These Thrones belong to Sita and Rama, and not to us. We have no right for them. In this holy hermitage, those two alone—Goddess Lakshmi and God Narayana—have the title to sit on Lion Thrones. We are their servants. Permit us to serve them thus." At these words, the ascetics and the entire, assembly of people were thrilled with joyous appreciation. They extolled among themselves the immense depth of the devotion that the brothers had for Rama.

Tears of joy flowed from their eyes. The monks were astounded at their faith and its steadfastness.

The Brothers offered the elaborate fare that was brought as food to the Thrones picturing in their minds the charming figures of Sita and Rama, occupying them; a little while after, they broke, off small particles from the offered dishes and placing them adoringly on their eyelids, they ate them as sacramental food. The elders, ministers, aides and the residents of Ayodhya craved pardon from the Sage Bharadwaja for not partaking of the food, since, as they said; they could not relish any food, overwhelmed as they were by the agony of separation from Rama. They refused to eat, for, they felt that, the Darshan of Rama alone, could give them the sense of contentment. That was the nectarine feast they yearned for. They were plunged in a gloom as deep as the standard of the Sage's hospitality was high. They said they were too engrossed in their anxiety for the sight of Rama to entertain the idea of food. The Sage had finally to accede to their wish to be left alone; he could not prevail upon them to sit down at the feast.

Towards the Yamuna

Every one got ready to, start for the forest, even as early as the first intimations of dawn. They, prostrated before the Sage, secured his blessings and his permission, before they left the hermitage. While the servants walked in advance showing them the way, the palanquins and chariots followed them, immediately after. Bharata walked behind, with his hand on the shoulder of the Chieftain of the Nishadas, Guha. He appeared as the very Personification of Fraternal Love and Devotion. He had no footwear to guard him against thorns and pebbles; he had no umbrella over his head, to guard him against the scorching sun. He did not allow any one to hold one above him. He did not permit any one to bring him footwear. But, the earth took pity on him and transformed the path he trod along, soft and sweet. The Wind comforted him, blowing cool and gentle all through the journey.

They reached the bank of the River Yamuna when evening fell. Throughout the hours of night, boats were seen gathering near the bank in countless numbers. Therefore, at daybreak the entire mass, of people could ferry over, at the same time! Then, they finished their bath, and, proceeded forward, after prostrating before the holy river, in reverential gratitude.

Thenceforward, Bharata and Shatrughna moved in the robes of recluses, into which they changed. With them walked the Ministers, the Companions of the Princes, and their aides, carrying the pictures of Sita and Rama in their hearts.

Discussion among Women

While on the march, inhabitants of the villages on the way stood in awe at the strange crowds that passed along; women who were walking towards the river to bring water to their homes placed the pots on the ground and stood stunned not allowing their eyes to indulge in a wink, looking on the brothers, not even winking their eyes lest the vision will be interrupted. They wondered who they were and concluded that they were the same two brothers, Rama and Lakshmana, passing through that path again, this time, without the Sita they had with them then, but, accompanied by the armed forces, the chariots, elephants horses and foot-soldiers. They wondered where Sita could be at the time? They searched for her amidst the moving mass, with

eager curiosity; and, they shared their disappointment with their friends in sad whispers. Nor were their words devoid of truth.

"The other day, when they saw Rama and Lakshmana, the brothers were shining with the splendour of physical charm, youth, virtue and intelligence. But, there was some sadness clouding the faces of these two, and so, these might not be those who passed this way that day," argued another woman who was in the group. Their conversation was overheard by one of the spies of the royal entourage, who reported it to Bharata.

Meanwhile, the women come to know that they were the brothers of Rama, and that they were proceeding to where Rama was, in order to have Darshan. At this, one rough-natured woman burst into rage. She exclaimed, "Ruling over the empire that his father gave him, look at this person, going to have Darshan of his brother Rama, accompanied by the armed forces! Has he no shame?" she asked.

Another woman interrupted her at this point. She said, "Sister! Don't say so. Our Emperor Dasaratha can never have, from his loins, children with hearts so hard. He must be going to Rama, with the various units of the armed forces, in order to pray to Rama, and persuade him to return to Ayodhya and, to make him accept the idea of taking him back with Imperial Honours."

A third woman declared her acceptance of this interpretation. She said, "Yes, yes. Who knows which snake rests in which hole on earth? No one can pronounce on the nature of another. Who can judge the feelings and motives that prompt others to action, they may be of a very high order, for aught we know. But, Rama is the unswerving adherent to Truth. He will not return to Ayodhya, until the full term of fourteen years is completed in exile, whoever might plead with him and pray to him. This is my belief." She expressed her noble sentiments in this manner.

They had Seen Rama

The spies duly reported the conversation of these village women to their Master, Bharata and to Shatrughna. They were delighted to know that those unsophisticated women from the rural regions had grasped the greatness of Rama to such an amazing extent. Thus, they walked along, listening to the people's admiration for the virtues of Rama and for their own humility and fraternal devotion. They were every moment fixing their minds on Rama only.

Many Brahmins, Ascetics, Monks and other Holy Men were encountered by them as they walked on; they found that all whom they met were engaged in the pleasant task of extolling Rama and his virtues. On seeing them Bharata prostrated before them and inquired where they were coming from. When the holy men struggled to master the surging waves of ecstasy and at last succeeded in discovering their voices in order to reply, Bharata watched them in eager expectancy. When they said, they were returning after having Darshan of Sita, Rama and Lakshmana, he and his brother fell flat on the ground before them, and rose with tears of joy streaming down their cheeks.

They said, "O How fortunate you are! Tell us, tell us how far are they? Where are they?" They inquired about the health and welfare of those holy men also; and, learning from them, that they

had to continue the journey for some distance more, they decided to spend the night, at the place where they were.

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

India had recognised the salutary effect of music on the mind, its potency to restore calm and equanimity, to still the waves of agitation and worry. Music is the instrument by which passions are sublimated, emotions are tamed, and impulses are directed to higher purposes. But, we have forgotten the great role assigned to music in Indian Culture. People are admiring the lilts and jingles of the films, and, losing the profundities of classical music.

—*Baba*

Social Life and Atmic Sadhana
A MESSAGE

What has sociology or the social sciences to do with the sciences of the spirit or the inquiry into the human spirit? This is a question that is commonly raised. So too, many do ask: What has the spiritual student and Sadhaka to do with society and its problems? It must be said, that both these attitudes are wrong.

No society can find its fulfillment, no social ideal can fructify, without the blossoming of the spirit of man. Mankind cannot realise the Divinity whose expression it is, without careful and constant attention being paid to the cultivation of the Spirit. How else can this Divinity express itself than in and through individuals? We can apprehend only the Jagat, this moving, inconstant, fantasia; we cannot see or hear, smell or taste or touch the Director of the Fantasia, God. In the same manner, we can apprehend the Individual, but not the entity named Society. For, Society is no separate, distinct, Complex formed out of elemental components. Society is the divine proliferation produced by the Will Supreme.

Man is mortal; dust he is and to dust returneth. But, in him, there shines the Atma, as a Spark of the Immortal Flame. This is not a term of flattery invented by the Vedantists. The Atma is the source, the sustenance of every being and every organisation of beings. It is the one and only Source, Substance and Sustenance. The Atma is God; the Particular is the Universal, no less. Therefore, recognise in each being, in each man, a brother, the child of God, and ignore all limiting thoughts and prejudices based on status, colour, class, nativity and caste. Sai is ever engaged in warning you and guiding you so that you may think, speak and act in this attitude of Love.

Society cannot justify itself by planning to divide the spoils gained out of Nature either in equal shares or unequal shares. The consummation that must inspire Society has to be—the Establishment and Elaboration, in every social act and resolution, of the Knowledge of the One Universal Atma and the Bliss that that knowledge confers. Sai does not direct, "The Atma has no

Death; therefore, kill the physical sheaths, the bodies." No. Sai does not encourage wars. Sai directs you to recognise the Atma as your closest kin, closer than the members of your family, your blood-relations and your dearest descendents. When this is done, you will never more stray from the path of Right, which alone can maintain that kinship.

Familial attachment operates even against the performance of one's legitimate duties. But, attachment to the Divine fills that Duty with a new dedication which ensures both joy and success. It activates man as nothing else can; it confers on him during the process of doing his duty the highest wisdom. Hence the advice: Do not enter the objective world (Prakriti) in the hope of realising the Atma; enter the objective world, after becoming aware of the Atma; for, then, you see Nature in a new light and your very life becomes a long festival of Love.

There are many who use their scholarship and intelligence, even Vedic scholarship, in dreary debate and competitive display. They are enamoured of their petty triumphs. They declare that Society is an arena for winning such triumphs. But, Sai calls on you to seek and strengthen another type of Society, where there is no room for such trivial desires.

Disputative Vedic scholars crave for the fruits of their endeavours and efforts, through ritual. Nature does not crave so; the clouds bring rain, as a homage to God who is their Lord. But, they attribute it to the efficacy of their rites and use it to inflate their ego. They play about, among the far-spreading branches of the tree of Desire. They are entangled in the coils of the three 'ropes'—the Tamasic, the Rajasic and the Satwic.

You have to go beyond the three ropes the three bonds. You have to be, ever, in the unchanging eternal Truth. You must be established in the One, as the One, with no trace or taste of Two. Earning and garnering should not interest you; you must not be caught in the pursuit of Yoga and Kshema; for, you are *full* already and have no wants.

The ideal of a high standard of life, instead of a high level of living, has played havoc with human society. A high level of living insists on morality, humility, detachment, compassion; so, the competitive greed for luxury and conspicuous consumption receives no encouragement and will be destroyed. Now, man is the slave of his desires; he finds himself helpless to conquer the thirst for pleasure and luxury; he is too weak to keep his nature under control; he does not know how to arouse the Divine Consciousness that is latent in him.

Mere moral practices or instruction cannot help you to achieve this. It can be done, only, by Spiritual Sadhana. For, it is a basic transformation. It involves the elimination of the Mind, which is the arch-obstacle in the path. Grace of God, if invoked and won can endow you with the power. And, the Grace is available within you, awaiting the Call.

Man must give up reliance on the vagaries of the mind. He must act ever in the consciousness of his innate Divinity. When that is done, his three-fold nature (composed of the Gunas—Tamasic, Rajasic and Satwic) will automatically express itself through only holy channels. That is the genuine Manifestation.

Another point. The argument may be raised; " If one has to give up the desire for comfort, luxury and pleasure, why should one be embroiled in society? This presupposes the belief that Society is justified only by the provision of such worldly joys. But, what kind of society can one build on such slender foundations? If built, it can be a Society only in name, it will not be bound by mutual love and cooperation. The strong will suppress the weak. Social relations will be marred by discontent. Even when attempts are made to divide the resources of Nature equally among all, the cordiality will be only on the surface. It will not be spontaneous. We can limit the resources available, but, we cannot limit greed, desire and craving. Desire involves seeking beyond the limits of possibility. What has to be done is, to pluck out desire by the roots; man must give up the desire for objective pleasure, based on the illusion that the World is many, manifold, multi-coloured etc, and not on the Truth that the world, nature, all creation, is ONE. When one is conscious only of the ONE, who desires which? What can be acquired and enjoyed by the second person? The Atmic Vision destroys the desire for objective joys, for, there is no object distinct from the subject.

This is the true function of Society—to enable every member to realise this Atmic Vision. The men and women bound by mutual interests in a society are not merely families, castes, classes, groups, or kinsmen and kinswomen; they are ONE Atma. They are knit by the closest of family ties; not only the one society to which they feel they are bound, but, all MANKIND is ONE. Vasudhaika kutumbakam, as the Sastras declare; the whole world is one family. This unity must be experienced by every one.

Natural resources and wealth are now being misused for the boosting of one's ego. But, when the Atmic Unity is realised, they will promote the new way of life through Love. What is now 'mercy,' or legally enforced mutual 'help' will then be transformed into 'Divine Love' that can effectively purify the recipient and the giver. This consummation is beyond the region of common politics, ethics or economic. They cannot transform the receiver and thrill the giver, however much they attempt to equalise. They do not have the appeal and they have no power to sustain. The equality they establish will be haunted by a shadow, the shadow of the ego. This shadow can disappear only when Identity as ONE is known and felt.

It may be said that not all desires are wrong; the Rajasic ones which harm and exploit others can be condemned; but, why renounce the Satwic desires? But, desire is desire, though the object may be beneficial and pure. The fruit of effort, the mind that seeks it, the vitality that activates the mind, life itself—every one of these has to be turned towards the Lord, with devotion born out of the Vision of the ONE.

Those who argue that the Spiritual Path is for the Individual only, and that the Society should not be involved in it are committing a great mistake. It is like insisting that there should be light inside the house, and saying that it does not matter, if there is darkness outside. Devotion towards God goes ill with hatred towards fellow-men. Fellow-men and the world must be seen ever in the mirror of Sat-chit-ananda. Kinship based on this recognition will alone last. That is the Sai Kinship. When you deepen that kinship, the True Presence, the Constant Presence of Sathya Sai will be yours. Do not be led away by your fancies into the jungle of words and feelings. Be firm, true to your innermost Nature.

Good and evil are based on the reactions of individuals; they are not inherent in things or events. Vedanta or Atheism is accepted or rejected, when one likes or dislikes it. They do not depend on logical acceptance or rejection. Only experience can establish their validity. Who can delineate Godhood as thus and thus? Those who do so are indulging in a futile exercise. They have no authority for declaring it. If they claim the right, they are but conceited people relying on their limited intellects.

Divinity is fully immanent in every one, it is patent for the eyes that can see clearly and deeply. Whoever denies this is only cheating himself of his reality. He cannot dismiss IT by denial, either from himself or others.

The conclusion, therefore, is inevitable, that, it is the duty of men to see in Society the expression of Divinity, and to use all his skill and effort to promote the welfare and prosperity of Society. Men must cultivate (1) this expansive feeling (2) this inclusive thinking and (3) this intuitive vision. Without these three, man is but an inert being; if he derides these three, he loses his title to be human.

The spirit of renunciation, adherence to virtue, the eagerness to co-operate, the sense of kinship—these are the characteristic signs of man. Life which considers these as encumbrances cannot be valued as 'life'.

The brotherhood of man can be translated into life only on the basis of the Atmic Vision. All men thirst for peace, happiness and bliss. They are the precious heritage which is their right, for, they are God's Treasure. They can be earned only by recognising the bond that knits man to man. All men are of one lineage; they are of Divine Lineage.

All men are cells in the One Divine Organism, in the Divine Body. That should be your faith, your fortune, your fort, your fullness. Awareness of this alone gives you the right to call yourself a man. Learn to live as men. This is the Sadhana, this is the message of Sai.

Krishna overturned the pot of curds and ran off with a ball of butter. Yasoda, the mother, was able to catch Him, by means of the footprints on the floor, left by the curd smeared soles! You too can discover the foot-prints, impressed as truth, beauty, virtue, humility, justice, peace and love. Train yourselves to recognise the foot-prints, in these.

—*Baba*

State Conference

The Third Karnataka State Conference of the Office Bearers of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation was held on Sunday, the 17th March, in the Silver Jubilee Hall, Lal Bagh, Bangalore, in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Over 400 delegates attended. The Prasanthi Flag was hoisted at 9 A.M., by Bhagavan and the proceedings began with Vedic Recitation by Vedasmrat Brahmasri Kameswara Ghanapati. Bhagavan lighted the

Sacred Lamp Wore the beautifully decorated floral Dais. Dr. P. S. Rao, D. Sc., the District President, ganpolore welcomed the delegates and Dr. M. D. Sandara Rao, the State President, offered the homage of the Organisation and its Units from all over the State, at the Feet of Bhagavan.

Dr. V. K. Gokak then addressed the gathering on faith and its three foundations. "Faith is essential for an understanding of Baba and for sharing in the Supreme Task on which He has come. Man must realise that the heart too has its reasons, to accept or reject the call that urges him to respond; that the Guru does not enslave or even dominate the individual; that the Avatar is the link between God and Man and God suffers no subtraction when He dons a body. The Avatar is the Advent of the Divine for raising man to Divinity."

Bhagavan spoke on the role that the Organisation has to play in the spiritual development of the individual as well as in the moral uplift of the community. Sanghachiththa is Samachiththa, He said. (The Social Consciousness is the Consciousness of Unity.) The Conference then named four Zonal Convenors for Karnataka and the Convenor for the Seva Dal. In the evening, Reports on Mahila Vibhag activities, on Samitis and Service in the Villages, on the Expansion of Bal Vikas work, and on the Inculcation of Indian Culture in the Youth of the Land were presented. Bhagavan in His concluding Discourse gave directions on these matters, and warned devotees against various individuals and institutions that call themselves as Second Prasanthi Nilayams and other misleading names. He spoke also of certain persons claiming to be possessed or in communication, and of people who were led astray by their tactics. He called for Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Love in the dealings of every Unit. Love and Humility must be the distinctive marks of the Sai Organisation, He advised. Bhagavan blessed the delegates at the end of His Discourse.

He sat through the Harikatha on His `Advent' that was charmingly rendered by Professor Madivalar of Haveri, Karnataka State. The delegates departed to their centres of work, with firmer faith in the spiritual nature of their task and a stronger determination to share more enthusiastically in every item of service to which the Units are dedicated.

—Ed.

The Renaissance of Dharma (Bhagavan's Letter to Teachers)

Camp: Prasanthi Nilayam, 18-1-74.

Dear Votaries of Dharma!

Receive my blessings. Ever since I came here, at Prasanthi Nilayam, I have been thinking of writing to you this important letter. Since a large number of devotees had come from very distant parts of the country and were waiting here for many days, I was engaged in granting them spiritual solace and sending them back home. Hence, this delay in sending you this message.

Embodiments of the Divine Atma!

Open your eyes and look around with some circumspection. Ponder over the heights we had attained in ancient times and the present pitiable predicament of mankind. What an abysmal descent! Isn't our situation very much like that of, a man who has tumbled down from a mountain peak to the depths below? We had, by observing and upholding Dharma, reached the pinnacle of perfection in every sphere, spiritual, material, scientific, economic. We followed with great veneration the principles and guidelines laid down in the sacred scriptures, the Shruti and the Smriti, which embody the commands of God Himself, and as a result, we were bound together by mutual love and affection, and our culture shone with supreme excellence.

But, today, we are in quite a terrible situation—the very opposite of the glory of the past. Wherever we look, we find men sunk in utterly low moral and material conditions. The Dharmic duties prescribed by the Lord in the Shruti and Smriti in order to save mankind from these very evils have been discarded. Infected by mutual animosity and distrust, we are spouting the fire of violence and cruelty and jeopardising World Peace. Violation of the laws ordained by God is the chief factor, responsible for the absence of abiding peace in the world.

Is not the transgression of Dharma (which is another name for the Commands of God to man) the sole cause for the poverty, the despondency, the despair and the lack of spiritual knowledge and effort that are so rampant at the present time throughout the world? It is heartening for us all to note that a few people, at least now, have discovered the reason for the crisis through a study of the sequence and the negation, and are striving to resuscitate Dharma which alone can confer prosperity and peace on the world. If the annihilation of something is causing injury to something else, then, the only method for the regeneration of the latter is the revival of the former. Isn't this principle universally acceptable and applicable? We are noticing that the decline of Dharma has caused the destruction of world peace. When we plan to bring about prosperity and peace to the world, isn't it our paramount duty to restore this Divine Dharma?

Teachers!

It is your imperative duty to wake up and strive, at least now, without further delay, for the preservation and fostering of Dharma. For, today, some persons are endeavouring to destroy Bharatiya Dharma, attacking it and by plucking it by its very roots. If we fail to resist their attempts, Dharma is in danger of being completely uprooted.

Some persons enamoured of modern civilisation and bearing the respected designation of social reformers and reconstructors, are trying in manifold deceptive attractive ways to pollute Society itself, by depriving it of Dharma.

The Dharma, for upholding which we have been all along willing and ready to sacrifice wealth, honour and even lives, is the Dharma named Sanathana Dharma. Sanathana means eternal, existing and effective for all time. Wake up Get ready. The moment has arrived, when you have to demonstrate your indomitable valour and irrepressible heroism.

You are born in the ever-effulgent land of Bharat. You are the valiant and invincible descendants of heroic Hindu warriors, who were worthy embodiments of courage, fortitude, valour and moral integrity. You are scions of the holy and lofty lineage of Rishis like Bhargava, Kausika, Vasishta Bharadwaja and Kasyapa who forced even the `three worlds' to tremble in fear, at their spiritual

might and majesty, won through severe penance. You will be unworthy of such great ancestry if you remain indifferent, slothful and apathetic like cowards, when the Dharma which is as essential as the very breath to our lives is being undermined. Resolve to engage yourself in the task of promoting the welfare of the world; be assured that Bhagavan will be your unfailing support.

As days pass by, the process of reshaping and reforming affect each field. Naturally, it is being applied to the educational system also. In former times, children were initiated in the spiritual path at the proper age and their studies began thereafter, under the Guru or Preceptor, in course of time, when Westerners became the rulers, many were lured to the study of their language, for, thereby they could secure the 'second' of the four goals of man, namely, riches. Thus they were transformed into supporters of the Western system of education.

In the past, teachers saw to it that the pupils were equipped with devotion to God in addition to the curricular training. So, the students were well versed in spiritual discipline and knowledge; every act of theirs was motivated by the yearning for salvation and spiritual joy.

Boys and girls were instructed by gurus who had full knowledge of the Country—its history, and traditions—and the principles of Religion and Culture. Now, since the teachers are themselves woefully ignorant of what culture means, what spirituality consists of, and what the significance of Religion is, the pupils are deprived of the wisdom that alone can confer peace and joy to their hearts.

The propaganda for atheism, the declaration that the Vedas have no historical validity, and the teaching through history that Hinduism is destroyed—these are the activities of the teachers who suffer from the mania for Western culture and civilisation. Can we call such a system of instruction, education? Can we call those who instruct these things, gurus? Vidya or Education is the communication of the knowledge of the Divine Power, and the inner Reality of the Atma. This alone justifies the claim to be educated.

Since they have no spiritual awareness, students are taking part in disorders and disturbances; they become easy targets to mob violence, unworthy of the educated; they descend to levels lower than the blind reach in their ignorance and draw down upon themselves the ridicule of the observers. They disfigure the educational institutions and bring disgrace upon them.

Teachers!

We have to inculcate in our College lofty ideals and take up highly noble projects. I am now communicating to you my feelings and plans, because I know that you are enthusiastic, inspired by spiritual ideals, and worthy of Sai's love and affection.

1. Mere formal teaching of the prescribed lessons in the College will not raise the students to the stature we desire. By mere planting, a sapling does not become a tree. It has to be fostered by the provision of the appropriate security, care, and periodical attention.

2. To shape the simple innocent students from the villages into votaries of the English language, devoid of the virtues of humility and fidelity, politeness and faith, which are so necessary for

happy living, is not a task which will promote the welfare either of the student or of the country. By the mere acquisition of an academic qualification which will assure them a job, they cannot progress either in morality or straightforwardness. Proper activities must be devised and adopted to make them useful helps of their parents. They must be able to serve them skillfully and gladly and thus earn their blessings.

3. There are 200 students coming to our College from villages around. We should group them into batches of 20 or 30; one teacher should accept the responsibility for guiding each group. When they find a student backward in any subject, they should encourage him, by special teaching in that subject; they should pay attention to the conditions and circumstances of each student and keep in touch with the parents too; they should help the students to cultivate and develop the high ideals that they have in their minds and the noble plans to which they wish to dedicate themselves.

4. Proper steps must be undertaken to put an end to the evil habits, the evil thoughts and evil talk that are rampant in these small villages. It is only then that the educated 'rural student' can maintain and develop his virtues. Or else, his attainments in virtue will be evident only as long as he is studying. As soon as he returns to his village, the behaviour, the way of speaking, the habits of life that the villagers practise will become natural for him also. Therefore, through each one of the students of our College belonging to a village, we must establish a Spiritual Centre in that village; the Centre must guard against the spread of parties and factions in that village and should not observe or honour any distinction between the villagers, on the basis of caste, creed, or family status. This will bring about a great change in the methods and message of education.

5. One day in each week or fortnight, teachers should gather the students and instruct them in certain lofty ideals of life; they should go to the villages of those students, and devote themselves to some programme of welfare activity in the village. This is very advisable. If you do the spadework and make the preliminary arrangements I shall come (I am returning to Brindavan in February) and in the months of February and March, all of us can go to one village after another, and establish these Spiritual Centres. We shall transform them into ideal villages. It is only then that the value of education can be demonstrated, expanded and sanctified.

6. For each one of these objectives to be realised, it is necessary that teachers must be idealistic and enthusiastic. Then only will students follow their guidance. Our College must become the pioneer leader in translating these high ideals. This is essential, not only for the individual, but in equal measure, for all mankind.

7. Consult the students, group by group, and find out who among them are interested in establishing such Spiritual Centres in their own villages; if they make proper arrangements in their villages, then I shall myself come and inaugurate the Centre and confer on the people of the village necessary enthusiasm and adequate facilities.

We shall start in this way, in a small measure; we can thus rescue the villages from the chaotic influence spread by politics and, make them wholly loving and helpful filled with Satwic ideals; this is the fruit of real education.

8. When the students of our College coming from villages see a village or two, developing on these lines, every one of them will come forward, asking for the inclusion of his village too. They will acquire along with Vidya or education, the virtue of Vinaya or humility. And, with humility, they can easily earn spiritual knowledge. This is very essential, and very urgent work. Due to the absence of these two, people are today, disgracing their humanness, though they are 'educated', behaving like fools and blind men, giving up the power of discriminating between the temporary and the eternal. It is enough progress, if men live as men! Man must be vigilant that he does not descend to the level of demons, that he does not pollute society and inflict 'earthquakes' on the country. If we do not take on hand these activities, we cannot remove the fear and anxiety that seem inevitable in the future for our students.

9. You must all meet together and take necessary interest in this matter. You need not compel any one who is not interested. It is enough if we have some five or six who join with love and faith. If they have the desire, and if all share in this task, the greater the joy. There should be no trace of compulsion in organising this. I am placing a car at your disposal for carrying out this programme. On this holy Sankranti Day, I have given expression to the thoughts that I am having for a long time, taking into consideration your enthusiasm for this work. I wish you will take the steps necessary for implementing this programme.

Read this letter with care and grasp its deeper meanings and significance.

Your Loving Sai

The Voice of Siva

Open your Eyes

Sivoham, Sivoham—was the exclamation that rose from the souls that knew the Truth in a flash of illumination, after long years of cleansing the mind through the process of Tapas. 'I am Siva; Siva am I' Though denoted by many names and recognised in many forms, the Divine Principle is One, without a Second. It is Sivam and it is latent in each being, including Man. Holy days are to be spent in the contemplation of This Truth and in special exercises to make oneself fully conscious of one's Divinity.

God is the Seed, which has expressed itself as all this. But, this fact, so deeply implanted in the hearts of every Indian for centuries, has been overlaid by veils of doubt and man has lost the courage and energy that the faith had given him so long. This was the very core of Indian Culture, but, children of India have neglected and very nearly lost this precious heritage. The fascination for Western fashions of thought weakened the belief in one's religion; that led to the giving up of the disciplines which shaped one's daily life; this in turn led to the deterioration in moral standards; this has bred misery, disunity, hatred and disgrace. It is time to open one's eyes to the tragedy and retrace the steps.

Delve Deep

The saints and seers of this land never spoke lightly or acted irrelevantly. They had the good of the generations always in view. When they invested some places as holy and named some days as sacred, they also prescribed the rules and ceremonials to be observed by pilgrims and

Sadhakas, so that Time, Expense and Effort could be used for the expansion of Love and the education of the instincts and impulses. The object of every rule was to bring the Realisation of the Atma as one's Reality a few steps nearer. For, the Atma in the Individual is the Atma in all; Sivoham is the Truth; and the Truth alone can make man free and full of Bliss.

Take one prescription: the worship of the Snake. Those afflicted with barrenness or serious illness or skin diseases of virulent types vow to proceed on pilgrimage to shrines of Subrahmanya (conceived in the form of a Snake). People laugh at this practice, "Indians offer adoration to Snakes, because, in their opinion, they have poison in their fangs!" The truth is quite otherwise. The inner meaning of snake worship is quite different. The spinal column of man ending with the 'thousand-petalled lotus' in the brain is very much like a serpent poised on its tail with the hood widely spread.

In the Science of Kundalini Yoga, the vital energy of man lying dormant like a coiled snake, at the bottom of this column in the lowest Muladhara Chakra, the Basic Wheel, is awakened and aroused, so that it courses up through six more Wheels (Centres of superior Consciousness) until it reaches the Sahasrara or Thousand-petalled Lotus Wheel at the very top of the skull. The passage for the Kundalini is through the Sushumna Nerve in the centre of the spinal column. The worship of the Snake, ridiculed as superstition, is the symbolic counterpart of this great Yogic Sadhana which confers vigour and vitality.

Take the demarcation of Tirupati as a holy Place of Pilgrimage: Lord Venkateswara, the Deity worshipped there is called the Lord of the Seven Hills, for Seven Hills have to be climbed over, before the Temple is reached. Obviously the Six Chakras and the Sahasrara are indicated here, for in Rajayoga, the Supreme is revealed, only when the Individual raises the Vital Energy—the Kundalini Shakti—up to the Seventh Stage. One of the hills is named Seshagiri, meaning, Snake Hill. From the plains, the range gives the appearance of a snake with a raised hood.

And, what exactly does Subrahmanya mean? Spend a little thought on that. It means, 'He who has attained the realisation of Brahma, the Universal Absolute, the Primal Cause, the Cosmic Consciousness'. Every appellation of God has deep significance. In the Vedas, Vishnu, for example, is named Parama. It means Paramanu, the Atom; He is Omnipresent, as omnipresent as the atom, found as the substance and sub-stratum of the Universe Vishnu is the Cause as well as the Effect, for, there was nothing else when Time began. The One became many; the many disappear, the One remains. Cattle are different from horses; true. But, when four-footed animals are considered, they are both the same. Under 'animals' a vast variety of beings are included. Thus it goes on, until only One Is.

Ocean and Wave

To this Unity behind the appearance of multiplicity, that is to say, to help realise the A-dvaita (Non-dual nature of Existence), Sankara, the greatest expounder of that school of thought, established Four Seats of Practical Philosophy called Mutts in the four regions of India. The very first step in the endeavour to realise this Unity was, according to him, Upasana, or, Worship, of the Concrete Symbol of God, which gives one the experience of the ecstasy of Union.

One day, Sankara was seated in meditation on the bank of the Ganga River. Suddenly, he exclaimed, "Lord! Surely, I am yours; but, surely, you are not mine." His pupil, Throtakacharya was by his side then; he was astonished at this statement, which, according to him, went against the Advaitic stand. So, he asked him how he could ever declare any distinction between I and You. Sankara replied, "The waves belong to the Ocean; but, the Ocean does not belong to the wave. The wave is the ocean in essence, but, the Ocean is not the wave." The main point to be attended to is, the elimination of the ego the elimination of the identification with the body and its needs satisfiable through the senses. For, you get joy when these needs are fulfilled; grief when they are not, anger when something comes in the way, pride when you win over that opposition.

To eliminate the ego, strengthen the belief that all objects belong to God, and that you are holding them on trust. This would prevent pride; it is also the truth. Then, when you lose a thing, you would not grieve. God gave; God took away. Of course you hear almost all talking in this strain and advising this re-action. But very few follow that advice themselves. This is the sin of all sins: saying one thing and acting quite the opposite, denying in practice what you assert as precept.

The Many Names

Siva is known also as Easwara, the repository of All the resources essential for Prosperity. The most important resource is Jnana, Wisdom. Three kinds of Jnana are demarcated: Jiva-prajna (Concerning the Individualised Divine), Easwara-prajna (Concerning the Name, Form, and Manifestation of the Divine) and the Atma-prajna (Concerning the Universal Absolute of which the Individual is the Temporary Particular). This is also mentioned in, some other texts as Deha-prajna, Jiva-prajna and Atma-prajna, but, the meaning of the words is the same as in the other list. Easwara confers the Aiswarya of Jnana. He is also known as Samkara, and sages have experienced Siva as conferring Sam or Auspiciousness of all kinds, Happiness in all ways. Siva is eternally auspicious; He does not come embodied in, other forms, with other names, as often as Vishnu. So, He is not described as Sri Siva 'or Samkara or Sri Easwara. Sri is inherent in His very Person and so it is superfluous to add Sri to His Name. When you realise Sivoham, I am Siva, then, you have all the happiness all the auspiciousness that there is. Siva is not to be sought on the peak of a distant range of mountains, or in some other special place. You must have heard that sin and, merit are inherent in the acts that men do; so too, Siva is inherent in every thought, word and deed, for He is the Energy, the Power, the Intelligence that is behind each of them.

Sivoham

All Energy, Power and Intelligence are in you; you need not search for them outside yourselves. God who is manifesting as Time, Space, and Causation is in you; why then do you feel weak and helpless? Man is tossed about by his ambitions and the craving to fulfill them. But, he must first know where he stands and where he should will to reach. Now, his efforts are wanton and wasteful. He is an expert in Mathematics, but, unable to do a small sum in arithmetic. He has mastered algebra, but, unable to measure the area of his home. He knows botany, with all its Latin names; but, ask him about the uses to which the common Tulsi plant and its leaves can be put; he has no answer. He has mastered all the physical exercises taught to him; but, he is helpless when asked to sit in Padmasana. He can talk loud and long on Moksha and of its being

the final goal; but, he does not know that he is already free; he imagines himself as bound and behaves as such.

Attachments bind him, attachments to illusory objects. When the illusory nature of the objects is revealed, the attachment falls of and he is free. These attachments persuade him to tarnish the act of worship also; for, he prays to God for granting him trivial boons. Pray to God for God; do not use Truth to achieve Untruth. Have the inner vision, not the outer. Do not be attracted by the objective world; concentrate on the subjective world.

You do not scatter seeds on the surface; you plant them deep enough for the roots to get a foot-hold. Do not dig the seeds into the soil too deep. Follow the middle path. Do not tighten the strings of the violin or veena too much; nor leave them loose. Do not get too bound with the world; do not also give it up, lock stock and barrel.

Vibhuti

The Sivaratri Festival, as celebrated here, is an example for you. You might ask, "Swami has often declared that all days are holy days, that there is no special rite or ritual that has to be observed on any single day; but, Swami Himself is pouring Vibhuti on the Idol and calling it Abhisheka; is this right?" Swami is doing so, to teach you a lesson.

The Vibhuti Abhisheka has a potent inner meaning, which Swami wants you to grasp. The Vibhuti is the most precious object, in the truly spiritual sense. You know that Siva burnt the God of Desire or Kama, called Manmatha (for he agitates the mind and confounds the confusion already existing there) into a heap of ashes. Siva adorned Himself with that ash, and thus He shone in His Glory, as the Conqueror of Desire. When Kama was destroyed, Prema reigned supreme. When there is no desire to warp the mind, Love could be true and full.

What greater offering can you give God to glorify Him than the ash signifying your triumph over tantalising Desire? Ash is the ultimate condition of things; it cannot undergo any further change. The Abhisheka with Vibhuti is done to inspire you to give up desire and offer Siva the ashes of its destruction as the most valuable of all the articles you have earned. Ash cannot fade as flowers do in a day or two; it does not dry and disappear or get soiled and unpotable as water does; it will not lose color as leaves do, in a few hours; it does not rot as fruits do in a few days. Ash is ash for ever and ever. So, burn your wiles, your vices, your bad habits, and worship Siva, rendering yourselves pure in thought word and deed. Showering on Him the ash purchased in packets from the shops will not please Him at all.

Damaging Tales

Siva is worshipped with the three-leaved bilva, for, He is immanent in the three worlds, in the three phases of Time, in the three attributes of Nature. He removes the three types of grief; He has no basis outside Him; He is the source of Bliss; He is the embodiment of the sweetness and efficacy of Nectar. Since every being is Siva-Swaroopa (for without Siva, it is mere 'Sava'—corpse) man has to live up to that Divine Status. Scholars and pundits who propagate Dharma in our country are doing great disservice, for, they cast doubts on the very majesty of Godhead. Swami Karunyananda spoke now of the episode where Brahma became jealous of Krishna, and stole the cows and cowherds from Him in order to bring discomfiture on Him. He said, Krishna

created the same number of cows and cowherds, every one exactly similar, and thus, foiled Brahma's conspiracy. People who hear such tales will naturally wonder how Gods can be envious of each other just like human beings; their faith in the Divine will be undermined thereby. These scholars are more intent on exhibiting their textual scholarship, than revealing the Glory of God. They do not mind the damage they cause, to the very cause they are pleading for.

There was an old woman in a village, some years ago. She sold a patch of land that she owned, and with the money, she had four gold bangles made, two for each arm. She wore them with great joy and went along the streets very proud of her new acquisition. But, she was disappointed, because no one in the village turned aside and looked at her bangles; she could as well have not worn them, for the villagers did not notice any difference in her. She tried various means to attract their attention towards the bangles, but, without success. One night she could not sleep at all, for, this neglect pained her much. At last, she got a brilliant idea which, she decided, must succeed; the villagers must be drawn to notice the bangles.

Next day, after sunrise, she set fire to her own dwelling-house! When the flames rose, and commotion ensued, the villagers rushed towards her, sitting, wailing in front of the burning house. She shook her hands pathetically, at the faces of the frightened villagers, causing the bangles to jingle and shine in the red light of the high flames, crying out, "Alas! My house is on fire" "O, pity my fate," "God, don't you see my plight?" Every time she shouted a sentence, she put out her arms vigorously at some one, so that she or he could not miss sighting the bangles. The pity of it! She was so anxious to exhibit her bangles that she did not care for her house itself; the house was on fire but she was happy her bangles were noticed. The scholars who are lost in admiration of their own cleverness are as foolish as this old woman.

Do not say or do anything that will bring Indian Culture into disrepute, or that will undermine the faith of the people in Goodness and in God. Do not claim to be orthodox and encourage heterodoxy or heresy. Cast aside the desire for happiness and prosperity, do not moan that you do not secure Heaven; it does not matter, if you are smothered by difficulties. Stand up boldly in defence of the honour of your country. That will bring you all happiness and prosperity, all the Grace you yearn for.

Love, Love, Love

Indian Culture teaches that all beings are actuated by the self-same Divine Power, blessed by the self-same Divine Grace. So, love all. Do not develop jealousy or hatred. There are many Sadhakas who enjoy perfect Calm and equanimity while sitting in Dhyana; or while in the Puja Room before the shrine. But, once they rise and come out into the open, they behave like demons. The Gita says, "Sathatham yoginah", "Be in Yoga, always". Be immersed to love with no trace of pride or envy. This is the highest Sadhana. At the present day, all grades and groups of people all over the world resort to Violence and hatred in order to satisfy their desires and demands, bringing about fear, anxiety panic and revolution. The gains through such tactics are not much; the gains will be greater and more lasting if the path of love, tolerance and peace is followed.

Love brings people together; hatred drives them apart. You cannot be happy, when you cause misery to others. God showers Grace when the Nine Steps of Bhakti are observed. Masters or

rulers can be won over by the same means; sacrifice, love, devotion dedication, in the path of duty. When, success is achieved, by means of unrest and violence, it has to be preserved and prolonged only by further unrest and violence.

Therefore; let this be the lesson of Sivaratri for you: Siva is in all beings and all things. He is the inner motivator. Be aware of this always; do not cause pain to anyone, do not harm or injure anyone, or hurt his self-respect. Love all alike, cultivate tolerance and spread brotherliness,

—*Discourse: Maha-Sivaratri. 20-2 74 Prior to Lingodbhavam*

Master mine!
When in the Spring,
the fields are ripe
and the kites dance in the wind,
I remember that my, soul's string,
is held by You
Now taut, now loose;
I prance; I soar, I fall
and, falling, rise again!

Long ago this sport began
as part of Thy master-plan.
When most I think that I am free
You tug, You release.
Lord, unwind, and wind, gently please,
Till I do fall, fluttering at Thy Feet.

—*T. R.*

"You Are Freed"

—*Sai Showers Grace*

'Do not be misled by what you see; what you do not see with your eyes is much more significant. Why waste your life without achieving its purpose—namely, knowing and, experiencing the Truth? Come, come with Me, you can make your life worth while.'

Man has in him all the Bliss, as well as all the equipment needed to unravel it; but, he is caught in dire ignorance of his own inner resources. He can have Supreme Peace, but, he does not strive to earn it; his attempts are weakened by doubt and indecision, and so, they are doomed to failure. Of course, there is the flow of water underneath the ground. But, how can we benefit by it unless

efforts are made to dig down into that source? A good deal of 'Desire-for-sense-satisfaction' has to be removed, before that inner Spring of Peace and Joy can be tapped.

Your lives are essentially of the nature of Peace (Shanti); your Nature is essentially Love; your hearts are saturated with Truth. Rid yourselves of the impediments that prevent their manifestation; you do not make any attempt towards this, and so, there is no Peace or Love or Truth in the home, the community, the nation and the world. The husband and the wife do not live in concord; the father and his sons are involved in factions; even friends do not see eye to eye! Twins take to different paths: For, they live in competitive warring world of passions and emotions. It is only when God is the Goal and Guide, that there can be real Peace, Love and Truth. The Divine must be revered at all times; what pleases the Divine must be clearly understood and followed.

The Ramayana gives two examples of such consecrated lives, those of Anjaneya and Lakshmana. Anjaneya or Hanuman dedicated every moment of his life, every wave of thought, every twitch of muscle, to his Master, Rama. When Rama sent him in the southerly direction on the mission to search for Sita, he was neither elated on being thus recognised as an efficient instrument nor depressed at the extraordinarily dangerous nature of his task. He knew that Rama would confer on him the skill and strength needed to fulfill the errand; in fact all his skill and all his strength were 'His gifts'. To feel that he was too weak an instrument was, he concluded, an insult to Rama's Omniscience and Grace.

Lakshmana too was a mighty hero, for, he drew strength from the Divine Itself. And, he had no other strength. Once while moving about in the forest as exiles, Rama instructed him to choose a nice spot and erect a Parnasala (Green bower) thereon, for Sita and Himself. Lakshmana was so shocked with pain at this that he fell on the ground; he lamented that he had fallen from his brother's estimation. Rama said that he had 'risen' instead, for; he was asking him to select the site himself.

That was the very reason why Lakshmana felt he had fallen from Grace. "Have I a will apart from yours? How could you ever imagine that I could exercise my judgement independently and select a site myself? Tell me, where and how; it will be done. But, I have no judgement of my own; I have surrendered, it long ago." That was the reply of Lakshmana.

You too declare that you have surrendered; but, that is just a verbal statement. If you sit in a car, you go along with it; on the cycle, you move with it; on a horse, you go wherever the horse takes you. But, in this case, you say and perhaps you believe that you have placed yourselves in My hands and so, you are going along the path I have laid-down. But, your mind and your heart are not fully in Me and so, the surrender is only in name.

As a sign of this deed of surrender and in order to sustain it, nothing more is enjoined than constant remembrance of the Name. No regimen of exhausting Sadhana is prescribed. Smarana is enough. You have recited Bhajans extolling the Names which summarise the Glory, all through the night, after the Emergence of the Atmalinga. But, this is only an appetiser. Bhajan must become an unbroken stream of Bliss on your tongues and in your hearts; it must confer on you the uninterrupted awareness of Soham, of the Unity of I and He, of This with That. It is

called Akhanda-hamsa japa; unbroken japa of the Hamsamantra, It will ensure freedom from anxiety, fear and grief.

Mahasivaratri is dedicated to the disintegration of the aberrations of the Mind, and so, of the Mind itself, by dedicating oneself to Siva, God. The Moon as well as the Mind whose Deity it is, have each 16 phases. On the Sivaratri, fifteen of these have disappeared; and, there is just a streak of the Moon in the sky. The New Moon that follows will have not even that streak visible.

The Mind too must be mastered every day until, on the fifteenth days fifteen phases have disintegrated and only a streak remains to be removed by a final flourish of effort. That is the Sadhana that you did throughout the night, Bhajan, vigil, fast. When the mind goes, there is no more Moha (deluding Desire and attachment) and the Kshaya (Decline) of Moha is Moksha (Liberation).

Smarana is the surest means of mastering the wiles of the Mind. You are indeed blessed, since from among the billions of people on this earth, you alone were able to come into this Congregation, this Presence, on this Occasion. People gather in many a sacred place for Sivaratri, but, you were able to be here on this thrice-holy day and witness the emergence of the Dasangula Swaroopa (the Upanishads declare that God is adyathistath dasangulam) the ten-inch-symbol of the Kala (Time) Desa (Space) Manifestation of Divinity, as described by Sage Kapila, the Incarnation of Narayana Himself. When Kapila, who too was the Personification of Time and Space was born, he called upon the Gods to gather in the Presence and take Darshan; his mother who called upon the Gods is therefore named, Devahuti (She who called the Gods). And, when the Gods came, Kapila asked them, 'Don't you know who I am?' Even now all human babies ask the same question as soon as they are born—Koham? (Who am I?)

Having had the unique good fortune of witnessing the Emergence of the Time-Space Embodiment in the Linga-Form, I assure you that you are released from the bondage of birth and death. Recollect (and live in the recollection of) that moment of Emergence and meditate on the significance of the Linga Form. This is the chance that is seldom gained through the performance of Yajnas or Yagas or other elaborate rituals; or as a result of years of arduous Sadhana. When you are asked what happened at Prasanthi Nilayam, tell them that your lives' mission has been fulfilled, that you were able to witness the Lingodbhava and see the Linga which emerged during the auspicious Hour.

The Linga, as you can see, is dasangulam, ten inches in circumference. It has within it, shining with dative light, the TRISUL of Siva, symbolising the three phases of Time—Past, Present and Future—and the three dimensions of Space—Earth, Sky and the Nether Regions. As mentioned by Me already, Time is measured in units of ten (60 vighatikas, 60 ghatikas and 360 days for the year), and, in this Linga too, as you can see even from where you are sitting, the colour of the Trisul (the three-pronged spear in the hands of Siva) inside this Linga changes into a new one, every ten minutes. The handle of the Trisul demonstrates the One of which the three are manifestations. This is the grand Mystery that has been revealed to you. You have witnessed the Divine Creation; you have seen the Divine Symbol; you have shared the Divine Bliss. Out of the world's population of many crores, you alone secured this fortune. The Shrutis declare the

Purusha as Splendour, as Jyoti. You have seen the Splendour when the Linga emerged; you have seen the triple Jyoti in the Linga Itself. No greater fortune can befall a man.

Live hereafter as befits the recipient of this rare Grace. Thyagaraja the Saint-Singer sang of the Rama Nama, as being composed of the two vital sounds Ra and Ma, Ra being the life-sound of the mantra devoted to Vishnu (Om namo NaRAyana) and Ma being the life-sound of the mantra devoted to Siva (Om NaMAshivaya). The two sounds became Rama, the One which became Vishnu and Siva, just as the Linga is the One from which all Forms manifest, the Elementary Form which symbolises the First Emergence of the Will of the Divine. I repeat that you who have experienced the sublimity and splendour of this Divine Event have acquired thereby merit enormous enough to save you from the cycle of birth and death.

Dwell on the mighty moment, this holy hour that you were privileged to spend here; dwell on the majesty of the event that you witnessed; sanctify your days by thoughts that are sacred, words that are suffused with love and deeds that are in accordance with the Grace you have won this day. Alert yourselves, whenever you are prone to deviate from this responsibility. Be ever vigilant that you do not stray or weaken or vacillate.

—*Bhagavan: Discourse: 21-2-74*

A Teenager Tells

Pranams at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan, my respects to my Gurus and Elders and my loving greetings to my brothers and sisters of the Sai Family. I would like to present before you a brief resume of my Bal Vikas, Pre-Seva Dal and the Summer Course Experiences and my own humble assessment of the effect, impact and transformation these have brought in me.

There is a story given by Swami Vivekananda. A lion-cub, having lost its mother soon after birth, chanced to grow up among a flock of sheep. It did not know that it was a lion and heir to the throne of the forest-kingdom, but believed that it was merely a poor weak sheep. We, the children of the present generation of India are in the same pitiful state like the lion-cub, growing up estranged from our own Culture ignorant that we are heir to the richest Culture in the world. In the story above, a lion happens to see the lion-cub shuddering in fright like a sheep at the roar of the lion and tells it, "How pitiful is your state! You are the Prince of the forest you are not a sheep. Assume the majesty your nature warrants." Baba's Educational Scheme of Bal Vikas has done just the same to us as the lion did to the lion-cub. Baba tells us; "You are Children of Immortality—*Amrutasya Putrah!* Become aware of your noble Heritage and live in away worthy of your Heritage."

To confess, years back when my parents said that I should start attending the Bal Vikas (called Bal Vihar at that time) it was not at all a welcome idea to me. The class is on Sundays to which my friends and I used most eagerly look forward to for merry-making. Besides, I was told that the Bal Vikas is a moral and spiritual instruction class. It was all very abstract and unintelligible to me. But my grudgings and protests were of no avail and I had to make it. But I found the atmosphere in the Bal Vikas class so different from what I had expected and feared.

The teacher whom the children were greeting 'Sai Ram, Aunty!' was very loving and kindly. However, I was at a loss to understand the purpose of *stotras*, *bhajans*, meditation and particularly the *Shanti Mantra*. Praying for my own welfare and well-being is quite alright, but praying for the well-being of all, even of those whom I don't like, I could not quite understand and reconcile myself to. Anyway, I found the class very interesting, especially the stories narrated from the Ramayana, Mahabharata and Bhagavata—though these stories were very different from the comics I used to read before. And I soon used to look forward to the class very eagerly. I found the meditation practice giving me a lot of peace. It improved my concentration power and memory and I started faring much better in my studies than ever before. The Spiritual Diary recording habit also caught up with me. Not that I became a Sathya Harischandra, but there is compunction and conscience-pricking whenever I utter lies or do anything wrong, whereas formerly there was no fear or hesitation at all in me to utter lies. I began to appreciate to some extent the purpose of the items taught, though not completely till we had the opportunity of Baba Himself explaining many of these points to us. Mother and Father, Baba said, are the visible manifestation of God to you. How was Pundalika of Pandarpur able to win the Grace of Vithal? It was certainly not by worshipping Him, but only by lovingly serving his parents that he could bring the Lord of Vaikuntha to his very doorstep. I then understood why my teacher insists that we must mentally offer our *pranams* to our parents as our first duty in the morning. Regarding prayers and *stotras*, Baba said: "For the water and current you use, you pay tax, What tax are you paying to God for the infinite gifts and amenities He has bestowed on you through

nature—the Sun that lights up the during the day, the perennial rivers that give us sweet water and quench our thirst and the countless other gifts?" Prayers are an expression of our gratitude to the Lord for His Infinite munificence to us. We talk of the great advances Man has made in Science and Technology but haven't these advances become possible only because of the precious gift of the intellect bestowed on man by God—the *buddhi pradata*? The prayer, whether it be to Ganesa or Gayatri, is to give us '*sanmati*' so that we may tread on the right path. 'Meditation' Baba said, tames the mind and '*bhajans*' are the purifier of all impurities and the best antidote for all human ills. Baba further said: "Like the thread that holds together all flowers of a garland, so too The One Divine Principle sustains the entire creation. All are one. *Vasudaiva kutumbakam*—Become aware of the Principle of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man"—then I understood why the *Santhi mantra* "*Om sarve vai sukina santhu....*"—Prayer for the well-being of all, including my supposed enemies who are in essence no other than my own brothers and sisters, is to be chanted.

After Bal Vikas, we are enrolled in the pre-Seva Dal class in which moral and spiritual coaching continues, but in a more intensive way. We have been taught the Life and Teachings of the great Ramakrishna Paramahansa whose life was a great experiment in the Search for God and an inspiring demonstration to the world of Realisation of God. A study of Christianity has convinced us that all Religions are essentially the same as per the saying '*Ekam sath; vipraha bahuda vadanti*—Truth is One: Sages call it by different Names.' Baba's Gita Vahini, in which he has given in simple prose the teachings of Gita, is one of our Books of study. Mahatma Gandhi referred to the Gita as his ever-unfailing mother, providing him guidance and solace all through his life. He said, "When disappointment stares at me in the face and all alone, I see not a ray of Light, I go back to the Gita for refuge. I find a verse here and a verse there and I begin to smile in the midst of tragedies." The Gita teaches us equal vision, with malice towards none and love and compassion for all—'*adveshtha sarva bhutanam, maitrah karuna evacha*' and a life of Righteousness. It teaches us the Art and Science of purposeful living in tune with the Divine and puts us on the path of Self-Discovery.

We have been given practical training in Yoga Exercises because a healthy body is needed to house a healthy mind and unless the body is healthy, no progress whatsoever is possible in matters either secular or spiritual. We have been given guidance in meditation; thus 'our body, mind and spirit all are being trained' in the Pre-Seva Dal. After Pre-Seva Dal, we have to opt for either Seva Dal Course or Bal Vikas teaching. My aptitude is more for Bal Vikas teaching and at the same time, learning. I am now a trainee-teacher for one of the Bal Vikas classes.

The days I have spent at the Summer Course at Brindavan have been the most glorious experience in my Life. It was to us a dip in the *jnana-Ganga*. Just as the River Ganga destroys our sins and purifies us, the *jnana-Ganga* dispels ignorance and illumines our heart. It was a great revelation to us of our great Culture and Heritage and the Rich wisdom enshrined in our Invaluable Scriptures like Vedas, Upanishads, and a host of other texts. The crowning programme of each day's programme was Baba's Discourse in His unique, simple and sweet style on Adi Sankaracharya's 'Bhaja Govindam'. Baba exhorted us to no longer stagnate as '*mudha-matis*' but to become '*mukti-matis*' i.e. aspirants for liberation, and advised us to start at our early age itself on the Spiritual Path.

Baba's Bal Vikas scheme has proved to be the greatest boon in my Life. The Sundays which I used to once fritter away seeing movies, standing in the ticket-queues for a longer time than the time of the duration of the picture, or in some other futile way, have, through the Bal Vikas Scheme transformed my life of idle merriment into a life with an Ideal. We are indeed fortunate that at this very early age of ours, Baba has put us on the quest of Sathya (truth): He has showed us the pathway of DHARMA asphalted by SHANTI and illumined by PREMA. May He bless us with success in our Quest of Truth, and may we be worthy instruments in spreading Baba's message of Love.

—*Lakshmi Rao*

Baba at Sandur (The Second Visit)

The Word come True

On Saturday, the 9th day of March, 1974, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba addressed a vast concourse of eager and devoted listeners, gathered before the historic and picturesque Palace of the erstwhile State of Sandur, ruled for centuries by the enlightened Royal line of Ghorpades. Baba concluded His Address on a note of reminiscence. He said, "Embodiments of the Divine! When I came here last, twenty seven years ago, I could not meet the subjects of the Ruler, nor address a gathering of the people of this region. But, there has been a persisting attachment and affection between Me and you, since long. For a Bower to grow into a ripe fruit, the factor of Time is very important. All through that long time, the process of fulfillment is active, though unnoticed. The baby takes years to grow into an adult. So too, for that affection and attachment to grow into this close contact, this interval of time had to pass!"

His Highness Maharaja Yeswantarao Ghorpade acknowledged his gratitude, at the First Meeting that Baba addressed in the State for that First Visit 27 years ago and for the continued and constant shower of Grace that Bhagavan was conferring on him and the people of the State ever since. He said, "I have had the good fortune to be at the Lotus Feet of Baba since 1947 A true devotee of Baba does not know what fear or disappointment is. When disappointment stares me in the face, and, all alone, I see not one ray of light, I go to Baba, and I immediately begin to smile, in the midst of overwhelming tragedies; I have had many tragedies in my life, and, if they have left so visible, no indelible scar on me, I owe it all to the Grace of Baba and His teachings."

The Maharaja spoke about one specific instance of that Grace: "When I gave up the Rulership of Sandur, in 1949, for the greater good of a United and Happier India, I was—being merely human—naturally very depressed; I could not see clearly what was to be my future. So, I approached Baba for guidance.

He told me that I should not despair, and that I would found an Organisation bigger than the State of Sandur! I could not then understand what Baba meant.

In 1954, I took over from a European Company—the Sandur Manganese Mines—and decided to enter the field of Industry, founding the Sandur Manganese and Iron Ores Pvt Ltd. (SMIORE).

By Baba's Grace, the Company made fast progress; in 1964, I converted the Private Company into a Public Limited Company, with an expanded Programme to establish an Electro-Metallurgical Industry, to produce Metals and Ferro-Alloys, such as Pig-Iron, Ferro-Manganese, Ferro-Silicon etc. With Baba's Blessing, the Foundation Stone of the Metal and Ferro-Alloy Plant was laid; the 15000 KVA Pig-Iron Reduction Furnace commenced production in 1961. Baba is blessing, personally, today, the Ferro-Silicon Unit of that Plant.

Now, I realise the significance of Baba's words uttered in 1949. These mines employ at present more than 3000 people, and this Ferro-Silicon Project will give employment opportunity for more than a 1000 people. So, you can imagine my personal feelings today, when Baba is Himself here, to bless the commencement of the work of our Ferro-Silicon Project. I have no doubt that with Baba's Blessing, we shall make spectacular success and contribute to the development of Karnataka, for which I shall always strive."

Ferro-Alloy Plant

It was indeed an unforgettably inspiring visit, the two days that Baba deigned to spend with the Royal Family, and the people of the State. On Friday Baba arrived at the Ferro-Alloy Plant at Vyasanakere near the ancient town of Hospet, (where, as a young boy of fourteen He had been given a Royal Reception by the elders of the place, in the very dawn of His Advent.) His Highness accompanied Him from Dharwar. He proceeded to the Site where the Furnace was to be erected; He blessed the Kalasha and directed Her Highness to deposit it in the ceremonial cavity sanctified by the recitation of Vedic hymns. He gave tokens of His Grace to the Vedic Pundit and to the Expert in charge of the Project. He autographed a Portrait of His to be placed in the Control Room of the Furnace.

Then, Baba moved on to the Pig Irons Furnace; after watching the working for some time, He planted two Champak trees, at the entrance of the Vrindavana, a garden specially laid out to commemorate His Visit to the Complex. He was greeted there by Bhajan from thousands of devotees which filled the air with the fragrance of Divinity. After unveiling the Yoga Sthambha—the Lotus Symbol Pillar akin to the one in front of the Prasanthi Mandir at Puttaparthi and lighting 'Mangala Deepa', Baba ascended the Dais amidst the joyful Jais of the vast multitude.

Baba spoke to the gathering in mellifluous Kannada, and won the affection and loyalty of all, by the surge of Love that flowed from each word. "Peace of mind can be acquired only by being in the Presence of God, in thought word and deed; it cannot be got by riches or by scholarship, or positions of authority. We can enjoy the Presence of God, whatever the work we are engaged in. You are engaged in shaping and forging iron. The magnet draws iron to itself. But, only when iron is free from the dust or rust. Man is the iron piece; Divine Grace is the magnet. When the mind of man is made unholy by vicious thoughts, it cannot win Grace. How to cleanse the iron, so that the magnet might draw it near? Love is the purifier. God is Love. Love makes us Divine," He said.

He spoke of the human body as a machine. "You are all familiar with machines. You know that the machine, however costly and complicated and useful it may be, can be operated only when the electric current enters it. The body too can work only when the Atma is providing it the

current. Try to acquire the Jnana of the Atma. That is the chief duty of man. Now, man is trying to travel millions of miles to reach the moon and discover what there is in that moon. This is sheer waste of money, time and effort. Let man travel at least half an inch into his heart and discover the greatness and glory of the Atma," He appealed.

"The body is the temple wherein Siva is installed; but, you do not try to see that Siva and derive Ananda therefrom. Unless you try to discover the Siva in you and live always as befits a person who is the custodian of that temple, life is a waste. Mere toil all day will not give that Ananda. But, let me tell you how to get it. Decide to spend five minutes every morning and evening in good thoughts, good company, and good deeds; avoid greed, envy and anger. Feel that the same God is in every one; revere all; do not hate any one."

Baba told them that proper effort along correct lines has to be undertaken, to get spiritual progress. "If the chapattis on your plate have to reach your stomach, you have to put forth the correct effort, haven't you? How then can you get mental peace and joy, without the least effort, along the lines laid down? Do not think that you have to do dhyana or japa or elaborate puja or tapas; pure thoughts, kind deeds, sweet words, and sympathetic feelings are enough," He said.

The Palace

After the address, Baba proceeded to the Sandur Palace, by car, accompanied by His Highness, Dr. V. K. Gokak and Col. Joga Rao. The Welcome at the Archway leading to the Palace Garden was an exhilarating experience to every one that witnessed it. Bhajan songs from thousands of devoted men and women echoed around; the soft notes of the shehnai pealed pleasantly in melodious sweetness; Baba was conducted in procession along the soft red carpet to the flower-bedecked Dais, school-girls in colourful dresses lining the floral path and scattering roses on the Lotus Feet; the Royal Umbrella was held over His Head, the Full Moon scattered silver glory all over the sky, and the tastefully illuminated Palace shone as a back-drop to the celestial scene. The atmosphere was serene, sublime, charged with the thrill of devotion and dedication. Baba blessed the poet who had composed the Kannada song of welcome Sri. V. T. Kale, after it was sung with exemplary enthusiasm by Sri H. Shambhulingappa. Baba greeted the assembly with a few words of joyful cheer.

The Miracle

On Saturday (9th March), Baba visited the Head Office of Smiore and spoke to the Officers and others gathered there. Then, He visited the Sri Sai Mandir, Sandur. Indra Devi of the Sai Yoga Centre, Tecate, Mexico, who was one of the party writes, "We drove to a shrine built 15 years ago by an unknown man who came into Sandur State, dressed like Shirdi Sai Baba and resembling him in build of body and style of living. He asked the Maharaja for a piece of land to construct a Temple; he himself worked at the image to be installed therein. He did not allow any one to have a look at it! When it was ready and installed, it was found to be a life-size statue, having a remarkable likeness to the man who had carved it! Before people could comment on this mysterious person and his incredible mission and its success, he disappeared! No one has seen him since. No one knew where the money for building the temple came from, for, the stranger had never asked any one for any contribution! When Bhagavan came into the Temple, and looked at the Statue, He spoke only one word, "MIRACLE", echoing the feeling that rose in the minds of all those who stood around Him. His Miracle, indeed, it must have been."

Baba went from there to the far-famed temple of Kumaraswami, and the shrines of Parvati Devi and Naganateswaraswami.

The Mines

Later, He drove to the Deogiri Mines; Baba preferred to walk through the long lanes of devoted workers and their families, rather than board the decorated car which the miners had made ready. Nearly ten thousand people had gathered there to earn Darshan and listen to the Discourse. Baba said, "Working in these mines situated in such lovely surroundings amidst the forest, you are indeed Karmayogins worthy of respectful gratitude. You are consecrating every hour of the day by work, and earning your daily food by the sweat of your brow. You have sound sleep and perfect peace of mind—treasures that the rich, the powerful and the famous do not have. You are the real pillars of prosperity for the country, the promoters of human welfare. Make Love the basis of your relations with others; each one is a temple where the self-same God is installed; let joy fill your families. Then, the family circle will be Haven; the place full of joy is Vaikuntha; the place where you perform the duty you have dedicated yourself to carry out is Kailasa. "

The miners and their kinsmen were overwhelmed with gratitude; they will cherish for long the memory of this gathering and this Discourse in their hearts and use it to sublimate their lives to higher levels of fulfillment.

Later, in the evening, Baba called together the members of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samitis of Sandur and Bellary, and other devotees anxious to receive instruction and inspiration from Him; He clarified the aims and objects of the Organisation and its ideals of Service and Sadhana. Baba also blessed a large number of ailing persons who had been brought for Divine Ministration.

At 6 P.M., Bhagavan proceeded to the Dais at the Palace Front Porch and blessed with Darshan the tens of thousands of persons many of whom had trekked long distances for the unique fortune awaiting them. Baba, then, spoke to them in Kannada on the value and purpose of life and the need to infuse it with Love. He said, "Now, mankind is hurrying towards ruin, though it could well arrest that calamity. A policeman asked a cyclist to stop, for he did not have the lamp on the vehicle. The man came fast without alighting, shouting at the constable to move away, for he did not have even the brake! Mankind too has no lamp and no brake, no lamp of wisdom to light its pads and no control over its sensual urges.

He said that those who desire to benefit from the resources of Nature must first acquire the Grace of Nature's Master, namely, God. Therefore, He exhorted every one to develop faith in God and Love for all mankind. He spoke of the Divine that was inherent in man as the one unifying factor, and described the body as the iron safe used to keep precious gems in safe custody'. He pointed out that the gems were the power of discrimination, the ability to detach the mind from sense objects, and the awareness of the Divinity in oneself and others.

Blessings

At the end of the Discourse, Baba as usual conferred Divine ecstasy on all by the Bhajans He sang for the gathering to sing in chorus.

Baba was welcomed at the Residential School, Sandur, by the students and members of the Staff. At the open Air Theatre of the School, the students were privileged to present before Bhagavan a devotion-filled Dance Recital, based on the Geet Govinda.

Baba left Sandur the same night for Prasanthi Nilayam, accompanied by Their Highnesses, arriving there, well after midnight. Indra Devi writes. "The next morning, the Mandir was filled with happily surprised people; for, Bhagavan was in their midst."

Baba Blessed Bombay

Peace dawned on Bombay again, which has passed through a trying period of tension, ridden with strikes, bundles, gheraos and clashes. Like a bad dream, all has been forgotten and Bombay got back into normalcy and sprang up into a state of joy and bliss with Bhagavan's arrival in the evening on the 1st of March. At about 6-30 p.m. on Friday Baba arrived at Dharmakshetra where thousands had been waiting since afternoon, singing Bhajans and thirsting for Divine Darshan. It was a festival and an ecstatic time for Bombay till Bhagavan left for Belgaum on the 8th morning.

On Sunday at the Sardar Vallabhai Patel Stadium, for the Maharashtra State Rally of Sri Sathya Sai Bal Vikas, about 2500 children from several parts of Maharashtra, assembled along with their parents. Children of the Government Remand Home at Chembur and also students from the Blind School, Worli, where Bal Vikas classes are conducted by the Mahila Vibhag wing of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samiti, participated in the rally. The rally started with Sarva Dharma Prayer, "OM TATSAT SRI NARAYANA TU....," with the children dressed up in the different costumes of India and seated in a decorated 'RANGOLI Map' of India.

A few items like Harikatha, a skit delineating the significance of Dharmakshetra etc., were presented by children. One girl Miss K. Lakshmi Rao, who underwent the Bal Vikas course, the Summer course in 'Indian Culture and Spirituality' and who is now a student of the Pre-Seva Dal Course and a trainee-teacher in one of the Bal Vikas Centres, Bombay, gave a talk on the impact of these and the transformation these have brought in her and what a great boon Baba's Educational Scheme of Bal Vikas has proved to be in her life and in the lives of thousands of other children—the younger generation of the country. Sri M. M Pinge, President of Maharashtra State Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations, said that the State Rally has been attempted in pursuance of the decisions at the VI All India Conference held at Rajahmundry in January this year.

Mr. Kamal Sahani of Bombay who is studying in Sri Sathya Sai College of Arts and Science at Whitefield said, "This is a rally for the reconstruction of man, This is the Mission of Baba and a Spiritual army of the young will be overwhelming the country to resuscitate the Glory and Heritage of the ancient Bharat." Bhagavan in His Divine Message, said, "Children should imbibe and live up to the Dattatreya Tatwa—the triple principle namely, Do not get deluded by the world. Do not fear Death. Do not lose fear of God!" Baba further said, "Discipline, Devotion and Duty should be the chief marks of one's personality and PAPA BHEETI and DAIVA PREETI,

should be like the two eyes guiding one's life. Equality of all Faiths and Religions is SAI TATTWA. Our country is a Nandana Vana, the celestial garden for all Faiths to flower and flourish, adding colour, beauty and charm to our Nation."

On Sunday 3rd March, Baba addressed a Meeting of Principals and Teachers of Schools at the Indian Education Society's King George High School, Dadar, on the Ideals of Education. The Indian Education Society has several Schools in Bombay, and has 400 teachers on its staff. The King George School has the reputation of its students successively scoring the top ranks at the State S.S.C. Examinations every year. Bhagavan said, unless a moral and spiritual grounding is also given along with other subjects taught, Education does not serve its true purpose, which is the building of character more than anything else; education without character is a waste.

Bhagavan addressed Bombay University Professors on 3rd March who assembled at the Sathya Deep Hall. Baba said that by the time students come to the University level they have already acquired many unhealthy traits and false values of life, and are a bit difficult to be mended and corrected, because at the school level they have not been given the right grounding and foundation in moral and ethical values of life. Even so, Baba advised that Professors should try to fill up this lacuna and to their best to remould the minds of the students, ingraining in them moral, spiritual and higher values of life.

In the evening Baba gave a public discourse at Dharmakshetra, emphasising particularly on the value of self-less work. Sri Srinivas, a student of Sri Sathya Sai College of Arts and Science, Whitefield, spoke at the meeting, expressing how fortunate he has been to be studying in Baba's College, where education has a new orientation, with equal emphasis on promotion of the intellectual, moral and spiritual personality of the student. Sri P. K. Savant, President, Prasanthi Vidwanmahasabha, Maharashtra, prayed that Bhagavan should visit the interior of Maharashtra, especially Shirdi, Baba's Abode during His previous Incarnation. In the night, Bal Vikas children presented two small dramas, one in English entitled 'Love and Service' depicting an old woman's pilgrimage to the Fair of St. Luke and the other in Marathi on 'Guru-Bhakti, based on a story from the Mahabharata.

In pursuance of the decisions at the VI All India Conference at Rajahmundry regarding the opening, of Agricultural Demonstration Farms, Polytechnics and colleges, it was felt that a beginning in this connection should be made at Bombay and at Rajahmundry, Bombay procured some Agricultural Farm Implements, and Bhagavan inaugurated an exhibition of these at Dharmakshetra on Monday the 4th. In the afternoon Baba visited a school at Khar (which Bombay Seva Samiti has adopted for free medical check-up and health follow-up when 32 doctors were conducting the medical check-up of the students of the school. In the evening, Baba gave Darshan at a public meeting in Khar, where Baba sang a few Bhajans in His sweet, melodious voice.

On Tuesday 5th morning, Baba inaugurated the new premises of Sri Sathya Sai Industrial Training School at Dharmakshetra. Later He blessed the Mahila Vibhag members who were preparing Agarbatis, harmonising work with Worship—"DIL ME RAM, HATH ME KAM." Baba blessed also the primary and secondary school children of Sri Sathya Sai Vidya Mandir at

Dharmakshetra. Baba blessed the children of the Central School of the Dumb and Deaf, where Bal Vikas class is being conducted, and who had come for Baba's Darshan to Dharmakshetra.

In the afternoon Baba addressed a group of over 35 doctors who have been helping in the Free Medical Camps being periodically run by Seva Samiti in the different parts of Bombay and also at the Free Medical Dispensary being run on Sunday afternoons at Trombay-Koliwada village of Chembur since Christmas 1973. Baba commended and blessed the work of the Doctors.

In the evening Baba released the Quarterly News Letter published by the Maharashtra State President. This newsletter furnishes guide-lines to workers and also provides information regarding various activities being conducted and proposed to be conducted. This will promote better co-ordination and also improvement in the activities of the different wings of the organisation. This publication is a step in the implementation of the decision at the 6th All India Conference and will be followed by all the states. Baba thereafter, distributed Identity Cards to Seva Dal members and Work Diaries to managing committee members,

On the 6th evening, Baba addressed the Seva Dal and Seva Samiti Members on their code of conduct and sadhana.

On the 7th morning, Bhagavan blessed the volunteers.

On the 8th morning, Baba left by a chartered plane for Belgaum with some children of Bal Vikas, members of Pre-Seva Dal, and Seva Dal, Mahila Vibhag and Seva Samiti, the State President, members of the State and Central Trusts, the Principal of Sri Sathya Sai Prathamik School and of the Agricultural Demonstration Farm. For all of them who had the blessed fortune to travel with Baba, it was a flight along with the Lord Himself.

Every morning during Bhagavan's stay in Bombay, there was Nagarsankirtan from Chakale to Dharmakshetra culminating with Bhagavan's Vishwarupa Darshan. There were Bhajans regularly in the Mornings and evenings. During Baba's stay, every day thousands and thousands came for Baba's Darshan.

While Baba visits places mainly to allay tire yearning of devotees for His Darshan, this particular visit of Baba was more to blow the humble endeavour of Maharashtra to make a beginning in the implementation of several of the programmes decided on at the 6th All India Conference at Rajahmundry last January. With His Grace and Blessings, what is it that cannot be achieved?

Manohara!

On the first day of April, Sri Rama Navami Day, Bhagavan arrived at Hyderabad by plane. Thousands of devotees who awaited His arrival on the campus of "Swam" felt thrilled when they caught the glimpse of Baba. In the Public Meeting held soon after His arrival, Baba spoke of the essential teachings of the Vedas. He declared that all the Four Purusharthas (Goals of Human Life) mentioned in the Vedas are equally significant. They are Dharma, Artha (Wealth) Kama

(Desire) and Moksha (Liberation) If Artha and Kama are God-oriented, they become exalted, and can lead man to the consummation of Liberation. Baba said that the Sri Rama Navami Day (the Birthday Festival of Rama) should be celebrated by understanding and imbibing the qualities of Rama.

Prior to Bhagavan's Discourse, a student of the Sri Sathya Sai College, Bangalore, spoke about his experiences at the College and of the translating touch of Baba's loving kindness. Sri Mukund from London gave a pleasant Veena Recital at the close of the meeting.

Every morning, Baba gave Darshan to groups of devotees who arrived at `Sivam' singing Nagarsankirtan through the streets of the City. Later, during Bhajan, Baba moved along the disciplined rows of devotees and blessed the vast gatherings. Baba gave inspiring Discourses on the tad and 3rd also, clarifying the diverse aspects of our culture and of the glory of India.

To mark the First Anniversary of the Inauguration of "Sivam" a Kavi Sammelan (Poets' Meet) was arranged, and the Poets privileged to share in the Joy read their compositions in the Divine Presence. Bhagavan in His Discourse gave good counsel and warned against verbal gymnastics, vapid, vulgar sentimentalism and the imitative enthusiasm for ultra-modern lines of thought. To demonstrate what He considered good poetry, Bhagavan recited the song, "Sri Ramaa Ramani Manoharaa," and every one was delighted at the unique chance of hearing Him sing that precious poem. Dr. D. Venkatavadhani, M.A., Ph.D., `Karunasri' Mudigonda Veerabhadramurthy, and Prof. Chaturvedula Narasimha Sastry, M.A., Ph.D. offered their verses at the Lotus Feet. Mahopadhyaya Jammalamadaka Madhavarama Sarma acted as the compare.

Bhagavan blessed and encouraged young students and teenagers to speak to the vast gatherings on their own spiritual experiences. Rajan Patel and Kamal Sahani of the Sri Sathya Sai College spoke of the impact on them of the spiritually oriented educational system designed by Bhagavan. Kartik Seshadri thrilled the listeners with a recital on the Sitar. Pupils of the Bal Vikas staged two playlets, "Kuchela" and "Bheema Garva Bhangam." They also recited a Ballad in folk-tune (Burrakatha) based on Bhagavan's Advent.

In the Public Meeting on the 6th, Bhagavan declared that his is the Language of Love. He declared that He does not set much store by pedantry and grammar. The object is only to implant the Message in the hearts, and to sow the seeds of Love therein.

Bhagavan left for Brindavan, Whitefield, on the morning of the 7th. Eyes moistened and hearts grew heavy. Every one was afflicted by the pang of separation from the Father, Mother, Master and Lord. "When, O when, shall we have this opportunity again to behold and be near Bhagavan's resplendent Form in the holy precincts of Sivam?"—that was the prayer in the heart of every one, as the plane carrying Him took off and flew beyond the horizon, towards Bangalore.

—Ed.

Moral Foundation

The low level of moral standards now existing must provoke the question whether an inculcation of a spirit of reverence through regular training in religious attitudes in our schools is not essential in the formulation of ideals of conduct and of service. Religion is accepted as part of education in most countries in the world. But in India the position is quite different for obvious reasons. We have to make a distinction here between mere moral instruction, which is perhaps provided in Indian schools, and religious education which is forbidden in all recognized schools. The reason for the ban is understandable in a secular State. State recognized or aided schools would have to provide instruction in all the religions or in none of them. The first alternative is cumbersome in practice, the second is in any case the safer of the two.

In this larger context, however, there would be some finer distinctions between different categories of schools. There are for instance, the so-called denominational schools, primarily Christian and Muslim. One expects, though this is not by any means the universal practice in denominational schools—there is a decline of interest in religion among the young of all religions—ways would be found of providing religious instruction outside school time. Where the practice exists it must be commended, since the influence on the boys, if the classes are conducted in the right spirit, would be wholly beneficial. The real weakness in the present syllabus in morals is that it is thin and arid, and would also be confusing to the young mind, since the religions are not strictly all alike in some respects, though the moral ground-work is essentially the same.

Anyone who escapes learning about his own religion misses not so much "religion," as he misses a vital part of his cultural heritage. Whatever his other accomplishments may be, there will always remain in the man a certain shallowness of mind, for which there can be no full compensation. What is equally crippling is that a man who has not absorbed the culture of his own country can never succeed in making himself completely at home in any other culture which may happen to be in vogue at the moment. The point was made in a pungent phrase which Sri Sathya Sai Baba used in the course of a spirited address to a crowded meeting of secondary school teachers of Bombay on the subject of ideals in education. He spoke of those—there was more sorrow and pity in his words than anger—who thought they knew the way to New York, but were at a loss to know how to get to Banaras.

Religious education, it may now be surmised, is probably the best means of instilling a moral sense. The strongest motive force for moral action comes from a coherent view of life held with all the fervour of religious faith. Men can, of course, be moral without religion; but the effort can be harder for most ordinary people. This is because there is only one secure foundation on which morality, both personal and social, can rest—an intuitive recognition of the sacredness of human personality. It is when we have learnt to shrink instinctively from using other human beings for our own personal ends that many social evils like hoarding, profiteering, corruption, exploitation will begin to come under human control.

There is no reason to shy away from the philosophical aspects of religious instruction. All philosophy is by its nature descriptive, which means that to grasp the fundamental truths of

Hindu philosophy one needs imaginative power, which the young can command, rather than any highly developed intellectual capacity. These truths are part of the Indian cultural heritage, and represent some of the highest achievements of the human mind. Why leave the young in ignorance of this glorious traditional knowledge?

The practical question, however, remains. If religion in this sense cannot be taught in schools, where else can it be taught? In the world outside there is usually a tripartite partnership in the religious and the moral education of the child—the family, the school and the existing religious institutions. May be in India we cannot find an answer because as yet we are not thoroughly convinced of the overwhelming need for religious education. Once we realize the necessity, a way may be found. In any case, there is much to ponder over the questions raised by Sri Sai Baba.

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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SITA'S DREAM

As soon as dawn broke, they discovered that they were quite near to the Chitrakuta Peak; so, urged on by the yearning to meet Rama, Lakshmana and Sita the Mother, they continued the journey, with redoubled haste. By about noon, they could hear the murmur of the Mandakini River; they could see clearly the Chitrakuta Peak.

The moment their eyes discerned the Peak, the citizens of Ayodhya and the two brothers, Bharata and Shatrughna, prostrated on the ground, in reverence. Rising they walked forward, with renewed vigour. Those who were too exhausted already and had despaired of further exertion, suddenly found that they had developed elephantine resources of energy. They walked fast, without paying any attention to their actual physical condition. Those who bore the palanquins and trudged along on bleeding soles suddenly found reinforcements of strength by cheering Jai, Jai, and reciting the name, Rama, Rama, while they hastened forward,

Even before the hour of dawn that day, Rama had risen from sleep; he communicated to Sita that his father was coming into his consciousness more often than on other days. At this, Sita said, "Lord! You know that I do not get any dreams, any day. But, this night I had a very wonderful dream! I can even say it wasn't really a dream. I dreamt that Bharata and Shatrughna had become frail and weak, as a result of separation from you; I dreamt that; finding it possible to be in Ayodhya without you for a single moment, they are coming to us, with not only the people of Ayodhya but also the Queens Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi." Tears gathered in her eyes while she was describing the experience.

Rama called Lakshmana near and told him, "Brother, you heard, didn't you, the description of Sita's dream? This does not indicate good tidings; for Sita saw all the others and I saw, in my dream, only father, father alone, with no association or relation with the rest of them. This strikes me as a bad omen. Come! It is best we take a bath." Accordingly, the three of them went to the river, for the bath.

Just then, birds flew across the sky in flocks; the northern region was darkened by a thick cloud of dust. Many animals and birds were scared into wild haste. Taking note of this unusual occurrence, Lakshmana climbed a tree to find out the reason.

He saw an army on the move, with infantry, cavalry, chariotry and elephantry advancing to where they were. He inferred, that a king was at their head. He informed Rama, accordingly. Rama told him that it was the dream of Sita coming true! He advised that the best course would be to return quickly to the `thatch'—the Parnasala.

The Advancing Army

Meanwhile, the Bhils, the Kiratas and other tribesmen of the jungle ran into the presence of Rama, and gasped but the news that a regular military force was advancing towards the spot and that the chariot of the royal leader of the army had a flag with the sign of banyan upon it. Sita, Rama and Lakshmana were confirmed in their inference that it was no other than Bharata who was coming towards them. They had no more doubts on that point. By this time, Lakshmana started quaking with anger. When coming to have a Darshan of Rama, why bring troops in full strength, he argued. That vile woman, his mother, must have advised him and he seems to have accepted her wicked stratagem, to attack the lonely and unarmed Rama in his jungle retreat and ensure that he does not return ever to the Capital City to disturb his reign, he surmised. Lakshmana was well-nigh consumed by the flames of anger that rose in him.

His eyes were reduced to red-hot coals. His words became sharp as sword-thrusts. Rama realised the change that had come over him; he said, "Lakshmana! Forbear! Don't be agitated. Become calm. Bharata is strong in virtue, and His love is immeasurable. He adds lustre to the royal line of Ikshvaku, like the lotus to the lake. It is not proper to cast aspersions on one so pure, so immaculately holy. Thus, describing the exact nature of the motives and mind of Bharata, Rama succeeded in quietening Lakshmana's upsurge of anger. Very soon, Bharata himself sent word through some forest-dwellers that he was seeking the Darshan of Rama, along with his brother Shatrughna and their attendants and followers. Rama felt glad when this happy news was brought to him. Like lakes in late autumn, his lotus eyes were filled with water.

The Brothers Meet

All this happened while Rama, Lakshmana and Sita were returning in haste to the `thatch' after their hurried bath. Bharata saw them when they reached the cottage of grass. He was torn by agony; he shouted distressingly, Rama, Rama, in extreme distress, fell flat on the feet of Rama and sobbed aloud on the ground. Lakshmana looked at the anguish Bharata experienced at separation from them; he realised that his estimate of his intentions was very wrong; he suffered terrible contrition within himself; his head was bent by the weight of sorrow; he shed profuse tears along with Bharata and Shatrughna.

Rama raised his brothers from the ground and sought to calm their feelings and quieten their grief. Even while he was so engaged, the Queens, Kausalya Sumitra and Kaikeyi, and the ministers, the Royal Preceptor Vasishta, the Pundits, the Citizens, the members of the armed forces came near, and were overcome by both grief and joy when they saw Rama. Their sorrow when they looked on Rama in hermit's robes by the side of the lowly but could not be wiped out

completely by the joy at setting their eyes on their dearly beloved Prince. They wailed and wept, shedding tears of grief and gratitude. The cries, Rama! Rama! that rose from their torn hearts sped over the vast expanse of earth and sky.

Rama spoke to them soft and sweet and persuaded them to control their emotions; then, he walked towards the mothers, but, could not bear to look on that picture of misfortune and misery. He became aware of the calamity that had befallen, but, he soon consoled and comforted himself; he felt sad that his father was no more; but, he soon consoled himself; he drew Lakshmana near him and told him the fact.

Feeling that it would be better that Lakshmana be informed more fully, he requested Sumantha, the loyal Minister of the Line, to relate to him the details and also of the facts regarding the administration of Ayodhya.

At this, Sumantha fell down unable to bear the burden of grief. Struggling to rise, he said amidst sobs, "Lakshmana! Where can we have Dasaratha hereafter? He was reduced to ashes by the flames of sorrow at being separated from you. Ayodhya has been converted into a jungle. Wherever you look, you see only sorrow; whatever you hear, you hear only wailing. Not merely men, even birds and animal cast off their lives when you left. Those who survive are keeping alive in the hope of your return." Hearing this, Lakshmana shed streams of tears. He stood like a stump, unable to reply.

Rites for Departed Father

Without a word, Lakshmana approached Rama, and told him in a faltering voice, "I could not imagine, even in my dreams, that such a terrible calamity would happen. We could not see our father, at least in his last moments." Rama consoled him, saying that there was no profit in grieving over what has already come to pass. "Physical bodies are as transient as bubbles in water; they are bound to burst and disappear, if not today, at least the day after," he said. He gave expression to many a moral maxim, until both the brothers went to the river, to finish the bath ritually laid down on such occasions, when one hears of the death of those who are near in kinship.

Meanwhile, Sita went towards her mothers-in-law, and touched their feet in great reverence. She also prostrated before the feet of the wife of the Royal Preceptor. She met the women who had come from Ayodhya and with due consideration put them at ease, by her sweet welcome. When their eyes fell upon Sita, the Queens wept aloud. The womenfolk who had come from Ayodhya saw the plight of that charming young Princess and they were so overcome with sorrow that they too could not desist from wailing. Coming to know that Emperor Dasaratha had left the body, Sita prostrated before the Queens again and again, saying "Alas! What great misfortune is ours! The emperor gave up his life because he could not bear the separation from us!" Sita felt that the news of Dasaratha's departure was as a thunderbolt on her heart. She and the Queens wept for long, at the turn that events had taken. Every one that day could not take either food or drink; they had no mind for either. The entire day and night were spent in sorrow.

When the sun rose, Vasishtha directed Rama to perform the obsequial rituals for the departed father. They were carried out in strict conformity with Sastraic injunctions. Since Sri Rama

Himself uttered the mantra sanctifying the waters, "May the holy waters of Ganga, Yamuna, Godavari, Saraswati, Narmada, Sindu and Cauvery come into this vessel and sanctify and water therein," the ritual was rendered sacred and eminently fruitful.

Let Them Return

Thereafter, the Preceptor, the Ministers of the Court, the Queens and the citizens of Ayodhya spent two full days with Rama, Lakshmana and Sita. At the end of two days, Rama approached the Preceptor, and said, "Master! These citizens and residents of Ayodhya are suffering very much here, drinking nought else but water and eating nought else but roots and tubers. Looking on at Bharata and Shatrughna and also on the Mothers, I feel every moment is as long as an age. It is best you return to the City. You are all spending your time here; the Emperor has ascended to heaven. It is not proper that I emphasise the urgency more. Please act, as seems most beneficial." With these words, Rama fell at the feet of Vasishtha.

Vasishtha replied, "Rama! Lord of the Raghu dynasty! Why do you speak thus? You have not realised how happy and contented these people are, since they are fortunate enough to be looking at your charming face."

When the people heard that Rama had requested them to return, each one of them felt tossed about in fear and despair, as a boat caught in a hurricane in midsea. But, when they heard the Sage Vasishtha pleading on their behalf, they sailed smooth, as the boat does when a friendly breeze blows on their sails. Their mind winds rejected the thought of returning to Ayodhya, and giving up the fortunate chance of the bath, three times a day, in the Mandakini River, living on the sweet simple meal of fruits roots and tubers gathered by their own efforts from the forest and more than all, filling their eyes with the pictures of Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana and their ears with the edifying and exquisite talk with Rama.

Sita was engaged in serving the mothers-in-law, anticipating their needs and over eager to be of use. She consoled and comforted them; she told them how she was spending her days happily in the forest, lacking nothing, and she made them wonder at her fortitude and skill. They were rendered happy at the thought that she was able to derive so much joy under such adverse conditions. They bore their own sorrow with greater ease, when they saw how Sita was braving her own.

Bharata had not a wink of sleep during the night, nor a pang of hunger during the day. While the people were happy, looking on at the face of Rama, Bharata and Shatrughna were filled with misery, while they looked on at that face. They could not bear it any longer; they approached Vasishtha and fell at his feet; they prayed to him to persuade Rama to return to Ayodhya, with Sita. They pleaded with him most earnestly expressing their agony in manifold ways.

Adherence to Truth

The Preceptor knew only too well the strength of Rama's faith in his ideals, and the tenacity with which he stuck to his sense of Truth, his determination to carry out his father's wishes. But, he was so moved by the sorrow of Bharata, that he decided to speak to Rama, at least to satisfy Bharata that nothing was left undone to make Rama return to the Kingdom.

He called Rama to where he was and said, "Rama! Listen to the prayers of Bharata. Conduct yourself in accordance to the wishes of good men, the interests of the people, the principles of politics and the directives of the Vedas," Rama recognised the affection that the Preceptor had towards Bharata that found expression in these words; he knew that Bharata would never deviate from the path of righteousness, that he would carry out his directions with full heart and in word deed and thought; and that he would always follow his steps and strive for his welfare and prosperity. He felt happy at this. So, he spoke soft and sweet a few auspicious sentences, in response to the proposal made by the sage: "Master! You are my witness, my father's feet are my witness. Let me assert this: No one is so dear to me as my brother, Lakshmana. No one has a brother in the world as dear as Bharata is to me. Those who are attached to the feet of their preceptors are indeed really fortunate; you have such affection and compassion on him; that is his great treasure. He is younger than me, and so, I hesitate to praise him in his presence. My opinion now is that Bharata should act, as he has spoken," Saying thus, Rama prostrated before Vasishtha and took his seat.

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

SAI FAMILY NEWS

From Tanzania

Abdul Paulo Kibomo writes from Arusha: "I am an African Christian of the Mpare Tribe. I am a citizen of Tanzania. I was for some years Laboratory Technician at the St. Catherine Nursing Home here New I am working in a Medical Dispensary. On 9-10-73, One Mr. William David (aged 30) employed in the Ngorongoro National Park was given an injection by the doctor, but, he became unconscious! Anti-allergic injection was given; but, his heart stopped completely. I lost all my courage. The doctor massaged the heart. I saw the Doctor perspiring a lot. Crying out, "Baba! Help me," he rushed out of the room; he brought a little quantity of white powder, which he rubbed over the chest of the dead body. A little was pushed into the mouth also. The Doctor kept on praying aloud. To my great surprise, the breathing started; the patient, who had died, opened his eyes. I asked the Doctor what that white powder was. He said, "It is called Vibhuti; it is the nectar for life." From that day, I reverentially worship Baba, to bless this poor soul."

U. S. A. Pilgrims

In 1969, our meditation teacher in New York, Hilda Charlton, told us that her Guru was Sathya Sai Baba. The practice of Sadhana slowly took an ever-increasing place in our lives, and so, we decided to go on pilgrimage to India. Our trip was inspired chiefly by the desire to meet the Guru of Rams Dass, Sri Maharaj-ji, in the Himalayas. We spent nearly two months with him, and though we found it hard to leave, we told him we would go to see Sai Baba in South India. He was very happy and kept encouraging us.

Our stay with Baba for many months was a supreme bring-up and blessing. Sai Baba is widely known throughout India and many other countries by what he terms his "calling card"—Miracles. These are manifestations of the Divine Spirit on the physical plane. But, really speaking, LOVE is his greatest Miracle. This is what attracted us. Baba's life is dedicated to the

uplifting of humanity, to awaken us to our spiritual heritage and to give courage and faith. He is not concerned about what religion you profess, or if you have another guru or anything like that. He only cares about your Love for God and for God's children. From morning to night, Baba is constantly giving to and serving others. He serves every one, no matter what their status in life is. He shows great care for his western devotees, since they come from so far. He has fed us personally, sent us sweets, fruits etc, and given us many interviews. This does not mean he spares the rod. He is very tough. Many egos are trampled, in Baba's territory. (Eddie and Kris).

Happy Healing

2620 patients, from about 14 villages and 25 hamlets in the region around the City of Coimbatore, were examined, their illnesses diagnosed and treatment given along with directions for further medical attention, by an eager and expert band of doctors, all inspired by Bhagavan's Message of Love and of Seva as Sadhana. This unique Festival of Compassion during which 262 were treated for ENT troubles, 378 for optical illnesses and defects, 201 for skin ailments, 234 for gynaecological disorders, 129 for dental complaints (of which 79 had to be cured by extractions), 222 for diseases needing surgical attention, and 544 needing examination and treatment by the pediatric section, was held at the village of Idigarai, on Sunday, the 17th day of March, from dawn till dusk. The Laboratory set up in the camp examined 129 cases. 823 patients were given medical care by the physicians. Drugs worth 25,000 rupees were supplied free to the villagers. 52 doctors 12 staff nurses, 15 students from the Medical College, 10 pharmacists, and 7 representatives of pharmaceutical firms willingly offered their services; 260 volunteers—members of the Seva Dal Units of the District of the Sathya Sai Samitis and Mahila Vibhags and pupils of the Bal Vikas Units—helped the patients to receive cordial welcome and loving attention. It was a charming sight to see the bright little kids leading softly by the hand the aged and the weak, to the section where they could obtain relief from specialists. After diagnosis, treatment and advice, they were again led by them to the dispensary where they were given the drugs. And, finally, they passed through the shrine where Baba's Portrait was installed and given the 'medicine of medicines', the Sacred Vibhuti.

The villagers were addressed in the morning by Dr. Punnaivanam, Dr. D. Lakshmanan and Sri G. K. Sundaram, President of the All India Cotton Mill Federation. In the evening, the Valedictory Meeting was addressed by Dr. Kulandaivelu, M.A., Ph. D., and by Dr. M. V. N. Murthy, M. Sc., Ph. D.

This is the Second Annual Medical Relief Camp, organised by the Sathya Sai Samitis of the Coimbatore Zone.

Mysore Letter

The Mahila Members of the Organisation at Mysore City have initiated, with the help of willing and enthusiastic Doctors, both men and women, a Free Clinic and Dispensary in one of the industrial and crowded areas of the City. They have also persuaded the Industrialists of the Area to help them in establishing a Nursery School and Primary Classes for the children of the workers in the spacious Rams Mandiram Hall of the place. They conduct weekly bhajans at the Lepers' Colony outside the limits of the City, and have brought Bhagavan with His Message of Peace and Courage, Hope and Assurance, to the afflicted brothers and sisters. There are about 60

patients living in the huts; they attend Bhajans, sing sweetly and, reading the writings of Bhagavan they have derived consolation and comfort.

The women workers are also arranging weekly Bhajans in the Home for Women (about 140 inmates) run by the State Government in order to rehabilitate them. The inmates are eager to read and understand more of Bhagavan's Message. Bhajan is also held at regular intervals at the Remand Home for Juveniles.

Two Bright Ideas from Kids

At the Saraswathipuram Bal Vikas Class, the young ones are indeed well imbued with the ideals of Prema and Seva which Bhagavan so strongly insists upon. One child saw caged birds being sold in the bazaar; her feathered sister was fluttering its cramped wings inside the cage. The child asked the father who was leading her by the hand "Father! Let us take that bird out into a garden or field beyond the city. Then it can fly away unharmed." "Surely" said the father; the child was rendered as happy as the bird.

Another child did not want her birthday to be celebrated at the home with the usual merriment, indoor games and fasting, in the company of her friends. She wanted to be celebrated at a children's home, where Bhajan is held by the Mahila Vibhag, so that she could spend the happy day with the children there! Bhagavan has indeed inaugurated a Revolution of Values in the minds of the children of the land.

—Ed.

During the hot months of the year, people rush to cool hill stations to escape the sweltering heat of the plains; so too, you should rush up to the cool heights of Sathya, Dharma, Shanti and Prema to escape from the sweltering heat of falsehood and injustice, confusion and conflict.

—BABA

The Year Named "Ananda"

In every country today, men have become power-mad and they resort without any compunction to self-praise and dry declamation. They develop hatred against others, foster envy and feed their fatal egos. They plunge the society to which they belong to fear, anxiety and disorder. They do not know that if elevating ideals are adhered to and practised, they could gain eternal fame; they are content with cheap applause and short-lived publicity,

You have gathered here today, since this is Yugadi Festival day, the Day reckoned by you as the Day that ushers in a new year with a new Name. This day is New Year day only because you have decided to call it so; it is not astronomically or climatically or meteorologically different from yesterday or tomorrow. Even as New Year Day, many hundreds of thousands of such Days have happened on this globe, and many thousands have been celebrated as Festival Days too. So too, this Day has come and this too will be gone. If the New Year Day is used by any one to begin a New way of Life, a New Step towards self-realisation, or self-enlargement through

service, then the Celebration has a worth-while meaning and significance. Otherwise, it is devoid of value. The red letter on the Calendar, which indicates this Day as separate from others, is a warning and a reminder of this Duty that you owe to yourselves.

The Name of the New Year that begins today is inspiring and auspicious. It is called Ananda, Spiritual Bliss, Inner Joy, Unshakable Calm. That name is a clarion call, which must ring in your ears all the 365 days of the New Year—Earn Ananda, Be Ananda, Become Ananda. Cleanse your Instruments of Consciousness, devote yourselves to Service so that you might weaken the forces of Ego and strengthen the forces of Social Unity, and Cultivate Japa and Dhyana so that you might rise towards Godhood—these are the steps by which you can earn and establish yourselves in Ananda.

Engage yourselves in your duties as intelligently and as devotedly as you can; but, carry out your duties as if they are acts of worship offered to God, leaving the fruit of those acts to His Will, His Grace, His Compassion. Do not be affected when the results you anticipate are not produced; do not anticipate at all, but, leave it to Him. He gave you the time, the space, the cause, the material, the idea, the skill, the chance, the fortune, and, you did but little of your own. So, why should you feel as if you are the doer? Do your duty, as a sincere Sadhana. Ananda is the Name of the year and you are happy it is so. But, what is in a Name except what you put into it or extract from it. A man named Rama must be inspired by that Name to manifest in himself the qualities that led Rama into the immortality which his Name attained. If a person carries about with him the name Dharmaputra, it is only a shameful burden unless he justifies the burden by being as righteous as Dharmaputra was. Or at least, by endeavouring his best to manifest Dharma in his life.

Man cannot reap the full fruits of his life here below if he only gathers riches, or collects popular votes, or load his head with tomes of learning. He has to cultivate and practise virtues too. He has to adhere to Dharma. The Shrutis direct that man has to earn just enough for his upkeep by honest means and use the rest of his time and skill for the general good. Dharma-Artha, earn Artha through Dharma. Then, you will certainly have plenty of Divine Grace. Dhritarashtra, the Father of the 100 Kuru Brothers who fought against the 5 Pandava Cousins—legitimate claimants to a share of the ancestral patrimony—had neither of these two, though he had abundant riches, superior armies and greater military skill and strategy. So, Dhritarashtra had to witness the total extinction of his dynasty and kingdom. Most men are Dhritarashtras; they pursue falsehoods and ignore Truth, they amass the trivial and ignore the crucial.

They do not realise that Death is stalking silently behind them; they do not notice the quick paces of Time; they do not know how precious is the chance that the human body, the human intellect, the human society and the heritage that it has accumulated for him has brought him, here and now. They are unaware that the same spark of Divinity that illumines every thought word, and deed in them is activating every other being too, in the Universe. They do not sense the brotherhood, they are not thrilled by the feeling of universal kinship.

They are sprawling in the slime of self-praise! They are slaves of their egos. And, consequently, they are never free from fear or anxiety. They also spread scandal about others, and so, they bog themselves in sin. Though they claim the respect of others, they are objects of ridicule and

hatred. They seek faults in others and so, their eyes revel only in faults. They cannot see good in any; so, they are consumed by envy and greed. Do not try to master others; master your own self, your own senses, your own mind. That is the real victory; they are the real enemies.

Do not waste time is unprofitable talk. Do not change your beliefs in accordance with changing loyalties, and changing surroundings. While accusing others of time-serving, be careful that you do not fall into the same evil. God is inherent in every thing, in every being. You can find Him in and through all that you see or do. In the golden chalice of your heart, He is the Wisdom that fulfils. Closing your eyes to this fact, you are spreading your hands outwards to snatch it. You may be compassionate, but, that emotion must be regulated and ensue. A compassionate man once brought home a fish he found struggling on the bank of a river in full flood; he placed it between the folds of a warm blanket and poured hot coffee down its throat. He thought it was suffering from a fit of cold. The hot coffee killed the poor thing. He could have saved it by throwing it back into the floods. He lacked the intelligence which would tell him what to do, to express his compassion.

Many leaders at the present time have compassion, but, possess no intelligence. They do not know how to solve the distress that they see and sympathise with. They talk of the need to establish peace at home and prosperity abroad; but, their acts betray their ignorance of the means by which they could succeed. How can they succeed, if they promote hatred and dishonesty? Any success won by adopting wrong means will only be trivial and temporary. Peaceful means alone, means that are wrought out of Love alone can ensure lasting benefits and real Peace. Fear not; frighten not. That is the message of God to man. Brutes fear; beasts frighten. Man has to be above both the weaknesses. Have faith in Truth and be fixed in Morality. You need not fear any one, for God will be on your side. You will not frighten, for all will be seen by you as Divine.

Talking of names, let me mention this too. Some persons who do not care for truth or righteousness might adopt the name Sathya Sai, and raise institutions in that name, for, they crave only the outer shell of fame and fortune; but you must know that they are unconnected with me and are engaged in acts which I have not authorised. In fact, I am the Witness of your activity, not a participant. I am like the electric fan; switch it on, it gives cool breeze. Switch it off, it allows you to swelter in the heat. I have no likes or dislikes. Those who talk ill of me are also remembering my name and deriving joy therefrom and perhaps earning a few paisa thereby. They are happy when they write falsehoods; you are happy, singing the truth. I am unconcerned with either. I have come on a task which I have imposed on myself. That task will go on, from victory to victory, irrespective of praise or blame. It can neither be halted or hindered.

No trace of fear can tarnish the purity of the heart that is shining in the splendour of Truth. I am Sathya Sai. Sathya Sai means, like the name Sesha Sai with which God is known meaning, He who is based on, who reclines on, the massive coils of the poisonous snake Sesha or the massive coils of objective desires—He who is based on Truth, who reclines on Truth, which the massive coils of objective desires cannot entangle. Truth knows no defeat, Truth knows no fear. It marches on heedless of acclamation or declamation.

Do not attach yourselves too much with the world and its wiles, for, it is ever changing fast and furiously. Be ever ready to fall into the hands of Death, gladly and gracefully, with gratitude for

the chances afforded while alive. Never grieve, for God is resident in you as your Truth. Later, in the last stages of your life, when you look back upon your failures and successes, you will have to say as Purandaradasa said, "Alas. We do not find Joy in this life as man." Do not spend your days in such a manner. Be warned now itself. Use the days allotted to journey towards Love, Joy and Peace.

The New Year Day is called in this part of the country, Yugadi—the Inaugural Day of the Age, as if a new big epoch is opening today. This is an opportunity to contemplate on the vastness of time, of its speed, of the short span of time which we share, in this life of yours, and which has to be put to the best use. Contemplate on the beginning of things, of nature, of life; of man, of the heart—all emanating from God and journeying towards God. Dwell on the grandeur of this procession from birth to Liberation, through life after life. Become aware that you, Nature and all that is, was and will be, are God.

To attain this awareness, Love is the surest means. Do not inflict pain on any one, through thought, word and deed. Control your passions, emotions and impulses, especially, anger, envy and greed. They thrive on the ego and make it a dangerous weapon. When you are enslaved by your passions, now can you stand forth and claim respect? Only cowards yield to their senses or passions. Brave men face up to them and win. The hero is he who overrules his mind and curbs his impulses; the zero is he who is overruled by them. Stand fast, like a rock, when the waves beat on you. Have faith in your ideals, in God. Do not allow faith to falter when failure comes into your door. Meet it as a new challenge, and triumph. Your Viswas (Faith) must not be like your Swas (Breath); for, Swat comes in and goes out, it is now in and now out. Let your viswas be firm, with no alternations of entrances and exits. If faith is one full continuous stream, Grace too will be showered on you in one full continuous stream.

—**Baba: Brindavan, 24-3-1973.**

'Santaakaram bhujaga sayanam' is one of the ways in which the Divine is described. Bhujaga is the cobra, the poisonous snake. Its Visha (poison) is the symbol of evil influence of Visnaya (worldly desires). The Lord is said to repose on the bhujaga, the evil filled multiplicity of the world. Yet, the description says, He is Santaakaram (in absolute peace, unruffled, in the least). The Lord is unaffected though He is immanent in the Universe. Man too must be in the world, but not of it.

—**Baba**

Thy Light

Through the Seas of Time
The boat of my life long glide
Like a yacht without rudder;
I Wander and ponder, ponder and wonder
And row on yonder and yonder,
Sometime through tossing waves

Sometime through calm serene water.

The boat tosses me up and down,
Now afloats me, then doth drown;
I do not know the Harbour
Where to cast the anchor,
I know not what this life is like!
Nor the mark it has got to strike.
I crave to Pray. Kindle thy light,
Oh Bhagavan Sri Baba Sai!
My humble soul do kindly guide.

—(*L. B. Samaddar*)

The Universe, His Mansion

Baba said so, long ago
And, reveals its truth to doubting men
By taking them, through and up
The starry dome of space,
The milky way of light,
The weightless vast of blue
In thought and word and feel!

He is the One who is and was
And will always be
Until He wills a won't;
The One who felt the first faint wish
To be not One, but many more.

And, at that moment (O fateful tick
Of Time's primeval clock!)
The Universe emerged from Him
As mansion, minion, mate and kin,
As field and fieldster, energy, entity
As all and some, whole and part,
And bird and beast and man
And grass and gulf, as brass and broad expanse!

Each little thing or grand
A picture, guide, to declare Him—
A proof of His Immensity,
A sign of His Infinity.

Man, man alone can see It in one sweep

And, when be is blind by ill or will,
Baba comes, so graciously, to lead
The wayward and the proud
Into the Halo of Light
Into the Heaven of Love.

—*Ramnam*

Vibrations

Bhagavan Sathya Sai is in reality Indivisible, Unlimited, and Unfathomable by the mind or by speech. But, He can be won by those capable of Love. He limits Himself, though Unlimited; though Unlimited, though Unmanifested, He has manifested Himself; though Indivisible, He has come as the gross from the subtle. Though above and beyond attributes, He has donned the garb of attributes in order to draw, satisfy and save us. Whoever yearns for whichever Attribute, He blesses him with that Attribute-ful Form. He is all Forms that Divinity is persuaded to take, all Names which the tongue of man has devised for Divinity are His. He answers when any one of them is raised from the heart. Love binds Him fast, inseparably, in the heart.

Bhagavan appears as Man, plays the Superman, and the God-man, but, is really God Himself in the role of Man. He is the most intimate Friend, the wisest Counsellor, the most far-sighted Law-giver, the most astute interpreter of the Scriptures, the most charming Speaker, Singer and Actor, the Divine Artiste, the most compassionate of God's Incarnations. Madhuradhipather-akhilam madhuram, declare the Epics: The Lord of Madhura, O He is All Sweetness. Sai too is all sweetness, all the time.

Bhagavan is the Veda, for what He says, happens. Truth has that overwhelming Power. Bhagavan is the Sastra for, what He does is an example, an illustration of what He directs us to do. He elaborates the Truth, with many a metaphor, simile, and story, as the Purana does. His words are the highest Poetry, for, they confer bliss and cure the littleness of man.

Bhagavan is the Gita; His look, His touch, His smile, His gesture, are ever teaching and guiding. He strengthens the tendencies towards Bhakti, Jnana and Karma, the first faltering steps that Man takes through Devotion, Inquiry and Dedicated Service to expand himself and his consciousness.

The Prasanthi Mandiram confers Prasanthi the Most Enduring Peace, on all who need it; and who does not? There, the atmosphere vibrates Love, Equanimity and Truth, for, one is aware of the Sai in all. This is indeed a strange and sustaining experience, seldom available anywhere else.

For, Sai is Krishna, the Supreme in Love, Wisdom, Power and Compassion.

—*Sribhashyam Appalacharya Kakinada*

Why Fear?

"Why fear, when I am here?" is an assurance that Baba often grants to those who hesitate to accept His Word about the fulfillment of some wish of theirs. While at Shirdi, Baba put the same comforting question to those who feared, despite His promise to save them from disease, disappointment or distress. The pose with the right palm raised up to shoulder level and presented to our view is often interpreted as Abhayahastha, the Palm that guarantees freedom from fear. Pictures of Baba with the Abhayahastha and the question printed underneath, "Why fear when I am here?" are kept in the domestic altars, and devotees pray that the promise might be carried out in their cases, ever.

Baba said one day that the palm was raised thus, only to warn people against "talking too loud"! True. When you start talking low, anger subsides, pride is humbled, the desire for verbal victory weakens, and tolerance prevails. Shouting, clamouring, boasting, abusing—all these undesirable practices provoke others into opposition and enmity, thus causing fear. But, man can shout with the eye too. Every sense can clamour and drag us into fear. What Baba means is, "Don't let your senses to call out aloud; keep them under restraint; then, you have no reason to fear." The upraised palm teaches us to equip ourselves with brakes and constantly examine their condition, not only on the tongue, and the other senses, but also on the mind and its vagaries, the reason and its conceit, and on the ego and its antics.

What does Baba teach us by the word, 'here'? Where is He, when He says, 'I am here'? In the shrine room or altar? On the wall? Over the door sill? Or, in the heart? Should we carry the picture of the Abhayahastha always in our purse? Or wear one on our body? Baba assures us that He is ventane (with us ever) jantane (inseparably with us), intane (as well-wisher, provider, guide, guardian, father, mother, brother or sister, son) and kantane (before our eyes as every being that we see). This is the experience of hundreds of thousands of fortunate souls. So, when Baba says, 'I am here', it is a mark of His Omnipresence, for, people from all the regions of the globe know and experience Him as 'here', wherever they are. Returning to Johanessen Tideman of Norway, a ring that He had created and given to him at Whitefield, which had slipped a month previous into the Chittagong River in Bangla Desh, Baba said, "It fell into My hands; I am everywhere; I was in that river when it fell." So, when Baba says 'here', He means 'everywhere'. Call on Him and He answers. As Rama, Baba declared, "I shall confer fearlessness on all beings; this is My Vow": Sai also makes the same Declaration. What does the word 'fear' signify, when Baba says, "Why fear." Fear is often morbid, like the fear of Death. Baba rescues us from this fear, by drilling into us the fact of the inevitability of death. He tells us that death is only the close of one term, in order to begin another, in the schooling we have to undergo. Fear of death is futile and foolish, Baba teaches. Then, there is the fear of poverty and privation. In a letter to a truant Pundit Baba wrote, "I foster and feed all beings in all the worlds. Therefore, do not conclude that you are miserably poor, since I cannot feed or foster your family! I am inflicting these troubles and anxieties on you so that you may learn a few lessons." For those who have realised His Truth, whatever happens is in conformity with His Plan. There is no reason to fear, falter or fumble. There is every reason to rejoice, for, troubles are signs of Baba's compassionate and continued interest in giving us lessons, so that we might win the goal of Life.

Baba, we should remember, reacts to the tremor of fear which causes anxiety not only in the hearts of His 'devotees', but in the hearts of all beings, wherever they may be, whatever their attitude to this present Personification of the Impersonal named Sathya Sai. He has come to confer courage on all; whether they call on Him or not, whether they are aware of Him or not, whether they are aware of the availability or the need of 'courage' or not! 'I have come', Baba wrote to His brother, at the age of 21 'to save all mankind by the grant of Ananda', 'Save' involves rescuing from fear. Raksha is the Telugu word used; it means, guarding from enemies, inimical forces, inducements, inflows, impulses, influences. For Sai, there is no 'other', no 'near or far'.

Baba also emphasises that "All are Sai." There is Sai in all, "Every person you meet or contact is a house with a portrait of Mine over his door; Adore the Sai inside him; revere him as you would revere My portrait or Myself," says Baba. When all are Sai, whom are we to be afraid of? Who will cause us harm? Baba says; "You do not fear that your finger will hurt your eye. You do not fear that your pockets will be picked by your own fingers. You do not fear that your teeth in a fit of vengeance snap your tongue in two. The Upanishads ask, "When there is only ONE, who fears whom?" The very root of Fear is thus removed by Sai, by His declaration that He is in all.

This brings us to another facet of Baba's declaration: Why fear, when I alone am here? For devotees of Sai, the I means Sai; for others who seek Sai through His other Names, I means those others Names, and they can be fearless because the Divine, demarcated by those Names is present in every being as clearly and as truly as In themselves. The I (Aham) is but the wave of the Ocean, which is Sai. Soham (I am He), Aham Brahmasmi (I am Brahma), Tat Twam Asi (That thou art), When I am that, how can I ever fear that. No one is afraid of his reflection in the mirror. One only loves oneself, one does not fear oneself.

Baba says that, in the statements from the scriptures quoted above, there is a tinge of duality, still tarnishing the Truth. When that is removed by a stroke of intuitive illumination, by the Grace of Sai, only That remains. There is no other to assert the Unity, to assert the ecstatic Bliss or express it. Only IS is, with no bounds of Was or Will be.

That Abhayastha will confer, as it promises, the boon of this illumination on all beings.

—*Taraka Das*

A Mirror of the Moon

Early in the morning of Dec. 8, 1973, Swami departed Prasanthi Mandiram for Brindavan. After an hour or so of driving, He directed the three accompanying cars to turn off the road to a clearing in an uninhabited area of forest. Everyone got out. Swami was in a delightful mood, moving about amongst the party and cracking jokes with the men.

Beside the picnic area was a wood-apple tree with a few large apples in view in the upper branches. The men tried to knock some of these to the ground by throwing stones, but without success. One small apple, about an inch in diameter, did fall to the ground, and Baba picked it up.

Holding the small wood-apple between thumb and forefinger against the morning sun, Baba said, "Here is the moon." Then He closed the small apple in His hand for a moment, and when His hand opened, the apple had disappeared and in its place there was a most extraordinary object.

The object in Swami's hand was a translucent disk (of stone?) thin at the edges and thicker at the centre. It reflected light in a brilliant way, and throughout its body there was a puzzling variety of modifications. There were dark areas of uneven shape and size; there were short and longer veins of luminous mineral-like materials of all shades of color; there were specks and dots of color that reflected brightly in the sunlight. The total effect of the disk was one of great beauty.

Everyone gazed at the object with intense interest and wonderment. Holding the disk to the sun, Baba said that it was the moon in miniature comprised of the moon's matter, that it was 'a mirror of the moon.' Nobody understood what He meant, and we started to ask questions. At length we understood that the two-sided disk was an accurate miniature in stone and minerals of the two sides of the moon.

It was as if one were to photograph the moon as it is seen from Earth, and then to journey to the opposite side of the moon and photograph that side. Each side photographed would appear on a photographic plate as a circular disk. Thus, one side of the translucent disk created by Baba mirrored one side of the moon, and the other side of the translucent disk mirrored the opposite side of the moon. The darker unevenly shaped areas on the disk were the very large features of the moon's surface; the brightly reflecting specks and dots were individual mountains and smaller mountain ranges; the shorter and longer veins of brilliant varicolored mineral were additional features of the moon's landscape.

Indeed, the visual modifications to be seen in the disk were so complex that we could not readily understand it. Swami said that the mineralized appearance of the luminous features of the disk were in fact moon minerals, that they could be seen in the disk because it was thin and therefore translucent, and that the same mineralization was in the moon itself. The miniature moon was exact and fully accurate, and were there to be a photographic enlargement, scientists could at once recognize all the landscape features with which they were familiar.

Baba told us that He would not give the miniature moon to anyone, and that the disk would be returned to where it came from. He did not describe that source and nobody asked Him.

At this point, food taken from the cars was ready, and a delicious breakfast was served by the ladies of the party. I had the moon-disk in my hand, so I put it in the pocket of my jacket and kept it there until breakfast was finished. Then I returned it to Swami. He again held it up to the sun and all along the edge of the stone disk there was a rich golden light. Swami said, see there is the sunrise!

After we had all admired the golden light, Swami again closed His hand over the moon-disk and when in a moment He opened His hand, the moon-disk was gone and in its place was the original small wood apple.

By this time a few strangers had appeared from somewhere and Swami gave them the remaining food. The ladies tidied up the picnic ground, we all returned to our cars, and we resumed the drive to Brindavan thoroughly pleased by the breakfast picnic with Baba.

—Hislop

The ego will fall off like the tail of the tadpole, when one grows in wisdom. Do not worry about it; it will happen naturally. If the tail is cut, the tadpole will die. Develop Sadhana, seek the Truth, become aware of the One, discriminate between the real and the relatively real. Then the tail (the ego) will disappear by itself, and you hop out of the morass of Maya.

—Baba

Jnana Yajna

Divinity Arouses the Divine

The Course

The Summer Course on Indian Culture and Spirituality at Brindavan, Whitefield that is being successfully held since three years is hailed all over India and even in many progressive countries of the West as a significant step in the discovery of educational values. It is planned, organised, hosted and inspired by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, whose advent itself has as its main purpose, the revival of the righteous way of life and the liberation of mankind from the shackles of modernism and materialism.

Over 400 students from the various Colleges of India spend one full month under His benign care and paternal affection. They get not only invaluable information regarding the various aspects of Indian Culture and the manifold paths discovered by Indian sages and seers leading to the blossoming of the Divinity latent in man, but they undergo also the much-needed transformation that makes them eager and happy to lead simple, sincere, self-respecting, self-confident servants of Society. Bhagavan has prescribed Yogasanas, Nagarasankirtan, Social Service in the villages around Whitefield, Bhajan, and other spiritual activities during the sessions. He Himself figures in the programme of lectures every day. His diagnostic and remedial discourses, full of love and wisdom, appeal direct to the hearts and heads of youth and solve the distracting doubts that clutter their intelligence. His discourses are translated into lucid English by no less a person

than Dr. S Bhagavantam, former Vice-Chancellor of the Osmania University, Hyderabad, Director of the Indian Institute of Science and Scientific Adviser to the Ministry of Defence of the Government of India.

Bhagavan's Discourses, as translated by him, are being published under the charming title, "Summer Showers"; already two volumes have reached the hands of thousands of educationist and thinkers.

The College Students have the pleasant and profitable privilege of listening to Lectures on Indian Culture and Spirituality from a galaxy of learned scholars and pundits, who have spent years of study, research and practice, in their special spheres of knowledge. Fortunate indeed are the participants, for, they are preparing themselves to be crusaders in the great campaign against ignorance, pride, and hate that are threatening the welfare and happiness of mankind. The significance of the Course for all mankind can be judged from the fact that more and more young men and women from Europe, America and Africa are being admitted year after year, to share this knowledge and the enthusiasm. This year, a group of students led by a Faculty Dean from one of the American Universities has come specially to share in the experience of the Camp, that is to say, the experience of Bhagavan's Love, and Bhagavan's great new Message of Unity through Service.

Dr. Gokak

This year's Camp was inaugurated on Monday, 20th May. More than 400 students assembled, with the group Teachers who accompanied them. They were selected out of thousands of applicants by means of Essay Competitions held by the State Presidents of the Sri Sathya Sai Organisation. Precisely at 9-30 A.M., Hon'ble Sri Ghorpade, the Finance Minister of the Government of Karnataka, who was to inaugurate the Course, was led in procession from the Main Gate of Brindavan, with the students, to the beautifully decorated Pandal where the lectures and other activities were to be held for the next thirty days. Bhagavan accompanied the distinguished Minister from the Bungalow, where he stopped to offer Him his homage. Students of the Veda Pathashala at Prasanthi Nilayam recited hymns from the Vedas, when the Function began.

Dr. V. K. Gokak, M.A., D. Litt., former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Bangalore, and now Director of the Summer Courses welcomed the Minister and the gathering, and laid the homage of every one at the Feet of Bhagavan. He said, "Sri Ghorpade is a distinguished Cambridge Graduate in Economics, and the Royal Family of the Sandur State of which he is a brilliant scion has been long attached to Bhagavan in loyal devotion." He announced that "Bhagavan is the sacrificant or Yajamana of the Jnana-yajna that was being inaugurated, The fruit that is gained by this Yajna is the highest possible Bliss for all the participants. And, the attainment of this fruit is certain, because Bhagavan is not only the Yajamana, He is also the Agni, the All-powerful Deity that is venerated and propitiated in all Yajnas."

In his short speech, Dr. Gokak made it plain that hardly any education is being given to youth at the Colleges where they spend the most precious years of their lives. An atrophy has overtaken the system. Students might be acquiring some skills and some little information, but they are incapable of living as integrated personalities. Education can fulfil itself only when the will is

cultivated, not as a separate selfish instrument, but, as the working of the Divine Will in the human personality, enriching it and elevating it into the realm of Universal. Students must acquire knowledge, certainly; but, the intelligence must be directed and guided by intuition and the vision of the One which expresses itself through the manifold. Intuition alone can penetrate into the heart of understanding and suppress all misgivings and doubts.

There is need for the cultivation of awareness among youth; but, the awareness must not be divisive and egoistic. It must be organised and harmonised, and help the individual to realise himself in the larger context of human society. They must learn to cast off animal desires and hankering after worldly comforts; they must rise from the *pasu* to the status *Pashupati*, (from the degrading level of the beast to the blissful height of the Divine.)

The Inaugural Address

Hon'ble Sri M. Y. Ghorpade then delivered the Inaugural Address of the Course. He spoke feelingly of the benign Presence of Bhagavan as a great Blessing; "Bhagavan's powers to understand and guide us are of great significance to us and to the future of mankind," he said. He spoke of the Summer Course as "a significant experiment in the educational process." He congratulated the speakers and listeners who will benefit from it, "in equal measure." He said that happiness or Ananda is the basic desire of all living beings and therefore, education must aim at instructing and inspiring the rising generation for this high task of establishing itself in Ananda. Ananda can be acquired by expanding the awareness, and deepening it, awareness of the body, mind and spirit. It is only this full awareness that can enrich the personality of man.

He mentioned that Yogasanas will help in keeping the body trim and tough, so that it can confront the vicissitudes of living. He extolled the Bhajans which formed a regular feature of the Course, as useful in releasing the emotions and cleansing them of obstructions and obstacles. Bhajans help the free flow of thoughts and impulses in proper beneficial and sublimated forms. The discourses on the variegated aspects of Indian Culture will sharpen the mental faculty, while the training given in Camp in meditation will teach the students to prevent their minds becoming tired and restless. The mind will be rendered more efficient, for, it is kept silent when not in use, through the progress of mediation.

He confessed that spiritual awareness cannot be taught, for it is neither mental nor logical. It is achieved only as a result of the effect of lifetimes of effort, which gets piled up and which prepares the individual for the Final Consummation. When the person is ready, it can be aroused and affirmed by a catalytic event or word. The Guru is the preceptor who sees through the veils, knows the moment of crisis, and arouses the Awareness by the appropriate mantra or word or deed.

Sri Ghorpade referred to Dharma and interpreted it as Social Justice. He also spoke of the conception of Yuga Dharma, as a means of orienting the value and validity of activity, with reference to the conditions of each age.

He dilated on Social Service as the highest Karma, for, does emancipation from the bondage to the soil bring freedom to the tree? How then, he asked, can emancipation from the Society into which he is born and in which he grows, give him.

Resuming his emphasis on Ananda as the ultimate and ever-present Goal of human endeavour, Sri Ghorpade said that it can be earned by the proper integration of the body and mind and spirit, by the maximising of our sense of satisfaction and security through the cultivation of a equanimity; he gave the arrow as the perfect example of Ananda, because it is speeding towards its target without a wink of doubt or fear. He wanted the students to set before them goals that are higher than their capacities and yearn to reach them. "Dedicate your lives to a higher purpose," he exhorted.

Bhagavan's Discourse

Bhagavan then lighted the Sacred Lamp as a symbol of Lighting the lamp of Awareness and Ananda in the hearts of the participants. He blessed the vast gathering and addressed them on the aims and methods that the Course had set before itself.

The verse which He sang at the very commencement of His Discourse summarised the Message He conveyed through the Discourse. He condemned the vain glory of the Scholar, puffed with pride at the amount of facts he knows; for, He said, he continued to be as ignoramus, so long as he was unaware of the meaning and purpose of his own existence, and of the Universe around him! The Discourse was a Divine Call for Humility and for Dedication; it laid bare the faults and failings of the educational system prevalent in all parts of the world.

"This is a Yajna, a holy ritual. The participants in this `sacrifice' can consider themselves rewarded if they acquire two benefits therefrom: Understanding the true nature of Nature or Prakriti and Visualising the true Path of Spiritual Effort. The students and teachers who have come from the far corners of this country and from beyond the seas are the officiating priests who have to be vigilant and full of care, lest the Yajna be tarnished by sloth or waywardness. In the sacrificial fire, it is customary to pour ghee and a variety of precious articles as an oblation. But, here, in the fire of this Yajna, I call upon you to offer your selfishness and false pride. This Yajna needs two ceremonial rites: Fix your mind on the higher truth; expand your sympathy and love so that they may encompass all living beings and activate you towards real service.

For. Life is a journey from the position I to the position, WE, from the singular to the plural, from the imprisoned one to the liberated One who is seen is the Many. The vision of the One, immanent in the obvious Many is the fulfillment of all the years of life. This is the teaching contained in the ancient texts and scriptures. But, these have been forgotten, ever since the minds of the people of this land were won over by Western Civilisation. When this happened, the goal of life became the amassing of money and not the awareness of the Self.

What has to be gained is not money, but, virtues. Money or the means of sustenance is sought after and collected by birds and beasts; there is nothing specially human in this pursuit. When intelligence is used for the acquisition of food and physical comforts, man is lost in animal pursuits. Human life is much more meaningful than that of birds and beasts. Man has in him a spark of the Divine; his body is the temple of God. So he must live in such a manner that the innate Divinity expresses Itself through Love, through Service of others, and through the recognition of the Constant Presence of God, in him and all around him. When Man dedicates his

skills to the search for Food, he estranges himself from the light that shines within him, the Atma.

Man consumes as food many living beings, plants, eggs, fish, cattle, sheep etc. These are born as human beings, on account of this act of consumption. But, since they have not had the education which can reveal the God within, they vegetate or stay brutish, without the appropriate ticket or passport for rising higher than the human status in which they have been hurriedly placed. Like most men, they roll along from womb to tomb, bond slaves to the senses and the ills that the bondage brings inevitably in its train. Do not be content with slavery; yearn to reach the Sun of Splendour, the Source of Perfect Wisdom.

Man does not discriminate and discover the special excellence of his own faith, as compared with the faiths of others, or, the difference between his beliefs and religion and the beliefs and religion that others hold dear. He does not evaluate his viewpoint, in the light of the viewpoints and attitudes of others. He does not weigh his acts and judge them, as worth-while or waste. The seers and sages of India have laid emphasis on this discipline and prescribed measures to achieve these ends. But, Indians have no knowledge of this discipline or of its value.

As a consequence, the sons and daughters of India are pitifully silent, when cynics and purblind critics discredit their ancient culture and point the finger of scorn at what they interpret as its absurdities and inconsistencies. Do not join such people in their campaign of vilification. On the other hand, attempt to assimilate the culture and yearn to experience the Bliss it promises. It is indeed a great shame that people calling themselves Indians are not informed enough or experienced enough to silence the opponents and traducers of Indian Culture.

The fault lies in the system of education that does not give them even a glimpse into the glory. The country is now sunk in fear and the cure lies in your understanding the remedies prescribed in the ancient texts, practising them and propagating them. You are now being led away by people who do not know the true characteristics of that Culture. And, the ideas you have about the Epics and the Puranas, the Sastras and the Vedas are warped by the prejudices that these people have implanted in you. For example the story of Virgin Mary giving birth to Jesus Christ is acclaimed as an evidence of Divine Will, but, you who accept this interpretation, are not able to affirm that the birth of Karna to Virgin Kuntidevi is equally an evidence of the same Divine Will. You are apologetic and ashamed when the fact of Karna's Birth as a result of Divine Will is twisted and turned by the so-called scholars of today.

People who are completely ignorant have no doubts or misgivings; those who are fully wise, too, have no doubts or misgivings. It is the half-baked variety of scholars and students that fall into the traps laid by the prejudiced and perverted. We hope that your contact with the ripe mind, the intelligent learning and the experience filled hearts of those who come to speak to you during the course of this Camp will strengthen your resolve and enthuse you to foster and support the principles underlying Indian Culture.

Education should not aim at making students get acquainted with a pile of books. It should insist on their assimilating the essence of the teaching which they elaborate. Now, students direct all their efforts towards acquiring more and more knowledge of just one specialised branch of learn-

ing. So, they are woefully deficient in general knowledge, and are unable to adjust their behaviour or conduct, and survive the vagaries of fortune.

The Minister referred to the relationship between Science and Religion. Of course, Science has to develop more and more, for, science makes life easier and more comfortable. It has given man many items that make living faster, more entertaining, and more standardised. But the trouble is, while Science and Technology have advanced by leaps and bounds, man has not learnt the art of using them in the right manner. He has allowed science and technology full license to cater to his sensual desires and thereby demeaned his stature and status.

You must avoid this mistake. At this age period when your intelligence, your alertness, your awareness are all in good condition, you must learn how to keep your impulses under control, and to master the senses that tend to drag you into wrong and vicious paths. When the desire for pleasure over-comes your reason and your innate goodness, you are left only with the shape and form of a human being; you have no right to be called a human being. Humanness and God-ness coexist as inseparables; they are the negative and positive poles, that have to be together to produce the warmth of love and the light of wisdom. Once you have established your Self in the Higher Self, you would not get lost; you can then wander freely in the realms of the Unreal. If you have not experienced the Self as a spark of the Supreme Self, your wanderings will be as fruitless as the trekking that animals do, by instinct. So try to transform the human-ness with which you are endowed, into the Divinity which is its real core.

The Universe is the body of God; every particle in it is filled with God, His Glory, His Might, His Inscrutability. Believe that God is the inner Truth in every thing and being. He is Truth, He is Wisdom. He is Eternal. Be humble, before the evidences of His Power and Majesty.

We have the example of Hiranyakasipu, the father of Prahlada. He was unequalled in power and authority over the entire Cosmos. He was the repository of enormous knowledge. He had won enormous skills through his asceticism and efforts. He was so proud of his achievements that he denied God, and declared that he had no need for him. But, a day came, when even he had to call out and clamour for God. So too, you may deny or dismiss God, out of ignorance or perversity; but, a day will come when you have to pray for his compassion.

You are God, in reality. It is the God in you that guides you and guards you. When you deny God, it is tantamount to your arguing, "I am born of a barren woman," or asserting very vociferously, "I am incurably dumb"! It is as absurd as denying yourself. This great Truth is well explained in the scriptures of this land, and, every one of you has the right to know this heritage.

The seers of this land have marked out the limits and lines, to be respected by aspiring men. The Vedas give these injunctions: Matru devo bhava; pitru devo bhava; acharya devo bhava; Sathyam Vada; Dharmam Chara. "Revere your mother as God; revere your father as God; revere your Teacher as God; Speak Truth; Act righteously." These five are as the five vital airs that sustain the body of man. Believe them as such; have unshakeable faith, that they have been laid down for your material and spiritual progress. Practice these precepts sincerely and without slackening, that will ensure success in your pilgrimage from humanness to Divinity.

If you revere your parents today, your children will revere you in the coming days; for, the present shapes the face of the future, as it, in its turn, was shaped by the past. That is why I always insist, `Be Good, See Good, Do Good; this is the way to God.’

When you return to your places after the Summer Course, each one of you must be equipped with the knowledge of these five disciplines and the fervour to practise them in your daily lives. Concentrate your attention for the full period on this task; do not mind the inconveniences, the change in diet, or the regulation of play and entertainment. Bear with these handicaps and rules patiently and gladly.

Life is all the sweeter for these restrictions and limits. You will encounter many obstacles in life, but, do not be disheartened by them. Pleasure and pain alternate in life; in fact, pleasure is but the interval between two pains! And that makes it welcome and worth-while. Have the future always in view, and put up with pain now, so that you can meet it boldly when it befalls you later in life.

Thyaga is the real Yoga; renounce and become a master of yourself. Bhoga brings about roga; indulgence is the cause of disease.

Treat all who are sharing this Camp with you as your brothers and sisters. Remember ever the brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God. People talk glibly while on platforms facing vast gatherings of "Brothers and Sisters!" But are they prepared to divide their property among the brothers and sisters? Of course, you need not go as far as that; but, you must recognise the one Divine Principle that animates all. When you are inspired by that belief, surely, your eyes and ears will refuse to note differences and distortions. Your hands will refuse to engage themselves in low activities; your tongue will not tarnish itself by low talk; your mind will not entertain low thoughts and ideas. Resolve that you will attain and maintain this purity in thoughts, word and deed.

That is the central Message of Indian Culture, which will be explained to you in all its interesting facets by the lecturers who have responded to the invitation of the Organisers.

Less Luggage

This reminds us of an ubiquitous poster patronised by the Railways and widely publicised by them in order to ease the accommodation situation in their coaches. Baba uses the wording of this poster to illustrate His teachings; in fact, this is only one of the many popular slogans in current use, to which Baba has imparted a new spiritual significance. He makes us see old familiar things in their nascent splendour. It is like brushing and dusting an old oil painting hung in the living room, which has ceased to attract attention and become part of the wall. Suddenly, a visitor recognises it as a famous masterpiece, and it is taken down and cleaned, thus revealing hitherto unrecognised beauties.

Baba does this, to the stories encased in the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, and the Bhagavatha, the tales and fables which children have heard while on the laps of their grandmothers, and

rhymes and jingles lisped for generations in the land. The Avatar has to keep in touch with the times, to keep in tune with the aspirations of the times, and to fashion His instruments out of the materials, human and cultural, that he can lay hands on. Though He is Sanathana, He is also Nuthana. He reveals that, within the drain-pipe, beneath the side-burns, and hidden by the dust of these symbols of modernity, is the 'human' who is no different from his precursor, and that there is a spare spark of the Divine in him too. With every gift, He awakens the spiritual eye of the recipient. He gives a wristwatch, with the warning that if the wearer utters a lie, or the watch will stop, if untruthful; it won't work. Every gift has a string. He produces a fountain-pen, and gives it to a student, saying, "Study well and write your examination with this pen. Swami is with you." He arouses the spiritual urge, with every re-statement of familiar statements. "Start early; drive slowly; reach safely," is a statement that He uses often to guide spiritual pilgrims.

"Less luggage, more comfort; make travel a pleasure"—the truth of this goes home to people who come to Prasanthi Nilayam. For, they would have discovered it for themselves during the long train journey. Baba wants us to examine our luggage and see if we cannot do with much less. He warns us against the basic instinct of acquisition and possession, which fertilises the sense of I and Mine. We cannot solve this problem, unless and until we set right our sense of values. It is difficult to get rid of the habit of acquisition, unless you develop the habit of giving away. I have found that if only you have the courage to give away a thing before it succeeds in possessing you, you will be lightening your burden and you will also brighten the life of another.

Luggage is acquired by men for the fulfillment of desire. So, one must be vigilant about desires; he must examine how it arises what it involves and where it will lead. Baba advises us to minimise our wants and maximise our ideals; plain living, less catering to the senses, and as a consequence; peace, joy and love are promised to us. Less reading means less lumber.

More comfort! Yes, this has to be experienced during travel. Also, to be learnt in life, our drawing rooms are cluttered with furniture; our roads are cluttered with traffic and trafficking; our curricula are cluttered with out-dated syllabi; our administrative system is cluttered with out-moded regulations; our religion is cluttered with rites that have lost their meanings. Baba is calling upon us, to look into each with the eye of the spirit, and retain only these that can elevate, uplift, and expand our way of life.

Make travel a pleasure! The surface meaning is obvious. The spiritual import is deep. Travel becomes a pleasure if desire does not convert it into an ordeal. We are all travelling from the womb to the tomb, from childhood to senescence, from ignorance to wisdom, from bondage to liberation. Though each of us holds a ticket for the destination, we halt at intermediate stations, where we find attractions beckoning us. We get lost in the market places of the world. We do not travel on and on, drinking in the beauty of the scenery, or the calmness of Creation spread before us as a carpet for the Divine to dance in joy. Baba tells us to equip ourselves with one item of luggage... contentment. "Life is a bridge," He says, "over the stream of change; do not build a house on the bridge." Be content with whatever you get by honest labour; whatever the Grace be the Lord shares out to you. Do good, be good, see good; leave the rest to Him. He has promised in the Gita that who does good will never come to harm."

Less luggage which will make travel through life a pleasure means that you must know what exactly is luggage and what is not. "Remember," Baba says, "all that is not 'YOU' is 'luggage'. And, what is 'YOU'? You are not the body, and so, the body is an item of luggage. The senses, the mind, the intelligence, the ego these too are not 'YOU', and so, they too form the luggage with which you are burdened on the pilgrimage to your real Self. Jettison them," says Baba, "make your travel lighter, safer, and surer of success."

—Murthy

Earn the currency that is accepted in the Bank of God, that is minted as word, thought and deed; it bears the stamp of Bhakti and Sraddha; it is called virtue. It is current as Sathya, Dharma, Shanti and Prema.

—Baba

Love of God

Make your heart your trysting place with the Lord.
Then it will be a constant source of joy and refreshment and
of great value in the life-span.

Soil which has veins of mica is valuable, but that which
has veins of gold is even more precious. The soil is valued
according to the rare metal which it contains.

Hearts are evaluated by their content, by the love of
God they possess, the most priceless of all possessions.

The Frontispiece

When Sai comes, where Sai is,
Flowers bloom; trees wear lovely crowns of green;
Children dance in glee; pebbles sparkle
In His sunshine, like precious gems.
And, boys and girls, enact their plays
Holding little lutes and drums,
Pretending to be Gods and Goddesses.
They long for the final scene in the play
When they can touch His Feet
And win the trophy of His Pat and Smile.

Youth grows taller, straighter,
When Sai comes, where Sai is.
Their gait is sturdier, their heads erect.

The City is aflame with ardour, its heart does throb,
With ecstasy; the wind is proud
To carry His clarion Call
For Love and Service, Faith and Fearlessness.
All roads lead to Sivam where Siva dwells;
And thousands throng around with thirst
Which they know will fast be quenched.

He casts His eye; He castigates!
O How tender is the touch.
He casts the illness off, He comforts all with Love.
He is there, He is here, He is everywhere.
The air is sweet, the sky is bright,
All eyes twinkle with holy joy,
When Sai comes, where Sai is.

—Tarak

Message

(For Inauguration of Temple Construction)

The Ocean is a vast mystery. It is boundless and as old as time. It has, in its womb, chaotic whirlpools, raging currents, and it has a face full of furious moods. No one can hope to sail over it from one shore to another land-bank, without a sturdy reliable boat. So too, man requires the sturdy boat of Divine Grace to cross the raging Ocean of this Samsara (ever-changing, ever-agitated flow of life). This Ocean too is vast and full of mystery; it has its unplumbed depths; it tosses man about from birth to death and again from death to birth; it inflicts on him many uprisings and downfalls, many illnesses and morbidities; in it roll the waves of desires and resolutions; it frightens man by its monstrous denizens, greed, hate and the rest of that horrible breed; it draws the reason of man into the whirlpools of doubt.

To equip oneself with the Ocean-worthy boat of Grace, one has to develop in himself the qualities of Faith and Discipline. One has to clarify and purify the inner Consciousness, the Chitta. Time is the Gift that God has blessed man with, for this purpose. So, man should use it as an instrument for the clarification and the purification. Contemplating the Glories of God, discovering His Presence in Beauty, Goodness and Truth seen anywhere, meditating on His Form, repeating His Name by these means the process can be made successful. Of course, these are not possible without virtuous loving and living kindness towards all beings. Thus, the mind will be rendered harmless, beneficent and even of great help in one's spiritual pilgrimage. Through the purified mind, one can transmute himself into the Divine, man can become Madhava Himself. For, it is the destiny and the right of every man to attain that status and immerse himself in the limitless Ananda that it confers.

All religions emphasise the importance of devotion and dedication to the Supreme Sovereign. The means of reaching that stage may be different; the description of the ecstasy that one can experience in the final Stage and all along the Path may be different; for it is beyond all attempts at description. Bhakti marga, which is only another name for this devotion and dedication, will certainly cleanse the mind. And, the mind will be illumined into Divinity.

Man has fallen into ignorance, egotism, and greed, because he has forgotten his real nature, which is unaffected by loss or grief. In truth, man is the embodiment of all the great virtues: Love, Peace, Righteousness and Truth. He has not realised this; he runs after low vulgarising pleasures, and so, entangles himself in falsehood, injustice, and violence. He has to cure himself of these by the remedies of Thyaga and Yoga (Renunciation and Self-Control). And, along with these remedies, he must regulate his ways of living and follow the regimen of faith and devotion.

As butter is inherent in milk, God is immanent in the Universe. When it is churned, the butter separates itself and becomes cognisable. So too, by means of Love and the discipline of the Recitation of the Name, God can be concretised. Temples in villages are the places where such concretisation has been effected. The temple is for the village as the heart for the body. In fact, the temple is conceived on the basis of the body being the temple man carries about him. A body with no heart, a village with no temple and a tank with no water are all three without function or vale. So, you must maintain and foster the temple in your village as carefully and as constantly as you attend to your own heart and its condition.

When you belch, you get the taste of the food you have eaten; the quality of the bread depends upon the quality of the flour; as the steadfastness in faith is, so is the devotion; as the devotion is, so is the Realisation.

As your Sadhana is, so will be the Truth revealed to you.

Accept My Blessings—all of you, Sathya Sai

A father tried long to correct the conduct and behaviour of his errant son. The fellow proved incorrigible. His ways could not be mended, by kind words or harsh punishments. One day, a friend advised the father to try a very popular remedy. The father thanked him profusely and called the son to his presence. "Look! From now on, write out a diary noting down every misdemeanour of yours. I am sure you will be aghast at the iniquity and be shamed into goodness." The son agreed; a few days later he decorated his room and celebrated the 100th Wrong, he was responsible for! Beware! Evil, when it is allowed to enter the mind, entices, ensnares, enslaves, and entangles inescapably. Be vigilant that it does not strike root in your heart.

—Baba, at Bombay to Seva Dal Members

Prema Yoga

"There are some who are attracted by various systems and methods like Hatha Yoga, Kriya Yoga or Raja Yoga, which claim to help people to realize the Self. But, I must tell you that no one of these can make you realise God. I am saying this most emphatically. The Prema Yoga—the Discipline of Love—alone can lead you to God."

Baba says this in Vol. VII of "Sathya Sai Speaks" (22 November, 1970.) To me, it is one of his most significant statements. The reason I think it's so important is that most people in the modern world (and certainly most Westerners) go about looking for techniques; and, often, they try any or all techniques, one after the other, incurring great expenditure of time and painstaking effort.

But, they will not relate to God, and often, they will not even admit the existence of God! I am talking about people who practise asanas, pranayam etc, and sit in meditation.

Until about a year ago, I was a Director of a "Self-development Center" located in London; it was called Kaleidoscope and it was patterned on ESALEN, the prototype of "Growth Centers". Millions of people come to these Centers (and pay good money) in the hope that they will become happier, healthier, and more worthwhile, more loving human beings. Or, they come for social reasons, to meet persons, to have some fun etc.

While involved in this work, I could see the profusion of techniques. There was Rolfing, acupuncture, bio-energetics, neo-Reichian-body-contact therapy; there were different types of massage; there were Primal Therapy, encounter groups, Gestalt; cocounselling, group marathons, the Enlightened Intensive, and something called Arica, based on many dozens of different techniques.

In addition to these disciplines, there were different systems of meditation being taught—Zazen, Vipasana, T'ai chi ch'uan etc.

All these are excellent methods; but, what happened was that many people went from one to the next, always looking for the big IT—the moment of Liberation, Freedom, the big Inner Explosion, when they would become whole, happy, and flowing with positive energy.

And, most of us didn't find it; maybe, we looked for God, but, we didn't look for Him, where Baba tells us He is, namely, in the human heart.

I came to Baba, after a crisis in my life. Life had become empty and meaningless for me. For the first time, I realized that I could not really expect it to bloom again! I was 43!

Until then, my strivings in self-development had dealt with self-improvement not only materially, in every sense, but, above all, emotionally.

And, here was Baba saying that the thing to do was not to improve the self but to 'lose' the self. "Cross out the 'I' and you are free! How to kill the 'I'? Place it at the Feet of the Lord, saying 'You' not 'I'. And, you are free from the burden that is crushing you."

This is so similar to other reading I was doing that I want to quote them. In the Tao Te Cheng I read, "I suffer most, because of me and selfishness. If I were self-less, then what suffering would I bear?" Jesus, in the Aquarian Gospel says, "He, who would follow me, must give up all the cravings of the self and lose his life in saving his life. I come to save the lost; and, man is saved when he is rescued from himself."

I was meditating one night at Puttaparthi, praying to Baba, "Oh, tell me, Baba, what do I have to do. Please tell me what I have to do," and, so on—really praying with much anguish. And suddenly what came through, the answer I got was, "There is nothing I have to do."

The feeling was, as though Baba had put that insight into me. Or, perhaps, it came from my heart, the internal Guru; it does not really matter. Because Baba has said that He is in our hearts ALL THE TIME. So what difference is there, really, between Him out THERE and THIS in HERE? But, the reason my insight was so momentous (and, I experienced tremendous relief, breathed freely, and cried tears of joy and gratitude) was that I had tried so many things and worked so hard. And, now my Heart (Sai) was telling me that I didn't have to Do anything; all I had to do was, 'ease doing and Be'.

There is nothing Baba wants from us—nothing. Not flowers, not offerings, not even service—not even the serving of others, if this does not come from the heart. (He says, "When you feel that it is not the 'other' whom you are serving, but, yourself, then your service will be bitter and more effective.") I suspect that Baba doesn't even want our love, that what He is doing is giving us the opportunity of loving Him, not for His sake, but, to aid us.

Jesus said, (except for the difference in style, the words could be Baba's), "Men call me Christ, but, Christ is not a man. The Christ is Universal Love and Love is King... Look to the Christ within, who shall be formed in every one of you, as he is formed in me. When you have purified your hearts by faith, the King will enter in, and you will see his Face."

I was present at a group interview with Baba, at which a young American asked, "How can I open my heart to others more?" And, Baba said, "When you open your heart, you die."

No one understood his remark at the time. We thought there had been some misunderstanding. But, the next day, we realised there was no misunderstanding. Baba was saying, "You, the Ego, cannot love at all; when Love opens your heart, you (the Ego) die."

But, it takes a long time for this message to sink in. When I was away for several months, trying to tell people about Sai Baba, I found myself talking primarily about the miracles. And, the people I talked to, were not interested, and justifiably so. For, they wanted Enlightenment, some one who would teach them a system of Meditation or at least give them a Mantra straightaway. "We feel He is incredible," they say, "but, what makes you think He is God? He has hardly ever even spoken to you!"

The answer didn't dawn on me, until I saw Baba again at Brindavan. At Darshan one day I experienced Baba as I had never seen Him before—more love flowing from him than I had ever

known; and, briefly, for perhaps a second, He looked at me, and, I knew He saw me totally and still loved me.

As Baba Himself says, "I do not depend on outer manifestations and actions. I am related to you through the inner principle of love. It is love, the invitation of the heart to the heart that has brought you in tens of thousands to this place. The validity and value of love are proved by you. Love is the most potent of my powers."

—*William Grossman*

*God's Grace is flowing, ever, full.
Only the pot that deserves gets filled.
Hatred makes the post narrow, small, leaky.
Hatred is fire; it evaporates Love*

*Love is Light.
Love comes from the Self-illuminated
As cool comforting revealing Light.*

—*BABA*

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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Offer to bear Sentence

Vasishta turned towards Bharata, for he could not reply direct to Rama. He knew that Bharata was to be the 'Ruler' he said, "Give up all hesitations and doubts. Rama is your elder brother; he has immeasurable compassion. Open your heart to him; tell him all that you have in mind." Hearing these words of the sage, he felt that Vasishta had probed into the mind of Rama and that both of them were inclined to favour him and grant his desire. So, he was glad at the turn of events.

Bharata stood motionless before them. Tears flowed from his eyes, red and bright like lotus petals. "The revered sage has told Rama all that has to be said. What remains for me to add specially, to the appeal he has made on behalf of all? I know full well the nature of my Rama. He has no anger against even wrong-doers. He has unbounded affection for me; I cannot deny it. A sense of shame has made me silent while I stand before him. But, my affection makes me delighted to look upon him; my eyes do not feel content, however long they fix their gaze on him.

God could not tolerate my affection towards Rama; He could not bear to see so much being shown by brother to brother. So, He designed this distress, devising my mother herself as the instrument to bring it about. I know that it does me no credit or bring me any respect, if I say

this. How can I establish my superiority by placing the blame on my own mother? When one proclaims himself innocent, can that statement make him truly so?

I am myself hesitating to declare, because of my doubts, that my mother is feeble minded, or that I am good and intelligent. I am diffident to state so. Can pearls grow in the shells of snails that infest tanks? Why should I blame others for my sorrows? My misfortune is as vast as the Ocean. I know that all this tragedy has happened as a consequence of my sins. I have been seeking a way of escaping from my grief, through some means, along any of the four quarters. I see now that there is one-way out and only one. My Preceptor is the great sage Vasishta; Sita and Rama are my sovereign Rulers. Hence I am certain all will be well with me. Lord! I do not wish for anything else: Rama! Grant but this one wish of your servant.

Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata and Shatrughna are all four the physical progeny of Emperor Dasaratha. So, all four are equally bound to obey the commands of their father. The father has equal affection for all the sons. And, there is no limitation or regulation that the commands of the father must be obeyed by this one son or that other son. You have borne the responsibility of obeying his commands, thus far. Now, it is our turn, to bear the burden of exile; Sita Rama and Lakshmana must return to Ayodhya and we two shall be in the forest as exiles until the sentence lapses. Confer on us this boon and bless us." Thus saying, Bharata fell at the Feet of Rama.

Alternate Suggestions

Listening to this prayer of Bharata, Vasishta shed tears of joy. Rama was not taken in by this argument. He said, "Bharata! I feel that your line of thought is not as valid as you seem to think. It is not correct so to act. Ask me for any thing except this." Bharata replied, "In that case, brother, allow me and my brother to be with you here and serve you, as Lakshmana has been doing. This will then be a wholly satisfying holy forest life for us." Rama did not accept even this prayer. He said, "Bharata! For me as well as you, the commands of the father are unbreakable; we have to bow our heads in reverence before them, and carry them out without least murmur. The most appropriate action for us all is that I should follow the orders issued to me and that you should follow the orders issued to you. Let us not spend precious days in such purposeless talk and cause distress to the people who have come such long distances hoping against hope. Return to Ayodhya that has been allotted to you with them and rule over them righteously. I shall carry out the task allotted to me and act righteously while guarding and fostering the forest realm assigned to me." Neither Bharata nor any one else could meet this decisive statement of Rama with any counter-proposal or argument. They had to accept it as the right path to take.

The Needed Solace

Bharata was overcome with grief. He lamented, "On whom else can God heap such unbearable agony than on me, who happens to be the son of a mother who felt Rama, Sita and Lakshmana are her enemies? Yes, Brother! I heard that Sita, Rama and Lakshmana were in the forest as exiles; I heard that you walked into the forest on bare feet with nothing to protect you from thorns and pebbles. The news wounded my mind like sharp spears, but, yet, I lived on! I am the cause of all this calamity; but as a sinner, I am alive; or else, I would have cast off my body long ago. My breath persisted in this body, even when Guha suspected me of treachery against my

brother and got ready to confront me in battle at the head of his forces! Alas! My heart is harder than diamond; that is the reason why it has not broken into bits, in spite of these blows.

I am looking on calmly at the very tragedy about which I was told; yet, my life is so unfortunate that I am able to stand the thrust of so much sorrow. Poly mother has such dreadful poison in her that scorpion and serpents have discarded their proud possessions in sheer shame; being the son of such a mother, how can God allow me to escape the consequences of my destiny?" Bharata was indulging in such self-condemnation and such self-torture that the citizens, the queens, the sages and others who watched his grief, his penitence, his humility, his reverence, and his fraternal affection were all stricken like lotus blooms that had fallen on ice. They reminded Bharata of many incidents from the Puranas so that he might recover from his depression.

Then Rama addressed Bharata. He said "Brother! Why do you give yourself up to despair? Your sorrow is in vain. Destiny cannot be countermanded. At all times, everywhere, you will be honoured by good and virtuous people; those who ascribe crookedness to you will be miserable here and hereafter. And, condemning one's mother? This crime will be committed only by those unfortunates who have not been trained either in the society of the virtuous or at the feet of preceptors. Bharata! Your name will be remembered long and those who bring it to their memory will be able by its unseen influence to discard their vices. You will be earning renown in this world and bliss in the next. The world will be sustained by your ideals and your rule.

Bharata! Both hatred and love cannot be suppressed and hidden in the heart. They need must find expression despite all attempts to keep them imprisoned in the heart. I know your nature very well. In order to uphold Truth, the Emperor let me go and, unable to bear the separation from me whom he loved so much, he lost his very life.

It is not right for a son like me or like you to dishonour the word of such a loving father. Therefore, do not hesitate further. Tell me what you have to say, ask about things that you desire to know and decide to shoulder the responsibilities imposed on you. That is the best course for you." Rama spoke these words with great emphasis.

One Last Demand

Bharata had no chance to speak any more, about his fond desires. But, he resolved to press one demand of his, the final one. "Rama! The Kingdom that you have given up, that has brought on this disgrace of being the cause for your exile. I do not like to rule over; I have no love towards it either. I can never go against your will, your command. I will not do so at any time. If you but cast your loving eye on me with no trace of anger, I shall consider myself blessed. Lakshmana has served you now so long; send him back with Shatrughna to Ayodhya and allow me to take his place at your Feet.

This will bring both fair renown. Lakshmana is an expert in administration; he can rule over the empire wisely and well in all fields of administration and bring solace to the soul of the departed father. Grant this prayer of mine; keep me with you; do not refuse my request; do not kick me out from the presence." Imploring piteously in this way, Bharata clasped the feet of Rama.

"Or else," continued Bharata, "kindly return to Ayodhya with Sita and stay there. We three brothers will stay on in the forest. We shall carry on our lives here in any manner that you prescribe. If on the other hand, you pile upon me this royal burden, I cannot bear the weight, and live. Keep me at your feet and pile on me a weight thousand times heavier than the empire; I shall bear it gladly and with enthusiastic delight.

I have no knowledge of the science of government, or the texts on morality; you are aware that one who is sunk in grief can have no wisdom in him. Even shame will be ashamed when one's servant answers back and point, to one's want of knowledge. Do not put me in that position. Rama! I am opening my heart to your gaze and revealing my inmost feelings. I desire only to promote the welfare of the world. Kindly decide on the best course for each of us; do not doubt our intentions; shower your Grace on us and confer on us your commands. We shall bow our heads in loyal reverence and carry them out without hesitation."

These; words of Bharata gave the vast gathering who listened to them great joy. Their hearts melted with compassion and gratitude. They extolled in manifold ways the affection and faith that Bharata had placed on his brother Rama. They were affected by the expression of his deep devotion. All of them with one voice prayed, "Rama! Lord! Accept the prayer of Bharata. With the passing away of Emperor Dasaratha, the long-established glory and happiness of the people too have passed away! The world has been pitiably orphaned. Ayodhya is wailing like a despairing waif. Like a chaste woman who has been deserted by her lord, she is lamenting her lot."

The Queen Comforted

Meanwhile, Kaikeyi (the forlorn queen) what shall we say about her! She was standing there, her heart gnawed by grief. She was anxious to discover how she could explain her wrongs; she tried her best to seek out Rama while he was alone, so that she could beg his pardon, but, could not succeed. She was ashamed even to show her face to Rama. She wondered how she could ever subject Rama, whom she loved so dearly, to all the privations and travails she now witnessed. Rama was her very breath. Therefore, she felt sure that by herself she was never capable of inflicting harm on him; she guessed that it must be the influence of some Evil Power that had possessed her which brought about this sad series of events. But, she said to herself that the world would never pardon her, however strongly she asserted that it was none of her doing. Torn by these doubts and misgivings, Kaikeyi was powerless to move forward towards Rama to speak to him nor could she walk away from him for she was anxious to have the burden lifted from her heart. She stood there, weak and frail, fearful and, faltering.

Rama noted her agitation and, using an opportune moment, he moved towards her in order to fall at her feet and pay her his homage.

Kaikeyi was waiting for just this chance. She clasped Rama's feet, saying, "Child! You are much younger to me; you are my son. But yet, you are the Master of the Whole World by means of your virtue and your wisdom. I do no wrong when I hold your feet in my hands. Pardon my sin. Come. Rule over Ayodhya, That alone can redeem me from the disgrace which I have brought on myself. If that cannot be, keep Bharata in thy presence at thy feet; bestow on me that boon. That will give me peace of mind, so long as I live; I have no wish to live after the consummation

of this wish of mine. I am myself shocked that I craved for the fulfillment of those two desires, which not even the most vicious ogress would have entertained. Did I ask for them while I was the daughter of the Ruler of the Kekaya Kingdom? Or did I speak those words when I was possessed by some evil genius? Or, was I under the poisonous influence of some evil star? I do not know; I cannot tell." She wept aloud in anguish, holding the hands of Rama fast in her clasp.

Rama shed tears at her plight. He assuaged her by his soft and sweet words. He said "Mother! You have done no wrong, not even the least bit. The human crowd is a pack of crows; they caw loud and hoarse without any rule or reason. Men do not try to know the truth; in their ignorance, they blabber as the whim dictates. Those boons were not asked by *you* of your *own* free will, with full knowledge of the implications. All this happened thus, for I willed it to happen so.

You have rendered much help for the fulfillment of the purpose for which I have incarnated and the task I have set before myself. You have committed no dis-service. Mother! I am repenting very much for having made you plead with me so long instead of expressing at the very outset my gratitude for the help you have done for my plan of action. Do not grieve over what has happened; if you do so, it will cast a shadow on my task; it will make my days inauspicious. Bless me, Mother! Shower your affection on me. Mother Bless me." Rama prayed and fell at the feet of Kaikeyi.

When Rama spoke thus, Kaikeyi recovered her mental peace a little, The other Queens, Kausalya and Sumitra heard the conversation and when they realised that Kaikeyi was but the innocent instrument of the Divine Will, they too consoled and comforted their sister, Kaikeyi. Nevertheless, Kaikeyi stuck to her wish and held on to her prayer that Rama must accept the throne and be installed as Emperor with Sita as the Empress of Ayodhya and that Lakshmana, Bharata and Shatrughna must serve them and be their loyal companions in court. She said that she would spend her life until death puts an end to it witnessing this Glory and sharing in this ecstasy. She repeated these words often and pressed for the grant of her wish.

Four days and nights were thus spent by them in the forest—praying, pleading, consoling, explaining, assuaging, weeping and imparting solace. They had all only one wish ruling their hearts—to persuade Rama to return to the Capital. At last, Rama directed Vasishta, the Royal Preceptor and Bharata to return to Ayodhya along with the Queens and the Citizens. News of this order spread despair among them; they said that the place where Rama was, was for them as delightful as a million heavens put together, and so, they refused to move. They said, that only those whom the Gods discarded would turn their backs on the forest where Rama was. They said, "O, what great fortune is this that awaits us here! A bath in the holy Mandakini river, delicious fruits for appeasing hunger, the Darshan of Sita and Rama, so charming to the eye, so exhilarating to the heart! Where else is heaven? What else is happiness?"

They talked in this strain among themselves and resolved that they should persuade Rama by every means to return with them, if they have to go at all.

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness

(To be continued)

Sastras

The Sastras are the facsimiles of what the Genuine is. They are like newspaper reproductions of new issues of currency notes, which are published for the information and guidance of the public. You cannot cut that bit of paper out and use it to buy things. You can only use it as a reference and say that if the note used is different it is counterfeit. So also, the Sastras lay down the standards; what is unsastric is counterfeit conduct.

God is above all Gunas; He has no Agraaha (anger), He is ever the embodiment of Love. He is in Gunas, but Gunas are not in Him. There is clay in the pots but there are no pots in the clay. One should not fear God, One must love Him so much that all acts He disapproves are discarded: fear to do wrong, fear to hate others, fear losing Grace.

—Baba

Sai Spoke Thus

The patient do not realize they are patient, they just know that they live in Eternity—beyond all events—and are at peace with what is.

The loving do not realize that they are loving—they simply love spontaneously all that they encounter.

The pure do not know that they are pure—they just do not recognize impurity.

The surrendered do not realize that they have surrendered—they just have no other desire but to do God's Will.

The Holy do not know themselves to be holy—they simply exist for God alone and are ever absorbed in loving Him.

"Do not make commitments to man—only to me—commit your life to Me.

Which is better? To have all the bother and worry of arranging things yourself—or allowing Me to take care of your affairs?

Do not mix so much with people—listen to me—I am company enough and My guidance is clear and sure.

Keep your own counsel—let others keep to their own path.

Remember the purpose of your journey.... ME.

Rely on Me—trust Me—Surrender—LET My will be done!

The voice of the world shouts.... the Voice of God whispers."

"Neither wish nor want... ACCEPT."

"Self-less-ness is God-fullness."

"When you live in love.... you live in ME."

—*Denise Eversole*

A bar of iron sinks in water; but beat it into a hollow vessel and it will float very well and even carry some weight!

So, man's mind sinks easily in the sea of senses; beat it hollow, hammering it with the name of the Lord and it will float safely on a sea of troubles.

—**Baba**

Taming the Mind

Devotee: Baba, what is concentration? What does it mean? How is it different from meditation?

Sri Sathya Sai Baba: Concentration is the fixation of attention on one point, on one act or thought, or subject, the attention of the senses; meditation comes in, when the senses are transcended, all desires are purified and overcome. In Meditation, there is only you and God. Intense faith and exclusive contemplation produce successful meditation. Ramakrishna Paramahansa had such faith and Sadhana; meditating on Hanuman, the form of God as Monkey, he even grew a tail.

Devotee: Does it come naturally to man, or, has it a method?

Sri Sathya Sai Baba: Concentration comes naturally to man, but, meditation does not. It has a method: Ramakrishna had a succession of Gurus, who guided him.

Devotee: My 'meditation' is enquiry "Who am I?"

Sri Sathya Sai Baba: It must be combined with meditation on Light, or Sound, or OM. You have to retire into the 'forest' inside you. It is 'for-rest'. Go in—that is the invitation.

Devotee: Does Swami direct us to 'go in' from time to time?

Sri Sathya Sai: Early morning is the best time. The mind would be quiet then, and there is no pressure of responsibilities. It is difficult during the day; people are around; work has to be attended to.

Devotee: Swami has said once that people make a mistake; by not paying heed to the 'Soham', that is repeated every time we breathe. How does one do it?

Sri Sathya Sai: Sa is He; ham is I. Yogi X advised you to repeat only Sa Sa Sa all the 24 hours; for, according to him, since ham is not uttered that I will automatically subside. It is an extremely difficult method; in sleep it is impossible.

Devotee: Yogi X says, he does it.

Sri Sathya Sai: He does not! Of what use is it to struggle with a Sadhana like that?

Devotee: Putting Yogi X aside, I want to accept your advice and say Soham with every breath. What is the technique?

Sri Sathya Sai: You need not 'say' Soham with each breath! The breath is always saying Soham; become aware of it, that is enough. Realise that it is there, and feel it. At night, during sleep, when there is no consciousness of I and He, of any duality, the Sa and the ham, the breath repeats Om; that is all.

Devotee: Sa is He and ham is I; is there a particular point in the body where the I or Atma is to be meditated upon? Where is the Atma seated?

Sri Sathya Sai: The Atma is everywhere. But, for the purpose of meditation the 'life principle' or Jivatma can be considered as located ten inches (an inch is the thumb-width at the first joint) above the navel at the centre of the chest.

Devotee: The mind, which is our instrument for Sadhana, has the power to lead us into illusion also; it is therefore very dangerous, isn't it?

Sri Sathya Sai: The mind should not merge itself with the physical senses; it has other senses of its own, with which it should be concerned. If that happens, there is no danger at all. They are: Truth, Awareness, Peace, Love and Bliss. As long as the mind is engaged with these, all is well. But, when the mind, as soon as it thinks of the 'theatre', picks up the body and carries it to the theatre with all the senses of the body alert and awake; it becomes involved with the picture, the people, the emotions and the concepts; peace is lost. The mind should not engage itself with the body senses; body senses should serve the needs of the body only.

Devotee: But, Swami, it is always said that all troubles arise from the mind.

Sri Sathya Sai: From desires, to put it more correctly.

Devotee: That means, one should control one's thoughts?

Sri Sathya Sai: Thoughts and desires are not the same. There are many thoughts that are not desires. If there is a desire, there was a prior thought; but, not all thoughts are desires. Dark clouds bring rain; but, there can be clouds which do not bring rain. When there is a strong desire for God, bad thoughts, even if they arise, just pass through the mind and are not held on to.

Devotee: Swami! The flow of thoughts interferes with meditation; how can we diminish and dry up the flow?

Sri Sathya Sai: The habit of thinking is a long-standing one; even when it is broken, it will continue for some time! The fan continues to revolve, doesn't it, for some time, even after the current is switched off? The best method is to train the thought on to a spiritual goal-Perfection, God, Rama.

Devotee: That means Rama must be always in our consciousness?

Sri Sathya Sai: There are four levels of consciousness in you: in the Unconscious, there are no impressions at all; in the Subconscious, the impressions are all in a jumble; in the Conscious, man is afflicted with doubt, indecision, wills and won'ts, the entire mass of duality. In the Super-Consciousness or Divine Consciousness, there is the impression of only ONE.

Devotee: When one is wholly absorbed in God, who will take care of the body?

Sri Sathya Sai: Who takes care of the body in deep sleep, when you are not aware of it? It is God who takes care of it-then, as well as at other times. When one half of the body is paralysed, can you make it move? Or, make it whole?

Devotee: Swami! Can Mantras help, if they are repeated and meditated upon?

Sri Sathya Sai: Yes. Even westerners have found the Gayatri mantra to have great power. It must be repeated by persons well practised in spiritual life and Sadhana.

Devotee: Swami! You do not give mantra to aspirants, it is said. When devotees are ready for mantra, should they ask Swami? Or, will Swami Himself say when they are ready

Sri Sathya Sai: Avatars have never initiated aspirants into the recitation of mantras or formulae, for helping man towards the realisation. To hear the Avatar, to have His Darshan, to understand His Directions and to act accordingly, that is the Mantra. Krishna gave no mantra to Arjuna; He said, "Do this." That was enough mantra; when Arjuna did as he was told success was assured.

Devotee: Is the world today without Saints who have direct and deep God-experience?

Sri Sathya Sai: Why do you ask so? There are people, even today, who have the genuine experience of the Vision of the Divine, of Self-Realisation. But, they do not travel hither and thither, building up a following of disciples. If you find such a one and ask for guidance, he would not be interested in you.

Those `gurus' who are moving about in the world are caught in the bog as deep as you are. They have various desires and so, various problems. Their knowledge is from books or from others; they have no full and real experience of the Divine of whom they speak. How can they pull you out of the bog onto firm ground? God is the only genuine Guru. Call on Him, He will guide you. He is in your heart; He is ever ready to help, protect and guide you.

Devotee: Baba's teaching carries the ring of Truth; His words carry into action, almost by themselves. Their authority does not even depend on whether Swami is an Avatar or not.

Sri Sathya Sai: Don't doubt about this Avatar, as Swami.

Devotee: When the mind is not busy, I keep it engaged in repeating Sai Ram. Is this all right?

Sri Sathya Sai: Quite all right.

From the Note Book of an American

To Those who are Mine

The world is a furnace and factory, where man has to shape his destiny by his honest untiring efforts. He who takes up this challenge and spends his allotted years and the skill and intelligence with which he is endowed, in purposeful activity, is really entitled to the status of Karma Yogi. You, who work in these Deogiri Mines are genuine Karma Yogis. For, from dawn to dusk, you utilise every ounce of your energy in work that is beneficial to your self and the people of this country. You do not waste time in wasteful habits; you devote your strength and stamina for productive aims; you strive to feed and foster your wives and children and sit down for your meal with them in the happy family circle. Really, God is delighted to reside in your hearts. Keep the heart pure, unsullied by evil or vice. Let the rays of Love illumine it. Let the foul bets of hatred and greedily away from the cavity of your hearts; let the clean air of mutual co-operation and help render the cavity safe and sweet.

You see these trees; they are able to stand firm and grow, because of the roots that have spread out of your sight. You see this garland in my hand. The hundreds of flowers are held together by a thread, which you do not see. You see this building over there; the walls have risen so high, because the foundations inside the earth are also high, though you cannot see them. So also, this world is so plentiful, so charming, so rich, so comfortable, so regular in its movements and moods, because it has an unseen master and lawgiver, God. The unseen is the sustainer of the Seen.

Have faith in His Grace, by leading a virtuous life, a life devoted to service of the weak, a life spent in thoughts about the might and glory of God. The nation relies on you to supply it with very essential commodities; you are in duty bound to answer that call. Pray that you may carry out that duty well. God will certainly answer your prayer, for, you are so simple and innocent. Let me tell you that you are really fortunate than most of the so-called rich; for, the rich do not sleep as soundly as you. Their burden of worry is much heavier; they desire more and so are dis-

appointed more. They are tempted into worse and worse styles of living and so, they alienate themselves more and more from Grace.

When you spend your hours in thoughts about Clod, you are also free from evil ways. You will not be tempted to abuse others or harm them in anyway. You live in Love, accepting all the events of life as His Gifts. Homes such as yours are really speaking heavens on Earth; the joy that bubbles in your hearts is the symbol of Vaikunta; the earnestness and care that you evince in your work is the sign of Kailasa, the abode of Siva. Hearts dedicated to these noble ideals are indeed `golden'. They cannot be tarnished by the ups and downs of life; they can remain unaffected and pure.

You are drawing wealth out of Nature or Prakriti. Prakriti is the manifestation of Purusha or God. When you desire to master Prakriti, and bend it for your needs, you have to earn the Grace of Purusha. So, approach your work in a reverential humble spirit. Ravana sough Sita (who is Prakriti, since she was the daughter of the Earth, discovered by Janaka in the furrow on the field he was ploughing.) But, he did not first win the Grace of Rama, the Purusha, God, who is the master of Nature. So, he brought untold disaster on his head and on the heads of all his kinsmen, clan, and followers. Every day before you begin work, pray to God for a few minutes at least; and, at the end of the day, when the work is over, gather in some consecrated spot, a temple or Mandir, and offer grateful thanks to the Lord, by singing his name and meditating on his majesty. That will make you real Karmayogins, even heroes of the Karma Path.

This place is full of charm; it is quiet, with a forest all around. Such retreats are sought after by sadhakas and sages, but, you have the luck to be working in these surroundings. This is a tapovan, I should say, a spot which aspirants would love to settle down in. I bless that you have all lives of joy and happiness, of love and service, of the ceaseless shower of Divine Grace.

Vein and Brain

My Parthi experience was supernatural. I am allowing the impressions and the inspiration to seep in, day by day. A tremendous energy has been released in me; my entire standard of values is changing. I have fallen in love with Baba as a Teacher—His discourses throb with love and compassion. I realise that. He is the greatest Poet of all. I thrilled to the rhythm and beauty of His Speeches. I fear my words might sound too clichéd and trite, if I try to crystallise my emotions on paper. Of one thing I am quite sure—let me tell you—a life has been changed; a soul has been won.

YOU bewitch me. You do;
I forget my life, as it was
And will be.
Each leaf on any tree
Whispers the cadence of Your Bliss.
My world is bright With Your Smile
And, I know and feet

Your Presence
In tissue and marrow, vein and brain.
I saw Your Glory; now, I recapture It
In the waves of love
That engulf my Joy.

You possess me, You do;
I seem to hear Your laugh
In the rhythms of my future
Transcending the raucous chant
Of fear and foreboding.
My days petal forth
When I submerge in Your Bliss—
Each tender moment tinged
With a chapter of adoration;
Each sunset streaked
In vermilion and gold
With the promise of Your Grace.

You bewitch us all, You do.
You course through our souls—
Each one of us a preacher
With sermons on Your Love.

—*Chaitanya Kalbag*

A Call

We are on the threshold of building a world-wide Sai Community. I believe Baba is leading and guiding a spiritual revolution that will change the life of men on earth. I believe you and I shall participate in that revolution. I believe Bhagavan's Mission is to teach us the way we should feel and think, and behave, in order to be instruments of that profound spiritual change in man. I believe this Summer Course is an event in that process.

Why build a World Community? Because, human survival depends on it. Do we need a World Community? Yes. As quickly and as coherent as possible. Are we capable of building a World Community? Of course we are, provided we follow the Path that Baba is showing us. We must develop the capability, and ...remember, as we attempt to do it, that Baba's Grace changes the direction and content of the lives of men. If it is His wish, the World Community can be built.

In the Discourse He gave when this Summer Course on Indian Culture and Spirituality was inaugurated, He asked us to move from 'I' to 'We.' He described this community in terms of caring for each other. He said man must care about his family, village, district, state and nation; and, He exhorted us to care about the human family, entire mankind, as well. He said we are all inextricably interconnected. Thus Baba has endorsed the three concepts of ecology; everything is connected to everything; nothing goes away; life flows in interconnected cycles. Baba has suggested the remedy for the present ills and future disasters of the planet; Science should be guided by human and spiritual Values.

Baba has also laid stress on some psychological changes that have made in the nature of peoples. Baba says, "Start the day with Love; spend the day with Love; end the day with Love. This is the way to God." He emphasises the need to share the joys and sorrows of life. By sharing, joy increases and sorrow decreases. He is also very keen on the cultivation of discipline, especially in the use of the 'Five Elements', Space, Air, Fire, Water and the Soil. He insists that each one should acknowledge and bear responsibility for the strength and weakness of society.

Each one of us has a role in ushering, through the practice of these rules of life, the World Sai Community. One precious contribution the Indians can make is something of which a few of you are unconscious of as a revolutionary concept—the sharing of the gesture Namaskar or Namaste as each of us honours the Divine Spirit in the other—we have nothing in the Western World quite as beautiful as that.

In terms of human communication, we are already one people. We can have world broadcasts of daily events on world TV and radio, whenever we please. I flew here from Chicago in 15 hours travel time; faster planes make it faster; guided missiles are faster yet. One of our prayers is that Baba's Message of world brotherhood and love shall be carried to all the corners of the earth as a unique breath of fresh air. Why else do you suppose millions of Indians and thousands of Americans and others seek Him out and pray to Him? Baba has said, re-assuringly, that it is not the Divine Intention that man shall be destroyed, or that he shall destroy himself. He has given us the vision of the human race living together in love and understanding.

To build a World Community is to meet and serve some of man's deepest needs and desires: But it requires skills that can be learned and practised. I propose we start right here and right now, to learn some of these: Do we leave community building here amidst us to Bhagavan? Do we exert ourselves or work responsibly on our own, to further the basic community which is Baba's hope for us? The World Community is being built in miniature here, now. We can observe and experience the stresses tribulations and difficulties in the building, as well as the influences for good. Do we form our own enclaves, staying apart and growing more distant? Does the small group of Americans and others draw together? Are they taken as an intrusion? Or, welcomed joyfully into the social system we are building? Do the Indian students reach out cautiously or not at all, or do they do it warmly and boldly, to the foreigners? Do the faculty feel comfortable in their separateness or uncomfortable? Do they nurture their loneliness or contribute to the Community building enthusiastically? Let each of us examine our feelings, attitudes and reactions in the light of what we know to be Baba's wish—how we behave, how we actualise and reflect, in our behaviour, Baba's Divine Grace.

—Prof. Robinson, *George Williams Collage, Chicago; Summer Camp 1974*

Plantains and mangoes while yet green, are kept covered by straw, or in a closed room, so that the heat might make them ripe and tasty.

Meditation on God gives you too the right "temperature" in which you can "ripen" and become more acceptable to Him.

—Baba

A Vedic Rite

The Voice of the Vedas reverberated in stirring symphony at Brindavan for 30 days The Discourses of Bhagavan on Brahman for the first fifteen evenings and on Bharathi for the next fifteen were drawn from the pure pellucid stream of the Vedas. Scholars who had spent a life-time of laborious study of the Vedic Hymns were struck with amazement at the amassing of proofs from the Vedic Texts for the re-interpretations that the Discourses contained, at the revelation of entirely novel but eminently convincing meanings hiding underneath many key words and names expounded in the Vedas, and at the collation and harmonisation of the concepts and ideations that are the special features of the Vedas,

It is said that the Venu-gana (Flute-music) of Krishna was really the Veda-gana, the music of the Vedas, for the Vedas are the very Breath of God. Baba too as Krishna voiced forth the Vedas, and added the melody of His Flute to it, when He spoke on all the evenings on the Vedic Concepts of Brahman and Bharatha.

Besides, Bhagavan arranged classes in Vedic Recitation for both men-students and women-students, and they were taught to chant the Purusha Sukta, the Sri Sukta and a number of others Invocatory Hymns, in the strict orthodox style, with all the accents and stresses, About 60 students seized this rare chance and enthusiastically benefited by the Classes,

Bhagavan also initiated a large number of the students who had come from the different States of India into the recitation of the sacred Gayatri Mantra at a Ceremony called the Upanayanam (Leading the initiate into the presence of the Guru) which He arranged at Brindavan on the 22nd June. Sons of devotees from Karnataka and other States also eagerly availed themselves of this opportunity, and over 300 boys were blessed by Bhagavan that day. It was an inspiring sight, for all lovers of the Vedic Culture, an occasion that strengthened their Faith in the revival of the Vedic Way of Life by the Avatar of the Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

The initiates were sitting in long files with their parents when Bhagavan came near each party and gave Darshan. He showered His Blessings on them and handed each candidate the "Triple thread" to be worn round the shoulders as the mark of a "pilgrim towards the Universal Absolute, the Brahman", whom Baba was describing and defining so clearly during the Course.

Then, Baba expounded the Gayatri Mantra as the Universal Prayer for the achievement of Wisdom, and He initiated the recitation of the same and the meditation on its significance. Moving among the parties again, Baba received from them floral offerings and their eternal gratitude. The three hundred "vatus" and their parents were then invited to partake of the Upanayanam Feast that Bhagavan had specially arranged for their joy.

It was a memorable occasion—after the Upanayanam Ceremony in the immediate Presence of Bhagavan and the initiation by Him of so many novitiates into the recitation of this great Vedic Mantra.

—Ed.

A piece of charcoal takes on the colour of fire and becomes hot, only when it is placed in contact with a glowing cinder and vigorously fanned. The burning is Paramatma, the charcoal is the Jiva, fanning is the Sadhana.

—Baba

Benediction on Bombay

May 11th, Dharmakshetra, the Centre of Sai Activities and the Cynosure of all thirsty years in Bombay was packed to capacity with tense hearts and longing looks, for, Bhagavan was expected to arrive for a few days' stay. Bhajan songs from thousands of throats filled the air with spiritual fragrance. People guessed every plane that flew past to Santa Cruz as the fortunate one that carried Bhagavan towards the Bhaktas. The guess proved right once, as sure it must!

Every one wondered how so many thousands could gather there, in spite of the Railway Strike and the attendant dislocation of transport; but, they know that the Grace of Baba could overcome all handicaps. When the yearning is strong, obstacles are challenges that can be defeated; distance is but a call to courage.

As soon as Bhagavan arrived, He blessed the son of the State President of Maharashtra, Sri. M. M. Pinge, whose wedding was being ceremonially celebrated at Dharmakshetra that very day,

the first marriage function that was so fixed with the benedictions of Baba. Bhagavan created the Mangalashtra for the bride and it was tied by the groom in the immediate Presence. Baba also created a handful of fragrant jasmine flowers and showered them on the heads of the newly married couple. Then, Baba moved among the devotees who were engaged in Bhajan, since morning. He noticed a few sick people in their midst, and He created curative Vibhuti for them on the spot.

In the evening, the Bal Vikas pupils of Bombay City offered their homage to Bhagavan. They assembled in large numbers and impressed every one with their discipline and devotion. They enacted a few playlets based on the Puranas and popular legends. There was also a short scene from the life of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, which the kids presented most realistically and with genuine talent. The Siva Tandava that was presented by a pupil was appreciated for its artistic excellence and spiritual meaning, by all the children.

On the 12th, the Day commemorating the Inauguration of Dharmakshetra, besides the Bhajan Sessions which drew thousands from long distances, Bhagavan delivered His Divine Discourse, calling upon all mankind to rise to the very heights of human-ness, by developing the Divine Qualities inherent in them, as the very core of their being. It required, He said, vigilant attention on the progress achieved by Sadhana in the conquest of the senses, the regulation of the mind and the vagaries of the intellect.

On the 13th, Baba explained for Ratnagiri Town, with Sri P. K. Sawant, Sri Page and other devotees from Bombay. Thousands gathered in that Town from the entire District, and waited eagerly for Darshan. Baba quenched their thirst, and after the Welcome Speeches by Sri Sawant and others, He blessed them with His inspiring and illuminating Discourse and His soul awakening Bhajan Songs.

On the 14th, Bhagavan gave the Valedictory Discourse of the Special Summer Course on Indian Culture and Spirituality, which the Sathya Sai Seva Samiti of Bombay City had organised for 66 students from Maharashtra, in response to the Resolution approved at the Rajahmundry Conference in January this year.

The Classes were conducted at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Campus, Andheri West. 40 boys and 26 girls selected from the Colleges of Maharashtra attended the Camp and successfully went through the rather hard schedule of Pranava-Japa, and Meditation, as well as Yoga from 4-30 to 6 A.M. besides Nagarsankirtan of five days during the camp, followed by three lectures in the forenoon and two in the afternoon, interspersed with question-and-answer hours, when points from the lectures not clearly grasped were elucidated by the resident lecturers. Such get-togethers, the Report said, were very valuable. "The type of questions they asked reflected their earnestness to imbibe religious and cultural values," it said.

Students were encouraged to write what they thought of the Course, and they wrote, "In this Summer Course, an attempt was made to consummate knowledge into wisdom, life into living, and every day was a blue-print towards the achievement of this goal"; "When I go back home, my parents will be happy to find that their son has come to know much about the ancient culture and tradition of our land"; "I should admit that I had no faith in God when I came here; now, the

greatest change has come about in my life"; "Whenever I chant Bhajans, my heart begins to vibrate with a spontaneous flow of Love and Peace. This is a new experience for me,"

The lecturers who participated in the Camp as teachers described how they had benefited by the impact of this unique opportunity. "This will enrich their personality and expand the frontiers of their spiritual experience," said Principal Mudgal. Sri V. S. Page said, "I found the boys and girls inquisitive and intelligent. They could follow the subtlest philosophical propositions." Rev. Fr. Joe Abreo, Principal, said, "These are the flowers of the nation; it was a pleasure and a privilege to meet so many bright young faces."

Dr. U. Mehta of the University School of Sociology, Bombay said, "Today, we see around us the might of student-power running a-mock, in dangerous channels and exploding as demonstrations, morchas, gheraos, strikes and what not; What is the cause of this waste of intelligence and strength and enthusiasm? Youth is our great national wealth, but, it is now being frittered away.

The answer is to be found in the sage words of Saint Ramadas:

Saamarthya ahe Chalavaleeche; Paree
Tethe Bhagawanthache.

"There is abundant power potential in our Youth; but, the most essential thing is lacking cultural and spiritual background, which can come only from their initiation into our ancient Divine wisdom."

The Report presented by the Organisers to Bhagavan included also some very pertinent observations on the "Follow-up Action" proposed by them. Those may be useful as Guides for other Samitis as well. On the first Sunday after the opening of the Colleges a general meeting of all students trained in the Camp, must be held, in order to revive their enthusiasm and to invite from them suggestions on how they proposed to give the benefit of their value-oriented training to fellow students and to the community in which they live. The Organisers and the "Teachers will also meet them and spend the whole day together. The students must be encouraged to narrate their Sadhana and Seva, and comments and suggestions thereon presented by the others. On this basis, a programme of action can be drawn up. Every student can be supplied with a blueprint of the same, which might include work in the "Adopted Village," service of the poor, the coaching backward brothers and sisters, help in the Technical Schools, or Agricultural Polytechnic as in Dharmakshetra. Care is to be taken that it does not distract them from their regular classes, while it is good enough as a training in Seva and as a spiritual Sadhana. The Follow-up Action Programme will be so framed and conducted as to build up from these students, messengers spreading, through word and deed, Bhagavan's Message of Sathya Dharma Shanti and Prema.

The students can maintain diaries in which they note the dates on which they do meditation or participate in Nagarsankirtan and attend Bhajan. They can also mention any other Sadhana done by them, and details of the spiritual books studied by them, and other cultural and spiritual activity which they shared or initiated. They can note down any act of service done by them to

the distressed and the defectives, and also the steps taken by them to interest their comrades, in such beneficial activity. These should be sent to the Director of the Summer Course, well in time, before the get-togethers, so that suggestions for modification of activities can be made to all. The Report also recommended that once in six months a Cultural and Spiritual Festival might be held, including a Pilgrimage to Puttaparthi. Darshan of Bhagavan on such great occasions, the Report said, "will further induce them to move on with greater zeal towards the objectives of the Camp and Course."

In His Valedictory Address to the Campers, Bhagavan reminded them that they are "Vidyarthi", that is to say, aspirants seeking Vidya, Wisdom, Inner Vision, Reality and the Bliss derivable from its Realisation. He warned them against becoming Vishayarthi, aspirants for objective enjoyment, for sensuous pleasure and for material satisfactions. Bhagavan graciously placed in the hands of every participant "Summer Showers-1973". Bhagavan blessed each of them, assuring all of His Compassion and Constant Presence. Baba left for Bangalore by plane at 4-45 P.M., the same day, leaving hundreds of thousands of heavy hearts praying for another visit ere long.

One special event deserves mention here. According to the Hindu Calendar, 14th May this year marked the Anniversary of the passing away in 1972 of Mother Easwaramma. Devotees arranged an Akhanda Bhajan at Dharmakshetra that day, and Bhagavan inaugurated it with the Lighting of the Lamp. The Sathya Sai Trust had the satisfaction of bringing into Bhagavan's Presence that very morning the Srimati Easwaramma Mobile Medical Unit Van, as a moment of the maternal affection that was showered by Mother Easwaramma on the sick, the grief-stricken and the distress-affected women who sought her guidance and counsel.

Up-to-date facilities with the most sophisticated equipment are provided in the Van for X-ray Screening, Blood-testing, and clinical diagnosis. It has provision for dental surgery as well as ophthalmological tests and treatment. Inoculations and injections can also be given by the doctors who travel by the van into rural areas and the slum areas of cities. It has an efficient sound system too so that talks on health problems can be broadcast and people, called together for examination and advice.

Bhagavan has initiated two schemes for the uplift of rural people—Samitis adopting villages for intensive Seva activity, and the establishment of Samitis, Mahila Vibhags, Seva Dal and Bal Vikas in the villages from where students come to attend the Colleges established under Bhagavan's Guidance and blessings. This mobile unit will be of great use to conduct mass surveys of dental and eye defects, as well as the incidence of lung disease and other illnesses among the people whom the Samitis have selected for intensive Seva.

The Mobile Unit arrived at Brindavan during the Summer Course, and Bhagavan called upon the Doctors who were there, Dr. Kanamwar from Delhi, Dr. C. G. Patel from Baroda (formerly of Kampala, Uganda), Dr. L. S. Bore Gowda and Dr. A. P. Narasappa, Dr. M. B. Sundara Rao with a band of devoted collaborators, men and women, to examine and help the Participants of the Course. He also sent the Van to the villages Sore-Hunisi (which was visited twice—once for general check-up, another time for giving the children 'Triple-Injections' to prevent tetanus, diphtheria and whooping cough and also administer the polio-preventive drug), and Seege-halli..

Villagers welcomed the Van as one more instance of Bhagavan's Prema, and are resolved to take the fullest advantage of this, new Instrument of Service, heralding Health and Happiness.

—Ed.

Message

Accept My Blessings and Love

Religion is not a dogmatic faith; it is the conduct necessarily implied in the Movement towards Perfection. Therefore, Religions cannot really contradict one another. All Religions are different forms, taken in practical life, by the One Aspiration for Perfection, the Aspiration working through different temperaments.

In this sense, no true Freedom is possible, without Freedom in the light of Religion.

Religion is the attitude of Reverence, which human beings have towards the Supreme Being.

It is based on the Relationship that exists between them and the Supreme Being.

This Reverence may take different Forms in different persons, because of the difference in the conceptions of the relation that is felt between Man and the Supreme Being.

*With Blessings
Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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The Old Brahmin

Each one of them expressed his inmost wishes in words soaked in sweetest love. Finally, one wise old Brahmin said, "Well. If we possess the good fortune and the merit to deserve the auspicious and happy company of Rama in this forest, He would certainly agree to keep us here. If that is not our destiny, evil fate itself will harden the heart of Rama, and he would drive us back to Ayodhya. If Rama does not bestow Grace, who else can? What does it matter where we spend our days, when we cannot spend them in the presence of Rama? Away from Rama, we are but living corpses." When he finished, all of them responded with the exclamation, "True! True! These words are absolutely true."

Sita's Mother

When Emperor Dasaratha passed away, the Family Preceptor, Vasishtha, had sent a message to Janaka, and, as soon as he received it, he and his queen, Sunayana, had come to Ayodhya for condoling with the bereaved. They learnt there about all developments. When Bharata arrived, and decided to proceed to Chithrakuta along with the Mothers, the Royal Preceptor, and the

leaders of the people, Janaka and his queen also accompanied them. They were waiting long for a favourable chance to meet Sita and Rama.

Meanwhile, Sita's mother directed a maid to find out whether Kausalya and other queens were available for audience, and she hurried towards their residences. It was the eleventh day of the bright half of the Jyeshtha month. The Queens met that day, in the forest the four of them. Queen Kausalya paid honours to Queen Sunayana; and treating her with great respect, offered her a seat. It was the first time the Queens met Janaka's consort. For the queens did not proceed to Mithila for the marriage of the Princes; nor did the Queen of Mithila visit Ayodhya then. Therefore, they both had no chance yet of meeting and talking to each other.

As soon as Queen Sunayana saw the Queens of Ayodhya, Kausalya Sumitra and Kaikeyi, she felt that even the hardest diamond would melt before their loving conversation, their tender manners and their compassionate comradeship. She found that their bodies had become emaciated, and that their heads were bowed down by sorrow. Their eyes were fixed on the ground below their feet. They were shedding streams of tears. The three Queens extolled the virtues and excellences of Sita and Rama, but, could not continue long, for, the waves of sorrow arising in their hearts silenced their words in sobs and loud wails. They could not stop the outflow of grief.

Queen Sunayana could find no words to speak. At last, she said, "Mother! Of what avail is sorrow at this stage? Providence directed things along this crooked way. A diamond-edged cutter was used to sunder the cream on the milk! We have heard of the life-giving Amrita, the heavenly nectar; but we have not seen it. But, we are privileged to see now the equally potent poison. We have the visual experience only of crows, storks, vultures and owls; but, the visual experience of the Celestial Hamsa which has Lake Manasa-sarovar as its habitat is beyond us. Queens! The sport of destiny is full of contradictions and absurdities; they astound us; they are as unpredictable as the wayward sport of children" while trying thus to console the Queens, Sunayana herself could not restrain her tears.

At this, Kausalya said "O Sunayana! This has happened not through the fault of one particular person. Happiness and misery, profit and loss, are all the consequences of karma, the deeds words and thoughts of the persons themselves. Has it not been declared, 'Avasyam eve bhokthavyam, krtham karma subhaasubbam'? Good or bad, whatever karma has been done, its consequences have to be willy-nilly suffered or enjoyed. God knows the hardship filled process of Karma; He confers the appropriate consequence according to the deed. Each one carries on the head this Divine Command, O Queen! We are entangled in delusion, and we yield in vain to grief. Why should the merit earned and stored by us in previous lives desert us when we grieve? Can this rule of cause and effect, holding sway over the world from before the beginning of the world be set aside for our sake? It is a mad hope." Kausalya ended her attempt at consoling, with many a sigh.

When she finished, Queen Sunayana spoke thus: "Mothers! You are indeed highly fortunate, for, Emperor Dasaratha has a renown for holy merit that few rulers have. You are the Consorts of such a noble person. You are the mothers of the very embodiment of Dharma, the very personification of Love, Rama, whose heart embraces all beings in compassion. You have earned

everlasting fame all over the world. What you said now is the ultimate truth. Happiness and misery are the two pots, balanced on back and front by the stick to which they are tied and placed on the shoulder. Every one has to carry both in equal measure. In case one has no misery, one cannot identify happiness as happiness, can he? Na sukhaallabhyathe sukham—From happiness, no happiness can ensue, isn't it?" Kausalya said amidst her sobs, in a grief-stricken voice, "if Sita Rama and Lakshmana reside in the forest, many calamities will happen. I know that Bharata cannot survive separation from Rama. My agony is heightened when I see Bharata more than when I see Sita Rama and Lakshmana. Fear overpowers me when I think of Bharata." Sumitra and Kaikeyi agreed that it was very true. They too were saddened at the condition of Bharata.

Sumitra Speaks

Sumitra spoke next. She said, "Mother! Through your blessings and good wishes, our sons and daughters-in-law are as pure as the Ganga itself. Bharata had never so far asserted that he was the brother of Rama and claimed something from him. But, now he is demanding that he should fulfill his wishes, in a Satwic, highly righteous manner. Even the Goddess of Speech, Saraswati, will hesitate to accept the assignment of describing the virtues, the humility, the large heartedness, the fraternal attachment, the faith, the steadfastness of that faith, the courage and inflexibility of that courage, that mark out Bharata as a great person, Can the ocean be measured out by means of a snail's shell? Bharata is at all times, under all conditions, the effulgent Lamp of the Royal Line; only, people did not realise this until now.

A gem has to be examined before its value can-be-determined; gold has to be tested on the touchstone, before its genuineness and fineness can be known.

Let us not talk despairingly about him at this time. Our reason is now affected by sorrow and deluded by filial attachment." Sumitra wiped her tears, as she concluded her wise words of consolation.

Hearing her words, the Queen of Mithila, Sunayana, thought within herself, "These Queens of Ayodhya are really very great, one greater than the other, in nobility. They do not praise their own children, as mothers are prone to do; they extol the virtues of the sons of co-wives; this is quite against the nature of mothers, as usually found in the world. How they are describing and appreciating the sons, born to the other wives of their husband! These queens, who do not distinguish between their sons and the sons of the other queens, are ideal housewives for the whole world. Ah! What large heartedness! What purity anti perfection in the feeling of Love!"

Kausalya's Wish

Kausalya mustered some little courage, and addressed Sunayana thus: "O Queen of Mithila, You are the consort of the Ocean of Wisdom, Emperor Janaka. Who dare convey counsel to you! We prattle away in our ignorance. Yet, I pray you might tell the Emperor at the earliest, when he is in a mood to listen, these words of mine, namely, "Persuade Rama and make him agree to have Bharata for some time with him, since Lakshmana has already spent some time in his presence, that Lakshmana be sent to Ayodhya to oversee the activities and the administration there, and that Shatrughna be directed to assist Lakshmana in his duties at Ayodhya. If only Rama agrees to those the rest of the problems would set themselves right quickly. It is only the condition of Bharata that gives me anxiety. His attachment and love towards Rama are deep-rooted and

delicate. He cannot survive separation from Rama. The Emperor has passed away; Rama will not return from the forest. If Bharata finds separation from Rama unbearable, it might lead to his death. Then, the empire would be reduced to a living corpse! My heart is torn by fear and anxiety when I picture the future, and the calamities that are in store." Kausalya held fast in her hands the two hands of Queen Sunayana, and appealed to her, to fulfill this mission and achieve this end, and confer Ananda on them all.

Sunayana Consoles

Sunayana was touched by the affection that filled the heart of the Queen and her adherence to the path of righteousness. She said, "Mother! Humility and virtue are genuine in you. They are natural expressions of your goodness and nobility, as smoke is on fire and beds of grass on the mountain peaks. Of course, the Emperor Janaka is ever ready to serve you by word, deed, and thought. He is ever eager to help. But, can a lamp illumine the Sun? Rama has come into the forest to accomplish the task of the Gods. After finishing that assignment, he will surely return to Ayodhya and reign over the Empire. The might of his arms will ensure the attainment by man, super-man, and sub-man of all their deepest wishes. These tidings were long ago revealed by the Sage, Yajnavalkya. His words can never be falsified."

Mother and Daughter

With these words, Sunayana fell at the feet of Queen Kausalya. Taking leave from her, and preparing to leave the place, she proceeded towards the cottage where Sita was. When she entered and saw Sita, she was overwhelmed with grief. She could not control her tears; she ran towards Sita and caught her in her arms. Sita consoled her mother by various means; she counselled courage and faith; she prostrated at the feet of the mother. She stood before her mother in her anchorite robes, appearing like Parvati, the Consort of Siva, during the days when she did Tapas. The mother could not contain within herself the questions: "Child! Are you really my Sita, or, are you the Consort of Siva?" She looked at her long and leisurely from head to foot, and was filled with wonder and joy.

At last, she said, "O Sita! Through you, two families have been consecrated, the family of your parents and the family of your parents-in-law. Your fame will reach the farthest horizons. The flood of your renown will flow as a full river between the two banks, the two royal lines of Mithila and Ayodhya. The Ganga has but three sacred spots on it—Haridwar, Prayag and the Sagara-sangama, where it joins the Sea. May the stream of your pure fame enter and sanctify each one into a holy temple."

Hearing these words of truth that flowed from the affection of her mother; Sita squirmed and bent her head, as if she was overcome with a sense of shame. She said, "Mother! What words are these? What is the relevance? What comparison can be found between me and the holy Ganga?" Saying this, she went through the gesture of prostration directed towards the Ganga, with a prayer for pardon.

Sunayana embraced her daughter, and stroked her head in tender affection. She said, "Sita! Your virtues are examples for all women who are mistresses of families to follow and emulate." Sita intercepted her, and said, "Mother! If I spend much time with you, the service of Rama might be delayed. Therefore, please permit me to leave for his presence." The Mother too realised that her

desire lay in that direction, and so, she felt that she should not be an obstacle in her way. She fondled and caressed Sita profusely and said at last, "Child! Go and serve Rama as you wish." Sita fell at her feet and left the place, for serving Rama.

Sunayana pondered long over the reverential devotion that Sita had towards her husband, and her other virtues; she never took off her eyes from Sita until she disappeared from view. She stood at the same spot, watching her and admiring her. She was awakened from the reverie, by her maid who came near her and said, "Mother Sita has gone in; it is best we now return to our residence." Suddenly, Sunayana turned back, wiping the stream of tears from her eyes; her unwilling steps took her to the cottage allotted to her.

Commendable Desire

The sun set just at this time; so, Rama Lakshmana and Bharata and Shatrughna proceeded to the river for the evening sacraments like bath and ritual worship of the Gods at dusk. The Pundits, the members of the Brahmin caste, the ministers and others also accompanied them. After finishing these, they partook of fruits and tubers, and laid themselves to bed under trees allotted to each group.

When dawn broke, after the morning sacraments were gone through, all of them gathered around the Cottage of thatch where Rama was. Rama came out with a bewitching smile, and passed through that thick crowd inquiring of each lovingly about his health and welfare.

Bharata fell at the feet of Rama when He came near him. He said, "Lord! A desire has arisen in my heart; I am unable to express it before you an account of both fear and shame." Rama stroked the head of his dear brother, saying as he did so, "Why do you hesitate to tell me? Come. Tell me what is it."

At this, Bharata said, Brother! I have great desire to visit the hermitages, the sanctifying bathing ghats on the banks of this river, the glens of these thick forests, the wild animals that roam therein, the lakes and streams, the waterfalls around this Chitrakuta Peak. They have all been rendered holy by the imprint of your lotus feet. The residents of Ayodhya are overpowered by the urge to see those meritorious spots."

Rama replied. "Bharata! Your desire is of course highly commendable. You can gladly explore this region, with the permission of the Sage Atri." Hearing this, Bharata was very happy. He fell at the feet of the sage as well as of Rama, and then, proceeded to the interior of the forest, visiting on the way, with Shatrughna and the people from Ayodhya, many hermitages and other holy spots.

On his way, he saw a Well by the side of the mountain. It has in it holy waters from all the sacred rivers and lakes. Bharata sprinkled its waters reverentially on his head; he prostrated before that seat of sacredness. He cleared the water by removing with his own hand some dry leaves and dirt that had fallen on the water. It is this well that it honoured even today as Bharatakupa or Maratha's Well, all over the world.

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness

(To be continued)

The Name BABA clearly indicates that Bhagavan is the God sought after by all religions. Baba has declared that He is the Embodiment of the manifold Names and Forms which mankind has applied to God throughout the centuries. What further proof do we want of this, than the name BABA itself?

B means Brahman, the primeval Divine Principle venerated by Hinduism; A is the Ahura Mazda adored by the Parsis; B means the Buddha revered by Buddhists and A is Allah, the Formless Godhead that Islam is eager to realise. Thus, BABA is the sum of the Divine as conceived by four important religions of the world.

The fifth, namely, Christianity adores God as a Father; and, that is what the full word, BABA means. BABA is thus the Name of God in all the religions marked out in the Sai Emblem.

—*Dr. A. P. Narasappa, M.B.B.S.*

Sai Spoke Thus

Pray thus:

Let my thoughts, pure and holy, arise, O Lord, as incense to Thee.

Let my Heart—Thy Shrine—beat in rapture, O Lord for Thee.

Let my hands bestow radiant acts of service, Lord, to Thee.

Let my feet, in joyful cadence dance along the Lighted Path with Thee.

Say thus:

Sai and I do the dance of life; I live in His Cosmic Form;

Never were we ever apart; never was I born;

Within His galaxies of Space, I've lost myself in His shining Face.

Soaring, blending, pure and free, I am He; He is me.

Before you close the door to some one's need

before you turn aside

before you retreat into selfish solitude

Ask yourself what would Sai Baba Do?

What door does He close?

When does He turn aside?

To where does He retreat? What solitude does He seek?

The reply you get is "Never, nowhere, none."

See Sai in every pair of eyes;

Hear Sai in every sound;

Breathe in Sai with every breath;

Recline in Sai as a planet reclines in space.

Be Sai to everyone you are involved with.
Love and Lift.
That is My Message and My Work.

—*Denise Eversole*

I Ask Myself

Am I a real Sai Devotee?
Am I striving always to deserve the Grace of Sai?
Am I true in word, thought and deed?
Have I read and understood the instructions for a good life that Sai gives?
Do I engage myself in the manana on these instructions?
Do I believe in Silence, where I can hear the voice of Sai?
Have I learnt humility? Have I suppressed the ego?
Can I forget and forgive the harm done by others? Do I love them never-the-less?
Do I feel the urge to help and serve the weak, the distressed and the disabled?
Do I lose faith in Sai when something goes wrong?
Do I review my conduct off and on and correct myself if I have strayed?
Do I feel frustrated and broke when my plans do not fructify?
Have I grown lukewarm towards Bhajan, Nagarsankirtan etc?
Do I get the thrill and joy out of these?
Do I fear to indulge in scandal or vengeance? Am I gluttonous or greedy?
Am I clear about the Goal I should strive for and the Sadhana that will take me to success?
Do I seek the company of the Good and the God-fearing? And, do I benefit by their simplicity, sincerity and steady devotion to Sai, who is manifesting as all Names and Forms of God?

—*Muktinath Bardoloi*

San Diego Letter

Dr. Samuel Sandweiss, M.D. and Dr, Earl Gershwin, M.D., related their experiences with Sai Baba, at a Public Meeting organised here to hear a lecture by Indra Devi and witness a film she had brought from India, on the Avatar of the Age.

Dr. Sigfried Knauer, M.D., also spoke on the occasion. Dr. Knauer said, "To be in Puttaparthi, where Baba was, when we went to meet him, was a great and memorable experience. We waited for the Master, sitting on the sands, in a semi-circle in front of the Temple. The atmosphere was filled with silent expectation. Stepping out of the Temple, He came, moving slowly through the crowd, gliding, rather, floating over the surface, than walking! There was a sublime transparency around him, embracing all with Love and Goodness. He called, with a gentle gesture, those among the crowd whom he wanted to see for an interview.

He called me in. After some minutes of talk, which I will keep to myself, Baba asked me to cup my hands, and he slowly dropped, one by one, thirty three tiny amber-coloured pills! "Thirty three vertebrae," Baba explained, later.

At Bombay too before my departure from India, Baba called me into one of the guest rooms at Dharmakshetra, where we remained alone in the room. Baba moved his hands in small circles and turning up his palms, he showed me how a liquid was slowly filling his palm! 'Oil', he said.

It had a very exquisite fragrance, however.

Then, he rubbed both palms, and gave me a treatment with the Oil.

In gratitude, I wanted to touch his feet, but, he didn't let me do so.

I have really no words to express or explain all that has happened due to his Grace. The phenomena presented by Sai Baba are hard to accept for many people, for, intellectualism has chained them to a three-dimensional world. Everything is looked upon as a result of physical reactions only. Intellect clouded Insight. The spirit as a Reality has been clean forgotten. But, the Spirit is at the beginning of every thing. The Big Bang Theory, they hold, makes them believe that the whole universe including man, was produced by chance and developed also by mere chance. But, the Spirit is real, and the Spirit is the beginning of every thing, It is eternal; it always was, is and will be.

Everything material is the condensation of the Spirit; Sai Baba is born into our time to bring this Truth to our awareness. Creation can take place, even today if the force of the Spirit is channelled properly. We can ourselves experience Creativity in the Non-physical Realm.

Sai Baba brings the Spirit down into the material world, so that everybody can see the manifestation of the Spirit. When he does so, the scientist can accept, has to accept the Reality of the Spirit."

Terrible and Tender

"Yaatherudra siva thanoo raghora papa nasini," The Prajapathi, who is the Divine Inspirer of the Vedas has two natures and names, two forms and features—the terrible known as Rudra, and the tender, known as Siva. When the Narasimha Incarnation of God, human with the head of a lion, emerged from the pillar in the Audience Hall of Hiranyakasipu, Prahlada, his little son, saw Him as tender, charming and compassionate. For he was saturated with devotion to God. But, the father who ignored God and dared to insult Him and injure His devotees, saw before him the terror striking form of total destruction. While Prahlada sang and danced in ecstasy, Hiranyakasipu shivered and shook in fear. It is therefore clear that man visualises in the One God the two opposites of terror and tenderness, reflected from his own mental make-up.

The One God manifests Himself in these two aspects, so that the world may be sustained and fostered, improved and cleansed. These two—the terrible and the tender—are the characteristics found together in every single thing on earth, for are not they all parts of the self same God?

Take the articles of food. It has the Sivam aspect, when taken in intelligently and in moderate quantities. It can also be Rudram, or devastating in its effects, if taken unintelligently and in excess. Every thing or thought that obstructs the surge of Ananda—every such situation, experience, idea—is Rudram; every step towards limitation, regulation, control, progress, sublimation, is tender, Sivam, auspicious fruitful, beneficial.

It is the desire that haunts man that is responsible for making the one item, food, either a boon or a poison. It is the mind; that decides the desire and directs it. A sharp knife can be used for slicing fruit or for stabbing; in the hands of a surgeon, it can save a life, rather than destroy one. The mind can liberate you from bondage or bind you more tightly with the objective world.

God is omnipresent, the inner motivator in every being. So, we have to posit Him as resident in, and manipulating, the mind too. When He manipulates it to our benefit we can call Him, Sivam; when He playfully or purposely turns it against our best interests, we can call Him. Rudra.

One point has to be emphasised here. We should not identify God as Sivam when we get happiness and Rudram when we fall into misery. For, happiness and misery are not two distinct experiences. The absence of one is the nature of the other. Each is inextricably intertwined with the other. Undiluted happiness is a chimera; pleasure is the interval between two moments of pain, pain is the gap between two moments of pleasure.

Again, God assumes or appears to assume the terrible aspect only to ensure the welfare of mankind and the happiness of the worlds. It is mentioned in the Epics and Puranas that God placed various temptations and tribulations in the path of ascetics and aspirants, thus demonstrating that He is either cruel or vindictive or positively mischievous! No! God has no desire to prevent or postpone their spiritual progress; nor has He any apprehension that they might trouble Him if they succeed! He is eager to award them the victory they seek; that is the reason why He puts them through the obstacles.

Being students, you know very well, that the University has prescribed certain examinations, at the end of every academic year. Do you ascribe this system to any desire for persecuting you? Do you think it is a sign of hatred? You know that they are conducted so that you could be promoted, aren't they? The Yogins, sadhakas, and aspirants are being tested by God, only to promote them. Instead of accepting the tests as signs of His Care and Love, people grow desperate and defeatist; they cry out, "O God! We cannot face these tests," just as students cry out, "We don't want examinations!" How then can progress be measured and achievement recognised? Those who pilot planes or drive cars or captain ships must possess certificates for having attained the required proficiency. They are Tested before the certificates are awarded. Those sadhakas, who protest and clamour when tests confront them, are only proclaiming themselves as unworthy of higher positions, as content to remain where they are.

The story of Emperor Sibi is an illustration of this truth. Though endowed with power and authority, prosperity and wealth, Sibi was a genuine Sadhaka, having attained a high stage in detachment and the spirit of renunciation. The God decided to discover whether his achievements were deep-rooted and unshakeable.

Agni (the God of Fire) and Indra (the God of the Heavenly Regions) took on the forms of a dove and a hawk. The hawk (Indra) pursued the Dove (Agni) across the sky, until the frightened bird fell into the lap of Sibi sitting on his throne, pleading for protection from the hawk. As befitted his Dharma, Sibi gave word that he would save the dove from its enemy and assured full protection for it. At that moment, the hawk presented itself before the Emperor and demanded its meal, its legitimate prey. "I am hungry, I had secured my food, you have deprived me of my meal," it complained. "Of what use is all your vaunted spirituality, if you rob me of my meal?" it lamented.

At this, Sibi said, "Yes, I shall slice off flesh from my body weighing as much as this dove weighs; you can appease your hunger with that." The hawk agreed; a balance was brought; the dove was placed on one pan, pieces of flesh cut from the body of Sibi were placed in the other pan. But, lo and behold, however many pieces of flesh were laid thereon, the pan on which the dove sat did to rise at all! It was indeed a mystery how the bird weighed so heavy. At last, Sibi said, "Well. You can take all of me. Eat me whole. Here am I at your disposal."

No sooner did he utter these words than the hawk became Indra and the dove was transformed into Agni—Gods effulgent in their Glory! They were supremely happy at the depth of Sibi's spirit of renunciation; they blessed him profusely and departed.

Though Indra and Agni might appear to be terribly cruel in their dealings with Sibi, it was indeed only a test to provide him a chance to express his sovereign qualities of self-control, compassion, and charity. The Mahabharata has a fine story which proves the same point. The fact that God might assume terrible aspects in order to examine attainment and establish the truth of achievement is witnessed in the story of Mayuradhwaja.

The Pandavas celebrated the Aswamedha Yaga, and as part of that ceremony released the chosen horse so that it may take its own course across the length and breadth of the land. Whoever stops and binds the horse is thereby challenging the sacrificant for a fight; he has to win back the horse, after defeating the audacious obstructionist! Mayuradhwaja, a great devotee of Krishna, a virtuous ruler, a wise man learned in the Vedas, a man of deep compassion, held the horse, and Arjuna, the Pandava Hero decided to meet him in battle. But, Krishna advised him to desist; for, he desired to demonstrate to Arjuna the devotion of Mayuradhwaja which far surpassed the devotion of Arjuna; he also desired to proclaim to the whole world, the heights that Mayuradhwaja could reach in the realm of self-sacrifice and truthfulness.

So, He proposed that He and Arjuna proceed to Mayuradhwaja's Palace in the guise of a pair of Brahmins, seeking a meal. They were welcomed by the King, who offered them rich hospitality. But, before they could eat the very first mouthful, Krishna stopped very dramatically and recited a tale of woe.

"Listen! O Soft-hearted Emperor! As we were coming along through a forest on the border of your empire, a tiger snatched away the young son of my companion here. Before we could come up with the beast, it had swallowed half the body; but, it heard our piteous appeal, and promised to release the boy, and return him alive to us, provided it is given as substitute, one half of the body of the pure, holy, and sanctifying Emperor of the land, Mayuradhwaja.

How can we relish your hospitality with this agony in our hearts? Promise to give the tiger half your body in exchange for the full living body of this Brahmin boy, and then, we shall partake of your hospitality." Mayuradhwaja agreed most gladly; when the lunch was over, he sat on the floor and instructed his queen and the prince to saw his body into two halves.

They placed the saw on the head and began the process of division, with the Brahmins witnessing the operation. Within minutes, the elder Brahmin noticed a few tear-drops in the left eye of the King. He said, "O You are giving us the promised gift with tears, not with full willingness. I cannot accept anything given with tears."

But, Mayuradhwaja replied, "Sir! If I am unwilling or hesitating, both eyes should shed tears, shouldn't they? Only the left eye is shedding them now; and the reason is this: the right half is being used for a highly sacred purpose, to save a person from cruel death. But, what will happen to the left half? Cast away, to be eaten by dogs and vultures? So, the left half is weeping, but, the right half is jubilant that it is being put to some meritorious purpose."

At that moment, Krishna manifested Himself to the great Mayuradhwaja in all His Glory and Majesty; He blessed Him that he would have Krishna always installed in his heart and that he would be ever-blissful and content. Arjuna too realised that there were devotees of Krishna far more advanced than he was. His pride was humbled. Mayuradhwaja's humility was rewarded.

Tests such as these are evidences of Grace rather than of Anger. The terrible aspect of God is not terrible in essence. God is described in the scriptural texts as, "Raso vai sah," He is sweetness Itself. How can sweetness ever become bitter? Godhead is a spotlessly clean Mirror; you see in It your own reflection. When you have terror striking propensities, the reflection you see will strike terror into you. When you have soft harmless propensities, the reflection will be tender and soft. Do not lay the blame on Godhead, as you are prone to do, now. When everything goes right, you say that God has come close to you; when everything goes wrong, you say that God has deserted you and gone afar! He does not move far or near. The distance from Him to you is as much as the distance from you to Him. He is ever where He always is, in your heart. Recognise Him there; realise Him there, as closest and nearest to you. He is your own Self, neither terrible nor tender, but, simply IS.

—From Bhagavan's Discourse 30/5/74 Brindavan

The timeless scriptures, the Vedas, Upanishads and Sastras, are like the traffic signs on the road. If they are removed, the journey is rendered slow and difficult, replete with accidents. India cannot afford to destroy them. They must be restored in the interest of humanity itself.

The Convocation

500 students from the Colleges of the many States of India, 40 teachers who had accompanied them, and a batch of students from the United States, Fiji, etc., had the unique good fortune of receiving the Blessings of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba at the Convocation which was the Valedictory Function of the month-long Summer Course on Indian Culture and Spirituality, which was held under the immediate Direction and Presence of Bhagavan, at Brindavan, from 20th May. The men students were given by Baba as their Convocation wear, white shirts and white Dhotis—symbols of purity and sincerity. The women participants were given kumkum-dotted white Saris.

It was a colourful procession from the Brindavan Bungalow, with the students and other participants moving double files on both sides of the floral path towards the Stadium, within Brindavan. Baba was accompanied by the members of the Faculty who were awarded the privilege of delivering lectures to the students—General Cariappa, Dr. R. R. Diwakar, Dr. D. R. Bendre, Dr. V. K. Gokak, Dr. S. Bhagavantam, Prof. S. K. Chatarji. G. P. Rajarathnam, 'Karunasri', Dr. D. Venkatavadhani, Sri Nakul Sen and many other distinguished scholars.

Bhagavan had characterised the Course as a Yajna, with these scholars as Ritwiks and having as its aim the discovery of the Divine, latent in the hearts of the participants. The Vedas prescribe a Ceremonial Bath, an Avabhrtha Snana on the Valedictory Day after the Poornahuti, and true to that ritual prescription, when the procession was half-way through, the Gods sent down a shower of rain which drenched the Ritwiks in conformity to the ancient ritual. The stadium echoed with the bhajan from thousands of devotees, and the music of the Nadaswaram band.

Dr. Gokak, the Director of the Summer Course read a brief report of the Camp, and pointed out that 3 new features marked this year's camp: (1) As resolved at Rajahmundry, the different States are holding shorter Summer Courses, of a fortnight's duration as tributaries of this full scale course. Already, Bombay had such a course, and another is to be held soon at Bharatpur, by the Rajasthan Samiti. (2) This year, we have a small group of students and teachers from America and other parts of the world who have travelled hither to join the Camp. (3) As an alternative to the Yoga Classes, this year, students were allowed to join the Veda chanting class, and about 60 students (men and women) have chosen to learn the Purusha Sukta and other Suktas.

Dr. Gokak then called upon a group of 7 men students and 7 women students to recite the Purusha Sukta and they inaugurated the Convocation, by reciting that meaningful Vedic hymn in correct style, with never a deviation of accent and stress.

Then, 5 student winners in the Elocution Contests held every Sunday during the Camp were given the privilege of describing their impressions of the Camp. Sri Aswini Kumar Ashraf, a blind student from a Collage at Patna spoke feelingly about the Camp and its impact on him. "Physically handicapped as I am, it was only Baba's Grace that has brought me into His Presence from 1500 miles away," he said. "I am now leaving with a sense of immense purity in my heart; the eminent scholars who gave discourses have unravelled the mystery enshrined in our culture. Though I am a student of the philosophy Honours Class, III year, I knew very little of this; ten

years of intense study would not have given me the inspiration and instruction I received here in this month," he said. "Baba's Grace, shown when He came near me often when I was taking food took me from the surface level to the innermost depths of my being and filled me with ecstasy," he said. "I heard people say that the next Avatar of our Sai will be as Prema Sai. But, this Sai is not only Sathya Sai, He is Prema Sai too. I cannot believe that I have to leave His Loving Presence. I place my heart at His Feet; I shall take my body to Patna tomorrow," he asserted.

Kumari Sujatha Ray of West Bengal confessed that a sense of discipline, a spring of devotion and a desire for social service had come into the hearts of the participants in a spontaneous and surging manner. Sri Rajan Patel of the Sri Sathya Sai Arts and Science College, Brindavan, declared that the rain that fell from the skies was but a signal of sympathy from the Gods, for the tears that welled up from the eyes of them all at the very thought of separation from Baba. Kumari Jayasri Saraiya of West Bengal declared that she was conscious on arrival at Brindavan of great big gaps in her education received in West Bengal, which was the scene of frustration and futility in most fields of life. She said that the camp had restored her self-confidence, and, by its atmosphere of love and service, rebuilt her ideals and reinforced her courage and strength. Sri Srinivas of the Sathya Sai College followed, and in his short sweet speech, he was able to echo the sentiments of every one of the participants. "We came here a month ago, to this Sai Workshop as vintage cars, requiring repairs and overhaul. We are today, perfect in every part, eager to take to the road, fit and fine." He pined for the continuance of the Camp so that they could have the spiritually saturated atmosphere of Brindavan and the supremely delightful Presence of Baba amidst them. But, he said, "When God closes a door. He opens a window." "Baba has blessed us and declared that He will ever be with us," he said.

Prof. Hemant Kulkarni, from the United States, then read a Poem he had written about Baba, and offered it as his homage to Bhagavan. Dr. Gokak then read the names of the first five among the students who had passed the Tests that were held on the 18th June, on the lectures and discourses given during the Camp by the rare galaxy of scholars. The first two places were captured by Abhijit Ray and Jalani of the Sathya Sai Collage. The third, Sita Bhaskar, hailed from Maharashtra, the fourth, T. R. Nitya, came from a Kerala College and the fifth, D. Mukherjea was a student from West Bengal. They came up on the Dais and prostrated before Bhagavan. Bhagavan gave each of them a Prize that was a thing of beauty and a joy forever.

A welcome feature was introduced in this year's Summer Course: an oath administered to the participants and gladly affirmed by every one of them with tears of gratitude streaming down their cheeks.

While Principal Bhatnagar from Delhi read out the Affirmation, the participants, all standing, repeated the sentences after him. It read, "I solemnly resolve, in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai. Baba, that I shall be loyal to Truth, Righteousness, Peace, Love and Non-violence; and spend each day of my life in transfiguring my intellect, will, mind and heart in the supernal light of these powers. I shall consecrate my life to the service of the Divine, in the manifold increase of my consciousness and the evolution of a spiritualised humanity. My heart felt salutations at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan. AUM. Sahanavavathu, sahanau bhunakthu, saha veeryam karavavahai, tejasvinavadhheetamastu; ma vidvishavahai AUM Shanthih, shanthih, shanthih."

In His Divine Discourse, Bhagavan warned the "cars" (that had undergone repairs and become as good as new, with no fault and foible) not to get damaged by rushing along byelanes and crosscuts, but, to stick religiously to the royal road of Sathya Dharma Shanti Prema and Ahimsa. He said that the driver was the person most responsible for injuries to the cars and He promised amidst cheers of thanks giving that He would act as the driver of each one of the participant 'cars'! He exhorted the students to enshrine in their hearts the precious teachings they had garnered during the Course and to resolve to put at least a few of them into actual daily practice. "So live," He said, "that the glory of Bharat (about which He had spoken to them on fifteen evenings) could be revived and sustained." He also appealed to them to treasure the knowledge they had gained of "Brahmam", the Universal Absolute, (from His Discourses on the other fifteen evenings) and aim at realising Brahmam and experiencing the Bliss of that Realisation. He blessed the participants and assured them that He would ever be with them, as their inner motivator, guide and counsellor.

Baba then surprised every one with the singing of an English Bhajan Song, which thousands repeated in ecstatic joy. After a few more Bhajan Songs from Baba, and Aarati, General Cariappa secured Bhagavan's Permission to call for three lusty cheers for "Jai Sai Dharma" "Jai Bharat."

—Ed.

The Eldest of Them All

The agonising years of torment, hope, and disillusion were over; the moment of decision had come, though it was sought now, by the sharp edge of the sword and not the soft words of Lord Krishna. The armies gathered by the Kauravas from their kingdom and from their allies were standing face to face with the forces of their Pandava cousins. Cavalry, chariotry, elephantry and infantry, eager to start the destruction of the enemy, the chief Actors all accoutered and equipped for the fray, Conches were blown; trumpets rent the sky with their blare. The air was tense with hope, fear, anxiety and anger. Blood in million bodies became redder; hearts pounded quicker; arms grasped weapons in deadly grip.

Dharmaja, the eldest of the Pandava Brothers, suddenly, removed his footwear; he laid aside his armour; he slid from his chariot; he walked towards the opposing cohorts, towards Bhishma, the Generalissimo of the enemy forces. Duryodhana, the eldest of the Kaurava Brothers, the Cousin most responsible for the war, the unyielding opponent of the Pandavas, saw Dharmaja crossover to the aged Bhishma. He was overjoyed; he guessed that Dharmaja had decided on surrender, for, he was by nature against bloodshed and battles.

The four brothers of Dharmaja were astounded. Bhima, the redoubtable hero of a hundred contests with the Kauravas, the person most eager for the battle to begin, felt foiled of victory. He recalled the many occasions when Dharmaja had stood in the way of revengeful action against the Kauravas. He feared that he would apologise and withdraw like a craven from the bloody gamble of war. Arjuna, the formidable bowman, witnessed his brother's defection with horror and anger. Nakula and Sahadeva, the twins, were struck dumb at their own helplessness.

Lord Krishna studied the situation from the seat of the charioteer on the chariot of Arjuna, which was in the front line of the Pandava army. He signed to the four of them to follow their eldest brother and do likewise. He said, "All these years you have revered him, and trod on his foot-steps. Do so now. Do not hesitate; do not doubt."

Dharmaja was the very embodiment of Dharma; he knew the right and he practised it whatever the consequences. He knew that Dharma will guard those who follow Dharma. He never did a hypocritical or a non-Vedic act; he never took a wrong step. He went straight to Bishma and fell at his feet. Standing before him with folded hands and bowed head, he prayed, "Grandfather! We had no chance to experience the love of the father; he passed away too soon. You brought us up from infancy with love and care, and made us what we are today. We have no right to fight against you; but, fate has conspired to bring us now into battle with you. Please have mercy on us; permit us to raise our arms against you."

Bhishma was naturally charmed and overjoyed at the humility and righteousness of Dharmaja; his eyes were filled with tears at the strange turn that destiny had taken; he blessed him and said, "Dharmaja! You have stuck to Dharma, in spite of the temptations this situation has placed before you. What a noble example you have set before the world! This Dharma that you follow will itself give you victory."

Next, Dharmaja and the brothers moved towards General Drona, the Brahmin Preceptor, who had taught archery to both the Kauravas and their cousins, the Pandavas. Dharmaja fell at his feet too and prayed, "Highly revered Preceptor! We five are your pupils; how can we rightfully take up arms against our Preceptor? The times have indeed gone awry. Pardon us, for this wrong. Permit us to engage with you in battle." Drona, the Acharya, was visibly moved by this appeal. "Ah! How great and good, this Dharmaja is! Even at this moment when the hounds of war are to be let loose to spread death and fury, he is sticking to the dictates of Dharma!" Drona was thrilled at the thought. He clasped Dharmaja in his arms and said, "Son! You are dearer to me than Ashwatthama, for, I am drawn to him only by duty, whereas I am drawn to you by love. You are all sons, for, I love you as such. Your Right will certainly earn victory over our might."

It is this adherence to Dharma that ensured their victory. Or else, was there any one on earth at that time who could force the redoubtable Bhishma to lay down his arms? Could any one excel Drona in archery? The Kauravas, whom Bhishma and Drona sought to support were defeated because they trod the path of Adharma, while the Pandavas never deviated from the path of Dharma. Dharma gave them the skill, the strength, the courage, the tenacity to defeat these great masters of military strategy.

The Kauravas went counter to their parents and their God. Their mother, Gandhari, counselled her children in a thousand ways, not to continue their vendetta, against their cousins, the Pandavas. But, they did not heed her. Their father Dhritarashtra pleaded with them to desist from the path of hate; but, to no avail. They turned a deaf ear to the advice offered by their Preceptor, Drona, to make peace with the Pandava cousins and give them their legitimate share of the realm. When the Lord, Sri Krishna Himself, went to them as a messenger of peace, as an

Ambassador with the Mission of Peace, they refused to listen to His Divine Words; they attempted even to overpower Him and put Him into bonds!

If you follow the same line of willful blindness, you will have to meet the same fate—total destruction. The Five Pandava Brothers are, you should believe, worthy of your reverence and have to be regarded as your `five vital airs', `five sheaths', `five sense organs'. Have them as ideals to be followed; you can then win the Grace of God. The memory of their travail and triumph will act as a mantra to purify and strengthen you, and elevate you to the Divine status which is your heritage.

—*From a Discourse by Bhagavan at the Summer Camp, Brindavan*

The Poet

According to tradition only the Rishis who had intuitively cognised the hymns in praise of God and the Divine in Man were revered as Poets or Kavis. Of course, Rishis or sages were honoured as poets, and the appellation Rishi was not given to `poets'. Rishis could be called kavis, because, `kavi ' meant he who understood the past, realised the present and educated people for the future. Since the poet has a purified consciousness, he could pronounce impartial judgement on the past, he could, lay his finger on the ills and `wells' of the present and he could recommend the paths for progress in the future. People could place faith in their words and listen to their call. They would not mislead or misinterpret.

Poets of the genuine class are aware of the three periods of time, can roam in their imagination over the three worlds and be ever fixed in consciousness with the three Divine Entities of the Trinity. The Sastras, Puranas, Epics and other sacred texts of India have some abiding vitality and validity, only because their authors had such unquestioned authority to guide and interpret the Age in which they lived and composed their works.

Vyasa and Valmiki underwent a long process of asceticism and study, as well as actual experience of spiritual bliss and thus lifted themselves up to the heights of Rishi-hood, before they composed the epics and texts bearing their name. The question may be asked, "Why should they compose poetry, however exalted, after attaining Rishi-hood? What was the urge that prompted them?" The answer is: "They were overcome with compassion, for the fellow pilgrims struggling along the path they had traversed; they were full of agony at the plight of fellow beings who were sweltering in the heat of worldly entanglements." They desired to establish peace on earth and goodwill among mankind and they relied on the Saraswati they had propitiated to lead them in the task they had imposed on themselves.

Their attention was ever on the Vedic message, "Swayam theernah, paraan tharayathi."
"Themselves having crossed (the Sea of Samsara or Change) they help others to do likewise."

—*From Bhagavan's Discourse*

Who is Sai?

God is inscrutable. He cannot be realised in the outer objective world; He is in the very heart of every being. Gemstones have to be sought deep underground; they do not float in mid-air. Seek God in the depths of your self, not in the tantalising, kaleidoscopic Nature. The body is granted to you for this high purpose; but, you are now misusing it, like the person who cooked his daily food in the gem-studded gold vase that came into his hands as an heirloom.

Man extols God as omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent, but, he ignores His Presence in himself! Of course, many venture to describe the attributes of God and proclaim Him to be such and such; but, these are but their own guesses and the reflections of their own predilections and preferences.

Who can affirm that God is this or thus? Who can affirm that God is not of this form or with this attribute? Each one can acquire from the vast expanse of the ocean only as much as can be contained in the vessel he carries to its shore. From that quantity, they can grasp but little of that immensity.

Each religion defines God within the limits it demarcates and then claims to have grasped Him. Like the seven blind men who spoke of the elephant as a pillar, a fan a rope or a wall, because they contacted but a part and could not comprehend the entire animal, so too, religions speak of a part and assert that its vision is full and total.

Each religion forgets that God is all Forms and all Names, all attributes and all assertions. The Religion of Humanity is the sum and substance of all these partial faiths; for, there is only one Religion and that is the Religion of Love. The various limbs of the elephant that seemed separate and distinct to the eye-less seekers of its truth were all fostered and activated by one single stream of blood; the various religions and faiths that feel separate and distinct are all fostered by single stream of Love.

The optical sense cannot visualise the Truth. It gives only false and barren information. For example, there are many who observe my actions and start declaring that my nature is such and such. They are unable to gauge the sanctity, the majesty and the eternal reality that is Me. The power of Sai is limitless; It manifests for ever. All forms of 'power' are resident in this Sai palm.

But, those who profess to have understood Me, the scholars, the Yogis, the Pundits, the Jnanis, all of them are aware only of the least important the casual external manifestation of an infinitesimal part of that power, namely, the "miracles"! They have not desired to contact the Source of all Power and all Wisdom, that is available here at Brindavan, They are satisfied when they secure a chance to exhibit their book-learning and parade their scholarship in Vedic Lore, not realising that the Person from whom the Vedas emanated is in their midst, for their sake.

This has been the case, in all ages. People may be very near (physically) to the Avatar, but, they live out their lives unaware of their fortune, but exaggerating the role of miracles, which are as trivial when compared to My glory and majesty, as a mosquito is in size and strength to the ele-

phant upon which it squats. Therefore, when you speak about these `miracles', I laugh within myself out of pity, that you allow yourself so easily to lose the precious awareness of My reality.

My power is immeasurable; My truth is inexplicable, unfathomable. I am announcing this about Me, for, the need has arisen. But, what I am doing now is only the gift of a `Visiting Card'! Let Me tell you that emphatic declarations of the Truth by Avatars were made so clearly and so unmistakably only by Krishna. In spite of the declaration, you will notice in the career of the same Krishna that He underwent defeat in His efforts and endeavours, on a few occasions, though you must also note that those defeats too were part of the drama which He had planned and which He Himself directed.

When many Kings pleaded with Him to avert the War with the Kauravas, He confessed that His Mission to the Kaurava Court for ensuring peace had 'failed'! But, He had not willed that it should succeed. He had decided that the war would be waged. His Mission was intended to publish the greed and iniquity of the Kauravas and to condemn them before the whole world.

But, I must tell you, that during this Sai Avatar, there is no place for even such `drama' with scenes of failures and defeats! What I will, must take place; what I plan must succeed. I am Truth; and Truth has no need to hesitate, or fear, or bend.

`Willing' is superfluous for Me. For, My Grace is ever available to devotees who leave steady Love and Faith. Since I move among them, talking and singing, even intellectuals are unable to grasp My Truth, My Power, My Glory, or My real Task as Avatar. I can solve any problem however knotty. I am beyond the reach of the most intensive inquiry and the most meticulous measurement. Only those who have recognised My Love and experienced that Love can assert that they have glimpsed My Reality, for, the Path of Love is the Royal Road that leads mankind to Me.

Do not attempt to know Me through the external eyes. When you go to a temple and stand before the Image of God, you pray with closed eyes, don't you? Why? Because you feel that the Inner Eye of Wisdom alone can reveal Him to you. Therefore, do not crave from Me trivial material objects; but, crave for Me, and you would be rewarded. Not that you should not receive whatever objects I give as sign of Grace out of the fullness of Love. I shall tell you why I give these rings, talismans, rosaries etc. It is to mark the bond between Me and those to whom they are given. When calamity befalls them, the article comes to Me in a flash and returns in a flash taking from Me the remedial Grace of protection. That Grace is available to all who call on Me in any Name or Form, not merely to those who wear these gifts. Love is the bond that wins Grace.

Consider the meaning of the name, Sai Baba. Sa means `Divine'; *ai* or *ayi* means `mother' and *Baba* means Father. The Name indicates the Divine Mother and Father, just as Sambasiva, which also means the Divine Mother and Father (Sa-ambasiva). Your physical parents might cultivate Love with a dose of selfishness; but, this Sai "Mother and Father" showers affection or reprimands, only for leading you towards victory in the struggle for self-realisation.

For, this Sai has come in order to achieve the supreme task of uniting as one family the entire mankind, through the bond of brotherhood, of affirming and illumining the Atmic 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 into the Divinity which is his goal.

I am the embodiment of Love; Love is My Instrument. There is no creature without Love; the lowest loves itself, at least. And its *self* is God. So, there are no atheists, though some might dislike Him or refuse Him, as malarial patients dislike sweets or diabetic patients refuse to have anything to do with sweets! Those who preen themselves as atheists will one day, when their illness is gone, relish God and revere Him.

I had to tell you so much about My Truth, for, I desire that you should contemplate on this and derive joy therefrom, so that you may be inspired to observe the disciplines laid down and progress towards the Goal of Self-realisation, the Realisation of the Sai that shines in your hearts.

From Bhagavan's Discourse 19/6/74

God has in His hand the string of the kite which is man; sometimes, He may give it a pull, sometimes he may loosen the hold; but what ever He does, be confident and carefree, for it is He that holds the string. That faith ever present, that feeling hardening into a Samskara, will fill you with Prema-rasa.

—Baba

Baba Answers

Q: Baba! Please tell us, how you are attained. I find my Sadhana infructuous.

A: I know you are inflicting many austerities on yourself. I must tell you that I am attained only by devotion and by a way of life that is illumined by that devotion. Do not deprive the body of its elementary needs; it is a sacred instrument you have earned, for taking you to the goal. Lead simple Satwic life, eat simple Satwic food, be sincere in speech, do loving service, be humble and tolerant, maintain undisturbed equanimity. Direct all your thoughts towards me resident in your heart.

Q: How, Baba, how can we progress in devotion?

A: There are different modes of devotion—that which foolishly weeps for me when I am not physically present; that which surrenders to me with wild abandon; and that which is steady and strong, ever attached to my will. I accept all these forms of devotion. The choice between one or the other is not yours, for, it is I who rules your feelings, modifies them. If you try to go where I do not will, I stop you; you can do nothing apart from my will. Be assured of that; this is the highest devotion,

Q: So, what remains for me to do?

A: What makes you think that 'doing' is so important? Be equal-minded. Then you will not be bothered about 'doing' or 'not-doing', success or failure; the balance will remain unaffected by either. Let the wave of memory, the storm of desire, the fire of emotion pass through; without affecting your equanimity. Be a witness of these: Commitment engenders, holding, narrowing, limiting. Be willing to be nothing. Let all dualities subside in your neutrality.

Q: Yes, Baba. But, when it is pain that one has to endure...

A: Do you think that I would confront you with pain, were there not a reason for it? Open your heart to pain, as you do now for pleasure, for it is my will, wrought by me, for your good. Welcome it, as a challenge. Do not turn away from it. Turn within, and derive the strength to bear it and benefit by it. Do not listen to your mind; for, mind is but another word for 'need'. The mind engenders need; it manifested as this world, because it needed thus. It is all my plan: to drive you by the pangs of unfulfilled need to listen to my voice, which, when heard, dissolves the ego and the mind with it.

Q: Baba! I crave for your Darshan, ever. Tell me where you go to and when.

A: I want you to pass beyond these criteria, and wait in readiness, and yet, with uncertainty. Location is limitation; let events manifold themselves. Be willing to be led by me, as I choose.

Q: But, how can we rise up to those high expectations, being so full of defects?

A: Your deficiencies make you need me, and curb the arrogance of your mind. They are there on purpose, as instruments to prod you on. Through them, I am making you want me. The feeling of separation is just a trick of your mind. You form conclusions, they become beliefs, and they shape your activities and attitudes.

Q: It is hard, to undergo your tests.

A: It is like baking a cake. I stir, I knead, I pound, I twist, and I bake you. I drown you in tears; I scorch you in sobs. I make you sweet and crisp, an offering worthy of God. I have come to re-form you. My plan is to transmute you into a successful Sadhak. I won't leave you until I do that. Even if you stray away before you become that, I will hold on to you. You cannot escape from me.

Q: You are so compassionate.

A: There is nothing I do not see, nowhere where I do not know the way. My sufficiency is unconditional, independent of everything. I am the totality—all of it.

Q: How then can we aspire for your Grace?

A: I do not ask for perfect concentration or full renunciation. I ask only for your Love, Love that sees me and serves me, in all beings. I ask only that you turn to me, when your mind drags you into grief or pride or envy. Bring me the depths of your minds, no matter how grotesque, how cruelly ravaged by doubts or disappointments. I know how to treat them. I will not reject you. I am your mother. No matter where you go, I am there. I can work with you everywhere.

Q: I clamour for Darshan; but, you ask me to leave for my home across the seas.

A: Do you not see very great merit ignored, that I might respond to need? Merit is only one amongst the many ways that lead men to me. Want of merit is also one of the ways by which men are drawn by me to my presence. Those who think that I am this outer form need me far more than you do. Their faith is more than you do. Their faith is more insecure, and, often, not at all. Their confusion arises from the habit of their minds depending on external conditions, and drawing its sense of security from those external conditions.

Q: Baba! However inadequate, I ask just this boon: Make me your instrument.

A: All are my instruments. Perhaps you believe, that I choose; this one is good, that one is worse etc. No. Either will do, so far as I am concerned. Both will do. My will is the source of all that is and happens; it interpenetrates every thing and act; it includes everything. Finally let me tell you this: My will is that you should manifest my will in you and through you.

—*From the Notebook of a New Yorker*

But . . . Baba

Baba!
Blessed are they who have seen You
—the Formless in their own Form.
Blessed are they
who have touched Your Feet.
Blessed are they who have heard and drank
the nectar of your voice.
Blessed are they who have placed
their pain, distress, agony, anguish—
as offerings to you and got as gifts
joy and peace, thrill and ecstasy.

Blessed more, are those
to whom the mystery
of Divine Descent is revealed by you
who have faced and felt
the Supreme One, manushim thanum asritham

But, Baba, what is the fate
of millions upon millions
sceptics, agnostics, myopic, blind,
the timid and the weak,
who do not accept the Truth they are?
Will they be ever caught in the dream
they dare not waken from
Wilt thou not save them
From mahatho bhayath?

—*Dr. Haripada Chakraborti, MA., Ph.D.*

I'll Never Say!

(Blind Participant, Summer Camp, '74)

A happening strange,
a thought purifying change
has purged brain and mind!

My self-deluded thought
my evil-affected lot
has, of a sudden, refined
as I touched Baba's Feet
with warm thrill, so sweet
My days of cloud, drifted behind;

I have received Light
with Love and Might!

I'll never say,
I'll never say,
"I am blind."

—**Aswini Kumar Ashraf,**
III Year Phil. Hons, Patna

Happy Birthday

—*Erica Moore; Ojai, California, U.S.A.*

Not being a devotee of Sri Sathya Sai Baba of India, I wondered why almost eagerly I had accepted an invitation to help celebrate his birthday in Santa Barbara. I had never met him—that is, not in person.

No. Certainly not in person, I reflected, as I sat taking in the garlands falling in graceful loops over Sai Baba's pictures. Flowers were everywhere. Candles of different sizes and varying fragrances flickered in a light breeze. Whisps of grey from glowing incense wafted its pungent odor through the room filled with devotees.

My thoughts went back—was it really seven years ago—to the time when Indra Devi on one of her whirlwind visits arrived at our house, her tape recorder blaring at its loudest some kind of sing-song! Seeing my husband's dismay, she shut it off. Hardly able to contain herself, she excitedly asked us to sit and listen. We wondered what Indra would be telling us *this* time. She spoke of Sai Baba, an Avatar, whom she had recently visited in India...

Now in Santa Barbara I listened, having been interrupted in my thoughts by a devotee, one of many, as he told in a resonant voice of his experiences at Sai Baba's ashram: of miracles, of the crowds, and of his love.

Just as Indra had told us on that visit long ago, I recalled. She had then shown us a medal hanging from her neck which Sai Baba had materialized just by waving his hand in the air in a circular movement.

This materializing of medals, rosaries, little statues and rings, some rings with stones in which Sai Baba's image could be seen by the wearer, had left an uncomfortable feeling with me ever since.

"Anyone else who wants to share his experiences with us?" Helene Vreeland, our hostess asked. Impelled by an inner prompting I stood up. Walking slowly to the front, I wondered what I was going to say. Somewhat bewildered, I faced the devotees assembled to celebrate Sai Baba's birthday.

Could I really share my experience with them, an experience so different from the ones related?

Indra Devi came to my mind again, who in the intervening years had become one of Sai Baba's most vocal devotees in America.

So I began: "Indra Devi stopped at our house one day on her way to a lecture. Waving a big birthday card, she urged me to sign it quickly as it had to be mailed immediately if it were to reach Sai Baba on time. Taken by surprise, I signed.

A month or two later while meditating, I was startled when Sai Baba appeared to me. It was not difficult to recognize him from the photographs I had seen. In his hand I saw the big birthday card I had signed at Indra's urging. Smiling, he pointed to the line I had written and read, with a question in his eyes as well as in his voice,

"Many happy returns?"

"Oh, Swami. Happy returns *of the day only*, I meant, of course." I said, feeling embarrassed and foolish.

He laughed and was gone. Yet his laughter remained with me. Even now in this crowded room I can hear it.

There was a slight hush when I had finished—then clapping and laughter.

Driving home in the moonlit night, I couldn't shake the feeling that by having spoken openly of my experience, I had made a commitment of belonging to the group of devotees, I had just left; commitment long overdue and an acknowledgement that Sai Baba had touched my heart.

Suddenly, a surge of love and joy streamed through me and with it the realization of a new direction in my life which became a reality, when I was blessed *in meeting* Sai Baba at 'Brindavan' in person,

I had a 'happy return' as Sai Baba had indicated. His will prevails, ever.

Letter From Ethiopia

I returned from Addis Ababa recently after five weeks stay there. The Indian group there is small, compared to those in the other African countries, like Kenya and Nigeria. BABA has not so far visited Ethiopia but I was most pleasantly surprised to observe that not only Indians but also Africans are very much interested and enthusiastic in knowing about BABA and His teachings.

One day my husband and I were invited by one Pehoua family who hail from a Central African Republic, previously under French domination. After a while the topic of our discussion got around BABA, and the Pehouas got so much absorbed and interested in hearing the glories of BABA that they invited us to perform Bhajan in their house which we did in our humble way. The Pehouas belong to the Catholic faith. But the effect of the Bhajan on them and their subsequent experiences are something difficult to describe. They told me that BABA appeared before them in their dreams and blessed them with divine Vibhuti! In fact, Mr. Pehoua mentioned to me that when he went to Mogadishu (Somalia) on a short visit, BABA blessed him there also.

Similarly, an Armenian family of the Zoroastrian faith was blessed by BABA. The lady of the family was very much mentally disturbed because of the kidnapping of her son while in America. She was looking for mental solace. She now regularly performs Bhajans in her house in Addis Ababa and told me that BABA has provided her great relief.

The Pehouas and the Armenian family have not so far seen BABA except through dreams and it is not certain whether they will be lucky at all to be before Him physically. But their devotion has brought them very much near to BABA so much so that they feel His presence not infrequently.

This only reinforces our conviction that BABA showers blessings on His devotees, irrespective of religion and nationality. Devotion is the only requirement.

—*Sheuli Gupta*

Letter to Editor:

I was/am filled with joy at the thought of Baba and I am trying my best to understand his wisdom and follow his guidance. He has offered me so much of these already. About ten weeks ago, while meditating on Him; I felt His Presence; I heard Him bestow the spiritual name, Prema, on me.

I was not familiar with the word, except that I had seen it once in a book. I didn't know how to pronounce it or what it meant, until after I received it. I feel quite certain that I am not worthy of this gift; but, I also know that Baba knows what we need, more than we.

Cordelia, Levenworth, Washington, U.S.A.

Love is My Form

In the July No. of this Magazine, (P. 149,) it was reported that 'Baba surprised every one with the singing of an English Bhajan song, which thousands repeated in ecstatic joy', at the conclusion of the Convocation of the Summer Course on Indian Culture and Spirituality.

The following is the text of that song:

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!
Prema, Sathya, Ananda!
Dharma, Shanti, Ananda!
Shirdi Sai, Parthi Sai, Prema Sai,
Jai! Jai
Shirdi Baba, Parthi Baba, Prema Baba,
Jai! Jai!
Love is My Form, Truth is My Breath,
Bliss is My Food!

—ED.

Men are eager to get happiness and when there is a prospect of earning un-diminshable happiness, they jump at the idea, but, they are soon tired of the effort. They seek short cuts, lean on others to carry their weight, and aspire for much fruit in return for little cultivation. Rigorous discipline and steady faith are absolutely necessary to achieve success in the pursuit of spiritual Bliss, which is 'un-diminshable happiness'.

—Baba

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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Bharata's Contrition

On the sixth day of their stay, Bharata called together, after the finish of the morning rites of bath and devotional ceremonies like the worship of the Dawn, his brother Shatrughna and his own aides and followers. He watched Rama for a favourable moment to accost him, and when he found one, he rose suddenly from his seat and mustered sufficient courage to lay himself prostrate at his feet.

Standing in front of him with his palms folded, Bharata prayed thus: O Mark of auspiciousness on the brow of the Royal Ikshvaku Line! You have fulfilled my desires do every way. On my account, you have determined to suffer miseries of all kinds. You are undergoing all types of troubles for my sake. Lord! I am awaiting your commands. For fourteen years, I shall be awaiting your return and serving you in the kingdom. Show me the path, by which I can feast my eyes on your Lotus Feet when the period of exile ends. Teach me the courage I need to survive these fourteen years of separation from you. Rama! Your subjects, their families, the people residing in the vast empire, the Brahmins, the Pundits—all are spiritually earnest; they are bound to you by feelings of reverential devotion. They are bearing the pangs of misery in the world, buoyed up by the love you bear unto them.

I care not even for the highest attainment of self-realisation, if, to attain it I am separated from you. You are aware of the inner feelings of your servants; you know their deepest desires. You can guide me and lead me into the goal, here and hereafter. This conviction is the sustenance and

strength on which I exist. On account of this conviction, I treat all this agony as just shrivelled blades of dry grass.

Till now, I elaborated before you my sorrows as if they were burdening my head. That was a failing on my part; do not hesitate to reprimand me for this fault."

Hearing this, the gathering hailed his statements and expressed their appreciation. As the Hamsa, the Celestial Swan is able to separate the milk from the water which is mixed with it and drink just the milk, so, they said, Bharata had separated the Truth from untruth and given expression to the Truth alone.

Rama's Counsel

Rama, all-compassionate towards the distressed, listened to these words poured out of the pure heart of his brother, Bharata, replied to him thus, in conformity with the place, the time and the circumstance: Brother! For you who reside in the home for us who reside in the forest, there is the One who fosters and fends all to foster and fend. You have, in a worldly practical sense, the Preceptor Vasishta, and the Emperor Janaka as guardians and guides.

No trouble can bother either you or me, even in our dreams; no, it can never happen. The highest duty for us is to carry out strictly the commands of our father; that alone can confer on us all the good we long for; that alone can enable us to earn lasting renown. That path is the one approved by the Vedas. The Vedas declare that, whoever reveres the commands of the preceptor, the father and the mother, and walks on the right path theirs is the noble example for

Be aware of this truth; throw away the shroud of grief; take up the burden of empire; rule over it for fourteen years with justice and rectitude as your ideals. The King is the face of the State. For, the face ears and drinks and thus strengthens and activates all the limbs of the body. The King feeds and sustains every section of his people. The mind encloses within itself all likes and dislikes; so too, the King is the repository of all moves and movements in the political field."

Rama expounded many a useful doctrine of state politics to Bharata. But, Bharata was too much agitated to earn mental peace as a result of Rama's advice. The mothers, teachers, and ministers stood benumbed, for, they too were overcome by the imminence of the moment of parting.

The Sacred Sandals

Suddenly, Rama in his infinite Grace loosened his sandals and gave them to Bharata. And, Bharata reverentially accepted them in his palms and placed them on his head. Tears streamed from his eyes, as the twin rivers, the Ganga and the Yamuna.

Bharata could not express his joy in words. These are not the `sandals' worn by the Ocean of Mercy! These are the guardians of the lives and prosperity of all mankind. These are the chests enclosing the precious treasure of Bharata's brotherly love. They are the protecting doors of the fort which enshrines the royal fame of the Raghu clan. They are the two hands that are ever engaged in good deeds. These are the veritable eyes of the Universe. These are the symbols of Sita and Rama who are coming with us as these two.

Bharata extolled the `sandals' thus wise and danced around them in sheer joy and thankfulness. All present fell at the feet of Rama and acknowledged the sublimity of Rama's Grace.

Leave-Taking

Bharata prostrated before Rama and prayed that he might grant him permission to leave. Rama appreciated the spirit of contentment with which he welcomed the `sandals'; he drew Bharata near and embraced him fast and firm with great affection and delight. Shatrughna also fell at Rama's feet; Rama embraced him too with great affection and he communicated to him also many a directive for ruling the kingdom and carrying out the duties that are devolving on him. Consider Bharata as Rama himself, he told him. Be his support and counsel, and help him to establish peace and prosperity in the Empire."

Then, Bharata and Shatrughna embraced Lakshmana in fraternal love saying, "Brother! Your luck is indeed great. Yours is the best of luck. In all the worlds there is none so fortunate as you." They praised Lakshmana to their hearts content and took permission from him to depart. Lakshmana too called them near, and told them that the `sandals of Rama are the springs of all varieties of auspiciousness and so, you, who have won that gift, are indeed more fortunate than any. He advised them to act worthy of the gift and ensure the same Grace of Rama forever. That is your` duty now, he reminded them.

Later, the brothers proceeded to where Sita was and fell at her feet. At sight of her, they could not contain their grief; they burst into sobs. He consoled them softly and sweetly in various ways. Is there naught else than the armour of Rama that can protect any one in the world? You are indeed blessed. The fourteen years will roll by as swift as fourteen seconds, and the empire will smile in plenty and peace with the return of Rama. Carry on the administration with patience and devotion; don't deviate a little from the guidelines he has marked out. By this rigorous obedience, you will be able to secure the fruits of your desire

Janaka Blesses

Then, the brothers, Bharata and Shatrughna went straight to Emperor Janaka and fell at his feet in exemplary reverence, and said, "Lord! You have such compassion on us that you came to Ayodhya, when you heard about the death of our father and of the exile of Rama into the forest, You observed our plight with your own eyes and comforted us during those critical days. You gave us appropriate advice to resuscitate ourselves. In order to fulfill your inner desire, you subjected yourselves to all this strain and trouble, coming over here into this jungle. You have shared with us our grief and contributed your valuable part in the pleading we made to Rama to persuade him to return. When those pleading failed, you consoled us and taught us to bear the disappointment and distress, and enriched us with your blessings. We offer our reverential gratitude. What more can we say or do? Your blessings are the most effective re-inforcements we require." Janaka listened to these words uttered so sincerely and so thankfully by the two brothers. He appreciated their reactions and feelings, their character and conduct; he drew them near to himself and he lovingly caressed their hair and stroked their heads.

He said, "Sons! May you walk along the path laid down by Rama and. you thereby win his Grace. I am proceeding to Mithila straight from here" Very soon, Janaka moved along the direction to Mithila with his Queen, and aides and ministers.

The ministers, feudatory rulers, Brahmins sages, ascetics, and others who had come with the brothers, went one after another towards Rama, Lakshmana and Sita, and falling at their feet, they took leave of them and turned their faces homeward, their hearts heavy with a sense of gloom. Sita, Rama and Lakshmana went to where the mothers were and prostrated before them. They consoled them, saying, "Do not worry in the least. Be engaged in the correct performance of your duties and responsibilities. Have before you ever the wishes and ideals that father has laid before us." As for themselves, they said they would be spending happily and peacefully the period of fourteen years as a quick span of fourteen seconds, and returning joyfully to Ayodhya. These words restored the spirits of the queens.

Kaikeyi

They fell at the feet of Kaikeyi and told her that she had not an iota of responsibility for the exile of Rama into the forest and that she was ever deserving their reverence and worship.

She has never intended any harm, they said. They assured that they would ever pray for her; they pleaded with her that she should not have the least worry over them in the forest. They gave her a great deal of courage to bear her burden of repentance, "Bharata had spoken rashly and impertinently, in a fit of senseless fury, when he was suddenly confronted with the two calamities: the death of his father and the exile of his brother. He flew into a passion, or his blood boiled at the person he imagined, was responsible for these events. He did not even care for the fact that you were his mother!" Rama, Sita and Lakshmana prayed that she should not blame Bharata for that incident; they begged her to pardon Bharata for the indiscretion.

While Rama was speaking thus, Kaikeyi was downcast with shame at the memory of her iniquity. She could not look Rama in the face. She felt within herself, "Alas, That I should be the cause of inflicting so much misery and suffering on this son endowed with a heart of compassion and mind full of virtues, a person who is unalloyed gold, nothing less. Am I not the reason for him to spend his years in this terrifying jungle? O, What a devilish deed did I perpetrate? But, did I do it on my own? Or, was it Rama that willed the turn of events through my instrumentation? Whatever the truth, I cannot escape; I have committed the gravest sin."

Kaikeyi was overcome with sorrow over the irrevocable past; she held both hands of Sita in her grasp and petitioned for pardon. Soon, she added, "No. No. It is not just that you should pardon a sinner who brought about such unbearable travail on such a pure and tender woman." She continued to lament her misfortune for long. Every one who had come from Ayodhya took leave of Sita, Rama and Lakshmana as and when they could get the chance. Afterwards, they ascended their chariots in due order,

Sita, Rama and Lakshmana approached each chariot before it left and consoled and comforted each occupant and persuaded them to leave. Sita, Rama and Lakshmana fell at the feet of the Preceptor, Vasishtha and apologised to him, saying that they had caused him and his consort a lot of trouble in the forest on account of unavoidable difficulties. They expressed sorrow that they could not serve them as well as they wished to, and as their duty demanded. They asked permission to stay back.

The Preceptor

Vasishta was of course a Brahmajñani and a Maharshi; so, he could know the inner feelings of Sita and others. He appreciated the devotion and humility of the brothers and Sita, and their strict adherence to the path of Dharma. Vasishta and his consort could not leave the presence of Rama, for, they were so attached to the virtues he embodied. The picture of those three standing by the side of the jungle track with folded palms, bidding adieu to each passing chariot and the people inside, melted the most adamant heart. Vasishta and his consort, Arundhati were very much moved at the sight of their large-hearted sympathy.

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness

(To be continued)

Let the song go round the earth—
Sathya Sai is Lord!
Sound His Praises, tell His worth,
Be His name adored;
Every clime and every tongue
Join the grand, the glorious song,
Sing the praises of His Love,
Sathya Sai is Lord.

Sai Spoke Thus

"One who accommodates Hari in his heart goes beyond the cycle of births and deaths"

1. Take up the name of the God that appeals to you and the Form appropriate to that name and start repeating it. That is the royal road to ensure Joy and Peace.
2. Sages and saints are never tired of singing the glories of the Name. Sing the Name and get the mind inebriated with its sweetness. You will find your whole body is permeated with a strange ecstasy in which your ego-sense and low desire disappear completely and you are thoroughly purified. If you continue doing this practice you will be established in that sublime state. Therefore keep the name constantly on your lips while walking, sitting etc. Gradually you will find the Name taking possession of you and your mind refuses to wander here and there. Contact of the Name is contact of the God, because Name and God are not different, Name is God and God in Name.
3. The moment you take God's Name, Krishna, Rama etc. all the qualities pertaining to that Name must stand before you, just as the name of your child or parent is uttered, that person with all the attributes, peculiarities at once stands before your eyes. You may say, that because the parents are seen no sooner the names are uttered all the qualities of the parents you are able to

recollect, but since Rama and Krishna are not seen you are not able to recollect anything about them. You know names are given according to the qualities of the object. If, when the word sugar is uttered the qualities of sweetness stand before you—that is the remembrance of sugar.

4. Once you take the name of the Lord which is sweetness itself, it will awaken all the sweetness latent in you. When you have tasted the Joy, you can never for a moment exist without that sustenance. In the surge of emotions and thoughts that will invade you at the last moment, the Name of God will be submerged unless you learn from now on, to bring that Name to the top of the consciousness, whenever you want it.

Once there was a shopkeeper who was inspired by that tale of Ajamila. He decided to remember the Name with the last breath by a short cut. He named his sons after the various Avatars, for he knew he was bound to call on any one of them when he was about to die. The moment came at last and according to programme he called on all his sons by name one by one. There were six of them and so he called on the Lord by proxy six times in all. The boys came and stood around his bed and as he surveyed them a thought came to the dying man's mind just when he was about to quit. "Alas! They have all come away; who will look after the shop now?" You see, his shop was his very breath all through life, and he could not switch it on to God at short notice. It is no mean achievement to get the name of the Lord on one's tongue at the last moment. It needs the practice of many years based on a deep-seated faith. The thought of God cannot survive in a climate of pride and greed. So it is best to be ready with the Name tripping on the tongue and the glory always radiant to the mind.

5. By constant, sincere and continuous Namasmarana and unshakable faith, an attitude of complete self-surrender develops. Therefore take up the Name and dwell upon Its sweetness. Imbibe It and roll It on your tongue, taste Its essence and contemplate on Its Magnificence and make It a part of yourself and grow in spiritual Joy.

6. Namasmarana slowly changes character and modifies conduct, mellows you and takes you nearer the Goal. There are two ways of doing this, with a Japamala, turning the beads automatically or repeating the Name, irrespective of the time, dwelling on the Form and on the Divine Attributes connected by It, tasting It, revelling in It and relishing Its sweetness.

7. The more you repeat His name, the more you become conscious of Him within you. The dark forces are conquered and the mind becomes still, pure and transparent. Ignorance is disease and realisation is health. We must cure ourselves of the ignorance by taking the proper remedy and the remedy is the God's name. Let us always keep it on our tongue. It will purify us through and through. It will grant us knowledge of the Divine and fill us with Bliss and Joy.

8. For the Bird in mid-ocean flying over the deep blue waters the only resting place is the mast of the ship, that sails across. So too, the Lord is the only refuge for man who is swept by the storms over a restless sea of birth and death. How far the bird might fly, it knows where it can rest. That knowledge gives it confidence. It has the picture of the mast steady in its mind, its form is fixed in the eye. The Name of the Lord is the mast. Associate it with the Form and have that Form fixed in the mind's eye. It is a lamp shedding light in the inner recesses of the heart. Have the

Name on the tongue and it drives away the darkness—both inner and outer. Peace—within is established—that is the sign of a person engaged in Namajapam.

9. To evoke the Divine in you, there is no better method than Namasmarana—Smarana that can be done along with all other activities of living. It is the inner purity that matters, not the outer movements of the lips. Smarana being an inner activity helping the inner transformation.

Repeat the Name. In course of time it will put down the distractions of the mind. The mind gets concentrated. Then you release the hidden power which subdues thoughts and controls actions. The mind gets attuned to the Divine Name and experiences ecstasy. Name and Form are not different. They are one and the same. The Name itself is Brahman. Brahman has no Name or Form. You give it a Name and Form. You give It a Name and utter the Name. By that you become one with Brahman,

10. Constant remembrance of God by repetition of its Name is itself meditation. Meditation stills the wandering mind. When the mind becomes still the veil between you and the Reality is removed, and you know that you are the Reality. Continuous remembrance is possible only when your devotion is intense. Repeat the Name, constantly, it will take hold of you and at a certain stage it will possess you. There you cannot forget the Name even if you try to. The body will become divine. All this is achieved by the "Little Name" Ram. It is no more the ordinary human body. This becomes a holy body. The place on which he treads becomes sanctified.

11. You may repeat the Name in anyway you like, but you must love the Name. The Name should be extolled and glorified. The Name has infinite power to raise you from the human to the divine plane.

12. If you want to be really happy, identify yourself with the Atma and dissociate yourself from the world. How to do it? The mind does not agree to detach itself from the world. Even when you sit silent by yourself see how much opposition it offers. And Ram-Nam makes it possible.

13. In repeating the Name you are really repeating the Name of your own immortal self—i.e. Atma-Ram.

You do not know that you are Ram. So you must ceaselessly remember Him until you are awakened to the consciousness that you are Ram yourself. Know that you are taking your own name. Ram is a synonym for Atman or self. By constantly remembering, gradually the body consciousness leaves you and you attain Jnana which is knowledge of the self.

—ED.

We plough the fields and scatter
The good seed on the land;
But it is fed and watered
By God's Almighty Hand:
He sends the snow in winter,
The warmth to swell the grain

The breezes and the sunshine,
And soft, refreshing rain.
All good gifts around us
Are sent from heaven above;
Then thank the Lord, Oh, thank the Lord,
Far all His blessed Love.

Students!

During the last thirty days, you have been listening to expositions of the meaning and significance of Vedic Words, like Brahman, Prajapati, Vachaspati, Saraswati, and Bṛhaspati; you have also been told the real significance of the name Bharat that this country bears. It is necessary that you should recognise, even when you are students, that the Vedas are the basis of the culture of this country, the guides for material as well as spiritual progress. When you understand the hymns, the dedicatory verses, the ritual directives, and the invocatory formulae contained in the Vedas, life would be rendered brave, peace-filled and secure against the winds of fortune, both fair and foul. It is natural for every being to seek happiness. Yet, each being must know that happiness does not emanate from the material things of the objective world.

You are students and so, I must tell you that any type of education that does not confer on you the abiding happiness of the heart, the unshakeable sense of equanimity, the awareness of the Divinity behind every particle in the Universe, is not entitled to that name. Education must implant elevating ideals, and kindle the lamp of wisdom. Nowadays, education is aimed at providing a living; it is a bread-and-butter trade. But, do we not have millions who have not gone through this mill, wasting money and precious time in the process, earning a living and enjoying peace and joy therein?

Though they have not gone through school and college, they have had the more valuable schooling in the University of Life. Any system of education that does not help you to discriminate between right and wrong, instill the fear of sin and the love of God, train you in the codes of humility and reverence; widen the horizon of your wonder, encourage you to worshipfully serve your parents, and inspire you to dedicate your skill and attainments to the progress of your family, village, community, country, language and nation stands condemned. The corruption and cruelty that are rampant in the country can be traced to this one defect. Selfish greed, pomp and injustice are prevalent in every field. The nation has no peace and the sense of security is feeble. As science develops and technology advances, humility and mutual love should also develop. Or else, man becomes a menace to man. Human sensitivity must be so high that no one can tolerate the misery of others. But, when one is not moved by the misery of even one's own parents how can this trait be cultivated?

Students! You are pure in heart. Do not slide down into such depths. Bring to mind the Glory of Indian Culture. Do not crave for the trivial pleasure of the senses; do not condemn yourselves as lazy lubbers; be active, earnest; bear with all trouble and disappointment; strive on and march towards success. Or else, the nation will weaken and decline.

You are a pin or bolt or nut or wheel in the huge machine called the Cosmos. If the pin is not in perfect shape, the entire machine will be hampered. Do not get disheartened and disabled; you are thereby injuring the welfare of the whole world. Remember that Indian Culture is built on the faith: Soham. 'I am that', the undefeatable, majestic, mighty That. It is not built on the Somari Principle (the principle of laziness). True rest is ensured only by hard work. Sleep is the reward for hard physical labour. And, if sleep does not switch off the mind of man for some hours every day, he would spin out all sorts of wild fancies. Young people that you are, work hard; serve the interests of your family and country, and be examples to others. Imagine how your forefathers during the Vedic Age engaged themselves with no respite, in good deeds and beneficial acts, so that they could be happy and make others happy. The descendants of those men have devised a system of education which does not ensure even a decent daily life.

Education was then called, Swadhyaya (Swa—own's own; adhyayana—study). Study for one's own best progress, (that is, spiritual progress) which gives peace and joy immeasurable. Today, this type of progress has become a matter of ridicule; the run is all behind fame, sudden fortune and power over fellow-beings and their fates. The Vedavids, men learned in the Vedas had but one ideal—the discovery of the I which they knew they were.

The Vedavids marked three stages in the life of man and assigned one aspect of God to preside over each stage. The first—where man is deep in activity of some sort or other in Karma—is presided over by Vasu. The second, under the protection of Rudra, is filled with reverential worship of the God in all, discovered through the impact of Love. The third is the stage of Jnana, the Supreme Wisdom, presided over by the source of Illumination, Aditya or the Sun.

This is the genuine Bharatiya Vision, to transform life into a Pilgrimage towards the God resident in oneself, a steady march, along the strait path to bliss. There is no such steadiness now. Fancy and fantasy rule the mind of man. You desire one thing in the morning; at noon, you change over to something else. That desire will not persist until eve. If your desire is fulfilled, you praise God and parade your devotion. But, if it does not prevail, you throw God overboard, and parade your unbelief!

I am reminded of a story in this connection: A clever villager used to enter the village temple in the early hours of the day, and sit on, with eye closed, in the hope that people will honour him as a great devotee. Since he did not get up and go about his business until about mid-noon, the temple priest was hard put, to close the doors and go home for his daily tasks there. So he struck upon a plan to stop the nuisance. He knew that the closed-eye session of Dhyana was just a pretence. He hid himself behind the Idol of the Deity, and when the villager was well set in his pretence of deep meditation, he said, in an imposing sonorous voice, "Listen! Excellent Devotee! I am mightily pleased by your asceticism and your steadfastness. Come. I shall merge you into Myself." At this, the fellow ran out from the temple, leaving no trace of where he had gone to!

The devotion and sense of surrender of men are similar to those of this impostor. Faith is weak, discipline is absent; earnest is lacking. Do not forget or ignore God; do not be misled into attachment for the world; do not dread death; be happy with whatever you have and hold, when you have them and hold them.

Live ever in the remembrance of the Name of God. I wonder how you would follow this advice! For, I know you are reluctant even to repeat the Name a hundred times a day or twenty five or at least ten times. You wag and waste your breath for hours together, but, when it comes to the pronunciation of the Name of God, you have neither the time nor the inclination.

There was a son who was instructed by his aged father to repeat the sacred Gayatri exactly 108 times a day. The fellow promised to do so but, he simplified the task by reciting it only once, and then, saying ditto, ditto, 107 times! The same boy secured a scholarship to study in America. The father took him to a temple near the airport from where he was to board the plane, and made him swear before the idol of Devi that he would adhere to Indian culture and tradition while abroad. But, he returned quite lost to all the values cherished in that culture and tradition. The astounded father took him to the same temple, and when the son stood before the Goddess, he accosted Her, "How do you do, mummy?" and moved forward to shake hands with Her. The father was so shocked at his impurity that he dealt two severe blows on the cheek of his son.

Fathers today do not treat their sons so; they appreciate outlandishness, brazenry, vices, and foppery. In fact, they are even worse, as examples. The parents and the teachers have to learn and practise the values of Indian culture. When the tank is full, the taps will yield water. But, when the tank is dry, how shall the thirsty quench their pang? Parents and teachers can earn My Grace only by becoming good and worthy examples to their sons, and daughters or their wards and students. You claim to have devotion to Me; but, you must examine and discover whether I am pleased with you. You must examine yourselves every moment whether you are observing the disciplines I have laid down, the programmes of service I have marked out. That is the way to earn my Love. Love others and serve them; then, you can win My Love.

—*Baba: Discourse: Summer Course; 17/6/74*

The Language of Love

Anticipating the rains at the appropriate time of the year, as dictated by previous experience of himself and his fore-fathers, the ryot prepares the field with plough and harrow; then, when the rains come and soak the furrows, he sows the seeds, so that they may sprout and shoot through the coil. If he delays or desists, how can he reap the harvest? Or, if, when the crop is ready for the sickle, he does not reap the sheaves and bundles them home, how can his granary be filled with the food he needs must have?

The rain is the gift of God; man can only pray for it, and please God by righteousness. The ploughing, the sowing, the weeding and the reaping are the Sadhanas man must undertake to deserve the Grace and to get the strength to thank God for His Gifts.

Without God, life is like a school without a teacher; it is a wire with no current passing through it; it is a body with no soul. God is in us, around us and beyond us; as the air is imperceptible in the absence of breezes or of things that it moves; so God too can be known only by His

manifestation in man and beast, plant and bird, in things and beings all around us. No one yet knows the mystery of the electric current, why it behaves so, what is the exact nature of its origin and flow; but, yet, it is manipulated into a thousand uses and it is manifesting through a thousand appliances and instruments.

So too, God is present everywhere; but, we can understand only that part of Him that manifests before our cognition. Ordinary people will swear that the earth does not move at all; it is held forth in poetry as a symbol of stability. But, it has two motions, both unbelievably fast! It rotates on its own axis at a speed which exceeds thousand miles per hour; even while rotating so, the earth moves round the Sun at an astonishing rate of speed! But, do we notice it while it happens?

God too is a reality, ever present in us and in every being; but, we miss Him, as we miss the movement of the earth. We have to infer God through proofs and evidences of His Providence, His Grace, His Majesty and His Glory, just as we infer the movements of the earth, the moon and the stars, by watching the sky, the seasons, and the precise procession of day and night.

We cannot describe God in the vocabulary learnt upon the limited earth. We have to experience the Bliss of realising Him as the core of our being. Man is endowed with a sense of wonder and awe, the sense which makes him, either a participant (Karma Yoga), an inquirer into the mystery (Jnana Yoga) or a devout adorer (Bhakti Yoga). When he suppresses or ignores or by-passes this sense of wonder, he gets involved in the physical world, physical needs and physical pursuits. He starts worshipping Mammon and he strays away from the good, the just and the beautiful. He barter the Chalice of Bliss for a handful of dust.

Since we have today a few poets reading their poems before us, I am tempted to tell them something about their art. The poets of today are in the forefront of those who regard God as dead, a decorative piece, if not an encumbrance or a nuisance. They cater sweet, coated with fashionable slogans and catchy phrases. They never care for the higher values of life, or the lasting ideals for living. Their poetry deals with external objects, sensuous emotions, and trivial tinsel. It is all so shallow and so sapless.

Real poetry emanates from the call of the Divine within, to express Itself in sublime vocabulary. It grants lasting joy to the poet as well as the reader. It does not lower one's estimate of the world and its Creator. Readers must be drawn more often to read the poem, and each time they browse on it and ruminate over its lines, new vistas of meaning must open before their minds. Then only can the poem be for all time and for all men.

Poets discover God first and then, they disseminate their ecstasy among those that are thirsty for that bliss. And, who has not got that thirst deep within himself? Every one is an exile, pining for his home in God. The pilgrimage towards God can be made smooth, quick and safe, by the right type of poets. A blind person or a lame person cannot cross a river at the ford, all by himself. The lame man can ride on the shoulders of the blind man and lead him across, safe. For, he has the eye and the other has the purposefulness and the strength. The poet has the eye full of experience; he knows the path; he can avoid the pitfalls and help others to do likewise. He can encourage, enthuse.

In the same manner, a person cannot, by himself, acquire the Jnana or discover the path to realise the soul within him; the poet is the guru for such earnest Sadhakas. He must be aware of this high role, as the Rishis of old were aware; he must train himself for this high status. When I speak to you, I do not pause to examine whether I am following the rules of grammar; the words pour from the heart, full of Prema. The heart renders all words sweet and soft. Sweet words and sweet manners lead to sweet actions and sweet reactions.

Fill the heart with love; then, the words coming out of the heart will be full of vitality and power. There is no Shakti more effective than Prema, or Love. The grammar of Love makes the words enter the hearts of the listeners and moves them into acceptance, appreciation and action.

A child's prattle has no grammar, but, it wins the love of the mother. Ramakrishna Paramahansa did not know the word 'pension'; he said 'pence' once, instead of pension. Swami Vivekananda interposed with the correct word; but, the Paramahansa said that the word did not matter, it was enough if what was meant to be communicated was understood. The Bhava (the idea intended to be communicated) is the real thing; the bhasha (language in which it is clothed) is of superficial interest only. I want you to imbibe the Bhava; I want the poets to inculcate pure Bhava, not pretty bhasha.

If you understand the Bhava which I am transmitting, then you can become genuine devotees and Sadhakas, and progress on the path of self-realisation. Now, there are Bhaktas by the million! They are increasing daily in number. And you might have noticed, Sai Babas too have become very large in number; also, people claiming association with Me, claiming that I have blessed them more plentifully than others, and authorised them to go about among the Bhaktas and gain importance or funds or donations!

Real devotees will never announce such absurd claims or listen to such claims made by others. A true devotee will be steadfast in faith, whatever the ups and downs of worldly fortune. He prays to the Lord not for padartham (things, material objects or the fulfillment of worldly desires), but, for Param-artham, the happiness that is supra worldly. The Pandavas were such devotees and so, Krishna declared that He dwells in the heart of every one of those five brothers, as well as of their Queen, Draupadi. They are all five examples for mankind, in this Kali Era. I exhort every one to cultivate Prema, for, I am Prema, and when you manifest Prema, you are only expressing Me, the Indweller of your Heart.

Discourse at Sivam, 1974

Chain letters:

Chain letters which hold out threats or lures are started by fools and continued by the weak-minded. We have announced often that such letters bearing the Name of Baba are to be totally ignored; Divine Grace cannot be won by posting copies to a number of addresses; it cannot be lost if one fails to do so. We are surprised that readers send us the letters they receive and inquire whether they have to respond. The only response the letters deserve is—tear them off and advise others to do likewise.

—ED.

To The Mothers

Many of you sit in Dhyana and after some time start complaining, "O Why is it I am not able to concentrate? Bhagavan! Help me to fix my mind on you!" Do not get impatient and begin to bewail. Feel rather that you must make the mind pure and clean, so that God Himself will be tempted to possess it. He is the chora (thief) of the heart. When thieves enter the house, they select things of value; they will not bother about firewood or charcoal bags! God too when He comes in the role of a thief, looks for the most precious thing, the thing He values most, the thing you have taken most pains to foster. He carries away the pure thoughts, the deeds soaked in the sweetness of sympathy and compassion, the feelings of Love that do not crave requite. God is no ordinary thief!

This thief makes people richer by His theft! Richer in happiness, serenity and self-esteem. This thief becomes the more loved, the more He steals! He wakes up the sleeping and then steals what the household has kept for Him. Many times, the people pretend sleep so that He may come and steal the things they have kept for that very purpose. He calls out: Tasmāt Jagratha Jagratha! Therefore, wake up, wake up; and, then, He carries away the treasure He seeks and finds.

You have that treasure in you; but, you do not know of it; hence, you do not keep it ready for Him. You feel you have nothing to give Him, and that you are poor and downtrodden. Once you offer the heart to God there is no more need to wail or want.

Those of you who are not affluent, have to borrow some vessels for cooking the marriage feast from some rich neighbour or acquaintance. Or, you may hire them from some Institutions which keep such big vessels for helping others. The code of conduct, whether you borrow or hire, is: clean the vessels before returning them; they have to be given back, just as they were brought from the owner. Cook in them; then, cleanse them before you restore them intact to the person who lent them.

The Immortal Beings, who have assigned for themselves this role, this venture of celebrating a 'life-time on earth', have as it were, borrowed BODY and HEART from God! —The Supreme Giver, in a clean condition. When finally you give it back, see that they are as clean and pure as when He gave them. That is the code of conduct; or else, He will not accept them!

Even experienced teachers nowadays delight in the mere injection into the brains of the children under their care the components of the textbooks! For, they endeavour only to push them through the 'examinations'; so, it is just a question of guessing correctly the questions that might appear in the paper and mugging up the answers for just those! Once the boys and girls have written the things with which their heads have been stuffed, they return home, with heads emptied and hollow. What you teach must, however, be imprinted on the heart, not stacked in the brain. That will mould their character and make them useful for themselves and society.

Take the example of Dhruva. His stepmother told him that he can win the favour of the King, his father, only through God's Grace, which he has to win through penance! So, the five-year-old boy went into the forest and practised austerities that were unparalleled in history! As a result of

the penance, his desire was so sublimated that, in the end, he declared, "I do not care for royal favour, or even the worldly throne! I shall attain the Kingdom of God; I shall sit in the lap of God" Thus, he rejected the lordship over humans and preferred the joy of being a child of God, with God.

In the tender hearts of the children, there is much potentiality of devotion and attachment to higher ideals and objectives; this can be developed and cultivated, by you. Do not think that they do not know anything; that you can divert them any way you wish; this is a mistake. Recognise the great potentials of the child; adopt such methods as the child himself might suggest or indicate. Help the child to reach Godliness and become aware of its high destiny. Do not presume that the child is some inferior personality or that it is incapable of attaining the heights.

The parents themselves are not competent to guide the children; they have reprehensible habits and ways of life, They smoke, play cards, gamble, drink, and fight in the home; they utter falsehoods, talk scandal, boast and slander, in the full knowledge of the children. How then can they lead their children on right lines? You will have to persuade such parents to mend their ways and be inspiring examples, rather than enemies and obstacles.

But, before you advise the parents see that you have no defect to which they can point their fingers! Learn the right to advise before you venture on the mission. First, set right your own homes; see that atmosphere of the home is free from hatred, pride slander and greed; see that Love is the flywheel of the home; that faith in God is the bedrock on which the relations between the members are built.

Indian traditions and Indian modes of living are now being fast cast away; crude manners of dress and speech and personal appearance are replacing them; children should be taught to look upon these with disgust; they should know them for what they are—aberrations and vulgarities! Now, obscene posters are pasted along the roads by cinema theatres in order to attract fans; they contaminate character very subtly and silently; children must make the elders ashamed when they permit such demeaning and deleterious posters to appear in public view! They have to waken the elders into a sense of shame, at the lowering of human values. Unless we plant these ideals in the children, India will go down to the depths of degradation.

How can you tolerate these obscene pictures, this most objectionable type of dress, this brazen behaviour and appearance? Do everything possible to root out this evil. Train the children and the young, to remove this blot, from the face of Bharat Mata.

India stands forth as the teacher to humanity, thanks to the virtue, the fortitude, the moral strength of the women of the past and the present. You have to maintain these qualities and foster them so that she might hold her head high among the nations of the world.

Establish the status of the mother in the home, as the upholder of spiritual ideals and therefore, the Guru of the children. Every mother must share in this effort—the expansion and steady manifestation of the God consciousness latent in every child.

—Baba

Voices and the Voice

Of the many billions of living beings, man alone has the privilege of being entitled to investigate the Truth of the Universe and to merge in the Bliss of its Realisation. But, man is lost in the pursuit of wrong goals; he is struggling in the fog of doubt and divisive loyalties. He is frittering energies and time in activities that bind him still further in the tangles of material wants. This type of activity called Moha-karma, flows from delusion and leads to further delusion. Man must soon outgrow this tendency, and turn towards Dharma-karma, that is to say, moral activity, idealistic activity, activity that sublimates lower instincts and impulses and transforms every deed into an act of dedication. When this attitude is confirmed and consolidated, all Karma becomes Brahma-karma. Man merges in the Universal and loses the inhibiting individuality. That is the Karma which the Atma craves for and delights in.

Even in the first stage of Moha-karma, man should endeavour to charge it with Prema. For, Prema will correct the Karma imperceptibly into the path of Dharma, and lead systematically, into the further stages of human progress towards Divinity.

What then is Prema? It cannot be earned or acquired; it is the natural endowment of man. It cannot be refused or thrown off the mind of man. It cannot be taught or acquired. If directed towards sensual objects, it may well spell ruin; if directed away from them, it can well ensure salvation. Prema or Love is a much-misused word. Any positive response to the attraction is called Love; any feeling of attachment, however trivial or transitory is characterised as Prema. We must certainly coin new words or set aside specific words to indicate the forms of love. The attachment of parents to their children or of the children to the parents must be called *affection*. The response to the attraction of sex is best described as fancy, fascination or delusion, Moha. The feeling of kinship or comradeship evokes dearness. The pleasure one gets through a sense of possession, especially of material objects can be known as craving. The yearning to reach for the sublimity that lies inherent in Truth-this alone is entitled to be called by that holy word, Prema. For, that is the sweetness, the most charming, the most satisfying possession of Man. Prema is strong and steady enough to overleap all obstacles, confront with equanimity all changes of fortune, and defeat all attempts to delay or deviate. It does not judge one incident as good and another as bad; it does not ascribe them to different agencies. Just as the same Sun causes both day and night, the same Divine Will causes joy and grief; so, the devotee does not wince or exult, when ill or well.

The fault lies in man's fascination for the `many', instead of the `one'; he pursues the diverse, and forgets the unity in the universe. Really speaking, the `many' are but different vehicles for the expression of the `one'. Take the example of the electric current. When the fan whirls, we say that there is the current flowing; when it stops whirling, we note the absence of the current. When the bulb is on, we notice its presence; when the bulb is off, we note its absence. The current, by itself, is invisible; it is Nirakara, it activates various things and so we recognise it. So too, Divinity is in all things and behind all activity. To understand it and to recognise it, we need instruments, vehicles, Upadhis.

The eyes see; but, can the organ `eye' see of itself? It cannot function without the prompting of the Divine Atma within. The brain thinks; but, can the cells perform the process all by themselves? No. They must be activated by the Divine within. The `one' is the basis, the cause of the manifestation in the many. Through Prema alone can the inherent, the immanent One be recognised. For, the Divine is Prema, more than anything else. Isavasyamidam sarvam: All this is enveloped by Me, activated by Me, says the Lord. All is one. The One appears as many, to the prejudiced eye. Clear the eye of the cataract of ignorance, and it cognises all as One. In fact, you see with your eyes, only yourself, everywhere. You talk only to yourself, to whomsoever your speech is addressed. You are pleased with yourself; you hate yourself; you harm yourself. There is no other!

Even when Divinity comes down as Avatar, man is unable to pierce the veil and revere the Divine. Lord Krishna says that people are unable to recognise the Divinity that is He, because they deem Him merely human. Only those who are aware of the current within, the Atma, can identify the Source of Power before them. Three disciplines are essential, to become aware of Divinity in all and in the Avatar: No activity should be taken up with individual aggrandizement in view; intellect and emotion must be directed to the revelation of the Resident in the Heart, Atma; every act should be done sincerely, with love, with no yearning for acquiring personal profit, fame or benefit.

Above all, listen to the Voice of God within. As soon as one contemplates a wrong act, that Voice warns, protests, and advises giving up. It pictures the shame that has to be suffered, the punishment that has to be faced, the disgrace that it entails. It would appear as if there are two personalities inside you, the one that prompts and the one that prevents. The warning signal, the timely advice, is given by the Jangam (the spirit of right) in the Angam (the physical body). It remind you of the absurdity and the danger inherent in the identification of the Self with the body, it encourages you to discriminate between right and wrong; it is God, enthroned in every heart as the Highest Wisdom, the Prajnana, the Eternal Witness, whom you can contact only in the depths of Dhyana.

In fact, when you examine your mind, you will find there; holding sway, not one but many `counsellors' with their contrariness, causing confusion. For example, no sooner have you planned to come to Puttaparthi to take the Darshan of Swami, these counsellors start playing their game. One voice advises you to start only after ascertaining whether Swami is actually present there. Another voice suggests that you can put through a call to a named person and discover whether Swami is at Bangalore or at Puttaparthi. A fourth lays before you alternative routes and means of transport, and causes a good deal of headache. This is the sangam, around the Jangam, the sangam (group) of voices that play around the spirit of Right, trying to distract it. Another voice might say, when the others have finished, "Well, my dear man! Consider from all points of view, this desire of yours. You may go there, putting yourself to a lot of expense and bother; think of this possibility also-you may or may not get an `interview' with Swami." Another voice might intervene and say, "O! Considering all the wrongs done and all the faults committed, it is very doubtful, if Swami will grant you the `interview'." In the wake of this Voice another will begin its argument of assurance. It will comfort, saying, "No! Swami is the very embodiment of compassion He will certainly pardon all errors." This principle that guides

and guards you along the spiritual path is the Lingam, that is in the centre of the Sangam, clustering round the Jangam.

The Lingam is in the very core of the heart of man, as the sole purveyor of Bliss Power and Illumination. Cultivate the vision directed inward, so that the Lingam might grant you these three. The mind will then be illumined with the cool comforting Light of Love—Wisdom. That is why the mind has as its presiding deity the Moon—Chandrama manaso jathah. Hence, the celebration of the Day of Thankfulness for all Gurus and the Prime Guru Vedavyas is done on the Full Moon Day.

Unless you cleanse the mind with Love, the Full Moon of Spiritual Wisdom cannot shine therein. The recital of the Name, the observance of vows and vigils, of fasts and festivals, may scintillate on the Inner Sky of the mind, as stars stud the sky; but, until the Lamp of Love is lit, the darkness will not vanish.

This day is a Day set apart for the worship of the Guru. Who is the Guru? How can a person who has not reached the goal, guide you towards it? When he is himself groping in the dark, how can he illumine your path? Most Gurus who profess to lead are themselves not quite sure of the road or quite convinced of the rightness of their path. `Gu' means darkness, or ignorance; `ru' means its removal. So the Guru must know the process by which ignorance can be removed in another. How can he do it when he has not done it for himself? The blind cannot lead the blind.

Guru has a further meaning too. `Gu' means gunathitha or beyond the 3 gunas, the three strands of which the Cosmos is composed and `ru' means rupa-rahitha or devoid of any particular form. Now, no mortal has transcended the guna and rupa. God alone can be described as unaffected by these. And, God is the Guru, right in your heart, ready to lead and enlighten. He is all-knowing, all-powerful, all-pervading.

Scatter the dark clouds of ignorance and egoism that cover the face of the Sun shining in the sky of your heart. Your parents might disown you, your kinsmen might desert you, your friends might give you up; your treasured possessions might leave you. But, God will be ever near, ever dear, ever ready with counsel and courage. People will gather around you so long as you have pelf and power; but, you will be left severely alone, when you lose these. They ate like swarms of frogs that infest a full lake, croaking flattery, sitting all along its shores, but, disappearing unto the last frog, when the lake is dry in summer.

You rush here, for the Gurupurnima Festival; but, there is no need to await this annual event for revering the Guru. People spend this day in worshipping the Guru and seeking his directives. This can be done all days of the year! Selecting a special day smacks of superficiality and exhibitionism. I desire to discourage this attitude of yours; I want you to cultivate, not these external ceremonies and festivals, but, the internal Sadhanas, the inner vision, the spiritual longing.

I do not claim that I am a Guru; or, consider you as Disciples or pupils. When I am All that is, who can be separately specified as Guru and who as Disciple or pupil? The Guru is He, the Disciple too is He. Ignorance of the One leads one to this dichotomy. Realisation of the Truth

will end this distinction. None need teach, none need learn. All *are* fundamentally Chitta. This is the Reality.

The teacher—that is the more correct appellation—should not feel superior; the pupil should not feel inferior. Both are Atma in reality. There is no high and no low. All are waves in the ocean of Bliss.

When your body is healthy, charming, fully content, consider how happy you are! Now, know that the bodies of all beings are you—really speaking. And, when all those other bodies are happy, healthy, strong, and full, calculate how much bliss you can cherish in your heart!

The vision of the Virata, the Cosmic Form, is given for those who surrender their ego and take refuge in the Lord (as Arjuna did) and who imbibe with care the Gita sung by the Lord in the silence. God is omnipresent; He is the Inner Motivator of every particle in the Universe. To declare that He is amenable only to your style of worship, that He will answer only to the Name that you have learnt to use, is to insult His Omniscience and His Glory. See Him in all, serve Him in all. Revere Him in all. Pray, "Let the whole world prosper; let all mankind be happy." This is the Special Message I give you on this Day.

Discourse: Gurupurnima. '74

Walk on!

Speaking to the gathering of thousands of devotees at the Poornachandra Auditorium, on 4/7/74, in the Immediate Presence of Bhagavan, Sri Nakul Sen, I.C.S. (Retd.), Former Governor of Goa, said, "This is a great occasion. We are celebrating Gurupurnima, which is also the Vyasapournima. Today, we honour Vyasa and through him, the entire institution of the Sadguru of Bharat. And, since Bharat has only One Religion, the Religion of Love, Vyasa is the Sadguru of the whole world. The world too is fast coming to that consummation. This is the reason Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba celebrates it; that is why we sing, "Gurur brahma, gurur vishnu, Guru devo maheswarah, Gurussakshath Parabrahma, thasmai sri Gurave namah." The Guru is Brahma, the Guru is Vishnu, the Guru is Maheshwara; the Guru is the visible Parabrahma; so, herewith I offer Pranams to the Guru."

Vyasa stands on a high pedestal of honour among the sages of Bharat, for, I shudder to think what our life would have been, if Vyasa had not traced out the lines of advance and the bounds of conduct. He was one of the greatest sons of Bharat.

Vyasa harmonised the opposing schools of Vedic scholarship, the followers of Trayi-vidya and the supporters of the Chaturved—those who upheld the claim of the Atharvaveda for being revered as authoritative and those who denied it that honour and asserted that the Vedas are only three: Rg, Yajur, and Sama, thus excluding the Atharva. He gathered the hymns and invocations and collated them into the four Vedas. He is therefore called Vedavyasa. Vyasa also compiled

the Brahmasutras, the string of aphorisms which summarised and highlighted the essential doctrines of the Jnanakanda, the Upanishads belonging to the Veda.

For those who are unaware of the Supreme Principle (param bhavam ajanantho), he composed the great Bhakti epics, the Mahabharata and the Bhagavata. The Mahabharata has, incorporated in it, the greatest of religious and philosophical texts, the Gita. Vyasa thus became the sovereign preceptor of mankind.

We are fortunate that we have this day here the unique chance of receiving the Darshan of the Jagat guru, the Saviour of mankind. Bhagavan is infinite power, infinite Love, infinite Wisdom; He teaches us that Truth is the very core of our being. He reveals to us that He is the Breath of our Breath, the Being of our being. He is the Lord, the Creator, the Guide, the Friend."

Adoring the Guru and offering Him the homage of dedication are held as obligatory on the Gurupoornima Day; so, over 15,000 persons came to Prasanthi Nilayam, from all the States of India, and even from far off lands like Sri Lanka, South Africa, Fiji, Australia, the United States, England and Europe. When they sat in lines in the Poornachandra Auditorium in the morning, Bhagavan moved slowly between the lines and gave each of them 'laddu' as Prasad, allowing them to touch the Lotus Feet, as He passed along. It took Him more than two hours to satisfy all.

In the evening at 5 P.M., the devotees again gathered at the spacious-Hall. Sri Nakul Sen spoke on the significance of the Poornima; a student of the Sri Sathya Sai Arts and Science College for Boys, at Brindavan was persuaded to address the devotees on the ideals on which he was fed at College. Sri Kamal Sahwney made a short speech on the Love that Bhagavan showers on the young students, a speech that thrilled the vast assembly by its unalloyed sincerity. Sri Kamal said, "Amidst all the shortages from which we are suffering, there is the shortage of teachers and Gurus. There is no one eager and competent to guide us, the youth of the land, to channelise our emotions, to sublimate our impulses, to lift up our hearts and to mark out our goal. Baba is the inspirer and the instructor, the father and mother, the friend and the guide, the master and the Lord—all in one, for us for the youth of Bharat. From rust and dust, He has shown us the way and led us to the realm of rest, the beet form of rest being in His Lap of Love. We are the feet, He is the Path; we are the world, He is the Heaven; we are the eyes, He is the Charm; we are the ears, He is the Melody. We need none else, we know nothing greater. He has opened our eyes to the absurdity and the vulgarity inherent in imitating other cultures and alien forms of thought and feeling. This College has so transformed me that my mother is now proud of me, whereas before I came under its influence, she was anxious and afraid what shape my future would take, what ugly mould I would pour myself into. Baba has guided me aright on the ancient path of Sanathana Dharma, the path laid down by the sages of India, in order to educate man into the Madhava he really is."

Bhagavan then blessed the thousands who had gathered before Him, and delivered His Divine Discourse, elaborating on the Angam, the Sangam, the Jangam and the Lingam that every being has as its spiritual nature. He called upon all to pray for the peace and prosperity of all mankind, for, all are One and One is all.

Bhagavan then sang a few Bhajan Songs which was ecstatically repeated, line by line, by thousands of thrilled souls.

On the 5th, Bhagavan moved among the serried lines of seated Bhaktas, seeking out the ill, the aged and the distressed for the gift of Grace. Seated on the lap of his forlorn mother, an aged lady from far-off Cachar on the North-Eastern border of India, employed in the Chandighati Tea Estate, was a boy named Kamal Kumar Purohit about eleven years old; he was the victim of muscular atrophy and could not use his lower limbs since six years. Some good people had told her of the Incarnation of Divine Love that had come down on earth to save such as she and he; she managed to reach Puttaparthi, with her invalid son. The doctors had said that he had not many more months to live and so, she made haste to bring him to the Divine Presence.

Baba lifted him with one hand; but, before he could take a few steps he flopped on the ground; some volunteers ran in to help, but, Baba asked them not to hold the boy! Then, stroking the back of the boy with His Divine Hand, He asked him 'Go'; he went, alone, and without any one to help him along! Ten thousand people saw this miraculous effect of Divine Compassion—the boy walked brisk and steady! He reached the verandah of the Mandir, about 20 metres away and sat among the rest. Later, he was called in, along with his mother. She no longer had to carry him about! Baba had relieved her of the burden and put the son on his feet! Truly, it was a memorable occasion, impressing on all, the depth of Divine Love.

Baba spent three more days curing, consoling, comforting and counselling hundreds of seekers from the various corners of the world. He is the Guru, who removes ignorance, imbalance, and inequity at all times and places, wherever these implant themselves. The Gurupoornima revealed this Truth to the thousands who had His Darshan.

—ED.

Advice to Students

"Ekam sath; viprah bahudha vadanthi" "The One alone exists; wise men speak of it as many-faceted." This is the harmonising unifying Truth that India teaches through the ages. Another lesson that Indian culture embodies and Indian thought emphasis is: When the process of living revolves around the body, it is steeped in misery; when it revolves around the Atma, the Divine Spark within, it is resplendent with joy.

When the years of life are spent out and man has not discovered at least who he is, surely, that life is a barren waste. Search for one's Reality, for the Witness within, the Divine that animates; this is the first duty of man to himself. Indian culture calls on all to discover for themselves the special nature of his 'is-ness', and its sacred consequences and to shape his activities and attitudes accordingly.

Ayam Atma Brahma—This Atma is Brahma. The Individual is the Universal, pretending to be separate! The Individual exists, cognises and is cognised, delights and confers delight, because it is the Universal. The tiny flame of a candle can light a thousand other candles and yet burn with undiminished strength. The other flames have to acknowledge that they have with them only the flame of the first one. The One has lit the many; the One is shining in and through the many. Ekoham bahusyam; the One decided to be many, to enjoy its own manifoldness. The One appears as all this diversity. That is the Truth.

Air which is but One, appears as storm, whirlwind, breeze, simoom, assuming various forms by change of speed in movement. The names too differ from form to form. The insistence on the fundamental unity of all creation is the special feature of Indian thought. It is faulty vision, to see variety as variety, the world as composed of desperate elements and forces. In spite of this great heritage which Indians have come by, they are today disparaging it and devaluing it by their behaviour and beliefs.

The beliefs of man must be free from Asuya, as the Gita declares. Asuya is the evil nature that cannot tolerate the happiness and prosperity of another, that prevents man from loving his neighbour, from serving the distressed, and seeing, in all, the same Divine Motivator that he himself has, as his Inner Charioteer. It makes man eager to pick holes in the activities of others and renders them blind to their virtues and excellences.

This is a College, an institution that imparts education and prepares the rising generation to be better women and better citizens. Education must open the eyes and enable them to recognise the One behind the many. When that One is known, the many can be known easily and clearly. Pursue the vast, the cosmic, the all-inclusive Truth; do not be satisfied with paltry trivial scraps of information; seek the Knower behind the knowing process. That is the Real victory.

Educationists must concentrate on methods by which unity will be imparted and distinctions relegated to a subordinate role. But, unfortunately at the present time, in the name of individuality and the sheer fancy for distinctness, every encouragement is given to idiosyncrasy and adventurism, foppishness and flippancy. Parents and elders have to hang down their heads in shame at the vagaries of their children.

Education must promote peace, security and happiness. But, as a result of the educational process through which they have passed, youth is causing anxiety, fear and unrest in the society of which they are a part. Neither have they any peace or joy or security. The Kaurava brothers sought for power, fame, selfish gain and competitive victory. They loved separatist divisive policies. Their thirst for power could be quenched, as Krishna said, only by a rain of arrows which wiped them off the face of the earth. In order to remove the terror that stalks the land from end to end, an immediate re-form of the educational system is called for.

Roots hold the tree firm; the foundation keeps the building from collapsing. Awareness of one's responsibilities, detachment from entangling bonds, confidence in one's own sense of righteousness—these have to be fostered in Colleges. Integrity, sincerity, and the desire to use one's skills and intelligence, for the service of one's fellowmen are essential in youth.

At present, educated people are wanting in the grit necessary to act according to their convictions; they know a thing is right but lack the will to carry it through. Teach the students to discriminate in a detached manner and arrive at right conclusions, and encourage them to put their faith into practice fearlessly. Now that the cultivation of the spirit is in the name of secularism, beyond the ken of the system, teachers who are themselves unaware of higher values are leading youth into less and less firm grounds, into fear and fickleness. How can such people, who have no inner strength, no vital faith in themselves, lead others? What can the country expect from this method of bringing up the young, this foolish and futile round, where the blind lead those unwilling to open their eyes in a series of fallow circles?

"Nayam atma balaheenena labhyah," the Atma cannot be won by the weak. That is the pronouncement of the Vedas. Without the awareness of the Source of all Strength, the Atma, man is basically weak and he can only lead men into further weaknesses.

There are many who swear that they have infinite confidence and faith in themselves, but, they assert they have no faith in God. How then could they have faith in themselves? For, who exactly is I? Is I the bundle of bones and muscle? Is I the name?

No. The reality of I is God; the I is a wave of the Ocean of Divinity, endowed with the same sublimity, the same taste, the same depth. How then can defeat descend on I?

Man has to be continually examining every desire that emerges in his mind, so that he may suppress or destroy or by-pass or obey. He must learn, from parents, elders, teachers, friends and the leaders of the land besides the books written by wise men of his own as well as of other countries, the standards by which he can test his desires. He has to accept them or reject them. There are some who are willfully wicked, who attempt at turn to justify by specious arguments the iniquities they perform. But, even then, they know that they are on the wrong path. The God within does not fail to warn, and to counsel.

Students! If you are drawn into evil in pursuit of momentary pleasure, you will have to suffer misery a thousand-fold as a consequence of the impulse. Wicked thoughts, wild schemes and

frolisome escapades might give pleasure at the moment but in the long run they are sure to land you in irretrievable ruin.

Your role is something far higher. You have to correct and transform those who behave like blind men though they have eyes, those who move about as lame men though their legs are strong and straight, those who behave like insane men though they are equipped with bright minds such men are in all fields now. There are hypocrites who talk `peace' and practise `war'. Your task is to expose them and educate them back into normalcy and virtue. Become instruments in the great effort to re-establish righteousness throughout the world.

This College has not been established just to prepare you for earning degrees. The main purpose is to help you to cultivate self-knowledge and self-confidence, so that you can each one of you learn self-sacrifice and earn self-realisation. The teaching of the university curricula and the preparation for presenting you for the university examinations and the award of university degrees—these are only the means employed for the end, namely, spiritual uplift, self-discovery and social service through love and detachment. Our hope is that by your lives you will set shining examples of spiritual awareness and its beneficial consequences to the individual and society. "

—Baba

Oh, I love to feel of Baba's Love,
How He built His heavenly mansion here;
How He came to earth to us
How He came His Grace to give
Oh, I love to feel Baba and His Love.

Baba Spoke Thus

Q: Baba... Which is the quickest way to reach the Goal?

A: There are no short cuts to Truth. The short cut is always long; it merely entices and deceives. There are only two ways that have been discovered by man and taught to man in all ages and all lands. (1) Expand the ego to infinity or (2) reduce it to nothing. The first path is Jnana, where the Jnani says, I am the Universal Truth, I am all This, All this is My mental Image. The second path is Bhakti, where the aspirant says, I am nothing; God is everything. In both cases, the ego sense disappears. The Bhakta denies himself and places himself ever under the guidance and protection of God.

Q: If it is God that motivates all acts in me, then, whatever I do must be right, isn't it?

A: Yes. Why do you doubt it? If you are conscious that it is God that acts through you, how can you ever do wrong? You fall into evil only when you forget God and feel that you are the doer. When the light of the God within you, is guiding you, you will always walk on the path of Truth and goodness.

Q: Bhakti is described as Love of God. Tell us, Baba, how to love God and cultivate that Love.

A: Truly speaking, you have no need to love God; nor is God in need of your love. What you have to do is to become aware that God who is Love and Love alone is seated in your heart and that your thoughts, words and acts must reveal that He is there. His Love must radiate through you; you would then see with Love, speak with Love, hear with Love, give with Love, receive with Love. You would become dynamos of Love.

Q: Should we pray to God to reside in us and radiate Love through us?

A: Prayer is only another word for communicating with that embodiment of Love. It is the channel through which His Power, Light, Glory and Purity flow into you.

Q: Can we pray for specific boons?

A: Yes; but, remember, the fickle mind of man cannot be permanently happy with the material things of the world. The more he gets the more he craves for. Gaining and losing, he involves himself more and more with the senses and the objective world. His vision is fixed on outer not inner values. What he likes at one moment, he starts disliking the next. So, the only boon one should ask for is, "Feed me with Your Grace, so that all wants cease." Surrender to God's Will; leave everything to Him.

Q: How do we know that we have received Grace?

A: As soon as you receive Grace, your heart becomes free from greed and hatred; you will have no more ill-will against anybody. You will be overflowing with love towards all beings. You will experience a rare joy, a unique stream of ecstasy.

Q: What exactly is Grace, Baba?

A: Grace is the Divine Power which reveals itself in us and turns our mind towards God, in all beings. We feel His Presence everywhere and love all beings alike.

Q: If God is Love, why did He create suffering?

A: Suffering draws you nearer to God. It is a sign of His Compassion. It is a bitter medicine given to man when he is ill with egoism or ignorance. It clears the mental obstacles in the path of the discovery of Truth.

Q: What is Truth? Many have failed to answer this very simple question. Volumes have been written on it but yet the matter has not been made explicit. What, Baba, is Truth?

A: Your own Self is the Truth. All the rest partakes of falsehood, unreality, modifications, change, ephemeralism.

From the Notebook of a Sri Lanka Devotee

No word of man can tell
How sweet the Name I love so well;
Oh! let its praise ever swell!
OH! PRAISE THE NAME OF BABA.

Golden Dust

Some time, my Lord wears
A deep golden rust;
The exact same colour
As pada dust!

Some time we see this dust
On the holy ground.
This dust is sacred
And, most renowned
This is the dust
Of our past good deeds.
This is the dust
To plant good seeds.

We must take the time
For an early start
And keep this Golden Dust
In our very hearts.

Say "BABA"

Wouldst thou
To one single source
The mystery of Life
Its fullness and void
Ascribe?

Couldst thou
Its pleasure and pain

Its din and calm
Seen and unseen
In one word Describe?

Canst thou
To both aught and naught
Yes and No
For one reason
Subscribe?

Say "BABA"
And, all at once
Is said!

—Tarakad

Offerings to the Master

So we are back home after attending another Gurupoornima festival! Did I say `home'? No, we are back at school, the school of this mundane world. We went home, like the student who goes home for the week-end to see his father and mother, but this parent whom we went to see is not only the Father and Mother but the Guru also.

He gave us instructions and sent us back to this wide world to learn them better by practice. Looking back, how fortunate we were to have had this opportunity of being with Him on the auspicious day, when traditionally the Guru is revered. He often says that the Guru is to be revered not only on a particular day but everyday in one's life. Yes, and this our Guru! Do we realize that this Guru is Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara, all the three blended into one—the Parabrahmam Himself?

Do we remember how many times we have gone there and how often we have listened to Him? I have lost count. Has it made any difference to us, all those lessons we heard with rapt attention? Every one of us who had gone through the elementary school, still remembers the play of the teacher's cane on our palms.

But what a teacher this Baba is! He doesn't even utter a harsh word in spite of our refusal to move out of the first standard of school. What a patience He has, to keep on instructing us, though we refuse to learn beyond the alphabet. Like little children we enjoy the stories He tells us but forget the essence of the discourses. He says, "I give not lectures but mixtures, for your mental health and moral invigoration."

Last time when we went He gave us a nice sugar-coated pill, but like the foolish child we are the sugar on the top and refused to swallow the pill; but He keeps on trying. What then shall we do? We can only pray to Him to bear with us and continue to instruct us.

Fellow pupils! It is said that the doctor must be paid the fees, so that the disease can be cured, and the teacher has to be paid his dues, so that the lessons may be retained in memory.

But what fees can we give Him, this strange Master who says "Come to me with empty hands"! Yes! There is one dakshina we can offer Him. Have you heard of the woman of Samaria who met Jesus at Jacob's well? After talking to Jesus she ran back to the village shouting "Come and see, the Messiah has come," and the people came running to see Him. They knew this woman's ill reputation. Yet, how did they listen to such a woman's words? Yes, they saw a change had come on her, which was reflected in the sparkle of her eyes, and that made them believe her words.

We know that like the woman from Samaria, we are full of defects, but let our meeting with our Master produce such a change in us that others may see the sparkle in our eyes and go to see for themselves the great Master.

This transformation in us is the greatest votive offering He expects from us. This change is possible only with His continued Grace. So come, let us pray

"Lord! Grant us the sense to understand your lessons. You have promised to be with us in our hearts always! Continue to instruct us, unmindful of our shortcomings. We beseech Thee, not to give us up as Bullheaded. We promise that we shall prove to be worthy of promotion to the higher class. We do not know when we will qualify to get the degree from Your University, but we shall strive at least to enter the High school."

"Baba! You told us this story of Krishna and Arjuna. When Krishna said the bird in the sky was a dove, Arjuna said it was a dove. When Krishna changed His mind and declared it an eagle, Arjuna promptly agreed. Again when He announced it was a crow, Arjuna assented wholeheartedly. Lord, help us to develop this implicit faith in You, so that we may be put by you on the road to spiritual success."

"Swami! We do not know how many times in our previous births we had the opportunity to learn at Your feet. But we do realise our unique privilege to be with You now, and be instructed by You. Grant us Thy Grace to enable us to become Your worthy pupils."

"Lord! You have told us that the nearer we are to You the more tests we get. May be we dread examinations, but we do understand that we have to pass these tests, to get promotion to the next higher class. Give us courage to face these tests and come out successful so that we can get nearer to You."

"Swami! Every time we come to You, You prescribe the right medicine and the most beneficial diet regime. But every time we default, like the diabetic patient who keeps on coming to the physician with a relapse of the disease. Help us to follow Your advice and come back to You healthy in body and mind."

"Master! You say education is a slow process like the unfolding of a flower, the fragrance becoming more and more perceptible with the silent blossoming, petal by petal of the entire flower. I do not know when this flower will fully blossom

Grant Thy Grace so that the unfolding may start now and the fragrance appears soon. Please do not allow it to wither away while still a bud. Let it someday, when in full bloom, adorn Thy holy Feet!"

M. Balasubrahmanyam

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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Janaka Takes Leave

Then, Rama saw the chieftain of the Nishadas standing before him, amidst his followers. He went forward to him and extending his arms, he embraced him, more warmly than he clasped to his bosom his own brother. He consoled Guha, with affectionate appeals to calm himself and persuaded him to accept the separation wisely and without pain. Guha could not do any thing to change the turn of events; so, he fell at the feet of Rama, and rose with a heavy heart, and walked off, with his eyes fixed on Rama for as long as he could catch sight of that picture of charm and love.

Sita, Rama and Lakshmana stood under a spreading tree, until the last of them left. Meanwhile, Emperor Janaka also prepared to leave, at the head of his party from Mithila. Rama and Lakshmana prostrated before their father-in-law and mother-in-law; Sita fell at the feet of her parents. The parents embraced her and stroked her head in fond tenderness. They said, "Daughter! Your courageous determination and your devotion towards your husband, will bring us great renown. Through you, our family and clan have been rendered sacrosanct. We must have accomplished some great vow and fulfilled some great austerity or else you would not have been born in our line." They extolled her in profuse terms and expressed their joy and exultation. They assured her, "Sita! You can suffer no want; Rama is the very breath of your existence. We know that since you live in his shade, no harm can touch you. However, as a result of you two being in different entities, problems and perplexities might now and then confront you. Those are but the play of destiny, passing clouds." Janaka presented before them many such Vedantic truths to bring them comfort and contentment. Then, he too, left the hermitage and took the track that led him out of the forest.

Sylvan Retreat

Sita Rama and Lakshmana stood in the shade of that tree, until the people from both Ayodhya and Mithila went beyond the range of their eyes. Then, they returned to their thatched cottage, and there, while Rama was describing with appreciative ardour, the devotion and faith of Bharata and Shatrughna, their exemplary love and loyalty, and the affectionate attachment of the subjects of the Empire, Sita and Lakshmana listened attentively and echoed the same sentiments. Their

hearts felt sore at their departure; they would fain have liked their presence longer. Often during the talk, they remembered the death of Dasaratha and tears rolled down their cheeks as they recalled the Emperor's affection towards them. Seeing their plight, Rama's face was lit up with a smile; he expatiated on the mystery of life and the key to its unravelling. Thus, they spent that eventful day, in the silence of that sylvan retreat.

The Sad Return

Meanwhile, the stream of people emerging from the edge of the forest towards the populated areas near Ayodhya—the ascetics, the sages, the Brahmins, the brothers Bharata and Shatrughna, the queens Kausalya Kaikeyi, and Sumitra, the ministers and the vast mass of citizens—could not contain the burden of sorrow, which became heavier the farther they went, the nearer they approached the City. They spent the time describing to each other the events of the five days they had spent in Rama's presence, and admiring the ideals that Rama had embodied and exemplified, and his love, compassion and affection.

They did not halt anywhere for food or even for sleep, since they felt neither hunger nor the prompting of sleep. The sense of sorrow at the separation had overwhelmed and put to flight all minor insufficiencies.

The second day, they encountered the mighty Ganga River; the Chieftain of the Nishadas arranged boats to row them across and also prepared plentiful repast for the tired populace and for the distinguished persons from the Court. But, no one partook of the hospitality he provided, for, their grief at having come away from Sita, Rama and Lakshmana lay too heavy on, their hearts.

Unable to displease Guha and unwilling to wound him, they just sat before the plates, fingered the items and getting up soon, threw the contents away. Why? Even the horses had no wish to feed. They just refused. Vasishta the Royal Preceptor noticed this, and he said, "See! Rama is the Inner Resident, the Atma that is in all; He is the Intelligence; the Awareness that marks out the personality of each Being."

They had no inclination to turn aside in order to snatch a few hours of rest. Bharata had resolved to travel straight to Ayodhya and not delay on the way. He was anxious to present before the citizens pining in Ayodhya the holy sandals of Rama, and bring them some little comfort and courage. So, the party forded the Sarayu and the Gomati rivers and reached the outskirts of the capital City of Ayodhya, on the fourth day of their journey.

Limited Joy

The aged, the children and the women of Ayodhya who could not join the vast assembly that marched to the place where Rama had fixed his camp, were watching for the first signs of their happy return, after accomplishing their mission, namely, persuading Rama to take up the reins of ruler-ship. Their eyes had well-nigh gone blind, with exhaustion and extreme anxiety. When they heard the distant whirr of chariot-wheels, they ran out into the streets and peered into every passing vehicle, asking, "Where is our Lord?" But, since dusk soon thickened into darkness, they went back into their homes, and spent the night in joyous hope that they could see their beloved Prince, with the first rays of the rising sun. Vast disappointment not unmixed with a little

satisfaction awaited them next morning, for, they learnt that Rama did not return to the Capital from the forest, but, had sent instead, the sandals he wore, as his representative.

Installation

Meanwhile, Bharata called together the Royal Preceptor and the Ministers of the Court and assigned to them the various duties of administration. He awarded them the authority to perform their duties. He then called Shatrughna near and allotted to him the task of fostering and consoling the queen-mothers. He arranged a gathering of Brahmins and Pundits, and standing before them with folded palms, he told them that he would fulfill their wishes, whether great or small, for he knew they would only promote the best interests of himself and the people. He wanted that they should place their demands before him without hesitation.

He also called for a gathering of the citizens of Ayodhya and the leaders of the people from all parts of the Empire and he described before them all that had happened in the Capital and at the place where Rama was living in exile. He gave them a summary of the conversations he had with Rama, and appealed to them to adore and revere the sandals of Rama for the period of fourteen years when Rama would be away, as the authentic Presence of Rama himself. "They will guard us all, they are our refuge and resource," he said. "In the full confidence that the sandals are ruling over us, let us," he said, "live with Rama installed in our hearts; after his return, Rama will rule over us directly, granting us the joy of his physical presence and personal direction: Our duty from this moment is to wait for that happy day, with humility and prayer in our hearts."

Then, Bharata decided on an auspicious hour, when the Sacred Sandals could be installed on the throne, for, he had the joy of all classes of the population in view—the Royal Preceptor, the Pundits, the ascetics, the priests, the ministers and others of the Court, the leaders of the people and the common ranks of citizens. He saw to it that arrangements were made on a grand scale to celebrate the event.

That day, he prostrated before the mothers—Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi—and then proceeded to the Throne with the Sandals borne on his head. Praying for the blessings of Vasishtha and permission from him and all those assembled, he placed them on the throne, offering them reverential loyalty. He placed all his responsibilities safely in their custody.

Nandigram

Later, that steadfast adherent of Dharma, that incomparable hero Bharata walked towards the village of Nandigram, where he had a thatched hut made ready for his residence. He wore his hair, braided into a knot, as Rama and Lakshmana had done; his apparel was made of the bark of trees, as theirs was; he lived in a cave specially dug into the earth. His food and dress were the same as those of the silent ascetics of the forest; his acts, thoughts and words too were austere and spiritually oriented.

Bharata renounced the luxurious life of Ayodhya which Indra, the Ruler of Heaven praised as unattainable by Him; he gave up the rich life of the Royal Palace, which even Kubera, the God of Riches envied. He was happy in that tiny village, living unseen by others in the cave inside the grass-thatched hut! He vowed that he would not look at the face of any one, until Rama

returned from exile. His mind was fixed on Rama and on the day of His return from the forest into which He had gone. His body became weaker and weaker with every passing day.

But, the spiritual splendour on his face brightened more and more with the passage of time. His devotion to Rama grew to vaster and vaster proportions. He was transformed into a pure soul that has achieved fulfilment. In the firmament of his heart, the stars shone in glorious galaxies; below them, his feelings and emotions shone like the Ocean of Milk, calm, deep and pure.

Indra's foolish Son

While Bharata was thus spending his days at Nandigram in the constant contemplation of Rama, far away in the forest, on the Chitrakuta Peak, Sita, Rama and Lakshmana were praising his devotion and sense of dedication. They were happy in the peaceful quiet forest home. One day, a fool named Jayantha sought to measure the valour of Rama, an adventure as foolish and suicidal as the attempt of an ant to discover the depth of the Ocean!

Prompted by sheer mischief, he transformed himself into a crow, and approaching Sita who was seated by the side of Rama lost in the contemplation of the scenery spread out before them, and with his sharp beak, he pecked at the sole of her tender foot, causing blood to trickle from the wound. Seeing the stream of blood, Rama plucked a blade of dry grass from the ground and threw it at the crow.

Rama will never hurt any one who has not done injury. But, when it is necessary, and when it has to be done, even Rahu will swallow the Moon, isn't it? So too Rama. He will never hurt the innocent. But, that blade of grass became a huge flame of fire and flew upon Jayantha. And, when he fled, it pursued him relentlessly wherever he went. Helpless and frightened, the crow returned to its original form and Jayantha fell at the feet of Rama praying for succour. Indra came to know that the culprit, Jayantha, was his own son and he too repented for his son's audacity and irreverence.

Jayantha prostrated before Rama and pleaded for mercy. He said, "I am a fool. I did not realise the baseness of my deed. Save me from your anger, from this fire." Rama pitied the poor fellow, who had so humbled himself. He made one of his eyes ineffective and sent him away, alive, as a single-eyed individual. The blade of grass that had become a fissile of fire was neutralised by him and it resumed its nature. Jayantha was grateful that he was let off with just a token punishment for the heinous crime he had committed; he lived for a long time on the Chitrakuta Peak, where Sita, Rama and Lakshmana had taken residence. One day, the tenth day of the bright half of the month Margasira, Rama ordered Jayantha to proceed southwards from his habitat.

Atri and Anasuya

Sita, Rama and Lakshmana too left Chitrakuta and reached the hermitage of the great Sage, Atri. The Sage came to know in advance of the intention of Rama to visit his retreat, through his pupils. So, when Rama was approaching the Ashram, he moved far out on the forest track in order to welcome Rama, Sita and Lakshmana. Atri was so overpowered with joy at the sign of Grace that he shed profuse tears in his ecstasy and declared that the visit had indeed made his life fulfil its highest aim. He said that his austerities had at last borne fruit that day.

That evening, the Sage Atri gathered his pupils and placed a high seat for Rama at the head of the assembly. His Consort Anasuya had meanwhile attended to the needs of Sita and brought her too to that place. Then, the sage described to all present the sacredness of the occasion, the powers of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana, and the Divine Forces that had incarnated as those three.

Anasuya also praised the virtues of Sita, and gave her holy counsel on the duties of women and the ideals they should ever hold dear. Sita spoke of the fact that every individual, every being, and every creature had the feminine principle inherent in its composition; she said that though there are masculine and feminine roles, acting on the world stage, all are basically feminine, when their strength, emotions and impulses and attitudes are considered. She said that her Lord, Rama is the incarnation of the One and only masculine principle in the Universe. In Him, she said, there is no trace of duality, of mine and thine, of grief or joy. He is the embodiment of fearlessness; He is strength personified. Purusha or the Eternal masculine has wedded Nature or Prakriti, the feminine. Though Nature appears manifold and variegated, it is really One undifferentiated Unity, the same Atma. Thus Sita revealed the truth of the Rama principle to Anasuya, the consort of the Sage Atri.

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness

(To be continued)

Sai Family News

Letter from Trinidad

Dr. P. M. M. Krishna, of the General Hospital, Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, West Indies, President of the Sathya Sai Samaj, writes, "We have recently formed this Sai Association. Our activities are well received all through the country. We have a membership of a few hundreds. We felt Bhagavan's Divine Presence amongst us and He gave us the requisite confidence and conviction. Our Bhajan Sessions are as good as the best, anywhere."

Medical Check-up Camps

The suggestion, made by Bhagavan at Rajahmundry that Samitis must pay attention to a new type of service, namely, medical check-up and advice for people of rural areas, living far away from places where they can get such facilities, is being vigorously taken up with gratifying results by a number of Samitis. Coimbatore has had a second Camp of a general nature as well as Dental Check-up Camp at Mettupalayam where hundreds were examined and helped. Tirupur, Kadampuliyur, Palayamcottah Cuddalore and Nellikuppam in Tamil Nadu, Doddaballapur in Karnatak held such Camps. Specialists in medical treatment and diagnosis, including lady doctors co-operated enthusiastically in the service of the poor and the neglected. The Easwamma Mobile Medical Check-up Van, equipped with X-ray appliance, dental surgery instruments, optical charts and instruments, blood testing equipment, loud speaker facilities etc., has been visiting the villages around Puttaparthi (Prasanthi Nilayam) and Vrindavan and enabling a fine batch of devotee-doctors to offer their services to the rural population, not only to cure their illnesses but also to ensure that their children do not fall a prey to polio, small-pox, diphtheria, whooping cough tuberculosis and such other deadly diseases; for the doctors, in these Camps and during their visits, invariably inoculate the young with prophylactics against them.

From Jakarta (Indonesia)

Sri. T. G. Kishin writes

The Sathya Sai Seva Samiti was started more than a year ago at Jakarta. The Nagarsankirtan which about more than 35 to 40 of us do every Sunday is a very popular programme among the citizens here. We move round the streets of this city from 4-45 to 6 A.M. We have Bhajan Sessions every Saturday as well as on Thursday in the evenings. On Tuesday, we hold Bal Vikas Classes; about 50 children attend the Classes and the parents declare that they are very happy at this service of the Samiti. Every Tuesday, we have also a Study Circle Session, where spiritual discourses are given by some elderly scholar and guide. In Dwaparayuga, Sanathana Sarathi (Baba) became the Charioteer of Arjuna. Now, it! this Kali Yuga, He has to be accepted by each and every one of us as our charioteer, to direct us and guide us back to Godhead.

"Sai Krishna Speaks"

A Student is Thrilled

Sri Krishna Janmashtami, the Birthday of Sri Krishna was celebrated by thousands of devotees at Prasanthi Nilayam, on the 10th day of August, in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Himself, Bhagavan who has incarnated as Sai Krishna, to lead mankind once again through the path of Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Love to Himself, the Supreme Goal.

At the meeting that was convened at 4-30 P.M., in the Prayer Hall of the Mandir, Bhagavan blessed all with the chance of Darshan. Dr. S. Bhagavantam, D.Sc., introduced to the gathering Sri Rajan Patel, a student of the Sri Sathya Sai Arts and Science College, Kadugodi, Whitefield, as one of the brightest products of the College who has just passed the B. Sc Examination of the Bangalore university in the I class, taking a high rank and soon proceeding to the Central College, Bangalore for his M. Sc. He requested Sri Rajan Patel to address the gathering for a few minutes. Sri. Patel spoke in feeling terms on the inspiration and instruction that students derive from the Divine Presence of Bhagavan at Brindavan. "Not only are we illumined; the moment Bhagavan steps into Brindavan after being away for even a few days, birds start flocking and singing sweetly and melodiously. The trees open their leaves and away to the rhythm of bhajan! The earth too becomes soft, as if it is afraid that Bhagavan's Feet would be hurt, if it did not change so. He is our Sai Krishna and we are His Gopas. In fact, Janmashtami has deep significance for us, students of the Sathya Sai College, for, it symbolises the bond of Love between Him and every one of us," he said.

The One

Bhagavan began His Divine Discourse, with the Declaration that Krishna is the One Name signifying all Names, the One Thought comprising all thoughts, the One Deed encompassing all Deeds. He exhorted all to utilise the Festival which commemorates the Advent of Krishna for developing Bhakti or Devotion, within their own hearts. He said, "Bhakti is defined as the means of discovering the Divine Reality within each being. Four steps are laid down in the scriptures to help man succeed in this effort: discrimination between the permanent and the impermanent,

withdrawal from the process of catering to the senses, positive control of the feelings, thoughts and pursuits, and incessant yearning for Liberation from all bonds. Bhakti is the urge which manifests as all these four endeavours.

Bhakti

But, that word is applied to all sorts of desires and disciplines, so widely and so indiscriminately that it is identified even with Epicureanism or Bhukti! Bhakti is derived from bha or Bhagavan or God. It directs man to have God ever in mind and to cultivate Love for God within him. It advises him to rid himself of egotism, to curb sensual desires. And to rise to the height of one's aspiration and achievement.

Bhakti leads man on to the Wisdom arising from the realisation of the Unity called God. Just as childhood grows into old age and gets fruition thereby, devotion grows into wisdom, Bhakti grows into Jnana. There are some who deny the need for Bhakti and assert that Jnana can be won without the preliminary stage of Bhakti. But, Bhakti is as necessary and as inevitable a process as childhood.

Devotion fosters the highest virtue; it is the most precious treasure; it is the truest path, the only way to God. Man must live in Bhakti, for Bhakti, through Bhakti. For, Bhakti is Love of the purest and the noblest variety. Such Love is the breath that sustains Life, that supports the Soul in the effort to merge in the Super-soul. The years of life spent without the Light of Love are years of ruin, of dust and dis-ease. One could as well be dead and decay for ever.

Love can transform man into a Divine Being; it helps him manifest the Divine which is his core. Love can tame even the most ferocious of beasts. It prompts man to fill the world with joy and to partake of that joy. It implants a deep distressing thirst for that exultation, that elevation of the spirit. The Avatar of the Lord as Krishna and the career of Krishna on the earth were for the propagation and promotion of this Principle of Love (Prema), by precept and example.

The Yearning

Prema or the Highest Love transcends the ego; it is pure; it is sweet; it is sacred and sanctifying. Prahlada had that Prema; so, whatever befell him—pain, grief, torture, disgrace—he bore them all, for he was unaware of anything except God whom he had enshrined in his heart. Meera too was so hungry for God and so agonised by separation from Him that she was always singing, only of His Charm, His Might, and His, mystery. You must yearn to be blessed with that earnestness, that dedication and that devotion. That alone can give you the Supreme Bliss. But, now, though many declare their desire to earn that state of mind, their efforts are all towards exhibitionism and elaborate self-aggrandizement! Those days, the Sadhana was silent and subdued; now, it is all loud and lavish. Bhakti reveals to you that God is in every one; so, the Love that surges in your heart towards God must flow towards all, for, all are embodiments of the self-same Divine.

The Closest Kin

God is bound to you by the closest bonds of Love. Parents might fall out; brother might take up arms against brother; sister might slip away without recognising sister; children might not revere

or even recognise their parents. Those are but 'social or economic ties', they might declare. But, God will never desert you or deny you, or turn away from you.

God is the nearest, the dearest, the most loving, the most eager companion, comrade and kinsman for man. This is demonstrated fully in the acts of Krishna, as related in the Mahabharata and the Bhagavata.

Insure

Creation posits a Creator; nothing can happen without the Will to make it happen. Before the beginning of things, there must be some Will that willed them to become. It can only be He that has become all this, whatever be the name or form that these have assumed. That Will is Love, It is Wisdom, It is Power, It is Bliss.

Each one of you must 'insure your lives' with That. Like other Insurance Institutions, this One cannot suffer loss or liquidation. It can never fail or falter. Pay the premium regularly as per the rules and you can claim the 'amount', and receive it. The premium you have to pay is the 'Love' that springs from your heart towards all beings. Liberation from pain and grief, the Bliss Everlasting, is the 'amount' you get.

The Tree

Or, we can picture the process as a Tree; which yields fruit at the end of a long process of cherishing care. Truth is the Seed, faith in the self, faith in the loving care of God—these are the roots that hold it firm and feed it; the recitation of the Name, singing of hymns and psalms, meditation on the glory that encircles and elevates—these are the showers that feed the Tree. Bliss is the fragrant Rower; the Wisdom that liberates (Jnana) is the Fruit.

When man neglects this duty, to himself he suffers grief. He is denied peace and security; he is restless and afraid. Peace will dread the company of the self-centred egotist, the hard calculating miser, the sharp heartless demon. It keeps close to the sage, the generous giver, the virtuous earner, the wise seer. You must long to be of such type that Peace can approach you and award you its presence.

You and Your Life

If, on the other hand, you stray away from the path of Love, not only men but even nature will throw obstacles which hinder your progress. For, the evil in you will manifest as obstacle in your path. They are not laid there by your enemies, but, are set there by your own feelings and impulses. Think good, feel good, act good, speak good—the path will be free and fair, easy and effortless.

Think evil, plan evil, do evil—the path will be strewn with fear and failure. The mind has to be cleansed for the path to be rendered smooth. Devotees do not deserve that status, merely by doling out charity, or visiting holy places, or attending religious discourses; fill the mind with Love, remove hatred and envy; adopt straight thinking and planning; that alone can justify the status of devotee. Walk steadily and silently towards the Goal, merging with God.

Draupadi

This day, being the Day reminding you of Krishna and His Birth in human Form, it is best to remember that, He taught this Message of Love by precept and example, throughout His earthly career. The Bhagavata and Mahabharata are full of lessons for you in the cultivation of Bhakti— one-pointed Love for God and all God's creatures. The Pandava Brothers and their Consort were devotees of this high status when Draupadi, their Queen, was humiliated and publicly dishonoured by their cousins in the Royal Assembly Hall, she did not call upon her spouses, the redoubtable heroes of many a battle, armed with heavenly bows and maces; she called upon Krishna, for she knew that He was her closest kinsman, shield and sword.

Many years later, she quipped Krishna for responding rather late on that occasion with His succour; but, Krishna asked her to repeat the words with which she called Him then; she said that she had called out, "O Dweller in the hearts of the Gopis! O Wanderer in the Floral bushes of Brindavan! O Resident of Dwaraka!" Then, Krishna explained that the delay was caused by the wrong address to which the prayer was directed. He said, "Your words forced Me to move on to Brindavan and Dwaraka, before I could come to where you were! If only you had cried, 'O Dweller in my Heart', I could have appeared before you at that very moment."

In the Heart

So, you should endeavour to install Him in your heart and be ever aware that He is there. Radha alone had that consciousness and the uninterrupted Bliss derivable from that knowledge. Cultivate that knowledge, that closeness. When you are aware all the time, only of the body and its clamour for attention, how can you ever concentrate on the Dweller within? Develop the in-look, the inward vision, and taste the Bliss it gives, at least for half a minute every day; that will surely confer on you great strength and security. Radha prayed that Krishna must keep her in the cool shade of His Presence so that she might be saved from being scorched in the arid desert of earthly life.

The Law of Love

Embodiments of the Universal Atma! Scriptures are endless; Sadhanas are countless; opportunities are few; time is already overstocked. But, you can easily win the battle of life, in spite of these handicaps, provided you arm yourself with Love, which is the essential teaching of all scriptures, the goal of all varieties of Sadhana, the best use to which all opportunities can be put and the most profitable way of utilising the precious capital, time. The simple men and women who tended cattle in Gokul where Krishna spent His boyhood years knew no Sadhana, learnt no Sastra, observed no vow, visiting no temple; they just kept the Name and Form of the God they moved with, ever in the shrine of their hearts. And they were saved.

Be Unaffected

Embodiments of Love! You are agitated, I know, since the world today is tossed on waves of unrest and insecurity. But, do not blame the world for it. The unrest is but the image of your own unrest, which you have projected on the world. The insecurity is fuming in your minds; the fear is raising its hood in your heart. The forces of the world, the beings in Nature are all unaffected, unchanged! You have changed; you are nervous; you are afraid, you have no peace!

You wear coloured glasses and see everything through those glasses. Correct your vision; the world will get corrected. Reform yourselves; the world will get re-formed. You create the world of your choice. You see many, because you seek the many, not the One. Try to subsume the many in the One; the physical bodies of yourself and others, the family, the village, the community, the state, the nation, the world, thus progressively march on towards more and more inclusive loyalties and reach the stage of Unity, in thought, word and deed. This is the Sadhana of Love, for, Love is expansion, inclusion, mutualisation. The individual has to be Universalised, expanded into Viswa-Swaroopa.

Malice, the Foe

When you enter upon this Sadhana, you have to suppress all tendencies of hatred, greed, envy and malice, and concentrate on expanding Love towards all, at all times. You might have to encounter opposition from all sides; but, consider these as tests of endurance, of sincerity and steadfastness. Your own parents, brothers and sisters, wife and children, kith and kin, friends and favourites, countrymen and others might try to turn you aside by ridicule and threats. You might even develop dislike for God for putting obstacles in the way; atheistic ideas might sprout in you trying to scotch the faith; but, you must overcome these with courage and confidence.

Trials for the Good

The good are always the target of malice and envy, slander and abuse from the wicked. Be assured that your goodness can be made tough enough to stand these ordeals. Avatars too are not exempt from the attentions of these wicked forces.

Krishna had to encounter these obstacles from the very cradle, right up to the finish of His life on earth. Personal spite, false slander, unfounded abuse and defamation followed Him at every step. Demons who could not tolerate the Light and the Love that He cast around Him conspired to tarnish His Name and obstruct His Mission. They tried to hind Him, to fail His plans and pervert His instruments. But, Truth triumphed and falsehood, stood exposed and disgraced.

Truth may be clouded for some little time by the fog of slander but, victory is certain. The forces of hate will be defeated by their own wiles; they dig for their own downfall; their action results in reactions, ruinous for themselves. In the Court of Dhritarashtra, the Kauravas planned to bind Krishna and put Him out of action, when He went to his Court on the mission of peace; but, what happened? Their stratagem recoiled on themselves and they were destroyed. Krishna was unscathed by their wiles and their campaign of defamation. When the Kauravas were indulging in their campaign of slander, many devotees were greatly distressed. For example, Sahadeva, the youngest of the Pandava Brothers, welcomed Lord Krishna back to their Camp, with the words, "I am not concerned at the failure of your mission; I know that it is all part of your plan. But, I am overjoyed that you have returned unharmed, from that nest of demons."

Krishna is undefeatable, ever pure, ever bright and ever effulgent in renown. Those who try to fail Him are themselves failed; those who try to cast slurs on Him are forever tarred by their own blackness. The malignancy of those who cannot bear His Glory will cause their eternal disgrace; it cannot affect Him in the least. His Glory will increase a hundredfold with every challenge from these peddlers of slander.

Wicked men tried to bring the Lord into disrepute by persecuting and torturing devotees like Prahlada; but, when they stood up to every challenge with joyful fortitude, they failed ignominiously. Prahlada gained vaster glory and the Lord's Truth was magnificently vindicated. Persons who cannot tolerate the Glory of the Avatar have indulged in such campaigns, in every Age! They have contributed to the heightening of the splendour and the spread of the message, in every Age. Their activities are all instruments to the propagation of the glory throughout the world.

Baseless Barking

Even today, such things happen; but, all of you must recognise their inevitability and their fundamental falsehood, and carry on your Sadhana in full faith and assurance, with undiminished enthusiasm and joy. The Sai Principle, the Sai Divinity can never be affected by any slander; it can never be shaken by any tactics; its progress can never be halted. Do not pay heed to the barkings you hear.

A stray dog stops and looks at its own shadow in the stream; it mistakes the shadow for another dog and starts barking aloud. This sets all the dogs in the neighbourhood, and later in the region, bark in unison. The reason why the first dog barked is its own ignorance of fact. The reason why the other dogs followed suit is that the first dog called the tune. A huge scare is built on a patent falsehood. Thus the story goes on, adding one thing to another.

Just as devotees remained unruffled in the Age of Krishna, you too must stand firm and be unaffected. Faith must endow you with courage and calmness. The life of Krishna teaches you this lesson more than others: do not lend your ears or mortgage your minds to purveyors of scandal or lies.

Krishna had to meet these traducers and destroy them one by one, throughout His life. His parents, His companions, His devotees, no one had peace from this tribe. The message of this Festival is that you must see the Truth that is covered by all the tales and legends that tarnish the Name.

Ananda

Devotion to the Divine will give you Bliss, and Prosperity and Peace. It cannot inflict pain, perturbation or personal anxiety. It fosters Love and brings all together as one band of brothers. The Avatar will not be affected in the least by these trivial tactics. It is Love itself; so, It is always Bliss, always happy in song and dance.

Krishna lived all His years singing and dancing in the ecstasy which was His very nature. He was humming a tune within Himself all the while, whether He was on a flower-bed or a battlefield.

I too am unaffected by praise or blame. My Ananda never suffers diminution. Where there is Love, there is Ananda; where there is Ananda, there is Music. That is the reason why Krishna sang the Bhagavad-Gita (the Celestial Song) while the clarion calls to start the holocaust were rising from the serried ranks, eager for the fray.

Love knows no fear, no untruth, no anxiety, no grief. I am Love; I shower Love; I share Love; I am pleased with Love; I bless that you have more and more of Love to more and more Beings. Love is God. Live in Love—that is the message of Sri Krishna Janmashtami.

—*Baba: Prasanthi Nilayam: 10-8-74*

Sairam

Sairam, we say, to brother Sairam;
Sairam, we say, to sister Sai Ram!
But, why? For this
To Tell him or her the Truth
That Sairam is the Reality
That activates the senses and the brain,
The mind, the manifold waves
Of passion and of pulse
Of egoistic urge;
That Sairam is the spark
Of Light and Love
That shines in him or her;
That we and they are One;
That there is no we or they
If only we delve deep
Into the Ocean of Mystery;
But, there is just One,
The One without a Second
SAIRAM

—Tarak Das

If the dancer trips, he blames the drummer, as the saying goes. This does not apply to the spiritual field. Here, you have to climb the peak alone. The I comes up at the first provocation: 'I am blamed; I am neglected'. The ego is up in arms against the world. To put it down, you must see Krishna in every one, every one who is blaming, praising, neglecting or honouring you.

—Baba

The Awakening Hymn

Bhagavan has always been emphasising on our realising the importance of the inner meaning of whatever we read in spiritual literature or perform as rituals; for, they are soaked in significant symbolism. Attention to the implications of the symbols is sure to help us in our Sadhana.

Bhagavan has stated that He has three Forms of Existence—the gross, the subtle, and the causal. In the gross aspect, He said, we see Him as Baba moving around Prasanthi Nilayam and showering Grace personally on the devotees and giving them material benefits, in all the places

where He grants His physical presence. In the subtle aspect, He said, He is the Inner Motivator of all beings on this Earth. And He said, that in the causal aspect, He is the All-pervading, Omnipotent cause and course of the Universe.

When we sing the Awakening Hymn at Prasanthi Nilayam or at our own homes or Group gatherings, we have to realise that we are addressing the Hymn not to the gross aspect of Bhagavan, but, to the subtle, the Sukshma Sarira aspect, the Sarva-bhuta-antaratma (the Inner Atmic Resident of all Beings). This search for the subtle aspect of Baba as delineated in the Awakening Hymn will take us into the depths of our own Heart, which itself is the genuine Prasanthi Nilayam, as often stated by Bhagavan.

If we adhere to the external meaning only of the Hymn, sung by us, after the Recitation of the Pranava (OM), every dawn, we are certain to encounter a few paradoxes. First, the very idea of awakening Bhagavan and praying to Him to start the day's functions! Is He really asleep? Does He awaken only after listening to us? Who are we to dare do such an atrocious task, as awakening the sleeping Bhagavan? No. The hymn is intended to awaken the subtle Baba residing in us. Or else, it has no value or validity. It conflicts with our concept of Baba as God Incarnate.

Brahman is the Unconditioned Absolute, the Universal, the Sat-Chit-Ananda Consciousness. God is the same Consciousness, conditioned but not controlled or constricted by "Maya," which is nothing but "Vanchcha" (Desire) and "Vasana" (tendencies created by the pressure of Desires). Both Brahman and God or Easwara are concepts difficult to understand and picture. God or the Divine, desires to enclose Itself in a human case and comes as Avatar.

When God incarnates as Man, He can be approached for Darshan (adoring Him while He is physically present), Sparshan (touching the Feet and contacting the Divine Power of Grace) and Sambhashan (getting the chance of elevating and purifying oneself through listening to His Voice communicating inspiration and instruction to us).

This principle of Incarnation is signified in the opening words of the Awakening Hymn (Suprabhatam) which is in the Sanskrit language—Easwarambasuthah Sreeman. Easwaramma is the name of the Mother: she was named so, long before Bhagavan was born, but, significantly enough, the name she was given by her parents means "Mother of Easwara"!

The word means, Son of the mother of Easwara, thus declaring that Baba is Easwara, the embodied Brahman, the conditioned Consciousness, the Spark of the Universal, working within us as the Illuminator and the Enlightener. Its Divine Abode is our spiritual heart. What we do when we sing the Awakening Hymn in the Brahma muhurta (the pre-dawn hour when the Brahman is more prone to become patent to the awareness) after repeating OM twenty one times is—to awaken the Consciousness, which is the Illuminator of all our thoughts, impulses and actions.

And, it is not we that address this Consciousness to awaken; no. It is our Pranas (Vital Airs), Indriyas (Organs of perception and of action), Mind, Intellect, and Sense of Awareness or Chitta. These can function only with the Grace of the Divine Consciousness in us; so we pray to that Consciousness to take note of them and their demands.

The recitation of OM twenty one times is of immense importance, and has special value as a preliminary to the awakening which we are keen on. OM is the Nada or Resonance of the Universal, the Note that is dominant in the music of the Universe, the Sphota which originated as the initial emanation of the Universe from the seed of desire in Brahman. OM vibrates our entire gross, subtle and causal 'bodies' and tunes our mental awareness to the Divine Consciousness. By this recitation, we are adjusting ourselves and getting ready to catch a glimpse of the Brahman inside us.

The second word of the song is "Sreeman." It means, one who is the source of wisdom, prosperity, progress, and peace. One who can confer all these, that is to say the Divinity present in us as our real Reality.

The very next line in the song speaks of the time, the predawn brightness in the eastern sky—Poorvaa sandhyaa Pravarthathe, the dawn is breaking on the eastern horizon. 'The rising of the sun' is only a relative concept, or rather, an illusion. The sun never rises or sets; it only appears so. The same illusion is within us. Our Consciousness does not sleep; it only appears so. Only our senses, our mind and our intellect sleep. The Consciousness is the witness of all the three states (the waking, the dreaming and the sleeping). When these get out of their sleep, we think that the Consciousness is waking up; so, we ask this Consciousness, this Chaitanya to wake up and begin Its Divine Functions. It is folly to think that we can wake Him up or that He needs waking up to function.

The first line of the second stanza in the hymn addresses Bhagavan as Partheesa, the Lord of Parthi. Parthi is short for Puttaparthi, the village of "snake mounds". Parthi or Puttaparthi stands for the snake-mound, which symbolises the human body; 'putta' is of the same earth as this body; it is the grossest form of Prakriti or Nature. The body is a snake-mound, because snakes or evil desires infest it. And, Baba is the Master whose Grace is needed to master the snakes and the Nature of which the mound is composed.

He is also Jagatheepati, the Lord of this Jagat. Jagat means all that moves, changer or is impermanent. He, the eternal unchanging Principle, is the master of the changeless Reality. In the second line, Bhagavan is referred to as "karuna poorna", full of Compassion. For, this entire Creation is His Leela, His Play and He is full of tender mercy and even appreciation for all the participants in His Play. What is the purpose of the Grace and Compassion that He showers? The next word—lokamangala siddhaye—for the establishment of peace and prosperity in the world—answers that question.

The third stanza is very significant, since it locates the 'abode' of Bhagavan within us. It says, Bhagavan in the vast, quiet building called Prasantha, that is to say, in the 'heart' of the wise; it says that the building is on the banks of the Chitravati. The river is symbolic of our own Sushumna nadi, the solar plexus, through which flows the Kundalini power. There, the Sun of Sathya Sai resides, and when He is propitiated, His effulgent splendour illumines the entire world—Aditya kanthiranubhuthi samastha lokan. In the absence of that splendour, nothing can function—the senses, the mind or the intellect. They are activated only by this Consciousness, the Spark of Divinity.

The Hymn has five stanzas which refer to five different types of devotees who gather at the Prasanthi Nilayam, eager to uplift themselves by evoking Bhagavan's Grace. (1) The Keerthana rathaah—those who take delight in praising Divine Glory. Those who are engaged in Karma or Activity, directed towards Adoration, those who use the Indriyas and Pranas (Senses and Vital Airs) for doing karmas under the guidance of the Divine in them. (2) The Bhakthaah, the devotees, who have 'maha uthsukatha', great yearning to 'sree paadapuja', to worship the auspicious Lotus Feet and who have brought 'divyakusumam', holy flowers for the purpose. The flowers are called holy and so, are not mere botanical acquisitions. They are Satwic Vasanas, purely motivated impulses and attitudes.

These devotees symbolically represent the mind, the seat of devotion, now full of holy creative loving thoughts and aspirations. (3) Next, mention is made of learned persons, the budhaah, the intellectuals, who have come from long distances (of doubt and dilatoriness) and who recite the mantras or spiritual formulae handed down from the sages of the past. These symbolise our own buddhi, or intelligence, which prays for clarification and consecration.

(4) The hymn mentions next the Jijnasu, the sincere inquirer, the earnest seeker, uncommitted to any authority or path, who are more evolved than mere devotees or the learned. They have come in search of the Divine Consciousness within, having heard adbhutha charithra (the history of the mystery) and the akhanda keerthi (the unbroken fame of the glory) of the Sai that is resident in every thing and being.

This type of aspiration is symbolic of the Chitta, the prompter of the heart. Bhagavan is the Chitta-chora, the thief who steals one's Chitta and desires to make it His Own. By appropriating the Chitta to Himself, He saves us from ruining our lives; He helps us realise the Reality and release ourselves from the coils of the ego.

(5) Last come the anganaah, the women, the feminine principle in every one, the Gopi aspect of the personality, who, like lotuses that bloom when the Sun rises, are awaiting the dawn. The stanza says, they sing the glory of Siva, the wearer of serpents as ornaments. They identify Baba with Siva, for, the Divine Principle or Sai is what makes the body live; or else, without It, one is only a Savam or a corpse.

Siva is what makes Prakriti or gross matter full of Chaitanya or Consciousness. The women are like petals of the lotus which though it is a water plant does not allow the water to wet it. Devotees have to be in the world but not of it; they must develop detachment, and, the women devotees, the Gopis are pull of this renunciation.

Siva is the chit, the individualised consciousness. The serpent is the symbol as Baba has often said, of the vertebral column, tapering towards the bottom like the tail and spreading at the top like the hood. Siva arouses and awakens the Kundalini power that is latent, lying coiled at the base of this serpent column.

Thus, in this hymn, we get a complete picture of the Pranas (vital air), indriyas (sense and work organs), manas (mind), buddhi (intellect) and chitta (Individualised consciousness), praying at

the beginning of a new day, for the Grace of the resident Divine (Sai). The Divine Consciousness is reflected as Awareness in the senses, as information in the mind, as Knowledge in the intellect, and as Wisdom in the Chitta. When one ultimately realises one's own self, the individualised consciousness merges in the super-consciousness or the Sai Consciousness. In other words the Jiva Atma which is a spark of the Param Atma becomes one with the latter.

By daily reciting the Awakening Hymn, one reaches this supreme consummation, the Param-dhama, the highest spiritual state. The last stanza contains a Prayer to the Teacher, the Guru, Sai, who is instructing us from our own heart, the Parthi (Heart) vasa, (dweller), the "Jnana-dayini" or Wisdom Bestower. Sai confers mangalam (prosperity or success in the most arduous undertaking, viz., realising the Truth of all truths) on all.

—*Prof. M. Krishnakutty Menon*

The Prophecy

Everywhere amongst the youth of this land, there is a great evocative cry for Christ, Jesus, God, Saviour, Reality etc. Many groups preach about the return or reappearance of Christ. But, most of them have very definite ideas of how He must return. They also feel that He will return in the same Form as formerly. Such people find it most difficult to accept the possibility that He is indeed amidst us and has been for 48 years!

Those with no religion to speak of or even those with no real belief in God are sometimes quicker to accept the possibility of Baba's Divine Advent. It is most interesting to be a witness of all these waves of faith and unbelief. Truly, we are seeing much prophecy come true in this generation. As of late, America has been upon a prophecy binge: on every bookstand we can find countless books on Biblical, Classical, Mediaeval, Oriental accounts, showing how events occurring upon today's world stage were foretold by sages and seers.

If one observes with enough attention, one can find Baba fulfilling quite a large portion of the Prophecies Himself. For example, there are several quotations from the books of the Tibetan Adept, DJHWAL KHUL (written by his amanuensis Alice Bailey) that seem extremely applicable to the Advent of Sai Baba.

Let me take just one of these books: "The Externalization of the Hierarchy," published in 1957. He says that the Christian Concept of a triumphant return of Christ, from the clouds of Heaven, to Jerusalem is true in one sense: but, not so true as to design, location and method. "Christ will return; the Jerusalem referred to is not the chief city of a small country called Palestine or the Holy Land. The word literally means 'the place of Peace' (Prasanthi Nilayam?). Jerusalem is symbolic of a peaceful world, a world which through its own self-initiated efforts has attained a general quietude and has acquired a certain measure of right human relations. His coming in the air from the clouds might well mean that at the right time, He will come by plane from the place on earth where He has been, for many generations watching over the sons of men. The words, 'Every eye shall see Him' might mean that, by the time He comes, television will have been perfected so that He will be seen, by this means, from even the most distant spot on earth."

Orthodox Christians will see in this line of thought the rankest blasphemy, says Bailey. But, why should it be blasphemy for Him to use modern methods? "Whilst on earth before, Christ conformed to the customs of His Time. "Riding on the clouds of Heaven" may sound more picturesque; and require a greater expression of Divinity; but, why use such a means when a plane will fulfill the purpose equally well and carry the prophecy to completion?" asks the writer.

In other pages of the same book, we have very significant statements: "His major task is surely the establishing of right human relations in every department of human living. He will again appear and guide mankind into a civilisation and a state of consciousness in which right human relations and world-wide co-operation for the good of all will be the universal key-note." This is what Baba means by His Mission of Dharma-sthapana!

The Book says, "The generally accepted idea that He will return triumphant as a warrior, omnipotent and irresistible has surely no basis. That He will ultimately lead His People (humanity) into Jerusalem is a fact founded on a secure foundation, but, it will not be into a city called Jerusalem; but into 'the Place of Peace' as the word Jerusalem means." And, again, "He recognises and loves those who are not Christian, but, who retain their allegiance to the Founders of other Faiths, the Buddha, Mohamed and others. He cares not what the faith is, but only whether the objective is Love of God and of Humanity. If men look for the Christ who left His disciples centuries ago, they will fail to recognise the Christ who is in the process of returning. The Christ has no religious barriers in His consciousness. It matters not to Him what faith a man may call himself." Another sentence is very illuminating, "the main objective of the Christ (when He returns) will not be to demonstrate power, but, to make public the already existent Kingdom of God." Read this sentence too: "When He came before, He was unrecognised. Is there any guarantee that, this time, it would be different?"

In the years of study that I have made of these Books on Prophecy, I am constantly struck with the actual expression and demonstration that Sathya Sai Baba is presently working out on this planet. For all who care to see, the very statements that the Tibetan has made are being fulfilled today. The Tibetan has stated that the returned Christ will teach the following subjects to Humanity; reading the list, one cannot but infer that Baba is the Divine Incarnation he has in mind: The laws of Karma and Reincarnation, the Illusion of Death and the truth of Immortality, the True Science of Meditation, and the Principle of essential Divinity are the subjects mentioned. While teaching the law of Right human Relationships (Dharma), the overall keynote, according to the author, will be the Brotherhood of Man and the Fatherhood of God.

Besides, it is said, that the Returned Christ will reveal and express the Will of God as well as the Love of God; He will bring restoration and renovation into education, religion, finance and in general, all phases of planetary life. He will revitalise the existing 'magnetic spots' upon the planet and re-charge (!) various shrines, talismans etc.! Millions, it is said, will experience the inner Birth of Christ, within the Heart; thousands will undergo the Baptism of the Spirit Experience."

Those who have been blessed by the Darshan of Sathya Sai can have no doubts about the Advent that the Prophecy has announced it has happened. The greatest wonder is that we have been allowed to take part in this incredible Drama.

—Denise

The Three D's

It is irrefutable that Bhagavan's Mission is to bring about a spiritual transformation, in order to save mankind from the abysmal depths of materialism into which it is blindly heading at present. His self-imposed task is to weed out the vices in man and nourish the virtues. For this purpose, He emphasises, in private interviews with people who approach Him for guidance, in public discourses, as well as in His talks to groups of workers in the Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, or members of the Sathya Sai Seva Dal, or students of the Sathya Sai or other Colleges, the supreme value of three D's: Duty, Discipline and Devotion.

These are not accidental accompaniments of His spiritual teachings, or just ornamental fringes of His Message. They are the central core of His Mission. They are vital to the crucial task of reviving spiritual values; they are the keys to open the gateway to the exciting discovery of the Divine in man, a discovery for which Bhagavan is calling all of us. "Realise the Sai that is resident in your hearts," is His relentless exhortation.

In these critical days, duty, discipline and devotion are a trinity of virtues, indispensable as means for the survival of man. They stand for the three dimensions of human existence, the three relationships which mark out the life of man on earth: man's relationship with his own inner self, which is governed by Discipline; man's relationship with the Society in the midst of which he is placed, governed by Duty; and man's relationship with God, of whom he is the image, governed by Devotion.

Bhagavan does not wish to make saints of us, detached from human kind or material ties; neither does He advise us to become Rishis engaged in undisturbed meditation in Himalayan solitudes. He wants us to live, free and full, in all three dimensions—individual, social and spiritual. In other words, He enjoins on us a life, worthy of the Divinity of which we are the expressions, unaffected by the sordid realities that may be around us. And, for such a life, the trio of the three D's are invaluable guides.

Bhagavan speaks of Discipline as the first of these three. Discipline, for what end? The personal and direct experiences of the individual do constitute his private life. His yearnings and urges, his strength and weaknesses, his emotions and passions, these define, to a large extent, his relation with his self. Discipline is meant to train the mind, to regulate the passions and emotions and to resist the temptations that assail from all around. When passions are allowed to run wild, man reduces himself to the level of the beast.

Driven by the mad urges of his unbridled passions, man is driven into evil, vice and sin; but, he can never more be at peace with himself, for, he will be troubled by his conscience. As long as the evil remains unconquered, the conflict between it and the good in us goes on unabated. The

result is, man cannot attain inner harmony, achieve the awareness of the Divinity latent in him. Discipline, therefore, helps in the consummation of the goal of realising the God in us.

The second D is 'Duty'. When Bhagavan speaks of Duty, to whom is that 'Duty' due? The mind may either be subject to rigorous discipline, and thus, made good and vital; it may not contribute anything to man's relations with the society where he lives. Man does not, cannot live in isolation. He lives in a social milieu with all its myriad activities, problems, entanglements and interpenetrations. And, so he cannot escape his responsibilities and obligations to the society that has fostered, guarded, taught and shaped him.

Indeed, our attitude to, and our relations with, society are largely defined by our sense of duty. Those who have a sense of duty know that service to humanity is service to God. Such men refuse to be corrupted by temptations. The evils of society today such as nepotism, adulteration, hoarding etc., are traceable to the dwindling sense of duty to society. Dharma is dislodged wherever the usurer, the black-marketeer or hoarder is respected and an honest man treated as a fool. So, one major plank in Bhagavan's programme is to inculcate in every one a sense of duty towards the society he lives in.

The third virtue Bhagavan insists upon is Devotion. Devotion to whom? Obviously to God. Devotion develops the third dimension of man's personality. It transcends the limits of the individual or even as a member of society. Devotion to God awakens and purifies our deepest yearnings.... for Peace, Bliss, Power and Tranquility. It deals with the problems of life and death, sin and destiny. Devotion does not mean mechanical chanting of mantras with ritual regularity. True devotion reflects itself in action, both public and private.

God's Grace cannot be won by duplicity. Devotion to God should be reflected in every sphere of activity. It should keep us at peace with ourselves, with society also. Then only can it earn for us Bhagavan's Grace.

The three D's are not mutually exclusive; they are complementary to one another. Man's life on earth is all of a piece. So, unification of these virtues and a harmonious growth of all these dimensions are the real aims of Bhagavan's teachings of these three dimensions. If one outgrows the other in any one, he becomes a distorted personality, an unfinished product. The three D's form a trident, with which we are taught to fight the evil, to subdue the ego and to lift the human in us to the heights of the Divine.

The three D's are today sought to be most scrupulously followed in the growing family of Sai devotees. Any one who stumbles into a circle of Sai devotees cannot fail to notice the sense of humility, modesty, duty and devotion with which they go about their mundane pursuits. Many of them live their lives with a sense of strict discipline, do their duty with self-less missionary zeal and in devotion, they are next to none. Always God-fearing, ever conscious of their duty to their fellow-men, they are free from the social evils and private sins responsible for the moral and spiritual decay of the world today.

If the Message of Bhagavan is spread in every nook and corner, and if the values of Duty, Discipline and Devotion are embraced by mankind, a New Era will dawn and a New Man will

emerge, whose mind will be guided by the noblest concept, 'the Brotherhood of Man and the Father-hood of God'. We are glad to announce that that spring is not far behind.

—*J. Srihari Rao*

Baba Answers

Question: Swami! Excuse me. A person, observing you moving amongst people and choosing some of them for special attention, is puzzled why some are left out.

Sri Sathya Sai: Yes. It is quite natural that you are puzzled. One looking from the outside cannot know who is worthy and who is not.

Question: People say that they are often punished by Swami. Is that a fact?

Sri. Sathya Sai: Of course. In punishing a person for misdemeanour, Swami wants to correct the defaulter. But, though harsh in appearance, at other times, he is all Love inside. Sometimes he corrects a person in private; at other times, he does so, in public. For, if he corrects in public, all who hear will learn and see for themselves, what pleases Swami and what does not. Swami is very strict in his principles and rules. An Avatar does not compromise. To the Sadhaka, strictness is, ultimately, the best kindness.

Question: Yes, Swami. Persons near you have to be perfect.

Sri. Sathya Sai: People judge Swami by the conduct and behaviour, the earnestness and sincerity, the generosity and humility of those 'near' him. So, those who are outwardly 'distant' are not apparently dealt with so severely. But, even they are watched and warned. Depending on the situation, I can be soft as a rose petal or hard as diamond.

Question: Swami is the motivator of the individual, I have heard you say it. I know it is true. How then do persons commit faults?

Sri. Sathya Sai: Swami is the 'I' in you and in every one else. The 'I' which prompts you to will, to think and act is the reflection of the 'I' that I am. The Sun is reflected in water. wherever it lies; whatever its quality. The Sun warms the water it shines upon. When the reflection is in muddy water, we say the person is Tamasic—dull, slothful, stupid, fond of darkness, revelling in ignorance. When the Sun is reflected in water that is quivering in ripples, the person is Rajasic, passionate adventurous, emotional. When the Sun is reflected in clear calm limpid water, the person is Satwic, calm, unruffled, full of peace and inner joy.

Question: Many Gurus teach, "All is done by the Lord; and, not by you." But, the world over, there is the concept, that man is responsible for his actions.

Sri. Sathya Sai: As long as you believe you are only human, this concept will persist. But, that cannot change the truth—"You are God."

Question: We do not will to be human, and not God!

Sri. Sathya Sai: No, you do not. It is just a matter of being confused. It is a delusion. At present, there is in you a mixture of 5 states of consciousness: the unconscious, the subconscious, the conscious, the super conscious and the Divine Consciousness, where God alone IS. When you

raise yourselves from one state to another, the idea of your being *merely human* will vanish of itself. The Gita teaches man first to engage himself in 'work'; then, he is asked to 'give up the desire to earn the fruits of work'; later, he is told that Dharma is his only concern; afterwards, Dharma is interpreted as Dharma for liberation; finally, he is told that even the desire for, Liberation is to be given up. 'Be attached Jo Me alone', is the final lesson. You do not *will* to be human; you are *misled* to believe so.

Question: Pardon a question that borders on the personal. Swami seems, to us to have different moods; what does this mean

Sri. Sathya Sai: I am not hurt by any type of questions; in fact, I want you to be free of all doubt. Remember, Swami is always happy. He is always Bliss. No worries, no concerns can affect the Bliss.

Question: Yes. Swami is often heard saying, 'Yes. Yes. Yes'.

Sri. Sathya Sai: Your tendency is to say 'Yes' to that which is pleasing to you, and 'No' if the prospect is otherwise. Swami says, 'Yes. Yes. Yes.' to everything that comes. For, everything is My Gift; everything is Good for the person, at the time, for the purpose I have in view.

Question: Considering the Task that Swami has undertaken, it is strange that You are always in Bliss.

Sri. Sathya Sai: The boat glides over the flood; but, does not allow the flood to enter it. On Swami's shoulders alone rests an ever increasing burden. The problems and sorrows of millions of people; the institutions and individuals who turn to Him for guidance; the interviews, the prayers, the petitions. On the mental level, unknown to you, I am with all who yearn for God, no matter where they actually are, over the entire world.

I am by the side of seekers, saints, yogis, rishis, everywhere, watching them, counselling them, fostering every sign of progress towards God and Self-realisation. But, the Bliss in Me is constant, unchanging. Even outwardly, My Bliss can be noted as constant, even while I may appear angry, impatient, aloof or distant. The anger is put on, just to set right some situation; the aloofness is assumed, for the particular time and place. My Love is as constant as My Bliss.

Question: Those saints, rishis and sages do they pray for counsel? Is not praying the same as begging? If we are God, we beg only from ourselves.

Sri. Sathya Sai: It is not begging, when you ask God for something. When you receive what He gives, you have to rise up to His level, at least for that moment. When you beg from, one equal to you, you put yourselves down and he is raised up. When you beg from one lower than you, you degrade yourself still lower. But, when you beg from God, you rise; you are elevated in spirit and you sense fulfillment.

Question: But, I had thought that since God knows all, He would remedy the situation, if it is appropriate that it should be done.

Sri. Sathya Sai: Of course, He would, provided you have surrendered fully, without any reservation. But, until then...

Question: Yes. Swami had written in a letter to me, "Do not worry about your health. Your God is always with you, in you and around you."

Sri. Sathya Sai: That is right. What I said is enough, for those who have surrendered! You must weaken your sense of identification with the body. You may have a headache today, a stomachache tomorrow. Don't worry. You are not the body; no; you are the Atma, the Divine Dweller in this body. Once I have told you not to worry, there is no more need to ask Me about it. Don't identify.

Question: Swami said that while praying to God, the petitioner raised himself to the level of God. In order to make such a prayer, in what state of mind should one first put himself?

Sri. Sathya Sai: It is not necessary that one should put oneself into any particular state of meditation.

Question: Usually, the advice is, that one should go to a quiet place and be in a quiet mood when he wishes to pray.

Sri, Sathya Sai: Wherever and whenever you put yourselves in touch with God, that is the state of meditation. You may feel that 1 P. M. in California is not a good time to call Me, for I may be asleep in India and that I should not be disturbed! I know you have felt like that once or twice I But, I am omnipresent; I have no such limitations. I never sleep. At the middle of the night, I turn off the light and rest in bed, because if the light is on, devotees will gather. I have no need of sleep. But, you need at least 4 hours of sleep.

Question: If I am walking .in the street, with people around, and my mind engaged with things I must do, is that a good time?

Sri. Sathya Sai: At the beginning; one might need some special circumstances for clearing the mind of junk and concentrate on God; but, when you become aware of God in every thing and everywhere, no matter where you are, it is the same; prayer can emerge from the heart and reach God.

Question: Swami! You have said that in meditation one should strive to cut off the Form aspect. But, we worship your Form and like it. We pray to that Form.

Sri. Sathya Sai: That is the right thing to do; but, later, when visualisation is abandoned, you come closer. Now, you are looking at Me directly.

Question: Swami! When they heard of, Krishna's Death, many Gopis fell lifeless from the shock. So, their relationship was only with the Form of Krishna, it seems.

Sri. Sathya Sai: No. The Gopis had both relationships. Because of their years of close companionship, they were strongly attached with the physical Presence. But, they also knew Krishna in their hearts as their Innermost Reality. They always felt He was with them, even when His worldly activity took Him far away, physically.

Question: Then, why the terrible shock? If Krishna was so firmly imprinted on their hearts?

Sri. Sathya Sai: Their only reason for placing any value on the body was that Krishna was also in physical existence! When Krishna left, they had no more interest in the world!

Question: One last question, Swami! On behalf of America. Will Swami come soon?

Sri. Sathya Sai: My coming will delay, until a base is built in America. However, I can go to America or any other Continent, informally, any time. The devotee need only call Me; I will appear at once.

—*From the Notebook of John Hislop*

Baba Spoke Thus

It is pinning your hopes on impermanencies that give rise to the 'hells'. The mind sees a magnificent pie in the sky; it dwells on it; it wants it; it yearns single-mindedly; the cry for more is endless. Remember, the God that is here, can alone steer you through a lifetime of eternal change. His ways are endless; but, so are the changes!

The universal solution to all problems has, as its base, non-holding, choicelessness. Any preference, even as the universal solution, leads to clinging, and to want. What is universal cannot be obtained by choice or will; it is not the product of directed Will. It is known most easily by means of 'profound indifference', Upeksha, not Apeksha. Upeksha is born of the experience of Apeksha or attachment, want and its futile fulfillment, the experience of endless Change.

When it is very clear to your deepest being that nothing 'lasts', choosing and clinging become pointless. Nowhere 'without', in the bahya, has anything been able to meet your needs for long. Whatever outer fulfillment has come your way is but a fraction of that within. The outer 'hell' can be lifted away, only from within. Want nothing from without—that is `the mantra for the Sadhaka.

Learn the peace that this mantra gives. Dare proceed alone, into the inner realms of emotions impulses instincts complexes confusions, depending entirely on Me, the Master of Your Mystery. I do not ask for perfect concentration, unswerving one-pointedness. Come into the caverns of your heart with the Lamp of Love, fed by faith in Me.

—*From A New Yorker's Notebook*

Divine Mother

Sai! You are in my heart
As I am in Your heart;
Forever we're one heart
Called—SOHAM; called LOVE.

Sai! Hrudaya Vihari!
You're Dharma and Shanti
You're Sathya and Prema;
Omnipresent One! SOHAM.

You are the Ocean;
I am the wave.
You are the mountain;
I am the cave.
You are the blue sky;
I am the star.

Sai! Divine Mother!
As ONE we area

You are the Love Tree;
I am your clinging vine.
You are the Divine Poet;
I am your rhyme.
You are the Father;
I am your loving son.
You are the Divine Mother;
I am your tender child;
Sai! Breath of my breath
From birth until death "
Through ages, my Guide
Through ages, my God!

—Lite Storm, California, U. S. A.

Durga Puja

Man has always believed in symbols, to communicate his ideas and feelings. The image of Mahishasura Mardini, the Form of Durga that is worshipped in many parts of India during Dasara is a very eloquent symbol. Look at the Lion which -is tearing the buffalo-demon into shreds.'-That is the animal method. The buffalo is the dull, doubting, deluded nature of man; it has to be destroyed by passionate, active, adventurous traits. But, the Mother Durga, has

sweetness and compassion in Her face. The face is calm and serene, shedding grace and guidance. And, cast your eyes for a while on the face of Mahishasura, the demon emerging from the animal mould. Don't you see a sign of delight, of recognition of the Mother, whom he had long forgotten, on that face? What we see in the picture is the elevation of the human mind from the stupid animal level to the pure Divine Level, from the Ogre to the, Oversoul, the Paramatma.

On and from Mahalaya Day, the New Moon Day, after which Dasara starts, the Devi Mahatmya epic is read religiously in every home, by every aspirant and adorer. O, what a cosmic picture of the Mother does that epic reveal! "Mother is all suspiciousness, all prosperity, all happiness, wherever found (Sivam); Mother is all goodness (Bhadram); Mother is timeless, eternal (Nityam). Mother is in all beings (sarva bhuteshu) as hunger in all its manifold forms (kshudha), modesty in man, woman child, bird, flower, dawn, stream and dell, (lajja); she is all the attributes—soft and hard, tame and wild, mild and mellow—in all the attributeful things and beings.

The description of the Indescribable Mother ends with the statement: "Obeisance to Her who permeates the entire Universe as `Consciousness' (Chit)." In fact, she is the Sat, she is the Chit and she is the Ananda, without which nothing can be nothing can Become. Mother Durga symbolises Love, Compassion, Grace. She is in all. Every person deserves our reverence, our adoration. All are Divine, masked as humans.

I lived several years in Calcutta and have gathered happy memories of Durga Puja there. It marks the end of the rains; it is the harbinger of pleasant days. It ushers a season of gifts, of cheer, of charity and goodwill. Groups of young men form Puja Committees, and erect Puja Pandals, where they install images of the Mother. There is an aura of adoration round every head, it is like the Ramalila in Delhi, the Ganapati festivals in Maharashtra and Karnataka.

The Puja is thick with fanfare, pomp, music, dance and all the ardour of folk psyche. The faithful manifest reverence and even the faithless evince respect and are carried along by popular enthusiasm.

The old shake their heads in dismay at the novel faces that the artists have given to the Mother and the strange tunes in which the bhajans are sung. But, the young are happy and gay. They learn lessons in organisation and in mutual help; they scatter love and brotherhood all around them. They enjoy the spectacular processions, the religious plays, the dances and the kirtans; they man the twin boats on the Ganga carrying the image of the Mother on the final day for the ceremonious Immersion.

What has amazed me is that the Puja is celebrated thus, year after year, by the young people of Calcutta and other cities in Bengal. It is a Youth Festival par excellence. The question may arise: Do they have the deep faith? It is a difficult question to answer. And, lack of faith is not peculiar to youth; in fact, many of the older generation go through only the shell of the ritual. The youth have learnt the rudiments of their behaviour from the elders who place examples before them.

In Bengal, Durga Puja will ever be; it cannot decline. For, it is Sarbajanin, a great folk festival, organised by youth.

Youth is ever fresh, ever optimistic, ever enthusiastic. They worship the Mother so ardently, perhaps because their memory of Mother is more vivid and more vital than that of the adults, since these latter have also greater energy; they can co-operate with each other more effectively. And, looking at the youth that study in the Sathya Sai Colleges and attend the Summer Courses at Whitefield, one can say that they are definitely more spiritual than the elders among whom they live. Who can gauge the hearts of the youth of India better than the Mother, the Sai Mata.

I have always enjoyed getting up from bed at 4 A.M. in Calcutta on Mahalaya Day for, the call, 'Jaago Maa! Tumi Jaago!' fills the air with ecstasy, rising from a thousand throats. Mother has come back to her children. Mother has many hands; her hands are everywhere; all hands are hers. Mother wields many weapons; She uses for each occasion, on each individual she desires to heal, the weapon most appropriate for the purpose. She fosters, She destroys, She protects, She teaches, She fulfils. All that lives is activated by Her; She is Shakti, Energy, Vitality, Meaning.

What is the relevance of Durga Puja in the Atomic Age? Let us, while witnessing the Puja introspect and ask ourselves; "Whither are we bound? Whither is the Mother, the Sai Mata, leading us?" Is the path, which many leaders of men have laid down, towards rapid industrialisation and unchecked technological progress the answer? Can it ensure human peace, human love, human progress as a community of brothers and sisters?"

Ramana Maharshi said, "Since the mind understands the world through the five channels of the senses, is there a world, other than the mind?" Modern science has found that the world we see is 'true' only in so far as the five senses are capable of interpreting it to us. A table is true, only with reference to the extent that the senses of eyesight and touch can penetrate. If we had the ability to see more incisively, we might be seeing no table, but, only a whirring gyration of knotted energy. Raymon Johnson, in a remarkable book, named 'the Imprisoned Splendour' says, "Perhaps, we can leave this strange world of the almost infinitesimally small, with the realisation that none of our mental concepts—colour, position, shape, sound, resistance touch, etc.—apply there! Indeed, Space, and Time which seem to dominate our familiar world are quite elusive in the Microcosm!"

If the world as we see it is a 'mental aberration' as these make out, how are we to find 'peace'—this is our basic problem. The answer is: Awaken the Divine Spirit in each of us, the Mother, and take refuge in Her. "Jaago Maa; tumi jaago."

Sai Mata says. "Children! I know you are agitated, since you are tossed on waves of anxiety and fear. But, the world has not changed for the worse. You have changed! You are nervous, you are afraid, you hate; you are filled with greed! Correct yourself, the world will get corrected. You create the world on the pattern of your prejudices and predilections. You see many, because you seek the many. But, in fact, there is only One. See the One; serve the One; love the One. Love knows no fear, no untruth, no grief, no greed. Love is God. Love is Mother. Live in Love."

"Jaago Maa. Tumi Jaago."

Educating Educators

Educational institutions in most countries have failed to deliver the goods. The American author, Alvin Toffler has condemned the educational system of America in his book, 'Future Shock'; the Mexican author, Evan Illich does the same in his book, "Deschooling Society" for Mexico; the Brazilian Paulo Friere has the same story to tell in his book, "Pedagogy of the Oppressed." He says that in developing countries, education has become a major instrument for the perpetuation of the 'culture of silence' for the dispossessed and oppressed masses. In India, we have a spate of research articles, books and articles revealing that our educational system has belied all hopes.

Teachers blame politicians for this sad state of affairs; politicians blame the teachers and social planners; students blame the educational administrators and teachers; these latter ascribe it all to the students. Parents who are economically weak blame the rich for grabbing all educational opportunities; the affluent blame the poor for the lowering of educational standards. Both teachers and students have learnt the politician's strategy of slogan-mongering, and staging bandhs, gheraos, strikes and other tactics. Elders and spiritual guides, proud of the nation's heritage, blame the educational colonialism, instilling in the minds of the young a set of pseudo-modern values; banishing from the curricula both religion and morality. The proverbial poverty of the people is trotted out as an excuse by every one. In sum, everybody is shirking the responsibility to identify the causes and remove the ills.

Meanwhile, the fundamental cause of the failure of education remains unrecognised. It is this: The social sciences have failed to evolve a proper conception of 'man and society' and, the role of education for the individual and for society. Education is not an independent discipline; it is based on philosophy, sociology, and psychology, and the conceptions dominant in those three.

My study of the writings and discourses of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the great Sadguru of the times, has revealed to me, with a great deal of surprise and embarrassment, that we, the so-called social scientists, have been labouring under a load of ignorance and confusion, about the real nature of man and society. This defect is the prime reason for the erroneous direction taken by social institutions, like education.

The view currently dominant about man is that he is basically an animal, urged by egoism, hatred, envy, greed and fear. While an earlier school of psychology judged him to be a bundle of instincts, the most popular of the modern schools treats him as, a creature of motives and drives, mostly unsocial and unethical, centering around the ego.

Since long, parents and teachers have mostly dealt with the child or the pupil, as a nuisance, a mini-devil! The widely accepted methods of disciplining the young and the means employed to examine his attainments betray this fact. But Bhagavan rejects this conception in toto. He declares, "You are not the centre of disquiet and untruth. You are the embodiment of peace; love is your very blood; your very nature is joy. Realise this by practice in actual experience". "Man

is Divine, take it from me. He is here on a holy mission for a Divine Purpose—he must earn here and now, his birthright, namely, Shanti (Peace)."

Sociologists today dilate upon "the Conflict Model of Society", according to which the basic condition of social life is discussion, arising through competition for power and advantage, between the groups. "This is the view of Alex Inkeles propounded in his book, 'What is Sociology'.

The Marxian contribution to sociological thought is the same: tension among the social classes, and consequent endless distrust. This theory has led Marx to decry religion as the opium of the poor, and as an evidence of resignation in the face of oppression. I hope I am not exaggerating when I remark that half of current Sociology and Political Science lives on glamourised Pictures of group-tensions and class-conflicts.

There is no room for God in the world built up by these theorists. Such theories have generated asanthi (anxiety), tension, violence and other disjunctive social processes. We have become habituated to the derivation of hedonistic pleasure out of these very tensions and conflicts. Which way will this attachment lead us?

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba has given an emphatic reply to this question. He told Dr. Goel of the National Council of Educational Research and Training, New Delhi, "I made you a Marxist for some years so that you may understand its language, its dialectics and its meaning, as preached and practised by a number of people in the world, But, do these not reveal an ignorance of human nature?" No one can be happy in the real sense, when he entertains these thoughts. Meanwhile, communist ideology is being injected into the educational system under various guises. Bhagavan's prescription is clear and concise. He says, "It is the duty of man to see in Society the expression of the Divinity, and inspired by that vision to use all his skills and efforts for the welfare and prosperity of Society". "The Brotherhood of Man can be translated in actual life, only on the basis of this Atmic vision—the vision that all are the self-same Atma." It is only when God is the Guide and Goal that there can be real Peace, Love and Truth.

Baba instructs us not to hate people or envy them on the basis of their wealth, caste, or social and cultural status. This enjoins upon all of us, teachers and students specially, to forego social and class prejudices, and develop healthy, pious, non-violent social contexts in schools, colleges, and homes.

Freud, the great psycho-analyst, discovered the libido as the driving force of human activity. By libido, he meant, the sex instinct. The climax of his thinking was that the ultimate desire of man was 'to meet Death'. Baba's philosophy and psychology of meditation, on the contrary, tell us that every person is a Divine Spark, whose highest and most insistent desire is to merge with the Source of that Spark, God. So, Baba lays emphasis in his system of meditation on turning towards the Source, the God of whom we are parts, and, transcending Death, becoming Immortal.

Sociology, as current today, rests heavily on what is called "the theory of reference groups". The individual cannot decide freely his role, performance or behaviour. The reference groups

surrounding him mentally or cognitively dictate hi; choice of these. The importance of the Individual is thus belittled by these sociologists.

Baba, on the other hand, lays greater emphasis on the inner promptings of the individual, his conscience, the Voice of God within him, cautiously heard during prayer or in one's meditation. Man should exercise his Viveka, faculty of discrimination, and act with a high sense of responsibility; he must refuse to be a mere pawn, scapegoat or slave. Baba instructs us thus, "Do not shape your conduct according to the opinions of others. Follow bravely, gladly and steadily the promptings of your own awakened conscience, your own Inner Self."

The overall emphasis of the science of sociology has been on treating Society as the basic Unit. Society, according to it, provides the basic incentive, guidance, help and control for the actions of the Individual. In Political Science, too, there has been, since long past, a similar controversy whether the State is for the Individual or the Individual is for the State. The State has now won.

The Individual has been relegated to a considerably inferior position, than either Society or State, creating, as a result, many imbalances and tensions. But, Baba asks, "What has Sociology or Science to do with the Science of the Spirit, or the Inquiry into the human spirit?" "No Society can find its fulfillment, no social ideal can fructify, without the blossoming of the Spirit of Man." Baba asserts that the Individual—the Atmic Reality of the Individual—is the only true permanent and reliable principle of social solidarity. Political parties, bureaucratic cliques, caste groupings, and other communities are bound to be limited, shallow, and flexible.

Modern sciences—physical as well as social—lay great stress on empiricism believing only in 'pratyaksha' and the conclusions of reasoning processes. We have been so indoctrinated by these sciences that we take pride in believing only what we can 'see' or 'experience' through our sense-media, and what we can reason out 'logically'.

Baba has baffled scientists all over the world, by transcending the laws they hold dear. He has given a jolt to our methodology too. "Do not be misled by what you see; what you do not see with your 'eyes' is much more significant". Again, sociology and social psychology are engaged in researches on the formation, fomentation and expansion of the ego identity. Erik Erikson's writings on 'identity-formation' and 'individuation', and the writings of several social scientists on the subject of 'personality, development' have impressed educators very much.

But; Baba's instructions are that if Peace (Shanti), Ananda (happiness) and Grace have to be achieved man must reduce his ego until it is destroyed. The reduction of the ego has been beyond the ken of educationists and scientists for long. The shadow of power-politics has fallen so thick on the home, the family, the school, the college, social work agencies, the University, the organs of administration, and other groups charged with activity, that the Ego is inordinately inflated and complexes of various degrees of virulence beset man everywhere. Baba's teachings are the best correctives for this craze.

We, in India, have been indoctrinated so much that we believe that tradition and modernity are antithetical and contradictory, as many social scientists assert. Baba demonstrates the fallacy of this stand. He shows how many of our traditional values and practices, beliefs and attitudes can

lead to a happy, progressive and well-knit social life We are not safe, if we reject one set of values totally and follow another set, rashly, without deliberation. Baba advises us not to ape but to adapt. In spite of this, we are still engulfed in the value conflicts born out of the denial of tradition and the loyalty to borrowed cultures, in the name of modernity.

Professor A. K. Saran has said, "The new Social Science will be based on a dynamic concept of social relationships; relationship will be based on Swadharma, the dramaturgical idea of the roles each is engaged in." The traditional social sciences have not yet welcomed this dynamic concept. But, Baba has long been emphasising this very need and explaining to different role-actors that they should understand their Swadharma and follow it with devotion and a sense of duty.

It is therefore clear that our faulty perspective has given a wrong direction to our thinking on Education and Educational Efforts. This powerful tool which can transform man and society has been mishandled so badly that the field is littered with follies, mistakes and wayward experiments. It is high time that educators correct their perspectives and make a sincere effort under Baba's Divine Guidance to develop a really functional social philosophy on which a beneficial educational system can be formed.

Baba has analysed the malaise that is besetting the system in various discourses of His. He has lightened our burden, and diagnosed the illness in clear terms. "Discipline is lacking among both teachers and students. Lakshmi (Money Power) rules the institutions of Saraswati (Scholarship). There is very little encouragement for creative effort and originality. Interest is not aroused in social harmony and well-being; enthusiasm is not generated in social service, calculated to establish identity and promote involvement. Blind imitation of unscrupulous leaders is given priority; exhibitionism, pleasure-seeking, agitational activities that attract publicity are promoted and appreciated; untruth and deceit stalk about unashamed in the campuses; politeness and good manners are ridiculed as outmoded; intolerance is mistaken for courage and self-respect; sensuous, egoistic, worldly, materialistic norms are held in high esteem; there is inadequate interaction between the chief sharers in education-parents, spiritual leaders, elders, agencies of public information, film producers, broadcasters etc; a good part of the curricula is out-dated and has to be either removed or reformed; no knowledge of the heritage, that has come down from the past as the roots of the mental make-up of the citizen, is imparted, so that he now grows rootless in a vacuum; there is a ruinous brain-drain from the villages into the arid atmosphere of the cities which are becoming cess-pools of faction and hatred; education is still under the harmful influence of foreign fads and behaviour patterns; students are not prepared for healthy social living, for constructive citizenship and for loving international living."

"If you cannot use your education to approach God in humility and to serve God in man, what is the purpose of all the knowledge you gather?" asks Baba. He wants us teachers to lay emphasis on creativity, excellence, charity and compassion. He exhorts us to encourage a healthy nationalism, based on the contribution that Indian culture can offer to the progress of mankind. He wants us to transform all holidays into holy days, when the spirit of dedication and not the spirit of revelry is dominant. He advises the training for leadership must be through group activities like social service and sadhana camps, bhajan, Nagarsankirtan etc. He calls upon educators to eliminate dishonest, distorted interpretations of the sacred texts of all religions, and of the ideals and achievements of the: spiritual heroes of all faiths. He would promote what is referred to in

the Vedas as Swadhyaya, Self-study, instead of the cramming that takes place now. "Develop the reasoning powers of the pupil, as the Upanishadic Sages, did," He says. It is indeed, a gigantic challenge that Baba has placed before the teaching community. The world's largest democracy, as we call ourselves, can progress only when the process of sublimating the lower instincts into higher ideals is ushered in, by the New Teacher, inspired by Baba.

Baba has Himself established a College for Girls at Anantapur and a College for Boys at Bangalore (Kadugodi-Brindavan). He organises Summer Courses on Indian Culture and Spirituality, which last for a full month and takes in about 500 students from Colleges all over India and even from Overseas. One can see for oneself how the new education is being shaped by Bhagavan, if only one visits these Colleges and attends this Course. Bhagavan feels that educational reform has a mighty role to play in His Task of Dharmasamsthapana (Revival and Resurgence of Righteousness among Mankind). May He choose us as little lamps to dare the darkness and usher in the Era of Light and Love.

From a Lecture by Dr. Satya Pal Ruhela M.A., M.Ed., Ph.D. New Delhi

In Baba

I had just returned to Bangalore, from Bombay, where Baba had healed my own cancer, when I discovered another patient suffering from cancer, recently arrived from London, and evidently on the verge. The next two weeks were for me a continuous nursing routine, during which many other devotees volunteered their help. We used to carry him on a stretcher for Darshan and Baba was very kind to him.

When he became too weak to bear with this transportation, he stayed behind. During the last few days, he was mostly in delirium. While in this state, he seemed to re-live a frantic life of wild parties, of dance and booze, hilarity and bouts of raucous purposeless life, in the lands from which he had come. A friend, confirmed that they were of the 'post-Hemingway generation.'

Then came the last day. Steve's breathing became more and more laboured. The room, one could feel, was filled with an unfathomable peace. One was thrilled by a deluge of the most profound Love. His breathing slowed down to a halt. Steve raised his eyes, shining in a new, hitherto un-manifest Illumination; he was in total Bliss. Every one in the room was too thrilled to move or even whisper their awe and wonder.

Baba's reputation seems to be largely for His cures. This too was a cure, A purge, a purificatory ordeal.

If only people knew how resplendent it is, to die in Baba!

—*Sister Om*

Instruments of Divine Will

I am happy to meet you and talk to you, on this occasion-the very first gathering of the members of the Council of Management of all the State Trusts and of the Education and Publication Foundation. The aims and objectives of the Trusts are themselves your guides; they can certainly inspire you in your dedicated task. They can help canalise your skills and devotion into activities that can help your spiritual realisation, as well as the welfare and prosperity of your countrymen of all creeds and conditions. I am aware of this. But, yet, since we are working within the framework of the legal and administrative system, we must have to pay attention also to strict accounting and sincere adherence to the requirements of law.

There are many Trusts operating in this country and in others beyond the seas. I wish to emphasise that the Sathya Sai Trusts have to shine forth among them all by their special characteristics. They must be based on mutual trust and cooperation, built on the actual experience of the One-ness of all. There is no room here for egoistic poses, compulsory tactics, greed for power, recrimination, and jealousy.

Of course, wherever money is dealt with, these evils are common; there are trusts that are compelled to enter into the process of litigation even as far as the Supreme Court, against their own members for breach of trust. Remember that trusts are built firmly on the foundation of trust; if you do not trust yourselves and your own reality, you can never trust another. Ultimately, trust depends on faith in God, as expressed in your own actions and in the actions of others. Virtue can grow only in an atmosphere of theism; you must have faith in the omnipresence of God, that God is the witness, the guide, and the guardian. Self-confidence, confidence that you are the pure unlimited self, is the great re-inforcement that religion can endow you with. When you establish this in your hearts, you can be entrusted with any type of responsibility, and any type of work.

The Vedas lay down four goals before men: Dharma Artha Kama and Moksha. But, they have to be pursued in pairs, Dharma and Artha together and Kama and Moksha together. That is to say, wealth (artha) has to be earned through righteousness (dharma), and desire (kama) has to be for liberation (moksha). But, man takes these four separately, and loses all.

He puts them into separate,, compartments and adopts distinct plans to achieve them. So, , his personality is not integrated; he leads a broken life. He gives up Dharma and Moksha as beyond him and wastes his life pursuing sheer Artha and Kama. They lead him into ruin.

You have to practise Dharma in the management of artha, especially when the artha is to be used for human uplift and human betterment as here. Udyogam purushalakshanam, it is said. Ud-yoga means, as is commonly understood, employment in some job, something that is worth doing. No. It means ud (higher) yoga (spiritual discipline), a sadhana which has assumed the status of a job. All jobs which you take up are ud-yogas, higher disciplines, which mark out (lakshanam) the Purusha (the man). When artha is sought through dharma, the Purushartha deserves the name, `paramapurushartha' for it is parama or oriented towards the para or the higher eternal values.

This is a chance for service for which you must feel extremely delighted, for, here, you can transmute your devotion and faith into positive acts of service for the benefit of your brothers and sisters. And, since I am with you in all that you do, you have no worry about the success of the undertakings. You have only to be 'instruments'; you need not devise devious ways or roundabout tactics. Doing your duties as members, you have the need to preserve and develop Trust in Sai, too.

This is Sai work, which you are invited to and enjoy the thrill thereof. This is elevating work that brings you nearer to the heart of the Divine. When Narayana hastened to save the elephant from the jaws of the crocodile, the Bhagavata says, He did not take with Him the weapons wheel or even the Lotus or the Conch. He went empty handed, as far as eye could discern. The conscious hand must have the inert pickaxe in order to break the hard sod; so too, the Divine Consciousness must have the Prakriti, or Objective Instrument to carry out His Plan.

'You have the chance to contribute to the happiness and beatitude of thousands. In order to carry out this duty, you have yourselves to lead exemplary lives. Your Nitya jeevita (daily living) must be transformed into live prayers and live sadhana. How much struggle are you now going through for ensuring physical comfort! You have to struggle much more for ensuring mental peace and spiritual progress, for Sathya jeevita (Life in Truth).

Revolve within yourselves the benefits that would accrue to you from this Sadhana into which you are initiated now, and prepare for shouldering the task assigned to you—to be instruments dedicated for advancing the mission on which the Divine has come.

—Baba, *Brindavan 20-6-74*

The Vasanas that hamper spiritual progress are like oil, sticky. Put into the mind the wick of a Name or name of the Lord, and bum it quick and fast by repeating the Name with intense devotion and Sraddha. The oil will soon be exhausted. The more intense your effort, the more quickly the Vasanas will get exhausted. That is the way to success.

—Baba

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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Moving Away

Rama, Sita and Lakshmana spent a very happy time at the Ashram of the sage Atri. They gave good counsel to the residents and pupils on various problems of right conduct. Then, taking leave of the sage, they resumed their journey through the jungle. The Ashramites shed tears of sorrow when they parted company. Despite their determined attempts to accompany Rama during the subsequent stages of his forest life, they had to stop away and resume the Ashram life for which

they had dedicated their lives. They had to witness helplessly the departure of the Divine Master of their hearts.

The jungle echoed with the roar of ferocious beasts that wandered about in search of prey. Manifold varieties of plumaged birds sang melodiously on the trees. Each had a peculiar beauty and melody; their coos and cries were balm for the ear. It appeared as if they had entered a new world of thrills.

While passing through this region of awesome grandeur, suddenly their eyes fell upon a lovely hermitage, which had at its centre a picturesque temple. Lakshmana moved forward, and cleared the track, pushing back the bushes that stood across. He broke off the thorny creepers that hung overhead and threatened to harm wayfarers. Rama and Sita could walk with safety along the track he cleared.

When they came to the precincts of the hermitage, a charming garden presented itself before them. Well fostered and affectionately looked after, the fruit trees and the flowering trees rose beautifully from the ground, with their charming crown of beauty. The branches were drooping under the weight of ripe juicy fruits. Sita was filled with delight; she forgot all exhaustion; she was lost in the heavenly peace and joy that she had come into. She walked behind Rama, imbibing the thrill of the Nature that surrounded her.

A Charming Ashram

When some residents noticed their approach, they ran in haste to their Preceptor; he hurried forward to the main gate to welcome Rama, Sita and Lakshmana. His eyes were streaming tears of joy; appropriate hospitality was offered to the guests; they were taken in, and given cool refreshing drinks; tasty fruits and tubers were placed before them. The guests accepted their attention and regard with great pleasure; they partook of the simple repast.

In the evening, they took bath and performed due rites; and, Rama spoke to the residents on ideal modes of conduct and behaviour. He permitted them to ask questions on the doubts that might be puzzling them and the knotty points of interpretations of the scriptures. They welcomed the opportunity most enthusiastically; Rama, too, offered convincing and clear explanations, in simple and satisfying words. Without doubt, the dwellers of the Ashram experienced very Heaven on earth. They spoke among themselves with great delight that the Presence of Rama was as elevating an experience as Contact with God Himself in Heaven.

The Curse Lifted

When dawn broke, Rama, Sita and Lakshmana bathed and went through the matinal rites. In spite of the plaintive prayers of the Ashramites, they started on their journey, expostulating that the people should not stand in the way of their vows and resolutions. They had resolved, they said, not to stay in one single hermitage or place, for more than one single night.

When they resumed their journey, and passed through the forest, a monstrous form, being the frightful ogre Viradha, appeared all of a sudden and rushed menacingly towards them. Sita was naturally frightened at the apparition; but, soon, she mustered courage that, when she had the Lion Rama to shelter her, she had no need to be frightened at the 'lame fox' that had presented

itself! "Let it roar its worst," she consoled herself. She stood behind Rama and watched developments.

Meanwhile, Lakshmana shot at the monster with a sharp arrow from his bow. Soon, he showered many missiles on it. When it was wounded by the arrows, Viradha, transformed into a blazing fury of anger and appearing like the very embodiment of death and destruction, pounced upon Lakshmana, Rama saw that his brother was getting exhausted by the struggle; he fixed a crescent headed arrow to his redoubtable bow and shot at the ogre. The arrow shattered to pieces the formidable three-pronged spear that the ogre was flourishing; it then sliced off the head of the monster. At that very moment, a bright heavenly form emerged from the fallen corpse!

Viradha had been born as an ogre on earth in consequence of a curse that he had invited upon himself from his divine Master, Kubera. He was one of a group of heavenly angels, Gandharvas, who were serving Kubera. Kubera had, later, taken pity on him and declared that his demonic career would come to an end, the moment he met his death through an arrow from the bow of Rama. He could then return as a Gandharva to the Presence of Kubera, it was said. So, the Gandharva fell at the feet of his Saviour, and extolled him with high praise, before leaving for his permanent abode.

Rama interred the huge body of the demon that lay on the ground; he also went through the rites prescribed for such disposal. Just then, a shower of rain fell on the spot, as if the gods above were showering tears of joy, at the compassion that Rama was evincing.

Sarabhanga

Next, Rama entered the famous hermitage of the sage Sarabhanga: Even while he was nearing the ashram, the ascetics and monks were talking among themselves of the havoc caused by the inroads of Ravana, the demon king. When Rama, Sita and Lakshmana appeared before them in the midst of their conversation, they sensed the meaning of their visit and knew that their fears would soon come to an end.

When the sage Sarabhanga saw the divinely charming figure of Rama, he could scarce believe that his eyes were true; he doubted whether it was all a dream, or an illusion, or some strange experience caused by his meditative mania. But, soon, he realised the genuineness of his good fortune; he was overwhelmed with the ecstasy of winning his long-desired goal; he knew that his asceticism had at last been blessed by the fruition of his yearning; he offered them profuse hospitality.

He extolled Rama to his heart's content. "Rama! You are the Heavenly Swan moving majestically on the waters that fill the minds of the sages. Ah! This day, I have realised the Goal of Life," he said. "Rama! I am unaware of any spiritual discipline worth the name. It was possible for me to win you, through just one path, the Path of Love. My eyes have seen you now; they need look on nothing else. And, You have given word that day that you would fulfil the wishes of the sages. Well. Now you have to stand by that word. My wish is this: Stand before me in this most charming form, until my breath leaves this body. I wish to cast off this body, even while my gaze is fixed on you," he appealed.

Within minutes, a pyre was set up; he ascended it and it was lit, with Sarabhanga sitting unconcerned on top, with eyes shining in joy, at the ecstasy of looking on at Rama. The eyelids did not quiver; the gaze did not slacken. With the forms of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana imprinted on his heart, Sarabhanga reduced his body into a handful of ashes. The blue placid waters of his heart shadowed the blue form of Rama, whom he had adored until the very last. His soul merged in the Universal, that was before him.

Though at first the ashramites were grieving over the departure of their Preceptor and Master, they soon realised that he had the unique fortune of a rare blessing. God Himself had come in human form and blessed him with mergence in his majesty and glory. They felt that they too had shared in that gift of Grace; they adored Rama and extolled him in various ways. They shouted 'Hail! Victory! Victory!' and taking the ashes of their Master, they applied it on their brows in reverent gratitude.

The news of the immolation of Sarabhanga soon brought to that hermitage the residents from other ashrams as well. They fell at the feet of Rama and praised him and his mission of compassion. "Lord! How fortunate was Sarabhanga," they cried. "Many a sage has fallen prey to the voracious ferocity of the Rakshasa tribe of demons, in this area. But Sarabhanga was noticed by the Lord Himself. He offered his body and life to the Lord Himself. "Lord! Save us from these rapacious enemies. Let us progress in our spiritual exercises and disciplines, without these perpetual attacks. And, at the end of it all, O Lord, bless us with the fruit we strive for: Your Presence before our Vision, they pleaded.

Sage Sutheekshna

Meanwhile, a sage Sutheekshna by name, came forward and prostrated before Rama. He was the pupil of the renowned Agastya. He was an incomparable devotee and his mind was saturated with love for Rama. He had steady faith, that God can be won by Love alone. He could not picture before his mind's eye any form of God other than Rama. He gazed upon Rama, without batting an eyelid, lest even that fraction of time would go waste. His heart melted into adoration at the sight of Rama.

He said, "Lord! Did you come so far into this region, just to bless me? Can you not merge me into the Love you are? Having come upon the earth with this visible form, do you still wish that I should adore as hitherto the Formless Absolute? No. I love this Form, this Name. I do not know any rite, or ritual. I know only that you, the embodiment of Love, can be attained through love. Yearning is the only earning I have accumulated. What is the only asceticism I have subjected myself to: Tell me, is that not enough?"

O Saviour from the travail of Birth and Death! No form of worship is so effective as service of the Lord through Love, isn't it? Singing your glory, meditating on it, and deriving unspeakable bliss in the process—can anything else yield greater joy?" he said.

Sutheekshna danced about, unaware of where he was or what he was doing; tears flowed in streams down his cheeks; he appeared insane for all who could not gauge the inner joy he was experiencing. Rama knew the urge within the Sage; he drew him near himself, and embraced him most lovingly. He spoke soft and sweet, to bring him round to a consciousness of his

surroundings. While Rama was holding him in his hands, the great sage entered the supreme state of Samadhi. He became like a doll, unmoved and immovable. Rama brought him back into consciousness through various means; as soon as he came to, he fell at the feet of Rama, falling full flat on the ground.

He raised his hands above his head and joining palms in adoration, he expressed his joy and took delight therein. He said, "Lord! You are the Conflagration that destroys the Forest of Delusion in which man has lost himself. You are the Soar Orb that makes it possible for the Lotus of the Hearts of Good Men bloom in beauty and fragrance. You are the King of Beasts, come to destroy the brood of Demonic Elephants. You are the eagle come to hunt down and destroy the bird that flits into birth and flits out of life, in a recurring cycle of joy and grief. Lord! Your eyes are as charming as Lotuses; my two eyes cannot drink in all the beauty of your effulgent Form. You are the Moon that sheds cool light to enrapture the twin Chakora birds, namely, the eyes of Sita. You swim happily as the Celestial Swan in the placid lakes that shine in the hearts of Sages. You are the Garuda Bird that preys upon and destroys the Serpents that breed in the minds of doubters and unbelievers. All cruelty, confusion and calamity will be burnt away when a tiny glance from your eye, falls on them." He extolled Rama thus and in various other forms, and derived great joy at getting the chance. He also utilised the chance to gaze upon the Lord and to have His Image imprinted on his heart. He was not conscious of the passage of time, or the needs of the body. He did not wink once while locking on and drinking deep the glory of Rama.

Rama watched him for a while and then, he raised him with his hands upon his shoulders. He said, "Sutheekshna! You are endowed with all desirable virtues. Ask from me, anything you wish for. I shall bless you as you desire." The sage replied, "O Friend and Kinsman of the Distressed! My wish is this: Reside ever in the depths of my heart, with Sita and Lakshmana." Rama said, "So be it." Then, with him as companion, Rama moved forward towards the ashram of Agastya, with Sita and Lakshmana following him.

Agastya

A short distance later, they heard the warbling of a river flowing by. When they walked towards the sound and neared the river, they could see a mountain peak above the flowing water. In the middle, there were beautiful flower gardens; and, like a lotus shining in the centre of a tank, there could be seen the lovely hermitage of Agastya in the midst of a carpet of fragrant flowers.

Words can only fail to describe the exquisite nature of that scene. Sita, Rama and Lakshmana stood petrified for a few moments at the captivating splendour. The atmosphere was so astoundingly spiritual. There, animals that are enemies of each other by their very nature, aquatic animals and land animals, beasts and birds of every type, sported and lived together, free from fear or enmity. They could see many monks, and ascetics lost in meditation sitting on the riverbanks.

When they neared the ashram, Sutheekshna ran forward to convey the happy tidings to his Master. He fell at his feet and declared, "O Teacher Great! O Embodiment of mercy! The Prince of Ayodhya, the Very Sustainer of this Universe, has just come into our Ashram with Sita and Lakshmana. The very person whom you were seeking to know and visualise through your spiritual practices for years now, without regard to whether it is day or night, he has come to you,

near you. Ah! What a great good Day is this! What great good fortune!" Suteekshna forgot himself and was filled with immeasurable ecstasy.

At this, Agastya rose suddenly from his seat and walked fast into the open. He saw the three, coming towards him; tears flowed freely from his eyes. He ran forward, shouting, "Lord! Lord!" He clasped Rama to his bosom; he had no mind to release Rama from the embrace. He stood with his arms around Rama, clinging to him, as a creeper clings to the trunk of a tree.

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness

(To be continued)

“The Interview”

People come to where Baba is present craving for an 'interview' with Him. Many imagine that it is possible, as with dignitaries of the World, to get the time, place, date, and duration, even before they start from their homes to where Baba is present. The word, "interview" is generally used for the direct personal talk which Baba, in His Mercy vouchsafes to persons whom He chooses, from among those who have come into His Presence. And, so, people have to wait patiently for the chance of being blessed by Him with the Interview.

Baba once asked a devotee, "Do you know what the real meaning of INTERVIEW is?" The devotee said, "I have been waiting since long and I haven't yet got one; that is all that I know about its meaning" "Oh, is that so?" exclaimed Baba, as if He was surprised at the plight of the devotee. He added, "But, do you know? I have been granting you the Interview every Day. It is you, who is not giving Me an Interview!"

The devotee was puzzled! He was struck dumb. He did not know what to say, how to react, except in utter bewilderment. "Do you know what the real meaning of "INTERVIEW" is?" Baba repeated, "You claim you have been waiting since long for the Interview. But, I have been waiting, patiently waiting, hopefully waiting, for centuries that you would give Me your Interview! INTERVIEW really means, ENTER-IN-VIEW. The view visualised when you enter in, not when you wander outside. Of course, when you have viewed Me in you, you will not fail to view Me outside you also."

—*Shiv Pandit*

The Onam Festival

Onam is the national festival of the people of Kerala State; it is marked by games, sports like snake-boar racing, literary contests, dance and drama; it is an occasion for all members of the family, wherever they are scattered, to come together round the family shrine; it is the day when the land welcomes back its ancient ruler, the Emperor Bali who established a Golden Age of

Equality, Justice and Prosperity for all, when he makes his annual one-day visit to his erstwhile dominion; it is the day of prayer, of thankfulness, of dedication and rejoicing.

Since some years, devotees from Kerala have derived great joy by celebrating the Festival, at Prasanthi Nilayam, which for them is their 'home,' with Baba, whom they have accepted as their 'Guide, Guardian and God.' This year, Onam fell on 30th August. Kerala was hoping that Baba would visit that State, on that auspicious Day, but, when news reached that He would not be coming, it was only by sheer luck that about two thousand devotees could 'make it' and present themselves before Baba, at Prasanthi Nilayam, on the 29th evening. That night, the children of the Bal Vikas, Trichur, played two musical dramas—one on "Poonthanam and Bhattathiri" as devotees of Guruvayoorappan, and the other on the famous incident mentioned in the Bhagavata, about the control of the mad course of the Kalindi River by the elder brother of Krishna, 'Balarama with the Plough'. The latter was characterised by some splendid movements of the Kathakali, which the children presented very correctly and charmingly. Baba was present throughout the acting of the play. He blessed the kids with the chance of being photographed with Him in their midst.

More tourist buses arrived on the night of the 29th from Kerala. On Onam Day, the Hall was decorated with tender cocopalms and bunches of orange nuts in typical Kerala style. Bhagavan moved among the lines of seated devotees, and sat on the floral chair, between two tall decorative lamps. Justice V. Balakrishna Eradi, the President of the Sri Sathya Sai Organisation, Kerala offered the reverential homage, of the gathering as well as of the thousands of homes where Baba is worshipped in Kerala, at the Feet of Bhagavan. Sri N. Kasturi recited a Malayalam Poem of his about the Compassion and Grace of Bhagavan. Sri Chandu Nair of Calicut recited poems composed by him on the spiritual glory of Kerala and on the yearning which the people of Kerala were having for an early visit from Bhagavan.

Bhagavan then delivered His Divine Discourse, which was translated into Malayalam, the language of Kerala, by Sri N. Kasturi. Bhagavan said, "Tulsi Das has said in his Ramacharitamansa that he composed the great epic on the story of Raghunath for 'swaanthassukhaaya,' that is to say, for his own sukha or happiness and joy. He engaged himself in that self-imposed task, not to please any patron or even Rama, but, to please himself. He derived great Ananda while writing it and when it was finished. That was the urge which moved him. In fact, all that a man does, is, ultimately traceable to this urge—the urge to earn self-satisfaction. A man builds a house, writes a book, enters a job, executes a plan—all because he gets joy therefrom. The cuckoo coos sweetly, and derives joy therefrom, far more than those who happen to listen. The rose blooms on the plant, because of an inner urge, not an outer prompting. The father fondles his baby and receives thereby more joy than he ever gives. The various disciplines undergone by sadhaks, monks, ascetics, and those on the march along the path of self-knowledge are all adopted and adhered to, because they give joy to one-self, and fulfil an inner need. This day is celebrated by you as the day when Emperor Bali was both humiliated and blessed by God, in the Form of Vamana. Emperor of the Three Worlds: Bali called himself so, for, he had Balm or Power, more than any one else. He was saturated with egotism. God came to him, while he was busy with a Yaga, in the form and guise of a Brahmin boy, and asked for a gift of just three foot-measures of land. Bali told him that he could ask for infinitely more riches and lands; but, the Boy insisted on that tiny gift only. The preceptor of Bali

warned him about the identity and bona fides of the strange mendicant; he mentioned that he may be God Himself. This made Bali happier, for, if it was true, he was so mighty that even God came to his door as a mendicant. Such was the measure of his conceit. But, when Vamana drew Himself up to cosmic proportions and measured the entire earth with one foot and the vast expanse of space with another foot, Bali was humbled; he offered his own head as the third foot-measure, and let himself be trod down into the nether-world. This day marks the day when the Incarnation of Vamana happened, in order to teach this lesson that pride meets with doom. Once the ego was thus suppressed, Bali became cleansed and God blessed him, with various boons. He assured him that He would ever be his guardian. He permitted him every year, on Onam Day, to come up into the world and see for himself his empire and receive therefrom the homage of his people. So, this is the Festival of Vamana's Advent as well as Bali's Transformation. This day also extols the merit of gifts, renunciation, charity, however little, to any one, for, all are images of God. Thyaga or Renunciation, Sacrifice, is at the very basis of Bliss, of Grace, of Immortality. Na medhaya na prajya, dhanena, thyagaine kai amrthathwam asnuthe, says the Vedas Not by intellect, not by progeny, not by riches, but, by renunciation alone can the Bliss of Immortality be attained. Onam is the Festival which instils this Message into those who observe it with an eye on its inner significance.

Kerala has contributed a great deal to the preservation of Vedic culture, and Sanskrit learning. Keralites have a name for faith and dedication. Witness the age-old privilege the Nambudiris of Kerala enjoy, as priests of the great Vaishnavite shrine thousands of miles away from their land, namely, Badrinath among the Himalayas.

Of course, wherever faith and dedication to God are evident, forces that tend to ridicule it, diminish its strength also are found. Where Astikam is, there Nastikam too will raise its head. But, disbelief in God or some Supreme Will can be only a pose, assumed for the sake of personal aggrandizement or advertisement. It cannot stand the light of reason or of experience: even the so-called atheists have Love in their hearts, honour Truth while dealing with Society and live on the basis of some eternal basic principles of justice. So, they are believers in Sath-Chith-Ananda. You have the duty to stand witness in your lives to the courage, the joy, the strength, the generosity, the humility that true spirituality and faith can impart to man, while faced with disappointment, distress, defeat, defamation and other calamities against which the atheist has no such shield. Gold gains in value when it is melted in the crucible. A piece of diamond when it is cut into a many faceted gem is thereby rendered more brilliant and more costly. The dull stone is not sought after by all. Prahlada, the grand-father of emperor Bali was subjected to torture by his irate father; but, that only added to his lustre. Bali himself shone all the brighter, for the punishment he received from the compassionate Lord. This is the lesson you have to garner today. Every obstacle is a step that leads you to the Ananda that can never be destroyed or taken away.

There is another duty that you owe to yourselves, which you have to recognise today. The world is the play-ground of Nara and Narayana, Nara transforming Himself into Narayana and Narayana transforming Himself into Nara, and playing their roles in unison. You know full well that Narayana has come; in human form for re-establishing Dharma in the world, for feeding the roots of faith in God and for interpreting God to man; you have to be assured that it is natural for man too to raise himself up, through spiritual discipline, moral elevation, expansion of love and

other means to become Narayana. But, man is unaware of this high destiny. He misinterprets his skills and strength and is so absent-minded that he slides down the scale into a monster or a monkey.

Of course there are many who struggle with these downward-dragging tendencies and endeavour to elevate themselves; these most often grope in the dark and are badly led.

There are two truths that must be accepted by every such pilgrim or devotee. (1) Devotion has to be full, free and comprehensive. (2) Divinity must be conceived as full, free and comprehensive. On the other hand, devotion today is almost always only 'part-time.' That is to say, when disease, defeat, and disappointments assail you, you turn to God and pray for His Grace; but, when you are happy, prosperous, healthy and in good shape, you ignore God and claim that they are all due to your own abilities and achievements. God is ignored in sunshine; He is wanted only when there is night. Devotion must persist and flourish, unaffected by time, place or circumstance.

God too has to be experienced in His Fullness, and the Ananda of that experience made one's permanent possession. Kasturi recited that poem, which was sweet to the ear and full of Sanskrit words. But, words seldom come out of actual experience. It is impossible to experience God and also talk about him. Words like Sarvajna, Sarvavyapi, meaning that "He knows all," "He is everywhere" are used by people, since elders and saints have used them from ancient times; it is impossible for any one to have the fullest and the most comprehensive experience of these qualities of the Divine.

The Gita speaks of God as achalam chalamevacha, immoveable as well as moveable, which strikes one as impossible. God appears to move, to act, to bless, to save, to test; but, He is unconcerned basically with these. Look at a tree. The branches, leaves etc might be moving with the wind; but, the trunk is steady and unmoved. God is but appears as not-is. The body moves, the reason moves, the mind moves, but the Atma is unaffected; it is steady, firm, unchangeable. The lake is unmoved; the surface is tickled into wavelets by every passing breeze. The colourless unmoved curtain or screen is unaffected by the pictures of fire, faction, floods, and glaciers that appear upon it in a realistic manner. When the pictures are seen, the screen is unseen; when the screen is seen, the pictures are unseen. But, without the screen (Brahman), the pictures have no meaning, they carry no message, they tell no story. They impart no Ananda.

You may carry a match-box in your pocket, with no danger of fire emanating, though the components are there in that box. So too, there are the components of Divinity in you; only, it is not patent, it is not expressed. Take a stick and strike its head against the chemical coating given on one side of the box, and suddenly, in a flash, you get the flame of fire. So too, take the Jiva (the Individual) and strike it on the Brahma Principle that is immanent in the Universe, make it aware of it, so to say and the Individual too manifests the Divinity latent in It. The tree is the Individual; the Forest is the Brahman. The one, apart from the Many is the Individual. The Many and the Manifold is the Brahman. Kasturi standing alone, apart, is Vyashti; when he goes and sits among you, the thousands who have come here for Onam, he merges in the Samishti. Samishti is Brahman; vyashti is the Jivatman.

Prahlada's grandson, Bali whom you honour today, extolled the Lord standing before Him as Master of the entire Cosmos, as, "Arch-thief among thieves," (Dongalalo gajadonga!) For, God steals the most precious possession of man, even when its owner is awake. He steals the Chitta; He is the Chittapahari, the Stealer of Hearts. I disappointed you; I even requested you not to come so far, away from your homes for this Festival; but, yet your hearts had been stolen by Me and so, you could not stay away. Onam is the day when you Keralites feast on the banana; when you eat a banana you have first to remove the skin. So, too, when we desire to eat a mango or a lime fruit. The sweet substance has to be reached after removal of the bitter skin. For Bali to be received and accepted by God, the bitter cover of egoism and power mania had to be removed. Ignorance, Maya, illusion, pride, all are the components of the skin. Onams come and Onams go; but, people are no nearer the Goal. This is because though Onam is given a hearty send-off, generosity, renunciation, love and the spirit of service are not given an equally hearty welcome. You have to take this as the Onam Message—strive to manifest, cultivate and express Love, and suppress pride and egoism, so that you can win the Grace of God.

—*Onam Celebrations, Prasanthi Nilayam 30-8 74*

The Switch

Sai Baba is Sathyam, Sivam and Sundaram; He declares that each one of us is also Sathyam, Sivam and Sundaram. He exhorts us to realise this Truth and endeavour to reveal that we have realised this Reality, by our words and deeds, attitudes and reactions. This is the meaning of His Announcement: My Life is My Message.

When the Divine Spark, the Sai Spark is encased in the human body, it manifests three Gunas or attributes: the animal instincts, the human reason, and Divine intuition. God's intention in evolving a man, with these qualities implanted, is evidently, to lead him home, and make him Divine again. Avatars come with this definite mission, when man is lost in the wilderness of instinct and unreason.

Baba, in His infinite compassion, tells us that it is easier in this Age to attain Divinity, than in previous ages. Of course, we have the Avatar to help us along. First, let us take the Sathyam aspect; the journey along the path of Truth. He says, it does not need great intelligence or cleverness to adhere to Truth, in thought, word and deed. Truth comes natural to the lips. It is falsehood that requires perpetual cunning, super-shrewdness, and a permanent pose of pretension. Be yourself; then, Truth will shine through you.

To be truthful is also to be righteous, to live according to the Cosmic Plan, the Dharmic Law. Dharma is certain to win, whatever the odds. The Ramayana; the Mahabharata, and the Puranas of Ancient and Modern History as proved by the World Wars reveal that where Dharma is upheld, there Victory is assured. Righteousness is the core of Goodness or Sivam. And, Sivam is Santam; the Good are not afflicted by anxiety or fear or greed or hate. They live in perfect equanimity.

When man attains Sivam, he is ever in Bliss. Bliss and Beauty are the same; what is more beautiful than a face shining in the sunlight of Inner Joy? "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever," said Keats. "Andame Anandam," says Baba. He means, "Beauty is Bliss." Bliss is Sundaram.

The push-button or switch to start the vehicle towards this Goal of Sathyam which leads him on to Sivam and Sundaram, is a 'pure and loving heart'. Switch on, a pure and loving heart for the Creator and for Creation; surely, you can reach the goal. For, Baba has told us, "Why fear? I am here!" He will goad us and guide us and never rest until we reach the Goal, namely, the Sathyam, Sivam, and Sundaram that He is.

—*J. Paramsothy, Sri Lanka*

This Blade of Grass

There are many strands in the coarse fabric of Faith. My strand has a paradoxical setting. For, I am a devotee of Baba, without the merit of conformity, in ritual.

With banking as my vocation, my career in its early days was conditioned by low income and low status; I had to plod in an environment of values attached to high incomes leading to high status. The message of the Bhagavad-Gita stabilised me then.

I have had my share of grilling in domestic and social life; I had more than the usual share of domestic calamities and the impact of the inconsistencies of human conduct and relationships. The patent dichotomy, between practice and precept, disillusioned me and denied the validity of image worship advocated by the superficially devout. Other emotional ways of devotion too did not appeal to me, for they were unsupported by the conduct of the protagonists.

I felt real religion was no more than Purity in Conduct. My dilettantism in philosophical studies did not confer the 'balance' I sought; my self-righteousness bred intolerance, and led to errors in behaviour, too.

In 1948, a domestic calamity left me high and dry, with basic frustration. I could get no conclusive guidance, from the reading I had already accomplished in Vedic Literature and many related books in Sanskrit and English. I had no clear faith to support my ethical beliefs.

In 1961, I passed through rigorous domestic and vocational upsets. An elderly relative prompted me to read the Life and Teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba. When I did so, the books had a strange impact on my mind; opened my vision to the error in-my assessment of Existence and its Purpose.

In June; 1964, I was posted to a centre in South India; then, I could go to Puttaparthi to have Darshan of Baba. The visit was, of course pre-ordained; but, this was not realised by me, till I had an interview with Baba.

The searching look, the revealing speech, the insight into the innermost contents of my mind, with which He conferred Grace on me made me aware that my career, my personal experiences so far, including the ups and downs, were all *relevant*, from the point of view of higher Purpose.

With that interview, my individuality and avocation took on a new complexion; they were based on firmer foundation. Baba's teachings clarified for me the deeper aspects of the Vedantic Message, which I had understood dimly until then. The Guru began to operate within me, instructing and inspiring me to higher reaches. I got a new awareness of Constant Guidance and watchful direction; He took charge and monitored my daily work and conduct. I was encouraged to deepen my introspection. I discovered many dark patches in the garden of my thoughts and actions. Promotions and bigger incomes which come to me held no significance now; they had only casual and superficial values.

The urge for freedom from imperfections become dominant; goodwill displaced carping intolerance. There was an under-current a query that agitated me for years—"who am I? What is my share in the evolution of the universal Scheme and Purpose?" This got a meaningful direction by the faith that was strengthened after the impact of Baba. I am still a *neophyte*, I admit. But, allow me to share with you what I feel. To me, Baba is a Symbol of the Unmanifest Power, that accounts for all I see. The mainspring of my Faith in Baba is the constant awareness of His watchful Direction of my every thought and deed. Bhajan, as I know it, is not a conventional ritual; it is steady uninterrupted introspection and meditation.

The process of unfoldment that is happening has no higher or lower planes; meaning is lent to each slant of Sadhana. All my old nebulous ideas on the meaning and purpose of existence have now integrated, through the alchemy of Baba's Grace, into one cognition, one devotional understanding.

I own that I am but a mere blade of grass in the vast field under cultivation. The blade is striving humbly to yield the promised sheaf of grain. My obeisance to Baba, the symbol of the Unmanifest, is best expressed in silence before the splendour of that overwhelming Grace, that never-failing Guidance and Revelation. I crave the pardon of readers for voicing forth the story of my emotional growth in Faith, inspired every moment and guided at every step, by the: Great Monitor, Baba.

—*K. B. Shanker Rao, Bombay.*

Sow love, and its sweetness uprising
Shall fill your heart with its glow,
Sow hope, and receive its fruition,
You'll reap whatsoever you sow.

We Need Him

I learned of Sri Sathya Sai Baba when I was in India, as a research scholar, studying the Tantrism of the Saktas, under Mahamahopadhyaya Gopinath Kavirajji. At Banaras, I was well acquainted with the family of my friend, Miss Priya Sen and I saw the Puja room of one of her relatives, where the portraits of Baba and other saints and deities kept for worship along with them, were thickly covered with Vibhuti (holy ash)! I also saw small-silver statuettes of Hindu deities that have mysteriously emerged from those holy pictures, and heard descriptions of miraculous happenings during their weekly sessions of hymn singing (bhajan)!

These wondrous events aroused my intense curiosity. During the course of a few months, we attended several bhajan sessions and I read Howard Murpet's book on Baba. I became convinced that Baba is a true Divine Avatar and my devotion to Him began to grow.

I deeply regret that we did not go to Puttaparthi, while in India. We had planned a journey to South India, at the end of our period of residence in that country, but, what little time we had, was taken up by the need to complete the research. Some friends in Calcutta who have also been blessed by Baba with Vibhuti from the pictures in their home shrine (!) told us that Baba was expected at Calcutta; but, He did not visit that City at that time and we had to return to the West, immediately thereafter.

The miraculous aspect of Baba's Nature was perhaps the initial lure; but, it cannot explain fully why I feel so strongly that Baba is a Divine Avatar. He has begun to slowly influence my life, encouraging me to take the first small steps in Sadhana. In some mysterious way, I am experiencing Kaviraj ji as the force of Jnana and Baba as the force of Prema. I have no external Guru, but, I have learned the essential Unity of all Gurus; I try to realise their One-ness.

Even though I knew that Westerners-are naturally sceptical and could not believe all these strange things happening in India, I could not restrain the impulse to bear witness, in my own limited way, to the appearance of a Divine Avatar in our life-time.

I was both surprised and thrilled when my parents, who are devout Christians, became seriously interested in Him, after reading and hearing about Him. It is very difficult for Christians to accept Baba without feeling they have abandoned Christ; the Christian tradition does not prepare them for the idea that the Son of God returns periodically to Earth, though it should be admitted that little stands in the way of thoughtful people accepting the idea of the Avatar. My parents are now convinced that Sai Baba is an aspect of God, even though the Revelation has appeared outside organized Christianity.

We are all eager to learn more about Baba. We met Mr. John Moffitt, an author, who met Baba some years ago; he plans to write about Baba in a forthcoming book. We continue to seek others who have met Baba.

Unfortunately in our country, the Indian Guru is associated with hippies and misled eccentrics and I can understand why Baba has not yet visited America, despite the urgings of His American devotees. If He ever does visit the States, there must be a long responsible preparation for His Coming, so that all who are ready to benefit from His Teachings will be alerted.

We Westerners are immersed in a deep moral and spiritual crisis. This has had a purifying effect on some; but, others have been caught in the vice of passion and greed. Many decent people are longing for true leadership and direction.

The message of our Jesus, who lived on earth 2000 years ago, has been clouded by the interpretations of lesser minds, and the influence of Christianity has waned. The message of Christ has to be re-vitalised and addressed to modern problems. Our priests and ministers try to do this, but, their attempts are frail.

We need the Immanent Authority of the Avatar to bridge our sectarian distrust of one another's religious traditions, and to fuse the spiritual aspirations of all of us, into a Collective Force that will eventually result in a fully evolved Human Consciousness lit by the Divine.

—*Arlene Virginia, U.S.A.*

What a Friend we have in Baba,
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!

Oh! what peace we often forfeit,
Oh, what needless pains we bear—
All because we do not carry
Everything to Him in prayer.

Bhagavan Spoke Thus

Question: Swami! The World is very cruel to me.

Baba: That is its nature. The purpose of the world is frustration; it has to engender need. When the need is strong enough, the individual seeks fulfillment...

Question: and, fails!

Baba: When he seeks fulfillment, without! Within him, he can get it. The within is accessible always; it is ever responsible. There is pain only so long as attachment for outer forms remains. Ultimate relief from pain can come only from loss of ego, the neutralisation of that which reacts to something as pain and something else as pleasure, whose memory, whose conditioning help to recognise the dualities of joy and grief.

Question: But, the world, Swami?

Baba: The World is Pain. Expect nothing from the world but that; I willed the totality of your conditioned existence to be pain, to draw you to me.

Question: I can at best only hope to attain.

Baba: God asks for neither hope nor despair. They are subject to relativity. Universal Being is beyond both hope and despair, both certainty and doubt. It knows no lingering in conclusions. It is ever flowing, in all directions, and in none of them.

Question: What then shall be my direction?

Baba: Take what works today for today. What works tomorrow, works for tomorrow. One day at a time, each day for itself, each moment for itself without a past, without memory, without conclusions.

Question: Conclusions?

Baba: Yes. Conclusions bind; they press on the mind. The new-born babe is not confined in conclusions. All conclusions enslave. Most men are slaves to the conclusions they have fallen into.

Question: That means I have to give up my practice of concentration?

Baba: The question that bothers you is that of fixity. You tried to fix your thought and attention on a word and later on a form; but, you discovered that nothing lasts; everything has to change; but, I tell you, awareness can remain, even when Form subsides, even when Word melts away.

Question: I find it difficult to hold attention on Form or Word.

Baba: For, when you try to meditate, the very trial invites the success-failure conflict on to the scene. You say to yourselves, "It is good to meditate on this and not that"; or, "To meditate on that is wrong or foolish." Practise choicelessness. No objective, no intention. Be yourself. Choose no particular Form for all are equally He; choose no particular word or Sound, for all are His.

Question: I am often tossed between contradictory beliefs.

Baba: Contradictions are inevitable. It is the very nature of the world and of the mind. But, you can choose: to be either buffeted endlessly by the apparent contradictions or remain in the calm centre of the cyclone. This is the problem of all problems: the problem of peripheral or central Being.

Question: The circumference or the centre? The rim of the wheel or the hub?

Baba: Yes. The hub is calm, steady, unmoved. But the mind will be drawn along the spokes, the objective desires, to revolve over mud and stone, sand and thorn. It will not believe that it can get bliss from the centre, not the circumference, without undergoing all the rough journey over the turbulent terrain.

Question: Ultimately, it means the conquest of the mind?

Baba: Learn to let all the conflicts spawned by the mind to play themselves out, and cancel each other out, as the Yadavas did on the final battlefield. Be the witness to the holocaust. The ultimate solution to the Conflict is not decision or even choice, but, passive being. Dare to remain inconclusive. See the endless quandaries of the mind as Divine Leela, His Sport, as the natural function of the bundle of desires, called mind. Do not believe in Mind; do not rally to its assertions and appetites. This is what I advised Swami Abhedananda to do. Watch the mind, from a distance; do not get involved in its tumblings and turns. Then everything becomes insignificant. When everything recedes into meaninglessness, you are in the hub, in equanimity.

Question: You are the hub, the spokes and the rim.

Baba: Do not concerned with, who I am! Concern yourselves with who you are and how you can be ever aware of that Truth. Do not be a willing captive of the endless stratagems of the mind. Abstain from all that draws you into its web. I will lead you, if you rely on Me. The alternates of the world will not bring you happiness, for, the mind which revels in alternates is but a will-o-the-wisp, flitting before your vision, along the marshy wilds. I do not judge you for what is never yours, really. Your imperfection is no obstacle for me.

Question: I confess I have not always observed the rules of conduct ...

Baba: Your mind keeps asking for `rules'. But, when you get the rules, you find you cannot keep them. Rules engender rigidity, force. They do not bloom out of Love or spread Love. There is always a way of doing a thing, without the strain of a rule. See how unperturbed I am, with your restlessness! I live thus, so that I may afford a lesson for you to learn.

Question: I am restless, Baba, since I yearn for rest and do not get it.

Baba: It is your reaction to restlessness that is bad, not the restlessness itself. Restlessness is only the rise and fall of a wave on the Ocean that you are. Nothing matters, so long as the depths are secure. Success is not important; failure does not matter. The River of Eternity is flowing ever into the Ocean of the Supreme Will.

Question: How long am I to be torn apart from that Will?

Baba: You are a fraction of that Will. That is why you are afflicted with the hunger to seek It and merge in It and find fulfillment and Bliss thereby. Turning to the world for solace and sustenance to appease that hunger has been tried by countless generations, including your own, but, the hunger is gnawing still.

Question: What then is the proper reaction to the attractions of the world?

Baba: Let go. Don't cling. Be still. Establish yourselves in the homelessness of the mind; physical homelessness will not earn the victory. There are many Sadhus still caught in the coils of greed, envy, pride and power-seeking. They have not escaped from their homes; they have built prisons round themselves. I prescribe homelessness of the mind, mind abiding nowhere.

Question: and, wandering everywhere?

Baba: Do not exclude anything. Be the witness of everything. The exclusive cannot endure. God is all. Your restlessness came from exclusion, the pressure exercised by the excluded into the area from which they were excluded. All is God; how can you push God out of His Domain? Your mind infers that the cause for the restlessness is whatever concerns it at theme. The actual cause is not that. You limit God by your assumptions; hence the restlessness, for, you too are Divine and your Reality protests against that limitation

Question: Baba! Sometimes, I feel so sad that I am so strange, so different in habits from the rest of those that came to you for succour.

Baba: If your path contrasts entirely with those around you, believe that is My will, for you. Every way is My Way. And, ways seemingly indirect may be the most direct for same Sadhakas. For me, there are no 'impossible cases' or 'incorrigible cases'. Practise choicelessness as hitherto. Choicelessness is constant contentment.

Question: This fascination for tea-drinking hurts me.

Baba: Heaven is not refused to those who drink tea! A Rajasic person is rendered hyperactive by tea; to an invalid, it is a welcome lift. But, do not adore tea as the only reality. Now, as regards these habits that have gripped you, there are two methods by which you can discard them. The first: Deprivation, denial. This can yield only temporary success. When pressure relaxes, the

habit asserts itself and it becomes difficult to resist. The second: Become so absorbed in something far more pleasing that the habit falls off by itself.

Remember, what is transient is not important; what is important is Eternal. My prescriptions are varied, they differ from person to person, from stage to stage, even in the case of the same person. All prescriptions work. Let people come to me, through Bhajan, through Japa, through Dhyana, through Mantras, or Tantra or Seva—as I ordain. Every one will come to me; every one has to come to Me. There are no exceptions.

Question: We rely on your Grace; we yearn for it; make us aware of it.

Baba: I never asked you to earn Me; I want only that you should need Me. Your path is not one of Merit. Bring the recurrent desires of your mind to Me, every time they emerge. They cannot shock Me, for I willed them! Bring Me your confusion, your fear, your craving, your anxiety, your inability to love the world, your hesitation to serve, your jealousy, all the deficiencies that defy your Sadhana.

Question: How are we to do Seva? If we feel the urge so to do? What if the urge is absent?

Baba: There are many ways to serve the world. You can serve, if not actively, at least by your serenity. Every one need not do all things. Your western heritage reveres active work; if your being tends toward serenity and solitude, take it as the best. Do not be sorry for it. Only a small minority can delight in serenity and remain still. God has willed it so. Otherwise, how could the world function? If stillness is your destiny dare to be so. If you are a recluse, be a recluse; but, be a recluse with Me. You may not be a saint; but, you can peacefully be nothing. Let each be as he is, remembering his author, his source and his goal. None is as he is but for Me.

Question: I have yet much to learn.

Baba: You wish to learn from Me. Well. If you are pre-occupied by the body's needs, arrangements for its travelling, its accommodation, and the food it demands, time will fly. That student learns best and fastest who does not spend his time constantly shifting from one classroom to the next. You will learn everything worth knowing in my classroom. I will expose you to all states of being, so that you may learn to rest in Me in all of them. There are no insurmountable obstacles to me; there are no pre-requisites for Me. I am unconditional.

Question: But you are absent so often and so long, at your Headquarters.

Baba: Always at every time, at every place, I am where you need Me. All things without are subject to the limitation of time and space, to the material laws of Nature. My outer Form is no exception! If you would perceive My physical Form it must come within the range of your gaze, position itself so that you could see It. And, even then, It may not gaze at you. But, I am omnipresent! The limitations of the body and the outer senses do not hold for the inner vision. Therein you can see Me at any time and any place, and receive Darshan. The outer vision is purposely insufficient, instantaneous, transitory, casual, so that you may crave for and accomplish the inner Darshan. If I have separated you from My Image off and on, it was only to

bring you to Me and My Presence within you. That alone will replenish you and refresh you, I know. None of My absences was a rejection, or rebuke, so far as you are concerned I intended them all. And, always, I willed that you return to Me.

—*From the Notebook of a New Yorker*

Gracious Mother

Many times have I passed through the gate of Death; many wombs have I Danced through. Many times have I laid myself down in sleep; and many times have I risen up. At last, O Gracious Lord, you have touched my eyelids and my heart has blossomed into the region whence You have come.

Let me arise and go forth with Thee. I am enamoured and overcome with Thy Love. Beholding Thy beauty, listening to Thy words, inhaling the Fragrance of Thy Presence—I yearn to begin my real Life.

When I prayed to Baba thus, He said, with a smile, "You are choked with the dust you have yourself raised! Yours is a self-imposed bondage. Steeped in the consciousness of your body, you are heavy with mortal adhesions. You have built your house on a bridge! Remember, you are a pilgrim, on the march.

Your first duty to yourself is to abandon! Abandon all your plans, even the best ones. Abandon all the theories you cherish; the doctrines you hold dear; the systems of knowledge which have cluttered your brain; the preferences you have accumulated; the pursuit of fame, fortune, scholarship, superiority; these are all material, objective. Enter the objective world, after becoming aware of the Atma; then, you will realise that all is the play of Atma.

You ran to and fro, over the world, away from your-self, seeking substance in shadows, and earned only war and conflict, tears and groans. Who cast those shadows? This question did not arise in your muddled mind. One phantasm followed another, one transitory gain or loss followed another, and the days rolled relentlessly by. Now, bewildered and disgusted, finding no rest and peace, you cry for help in utter anguish.

Give up even thought, He told me. For, thought is alien to your reality. It is vain to tarry at the intellectual level, for, systems and philosophies however cleverly erected, plans and purposes, proofs and arguments, can please and satisfy only for a time; they contradict and destroy each other, in the end. Seek; but do not get entangled. Be like the fly, which cleans its legs of the honey or slime in which it is caught; remove every particle, attractive or disgusting, which sullies the brightness of the soul and impairs its freedom."

He said, "Leave all to Me. Absolutely. Carry on the duties of the place assigned to you. Do not forsake the past; give your best, out of Love, to Me and to all in whom I am.

He said, "Though you appear to all who look on, as engaged in worldly pursuits, in worldly plans and occupations, know that you are busy only with Me and My task. You are instruments, in My hands. I am operating all mortals as the machinist operates the machine. I dwell in every heart. All you have been and seen and done and thought, not you, but I, have seen and been and wrought! Pilgrim, pilgrimage and road, was but Myself! You arrived at Myself!"

Baba called, "Come, all lost Atma's, to your centre, draw! O! Rays that have wandered into the wide darkness! Return! Subside back into the Sun."

I am a ray, a spark, a wave, He taught me. Baba said, "The entire universe is as unreal as a dream; sleep causes dreams; Maya is the sleep that has caused this appearance of Creation on the Reality of the One, the Paramatma."

Baba assured me, "Be established in the ONE. You are Poorna, full; you can have no wants. Act ever in the consciousness of innate Divinity. The Atmic Vision destroys all desires for objective joys."

O Gracious Mother!
In Thy vast eternal Compassion
Heal us
Thy foolish children,
Who heed Thee not;
but, turn their backs on Thee
and scratch and scramble
in ash-heaps and dust-bins
for tricks and trivial tools
that can break the bonds
and confer salvation
and freedom.

—S. D. Khera

I Still do Crave

Long have I trekked through Time's alleys;
My raft I've rowed over billowy vales;
Long have I suffered with beggars and kings;
But, never could I know to whom I belong!

A runaway prodigal son have I been,
Drinking deep the fountain of fire;
I met Thine eyes, so mellow with Love;
I heard the Voice of ambrosial lyre.

Thy robe's cool and feathery brush

Soothed the burning wounds I had;
A touch of Thy Feet opened the gate
Of Joy, unconfined by Time and Space.

Thirsty for ages and ages, on end,
At last I've come to the Nectar Spring;
But, weak and worn, I shall do crave—
Gather Me in Thy arms, O Lord!

—*Bijaya Kumar Mishra; Cuttack*

Line up! March on!

"I am ever with you. Don't worry. Do you know how hard it was to save you from that train disaster? Your son too was there, caught underneath the bridge, in the flood. And, then, that heart attack you had! That was yet another job! On the second day, your condition was indeed very critical. The doctors were certain of that."

These were the words with which Baba greeted this insignificant schoolteacher, on the 26th day of June 1970, at Brindavan, when I first met Him face to face. A thrilling sensation of trepidation and consolation overcame me.

My memory flashed back to that horrid night of the 23rd December 1964. I had fallen into the surging waters of a roaring river, through the open side of my railway coach and was being pressed down by the weight of the debris that descended on me. Shrieks and pathetic cries of agony were heard from all sides. Many floated desperately along. I called out the name of my Lord, Sai Ram.

In a moment, my feet touched a flat rock and I could keep my head over the water. I called out into the darkness the name of my son. O, how merciful is Baba! I heard my son's voice, not far from me, answering, "I am safe, father. How are you?"

And, close by me, on the same rock of refuge, stood the doctor, with whom I was holding a long conversation, when the gap in the line that yawned on the bridge pulled us all down into the catastrophe! Baba had not only saved him, but, he made him come up to me, so that he could administer first aid to both father and son. Baba was referring to this incident, which took place, six years previously, when he said I had assigned him a `job'!

It was in 1969, five years later, that I was struck by a severe heart attack. The self-same doctor, who treated me during the train disaster, looked after me then, as the Providential Instrument of Sai Mata.

And, now, I stood before my Lord, to receive from Him the mantle of faith and the assurance that He would guard me for the rest of my life. I had struck gold. I knew that Baba was radiant, loving, wise, and full of power and mercy.

He is the Avatar of the Age. Baba has come to resuscitate all sinking hearts, not merely, the physical sinking, but, the morally spiritually sinking, more than the physically sinking. We all have narrow constricted hearts; we all have fallen into the flood of doubt and distress. He pulls us out of the mire, he gives us something to stand upon and keep our heads above the surging fears. He toughens us for the battle of life. He has come to cure the twin ills of complacency and lassitude, which hamper the efforts of the Sadhaka in every field.

Love is the only agency adopted by Him to transform us. Grace is the vehicle of this Love. The gift of Grace from Him is but His prompting to develop the Divine qualities latent in us. It is but a means to that end. It is often the first lesson we get to become aware of Him as our reality.

Selfishness, the exaggerated notion of 'I' and 'Mine', is, according to this Teacher the root cause of the anxiety and fear, of hatred and envy, that afflict human society everywhere at the present time. Eradication of this evil weed, which is ruining the field (Kshetra) of the heart of man is possible only by the Sadhana He lays down.

Baba's teachings are sweet and simple. It takes us step by step, gently but steadily, from the gross animal level, to the sublime Divine level. The method that can guide us nearest to Him is the Practice of the Constant Presence of Sai. Sai as we have all experienced is the unfailing Companion on the Pilgrim Path. He is the Antaryami, the Inner Motivator, the Inspirer, the Guide, the ever-vigilant Witness.

Do we ever make a start on this Sadhana? Once we are lined up under the influence of some miraculous experience, material or spiritual, that shed His Love on us, our duty is to march on.

He says to all who have decided to march on, "If you take one step towards Me, I take ten towards you."

Meanwhile, let us recapitulate the preliminary disciplines one has to impose on oneself. Start every day with Love, fill the day with Love, fulfill the day with Love. Dedicate the activities of each day as offerings to Baba, for, "Work is worship." Let us be ashamed of that weakness—worry. For, when we worry, we are doubting Him or denying Him. Let us do good turns to those He places in our path; but, let others not know that we did them. For, it is all His, and there is nothing specifically ours. Let us not be drawn into anything wrong, anything that Baba would not approve. Let us not harm or injure any one by harshness of speech or hurting comment. Let our words be few and also soft and sweet. Let us be content with what Baba is pleased to give us and act well the role He has assigned. Let this be our resolve, until the curtain falls.

—*Prof. G. B. Pillay*

Oh, touch the hem of His garment!

And thou, too, shall be free,
His saving Power, this very hour
Shall give new life to thee.

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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Agastya's Hermitage

Agastya could not contain the joy that welled up within him, when he led Rama, Sita and Lakshmana into his hermitage. He invited them to rest on elevated seats. He had fruits and sweet tubers brought and he offered them for their repast. Then, he enquired about the journey they had gone through and, when Rama was answering his queries, Agastya listened with eyes closed in deep delight, streaming tears of joy down the cheeks. There was a happy smile hovering on his face. At last, he spoke, "Lord! I am convinced that there is no one more blessed than I am. The Lord, Narayana, has Himself come to me; He has stayed in my hermitage! Is this true? Is it a dream? No. It is clearly a fact of experience." He gave expression to his joy in grateful and devotional words.

Rama said, "O Monarch among Monks! I have nothing to hide from you. You know too well, the reason why I have come into the forest. As a consequence, I am not announcing it specially now. Direct me, how I can destroy the brood of demonic persons, the Rakshasas, who obstruct the austerities of sages and monks, and how I can protect and preserve from danger the dedicated servants of God; I shall act accordingly; I am awaiting your advice. In the Hemantha season (the cold months) Lotuses shrivel up and die. The season has approached for the shrivelling of the Rakshasas.

He was Aware

Hearing these words of Rama, Agastya smiled. He replied, "Lord! You are omniscient. I do not know why you require me to tell you how. I am unable to decide whether you are blessing me or testing me. Nevertheless, through the effect of your Grace, the Darshan (sight), Sparshan (contact) and Sambhashan (speech) that you have just now blessed me with, I am able to grasp the significance of your question. That too is your Grace. The Maya, which is Your Creation and your puppet, your slave, lying at your feet, is watching ever, for the slightest raising of your brow, to carry out your commands. Through the skill endowed by you, Maya is creating all beings on earth and in heaven.

Your Maya is unconquerable. It is harassing beings endlessly, that is to say, those who fall a prey to its machinations. This is a fact that is known to all. Your Maya is like the fichus, spreading far and wide; the orbs in the Cosmos are as the fruits of that tree; the beings and things that exist upon this Cosmos are like the worms and larvae that creep inside the fruit. The fruit might appear lovely outside; but, when it is opened, hundreds of worms can be seen wriggling inside.

Those attached to this exterior world and its transitory treasures are afraid of You, since in Your aspect as Time, You cause inexorable ruin on their plans. The Cosmos itself is an appearance on

Your Reality. Rama! You are adored by as worlds. You ask me for directions, just as a common man would; you praise me, as men do. This raises a laugh in me.

I am not concerned with anything now. I desire that you stay in this hermitage, with Sita and Lakshmana. That is the only boon, I ask for. I prefer always to worship Your Attribute-full Form, not Your Attribute-less Principle. That is what I believe in and teach. That is my Ideal, my favourite Goal, my Aspiration.

Therefore, grant me this boon. It is Your sport, to elevate Your servants, and, Yourself to slide into the background as if You are innocent of anything and ignorant of everything! But, do not elevate me. Do not ask me for directions. My duty is to assent and accept your wishes and to follow Your footsteps. Father! Do not inveigle me into Your Maya, and delude me into egoism, making me the target of your sport."

The Curse on Dandaka

At this, Rama said, "O Venerable Sage! This region is well known to you; so, what harm is there if you tell me which place I can select for my stay? This is what everybody would expect of you, isn't it?" Agastya replied, "Master! Since You have commanded me, I shall obey implicitly and give answer. Very near this place, the sacred river Godavari is flowing. Since ages, that great river has been flowing full and free. Adjacent to it, we have the Dandakaranya; when you sanctify it by residing in it. You would have conferred upon the monks and sages that live therein all content and happiness. For, that forest region and its guardian ruler are under a curse and afflicted thereby."

At this, Rama intercepted the sage with the words, "Agastya! Sita is anxious to learn the story of that curse. Tell us about it, in some detail." Agastya saw through that request and so he addressed Rama as 'O Director of the Eternal Cosmic Play. Once upon a time', he said, 'famine raised its head in the Panchavati area. All the monks and ascetics who lived there took refuge in the hermitage of Sage Gautama. He gave them all they needed through the powers he had acquired as a result of his austerities! When the famine was over, the monks decided to return to their old residences.

But, there were some pseudo-monks among them, who conspired against him, and planned to bring him into disrepute. They brought a cow that was in the throes of death and made it enter the hermitage garden, in a particularly green and attractive patch. Gautama saw it, about to bite a beautiful flower away from its stem; he attempted to drive it away, but, at his very first push, the cow breathed its last! The conspirator monks immediately laid on him the dreaded sin of 'go-hathya' (bovicide)!

They condemned him as an outcast and a heathen. Gautama desired to discover whether the cow died as a result of his push or naturally, since its allotted span had ended. He sat in deep meditation exploring an answer to this vital question. Soon, it was revealed to him that it was but a trick played by inimical monks. He was disgusted at their despicable nature. He said, "May this forest polluted by such low minded persons be out of bounds for the good and the saintly. May it become the haunt of demonic Rakshasas."

Another incident too added to the effects of this curse. The ruler of this region, Dandaka by name, violated the chastity of the daughter of his own preceptor, Bhrgu. Bhrgu listened to the pathetic story as related by his daughter and, in the extremity of his anger, he over whelmed the region with a thick downpour of dust. Therefore, this area was sodden deep with mud, and in course of time, it was a thick jungle from end to end. The region is named Dandakaranya, after that infamous ruler."

Curing the Curse

"Rama! Crest jewel of the Raghu Dynasty of Kings! I am certain that when you take residence in that forest, the Rakshasas will be decimated and the curse will be lifted. Monks and Sadhakas can once again dwell there, and progress in their austerities. Humanity everywhere will benefit by this cleansing and this consummation. I may tell you that the sage who cursed will also be rendered happy by you, for, he is in a sad mood at the consequences of his anger."

When Agastya finished his account of the story of Dandakaranya, Rama said, "Well. So be it. I shall reside there." He took leave of the Sage, Agastya, and proceeded to the Dandaka forest, with Sita and Lakshmana. Before they left his hermitage, Agastya brought forth certain weapons that he had acquired by his asceticism from Divine Sources, and placed them in the hands of Rama saying that he had no wish to us, them and they had now an owner who deserved them and who could utilise them for a holy purpose. "Rama!" he said, "You are my shield, my strength, my prowess. These weapons cannot save me, but, You can. Your Grace is the most powerful weapon I possess. You are my refuge, my fortress, the impenetrable armour for my breast."

Even as Sita, Rama and Lakshmana entered the thick jungle-ridden area of Dandaka, trees that had gone dry were thrilled into greenery and were covered with tender, whispering fluffs of leaf. Weak, enervated creepers and vines suddenly felt alive, alert and active; they gave birth to bunches of fragrant flowers. The forest hastened to clothe itself in lovely green, speckled all over with multi-coloured floral dots. They sought a spot where they could reside therein and soon, arrived at the place known as Panchavati, which Agastya had indicated.

Jatayu

They saw there the old Eagle Chief, Jatayu. He was a great friend of Dasaratha accompanying him on his spatial expeditions to help the denizens of Heaven. Rama related to the Eagle the sad news of the death of Dasaratha and alleviated his sense of loss and bereavement. Rama told him about Himself, and spoke to him about Sita and Lakshmana, and of his other brothers.

They were set on rigging up a thatched but on the banks of the Godavari. Jatayu had become a close friend, and through him they could acquire a clearer picture of the region. That night, they spent the hours under a tree in sound and refreshing sleep.

Lakshmana's Ordeal

Rama wished to stay at Panchavati, on the Godavari, for some length of time. So, reclining under the cool shades of a spreading tree, Rama called his brother near, and said, "Lakshmana! Brother! Fix upon a beautiful and comfortable spot in this area and build thereon, a nice little cottage, as charmingly as you wish."

"Lakshmana received this order as a dagger-thrust! He could not bear the agony. He fell at the feet of Rama, crying out in anguish, "Tell me what crime I committed to deserve this cruel command." Sita and Rama were struck with amazement at this behaviour. Rama said, "Lakshmana! I cannot understand what makes you so sad. Have you heard any day, a single cruel word from my tongue? Have I become so insane to utter harsh, unpleasant words to you or any one else? You attend to my needs and wishes and serve me as the very breath of life. How then can I speak in cruel terms to you? Your grief is meaningless, mistaken. After all, what did I tell you now! I told you only this: Choose any spot you like and build thereon a hut for us to live in. Isn't it so?"

At this, Lakshmana closed his ears with the palms, and protested sadly, "Rama! Rama! I cannot bear to hear these words." Rama was surprised at his gesture and grief. But, Lakshmana stood before him with folded hands and supplicating with the words: "Lord! There is no one in me to say 'I'. My only treasure, my only possession is Sita and Rama. I have no wish of my own; I have no will of my own. My wish, my will, is Rama's wish, Rama's will, Rama's command. Obeying it is my wish, my will. I am the slave who cares for none else, nothing else. When I am such, how can I bear to listen to words which indicate that I have to "choose according to my wishes" a spot for the cottage? As if I have the capacity and inclination to choose!

Had I preferences of my own, how can I be a fit servant of Rama? How can I deserve that privilege and pleasure? It would mean I am unfit to be alive on earth, and my life is but a burden and a shame." Lakshmana stood, sobbing aloud, unable to stifle his grief.

Rama saw his plight. He consoled him with kind words. "Brother! Your heart is highly sanctified. I used those words in the ordinary worldly sense, but, do not be under the impression that your brother is unaware of your innermost quality of dedication. Do not grieve."

Rama showered His smile on Lakshmana and continued, "Brother! I am delighted at the purity of your devotion and the genuineness of your service. Your intentions are innocent and elevating. I will not cause you pain by such words hereafter. I spoke to you the language of common usage, that is all. Do not take them so much to heart. Come! Let us go and choose!" Saying thus, He took Sita and Lakshmana with him; after traversing some distance, Rama stopped and said, "Well! Erect the thatched cottage (Parnasala) here!"

When he heard those words, Lakshmana exclaimed in great joy, "Ah! I am blessed, indeed. My duty is to carry out such commands, not exercising my wish or will to erect anything on my own." He fell at the feet of his elder brother; rising happy and content, he entered on the task of collecting branches and twigs for the hut that was to be their home.

Sita and Rama realised that Lakshmana had a highly sensitive mind, a delicately subtle intellect; they derived great joy within themselves at the recollection of the depth of his faith and devotion. Sita confessed to Rama on many an occasion that life for her in the forest was even more delightful than life at Ayodhya, for the reason that a brother like Lakshmana was accompanying and serving Rama.

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness

(To be continued)

O Baba! I have promised to serve Thee to the end;
Be Thou for ever near me, my Master and my Friend.
I shall not fear the battle, if Thou art by my side;
Nor, wander from the pathway if Thou wilt be my Guide.

Sai Yoga in New York

Recently, nearly 300 persons congregated in the Auditorium of the Madison Avenue Baptist Church to partake in an Inaugural Lecture Program of Lectures and demonstrations by Indra Devi and others on Sai Yoga. The group was composed basically of four types of people: Eastern and Western devotees of Sai Baba, Western students of Indra Devi. Western Yoga enthusiasts and Eastern and Western curiosity-seekers.

The fact that about a hundred Westerners were in attendance indicated that Baba had become a force to be reckoned with among the guides of youth.

The shrine reflected both care and attentiveness by those in charge. Colored lights sparkled like pinions of peacock feathers, displaying iridescent golden and blue-green colors. Leis of red and yellow flowers adored many photographs.

The chant of Om united many voices in an effect of consonance, while also giving a sense of response to the disposition of the colors. Due to the enthusiastic participation of the gathering, bhajans were extended past the prescribed fifteen minutes to more than half an hour.

This was the first visit of Indra Devi to New York, after an interval of 14 years. Russian by birth, Indian in spirit, the seventy-five year old woman captivated the audience with a soft voice that trembled whenever she spoke about the Leela of Baba. She elicited much emphatic identification from the audience. Before long, others came to the front and contributed stories of their own, about Baba.

I was struck by the similarities of these stories to the ones about Sri Krishna. They throw light on the Divinity of an Avatar. The Avatar loves devotees, but, is at the same time, beyond all attachment and desire.

At the conclusion of the lecture, Indra Devi became reflective. She said, "To talk of Baba is becoming increasingly difficult. Because, I don't know what to say." It has been noted that devotees who revere Him with their whole selves develop a single-minded purpose, in which silent meditation takes precedence over speech, thus refusing bondage to all attachment and desire.

—*Rosmarie T. Bouino; From 'Transindia', New York*

The Festival of the Mother

Devotees from all parts of the world gathered in their thousands days before the Dasara began; and, volunteers belonging to the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Dal began the pleasant task of arranging for the reception and residence of the thousands more who were expected. Contingents from East Godavari, Orissa, Karnataka and Kerala joined the groups from Haryana, Punjab Maharashtra etc. and under the guidance and with the blessings of Bhagavan entered upon their arduous duties with alacrity and enthusiasm. Bhagavan addressed a gathering of about 800 volunteers (men and men) at 9 P.M., on the 15th, and spoke on the responsibilities of the bearer of the Badge of Seva.

On the 16th, the Dasara, dedicated to the adoration of the Mother, the Supreme Guardian and Guide of Humanity and all that live and move, was inaugurated by Bhagavan, before a gathering of over 15,000 devotees. With the morning Sun shining soft and sweet, and the strains of music and Vedic chants filling the air with fragrance, Bhagavan gave Darshan before the Silver Doors. He spoke about the Prasanthi Flag and declared that it was a signal of spiritual victory, of the Suras over the Asuras, of good over evil, of the splendour of wisdom over the darkness of ignorance.

The 17th Annual Day of the Sri Sathya Sai Hospital was celebrated in the evening. Over 50 doctors had arrived from various parts of the country to serve the vast gathering of devotees. Sri Nakul Sen, I. C. S. Retd. was the President for the function. Dr. B. Sitharamaiah of the Sri Sathya Sai Hospital presented the Annual Report and welcomed Sri Nakul Sen. Sri Nakul Sen said that Bhagavan is the Mother, adored during the Navaratri and, true to the maternal nature of the Parashakti, Bhagavan is having the Hospital Day on the very first day, since "Sariram adyam khalu dharma sadhanam"—the body and its upkeep are essential for the Sadhana of Dharma. Bhagavan, in His Discourse, referred to the incessant vibrations and emanations that proceed from every individual thing and being, and the action and reaction that result therefrom to every one who is involved in them. The recognition of this truth is an essential ingredient of every health practice, said Baba.

On the third day of Dasara, over 5000 indigent and disabled persons were given a sumptuous feast at the Prasanthi Nilayam the sweets being distributed by the loving hands of Bhagavan Himself. Later, over a 1000 defectives were given saris or dhotis by Bhagavan.

The fourth day was the Day when the thrice-holy Vedapurusha Saptaha Jnana Yajna (the Vedic Sacrifice dedicated to the Glorification and Study of the Divine as defined in the Vedas, lasting for seven days) was inaugurated. The Minister for Religious Endowments in Andhra Pradesh, Hon'ble Sri Suryanarayana Raju delivered the Inaugural Speech. He said that the occasion, the participants and the Divine Presence of Bhagavan reminded him of the Rajasuya sacrifice extolled in the Mahabharata! He congratulated the Vedic scholars on the chance they had secured to perform the Sacrifice in the Divine Presence and appealed to them to share their knowledge

with the common people of the land. Bhagavan declared that Yajna meant 'Tyaga'. He clarified the inner significance of the Mantra that invoked the Gods for the benefit of humanity.

That evening, the Annual Day of the All India Prasanthi Vidwanmahasabha, started by Bhagavan a decade ago to revive the study and practice of the ancient scriptures was celebrated. Brahmasri Mudigonda Pichayya Sastry, an octogenarian doyen of Tarka and Vedanta gave the Inaugural Address. He described Life as the desperate struggle of Man caught in a maze; he declared that the Vedas contain the key to human liberation. Bhagavan in His concluding address spoke of Vedanta as the treasure house of the spiritual wisdom, which is the heritage of the whole of humanity.

On the 20th, and subsequent dates, the morning hours were resonant with the rhythmic chant of the holy hymns of the Vedas, the mantras with which the Rajarajeswari aspect of Divinity was worshipped and the soul-stirring recitation of laudatory verses on the Names and Forms of the One Divine Principle. In the evening, Brahmasri Lanka Sitharamasastry and Brahmasri Sishtla Chandramouli Sastry spoke on the meaning and methodology of the Vedic rituals employed in the Vedapurusha Yajna. While the former dwelt on the philosophical aspects, the latter elaborated the symbolic significance of the mantras uttered to invoke the guardian deities. On the 21st, Brahmasri Mudikonda Pichayya Sastry gave his second lecture on Advaita. Bhagavan created a nine-gem necklace and put it lovingly around his neck at the end of his speech. Dr. Divakarla Venkatavadhani of the Osmania University spoke on the Soundarya Lahari of Sri Sankaracharya and made every one appreciate the esoteric and poetic excellence of the verses. Bhagavan explained the various terms used in the Darsanas for the Atma and elucidated the Sadhanachatushtaya or fourfold endeavour that a person must undertake in order to realise the Atmic reality.

On the 22nd October, Dr. V. K. Gokak who had just returned after a month-long tour of the United States, Hawaii and England, visiting Sathya Sai Centres and enthusing devotees by conveying to them the Message of Love, Reverence and Service spoke of his experiences and conclusions, to the extreme delight of the mammoth gathering. He related many incidents to illustrate that Bhagavan is already in all the places which he visited and that He is demonstrating to all inquirers that He has come to correct, console, comfort and counsel, as Jesus did centuries ago. Bhagavan spoke that day on the second of the four requisites for spiritual progress laid down in the Sastras, the group of Six attainments. On the 23rd, the Durgashtami Day, Br: Doolipala Ramachandrasastry, Principal of the Sanskrit College, Kovvur asserted that the teachings of Bhagavan are simple and sustaining; they are as clear as the pellucid stream of the Upanishads and are applicable to the problems of the present though they are resonant with the immortal religious culture of India. After him, Brahmasri Maddulapalli Sathyanarayana Sastry of the S.S.N. College, Narasaraopet addressed the gathering on the philosophy of Sound and its ramifications in the field of Light, Energy and Divinity. Bhagavan spoke that day on the Four Credentials that any subject of study or object of attention, any inquiry or conclusion, should possess—the Content, the purpose, the path and the qualification. "No one should undertake any study unless he has an elementary idea of the content, a glimpse and taste for the purpose, a determination to follow the path by which it can be acquired and the skill and energy, the aptitude and alertness needed to finish the task," He said. He also spoke of the gross, subtle and causal bodies in man and in all conceptions of the human mind.

That evening, the students of the Sri Sathya Sai Boys' College of Arts and Science put on boards the Telugu Drama, 'Pandava Vijayam', specially written for them by Bhagavan Himself. Bhagavan had also taught them how to render the lines, sing the songs, and express the emotions. The Director of the Cosmic Play had, in His infinite Compassion, condescended to produce this play, in order to better impress on the people His Message that 'pleasure is but an interval between two pains'. The play is based on an episode in the Mahabharata where the Pandavas hear, even while they were celebrating their total victory over their wicked cousins, that the son of their Brahmin Guru—Ashwatthama—had slaughtered their five infants in their cradles, in order to destroy the dynasty and pluck out the name Pandava from the annals of history! The play was well produced and the vast gathering of over 20,000 were moved into joy, grief, compassion and anger by the text, the histrionic skill, and also the music talent that marked the enactment of the play. This was followed by the thrilling performance by the girls of the Sri Sathya Sai Arts and Science College for Girls Anantapur. They enacted the famous one-act play entitled "The Bishop's Candle-sticks," depicting the transformation of a petrified heart through the alchemy of Love. A student, Chalapathi Rao, gave a fine mono-acting performance depicting Rama on the eve of his exile.

On the 24th, the speakers were Brahmasri Jammalamadaka Madhavarama Sarma and the renowned poet of Andhra, Sri Jandhyala Papayya Sastry. Sri Madhavarama Sarma announced that he has already composed 16000 verses for the Sathya Sai Purana, which he intends offering at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan on His 50th Birthday Festival in November 1975. Bhagavan elaborated on the Pranava as the primeval Sound and declared that since Creation is the product of the Pranava, it has vast potential value for the Sadhaka.

On the 25th, Vijayadashami, the Day of Victory, the Valedictory Day of the Yajna, Bhagavan reached the Poornachandra Auditorium at 9 A.M., accompanied by the Ritwiks reciting Vedic hymns; coming on to the Yajnamantap, He created the nine precious gems for the Valedictory Offering to the sacrificial Fire. It was a thrilling experience to see the aged and reverend priests and savants circumambulating the sacred fire when the flames rose, red and blue, to yards of height, with Bhagavan standing within the holy circle as the Vedapurusha Himself.

Bhagavan had the Sacred Bath in the form of Shirdi Sai; He created a gem neck-lace for the silver idol and with Dr. S. Bhagavantam, D.Sc., holding the Vibhuti Vessel, He showered an enormous quantity of Vibhuti on the idol by rotating His Hand inside the vessel. Afterwards, He sprinkled the Yajna Tirtha and the Abhisheka Tirtha with kusa grass on the heads of every one, moving among the vast gathering numbering more than 20,000!

That evening, prize winners in the students' essay competitions on subjects related to Bhagavan's Message and Mission were given prizes: three, for each State. More than 1500 College students wrote the essays and the winners were invited to the Prasanthi Nilayam so that they may receive the blessings of Bhagavan on the auspicious Vijayadashami Day.

Bhagavan then called six poets on to the Dais and they were accorded the unique privilege of reading their poems in the Divine Presence. Brahmasri B. Tirumalachar, (Sanskrit), Sri N. Kasturi (Telugu), Dr. Chaturvedi Narasimha Sastry-Amarendra (Telugu and English), Brahmasri

Jandhyala Papayya Sastry, Karunasri, (Telugu), Brahmasri Deepala Pichayya Sastry (Telugu) and Brahmasri J. Madhavarama Sarma (Sanskrit). Bhagavan in His Discourse emphasised the need to develop 'balance and equanimity', through poetry and other arts. Afterwards, there was a variety entertainment highlighting a Kathakali, Poothana Moksham, and a scene from Gayopakyana by Sri A. N. Subba Rao and party from Tenali. On 26th, Bhagavan gave Darshan on the Jhoola, while the Burrakatha Party from Bharat Heavy Electricals, Hyderabad, recited the story of Lavakusa.

The immense concourse of devotees were entertained on different days by items of artistic excellence by the pupils of Bal Vikas Classes from Guahati (Assam), Chirala, Guntur and Dharmavaram (Andhra Pradesh) Ernakulam and Trichur (Kerala); a prodigy child aged 7 of the Bal Vikas Group of Chirala spoke in English on Bhagavan in lucid, luminous style and thrilled everyone! Four students of the Sri Sathya Sai College, Brindavan, Bangalore, spoke on Bhagavan's Message: Deepak Shrimali (English), Kamal Sahani (English), Vijaya Sharma (Hindi) and Ravi Kumar (English). Each speech was a model of brevity and clarity, besides being saturated in sincerity.

Sri Rama Kumar Chatterji gave a delightful recital of devotional songs. Captain Dr. (Miss) Kabitha Roy and friends recited a musical composition entitled Sri Sathya Sai Punthi, in folk tunes, an experience welcomed with joy by thousands. Sri Jasraj and party from Bombay gave a music recital that was highly appreciated. The members of the Bhagavata Bhakta Samajam, Krishna-Guntur, gave a Harikathakalakshepam and a Tharang Recital.

On the 27th, Bhagavan blessed every man woman and child with the gift of sacred Vibhuti and the chance of offering Namaskar to Him. On the 28th, He blessed the Seva Dal and Doctor Volunteers and gave them loving advice.

Dasara 1974 will remain an unforgettable experience of ecstasy in the minds of over 20,000 devotees who were blessed to witness the Festival

—*Editor*

The Flame of Full Surrender

`Arati' symbolises Illumination of the Spirit. That is why Arati is done at the end of every session of Bhajan and Worship, with a burning lamp of camphor. The flame is waved before the Image of God or before the Incarnation of God, to signify that the Prayer was dedicated to the achievement of Illumination. The word Arati means "Atma-rati," the longing of the individual Atma for the universal Atma, the Atma for the Paramatma. It also means the union or the merging of Light with Light, that is to say, the `particularised' with the Universal Light.

When camphor and fire meet, there is no remainder or residue of even soot. Only such camphor is used for the ceremony of Arati. The person who waves the flame has to pray in his mind or by appropriate hymns, "Even so, my Lord, let all the impurities in me be burnt away, and let there be no residue left for me to work out, in the coming days."

The daily routine of spiritual disciplines at Prasanthi Nilayam, the abode of the Avatar, is a lesson for the Sadhaka to observe and follow. We begin the day with the recitation of the Pranava, to arouse and cleanse our vital airs (Prana). We recite OM 21 times, and then, awaken the faculties of our personality for carrying out the duties of the day ahead, singing the awakening hymn, the Suprabhatam Song.

Then we purify the environment and serve our fellowmen, both, by the Nagarsankirtan, (Group Bhajan) along the roads of our villages, towns and suburban areas. Singing Bhajan chants and going around have been prescribed by Bhagavan in order to symbolise our daily 'out-going activities'; He wants us to go about our daily chores with the name of God on our lips and the form of God before our eyes. "Maam anusmara yuddhya cha—keep Me ever in mind, and then, fight on," as Krishna says in the Gita.

The fourth item, Mangala-arati, the auspicious Arati, is done at the end of the day, when the senses, the intellect, the mind, the ego-consciousness are all tired and exhausted and have come home to retire for the rest they get during deep sleep.

They praise the Lord and greet Him and go through the symbolic act of mergence, to convince themselves that they have His protection, during the time when they are dormant in the Atma. They surrender and thereby de-fuse all the Vasanas or 'tendencies, attitudes and bents' acquired by them as a result of their 'Karmas' at the Feet of Bhagavan. This is the meaning of the burning camphor waved before Bhagavan or His Image or Portrait.

The Song sung during Arati at Parthi and at all gatherings of devotees has four important verses, which are addressed to Bhagavan through various significant and meaningful Flames.

The Song begins with OM, which itself is the all-inclusive Name: OM ithyekakshram Brahma. This one Word OM is Brahma.

Jai Jagadeesa Hare—we are thus greeting the Hari (Hare means O Hari) the Almighty who destroys evil and sustains good as Jagadeesa, the Lord of Jagat. Jagat means that which 'gath' or moves, changes, evolves, declines, namely, Creation. The verse prays for Victory to the Divine Forces and the defeat of un-godly forces.

Then devotees address Him as Swami, Master. For, the senses, the intellect, the mind, all serve the Master within and act according to His direction, in the ideal organism. He is praised as Bhakta jana samrakshaka who protects those whose lives are dedicated to His Glorification, who are conscious that He is their Guide and Goal. He is referred to also as Parthi Maheshwara, the Great Lord of Parthi, the place where He was born and which He has chosen as the Centre of His Dharmachakra, "Wheel of Righteousness—Revival Task." Parthi also means the human body with its propensities and desires and He is the Lord who resides in it and can exercise mastery over it, in every one of us.

Sasi Vadana, in the second verse, means, obviously, that His Face is as charming as the Moon. At the commencement of the Day we declare, in the Awakening Hymn, that He is illumining the World as the Aditya (Sun). At the close of the Day we see Him as the Moon.

The Moon represents the mind (chandrama manaso jathah). We see our own mind in His Face, for, we thereby promise to keep it as bright, as cool and as pure as the lovely Moon. The word Sreekara appears in the Arati song, just as the word Sreeman appears in the Awakening Hymn. This new word means that Baba is not only the repository of prosperity and peace, auspiciousness and well-being; He confers and creates them in order to bless mankind.

Baba is also Sarva Prana Pati—The pati (lord) of sarva (all) prana (living beings). He is no hard-hearted Master, though. He is Asrita kalpa lata—a wish fulfilling tree for all who seek Him. The senses, mind and intellect all get their wishes fulfilled only through the Grace of Consciousness, which is but a reflection of His Glory.

Baba is remembered with gratitude in the Arati song as Apat Bandhava, the Refuse of those in Peril. This is an appropriate attribute of Baba to impress on the mind, when asleep. For, He is present as the eternal Witness, even when we are unaware of ourselves and our surroundings, during deep sleep, when He alone does protect us from harm Sleep is Avidya, or dark ignorance and He guards us from the dangers of ignorance, if only we take refuge in Him.

In the third verse, Baba is designated, Mata, Pita, Guru, Daivamu, mariyanthayu Neeve, that is to say, You are Mother, Father, Preceptor, God and all else we need for our progress. As the Divine Consciousness within us, our antaryami, He is the Mother (giving birth to thoughts and knowledge), Father (the originator of the process of thought, feeling and volition), Preceptor (illuminator) and God (the goal striven after as the Ultimate source of Bliss Everlasting).

We speak of Baba as Nada Brahma, in this verse. He is the embodiment of the Original Word that emanated from Him and expressed Itself as all this multiplicity. He is Nagendrasayana, He who reclines on the Great Serpent, the Kundalini, the Yogic Pathway. He is Jagannath, the Lord over the Eternal Flux.

The fourth verse declares that Bhagavan is OMKARA RUPA, of the Form of OM; He is Ojaswi, the Personification of strength and splendour, the very effulgence in the absence of which no one will get the strength to function. The name Sai Mahadeva also occurs; it means Sai is the manipulator and master of all the senses, the mind and the intellect as well as the experience they gather and co ordinate.

Finally, we pray to Him to accept the Mangala Arati. (Mangala Aarati anduko) Praying thus we are submitting all our Vasanas (likes and dislikes) acquired during the course of the day at the feet of Bhagavan. The fragrance of the camphor represents the perfume of these Vasanas. They ought to be elevating and pure.

In the flame of the Wisdom which we receive from Him, the Vasanas are burnt away, without any balance; and, finally, we call on Him as Mantara Giri Dhari. This is really a very appropriate Name to be uttered in the context. It refers to the story of the Lord holding the Mantara Mountain

on His back, in order to keep it from sinking, when it was used as a churning rod in the Ocean of Milk by the gods and demons.

The Lord assumed the form of a Tortoise at that time, in order to carry the peak on His back. Our mind is the Ocean and the Intellect is the churning rod. When the rod sinks into the mire of greed and hate, let us pray Bhagavan to give it His support, so that we may awaken wiser and purer than when we went to sleep.

The words, Mantara Giri Dhari are sung a second time with a slight change, or, can be, with even deeper significance. Some Bhajan Mandalis do so, with good effect. They say, Mangala Giri Dhari, indicating Krishna Himself, who bore aloft the Govardhana Giri to save the Gopala Community from the deluge. Indra, the Presiding Deity of the Indriyas (senses) inflicted the Deluge on the region where the Gopalas lived, and Krishna saved them. We request Bhagavan most humbly to raise the `umbrella' of His Grace, so that the deluge from the Senses might not destroy our higher aspirations.

The concluding verse is chanted three times, addressing Bhagavan as Narayana, as Sathya Narayana. Baba was named Sathya Narayana by the parents; in the subtle sense also He is Sathya (the Reality) and Narayana (the Supreme Indweller). Then we refer to Him with a Jai as Sadguru Deva, the Divine Preceptor, the God who has come to Teach.

And, with that, the flame is waved, until the camphor is spent and the day is done. Its duties, doubts, desires, defeats, and successes are laid at Baba's Feet.

—Prof. M. Krishna Kutty Menon; Ernakulam, Kerala

The Names

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba attaches great importance to the recitation and adoration of the Nama or Name. It is reverentially uttered in Bhajan, Namaskirtan, and the pre-dawn Nagarsankirtan. And, it is also used for Japa, as a constant spiritual exercise.

The letters constituting Bhagavan's Name are truly chinmoy (surcharged with spiritual power). The Name is not different from the Person named. Since the Person is chinmoy, the Name too is potent and pure. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu has declared—and, who knows the latent powers of the Name more than Chaitanya Mahaprabhu?"—The Name, Krishna, the glory of Krishna, the Leelas of Krishna are all as bliss-imparting and as blessed as the Lord Himself."

Bhagavan has said in the Gita (X, II), "Ignorant dunces do not know Me in this human habitation." The Avatar in human form is doubted and denied by the foolish, who do not accept the might, majesty and mystery of God. They require God to behave as they believe or dictate! The Avatar is Brahmam, Sat-Chit-Ananda Itself.

So, the Name that calls to memory, that brings before the eye, the Form of the Avatar, is pure, holy and perfect. It cannot be uttered by the tongue, except through His Will. It evokes His Grace and cleanses the mind of the utterer. It is independent and effulgent; it lightens burdens and brightens the career of the person. When it `dances on the tongue', as Baba says, it wears away the mundane, material nature of man and liberates him from the bondage caused by the identification with the body.

As Bhagavan says, the Name can never be soiled, or diluted in strength, whoever may try to tarnish it. When the rays of the Sun enter a room that was dark for ages, they do not get dark thereby, nor is their illumining and disinfecting power any the less; they are as 'chinmoy' as ever. The Name too is `chinmoy', whoever utters it, whoever hears it, whoever writes it or remembers it. It can be recited, by all, at, all times, under whatever conditions.

The Bhagavata says that the Name is a cord that binds to Lord to the devotee who calls on Him. The Lord hears the call, as Baba has demonstrated to us in millions of cases, and the Lord prevents the crisis, or averts the calamity. The instance of Draupadi being saved from ignominy at the Court of the Kauravas is well known. Sai Krishna, in our days, is saving hundreds from distress and defeat, since they rely on the Name.

Bhagavan has also advised us to sing the Name forming choral groups, and walking; along the streets of the area around our homes in the early hours of the morning. This is an act of service to ourselves and others Blessed are the animate and inanimate who are affected by the Voices repeating and extolling the Name. Blessed too is the long stretch of land, sky and water, that are purified from the putrefaction caused by the noises of anxiety, fear and hatred. It is as if the holy waters of the Ganga have been sprinkled over the entire area by a kind hand!

—*Prof. S. C. Das Gupta; Varanasi*

The Other Science

Avatars will always remain unpredictable, mysterious, incomprehensible. Baba has told us that no one can succeed in unravelling His Reality, His Nature and His Truth. Yet, man feels a perennial need to analyse events and phenomena concerning Avatars and Super human Personages and to arrive at conclusions, however defective or incomplete.

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba is the first Avatar of the Age of Science. He encourages the scientific spirit of inquiry, for, He advises every one to "Come, See, Examine, Experience, and then, believe." No wonder, many eminent scientists are adoring Him. He understands and appreciates their researches and discoveries. He is fully aware of the benefits that science and technology have showered on mankind; He is not averse to make the fullest use of such. He has established Colleges of Science, and fosters research and study. But, Bhagavan avers that Spirituality transcends Science, and that, only those who have so transcended can find God. Science pursues the question, How? Spirituality asks the question, Why? By Whom? Or, by what?

Bhagavan declares that Science needs better direction and guidance, which the scientists themselves cannot now muster. He says that only the spiritual leaders, venerated and accepted by the people as the prime movers of all that is good and vital, can give that lead. Now, Science has, in the words of Bhagavan, no 'humanity'. It fills people only with emptiness, loneliness and desperation. It is a cancerous growth, fomenting wars and hatred, supplying weapons to the angry nations of the world to destroy each other.

India too is infected by this insanity and it has accepted the highly capitalised Science of the West as her goal; already, she is feeling the painful effects of the cancerous growth. Science has become too colossal and all-pervasive.

In spite of centuries of adherence to the philosophy of simple living and high thinking, India too is drawn into the whirlpool, by the time-spirit. Though every nation is aware of the evil that is spawned by the mighty Giant called Science, no nation has so far evolved a method of channelising Science towards the spiritual, as well as the moral uplift of man, apart from its current contribution towards his material comfort and happiness.

Bhagavan has the answer; He has come for this very purpose, to save humanity from the tentacles of unchecked Science. He says, "Every one should realise that the Science of Self-discovery is his birth-right! He must value it as a life-saver; he must earn it and use it for his progress. That other Science was explored and established by sages, who laid down its laws and methodology in clear and concise terms, for all to be attracted by it and to start practising it.

Not to know this Science and not to benefit by it is to inflict on oneself great loss. As a result of the discoveries these sages made, India has been, for centuries, the spiritual leader of all mankind. She has the potential even now, in spite of overwhelming odds; the spark that Baba can confer is enough to ignite it once again and develop it into a mighty conflagration. India can again become, as a result of the ministration of the Avatar, God-filled, and God-led. Its spiritual preceptors can once again achieve the eminence and authority they had in the courts of the ancient kingdoms of India.

In those days, the Guru and the Sanyasi instructed the rulers on the ideals they must place before them, and the most moral means they should use to reach them. The rulers consulted them and respected their wishes and their advice. Similarly, in India tomorrow, politicians and scientists have to keep before them the advice of the spiritual leaders, if India must advance into Peace and happy plenty.

Bhagavan, in His Divine Grace and Wisdom, has inaugurated a grass-roots spiritual resurgence in India, through the thousands of Sathya Sai Seva Samitis, and allied units of moral uplift, like the Mahila Vibhag, the Seva Dal and the Bal Vikas. Every one attached to these Centres of Service is transformed into a humble, earnest, Sadhaka, seeking to correct his faults and to make himself or herself a better instrument in the hands of Bhagavan, for the fulfillment of the Task on which the Avatar has come.

The Avatar is geared for modern times, and so, recognising that the world has shrunk into a small neighbourhood colony, It deals with spiritual growth on a global level.

Baba knows that the emptiness inherent in the machinist and technological culture of the West, fast spreading into the East, will induce the forlorn, fear-ridden people into various isms, that promise speedy victory of one type or other. These proclaim themselves as short cuts to salvation. The young as well as the old turn to hippieism, to drugs, and to various exhibitionistic, esoteric cults. These attract, because they provide an escape from the hard realities of life and its urgent call for shouldering social and individual responsibilities; but, the entrants seldom know that these isms end in disillusionment and despair.

Bhagavan insists on the hard way, the ancient way, the way that toughens and rewards richly. Not for him the life of indulgence or indolence, with a few minutes or hours of meditation in an air-conditioned room. He is against such made-easies; he decries part-time devotion, and part-time Sadhanas.

Spiritual leaders in India are easily impressed by the large numbers of foreigners that flock their Ashrams and crowd into their classes. They little realise that the hunger of millions across the world for spiritual sustenance and guidance is deep and disturbing. They are prepared to trek to the ends of the world to taste what is offered as food to relieve their hunger. These Gurus travel abroad, and revel in publicity. But, they trail away into oblivion leaving the people as hungry as ever. Bhagavan is definite that the teachings of the Rishis should not be watered to suit the whims of those who demand a cure.

I feel certain that Bhagavan will visit other countries and bring about spiritual resurgence. He has often declared that He must set India in order before He proceeds abroad. He is determined to have a spiritually resurgent India as the standard-bearer of the New Era of Dharmic Renaissance.

I have often wondered about His first—and, until the moment of writing, His only visit—to a land across the seas, to Africa, to the State of Uganda. Bhagavan goes to persons in their darkest hour. When He moved amongst the Indians in Uganda, He must have been aware that, before long, they were to face chaos and ruin. He spread the message of Love and Fortitude. The Africans too are His children, and they needed His Blessing. He knew that both Indians and Africans were passing through critical times and that all this experience was worthwhile as a step in the process of African evolution.

Bhagavan is against the modern craze for quick results and little effort. He preaches no new religion, no strange cult. He accepts all religions as different paths that lead to the mountaintop of enlightenment and peace, He re-iterates the basic disciplines of all religions: Sathya (Truth), Dharma (Morality), Shanti (Equanimity) and Prema (Love).

Above all, He emphasises the practice of Love. Love is God; Live in Love, He says. Love is the quality that distinguishes a cultured man, a Sadhaka, an aspirant, a devotee and a practitioner of spiritual systems. Bhagavan declares, "You are imprisoned in the ego; you have to liberate yourselves quickly and safely. But, most of you do not seek from Me the key to this liberation! You ask from Me trash and tinsel, petty little cures and gains; very few desire to get from Me the thing I have come to give, namely, Liberation Itself. Even among those few who seek Liberation,

only a small percentage stick sincerely to the Path of Sadhana. Among them; only an infinitesimal number succeed.”

In the present world crisis of character, Bhagavan's Grace will certainly act as a powerful catalytic. It will bring about a transformation among the peoples of the world. One can observe that the groups who flock to Baba for spiritual strength and guidance are as diverse as the peoples of the earth. They are equally diverse in spiritual development. Among them, one finds nonbelievers, escapists, drug-addicts, agnostics, as well as highly evolved Sadhakas, deep Vedic scholars, broad-minded Scientists and artistes, poets, pundits and ordinary simple folk who delight in ancient prescriptions.

Bhagavan accepts them all, welcomes them all, for, they are all His children. He is compassionate to the sinner, He comforts and consoles the distressed, and leads the doubter and the confused by the hand into the realm of Light.

His love touches each one, whatever he is, and however he is. But, His touch brings to each an awareness of his own spiritual status and a glimpse of the Goal. One feels glad that he is accepted in spite of his faults and failings; his complacency is shaken; his pride is pricked; he is stirred as never before, to strive for enlightenment.

Bhagavan says, "Bharat is the Yoga-bhoomi (the Land of Yoga, Self-control, Sense-control, Mind-Control), Tyaga-bhoomi (the Land where He who renounces is revered), and the Land of Personality Integration, and the Cultivation of Spiritual Intuition." India has to be again this, so that it might lead mankind into the haven of Peace.

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba has willed that this consummation must happen; and, so, it shall happen.

—*Dr. Desraj Dhairyam, D.Ph. (Psych) Dip. Chin. Psych (Columbia)*

The Thin Line

It is a rationalistic dogma that any extraordinary sign of the power of mind over matter cannot really be there, or, if true, is just a species of deception. To most ordinary people, such an attitude of mind seems thoroughly irrational. There is today a great interest in superhuman phenomena among scientists all over the world, for too much has happened and is happening for them to ignore them any longer. In any case, the time is past when any rational person can argue that what *cannot* be explained does *not* exist. It *does*.

There are thousands in India and abroad, to whom 'laboratory proof' would be superfluous. The interests and emotions of ordinary people as well as their private grieves and sorrows would have to be taken into account vis-à-vis the phenomenon personified by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, for instance. For, it is part of living Reality.

There are areas of human experience where there are only beliefs—no `truths' as commonly understood. And whether there has been relief, cure, consolation, spiritual benefit by sight (Darshan) or communion (Sambhashan)—no one can really judge of such things except those who are directly involved. It cannot but be a subjective judgment. For, no one who stands outside the ground can really argue about it, still less dogmatise.

It is also worth noting that the line separating the sceptics from the faithfuls has often been thin. There have been several instances among the former joining the latter fold.

Haldane once said, "The world is not only queerer than you imagine. It is queerer than you can imagine." Julian Huxley thought of the human brain and the senses as a kind of filter, which allowed you to see only a few things existing. And, he went on to make a Confession, which is pregnant with meaning in this context: " I have always felt a horror, of limiting the possibilities of things."

—*Extract: The Economic Times*

Truth Through Truth

The atmosphere of Prasanthi Nilayam is highly charged with spirituality. Many occurrences that appear as coincidences are actually "miracles". People are greatly impressed and affected by miracles concerning physical materials, but if one looks out with a spiritual eye or listen with a spiritual ear, he will experience many "miracles" in the region of spiritual understanding, or rather, experience. Here is one, I experienced

At Prasanthi Nilayam, on the morning of 9th September 1973, there was a spiritual discourse by Bhagavan on the occasion of the Onam Festival of Kerala, celebrated at the Nilayam by over a thousand devotees from that State.

During the Discourse, Bhagavan referred to the fact that man has in him Danavatwa (Demonic qualities), Manavatwa (Human qualities) and Daivatwa (Godly qualities). He said, "Spiritual development consisted in developing Daivatwa or the Godly qualities of Ahimsa (Non-violence), Daya (Compassion), Shanti (Equanimity) and Prema (Love). The Divine qualities of Sat, Chit and Ananda (Being, Awareness and Bliss) are inherent in man."

But, how to manifest them, after becoming aware of them? Baba said that the method is Sathyasya Sathyam—Truth, through Truth. The Truth has to be developed or seen or experienced through the Truth already latent in us.

"I will give you a small example." He said. "To see the moon, you don't have to collect candles or carry a hurricane lantern or a petromax lamp! You have to see the moon by the rays emanated by the moon itself! You see the moon, through the moon."

Then, He passed on to the main topic, the career of Mahabali and the way God fulfilled his life, and the lessons we have to derive from the episode.

The matter referred to by Bhagavan about knowing "the Truth through Truth" had its impact on me at the moment. Later, I was ruminating over the statement, in the depth of my mind.

Now comes the miracle.

That afternoon, sitting on the sand-strewn grounds of Prasanthi Nilayam, waiting for Darshan, when Bhagavan comes out from His room, I heard an elderly man telling a youth who was deeply engrossed in reading a book, "When you meet Baba, you come to the end of all reading."

He spoke in Marathi, and I felt it as a sledge-hammer stroke; the circuit was complete. Yes! Why have a petromax lamp to see the moon?

I thought to myself, "How true!" How many people must be reading and reading or hearing and studying ABOUT spirituality, without LIVING it! Such efforts are like arranging petromax lamps to see the Moon.

When you meet Baba, you come to the *end* of reading about spirituality. You begin to LIVE spirituality, to see Truth through Truth.

—*Dat Pethe*

What do You Know of Me?

"You wish to write a book about me; what do you know of me?" Baba asked Arnold Schulman this question. Yes. It is very true; we know, and can know only precious little of this most inscrutable, unprecedented Divine Phenomenon.

Some of us pretend to have measured Him as a great spiritual Force, as a great alchemist of character, as a great spiritual Guide as the great popularises of the Advaitic doctrine of Creation and Liberation, and so on.

There are many who snatch at opportunities to speak about Him, and hold forth for hours describing the miracles they and others have experienced, miracles which He Himself has described as 'insignificant mosquitoes on the vast expanse of thick dermature which covers the elephant.' Many argue load and long to convince those who deny, doubt or denigrate these 'incidents', and feel happy if they win, for, they congratulate themselves on adding a few to the million admirers and adorers of Baba, as if, He needs the feeble support we give or the paltry conquests we accomplish.

He has His plan, His ways, His means, His victories; ours are only exercises in egoism and futility.

But, all who have come into His Presence know how gentle, how compassionate, how sweet He is in movement, speech and ministration. The moments of the delectable 'interview' are indeed a

memory forever. There is no gainsaying that Baba instills in us the dignity of doing one's duty—whatever it may be, high or low, difficult or delightful—and the necessity for putting into our task all the skill and intelligence, all the sincerity and steadfastness that He has endowed us with.

From the discourses with which He inspires and instructs lakhs of ordinary men and women, from His lucid writings on Love, Wisdom, Righteousness, and other spiritual disciplines and from the Directives He has outlined for the education of children, adolescents, and adults, one can realise that His main preoccupation is the re-establishment of Peace, through Love and Loving Service.

While contemplating the compassion which Baba shows to us, in spite of our failings and faults, we have to admit that we have yet a long distance to traverse, before we can justify to ourselves the claim to be His Devotees. We are still attached to flippant moments of fun and frolic. While trying to impress others by our eloquence and fervour, we do not examine ourselves in penitent moods that we are unworthy, of the rare privilege of being contemporaries of the Avatar of the Age, but yet, we bloat our achievements in Sadhana, and condemn others of sloth or worse, in the same breath.

We form ourselves into Bhajan Mandalis and we adore Baba as the Embodiment of Love; but, we do not ask ourselves whether, in every transaction and dialogue, we saturate our deeds and words in that Divine Virtue, Love. We know that Baba wants us to practise Silence, as the most effective Sadhana; but, we persist in loud behaviour of all kinds. Our practice of Sadhana is, as most would agree, mere routine ritual, devoid of the ring of genuine thrill.

Therefore, let us pray, "Lord! Save us from the pests of hurry and indecision, of complacency and conceit, of fanaticism and fear; enable us to earn a valid perspective of Life; give us the will and the chance to have quiet half-hours of relaxation and meditation on Thy Glory and Grace."

"Lord! Make us unafraid and happy. Give us the opportunity to do some one a good turn, and please do not allow the fact to be talked about. Give us the strength to bear the stings of malice and scorn, for, they too are your gifts of Grace; give us the courage to resist the pangs of passion and prejudice, for, they too are Your ways to toughen us. Give us, O Lord, the skill to enjoy the beautiful as Thy handiwork, to act courteously to all, as embodiments of Your Love, and to believe that whatever I give to the world is what I give to myself."

—*P.N. Pal*

When my Lord is wearing white,
He shines as lustrous Pearl in moonlight.
He is as sweet as a jasmine in bloom!
As soft as shimmering silver form,
As bright as a wondrous star.
Shining so bright behind a fleecy cloud.

All forms of worship, prescribed in all faiths, are meant to chasten the impulses and educate the emotions. Human passions and desires have to be guided and controlled. Just as the raging

waters of the Godavari River have to be curbed by bunds, halted by dams, tamed by canals, and led quietly into the Sea which is their goal, so too, the age-long raging instincts, impulses and passions of man have to be trained, trimmed and transmuted, by contact with higher ideals and higher powers.

—**Baba**

All and Sundry

"Believe me," writes Sri Muktinath Bardoloi of Shillong, in a letter, "every day I see new and ardent faces in the Sathya Sai Mandir, and this remains me of the Sri Surya, shining on all and sundry."

All and sundry! All and sundry?

Sai Surya shines on all and sundry... what a meaningful statement! "All" is defined by the dictionary thus: comprising every individual one, comprising the whole extent, as many as there are, as much as there is. Sundry is defined as separate, divers, several. Bhagavan would refer to these in His Discourses as Samashti (All) and Vyashti (Sundry). The Sai Surya when it shines confers warmth, and light. These two transform and cleanse us. They illumine and inspire. When He shines on "all," He reveals that the all is composed of sundry; when He shines on 'sundry', He reveals that they are not apart from the all; that they are for all, and that they get significance and purpose only from the all of whom they are the waves.

Separateness is a point of view, an angle of vision, a partial picture. The Vyashti feels that he is separate, unique, as a result of the massive mental content which he has accumulated through many lives, and the superficial manners and mannerisms of thought and action which he parades. But, Bhagavan has said, that the true spiritual essence of the Vyashti or individual is the I, the Self, rid of all names and forms which are its apparel. In the deepest experience of the Sadhaka, this I is contacted and experienced, freed from the shackles of temporality and temptation. Man then becomes aware that the I is no isolated Vyashti, but, it is united inseparably, as the waves of the sea with the very basis of Consciousness, that all waves are together the samashti, the sea. That art Thou. In his remarkable book, "The Imprisoned Splendour," Raynor Johnson writes of the Vyashti, the individual thus. "We agree that individuality does not reside in bodily separateness; nor yet in uniqueness of mental content; we may ask ourselves, whether at any level of approach to reality, its origin is apparent. I do not think there is any such point, until we get back to the unity in the Divine Self. It is as though we are the myriad thoughts of God, as a myriad beams may originate from the One Sun."

We are each one a ray of the Sai Surya. All and sundry. The sundry is the all; the all is the sundry. Johnson says, "Take the human body the billions of cells are united into functioning organs, and the various organs, into still greater wholes, through which runs a principle of co-operation and unity. The unity is not one of structure, and function, but of relationship." Baba gives an equally convincing example to illustrate this relationship, the tree. Its roots, trunk, bark, branches, twigs, leaves, buds, blossoms, fruits have each a different form, texture, taste, colour, and function; but, all are united in one co-operative endeavour and purpose.

Baba has drawn our attention to the deeper meaning of the word, Samaja, which we use often in place of Samashti. 'It is no thin filament of affinity that binds the vyashtis into a samaja', He says. Sama means, same, equal, undifferentiated, that is the key to unlock the nature of the samaja. People imbued with the sense of sameness, of being images of the self-same God, of

being instruments of the self-same Divine Motivator, they alone are entitled to call themselves a samaja, not others."

If the sundry feels the all in its core, and serves each as a limb of the all, if the all serves the sundry with love and reverence Dharma will be firm and will prosper in the world.

—Narayanamurthy

The path of spiritual progress has been clearly mapped out by Sankaracharya. He calls it the Four-fold Discipline, the Sadhana Chathushtaya. The first among these is: Discrimination between the temporary and the eternal, Nitya-anitya-vishaya-pariseelanam. With the help of the sacred scriptures, man must understand the true nature of himself and the objects around him, and discover that the I in him is eternal, undying, and unborn, and be established in that awareness. The second is; full detachment from the consequences of acts; Iha-amuthra-phala-bhoga-viraga. He is therefore free from any desire for worldly or heavenly joy. The third is the acquisition of six attributes that are highly spiritual, a group of six, that regulate his thoughts, speech and actions. They are called the 'treasure', or samaptahthi, of the 'six', named sama-dama adi, Sama dama etc. Sama is the control of the senses that deal with the outer world and dama, the control of the emotions and passions that arise in the layers of the mind. The fourth is the constant and unremitting attention on the goal of liberation from the bonds of grief-joy, pain-pleasure etc. This is referred to by Sankara as mumukshutwam.

—BABA

Karma

Question: Swami, you say that when the senses turn away from the inner witness and mix with external worldly objects, the reactions of pain and pleasure result. What then is the proper place for the senses? Why do they behave thus?

Bhagavan: It is all the play of desire. Desire for objective things causes pain and pleasure. Desire, for God confers Bliss, which is far more sustaining than pleasure.

Question: But, Swami, our actions are very seldom limited to that which is Duty. Most action arises from desires, worldly desires. One sees, hears, smells, touches or thinks... all these breed desire.

Bhagavan: Remind yourselves that God works through you as Desire.

Question: That looks strange! Does God prompt even bad desires?

Bhagavan: Desire arises through some energy, motivation, urge; That energy is God's gift. The desire that it provokes results in pain or pleasure, is either good or bad, depending on time, place and person. In early years, desire for worldly advancement might be good; in later years, in

might be bad. God grants you discrimination along with desire. You must use it to put aside wrong, action. The wrong desire is God overshadowed by Maya, where as the power of discrimination is the instrument given by God to destroy Maya and visualise God.

Question: Swami, You say that it is man's duty to be happy.

Bhagavan: Happiness is one of the major gateways to Divinity. To be unhappy is a serious act of sacrilege. It is a barrier to God-Realisation.

Question: Swami, when the mind is not engaged in work...

Bhagavan: The mind is ever agitated and active!

Question: During meditation, I mean...

Bhagavan: Yes?

Question: When the mind is not engaged, in any particular work, where should the attention be kept?

Bhagavan: Between the eyebrows, that is the Eye of Wisdom, of Siva.

Question: Swami says that body, mind and intelligence, do not work for anybody. They do their own work, what does that mean?

Bhagavan: What is meant is... "Unfortunately that is the case." They are doing their work, to the detriment of the person. Their work should be coordinated for the, benefit of higher purposes. For example: The eyes see; that is their work. But, the mind should see through the eyes; the intelligence should direct the mind; the Atma must be reflected in the intelligence.

Question: For whom should the entire mechanism be functioning?

Bhagavan: For the Atma. The Earth turns on its own axis, but, at the same time, it is revolving around the Sun. The various faculties of man should do their own work but the Atma is the source of all the energy and power.

Question: Does God forgive even present Karma?

Bhagavan: There are three types of Karma: past, present and future. The present Karma must continue its course. It is like the trail of dust behind the moving carriage. When the carriage stops, the dust will settle on it... But, the carriage cannot forever continue fast, on the road in order to escape the dust. The best course, then, is to get on to the highway, away from the dust-track. That is to say, man must acquire the Grace of God and move along the path smoothed by it.

Question: Swami. Pardon me for saying it! Spiritual progress seems very difficult, indeed.

Bhagavan: Vital to spiritual life is the unshakable faith that one has in the Atma. Once this is achieved, spiritual progress is quite easy. A bowl turned down remains dry, no matter how heavy the rain is. But, a bowl turned up collects at least a few drops, though the shower is light. Turn the heart towards God; then, Grace can be won. If faith, enthusiasm and devotion are great, the bowl will be filled. My dear Sadhaka, life in the outer world is endless trouble. But, life in the inner world is smooth and simple!

Question: It is not necessary to mortify the body?

Bhagavan: That is wrong advice. A healthy body is very light; it is not a burden; it helps sadhana by giving you healthy thoughts.

Question: One last doubt, Swami, for today. Swami advises us to cut at the root of desire. What does this mean?

Bhagavan: When a desire arises, analyse it; find out whether it is good or bad. If bad, reject it; if it is good for you and not harmful for others, go ahead. If you are uncertain, do nothing, until the uncertainty is clarified.

—*From: Note Book of John Hislop*

Sathya Sai, Oh gift of power, I will love Thee more and more;
Be my never-failing Friend, I will love Thee to the end.

O! `TIS.....

When we bring to mind, just once
The delight that Baba gives,
O `Tis soft as mother's clasp;
O `Tis cool as silken moonlight;
O `Tis thrilling, as when Siva within
Dances His Cosmic Play.

When Baba nears a step to us
O `Tis Kailasa calling silver sweet;
O `Tis Heaven showering Solar rays
O `Tis temple's open Door
Widening and welcoming joy.
O `Tis the Lord calling children home.

When Baba stands a moment
Before your stricken frame

O `Tis the lunar orb your palm does hold;
O `Tis a hundred Paradise parks
Scattering beauteous scent
Through a million jasmine jars.

When Baba opens His lips and speaks
O `Tis the lilt of lovely gems of Love
O `Tis the Trumpet blast of Victory
O `Tis the nectar the flute did rain
On cowherds' ears by Yamuna's holy stream
O `Tis melody infilling the core.

Touch the Lotus Feet but faintly—
O The vine of Love doth bloom in bunches
Your heart doth feel the ecstasy
Of sacred Alakananda bath
O `Tis a gift of gold, galore
O `Tis Ganga pure from icy skies.

When Sai Ma gifts a lovely smile
O `Tis Full Moon all around
O `Tis Prasanthi Nilayam, where you are
In Divine Charm, effulgent, grand;
O `Tis floral shower from the host of gods
O `Tis Angel Spring refreshing Earth and Sky—

—*Karunasri, (Translated from Telugu)*

The Birthday

This is the day when Truth was born
This, the day when Wisdom dawned!
This is the day when Dharma shone
And Karma was taught to bend to God

This is the day when Peace prevailed
And darkness no more veiled
The brightness of human heart.
This is the day when, everywhere,
Abodes of Shanti rose and grew.

This is the day when Love was born
And was cradled in every human heart!

And charmed each home with its smile
To melt the fog of fear away.

This is the day when Tolerance came
On wings of wisdom to the earth
This the day when children all
Forgot their colour and their creed,
Their purses and their pride.

This is the day when Adoration raised
Its palms to perfect Purity;
This is the day when poets sang
Of God and goodness in Sai, Form.

—(*Translated from Telugu*)

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

59

The Little Cottage

When Sita and Rama saw the hermitage constructed by Lakshmana, they were charmed by its beauty, its captivating simplicity and comfort, and the inspiring setting in which it shone. Sita entered the cottage, and was immediately struck by the skill and artistic taste of her brother-in-law. She praised him very much for finishing it so quickly and so full of useful adjuncts and parts.

The three of them spent their days happily in that cottage. News that Sri Rama had made the Panchavati his home and that he was residing there in a house of leafy thatch like their own, spread far and wide; so, every day, groups of ascetics trekked thither in order to offer their homage. They brought with them their pupils too; they had their fill of Darshan, and they had the great good fortune of speaking to Rama and being spoken to, by Him. Thereafter, they left most unwillingly, praising Rama all the way back to their own hermitages.

Discourses

Many others came, with the intension of solving the doubts that pestered them, while trying to understand the Sastras and scriptures, and while attempting to define and interpret the Codes of Morality or the texts on Rituals. Others prayed to Rama and sought to clarify from Him whether the ascetic practices they were following were correct and beneficial. Since Rama was master of all Dharmas and since He knew full well all the Sastras and scriptures, they derived the fullest satisfaction from His answers and directives. Each one of them was filled with joyous contentment.

While on the subject of questions and answers, it is best that the four grades of questions be clearly understood. Questions are generally classified into four: (1) Trivial (2) Low (3) Passable and (4) Praiseworthy. Questions that are put, in order to drag another into a controversy and later, to inflict a humiliating defeat on him, are trivial. Questions that are put in order to demonstrate one's own verbal cleverness and rhetorical skill are 'low'. Questions that are put to announce the intellectual equipment and the reasoning faculty of the questioner are 'passable', and belong to the third class. Questions that are asked with the sincere desire to remove one's doubts are 'praiseworthy' and belong to the highest class. It needs no mention that the Sages, monks and ascetics came to Rama, with the fourth type of questions only.

Rama and Lakshmana were filled with delight, when they saw the ascetics. Many among them were overcome with admiration and gratitude when they listened to the ideals propounded by Rama, so simple, so easy to grasp and realise, so truly conforming to the dictates laid down in the Sastras and Scriptures, and so free from complexity in the exposition of righteous conduct. They burst into paeans of praise and adoration. "O Master Supreme!" they exclaimed, "O

Omniscient One, who knows the Past, Present and Future! Who else can be our Lord and Liberator? You reside in the hearts of Sages; we have secured you in our midst as a result of the austerities we have gone through. O, How fortunate are we? How grandly have our wishes been fulfilled!" They departed from the Presence, most unwillingly, with tears of joy mingled with tears of grief (at the separation) streaming down their cheeks.

A few of them laid themselves under the shady trees a little distance from the cottage where Rama was, and were determined not to return to their hermitages. They gathered fruits and tubers from around the spot, and watched out for Rama eager for additional chances of Darshan. When sometimes Rama came out of the cottage and walked around, they filled their eyes with the unforgettable picture, from behind some tree or bush. Thus they spent the days in full contentment.

Rama stole the hearts of all who came into His Presence; they became mad in their single-pointed devotion to Him; they felt that contemplation of His Face and repetition of His Name were all the austerity that they had to practise thereafter; He discoursed on Dharma and Spiritual Disciplines during both day and night, to those who gathered around Him.

The Real Purpose

Often, He called Lakshmana to His side and told him, "Brother! Having come for this holy task, how can I stay on at Ayodhya? How can I enact the further chapters of the Ramayana? This is the task I have decided upon. This is the purpose for which I have come. The fostering and protection of the good and the godly, the destruction of the wrong and evil that threaten the peace and welfare of the world, the promotion of righteous behaviour and activities ...these will proceed from now on." Thus, He used to inform His brother about what He had, resolved upon and about the intent and meaning of His Incarnation as Man on earth.

The Instruction

Off and on, He raised Lakshmana to the role of a vehicle for spreading His teachings, intended for the uplift of humanity and instructed him on the ideals of morality and progress. "Lakshmana!" He said once, "Affection for the body, attachment towards possessions of any kind, egoism that breeds the conflict of 'You' and 'I', the bonds that grow between the individual and his wife, children and property—all these are the consequences of the Primal Illusion, Maya. That Illusion is basic, mysterious, and wondrous. Maya establishes her domain over all beings and things, all species of living creatures. The ten Indriyas (five senses of perception and five senses of action) have each its presiding deity and Maya perceives the objective world and derives pleasure therefrom, through their instrumentality. Every item and particle of such pleasure is Maya-produced and so, illusory, evanescent and superficial.

Maya has two names: One type is called Vidyamaya and the other Avidyamaya. The Maya named Avidya is very vicious; she causes boundless misery. Those drawn by it will sink into the depths of flux, the eternal tangle of joy and grief. The Maya known as Vidya has created the Cosmos, under the promptings of the Lord. For, she has no innate force of her own. Only while in the Presence of the Lord can she create the three-stranded Cosmos (Prapancha). (The

three strands are Satwa, Rajas and Tamas, each of which separately or in some kind of combination is characteristic of beings, Satwa meaning the equable balanced temper, Rajas, the sanguinary or the emotional, active temper and Tamas, the dull, inert temper).

The truly wise, the Jnani, who has realised the Reality, is the Person who has given up the rights and obligations of caste and society, of age and status (Varnasrama) and lives in the constant awareness that all this is Brahman. He has understood that there is no manifoldness or diversity, here; it is all One. (Sarvam khalu idam sarvam; Na iha nana asthi kinchana). He knows that the entire Cosmos is constituted of the same Brahman, that there can be no second entity apart from Brahman.

O Lakshmana! You must know that the Trinity (Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra) are but the reflections of the one Brahman in each of the three strands or attributes—Satwa, Rajas and Tamas. The Rajas attribute is personified as Brahma, the Satwa aspect Vishnu and the Tamas aspect is known as Rudra or Siva or Ishwara. The entire Cosmos, including the world is the manifestation of the One Brahman through one or other or some combination or other of these three attributes. So, the wise man will go beyond and beneath these three strands and seek the Origin in the One. He alone deserves the name monk or Vairagi—for he has no raga or 'likes and dislikes'.

Sometimes, Rama drew Sita and Lakshmana near Him and explained to them that so long as the Individual Jivi does not understand aright the affinities it has to Maya and to the Supreme Brahman, it can never liberate itself and merge in the Supreme. It has to remain a particularised Individual only, bound by the coils of illusion into the limits of name and form. But, Rama said, the instant the Individual discovers and knows that it is but the image of the Supreme, and that the distinction between the Supreme and itself has no basis in Truth, Maya, will disappear, like fog before the risen sun. This is the genuine Atmajnana, for, the Supreme is Paramatma and the Individual is the same Paramatma seen as an Image in the Body-with-name-and form, the Upadhi.

Act in accordance with the rules of conduct laid down for the status you have risen to and the call that has come to you (Swadharma); you derive detachment thereby. Practise Yoga or the Search for Union with the Supreme; you derive Jnana thereby. This Jnana is the every last step in spiritual progress. It leads to Consummation.

Adoring the Supreme with the greatest possible Love is called Bhakti, Devotion. I shower Grace on such a one; Bhakti will grant him full prosperity. Bhakti emanates from the heart, spontaneously; it does not depend on extraneous things or persons. Bhakti can confer Jnana too on the person who has dedicated Himself to the Supreme. The joy that Bhakti endows a man is unique and immeasurable.

How does a person first decide to walk on the path of Bhakti? It all begins with the compassion of some one good and godly sage or saint or realised soul. This path leads men quickly to Me."

The Lemon Sapling

Listening to such discourses, Sita and Lakshmana forgot where they were and under what conditions; Rama too seemed unaware of all that had happened, in the enthusiasm with which He dilated on the attractions of the spiritual path. They spent long periods in introspection and exploration for inner delight.

One day, Lakshmana was ruminating on these deep Truths and precious directives while he was keeping watch around the cottage. His eyes fell on a tiny sapling of lemon, struggling upwards under the shade of a huge tree. He desired to plant it nearer the Cottage and help it grow more vigorously under his care; so, he was digging it up by the roots with intense love and attention, when the wicked and vicious sister of Ravana, Surpanakha by name, rushed into the scene!

The Sister of Ravana

As soon as her eyes fell on Lakshmana, she was enamoured by the halo of goodness and the splendour that illumined his body. She was struck dumb at the unexpected vision. She suddenly transformed herself into a charmingly pretty damsel, and approached Lakshmana with amorous gestures. But, Lakshmana paid no heed; he continued his task, unaffected by the apparition.

Surpanakha could not bear his inattention any longer. She came close to him and in a pathetic voice, she appealed, "Lord! Why are you plunging me into despair? Cool my unbearable ardour; cast on me your loving happiness-conferring eye." Lakshmana did not react to her call; he heard her words, but, he only smiled within himself at her audacity; he continued with his attempt to pluck the plant safely from the shade.

Surpanakha lost patience; she prepared to draw him to herself. But, Lakshmana drew back, saying, "Mother! I am the bond slave of Sri Rama. I am not a free man; whatever I do, however small a job it, may be, is done only as He commands," as a prelude to the advice he planned to give her.

Hearing his words and curious to know with whom he was talking, Sita and Rama came out of the cottage into the garden; Rama noticed Surpanakha and recognised that she had changed into the damsel before him. He prepared himself for all eventualities.

Meanwhile, Surpanakha pelted on Lakshmana harsh abusive words, like 'coward', 'villain' etc., and laughed loudly in scorn at his irresponsive behaviour. She had not noticed Rama until that moment; all her attention and anger were fixed on Lakshmana alone. She pleaded before him, "O Most Charming! Wed me and be happy. I can delight you and serve you most loyally."

Lakshmana tried to ward her off by saying, "Pretty woman! I am a slave; if I wed you, you will have to live as a slave," and continuing the jocular retort, he said in fun, "Well. There is my master, Rama; if you wed him, I will be your slave."

Surpanakha took him at his word; she believed that it was good strategy. She turned to the cottage which Lakshmana had pointed to her; and there, standing near the door, laughing together at her, she found a very beautiful woman and beside her, the embodiment of masculine charm!

Surpanakha was smitten with passionate love; she ran forward to Rama and weeping out her distress, she prayed, "God of Love! God of Beauty! Accept me as yours." Rama too decided to treat her to a homily and derive some fun out of the ludicrous situation before him. He said with a chuckle, "O Beauteous Woman! I cannot wed you, for, I am under the vow of monogamy; I have my wife here; my brother, Lakshmana there, has a wife, but, she is not here. So, wed him and derive fulfillment. He is the proper person for you; approach him."

At this, the woman hastened to where Lakshmana was and started her appeals once again. She said, "Your brother has agreed to the wedding; so, do not delay; accept me," her attitude now was very humble and gentle. Lakshmana grasped the absurdity of her plight and wanted to heighten the fun. He sent her to Rama and Rama sent her back to Lakshmana several times, until she grew so desperate, and blinded by passion, She relapsed into her demonic nature!

Her crooked intelligence told her that it was Sita that stood in the way of her success in this adventure of lust; for, Rama could not wed her, since Sita was by His side. If she were removed, Rama would certainly yield to her solicitations. So, she fell upon Sita in order to kill her and swallow her; for, she was a demon without doubt. At this, Lakshmana stood ready, watching the face of Rama for orders. Rama realised that the woman was far-gone and that she had to be stopped. Feeling that an axe need not be used when the nails are enough, He raised his hand up, and counted four on his fingers, looking at Lakshmana.

Ears and Nose

Lakshmana immediately grasped the meaning of that command! By counting four, Rama indicated the Four Vedas, which are collectively called Sruti, that is to say, "The Heard," which means, the Ear. Lakshmana had a sharp vigilant intellect and so, he could rightly interpret the slightest gesture of Rama. Rama had held his hand up, towards the sky. The sky or Aakash is the fifth elemental force, characterised by Sound; sound is the symbol for Brahman, known as Sabda Brahman, or God. God resides in heaven, and heaven is also indicated by the raised pointing hand. Heaven is also known as 'naka', in Sanskrit; it has also another meaning, 'Nose!'

No sooner did Rama make those two gestures, Lakshmana rushed towards the demonic woman with his sword drawn; he dragged her down to the ground; and shouting that her effrontery must be punished, he slashed off her ears and nose!

Surpanakha raised such a loud wail that the forest quaked and quivered. She assumed her real shape as an ogress and yelled, "Is this just? How can you deform so cruelly a woman who has come to you? I shall bring my brother Ravana here and inflict retribution for this cruel act." With this, she disappeared quickly into the forest.

The Wail

She went straight to the demon chieftains, Khara and Dushana in the Dandaka forest and wailed, "How can you bear silently this insult and injury dealt to your sister? For what purpose have you stored so much of valour and might: It is better you burn it into ashes. Are you masculine? Can you call yourselves men? Shame on you and your boast of heroism." They could not understand what had happened to her, and who had deformed her so piteously. They asked her, "Sister! Who inflicted this injury? Tell us; we shall wreak vengeance with all our might."

At this, Surpanakha started retailing her story. She began with an elaborate description of the charm and captivating beauty of Rama and Lakshmana! Hearing this, the brothers got wild and inquired why she was wasting her time and theirs with that superfluous prologue. "Tell us, who injured you? Who defaced you?" Then, she informed them, all that happened in the forest.

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness

(To be continued)

Baba the very thought of you
With sweetness fills my breast,
But sweeter far Thy face to see,
And in Thy presence rest.

The Flag of Victory

The hoisting of Prasanthi Flag on the Prasanthi Mandir is the Inaugural Function of all festivals celebrated at the Prasanthi Nilayam. This has become an important event, looked forward to with eager expectation and enthusiasm by the thousands of devotees who gather here. But, most people do not know that the hoisting of the Flag is a meaningful signal of Victory, and, even those who know, do not often recall to their minds what the Victory is, that is indicated by the hoisting of this particular Flag.

Of course, as all of you have realised, the Dasara Festival marks the triumph of the forces of good over the forces of evil, of Parashakti in Her three Forms of Mahadurga, Mahalakshmi and Mahasaraswati, subduing and destroying the Asuric embodiments of lust, greed, hate and other Rajasic and Tamasic vices.

But, what is *your* share in this struggle and this Victory? What is the impact that this ceremony should have on *you*? This Prasanthi Flag symbolises the Victory that each of you has to achieve over the same Asuric urges that infect and torment you. The triumph that deserves to be celebrated here by you is the one accomplished over the forces of ignorance and delusion, that, by their subtle and sinister influence veil your true Nature and Reality and lead you into the desert wastes of the sensory world.

Of what benefit is it, to know everything about the `object', while knowing nothing about the 'subject'? Such incomplete knowledge is of no avail at all; to boast of it is tantamount to making oneself the target of ridicule!

Examine any object in Nature; examine anything, alive or inert, in Creation. You will observe that they all undergo a process of disintegration, of transformation, of transmutation; they are never one moment, what they were the previous moment! It is a flowing river, where you cannot dip in the same water more than once! A seed fallen on the ground soon becomes different: a sprout! It fast becomes a sapling, a tree, with a variegated equipment of trunk, branch, twig, leaf, bud, bloom, and fruit! Each of these manifestations has a distinct colour, got evidently from nowhere; it has a distinct feel, form, taste, and name, and so, it has a unique purpose and use. The seed itself disappeared from the ground, but, is found, multiplied a thousand fold in identical forms, encased in each of the thousand fruits! What a grand mystery this!

The same heap of clay is transformed by the deft hands of the potter into a vast variety of plates and pans. The one nugget, of gold is transformed by the artistry of the smith into a fascinating array of beautiful jewels. These facts are within the experience of every one. The fruit, the pot and the jewel are `effects'; there can be no effect without a `cause'. The seed, the heap of clay and the nugget are the material causes, the gardener, the potter and the goldsmith are the instrumental causes, the manipulative causes. So far as the creation of the manifoldness of the Universe is concerned we call Him, God.

When the Cosmos manifested through the Will of God, who is the Universal Absolute, It arose from the Absolute only, since there was then, only ONE, just as even now there is only One, in spite of all this seeming variety. That Will which emanated from the Absolute persuaded 'us to see and experience Many; that is all that has happened. The One Reality is still the One; it has not undergone any change. We have superimposed on the One, this illusion of the Many!

God, therefore, is the material cause as well as the instrumental cause, the gold and the goldsmith, the potter and the clay, the seed as well as the tree. `Bijam maam srava bhoothanam' He says in the Gita, I am the seed of all the elements and all beings. Nature is His Body; the Cosmos is His Will; the Vedas are His Breath.

The Sankhya School of Thinkers declare that the objective world arose out of the conglomeration and conjunction of desperate atoms; but, they do not pursue the matter and explain what induced the atoms to join with their kind in particular designs and groups. How does this urge arise?

How does this awaken, within the minute atom? Who has planted this desire in the tiny heart of the atom? These questions are by-passed.

Most philosophers, especially in the West, ignore the problem of identifying the Cause of all the effects we find every moment all around us. The Upanishads declare, `Ekoham bahusyam'. `I

am one, let me become many,' willed God; and God became all this, in response to that Divine Desire, that Primal Urge.

He became all this. He is therefore the Antar-atma (the Inner Reality) and the Antaryami (the Inner Motivator). The Vedas declare `Vaasudevassarvamidam'—'All this is Vasudeva, God'. They also say, `Neha naanaasthi, kinchana' `There is not the slightest trace of many-ness here'. `Ekam eve'—there is only ONE; `adwithiyam', `without a Second'.

Realising and experiencing this basic Truth, becoming blissful and aware of one's native Divinity is the Victory that this Prasanthi Flag denotes.

Have you own that victory? No. Why then am I hoisting it for your exhilaration, on this Festival Day? I am only hoisting it to instruct you, to inspire you, and to remind you of the precious heritage of Upanishadic wisdom, that your forefathers have earned and left for you. You are basking today in the sunshine of their glory; you have the chance to live on the fort fortune they have left behind for their children and children's children. This Flag invites you all to share in that immeasurable treasure.

—Baba: Flag Hoisting Day 16-10-74

The Fruit of Sacrifice

Compassion towards all creatures is the greatest virtue; willful injury to any creature is the worst vice. Have full faith in this; spread love and joy, through compassion, and be full of joy and peace, yourself. You do not have joy and peace now, mainly because, your vision is warped and wobbling. The Vision is now directed towards the faults and failings of others, never towards one's own faults and failings. The ears too delight when stories of the failures and foibles of others are related. No attempt is made to examine the failures and foibles of s oneself. Really speaking, inquiry and the investigation have to begin with oneself. For, what we see in others is the reflection of our own selves, our own prejudices and preferences.

Besides, when your attention is focused on faults and failures, vices and wrongs, the mind too becomes infected with their pollution and it starts relishing only experiences that smack of such tastes. Hence, the lives of such people lose the peace and joy that are the heritage of the wise and the wary.

Let us take the example of the snake. It has two characteristics: (1) It never moves straight. Its path is always crooked. (2) It strikes at all, that comes in its way. Man too is snaky, for, he exhibits these two characteristics in a marked manner. So, he shares another characteristic too of the snake, namely, poison.

Poison is called in Sanskrit, Visha. A kindred word is Visha-ya, which means, the sensory objects, which poison the mind of man with lust, anger, greed, craving, pride and hate. The snake's poison is the cause why it is destroyed wherever seen. Man's slavery to vishaya is the cause of his downfall. But, the situation is not without some hope. The serpent can be tamed and its poison fangs removed, when music from the nagaswaram pipe is played and when it is fascinated by that sweet melody. The poison that vishaya exerts on the human mind can also be eliminated and countermanded, when man is fascinated by the sweet melodies of Namasmarana, or Sankirtan—that is to say, by the repetitive chanting of the meaningful Names of the Lord. The poison in both can thus be sublimated into pure nectar.

What happens to man when Namasmarana withdraws his mind from the sensory tangles is—the acquisition of a new balance, of a blissful equanimity, called, Samachitta. Nature is constant flux; nothing remains the same, even for a few seconds. The sweet dish that is cooked now becomes stale and stinking a few hours hence and is ruined so much that it acts as a danger to health, when consumed. Other types of change happen in other fields, other things and beings.

And, man not only expects these changes, he prepares himself to face them; in fact, in many cases, he is unhappy, if the change does not happen! If things remain the same, it is certain to cause deep disappointment. A newborn babe must grow in weight, in movement of limbs, in the intake of food, and the output of energy through activity. Or else, parents become anxious, and run from doctor to doctor. The same thing happens when the child does not walk or talk, weep or laugh.

In a normal baby, there exists real Samachitta, for, there is no desire (except the instinctive desire for food, drink and maternal protection), to agitate it. The babe is the inheritor of Immortality; so, it is unaffected by anxiety, that haunts the adult. The word Sama-chitta is, in common parlance, taken to mean, sheer equanimity—an unshaken balance, when confronted by success or failure, loss or gain, pleasure or pain. But, `Sama' has another and more significant meaning, namely, Brahman, the Universal Eternal Absolute Principle. Samachitta, therefore, in its philosophical sense, means, a consciousness established in the Absolute Brahman, and as a consequence, above and beyond the storms and stillnesses of the world of duality. This constant consciousness of the Reality is the fruit, of Yajna, or Sacrifice, the Vedic symbol of Thyaga (Renunciation), as mentioned in the statement, na medhaya, na prajaya, dhanena, thyagenaika amrtattvam anasuh, not by the intellect, nor by progeny, nor by wealth, but, only by renunciation can immortality be attained. Yajna means Thyaga.

It is to emphasise this great axiom that during Dasara every year, the Vedic Yajna is performed; the thousands who attend the Festival can share the knowledge and the inspiration that the Yajna provides.

This day is the Samapti of the Yajna. Sama means, as I just now said, Brahman. So, Sama-apti means, the attainment of Sama or Brahman, which is the summum bonum of the ritual. The realisation of this Brahmic Reality is the birthright of all men. But, though born with the right and the responsibility, as the Amrta-putra, man denies himself the victory, courts defeat and

prides himself as an Anarta-putra, the child of the Illusory, the Delusion. The realisation which is his due is not an unattainable achievement; it is a simple conquest, so simple that people never attempt it!

The assertive ego that urges him to identify himself with the body and the instrument with which it is equipped, the motives with which those instruments work and the reactions which those motives breed has to be mastered by the Real Self, a wave of the great Ocean of Cosmic Consciousness, that is all. Now, man declares himself as Aham and takes pride in his Aham-kara or Aham-consciousness. But, he is not aware of the inner meaning of the word Aham! Aham is just a verbal symbol for what he really is. A is the sound that represents the Omnipresent Godhead, named also as Vishnu. In the Gita it is asserted, Aksharanam Akarosmi, among the letters I am a, (pronounced as in Atma, anatomy etc). Ham means, Energy, Power, Force, Shakti.

So, when one points to himself as Aham, he is unconsciously announcing that he is the hardened energy of the Omnipresent Universal Absolute Brahman called also Vishnu.

Besides, the Lord says in the Gita, maya krtham idam sarvam. I have made all this out of myself! When all is He, you and all Jivas (individualised beings) are He. How then can we demarcate some as bad, and relish the stories concerning them and list their faults and failings?

The question may be raised, "The good and the bad are so obvious, how can we deny it or ignore it?" They are obvious only so long as the individual is not fully established in the truth that God is All, (Vasudevassarvamidam). Until that moment, the body dominates thought, desires haunt the mind, ego rules the intellect; so, dualities lord over man. When like the boy Pahlada, one is sunk and saturated in God-Consciousness, there can be no feeling of gain or loss, pleasure or pain. He is immersed in the Word, and is unconcerned about its meaning which is manifested in all its variety in the objective world. The one Word seems to have many meanings, as a result of ignorance. It is the Word, the Para-shakti (the Supreme Principle) that gives value and validity to every one of the meanings.

Another idea called ekagratha (one-pointedness) too now be elucidated. Sadhaks often bewail that they do not earn one-pointedness. They mean, by that term, that they are not able to concentrate their attention long on a flame, light, picture, or idol. The eye concentrates on, something seen; the nose, on some fragrance; the ear on some melody. But, the mind concentrates on the One, the Ekam, the Brahman—which is described as ekam nityam vimalam achalam sarvadhee sakshibhootham (the One, the Eternal, the Pure, the Inflexible, the Witness). Ekagratha, therefore, denotes the concentration of the inner Vision on Brahman. The intellect, the ego, the senses—these should subserve this great Purpose and help in attaining the Ideal. They should be vigilant that they do not divert the Vision or deviate it from the Brahman.

However, it has to be admitted that such Sadhana is now very rare; very few fix their Inner Vision on the Universal and the Eternal; nor do they listen to Its Majesty and Mystery. The tragedy which has fallen upon mankind is just this: the mind of man has strayed away from its moorings, and is being tossed about on the waves of doubt and diversity. Brahman is One,

Unchanging, Everlasting. A mind filled with the yearning for Brahman will see the One in all, it will remain unaffected by the smiles and sneers of fortune. But, man's mind has been tempted into strange paths that can lead him only to fear and frustration. Man condemns the world and calls it a seat of wickedness and war.

The fault lies, not in the world, but, in himself. He has war in him and so, he sees war; he is inherently wicked and so he observes wickedness all around him. A brilliant lamp cannot remove the darkness which a blind man has always around him. For those who have eyes to see, it is brilliant, the light around them. The darkness the blind man swears by is in him, not outside him. So too, the man who is at peace with himself will discern peace all around him. Nature is beauty, truth, and peace. Man sees it ugly, false and violent—that is all.

It is strange, but, true: Immortality lies enshrined in the mortal; there are diamonds in dirt and dust; wisdom dwells in this mansion of muscles; the Atma illumines this tabernacle of the jiva. Man does not look into himself; he is poor, though under his feet there lies buried treasures. Heir to inexhaustible Bliss, he runs after momentary pseudo-pleasures! He gets as reward only distress, disappointment and defeat. He spends all his allotted years in this wasteful adventure, and even at the last moment of life he is beset with sorrow and fear. He has no peace, when he leaves his body, for, he has lost the chance of winning peace through its instrumentality.

There was a woodcutter once, going daily into the forest and collecting a bundle of fuel which he sold in the village nearby for a pittance, which just sufficed to keep his wife and children alive. One morning, while he was stepping out of his hut, the wife reminded him that it was Yugadi (the New Year Festival) the next day; she pleaded with him to collect a heavier bundle of fuel that day, so that they could get a few more paise to give the children a morsel of sweet rice each. The man nodded assent and walked on. He succeeded in gathering an extra huge bundle, but, with that heavy load on his head, he was soon exhausted; he had to deposit it on the ground, before he could approach the village. This set him thinking of his plight. He had lost all his old zest for living. He called upon the Angel of Death, the Mrthyudevata, to relieve him. He cried, "O Death! Have you no mercy towards me? Why have you forgotten me, so long? How I wish I could die and escape from this daily grind!" The Angel of Death took pity on him and appeared before him, to fulfill his wish.

But, the woodcutter suddenly receded; he cleverly changed the purpose of his appeal to the Angel. He had no wish to die, though in his despair, he had called for her help. He said, "No. No. I had no one here to lift this bundle on to my head, so I called on you to come to my aid. That was the only reason behind my prayer. Please help me to lift this burden and place it on my head; I have to reach the village soon!"

Since man is innately immortal, he recedes from, the grasp of death; the will to live is very strong, much more persistent than the will to die.

It is like the story of the Sun and Darkness, this question of meeting Death or vanquishing Death. The Sun-God was, one day, very much, impressed by the 1008 names with which a

devotee offered Him worship. He listened to the Names, as he uttered them in steadfast faith. He was particularly, alerted when he called upon Him as Andhakaradweshi—He who was looked upon as the enemy by darkness. He could not tolerate the existence of an enemy alive; so, He called for a war unto death for this Demon called Darkness. He went into all the places where Darkness hid himself; but, no sooner did He spot him, the demon disappeared so that He could never come into grips with him. Finally, He concluded that Darkness was non-existent and was only a creation of the imagination of His adorers! Before the Splendour of Immortality, the darkness of mortality too would flee in haste.

The resident in the body has no birth and therefore, no death. But, man is hugging the falsehood that he is the body and so is subject to death and birth. A silver cup can be reshaped by the smith into a plate, or later, into a pan-box. But, though the name, the form and the function might change, the silver is there, in all three, unchanged in substance, in spite of the births into plate and box and the deaths as cup and plate. When a man stands on the bank of a sheet of water, his shadow appears in the water. People say it is he, but Vedanta says, he is not it. When the shadow is beaten with a stick, he is not hurt; so, it is not he; but, when some one says it is misshapen, ugly, etc., he gets angry! So, he is it. The shadow is both he and not-he. It is neither true nor false, it is real-unreal, it is mithya.

The eye is distinct from the objects it sees; the eye is an instrument used by the I, which is a ray of the Splendour of the Atma. The senses are mirrors and when the light of that ray falls on them, things and objects are reflected therein. The Atma shines and all the inner organs of perception awaken to their duty of gathering knowledge and revealing Bliss. It is their duty to function according to their nature; the result is not to be aimed at. It follows when the duty is done efficiently to the best of one's ability and will. A knife cuts vegetables; but, does not eat them. It cuts a fruit; but, is not tempted to taste their sweetness.

Let us imagine a cup, full of fruit-juice. The cup is not aware of the sweetness of the juice. A straw is used to sip the juice; the juice fills the entire length of the straw; but yet, the straw is a stranger to the taste; the tongue has the juice on it; but it has no knowledge of its calorific value or its components; it can only pronounce judgement on its taste; for other purposes, it sends the juice into the stomach. The stomach discriminates and distributes the essentials of the juice to every part of the body, every nerve and cell, and contributes to their efficiency and strength. The cup is the body of man; it has in it the Divinely sweet Atma principle. The sense organs are the straws; intellect is the tongue; the ego principle is the stomach; it converts the sweetness into spirit and confers Bliss, Peace and Light.

—*Discourse by Baba 25-10-74*

The Name of Baba is so sweet,
I love its music to repeat,
It makes my joys full and complete,
The precious Name of Baba.

The Inner Melody

Bhajans have to be sung and offered to God in an attitude of utter humility; they are not to be taken as exercises in an exhibition of talents and as competitions for mastery of musical skill.

They have to please the Lord, not your fans. With each Bhajan song, the mind must be rendered purer, freer from passion, and stronger in faith. But, I find that you do not succeed in this task. The adoration does not arise from the heart; nor is it addressed to the Supreme by the sincere self. It is tainted by the admixture of envy, pride and hate. How can prayers so fouled reach God

For example, I find that when any new devotee sings, others leave him alone and do not sing the lines after him! They ignore him and insult him in this manner. But, when one of themselves, one of the usual group leads with a song, they join enthusiastically.

This kind of group politics has no place among Sai devotees and cannot be tolerated in Sai Bhajan Groups. I find this evil trait spreading in most Bhajan Mandalis—members divided into rival groups competing for chances to sing, trying to attract the attention and appreciation of the people. Urged by this selfish motive, they discourage the sincere Bhajan singers; they keep mum when they offer their songs; this means either that they have lost their voice or that their hearts (have been so deadened by selfishness.

Attitudes of difference and distinction should not enter the hearts of devotees so far as this sacred sadhana is concerned. Nor can the song of such people be pleasant to the ear; for, it is only when the feeling arises in the heart that the song will appeal to the hearts of others. It would be far better for all parties if such self-important and conceited folk stay away from Bhajan, rather than pollute the sacred atmosphere by the spirit of rivalry and factionalism.

When devotees taking the name of Sathya Sai behave in such a manner, that is to say, people to whom the world is looking for guidance and inspiration, when they descend to such levels, what is to happen to the uplift of the world and the restoration of Dharma?

Bhajans where you quarrel and compete, and revel in putting down others and raising yourselves, might give *you* satisfaction; but, let me announce here, they do not please *me* at all. I am pleased only when Love is the keynote, when the feeling of Unity prevails, when the melody comes from a cleansed god-loving heart.

The office-bearers in the Units of our Organisation should be ever vigilant, that this poison does not creep into the working of the Units, either in Bhajans, or in the activities of the Mahila Vibhag or Seva Dal.

Remember all are the sons and daughters of Sai Mata. How can I tolerate when the sons and daughters quarrel among themselves and divide themselves into rival groups? Unless you sing Bhajans for your own joy, you cannot bring joy to others.

—Baba

The True Offering

Embodiments of Divine Atma,

You are celebrating this Day as the Birthday of Swami, and deriving Ananda through various programmes as here, carried on with enthusiasm by you; but, in fact, I have no wish to consider this as a special Day because it is the Birthday and celebrate it as such. I have come on purpose to reveal to man the mystery of his Reality and the goal of his life; I have not come to set them the task of celebrating the birthday or to get arranged any pompous and personal festivals. I have no such desire, at any time, in this or any other sojourn.

On what day do I celebrate my birthday? On that day when all of you experience genuine Ananda, in your hearts! Now, when your hearts are surging with manifold fears and anxieties, and torn by miseries and losses, and driven asunder by grief, declaring this day as my birthday seems to be barren of meaning!

While on this subject, it is essential that I warn you of another subject also. Do not spend your time trying to understand Me; do not waste your time in that attempt. The reason why I am saying this is: It is beyond any one's capacity to understand Me. So, trying to do the impossible, you are only wasting your time and your effort. It is only when you succeed in knowing yourselves that you can know Me.

I need nothing, however great or small, in this Universe. At no moment has desire affected me for any thing or activity. I am the person come to give, not to receive. And, what you can offer me is just this: pure, unadulterated Love. When you offer me that, I derive Ananda.

During the recent Dasara Festival, some announcements were made; if you ask me what connection I have with those announcements, I reply; the connection is that of the name only. Otherwise, I have no connection with these.

Considering the wrong and undesirable paths that youth is courting and preferring all over the world at the present time, the Members of the Sathya Sai Central Trust have decided to establish Colleges in many States and through these institutions, to provide youth opportunities to transform itself in various ways, to maintain unimpaired the ideals of Indian Culture, and to equip youth with the strength and sweetness that are the common virtues of all Faiths and their basic Truth. For the realisation of this plan, they resolved to utilise the fiftieth birthday of Swami and celebrate it with its unfoldment, on a grand scale. They decided thus, as a result of

earnestness and depth of devotion. In order to establish colleges, funds are needed; no task can be fulfilled without money, even the smallest and the least important. So, they agreed on a method by which, each devotee gives as a life-time contribution, the sum of fifty rupees; thus, a corpus can be built up, out of which they could start and develop educational and health services. They were moved by high ideals and pure intentions to resolve thus.

This resolution they placed before Me. I responded to their proposal in this manner: Well. Do not carry out this task in a hush-hush way, swayed by the one purpose of collecting money. Be frank about it; adopt such means as will remove all doubts from the minds of individuals, of the Government and of the world outside.

Finally, they made the announcement that day. But, many have imposed on that announcement their own interpretations and absurdities, and they have started propagating that it is proposed to spend fifty lakhs of rupees, for the celebration of Swami's 50th Birthday!

Really, to spend 50 lakhs of rupees for wastefully celebrating either a birthday or any other such Festival is a sin which cannot be compared with any other in the degree of iniquity. When people all over the world are affected by manifold miseries consequent on absence of food and shelter, if some one spends 50 lakhs of rupees on his birthday, it has to be proclaimed a vast misuse, a heinous sin. I can never be a party to such activities.

Not this only. In Prasanthi Nilayam, no misuse or extravagance can ever happen, for any festival either Sivaratri, Navarathri or the Birthday. Many people imagine that lakhs are spent here for the Dasara Celebrations; but, all who come, serve their best in the fullness of devotion that dwells in their hearts and so, not a naya paisa is spent for any purpose. The Ritwiks who officiate at the Yajna, the lecturers who deliver discourses—all come and share in the joy, out of Love and Faith; their comforts are looked after by the members of the Seva Dal and the Seva Samitis and by the volunteers, who dedicate their strength and skills to make the Festival a success. No paisa is spent on any item. Today, you find the Prasanthi Nilayam area clean and pleasing. What is the reason? How many sweepers have we employed, how many coolies are engaged? ... You may wonder. No, not one. Everyone cleans the place where he is staying, and the area adjacent. Thus, cleanliness is ensured, without any cost. It can be asserted that at no place in the world are resources put to such good use, with the least expense, as at Prasanthi Nilayam.

Prasanthi Nilayam is holding forth and exemplifying the highest ideals, in the material, ethical, economic, moral, spiritual, worldly, and even political fields. There is no place here for anything contrary. This can be asserted without any possibility of contradiction. In spite of this, some ignorant, individuals rely more on their guesses than on facts, and indulge in spreading wrong conclusions. Let me tell them that if a single person in the whole world points out a wrong step in Prasanthi Nilayam, he shall be met and convinced. For, the Prasanthi Nilayam is eagerly bent upon the task of upholding and demonstrating high and holy ideals and achieving spiritual realisation: It does not seek these worldly riches; nor does it yearn for earning favours and fame.

Embodiments of the Divine Atma! When you feel the desire to give away in charity, direct your minds towards the development of good educational institutions, the provision of healing facilities for the sick, and the amelioration of distress among the poor. Not in this place, but, anywhere, the members of our Organisation must be ready and eager to help students, the sick, and the poor. Feel that this work, wherever carried out, is work that pleases Me.

You need not offer Me any thing; I only want that you should realise the goal of life by playing your role in the activities that help and cure, carried on lay such institutions.

You are all aware of this: I do not allow anyone to bring here even a flower, a fruit or a coco-nut. However, some persons, carried away by their devotion and dedication, or moved by sudden enthusiasm or exultation send by post or bring when they come here clothes for Me and place them before Me. From this day, I am directing that this should not be done; observe this as my command. If any one brings clothes despite this he shall not be admitted to Prasanthi Nilayam. Such persons will be treated as acting against Swami's wishes and orders. What you should place before Me as offering is Pure Love; only that.

Therefore, from this Day, spend your days and years in activities that help those who are in dire need, and thus make this human existence of yours worthwhile and fruitful. I wish you will conduct yourselves accordingly and I bless you.

—*From Baba's Discourse on Birthday, Prasanthi Nilayam 23-1174*

The more the fuel, the more the illumination. In all humanity, every individual has the undisputed right to feed his fire with fuel! Fire has the power to give light, by its nature.

So too, in the fire of the Buddhi of the aspirant and spiritual practitioner, the fire from which emanates the light of wisdom, the fuel of renunciation, peacefulness, truth, mercifulness, forbearance and selfless service has to be constantly fed. The more they do this, the more efficacious and effulgent the Sadhakas can become.

The World is a huge hospital and humanity is bedridden. Some are writhing in the pain of envy, some are bloated with pride, some are suffering insomnia through hate, some are struck down with selfishness; every one has some illness or other. Render gratitude to the doctors who diagnose and prescribe remedies, in order to restore health of body and mind. Praising the doctors or worshipping them might induce them to pity your plight; but, you can be cured only by taking the drug and obeying restrictions on food, drink, and habits.

—Baba

The Vedic Rite

On October 19th, as part of the Dasara Festival, the Vedapurusha Sapthaha Jnana Yajna was inaugurated in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan, at the Yajna Mandap of the Poornachandra Auditorium. Bhagavan proceeded to the Mandap accompanied by the Hon'ble Minister for Religious Endowments in Andhra Pradesh, Sri Suryanarayana Raju. Before the Yajna was started, Sri Suryanarayana Raju spoke on the authenticity of the ancient scriptures of India. He said that those who scoffed at accounts in the Ramayana of aerial vehicles and in the Mahabharata of highly destructive weapons of war were forced to recognise their validity, when aeroplanes flew overhead and atom bombs exploded over Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He spoke of the basic principles of individual and social conduct enshrined in the epics of India and exhorted the younger generation to emulate them and advised the older generation to impress them more by example than by precept. "I am really very nervous to speak on such matters before this vast gathering of Vedic pundits, scholars and elders engaged in various professions assembled in the Presence of the Avatar of the Age, come to re-vitalise the ancient Vedic Yajna," he said. He praised the Pundits of Andhra Pradesh for their mastery of the Vedas, but, requested them to move more among the people and share with them the wisdom of which they are now the repositories.

Bhagavan then delivered His Divine Discourse. He said, "Indeed, every one of you ought to feel proud that you took birth in this Holy Land, long famous as the land of Yoga, of Thyaga and of God-oriented Karma. You are the children of Mother Veda, whom she loves so affectionately that She has called you here to witness this great Vedic Yajna. Bharat is the land that God loves, for, He has taken Avatar here often, and is even now moving on this land, carrying out His Mission of restoring Dharma to people who are ignoring it. This Yajna is an item in that great Task.

It is a great pity that Bharat which earned such eminent renown in the spiritual field is today in the throes, of a devil dance of vice and wickedness, in the background of falsehood, injustice, hatred and faction. The land is sunk in anxiety and fear. Therefore, at this juncture, it is necessary to light the lamp of love and hope and impart courage and confidence, by both precept and example.

The Vedas are the very roots of Bharatiya Culture. So, it is the bounden duty of every son of India to observe the rites and rituals, the injunctions and instructions, laid down in the Vedas. Many have fallen into the habit of asking, what is the object of these directions, what can we gain from them? Well, Let me tell them that the one single object that the Vedas have in view is to make man Divine, through a series of spiritual exercises. They lead man from the animal stage, when he believes he is just this body suffering hunger thirst and desires of various kinds, into the state of human-ness, when he recognises that he is far higher than an animal and later, the Vedas persuade him to use his intelligence and discrimination to uplift and sublimate his passions and emotions to the Divine level where he is in eternal bliss.

The Vedas elaborate the Sanathana Sastra, the primal science of the spirit. Understanding this science well and practising it from the duties every man owes to himself That science results in the removal of ignorance, the gaining of knowledge; not the knowledge of material, worldly

things, which changes and gets superseded every few years! It endows the seeker with the knowledge that is the key to the entire gamut of knowledge, that which if known, everything else is known.

That is why the Vedas are called so. The word means, Vedayathi ithi vadah, that is to say, Veda means, that which makes you know. The cosmic principle is amenable to the mystic formulae and sound patterns that the mantras of the Vedas represent; the four fundamental urges of man (Dharma, to be righteous; Artha, to earn and accumulate; Kama, to desire and get the desires fulfilled and Moksha, to expand and get liberated from the 'here and now' into the 'ever and everywhere') get sanctified and sustained by the Vedic path. The material physique of God can be adored by the Yantra; His spiritual physique has to be propitiated by means of mantras.

Coming to this ritual of Yajna which we are now inaugurating, you will notice that when the sanctified offerings are laid on the holy fire, the pundits utter the word, Svaha, as often as they offer. The reason why that word has to be uttered is, according to them, to enable the offering to be totally reduced and consumed by the fire. Now, it is the very nature of fire to consume and so, there is no need to call upon Fire in this manner; it does not stand to reason to declare that fire has to be prayed to for being and behaving so.

It is uttered to acclaim the energy and splendour that are latent in fire and to invoke the Divine Tejas that enables fire to shine and purify. The presiding deity is called upon to carry the offering to the particular God to whom it is dedicated, saying, Indrayasvaha, Keasavayasvaha, Rudrayasvaha, Varunayasvaha etc. Indra, Kesava, Rudra and Varuna will receive the oblation through Agni the presiding deity of Fire, only when He is invoked and aroused by the syllable Svaha.

Not only is Fire divine; all the elements are divine. In fact, there is nothing in Creation that is not divine. Kalidasa in the Kumara Sambhavam Poem has addressed the Himalayas and the streams, glaciers, peaks and trees thereon as divine, as symbols and signals of the immanent Divine. For every element and being, fire which gives heat and light is considered to be the very life principle, the vital breath.

There is another clarification which I feel I should make just now. The Vedas are countless, 'Anantho vai Vedaah' it is said. Now, the doubt may arise why countless Vedas are necessary to lay down the path of spiritual progress. Let us take an example. To make a child understand the meaning of one word, the parent or teacher uses very often a whole barrage of words. Explanation means elaboration, repetition, re-emphasising. So, to make clear to men of average intelligence or no intelligence, it became necessary to have a number of supplementary or complementary texts and scriptures, and since their number is immense, they came to be known as 'countless', Anantha. The aim of every Veda, however large the number, however varied the approach, is the same: to lead man from the animal stage through the human into the Divine height of self-realisation.

From the Universal Absolute manifested the Brahman, the Cosmic Principle. From the Brahman, Karma or Regulated Activity based on Vedic prescriptions originated; from this kind of Karma, the Gods are delighted and they shower rain, directing the God Parjanya to bless the world and its people. Since Rain falls, crops grow and food is available for consumption; through food, man gets health and strength and vitality; as a result of this vitality, man multiplies and reproduces himself. This is the cycle, according to the Vedas—Karma, Rain, Crops, Food, and Fecundity. Krathus or elaborate rituals of this type, are undertaken for invoking timely rains, congenial seasons and peace and prosperity for the whole world.

It is the activity which declares whether the individual or society is good or bad. The thermometer measures the temperature of the body and announces whether the body is well or ill. The Karma or activity is, the indicator of inner character. Observing one's actions, their motives, their consequences and the extent of one's involvement, it is possible to declare one as a pashu (beast) or Pashupati (the Lord of Individual Souls that is to say as Divine as God Himself).

The Krathu is also a Karma, albeit a Vedic Karma, dedicated to the acquisition of the welfare of the world. All Karma done to ensure the welfare of others, without any aspiration for personal benefit, is good Karma, which the Gods would appreciate as a krathu. The evil consequences that are sure to affect you when you have committed wrong karmas can be counteracted by engaging yourself in beneficial karmas, thereby earning merit.

There is no attempt now to counteract evil by good and so, the country is fast sliding into ruin. How can the country uplift itself? The country is not just a piece of the map, or a slice of earth. It is a collection of men, women and children, bound together by tradition and certain common ways of life and thought handed down as valid and valuable by generations of patriots and leaders of spiritual life.

Once upon a time, since the vices of greed and vanity developed uncontrolled among men, the Veda was so incensed and insulted that it took the form of a black deer and fled into the forests. At this, it is said, the Vedic Pundits, Sages and scholars followed it with prayerful importunities; but, it would not return. They had to come back, with just the skin of the deer and be content, with that remnant. These Ritwiks who officiate in this and other Vedic rituals wear, as you can see, pieces of the skin of a black deer, to warn themselves against the recurrence of that catastrophe. They also take their seats on deer-skins. Every act and gesture, every accent and tone of the mantras has a meaning traceable to the deep past and the experiences of the makers of our culture. The skin is called 'charma' in Sanskrit. But, worn during the ritual it gives 'sarma', which means joy and enthusiasm, Ananda and Sukha,

Yajna means, as you know, sacrifice, Thyaga, renunciation. This Yajna celebrated here has no particular individual desire to satisfy. The aim is to ensure the prosperity and peace, not of any one individual, nor of any region or community or country, but, all mankind.

Gandhi used to go round the country praying 'Sabko sanmati de Bhagavan'. "O Lord, give every one, give all, goodness of mind." You who are attending this Yajna dedicated for the

welfare of the world should pray likewise and, yourself entertain only sanmati, so that the world will profit by your example.

—*Discourse by Bhagavan*

The I persists in the waking stage, the dreaming stage, as well as the stage of deep sleep; water persists in the sea, the wave and the foam. In the same manner, the I is the same in the three bodies of the individual, the Paramarthika, the Prathibhasika and the Vyvaharika. The Paramarthika is the spiritual body, the Prathibhasika is the apparent body and the vyavaharika is the active body. The apparent body is the reflection of the spiritual, and the active is the reflection of the apparent. The basis of the spiritual body which is the only truth is Brahman or the Ultimate. He who is established in this Truth is the Kutastha, or the Fixed One, fixed in the Highest Bliss, acquired by escape from the demands and diversions of the apparent and active bodies. That is to say, the Kutastha is confirmed in Brahman, he is a Brahmajñani.

—**Baba**

Vehicle Care

Doctors agree that illness is caused through faulty food habits and foolish ways of spending leisure. But, they not seem to know that food is a word that must connote a wider variety of 'intakes'. Every experience that is drawn through any of the senses in 'food' and has an effect on one's health. We say 'food for thought'; whatever we see or hear or smell or touch has an effect on the body, good or bad. The sight of blood makes some people faint; or, it maybe some bad news, that administers a shock. Allergy is produced by unpleasant smells, or when something intrinsically unwelcome is contacted or tasted. A sound mind ensures a sound body; a sound body ensures a sound mind. The two are interdependent. Health is essential for happiness; happiness or a capacity to be happy, whatever may happen is essential for physical health, too.

The food we consume should be tasty, sustaining and pleasant. It should not be too 'hot' or too saltish; there must be a balance and equilibrium maintained. It should not arouse or deaden. Rajasic food enrages the emotions; Tamasic food induces sloth and sleep. Satwic food satisfies but does not inflame the passions or sharpen the emotions.

Nature has many mysteries in its makeup. Man is able to unravel only those that are cognisable through his five senses; he does not realise that there is a vast unknown beyond the purview of the five faulty instruments of perception that he has. For example, from every being and thing, constantly, without intermission, millions of minute particles and millions of vibrations are issuing forth. Certain substances like camphor emanate so much of these that a lump disappears in a few days. The bodies of others affect us by these emanations and we too affect them in the same way. For good or bad, we are interacting in this manner, inescapably. Naturally, the growth of the body is affected, as well as its health and strength, by the contact or company we develop.

These emanations are intensified when dirt accumulates, or sewage collects, or drains are choked. Sanitation rules are framed to reduce the possibility of disease spreading from such areas.

Five types of bath are prescribed in the Hindu scriptures, in order to maintain physical immunity from the emanations of others, First, we have the 'mud bath', wherein fine mud is applied over the body and kept on for some time before being washed away. Second, the 'sun bath' is recommended, because the rays of the sun are powerful disinfectants; they feed as well as freshen. Third: bath in water. If the water is a flowing river, considered holy, and if the bath is taken after propitiatory hymns etc., the bath will cleanse the body and, at the same time, elevate the spirit. The fourth type is the 'air bath', when the body is exposed to the cool breeze, and its salutary effect. The fifth and last type is the 'ash bath', where the body is given a coating of fine ash or Vibhuti, revered as the mark of Siva. The ash guards the body from evil contacts and the deleterious effects of the vibrations proceeding from others; it also sanctifies and purifies the vibrations of the individual wearing the ash, for, it reminds him always of the inevitable end of all that one feels as one's own, except the Lord who is the very person himself.

Un-touchability as a social practice must have had its origin in the realisation of this truth. But practices like avoiding contact with demeaning or defiling men or things latter became a ritual, a hollow round of negations. Those who are ridiculed for observing such restrictions and taboos are finding it difficult to explain the inner significance of their behaviour. These observances originated from the anxiety to earn length of life and strength of body, so that the seeker might gain the goal. The Gita speaks of 'yukthahara viharasya', habits of feeding and recreation which are controlled and regulated. The gross part of food is discarded as faeces, the subtle part is transformed into muscle, blood etc and the 'more subtle of the subtle' aspects are transmuted into the mind and its activities. That is why the sages have prescribed certain limits and levels of food, in order to promote the spiritual urges and prevent contrary tendencies.

But, nowadays, as a result of the downgraded time spirit, food that damages the spiritual urge is being increasingly favoured! The elementary rules of personal cleanliness are neglected in the name of 'novelty and neo-spiritualism'. Bath is given the go-by. Oral hygiene is not cared for. Damaging habits are cultivated and tolerated. The mouth is the gateway of the physical mansion; if the gateway is foul, what can we say of the residence and the inmates! Uncleanliness has become a popular cult; it is necessary to keep away from its votaries, for, cleanliness is next to Godliness. Unkempt, disheveled, dirty heads and bodies denote unkempt, disheveled intellects and minds.

Of course, it is true that many sages and saints paid little attention to personal cleanliness, since they were always on the higher plane of nearness to Reality. Imitating them without the inner conviction that one is not the body but that one is the Universal Indweller can only be hypocrisy and exhibitionism. Ishwara swallowed the poison that emerged from the Ocean; but, mortals cannot do the same, even with reference to minor poisons of the world: Develop equanimity, install in the mind the faith in the Divine and then, you get the authority to neglect the claims of the body, with impunity. You cannot challenge the wisdom of the sages and ask,

what harm is there if I too behave likewise! Great harm will certainly ensue, when you venture into these realms of the spirit with the ego bloated big.

The body has to be carefully and tenderly fostered; it is a precious gift, a very complicated but well coordinated machine, given for achieving a laudable task. Its exterior too must be clean and full of the charm of goodness. The skin of the Fruit of Ananda is the physical body; the succulent flesh is the muscle, bone and nerve; the hard uneatable seed is the evil that gets mixed up in life; the juice which the fruit offers, for which the tree was planted and nourished is the Bliss it shares with all. The body will shine if the character is fine; service of man and worship of God will preserve its charm. The Lord will be watching with a thousand eyes the least activity of man to discover any slight trace of self-less Love sweetening it.

In the past, illnesses were cured by the simple remedies that nature herself provided—roots, tubers, fruits, leaves etc., rest, change of residence, regulation of diet, sadhana etc. But, now, man lives in an age, of tablets and injections. Do not believe that health is retained or maintained through doctors; nor can drugs alone guarantee it. Were that so, the dead should all be alive now. Well. Examine whether the doctors themselves follow the advice they offer to others. They are victims of the very habits which they advise against! They condemn smoking and drinking intoxicants as dangerous to health, but, they indulge in both, and thereby, encourage the very evils they condemn!

This is the type of health-advisers that we have! In every field, spiritual, moral, economic, political, and literary, absence of proper leaders is the root cause of all the distress, anxiety and fear that torment the world.

You are embodiments of the Divine Atma. Do not crave for recognition and respect from others; crave rather for winning Grace from the Lord. In the pursuit of that aim, do not be misled by the emergence of obstacles and obstructions.

—Hospital Day: Discourse; 16-10-74

You are all now sitting in this Poornachandra Auditorium listening to Me and the Pundits, and taking the words to heart, and very happy that you had this opportunity. When this meeting is over and you finish your dinner, you come to this very place and lay yourselves down to sleep. During sleep, you dream that you are shopping in the bazaars of either Calcutta or Delhi or Bombay, busy bargaining and selecting the things you are after. When you are awake, you never worried about those things or places. When you are dreamt, you never worried about the discourses or the words you took to heart. When awake, shops were non-existent; when shopping, the lectures were non-existent. So, they have no right to be called 'real' or Truth. Truth is One, it can never be two. But, while listening, 'you' were existent; while dreaming, you were existent. So, the only Truth is You, the I in you.

—Baba

