

Father!

Father of the Endless Worlds!
I had many prayers.
Now, I've only one—
That, when the stars fall from Night
(As one Night, they shall),
I will end my flight
In your Heart;
I will finish playing this part.

Father of Truth!
I've floated on dreams
Too long, for dreaming.
This canopy of deep blue air
Ends, where You exist alone—
Alone, existing in splendour.

You alone exist!
Father of blinding beauty!
Dancing on the ruin of the World
I find I am hurled into Love
Of Your Goodness, Truth and Beauty.
This now is Love
Which once was Duty.

—*Oxonian*

Happy Birthday

Happy Birthday, SAI BABA, we rejoice on this, Your birth day,
Your being amidst us, makes us so happy and so gay.
All these years, You have spent in trying to teach
By your various ways, to make us reach
The goal, for which we struggle and we strive,
And pray for Your Blessings, there to safely arrive.
The following advice You have given time and again,
It's now upto us to practice and to attain:-

"To see the Lord in everyone, wherever you look;
In the street, in the house, in every corner and nook.
It's His image you must see in every upturned face,
No matter of what caste or creed or race.
A helping hand you must lend, wherever you go,
And pull up the struggling, the needy and the low."

If these teachings are followed, then what more can one ask,
Than to pray to succeed in one's worldly task,
Of loving and giving, without anything in return,
And to go on this way and continue to learn
The above lessons, so lovingly and beautifully taught
That one feels duty bound, to return what one got
From You to others, and thereby pass on
THE MESSAGE OF LOVE, FOR WHICH YOU WERE BORN.

—*Katie Panthaky*

Four Steps

Stages of Life

The culture of this ancient land is as deep as it is vast; it is built on strong and sustaining principles of human development. But, Indians at the present time are neglecting its lessons and entangling themselves in the search for material joys and pleasures. They ignore the true and eternal values. They turn a deaf ear to the call of the Divine; they respond to the siren voice of the worldly. This is the twentieth century, the Age of Science and Technology. There is plenty of material comforts and sensual pleasure easily available. So, driven by an insane urge for the temporal and the trivial, man rushes into ruin, and loses the precious heritage of Atmic treasure which the Culture promises him. In fact, if only man knew the purpose and plan of Life, he would not waste his years and his skills in the pursuit of mere time-bound joys. That he is everywhere engrossed in these endeavours is a pitiable fact, which can be attributed to his misfortune or his ignorance. Of course, man has lost faith in himself; so, there is no wonder that he has lost faith in God also. Only those who know themselves and have confidence in themselves can acquire knowledge of God and confidence in God. Know thyself, first; then, your attempt to know the world will be rendered simple.

Indian Culture has laid emphasis on Four Asramas or Stages of Individual Development, in order to assure every one with the education needed to know himself. For Atmavicharana, Asrama-dharma is very essential. Through adherence to the regulations and prescriptions of conduct and study assigned to each stage or Asrama, the earning of knowledge and wisdom is made easy and automatic. Wisdom can come only through work as worship; the Asramas guide man to sublimate all activity into worship.

Just as we have four stages: childhood, youth, middle age and old age, we have four corresponding Asramas: Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha and Sanyasa—Studentship, Householdship, Recluseship and Monkship. During the years of childhood, and teenage, man has to equip himself with the information necessary to share in the work of society and to derive health and happiness thereby, and acquaint himself with the tools of knowledge and the paths along which wisdom can be garnered. As a householder raising a family and sustaining a society, he has also to uphold the ideals of justice and truth, and promote them by his actions. He must learn the innate majesty of mankind and live in accordance with that high status. As a recluse and

monk, in old age, he has to be the guide and teacher of the people around him, imparting to them the fund of wisdom he has won through his experience.

What Sastras Say

The Sastras lay down the lines along which man has to direct his thoughts and activities. Sincere adherence to these laws and limitations alone can guarantee wisdom or Jnana. Otherwise, man drifts aimlessly along the cross-currents and whirlpools of life and ends up ignorant, both of the nature of the Loka (World) and the glory of Lokeswara (God).

The higher path must be trodden from childhood; it cannot be adopted at an advanced age. The child must learn to be truthful in word and deed, and avoid the cowardly habit of falsehood. Later, boys and girls have to become conscious directors of their senses, instead of being automatic slaves. Heads of families have to adhere to the schedules of rites and worship prescribed for them; they have to supervise the behaviour and conduct of the members of the household; they have to render hospitality to guests and deal charity to the poor; they have also to equip their sons and daughters with the processes by which they can have mental peace and equanimity, under all conditions. Because these obligations have been neglected for some generations, the forces of atheism have earned strength now.

The Ripening Fruit

When the seeds are ridden with defects, how can the tree yield richly? When parents and elders do not provide good examples to the children growing under their shade, how can the country prosper and be free from anxiety and fear? You cannot separate the rind, the pulp and the seed that a tamarind fruit has, when it is still green. But, once it has ripened, the separation is quite easy. So too, until a person becomes ripe in experience and can be pronounced wise, he cannot discard his identification with the body, the senses, and the mind. He will not be able to differentiate between Atma and non-Atma, Kshetra and Kshetrajna, Prakriti and Paramatma, Guna and Trans-Guna, and such other entities.

Let me tell you a small example: Krishna killed the Kaliya serpent that was poisoning the Kalindi river and destroying all trace of life for miles around, by means of deadly fumes. No sooner was Kaliya killed than the 'wives' (serpents) of his harem, prayed to Krishna for succour and surrendered to Him. This is the story, according to the Bhagavatha. Now, what does this signify? In the Mind-lake (the Manasa-sarovar) of man, there lurks a poisonous serpent, Desire. When that is destroyed, the various frailties and frivolities, triumphs, trials and failures, pains and pleasures, that Desire brings in its train surrender to God.

Desire can be killed, only when faith in the Atma as the very core of being is firmly established. Since all efforts are now directed to the accumulation of material goods and the satisfaction of sensual desires, man is tossed about on the waves of fight and faction, falsehood and greed. The individual is intimately related to society and so, his restlessness affects society too.

The individual will is ultimately responsible for the welfare and well-being of the world. The world is but a mental image of the individual. How this happens is a mystery. One can only say, that just as sleep is the cause of dreams, Maya or the Basic ignorance is the cause of Creation.

Doctors ascribe dreams to various reasons: indigestion, the compulsions of thought, the confusions of mental pictures etc. But, we can be certain only of one reason, namely, sleep! Dreams are nullified when the person becomes a Jnani (One aware of the Truth). At that stage, one gets rid of the night-dream as well as the day-dream.

The Grand Design

The Four Asramas have been devised in order to awaken man into the Jnani stage. Education today, in all grades, is a process of packing information in the brain and skills in the hands. It is useful only for parading scholarship, dialectical controversies and mutual recrimination. It does not instill humility, a sense of balance and equanimity. Of course, spiritual training is totally absent. Perhaps, the feeling is that spirituality is a solitary pursuit, which can be undertaken only in the silence of the forest. No! True spirituality is the awareness of the fundamental unity of man in God.

People celebrate the birth of a child; they are happy when the child grows tall and strong. But, the fittest event for such celebration is when the child justifies its birth, by achieving good fame as a benefactor of man or a servant of mankind. Emperor Dhritarashtra had hundred sons! He must have celebrated their birthdays, too. But, no one of them did any one good; they were all arrogant, greedy and full of spite. Therefore, they accomplished only the extinction of the entire dynasty and all who were attached to it!

Sons and daughters are now keen to share the properties of their parents and spend their portion as quickly as possible. They do not care for the much more precious wealth of experience that their forefathers have earned for their sake. They waste their years in fallow efforts so much that even their health is destroyed; children wear glasses when barely ten; they dye their hair when barely fourteen; they age fast and show signs of senility when barely sixteen! To praise the habits that people adopt today as 'modern', or 'conducive to progress' is ridiculous to say the least.

As the ancients emphasised, food habits and recreation habits have to become Satwic, that is to say, such as cannot arouse and feed the passions of man, or make him dull and stupid, idle and listless.

Above all, every one must realise, (and guide himself accordingly), that the main mission of man here below is march towards the Ideal of Unity and Peace.

—*Baba's Discourse: 23-11-74*

Glimpses of Baba

(From "The Movement," California)

(I was in the United States in September-October 1974, visiting Sathya Sai Centres. The California newspaper, named "The Movement," devoted to an exposition of the spiritual life, interviewed me regarding Baba in Tustin, California. As the interviewer asked very interesting

questions, I was made spontaneously to comment on aspects of Baba's personality on which I do not always dwell. -Gokak)

Movement Newspaper: I have the feeling, Dr. Gokak, that being with you is like being with Baba, in a vicarious way, of course.

Dr. Gokak: Well, he asked me to go to America, and he said, "I'll take care of you in every way." My prayer to him is that I should be worthy of him; whatever I say or do should not be unworthy of a man representing Baba. He said, "I'll help you in every little way." So far I have nothing to regret.

N. N.: Does Baba ever speak through you? Do you sometimes hear his voice?

D. G.: In dreams, Yes.

M. N.: How about during the day when you're involved in doing something, or contemplating doing something?

D. G.: I don't hear him, but suddenly there is guidance. There is no doubt about that! As long as I'm going right. I am guided. The moment I go wrong, I know that I am going wrong, and I correct myself. That moment of knowledge, self-knowledge, is where he steps in. I can't say that I hear this, but it is there in the system

M. N.: Like an alarm clock.

D. G.: It has been like that all these days. I very clearly see what he is doing for me.

M. N.: Is this your first trip to the United States?

D. G.: No, I was here fifteen years ago on an academic assignment. I was the head of a delegation to report on reforms in examinations of higher education in universities.

M. N.: Have you been surprised by anything that you've seen here this time?

D. G.: This time I am a different kind of company. For the greater part of each day I have been with Sai devotees. Wherever I've gone there has been so much love. I have been spoiled! I have been so well looked after. There has been so much love showered on me that I cannot tell India from America.

Looking to the young people, because on my last trip I spoke with many of them, I find a very significant change. At that time, they were asking questions about India, about what happens there, exotic questions; but now they ask me about time, about eternity, and things like that. They are greatly interested. This is a very significant change.

M. N.: I've heard you say that living so close to Baba you sometimes can get "burned." To what does this refer?

D. G.: It means that he is all perfection. In that Light around him, no iota of untruth can survive. No insincerity can have any place around him. No double standards. But we are imperfect; this is why we are human. In our dealings with him we will sometimes try to impose this imperfection on him without our knowledge. He is very sorry for us because he knows that we are going to get "burned." He can't help it; he, himself, can't help us when we are getting burned because this is a very natural thing. But if one understands what is happening that it is the impurity within one that is being burned, then one can stand it all right. Plus, there is Baba's grace. While this is happening, his love is still flows to the person. This is what saves and heals him. This is what I referred to. You are on top of a volcano; this is perfection.

The moment you go slightly wrong, in what you do you are blown up. This is a critical moment in one's life; he may or may not survive it.

In a fit of ego one may go away. He is hurt; he is deeply hurt. If he goes, he goes, it's his loss. There is no compromise. As Baba has given saying, "The nearer and dearer you are, the greater are your chances of getting burnt." In becoming worthy of him, you have to burn a great deal. This is what happens to everyone around him.

M. N.: The "burning" then is purification?

D. G.: Yes, it is all the same.

M. N.: What is an Avatar?

D. G.: An Avatar is one who is a physical projection of a ray from the Transcendental Plane, that aspect of God that is above the Universe; the third aspect. From that aspect there is a ray which is not subject to cosmic laws. The human being who is a God-man, an Avatar, is a descendant from the Transcendental Plane. He is Spirit in all It's glory, transcending cosmic laws. The God-Man represents man in the highest awareness.

M. N.: It must be strange at times relating to Baba, being so close to him and knowing him. How do you relate to him, as a close friend or as a vehicle for God to come through this shell called Sai Baba? How do you relate to that situation?

D. G.: He's the friend I love, the God I fear, and Krishna at whose enigmatic hands I love to be slain, making myself immortal. This is how I relate to him. I am prepared for everything. For my doing, for my undoing, for all that. And I am also prepared for the human relationship. In the morning, when I am in the next room and the Avatar walks in and says, "Do you have a shaving brush?" I give him mine because he has forgotten his own. I relate to him in this way also. He is so intensely human. He can be so divine.

M. N.: Does this seem like a paradox to you?

D. G.: No. Even when I am aware of all that he stands for when I am near him and he cuts jokes with me, I forget all that he is and I begin to talk as a friend. It is only when I get away

from him, and come to America, for example, and see what is happening to him in all these homes, all these photographs everywhere that I say, "Is this Baba with whom I'm staying?" I begin to experience a sense of awe.

Once I said to him, "When will you show me your cosmic form?" He said, "Wait, wait, I will show you." He said, "Why do you think I have taken you so close to me? For that reason I have taken you close." But actually, I don't know what else he is going to show, but what I have seen already (laughter). When I am near him, I still forget that he is Baba. I think of him as very great and all that and near to me. I can take liberties and joke now and then, when he smiles, not otherwise (laughter). But then I forget the rest of it. When I go to other places and see Vibhuti (sacred ash) showering in photographs and images appearing from nowhere and people going into ecstasy repeating his name, then I say, "Yes, this is the cosmic form."

M. N.: What do you think of astrology, palmistry, psychic readings and other such things?

D. G.: I'm an amateur palmist. One morning I was sitting in my room looking at a particular point in my own palm which refused to grow; Baba happened to come in at that moment. He asked me what I was doing. I couldn't explain, I was rather shy. But he knew and he asked me, "Do you know palmistry?" I said, "Several years ago I read some books on palmistry." He said, "Come on, read my palm!"

When he held out his hand, it was not for me to say, "No." So I spent some time looking at his palm. In fact, I was quite interested as it was the palm of an Avatar. I only know Western palmistry. There is Indian palmistry in which signs of discs and conchs reveal if a person is an Avatar. Unfortunately, I had not studied this, so I was unable to apply these tests to his palm. I used all I knew from Western palmistry and I said, "This palm reveals no traces of Avatarhood." Then he said, "Good, proceed. After all, how can the physical body bear on its traces of the Avatar; it doesn't." So I was quite satisfied that I was a good palmist. But, he probably said this to satisfy me. Then I proceeded to look for the signs of the supreme power that he exercises among us. Being an amateur, I was unable to locate many of the signs. But, I did find some of them. He saw that I was fumbling, and seeing another young man near, he said, "Look at his palm. Tell me whether he is going to marry or not."

I tried all of my palmistry cleverness and spent some time regarding his palm. I thought he was going to marry, but I didn't want to be dogmatic in the presence of Baba. He might change anything. If I said, "Yes, he is going to marry!" then he might see to it that he would never marry at all and falsify this prediction. So I said, "There are tendencies toward marriage on this palm, and if Baba will, he may marry." As it turned out, he married after two or three years, making my prediction right. But he went into this marriage with full permission from Swami.

Palmistry and astrology can anticipate certain possibilities in human life. Something, of course, depends on the science of astrology and palmistry, but much more depends upon the astrologist and palmist. One must have something of a psychic attunement with the object whose fortune he is going to read. If this is there, then everything comes out correct.

There is an English story about an astrologer who told a subject that he was going to kill someone at eight o'clock the next evening. The whole day this person kept himself indoors. The time was 7:30, 7:45, 7:50; he still kept himself indoors. He didn't want to take any chances. If he stayed in his room, who could he kill except himself? He knew he was not going to commit suicide. At 7:50 he came out of his room. He left for an evening walk, greatly relieved that he had falsified this prophecy. As he was walking along he met this astrologer and he said, "Such a false prophecy came from you! You don't know your own job!!!" And he hit him in the face. The man fell dead on the spot! So the astrologer was killed and the prophecy came true.

There are these possibilities both in palmistry and astrology, but Baba has also told us that the moment that a man has realised his soul ceases to be a creature of circumstance. He ceases to be swayed by his own destiny. What rules him is not the stars, but his own Soul. He consciously shapes his own life as he chooses. At this point, astrology and palmistry lose their meaning.

M. N.: You've mentioned prior to this interview the "Hour of God." You said that this hour will be brought to us sometime during the 1980s. Will this come about by the development of man, or will this be an act of the God force itself?

D. G.: The development of man's technological forces has been going on for years. There is a possibility that there is going to be a world crisis around the 1980s, after which there will be a definite turn toward what we call the Golden Age. At this time, it will be clear to man that any more entering into world power games will end in disaster for the whole world; and this will not be done. Simultaneous with this realization, there will be a descent of Grace. This descent of Grace is what will really bring forward the "Hour of God." This "Hour of God" is different from the prediction regarding the collapse of California.

The "Hour of God" is the hour of the unexpected; there will be different patterns in things. We will find that all elections that take place will place good men into positions of power. It is the good men that will begin to lead the industries. It will be the good men that will serve the people. Then there will be a great change in the very atmosphere. This will be one of the signs of the coming of the Golden Age.

This spiritual awareness will assert itself in small Gnostic groups, a group here, a group there. These groups will have lived this kind of Gnostic lifetime. And meanwhile, there will be signs of the coming Golden Age.

Sai Baba hinted that the person who was to come in a robe, with a stock of hair on his head' is already here. If you like, this is the coming of Christ. You may or may not accept this, but this is what Sai Baba said.

M. N.: What is the importance of being with one's Teacher, physically.

D. G.: It has very great importance. One cannot consummate a relationship if his work takes him away. One cannot draw all the love and all the delight that he can receive by being near. Suppose I have Rama Krishna for my Master. He is no longer in the flesh. It is quite possible that I could get in touch with my Master in my own meditative musings. But there is a particular

delight in the physical presence of one's Master right with us as a human being. One relates to him as a human being and still he is the Divine in the human. This brings in a certain sense of fulfillment and a certain experience that has been spoken of in all the ancient Indian texts. They say that even the gods hunger for this relationship.

In this evolution, when God comes down and is represented in human flesh, he brings something of the divine himself in human flesh and is part of the evolutionary term "existence." There is a peculiar joy in this relationship of the human-divine, which you don't get even in the Divine by Himself.

M. N.: If God wanted man to hear His voice, why does man have difficulty in hearing Him?

D. G.: As long as man loves to hear his own voice, how can he hear the voice of God? It's only when one shuts his own ears to his own voice that he is able to hear the voice of God. It's very difficult. The voice of God has to penetrate through the many layers with which we have surrounded ourselves. The purer we are, the nearer we are to His voice.

M. N.: How has your spiritual development changed since working with Baba? Have you noticed the change?

D. G.: Yes, there has been a great deal of change. The first change was that he made me conscious of what divine love stands for. I was an intellectual. I compared my emotions to water that jets out from a rock. It is very difficult for this water to come out. It's like penetrating the heart of a rock. This was my emotional life for a long, long time until I met him I don't know what he did, but he cut down some of this rock. He made it clear for this spring to gush forth. This is only one of the great things that he has done for me.

Another thing that he did for me was to correct me, in so many small, even trifling, matters, to which I never gave any thought. In India, an intellectual is a lazy person. There is so much labor available that one never has to do anything. This creates an imbalance in one's personality. Baba does everything. He never allows anyone to do his things. He must do his own packing. If there is a public meeting, he must put up the buntings. He does that. All of this enabled me to get back this balance that was lost.

M. N.: Would you encourage any spiritual students to attend the Sai Universities in India?

D. G.: Not unless an American student joins the College for Indian History, Sanskrit, or learning a modern India language. If he joins anything like Chemistry or Engineering, he will find that he is doing something which is useless for his purpose. The Chemistry or Physics required in a developing country like India is different from the kind of Physics or Chemistry which is required here in America. One can join these universities for study in Indian disciplines, Indian Philosophy, and so on. And even better, he can join our summer courses with us we admit others along with our own students. However, it may be difficult for them. Their diet has to change, their habits have to change. They have to get up at four o'clock in the morning, chant OM, meditate and go about singing songs of God throughout various villages in the early hours of the morning.

M. N.: I've heard that you were visiting with Dr. Benito Reyes of the University of Avasthology in Ojai. What was your impression of what was happening there?

D. G.: I have great faith in and a deep appreciation for what Dr. Reyes represents. I believe that he is a very genuine person who doesn't mince matters, who calls a spade a spade; he never compromises. When it comes to giving up advantages he might have, he will never compromise his Truth. This is a spiritual college interested in spiritual things. The entire management is interested in building a spiritual institution. Thus, there may be a great deal of strength in its success because this has been assured by Baba. Dr. Reyes told me that his own Master, who has synchronized with Baba has told him that between the year 1976 and 1980 a great world Teacher will visit the institution. Dr. Reyes is sure that Sai Baba will come there during the period of time. For all of you readers who want to know when Baba will come to America, here is a prophecy. Between 1976 and 1980 he is going to come here.

M. N.: Would you encourage people to come to India to see Baba?

D. G.: Oh, yes. Particularly because he has set a limit about it. He says he is not going into retirement until all those people that were destined to see him in this lifetime have seen him. Apparently, there are a certain number of people who still have to see him. Until then, he is open and accessible to everyone. I don't know when this will be completed, when the statistics will be over. Therefore, the sooner one goes to him the better.

M. N.: What does Baba require of people, if anything, so that he would wish to come to America? What should the people do here so that he would be satisfied?

D. G.: He would be very happy to come here and to see seekers of Truth, steadily pursuing their goal. Nothing pleases him better than the sight of a man who is sincere to himself and loyal to Truth. Those who have been Sai devotees in this country, if they have pursued the Sai way of life, which really means right doing, right thinking, right feeling and the pouring forth of love to those who are around them; if this is done, if the Sai way of life is adopted by them and practised by them, nothing would be dearer to his heart. It's not that he wants big receptions. He really would be very happy to go to the homes of people who have lived this kind of life and spend his time with them. He has ideas of coming over here and speaking directly, without an intermediary. But when, I am unable to say. Probably in two or three year. Next year he won't be able to come here because that is the year of his 50th birthday and the year of festivities for us in India.

M. N.: What does Baba say of the different religions?

D. G.: The first thing he says is that there is only one religion, the religion of Love. There is only one language and this is the language of the-Heart. There is only one caste and this is the caste of Humanity. There is only one God and He is omnipresent. I am quoting Baba's own words. He stands for this universality of outlook; his ashram flag contains the symbols of all great religions of the world. Those people that want to believe in their own religion should never

be disturbed. They should practise their religion spontaneously, but with proper understanding; they should not practise it in a blind manner. One should be guided through his studies.

There are people who don't want many rituals to bind them on their way. They want to feel free. They want to live a life of psychological awareness. They don't want to be bound down by any particular rituals. Their hearts prompt them to turn their whole life into a pilgrimage. If one wants to turn his life into a ritual and be a free person not professing any religion but speaking only of the Divine, then this also is welcome. Just as Baba doesn't want rituals to be discarded, he doesn't want rituals to be adopted either. It depends on a person's needs in his life. If one needs a religion then he takes it with understanding. If one needs the other life style then he takes that with understanding.

M. N.: Is there a reason why Baba is always seen in crowds?

D. G.: This is his role. The 24 hours of every day are directed toward liberating the common man, setting him free his bondage, wherever he may be from. All the methods, techniques, and exposition of his philosophy are directed toward this particular purpose.

His methods are those for redeeming the common man. His bhajans, which are sung with concentration on their rhythm, music, meaning, and imagery, can liberate the heart and release these springs of life. He has transformed the lives of millions of Indian people and thousands from all parts of the world.

M. N.: Does Baba ever manifest large objects like a house or an airplane? I've seen some of the small objects that he has manifested—rings, necklaces, and statues.

D. G.: I have not seen anything like this done, but from what I know of him, a thing like this is possible. If a man can bring back the life of the dead, which has happened in two or three cases, or be in two places at the same time, this also can happen. It has not happened because it has not been necessary. These materializations do not take place for fun. They take place when the need is there, when the circumstances require them, then they are done.

M. N.: Has Baba explained his ability to do the miracles that we hear about, and his manifestations?

D. G.: Yes. He has said, "I don't perform miracles, these miracles flow from me; how can I help it? It's my love that expresses itself in this form. I see a person who is dear to me, such a beautiful Soul and a ring comes out and I give it to him! Here is somebody else; he needs to be healed. He is such a fine person; and some medicine comes out or some healing Vibhuti and I give it to him!" This is love, nothing else but love. Somebody asked him, "How is it that you cure so many incurable diseases?" Baba answered, "It's not always done. It's my experience that I am in the heart of every living being; I am seated there whether he acknowledges me or not. I am in the heart of every living creature. I therefore love everyone, for in a sense, I love myself. If I do this and if the other person also responds to me and loves me, then the negative and the positive meet and my love and his love flow into each other; there is a conjunction. And then there is a cure. Where there is no response in love, there is no cure."

"If I am to satisfy the legitimate worldly desires of my devotees, later I want them to want spiritual gifts. I want them to ask for God Himself. In order to train them toward this desire for God, I satisfy their worldly desires now. I do this so that they might come to me for something greater."

These are techniques required of a redeemer who deals with the common man.

*Oh Sai!
I long to know Thee better, day by day,
I want to draw much closer when I pray,
To listen more intently for Thy voice,
To let the things Thou chooseth be my choice.*

Himalayan Heights

I was on a trekking expedition in the Himalayas to Gangotri. On the return journey, the petrol tank of the car sprung a leak, at a desolate place, between Harsil and Jhala. The precious liquid drained away into the ravines.

It was late in the evening; not a soul was found anywhere. Petrol could be obtained only from Uttarakashi, 60 miles away. And, 60 miles in the Himalayan Region is equal to at least 200 miles in the plains!

Even if petrol could be obtained, the problem remained, how to store it and use it; for, the gaping hole in the tank was as big as of saucer. So, first, the hole had to be closed by welding. Where could that welding be done?

It looked as if we had to persuade the ladies and children to walk to safety towards some village near by in the fast enveloping darkness; then we had to remove the petrol tank and carry it for a distance of 60 miles to Uttarakashi and get it welded there and bring it back and fit it to the car; then, we could fill up with petrol, provided we get some quantity. All this had to be done, before the car could move an inch out of that vast wilderness. Certainly, we were in for three or four days of suffering, in the shivering snows. For, we had no other person who can act as mechanic or driver.

And, lo! What cannot a prayer do? This is where Sai came into the picture! His presence was felt by me in the midst of that desolate despair. I announced, immediately, that relief was at hand and will soon be arriving. I told the family that Baba would tell us latter at Puttaparthi how we had suffered and prayed and how he had helped us.

No sooner I said so, a jeep came round and gave us five litres of petrol in a tin; they gave us also a big cake of soap, so that we might stop the leak by plugging the hole with it. The car started without trouble; we proceeded a few miles and reached Jhala, at the bottom of a mountain at least 10,000 feet high.

We could get no food or accommodation at that place. We also discovered that the cake of soap had fallen off, and the tank had gone dry!

We prayed again and again, Baba answered our prayers. The same vehicle appeared before us, and the mysterious helper suggested this time that the petrol tin be fitted near the engine itself; he advised us to provide a direct connection with a length of rubber tubing. This was done and, lo, the car started and mounted up the perilous ascent of the Sukhi Himalayas, 10,000 feet high. The entire population of Jhala had come to cheer us, when we ventured to move into the Heights, with Sai and the Stars, as our sole Guide and Companions.

That quantity of petrol too was consumed that night to the last drop; Baba sent us succour in the same mysterious manner. Petrol was provided and we reached Ganganani late at midnight, safe and sound. We got both food and accommodation there and felt relieved and happy. The next day, by about noon, we reached Uttarakashi, with the least discomfort. The tank too was welded there. Further journey was smooth and uneventful.

....When we met Baba at Puttaparthi, on our return from the mountaineering Adventure; He welcomed us, with a twinkle in his eyes. He recounted the story of our travels, and told us all the detail's of the succour He gave us, without our telling Him anything about them.

He knew. He had helped us. He had answered our prayers.

—P. S., (I. A. S.) (*From the 'Indian Herald'*)

Honour your Kith and Kin

Volunteers! Embodiments of the Divine Atma! Service without idea of self is the very first step in the spiritual progress of man. For, it trains you to transcend all the distinctions artificially imposed by history and geography and realise that the human community is ONE, and indivisible. Learn this truth; experience it in action. That is the duty of the Seva Dal Organisation. How can a person be held 'divine' (as every man truly is), unless he has established himself in the sense of this Unity and shaped all his actions thereby? Man has been brought forth so that he may enjoy his heritage, namely, the Bliss that comes of the realisation of the One. Any activity solely intended for the individual is, on that very account, barren. For, the community is essential for the individual, for his very survival. Your service will confer on you and on the community wherein you live untold benefits; it will also bring an invisible but potent benefit, namely, Divine Grace. Seva or service is an important ingredient in the Nine-fold discipline of devotion or Bhakti. You can see, sense, understand and sympathise with others who are a kin to you, and so, you have greater reason to render them help and service. If you do not

feel the call at the sight of human distress, disease or devotion from the right how can you muster the determination and dedication necessary to serve the unseen, inscrutable, mysterious God? When you do not love man, your heart will not love God. Despising brother man, you cannot at the same time, worship God; if you do, God will not accept that hypocrisy. God is the resident in every heart; so, serve any one, that service reaches the God within him; it brings on you the Grace of God. The heart that does not melt at the sight of persons caught in the coils of ignorance, disease or deprivation has to be labelled demonic; to call it bestial is an insult to the beasts. Give up egotism, sensualism and greed; fill your hearts with renunciation, belief in the glory of the Atma (Self) and Love. That is the means by which you can make yourselves efficient Seva Dal workers.

Thousands arrive at the Prasanthi Nilayam during the Festivals; among them we have a large number of sick people, the aged and children. You have to serve these visitors with special care and love. Do not go about strutting with pride that you have a badge and a scarf; go humbly among the people with love in your hearts and softness in your speech and sweetness in your acts. It is a badge which a "servant" alone is entitled to wear, not a master lording over others. The badges rest on your hearts, don't they? If your hearts are filled with pride, and a sense of superiority over others who have no badge on their chests, then, the hearts themselves will be affected by the evil aroused by this decoration. When you disregard or disrespect the badge, you are disregarding and disrespecting your own inner reality. The badge and scarf do not entitle you to roam about in the bazaar, or lounge in the hotel outside the Nilayam, indulging in low talk and vulgar habits. It does not allow you to exercise authority over any one or appropriate anything from any one.

It is a call and an inspiration, for you, to provide comfort and consolation to those in need, to seek out means and methods to increase the ways in which you can help others and contribute to their joy.

Be worthy of this gift of Grace; maintain the high ideals of the Seva Dal organisation. This opportunity has been given to you out of sheer Grace; it is not given as a consequence of some rule or claim. It does not bind you; it gives you distinction and duty, both. If you have it with you, and yet, withdraw from service or hesitate to render it, you are on the wrong track. People come to this Presence to get rid of sin and accumulate spiritual merit; if you dishonour the badge, you be retaining the sins and accumulating a lot more. Remember, with each act of Love and Service, you are nearing the Divine Presence; with each act of hate and grab, you are moving farther and farther away. The ideal of service must inspire those in authority, those who possess riches, those who are endowed with skills and intelligence, leisure and health. Serve the community and the community will serve you. Exploit it and it will exterminate you. Put an end to laziness; bury your clamorous ego; bury the greed for power and pelf; then, you get the qualifications needed for a member of the Seva Dal.

I know that some people allow others to use the scarf and badge given to them; they do so to escape work or to please their friends. This is very wrong; these symbols of Seva are as vital to each one of you as your own breath. When you give them over, you do great injury to your own breath. Or, there are some, I know, who keep them hidden, out of sight of others, when they drink, gamble, or smoke and indulge in such harmful and shameful acts. This too is despicable.

Now, about some things you have to bear in mind, when you serve the people who come here and stay for the festival. Distribute water to the thirsty; help the aged to find places away from the scorching sun or pouring rain. At the gatherings, arrange to seat the persons who have come from long distances for the first time, eager to take Darshan, in places and rows wherefrom they can see and enjoy the Festival in all its aspects. When you meet with cases of illness, report immediately to some doctor and help them to get relief. Do not delay. When your services are called for, do not rush thither in huge numbers; go in as small a number as is required. Too many enthusiastic persons can only hinder the work; and, work in other fields will suffer.

I am Prema, and you should hold on to Prema as your method of Seva. Soft speech reaches the heart quicker and deeper. Reveal in gentle words the reason why you do not allow certain things to be done or you require certain other things to be done. Win the willing co-operation of people; not their resentful acquiescence. Do not rely on harsh behaviour, or violent means. That is a path into which many slide easily; but, they do not realise that they are ridiculed as Alsations or Bulldogs by those who suffer their attentions. Do not also use your status to show favour to your kinsmen, or friends in any manner. All are your kith and kin, in the Sai Family.

This is your home, and the thousands who come to this home are your kith and kin. Welcome them as you will welcome your nearest and dearest relations; as far as in you lies, make their stay comfortable. This scarf and this badge confer on you the right to declare that Prasanthi Nilayam is your home. Keep that in mind and do not behave in any manner that will tarnish the brightness of that declaration. That status is a precious gift. Do not overstep the limits imposed by the Organisation; do not disobey the rules laid down; do not deviate from the ideals laid down. March straight on, and reach the goal.

—16-10-74 Poornachandra Auditorium Prasanthi Nilayam

There is no progress if the fledgling remains in the nest; it should develop wings and fly into the sky.

There is nothing gained if man grovels in the dust; he must see the distant goal clear and grand and then take to his wings and fly.

—Baba

Only He

"Baba is actually an ocean of Love and Compassion towards suffering humanity. Here is the key, if there is one at all, to unlock the Truth about this Incommensurable Personality—not even all His miracles! With His astounding control over forces of nature, He could have kept Himself aloof as a dread and awe-inspiring Personality, irascible and unbending like some of the great Rishis of our ancient Aryavartna. But what do we actually find? Baba is so gentle, so like a child, so full of laughter, jollity and bonhomie, so full of compassion and love for everybody! My very first sight of Him moving among His disciples gave me a thrill of this recognition of His

boundless love for humanity and the very first glance at me showed that He knew me and recognised me, and I felt as if we had known each other for ever so long!"

I was thrilled to see Baba moving among the people, from place to place selecting the persons to be interviewed by Him that evening. Soon He came to the spot where I was standing. He shot a glance at me and I felt as if a streak of lightening had passed through me, for in that glance there was a clear indication that He had recognised me. It was a glance one gives to a person whom one knows well but who has not been seen for a long time... Even to this day the wonderful glance of recognition He had shot at me remains with me in all its intensity.

By this I do not mean to suggest that I was a specially privileged sort of person. Nothing of the sort. During all these years Baba must have come across lakhs and lakhs of persons like me, but I believe when He specially comes down to select persons for interviews from among the masses of people gathered there, a glance by Him at any single person gives Him in a flash the past, present, the future and the complete psyche of that person. And knowing the intensity of that person for interview, or the urgency of his problems, He selects him for interview. Otherwise to ordinary eyes His selection seems to be extremely haphazard. He moves like a Christ among His disciples is how a Professor of Philosophy of an American University has described Him, as told by Kasturi to me. He looks into the eyes of everyone gathered, going from place to place among them to have a closer view of them and from each particular group selects one or two."

That forenoon, He called us in, that is to say, the kith and kin of the bride and bridegroom, for He had promised to "wed" them together and bless them. "It can be imagined in what a trepidation we all were. We were about to meet Baba face to face and at close quarters—and to speak also to Him. At that particular moment I was completely ignorant of the manner He would adopt to meet us. Would He be distinctly aloof doing only the task He had allotted Himself? Would He be serene and grave? Would He condescend to talk to us? All such questions were there in our minds—at least in my mind! I was really in tenterhooks!

In five minutes He entered the room turning aside the screen over the door leading upstairs to His quarters. He scanned all of us with eager laughing eyes and made humorous comments as He did so. He joked with the bridegroom, and said laughingly, "See how she giggles, and that in front of elders! Other people would be shocked to see her giggle like this, especially when she is a bride sitting by the side of the bridegroom," and so on and so on, in an extremely light-hearted and cheerful mood. In five minutes we felt He was just one of us—One whom we had known intimately since a long long time. He joked and laughed with us just as any intimate member of our family might do, In fact, I felt how at home He would be in our family group—with Shankar, Chidam, etc. In fact, I felt as if He was one of our own—an intimate sunny-natured relation whom we had not seen for some time! He talked to us as if He had known us intimately all along. Nobody out of hundreds who had had contacts with Baba and spoken to us about Him had ever given this particular picture of Baba. Their stress was all on the miracles performed by Him. This intense humanness, this wonderful camaraderie He has for all persons whom He meets; this remarkable quality of feeling Himself one with the people around Him, this superabundance of good humour, jollity and love and affection for all people made a powerful impact on me; for the picture I had had of Baba was something entirely different from this! Then and there I was

convinced that if at all any living saint is to be called `Bhagavan' it can be only He... His is a whole and undivided love for all humanity.

—*Principal P. Ramananda*

Count your blessings, name them one by one;
Count your blessings, see what God has done!
Count your many blessings, name them one by one;
And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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The Bad Omen

Khara and Dushana were highly incensed at the plight of their sister, whose ears and nose had been slit asunder; they collected an army of fourteen thousand Ogres, and marched in hot haste towards Rama and Lakshmana, the brothers who had punished her in that manner. The ogre warriors were so indomitable that they could not be defeated even in dreams; they knew no retreat or defeat; they were invincible in battle. Like winged mountains, they moved fast along the valleys in terror-striking groups, while the earth shook underneath their feet. Each of them was armed to the teeth with a variety of deadly weapons.

The earless, noseless, widow, Surpanakha, with her bleeding face was walking in front of the entire force, eager to take revenge. She was leading them to the patch of green where she had met the brothers.

But, she spelt an inauspicious beginning for the campaign. hers was the bad omen for the expedition. A bleeding face, a widow, a defective—these are considered bad omens. Surpanakha was all three. The Rakshasas were not aware of the pros and cons of the proprieties of staring on a march towards the battlefield; they relied on their physical and material might, and their nefarious stratagems. It is for this very reason that they are always unable to stand before the might of Divine and Dharmic forces.

For, who can withstand the power generated by the observance of Dharma and the Grace of God? They never paid attention to Righteousness or Divinity; they concentrated all their energies and skills on equipping themselves with physical might. Proud of their weapons, their wickedness and their muscles they strode forward into the forest, blowing aloud their trumpets, roaring like lions, bellowing like wild elephants, yelling about their exploits and gyrating wildly in their tribal dances. They seldom realised that their onslaught was comparable only to the onslaught of a sparrow on an eagle!

Strange Fascination

From a distance, Surpanakha pointed out to her brothers the hermitage where Rama was. To arouse the ogres into a final frenzy, the army shouted, in unison, "Kill, catch, murder, flay," and ran forward. When they approached the hermitage, the brothers challenged Rama, crying out at the top of their voices, "O Most wicked, O Most Unfortunate! You dared deform our sister, did you? Now, try if you can to save your life from extinction!"

Rama was already aware of their approach; he directed Lakshmana to keep Sita away, in a cave, and be on guard. "Do not worry about me in the least; nothing ill can ever happen to me," Rama said. Lakshmana knew the might of Rama and so, he obeyed implicitly. He had no doubt at all about Rama's victory. He led Sita into the cave and stayed there itself, with his bow and arrow ready for any emergency.

Rama stood before the hermitage, a smile lighting up his face and his Kodanda bow, well stringed, ready for the fray. Rama passed his hands gently over the matted hair on his head; at this, the ogres saw billions of blinding flashes emanating from the crown of hair. His arms appeared to their eyes as huge multifaced serpents. As a lion glares at an elephant, and bares its teeth relishing the victory that was already assured, Rama the Lion, stood defiant and terrible before the pack of frightened elephants. The cries, "Here is the person who deformed our sister." "Hold him" "Catch him", "Kill him", rose over the tumult. But, no one dared come forward to put that cry into action. However much they were prodded and encouraged, not one of them could muster enough courage to approach Rama.

The curses and cries of the ogres filled the forest, and wild animals in panic ran helter-skelter, seeking shelter. A few ran into the cave where Sita was; Lakshmana sympathised with their agony, and allowed them in, so that they might rid themselves of fear and anxiety. He gave them refuge and welcomed them in. For, he knew that they were in dire distress.

The ogres who surrounded Rama were so overcome by His beauty and charm that they did nothing but stare at the glory and the splendour; many revelled in descriptions of his grace; many were lost in admiration and appreciation; all were bound to Rama through Love and Reverence. No one of them could or did raise a weapon against him, or cast an angry look!

Surpanakha too joined in the praise. She said to Khara and Dushana, who were standing wonder-struck near her, "Brothers! What incomparable beauty is standing before us! I have never seen till now such charm, such grace, such pure harmony, such melodious physique. Do not kill him; but, catch him just as he is and present him to me."

The brothers too were similarly entranced. They replied, "Sister! We too have never set eyes on such an embodiment of beauty. The nearer we approach him, the faster he binds himself to us; we get more closely attached to him; we are fascinated by his charm. We do not have even an iota of anger or hatred towards him. The longer we look upon him, the more profuse the joy that wells up within us. Perhaps, it is this feeling that is called Ananda by the sages living here."

Khara did not like to converse with Rama, himself; so, he sent a messenger to him, to find out direct from him, who he was, what his name was, where he came from, why he entered the forest and took residence therein, etc.

The messenger neared Rama and asked him the questions he was directed to place before Rama. Rama smiled at this behaviour. He said, "Listen, fellow! I am a Kshatriya, come into this forest to hunt wild animals like your master. I am not afraid even of the God of Death. If you feel you have the capacity, come, give me battle and win. Or, else, return home, every one of you, and save yourselves from destruction. I shall not kill those who run away from the field. This statement was carried by him back into the camp of Khara and Dushana, and it was related to him correctly. At this, the brothers took up their arms, the spears, axes, pestles, bows and arrows, and yelled until the skies were booming with the echo. They showered their missiles upon Rama. Rama cut all of them into pieces with a single arrow from his bow. Other arrows Righted amongst them by Rama did as much havoc as fire or lightening could do. The ogres retreated before the onslaught, crying out in pain, "O Mother," "O Father," "Alas" "Save us" and so on, in sheer agony of sorrow and despair.

Killed One Another

Seeing them fleeing, Khara, Dushana and their youngest brother, Trisira, called out, "Rakshasas! Do not flee from the flight. Whoever is found running away, will be killed on the spot, by our own soldiers." At this, they planned within themselves, and said, "Well! It is far better to die at Rama's hand, than anywhere outside his Presence, by some one else."

So, they came back to their ranks and moved forward towards the place where Rama stood. But, they were in no mood to give battle. They were so fascinated by the personal charm and splendour of Rama that they stood entranced gazing at the Divine Beauty.

Meanwhile, Rama let loose the arrow called Sammohana, which had the effect of deluding the enemy and confounding them. As a result, each soldier saw his neighbour as the person he had been deputed to destroy, namely, Rama. Khara and Dushana had exhorted them to kill Rama, and so, each one fell upon the other, shouting, "Rama is here," "Here is Rama"; they killed each other in great glee. The entire place was clustered with the severed limbs of the ogres. Blood flowed in streams through the forest. Vultures and crows flocked around, eager to fill themselves with the carrion. Fourteen thousand ogres faced one person on that day in that field! The ogres died, every one of them, crying, "Rama," "Rama" when they fell. Khara and Dushana too died along with their loyal henchmen.

The Vision of Sages

The ascetics and sages who witnessed this scene of terror realised the unique valour of Rama and felt happy that the end of Ravana too was certain at the hands of this redoubtable hero. They were confirmed in their belief that Rama was the Almighty Providence who had come to wipe out from the face of the earth the entire race of ogres or Rakshasas, and thereby ensure the peace and prosperity of mankind.

As soon as the fierce engagement ended, Sita and Lakshmana came near Rama and prostrated before him; Rama raised Lakshmana gently from the ground and described to him the fate of the

fourteen thousands and their maters, during the battle that lasted barely half an hour. He detailed the incidents with evident joy and interspersed the narration with many a smile and chuckle. Meanwhile, the eyes of Sita were roaming over the body of Rama in order to assure themselves that he was unhurt, and had not suffered even a scratch.

The next day, groups of ascetics and sages with their disciples and pupils visited the Panchavati Ashram of Rama, for they had heard of the destruction of the ogre army, achieved single-handedly by the Prince from Ayodhya. They extolled Rama for his bravery and bowmanship.

Some among them who had acquired the power of forward vision approached Rama in all humility and said, "O Master! You have to be vigilant and alert in the coming days. The Rakshasas are opposed to all limitations and regulations that justice and uprightness impose. Their daily routine is to cause harm to all and sundry. Their highest goal is to fulfill their selfish desires. They do not care how they fulfill them and by what means.

They have an elder brother named Ravana who possesses vastly greater powers. His army is many millions strong. This termagant sister will certainly go to him and bewail her fate. And, he won't desist from, taking up her cause and trying to wreak vengeance on those who disfigured her.

Thus they forewarned Rama and Lakshmana, giving them such information as they had with them. Rama listened to them with smile playing on his face. He said, "Yes. Yes. I am not unaware of this. I have come on this particular mission." He nodded his head, as if he was eagerly looking forward to the happy event of the encounter with Ravana himself. But, he did not speak more; he sat as if he was innocent of any knowledge of the future.

He turned his eyes to Lakshmana, and with a twinkle in the eye, he told him, "You heard it, didn't you?" Turning to the sages, Rama said, "Please do not become anxious or worried. I am prepared to meet all situations." They were consoled and comforted by that assurance and promise; Rama instilled faith and courage into them, and allowed them to return to their hermitages, confident that they can continue their studies and practices in peace and tranquility undisturbed by the Rakshasa hordes.

On To Lanka

As the sages foretold, Surpanakha lost no time to appear suddenly before her brother, Ravana, rending the air with her weeping. Hearing it the Rakshasas of Lanka were frightened that some calamity had overtaken their land; they came out into the streets and started discussing in groups what the reason could possibly be. Surpanakha barged into the Audience Hall of Ravana, the Rakshasa Emperor, and spouted angry invectives, to the astonishment and anxiety of every one present.

Her appearance was monstrous, her body was covered with blood, her words were poisoned by anger. Ravana understood that someone had inflicted great injury on her. Ravana was shocked at her plight. He roared from his throne, "Sister! Tell us in full what happened."

Surpanakha replied, "Brother! If you are a genuine Rakshasa, if the super-human powers gained by you after years of asceticism are real, then, come, the moment has arrived, to parade your valour, your courage, and your heroism. Arise! You are ignoring the calamities that await you, and let things go by, lost in the intoxication that drink provides.

You have paid no attention to events that are taking place at Panchavati: who has come there, for what purpose, and for what task are they born. Princes determined to destroy the Rakshasas have entered the Dandaka Forest. They are felling to the ground lakhs of Rakshasa soldiers. They have cut to pieces the brothers, Khara and Dushana. They have wiped out of existence, in the wink of an eye, thousands launched against them.

Their heroism is beyond description, their personal beauty—Ah!" Here, Surpanakha halted and stood silent, contemplating the splendour that had enraptured her.

Hearing her story, Ravana became uncontrollably furious. He gnashed his teeth; he slapped his thighs as if he was in a burst of challenge. "What? Did those vile persons kill Khara and Dushana? Perhaps, they did not know my name, that I am behind them as support. Perhaps, they have not heard of my might and vengefulness.

Ravana continued to boast aloud, retailing to the people present, his exploits. Surpanakha interrupted him, saying, "O Mass of Wickedness! When your arch-enemy is dancing on your forehead, you are sitting here like a coward, extolling yourself and your invincibility! This is no sign of an emperor worthy of his throne. Perhaps, you do not know that sanyasins are ruined by the company they keep, emperors are ruined by the ministers they employ, wisdom is ruined by desire for appreciation, and the sense of shame is destroyed by imbibing drink. Well, brother! Do not neglect fire, illness, an enemy, a snake, and a sin on the ground that each is small and insignificant, at present. When they grow big, they are bound to inflict great harm. Therefore, hasten; do not hesitate."

Divine Charm

These words of Surpanakha poured the poison of hatred into the ears of Ravana. At this, Kumbhakarana, the other brother who was present, asked Surpanakha with a smile on his lips, "Sister! Who plucked out your ears and nose?" With a loud wail, she replied, "Alas! This wicked deed was done by those very Princes."

Ravana then consoled her, to some extent; he then asked her, "Sister! The nose is on the face; the ears are on the sides of the face. They cannot be sliced at one stroke. Now, tell me, were you sleeping soundly, when they cut them off? This is indeed surprising." The people present also wondered how it could have happened.

Surpanakha replied, "Brother! I lost all awareness of my body, why, of the region where I was, when their soft sweet hands touched me. When my eyes were drinking the charm of their beautiful faces, I was not conscious of what they sliced or cut. The very sight of these Princes rendered me so entranced that I lost all awareness of myself and the surroundings.

What shall I say of the ecstasy I derived by conversing with them! They bubble over always with joyful smiles; they know no other attitude or reaction. Even masculine hearts will surely be fascinated by their charm. They are really enrapturing representations of the God of Love. I have never so far set eyes on such beauty. Fie upon our Rakshasa prowess, our vile stratagems, our abnormal figures, own ugly appearance! We are indeed disgusting. Look upon them but once; you will swear I am right. Why? Khara and Dushana, who died in the battle they sought, were reluctant to fight with them. They were protesting and pleading with me "How can we feel enmity and fall upon these embodiments of auspiciousness and acmes of beauty?" they asked. The courtiers and ministers assembled in the Hall listened to this description with awe and delight.

The Inner Urge

Her words confounded even Ravana. The picture of Rama that she drew was something that gave him great joy and peace, when he contemplated on it. Deep within him, he felt an urge to cast eyes on that inspiring embodiment of divine charm. As he listened to his sister, the anger that had raised its hoods within his heart slowly slithered away. He decided to investigate calmly what really happened at Panchavati.

So, he addressed his sister, thus: "Sister! Tell me, do these two brothers live at Panchavati all alone? Or, are there any others with them?" Have they no followers, companions or courtiers?" Surpanakha replied, "No. They have no band of bodyguards or kinsmen or warriors. The elder of the two, named Rama has a woman, who is endowed with superlative beauty. She is even more charming than they; she is the very Goddess of Love, in human form. The two brothers are resident at Panchavati, with this woman; they roam about freely and without fear in the forest glades and valleys. In fact, I have never so far set eyes on such perfect feminine beauty; the like of her does not exist on heaven or earth."

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness

(To be continued)

The Labyrinth

The real and the unreal (that appears to the ignorant as real,) are not two distinct things; one is the absence of the other, that is all. The `absence' of reality cannot be an `unreal thing'. The absence of light cannot be raised to the level of a distinct thing called `darkness'. There is only One; it appears as two. In order to explain this, Brahmasri Mudigonda Pichayya Sastri gave a good example. He spoke of a red-hot cinder, which burns the-hand, since fire has entered into the piece of coal. So too, when the ego enters the Jiva, the ego develops attributes and appears many-faced.

But, just inquire, how the coal itself came into being. That too was a result of fire! The Jiva itself was manifested since the feeling of Aham or ego arose in the Nirguna Brahman, the attributeless, desireless Universal.

The Sastry also spoke of the difficulties involved in releasing the Jiva from the clutches of the ego. He said it is like separating the heat from the red-hot cinder; it has become part and parcel of the coal. But, by the process of cooling, the coal can again rid itself of the heat that in-formed every particle of its substance.

He called `life', a labyrinth, from which few can escape, though all have entered it easily! He quoted the Mahabharata episode where Drona, the teacher of the clans in the art of warfare (also called Kumbhaja, born in pot) had arrayed the Kaurava troops as a labyrinth on the battle-field of Kurukshetra; Drona challenged the teenage son of Arjuna, Abhimanyu by name, to come into the Padmavyuha (labyrinth of the lotus shape) and fight his way out, if he dared. His father Arjuna was not present in camp; his wife was enceinte at that time and, so, as the Sastras declare, the prospective father had no right to gamble with his life. When the young warrior mentioned the challenge, his mother expostulated with him, and told him that he could well excuse himself from the ordeal.

The reasons she gave him for this withdrawal have a deeper meaning. The labyrinth was constructed by Kumbhaja, which means, one born in Intelligence, Brahman Itself, for, Brahman is Prajnanam, or the Supreme Wisdom. How can a person break through the labyrinth devised by Brahman, when he is overwhelmed by the egoistic pulls: consideration for his wife and his child-in-the-womb and the absence of his father? These two excuses are the symbols of I and Mine.

The Mahabharata declares that Arjuna alone had the capacity and skill to break the Padmavyuha (that is to say, the labyrinth of birth and death, the tangle of desires and fulfillments). Why? Because, Arjuna, (the word means, pure, unblemished, immaculate) was free from the ego and so could foil its stratagems. Through the pure mind alone can the chain be broken, the tangle cleared. The pure mind reflects the Reality clearly, the Reality or God that is the basis of oneself as well as the objective world. Chitta-Suddhi brings about Jnana-Siddhi; the pure mind confers the boon of wisdom. God is immanent in every particle in the Universe; the clear vision can experience Him everywhere at all times.

That vision gives immeasurable, inexpressible Bliss. Of what avail is all the loud chanting, praying, singing and wailing, when the heart is soiled by egoism and selfish desire? A person behaving so might be taken by ordinary mortals as highly devoted to the spiritual path, but, deep in his disturbed consciousness, he will be tormented by anxiety and fear. On the other hand, a person might appear poor, distressed, and depressed to ordinary mortals; he might not have the exterior demonstration of devotion. But, God would be ever installed in his heart, guiding and guarding him. He might be doing all acts as acts of worship to the God residing in his heart.

The bird in this physical cage wherein man is imprisoned is always, from the moment of birth to the moment of death, chirping `Soham' `Soham', declaring that the Jiva and Deva are ONE. It is this affirmation that is the justification for the gift of life. When that chirp does not emanate from the breath, the body is a corpse, savam! When it manifests, illuminates and fills the cage with the Divine Fragrance, it is a tabernacle, Sivam! Identify yourselves with the mantra the bird chirps, the breath repeats. You might forget any other Sadhana or any other duty to yourself—but, the breath never, even for a moment forget this Sadhana—reminding you of your innate

Reality, namely, Sa (He). I am He; He is I... that is the refrain of every breath. What deeper instruction, what greater inspiration do you require, to keep you on an even keel of equanimity?

A devotee once lamented, saying, "O God! You have forgotten me!" This is never possible; it is the devotee who forgets that he is the child of God, that God is his never failing friend and guide. God is all-knowledge, all-power, all-mercy. Faith in God has to be constant, firm in the face of every challenge by fate or fortune. On one occasion, the deer of the forest held a huge conference to consider their plight. The leader of the vast multitude that had assembled counselled courage and unity; he said that it was a real shame that mean creatures like dogs, who were not as fleet as they and had no horns could put terror in their hearts. At this, the vast congregation unanimously resolved with loud acclamation that no deer shall henceforth turn its back when dogs pursue them, should stand their ground and give a fight to the finish. While the echoes of the acclamation were still booming through the forest, the distant barking of a solitary dog was heard by the quick ears of the deer, and, in an instant, not a single deer could be spotted where thousands had assembled to pass that resolution. They dissolved into thin air, and denied their own resolution. This is verbal hypocrisy, which is fatal to spiritual progress, and ruinous in any field.

The fault lies in the belief that things happen as a result of human effort and planning, human intelligence and care. No one can succeed in any venture without Divine Grace. It is a God's plan that is being worked out through man but, man prides himself that he has worked for it.

This reminds me of a story. A poor simple villager made his first rail journey. He purchased a ticket and entered a compartment; he found it occupied already by a few passengers who had kept their boxes, bundles and odd items of luggage on the racks or under the benches on which they sat. They were unconcerned with the extra effort that the engine would have to make to drag along those boxes and bundles. How cruel of them, the villager thought. The engine has to pull along their weights, and now they are imposing on the train, this additional burden too. He for one was not going to inflict this extra trouble on the poor thing; so, he kept his box on his shoulder and his bundle on his head. He believed that he was carrying his box and bundle along, and not the engine. Most people behave in the same silly fashion, ignoring the fact that God is All; man is but an instrument in His hands, for the execution of His Plan. Faith in this fact is the key to Peace and Joy.

—*Baba—Prasanthi Nilayam: 23-10-74*

Baba has come at a time when Hinduism was shredding into tatters, and a morality in the name of technological and scientific culture is eclipsing the glory of the world's spiritual heritage. During these years of His mysterious and miraculous life, He has influenced millions of doubters disbelievers and seekers, and made them all shed their ego, in order to hold fast to the fundamental values of Indian culture, which are truly universal in outlook.

Rtha, Sathya, Yajna, Tapas: Faith in God who informs the Cosmic Order; Truth, which means Accord between thought, word and deed; Dedication, which offers all moments of life as offerings to God; Sublimation, which purifies the body, and mind and transmutes instincts,

impulses, passions and emotions into beauty and goodness; these, regardless of formulae or doctrine, is Dharma, according to Baba.

These values, eternal as they are, are being emphasised and strengthened by Baba, for the benefit of all mankind.

—From 'Premier', Bhopal

Three Minutes Late

After a triumphant tour as Bhagavan's ambassador to the Sathya Sai Centres of America. Dr. V. K. Gokak's return flight to India was scheduled by his California hostess, Mrs. Elsie Cowan for an 8:30 a.m. departure on Oct. 7, 1974. But, for the first time in his life he was late and the plane departed minus one distinguished Indian passenger, namely Dr. Gokak.

How could this be? Could not Baba have delayed the plane for three minutes? Or, could He not have prodded Hislop, the driver of Dr. Gokak's car to speed up a bit and thus gain a few minutes on the drive from Mrs. Cowan's home to the airport? Or, on the other hand, could it be possible that Baba made obstacles in the way of the driver so as to make him slow and late?

Some would say that missing the plane was just an accident. But what is an accident and why does an accident happen?

Although it is true that Hislop resisted Mrs. Cowan's proposal to depart Santa Ana at 5:30 a.m. with the argument that it was far too early for a short drive of 35 miles, nevertheless there still should have been plenty of time. Even though Hislop and Dr. Gokak did not wake up when they should have, Mrs. Cowan and Mrs. Hislop were up bright and early with coffee ready, and the party did get away by 6 a.m.

The trip started out fine and for the first 15 minutes the car sped along fast and easy. But then the trouble started. First, the traffic got thick as glue and the highway became almost like a huge parking lot filled with cars that were either stationary or inching along only a few feet at a time. The minutes and half hours passed by, but the car made little progress and every time the watch was consulted the temperature of the passengers rose another few degrees. The driver berated himself for not heeding Mrs. Cowan's 5:30 a.m. starting schedule and although the passengers were polite it was easy to see that they had the same thought as the driver!

The slow pace became intolerable, and it was decided to leave the 8-lane highway and; take a chance on unknown side streets. What a relief it was to get off the highway! The first side street was almost empty and the spirits of the passengers rose along with the higher speed of the car. Surely now the airport would be gained in time to get Dr. Gokak on his plane.

But no sooner the sigh of relief than a new, never-imagined obstacle arose. First, earth-bound highway vehicles had stopped all progress. And now the heavens themselves moved swiftly to

maintain the level of resistance to the car's progress. Southern California is a desert—dry, dry, dry. September-October is the dry brush-fire season. Yet, despite the season, it suddenly started to rain, not just rain—it poured down in torrents from a canopy of thunder and myriad lightening flashes. The roads quickly became dangerously slippery and the opportunity to drive fast was immediately lost.

Still, at least the car was moving—but not for long! Now the inner city was reached and with it came the inner-city traffic-light system. One block of driving and then a red stop-signal. Another block and another stop-signal. Two minutes lost at each stop-signal; miles still to go and only twenty minutes to plane departure.

By now even the calm Dr. Gokak was urging. "Speed up! Speed up!" And Mrs. Cowan urged, "Make the signals, I'll pay the fine if a policeman stops you." The fifth passenger, a delegate from Hawaii warned, "Talking to a policeman will take longer than the traffic signal."

But the driver, throwing caution to the wind, did step on the gas and the last few miles of driving behaviour was surely no model for a law-abiding citizen to copy!

At last the airport was reached. Dr. Gokak and Hislop, leaving the parking of the car to the others, took the luggage and ran. Porters at the outer doors said, "Stop. You cannot make it." The ticket officer, however, shouted encouragement, "Run! You may make it—even though I doubt it."

As soon as the boarding ramp was sighted, the runners shouted, "Wait! We are here!" But the officers at the gate shook their heads, "Too late. The plane moved away from its mooring three minutes ago."

Well, that was that; Dr. Gokak turned to the information office beside the ramp and asked the time of the next departure. Armed with this information, he and Hislop made their way towards the passenger lounge to sit down and wait for the others of the party to arrive and ask, "What happened?"

At this moment, a man came running up and, somewhat out of breath from hurry, said, "Oh, Dr. Gokak, you are here. Thank goodness I caught you before you got on your plane. I have a letter from me to Baba and I prayed to Him that I would be able to make it to the airport in time to give you my letter to give to Baba. Baba helped me. The highway traffic was terrible, but Baba must have cleared the way because I have got to you in time!"

Dr. Gokak and Hislop looked at each other and then broke into laughter. Dr Gokak said, "Well, here is the reason we missed the plane; here is the man responsible for it!"

The newly arrived devotee started to ask questions. By this time the other three members of the party arrived after having parked the car and were told the story. One person said, "What Baba will not do in order to please a devotee." And someone else responded, "Yes, Baba will go to any length for a devotee, even to the extent of delaying other devotees!" This remark caused another round of laughter. Then everyone went to the airport cafe for breakfast and has a very pleasant

and enjoyable visit talking of the glories of Baba and of His Leelas. At 10 a.m. the next plane was ready for departure and Dr. Gokak was wished an easy flight for his homeward trip to distant India.

—*Hislop*

Importance of Taal and Shruti in Bhajans

The most important and popular activity in the Sai Organisation is Bhajans, the musical recitation of the names of God, abiding by all the rules of Rhythm and Shruti, in order to make it pleasant and profitable.

Rhythm is the subconscious cycle of time-spacing. In music, depending on its nature, spacing of time is indicated by regular beats of drums or other musical instruments, or claps. Whether time-beats are loud or mute, the musical composition and its recitation can never appeal, if it is out of rhythm. Because rhythm is an excellence of nature itself, though we are not conscious of it always. Everything in Nature is rhythmic, with short or long intervals. This rhythm indicates the beginning and end of natural movements and the changing and repeating phases of natural things. The longest known rhythms in nature are the risings and settings of the Sun every day, the movements and phases of the Moon, the planets and other astronomical bodies, the changes in seasons etc. Irregular seasons cause havoc; so do irregular beats in music. In short, rhythm is God-created regular time-spacing which activates the world.

Time-sense is a subconscious feeling in all humans. Hence, when we sing bhajans, the `leaders' automatically know where to leave, and the `repeaters' where to start and leave again. In the absence of this natural gift of time-sense among the leaders and repeaters, the song will result in mental disturbance; the smooth concentration in bhajan is lost, the `Samadhi' is broken and the mental Image of the Lord created in everyone's mind is warped. Hence, the leaders who unfortunately have no time-sense, must practise and gain it or sing no bhajans at all, for others. Bhajan is nothing but a deep devotional Sadhana, a meditation on the Lord, on His form as described in that particular bhajan. I always visualise Baba as that form-when-ever I get an opportunity to sing, either as leader or repeater.

Still more important in Bhajan, and in all music, is the Shruti—the basic note. Shruti is the natural steady sound produced through the vocal organ, each individual having his own frequency. Actually the seat of our voice is the heart—from where the OM or the Pranava vibrations emanate. In other words, the Shruti is the Omkar itself. And as Baba has always told us, the seat of Divinity too is the heart. Thus we can safely infer that each one's individual Shruti emanates right from the Creator residing in every one's heart. So, if the bhajan singer knows this and produces the vibrations of his individual Shruti, in perfect harmony with it, his singing is bound to vibrate the chords of his heart, and the heart of the Creator who dwells therein.

Every individual singer does not have the same pitch of voice. Depending on the voice-producing chords in the throat, the pitch differs. So does the voice. Hence the basic note or Shruti for different singers for the same song may not be the same; this is not often understood. The easiest way to find out one's Shruti is to take the help of a harmonium. For convenience, this instrument has in each octave (or the Saptak as known to us) twelve keys or sound-producing reeds reproducing various frequencies. Each one is a Shruti by itself. There are three or more such octaves in base, medium and higher pitch. Out of these twelve broad basic Shrutis some reed always equates the pitch of the voice of the singer. That exactly is his Shruti.

Many singers have not identified this; so they are not able to direct person who may be accompanying on the harmonium; the bhajan then becomes out of tune and very embarrassing to the ear. Normally a good singer can cover all the following keys of the Saptak starting with his Shruti. Trained voices cover many more both, from prior and following octaves.

With this Shruti as his basic note, an individual can successfully produce the other related vocal notes in a harmonious way. If a singer sings in his own natural Shruti without straining his vocal chords, he can easily produce the various melodious raagas or their combinations, on which they are based. In fact they are the natural vibrations of his basic note or Shruti, which is nothing but his pitch on OMKAR. So with the natural vibrations of Omkar in his own heart—the seat of Atman—its chords are bound to reverberate and respond in harmony—a Divine harmony, indeed. This done, one who sings with devotion, love and emotion, helps not only himself but others who listen to hits while singing in enjoying a communion or Samadhi with the Indweller—the Lord Himself. To achieve this one must forget everything else excepting his own Shruti. So much so, that his own voice merges with it, and gives him a thrill of real communion.

One who cannot do this, actually deprives himself and others of this Divine Joy, the great ecstasy, depriving them of the very purpose of Namasmarana. Hence those who cannot sing in tune and rhythm had better keep themselves free from public `bhajan singing'.

Singing on an unnatural high pitch disturbs the singer and the listeners. The voice at a high pitch needs lot of straining, making it emotionless and mechanical. Natural singing on one's own Shruti easily produces notes that are delicate and graceful and vibrations which appeal to the singer himself, to the listeners and above all to the Indweller Himself. Low voiced singing is easily boosted and made audible with mike and loudspeaker arrangements, carrying it to every nook and corner of the gathering. So why should we sing in an unnaturally high pitch?

As regards speed of singing, fast bhajans go well with naturally high-pitched voices, but those with heavy and broad voices appeal more with slow-moving bhajans. Both are good and need proper selection and placement of order. Slow songs shine more in the beginning and faster ones later. The `repeaters' too are very important. Those who sing the chorus must match the Shruti of the leader. Participants have to be selected on this basis for different songs with different Shrutis. This will make the bhajans pleasing. All these factors help to make the public bhajans an enjoyable tonic for the ears and the heart. The communion with the Indweller becomes possible if all sing sincerely and well, with love, devotion and emotion, and in a natural graceful way.

—*R. S. Junnerker*

Lord! For Your Summons! Tarry

Something beckons me from Yonder,
Where millions surge in unison of ardour,
For Peace and Bliss and a glimpse of The Divine;
From where flows the Balm of Love in torrents sublime,

And bathes the Souls that are scorched in the flame of agony,
Where, washed of blemishes, illumined, man reaches Destiny.

From where walk back the wretched, the afflicted and the maimed,
In stately gait, with hopes renewed; not disdained!
Where the Dead come to life, forfeiting pride,
Fall at The Lotus Feet, surrender, in Pace to abide!
Where millions throng from all the Globe,
Forget their levels and mingle in the soothing warmth of Love.

Here men of all creeds and colour are closer,
Become brothers and share the modest meal and shelter—
With no murmur, but Joy Supreme, sit together in peace and order,
Sing His Glory night and day and fill the air with fervour.
To each He grants desire, but reserve
The highest gifts for those who want not, but deserve.

There in sanctified setting and wondrous splendour,
He revives the Glorious Past, in Dasara Days,
When the hoary priests sing Holy Hymns
When not the simple folks only but the shrewd and cold,
Are held spell-bound, struck by awe;
Succumb, submit and stay to pray.

That is The Abode of Peace, —Prasanthi Nilayam,
It beckons me from yonder, the Abode of BRAHMAN!
There presides my Lord, THE CAUSE, Sri Sai, Sathyanarayana.
In trepidation and lingering hope, I tarry for His Summon

Lord, make it soon,
Grant me the boon,
I pray,
Don't cast me away
As a devotee love astray!

*Rabindra Nath Basu,
53/1 Motilal Nehru Road, Calcutta -29
November 14, 1973*

Mind-Stuff

It is a vain task to divide the things of the world into good and bad and it is also sacrilegious!
For, when all are the products of His Will, how can any thing be extolled or condemned?
Besides, what is good for one may be bad for another; what is good at sometime may be bad at
another time; what is good in small quantities may be bad in large quantities. The crow relishes
the bitter neem fruit; the kakoo eats the tender leaves of the mango tree. People find joy and

satisfaction in a variety of things and experiences, of the most contradictory character. Therefore, one can only infer that it is the mind of each that directs one to seek this thing as good, and avoid that other thing as bad.

Philosophy tells us that the mind decides, not merely the goodness or badness of a thing or experience, it creates all things and all experiences. Without the mind, there can be no object or feeling or emotion. No mind, no matter! The mind revels in name and form; it imposes name and form and thus, helps in creating things and experiences. It cannot contact or operate upon anything without name and form. That is why the mind is helpless when meditation has to be done on the, nameless and the formless. It clings to name-form, ever. Mental pictures have concretised themselves as objects and as ideas; so, the Srutis declare, "Yad bhavam, thad bhavathi," as the mind operates, so, the matter is decided.

But, God is beyond Name and Form; He is all names and all forms and yet, incomprehensible and mysterious. How then can God be apprehended by means of Dhyana on Name-Form? This is a legitimate question. It can be answered by means of a smile. Water drowns man; water also helps him swim. It draws in and it buoys up—both. Only, man has to learn the process by which he can keep afloat. In the same way, name and form which appear to be limitations and handicaps can serve as instruments and helps to transcend Name-Form and realise God.

The realisation of God instills Ananda, which has no form, but only a man-made name. It springs and wells up in the heart, and pervades the entire body and expresses itself in the face. The face is the index of inner bliss. Sadness, anxiety, fear, hope, determination, doubt—all are reflected on the face, and can be easily spotted.

The mind can remain unaffected by the storms of emotion only by bending to the yoke of Intellect, or Buddhi. It should escape from the grips of the senses and yield to the reins of the reasoning faculty, and obey unquestioningly its dictates. The senses are inert, so long as the self keeps away from inducing the mind to accept the information submitted by them.

This mike before me helps those who are sitting all over this vast Auditorium to listen clearly to my words. But, the mike and the loudspeakers are inert metallic things. A few minutes ago, the College student made a speech which was interrupted for a few minutes, since the electric current failed. Without that current activating them, they cannot work at all.

The eye that sees is inert; all objects 'seen' are inert; only the seer is 'intelligent'. And, the current of intelligence is supplied by the Atma, which is your Reality. When the current does not activate, the eye might look on but it does not see; the ear might be hearing, but, the hearer does not react or recognise. For, the mind is elsewhere. It has to function with the help of the Divine Consciousness within.

The mind is like a fragrant flower; it emits fragrance whether it is held in the right hand or in the left, whether the person who holds it is good or bad. It walks blindly along, irrespective of the lie of the land. It is blind; and so, someone has to take it on tow. When you invite ten blind people for dinner, you have to lay twenty plates! For, each blind person brings with him, and has

to so bring with him, a guide who can lead him to your home. So, the mind too must have a guide who knows the way, the obstacles, the shoals and ferries.

The mind has to be watched vigilantly, and warned against its own tricks. It is a clever actor, embroiling you in many a close adventure. The mind is like the reverend old gentlemen who appeared alternately in the houses of the bridegroom's party and the bride's party during a marriage festival and issued orders to all and sundry, which were honoured by both, since each party thought he was a person with authority coming from the other party! His very pomposity aroused the suspicions of both, before long, and when they jointly sought him and asked him who he was, he took to his heels and made himself scarce. The mind too is just like this gentleman. Catch it and inquire wherefrom he secured credentials to order you about; it will disappear in no time!

The only method which you can adopt to escape from the coils of the mind is the cultivation of pure intelligence. This is the sum and substance of all spiritual discipline. And, the intelligence gets cleansed of all partiality and prejudice, hatred and greed, only by the adoration of God through Love poured out to all the beings created by God and standing witness to His Glory and Beauty. Share Love with all; earn the treasure of Love, store it in your heart and invite all to share in it. When you try to distribute the property earned by your grandfather or father, legal, moral, economic and practical obstacles will stand up before you. But, when you are distributing your `self-earned' property, nothing legal or otherwise can stand in the way.

Remember the mind is a very talkative thing; it can never keep quiet even for a second. You have been listening to me since more than an hour and perhaps you are under the impression that your mind has been quiet all that time. No. The mind has been holding a conversation with itself, when it is supposed to be silent! Give it perpetual tasks. Ask it, (as some Rishi did to a demon who acted as his servant but threatened to devour him the moment he did not have any task allotted to him) ask it to climb a pillar and slide down it, whenever it has no other work. The pillar is Soham, (I am That), a mantra that the breath is repeating from birth to death, `So' when you inhale and `ham' when you exhale. Let it repeat Soham all the time.

The Sathya Sai Organisation has been established with this goal in view—to provide sacred tasks for every moment of wakeful life, to make people conscious of the vagaries and vanities of the mind and teach them the processes of disintegrating the mind and establishing the reign of the Pure Intellect, by which alone the One behind all this multiplicity can be realised as the only Reality.

—*Baba's Discourse: 23-11-74*

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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The Growing Lust

Listening to the words of Surpanakha, the lustful passion of Ravana was aroused, and he became the bond slave of ruinous foolishness; he wriggled out of the feelings of hatred towards

Rama and Lakshmana and started planning stratagems to bring Sita away from their presence. He sunk in thought and plunged into anxiety and restlessness, without sleep or any effort to quench hunger or thirst. Such was the fascination that haunted him.

While Surpanakha was describing the beauty and splendour of the brothers, Rama and Lakshmana, there was one person in the Audience Hall, Vibhishana, who gave ear to the story with joy in the heart and tears in his eyes. He installed those Divinely charming figures in the temple of his heart and yearned deeply for the chance of being in their Presence and falling at their feet. "Will they receive me? Can I be saved? Do I deserve to be blessed by them?" he asked himself. He told himself, "They are Divine, for certain. They have appeared on earth in human form, in order to destroy the wicked brood of Rakshasas." He offered in his mind all that he had and was; he began living in the constant meditation of their glory from that very moment:

Ravana had fallen from the Yogic heights he had reached in his previous births and so he was roaming about as a Rakshasa; really speaking, he was a great devotee of God. He was aware, deep within his consciousness, of the Universal Absolute, named Narayana. He was not unaware of the fact that Rama was Narayana Himself come in human form in order to confer joy and peace on the gods and in order to destroy all traces of demonic wickedness on earth.

However, since there was no other route for him to reach Narayana, he had to cultivate wanton wickedness and violent hatred, and invite Rama to kill him by His arrow; of course, this might be called a Tamasic type of devotion, stupid and infamous. But, his inner aim was to cross the ocean of Birth-death, through that act of self-abnegation and surrender to Narayana.

Demonic Urge

Meanwhile, since his body and mind had grown out of Rakshasa urges and developed with the help of demonic sustenance, he ignored the Divine in himself, which was calling for merger in the Divine Rama. He relied on the Rakshasa nature and awakened its sinister possibilities, and powers. The Divine and the Demonic facts of his personality rose and sank alternately, moment after moment. So, he convinced himself at last that the two brothers were Royal Princes and no more; he resolved that he would kill them both and bring away the lady, of whom he was so enamoured. He promised his sister that he would avenge the injury inflicted on her, in that manner.

Maricha, the Accomplice

He announced that the Assembly was adjourned; he ordered his aides to bring to the Audience Hall the Imperial Chariot for his journey. He took his seat in the chariot with no companion beside him. He hurried to the 'sea-shore dwelling' of Maricha, and sat by his side, detailing to him the events that had happened. He ordered Maricha to play his part in the execution of his plan.

But, Maricha said that he had borne the brunt of the might of both Rama and Lakshmana, once already. He told Ravana that they are not of the common run of Princes; he advised him against such wild enterprises. He argued long and lovingly with Ravana, so that he might dissuade him. But, passion had made Ravana blind to the dictates of duty and morality. So, he threatened to punish Maricha, if he did not yield to his will. Maricha decided within himself that it was better

far to die at the hands of Rama than of the Rakshasa that Ravana was. He agreed to the proposal that Ravana laid before him, and got ready to play his part in the conspiracy.

The Strategy

Ravana proceeded to the Dandaka Forest, with Maricha following him close. On the way, Ravana explained to his companion the strategy he had fixed upon. He directed Maricha to transform himself, by means of his demonic powers, into a lovely golden deer. He wants him to frisk about, in that alluring form, before the hermitage where Rama, Sita and Lakshmana were. Maricha had to assent, since he had no way of escaping from his ire. Ravana told him, "Rama will try to capture you, and will follow you and you should lead him far into the distance, and from thence, you must yell in painful agony, O Sita, O Lakshmana, in a voice exactly like that of Rama." Then, keeping the chariot afar, both moved towards the hermitage.

The Hour

While this web was being woven, at the hermitage in Chitrakuta Valley, Sita Rama and Lakshmana felt that the moment of fulfillment of their task had come. Rama sent Lakshmana -to collect and bring tubers and fruits for the day. And, noting that the proper hour had come, he told Sita thus: "Companion! You know all. Both of us are aware why we have come on earth, and what our task is. That task is now calling us; we have to enter upon it, in right earnest now. Your nature and characteristics are noble and holy, beyond measure. We both have assumed these human bodies, through rites associated with the Divine Fire Principle. My body arose from the Offering brought out of the flames of the sacrificial Fire by the God Agni Himself. You rose from the earth that was furrowed by the sacred plough in order to consecrate it for a Fire-Altar, where a Yajna had to be performed. Our bodies are born in fire and are being sustained by the warmth of fire.

Therefore, Sita, deposit all your Divine attributes and splendour in Fire, and act as an ordinary human being hereafter. I too shall move and act as an ordinary human being, and exhibit sorrow and anxiety on your account, the pangs of separation and the pain of loneliness. The world would keep in mind only these common modes of behaviour, and take us as human. They will accept them as worldly conduct and natural reactions. Remember that the smallest act of ours has to be an ideal for the householders of the world. We have to hold forth models in the relationship between the husband and the wife; they have to be quite in consonance with the principles of Truth and Righteousness.

The Roles

Our activities have to be in conformity with the guidelines laid down in the Sastras, the spiritual texts. We have to shape our lives, in an exemplary manner, so that common men can be inspired thereby and prompted to follow the ideals elaborated therein. We have to enact this drama until the final consummation, namely, the destruction of Ravana and the Rakshasas.

Therefore, place your Divine Splendour in the keeping of the God of Fire, Agni, and move about as an ordinary human being caught up in the coils of Illusion, Maya. For, there can be no effect without a cause. We must consummate the effect, namely, the destruction of Ravana and the Rakshasa brood. So, we must manipulate a cause to justify it or bring it about. Ravana has a basic fault in his structure, namely, his lustful passion. We have to highlight it before the world.

So, we have to so prepare a situation that it would appear as if he kidnaps you in a fit of passion. The world has to realise that his 'dedication and devotion to God' are not of the highest order, for, of what use is that sense of surrender if it is tarnished by the craving for sensual pleasure and immoral yearnings? All activities and behaviour emanating from a consciousness that is not pure are trivial and tarnished; the devotion to God that is polluted by lust is as foul as dirt—these truths have to be emphasised now, for the benefit of mankind

The Lesson

It is also imperative to announce for the benefit of mankind that any spiritual sadhana or asceticism, or religious rite or ritual undertaken with the intention of gaining super-human powers are paltry and pernicious. We have to hold forth Ravana as an example and warning to mankind that however many divine rites and acts one may do, if one does not give up one's demonic passions and impulses, they add up to only one result; rendering time unholy and fallow.

Over and above all this, Sita, there is one overwhelming consideration we have to place before ourselves. There is a curse that has been pronounced on Ravana and he has also been assured of a means by which he could end its consequence. We have to see that the means is fulfilled. The beginning of his end has arrived.

Today or tomorrow, we have to be separated from each other. Of course, we are inseparable entities and nothing can keep us apart. Yet, we have to pretend that it has happened, in order to render the make believe effective. Go now, and deposit your Divine Form in the keeping of Agni (Fire); it is time for Lakshmana to return with the fruits and tubers. And, Ravana is ready with his perverted intelligence.

I have to inform you of another secret, too. You have to perform your part, in the destruction of the Rakshasas. Though you might be apparently under the surveillance of Ravana, since your Power is immanent in Fire, you will have to burn Lanka to ashes emerging from the Fire where your Self is dormant from now on. Lanka has to be turned to ashes, not by Fire, but, by you as Fire. And, Rama has to kill Ravana, that is the Divine Will. This truth has to be proclaimed.

This mystery is to be kept from Lakshmana also. He is our instrument in this endeavour. When this task is accomplished and we have to re-enter Ayodhya, I shall accept you again from the Fire where you reside. That act too I will transform into a lesson for the world.

"The drama starts now;" Rama said. Both Sita and Rama decided on their plan of action and awaited the unfoldment of Ravana's strategy.

The Drama

From that moment, every act and behaviour of Sita and Rama, —the pangs of separation, the gasps of anxiety, the signs of pain, the groans of grief—were gestures and reactions played while enacting the drama decided upon. They were not genuine at all. For, how can Sita and Rama ever be separated? Through their conduct, they only willed, to teach mankind some valuable lessons.

At this moment, Lakshmana made his entrance, with his hands full of fruits and other eatables. They partook of the simple meal and drank the cool limpid water of the river near by. Then, they sat, admiring the charming landscape and bringing to mind the atrocities of the Rakshasas which fouled the peaceful atmosphere of the forests. They talked exultingly about the sweetness and sanctity of sylvan life.

Not far from them, Ravana and Maricha were arguing how best to enter the hermitage to execute their nefarious design. Maricha was disgusted at the passion and perversity of Ravana; but, he did not have the courage to deny him his own complicity. He had no inclination to die at hands of such a wicked person; so, he accepted the role Ravana granted him and agreed to do as he wanted.

Maricha changed his form into a fascinating golden deer, a form that was certain to attract the admiration and attachment of Sita and Rama. He thought within himself: "Ah! What an auspicious day is this that has dawned! I am about to be blessed in a few moments with the vision of the three most charming individuals on earth! On me will fall the looks of Sita. And, then, ah, Rama will follow me, with bow and arrow in hand. Ah! How fortunate am I! I am the servant, who has to tread on the footsteps of Rama; but, my Master will follow me now. Of course, I know that I am engaged in a most heinous act; but, I am forced into it; I do not act according to my will. I am being forced into it, and so, I am free from sin."

"Whatever sin I have perpetrated, when Rama's arrow shot by Rama's hand strikes me, this artificial form will disappear; that will be my happy destiny. Can all people aspire for such an end? Can all achieve it? And, I will have another piece of good fortune. When I draw my last breath, my eyes will be fixed on Rama! That Divine Beauty will be in front of me; that sweet Name will be on my tongue! Ah! How fruitful has my life become! I do not find any one luckier than I."

Maricha dwelt in his mind on these sweet thoughts, as he walked slowly towards the hermitage. The all-knowing Rama and the all-knowing Sita were both awaiting his appearance.

The Golden Deer

The deer approached hesitatingly and with evident trepidation the precincts of the cottage. It fixed its looks on Sita and Rama and stood for a while; then it frisked and skipped a few paces and peering into a bush of creepers, it entered it out of sheer curiosity, only to come out of it in a trice, Sita, Rama and Lakshmana noticed its antics and admired its appearance; seeing that it had a golden skin, they decided that it was a strange species of deer. They noted its special characteristics and were fascinated by its charm. Sita said, "If only I could have this deer with me, I could spend time happily in its company. When you two are engaged in things concerning you alone, I could be happy playing with this unique pet. Please catch this bright little animal for me. Can you not fulfill this tiny wish of mine, so that I can entertain myself when alone, fondling it and watching it play about? Sita appealed thus, exhibiting great attachment to the mysterious deer.

Noticing this, Lakshmana rose from his seat, saying, "Mother! I shall get it for you." Rama stopped him. He knew that it will fall only into his hands. Lakshmana did not know the drama

that was being enacted, with this as the prologue. He said, "Lakshmana! It has to be caught, without inflicting any wound or injury. So, I have myself to pursue it and catch it. I have myself to fulfil this wish of Sita." At this, Lakshmana was silenced and he sat down, as directed by Rama.

Moreover, since the subsequent scenes of the drama were known to both Sita and Rama, Rama kept to himself, while he said, "Lakshmana! This forest is the dwelling place of Rakshasas. Remember what happened two days ago, when their leaders, Khara and Dushana fell upon us. Their kinsmen and comrades might come in force and attack us. So, it is necessary to have arrow on bow always and watch all the four quarters with utmost alertness. Guard Sita with great care. Do not leave Sita alone, under, any circumstance. This deer might escape me and flee into the distance. I have to catch it alive; so, it may take some time for me to accomplish this task. Or use your intelligence and physical prowess as suits the occasion, and save Sita from any danger that might threaten her, while I am away."

The Stalking

Rama then stalked the strange deer and went beyond sight. The deer did not cast its looks forward, but, ran fast with its head bent backwards its eyes cast on Rama, the pursuer! Seeing this behaviour, Rama was delighted. Rama knew that the deer was Maricha himself, his great devotee, who had experienced and realised the Rama Principle and the Rama Power. So Rama too fixed his eyes on the deer and followed its gait with great interest. The deer came within reach one moment, but it sprang afar with one leap, to attract Rama to a little more distance. Rama seemed to be enjoying this tantalising pursuit. But, after some time spent thus, Rama fitted an arrow on his bow and aiming at the deer, he released it straight on the target.

When the fatal arrow struck him, Maricha exclaimed in agony, "Ha! Sita! Ha! Lakshmana!" and collapsed on the ground.

The cry fell on the ears of Sita and Lakshmana. Even before the sound reached her, Sita said, "Lakshmana? Did you hear? That is the voice of your brother. He is calling you for help. Go, go immediately; do not delay." These Rakshasas are experts in magical transformations and tricks. They cause profuse calamities, changing their shapes and natures." She wanted that Lakshmana should proceed in haste to the spot from which the cry had come.

Lakshmana's No

Lakshmana was an intelligent person, used to discriminating and arriving at right conclusions. He was also a loyal adherent of the directions of his brother; he revered those orders, precious as his own breath. So, he said, "Mother! No calamity can ever happen to Rama. No Rakshasa, however crafty, can harm Rama. You have seen, haven't you, how he destroyed in a trice thousands of these very Rakshasas? Do not be anxious; muster courage and be calm. Rama will soon come back hale and hearty, into this hermitage."

Just then, the cry came again across the distance: "Ha! Sita! Ha! Lakshmana!" at this, Sita was even more agitated and confused. She said, "Lakshmana! Why is it that you are behaving so hard-heartedly? I do not understand your intentions. Go soon. Go and put an end to the trouble

into which your brother has fallen. Help him; go." She demonstrated her fear and anxiety in many ways and tried her best to persuade Lakshmana to leave her.

Of course, Sita knew quite well that Rama can never be touched by trouble. But, things have to happen as foundations for future events. She acted like an ordinary ignorant person affected by the cries. Lakshmana spoke assuringly in various ways; he pleaded piteously that he would not disobey his brother. Seeing that she cast aside all his arguments and appeals, Lakshmana said at last, "Mother! The Command of Rama is my very Life; I consider it as precious as my breath. Did you not hear Rama ordering me never to leave you unguarded, but, always to protect you? Therefore, I shall not move one step away from here, whatever might happen."

Sita-Alone

Sita desired that Lakshmana be sent afar, for Ravana had to approach the hermitage; it was the plan that Rama had designed to effect the destruction of Ravana and the Rakshasas. She had to fulfill the will of Rama. So, she too held on to her words and made them sharper and more hurting, so that Lakshmana could yield.

Lakshmana closed his ears with the palms; he could not bear the imputations and the charges. He prayed, "Mother! I shall suffer all the anger you pour on me." But, when Sita became harsher and threatened to go herself, to the rescue of Rama if he would not proceed, Lakshmana had no alternative. He could bear it no longer. He could not allow her to roam about in the forest in order to discover Rama and help him. So, with a heavy heart, he moved away from the hermitage, in search of Rama.

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness

(To be continued)

Sai Family News

Operation: Operation Surgical:

The Gangadhar High School, on the outskirts of Surat City, Gujarat, was, for about three weeks in December last, the centre of a unique Spiritual Sadhana, organised by the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samithi. The indigent villagers of the surrounding region were invited to take full advantage of the "Sairam Sarirak Chikitsa and Sastrakriya Seva Yajna (Diagnostic, Curative and Surgical Camp), wherein thirty two physicians and surgeons—each an eminent specialist in his own field—gave their valuable services free, in an attitude of dedication and reverence; and, 300 volunteers took loving care, and served sustaining food and provided comfortable lodging to the patients and their folk from the moment of their arrival at Camp to the hour of departure, hale and hearty, to their homes.

A large percentage of the 2000 villagers who were given expert advice and expert nursing, belonged to Adivasis and other tribal communities, usually unaware of or reluctant to benefit

from, modern curative and surgical institutions. Over 200 patients had to be given surgical treatment for eye, ear and throat disorders, abdominal illness, hernia or hydrocele.

The Blessings of Bhagavan enabled the Organisers to serve the vast number of people to their own satisfaction and to the satisfaction of the patients and participants.

Mini Study Courses:

The Christmas and New Year Holidays were utilised by the Sathya Sai Seva Organisation in several States, to organise, as directed by Bhagavan, "Condensed Courses on Indian Culture and Spirituality, in local languages, for College Students, in Camps run on the model of the month-long Summer Holiday Camps, being held since 1972, at Brindavan, near Bangalore, in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan. Reports are coming in from places as far apart as Guahati (Assam), New Delhi, Bombay, Hyderabad etc. The Organisation in Tamil Nadu held a ten-day Camp at Coimbatore City, at the President Hall, for 183 students (boys and girls) from all the Districts of the State. Participants were put through a tight schedule which lasted from 4-30 A. M. till 9-30 P. M., and they enjoyed every minute of the day, benefiting fully from the items that were provided. The recitation of the Pranava, and the Awakening Song was followed every dawn by Group Bhajans on the move through the City Streets; then, the students were taught Yogasanas. Later, there were two discourses of an hour's duration each, followed by a half hour of questions and answers. This valuable opportunity was fully utilised by the students. There was a third lecture in the afternoon, on similar lines. Every evening, a distinguished industrialist or scholar was introduced to the students as the Chief Guest; the short talks they gave provided both inspiration and instruction on practical Sadhana of Karma. Students presented to the audience reports of the speeches. They had a hearty session of Bhajan-singing every evening. Later, they listened to musical discourses on Ramayana by Sri. Balakrishna Sastry, an Officer of the State Bank of India and on Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, by Sri N. Kasturi and his son.

The Chief Justice of the Tamil Nadu High Court, Sri K. Veeraswami inaugurated the Camp; a distinguished galaxy of scholars famed for their erudition and skill in exposition responded to the invitation and spoke to the students, on a variety of subjects dealing with religion, spiritual disciplines and the saints of this ancient land. Scholars also arrived from Cochin, Hyderabad, and Bangalore.

The Coimbatore Camp had the unique pleasure and privilege of the Presence of Bhagavan, on the 30th day of December. Baba came down from the Nilgiris where He was staying for about a week; He called it a `surprise visit'! He filled every heart with joy, courage and illumination. He gave a Discourse, demarcating the main lines along which youth has to march today, to win self-confidence and self-realisation.

He said, "Education in India today gives free rein to irreverence and irresponsibility. It does not ensure the peace, progress, and prosperity of the people of this land... It does not mould the minds and brains of the youth of the land into useful instruments of service.. It does not train the hand and head in practical achievement; it only breeds conceit and cleverness. Really speaking, the Universe is the only genuine University. One can learn much by observing the stars and the cells, the microcosm and the macrocosm, the anu and the ghana.

Youth has to be trained to meet failure and success, pain as well as pleasure. When the pen is used, the writer strikes out and substitutes; when the brush is used, the painter, draws and wipes; destruction and construction have to operate alternately. Is and Is Not are the obverse and reverse of the same coin; you cannot have joy without grief. Joy is but the interval between two moments of grief. Life will have no tang, no tonic effect, without a few bouts with pain and disappointment. That is why Indian Culture laid emphasis on Mind Control, Sense Control, Yoga, Meditation, Renunciation and other disciplines. These will toughen youth and make them warriors who can meet the trials of life.

In the educational institutions of Ancient India, the student learned skills and all the strengthening virtues under the full guidance of the Teacher; he aspired for cent percent achievement: full marks and no remarks!

But, today, you can get a Degree at the Convocation if you secure 30 marks out of a total of 100. You can commit 70 errors and get a degree in spite of all that. Can such a degree deserve all that cost, in money and time? It should not encourage imitative habits which weaken originality and individuality. It should develop the faculty of independent thinking and the application of reason. Love is to become patent as self-lessness; self, if it is thrust forward becomes patent as love-lessness. Love is evident in those who give and forgive; the self is evident in those who get and forget! Love that is worldly, that is based on material things or on temporary satisfactions wanes quick. The newly wedded couple are head over heels in love; but, with the passage of time, the husband becomes cool and even positively short tempered; the same is the case with the wife, too. But the highest type of love sees the Divine shining in all and never wanes. It does not see men as belonging to different faiths or nations or classes or castes; it sees all as embodiments of Divinity. Service to any one is felt equivalent to the worship of the Divine.

You are the makers of the future; you have a long distance to go. Your elders will alight soon, when their journey ends. But you have to decide that your journey will be safe, happy and worth-while. Develop, the inner vision of the saint as a corrective to the outer vision of the scientist asks, "What is that?" The saint asks, "What is this?" The scientist depends on the Yantra, the instrument, the machine. The saint depends on the Mantra, the mystic formula, the key to the mysterious workings of the mind, the lamp that can illumine the dark caverns of the sub-conscious. The scientist analyses the matter; the saint probes into the mind that conceives and creates matter. The scientist seeks knowledge and power; the saint seeks peace and bliss. This is the lesson that the Winter Camp was intended to impress on you. Do not fritter away your energies and this precious youth in political squabbles and agitations. Devote all the time and all the opportunities you have to grow into real children of Bharat Mata.

Of all the Winter Camps being held in the country, I have come to you only this season, in person, to bless you. I wish that you should join the Seva Dal in your town and learn to put the ideals you have learnt into daily practice. Contribute as much as you can to the task of building a happy healthy prosperous nation and world. He graciously sat with groups of men and women students for photographs, which they value and cherish as precious mementoes of the Camp.

Though the Camp was held for the short period of ten days, one could see that each of the participants felt, on the final day, when they packed for home a pang in the heart, and had a tear in the eye; for, the Camp had forged them all into a happy Sai Family.

Letter From West Indies:

In August, 1971, the Saraswati Kirtan Mandali, a Devotional Choir formed some three years previously visited the Republic of Guyana, our neighbour. It was then that we had our first contact with Baba, at the Residence of the High Commissioner for India. After this visit, we used to meet every Sunday evening in a temple here and chant Bhajans. It struck us recently as very miraculous that some of the songs that we sang then were sung by Baba Himself, at the Prasanthi Nilayam and at the end of His Discourses—for example, the song that begins with 'Prema Muditha manse kaho'

In May 1973, regular Bhajans were started on every Tuesday and Saturday evenings at Trinidad (West Indies). The number of eager participants grew from day to day, from a hundred to three, four, five and even seven hundreds in a few months. On the 23rd November 1974, when Bhagavan's Birthday was celebrated at the University of the West Indies, there were present over 5000 persons of all religions and races gathered for partaking in the Function. So involved and absorbed were these thousands in the programme that the meeting continued from 5 P.M. till 10 P.M. Never before in history had the West Indians gathered in such large numbers, sitting on the floor chanting Bhajans with tremendous ecstasy, derived from the Kirtans on Baba.

The Presence of Baba is being felt every day, in this far-off country. Many lives have been reshaped. The 'Samiti' that Baba is has begun to operate on a large scale on our uncouth 'iron' personalities and shape us into human beings full of Prema. At the Sai Baba Devotional Sessions, social status, class distinctions and racial differences do not raise their heads at all. Doctors, lawyers, agriculturists, labourers, students, professors—all equally share equanimity in the Holy Presence.

In the little village of Avocad and in Suparia on the Old Road in South. Trinidad, young children are spreading Baba's Message of Love and Service and changing the lives of their parents. They insist on Bhajans and draw their parents to join them. The incident mentioned in the biography of Baba written by Sri Kasturi that Baba in his early days cuddled the fowls that were marked out for being killed and cooked (and that He Himself abstains from meat) has made many children stop eating meat! At the District School, the Headmaster gathers the children during breaks and encourages them to sing Bhajans!

In one home, a young man (age 19) was told by his father, "You are lighting lamps in other people's homes; how about lighting one in your own home?" Bhajan was started thus in his own home, with the parents' blessings! Many here have experienced providential cures and many miraculous happenings due to the Grace of Baba.

We offer to Baba on behalf of the Arine Devotional Choir (Bhajan Mandali) and the brothers and sisters of the Chaguanas Devotional Choir, the Bhajans we sing;

O Children of noble ancient Culture!

Awake; the Time has come to rise.
With courage and strength, united fast,
Rise up, awake, the Time is ripe.

Our parents came from India
Full of Joy and Hope
They planted Dharma, Prema here
On this far-off land
And built a new Home beyond the sky.

The years did guard the plants they sowed
The Dharma and the Prema.
Their hope was the hope of Sita
Their hope was the hope of Rama
Their sons and daughters toiled hard
To keep the Homes their fathers built
As Homes of Joy and Peace.

Now is the time for weakness
Now is the time for strength
In body, mind and spirit, too,
As Baba has taught us all.

Let us love and serve one another
Let us join hands and voices
Across this lovely land
Across this azure Sea.

Little did we realise when we started singing these Songs that they contain the essence of Baba's Message—Sathya, Dharma, Shanti and Prema, the quintessence of the Sanathana Dharma which India taught to mankind. The films shown to us about Bhagavan by Mr. Rooplal Singh have brought Baba closer to our eyes and hearts. The Saraswati Kirtan Mandal and the Caparao Devotional Group have conveyed the thrill of song and joy to many a home.

May Baba continue to guide and bless us—is the prayer of thousands here.

—*Surajrattan Rambachan, B. Sc., M B. A.*
The University of the West Indies Department of Manager Studies

The Lord is near, and O so dear!
My heart in longing, cries.
My eyes do strain, to catch a glance,
From those two Divine eyes.

`Tis well that He can see all round—
And, does not need to turn.
His very Presence brings untold peace;
And, I forget to yearn!

—*D. N. P.*

The Call of the Eternal

In the early years of my life I saw light around and a path before me, but ere long the light became dim and then disappeared from the view. I lost the track and the scent. Since then from time to time, haunted by doubt, fear and anxiety, I moved from place to place to ease my soul only to be disillusioned and retrace steps with faith shaken and the, vision of a new hope blurred. But my recent visit to Rajahmundry, the venue of the sixth All India Conference of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, from 2-1-1974 to 4-1-1974, brought me rich rewards. The Darshan of BABA has thrown open before me the gate to the vistas of a life, undreamt of and untasted hitherto. I can claim no merit and yet I had the good fortune to have the grace of BABA in abundance. For days together I had the rare privilege to watch him from close quarters, listen to the words that fell from his lips and drink deep at his nectar of discourses and touch His Lotus Feet.

My heart was hard and parched up when, all on a sudden, upon my life a shower of mercy and a flood of grace appeared, as if from no where, with a burst of song. My soul was sick of the dull drudgery of the insipid world around that shut me out from a life beyond, with my mind blinded with dust of desires and delusions. BABA, the lord of silence, who is ever wakeful, broke down the barriers and entered my soul, unseen and unnoticed, with the majesty of a King and slaked my whole being with his benediction. My soul was enlivened and I was thrown in an ecstasy of supreme blessedness. My mind, in spite of myself, turned to the inspiring utterances of Krishnadas Kaviraj, the celebrated biographer of Sri Chaitanya, "of all the sports of Lord Krishna, His play on earth in the form of a human being is the noblest." I, therefore, did not look upon myself as a man of no weight and worth being born in the KALIYUGA. On the contrary, I had the profound satisfaction to hail the KALIYUGA with hands out-stretched, "O Kaliyuga, thou art the best of all the YUGAS and hence I bow to Thee in deep humility."

Weeks and months have rolled by since I had the `Darshan' of BABA. But it seems, as if I have just woken up from a deep slumber and a sweet dream. My mind is still floating in an ethereal realm of light and boundless bliss, which BABA diffused in endless torrents around Him, casting His enchanting smile and mystic spell. My mind oftener than not is carried back to the wizard of Puttaparthi and I am made to muse in silence over again

When I go from hence let this be my parting word, that what I have seen is unsurpassable.

I have tasted of the hidden honey of this lotus that expands on the ocean of light, and thus am I blessed—let this be my parting word.

In this playhouse of infinite forms I have had my play and here have I caught sight of Him that is formless.

My whole body and my limbs have thrilled with His touch who is beyond touch; and if the end comes here, let it come—let this be my parting word.

—*Kalidas Mukherji*

The Children of the Land

Children are the crops growing in the fields, to yield the harvest on which the nation has to sustain itself. They are the pillars on which the foundation of the nation's future is built. They are the roots of the national tree, which has to give the fruits of work, worship and wisdom to the next generation.

The Sathya Sai Bal Vikas has been evolved in order to feed these roots, strengthen these foundation pillars and fertilise the growing crops. Children are now growing up in an atmosphere polluted by corruption, anxiety and hollow pomp, because people are enamoured of the shallow material culture, mainly imported from the West. Parents and teachers and even the leaders of the nation are devoid of admiration and adoration, understanding and practice of the basic principles of Bharatiya Culture; children are denied the previous heritage which is their due; they are inducted into alien ideals, thoughts and habits. They are praised for reciting foreign Nursery Songs, to the neglect of native rhymes! The educated child cuts himself away from the village child or the children of the unschooled.

The older persons have but a little distance to travel, before they disembark. But the children remember, have many many miles to go and they take the nation along with them, to perdition or progress! The Rishis of old knew the value of our culture and the deep peace and security that the heritage of that culture can give, in these days of turmoil and strife. So, they prescribed three disciplines for every one, young or old. They declared, Matru devo bhava, pitru devo bhava; acharya devo bhava. So long as a nation grows up with these three ideals, it can never be pulled up by its roots and get dried up. For, adoration of the mother as Divine, of the father as God and of the Preceptor as God will make the growing generation cherish the heritage, which is handed down by them and through them. The generation gap will not be an unbridgeable chasm.

—**Baba**

The Message of the Gita

Unquestionably, the Bhagavad Gita is the most popular amongst Indian scriptures, not only in our own country, but also abroad, as innumerable translations in foreign languages testify. Perhaps it is the one Indian text which is fairly well-known in the West. The reasons for this vogue are not far to seek. Short and simple in style and expression, it is the quintessence of Indian doctrine in all its manifoldness. As the traditional Gita Dhyana puts it poetically, the Gita

is the rich milk for the sake of Arjuna, but really meant to be drunk by all thoughtful men, as mentioned in the "Gita Vahini" by Baba.

Despite its apparent simplicity or possibly on that very account, the Gita has lent itself to a multiplicity of interpretations since time immemorial. Sankara's commentary starts, with the avowed objective of correcting prevalent misinterpretations. Every commentator since then has, each according to his own lights entertained the same purpose. This has continued right down to modern times. As foreign observers have often noticed, every thoughtful Indian seems to feel the call to write his own commentary on, the Gita, instead of attempting any original, work. Although this is intended as a criticism, there is much to be said for an attitude which seeks to relate itself organically to an honoured framework of thought, rather than aim at a dubious originality. It may be said that the Gita stands in need of such re-interpretation from time to time, from temperament to temperament and from individual to individual. So the Message of the Gita is not one which can be formulated dogmatically once and for all: It can be put only suggestively with a variety of qualifications and safe-guards, which take due account of the human context. Baba's Gita Vahini is eminently valuable in the contemporary context.

The Gita not only needs continual reinterpretation, but can also stand it. It invites such an approach. There is a plasticity about its structure, a flexibility and freedom from dogmatism in its statements, which are the very characteristics of Hinduism at its best, but which have proved a stumbling block to rigid minds. To borrow a comparison from science, its make-up is not crystalline but colloidal. As is well known, crystalline structure is the hall-mark of the inorganic world, while the amorphous colloid is the basis of organism and life.

In keeping with this, the Gita allows and even advocates a wide freedom of approach. As is said (IV. II): "By whatever path men may seek me, even so do I welcome them, for all paths are mine." This is the principle on which the basic Hindu doctrine of Isha-devata rests. The teaching of the Gita is also not unitary in any narrow, mechanical or logical sense. It does possess a unity of outlook, but it is not a syllogistic or mathematical unity. The unity is not on the surface, and not visible at first sight. The venerable scholar, Dr. Bhagavan Das records that in his own case, even after a third reading, the Gita still appeared to him only a bundle of aphorisms, rather than a connected work, "each indubitably very valuable in itself and applicable to and helpful in different situations in life, but very disjointed and unarticulated with one another, and also quite inappropriate to the occasion on which they were uttered by Krishna." The work itself seems to recognize this: for at the end of each chapter, the colophon does not speak of the Gita in the singular, but Gitas in the plural, each verse being reckoned as an Upanishad. The reconciliation of the seven hundred verses of the Gita is therefore to be sought through devout meditation. Their final samanvaya is only the concept of Vasudeva(VII. 1S) Every interpretation is an attempt at such a reconciliation.

The key to the understanding of the Gita is to be found in the doctrine of 'Swadharma.' In a half verse which is twice repeated (III. 35 and XVIII. 47) it is emphasized that better far is one's own duty, though devoid of merit, than the duty of another well discharged. This forms the dramatic theme of the Gita, where Arjuna is counselled to stick to his own duty in preference to ideals of an apparently higher order. Here again we have a fundamental platform of Hindu conduct to the social environment, to heredity and age: in brief Varnasram-dharma.

Accordingly, we have in the Gita a gradation of teaching, as well as of seekers, be they Jnanis, Bhaktas or karma-yogis. It would be fallacious to treat each verse of the Gita as if it were a universally applicable doctrine, irrespective of the personal factor. It would therefore be opposed to the spirit of the Gita to assert unconditionality that it teaches only anashakti-yoga or anything else exclusively.

The idea of dharma has as its counterpart that of karma, action or conduct. Karma is the application of dharma. The complexity and even ambiguity of the Gita teaching can best be seen in connection with this term. The Gita itself interprets the concept paradoxically! It extols him as the wise man who sees inaction in action and action in inaction (IV. 18), and in the previous two verses says that the concept of "action" is very mysterious and that even sages have been perplexed by it. The Gita employs the term with varying significance according to the context. It is the attitude that is all important, as explained in another place unequivocally: it is the visarga that determines the constitution of beings (VIII. 3).

Whenever the Gita speaks of action as bondage, it has the commonsense attitude in view. To the sage, action ceases to be bondage. Outwardly, there can be no criterion for distinguishing the two types of action. The distinction is wholly inward. The ambiguity of this concept has led to highly conflicting interpretations: on the one side we have Sankara who makes karma, Public Enemy Number One, and on the other, Tilak who would make the Gita exclusively karma yoga-sastra, interpreting the term literally. In between, may be placed Gandhiji's understanding of the Gita as wholly allegorical in order to secure alignment with his cardinal tenet of non-violence.

The Gita itself offers an intermediate concept which functions as a bridge between the two antithetical notions. The mediation is effected by the process known as Yajna. In a manner of speaking, liberalized and extended idea of Yajna is perhaps the most distinctive teaching of the Gita. Yajna is the symbolic or sacramental employment of action whereby action ceases to be a bondage (III. 9). There is endless option in regard to the manner in which action can be converted into Yajna (IV. 32) Yajna operates in the field of Bhavana, an untranslatable word. A mutual Bhavana-tension is established in this field of force between the worshipper and the worshipped, yielding results. Yajna is efficacious as well as obligatory. To seek to attain the normal ends of life in any other way is sinful, even the cooking and partaking of food is for the self (III. 13).

The worship of the numerous aspects of deity in the shape of the Vedic gods is not condemned, although at the proper stage it is sought to be transcended. Sayana's description of the Veda as teaching `paralaukika' means for the attainment of human desires and the warding off of evils finds support here. Karma in the technical sense (Smarta) is stated here to have its origin in the Veda (Brahma) which itself has its source in the akshara (III. 5). Thus the idea of Yajna is always intimately linked with that of Brahma. The true rationale of Yajna is explained in the Eighth Chapter, which propounds Purusha (person in the inclusive sense) as the sphere of Yajna (adhiyajna) as well as the support of the gods (adhidaivatam). This realisation leads to the infinite extension of experience (loka samgraha) or in other words a fuller perception of the glories of the Supreme Person. Such a vision is described, for example, in the Eleventh Chapter (Visvarupa-darsana).

The cosmos in which Yajna is effective is radically different from what modern science pictures it to be. A continuous interaction is posited between the microcosm (pinda) and the macrocosm (Brahmanda). Its most compact presentation is in III. 14 where rain is said to be produced from Yajna. This is fundamentally in line with the Vedic conception of rta, which subsumes cosmic as well as mortal order in its broad sweep. To try to appreciate the truths of the Gita or to attempt to follow them without originally subscribing to this doctrine of rta, would be vain and totally futile—anrtha.

Keeping all these considerations in view, the ethics of the Gita would be seen in their right perspective. Here we have a threefold classification according to the Gunas, in place of native opposition between good and evil. The essence of the moral personality is Sraddha (XVII. 3). Here again the term has no exact equivalent. Bhagavan Das renders it as "inborn faith." It may be Satwic, Rajasic or Tamasic. All experience is pervaded by these three strands (Gunas). The Gita presents Jnana, Bhakti, and karma, each as thus threefold. Ethical endeavour aims at the attainment of Satwa. But before it can be attained, it has to be recognized in experience in its specificity as differing from the other two qualities. None of them is found in isolation, but always in mutual interaction. But the Gita does not stop with Satwa. That too would be a sort of bondage. Satwa has to be transcended and a state reached which is beyond the Gunas. Essentially this stage is non-ethical.

This stage is beyond all antitheses: Nirdvandva. It is beyond all qualities: Nirguna. It is from this height that even the Veda is looked down upon. This is the true balance and equilibrium (samatwa) of the Gita, which is variously described as yoga (III. 48), which is itself said to be skill in action (It. 50). It leads to that evenness of vision known as samadarsana. Here there is no "Either-Or" of action versus inaction, for the feeling of agency (kartribhava) is itself lost. Such a harmonised person is a yukta. Appropriateness and moderation characterise his entire conduct and lead to the elimination of pain which is a symptom of imbalance (VI. 17). The culmination of this is Samadhi, which in the Gita is not a trance condition, but a stabilization of the wavering consciousness. The stabilised person is the Sthitaprajna. This type of Samadhi has been termed Sahaja elsewhere, although the word is not to be found in the Gita itself.

Taken as a whole, the aim of the Gita is that attainment of the rounded goal of life as adapted to the circumstances and equipment of each individual. Compendiously this is Purushartha Siddhi. The ideal approach of a beginner to the Gita would thus be to take it as a whole reverently without any critical attempt to evaluate or select. By meditative brooding one should allow one's subconscious mind to soak in its contents, and slowly make its own selection. Then the particular pattern of the teaching which most suits the tendencies (samskaras) of the individual will stand out, as in a kaleidoscope, by merely patiently turning over.

Thus alone can the congenial direction be discovered, the individual and concrete message. After one has found it out for oneself, it would be foolish to generalize and claim universal applicability for it. That would be against the very spirit of the Gita. The Gita is suspicious of all that savours of propaganda, and cautions even a man of realization from meddling with the convictions of others (III. 26). It provides a gently graded and elastic teaching to suit all

temperaments. Especially the three broad Indian types with the inclinations towards practice, devotion or knowledge. All three can find their canon and testament here.

It may safely be said that there is no such thing as the Message of the Gita. There are as many messages as there are readers in earnest. No one will go empty-handed. Everyone will be taken by the hand and led forward, in line with his Samskaras. The quietist as well as the activist have found their inspiration here, and all who come in between. The die-hards and the reformers, terrorists and advocates of ahimsa, all have sworn by the Gita. One will get there whatever one takes to it. It is the divine mirror in which every one first finds his own lineaments, but ultimately his innermost Self.

—*K. Guru Dutt*

The Primal Light

Today is All Fools Day, the First of April! I feel it is the most appropriate day to inquire into the meaning of `Self.'

Jesus exhorted us to `Love thy neighbour as thy self.' The Vedas declare that the self is the Atman, the very core of our Reality, which gives meaning and significance to existence, which is the subject of knowledge and which is the spring of all bliss. The Atman, considered as the Universal Absolute, however seemingly particularised in the individual, is called by the Vedas as Brahman. Some writers translate Brahman as God; the Upanishads declare that God has three characteristics, Sathyam (Truth) Jnanam (Knowledge) and Anantam (Eternity). God has these to an infinite extent. Limitless knowledge makes God omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent. He is limitless. However, the word God is more personalised, has associations of other characteristics like Love, Power, Grace, Compassion etc. It cannot denote the Primal Energy or Infinity that the word Divinity or Brahman can give.

Baba tells us that all living beings have the Primal Energy or Paramatma or Parashakti incorporated in them; It is this Core that is referred to by man, when he speaks of `I'. He owns the body and claims all that pertains to it as `mine'. He struggles all his life to maintain the `I', and the `mineness' of all things that cater to the `I'.

When a person dies, the body that is then deprived of this vital primal energy is called as `the body of X'.

Brahman is usually described as Light, as in the prayer, *Thamaso maa jyothir gamaya* `From darkness, lead me into light.' That is to say, particularisation is the darkness; universalisation is the light. Liberate me from the I into the He, the It, the Divinity that is immanent and transcendent that is the prayer.

We all know that the food, fluids, and air ingested into the body are eventually turned into energy by the process of assimilation. The energy is transformed into heat, in the same way as

solar energy is. Light brings darkness; darkness causes cooling. Divinity is called Paramjyoti, the Supreme Light. It removes Ignorance and Delusion and causes Illumination which reveals Truth.

Of course, as Baba says, Light can be used by man for good purposes or bad. So we have to be vigilant that we use the Primal Energy that the Divine endows us with is used for beneficial purposes only. Electricity can light up, can cool down, or do whatever use it is put up to (even the electric chair): The Primal Energy resident in us is like Electricity. We can use it for liberating ourselves or for tightening the bonds. We have to pray to Baba to guide us aright, so that we are free from entanglements and attain freedom.

—**Karuna Pani, Bethesda-Md. U.S.A.**

When a plane flies across the sky, it leaves no mark on it, no streak that lasts, nor furrow or pot-hole that interferes with further traffic.

So, too, allow all feelings and emotions cross your mind but do not allow them to cause an impression on your inner heart.

—**Baba**

The Swing of the Pendulum

Baba often uses the analogy of the swing of the pendulum to describe the state of our mind. In the interview room, He says with deep sympathy, "your mind is like the pendulum; it swings from faith to doubt, and doubt to faith. At one time you have faith in Swami and again this faith is followed by doubt! You vacillate! Learn to be steady in your heart," smiles Baba; "Come, examine, experience and then believe. But don't lose faith merely because somebody says something. Don't discount your own experience!" In the Gita Vahini, Swami says, "The weak will be agitated as peacock feathers; they are restless, with no fixity for a moment. They sway like the pendulum, this side and that, once towards joy, the next moment towards grief."

The pendulum is a very picturesque analogy of the human situation! It symbolises the eternal problem of swinging from birth to death, the consequence of our attachment to desires. From birth we swing towards death gathering momentum from the cumulative effect of unfulfilled desires, only to swing back to another birth, back to where we started. Through our lives, we swing between grief and happiness, love and hate, heat and cold, anticipation and disappointment, peace and confusion, between the dualities of opposites. The Lord has said in the Gita about this swinging of the pendulum: "Sukha dukhe same krutwa laabhaa laabhau jayaajayau..." Treat alike pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat."

Baba reminds us that happiness is only an interval between two moments of misery; misery is only an interval between two moments of happiness. Once the pendulum swings forward, it must come back to its original position. "Grief and joy are the obverse and reverse of the same coin; it is like a printed page; you cannot have only one page without the reverse!" says Baba.

The pendulum also signifies time; it is the movement of the pendulum that gives us a measure of time. God is described as kalaswarupa; He is also described as kalateetha, beyond time. What

does this mean? Taking the analogy of the pendulum, it means that God is beyond dualities; beyond the swing of opposites; He is dwandwateetha! If we do not swing between the opposites, then we will not be subject to the bullying effects of time! So the only way to transcend the pull of dualities, is to welcome neither happiness nor grief.

In fact Baba says, "Generally man seeks only happiness and joy; under no stress will he desire misery and grief! He treats happiness and joy as his closest well-wishers and misery and grief as his direst enemies. This is a great mistake. When one is happy, the risk of grief is great; fear of losing the happiness will haunt the man. Misery prompts inquiry, discrimination, self-examination and fear of worse things that might happen. It awakens you from sloth and conceit. Happiness makes one forget one's obligation to oneself as a human being. It drags man into egoism and the sins that egoism leads one to commit. Grief renders man alert and watchful. So misery is a real friend... So, trouble's and travails are to be treated as friends; at least not as enemies. Only it is best to regard both happiness and misery, as gifts of God. That is the easiest path for one's liberation."

The pendulum swings as long as the main spring is able to make it swing; once we tighten the spring it unwinds itself; the swing of the pendulum is a consequence of this unwinding process of the main spring. This also can be compared to human life. When we are born, the main spring is wound with the Prarabdha karma which runs out as the spring unwinds itself! Most of the time man does not realise that he is swinging because of the unwinding of the main spring of Prarabdha karma, the karma that has to work itself out during the present life. He even enjoys and grieves with the swinging of the pendulum. But man is not a mere clock, an unintelligent machine! The moment he realises that the swing of the pendulum is the result of his Prarabdha karma, then he can transcend the swing! He can swing but not take part in the joy and grief of the swinging. His problem is that he is not only swinging but identifying himself with the swing, thinking all the time that it is he who is responsible for the swinging; the moment wisdom dawns on him, he can cultivate detachment. We may not be able to alter course of events; we can certainly alter our attitudes to them. Paul Brunton in his book "Message from Arunachala" says, "Even were we immutably preordained to undergo predicted disasters, our reaction to them is not preordained. Events may be fixed by unseen powers, but our attitudes towards them is not." This is the fire of wisdom that burns up karma!

We can take the analogy one step further if we think of an electric clock which we do not have to wind every week! We swing like the pendulum of the electric clock, thinking all the time that it is we who swing; we forget that we swing because there is a power that makes us swing; the divine power, which like electricity, is unseen, but active in and through us. Like puppets, we swing and dance so long as the Sutradhara, the puppeteer pulls the strings. "Surrender!" advised Krishna to Arjuna. "Surrender!" advises Sai Krishna to all of us swinging like the pendulum! "Man surrenders his dignity and status to other men for purposes in life; wealth, fame, possession, pomp, power, etc. But rarely does he get the chance to surrender to the Lord, for the sake of the Lord! How can he get the urge, so long as he craves for the Aadheya and not the Aadhara? He longs for the object, but does not long for the base on which the object rests. How long can a base-less object satisfy? He wants the gift, not the Giver, the created not the Creator, things from the Hand, but not the Hand! He is running after a non-existent thing. Can there be an object without a pre-existent Cause? No; if there is One, it can only be the Un-caused God. It is

sheer ignorance to surrender individuality for the sake of the transitory products of action, the 'caused' rather than the Cause. Surrender rather to the Basis, the Cause and the Origin of All, the Sarveswara. That is genuine Saranagati!"

Let us not swing like the pendulum. Let us transcend the dualities of opposites; then we will not be affected by both; we will have Tithiksha, equanimity. That is what Baba wants us to learn when He tells us "Don't swing like a pendulum!"

—*Narayana Murthy*

We need Him; So, We deserve Him

*Beloved Bhagavan, Respected Elders,
Brothers and Sisters,*

Today Bhagavan has completed 48 years in this body. He has promised to stay for at least 45 years more. A little calculation tells me that those on the Age-group 15-20 years stand the best chance of completing their lives contemporaneously with the completion of Bhagavan's Mission. To me therefore, students seem to represent possibly the most fortunate beneficiaries of Bhagavan's Mission. In almost every public discourse that He gives, He has a few words for the students, the Youth of our country and of the world. I also feel that Youth needs Him most. Bhagavan has declared, "You do not have to earn Me; it is enough if you need Me" The logic is Divinely compassionate. It is not so simple that human reason can comprehend. But the fact remains, that "because I need Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, I deserve Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba."

Modern Science, the increasing emphasis on evidence perceptible by the senses, the degradation of Faith, and the banishment of Purpose from the Universe have all been generating a giant wave of atheism, that is nowhere so apparent and appalling as in Youth today. For many High School and College students, God is something that is either non-existent, or in hiding, or sleeping or even dead! Moral and ethical forces are frail, faltering or totally absent. Spiritual mores are becoming quickly things of the past.

Yes. Mentally and morally, the average young person today is a cripple—a deformed product of unfortunate circumstances. The education he receives and the upbringing he undergoes are both wholly lopsided; they can lead him to little or no good.

This is where Bhagavan comes in! He is something that has never happened before, to Youth. For, He is the Only One who combines and can possibly combine, the most Pleasant with the Best. His physical appearance and His Divine Voice, are fantastic baits for the attraction of Youth towards Him. It is Bhagavan's unique feature that—besides being Himself the End—He constitutes the simplest, easiest, and the exciting Means of reaching that End!

Youth, in India as well as most other countries, is today restive and insecure. The rapidly disintegrating World seems to hold little in store for Youth. But, the crisis is not merely economic. It is the crisis of the spirit that makes the situation acutely pathetic. Youth is rendered hollow, liable to break down at the slightest provocation. The built-in mechanism of Religion and spiritual Sadhana which used to impart immunity against the ups and downs of life, and the healthy optimism that faith gave Youth in facing bleak prospects have been gradually eroded out of existence.

Torn by the Western Urge to master the external world, turning away from the inward urge to master the internal world of his own mind, Youth is at the cross-roads, completely at loss to decide on the next step. To the youth caught in this turbulent turmoil comes Bhagavan Baba!.... the guiding Guru, the sympathising Friend, the understanding Elder, and the Divine Parent. He appears as One who demands nothing, but, gives everything. His Hand is ever engaged in Giving.

What Bhagavan offers is the right combination of the ancient and the modern, the correct synthesis of the values of East and West and the best possible reconciliation between the World of Matter and the Realm of the Spirit. Irrelevant rituals and outdated traditions, which have been largely responsible for Youth losing faith in Religion, are discarded by Him. He does not insist on the study of ancient texts; the fortunate ones encouraged by Him to study them are not divorced from the achievements of technology. Indeed, some of the graduates of the Veda Pathashala at Puttaparthi who recite the Vedas with cent percent authenticity are very good at driving automobiles and running printing presses!

There are a few other observations I would like to make. Youth in all lands are sick and tired of those who do not practise what they preach. Bhagavan, whose Life is, as He says, His Message, teaches us far more by example than by precept. In fact, Words are presented to Youth in terms of Action.

Then again, Bhagavan's hold on youthful audiences is amazing. I guess you have noted that youngsters get very restless when they listen to speeches; but, when Bhagavan addressed them, they listen spell-bound for hours at a stretch! His Daily Discourses, during the month-long Summer Course on Spirituality and Indian Culture held every year at Brindavan, Whitefield, are eagerly awaited by the entire gathering of students. He transforms the most profound and complex of truths into something not just intelligible, but also interesting. He changes the most commonplace fact into something attractive and important. And all this—the Wisdom of the Ages coming from a Person more youthful than the youths themselves—and with a sense of humour, which makes youth feel that He created the world only to have a good laugh at it!

Another factor that gives Him early steady and permanent entry into the heart of Youth is Divine Tolerance, His Readiness to forgive, not once, but a thousand times. By the passage of time and through more intimate contact with Him, the erring Youngster himself realises that long hair, side-burns and multi-coloured clothes look out of place and even ludicrous and ugly in the Presence, and on a Sadhaka. It is because they love Him that they do not wish to do anything against His Wish.

Prema is His greatest Miracle. Prema is the modus operandi of His Mission. Youngsters who come to Him first in fear and shivering in awe come again full of smiles and joy. But, at this stage, it is essential to point out that Bhagavan would be the last person to compromise on Principles and Ideals. He says often that strictness is the best blessing that the Master can vouchsafe to a Sadhaka.

And, above all, is this Unique Factor, which alone makes Him outstanding among the Redeemers of Youth; a Redeemer the world has never known so far. This is His Omnipresence. He is at the root of each thought, word and action of every single Young Person, and therefore, He corrects each of them as no one can.

Yes. No longer shall Youth have their passions wrongly spent, their energies wasted and their faith misplaced—for, they shall tread the Path that Bhagavan has traced. Sathya Sai Age has dawned; the Sathya Sai Sun shall have Youth, as Its Thousand Bright Rays.

—*Anup Sahani III Year B Com.; Sathya Sai College, Brindavan*

The Rishis discovered the Truth that is hidden behind the veil of multiplicity; the many always hides the One, the One on which the ignorance of the perceiver and even the partial vision of the subject superimposes the Many. Children have a right to the knowledge gained by the Rishis and communicated by them through story and parable in the Upanishads that idam sarvam, all this, is avasyam, enveloped by God. They must be made aware that no one should be harmed or insulted or injured, because it is only harming oneself, injuring oneself or insulting oneself. This is the philosophic basis for the Golden Rule, 'Do not do unto others what you do not like them to do unto you.' You have heard people say, "The adoration of God in any form reaches the One God." But, let me tell you its other face, its obverse, which is also equally true: "The slighting by you of any form of God (and, remember, all men, all living beings are Gods in various forms) reaches the One God! So, reflect on this and re-form yourselves accordingly. This is My Message to you.

—*Baba: Bal Vikas Rally. Bombay*

Culture—Agriculture

India is a sacred land, whose glory has spread over all the continents, whose sons and daughters have won by their material and spiritual excellences eternal fame amidst all mankind. They have freed their motherland from the shackles of foreign rule; they have added to human happiness by their attainments in music and the fine arts. Even today, India has a name that is revered and held in high esteem. You have a great responsibility, for, you have to maintain and develop the splendour that was India.

We have met here today in a spirit of prayer and Sadhana, to dedicate ourselves for a new step in education. The objectives of true education are two and only two. The first and the most basic of the two is education for the provision of food, clothing and shelter, for the promotion of health and harmony in society for avoiding pollution and promoting honesty. In the olden times, when the student underwent the basic training under the teacher, he learnt, before he was 15 years of age, to spin, weave and procure clothes for his own use; to produce the food he required; and to look after his needs for basic comfort. He was contented and happy, with simple habits which gave him ample leisure for Sadhana and contemplation of Nature. Every one must endeavour to be self-reliant and self-sufficient, so far as food and clothing are concerned. The rulers of this land are scared of the growth in population and they are excitedly advocating wrong and dangerous means to curb the increase. But, they forget, that with every extra mouth that has to be fed, we are getting also two extra hands, and a pair of legs, besides a brain that has vast potential for development into a national asset. We have no scheme to use the two extra hands and the precious little brain for national uplift and national prosperity. We encourage laziness, by making it the sign of affluence; we do not condemn it, wherever found. We have no strategy to maximise production and minimise waste, even in food. If only every one in this land will consume just the quantity of food that he needs and nothing more, there will be no scarcity at all. This country has never lacked in the wherewithal to feed her children. This is the land of Goddess Annapoorna.

The second objective of education is the culture of the mind and the spirit. This too is very much like agriculture, which provides food and clothing for man. We want Dhanya (Grains) to sustain the body; we require Dhyana (meditation) to sustain the spirit. In agriculture, you prepare the soil, plant seeds, feed the plants with fertilisers, and reap the harvest. In heart-culture, we have to plough the hrudaya-kshetra, remove the weeds and wild growth, and plant the seeds. The weeds are pernicious tendencies attitudes and habits; the fertilisers are devotion and dedication. Water to help the plant grow is the quality of Love. The seeds are the Names of God, which are deposited within the purified heart. The bravest which is the reward of all this spiritual discipline is Wisdom.

Heart-culture has been the goal and aim of Sanathana Dharma, the ancient religion of India. It is essential for a happy contented peaceful life. This Dharma exhorts us to plant the seeds of Love and reap the harvest of Wisdom, for the sake of social harmony and national prosperity and the uplift of all humanity. Sanathana Dharma makes you realise the Unity that underlies all the diversity that is apparent. That Unity is the basis and the justification for loving all, with no desire for any benefit therefrom.

But, Indians have developed so much cynicism and scorn about their heritage that they ascribe the discovery of the Vedas and their compilation to the crooked designs of some Brahmins! Muslims revere the Quran as the Word of God; Christians revere the Bible as the Word of God; but, Indians treat their scriptural texts as negligible teachings of interested persons! And, they stray away from the right path into distress and discontent. Max Mueller said that what is not found in Indian culture is not found in other countries. But, as soon as Indians learn English or any other foreign language, they develop so much of ego that they start decrying their own ancient culture and adopting the manners and mannerisms of the alien civilisation.

Gandhi said, "My India is the India of villages." The freedom that has been won and the prosperity that is looked forward to can be ensured only when the villagers are free and prosperous. And, this depends in its turn on the freedom and prosperity of each family in the village. Now, there is no unity, no mutual co-operation, no love between the four or five brothers in the family; every one is at cross-purposes with the rest. How then can the village enjoy freedom and peace and prosperity? And, what to speak of the country, when the condition of its villages is so bad? Every person seeks positions of authority, without trying to deserve the authority by means of the qualifications necessary to use it in the right way. Of course it a person who has good intentions and full capabilities and the vision of the Divine, he can well seek authority and discharge it well. But, we seldom see any one thinking of one's duty; everywhere, people are after the acquisition of positions of authority.

As a result, several malpractices have entered the field of education. Money is paid to gain admission into schools and colleges, Money is paid to acquire marks and degrees. The teacher does not transmit taste, style, attitude or outlook; it is all a matter of books and more books. The student is left to gather these from outside the educational institutions. Moreover, more value is attached to information and its collection; no attempt is made to gain transformation and to the correction of habits and characteristics. How did the great artists who drew the frescoes of Ajanta and carved the temples of Ellora learn their trade? They did not attend any school; they learnt from the teachers, the master craftsmen, the inspired artistes.

Books cannot give the guidance and the inspiration for real good work. Also, the worldly aspects must be harmonised with the spiritual aspects in order to live a full life. Then only can man have self-confidence and avoid the imitative path. Mental, peace cannot be secured by blaming others and avoiding one's own responsibility.

Today, we are establishing this Agricultural Polytechnic, so that those who study here may not depend upon others to give them a job, but, so that they can earn a livelihood for themselves by their own skills and effort. This will be a spiritual discipline also and it will give them ample chances to develop their spiritual attainments too. Students here will be encouraged to practise working with others in mutual and productive co-operation. The five fingers of the hand have to come together so that a thing can be grasped firmly. Nowadays, you know they appoint what are called Committees for all kinds of works, a Committee for Water Supply, a Committee for the supply of Electricity etc. But, they do not work smoothly; there are bickerings and factions. They come for tea and do not deliberate and determine anything.

Mutual respect can be built on the faith that all are children of God and all are Divine. Then on that basis, there can be co-operation, and enthusiasm for work. Each will then do his best, knowing his duty and his responsibility.

The future of the country depends on the skill and the sincerity of the youth. Therefore, the necessary enthusiasm and encouragement must be generated among the youth. All my hopes are based on the students, the youth. They are very dear to me. They are faultless; it is the parent and the school that are at fault for all the waywardness and violence. They lead them into wrong directions. Instead of filling your heads with facts and figures, fill your hearts with love and light. Have confidence in the vast powers of the Atma, which is your reality. Have faith in the Grace of God, which you can secure by prayer.

While praying and using mantras, formulae or such expressions, one must know the real meaning and significance of the words and their deep implications. One individual for example did not know the full implication of the word Siva; he meant by that word, the Form of God who is supposed to live in Kailasa with his consort and family. He told me that Sivoham meant, 'I am Siva' and was shocked when asked, "Then, what is Parvati to you?"

Many people do Japa and join Bhajans, but, they are not aware of the meaning and value of the words they utter mechanically. Elders who propagate mantras and pose as spiritual teachers do not themselves know the inner meanings of what they recommend to others or hand on to their disciples. Sivoham means that you are Divine.

Man must be engaged in work; he must do it with faith and devotion, as an act of worship; in this way, he will derive wisdom. But, the education imparted today does not direct him along these lines. It is sterile instruction, as it is. I hope that in this Polytechnic, whose Foundation Stone I am laying now, will pay attention to these points also. Moral and spiritual principles have to be emphasised all along, even while merely material subjects are taught and learnt. I want the Committee in charge of this Institution to propagate the ideals of Service, Love and Sadhana, which Sanathana Dharma embodies. Even a small number of such Institutions will be enough in our country to serve as examples and guides to others. A College in every City is not necessary. We do not have several Commanders-in-Chief; we have only one, though soldiers are million or so. This one College in the City of Bombay, if it is run in an ideal manner, can spread the ideals of the Unity of Man, and the Utility of Love throughout its vast population and even outside its limits.

Students who undergo training here, in this College, when they go to the other States will spread the ideals they have imbibed here. The role of the teacher is also important, for, if a student deteriorates, only he will suffer. We must try to raise in this College good teachers for similar colleges in future. The Citizens of Bombay should endeavour to promote educational institutions of this type and also institutions fostering the health of people, so that the land may have peace and prosperity.

Today, there is a great deal of talk that this country is lacking in peace. But, this is not right; for, the lack of peace of mind is an intensely individual complaint and phenomenon. The country has not deteriorated at all! It is the individual that has to be cured; it is their thoughts and feelings

that have to be corrected and cleansed. It is not possible for any one individual to change his ideas, his habits, his attitudes and impulses. For example, we find that the price of every article is soaring sky-high. The rulers of the land are devising various plans to bring down the price. But, this can succeed only through one means: raise the value of man, and the value of everything else will come down. Now, man is devalued, into a machine. Man too has forgotten his worth. He is demeaning himself into a beast and not realising that there is Divinity in him. Today, commodities are valued as essential, but, man is not so valued.

If man is valued at his true worth, and treated as a Divine Spark enclosed in the body, then, he will rise into new heights of achievement and produce all the necessities of life in profusion. He will not grab or cheat; he will be a good worker, a pure person and a sincere Sadhaka. He will cultivate the inner vision and realise that he is not the body or senses or mind or even intellect. He will be full of Prema and self-confidence.

It is not good for man to be constantly engaged in exciting things—exciting food, talk, books, films, games, sights, sounds. They are Rajasic things that disturb and agitate the mind. Nor is it good for man to be engaged in cruelty—cruel professions or activities.

Today, the Foundation has been laid for this Agricultural College. I hope a beautiful building will come up here before long. I hope there will not be any misuse of money in wasteful expenditure. I hope students who are trained in this College will become efficient farmers, self-reliant young men, who depend on their own skill, character and stamina for earning their livelihood. I bless you all.

—*Bhagavan's Discourse: 5/1/75 Dharmakshetra, Bombay*

He at the Helm

It was exactly one year ago that the sequence of events became even remotely perceivable. Swami Paramahansa Muktananda of Ganeshpuri was scheduled to arrive in Hawaii, on the return portion of his American tour. With the multitude of hotel accommodations available and the innumerable homes that abound the slopes of Honolulu, it was a little surprising when Baba Muktananda accepted the invitation to stay in the `shell' of our new home, still very much under construction!

The invitation had been extended significantly, seemingly on impulse, partially based on Irene's steadfast devotion to Baba Muktananda as her Guru (even though she had never met him) and partly on my reluctance to have any one, including the illustrious personage of a Holy Man, to intrude into my life and the small flat we were than renting.

All doubts and hesitations associated with meeting a `realized being' for the first time welled up. How should I act? Will he see through me? The expectation of his arrival in itself was fraught with discomfort. But, from the instant of his arrival, Swami warmed our hearts. With affectionate smiles and embraces, he melted away the walls of resistance; with his discourses, he

removed doubts and with firm mandates, he instilled discipline. The darshans he held and the Shakti of his presence permeated the atmosphere with Prema and Shanti.

Physically, it has changed the 'outcome' of the house itself! Aspects of finish—design were obviated and the building took on an air of simplicity and informality quite unintended initially. More importantly, the visit initiated a change in our lives, which at that moment, we could little comprehend.

In quick sequence, other Swamis travelling through Hawaii further graced the home with bhajans and discourses. Swami Satchidananda of the Integral Yoga Society accepted an invitation, again seemingly offered on impulse and added his grace and his lessons to the house. The 'net' was closing in on us; but, we had yet to understand its basic implications!

Then Indra Devi, beloved Mataji, on a brief stop-over from India to Tecate (Mexico) delivered, to a small gathering at the "Church of the Cross-Roads," a testament in words, and a film of her love for her Bhagavan, Sri Sathya Sai Baba. We had decided to attend the lecture, simply because the name 'Sai Baba' denoted yet another Guru. The culmination of that evening left us with a sense of amazement at what we had seen and heard, but, with a knowledge that this Baba was something quite different from all that we had previously encountered or read about. This was an Avatar; of this, we were sure!

The following day, Mataji arrived at the house quite unexpectedly and with more words of reverence for Sai Baba, she related the Leelas of Baba and the supreme love he bore towards his devotees. Books followed Mataji; we were inundated with tapes of bhajans recorded at Prasanthi Nilayam, and more printed material. The waves of Sai Baba rolled over us and washed us, until it was all that we could contain within us, the need to travel to India; but, this was yet to be.

Numerous attempts were made, all meeting with obstructions. Some seven months later, all conditions jelled—visas, passports, finance—and, we journeyed via Australia to India! Though all this took place, it must be said, that the impetus of Baba's calling us, and all that had transpired during the past year, still remained vague in our minds...

We arrived in Madras, and after a three-hour lay-over, boarded a DC-3 for Bangalore arriving at 10'00 in the evening. The next morning, a call was placed to our only contact in India, Mr. K. Bhirumal, a devotee of Baba. He recommended that we journey immediately to Whitefield. Another taxi; and, then, the pure Delight of watching Baba grace the rows of 'royal poincianas', lined thick with devotees.

Upon reminiscing on our impressions later, we were struck with the feeling of complete familiarity that Baba imparts, to even those seeing him for the first time! The figure, replete with silken dress, the gentle smile, and, of course, the halo of hair were exactly as we had known it would be. We handed over a letter that Mataji had given us, somewhat awkwardly and in full awe. Baba commented, "Mexico! Indra Devi!" and passed on. Word came soon after, that we were to follow him! Baba had blessed us, with an interview; the total time that had elapsed since our arrival in India was 18 hours!

The little Interview Room was crowded and Baba launched into a general discourse with specific comments directed towards some, but, seemingly applicable to all. Then... the Individual Session, in which he quickly cut into the secret depths of one's own being, the problems, of health, the previous meetings (!) where he had contacted (!) Irene via a dream, and the specifics of that dream and another (!), the difficulties of individual Sadhana, the particular desire of each of us and our internal turmoils. Vibhuti, sacred ash, was manifested. All this... quickly, naturally and spontaneously delivered and conferred, with a love and understanding which rendered new meaning to those old words.

Here was a CONFIDANTE, GUIDE, DOCTOR, FRIEND, FATHER, MOTHER and GOD, rolled into ONE! Here was the culmination of those past events within this lifetime and all the previous ones, Manifest, All Knowing, before us!

It would be naive to say that either one of us can, even in a small measure, understand the Divine nature of Baba's Calling, much less understand Baba Himself. It is readily perceptible, however, that the culmination of events leading to our arrival in Puttaparthi is in reality a point of conscious embarkation, (in essence, a New Birth), knowing that Baba is at the helm.

Ours, of course, is hardly a unique story. There were no spectacular occurrences; there were no manifest Leelas. Yet, all this is, in reality, His Leela. Each one called to Prasanthi Nilayam comes on a wave of `seeming circumstance'. Names, times, places and events vary from person to person; but, the story remains ever the same—the directional moment towards Baba is unmistakable and constant. As has been stated to us, the subtleties of man's ascent towards God pale and wane, when compared to the subtleties of God's descent to man. Bhagavan's Call is the subtlest of subtleties; but, come, we must, when call beckons! There are no accidents, no circumstantial happenings. But, how it is all integrated how it is all fits together, is best understood by Baba Himself.

Once touched by Baba, once the bond is established, we can only venerate Him, prostrate before His Loving Grace and tireless generosity, and pray that He will continue to bestow His multitudinous Blessings and unerring control over all aspects of our existence and sadhana. By His Grace and His Grace alone, we are here. Jay Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Sai Ram Sai Ram Sai Ram.

—*Steve W. G. Au, Honolulu; Hawaii*

The game of Life is worth playing and becomes an interesting tonic, only when there are bounds for field and rules and restrictions for the payers. Imagine a game of football or cricket, where there are no rules or boundaries or umpires. The game will be chaotic; it will soon degenerate into a riot, a free fight. Dharma is what makes the game of life interesting, decent and desirable.

—**Baba**

Narayana Seva

The gift of food is the noblest of all gifts. You have today arranged the feeding of a large number of people and thus justified the name of this village. The years of life allotted to man is very short; the world in which he lives is very wide; time extends far behind and far beyond. What little man has to do here has to be done quickly, at the place that is assigned to him, within the time that is allotted to him. And, man has such a formidable task before him; it is to fulfill it that he has come as man, exchanging for this human habitat, all the merit he has acquired during many past lives. The task is no less than the manifestation of the Divinity latent in man. The easiest and the most pleasant means by which this can be accomplished is Seva—the service of man, done in a spirit of dedication and devotion. And, in villages like this, Seva is a potent and profitable discipline. And, the best type of Seva is feeding the hungry. The first step in this discipline is the establishment of mutual help and co-operation in all Seva activities among the residents. This will ensure peace, security and prosperity for the village.

A single homestead cannot make a village; many have to cluster together and live as one family in order to constitute a village. And, for such Seva as you are doing, each homestead and every member there of has to lend a helping hand and achieve success in the common venture. The physical strength, the monetary resources, the intelligence of all have to be pooled in order to make the project succeed. This garland has not happened out of a single flower; many flowers of different hues and fragrances have strung themselves around the string in order to achieve the common aim of decorating the picture or person. No one in the village can stand apart and say, 'This work is not mine; it is the responsibility of that man or this group'.

For, today, the Cities have taken a turn towards confusion and contests; they have no peace, no security, no calmness. It is all agitation, anxiety, fear, faction and suspicion. It is only in villages like yours that a modicum of quietness, fellow-feeling, tolerance, and truth can be found. The pollution of character that is spreading in cities is fast invading the villages also. The villages should not yield to the temptation of imitation and invite catastrophe on themselves. They must appreciate the ancient Indian ideals of simplicity and sincerity, service and spiritually oriented living. You must curb greed and anger, envy and pride, and live in amity and the spirit of brotherhood. Then India will be happy and prosperous. Each one must carry out the duties of his role in a worshipful attitude.

I see that only a few young persons and elders are running about and carrying on the various tasks this function entails. This is the case in most villages. If all do not share in the cost, the village cannot benefit. Life has been bestowed not for just eating and digesting, roaming and reclining, but, for a far greater purpose—the realisation of the Divinity in us, in all that exists around us and even beyond all things that strike our senses. To waste such a life in vain pursuits, and in more sense-pleasures is not the sign of an intelligent person. Deserve the Grace of God by helping the weak and poor, the diseased and the disabled, the distressed and the downtrodden. Do not laugh at others or take delight in insulting them, or in carrying tales demeaning them. There is no more heinous sin than hurting the feelings of others. Man must develop two qualities: Fear of sin and devotion to God.

To cultivate devotion to God, always endeavour to mix with good persons, engage yourselves in Namasmarana, (in the early hours of the day, join the choir groups that sing the names of God and move along the streets thrilled with the joy that wells up when you do so). You have a few temples in the village; make them active, and alive. Gather there for an hour each day and sing Bhajans. Why waste time or even pollute time, by talking ill of others? The eye, the hand, the nose, the head, the stomach, each looks different; each does one special task; each has different name and function. But, they subserve the interests of the one body to which they all belong; they do not work at cross-purposes, do they? So too, each of you is a limb in the body called the village. Do your work without a murmur; work in full co-operation with all. The village can be healthy and happy only then. Love, love alone can bind you to others and to God, who is the very embodiment of Love.

You are referring to this gift of food as Annadana, the Charity of Food. But, no one has the authority to give in charity what has been given by God or be proud of it or even to feel that he has given something in charity. God gave the rains, God fostered the sapling and God ripened the grain; what right have you to call it yours and give it in Charity? It is not Dana that you do; you are only offering gratitude to God; you are sanctifying the grain you have harvested by offering the food prepared out of it to these Gods (Narayana) in human form. Call it Narayana Seva; that will be more correct. Anyway, since you are doing it with love and humility, in spirit of Divine worship, I have come to your village to bless you. Do not cast all responsibility on a committee, or a group of enthusiasts; join them wholeheartedly and offer to share the burden. I want every one to join in this Narayana Seva and that it should be done, not once a month as now, but even at more frequent intervals.

—*Baba's Discourse: Sore-Hunise Village 28-1-75*

Not Twice, But Thrice

Imitation

You are all sharing the joy of serving others, doing good to others, according to your capacity and skill. The main objective of the Sathya Sai Organisation—which you must always keep before you—is, to help man to recognise the Divinity that is inherent in him. But, this Divinity is latent; it is veiled; it is not always apparent to one self or others.

There is nothing wholly bad or wholly good, in Creation. There are few who do not commit mistakes; there are few who do not perform good deeds. Both good and bad, beneficent and maleficent, constructive and destructive, are ever present everywhere. You, as members of the Managing Committees of the units of the Samiti, and as members of the Seva Dal and of the Mahila Vibhag are unique, because, you have dedicated your talents and time to the service of others and, ultimately, to the promotion of your own best interests.

First of all, I want that you should give up the blind imitation of other cultures, other social systems and other ideals. This tendency has now conquered 99 out of 100 people, in our country. Your conduct and behaviour, your dress and food habits, your sports and games, your methods of agriculture and industry, your art and architecture—all are borrowed from other societies. Even

your intelligence follows the processes of other cultural groups. You are leading lives which have no roots in the past; it is guided and controlled by these other civilisations.

The One

To escape the pull of these alien attractions and material pleasures, faith in God as your inner Reality and the source of immense power is essential. The Sathya Sai Organisation must recognise and reestablish this Truth—the Atma that is the Reality of every one, however distinct they may appear in physical form and mental equipment. When one lamp lights many lamps, all shine with equal brilliance. The Param-jyoti (the One Supreme Effulgence) is the origin and source of all the Jivan-jyotis (Particularised effulgences). Ekam eva adwithiyam: There is only ONE without a second. The same wind is referred to as breeze, whirlwind, storm, typhoon, hurricane etc. The same God is referred to by different Names. This is the very foundation of our culture.

So, your duty is to emphasise the One, to experience the One, in all that you do and speak. Do not give any importance to differences of religion or sect or status or colour. Have the feeling of one-ness permeating every act of yours. Only those who do so have a place in this Organisation; the rest can best withdraw.

You have to re-establish the moral outlook and the righteous behaviour in this great Country. That is the tradition appropriate and native to India. However; do not look down upon the cultures of other countries; do not try to discover faults on other cultures and decry them. The Bhagavad-Gita advises that you should be "adweshta sarva bhuthanam," not condemning or hating any being.

With Full Heart

You have been in this Organisation since 7 or 8 years. It is time for you to ask, yourselves, whether you are in it out of compulsion or of your own free will; whether you are giving it the best you can, in efficiency and enthusiasm. Has the work been exhibition-oriented or has it been genuine? Is your faith in the rightness of Service patent in every act of yours?

Let me tell you that if you serve with your whole heart the result will be Ananda for you; half-hearted work will give only superficial joy or fame. Remember that the God you worship by this work is resident in your own heart. Others may or may not see; but, the ever-present God sees and notes all that you do or feel. He metes out to you the consequence, in full, of whatever you do or feel.

There was a rich man once who owned a rice mill. He heard a Pundit expound that the Service that God appreciates most is the gift of food to the hungry. So, he decided to serve food to the poor in his village. But he had no mind to use good varieties of rice for the purpose. He felt that any rice is good enough for them. So, he got the rice that was rotting in his godown—he did not care even to remove the worms that infested it; he cooked it and served it to the hungry poor, who ate it and suffered many illnesses as a consequence. His wife expostulated with him and told him that good food given to 10 persons would be more meritorious than bad food given to hundreds. But, he was in no mood to listen to sound advice.

Sincerity

The wife therefore hit upon a plan to him. She placed on his plate every day food that was rotten and full of worms. When he grew angry and castigated her, she replied, "The Pundit said that every one has to suffer for the injury he causes others; you have to eat, in the other world, rotten food, full of worms. I am giving that type of food to you, even now, so that you may get used to it. It will help you to eat the consequence of your evil deed." At this, the husband realised his iniquity; he repented for his wrongs and learnt better ways of service to the poor.

When you visit the patients in a hospital serve the patients with a full heart, sincerely and to the utmost extent possible. I must say that the service programmes you have undertaken in Bombay City are being carried on very well. They can be the ideals for other Cities to follow.

But, do not put a full stop; have only a coma. Move on with greater and greater enthusiasm, and achieve more progress in all direction's. Service is a life-time programme; it knows no rest or respite. This body has been given to you so that you may devote its Strength and skills to the service of brother-man. Serve man, until you see God in all men; then, what you do will be elevated as Worship.

God is Love and can be reached and realised through Love. God is Truth and can be reached and realised through Truth. But, are you concentrating on the development of Love and Truth?

Bal Vikas

I must say that the Mahila Vibhag is evincing greater enthusiasm and love in their work—the Bal Vikas classes, for example—than the men, in the Samitis. This is, I know, because the men have not got as much leisure to devote to Samiti activities; but, they can use the available time in sacred ways and to greater benefit. The kind of Seva which the women are doing in the Bal Vikas is very useful, for it ensures a good future for our country. The children are trained in a very fine manner. These children will bear the burden of the country better and more intelligently, with more attachment to the culture and traditions of Bharat.

Tell the children what they cannot learn by themselves, by observation, namely, the stories of Ramayana, the Bhagavata, and the Mahabharata. Tell them also stories from the Bible, the Buddhist texts, the Zend-Avesta, and the Quran. That a horse has four legs is a fact which one need not *teach* the child; it can discover it in a moment. What is not known to the children are the stories and verses that embody our culture.

Do not be deterred by people who say that the information and inspiration you give will be too much of a burden on the tender minds. It is only grown-ups that would find learning new facts burdensome; the tender age is the best for this kind of instruction. Tell them the importance of OM and its significance, as the basic sound of all creations. It is a meaningful symbolic sound; it is quite unlike the useless jargon which children learn today, in the very first lesson at school: Ba Ba, Black sheep! Ding Dong Bell; the Pussy is in the well!

Seva Dal

The Seva Dal members must spend their leisure time in Satsang and not waste even a moment in frivolous play. Take some good books and read them out to illiterate brothers and sisters;

spread the Message of our culture among all those who have no chance to know about it. Do this service to the slum-dwellers, the people who live in hutments, and the villages. The city-dwellers are used to silly storybooks and novels that drain their brains and plant evil thoughts in their minds. But the poor in the villages and in the huts will welcome you and listen to the stories and lives of saints and Divine Incarnations. Transmit to these people the sacred texts of all religions and the lives of the Saints of all faiths. Do not imagine that your task is to propagate Sai and speak of Sathya Sai and his Message. This is not right. But, through the name of Sathya Sai and the emphasis on his message, aim at the promotion of Godliness and of Faith in God. Create the spiritual attitude; promote spiritual discipline. It does not matter what Name you use, or what Form they concentrate upon. Through some Name and some Form, lead them into the path of Faith and Sadhana.

Just now, some among you felt that the sun is scorching the spot where I am and you wanted to do something to avoid it. But, this is happening to many people here, and you should not be content with measures to prevent the sun from hurting one individual. Seva Dal must care for the comfort of all. There is the Atma in every one. This Body is for you and all these other bodies are also mine.

Your Prema, your Shraddha, your Bhakti (love, steady faith and devotion) have persuaded me to come over to Bombay, twice a year! If you promote these virtues even more, in a still large measure, I will come to Bombay not twice, but, thrice a year, and give you Ananda. I give you blessings for all the Seva that you have undertaken and all the love you are sharing with others.

Bhagavan's Discourse: 6-1-75 Bombay

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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Precautions by Lakshmana

When Lakshmana left the hermitage, he pleaded with Sita to enter the place and be within closed doors, and never to move out; he exhorted her to be careful and vigilant; he moved out of the hermitage, with no willingness or even with no strength to move! He turned round and addressed the spirits of the forest, praying to them to keep watch over Sita and guard her. He drew 4 lines, around the hermitage and invoking on them mysterious and mighty mantric power, he asked Sita not to step beyond them on any account, under any pretext or pressure.

Lakshmana was a person endowed with all the virtues; he was caught between loyalties to two diverging commands; he could not disobey either; so, he was overcome with anguish. He had perforce to behave counter to the command of Rama; he had to leave Sita alone and unprotected by him.

Fear shook his heart. He walked off, in spite of his legs failing him; he turned back towards the hermitage, at every step he took forward.

The Beggar

At that very moment, Ravana was transforming himself in appearance and apparel, for, he was awaiting just this chance. He became in outer form a Rishi; but, his intention, in spite of his innate power to terrify by his very name, both gods and demons, was to steal like a sly dog. Casting his eyes all around him, he entered the hermitage, surreptitiously, with a trembling heart. When he attempted to enter by the front door, the mystic lines that Lakshmana had drawn across seemed to raise tongues of fire at him. He feared that his plan might fail and that something even worse might happen to him. So, he stood beyond the line, and shouted, "Mistress of the House! Give me some alms."

Sita heard his cry; she knew that it was Ravana. She brought tubers and fruits in her palms, and came out through the door and stood outside the door. But, Ravana dared not go near to receive them. He said, "I shall not come close to any hermitage; this is my vow." He wanted that Sita herself should go near him and offer the alms into his hand. Sita replied, "No. I cannot cross the line that was drawn by my brother-in-law. Come yourself revered guest! Receive it from me, here." At this, the mendicant who was really an impersonation argued, "Lady! I will not cross the line and come beyond it. Nor can I accept alms given from beyond a line. It is not proper for ascetics like me. Come. Give it to me, I am hungry; I am very hungry." He acted the part so well, with many a gasp and gesture, that Sita decided to give him the alms she had in her hand, after crossing the line and getting near him.

"Save Me"

All this happened in a trice. No sooner did she cross the line than Ravana drew her by hand and lifted her away into a waiting chariot; he did not pay heed to her lamentations, but, drove the chariot into the distance with terrible speed. Sita screamed out, "O Rama! Lakshmana! Come soon and save me from this wicked monster." The anchorites and forest-dwellers around Panchavati heard the cry but, could not save the person who lamented. The entire forest faded from green to brown, when the voice of agony passed through it. "O Rama! O Master! Save me; O Save!"—"Save me from this monster!"—that was the cry that reverberated in the forest and made all things that move and do not move feel sorrow-stricken in sympathy.

Sita was admonishing Ravana from inside the chariot. "O Ravana! You are building a royal road for your own destruction. You are effacing your empire, your subjects, your dynasty, completely, without trace. You are perpetrating this vileness with a laugh on your face; but, the day will come when you will pay for it with tears in your eyes. Mean wretch! This is a vicious act, unbecoming a person who has practised austerities like you. "She gave him many a piece of advice and warning; she also called upon Rama and Lakshmana to rescue her.

An Eagle hears the Call

The monarch of eagles, Jatayu by name, heard the plaintive cries that rose from that moving chariot. He recognised the voice as that of Sita. He realised that Sita was in the chariot of Ravana; he grieved over his age, which made him too weak to fight with Ravana, the villain who was taking her away by force. He felt that it would be wrong not to hinder him. He knew that no act of service can be nobler than rescuing a woman from the clutches of a fellow who was kidnapping her from her lord and master. He resolved to sacrifice his life, if need be, for the holy act of saving Sita from the demonic grasp, and using all his energy and skill for that act of

service. Circling overhead, Jatayu shouted, "O Sita! Have no fear. I shall destroy this cruel villain and release you. I shall place you in the Presence of Rama." He flew across the chariot's path, and hit Ravana many times with his sharp beak, causing him to bleed profusely he beat the chariot with his wings and attempted to stop it by creating a terrific wind that would retard its speed.

Jatayu, even while on his wings, gave Ravana excellent advice to correct himself, before it was too late. "Ravana! This is a step that would bring you no good. Release Sita and go, safely home. Or else, like moths that fall into fire, you and your brood will be burnt in the fire of Rama's anger. Your pride will cause your total ruin. To kidnap another's wife is a heinous sin. Only a sinful heart will yearn for another's wife, and wander in search of her. Only base brutes, worse titan dogs or foxes will descend to such depths. You are acting like a man who is so completely mad that he cannot pay any heed to what is in store for him. Consider, is there a more barbarian crime than this? O! What a sin has your parents done to be claiming you as their son? Your head has turned, because you calculate your physical strength, your riches and the peoples under your control. But, listen, all these will go up in flames and be reduced to ashes. Even the powers you have achieved through your austerities will be destroyed in a trice. Can you remain calm and inactive, when your wives are carried away or coveted by other Rakshasas? In fact, 'those who regard women as those who are their wives and those who are not' will never invite this dread misfortune on their heads.

Uttering these words of golden advice, Jatayu flew along with the speeding chariot for some distance. Sita derived great consolation and calm, while listening to the words of Jatayu. She was happy when she heard these sentiments so well expressed.

The Duel

Jatayu succeeded in stopping the chariot and forcing Ravana to engage in battle with him, after making Sita dismount the chariot and helping her to sit under a tree. But, age took its toll; he could not fight for long; he was overcome by exhaustion. But, he was able, during the fight, to pull down the crown from his head, and to pluck out, a few bunches of hair. He pecked at his body so fiercely in so many places that he was turned into a mass of bleeding flesh. His beak and widespread wings hurt him a great deal and humbled his pride.

At last, as a last resort, Ravana drew his wheel-sword, and with its sharp edge, he cut off the wings of Jatayu, felling him helpless on the ground. Wings are as the very breath to eagles. So, he cried out in his agony the name of Rama and fell on the ground.

"I fought, with no reservations, in the cause of my Master; but, my struggle was of no avail. This too is the will of Rama. Rama must have planned all this, in order to confer some benefit on the world. Or else, can Sita be taken away by force by any one, without His Will designing the story? I have now only one prayer to Him. I must hold my breath at least until I meet Him and am able to convey this news to Him. I have nothing greater to do in this life." So saying, He closed his eyes and was lost in prayer.

Meanwhile, Ravana had placed Sita again in the chariot, and started off in great haste and with much commotion. Jatayu saw him moving fast; he heard Sita crying out for help. Jatayu was

sunk in anguish that he could not offer further resistance; he lay, in a pool of his own tears, his heart yearning for Rama and his tongue, whispering His Rama.

"When death draws near, when calamity is a few steps off, nature behaves in an unexpected manner to warn and to teach. Things behave topsy-turvy. This Ravana too, is behaving in this manner, since his end is near, and his kith and kin are about to be wiped off the face of the earth"—Jatayu realised this truth and lay there, keeping himself alive by his own will, awaiting the approach of Rama.

Panchavati Hermitage

At the Panchavati, Rama returned from the depths of the jungle, after killing the 'impersonation' called the Golden Deer. He thought within himself that the plot of his story would have by now worked out, at the hermitage, as decreed by His Will. He said within himself, "Though this is but the blossoming of my plan, people should not understand so soon that it is the Divine Design; so, I have to behave hereafter as an ordinary human being."

When he was about half way back, he saw Lakshmana coming and, he decided that he too must be kept unaware of the secret purpose behind the seeming tragedy. So, he asked, as if he was perturbed in mind, "Lakshmana! Brother! You have disobeyed me and brushed my word aside. You have come away, leaving Sita alone in the hermitage. How could you do so? You are witnessing the wickedness of the Rakshasa brood every day; how could you desert Sita so? Alas! What has happened to her? I am afraid some calamity has befallen! I feel that Sita is not there, in the hermitage. Alas! What shall we do now? What is to be our future?"

Hearing this lamentation, Lakshmana fell on his brother's feet, and said, "Brother! You know me, and the inner workings of my mind. Whatever the occasion I am ever ready to offer myself, my very breath, at the feet. Will I ever go counter to your command? No, I never will. However, this time it has happened. The force that compelled me to disobey is the prompting of my Destiny. What can I do? The outburst, "O! Sita, O! Lakshmana," that arose from the throat of that false Deer reached the Hermitage. As soon as she heard it she urged me in various ways to run to your aid, for she feared great harm had come your way. I am conversant with the tricks of these Rakshasas and so, I fell at her feet and prayed for pardon. I told her, "Rama cannot be harmed in the least. No danger can approach him. The cries we heard are only the false stratagems of the Rakshasas."

A second time, those cries struck our ears. Then, she lost all courage. They were exact reproductions of your voice. , At this, she ignored her own Reality; she ignored the mores of kinship and family; she used words that should not be spoken or taken in by the ear; I could not suffer it any more; So, I directed her to take every precaution; I did all I could to keep her safe, and, then, came away from the hermitage. I shall gladly accept whatever punishment you award me, or, whatever measure you take to avenge the wrong I have done."

With these words, Lakshmana fell flat on the feet of Rama. At this, Rama said' "Lakshmana! You ought not to have left her all alone, whatever the reason. I feel that Sita will not be at the hermitage when we reach there. How can we pride ourselves as heroic men, when having come into this forest, we are not able to guard Sita from being carried away by the Rakshasas?"

Rama `laments'

Can you tolerate when people talk tomorrow that Rama was unable to save his wife from the calamity of being kidnapped? Can you remain calm in mind, listening to such talk? Alas! How am I to bear this tragedy of Sita? Rama moaned and groaned in great mental pain, just like an ignorant man, and ran forward to the hermitage, to find whether his fears were true.

As Rama had indicated, Sita could not be found therein. In seemingly unbearable anguish, Rama lamented her disappearance. Lakshmana fell on the floor, even as he stood, unable to bear the grief. Aware that he had caused this catastrophe, he felt like giving up his life; but, he realised soon that Rama, already deprived of Sita, would be put into further anxiety and tangles if he departs from' this world, taking his own life. He felt that if he dies, Rama would wander alone, in sorrow, through the forest glades; he will have none to give him food and drink. He could not bear the anguish of Rama at the loss of Sita. He could not find his tongue, nor could he frame words, to console Rama and pacify him.

Light Dawns

Lakshmana ruminated in his mind on all that had happened that day; he soon came to the conclusion that it must all be the result of Rama's own will; he realised that this brother of his was not just an ordinary man; he knew now that what was happening was part of the drama that was destined to bring about progress and prosperity for all mankind. For, he who could gladly wipe the tears from all eyes; he who was the guardian of the world, he who had not evinced an inkling of sorrow so far-was now lamenting and weeping like any ordinary human being, at separation from his wife! Watching these happenings, Lakshmana could easily infer that it was all the unrolling of a play directed by Rama!

Lakshmana knew very well that Sita was self-less, and incomparably virtuous. That such a uniquely pure woman could have met this calamity was inexplicable, except as a scene in that play, or a part of Divine Plot, devised by Rama. No one can execute even the slightest deed without orders from Rama.

However, Rama had come down as man, and resolved to guide man by his example along the path of justice, integrity, detachment, devotion, virtue, veracity; morality and humility. Lakshmana realised that this was the meaning of the play which, Rama and Sita were enacting. He recognised himself as but an actor, whose whole duty was to act the role assigned to him as well as he could.

Rama agrees

Deriving strength from these thoughts, Lakshmana approached Rama and fell at his feet. He said, "Brother! You are, I know, the Director of the Drama which the Cosmos is. There is nothing you cannot do, nothing you do not know. Everything that happens follows your will, alone. These events could not happen unknown to you. I will not take a denial. I believe so, firmly. By these incidents, I believe you are designing to promote the peace of the world and destroy the Rakshasa race. My mind is whispering this to me and asking me to be firm in that faith. This must be the Truth behind this play. Pray tell me the Truth and help me gain peace of mind."

Rama replied smilingly, "Lakshmana! You are a limb of my person; so, what can I keep away from you? Your inference has hit the truth. I have incarnated in order to uphold and foster Dharma (Righteousness); to do so, I have to enact many scenes as examples of righteous and unrighteous conduct. A baby that wails has to be comforted into quiet joy by means of prattle and play, toys and jingles, songs and swings; The mother has to devise many stratagems on the spot, in order to persuade the baby to drink the milk it needs. The purpose is just the giving of the milk feed; but, consider how useful these *means* are—the songs and swings, the toys and talks, the tricks and tickles. These methods help the quenching of hunger and the stoppage of wailing. That is their reason, too. You have to add them all up, in order to discover how the hunger was quenched and the grief ended.

Similarly, dear brother, I who am the Mother of the Universe, have to act in these manifold ways to re-establish Righteousness and demolish unrighteousness. These incidents have been designed to secure the twin aims of the removal of grief and the winning of bliss; they are not just meaningless exercises.

Ordinary folk base their conduct on the ideals presented to them; so, as Master and Leader, I have to practise what I intend to place before them, as ideal conduct. Unless I practice what I hold forth as the ideal, I cannot claim to be Master and Leader. When masters and leaders who do not deserve the positions appear and exercise authority, Righteousness declines and Unrighteousness runs wild. Therefore, brother, remember that those in authority as masters or leaders must prove their advice right by actual practice; they must help realise the ideals they preach by their own genuine efforts. This is the way to earn the Grace of God and the gratitude of men.

Sita knows the role she is playing. These two bodies—mine and Sita's—evinced the joys and pangs of union and separation, only as bodies! The pain and pleasure, the weeping and wailing are all illusory and unreal. They follow the needs and compulsions of the Incarnation I have taken upon myself, along with other limitations

I am taking you into confidence regarding my Reality; take note that you too will have to act in conformity with time, deed and cause, space, occasion and recipient, as the story unfolds. This Divine Mystery is beyond the intelligence of others. So, you must also keep mum on this and play according to the rules. We have to concentrate on the mission on which we have come.

After this revelation, they plunged immediately into the task of searching for missing Sita. Both acted their roles during this search most sincerely, admirably, and realistically.

Sita's Role

Not only the brothers, but, Sita too exhibited supreme nobility and acted with equal staunchness and sincerity, even though the Rakshasa guards, in the place where she was kept captive, terrified her and threatened her most cruelly. She did not waver, or yield; she stuck bravely to her determination to save herself and to preserve her purity. She maintained her vow undefiled.

The drama enacted by the two parties held forth for every householder and every individual the highest ideal of Righteous conduct. It placed before the fathers, mothers, wives husbands brothers and friends the best lines of behaviour expected of them and how each of them has to keep their promises, and grow their virtues. Why dilate further The Ramayana lays down ideals for all relationships of life, and for the realisation of the highest aim of human life.

Nowhere else can be got such a variety and quantity of moral dicta and their practical applications. The one text, Ramayana, has, soaked in its pages, directions for correct conduct in all situations and under all conditions; it teaches how to justify this human birth, how to carry on the government of a kingdom, how to regulate the reactions of the people and how to design the laws that can control and consummate the wishes of the people. If only the Ramayana is studied closely and observed in daily practice, mankind can attain peace and prosperity in all fields.

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness

(To be continued)

The sea is receiving the rain... and I awakened to my heart's pain. My Spirit is searching, searching... in sleep I cry out Your Name. The rooms are all quiet, as if ghosts had taken the place... of the sorrows of all the sleepers. For their sorrows I pray, I pray. Pillowed beneath my head each night, is Your sweet picture. In dreams there is only Your Face... the Face of my Lord, SAI. On the hills before the crashing sea, I sleep and my Spirit has peace. I no longer cry, my bliss and my ecstasy... is for You, my Lord Sathya Sai.

—Genevieve Savoroff

With You, Within You

Q: Swami! I wish to settle down here, at Puttaparthi, which is my real home.

Baba: The repose of the wave is in the Ocean, which is its support and sustenance. Your home is neither America nor India, neither New York nor Puttaparthi; nor, any place of pilgrimage, sanctified by saints. What matters is, not what you do, but, how; not where you are, but, how you are, where you are. As for this being your home, rest assured that I will protect you, no matter where you are. You cannot be separate from me; you are not separate from me.

Q: You are my Guru, Swami.

Baba: I am with you and within you; here and now, there and ever. From within, I dissolve your doubts, allay your fears, stop your anguish. Is that not your experience?

Q: I am unworthy of all this compassion.

Baba: You say so, because the way of the world is to reward worthiness and deny even attention to those it judges unworthy. But, I know of no such limitation or distinction. Sunshine falls

on all; it disinfects all, warms all, illumines all. I know you want a tangible Sadhana, suited to the equipment you now possess.

Q: I am tired of this unending round of joys and sorrows.

Baba: But, you have lived with them all these years and all these lives, too. Why do you talk of certain happenings as joys and certain others, as sorrows? Today's joy may well be tomorrow's sorrow; what is joy for you may well be another's sorrow. Do not judge happenings as good or bad, pleasurable or painful. What right have you to judge? Submit to the test—whether it is light or hard. Be glad, be thankful that you are tested and toughened and cleansed. Your inner consciousness must be like the sky, where no trail is left by the flight of birds or planes or rockets.

Q: What Sadhana is best for me, Swami?

Baba: Be like the log of wood that is tossed about by waves; but be aware of your being on the lap of the Ocean. Be delighted that wind and water are playing with you. Do not want it to be different. Do not want anything; be fully content.

Q: But, Swami, I must reach the shore...

Baba: It is a shoreless Ocean, this Ocean of Bliss and Grace. Give up trying to go anywhere. Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached, they say. But there is nowhere to go; the goal is in you, realisable as soon as you arise and awake, as soon as you know you are the wave on the Ocean, of the Ocean.

Q: Then, I need make no effort?

Baba: You have to; it is a challenge to all men. Relinquish the search in the outer world; seek within, the core of happiness. Take refuge in your own Truth, in the Atma. Go to the centre of the cyclone, where calm prevails.

Q: But, that will deprive me of you...

Baba: I am the Truth, the Core of your being. Bring me, your deepest wounds, your unhealed scars, all that oppresses your being, all that hinders your progress. Look upon me, as with form and as formless.

Q: I adore the Form and the Name.

Baba: The image your mind has made is of me, in this form and with this name. But, this is a tiny fraction of my Reality. Your problem is 'division', this Form as different from other forms, this Name as distinct from other names. But, Truth is One, without a second. It admits of no partial allegiance, no part-time devotion, no half-hearted dedication.

Q: I wish to teach the West the vision of the East.

Baba: Let all else happen as it will. Do not try to change the ways of others. People are unteachable through words. If God wills that they learn by example, they will. But, at their own rate in their own time. So, be an example; that is enough.

—*From a New Yorker's Notebook*

Baba.... in Mexico

The world over, devotees of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba know, from personal experiences of His Leelas, that He is omnipresent and that He is, wherever they are.

Villa de San Miguel, Mexico, is on the opposite side of the world from India. It is as far distant from the physical person of Baba as any place can be, and, this is where our home was built. When the builders were finished and gone, and we were about to move in, the floor had to be cleaned. My wife took a garden hose and used the stream of water as a broom to sweep out the overlay of dust, which had come from the work of the builders. But, before beginning her task, she had placed a treasured picture of the Lotus Feet of Baba, on the hearth of the salon fireplace. She moved the garden hose from room to room, and after a while returned to the salon, where the floor was just beginning to dry.

I was outside and I heard her voice urgently calling. Upon joining her in the salon, she pointed to the imprint of two small bare feet on the damp cement floor, and asked in a perplexed tone, "How can I make that mark when I have shoes on?"

We were silent, looking at the clear imprint of the two small feet. Our eyes moved from the imprint to the photograph of the Lotus Feet, and we looked at each other in the realization that, "It had to be His Feet. Who else could it be but Baba, leaving a sign that He was here in the new house?"

In our neighbourhood, there is a young man who does gardening. He is poor; but, also unfortunate, for he has the habit of liquor. He married a nice local girl and a baby had been born, just before, we left on a visit to India.

While we were away, we had arranged with this young man to visit our house, once a week and water the flowers in the garden. During the course of an interview granted to us by Baba on the day of our departure from India, He turned to my wife and said, "About that servant of yours..." My wife said, "But, Swami, we have no servant." He said, "Yes. But, there is a man watering the flowers. Take this and give it to the baby." Then, He moved His hand and there appeared a medallion on a chain which He handed to my wife. She exclaimed, "How wonderful! It is lovely baby and he is a nice man." Swami responded, "No. He has very serious faults."

As I write this, we are on the eve of another visit to India. There is a new shrine to Baba just completed in one of the rooms of the house. My wife had placed Swami's pictures there and she burned the first stick of incense to honour Him. Yesterday, a couple of days after the little ceremony, she was cleaning the house and had reached the shrine, which was the next on schedule for the dusting routine. Some ashes had fallen from the stick of incense that had been burned and she was about to dust the ashes away, when something about them halted her hand in mid-air.

I heard her voice, excitedly calling and when I arrived, she pointed to the ashes. The ashes had fallen in the form of a perfect and beautifully proportioned OM sign!

Out of an infinite number of possible configurations that falling ash can take, surely, the odds against the ash falling in a perfect OM sign rule out the 'accident' theory. It had to be Swami, present here, on the opposite side of the Earth from India, telling His devotees once again that, where they are, He also is there.

—Hislop

Ethics: An Integral Part of Religion

—K. Guru Dutt

An influential and growing body of opinion holds that the days of religion are over, and that secular ethics is fully adequate to the regulation of life. By and large, Nehru seems to have shared this view. Thus Andre Malraux, the noted French intellectual in his book *Anti-Memoirs*, quotes Nehru as saying, "Humanity lacks something essential. What? A sort of spiritual element which holds in check the scientific power of modern man. It is now clear that science is incapable of regulating Life. Life is regulated by virtues."

Such identification of spirituality with ethics is altogether too naive. It ignores the extraordinary complexity of the workings of the human mind. The objection to it comes not so much from the side of religion, as from science, especially from recent psychology. Long before Freud, William James has stressed the part played by the subconscious mind in human experience and behaviour; and sought to explain how a large part of religion lay in techniques for coming to terms with the subconscious. Subsequently the idea was developed from various angles by Freud and Jung and a host of other investigators. Although they differ greatly in regard to the mode of approach, as well as their conclusions, they are all agreed about the dynamic function of the unconscious in our lives. Hence they are all clubbed together as "depth" psychologies.

Our problems, personal and social, are thus seen as having their roots in the unconscious, and as being the outcome of a conflict between the conscious and the unconscious. The solution of these problems obviously depends on a resolution of such conflicts. Human drives have their origin in the unconscious, and conscious professions are in the main "rationalizations" or justifications of unconscious motivation. It is the dream life rather than surface awareness that offers a glimpse into the depths of being. During the waking life, contact with the unconscious cannot be established directly or "consciously", but only indirectly through myths and symbols: they are the language of the unconscious. This realization is leading to a wholly new evaluation of their role and importance. Such being the case we can imagine that conscious and willful ethics is but a poor barrier against the over-powering upsurges from the unconscious regions. The will is essential but far from sufficient.

Here then we are up against the great dilemma: the knowledge and the practice of virtue are wholly different things. That is the gist of evil-minded Duryodhana's lament, "Alas, I know the good, yet I am unable to follow it; I know what is evil, yet I cannot desist from it." But even Arjuna's problem is no other. He asks in the Gita (III.36) "What is it that compels a man against

his own will to do evil?" The answer is that when a man feels acutely confronted with the limits of his will, he instinctively craves the support of something which is not a creature of his will. It matters little whether this "Other" is named God, or the Law, or anything else. The immemorial experience of mankind is that such a buttressing power lies at the back of appearances. It does not thrust itself on us, but is accessible if we attune ourselves to it. In the words of the Bible: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you."

The secret of Mahatma Gandhi's power lay in his co-ordination of religion and ethics. Our mistake is fondly to imagine that the two can be divorced, and that we can retain a secular ethics while at the same time discarding God. Gandhiji's strength consisted in the rhythm of the exertion of will and its surrender, each reinforcing the other. Pride of will is the greatest obstacle to its own efficacy, paradoxical though this may appear. That will is unconquerable which is capable of saying "Thy will be done!"

The process is not so difficult as it may look at first sight; and it can be divested of all the paraphernalia of conventional religion. Not faith but a willingness of the heart is all that is needed. If one assumes and cultivates a "presence" which watches every thought and deed, the mood will grow stronger with each affirmation. It will act as a check as well as a stimulant capable of experimental verification. We know to what an extent behaviour can be affected by the feeling that we are being secretly spied on; or how guarded we shall be in our talk if we believe that a concealed microphone is recording it. But a posited inner "presence" can censor our thoughts also. The point is that even mere suspicion can prove as effective as actuality. It is so with the notion of God, conceived as the Inner Ruler (*Antaryamin*). It is a tacit "presence" which is there all the time, even when we are not aware of it. To become aware of it is the core of all religion. We may say, "Take care of the presence and the 'presence' will take care of our ethics." More concretely, I should say that the "Presence" I have in mind is no other than that of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Jesus was referring to the loss of such awareness when he asked, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" No doubt this has been understood as meaning that one has to make a choice as between the world and the soul, and that he cannot have both. And it is true enough that men have sought in religion a way of escape from the world. But the great dictum is worded conditionally, and is capable of another interpretation: "It would indeed be an irreparable loss if man in his greed for the things of the world should pay for them with the integrity of his soul." This alternative, which is the converse of the other, is no less valid, and makes out a case for the co-existence of the world and the soul.

This awareness does not inhibit activity, but eliminates egoism. The question here is not one of the "existence" or "non-existence" of God in the objective sense. But the awareness makes one perceive a "presence" in which, in Gandhiji's words, the Law and the Law-giver are one. Merging in this "presence" one reaches into the depths of being, and experiences what has been variously described as "cosmic consciousness" (Whitman), as "the oceanic feeling" (Freud), or the sense of the "Holy" (Rudolf Otto).

There are many varieties of such experience; but ethics has no place for any of them. On the other hand, religion includes ethics as an integral part of itself. An ethics which excludes

religious experience is self-stultifying; and is no match for science which plumes itself on its "ethical neutrality."

Gandhiji used to say that the opening lines of the Isha Upanishad embodied all the religion and ethics we need: "Realizing that everything is pervaded by God, eschew greed, and let all enjoyment be tempered by renunciation. This is the sole key to a sane and active life." The Gita also stresses the same idea: Yoga is skill in action; and such skill lies in a balance between effort and renunciation. Popular wisdom in ancient India had its maxim: Excess (greed) is to be avoided in everything—*Ati sarvatra varjayet*.

The foundation of such an ethics is a sense of limit. Thus the Buddha advocated the Middle Path; and the ancient Greeks prized "moderation". Till recently Europe too cherished this value. Thus Montaigne asked, "Can there be excess in virtues?" and himself answered: "No, if there is excess, it ceases to be virtue." A faint echo of this sense is discernible in our word "economy".

But modern civilization has "cast prudence (economy) to the winds". Ours is an economics of waste. It is a record-breaking process which wants more and ever more of whatever it be. What is urgently needed is an ethics which will keep this extravagant greed in check. What will set a limit to the actions undertaken by the partisans of the good? What independent principle is there to control the excesses of the upward and onward drive of "progressive" determination? A purely pragmatic account of the good leads necessarily to unmeasured conduct. As Dr. G. P. Grant has said, "The idea of limit is unavoidably the idea of good."

Summing up, the equating of religion with ethics is detrimental to both. Essential elements of religion find no place in ethics, e.g., a sense of the sacred (numinous), the perception of a Law which links up the numinous with everyday life, an I-Thou relationship (to use Martin Buber's phrase) with a Centre glimpsed through similar relationships with human beings and even with the cosmic objects, a cosmogony accommodating such experiences; symbolic techniques based on a psychology of depths as well as heights linking the conscious with the unconscious, and finally a scheme of morality in line with total human experience and activity. Otherwise, we shall be cooped up in a sterile ethics which, in Tagore's words, "dances precariously on the single hope of humanity."

The most perfect blend of religion and ethics for our own time is to be found in the teachings of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

In the Siva-Presence

The Flag

No announcement of where Mahasivaratri will be celebrated and where Bhagavan's Presence can be anticipated was made in the Sanathana Sarathi; the replies given to all inquiries were highly evasive; nevertheless, on the evening of the loch March, more than 20,000 devotees had

arrived at Prasanthi Nilayam, from all parts of the World and all the States of India to witness the Festival!

Bhagavan hoisted the Prasanthi Flag on the Prasanthi Mandir at 8 A.M., on the 11th, the Holy Day of Mahasivaratri, dedicated to the unintermittent contemplation of Siva, as the Giver of Prosperity and Victory, here and hereafter. Sri. N. Kasturi in a short speech placed at the Lotus Feet the homage of millions all over the world. Sri Siva Pandit, M.B.A., (Calif), of the Sri Sathya Sai College, Kadugodi, Bangalore spoke on the significance and sanctity of Sivaratri. Bhagavan then addressed the vast congregation. He said, "Every individual, thing and being has as the Core of Reality a Divine Spark, which is ever being fostered and grown into higher and larger dimensions. Man too has this task; the attempt to manifest in a deeper and more valid way the Divinity that is latent in him renders this Day, the bright Night of Siva. If this is not done, it remains the dark Night of misery and failure."

He said, "For this effort, the Buddhi or Intelligence has to play its rightful role. The mind has to place before the Intelligence the raw material of sense impressions and experiences for examination and appraisal. If it does not do so, man becomes the plaything of the vagaries of the sense. This is the reason that Gandhi prayed, `Sabko sanmati de Bhagavan! Grant all men, Good Intelligence, O Lord!' Intelligence with its power of discrimination is the most valuable instrument for the progress of man in the spiritual field."

"There are four grades of Intelligence: The I-centred, the Generous, the Other-centred and the Spiritual, Release-oriented. Dedication of all activity to the Supreme and devotion of all talents and possessions to the Service of others conceived as Divine are the characteristics of the fourth and the highest of these grades. Resolving to cultivate this grade of Intelligence is the prime duty of you all, on this sacred Day in this sacred Presence," Baba said.

The Abhisheka

At 11 A.M., Bhagavan proceeded along the Flower Path in procession, accompanied by Vedic Pundits the State Presidents of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations and others, to the Poornachandra Auditorium, where thousands were chanting Bhajans in ecstatic joy. He performed the Rite of Abhisheka for the Silver Icon of His Previous Avatar; He created a gemset golden jewel to decorate the brow of the icon; He showered fragrant Vibhuti over the Icon created by twirling His Hand inside a pot. He moved amongst the thick mass of devotees and conferred inestimable bliss.

The Jubilees

In the evening, the thousands assembled again at the Auditorium in the Presence. Sri. Nakul Sen, I C S (Retd.), Former Governor of Goa, spoke on the conception of Siva-Shakti and of its inner significance. Sri. C. Srinivas, Student, B. Com. Class (Final Year) at the Sri Sathya Sai College, Kadugodi, Bangalore, spoke in English on the Importance of Sivaratri as a Day of Dedication. Sri. N. V. Chalapathi Rao, Student, Ist Year, Pre-University Class, of the same College, spoke in Telugu, on the Prema that Bhagavan showers on the students of His College and the subtle but lasting transformation of character that it brings about.

Sri. Adinarayana Rao, famous Music Director and Srimati P. Susheela, the renowned playback Singer offered, at the Lotus Feet, the gramophone record wherein they have rendered very enchantingly the Suprabhatam verses and a few other hymns and prayers to Bhagavan.

Dr. S. Bhagavantam, Member, Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust, then announced in outline the salient features of the Programme drawn up by the Trust to celebrate, in November 1975, the Golden Jubilee of the Advent of the Avatar and the Silver Jubilee of the Prasanthi Nilayam. He said that "Bhagavan was not in favour of a prolonged and elaborate Festival, since it would involve multiple journeys for devotees or long periods of stay, away from home and from their usual avocations. So, Dr. Bhagavantam said, that Dasara '75 will be held on quite a simple scale only, while the Vedapurusha Jnana Yajna and other items of the Dasara Festival will be celebrated during the Birthday Fortnight at Prasanthi Nilayam.

The Jubilee Celebrations begin with 'Narayana Seva' (Feeding of the Poor and Distribution of Clothes) on the 13th November. 'thereafter, until the 20th, the Yajna will be performed in conformity with Vedic Injunctions, with the concomitant explanatory Discourses by Pundits and Scholars and the Divine Discourses by Bhagavan. The celebrations also include an All-India Conference of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Dal and another All-India Conference of the Gurus of the Sri Sathya Sai Bal Vikas. The highlight of the Festival will be the Second World Conference of the Office Bearers of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations which will be held at Prasanthi Nilayam for three full days in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan. An All-India Rally of the pupils of the Bal Vikas Classes will be a spectacular event, and a source of inspiration for all who have the future of mankind at heart. Dr Bhagavantam announced that more details of the functions as well as of the dates when these will be arranged will be published in due course.

The Emergence of the Lingam

Bhagavan in His Sivaratri Discourse dwelt on the One that is patent as Many, as was evident from the One, aim and yearning that had brought more than 25000 people from all lands into the Presence. "Languages differ, castes and creeds differ colours differ, professions and economic status differ, but, the heart is One, thirst is the same," He said. Bhagavan said that the Culture of India is as the Mother and her History is as the Father for every Indian; they should both be revered by careful study and faithful obedience. "The Culture of India is universal and supremely spiritual. The history of India is the history of the survival and the victorious career of the ideals of this Culture," He said. "The eye of the developed soul does not see difference or distinction; the sage knows only God, sees only God; so, he has no greed, no envy, no hatred, no anger," He declared.

"Faith in this Unity and in God who is the basis of the Unity is being eroded fast and the youth of all countries are moving fast along the path of trivial values. Had there been no God, how could that Word and other words indicating Him and describing Him come into vogue?" He asked.

When Baba was leading the vast gathering in singing Bhajan songs, the first intimations of the emergence from Him of the Linga, that had been forming in Him since a few days, become apparent to those watching Him. Bhagavan too sat on the chair and signed for the Bhajan to be continued. While 30000 voices were chanting the songs, OM SIVAYA in unison, the Linga (a

darkish brown oversized oval Lingam, with the Siva-Shakti Forms in its interior clearly visible in the luminous material) emerged; Bhagavan graciously held It in His Hand and moved along the lines of squatting devotees, explaining Its Symbolism to them. It was an experience that thrilled every one with heavenly ecstasy.

The concourse continued the bhajans until the dawn of the next day, the 12th March. Bhagavan gave the devotees Darshan at dawn, when the Bhajan concluded with Aarati. He said that Bhajan must be adopted as an incessant Sadhana and not be concluded after a few hours of performance. He compared the activities of the body, the mind and the heart to the three hands of a watch—the ones that indicate the seconds, the minutes and the hours. The body moves restlessly and executes a variety of good deeds so that the mind may progress a little step forward and when the mind has accomplished a great deal in the direction of cleansing 'and clarifying, the heart progresses silently and unnoticeably a little step forward. However tardy and slow, progress has to be maintained by ceaseless activity; the key is the urge to become Divine and shed the human and the brutish.

Impersonations

Bhagavan stressed the need for genuine yearnings and genuine achievements. He said, "Imitation is merely human; creation is Divine." He spoke of fakes and attributed the decline in religious enthusiasm to the large increase in the imitative field. " Seek guidance from your own heart; for, I dwell there. Avoid these imitations. Nowadays, in all the States of India, impersonations are cropping up, people calling themselves Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba and even signing letters as Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba! They declare that they too are Sai Baba and that I have blessed them to be such and authorised them to imitate Me and behave in that manner! They call their residences the Second Prasanthi Nilayam or the Third Prasanthi Nilayam! They try to earn name and fame, riches and lands, property and position by these means. All this produces confusion among the spiritually minded and leads to the decline of faith.

My Divine Power is not something which can be handed over or received! It is not an article or thing to be presented to someone! And, there can be only ONE Prasanthi Nilayam in the world. A `Second Prasanthi Nilayam' is a meaningless term. For, there is no relationship or connection between this Prasanthi Nilayam and the others who claim to be so. In reality, the real Prasanthi Nilayam or Abode of Higher Peace is your own heart; make that the Abode of unshakeable Peace and Tranquility. And, if you have money, do not misuse it, but, help to relieve distress and to cure disease and ignorance, by donating it to hospitals, schools, hostels, health centres etc. You should not spend the money for visiting even this Prasanthi Nilayam frequently. Be where you are and engage yourselves in Sadhana and Seva; My Grace can be won easily in this manner.

I must warn you against another thing also. Chain Letters are being addressed to devotees and earnest Sadhakas; they are written as if Sai Baba is requiting you to copy and send them, and sent by persons engaged in false propaganda or by persons who do not know the truth and are only just foolish. Do not be afraid of the bad consequences they predict; do not be tempted by the promises of fortune they hold out before you, if you obey their directions. Both are baseless. Do not exhibit your weakness by continuing the chain, and make others too weak. Tear the letters to bits and throw them away." Bhagavan said. Then, Bhagavan assured the devotees that He will be

with them wherever they are and permitted them to leave, if they have urgent work or duties. Devotees were privileged to break their Sivaratri Fast by partaking of the Holy Offering (Prasad) that was distributed to everyone, after the morning Session was over.

The Evening Gathering

At the evening gathering that was held at the Auditorium, in the Presence of Bhagavan, Swami Karunyananda spoke in Telugu on the Avatar and how, it is delineated in the Sastras; he described the Love, and Compassion of Bhagavan and exhorted every one to adhere to the Disciplines that He has laid down. Dr. V. K. Gokak, M.A., D. Litt.; in a short and illuminating speech commented on the statement that Bhagavan had vouchsafed in the morning, "The real Prasanthi Nilayam is the Heart of Man." He described the processes by which the Heart can be rendered fit enough to, deserve that status, and quoted the incident in the Mahabharata where Arjuna could propitiate Siva and win the Pashupata only after passing through the ordeal of the Destruction of the last traces of his ego.

Bhagavan in His Discourse emphasised the duties of youth. He said, "The fruit begins as a bitter thing, is converted into a sour article when it grows and finally, when it ripens, it fills itself with sweetness. Elders and old persons should not be disregarded or ridiculed; they have to be revered and their advice have to be respected, for, they have passed through varied experiences and they have rich sweetness to offer." Baba exhorted the elders also to be worthy examples to the young. He wanted the parents and teachers especially to shape their conduct and behaviour along worthy lines so that youth may not be misled into wrong and reprehensible ways.

The thousands who attended this year's Mahasivaratri returned home, chastened and comforted, with their hearts filled with delight and their minds inspired by the counsel that Bhagavan proffered in gracious abundance.

—Ed.

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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The Bird who Witnessed

In order to discover some clue about how Sita had left or why or when or whereto, Rama and Lakshmana forsook the hermitage and armed themselves with their weapons; they peeped into every cave, they examined every tank and looked over every hill in the region. They could not come across any indication or sign. While proceeding thus, they saw before them branches of trees that had been pilled or plucked asunder, lying across the track. There were other evidences of a combat that had taken place there, like broken arrows and patches of blood. Rama drew the attention of his brother to the place.

He said, "A fight seems to have taken place here, and looked around for information about who had engaged with whom. He found there an eagle of truly regal mien lying on the ground, gasping for breath, but still repeating reverentially with eyes closed, the Name it adored, "Rama, Rama." The brothers walked straight to the bird and lovingly stroked its head and body; when

the hand of Rama blessed it with the tender touch the bird recovered some little strength. It opened its eyes and looked around. It saw the beautiful form of Rama that could captivate all the worlds. Suddenly, it was overpowered by a flood of both joy and sorrow. The incapacitated bird could not move its limbs, nor could it turn on its side; so, it crawled a little forward and raising its head, placed it at the Feet of Rama. Rama placed the head on his lap and gently fondled it into awareness and activity.

Jatayu said in feeble accents, "Lord! While the wicked Ravana—yielding to maleficent motives, forsaking justice and uprightness, casting away powers acquired by years of asceticism—was carrying away Mother Sita, in a chariot, through this forest, as a dog goes in stealth and as a fox goes cunningly, the Mother of all the Worlds, the Daughter of Janaka, wailed aloud, 'Rama', 'Rama', sinking the entire forest in, gloom.

Beak against Wheel

I heard the wail, but, did not know who it was that raised the sad cry. I went near and discovered to my great surprise and sorrow that Mother Sita was the person in distress! I could not remain quiet. Though old and decrepit, I pronounced your Name, and derived strength thereby and courage to give him battle. I pecked at him so furiously that his body streamed blood all over. He placed Sita in the shade of a tree and fought ferociously. He drew his wheel weapon and slashed my wings into shambles. I could not do anything to stop his onward journey with Sita; so, I lay here, weeping over my defeat, and waiting for your arrival. I am most unlucky, for, though I saw Mother being taken away by that ruffian, I could not save her." Jatayu shed tears of despair, as he spoke these words.

Rama too displayed great interest and anxiety, and he addressed the bird thus: "O Chief of Birds! I shall never forget your help. The good deed you have performed will give you Bliss in the next world. Do not feel sad." Thus saying, Rama dusted its wings with his own matted hair, while Lakshmana hurried to bring some water to slake its thirst and refresh the wounded bird.

Rama poured the water drop by drop into the bird's mouth; Jatayu was delighted at the good fortune and the face glowed with ecstasy. Jatayu said, "Rama! I am luckier than even your father, for, he did not have *this* chance of drinking water from your hands when he left this world. I could get my last sip from your golden hand! I could rest on your lap. I could drink nectar from your fingers: And, while drawing my last breath, I could fill my eyes with the picture of your charming Lotus Face. I am certain I will be merging in you. O, I am indeed blessed."

Then, Jatayu spoke in feeble tones, "Rama! That vicious demon, Ravana, proceeded in the southern direction. Most probably, he must have reached Lanka. Therefore, go straight to Lanka, destroy that wicked fellow and draw the Mother to your presence." Jatayu could speak no more. He cried aloud 'Rama' just once and drew his last breath.

Hurdles on the Way

Rama allowed the vital breath of Jatayu to merge in Him; he performed the obsequies to the body of the bird and, took the valedictory bath. After these rituals, he moved towards the south, picturing in his mind, the regions of the South and the `travails' of Sita.

On the way, a certain demoness called Aja-mukhi espied them and was entranced by their personal beauty. She said to herself, "Ah! What loveliness of body! What a feast to the eye! I must wed them and win the happiness." So resolving, she clasped the band of Lakshmana and drew him towards herself. Lakshmana inferred that she too was stricken with the malady of Surpanakha, and he treated her with the same contempt. He cut off her limbs and taught her a severe lesson.

The forest through which they passed was as terrible as the demons they found there. It was infested with wild animals that roared, howled and growled most fearfully. Even the toughest heart would quake in fear at the scene and the noises.

While the brothers were trekking across, a demon called Kabandha, a mass of distortion and disfiguration, appeared before them; he opposed their advance and shook the forest with his unearthly guffaw; he attempted to snatch Rama and Lakshmana but, Rama slew him, ere he could succeed. He was a monster, with no head; his arms were inordinately long; he had his mouth in the centre of his stomach; he was a terror in that forest, devouring whatever he could get within the sloop of his arms. By killing him, Rama saved the forest-dwellers from a dreaded foe.

On the point of death, Kabandha realised who his enemy was; he recognised Rama. He said, "Master! You have this day liberated me from the shackles of a curse that had reduced me to this ludicrous and cruel role. My sins have been exonerated by the vision I have of you." While falling at the feet of Rama, Kabandha said, "Your mission will succeed, without delay or obstacles. You will certainly triumph over the forces of wickedness and their instruments."

The Fruit Basket

Rama, the large-hearted lover of all, moved on from that spot, walking on foot, with his brother as sole companion. They soon came across an old woman—she had a stoop; her head could not be held erect; her eyesight had become dull; her hands were quivering; she was coming towards them, with a basket of fruits on her head!

She saw the charming figures of the brothers and inferred that they are the two, who were described with excitement and delight by the Rishi of the forest. Placing the basket on the ground, she stood on the trail, whispering 'Rama' 'Rama' in reverence and thankfulness. Lakshmana guessed that this too was, an impersonation by some wily Rakshasa to harm them. But, Rama knew that his guess was wrong; he proposed to sit under a near-by tree, the tree that was adjacent to the very hermitage where the old woman was residing.

Sabari the old woman noticed the lotus-petal-like eyes, the ringlets of hair on their fore-heads, the long arms that reach down to the knees, and the dark-blue complexion. She could contain her ecstasy no longer; she could not suppress her adoration. She ran forwards and fell at the feet of both. She asked, "Where are you coming from? What are your names?"

Rama replied smilingly and coolly. "Mother! We are coming from Ayodhya; we are residing in the forest; I am called Rama; this brother of mine is known as Lakshmana." At this, Sabari exclaimed, `Father! My long-cherished desire has been fulfilled this day. I have been waiting for

your arrival, day and night, and looking for you into the distance, until my eyes have become dull and insensitive. I have achieved success. My longing has, had its result. My vigil and fast have borne fruit. Ah! I have been rewarded. This is the result of my Guru's Grace; this is the mysterious working of God." She brought the basket near Rama. Meanwhile, Rama asked her, "Mother! You speak of a Guru; who is he, this Guru of yours?"

Sabari

She said, "His name is Mathanga Rishi. But, since women are not taken as pupils in this hermitage, I listened to his lessons, hiding behind bushes and trees. I served my Guru and other Rishis, removing the thorns from the tracks that lead to the rivers where they take their bath, mostly by rolling over the ground, for, I had to do it pretty early, before dawn. I also removed the pebbles and stones that might hurt their feet. I lived on fruits and tubers as the other pupils did. I served my masters unseen, and spent my days in the dark recesses of the jungle. Mathanga, the mahatma, who knew the yearnings of my mind, told me one day, "Mother! Your body has reached a ripe old age. If you strain so much, you will soon be exhausted. So, come, reside in the hermitage and take good rest." While I was spending my days thus in the service of this hermitage, the Rishi desired to quit the body and called me beside him.

He said, "Sabari! The task on which I have come is over. I have resolved to leave this body now. You shall remain in residence at this hermitage itself. Within a short time, Rama will come into this forest. Invite him to enter this hermitage and offer what little service you can to him. Let this hermitage be sanctified by the touch of his feet."

I protested a great deal; I told him how I could never be happy in the hermitage without him. I prayed to him to take me too through death to where he was proceeding. My Guru was not willing to agree; he was not in a mood to accede to my wishes. He said that I had to be here awaiting the arrival of Rama and that I could not avoid that responsibility or lose that joy. From that day, I am existing here, with arms outstretched to welcome you, with eyes watching the horizon, and carrying about with me this decrepit body, so that I may live to see you and serve you. O Rama; O Lord. O Compassionate to the Afflicted. O Dweller in the hearts of Rishis. My vows, fasts and vigils have attained fruition now. The wish of my Guru has been fulfilled. The hermitage is just a few feet off; please, sanctify it, by entering it." Sabari fell at Rama's feet and entreated him to accede to the last dying request of her Guru.

Doubly Sweet

Rama was naturally very happy at the dedication and devotion of the old woman. He was the very embodiment of spontaneous, surging love. So, he rose and walking towards the hermitage with his brother, Lakshmana, *entered* it. O! Sabari was overpowered by a flood of joy; the flood broke all limits and expressed itself in ecstatic thrill and speech. That gem among women was until that moment too weak to tread a few paces; now, she found herself endowed with the strength of a thousand elephants! She marched buoyantly to the river and brought, in quick time, cool limpid water that was eminently potable.

She tasted first the fruits she chose from the basket and she offered to the brothers those she found sweet and ripe. While they ate, she looked on happily and with gratitude at their charming faces, and when they had finished, she washed their feet and placed on her head the drops of

water sanctified by contact with the Feet. "Lord! I have no more desire. For what shall I live on? I survived until now for that one piece of good fortune—the Darshan of Rama. I have had the Darshan. Now, save me by merging this life, this breath, in thy Lotus Feet. I have heard your glory extensively from the sages and saints. Today, I have witnessed it; I am full of gratitude and joy."

Rama relished the fruits she offered with so much devotion; while partaking of them he said, "Mother! These fruits are as sweet as your own heart. Really, these are not fruits that grow on trees. Why, the wild fruits that grow in jungles are not so sweet at all. They can never be. These are fruits that have grown on the holy trees of life, on the branches of the pure mind, in the sunshine of love. Rama ate the fruits extolling their taste all the time.

Seeing Rama in this mood, Lakshmana was happy beyond words; for, Rama had not eaten fruits with such joy; all these days, Lakshmana had to persuade him to taste a few, with a good deal of parleying, pleading and praying, even after the fruits were peeled and placed before him. Rama was so afflicted by the separation from Sita. In spite of all the efforts of Lakshmana, Rama would eat only half a fruit or so; never was Lakshmana satisfied with the quantity that his brother ate.

Today, Sabari gave him the fruits she had collected from those which had dropped ripe from the trees; she used to dust them and clean them and keep them for him every day, and when Rama did not arrive, she consumed them-herself as sacramental food, given her by Rama himself! Day after day, she roamed the forest in search of sweet ones to be placed before Rama. Thus, daily the fruits were saturated with her love and devotion and the fruits became doubly desirable. Lakshmana noticed that this was the reason Rama was eating them with so much joy. He was filled with delight, and he admired the devotion of Sabari that was so richly rewarded. He appreciated the divine joy that she had filled herself with as a result of her long years of spiritual study and practice.

Ecstasy

Sabari stood with folded hands before Rama and said, "Lord! I am of low caste; I am of untutored intellect, dull and stupid. I am not learned in any sacred art or text. I am lower than the lowest. How can I extol you or describe your glory? I have no skill in the use of words. I have not cultivated my Reason. Nor have I practised austerities prescribed in order to gain insight into Divinity. I am on the lowest step in spiritual Sadhana. My only strength is my love for God. I have no other support or sustenance." She spoke of Rama's compassion, in accepting her offering. "Your grace is boundless," she said.

Rama was listening to her words intently. He lifted her chin and looked right into her eyes. He said; "Mother! Devotion is the only thing I need; the rest are subsidiary. Other things like scholarship, intelligence, status, social prestige, caste I do not pay attention to them. They are of no value in my eyes. More than all the powers gained by spiritual disciplines and austerities, I relish the sweetness of devotion saturated with love. I seek only that. A man who has no love in him is as barren as a cloud with no moisture, a tree with no fruits, or a cow yielding no milk; he is ever far from God and can never earn Grace. Sabari! Of the nine ways of evincing and cultivating devotion, I only desire that any *one* be followed consistently by man. But, I find you

have followed to the very end all the *nine* ways. So, I do not see any one higher than you in spiritual attainment. I am indeed happy, and elated in all manner of ways, for, you have offered me devotion that is pure, steady, and self-less and which is Love springing from the heart and surging from it in all directions and towards all beings. You have not cast aspersions on any one, even while dreaming! That is what makes your mind so pure. Your mind does not blossom when `good' comes to you, nor does it wither, when `bad' comes. You are blessed in all ways."

Sabari drank in these words of counsel that Rama spoke to her. She said, "Rama! There is no path for the devotee other than doing one's best to please the Divine Mind, is there? I do not crave for aught else. This day, my Father, my God, the Lord of my life, the Lord of all the Worlds, the Lord of all Creation has appeared before me! How can I measure my good luck, O Lord of Janaki, of Sita, the daughter of Janaka?" At this, she remembered Sita, and the brothers, too, suddenly realised their plight. Rama told her, "Alas, Sabari, all this while you kept us happy, rid of anxiety, floating in joy; but, now, you have plunged us in grief." Sabari was struck with remorse; she raised her head in consternation and pleaded, "Lord! What is this you say? Pardon my indiscretion," and fell at the feet of Rama.

The Sita-Principle

Rama asked her, "Sabari! Do you know anything about Sita? Have you heard anything about her?" Sabari replied, "don't I know? Don't I know about Sita? No woman who knows the Rama-principle will be ignorant of the Sita-principle, that Gem of womankind, that crown of virtue, that Light of Femininity? O! What great good fortune is hers! She is the very shadow of my Rama! Rama! I must tell you what my Guru Rishi Mathanga has taught me about the Sita-principle. Of course, there is nothing you do not know. But, since you asked me now, whether I knew anything about Sita, I shall tell you what I know."

"Rama deluded the minds of Manthara and Kaikeyi, in order to fulfill his mission of destroying the Rakshasa brood. As a result of this, my Guru told me, Sita, Rama and Lakshmana have entered the forest as exiles; he said, they would visit hermitages and bless the ascetics and that Rama would kill the demons who obstruct their rituals and disciplines. He said that Rama would devise a plan by which Ravana, who is knit strongly with the Rakshasa clans will be tempted to enact a role in a drama centering around the `abduction' of Sita! He assured me that the Sita abducted by Ravana is only a pseudo-Sita and not the real, genuine mother. Ha, had told me that Rama would come into this forest, while searching for the Sita who has been abducted and that, I would be rewarded as never before by that visit.

My Guru also told me that Rama would cultivate an alliance with Sugriva, who has taken refuge (in the Rishyamuka Hills adjacent to, this hermitage) from the deadly depredations of his elder brother, Vali. Rama would accomplish the task of seeking out Sita through Sugriva.

Rama! You are Director of this Cosmic Drama, which you have designed. The incidents of your Drama were known to my Guru and he has revealed them to me. Your stage is the entire Cosmos. Your will decides the future of the Universe; it ensures the stability and progress of the Universe. All that happens is the unrolling into action of your Will; without it, nothing great or small can ever happen.

Lord! You are acting in this play, as if you are unaware of your own plot. You are pretending to be grief-stricken at separation from Sita! Only those who are foolish, or who disbelieve in the Atmic reality, or who are atheists can take it as true; those who are aware of Divinity and its mysteries, those who are devotees, and Sadhakas seeking to know God as their own Reality, will not be led away into the belief that it is genuine. You are the Doer of all that is done; no one however powerful can hinder or oppose your will. You will the reactions of people to all happenings as good or bad; they are not the authors thereof. The ignorant may assert that they are the executors of their deeds.

Rama! Pardon my impertinence. I have spoken too much in your presence.” Thus saying, she fell at the feet of Rama. She developed the Fire of Yoga and as a result, her body was reduced to ashes, while her breath was merged in the Rama-principle she adored.

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness

(To be continued)

Sab Ko Sanmati

You, are citizens of no mean land; Bharat is indeed a Divya Bhoomi, a land saturated since ages with devotion and dedication to God; the path to God was sought for, by even the common folk. Spiritual discipline permeated every activity of life and every detail of daily life. You are the inheritors of a great culture, which has survived the onslaughts of alien rule and political suppression.

This culture has upheld strength of mind and purity of thought, which are translated into beneficial resolutions and desires, as the essential requisites of a progressive human being. The mystery and splendour of God can be grasped only by a pure mind and a clear vision. That is why the Lord granted a new eye to Arjuna in order that he might not be confounded by His Glory. A resolution adopted by the mind is like a stone thrown into a Sarovara or lake. It produces ripples that affect the entire face and unsettles equanimity. A good resolution or Sankalpa sets us on a series of such thoughts, each contributing its quota to the process of purification and strengthening. Bharatiya culture insists on purity of Sankalpa because, like a fragrant flower in the hand, it will spread its beneficial influence on others and through others, on the society and community, in which the individual operates. A bad thought desecrates the individual as well as the community. Misery too is infectious; your impurity can pollute others too. When the Mind acts in subordination to the Intellect or Discriminating Reason, it will help the Realisation of the Inner Truth. When it yields to the pull of the senses, then, it will tighten the bonds.

Good ideas have to be accepted and bad ones eschewed. Each idea has to be judged in the Supreme Court of Viveka (intellect). And, the ruling has to be treated as inviolable. It is in this context that we have to remind ourselves of the prayer of Gandhiji, "Sabko san-mati de Bhagavan." O God, Bestow right understanding on all.

Again, the individual born in the lake of Society must swim and float in the calm waters, and joining the river of Progress, merge in the Ocean of Grace. Man has to move from the stance of I to the position of WE; this day, we see only the wild dance of ego-stricken individuals, who hate society and behave most unsocially.

Water flows from a higher level to the lower levels. God's Grace too is like that. It flows down to those who are bent with humility. So, give up the ego, overcome jealousy, and cultivate love. How can man be truly at peace with himself, and with others, if he does not endeavour to win the Grace of God? While trying to get the best out of Nature's Gifts, you must first be equipped with humility and simplicity; otherwise, you will only be dragged along into ruin, through many unfulfilled desires. Ravana desired nature (Janaki, who was found as a child in a furrow of ploughed land); but, he was not chastened by the effort to win the Grace of God, and so, he met his downfall. Desire leads to anger, when it is foiled; and anger weakens the body. It impairs the digestive system and chases him fast into old age.

Remember, when Prema is installed in the heart, jealousy, hatred and untruth will find no place there. Live in Prema, live with Prema, move with Prema, speak with Prema, think with Prema, and act with Prema. This is the best and the most fruitful Sadhana. Do not want Prema from others, while yourself refusing Prema to others. This is not a one-way traffic.

Love for all should spontaneously flow from your heart, and sweeten all your words.

—*Baba's Discourse: Chembur: 30-3-73*

Seeds of Virtue

Seeing this Rally and listening to the Marching Song, and witnessing the other items you presented, I can now say that what happened this morning is not the rise of the Sun, but, it was in fact the Rise of Ananda. People are talking about the glory of India's past; they go on praising endlessly about the reign of Rama, or in recent times of Ashoka, or Krishna Deva Raya. They try in vain to assess the present in terms of the past; they close their eyes to the dismal present and dream about the past. If children are put into the right path, and guided along the path that you are now treading, Rama Rajya can again be established in this land.

Every child of this land has four debts to discharge—reverence to mother, respect to the father, obedience to the teacher, and adoration to God. Besides these, every child must learn to live in peace and love with other children and other families. The idea that one can live for oneself and that one need not worry about the wants and weaknesses of others has to be removed quite early in life, by the Bal Vikas Gurus. Encourage the child to cultivate the pleasure of 'togetherness'. They will enjoy it; and, you will be sowing the seeds of social peace. The seeds will grow into universal peace and universal bliss.

Life is like a train journey. You, young children have a long way to go; but, the elders have to alight from the train pretty soon. You must learn to make your journey comfortable and happy.

Do not carry heavy unwanted luggage, with you. That will make the journey miserable. Do not indulge in fault-finding and in picking quarrels with others. Don't desire to have the best things for yourselves only. Share with others around you the good things you are given. Anger, hatred, envy, jealousy, these are the heavy luggage I asked you to avoid taking with you in the journey.

I must give the elders, the parents who are here in large numbers some advice. Do not set bad examples for these children to follow. If you are truthful, just, be calm under provocation and full of love in all your dealings with others, these children too will grow up in Sathya, Dharma, Shanti and Prema. If you tell your son, when you are actually at home, to speak through the telephone, when some one is calling, to reply that father is not at home, you are sowing a poisonous seed, which will become a huge tree. Let me tell you a story to illustrate the danger of such small beginnings. A mother carried her son on her shoulder, when she went to the market. A woman with a basket of fruits passed by her; the child lifted a banana from that basket, and started eating it. The mother noticed it, and when she was told that he had cleverly lifted it from the basket of a passing fruit-seller, she complimented the son on its smartness: This made the child indulge in petty thieving and picking pockets, as it grew into a boy and in actual house breaking and dacoity. Once during a dacoity, he committed even murder, and when he was caught and jailed, he expressed a wish to see his mother before being hanged. The wailing weeping desperate mother was brought before him. She was sobbing at her son's fate. The son asked her to come closer to him; suddenly, he tried to strangle her, and the guards separated them. The son said, she deserves the punishment; for, it was she who brought me to this doom. Had she reprimanded me when I stole a banana when I was a child of two years instead of complimenting me, I would not have fallen into this evil way.”

Parents set bad examples—uttering falsehood, scandalising others, gambling, drinking, behaving violently, inflicting injury, becoming addicted to night-clubs pictures and drinking parties, quarrelling at home after arriving home past mid-night. How can children used to such low sights and sounds learn to become bright fresh fragrant flowers of the Sanathana Garden of India?

Many such parents do not allow their children to join the Bal Vikas Classes, or to attend Bhajans and Satsangs. If the children clamour at home that they may be permitted, they shout at them, and call them `mad'. They say that religion and God are only for idlers or old senile people, and that the path will lead them on to Sanyasa, which is a calamity to be avoided! They reverse the very values of life. Parents must correct themselves before they try to correct their children.

Children! Learn the best teachings of all faiths; put them into practice. Chant the Name of God with your whole being. Imbibe the noble qualities that those Names represent. Purify yourselves and purify the world. That is my blessing.

—*Baba: Dharmakshetra: 6-1-75*

The Bloom and the Bud

Do any roses hesitate to bloom?
Do they fear, that, somehow
Hearts bared to public stare
Perhaps may not evoke
The delight in Love
That is blossoming within?

But, O
Poor slender buds
That hang their heads and die

Will never know the queenly joy
Of the generous varied bloom;
Please, O Gracious Lord,
Help us, the buds, always
To remember-it we hesitate
To grow, to open our hearts
And scatter beauty, joy and Love.

—*Anon*

Towards a Universal Religion

Almost every living religion today claims that it is a world religion. In so far as the term 'World Religion' connotes the wide geographical extent of its spread, it is perhaps a justifiable claim. Most religions which had their genesis at particular places and at particular historical periods and under certain political and social circumstances, have not only survived the ordeals of history, but have grown to maturity and developed under traditions entirely different from those of the place of their origin. Christianity, which was basically a religion of the West has now permeated all over the globe. Islam, which had its origin in the Middle East, has spread through India, Pakistan, Bangla Desh, Indonesia and the Philippines. Buddhism, a religion of Indian origin has grown out of its geographical confines and spread to China, Japan, Ceylon and other countries. Hinduism which had its birth in the ancient Indian ethos has survived the internal dissensions and external onslaughts and is now gaining ground in the West in the form of some cult or the other. In the limited sense of global spread, all these religions can justifiably be called world religions. But alas! None of them can, with equal justification, claim that it is a universal religion.

What is universal religion? To define it is to confine it to a set of theological doctrines. In fact it defies all definitions and outgrows the narrow confines of the doctrines of any single living religion. Since universal religion resists definition, it is not only easier to describe its import, but is consistent with its true nature.

The universal religion, to be worthy of its name, must be universal in intent and outlook. While each of the other faiths develops its own exclusive doctrine and is eager to impose it on others, the universal religion is happily free from any doctrinaire rigidity and is good to all, intended for all and is available to all. It is a quintessence of the spirit of all living religions, without, however, their fanaticism and frantic eagerness to convert others. It embodies in itself the virtues and excellences of religions without their bigotry and their dreadful hostility for one another. Its one supreme message is the message of love based on faith in the "Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of man." Is this not the Core of all religions of the World?

Three most prominent avenues to realisation of the ideal of establishing the universal religion are, (a) to get the whole of mankind really round one spiritual genius and owe its absolute allegiance to him, (b) to pursue unifying movement based on the syncretistic elements available in all religions and (c) to pursue comparative study of all living religions and discover the fundamental and unifying core of All faiths hidden deep under the superficial patterns of diversity in rituals, traditions and doctrines.

In Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's Divine Person and in His eternal message of love, all these avenues merge into one broad highway which leads mankind to the universal religion which assures the troubled generation of mankind a millennium of peace and, prosperity, or truth, love and righteousness.

In the Person of Sri Sathya Sai Baba, we find not only a spiritual genius who can rally round Him men of different faiths, but the manifestation of the Divine. In Him are found the Gods of all religions. He repeatedly tells His followers that they need not give up their faith in and worship of their traditional Gods, Christ, Allah, Rama or Shiva, because He is the manifestation of them all.

It is, therefore, no miracle that his Christian devotees who throng Prasanthi Nilayam from the remote corners of the West see Him as Christ reborn in India. The Muslim devotees see Him as God. From the devotees we gather that He grants them a vision of Ram, Krishna, Subrahmanyam, or Srinivas depending upon the Gods whom they believe in. He is the universal God, of all ages and of all lands and creeds, and has come down to us to dispel the darkness of our hearts filled with ego, pride, selfishness and fanaticism.

Bhagavan Sai's express mission is to subordinate the superficial layers of differences and to unify all creeds into one supreme religion, the religion of love and brotherhood. Through Him the Universal Religion is silently coming into being. All roads lead to Him; all faiths find their ultimate goals in Him; all streams flow to Him; all wills lose their identity and become one with His Divine will; all voices blend themselves into one exquisite melody in singing His glory.

Faith in Sai is one of the roads to universal religion. But Bhagavan does show the other paths too. In His preachings, He emphasises the essential unity of all religions of the world. It is a part of Bhagavan's mission to bring us to a blissful awareness of oneness of God behind the multiplicities of multiplying creeds. Underneath the ripple of waves is one undisturbed current.

In fact every religion has its inherent and inbuilt factors conducive to a sense of unity. For example, Hindu Philosophic doctrines tell us that all Gods are varieties of expression of the same God. Advaita Vedanta and Visishtadvaita Vedanta agree that Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are the three facets of the one ultimate unity, Brahman. Again, the doctrine of Avatar or reincarnation so vital to Hindu Philosophy, is an attempt, unique in excellence, at unifying all creeds and sects. When Lord Krishna Said: "when righteousness Declines, O Bharat! when wickedness is strong, I rise, from age to age, and take visible shape, and move as man with men, succouring the good, thrusting the evil back, and setting virtue on her seat again."

He not only revealed His mission, But also implied the oneness of all Avatars that went before Him and that were to succeed Him (including Sri Sathya Sai and his future Avatars). Other religions of the world have also enshrined in their doctrines and practices the sense oneness of the many. The multifarious springs of religious thought in China have united to make one cultural stream fed by the famous 'Three truths' including Taoism, Confucianism and alien Buddhism. Japanese Shintoism absorbed into itself not only Confucian and Taoistic doctrines, but also Buddhistic ideas.

In the west Christianity unmistakably displayed such synthesizing trends by accepting Jesus, the Jew, as Saviour and by incorporating Hebrew ideas and scriptures in the Bible. Denominational divergences in modern Christianity are being bridged by several ecumenical movements emphasizing the oneness of all religions and brotherhood of mankind.

In the Middle East, Islam accepts Moses and Christ as apostles of God's message to the world. The ninety-nine attributes of God central to Islamic faith are resilient enough to include all the myriad names of God used in all other religions of the world. Sikhism, a blend of the best from Hinduism and Islam, is a pointer towards the universal religion.

Besides these synthesizing tendencies displayed by individual religions, there have been collective efforts (though feeble and ineffective) such as world's Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893, World Fellowship of Faiths, also held in Chicago and -World Conference of Religions held recently in Bombay. All these are a genuine expression of obvious urgency to restore a sense of oneness of humanity and to establish a kind of Universal Religion.

By underlining the common core of all religions in His discourses, Bhagavan Sai has been fulfilling His self-imposed task of elevating man to nobler and divine heights from where it would be an easy step for mankind to forget the differences and live in peace.

There is yet another path an intellectual path which Bhagavan shows. In Summer Schools on Spirituality and Indian Culture held for students and teachers, not only Bhagavan Sai Himself delivers discourses but several intellectuals and acknowledged authorities on various religions are asked to talk on various religions, thereby giving an opportunity to the participants in the summer School to have a glimpse into the nature of every prominent religion. Those who have an insight into things do not fail to realise the oneness of all religions.

But study of unifying elements in any single religion or a comparative study of all religions, is a path too tortuous and too exacting for man, and is often full of insurmountable hurdles of doubt

and skepticism. Faith in Sai is the surest and quickest road to universal religion. He is a living God in man's image; an Avatar in flesh and blood, of Christ or Allah or any other God known to man. So long as men have faith in Him and follow His teachings in thought, word and deed, no matter what Gods they worship. It is better to believe in one than to believe in none or all. We repeat, all roads lead to Him and all sheep come into His fold. Then, Mankind shall attain the kingdom of God for the mere asking. For such is His boundless love for man, the sinner in religion!

J. Srihari Rao, Raipar (M. P.)

Egoism—Ahamkara and Mamakara—can be removed only by the twin detergents of Viveka and Vairagya. Bhakti is the water to wash away this dirt of ages and the soap of Japa, Dhyana and Yoga will help to remove it quicker and move affectively.

Each of you must take up some one spiritual Sadhana in order to cleanse the mind of lust and greed, anger and hatred. Come out of the well of Ego and swim into the sea of the Universal Spirit or Paramatma of which you are a part. Force your mind (or persuade it, gently, and caressingly) to breathe the purer and more vital atmosphere of the Eternal; remind it of God and His Glory, every second, every breath, when you repeat any one of His Names.

—Baba

Vaster than the Vastest!

Brahmavid Brahmaiva bhavathi (He who knows the vastest becomes the vastest), say the Rishis (sages). Brahmam is the word used for what they indicate as the vastest, which words cannot reach nor the imagination conceive. There is a Brahma, the First of the Trinity, with four heads, the Creator, from whom we have to distinguish this vast immanent Principle. This Brahmam is described, not as one of three, but as the One without a Second. The Vedic statement that All is Brahmam (Sarvam Brahmamayam) is the key to the understanding of the Universal Eternal Principle. This Brahmam need not be sought, at some far distant spot, on the Himalayas or in the depths of Space. Some cosmonauts when they landed on moon reported the God does not exist, because they did not spot Him anywhere in their spatial journey, as if He lives and moves in space and accosts all who dare flit through His corridors! Brahmam is the Reality of the seeker, the Cosmonaut, the person who asserts its existence as well as of the person who doubts or denies. To say that the Divine is a fiction of some one's fancy is to be false to one's own genuine truth. The Divine is what integrates and unites all this diversity into one single essence.

We can easily become aware of it, if we observe the prescribed course of Sadhana and have the elementary faith to impart sincerity for that Sadhana. One must sharpen the intellect and widen the imagination to be able to conceive of Brahmam, which is subtler than the subtlest, vaster than the vastest. Brahmam is the very urge behind all aspiration and all achievement, even the aspiration to know Brahma. It is the activity in every atom and cell, as well as in every star and galaxy.

Brahmam also means sound, voice, word, mantra, And, through the sound OM, as well as through various other sacred formulae or mantras, it is possible for man to develop the superfine intellect necessary to grasp the Immanent and Transcendent Principle called Brahmam.

Brahmam means Brh or big, the biggest, the vastest. It is described as bigger than the biggest, vaster than the vastest. The Universe is the body of Brahmam that emerged from it when the desire to become Many arose in It. The Universe rose when Brahmam uttered the First Word, and so, the Word or Vaak is also called Brahmam. The word is also called pada and all created things are referred to in Sanskrit as Padartha, the meaning of the spoken word For, when the word was uttered the thing was created or became manifest. The word produced its meaning, namely, the thing!

The Infinite Eternal. Brahmam can be cognised as having three attributes, for the convenience of awareness: Sat, Chit and Ananda. The minutest particle in the Universe has these three characteristics, and the vastest too. Man too is the embodiment of Sat-Chit-Ananda; but, since he is too attached to the body and its impulses, he is unable to dive deep into his reality and benefit from the springs of Chit and Ananda that are there.

The attraction that the vast Brahmam has for the anu or the small is the attraction of the whole for the part. It is the basis of all Love—the love of the mother and towards the mother, of the father and son, the friend, the spouse, and even of the devotee towards God. The Jiva or the individualised part loves the Brahmam or the totality of which it is a part. See all as parts of the same whole to which you belong; then, there can be no hatred or envy or greed or pride.

Saraswati, the Consort (the patent power) of Brahma is celebrated as the Goddess of Vaak or Word or the Urge to Express, to manifest. Her vehicle is, according to the Vedas, the hamsa or celestial Swan, the pure bird that is endowed with the rare power of discriminating between water and milk, even when they are mixed and receiving only the milk (that is to say, separating the valid from the invalid, the lasting from the fragile, the true from the untrue). Moreover, hamsa is the symbol of Soham, the seed-mantra that is uttered by human breathing (sa-ham-Soham; Sa means He and ham means I; He is I; I and He are the same; I am He from birth to death, meaning that the Jiva is Brahmam, no more no less. There is certainly difference in quantity but there is no difference in quality, between the two. A drop of seawater is as brackish as any other; you need not taste the entire sea to know that. The Jiva is Sat-chit-ananda; the Brahmam is also sat-chit-ananda. That is the reason the Jiva is asked to announce itself as "Aham Brahmasmi"... "I am Brahmam." It is as true as the drop of seawater saying, "I am the sea."

Yogis can cognise this easily. That is why one yogi sang, "Go, mind! Rush to where the Ganga and Jamuna are." This does not mean that the Sadhaka should go on pilgrimage to Prayag, Allahabad where the two rivers meet. Ganga and Jamuna are the Ida and Pingala, the two nerve-channels through which the Kundalini power is uplifted and Prayag is the Bhroo-madhya sthan, the spot on the brow where they meet between the eyes. When the Yogi is able to concentrate on that spot his 'serpent power', he can become aware of the Sea and transcend the name-form of the drop. That is the meaning of that Call.

—*Baba's Discourse: Brindavan Summer Camp, 1974*

When the world sleeps in stupor
The Yogi wakes in wisdom;
When the world awakes in action,
The Yogi sleeps in Bliss!
While waking, he is Siva
While sleeping too, he is Siva.

`Youth Guides' for Youth

Well-wishers of Youth! Instructors of Youth! Young men of the College! When you look deep into the theory and practice of modern educational institutions and compare them with what we know of the theory and practice in ancient Indian educational institutions, you will be shocked at the vast difference in the two systems. The ancient schools aimed at self-knowledge first and knowledge of the objective world as a corollary. Truly, that is the sign of the educated man—his awareness of his own reality. How can a person be termed educated, when he does not distinguish between the really real and the relatively real in himself as well as in the outer world?

Among the educated, we do not find signs of self-knowledge; nor do we see another quality that we expect every human being to have, namely, the quality of mercy, of sympathy or compassion. The `un-educated' have this quality, more than the `educated'! `Education' seems to harden hearts and squeeze out the feelings of pity and piety. Many species of animals are soft, and tender in their habits and nature. The deer, the elephant, the cow, the horse—these live on Satwic food and behave in a Satwic manner; so, they are adored and even worshipped by man. Tigers, bears, hyenas and other wild animals are feared by man and driven by him into the dark recesses of forests. The wonder is that the wildness, the cruelty and the terror-inflicting attributes of these beasts are developed and exhibited by man himself! Man prides himself as the crown of creation; he declares that he has in him the spark of the Divine. But, he ignores it or suppresses it and revels in displaying the qualities of the ferocious beasts of the jungle.

Imagine the fate of the cows, when a tiger enters the manger. Can they survive the invasion? So too, the `cows' of Truth, Justice, Peace and Love cannot survive in the human heart when the `tigers', namely, greed, anger, and pride enter and play havoc. Today, the human heart, (especially the hearts of those who are `educated') has become the lair of wild desires and cruel habits. Rajoguna has overwhelmed the Satwic traits.

A blind person cannot see the travails of others; nor can a deaf person be moved by the groans of a man in pain. The sight of suffering softens the heart; stories of distress urge one to rush to the rescue. But, education, as imparted now renders men indifferent to the sufferings of others: blind and deaf, in fact! Things are even worse; for, educated persons and persons undergoing education in colleges and schools now inflict harm and pain, cause loss and injury, and revel in violence: and apparently enjoy doing so! Observing this downfall in standards, one is tempted to doubt whether these are men, or, beasts inhuman skin!

Embodiments of the Divine Atma! Yours is the responsibility to cherish and develop the ancient culture of this land. Bharat is the land of Love, of Yoga, of Spiritual Search, and of joyful Sacrifice of the lower self to promote the interests of the Higher Self. But, this day, Bharat is afflicted with the poverty of all these precious qualities. Greed, anger, hatred and other evil traits have displaced the traits of love, brotherhood and compassion. In the educational field, too, the evil has grown. Educational institutions are the nursery for tradition, loyalty to culture, and ideals of service to society. They train youth to benefit by the experience of the previous generations and to march on towards victory in the campaign to master this world and the next.

Therefore, I desire that the youth of the land must make the fullest use of these precious years, when they are at College, to learn and practise the culture of this great land; they should not fritter away this crucial period in their lives, indulging in wasteful and wild adventures causing loss and pain to others. The students today are the teachers of tomorrow's colleges; they have to shape the destiny of this land, through their precepts and example. You cannot be young for long. Every day you are moving nearer and nearer to the 'age' when you have to take up the burden of running a home, and running the country. If you relish the infliction of loss and damage, of suffering and pain, today, surely you cannot complain when later, you have to encounter those very evils at the hands of the youth of those days.

Wisdom flashes like lightning amidst the clouds of the inner sky; one has to foster the flash, and preserve the light. That is the true sign of the 'educated' person. Do not believe that mastery of many tomes make you wise. Wisdom can grow only where humility prevails. It thrives when man is afraid of vice and sin, and is attached to the Divine, in himself and in all else. The crisis of character which is at the root of all the troubles everywhere has come about, as a result of the neglect of this aspect in education.

I shall illustrate this by one little example. The Universities lay down the rule that a student is entitled to a Degree, when he gets thirty marks out of a total hundred prescribed for a question paper. This means that you can get the distinction of being an 'educated person', even if you commit seventy mistakes! When such a degree holder gets a job on the basis of his having committed seventy mistakes (!), he easily slides down, by force of circumstance, into a hundred mistakes out of every hundred tasks that he has to do. Naturally, the country suffers and people bemoan the educational system. Education today has to move haltingly and half-heartedly through a series of strikes, gheraos, and other interruptions and so, students are seldom able to carry out their primary duty of study. Later, on too, when they become responsible officers, they easily tend to neglect the duty that is primary to them at that stage.

While you are students, you must feel that study is your first and only duty. Be witnesses of what is happening outside the classroom; do not rush out and get distracted. Try to identify the One in the many; become strong, physically, mentally and spiritually; imbibe as much as possible the wisdom that has been gathered in the past; cultivate the skills by which you can serve society. The heart soaked in compassion is verily the Altar of God.

If you forget these ideals and allow greed, conceit and hate to take root in your hearts, you are only lowering yourselves to the level of the beast. As a first step in educational progress you must revere your parents and have gratitude and love towards them. It is through them that you have this wonderful chance of life on earth. They are the custodians of culture, the earliest teachers who instilled virtue into you. In this College, the ancient ideals of Truth, Righteousness, Equanimity and Love are held before you, all the time. I am sure you have imbibed them, and I bless you that you by your example, propagate them wherever you are. Have compassion in your hearts for the unfortunate brothers and sisters, who are unlearned, ill or suffering. Try your best to open their eyes, to cure their ills and to alleviate their distress. That is the message I wish to give you this day.

—*Baba: College Day: Brindavan: 23-3-75*

A Word for the West

On 28 March—"Good" Friday on the Christian Calendar, the Day of Christ's Crucifixion—The 'foreigners' at Brindavan received Special Grace from Baba. He called all of us in for a 90-minute talk on the guidelines for the behavior of devotees wishing to spend days in His Presence.

Swami is aware of the difficulties and distractions faced by foreigners trying to adapt to the customs of a different culture. He is aware that it is difficult not to bring old habits along with us into the new environment. He also knows the many wrong notions and divergent routes that can easily distract one on the spiritual path, especially the young. That day, out of His Supreme Compassion, Understanding and Love, He once and for all set the accord straight as to what He expects of us in Prasanthi Nilayam. He also approved of a set of guidelines for the conduct of foreigners in the Ashram, which will be published shortly.

'You have come from long distances, you have given up several comforts, you are putting up with various difficulties. You have come with great hopes and ambitions, and if you realize that, and if you realize the code of conduct prescribed for Prasanthi Nilayam and submit yourself to it, Swami is ready to give you all opportunities for spiritual progress and all opportunities for your sadhana and practice.'

Swami asked us to keep in mind the goal which brought us to India. 'What is it that you want to acquire from here? Why is it that you have come here? Have you been able to get what you thought you would get? This kind of questioning and enquiry, each one should make for oneself every day.'

'Why come here and promote new attachments and connections, after cutting away your old attachments with your parents, your country and your friends?'

Swami spoke of selfless Love—expansion as love—as the only love which leads to spirituality. He said each individual must develop his own spiritual power, rather than running from place to place, seeking it in others. 'Give up your attachment to the constant wandering of this physical body. Travelling from place to place, constantly moving about the place you are in, and excessive walking and moving about will rob you of your mental peace. Control your body and develop steadiness of your limbs.'

Swami also outlined the specific behavior expected of foreign guests and residents of Prasanthi Nilayam, and gave advice about some specific aspects of meditation. He emphasized the strengthening of the pure heart as more significant than any exterior aspect of devotion. He asked all to lead clean, quiet, self-controlled lives, to give up any misleading or unclean habits or practices, and to live as perfect examples to newcomers at Prasanthi Nilayam. He insisted that those who wish to live as isolated individuals, and lazy persons who collect money from others, would be left outside of the Nilayam.

Swami said that those who live according to His directives will be kept very close to Him and would be given opportunities for service within the ashram. 'I hope you will be able to achieve

your hopes and your ambitions, and to get the spiritual progress you came here for... I am always ready to help you in this spiritual path.'

—*Richard Bayer*

Cities Steeped in Joy

Bhagavan left Bangalore on the 30th day of March, on a ten day visit to Delhi and the neighbouring States, for He had become aware of the deep thirst, the millions in North India had developed for Darshan, Sparshan and Sambhashan. During the short halt the plane made at the Hyderabad Airport, He went into the City to bless a large gathering of devotees. At Delhi, He was enthusiastically welcomed by a huge concourse of Citizens. On 2nd April He addressed a mammoth gathering of devotees who had collected from far and wide, at Talkotra Gardens, where the huge shamiana put up by the Delhi Seva Samiti to accommodate over 20,000 people, was found woefully inadequate! Every one was struck with wonder when the gathering of over two hundred thousand sat silent and attentive, in perfect order, drinking in the nectarine counsel and imbibing the Divine vibrations that surcharged the atmosphere that day.

Every day, orderly groups assembled opposite 16, Golf Links Road, after Nagarsankirtan, to get the much coveted Darshan of Bhagavan; and they were not disappointed. Later, about 9 A.M., Bhagavan moved into the Talkotra Gardens, where He gave Darshan, during Bhajan, to the thousands gathered there. He graciously moved along the rows of devotees, blessing them with His Abayahastha and creating the curative Vibhuti for those whom He noticed to be ill. The Evening Session of Bhajan was at 5-30, and Bhagavan gave Darshan then also. On some days, the child pupils of the Sri Sathya Sai Bal Vikas entertained and instructed the gathering, enacting plays based on spiritual themes.

Bhagavan flew by chartered plane, with a small party of devotees, from Delhi to Amritsar, the Holy Place of the Sikhs. The news of the programme at that place had reached the region only a few days previous, but, yet, the yearning was so intense and widespread that a few lakhs of people had assembled to greet Him and listen to His Discourse! Passing through Chandigarh, Bhagavan blessed the devotees of that City. He then motored to Simla, at the head of a remarkable `caravan' of more than twenty vehicles! When morning dawned in Simla and the first faint rays of the Sun stole through the mists, thousands were seen occupying every foot of land, all around and over the Ridge, eagerly awaiting Darshan. The majestic Himalayan bill station lagged not a bit behind the Capital City of India in offering its keen devotion to the Lord. Many wondered where and how those hundreds of thousands hill-men lived; the number was beyond their expert calculation.

As in Delhi, the morning and evening Bhajan sessions, with Baba moving amidst the rows of people, all sitting in sincere yearning and steady discipline, formed the main items of the daily schedule. On 4th April, Bhagavan gave a discourse to the vast concourse. Baba sang a few Bhajans, which thrilled every heart with ecstasy. "His sweet melodious voice still rings in my ears; I now realise how Sri Krishna's Flute could send into ecstatic madness the Gopas and

Gopikas,” writes Sri Brahmananda who had the chance of being there that evening. Undoubtedly, the hill-men would treasure the memory of that Discourse for years and years. Bhagavan's words went, clear and fine, moving the hearts of those simple folk with His telling moral epigrams, significant illustrations, providing food for reflection and spiritual exaltation. Here too, the children from the Bal Vikas classes won the Blessings of Bhagavan by enacting some good playlets and demonstrating fine dance items.

Bhagavan's programme also included a visit to the Sri Sathya Sai College at Jaipur, Rajasthan. He proceeded thither in a chartered plane with a small group of devotees. Bhagavan addressed the students and commended them on their fine discipline, devotion and duty. The people of Jaipur too had a chance to pay homage to the Lord.

On 8th April, Bhagavan gave a discourse at Vigyan Bhavan, where Ministers of Government, Members of Parliament, Members of the Diplomatic Corps from various countries, Industrial magnates, Administrators and Scholars had gathered in large numbers. The Vice-President of India, Hon'ble Sri B. D. Jatti presided. He said that Bhagavan was a great and potent force in the reconstruction of India, and mentioned the advance made by the Organisation in the fields of education and social integration. Bhagavan gave a very inspiring talk on the disaster at whose brink the world is poised and pointed out that Love—the basic teaching of all faiths—is the only remedy which can save mankind.

When Bhagavan left Delhi for Hyderabad and Bangalore, there was not a dry eye among the thousands that bade farewell. Delhi had not realised that Bhagavan was with them for about ten days; the joy was too deep for Them to count the days. Bhagavan halted at Hyderabad for some time before resuming His flight to Bangalore. He was at both Brindavan, Bangalore as-well-as Prasanthi Nilayam, on the sacred New Year Day (Yugadi) on the 12th April. His Compassion was so great that He travelled to Prasanthi Nilayam in the hottest part of a broiling day, to give the hundreds awaiting Him there the coveted Darshan on that Holy Day.

Is a Path Needed?

Q: Baba! Your advent has been a great landmark in human history.

A: Millions come to me, but few give me their attention. It is a matter of demand and supply. God demands attention, for, every one needs Him. The need is to surmount the falsehood and the fear, that mankind has woven around itself.

Q: The mind of man does not accept that it is woven by itself.

A: Your mind weaves further stratagems to escape from this falsehood. It perpetually seeks other forms and other places to assuage the need; it repeats the same error, not realising the potency of the only answer to all its problems, Mindlessness. Where the mind is *not*, God is automatically.

Q: Yes, Baba. It pesters us with desires.

A: You call it `desire'. But really it is something in which the mind takes refuge, temporary refuge. But, you should seek a refuge that can restore balance and equilibrium to the mind. Let the part merge with the whole, the wave with the sea Seek the whole, the boundless. There is only one God and He is omnipresent. Seek Him, desire Him, that alone counts; that desire alone works.

Q: In spite of all attempts and searches, contentment, Baba, is so hard to come by.

A: Real contentment comes only when you are aware of the frailty of seeking anywhere else, for what does not ask for attempts or searches, for what is self-evident and self-effulgent. See the condition of all men in all lands 1 Each one seeks in time and space that which is beyond time and space; each one seeks through study and scholarship that which is beyond the senses and the intellect. Then, when some one advises him to try elsewhere, he agrees and moves on. But what they seek is ever, all around them, even in their own being as their very core, nor matter where they are. Always, they seek the right thing in the wrong place, through persons, books, symbols, situations, paths. But, I am too near to need a path. Lift the veil, and I am there. Or, deny that there was ever a veil; that is enough for me to shine forth.

Q: When that illumination is attained, there is no more death, is there?

A: Birth and death exist within the realm of opposites. You cannot have one without the other. If there is death, birth must follow. Leave the body's health or demise to Me. It is not your affair, nor is it your responsibility if it languishes or perishes. It is the boat I have given you, to be used cautiously and carefully for crossing the ocean of objective change. It is a vehicle provided for your journey to me. Once you realise that I am you, the vehicle's task is done, but, you may have to take care of it for some more time, so long as I wish.

Q: Morality cleanses the mind, you have said, Baba.

A: Yes. I have said, Be good; see good; do good. But, the good you can do is limited by the capacity of the vehicle and the environment which surrounds you, physically and socially. Let me tell you the highest good you can do: Abide in the absolute and the eternal. That will ensure your liberation and the welfare of the society where you are.

Q: It seems to be an impossible task, Baba, to be established in the eternal and absolute.

A: The meaning of what you say is that it cannot be 'held on' by the mind. Give up the mind. That is why I say, "Die-mind, not Diamond, should be the precious gem you crave for." The mind is such a wayward instrument. Holding soon tires of holding. That is the nature of holding. Release the hold and you earn release.

Q: Baba, I admire the saintly persons who have developed rare virtues and are moral giants.

A: You do not know that they are, most of them afflicted by pride at their being so virtuous! This pride bars them from me. Be humble; humility is the highest virtue.

Q: Whatever happens, I hold on to you and you must vouchsafe humility to me. When I find I am neglected, I suffer pain.

A: That pain comes from the misconception of your mind, that I am far smaller than I am, and that I am limited and localised. Suffering is only another name for misunderstanding.

Q: What should I do to be free from pain?

A: Go to the centre of the cyclone; the rod in the centre of the bottom millstone, where you will not be affected by pressures, or what goes on around you. I am where stillness and silence are, to help you establish yourselves in yourselves.

—*From the Notebook of a New Yorker*

Many Mansions

A few hours from now it will be Christmas when people all over the World will celebrate the birth of Christ. It will be celebrated with great pomp and ceremony, so great in fact that it would almost seem that they have forgotten the actual circumstances of this Man's birth. We, Christians, believe that one of the central themes of the birth of the Christ-child in the fact that when His pregnant mother, and His foster father, were seeking room for the night of His birth, they knocked on the door of an Inn, and, in spite of the delicate condition of Mary, admission was refused.

There are many lessons to be learnt from that refusal, but, to my mind, the greatest one is the lesson which is not generally emphasised. Even if Christ had been born in the relative comfort of that desert travellers' Inn, the message of His birth should still have rung as loud as Christmas bells. And the message would be similar to what Baba says:

"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"

Not only did He not immerse himself in this world life, but Christ permitted himself to be born in the humble surroundings of a stable-cave, in Bethlehem, high in the cold hills of Judea.

After the record of his birth and a few incidents in His infancy, our Christian records say nothing of the childhood and youth of Christ. These are known as the Hidden years and because they are hidden, they have been the subject of considerable speculation down the centuries.

Some say Christ belonged to an ascetic sect of religious people called Essenes. The scriptures of this sect caused much excitement in the religious world when they were discovered hidden in a cave in the ravine of Qumran at the northern end of the Dead Sea. They were discovered by an Arab boy in 1947, and immediately the similarity between them and the teachings of Christ were pointed out by scholars.

Some savants go even further; they assert that the Essenes were really a Buddhist monastic order. This is not impossible for there was considerable traffic between West Asia and India and the Semitic lands straddled the caravan routes. There is even a belief that Christ studied in a Buddhist monastery in Ladakh.

These are very interesting stories, indeed, but then there are always interesting stories around great men and not all of them are necessarily true. I believe that the best way of judging who a great man was is by studying his teachings: they reveal his mind better than all the embellishments and embroideries of his enthusiastic followers.

One of Christ's teachings was that 'we should not lay ourselves treasures in this world, where rust and moth might consume them and thieves might break in and steal.' This teaching is not unique to Christianity; Baba has expressed it in other words saying:

"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."

But by this message we must not believe that total renunciation of this world is applicable to all people. The ancient Hindu thinkers were aware of this because they divided a man's life into various periods, one of which was when he fulfilled his duties to society as a Householder. The Lord Buddha, in his search for truth, also tried the way of severe renunciation and then rejected it.

Christ himself foretold that the bigots of his age, and all ages, would accuse Him of being too concerned with the world. We know that he mixed with wine-sellers, a hated tax collector and women of loose morals, when the bigots of his age tried to cast aspersions of Christ's private life by referring to the people, He mixed with. He silenced them with the observation that He had come to cure those who were sick: a physician is not diseased merely because he has to mix with diseased people. His fine balance between the things of the spirit and the things of the world is summed up in His sayings "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's." Or, to put the same concept in the words of Baba:

"You do not scatter seeds on the surface; you plant them deep enough for the roots to get a foothold. Do not dig the seed into the soil too deep. Follow the middle path. Do not get too bound up with the world; do not also give it up, lock, stock and barrel"

It is however possible for this to be extended too far. It is possible for religion to get too enmeshed in the world and no organised religion is completely free of this plight. The Puritan Christian ethic of hard work and free enterprise has grown into the monster materialistic ethic of

the Western nations where consumption is an end in itself and ostentation is the greatest virtue. The voice of organised religion in the so-called Christian nations is strangely silent about the arms race, pollution and the monstrous 'trialogue' theory of food distribution. The white supreme regimes of Rhodesia, South Africa and Portugal of the recent past are all Christian and base their policies on an interpretation of Christian values. An ill-disguised form of slavery is the bedrock of their unjust wealth. Conveniently they ignore Christ's third teaching which is that 'He is the vine and all men are the branches' or, to put it in Baba's words:

`All men are cells in One Divine Organism, in the Divine Body. That should be your faith, your fortune, your fort, your fulness. Awareness of this alone gives you the right to call yourself a man. Learn to live as men'

What does this mean? It means that we should suspect the teachings of the closed mind. It virtually prohibits dogmas, and the index of forbidden books, and the Holy Inquisition. It says that religion is made for man and not man for religion. No great religious leader has ever confined his followers to the literal impact of his words for though the content of his words expresses a simple, timeless, truth the vehicle of language changes with the times and so the words must change to retain the integrity of the original meaning.

God has given us senses and the intelligence to look around us and draw a constant stream of lessons from His creation. Science and faith only appear to act in opposition as do the twin blades of a pair of scissors to cut through the confining veils of ignorance. This has been beautifully expressed by Baba as:

`The whole world is a University for you. You can imbibe wisdom from the sky, the clouds, the mountains, the rivers, the daily phenomena of sunrise and sun-set, the seasons, birds, trees, flowers, the insects; in fact all Beings and things in Nature. 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."

And if you reach this final level of religion when you can see the unity of all creation you will realise that here, finally, we meet as man to man. We meet here as people on the same quest, inspired by the same ideals, using the same tools. It is a pity that whereas the language of science knows no caste, the language of religion does. But this is not to say that all religions are equal. All colours are not equal. All scents are not equal. All textures, all tastes, all sounds are not equal. All men are not equal for it would be a very insipid world if it were a grey, flat existence of total equality. For we must remember that:

"Every one of you is a pilgrim on that road proceeding at your own pace, according to your qualifications and the stage reached by you. The advice that appeals to one of you might not be appropriate to another who has travelled a less distance or reached a more advanced state. The doctor directs one patient to drink curds and prohibits another from drinking it. When doctors who treat diseases have to prescribe 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.”—Baba.

But we do not have to fight because we differ in our approach to the world. We do not have to view each other with suspicion, or hatred or contempt. When you look at Baba's emblem and measure the distance between two religions on different sides of the 'central flame' they seem to be diametrically opposed to each other. But if you look again you will see that they are all the same distance from the centre. I have opted for the red light of Christianity; for another it may be the green light of Islam; the preference of a third might be the saffron light of Hinduism; a fourth may choose the blue light of Buddhism. But all these colours, all these religions, all these lights are striving for the same purpose. One day, when we have come to the end of the quest, we will find ourselves merged and bathed in the final, blinding, white light of Truth.

This then is the final message of Christ, as it is of all religions: that mankind is one, treading a myriad paths, on one quest: and when we have reached our goal it will matter little which path we trod, for, in our Father's Home, there are many mansions: And before I leave to-day to celebrate the greatest festival of my faith, this is my wish for you: that regardless of what path we choose to take we shall all meet again in the same mansions in the Kingdom of the Light.

—*Hugh Gantzer Commander (Retd) Indian Navy, Cochin*

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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Rishyamuka Range

Thus, Rama and Lakshmana fulfilled the deep yearnings of Sabari and filled her departing soul with bliss. They continued their journey through the forest, moving like twin lions, talking about the devotion and immeasurable dedication of the aged aspirant, Sabari.

Travelling fast, they approached the Rishyamuka mountain Range. Amidst the hills of that range, Sugriva was residing as a refugee, accompanied by his Ministers, and Courtiers. Sugriva espied the two brothers, nearing the hills and was astonished at their noble mien and mighty stride. They appeared to belong to some Divine descent. Sugriva was ever on the watch for strange faces nearing his habitat, for, he was afraid his elder brother, Vali, might torment him, even in his present home, by sending emissaries of death or distress. So, Sugriva had his eyes on all lines of access which led to his craggy residence.

He was frightened at the gait and the glory of the two strangers; he was anxious to know quickly who they were and what their mission was. So, he called Hanuman to his presence and said, "Mighty hero! Have you noticed those two effulgent personalities? Do not delay any longer; go; inquire who they are and why they have come so far, and from where. Bring me all the news you can gather. If by some chance, they happen to be persons sent by Vali, give me a signal. I shall be watching for it—bend your head low, over your chest. That will do. I shall immediately arrange to give up this hill for another.”

Sugriva gave him various similar directions and suggestions, to meet all contingencies. Hanuman hurried towards the strangers by leaps and bounds; reaching their presence, he fell at their feet in great reverence. He said, "O Shining Ones! You arouse deep wonder and curiosity in me. Your charming forms are attracting my mind with a strange yearning. You look so tender and innocent. Indeed, you are not mere men. Of that, I am convinced. I guess you are the Divine pair, Nara-Narayana come down on earth. Won't you tell me why you are going through this terrible jungle, with no others to serve or guide?" Hanuman questioned them in great humility and reverence.

The Devotion of Hanuman

Rama appreciated the devotion and humility of Hanuman; there was a smile on his face when he replied, "Hanuman! Hero! We are the sons of Emperor Dasaratha, ruler of Ayodhya. We entered the forest region, in accordance with the wish of our father; this is my brother, Lakshmana. My name is Rama. My wife too came with me into the forest; but, while we were residing at the Chitrakuta hill she was carried away by some Rakshasa taking advantage of the time when both of us were absent from our cottage. Now, we are moving around in this area, searching for her, intent on knowing her whereabouts and on regaining her." Rama spoke to Hanuman without any inhibitions, the plain facts which could explain their presence near their Range of Hills.

He said, "Well! Mighty Hanuman! I have given you my antecedents and story. I like to know about yours, too." Hanuman realised that the brothers were his own Overlords; so, he fell at their feet once again to pay his respectful homage. Rising up, and standing before them on one side, shedding streams of tears in sheer joy and devotion, he could not speak at all.

At last, gathering courage, and standing with folded arms, he said in a faltering voice: "Lord! I am a stupid ignoramus; that is the reason why I questioned you so; pardon my audacity and my foolishness. O, Monarch of Monarchs! You are asking me to tell you my antecedents and present condition, as if you are ordinary mortals who can know them only when told. Is this just? I could not know who you were, bound as I am by the Delusion which you yourselves spread over us. Lord! You are mighty, and unconquerable. How can the servant be on a par with the Lord and Master?"

All beings are overcome and deluded by your strategy and under your plan! I desire to make a declaration, for which my Lord is witness. I know no other activity than adoring my Lord. When the servant is fostered and guarded by his Lord, why should he fear? The might of the Lord is the shield of the servant. Saying so, Hanuman assumed his real form.

Rama was filled with joy at the sight of Hanuman; he embraced him, and told him, "You are as dear to me as Lakshmana is. He drew him to himself and fondled him lovingly stroking his head and gently touching his forehead and face. He said, "Hanuman! I shower my Love most on those who serve me and who deem that service as the highest means of liberation." At this, Hanuman said, "Lord! Sugriva, the Ruler of the Vanara hordes has drawn upon himself through various circumstances, the enmity of his elder brother Vali and he has been driven out of his kingdom as an exile into this forest where he has taken residence. He too is your servant. He deserves your

affection and blessings. Confer Grace on him and release him from the disgrace he is now immersed in.

He has the skill and authority to send millions of monkeys all over the world to seek and find Sita. He is the Monarch of Monkeys. He can achieve Victory in that undertaking." Hanuman detailed the manifold excellences and capabilities of Sugriva, and persuaded Rama to seek his friendship. When Rama decided on that step, Hanuman offered to carry them on his shoulders, right to the top of the mountain range where Sugriva was.

The Bond of Friendship

Sugriva was delighted at the very sight of Rama and Lakshmana. Sugriva understood the reasons why Rama had come into the forest and to him. They both sympathised with each other and appreciated each other's distress. They felt bound to each other by common bonds of comradeship. Sugriva fell at the feet of both Rama and Lakshmana, and offered reverential hospitality.

Rama assured Sugriva that he would destroy his fear and remove his distress, for, he was the embodiment of compassion itself. And, Sugriva too promised to sacrifice everything, even his own life, in the service of Rama. The vow of everlasting friendship was solemnised with ritual Fire as witness.

For, Fire is present as warmth and light in the heart of every living being; fire that is present in the inner consciousness can burn away any wavering or waywardness that might affect the vow. In fact, Fire or Agni (the subtle Divine Effulgence and Illumination which is the core of Fire) is the chief element in the Ramayana. Rama was born of the nectarine gift brought by the God of Fire from out of the sacrificial altar. Sita was wedded to Rama with Agni as the Witness. Lanka was destroyed by Agni. It was in Agni that the Reality, the Principle, of Sita was kept in deposit while she was taken by Ravana to Lanka, and it was from Agni that she was once again redeemed, when the war with Ravana ended in victory for Rama. The implication is that the heart of Rama was cleansed and rid of amalgams with each contact with Agni. For, Rama is the symbol of Jnana or the Supreme Wisdom. He is the symbol of the Supreme Morality, too. So, the pact with Sugriva was affirmed and sanctified by invoking Agni (Fire) as the Witness. Lakshmana sought to deepen faith and tighten the bond, by relating to Sugriva the Truth of Rama and the mission on which he had come.

A Bundle of Jewels

He told him also of Sita, and her Divinity. She was daughter of the King of Mithila, he said, and so, she can be won and her blessings secured, only by untiring Mathana, or Churning, or seeking through Sadhana. Listening to him, Sugriva shed tears of contrition. He said, "Master! One day, while I was engaged in exchanging counsel with my ministers, I heard the cry, 'Rama! Rama!' from the sky, from within the Pushpaka chariot, which we saw flying through space. While we were watching this strange scene, she threw a bundle tied in cloth towards where we stood. It was a bundle of jewels and so, we have preserved it intact and safe. It is very likely that the Rakshasa called Ravana has carried her away. For there is no iniquity that Ravana has not committed so far." Sugriva gnashed his teeth in uncontrollable anger at the monster who he suspected as having done this dire deed.

Meanwhile, Rama asked that the bundle of jewels be brought; at this, Sugriva himself rose and proceeding to the cave where he had hidden it, he carried it to the Presence and placed it before Rama. The cloth in which the jewels were bundled was a part of the fibre-cloth which his step-mother had thrown towards Sita, so that she might wear it while in exile as a recluse in the forest. Recognising it as such, Lakshmana shed tears. Seeing him overcome, Sugriva and Hanuman also became sad.

Rama loosened the knots and undid the bundle; he showed the contents to Lakshmana in order to confirm whether the jewels were those of Sita herself. Lakshmana declared that he could not identify them all, for, he had never raised his eyes and looked at Sita. "I have seen only the toe-rings that sister-in-law wore; for I used to prostrate at her Feet every day. Yes. These are the toe-rings she wore; I can vouchsafe for that.

While moving through the jungles, I used to follow her and walk on her foot-steps. You know that you always walked in front and I followed behind Sita. I was walking watching her feet and, so, I know these rings quite well." Sugriva and Hanuman looked on wistfully at the brothers, when they acted their roles and pretended to be moved into sorrow, at the sight of the jewels cast off by Sita. Sugriva could not bear it any longer. He said, "Lord! Do not give way to sorrow. This day itself I shall set on foot plans to discover where Sita is, and, destroying the wicked Ravana, I shall bring Sita back and make you both happy. This is my plighted word, my sacred promise."

Rama expressed great satisfaction at this promise. He said, "Tell me in detail the reason why you are residing in this forest and not in your capital." At this, Sugriva described consecutively and in clear concise terms, as beads are strung on a string to form a garland or rosary, who his parents were, which his real place of residence was, what were the reasons for the enmity that grew between himself and his elder brother etc. Rama felt that the story of Sugriva was more or less akin to his own, especially, the separation from the wife and the exile from the Kingdom. He felt that Sugriva was upright and just, and that Vali deserved punishment since he had carried away his brother's wife, a crime which the code of monkey morals will not excuse,

Strange Births

Rama asked Sugriva to tell him the story of his birth. Sugriva replied, "Yes. I seek to surrender at your feet the chronicle of the origins and fortunes of my entire clan. Once upon a time, Brahma, the Creator, created a monkey form. It was endowed with great might; but, it was ever wayward in movements and activities. So, Brahma named it Ruksharaja; when it demanded to be told what it should do and where it should reside, Brahma directed, 'Live in the forest, for, there you can move as your waywardness dictates. Eat the roots, and fruits as fancy directs. And, when you catch a Rakshasa, kill him and save the area from his misdeeds.' Ruksharaja migrated to the southern region, and followed Brahma's instructions.

One day, the monkey Ruksharaja went to a lake to slake its thirst and when it dipped its face on the surface of the clear water, it saw its shadow in the lake. It was much concerned, for, evidently there was an enemy hiding in the lake, lying in wait for him! It roamed all round the shore of the lake, eager to catch the enemy when it popped out of the waters. The enemy inside

the lake roared when he roared; gnashed its teeth when he did so; it echoed, reflected, all noises and all gestures. Unable to control himself any longer, Ruksha jumped into the lake to strangle his rival.

That jump transformed him into a female! Struck with amazement, she came on shore, and turning to the Sun, she prayed for Grace. She also prayed to Indra, with great mental anguish. Through the Grace of Surya (the Sun) she got a son, that is, Sugriva, myself; and through the Grace that Indra bestowed on her, she got another son, Vali, my brother. Immediately after the birth of the two children, she became once again, Ruksharaja!

Ruksha took the two babies with him and approached Brahma for instructions. He related to Brahma his entire story so that He could recollect the facts of his origin and career. Brahma took pity on him, and announced his decision thus: "O Ye Vali and Sugriva! Go into the regions of the South and establish yourselves in Kishkindha. The Lord of all the Worlds, the Supreme Sovereign of the Universe, He who is known by many Names will take birth as Rama, as the son of Emperor Dasaratha of the Raghu Dynasty; he will come into the forest according to his father's command; he will engage himself in many superhuman achievements; he will also behave like an ordinary mortal. During his wanderings, he will arrive at Kishkindha where you are and form friendship with you. Seek the fortune of securing his Darshan, hearing him speak and touching his feet. Your lives will be rendered blessed thereby."

The Two Brothers

We both listened to the Voice of Brahma addressing us thus. We were delighted at the prospect that lay before us. We did not undertake any Japa, austerity, ritual or Yajna; all our talents and accomplishments were the direct result of the Grace that Brahma showered on us that day. When that Voice ceased, we offered homage in our minds to Brahma and reached Kishkindha. We destroyed the Rakshasas who infested the forests there.

One day, a Rakshasa named Mayavi, the son of Maya, proceeded against us in order to wreak vengeance against us: He besieged us at midnight and created tremendous confusion. My elder brother could not tolerate even one moment the audacity of the foe. Vali rose and fell upon him with all his might; and so, Mayavi fled in terror.

Mayavi hid himself in a cave, and Vali pursued him to the very last. I was also engaged in the hot pursuit of the wicked Rakshasa, close behind Vali. As he entered the cave where Mayavi had taken shelter, Vali directed me, "Brother! I am going into this cave to kill the enemy; watch the entrance and remain here, lest he escape." When I asked him how long, he replied, "Even as long as fifteen days and nights. Keep close watch that long." "And, if I do not emerge on the sixteenth day, you may take it that he has killed me; you can then return."

I waited and watched for full thirty days; by that time, the smell of blood emerged from the cave, a smell that I could infer was that of my brother's blood. I feared that Mayavi might emerge alive from the cave; so I placed a huge boulder at the mouth of the cave and knowing that it was foolish to wait any longer, I returned home. I gathered my companions and well-wishers and consulted them about the next step. We felt that Mayavi who could kill the redoubtable Vali must indeed be a formidable enemy and so, I spent the days in perpetual fright. The inhabitants

of the capital realised that they must have a leader in these hard times when they were beset by foes on all sides. They pleaded that since Vali had died, I must be their leader and guide and that I must step into his place. I had no inclination to accept the authority, but, they forced me into it.

Vali's Vengeance

Shortly after this event, within about two or three days, Vali returned to the capital; he had slain Mayavi and rid the land of that vile foe. On finding me holding the position of ruler, Vali was filled with uncontrollable anger; he inferred that I had shut the exit of the cave with a boulder to prevent him from coming out alive, and that I had deliberately sought the position that was thrust on me. He decided to wreak vengeance on me for this. He began treating me as the lowest of the low and to impute motives for even the slightest fault or mistake. He deprived me of all powers and positions and looked down on me as if I were less than a menial of his household. He forced me out of the family home. He took my wife into his custody. One day, determined to destroy me, he fought with me ferociously. I could not stand up to his prowess; so, I left Kishkindha and took refuge here. Vali insisted that those who supported me or befriended me should not stay behind and so, they have also joined me at this place.

My wife tried hard to come back to me; but, however much she tried, he did not allow her to come away. He treated her as his own wife." Sugriva's eyes were streaming tears as he related his sad story. Rama consoled him and sympathised with his plight. He assured him once again that he would protect him from harm and guard him against evil.

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness

(To be continued)

Ramayana for Everyman

The Ramayana is a guide-book, a sacred text, an inspiring scripture, for Everyman in all lands, at all times, whatever his creed or condition might be. For, it imparts poise, balance, equanimity, inner strength and peace. Peace is the best treasure, without which power, authority, fame, fortune are all dry and burdensome. Thyagaraja has sung that there can be no happiness, without inner peace.

To earn this peace and to be unshakably established in it, man must develop Abhyasa (Steady practice) and Vairagyam (Full detachment). From birth to death, man is the slave of habits and practices. One must examine these, and rely more and more on those that lead him towards subjective joy rather than objective pleasure. Subjective joy can be acquired by harmony in the home, mutual co-operation among the members of the family and community, acts of service to others and concern for the welfare and prosperity of the society in which one is living.

The Ramayana holds up the ideals to be pursued by the father, the son, the mother, the brother, the friend, the servant, the master, the teacher, the pupil etc. The happy home is the basic cell of the national organism. It ensures a happy world, for, mankind is one family, and if any one unit is sad or struggling in distress, how can the rest be safe or satisfied?

Vairagyam or Detachment does not imply renunciation of family ties and fleeing into the loneliness of the jungle. It means our giving up the feeling that things are permanent, and capable of yielding supreme joy. The mind plays tricks with man and believes that some things are good and some bad, some eternal and some transitory. You might have a plateful of nice eatables before you and they might appear to be delicious and fine; but, if the cook announces that a lizard had fallen into the cooker when it was on the fire and has been boiled alive, all the fascination for the food disappears in a trice! There is no object without fault or failing; there is no joy that is unmixed with pain; there is no act that is not tainted with egotism. So, be warned and develop the detachment which will save you from grief.

The Ramayana instills this wise, valid, valuable detachment, or Tyaga. Rama gladly journeys into the forest as an exile, the moment he knows that his father's wish was that he should do so; and, remember, he was to be crowned Emperor just that moment by the very same person who ordered him to go into exile! When those - who have full powers and claims, renounce positions of authority in the Ramayana, we see today persons with no powers or claims, clamouring to occupy positions of authority!

Duty is God; that is the lesson the Ramayana teaches. The word duty is used to indicate the methods by which one exercises his authority. No. Duty is the responsibility you have to respect and revere others and to serve them to the best of your ability. You claim to have the freedom to walk, waving your walking stick around you; but, the man coming behind has as much freedom to use the road as you have. To exercise your freedom so that you do not limit or harm the freedom of others—that is the Duty, which becomes Worship.

When Rama, Sita and Lakshmana reached the banks of the Ganga, Sumantra the aged Minister of the Court who had taken them so far in the Royal Chariot could not follow them; he had in duty bound return to the Capital. So, he turned back with tearful eyes; Guha rowed them across the river; they entered the forest and started walking in single file through the thick jungle, Rama, Sita in the middle and Lakshmana following behind. They reached the hermitage of Valmiki soon; when the Sage came forward to welcome them, Rama asked him to indicate a place where he can reside. Valmiki said, "We sages reside in You; You reside in us. Where else can I, request You to reside? Though you have assumed this human form, You give yourself away by the Beauty that shines in You."

The Beauty of Rama was the Beauty of Inner Peace, the Splendour that fills one when he is conscious of living in Dharma. Ramayana teaches also the need to give up the false identification with the body. When Rama saw Tara wailing over the corpse of Vali, He gives her lessons on the evanescence of the body and the foolishness of identifying a person with that vehicle he uses for the purpose of his journey to Divinity.

When desire for the evanescent overcomes reason, he is doomed; he becomes distant from the goal. Consider Sita. She renounced everything that she thought would give her comfort in the palaces of her father and father-in-law and preferred to follow Rama into the forest. So, she secured the Proximity and Presence of the Lord. But, alas, when she saw the false form of the Golden Deer, she yearned for it, and sent both Rama and Lakshmana after it, so that she might

fondle it and feed it and have it as a pet. What was result of this fatal desire? She was forced to live far away from the Lord and to pine for Him in great anguish.

When Rama is installed in the heart, everything will be added unto you—fame, fortune, freedom, fullness. Hanuman was a mere monkey leader until he met Rama; he was a minister in the court of his master; but, when Rama gave him the commission to seek Sita and sent him, that is to say, when Rama was installed in his heart as guide and guardian, Hanuman became immortal, as the Ideal Devotee.

The Ramayana has a deep undercurrent of significant meaning. Dasaratha means, he who rides in a chariot of ten, that is to say MAN. He is tied up with three Gunas, or three wives, as in the Ramayana. He has four sons, the Purusharthas; Dharma (Rama) Artha (Lakshmana) Kama (Bharata) and Moksha (Shatrughna). These four aims of man have to be systematically realised, always with the last one, Moksha clearly before the eye. Lakshmana represents the Buddhi or Intellect and Sita is Truth. Hanuman is the Mind, and it is the repository, if controlled and trained, of Courage. Sugriva, the master of Hanuman is Discrimination. With these to help him, Rama seeks Truth and succeeds. That is the lesson of the Epic to Everyman.

The culture of this land is based on the high ideals of Righteousness enshrined in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, in both of which God has led mankind in the garb of man. There is a story of Alexander the Great, which illustrates the glory of Indian Culture. It seems Alexander used to go incognito to the villages around his camp, in India, in order to learn the habits and manners of the strange new land into which fate had brought him. One day, he found a man pleading with another to accept a pot of gold, which the other was refusing even to look at. He came to know that the pot of gold was discovered under the soil of the field purchased by the man from the man who refused to accept it. The buyer argued that he had bought only the land and was therefore not entitled to own the pot of gold; the seller said, he had no more right for any thing found on or in the plot that he had sold. Alexander watched this contest for some time; both did not yield. At last, the village elders were called in to, decide the issue. And, even as Alexander watched, the elders found a happy way out: the buyer's son shall marry the seller's daughter, and the pot of gold shall be given to the bride as dowry! Alexander felt elated at the heights to which human virtue could rise; he was also ashamed at his own adventurous ambition to conquer another's property by force of arms: The ideals, underlying the ancient culture of India have to be studied and practised by every Indian at least, so that the world might have the benefit of the great examples this can provide.

This day, when you are celebrating the Birth of Rama, you have to dedicate your activities to these ideals propounded in the life of Rama. The fact that you are alive this day is a blessing, for, you can know of these ideals and also the means by which you can realise them in actual daily life. There are many who spend much time in mechanically reciting the name Rama or systematically reading the entire Ramayana according to a fixed time-table, or who worship the images of Rama, Sita, Lakshmana and Hanuman as a daily ritual, with pomp and pedantry; but, like the person who puts a foot forward only to draw it back again these persons do not progress at all, though years might elapse. Without gaining purity of thoughts and intentions, compassion and the urge to serve, these outward expressions and exhibitions are but ways of cheating the

society which applauds you as a great devotee. Your sight must become insight; it must be turned with in, and used to purify and clarify.

People talk glibly of Sakshatkara, the Vision that Liberates. The See-er and the Seen have to merge and become One and experienced as One Only, without a Second. That is the Sakshatkara that is worthwhile. You may have a fruit. You may earn the fruit of Tapas, in your hand. But, unless you eat it, digest it, and make it part of your own nature and derive strength therefrom, you are not saved at all. Merge into the Divine which you really are; that is the consummation.

In order to reach this goal, you have to proceed far. First, examine your present equipment; find out its defects, for example, whether it is damaged by egotism, greed, insincerity, waywardness and sloth. For; with these faults, it is difficult to concentrate on thoughts of God, either within or without. You must also cultivate the positive quality of Love (Prema) for the Embodiment of Prema can be realised only through Prema. That is the Message the Ramayana gives all those who study it with sincere desire to learn. That is the Message I wish to give you today.

—**Baba: Ramanavami: Brindavan: 20-4-75**

Repeat the Gayatri. It is the most universal and the most effective prayer. It has three parts: 1. Contemplation of the Glory of the Light that illumines the upper, middle and lower worlds. 2. Picturisation of the infinite Grace that flows ever from that Light. 3. Prayer for full and final Liberation, through the Awakening of innate Intelligence that pervades the Universe as Light. All can use this prayer and be saved by it. "Om bhurbhuvah suvah; thath savithur varenyam; bhargodevasya dheemahi; dhiyoyonah prachodayath."

—**Baba**

Yoga in Modern Life

—**V. S. Page**

Nowadays all over the world, there is evident a great curiosity about the Yoga science. Especially, in western countries many- people seem to have been attracted towards Yogic practices. Their interest, however, appears to be limited to Yoga so far as it is concerned with physical exercises sometimes, there is a curiosity and even attraction for Yogic miracles. Some of the aspirants are drawn towards higher practices of Yoga. It is, therefore, necessary to clearly understand the method and the purpose of Yoga practices.

The word `Yoga' is used connoting various shades of meanings. There is a reference in the Mahabharata which shows that Yoga was used as a sort of military command. The, root meaning of the word `Yoga' is `joining', from 'yuja', to join. When the word `Yoga' was used for giving an order, horses were joined to chariots, arrows to bows, eyes to the target etc. Therefore, any act of joining is connoted by the word `Yoga'. It is not, however, an *ad hoc* joining. The joining must result in some sort of identification, assimilation etc. The archer has to fix his eyes on the target at which the arrows are aimed and he has to start the operation with single-minded attention so

that he gets completely absorbed in the same. This is called 'tanmayata'. This 'tanmayata' is equally applicable in the case of spiritual meditation also.

The Upanishad says, 'Omkar' is the bow, individual self is the arrow and the universal spirit is the target, at which one has to shoot without committing the slightest error with complete absorption, which is sometimes called 'Samadhi' in the language of 'Yoga'. 'Dharana' is fixing the mind on something for the smallest unit of time. To remain in such a position for a longer time is 'Dhyana' or meditation and complete absorption or identification is called 'Samadhi'. Hence, Yoga is the process of joining or fixing the mind on something. The result of this Yoga is 'Samadhi'. Many times the word 'Yoga' is used both for, the process as well as the result.

There are six 'darshanas' or systems of Spiritual or Philosophical thought recognised amongst Hindus. Yoga is one of them, but here the meaning is Yoga as propounded by Patanjali in his Yogasutras. In this limited sense, the object of Yoga is Kaivalya or separation of 'Purush' and 'Prakruti.' The exact definition of Yoga as given by Patanjali is the Control of the Chittavritti. Normally, 'chitta' is understood to be mind and 'vritti' as, the modification of the mind or movement of the mind, and Yoga is understood to be cessation of all movements of mind. But this meaning is not the precise one. It betrays only a surface understanding, because Patanjali himself has made it clear that 'vrittis' are five in number. These are not mere modifications of human mind nor its movements, but five states of the human consciousness. They are Pramana, Viparyaya, Vikalpa, Nidra and Smirti.

These five states can be described in simple language as follows: (1) The state of mind in which we see things as they are: (2) The state of mind in which our vision is perverted i.e. we see some other thing for something else: (3) the state of mind in which we see something, though actually there is nothing i.e. state of mere imagination; (4) State of mind in deep sleep; and (5) The state of mind in which we remember something or revive some past impressions. When human mind transcends all these five states it is called Yoga. It is a state of pure absolute consciousness not of something else but of consciousness itself.

The meaning of Yoga is not confined only to the aspects described above. There are other types of Yoga as well. When the mind is doing some duty without any desire for fruits or without any egoistic sense it is called 'karmayoga'; similarly, 'bhakti-yoga', 'dhyana-yoga', 'kriya-yoga', 'laya-yoga' etc. This is as regards Hindu tradition of this mystic science. There have been great mystics in the western world as well and their mystic experiences have been very well studied, analysed and evaluated by some eminent authors like Mr. William James, but these mystic experiences in the western countries are not so systematised as they are in India.

Mystics exist not only in Hindu tradition, but they also exist in Jaina and the Buddha cults. There are many common points in the yogic practices of all these traditions. The western world is attracted not towards this spiritual side of Yoga, but its attraction is mainly for miracles as well as physical exercises. Yoga is looked upon as a special therapy as distinct from psychic therapy or even Logotherapy. Healing by faith, sometimes called the Christian method, is also different from Yoga therapy. This way of looking at Yoga is also getting hold of the modern mind in India. The object of Yoga is not to satisfy the curiosity by miracles or by curing diseases. True; Lord Jesus himself did some miracles and brought relief to some patients or the afflicted, but the

message of Lord Jesus is something beyond that. His was an intensely spiritual life. So the object of Yoga is spiritual and not material, though one can derive certain material benefits as well from the practice of Yoga.

Research in yogic miracles is going on a very vast scale outside India and even in our country some institutions have taken up this research. This research is known by various names. Sometimes it is called psychic discoveries. These psychic discoveries may mean mental telepathy, hypnotism; faith healing or it may mean miraculous powers of mind such as precognition, psychokinesis etc. Miracles such as sightless or eyeless vision, moving the objects by mere sight, materialising thought and many more such things. This research is not only being carried on in western countries, but it is equally being attended to in socialist countries as well.

We need not go into this at length as volumes have been written on this subject. At the moment we should not get ourselves interested in miracles or the scientific aspect of the same. Time has now come when more and more research will reveal that the miracles are not miracles in the real sense of the term. Law of causation operates even in the case of such so called miracles. With modern instruments it has been possible to take photographs of the invisible bodies, till late called subtle bodies or astral bodies etc. Let us not get ourselves entangled in this at present.

To my mind, yogic powers or the yogic miracles were useful in the field of metaphysics as well. They serve as data for drawing further inferences as to the nature of the universe. For instance, we say that God created the world out of Himself without any instruments or material for this creation. What is the proof for this? It has been argued that as the Yogi materialises his thought and produces a thing without any outside aid, similarly God must have created the universe out of Himself without any extraneous matter. This theory of creation by God is based on the experience of materialisation by the Yogis without any material aid whatsoever. It is said that God who is of the nature of consciousness had the whole universe in Himself and projected the same outside, at His will in the same way as Yogi creates the material thing out of his own mind.

All things cognised by senses, are a sort of data for us to infer and we construct our own universe out of this. This is the basis of philosophy. All things felt by the senses are called 'pratyaksha', but in addition to this there is 'Yoga pratyaksha' i.e. not cognised by ordinary persons, but by yogis. 'Yoga pratyaksha' is also data of human experience which one must take into account while constructing his ideas about the universe as such.

Similarly, Yoga as therapy may be useful for curing some diseases, but perfect understanding of this power may give us ever expanding knowledge about human mind and human soul as well.

From what I have stated above, we should try to grasp the real significance of the Life and Message of Shri Sathya Sai Baba. His miraculous powers cure the afflicted or the diseased. But it would only be surface understanding of Baba's life if we are unable to probe deeper. His life gives the message of Sathya, Dharma, Shanti and Prema, which is the deepest experience in life itself. I once asked Baba Himself as to how one can recognise a perfect yogi. He advised me to

see two things and not to divert my attention to other matters. "Where there is perfect peace and intense joy there is perfect yoga." Every act of the true votary of God is an act of worship of the Almighty; the very purpose of the `Avatar' is to make people happy.

I would like to close this article with a quotation from Yogavasishtha; Sage Vasishta, after teaching Rama, the spiritual lessons, concludes as follows: Rama goes into trance and sits silent completely absorbed in Samadhi. The Guru Vasishta pats him on his back and shakes his shoulders and wakes him up. He tells Rama "Present is not the time for rest, nor this world is a rest house. The physical body needs rest. Rama! You are not a physical body. You are `chinmaya' i.e. consciousness absolute. You have assumed this physical body to make people happy which is the goal of the perfect yogi.

Unless `lokaparamarsha' or the art of making people happy is established deep in the normal activities of Yogi, his Samadhi cannot be said to have been completely stabilised nor can it be said to be spotless or pure." This lesson is meant for all though it was delivered to Rama. All are not Avatars, but if the purpose of the Avatar is to make people happy, the same is the ideal of the devotees of Avatars. The object of Yoga is not only to attain high ecstasy and make oneself happy, but to make all people happy by imparting to them, the real knowledge, especially the spiritual knowledge which would result in Truth; Peace, Duty, and Love. One has only to open his eyes and see how this is being practised in the Spiritual Movement run by the Sri Sathya Sai Organisations.

Dharmakshetra

The 12th day of May, 1975, was celebrated by the Sai Devotees of Bombay as the 7th Anniversary of the Inauguration of Dharmakshetra, the architectural gem, which serves as the Centre of a huge Campus, wherein is situated the Sathya-deep Hall and Residential House, the High School for the children of the area where the labour population predominates, the School run with a work-oriented curriculum and a worship-oriented atmosphere, the Prayer Hall, with the Five-Fluted Five-Petalled Stupa of Concord of all Faiths on the heights behind and the Agricultural Polytechnic which is destined to revolutionise the country side with its propagation of both cultural and agricultural values. This institution is the first of its kind in the State of Maharashtra. Dharmakshetra has become a great national and international centre for the dissemination of Baba's Message of "Be Good, Do Good, and See Good in all."

The mile-long Nagarsankirtan Gathering awakened the neighbourhood into the conscious of the historic occasion. Baba gave Darshan to the vast concourse from near the Stupa, and later, when more than 20,000 devotees were engaged in sharing and showering Divine ecstasy in Bhajan, Baba gave Darshan again at the spacious shamiana. The Public Meeting in the evening was presided over by the Mayor of the City Sri. M. M. Pinge, the State President of Sai Organisations welcomed the gathering and pleaded for blessings and guidance from Baba. Sri. P. K. Sawant, former Minister of Agriculture, gave an account of the new trends in rural education that the Polytechnic intended to foster.

The Mayor then congratulated the City on the continuous flow of blessings from Baba and thanked Him for insisting on the practice of Seva and Sadhana and for vigilantly watching over the various useful activities of the many Units of the Organisations, all over the City and its outskirts.

Bhagavan then blessed two students of the Dharmakshetra School, who had shown commendable skill in the Trades for which they were trained and gave them the Certificates of Merit. The students who received these marks of appreciation from the Divine Hands were: Ramesh Appa Parulekar and Ravindra Dattatreya Pande. They are specialising the Wireman Trade, at the Sathya Sai High School (Service Industries Training Section).

Sri V. S. Page, the famous speaker and scholar of Maharashtra spoke on the significance of the Stupa and the epoch-making lesson it conveyed. He said, it represented Baba's Teachings which have 3 facets: Universal Love, Incessant Sadhana and the promotion of social peace and progress.

Bhagavan blessed the huge gathering with an inspiring and illuminating discourse on the importance of work and of its seen and unseen consequences. He said that all work is the end-product of three tendencies or powers in man: the Icchashakti (the urge to desire), Jnanashakti (the urge to know) and Kriyashakti (the urge to do). Each of these urges have to be sublimated, in order that action can be beneficial. The fruit is immanent in the seed, so too, the merit or demerit is immanent in the deed.

There are three stages of activity, the highest, the middling and the low. When the activity is prompted by the urge to benefit oneself and one's family, it is low; when the urge is to benefit one's country, it is of middling value; when the whole world and its welfare is taken into consideration, it is of the highest order. The child progresses from the Elementary School into the Middle School and from there, on to the High School and ultimately to the College and post-Graduate institute, so too, man must move into higher and higher stages of activity. He should not, like a feeble-minded child, be in the same class for years unable to learn any more."

On the 13th, at 10 A.M., the Students of the Sri Sathya Sai Arts and Science College enacted, at the Shanmukhananda Hall, Sion, a play inspired by Bhagavan, woven round the famous Bhaja Govinda Hymns composed by Sankaracharya. The essential teachings of Sankara, as indicated in sweet and simple Sanskrit verse therein, were dramatised in a few scenes of intense emotional appeal. The students played their several roles so intelligently, so realistically and so sincerely that they won the wholehearted admiration and appreciation of the vast audience of spell-bound devotees. This play was followed by skits and playlets, dances and tableaux from the pupils of the Bal Vikas Classes, the members of the Pre-Seva Dal, and of the Seva Dal itself. Altogether it was a three-hour festival of devotion, delight and Light.

Bhagavan was busy during all the days of His Stay with the members of the Sathya Sai Central Trust and the State Presidents (about 18 in number) who had come to Him for directives regarding the Celebration of the Golden Jubilee of the Advent, Which Bombay itself had initiated with the Inauguration of the Pillar of Universal Faith. He spent hours with the Students of the Sathya Sai College. Every morning and evening (except the hours spent in the Shanmukhananda hall), Baba moved among the tens of thousands who flocked at Dharmakshetra for Bhajan in His Presence and showered His Blessings on the sick persons and others in distress. Many of them came from long distances and from moffussil towns, and neighbouring States.

On the 14th, Bhagavan inaugurated a Book Centre, from where Overseas Devotees could hereafter obtain easily the Publications relating to the Advent, the Mission and Message of Sai, besides portraits etc, which they desire to possess. Since Baba had decided to leave Bombay by the first flight to Bangalore, on the 15th, He graciously collected the men and women members of the Seva Dal who had devotedly and diligently served the vast mass of people who congregated at Dharmakshetra every day, from Nagarsankirtan in the predawn hours to the Arati at dusk; and, He gave each of them the precious Vibhuti and a quantity of sweets.

When Baba left Dharmakshetra, at 5-30 A.M., one could see hundreds lining the path, in spite of the place being far away from the City and in spite of the rather heavy downpour with which Baba had blessed Bombay's sweltering days and nights. At the Santa Cruz airport too, thousands of devotees had secured positions of vantage so that they could win one more glimpse of their beloved Sai.

From the Mouths of Children

We are children of the Sai Era. I wonder how empty our future would have been if the Sai Era had not dawned when we were born. We see people rushing round and round, very busy. We find elders who do not pray or read Divine books. But, we, in the Bal Vikas know much about the Leelas of God and the ways in which we can win His Grace.

We, the children of the Sai Era, have the good luck of seeing the Avatar; just as the children of Gokul had the chance to see and talk to Krishna. We have heard Sai Krishna sing and talk, we have touched His Feet, and we have acted plays in His Presence and danced before Him and been rewarded with His Blessings.

Baba wants us to grow into good strong men and women, able and willing to serve others with love. He asks us to be as sweet, as loving and as fresh as. He is; we are promising Him every day in our prayers that we will try our best, with His blessings to help us. We should, He says, be examples to other children. We know that this alone can please Baba.

Baba tells us that this land where we are born and where we have to live and serve, is Bharat, a word which means, "having strong attachment to God" He says, Bharat is the land of Yoga and Tyaga. So, we have to learn Yoga and practise Tyaga, in the days to come. Baba has given us a grand duty. We are, He says, the pillars of the Nation and He wants us to see good, do good and be good, so that Bharat may stand in the front line of nations.

Yes. Each of us will be a Vivekananda, living the way which Baba lays down and spreading His message of Sathya, Dharma, Shanti and Prema, the Message of Sai Rama Krishna Bhagavan, our Master. We are hundreds and thousands of Vivekanandas, a mighty legion, for, all our Bal Vikas brothers and sisters, all over this country and, in other countries, are getting ready and trying their best to become fit instruments in the hands of Bhagavan Baba. We are now the raw material; we pray, "Baba! Shape us, change us into real 'Bangaroo'!" We desire to grow into useful sons and daughters; the bamboo and the coconut tree both grow to the same height; but, while the bamboo has no fruit to offer, the other tree carries on its head bunches of nice fruits. We plan to lead fruitful lives.

I have already made a blueprint for my future. No. I am not building castles in the air. My plans are not about which profession I am going to take up. Of course, I have my ambition and I am determined to put forth all my effort to study well. But, whether I join the engineering, or medical or any other profession, is something not totally within my choice. Destiny plays its role in this matter, and I will have to submit to it without slackening my attempts.

But, living a moral disciplined life is certainly within my choice and I have chosen. I am the sole arbiter, when the problem is, whether to tell a lie or speak the truth and face the consequences. Whether to be friendly with others or hostile and harmful is a matter of my choice. Whether I live for myself alone or whether I take delight in serving my brothers and sisters, as well as my country is certainly within my choice. These are the ideals Bal Vikas has set for me and for all my little brothers and sisters.

Baba has assured us, "Why fear, when I am here?" If only we try to be pure and good, at home as well as outside the home, He will shower His Grace. He is always 'here'; His `here' is

`everywhere'; He is ever with every one. He is watching all our thoughts, words and deeds every minute. I am aware I cannot escape His searchlight, for even a second. I know I have to be cautious all the time. Baba's assurance has become my 'policeman'. Along with love and Devotion, I have got Fear too; for, while guarding me, He is also watching me. He will guard me for years and years, since He has charted out our lives. From Bal Vikas, we move on to Pre-Seva Dal, from there, we move on to Seva Dal and after a few years of Seva training, we take up our duties at the Seva Samitis, to be His blessed Instruments in serving our families, villages, country and humanity. This tender plant is sure to be guided and guarded till it grows to its full stature, and bears delicious fruit.

The Bal Vikas is making us happy and full of energy and enthusiasm. Our teacher told us a story she had heard Bhagavan relate. Once a group of eighty people went to New York, as a Delegation, to attend a Conference. They were lodged in a posh hotel; there they chose to take up lodging in the topmost flat, as their ambition was to live on the top of the city, above every one in the world. One evening, they went out together shopping; they purchased various novelties to be taken home and there to display them proudly before their less lucky friends and relatives. Unfortunately, when they returned to the hotel, the lifts were not working; there was failure of electric current!

So, they had, as the story goes, to climb up to the 80th storey, carrying with them, the heavy packages. In order to while away their time and make the task of climbing bearable, they decided that each of them should narrate his greatest 'ambition' in life, for others to listen and learn by. This they did up to the 79th floor; it was the turn of the 80th man, the leader of the Delegation, to finish the climb with his narration.

But, he was silent. Others pressed around him and wanted him to give the finishing touch. He said, at last, "I can only narrate a tale of woe; the greatest ambition of my life now is, to collect the bunch of keys of our flat, for I have left it at the ground floor. I have now to climb down all the steps and climb up again."

This is the state of man, says Baba. He has come to give us the key of life, by which we can reach the Kingdom of Peace, Prasanthi Nilayam. Man has gone up to the Moon, but, he has lost the key to happy life on Earth.

We are moulded by the Sathya Sai Bal Vikas. Baba told us once that there are four types of Vikas or development or blossoming. They are Manovikas (development of the mind), Buddhivikas (development of the intellect), Bhavavikas or Hridayavikas (expansion of the heart and the good emotions of the heart), and Atmavikas (blossoming of the Soul). He said, wet clay can be moulded any way we like. It can be made into an idol of Lord Gajanana or into a common toy. There is a great difference between these two forms of clay. As Lord Gajanana it is adored and worshipped. As a toy it is thrown away, when the child has lost interest in it. The toy has no lasting utility; whereas the idol of Ganesha, though made out of the same clay, remains precious and revered for ever. By proper training and effort, we too should make ourselves worthy, like the idol; this was what Baba told us.

When religious ceremonies and birthdays of Rama, Krishna and other Avatars and festivals of Ganesha, Siva and Durga, or Holy Days like Bakrid or Christmas are celebrated, we children did not know why the elders were doing so; we cared only for the feast. But, Bal Vikas has taught us the real purpose of these festivals, and made us share in them with greater joy. We now help our parents to celebrate them. Bal Vikas has taught us to revere our parents and love our brothers and sisters, as Rama did and as Sravan Kumar did. Harishchandra never swerved from Truth; Dhruva and Prahlada had unshaken devotion to the Lord. We desire to emulate their great qualities in our own lives.

We have great love to recite prayers and Stotras, the proper ones, at different times of the day. We are taught to respect our parents and teachers as God, and we do our best to follow the direction. They also appreciate us and treat us with love.

We are also practising Japa and Dhyana. We know Baba likes us to start early, drive slowly and reach safely. We like Bhajans most and we are very happy when elders take us out with them for Nagarsankirtan.

When we look around us at the trees and mountains, or up at the sky with its stars, we feel that God is the greatest Artist. What a range of colours and Sound! What beauty! What variety! Every thing and being has its own special beauty. Even the lines on the palms and finger-ends are different for each man! Bal Vikas has taught us to see God's power and wisdom in this. At the same time, there is unity in this variety. We should not disturb this harmony of Unity; it is Love that keeps up this harmony. We know one song, "In me, there is Ram; in you, there is Ram; in him, there is Ram; there is Ram in all." So, we do not hate any one, for, in him too, there is the same Sai Ram.

"Sai Ram! Make us come through schools and colleges not with a mere Bachelor's or Master's Degree, but, fully blossomed in mind, heart and spirit, and rooted in the sacred values of life. Make us fit warriors for the battle of life, able to fight with evil tendencies and temptations, and shape us into servants of the weak, the ignorant and the distressed. More than the Master's Degree which the College offers, we prize the degree, "Worthy children of Sai." Jai Sai Ram."

—*From Speeches of Bal Vikas Children, Bombay, in the Divine Presence: 7-1-75*

Joy comes to man not through the shape of things, but through the relationship established. Not any child, but her own child makes the mother happy. If one established that kinship with everything in the universe, what an overpowering joy could be experienced. Only those who have felt it can understand.

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

The Buffalo Corpse

Sugriva said, "I am residing on this hill, helplessly, for, this is the only place where my vengeful brother, Vali, cannot come; there is a curse laid on him, by a sage which effectively prevents him from entering this region" Or else, I would have died at his hands long long ago." Rama inquired, "Friend! How did he incur that curse?" Sugriva explained, "Master! Dundubhi, the brother of Mayavi was a mighty hero. No one could equal him in valour and physical strength. He revelled in confrontations with mountains and the sea, in sheer joy at demonstrating his might! One day, while he was exulting on his daring exploits, standing in front of a mountain peak that he had pulverised, he heard an unseen Voice announce, "Dundubhi! Do not allow your head to swell so! Beware! There lives one who is mightier than you. He is gaily wandering on the shores of the Pampa Lake, assuming leadership and asserting his power. His name is Vali."

When these words fell on his ears, Dundubhi changed himself into a formidable buffalo and rushed into Kishkindha, where the Pampa Lake is situated. He ploughed the earth with his horns and bellowed his way through hill and dale, parading, in lofty pride, his, impregnable power. His fury was getting wilder at every step; he cast terror all around. When he dug his horns into the earth, huge trees rolled, uprooted, on the ground. His ferocity quaked all hearts.

While he was thus invading his region, like Rahu venturing to swallow the Moon, Vali perceived him, and that very, instant, fell upon him. The two strange looking foes struggled for victory, like wild tuskers entangled in mortal combat. The fight lasted more than six hours! Finally, Vali gave a mortal blow to Dundubhi; staggering with pain, he fell dead on the ground, like a mountain peak reeling to the ground during a violent earthquake. The impact was so unsettling that trees too were laid flat on the ground along with him! Vali was so intoxicated with success that he tore the corpse apart and threw the halves far into the distance one to the south and the other to the north.

The Curse

The bleeding mass of flesh and bone fell on a hermitage, showering a rain of blood over the holy area, which polluted the ascetics peacefully engaged in meditation and recitation of sacred hymns. It was the hermitage of the great saint, Matanga. He had gone to the river flowing near for his ritual bath. When he returned, he noticed drops of blood all over the place and soon came near the half-corpse of a terror-striking monster. He could not contain himself; his disciples and pupils, yearning to be bathed in bliss, were suffering agony and bathed in blood; his forbearance gave way; he halted a moment, wondering who could have dared commit the sin; his anger could not be kept under restraint; it did not allow him to look back or peer into the future; he pronounced a terrible curse!

"If that vicious, sinful Vali approaches this hill or even casts his eye on this hill, may his head be broken in two"; that was the imprecation he uttered. Scared by that curse, Vali is keeping away from this hill; he cannot approach this place or even look upon it. Emboldened by this circumstance, I am living here, unhampered, robbed of my wife and deprived of my kith and kin." Sugriva thus related his plight to Rama, with nothing held back.

Rama was disturbed by the story of the wickedness of Vali which was tormenting Sugriva since long. He could not listen any more to the list of his atrocities. Rama could not tolerate

unrighteous acts; he would not relish the description of vice. He comforted Sugriva and assured him that Vali could not escape punishment for relying solely on physical strength and material power ignoring the strength and power that one should earn through righteousness and devotion to God. He vowed that with one arrow he would fell Vali to the ground and put an end to his wicked life, even if all the fourteen worlds oppose the fulfillment of the vow.

The Bond of Friendships

"Do not cast your looks upon the face of a person who is unaffected by the sorrows of his, friend, or by the absurd boasts of his enemy. Do not choose a friend merely to win some temporary gain, or to satisfy some urgent desire, or to plunge into some foul behaviour. Friends must have deep love, towards each other; he, who has no love filling his heart, moving his mind or lighting up his face, can only be a bad undesirable 'friend'. The hearts of such false friends will be-crooked and contaminated. A wily servant, a greedy miserly and evil-minded wife or husband, a false friend—these four make life painful, as when pierced by spears and spikes. Therefore, O Sugriva, do not grieve. I shall come to your rescue, to the fullest extent of my physical, verbal and mental capabilities. What does it matter how strong Vali is? You are not aware of your own strength; you are bewildered by your estimate of his strength, that is all. That is at the bottom of your doubts and fears. Well. Perhaps, you desire to be assured of my powers, before you develop confidence and courage. Ask me to accomplish any task, so that your faith in me can take deep root. I shall demonstrate my strength and fill your heart with courage. When that is done, I shall fight with Vali and destroy him."

Rama gently stroked the back of Sugriva, in order to induce him to trust him and be rid of fear and anxiety himself. Sugriva was eager to see the prowess of Rama; he was also wanting some prop for faith. He said, "Rama! Once upon a time, I and my brother agreed to test our strength and skill on a line of seven giant palm trees, trying to fell them one after the other, shooting a single arrow right through all of them. I felled only three; but, my brother Vali hit five and they all rolled on the ground. His capacity had that maximum measure. To defeat Vali, one should have strength beyond his. I am most eager to find out whether you have that extra might and to see how many palm trees you can fell with one arrow."

The Proof

Sugriva and his courtiers then took Rama to a place where seven mammoth palms were piercing the sky in a row. They asked him to attempt to shoot them down; they talked among themselves that since those monstrous trees were four or five times huger than the five that Vali felled, Rama must be considered strong enough to overpower Vali even if he felled two of these giants. Looking at that row, Rama smiled and calling Sugriva near him, he told him, "Sugriva! These 'tall' palms are in my eyes the weakest and tiniest." Then he fitted an arrow on his bow; he felled all the seven; his arrow pushed the fallen palms up a mountain that was in the distance, and blasted the rocks on the way!

Sugriva was overwhelmed with wonder and devotion. He prostrated at the feet of Rama, exclaiming, "Rama! A hundred Valis could not have achieved this feat. I am indeed fortunate; I have no more worries in life, since I have secured your friendship! Though I am estranged from one Vali, I have today got a hundred Valis as my thickest comrade! Pardon my mistake. I am ashamed that my small-mindedness persuaded me to test your powers in this manner. O I am

indeed lucky that I am blessed with the friendship of God Himself, in this form. My tale of woe has ended this day. The hope has dawned in! My heart that I can soon regain my Kishkindha; I am really happy that I can again live happily with my wife and children. I am only tossed in doubt, about when and how soon it can happen within minutes, or hours or days. Of course, that depends on the will of Rama, on His Grace. It will be fulfilled the moment He decides on it.”

Sugriva knew that Rama alone could help him and that Rama alone has to be relied upon. He prostrated at Rama's feet, and said, "Rama! Your will, your Compassion, they are my sole refuge. When are you intending to put an end to my sorrows?" Rising again from his seat, Sugriva declared, "Listen, Rama! So long, I had labelled Vali as my greatest enemy, and shivered in fear of him. Now, I find he is my greatest benefactor. For fear of him, I took residence on this mountain range; since I was here, I could notice your arrival and meet you and be blessed by this friendship! Therefore, Vali is the root cause of all these developments. He is indeed my benefactor."

"Rama! We fight with another person while in a dream; we hate him to the utmost; we adopt all methods to ruin him; but, as soon as we awaken and rise from bed, we know that the hatred and the struggle were false and baseless; your Darshan has awakened me from my dream. While in that dream, I hated Vali and interpreted all his actions as inimical to me and I fought with him, in my ignorance. Now that I have seen you and had the benefit of listening to your counsel, I have risen conscious from my dream. The touch of your holy feet has imparted the vision of Truth. My long fostered hatred and envy, greed and egoism, my enmity towards Vali and my plans for vengeance, these made me weaker and weaker; I was sunk in my single minded yearning for a favourable moment to pay off old scores; this was the Tapas, the austerity, that granted me your Grace; I got you and my agony was reckoned as asceticism, my anger was transformed into love; Lord! Bless me, pour Grace on me. I have no more desire to regain my kingdom. My wife and children have their, careers marked out for them by destiny; what can I do to change the course of events? I shall no more worry about them. Enough for me, if you confer on me the joy of serving you and being with you, in your presence, for the rest of my life.”

The First Fight

When Sugriva prayed in this strain, Rama tenderly stroked big head and said, "Son! The words you utter are indeed true. Kingdoms and power, joys and griefs, anger and anxieties, properties and privileges, goods and bads, are all of the stuff of which dreams are made. The proximity to God, the God-Principle in you, that alone is real. But, remember, my vow, my word, can never prove false. Whatever might happen, I shall grant you the kingdom; you cannot escape the responsibility of ruling over it. You cannot evade the fight with Vali which must take place tomorrow. Come, get ready.”

Rama rose and both he and Lakshmana moved forward, armed with bow and arrow, with Sugriva by their side. Hanuman and others were permitted to remain in that hill-residence itself. Sugriva was given necessary instructions, while on the way; at last, he was directed to go forward alone, and shout a challenge in front of the main gate of the City. Following this command given by Rama, Sugriva stood before Kishkindha City and shouted so fiercely that the walls of the fort shook, and the earth quaked in fear. No sooner did that call fall on his ear than

Vali rose from bed, as a cobra does, when it is trodden upon, and came out, ready to fight and put to flight; he knew it was his brother who had challenged him to combat.

At this, Tara, the wife, clasped his feet and reminded him of the words spoken by his own son, some days previous. She said, "Lord! The brothers who have sought their help are no ordinary men. They are endowed with mighty powers. Sugriva, who was in hiding all this time, has come now with a new confidence and courage, and has even dared challenge you. He would not venture to do so, without weighing pros and cons, and looking before and after. He must have cultivated conviction about their capabilities and own the promise of their assistance. The princes, Rama and Lakshmana have Divine Powers; it is not propitious that you enter into battle with them."

Listening to her pathetic importunities, Vali burst into a jeering laugh. "Cowardly Women!" he said, "It is said that Rama is equal minded. If that is true, he will certainly look upon both of us with an equal eye. Moreover, I have not done him any harm, have I? In spite of this, if Rama kills me, well, my birth and years—life, I shall believe, have been fulfilled thereby!"

Tara was happy on the one hand that he had such an outlook; on the other hand, she could not entertain for a moment the idea of separation from her lord. So, she pleaded again, "Lord! It is considered a bad omen, when a woman objects. Do not rashly accept the challenge." But, Vali set aside all her pleadings. "When battle calls, no one cares for omens; either the enemy should die or one's own life should end." So saying, Vali pushed Tara aside and rushed towards the main entrance to the Fort, roaring in terror-striking anger.

The First Flight

He saw only Sugriva there; so, he jumped on him and both began a heavy fight with their fists, inflicting hammer-blows on each. Sugriva could not bear the rain of fierce hits; he felt a desire to flee; Vali with many a kick and pull, caused such agonising pain that Sugriva managed to escape, leaving Vali victor! Vali retired into the Fort, patting his thighs exultingly.

Rama and Lakshmana followed the fleeing Sugriva. When they reached the hill-resort, Sugriva fell at the feet of Rama, his heart heavy with the burden of disappointment, despair, pain and fear. He said, "Lord! I do not understand why you caused this disgrace to me. I proceed in this venture, buoyed up with a huge pile of hope that you would come to my rescue. All the while, I was watching for the moment when your arrow will hit Vali and finish him. But, that event never happened. Dispirited, I could not bear the weight of those blows; so, I had to take the shameful course of fleeing for sheer life. My brother is a mighty hitter; I could not stand those blows."

Rama consoled him and said, "Sugriva! Don't grieve. Listen to the reasons. You are so like each other, so indistinguishable one from the other, so much the same in appearance and attainments, that I could not take correct aim at him." Those words had a deep inner meaning, too. They meant that Vali too was devoted to His Feet. "He too is my votary. He has yearned for My Grace as much as you have."

But, Sugriva could not grasp the hidden import of the declaration, He prayed, "Knowing so much, could you not discover who Vali was and who Sugriva was? I cannot believe your words.

I do not know the reason why you could not. Perhaps, you wanted me to display my ability to the utmost. If that was your intention, I could have taken note of it from the beginning itself; what really happened was, I was so confident that you would attend to his downfall, that I took the fight rather easy, and in a light hearted manner."

The Garland

Rama drew the down-hearted, dispirited Sugriva to his immediate presence and consoled him profusely. He passed his Divine hand over the body of Sugriva, so that the pain disappeared in a trice. The wounds and contusions were instantaneously healed. Sugriva was overwhelmed with surprise. He exclaimed, "Rama! Your hand can achieve anything; it contains everything. Creation, Preservation, Destruction, are all three subservient to Your Will. I have no desire to rule over this kingdom. Compared to the joy Your Grace can confer, this joy is nothing at all."

Rama did not pay heed to his words. He said, "These words of yours are but reflections of passing thoughts. You spoke like this when you had a vision of my Power and Glory. I do not attach much value to them, for, I care more for feelings that rise in the heart. There are many great devotees who forget everything when they experience the Sport and Supreme Might of God, and believe that there is nothing higher than God. But, after some time, or when their mental cravings do not bear fruit, they develop doubts, about what they experienced or saw! These are the veils that hide, the curtains that distort the truth in the minds of those with weak faith. I know how it all happens and so I do not attach much value to these sentiments. You have to get ready to confront your brother once again." Thus, Rama forced Sugriva into the fray.

Sugriva had no liking for the fight, but, he was certain that this' time Rama would keep his promise and kill Vali. He walked boldly on, with confidence in his heart. Rama got some wild flowers and had them strung as a garland which he put round Sugriva's neck. What Rama meant was: Vali had already told Tara that Rama looked upon all as equal. It was this 'equal' sight that prevented him from killing Vali. "Now, I have put this garland of flowers round his neck to show that my love toward Sugriva is greater, and so, I can with justice, deal with Vali differently."

Sugriva has a garland extra, indicating that he wears the symbol of Divine Love. Love needs no reason for its flow; it comes from no selfish urge. Thus encouraged and filled with heroism, Rama and Lakshmana persuaded Sugriva to shout again a challenge at the gate of Vali's Fort. They hid themselves behind a tree that was nearby. When Vali rushed out eager for the fight, and when the earth quacked under the weight of his impact, Sugriva was frightened; he prayed to Rama with all his heart to come to his succour soon, and went forward to meet his foe. To justify his own attainments and capacity, Sugriva fought to the best of his ability. When his strength gave way, and the first signs of exhaustion appeared in him, he called out 'Rama' just once. Rama has as his favourite task, the guarding of his devotees. So, when he heard the call, he placed an arrow on his bow and shot it straight into the proud heart of Vali. Vali swung round helplessly and slid down until he fell flat on the ground. At that moment, Rama came near Vali and granted him the Divine Vision of Himself.

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness

(To be continued)

Sai Family News

From Halifax, Nova Scotia

"We celebrated Shivaratri with nearly forty people attending. After devotional songs the film 'Sai Baba—His Life Is His Message', and slides, were shown. Recently we were fortunate to visit southern California, participating in bhajans at Tustin and attending the center at Anaheim. Elsie Cowan presented us with a robe Sai Baba had given to her. We are unable to portray the gratitude we felt in receiving such a precious token of Baba's blessing. This gift will be the root for the establishment of our Halifax Sai Baba group."

From Grass Valley, Calif

"We are very happy with the Newsletter. Our Center, in a country town, brings only a handful of devotees to bhajans, on special occasions as many as fifty or sixty. Every Thursday we teach bhajans, then sing, meditate, distribute Vibhuti, and then have an informal reading, show a film, or tell of our experiences with Baba and relate new stories we have heard. The most wonderful thing about bhajans for us is the uniting of devotees in His Name and the experience of peaceful energy and love each receives. We are thankful Baba picked this area for a Center."

Health

Onetime, Baba wrote to an American Devotee, and He said: How is your health? The secret of health lies in keeping the mind always cheerful, never worried, never hurried, never worn down by any thought of fear or anxiety. Have all your attachments severed from every object and concentrate yourself on one thing, one fact, the truth of your Divinity. Immediately, on the spot, realization is gained. Nothing is done in a day, religionrequires hard, constant practice. The mind can be conquered only by slow, steady practice. Impurity is mere superimposition under which the real nature of man is hidden. You are the embodiments of God. Fill your thoughts, fill yourselves, with the thought of your Almightyness, your Majesty, your Glory, open the gate of Wisdom, enter the abode of peace, enter the abode of Bliss, be in peace forever."

Sri. D. D. Gupta (Meerut) and Dr. G. V. L. N. Murthy (Patna) have been nominated by Bhagavan as the State Presidents of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations, in the States of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, respectively.

—(Ed.)

There are some throat pastilles which must be placed in the mouth and the essence swallowed slowly in order to relieve cough. Place the divine Name on the tongue and imbibe its taste slowly to get rid of the troublesome upsurge of passions and emotions. Keep the Name lit on the tongue; it will illumine your interior and reflect on the exterior. It will cleanse your mind as well as the minds of those who hear the Name when you recite it. Keeping it on the tongue is like always having a lighted lamp at the doorway of your home.

—Baba

Sat-Chit-Ananda

To the afflicted and earnest seekers—keeping in view the present sweeping advancement of science and bewilderment caused by its achievement—manifestation of God, the ungraspable, beyond time and space, inexplicable by words in the form of Baba, though sometimes puzzling even to believers, is significant and also coherent. May He bless all of us in our sincere efforts and progress.

In 20th century, Bhagavan Himself has again explained Gita, in the context of present time and need, which was once explained and recorded beyond our conception, in Kurukshetra, when Arjuna was completely bewildered, as we are now. And...where were we then??? It would be appropriate to say "in the Womb of Bhagavan Himself"—for, all visibles and invisibles are only His manifestations—the Atma. With this concept, I earnestly pray to Him to lead us, stage by stage, to cross our hurdles, and not only, may He, help us to merge in Bliss, but be able to sustain His Kingdom in whatever merit we may fit in.

Well, amongst many-sided explanations in Gita Vahini, which is so unfathomable, it would be preferable to ponder deeply on the subject "CHIT" and its significance.

Bhagavan reminds us: "You are the SAT, the Atma; the entity that has no death. It is this Atma that is in every casement (manifested in and through an inert atom an immeasurable mountain; from small insect to possessor of noetic faculty) and so every being feels the force of that Sat in the form of eternal unchanging Existence..."

"Now take the second: CHIT—the force that urges you on 'to know everything'. Every person is eager 'to know' about anything that is apparent to his consciousness; he asks the questions: 'what is this? How does this happen?'... The number who actually succeed in 'knowing' may be only a few... Take a little boy with you when you go to the market or the bazaar or an exhibition....He will be continuously asking the person who is leading him by the hand 'what is this' and 'what is that'... It is the Chit-Shakti that expresses itself! It cannot rest until knowledge is gained; so the hunger emerges as a stream of questions. The Chit-Shakti is 'self-luminous'; so it has the power of illumining even inert things. That is why these qualities shine in man and make other things clearer to him. This is enough to make it plain that man has in him the Principle of Intelligence or Chit Shakti." Again he points out—His Rupam or Form—is Achintya or incapable of being imagined by the mind. You might hesitate to accept this. But the mind is matter; it is inert. It is fleeting. But, Brahman or Paramatma is 'Pure Consciousness' (Sat-Chit). It is eternal, everlasting, imperishable. It and Mind are at opposite poles; the fleeting and the fixed—they are totally unrelated. One dies, the other remains! The inert and the active are unrelated.

So, in a very humble way I could grasp that the function of Chit was/is/will be 'to know'. But what has to be known and identified? Is it only the surrounding? The World? Only the sun, the moon and so on and so forth? No Along with these the primary thing to be grasped was the SAT within which everything is through which everything can be known and ultimately get ourselves absorbed in Ananda. But this 'effort-to-know' the Sat-Chit, as it began accelerating from our childhood, becomes distorted practically, letting our efforts stray away from about the age of 5/6

years onwards. Because from this age we entered into the world and its attractions and our untamed virgin mind was tempted: it strayed through our senses; being unchecked, it led us to deep-rooted attachments. Thus the 'to-know' process was entangled, distorted and frustrated. Owing to entanglements, we mostly became not only sensuous, but its reverse tendencies even led us to discover suicidal weapons like atom-bomb etc. and to find out what was on the moon, thereby accelerating the effort into a series of further adventures; it led us to explore nature indiscriminately out of curiosity, but mostly for the sake of the power-race. And we began to loose ourselves in our own build-tips. Therefore, the 'pure consciousness' in Jivi started getting 'rusty'—and like a strayed son we go lost.

Still, Baba, the Loving Avatar, calls us Divyaswarupulara even to a person whom we feel to be wretched, condemned, strayed beyond the conditional behaviours required to live in a society, and he sows seed of Love in him. Why is it so? `Because even the lowliest man whom we deign to call so, has the 'CHIT'—the `pure thing'—the poetic faculty. And Baba Himself is SAT-CHIT-ANANDA Swaroop.

So what we need is only cleansing of the `rusty layers' and keep on doing so—keep ourselves examining. For this act, we have so many treatments prescribed in our respective religious tenets—only to train our mind and to set ourselves to correct course, which we barely do. So, when the mind is tamed and kept on goading towards the goal, stage-by-stage, it will surely help us to reach the ULTIMATE. In other words, when the mind gains tranquility we shall be able to know the Supreme; and get His reflections—Baba has stressed this point off and on. The very mind, the tamed one, plays vital role in accelerating our efforts towards correct course.

It is for this reason, Baba the Avatar, along with His instruments—whom we may not know directly, is correcting our Buddhi and behaviour in order to set us to our right effort to reach Him—the Mother—CHIT! He severely admonishes us for our negligence to our children owing to their importance that we are now led to know. He is sowing the seed of Love. Therefore He admonishes that "if hate, in whatever form, in howsoever slight a quantity, resides in the heart, that person cannot be a Bhakta."

Furthermore, as the tendency of the "CHIT" is 'to know', Bhagavan's explanation about Anubhava-jnana is also very important. He explains—"The types of knowledge you (Arjuna) mentioned now (i.e. Knowledge learnt through ear from a teacher, or knowledge culled from Sastras or imparted by those rich in actual experience) are all useful at some stage or other of one's spiritual developments; but by none of them can you, escape the cycle of birth and death! That which releases you is known as Anubhava-jnana, the knowledge that you yourself experience; that alone can help you to free. The teacher can be of some help in the process; but he cannot show you your real SELF." He again admonishes us to have (i) faith (ii) earnestness and (iii) freedom from envy; besides we must be steeped in Shraddha, if we cared to follow this Marga.

—Wang Chu

Sorrow of the Sleepers

The Sea is receiving the Rain
And, I awaken to my heart's pain;
My spirit is searching, searching—
In sleep, I cry out Your Name.

The rooms are all so quiet
As if ghosts have taken the place!
O, the sorrows of all who sleep!
For their sorrows I pray; I pray!

Pillowed beneath my head, each night,
Is Your Sweet Picture, O Lord!
In dreams, there is only one Face,
The Face of Sai, my Lord.

On the hills, before the crashing sea,
I sleep and my spirit has Peace.
I no longer cry; My bliss And ecstasy
Is for You, My Lord, Sathya Sai.

—*Genevieve Savoroff, Santa Barbara, Calif., U.S.A.*

The Golden Chair

This ageless soul once came upon a photograph of Sai Baba in a small shop in Sri Lanka. He looked so unique to me that upon my arrival in India, I managed to find my way up to Prasanthi Nilayam; I reached there in the evening, rather late in the day; so, all I could do was to gaze curiously at the silver doorways on the balcony. The more I looked at them and at the area surrounding me, the stranger and more estranged I felt! My soul felt quite calm and reassured, free from all the worries that left me when I entered the place.

After the first few Darshans, I knew in my heart that I had come *home*. My home was and is this Temple of the Lord. For, the Lord became my father and mother; best of all, he was my dearest friend, who had known me for thousands of years!

My pilgrimage had ended at last! Coming out of a meditation at Darshan, I saw an orange spot in the distance, at Whitefield. Can you imagine the Sun peeping out of the horizon, rising above it; and walking towards you with each flaming step burning and cleansing every fibre of your being? That is what happened to me that day. Baba was that sun!

I've tried so hard with all my intellectual power to try and figure out this Mysterious Miraculous Phenomenon, the faces of whose devotees seem to be glimpsing an Eternal Reality

while watching Him and His movements. I have failed in all my attempts! I have found that, to touch His blue Lotus Feet is infinitely beautiful and beatific. Ah! What sweet mindlessness, you get while He is in the orbit of your vision!

Being at Brindavan, for the 1974 Summer Course has helped me immensely to understand Baba's World at all levels, directing me to do human service in the name of God. After all meditation and chanting, are not all there is, to Sadhana. His Divine Messages take in all aspects of living, on the earthly as well as spiritual planes. Sai Baba is the Avatar of our Age; he does not complain about working overtime. His energy is endless.

So, here I am, in the Bhajan room of the Sathya Sai Baba Center of San Francisco. Of course, we know that anything we accomplish can only be the result of Sai Baba working through us.

Being able to feel Baba so many thousand miles away has helped His devotees here to understand and experience His Omnipresence. We are keeping a Golden Chair in each heart, reserved for our most dear and near Baba.

—*Laurie Chaprack*

To the Students

The future of India lies in your hands. You are fully aware of the characteristics of this Kaliyuga we are passing through. You find around you injustice, irregularities, immorality and untruth with all their devilish attributes and atrocities. But we have to march ahead in spite of all this with a quiet, tolerant and benign attitude towards life. Almost all the fields and walks of life are polluted with these poisonous feelings, but the field of education being the most prominent organ, needs our special attention. We should first enquire and try to find out why the parent or pupils or their teachers are taking active part in these anti-academic activities. The main reason for this disorder is that the human mind is haunted and dominated by two devilish blemishes, viz. selfishness and ambition. These forces are standing in the way of human beings in realising the human values which go to make up humanity. It is not becoming of a man to exchange his valuable life—as precious as gem—for worldly desires and ambitions which are as worthless as a coal-stone. Man becomes immortal neither by deeds, nor by procreation nor by wealth. What makes him eternal is the spirit of sacrifice. We should therefore try to make our lives meaningful by sacrificing our personal comforts for the sake of society and our fellow beings.

Today when we find our educational trends going astray and causing anxiety to parents and society, we need to reiterate our old values, according to which an education based on our cultural heritage can alone lead one to real education—Atmavidya—the state of self-realisation. Every Indian will have to recognise the culture based on Vedic philosophy. You will know how restless and agitated the youth of India is today trying to grab every thing with all pride and no achievement and thus getting involved in meaningless pursuits.

The student of today is not able to realise what he should primarily be concerned with. It is only in name that he is a 'Vidyarthi', the seeker of knowledge. In practice, he is only a 'vishayarti', a seeker of worldly pleasures.

It is the duty of every human being to understand and respect his parents. Similarly, in a nation it is the duty of every national being to assimilate and appreciate the historical and cultural background of his nation and consider these two factors as his father and mother. In fact, one who is ignorant of the historical and cultural heritage of his country is like a stupid person who has no knowledge of his parents. We have therefore to make manifold progress in the field of education today to keep pace with the general advancement that is taking place. But we are ignorant of our great classics and scriptures like Ramayana, Mahabharata and Bhagavad-Gita.

Once a District Educational Officer was inspecting a school. He asked the teacher to find out from one of his pupils as to who wrote Ramayana. The pupil innocently replied, "Sir, I never wrote it; perhaps you might have written it." Then the teacher found himself in a miserable plight and turned to the Inspecting Officer to assure that he has not done so and tried to enquire if the officer had by any chance written the work. The District Educational Officer referred the matter, to be safe, to the Vice-Chancellor, who finally observed that some Brahmin must have done it and advised the officer concerned to close the issue. This means that the state of affairs in our educational field today is so pitiable that our students, teachers, inspecting officers and Vice-Chancellors are all sailing in the same boat. Nobody knows about the author of a work like Ramayana. In these circumstances we are not justified in calling ourselves educated. We are wasting our precious time on imitation. The end of education is character and the end of knowledge is love.

Education does not mean mere knowledge of books and acquaintance with them. If we concentrate on book knowledge at the cost of practical application, we will be spoiling the name of education itself. In olden times, only those who secured hundred percent marks were allowed to pass a test, but now, thirty-five out of hundred will enable a person to get through an examination. That means, a student is allowed to commit 65 mistakes out of hundred. If a student is allowed to make 65% mistakes when he has full time and energy at his disposal there is no reason why a grown up person, when he becomes an officer, need not be given the margin of committing 100% mistakes. It is therefore the duty of each and every student to attain hundred percent, perfection in his knowledge. If he cannot do this as a student in spite of his advantages of age and energy, he will not be able to do justice to his work when he takes up a job and assumes false notions of prestige and dignity.

Moreover, education should lead one to humility, which in turn equips him with all the eligibility. Eligibility provides him with necessary material wealth, which again enables him to do some charitable deeds. Charity makes him happy both in this world and the other one higher than this.

Today we think of our rights and responsibilities. On one side we have the individual freedom and fundamental rights, and on the other we have our responsibilities and duties to be performed. We are no doubt anxious about our individual freedom and power, but we do not think of our duty in the same proportion. We should do full justice to our social obligations and establish the

reputation of our country and its culture. The colleges today are not paying adequate attention to this cultural aspect: It therefore became necessary for us to establish Sathya Sai Colleges with special objectives pointing to this end even though there are thousands and millions of colleges all over the world. A Sathya Sai College is not intended to prepare graduates who carry their degrees like begging bowls going from door to door begging for a job. These colleges are being established to promote a sense of self-reliance and a spirit of service to society and humanity at large. Man cannot live in isolation like a drop of oil on water surface. He is a product of society. He has to live in it, grow with it and work for it. Human birth is supposed to be a rare one, not easily granted to the animal world.

We who are crossing the ocean of Samsara (the chain of birth and death) need to cultivate the art of swimming through Bhagavat-chintana (Meditation on God). However, learned we may be, if we do not have this training and cultivation, we are bound to sink. Life is a boat which enables us to cross the ocean of Samsara with the aid of meditation on God.

A country needs an ideal as a human body requires recoument. Body is an assembly of various organs. No single organ can constitute a body. When the various organs get separated, the human body gets weakened and even loses its existence. Similarly, if a nation is split up into different parts, it gets disintegrated. There may be different states in a nation, but there should be a feeling of 'one nation' throughout the country. We should develop a habit of visualising unity in diversity and not diversity in the unity that is divine. God is everywhere and in everyone. The whole universe is inhabited by Him. One should find God in every object. These are the ideals we find in our scriptures. There are bulbs of different colours and their voltage also differs. But whatever the colour and whatever the voltage, current that flows is the same. This kind of thinking is highly essential today in our educational field. In our culture, we respect our father and mother as God. It is only when we respect our parents, that we can expect our children, in turn, to respect us. There is reaction, resonance and reflection for everything in the world. The young girls who, are studying, in this college today will become mothers tomorrow. It is therefore necessary that they should equip themselves with all the culture, learning and wisdom that they need in their future lives. In India, we assign a special place to women. It is therefore all the more important that the girls who are studying here should train themselves in such a way that they can live upto the ideals and aspirations of an Indian woman. We consider women as Grihalakshmi, Dharmapatni and so on. But we should also propagate these values in women in an appropriate way. A woman has to maintain her house. She is not only the housewife; but on her depends the glory or otherwise of the whole country. That is why we say this is our motherland. It is in this spirit that we refer to our country as Bharat Mata. We also find that women are given the first position when they are associated with their counterpart as in Sita-Rama, Lakshmi-Narayana, Radha-Krishna and Parvati-Parameshwara. It is only to establish this prominence given to women in our country and to train our young girls on these lines that we took up the task of opening such colleges. I expect the young girls studying in this college to cultivate such good qualities which will bring name and fame to the native homes and also to those where they proceed after marriage. The bad habits and vulgar behaviour that we find in most of the young girls today should not find a place in the girls of this College. The girls of a Sathya Sai college should maintain the ideals of the institution and keep the prestige of their homes, their society and their culture. It only then that the purpose of establishing this college can be served.

Just a few minutes ago, our Chief Minister of Rajasthan declared that a site had been given to this College. It is our desire to build a beautiful temple in that site allotted to the college so that it may serve as a source of inspiration and worship for the people of Rajasthan. The Central Committee, as well as the State Committee are prepared to undertake this work. We are therefore thinking of constructing a temple very soon for the benefit of the students of this college. This needs the support of all people from all walks of life, not merely the officials. All people should join hands and work unitedly for this cause. It is only with the united effort of people that works of pious and ideal nature can take shape: A cloth takes its shape only when various threads join together. If the threads are disjointed, there is no cloth. Same is true with this college. When this college comes up soon to all the ideals we have in mind, I shall take pleasure in visiting this place twice a year.

Bhagavan's Discourse, Jaipur 10-4-75

Words and Silence

A word is an image, visual and auditory. It is a sound, made of sounds. As it seems, its meaning has nothing to do with it as a visual image. A word acquires meaning from tradition and prejudices. No word has a constant connotation. Its connotation also changes with intonation which means that words and their meanings have nothing common between them.

A word is a sound and the meaning attached to it is a reflection of our fancy. It is a sort of guided fancy which takes its shape from the traditional life of a community. A word is a personality born out of the reaction of one or more personalities. So it has a purpose—a purpose of communication which it never fulfills entirely. A word is like a man and its meaning, his hunger. Just as hunger has no existence outside man, the meaning cannot exist taken out of the word, or sound; but like hunger and man they do not express each other. A word does not justify its meaning, and meaning the word. Sound has been and shall be; but meaning is and may not be. Sound is primordial, meaning is today. Sound is history, meaning is fashion. Meaning hangs on the sound but sound exists without the meaning, for meaning is our own attempt at explaining ourselves, it is our own endeavour at revealing ourselves. Meaning is ego, sound transcends it.

A word is born out of the silence of the heart, or of the silence of space, in the form of a desire. Sometimes it is born as a conflict of desires. The meaning is taken out of our habits, convictions, prejudices, and hypocrisy and is thrust upon the sound. A sound is illumination, meaning is a lamp to put it in. Sound is the sun, meaning a solar stove. A sound does not try to communicate, does not demand to be understood; it shakes our consciousness and makes us aware. Meaning attempts to interpret this awareness and give it a shape, a colour, in time. So meaning is perversity of the awareness, and for that matter, of the sound as well. So the real impact of the word is lost the moment we try to explain it through a series of word-images. Some words are like commodities. They are not primarily sounds; they embody a form. But, the formless words are pure words, pure sounds, vibrations, and awareness.

We never really understand a word, a sound; for we are never aware of the silence out of which it is born. A meaning, a definition is like death; not a negation of life, but uncertain acceptance of life. Sometimes it is a fear of life, a running-away from life. We formulate words and give them meanings to escape the enormity of the awareness, the wordless understanding. So the more wordy we become, the less meaningful we are, the less exact we are; for in a series of sounds the sound which struck our awareness is forgotten.

The deeper we go near this awareness, the greater is the failure of language. Language is an approximation to the real meaning, not the meaning itself. Over the ages words have tried to catch their archetype, the sound, the awareness, but have generally failed, for when we give it a visual image, a visual shape, and define the shape to have carried a particular concept, we kill the sound.

Therefore the silent man has been accepted as the man who understands most. In him images, visual or auditory are resolved and dissolved in the elemental awareness, the sound; and every move of his becomes meaningful. He is silent, not because he is a fool and has not much to say, but he is a wise man, who knows thoroughly what he wants to say.

The chief effort of all our great poets and thinkers has been just this: to bring every word nearest to the awareness. They chisel words and meanings until they most nearly express the sound. These great artists know how this nearness never comes too near the archetype. With this in view Shelly said the perfect poem can never be written, for a perfect poem is born in awareness, and man has no words that can breathe the awareness.

Words and their meanings have the profoundest influence in the field of literature. They generate passions and emotions in our daily lives as well. Man very often goes erratic in his emotional life for miscarriage. He struggles hard to make himself understood by his fellowmen, but he finds he is always misunderstood. He becomes angry, desperate and calls the world a shabby little place to live in. This happens most in the case of poets, painters, thinkers, and lovers, for in these fields human awareness is not potent and words fail to picture it through visual and auditory images. You often don't mean what you say, and don't say what you mean. Therefore our language fails us and we never make ourselves rightly carried through. It is a funny story of man. We seem to live an erratic world where the more we endeavour to set it right, the more it goes wrong! This happens because we don't say the language of awareness, neither do we hold our tongues to understand it.

Then is it a lost world? Am I a helpless babe trying hard for centuries to speak a right word, and every time failing? The picture is of a man reaching out his hand to grip a glass of water and quench his thirst of centuries, and every time the glass slipping through his fingers. Hardly he knows this and lives an angry, passionate, and erratic life.

However, the picture is not such a bleak one. Fortunately at times, this awareness vindicates itself, and man understands this wordless meaningful sound and becomes silent. Only then is silence, the best eloquence. When you are quiet the tongue and the mind cease formulating words and meanings, you see things in a much better light. In case of poetry, the suggestion is more expressive than the presentation. The presentation of a verse, the visual image of a verse,

does not build your awareness as much as the suggestion does. The modern man has, happily for us, come to realise this partly. So we have today so many schools of thought and expression, new pattern in poetry and painting, new doctrines in politics and literature. Perhaps man is heading towards his inevitable end, to speak the language of awareness, and this is silence.

Then what would be the form of this language? When meaning dissolves in sound and the sound in awareness, the mind is absolved of its erratic emotions and is able to understand all words in their purest form. He may not speak a word, but he will not lack speech; he may not try to convince others in so many words, but conviction will flow from him, he may not be learned, but certainly he will possess all wisdom. Words and sounds only point towards this awareness; so in awareness only the language is most meaningful. To reach this state man has to transcend his language and make it face the awareness consciously. That is why Bhagavan says, "Silence is the first step to Sadhana."

Silence is a very vital aspect of human language through which all human communications attain fulfillment and the personality evolves fully. The person who knows it, is a great poet, a saint, a Rishi, a man of equanimity. This is the obvious end of all languages; it is the perfect language. A man should expose himself to this perfect language as often as he could. If he can relapse into this wordless awareness of his own self, he certainly can reach the awareness of others and tap the very source of all happiness, all understanding, with remarkable success.

Thought is also a kind of language. Because through the process of thought, we try to give a meaning, a definition to our intuitive experiences. When Baba advises, "Keep quiet and try to see who is it that thinks," or "Don't run after the mind, simply watch it" or "Let the mind travel wherever it likes, you don't go after it, then the mind will come back to you as a child returns to its mother when she does not take care of the child's ramblings." He refers to the conscious awareness of the innate silence in a human being. There are layers upon layers of sound or of ego that drowns this inevitable silence of the being and in the multitude of sounds he fails to hear the voice of God emanating from the very core of his being.

Bhagavan's plan to reconstruct the human being seems to put all its stress on the necessity of being silent inwardly, or of being aware of the innate silence that forms the core of everything. Then a new love will fill our entire existence and will reveal to us that the fabric of all Existence, living or non-living is only God's love.

To get a glimpse of Baba's all pervading love, we have to throw overboard all our 'loves' and wait at the thresh-hold of LOVE itself—then avenues of a new understanding shall be opened out unto us. To love through Love—just as to Sai, through Sai, which is the significance of Bhagavan's Upadesh: "Start the day with love, spend the day with love, fill the day with love and end the day with love, for love is God."

—*B. K. Misra*

Writing the Name

When Bhagavan proceeded with a large group of devotees to Badrinath, He directed those who remained behind at Prasanthi Nilayam to spend their time in the contemplation of God, by means of a daily routine, of what is called "Likhitha Japa," or "Writing the name of the Lord," as many times as possible (or a certain predetermined number of times a day). This year, being the Golden Jubilee Year of the Avatar, and the Silver Jubilee year of Prasanthi Nilayam many devotees have resolved to `write' the Name and offer the Books at the Lotus Feet on the occasion of the Birthday, 23 November 1975.

Let us delve a little deep into this Sadhana and resolve to do it correctly so that maximum benefit can be derived. I feel it is better to take the ruled note-book and write on the topmost line the Mantra or Name that has appealed most, say, four times. After this, it is easy to divide the page into columns. This is preferable to purchasing books that have already been divided into columns; for, a mechanical division like that may force some to cramp their writing and deform the Name. Three partition lines will make four columns. With the mantra written on the first line, as freely as our handwriting needs, the whole book can be prepared for the japa-sadhana. There is no more need to spend time in searching for rulers or scales; and writing need not be haphazard or tentative. It can proceed on even stream.

Writing is best done in the shrine room, or at the place where we generally sit for Dhyana or Meditation. Or, we can select a place where we will not be disturbed; but, it is best, it is the same place every day. A picture of Bhagavan in front of us will help the atmosphere of devotion to persist and whenever we feel exhausted or tired, a brief contemplation of the Face will inspire us to carry on. The entire family sitting together and silently writing in a spirit of dedication will be ideal, if it is possible.

It would be advisable to decide beforehand whether we write a page or two or more at the sitting. Otherwise, the mind would be prodding us at the end of every line, `How many more lines?' The target will keep it quiet, and co-operative.

For, concentration on the Glory and Majesty, the Compassion and Message of Baba is the very purpose for the Sadhana. Without it, the `writing' is frittered away and results only in waste of paper and time. Let us sit in a comfortable posture, with proper and sufficient light falling on the book, and maintain silence while `writing'. Let us think of the meaning of OM, of Sri and of Sai Ram (if that is the name you write).

The deeper the understanding, the greater the benefit. Ananyaaschinthayantho maam—Think of Me, and think of Me alone, to the exclusion of everything else; and, I shall be ever with you and provide you with prosperity, here and hereafter, says Baba, in the Gita. While writing we will feel happy, and peaceful. That is the test whether the Sadhana is progressing well. When strain is experienced, we, can lift up our eyes to the picture of Baba and start again. When stray thoughts peep in, we can pray to Baba and He will help.

Of course, the `writing' should not be done in fits and starts, in occasional jerks and lapses. No Sadhana should be treated thus. After a few days, we would be extremely miserable, when a

session of `writing' is missed! Sraddhavan labbate Jnanam—He who is steady and full to faith gets the reward—namely, Realisation of the Truth embedded in Oneself.

—*Saidas*

At-One-ment

Bhagavan has said that He is Premaswarupa, more than all. That is to say, He is the embodiment of Prema, or Love. And, He has also told us, often, that He can be understood only through Love, for, the Sun can be seen only through its rays.

We have therefore to develop Love, and realise that God is Love. Expansion is the main means by which we can develop Love. We are now caught in the cage of limited attachment. Each of us is entangled in love for our body, love for the senses which clamour for satisfaction through some object or other, love for those whom we have selected as our friends or who have been presented before us as related to the body. We love our habits, our attitudes, our pets, our pet prejudices, our predilections.

The first step is to free ourselves from this cage. Love, does not wait for some one to open the doors of the cage; as a matter of fact, the I door of the cage is ever open. Only, the inmate imagines that it is bolted! The bird is ever eager to fly out, but, it is afraid, feels itself too weak. It has got only to be told that the door is open, that the wings are strong, that it need only rise and move.

This is the first step in the cultivation of Divine Love, as Baba says, to stop spinning a cocoon around our self, a cocoon which limits and imprisons. The Vedic prayers always emphasise liberation from limitation. It says, *brhathe karomi*, 'I desire to become expanded, vast, limitless.' In fact, Brahma is the unlimited, illimitable Truth. To realise Brahman is to merge with the Infinite, the Vast. Brahmin is he who is ever eager and ever determined to become Brahman, and who has been initiated into the mystery of achieving that state. Brahmanyam is the state of limitlessness. And, Subrahmanyam is the happy blissful state of having reached the limitless Truth. That is why Bhagavan generally concludes the Bhajan songs He sings for our edification with the song, 'Subrahmanyam Subrahmanyam.' We have all noticed the enchanting enthusiasm of Bhagavan when He sings this song and the atmosphere of ecstasy He creates when we repeat the lines after Him; all this is to emphasise the inner meaning of that conception of Subrahmanyam, that commands us to expand our hearts and achieve the vastness of Universal Love.

Love of God and love for fellowman go together; not only because all are children of the same Father which is God, but, as Baba says, all have God as their real Reality. "Do not hate or harm any one, for, there is Sai in every living being. When you hate another, you are really hating the Sai in him; when you harm another, you are really harming the Sai in him. Remember this and be warned." We know from our experience that this is no empty assertion; He knows all; He is in all; without His Will, nothing can ever happen. Baba has often asked us, "If you cannot love the brother whom you can see, how can you love God whom you cannot see with these physical eyes? If you cannot revere and love the parents who have created the physical frame for you and who provide for you when you were helpless and alone how can you love the unseen Creator and the intangible Providence?"

Love engenders sympathy. That is to say, when others are miserable, love will not let you be happy; you too suffer the same extent of misery. This is called Anukampa in Sanskrit. Anu-kampa means, vibration of the same nature and extent. When the other person suffers, the heart of the person who becomes aware of it also vibrates to the same extent with the same feeling. However, the more difficult reaction is, to become equally happy, when another is happy. There is no place for envy or greed, when love expands.

Nor is there any place for falsehood, for, the truth has to be hidden only from those whom we do not love or from those who do not love us. True love does not expect a return; so, there is no one from whom you have to hide things. Thus Prema ensures Sathya; where love reigns, truth too prevails.

Fear is the root cause of untruth; where there is love, there can be no fear. And, where there is no fear, there peace or Shanti reigns too. When we genuinely care about what happens to another person (and are not merely being attracted) love can be said to sprout. Resentment and unforgiveness are signs of an unloving nature; love is eager to understand, and understanding removes the clouds of resentment and anger. Love is built on faith, the faith that all areas deeply rooted in Divinity as ourselves.

Baba does not encourage a woolly type of vague Love that is complacent and confined. It must manifest itself in action, in service, in brotherliness, in sympathy and in the realisation of the essential One-ness in God. The ego is the worst obstacle in the path of Love. It is the narrowest of cages in which the individual is imprisoned. So, Baba insists on Seva or Service as an exercise in the elimination or at least the education of the ego.

Seva is elevated by Baba to the status of worship; one has to be humble while rendering Seva, whether the person served is a leper, a beggar, a patient, a prisoner, a mad man, a deaf-mute or any other handicapped unfortunate. Baba wants that we should regard each of them as a role in His Play, as a Brother in that habiliment, as an Image of the God whom we adore in our shrines.

We have also to equip ourselves with the know-how of service; for, Love has to express itself through beneficial ways. It is not mere blind love or frothy love that Baba appreciates; it is Love that respects the recipient, that renders skilled service.

Seva is the outer form of the Love within. The feeling of Love is the echo of the feeling of One-ness in God. So, Seva promotes spiritual search for the One—the One which, if known, all else is known.

—*Taraka Das*

I Love Villages Most

The Sun is not the only gift that has dawned on this village this day; Ananda too has dawned. For, I have come to make you aware of the Ananda you are. Ananda is the home from which you have strayed away! It is your place of Nativity. You seek your home elsewhere and so, you are

afflicted by distress and disappointment. Know that Ananda is your Nature, your sustenance, and your goal.

Villages are the places where this knowledge comes easier to man, and takes deeper roots. That is the reason I love villages most. For, the virtues of detachment, uprightness, honesty, and sincerity which are essential prerequisites for acquiring this awareness are surviving, in however attenuated a form, only in villages this day. They have disappeared from towns long ago. Of course, you have your troubles and handicaps; but, certainly, you have less obstacles to overcome, when you decide to lead the good life and attain the awareness of your Divinity.

Why is man afflicted today with fear and anxiety? Are we to search for the reasons outside us or do they lie within us? The reason lies in the false emphasis we have laid on things of the material world, ignoring things of the spirit. The body that man bears is essentially the receptacle of God. It is a temple, where God is installed and where God is the Master. It does not deserve all the attention you now pay to fulfill its urges, needs and whims. It is equipped with very valuable instruments which can help you in the journey; but, you seldom use them! The senses bring you impressions from the outside world, but, you do not evaluate these impressions by the touchstone of a clear reason or a balanced mind. You do not proceed; from one step to another in the march towards the elimination of the ego and the merger into the One. City-dwellers are buffeted by storms of passion and emotion, and they are hunted or haunted by phantom desires and wild imaginings. They have neither the inclination nor the insight to dedicate their time, their skills and their activity to Divine ends.

The Divine is the core, the essence of your being. God is everywhere; when He is recognised and adored as the Indweller of your body, it becomes a Temple, and it is no more a burden. God is shining, announcing Himself through you; He is expressing Himself through every thought word and deed that emanates from you.

In the Temple that is built and put together, we have an idol that is sculpted and moulded by man. But, in this temple that is gifted by God, God shines in His own Light, and manifests in His own Glory as Love, Power and Wisdom. He shines and manifests thus not only in single body, but, in all bodies. He is the Indweller in each; so, when you insult, injure or inflict infamy on another, remember you are inviting the pain to visit your own self, for, the other is none other than your own self.

Seek the gem of Divine Knowledge within you, just as precious stones have to be sought in the bowels of the earth. Now, what you seek is trivial trash. Go deeper, where the treasure is stored. I know you have, in this village, as in most villages, a big chariot festival, when the replica of the 'Installed Idol' the processional Form, is taken round the entire village with great pomp and paraphernalia. The wheeled chariot or the palanquin is decorated with reverent attention; bands of musicians and dancers are engaged to precede the chariot; many come to the festival to admire the decoration of the chariot; more are interested in the songs and dances, the songsters and the dancers; only a handful are drawn by the idol which is the central figure of all the gaiety and adoration.

The human body too is a temple chariot; the Atma is installed therein; and, it is dragged by emotions, impulses, passions and urges along the streets of desire. Success and failure, joy and grief, gain and loss, are the dancers who accompany this procession of Life. Here, too, many pour their attention only on the chariot, its height, its decoration and its progress. Many others are concerned with the dance of dualities, the pain-pleasure duet; that is part of the procession. Few pay attention to the Atma, the Crown and Consummation of human existence.

But, sages and saints have known that the most noteworthy achievement of the senses of man is the glorification of the God within. "They are not eyes, they are but globules of glass, that do not earn a vision of God," says one. They are not ears, they are but muscular protrusions that do not relish the praise of God," says another. Surdas condemns the hand that does not worship God and calls such hands, sticks of wood. The world and its attractions may appeal to your instincts and impulse but, God draws out your Love, as no worldly thing can. Develop the inner vision, the habit of listening to the inner Voice, and you are assured of unshakeable Peace and infinite Joy,

In the village, you are ever in contact with God, His Grace, His tenderness and His Love. In the cities, life is more superficial. You may not have the benefit of the radio or the electric current; but, you can hear the birds sing at sunrise and you can bask in the bright sun underneath the pure blue sky: When you get the twin gifts of medical care and schooling facilities, you need nothing more for marching onwards to happiness and peace. But, I find that in several villages, the behaviour of some one person or some one family disrupts life and breeds fear, faction and fighting. This can be cured only by the potent drug called Love. The forces of brotherhood, mutual help and sympathetic understanding have to overpower the sinister influence of these individuals and promote unity and strength.

Many leaders of this country are promising to provide a quantity of food, some kind of dwelling, and a few yards of clothing to every one so that people may be happy. They also promise to each sufficient schooling so that they may write and read letters, and grasp the news from the papers. But, these cannot ensure peace, for, man is not merely a bundle of bones and muscles; he is equipped with a heart and a spirit and these have also to be fed and fostered.

Men may have superabundance of food, clothing and houses; but, their hearts may be dry and their spirits gloomy. Sense-control, self-confidence, contentment; absence of hatred and greed—these are far more precious as possessions than land, money, or houses. The Seva Samiti that has been started in your village, with its subsidiary units of Mahila Vibhag, and Bal Vikas will sow the seeds of these disciplines and promote Peace and Happiness.

Above all, cultivate unity and brotherhood. A single fibre of hemp cannot bind even an ant; thousands rolled into a rope can tame a wild elephant into quiet submission. In unity lies strength and prosperity. Unity in the villages can usher in a new era of joy and prosperity in the entire nation.

Make the temple of Vinayaka inaugurated today the hub of this new movement. The temple is to the village, as the heart is to the body. You have all joined to build it and bring it into being; continue to reap its benefits together and to share its light together. With the Grace of God, what

seems impossible can be achieved quite easily. All are children of God; do not injure any one, for, that injury will react on you quite soon. You reap as you sow; you cannot grow a fruit-tree when the seed you have planted is that of a weed.

There are some ignorant persons who laugh at bhajans, and other acts of worship and characterise them as waste of valuable time! These persons might laugh at your pouring bags of paddy seeds on slushy fields and condemn that act too as waste of valuable food material! But, you know that for every bag of seed, Mother Earth will give back, in a few weeks, grain tenfold or even twenty fold. Time spent in thoughts of God or adoration of the Divine is indeed well-spent, for, it rewards you with a rich harvest of mental peace and courage.

When thieves attack the neighbour, you become alert and keep vigil; you feel that it may be your turn next. So, you must see that thieves do not enter the village. For, then, all can be safe and secure. Your neighbour's loss is as much your own. Do not inflame your anger and blow it into a conflagration which may destroy the entire village. Be cool and calm yourself. Take a glass of cold water and lie down quiet for a while, till the fury, loses its heat. Do not fly into a passion and throw vulgar abuse at the person you dislike. And, be careful; do not indulge in these acts before children; for, they will learn these behaviours and start imitating. You cannot easily correct them later.

Goodness is Godliness. Never talk ill of others; spend your time in showering love and in mutual help. Wake up early and sing the glory of God in-group bhajan moving along the roads and cleansing the atmosphere, polluted by anger and hatred. Let the air you breathe be free from evil vibrations. When you mention the sky you point your finger upwards, to indicate that it is there. But, the sky is here also. It is one of the five elements, the Pancha-bhutas. Its sign and symbol is sound; wherever sound is, there, we can infer, is the sky. There is an inner sky also, the Aakasa in the Heart. Just as the sun and moon in the outer sky are hidden by thick masses of cloud, the sun (Intellect) and moon (Mind) in the inner sky are also hidden and suppressed by thick clouds of vice and evil. So, make all efforts to remove these clouds, by the strong gale of Devotion to God.

When you cook any item of food, in a copper vessel, however fresh and fine the vegetables are, however clean the dhal and salt, however free from grit and dirt the tamarind fruits, if the vessel has no lining of tin, the food made therein will turn into poisonous stuff. You all know this truth. The heart too is a copper vessel where you prepare various types of food for yourself and others. See that it has a good lining of Love; or else, it too will cause harm and pain, to you and the rest.

Love... Love... Love First... Love, as long as Life lasts. For myself, I can say, I shower more blessings on those who decry or defame me than those who worship and adore me! For, those who spread falsehoods about me derive joy therefrom; I am happy that I am the cause for their exultation and joy. You, too must accept this line of argument and be very happy when some one derives joy by defaming you. Do not respond by defaming that person; then, the chain of hatred will bind both and drag both down. Life will become a tragedy. Conquer anger by means of fortitude; conquer hatred by love. Do not feed anger with retaliation; do not feed hatred with fury.

Forget and forgive all that has happened amongst you until this very moment; start a new chapter of Love and Brotherhood from now on. The Professors and the students of the Sri Sathya Sai Collage are ready and eager to come to your help, whenever you need it. Some young men from this village are students of this College; when they come home, you must remind them of the ideals of service and reverence that we are instilling into them. The College is trying to help them not only to earn a University degree but also to become skilled and enthusiastic servants of the weak and the disabled, and efficient citizens of the nation. They should not behave like the half-educated haughty youth, who wander the streets with a transistor on their shoulders, pursuing the vanities of the world and running into debt and dissoluteness. They should preserve and develop their ancestral property; (not only land and riches; also, heritage and culture); they should be assets to their parents, the society and the nation. They should not exploit the innocence and ignorance of the very parents who have sacrificed their everything in order to send them to College and maintain them in hostels. Send your sons to the College; there they can learn to escape these temptations and to be useful and efficient for the task of preserving Indian Culture and Spirituality. Encourage your sons to realise the meaning of my Mission and to become fit instruments for spreading, by the example of their lives, the Message which I have come to give mankind.

—*Baba's Discourse: Panathur Village: 28-4-75*

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

66

Why this Act?

Though struck to the ground by the fatal shaft, Vali rose up and assumed a sitting posture; he was strong and courageous beyond compare! With folded palms, he cast his lingering looks on that cloud-blue complexion, those lotus-petal eyes, and shed streams of tears in his ecstatic exhilaration. He could scarce contain his joy; he exclaimed, "O Rama! Being such a divinely auspicious embodiment of beauty, being the very Lord of all Creation, why had you to perform this confounding, questionable act? Had you but told me, and then, killed me, I would have been extremely happy, to die.

Would I have refused to render you the good that Sugriva could? No. No. This has been thus done, not without some justifiable reason. For, the Lord would never undertake any task without just reason. Seen from the outside, the task might appear contrary to our idea of Divinity; but, examined with the inner view, the fact that it is based on Truth would become evident.

I know that the deeds of the Lord should not be interpreted from the common worldly point of view. The Lord is above and beyond the Gunas (or attributes that limit and regulate human conduct). So, His deeds can be understood correctly, only when viewed from a position unaffected by emotion, passion, or prejudice. Acts done with perfect equanimity can be

understood only by perfect equanimity. If you are swayed by characteristics and attributes, you would naturally see only kindred characteristics and attributes, even when they are absent!

Vali was endowed with very high intellect. So, he argued thus and said, "Rama! I know full well your prowess and skills. You can, with one arrow, destroy not only this Vali, but, the entire Universe. You can create the Universe, again. Nevertheless, I desire to learn from you the sin for which you have killed me. Please identify for me the error I was responsible for. You have come upon earth in human form in order to reestablish Righteousness, haven't you? What is the meaning and purpose of this action, hiding behind a tree, like a common hunter in order to kill me?"

Incest

Rama graciously sat by the side of the dying Vali, and said, "Vali! You know that my deeds are not motivated by selfish ends. Give up your wrong notion that I sought and secured the friendship of Sugriva, in order to search the whereabouts of Sita with some success. Why, you yourself said just now that I have assumed this human form for the purpose of re-establishing Righteousness on earth! Now tell me, if I simply witness the wrong, unjust, and vicious deeds of yours, what do you call it? Service or dis-service to the world? Righteous or unrighteous?"

The brother's wife, the sister and the daughter-in-law are all three equivalent in status to one's own daughter. To cast sinful eyes on them makes one a heinous sinner. No sin affects one when such a sinner is killed. How unjust was it for you to infer that Sugriva closed the entrance of the cave with the evil intention of killing you! You said you would come out at the end of ten days, at the most, and you asked him to wait at the mouth of the cave, until then. Yet, he waited there, anxiously awaiting you, for one full month!

Finally, when he was assailed by the smell of blood, he was grieved that his brother was killed by the ogre; he hesitated to enter the cave, for the ogre who destroyed you would certainly be no match for him. When he placed the boulder up against the mouth of the cave, his intention was to prevent the ogre from coming out, and to see that he is confined within that cave itself.

The citizens pressed on him the rulership and he had to accede to their wishes. What crime has Sugriva committed when he acted thus? You did not stay to inquire. He never disobeyed your commands and directives, even to the slightest extent; for, he loves you and reveres you. He adheres strictly to the path of Truth alone. But, you treasured in your heart so much vengeance against him, for no reason at all; your overweening pride made you drive him into the forest. When you sent him, you should have allowed his wife too to go with him. Instead, you chose her to be your wife, the person whom you should have treated as your own daughter! Do you call this a sin or don't you? There is no sin, more heinous than this.

Besides, you occupy the position of the ruler of this region. You have to protect and foster them. How can you punish those who commit crimes when you yourself revel in the same crimes? 'As the King, so the Subjects' says the proverb. The people will be such as their rulers are. Therefore, what you have done becomes more heinous and more reprehensible. Doesn't it?"

I am not a Sinner

Thus, Rama out of His infinite Love, clarified to Vali the crimes and sins he had committed. Vali listened with attention and thought over what he heard. At last, he realised his error, and said, "Lord! My cleverness has failed to make you pronounce my acts as right. Now, hear me! I am not a sinner at all. Had I been a sinner, how could I be floored by an arrow from the Lord's own hands, and how can I pass my last moments looking on the Face of Divinity and listening to the sweet words of the Lord?"

Rama was highly pleased at these words spoken with such high wisdom, out of the depths of love and devotion, delight and dedication. Then Rama wished to announce to the world the genuine spirit of renunciation that Vali had at heart. He said, "Vali! I am restoring you to life. I am freeing you from the obligation of old age and senility. Come. Have your body back again."

He placed His hand on the head of Vali. But, even while He was blessing him so, Vali intervened with a prayer, "O, Ocean of Compassion! Give ear to my appeal. However many attempts one might make throughout life, the moment when the breath deserts us for its journey away from us cannot be avoided. At that moment, even the sovereign sages do not get Your Name on their tongues! Such unique good fortune I have secured now, here, when I pronounce Your Name, look on Your Form, touch Your Feet and listen to Your Words. If I misuse this chance and let it slip away, who can say how long I may have to wait for these again? Continuing to breathe on what great achievement am I to accomplish? No. I do not wish to live any longer."

The Death of Vali

"Lord! Even the Vedas, the Source of all Knowledge, speak of you as only. "Not This" "Not This"; thus they proceed, until they declare finally, "This" "This"; that "This" I have now secured in my grasp; shall I let it slip? Is there on this world a fool who would give up the, Divine Wish Fulfilling Tree that he has in his grasp for the sake of a wild weed? This Vali, born out of a mental resolution of Brahma Himself, endowed with strength of body and sharpness of intellect and renowned for these qualities, cannot yield to the temptation of clinging to the body as if it is real and valuable.

No. If I yield, I will become the target of infamy. Why elaborate? When there is no self-satisfaction, what do other types of satisfaction matter? Lord! As a result of Your Darshan and Your Words, I have overcome all sense of duality and distinction. I have acquired the Vision of the One, apart from all the rest. The mass of 'consequence' I had earned through my sins has been destroyed; let the body which is burdened with the Consequence be destroyed along with it. Do not allow another body to appear to bear the burden."

Vali declared his determination, to give up his breath, and called his son to his presence. He said, "This fellow grew up until now as the lust-born son of this body. He is strong, virtuous, humble and obedient. Now, I wish You would foster him as Your Love-deserving Son. I have placed him in Your hands." With these words he placed the hands of his son in the hands of Rama. Rama drew Anagda, the son, near Him, and blessed him, with great love. Pleased at this acceptance, Vali shed tears of joy; his eyes were fixed on the Divine Face before him. His eyes slowly closed in death. Will an elephant worry or take any notice of flowers that fall away from

the garland round its neck? With same unconcern, Vali too allowed his breath to slide away from him.

Tara Mourns

The inhabitants of Pampa Town gathered in sad groups as soon as they heard the news of Vali's demise. His wife, Tara, came to the place, accompanied by her retinue; she fell upon the body and lost consciousness. The agonising wail of Tara was so poignant that even stones melted in sympathy. When she recovered consciousness, off and on, she looked on the face of her lord and cried in utter grief.

"In spite of all the protest I made and the arguments I used to stop you, you rushed forward to this doom. The wife would ever be vigilant of the security and happiness of her lord; there is no one more concerned for the welfare of the husband than the wife. Others, however eminent will always have some little egoism mixed in the advice they give. Lord! On account of the mischief of Destiny, my counsel could not prevail.

Lord! How am I to foster and bring up this son? Will those who killed you desist from harming your son? Who will guide us now? How did your mind agree to leave us behind and proceed to the next world? For whose sake must I continue this life?"

Then, Tara turned to Rama and poured out her heart. "You sent my dear Lord, my very breath, to the next world. Do you want us, who are left behind, to live at the mercy of strangers? Is this the right thing for a noble person, a person devoted to right conduct, to be proud about? Is it appropriate? If you do not desire our progress, if you have no wish to alleviate our sorrow, then, kill me and my son; the arrow that killed the mighty hero will not quail before a weak woman and a stripling lad. Let us join him in his journey. She fell at the feet of Rama and wept in inconsolable anguish.

Rama said, "Tara! Why do you weep so? You are a heroic wife, do not behave in this manner, for, it brings your role into infamy. Be calm. Control yourself. The body is a temporary phase; it is contemptible. Vali himself regarded this body as debased! Its fall, its end might happen any day; it cannot be avoided. It is but an instrument to achieve the Supreme Goal and if that end is not kept in view and attained through it, the body is but a lump of coal whose destiny is the fire. Weeping for Vali as this body is foolish, for the body is here. Do you then weep for the Atma that was in this body? That Atma is eternal; it cannot die or decay, diminish or disintegrate. Only those who have not realised the Atma principle suffer from the delusion that the body is themselves; until then, even the most learned are led into that error.

Being enamoured of the body as if it is you is 'ignorance'; being aware of the Atma, which you really are, is 'wisdom'. Getting the knowledge of the Atma is as precious a piece of good luck as getting a diamond in the dust. The Atma is the gemstone embedded in this mass of flesh. The body carries urine and faeces, bad odours and bad blood; it is pestered by pests and problems. Its decay cannot be arrested; it must die some day. The achievement that one can perform through it is its justification. That is the crown of human life.

Your husband has achieved many heroic and honourable things through this body. While ruling this kingdom, he protected and promoted his servants and faithful followers as if they were his very breath. He destroyed the Rakshasas. He had deep devotion towards God.

But, he inflicted injury on his brother. Besides that sin, he did not commit any other. His death at my hands was the consequence of that sin. Therefore, believe that it too has been washed away. Now, you have no reason to grieve.”

When Tara heard these words of counsel and consolation, wisdom dawned in her mind and she was calmed. Rama said that there should be no more delay, He asked Tara to go back and had the funeral rites for Vali performed by Sugriva. He advised Sugriva to bring up Angada with Love and Care. When the rites were over, he sent Lakshmana into the Capital City, and had Sugriva installed on the regal throne. Hanuman and others too entered the City and helped him as friends and followers, to carry on the task of government successfully.

The Brother's Remorse

As soon as he assumed the reins of office, Sugriva called together the elders and leaders of the community; he ordered them to make all proper arrangements to seek and find the whereabouts of Sita. He asked them to initiate all steps necessary for the purpose.

Sugriva was not happy that he became the ruler and was honoured by that responsibility; he was, on the other hand, sad and morose, because he had been the cause for the killing of his brother. "Alas! Anger leads one to perpetrate the direst of sins; it breeds hatred, and murders love. Shame on me! To what depths have I fallen, since I allowed anger and hatred to enter my heart! My heart is torn in anguish by the words of adoration Vali addressed to Rama. I never realised, even in my dreams, that Vali had such a deal of devotion and dedication in him, Ah! His wisdom is boundless. His furious anger did not allow that wisdom to express itself! Yes. Anger suppresses the divine in one; lust and anger drag life into disaster.”

Though much depressed by these thoughts, Sugriva learned the guidelines of government from Lakshmana; he prayed to Rama that He should enter the City and bless him and his subjects. But, Rama said that he had to live in the forests only and not enter any town or city. Or else, he would be disobeying his father's wish.

Sugriva held a conference of leaders and announced that, since the season was late autumn, rains were imminent and the monkey hordes would be hard put to it, to move about in the cold and in the storm. So, he suggested that as soon as the autumn passed, they must set about the task of searching for the place where Sita was. He presented this information to Rama and Lakshmana also. Rama realised the truth of these statements and he acceded to the proposal. The brothers retired to the Rshyamuka Hill and took residence there.

The rains started soon; it poured as if pots were emptied from the sky, on every square, inch of space! It became a hard task for Lakshmana to procure, in time, even tubers and fruits for sustenance! They could not come out of the shelter of the hermitage. Sunlight became a scarce commodity.

Rama spent the time in administering valuable counsel to Lakshmana. "Lakshmana!" he would say, "When a wicked son is born the code of morality will be corroded. When a cyclone starts its career, the clouds shudder in fear. The company of bad men is the prelude to the disappearance of wisdom. The company of good men makes wisdom blossom." Thus, they spent their days, learning and teaching, matters concerned with Wisdom and its acquisition and upkeep.

The Search is on

The rains stopped. The Sharad season dawned on the world. The earth shone resplendently green. Grass sprouted everywhere and soon decked itself with many coloured floral dress. Greed weakens when gladness grows, so too, the waters evaporated when the star Agastya appeared in the sky. The mind is rendered pure and pellucid when desire and delusion disappear, so too, the rivers were rendered clear and clean. Rama told Lakshmana, "Brother! It is desirable to give a warning to Sugriva now."

Lakshmana paid heed to that command, and requested Hanuman, who was a daily visitor to the hermitage, to remind Sugriva of the promised task. Hanuman was most earnest and anxious to fulfill the orders of Rama; so, he warned Sugriva immediately and effectively. He called together the leaders of the monkey hordes and initiated the arrangements. Sugriva gave every one the determination and courage needed for the execution of the task assigned. Urged by the resolution that the mission must succeed, he sent them to all the four quarters. He entrusted the over-all leadership to Hanuman himself. Led by Hanuman, the entire assembly of monkeys shouted, "Jai" to Sugriva and "Jai" to Rama, the Lord.

Dancing and jumping in glee, the monkeys hurried on their different demarcated paths, inspired by Hanuman and the holiness of the mission. Hanuman went East with a group of followers; Sushena and Myndava proceeded North. They searched the Gandhamadana Mountain range, the Sumeru Peak, the Arjuna Mountain, and the Nilgiri Ranges, and the caves therein, until at last they reached the shore of the Northern Sea. The group of Hanuman also were equally earnest in their search. They cared least for sleep or food; they were ready to offer their very lives at the feet of Rama. They desired only one thing, success in their task of serving Rama. From the least to the highest, every one had the same loyalty and spirit of dedication. Reciting the Name, "Rama" "Rama" "Rama", they peeped into every nook and corner, every peak and promontory, every cave and cove, every valley and river-bank, for, they could penetrate into regions and places where men cannot enter.

A Woman's Vision

One day, they reached the shore of a broad lake. There they espied a woman deeply engaged in austerities. They prostrated before her, from a distance. She opened her eyes and seeing their exhausted condition, she said, "Monkeys! You appear Very tired and hungry. Refresh yourselves with these fruits" and she supplied plenty of food. When they sat around her, she heard from them the mission on which they were moving about. She said that she was proceeding to the holy place where Rama was in residence.

"Listen to my story," she said. My name is Swayamprabha. I am the daughter of a Celestial Gandharva. I have an Apsaras friend called Hema. While engaged in austerities, Brahma appeared before me and interrogated me, what I needed. He assured me that he would grant me

my wish. Then, I replied, 'I wish to see God as man, moving on earth!' He said, "Be here alone. In due course, a number of mighty monkeys would arrive here, and halt at your request. From them, you can know of Rama, who is God come in human form. Later, you can look on Rama himself. Ah! That boon is being realised. The first sign and the second, of its fulfillment are already evident. The first is your arrival. The second is your account of Rama's story and the place where He is in residence. Now, I am as happy as if I have already attained the third, namely, the Darshan of Rama." The woman was immersed in unbounded ecstasy and delight, and shedding tears of joy. The monkeys too were moved into tears of delight.

Meanwhile, the woman began introspecting with eyes closed. She broke the silence with the announcement, "Monkeys! On a sea-shore, in a beautiful City, at the centre of a charming garden, alone, all by herself, Sita is bewailing her fate. You will see her, without doubt. Be assured of this. Proceed in confidence and with courage."

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness

(To be continued)

Why are the stars so bright,
Why is the sky so blue,
Since the hour I met You?
Flowers are smiling bright
Smiling for Your delight
Smiling so tenderly
For the world and for me.
The world cannot be wrong
If in this world there is YOU.

—P. K. Patel

Research light on a Sadhana

"Sri Sathya Sai Baba is the only living Indian Saint who has convincingly shown through his preachings and practical work that the most valued heritage of ours, namely, 'spirituality' is primarily concerned with the here-and-now, in the very world in which we live, rather than a 'here-after', in some other world. He is very much distressed to see the fast deteriorating conditions in our country, in all sectors of social and political life. The most disturbing factor, according to him, is the waywardness of youth. Convinced that the educational system alone is responsible for this sad plight, he has drawn up plans to revolutionise the entire system, and has already, taken steps to fulfill them by founding several educational institutions, imparting education at different levels, with curricula conforming to the principles he has laid down. What is most unusual for a saintly person like him—it is a pleasant surprise for us in the academic

field—is his insistence on research and the scientific evaluation of the programmes he has initiated." says Dr. T. R. Kulkarni, of the University of Bombay.

Baba wants every step in His mission of Reconstructing the Moral Values of Mankind, to be taken up with understanding, sincerity and faith, by those who opt to share in the task. Therefore, He has established the Sri Sathya Sai Research Institute, in order to provide facilities for the systematic and scientific study of the schemes, plans and programmes that emanate from the central theme of His Mission and to evaluate periodically, with the help of measurement techniques, the targets attained and the distance gained. This Institute is registered as a Public Charity Trust and it has been `approved' by the Indian Council of Social Science Research of the Government of India.

The Institute has started work on its first assignment: An inquiry into the effect of the Bal Vikas Centres of Instruction (Age Group 10-14) run by the Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, Bombay, on the Children's Character and Attitudes. Baba guides and blesses the Bal Vikas Movement (Bal Vikas `means' the blossoming and expansion of the dormant talents and traits in children), for He deems it the most basic and fundamental step in the moral and spiritual uplift of mankind—the plan and purpose of His Advent. It was therefore felt that the appraisal of its impact, especially after four years of its inauguration and expansion, was an urgent need.

The investigation was undertaken by Dr. T. R. Kulkarni, of the Department of Applied Psychology, of the University of Bombay, a distinguished scholar and experimentalist, acquainted with Western and Eastern techniques of psychological probing. He was assisted by a brilliant co-worker in the field, Miss Villi Nanji. The interim report on the psychological evaluation was placed by him in the hands of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba on May 12, 1975, at Dharmakshetra, on the happy occasion of the Seventh Annual Day Celebrations of that International Centre of the Sathya Sai Seva Organisation.

"A remarkable feature of the Bal Vikas Instruction Programme," says Dr. Kulkarni, "is that it is new and yet very old." "Its newness lies in the fact that it seeks to treat some well-recognised religio-spiritual practices or exercises to be undertaken by both the teacher and the taught, as the most fundamental aspect of the educational process, at any level of education or instruction, in whatever sphere of social activity. It is very old in the sense that it is entirely based on the ancient cultural traditions of India. The entire programme is subsumable under the single label—Sadhana."

The Report has a note on the Bal Vikas, which explains this Sadhana aspect of its nature. We shall reproduce it here in full, as it is an instructive and inspiring summary of this novel experiment in revitalising the roots of education.

"The Bal Vikas Centres are special classes, conducted once a week, preferably on Sundays. Children are admitted on a strictly voluntary basis, both child and its parents having expressed willingness to join. On other days, children attend their schools and receive regular education there, according to the prescribed curricula therein. But, for those other days too, special instructions are given to the children which they have to practise at home, at fixed hours, as

taught at the Bal Vikas classes. The co-operation of the parents is sought, so that they may see that the children scrupulously follow the instructions given.

The Bal Vikas Centres are divided into several units, spread over different parts in the town or city. Each unit is under the charge of a Guru (Teacher), assisted by four others who have specialised in tasks, such as story-telling, bhajan etc. All the teachers are ladies, who have undergone a special teacher-training course. The number of children in each class varies from 20 to 40. Each class is subdivided into groups for specified parts of the course, after the first two items in the daily schedule. The entire programme of each class lasts an hour and a quarter.

The steps in the Instruction each day is as under:

Step I: Omkar Chanting:

Time- 3 minutes. It is claimed that such chanting sets the children in a proper frame of mind for subsequent exercises.

Step II: Prayers

This comprises recitation of hymns, invocations,, and the like, eulogising the greatness, glory and mercy of God and expressing gratitude to Him for all that He has bestowed on us.
Time: 10 minutes.

Step III: Bhajans

Singing of devotional songs in chorus, for about 15 minutes.

Step IV: Story Telling

Stories selected from epics like the Ramayana, the Mahabharata etc., the sacred texts of different religions, the lives of Saints and founders of Faiths, and other great persons are narrated, for about 15 minutes.

Step V: Japa

Recitation of a mantra, 21 times.

Step IV: Meditation

For Japa as well as Meditation, children are trained to assume a specific posture (sukhasana or padmasana), that is, the cross-legged position. In meditation, effort is made to keep the attention fixed on some one Divine Form. Both these steps—Japa and meditation keep the child engaged for about ten minutes.

A close look at these six steps, says, Dr. Kulkarni, shows that they are wedded together into a hierarchy of exercises, the aim of which is to keep the mind, both perceptually and emotionally, steady on some Divine Idea. From this point of view, meditation may be considered as the common denominator of all the steps. As the children proceed higher from the Omkar chanting, the degree of meditation goes on increasing, until, at the stage of meditation, there remains nothing else but meditation. All the preceding steps can easily be understood as necessary accessories to meditation. And, all meditation is essentially, Sadhana.”

The investigation into the impact of this Sadhana was conducted with the help of two groups of child-pupils, one, the Experimental Group from Bal Vikas Centres and the other, the Control Group, selected from regular High Schools the inquiry penetrated into a variety of problems and goals, like intelligence, attitude to parents, severity or otherwise of upbringing at home, adjustment at home, adjustment or maladjustment at home, at school and with adults and children of the same age-group, artistic, religious, economic or social interests, moral and religious attitudes, introversion or extroversion etc.,. Parental behaviour patterns and reactions were also studied through interviews and questionnaires, and correlated. The post-testing of both the Experimental and the Control Group was pursued after a training period of three months, the training in the Bal Vikas curriculum being given to the Experimental Group only.

The results were charted through statistical devices and techniques. Dr. Kulkarni says that the next phase of the programme of research is planned on a wider and more sophisticated, level. The transformation that is achieved by means of the Bal Vikas Instruction is demonstrable and measurable, and so, he proposes to use laboratory equipments like electro-encephalograph, polygraph etc. to discover the extent and depth of the transformation in greater detail. The Sathya Sai Research Institute, he says, is proposing to establish such a laboratory soon.

Dr. Kulkarni says that the entire Bal Vikas Training Programme is Character oriented, and so, he has paid more attention to some well-known character variables and allied factors. Baba has said that it is not knowledge so much that is 'power', but, that, Character is Power. Character is defined in the dictionaries as "an integrated system of traits, or behaviour tendencies, that enables one to react, despite obstacles, in a relatively consistent way, in relation to moral issues."

The essential core of character lies in the formation of certain desirable, durable, and irresistible habits. So, the teaching of such habits should receive the greatest attention; this can be done only by, transformation and not by the transmission of information. And, how is this transformation to be effected? Only by providing the child models of moral behaviour to be identified with. The Bal Vikas teachers have to be such models for the children and by their love and sympathy, they have to attract and achieve the process of identification. This means, Sadhana for the teachers too.

The Interim Report provides heartening reading, and heralds a new era in child education, for nations, all over the world, for, children, everywhere have to 'blossom' to the fullest beauty and fragrance (Vikas). The Report reveals that pupils of the Bal Vikas Centres show a more positive attitude towards their mothers and fathers; they have attained a better adjustment level than others; they show greater moral stamina. They are prone to more introversion, and stand up to stress and tension more calmly. They seem to be less social, for, they are prone to quiet contemplation and they are drawn to the home more insistently. They are also less money-minded; they are endowed with more aesthetic values.

In short, the Interim Report gives one the impression that the children attending the Bal Vikas benefit through the years in a variety of ways. They manifest positive signs of improved personality; they have a respectful attitude towards parents and elders; they have a more enlightened outlook on life.

This was the result expected by all those who had faith in Baba's Message and Mission. This report has fortified faith and infused enthusiasm for fulfilling this and the succeeding stages of Baba's programme for the unfoldment of the Divine potentiality in Man.

—Ed.

Sai Family News

Sai Books

The Sri Sathya Sai Education and publication Foundation has opened an Exhibition and Sales Centre, at 32, Nicol Road, Fort Bombay 1 (BR). The Centre is well equipped to handle all Overseas enquiries and to export Sai Books, with adequate packing and shipping facilities.

It contains the Divine Message Exhibition which is well worth several visits. It illustrates through photographs and pictures the ideals of education as propounded by Bhagavan and the ways in which, under His guidance and inspiration, these ideals are being practised in the educational institutions established by Him.

Conferences

During this, the Golden Jubilee Year of the Advent of the Avatar, Zonal and State Conferences are being held all over the country in order to acquaint the people with the message of Bhagavan, and in order to inform the Office Bearers and Members of the Sathya Sai Seva Organisation the details of the plans laid down, with the approval of Bhagavan, by the Sathya Sai Central Trust and the Education and Publication Foundation, for the celebration of the Jubilee, during November, 1975, the Second World Conference, the Seva Dal Conference, the Bal Vikas Guru Conference, the Bal Vikas Rally etc.. A State Conference has been held at Shillong by the North Eastern States; Zonal Conferences have been held in Tamil Nadu. Seva Dal Units are being given supplementary training, as at Doddaballapur in Karnataka.

Seva Work

In order to relieve the distress of the villagers round Sulurpet, consequent on the extreme drought conditions, the units of the Sathya Sai Seva Organisation in Coimbatore City and suburbs established a Prasad Centre, which prepared and distributed food for over a thousand recipients for over 45 days.

Meditation Centre

The Sai Baba Meditation Centre, West End Avenue, New York, holds weekly Satsang meetings with Bhajans, Yoga sessions and Study classes on the teachings of Bhagavan. "Many devotees," writes the President, "see and feel the presence of Bhagavan at these meetings. Many have healings and miracles happening in their lives with the Vibhuti and Amrit, flowing from their Baba pictures." The Centre has a project, to build a Temple of all Faiths during this Golden Jubilee Year.

Happy News

Happy News came every day when the results of the various examinations held by the University of Bangalore in April last were announced---news happy for the Sai Family. The

Sathya Sai College at Brindavan, Kadugodi, has set very high records of academic achievement, thus proving that an education that primarily encourages sincerity, faith and earnest discharge of duty, with proper attention to the development of Devotion and a sense of Duty, can yield also academic excellence.

Students of the Sathya Sai College won the First Rank in the I Year B. Com., and the II Year B. Com., They won the II and III ranks and the IV rank in the III Year B. Com. Examination and the IV rank in the I B. Com., as well as the VIII rank in the II B. Com., One student secured the IX rank in the I B.Sc., Examination while another got the VI rank in the Final B. Sc., Besides these distinctions, one student of the College secured the Ist Rank for the entire Karnataka State in the P.U.C examinations (Commerce) conducted by it this year. May Bhagavan bless these bright young students and shape them into fit instruments for His Mission of Peace and Love, Truth and Righteousness.

Like the prince who has fallen into a den of robbers and is growing up in their company, the Soul of man has not recognised yet its true dignity and identity. Though the boy does not know, he is nevertheless the Prince, whether he is in the Palace or in the robbers' cave. Very often, he gets intimations of his real status, a longing for the joy that is his heritage, a call from his innermost depths to escape and assume his real role. That is the hunger that gnaws, the thirst that torments, the individual. You are all princes caught in the robbers' den.

—Baba

The Advent of Unity

Sri Indulal Shah remarked while welcoming the vast gathering of devotees at Dharmakshetra on 11-5-75, "This day marks a great landmark in the history of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation." And, a landmark in the history of that Organisation is bound to be also a landmark in the history of mankind!

That day, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba blessed and unveiled a Stupa, 40 feet high, announcing to the world that the Sai Era of Harmony and Unity has found roots in the hearts of millions and that each Religion has something significant to contribute to the stream of human progress.

Bhagavan has, on the Flag of the Organisation that bears His Name, the sacred symbols of Five, World Faiths (which subsume and represent others too), in order to teach that Truth has many facets and every facet adds to its lustre and value. He has said that the Cross carries the Message of the Elimination of the 'I', that the Fire Symbol of the Parsis is an, invitation to cast into Fire the lower instincts and impulses, that the Wheel of the Buddhist faith is a reminder of the Wheel to which we are bound and of the Wheel of Righteousness that can release us, that the Crescent and Star is an inspiration for steady faith and unswerving loyalty to Good and God, and that the OM that summarises within itself all the processes of Being and Becoming is to be accepted as the ultimate formula of spiritual success. The Stupa that stands, by the side of Sathya-deep, on the Holy Hill of Dharmakshetra, is a five-fluted structure, opening out on top

into five petals of a single flower. It rises from a five-sided base, each side embossed with a marble slab, carrying the Symbol of One Faith, with its message, carved in attractive letters, both in English and Hindi. "Listen to the Primeval Pranava, resounding in your heart, as well as in the Heart of the Universe" (OM). "Remember the wheel of Cause and Effect, of Deed and Destiny, and the Wheel of Dharma that rights them all (Dharmachakra). Offer all bitterness in the Sacred Fire and emerge Grand, Great and Godly" (The Fire Symbol). "Be like the Star, which never wavers from the Crescent, but, is fixed in steady Faith" (the Crescent and Star). "Cut the I feeling clean across and let your Ego die on the Cross, to endow on you Eternity" (the Cross).

The Symbols are also embedded in the rings under each fluted column, in metal plates that are illuminated at night. The petals on top are also bathed at night in blue light, which with the red flame in the centre, inspire in the heart both Aspiration and Achievement.

The Ceremony of Inauguration of the Stupa was as simple and charming as the Stupa itself. Thousands of devotees had gathered hours earlier, but, since space around the Stupa is limited, television sets were provided in the huge pandal below for all to share in the joy.

While the Nadaswaram was filling the air with sweet melody, Bhagavan entered the Shamiana, with Sri. S. B. Chavan, the Chief Minister of Maharashtra. The pupils of the Bal Vikas recited prayers from the texts of the Five Faiths—in English, Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, and Pali. Bhajan songs were sung in chorus by the pupils of the Dharmakshetra School and others. When Bhagavan unveiled the Stupa and the long silken cover fell off, revealing the "Column of Concord," the children released hundreds of balloons that floated free and frolicsomely into the distance. A song specially written on the Aikya Stupa (the pillar of Unity) reminding all of the mantra that the Stupa is initiating the world into, the Message it was instilling, under the Inspiration and the Guidance of the Sathya Sai Avatar was sung most melodiously, when it came fully into view. It filled, every one with the thrill of an elevating spiritual experience!

Chief Minister Sri. S. B. Chavan spoke on the Fundamental Unity in the values which spiritual effort seeks to attain, through every religion. He declared that Bhagavan was insisting on the cultivation of Love as the very basis of individual and social Liberation, and announcing that Love alone can take us to God who is the embodiment of Love. The Chief Minister deplored that the efficacy of Love has not been realised yet by the majority of mankind; he prayed that Bhagavan will soon transform the heart of man into a Spring of Universal Love.

Bhagavan has laid down a programme of progressive spiritual education, beginning from childhood (Bal Vikas Classes), and proceeding through the early teenage (Pre-Seva Dal) into teenage (Seva Dal) on to adult the adult years and middle age (Seva Samitis and Mahila Vibhags), where by systematic study and practice, man is moulded into fit instruments for the working out of God's Plan. There are more than 25,000 children attending the Bal Vikas Classes in the various States of India, and being instructed by dedicated 'Gurus' in the Sai way of Service and Sadhana.

A psychological evaluation of the instruction imparted to the children and of its effects upon the behaviour patterns and attitudes, the character traits and intelligence of the children has been made, so far as the classes in Bombay City are concerned, by the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of

Research, Bombay, under the guidance of Prof. T. R. Kulkarni of the Department of Applied Psychology, University of Bombay, assisted by Kumari Villy Nanji and others. Sri Indulal Shah announced the publication of an Interim Report of the conclusions of this investigation and Prof. Kulkarni placed the Report in the hands of Bhagavan.

Prof. Kulkarni gave a short speech on the findings, which confirmed the hopes of the promoters of the Bal Vikas movement: positive attitude towards parents, better adjustment levels, increase in moral development, greater contemplativeness, higher aesthetic appreciation, and less money mindedness.

Bhagavan began His Discourse with a Song extolling the Four Basic Qualities of Man, Sathya, Dharma, Shanti and Prema and characterising them as the Four Pillars of Sanathana Dharma, the Eternal Religion of man. He sang another Poem too, declaring that Religions are but different names for the same road; cows may be brown or black or mottled, but, the milk they yield is white; ornaments may be of different shapes, but, they are all made of one substance, gold; flowers may be of various hues, but, the act of worship in which they are offered is the same in spirit and aim everywhere.

Speaking next on the feelings of friendship and enmity which harass man He said, "The separation between those whom you like and those whom you dislike is purely a matter of individual taste; the mind is so constituted that it divides others into categories like friends and foes, good and bad, desirable and undesirable. This trait is inescapable when one moves in the world, involved in its activities. But, one has to remember that the enemy is one's best friend!

Kabir prayed that he may be given always the burden of an enemy! For, he said, an enemy rids you of sin, by abusing you and insulting you—acts which transfer the punishment you have to undergo to the person who hurt you! And, Kabir P not happy, at having friends who flatter and praise, for, these latter, rid you of the punya (merit earned), which diminishes with each act of appreciation. The evil that you have to suffer for your sins is taken over by those who hate you; the good that you have to consume in return for the good that you have done is consumed by those who extol you. Thus, you are left with a nil balance, an eventuality for which you ought to feel very thankful," says Kabir.

The enemy elicits your hardihood, your fortitude, your patience, your courage, your self-control and a bunch of other desirable virtues. He keeps you ever alert and vigilant. Ravana was the prime cause for the achievements of Rama; Kamsa helped the world to know the exploits of Krishna; the father Hiranyakasipu brought out the uniqueness of Prahlada's Devotion. Dharmakshetra became the battlefield of Kurukshetra and so, it has been imprinted in letters of gold on the pages of history.

While engaged in Adhyatmic Sadhana, one has to dwell more on Unity than on the Duality of likes and dislikes, or on the Diversity and Multiplicity that is so patent to the untrained eye. With each sunset, the span of life is being clipped away remorselessly; but, man does not prepare himself for the eventuality of death and the aftermath. He is too busy with trivialities, even to spend a few minutes in Satsang.

When I asked a gentleman in Delhi recently why he could not find time for Satsang, he replied, "Baba! I have no time even to die"! Man is Time, the Master of Time, God; and, why should any one have 'time' to die? Can he decide when or how or under what circumstances? Without wasting anymore days in vain pursuit of the little things and little victories of life, man must aim at the goal of realising his innate Divinity. Time wasted is as bad as life itself being wasted. One has to start early, so that he can go slowly and reach safely. Haste is waste; waste works worry; and, so, don't be in a hurry.

When you practise the attitude of "friendship" with all, there can be no two—those who like you and those who don't, or those whom you like and those whom you do not like—there can only be one. To, cultivate this attitude, you have to nurse three qualities—Love, Compassion and Comradeship. When your heart is made into a nursery of these virtues, it becomes a Nandanavana, a Garden of Paradise, where the weeds of anger, envy and greed do not strike root.

The Gitacharya has emphasised the quality of Adweshtaa Sarvabhoothaanaam—absence of hatred against all beings. So, your duty is to love all as fellow-pilgrims. There is only one religion, the religion of love, there is only one caste, the caste of humanity; there is only one language, the language of the heart; there is only one God and He is Omnipresent. It is as a symbol of this Unity based on Realisation that the Stupa has been installed today at Dharmakshetra. The Himalayas form the Crown on the Head of Bharat; Kanyakumari forms the Feet. And, Bombay is the vital organ, the stomach.

When the stomach does not function effectively, the body suffers from Head to Foot! When the stomach is given clean, sustaining food, and helped to function smoothly, the entire body can function in the best manner, with no pain or disease. That is the reason why the Stupa of Unity has been set up in Dharmakshetra, Bombay, first. Bombay has a number of earnest workers, who have discipline, and duty, guiding their devotion. If there is no discipline, devotion will result in ruin; if there is no sense of duty, devotion cannot be canalised for the benefit of society. So, I exhort every one of you to learn the lesson of the Stupa, which calls upon followers of all faiths to live in Love and dedicate all activities of head, heart and hands to God as acts of worship to Him."

The Shadow of the Sky

Those in search of God generally ignore the world; the seekers of the Spirit often pronounce the world to be an impediment. Those who swear by the reality of matter, the fanatics who refuse to have faith in anything that does not enter their consciousness through the senses, they ignore God and the demands of the spirit. Baba says that those who cast their looks on the ground do not see the sky. Those who look only at the sky do not see the ground beneath their feet.

The problem is, how can one see both earth and sky? Baba says it is quite easy and is done often. Look into the limpid waters of a lake on the ground; you can see the sky within it. Arjuna saw the "revolving fish" that was over his head and not visible to him, in the oil pot that was kept beneath the pole. So too, man can see and understand from that sight, the Divine that lies

`underneath' the world and forms its base and its sustenance. How to read in the pages of Nature the words of God that blaze forth between the lines is the subject of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's book, Dharma Vahini. For, Dharma or Righteousness is to Him not a code of conduct, or a bundle of ideals held before the eyes of the pilgrim, but, a fundamental possession which shapes and guides all activities of man.

The Atma-dharma is the only Dharma that is relevant; for, once man knows that he is the Atma (a wave of the Ocean named God, or a spark of the Flame called God), all else will be added unto him and all else will be shaped for him. The wave, too, has its rules to obey. This is called Purusha Dharma, by Baba. Purusha means, he who is the resident of the City, namely, the Body—the embodied One, the Individual. The wave is a sample of the ocean; the individual is a specimen of the universal; the world is an image of God; God made man in His own image—God made the objective world out of His own substance. The Universe is the Body of God. Treat it as such—that is the Dharma. Do not commit sacrilege by polluting it, denying it, decrying it, and exploiting its gifts for scattering ruin and death.

Baba emphasises in the book, Dharma Vahini, the mantra named Gayatri, because it is addressed to the Divine Principle that is immanent in the objective world and asks only for greater understanding, and a purified intellect, so that the individual might become aware of the Universal from which it has strayed away. Baba says that the Gayatri is the yearning of the Universe or Prithvi, the clamour of the `limitation' for `liberation'. He has also interpreted the yearning of Radha for Krishna—so appealingly pictured in the Puranas—as the yearning of the World for the Sky that is reflected therein, but, whose full glory the shadow could not express, the yearning of Dha-ra (Ra-dha reversed) for the Divine Lord who encompasses and embraces All.

Whatever, therefore, conduces to the realisation of the Divine, in every atom and galaxy, in every thought and deed, in every grain of sand and star that sails in space, is Dharma. And, man's duty becomes the cleansing and the maintenance in good repair of all the instruments that help him to realise this Truth.

The Dharmasastras or Texts of Righteous Activity, with the chiefest of them called the Dharmasastra of Manu, elaborate the procedures for the successful execution of this process. In them, man is represented as the Subjective Divine and woman as the Objective Divine, and they meet and fulfill each other's role in the Home. So, they dwell in detail on the Home and its role in educating both parents and children. Baba interprets a variety of rites and rituals that have become routine repetitive exercises in futility and awards new and significant meanings to them. The Yajna where animals are sacrificed have been saved from infamy by Him; for, He says that the animal to be sacrificed is the animality of man, and not a dumb quadruped drawn to the post. Behead the ego, consign into the flames the delusion that you cling to, namely, that you are the body, and nothing more. The prayers uttered as per textual directions when the sun rises, when the sun is at the zenith and when it sets, are sublimated by Him into prayers uttered to sanctify the waking, dreaming, and deep sleep stages. The temples which form the hearts of our villages are endowed by Baba with symbolic meanings hitherto undreamt of.

The idol of the Bull installed in front of the Lingam in temples of Siva is, He says, the Individual Soul, the Pasu, yearning for the Universal Absolute, the Lingam. The tall and imposing Gopurams or Entrance Citadels found in most of the temples in South India, He describes as Announcers and Heralds of the Sacred Residence of the Divine. He also demonstrates how the adoration offered to one Name and one form reaches the Source of All Names and All Forms.

In fact, Baba insists on four steps in spiritual progress: Truth (Awareness that we are not limited embodied individuals), Righteousness (the practice of Love towards all, as integral parts of the One to which we too belong), Peace (the absence of fear, greed or hate) and Love (the expansion of the heart to include all who have emanated from God and who are proceeding in diverse ways to reach Him). Dharma or Righteousness helps man to experience pure unalloyed peace and bliss. We develop the inward eye and discover the fundamental Unity and this leads to the breaking of bonds and liberation. This is the lesson that Bhagavan's 'Dharma Vahini' teaches us.

—*Prof R. G. Hulkarni*

Divine Incarnations

—By *Howard Murphet*

According to the ancient wisdom we are all, in a sense, divine incarnations. Within each one of us there is the spirit of the Divine. "I have said, ye are gods," wrote the psalmist in the Old Testament. Jesus Christ said: "I am in the Father and you are in me, just as I am in you." "Tat Twam Asi," "That thou art," teach the Upanishads. And so on, throughout all the worlds great scriptures.

But the question many ask is this: does God appear as Man in a measure much greater than the spark found in ordinary men? If so, how can we recognise the Godman? Would we know Him if He came to dinner?

First, what do we mean here by the word 'God'? Trying to define Him at the high level of the transcendent Causeless Cause is an impossible task for the human mind. But at another level we can think of the Divine as having certain attributes. The three basic ones are—Sat-chit-ananda, total existence, or omnipresence, total consciousness, or omniscience, and total bliss. "Where there is joy, there is creation," says the Chandogya Upanishad; so total bliss must be wholly creative, or omnipotence.

From these three basics derive inevitably such attributes as superhuman Power, Love and Wisdom. Also an abiding Joy and an inner Peace. And if such are Divine qualities, we would expect to find them in an Incarnation of God, while making allowances for the fact that, in order to live the life of a man among men here in space-time, He must to some extent circumscribe the amplitude of His Godhood.

Let us consider for a moment some of the supreme personalities known as Divine Incarnations or Avatars. Lord Krishna's superhuman power is seen in the many remarkable miracles of his life when he bent Mother Nature to his will. We see abundant evidence of his omniscience and superhuman wisdom in the Bhagavad-Gita. Today, 5000 years since he walked the earth, his Divine Love comes through to us in the old tales of his Leelas—like ambrosial notes from the Flute Divine.

Yet, though on three occasions he even revealed his transcendent nature to men, very few of his contemporaries recognised him as a Divine Avatar. "For my Glory is not seen by all: I am hidden in my veil of mystery; and in its delusion the world knows me not," he said in the Gita. If he was back on earth today, with a different appearance from the dark-blue body we know—or think we know—how many would perceive his Divinity? Few, as of yore.

Moving down the centuries to Jesus of Nazareth, called the Christ, how shall we judge the degree of his Godhood. Let us take again as our yardstick the three, basic attributes and their corollaries. His miracles demonstrate his superhuman power over Dame Nature. Divine wisdom is shown in the Sermon on the Mount and in many of his other teachings. Love and Compassion for mankind are the keynote of his works, words, and death on the cross. But who recognised his Divinity? Not even all his close disciples until his God-power was shown again at his

resurrection. Afterwards St. John wrote: "He was in the world, but the world though it owed its being to him, did not recognise him."

The difference between man and God-man, says Swami Ramakrishnanda, is this: "Man is always consciously finite and unconsciously infinite, while an Incarnation of God is consciously infinite and finite." We do well to remember that the finite consciousness is there, too. "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" cried Jesus from the cross. While Krishna upbraided Arjuna for expecting him to repeat, at a later time, the teachings in the Gita, saying that he had given them when "concentrated in Yoga."

Today? The state of the world suggest the end of an age and the birth of a new one. I have myself studied two human divine lives of the last century.

One is the life of Sai Baba of Shirdi, as depicted in the books of H. H. Narasimhaswamiji, and Sri Sai Satcharita. The other is Sri Sathya Sai Baba with whom I have spent many golden hours. In both the three basic attributes of Divinity shine through—Sat-chit-ananda—lights too powerful to be wholly limited by the mortal lamps enshrouding them.

I have seen, too, many of the subtle, derivative attributes of Godhood. There is, for instance, the inscrutability of a vision pitched beyond the present; the superhuman energy and steadfastness that moves, unshaken, towards a goal beyond our human view. There is the power to see into men's hearts the dark corners hidden even from themselves; to find there the shrunken flowers that need His sunshine, and the entrenched weeds that call for His weed killer; if the burning is painful, there is the salve of Divine Love. There is the Self-illumination that requires neither books nor teachers, so that Sadhana-Siddhas and Nitya-Siddhas sit at His Feet. And I see, at all times and places, Sai's complete Lordship over the senses.

A point of interest about Shirdi Baba is that he sometimes spoke of incarnations during which he reached God-realization. Whether these were in earlier kalpas or our own, it recalls a point made by Dr. Annie Besant in her book on Avatars. The Godmen, she says, have come up through evolution, as even the Gods of form have done. But Avatars have always risen to Godhead through the Bhakti path. One so risen "must keep the centre that He has built even in the life of Easwara... in order that he may come forth as a manifestation of Easwara... He must be so devoted as to be willing to remain for the service of the universe while Easwara Himself abides in it..."

On the subject of Avatars we must remember that Names and Forms do not matter, in that all Incarnations, at root, are one with the One Divine Life.

Some people in Christendom imagine Jesus returning to earth in the form and in the manner of their choosing. But God comes in a way most appropriate to the Time-spirit and the point in evolution. The man Jesus will not return as he was 2000 years ago. But the Jesus, the Divine Krishna, the Divine Rama have been back many times and are here now.

The great scriptures teach that an Avatar always used helpers on earth for the work He has come to do. Only He knows what that work is, but it will probably be nothing less than the

saving of humanity's life thread, and the preparation of the ground for the centuries that lie ahead. As Christ said: "He who has ears to bear, let him hear."

There is, in this world no Tapas higher than fortitude, no happiness greater than, contentment no punya holier than mercy, no weapon more effective than patience.

Seeds of Vikas

It is the bounden duty of every son and daughter of this land of Bharat to implant in the hearts of every child of this land the basic lessons held precious by the founders of Bharatiya Culture. This should be the very first vow to be carried out by every parent, every teacher and every person who dedicates himself to the service of human welfare. For, Bharatiya Culture is the precious heritage of the whole world, and of every human community therein. The lesson that the Atma or Divine Principle, resident in every one is the real core of the Universe and that it is the supreme sovereign of the Cosmos will certainly bring together all mankind and ensure Peace and Harmony among the nations. Of what avail is life when the Truth is not known? Why deprive children of this great treasure and look on, when they lead dry `fallow' lives? Every person has to try to know his own Truth and lead his child into that awareness.

What is happening today is quite the opposite! Parents, teachers and leaders are inflaming the passions of young minds and encouraging them to indulge in violent deeds. The very people who preach the message of Peace, who talk of the basic principles of child education, who harp on love, harmony and mutual love, and how elaborate on the principles of social progress and national uplift are themselves undermining these hopes by their example.

Bharatiya Culture emphasising humility, sincerity and unity is the best cure for such emotional errors. More than the pursuit of luxurious life or competitive comfort, the acquisition of wealth or power, which are all liable to quick decline, the ideal of simple living and high thinking laid down by the sages of India will lead to happy lives and greater social peace.

You must have experienced the thrill of witnessing the plays enacted now by the children of the Sathya Sai Bal Vikas Children. The plays were inspiring and instructive; the acting was appealing and attractive; the meaning has gone deep into the hearts of the children, as well as the elders who witnessed the plays. But, let me tell you, this is not enough. Along with the Bal Vikas, the elders too must experience Vikas, and lead exemplary lives of simplicity and sincerity, of spiritual discipline and steady discipline. Children are wayward and vile, today, since they have no other examples to follow. Learn the lessons of duty, devotion and discipline from the lips of these children; let each child be a ray of sunshine in the home, shedding light and love. Let the child's desire to serve other children and the defectives around be an inspiration to

you. Children do not say one thing and do the opposite. They are too straightforward and innocent. Imbibe this nature now from them; for, elders have strayed far from that ideal.

The signs are favourable. The fame of this country will not diminish; it will only grow, with the coming days; very soon, India will be free from fear, and will soon regain her old position as the Preceptor for Mankind.

—*Baba: Vigyan Bhavan New Delhi: 31-3-75*

Grace

We talk glibly of Grace and its conferment of the benefits we derive from it, and the various ways in which Bhagavan showers it on us. Bhagavan uses the word, 'Asirvad', for Grace. This word is usually translated as Blessings; but, it is more appropriately understood as 'Grace'. 'Vad' means Statement, Announcement. Asih means, the act of Willing Auspiciousness. When Bhagavan wills that everything be auspicious, it happens so. Asih Vad make up the word, Asirvad.

There is also the word Anugraha, which too means more or less the same, namely, Grace. In fact, there are five stages, according to classical texts, of the conferment Samgraha (helping the devotee to concentrate his mental and intellectual energies in the direction of the inner self and the Reality which is his core), Pratigraha (accepting him for further training, when he has attained some success in mastering his senses and emotions), Vighraha (the Divine assuming an explicit form as a concrete Guide and Master) Parigraha (loving acceptance of the devotee and leading him from stage to state in the spiritual journey) and Anugraha (saving him from suffering through the 'grasp' of Grace).

The Sastras declare that the Divine Teacher or Avatar holds the bijamantra (the seed-formula of liberation) as the Fish Incarnation held the seed of creation and of wisdom, in the beginning of time and imparts it to the devotee; He uplifts the disciple, who is overburdened by the troubles and travails of transitory existences, as the Tortoise Incarnation uplifted the Peak which churned the Sea of Milk (the sea of passions, impulses and incentives that fill the turbulent depths of the human heart). Like the Boar or Varaha Incarnation the Divine Guru resident within, when cognised and aroused, brings the devotee away from the pralayapayodhi, the Ocean of Dissolution, or the whirlpool of despair and doubt, and places him on the dry land of safety and security. The Guru showers Grace in order to destroy the panchaklesa or the five-fold afflictions that handicap the devotee in his spiritual progress: ignorance, egotism, attachment, aversion and fear. The Grace in this case can be compared to the Man-Lion Incarnation the Narasimha, who plucked out the entrails of the Demon embodying these vices.

The next Avatar, Vamana (the short Teenage-Supplicant) is the representation of another aspect of Grace. The Guru, out of sheer compassion, seeks acceptance from the novice, anxious to save himself! And when He is welcomed, He confers the Grace, that destroys his ego and reveals to him his own mighty glory.

Bhagavan Baba is the Jagadguru, the Guru of the entire world, and of all who are caught in the jagat (that which is constantly changing and undergoing agitation). He upholds, uplifts, and saves; He demolishes evil propensities that hamper and by sweet counsel and guidance, He reveals to us His Glory that is really our birthright.

—*Taraka Das*

Himachal

People of Himachal Pradesh! Lord Siva resides on the' Himalayas, as the Puranas declare. The inner meaning of this declaration is: Lord Siva lives in hearts that are as pure, as white and as cool as the snow (Hima) and also as steady and unmoved (achal) as these mountains. Your surroundings, therefore, are teaching you a lesson whenever you turn towards them. They exhort you to be pure, unblemished, comforting to the distressed and unmoved by either luck or misfortune. You must have won nativity in this region, as a result of the merit earned in many previous lives.

Man has to become aware of his genuine Nature and be established in that. Or else, he ceases to be entitled to that name. When fire does not burn or when water does not flow, can they lay' claim to those names? Genuineness consists in being true to the deepest core.

Man has Truth as his nature. That is to say, you can rely on man's behaviour being always true; he will speak out only what he feels to be sincere, he will act according to his word; his thought, word and action will be consistent and complementary. If in any one case, this concordance is absent, then, the person is a man only in outer form. He is worse than a beast, for, beasts are free from the burdens of thought and speech.

All things in Creation are subject to the law of change and man too is subject to this law. But, man should use the law for progress, and not for sliding lower in the scale. Dharma is the norm, which he must adhere to, so that he changes from good to better and from better to the best. Dharma is that which is `worn'; man must wear the apparel of Dharma so that he is saved from the cold winds of ego. Man has been endowed with Buddhi or intelligence, so that he might at every turn decide what is beneficent for observance and what is detrimental. Gandhi while going through hate-ridden regions, prayed, "Sabko sanmati de Bhagavan!" (O Lord! Give everyone good intelligence!) The intelligence has to be kept sharp, clear and straight.

There are four directions in which the intelligence guides man... (1) Swartha-sukha-buddhi. This indicates the fully egoistic nature, where the individual does not care for even his wife and children, but, is eager to fulfil his own needs first and foremost. Then, we have (2), the Swartha-parartha-sukha-buddhi. This allows some consideration for the happiness of others also. Birds feed their young and undergo great exertion to bring them up. The next variety is (3) Parartha-buddhi. Those who have this seek for others as much happiness as they seek for themselves. They are prepared to undergo any trouble to secure for others too what they feel will

grant them happiness. The next is (4) Adhyatmic Intelligence. This leads man ever on the path of renunciation and service, for, they alone lead to Spiritual advancement.

India was for long centuries the guide and guru of mankind, because people cultivated this type of spiritual intelligence. Today it has yielded place to falsehood, hypocrisy, injustice, and greed. The Adhyatmic intelligence recognises the Unity of Creation and so, what the other person feels is felt by the individual too, to the same degree. This vast gathering of people will appear to the Adhyatmic intelligence as a garland of multi-coloured flowers strung on the one single thread, God. Develop this vision; see the One behind the many; see the string that runs through each flower, the Brahmasutra.

When you win the Love of God, His compassion will flow unto you. Love gives and forgives. Ego gets and forgets. When your son steals some money from the house, you do not hand him over to the police; but, when your servant steals a spoon, you have no such qualms. For, you have no love for the servant.

Live without hating others, condemning others, and seeking faults in others. Vyasa, who wrote eighteen voluminous Puranas summarised all the Puranas in one single line of a small couplet: "Doing good to others is the only, meritorious act; doing evil is the most heinous sin." When you feel you cannot do good, at least desist from doing evil. That itself is meritorious service! Do not try to discover differences; discover unity. Creeds, castes, country of origin may differ; but, the inner hunger is the same for all men. Understand that the purpose of life is—to know the Embodiment of Love, namely, God, through Love, and demonstrate through your own Love that you have known Him. The limbs of the body have to work in unison for the common purpose of sustaining the body and keeping it fit for its prime mission. If one limb quarrels with another or refuses to cooperate or help, the entire body, including the refractory limb will suffer: When you see a thorn on the road the feet move away; the eyes saw and immediately, sympathetic vibrations warned the feet. The love and co-operation between eye and feet come from the Atma within and the Love which is its very nature. Just as your body is kept safe and secure by love, may the country also be kept safe and secure; for, it has a great mission to fulfill, as the guide and Guru of mankind.

—*Baba's Discourse: 4-4-75*

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sal Baba

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The Monkey's Grief

One day, during their journey, the monkeys sank in gloom and sighed, "Alas! The period allotted to us by our Master, Sugriva, is nearly over. Only two days remain. And, we have not yet traced Sita!" Angada and the rest lamented their fate and were lost in despair. Tears rolled down their cheeks. They had come to the shore of the sea and were sad that no one of them could cross

it to continue the search. So, they sat in groups on the sands and were pining for the disappointment they had encountered.

Seeing Angada grieve, Jambavantha, the old leader, counselled him in many ways. "Why do you grieve? We have put forward our best efforts; we have searched all places without the least dereliction of the duty assigned to us; we have not wasted a single moment in idling; we have not worried even about food and drink. We have been engaged ceaselessly in the search for Sita. Our Master and Ruler, Sugriva, might not be a witness of our activities; but, believe me, Rama is witnessing them! Therefore, Rama will not be a party to the infliction of any punishment on us. We have no reason to fear the anger of Sugriva. Since this is His Task; let us carry it out with His name on our tongue and His Form in our minds."

Sampathi

While Jambavantha was thus consoling and comforting Angada, a huge aged bird hopped up to the shore, in order to perform the last rites for its dead brother, and offer water, sanctified by sesame grains, in the holy sea. The monkeys gathered around the new arrival and wondered whether it was a Rakshasa who had transformed himself into that form. The bird, however, started speaking first. It said, "Monkeys! My name is Sampathi. Myself and Jatayu are brothers. Eagles as we are, we both raced towards the sun in competition, years ago. My brother could not bear the scorching heat as we neared the Sun; he flew back. But, a sense of pride induced me to continue the flight; as I proceeded stage by stage, my wings were burnt, and fell off. I fell like a stone from the depths of the sky. A sage named Chandrama happened to pass that way and see my pitiable state. His heart was filled with compassion at my plight. He sat by my side and taught me a good deal of wisdom through his lessons. Listening to his precepts, my pride was destroyed. He told me, "O King of Birds! Listen to my words. In the Treta Yuga that is coming, God Narayana is incarnating in human Form; His Consort will be carried away by Ravana to an unknown place. An army of Vanaras (Monkeys) will proceed to trace her whereabouts; Your life will be rendered holy and worthwhile on seeing those emissaries of God engaged in their holy mission. You can assure yourselves that it has been rendered so, because, at that very moment, your wings will grow into strength. Your duty will be to communicate to them information regarding the place where Sita is kept. This day, I came to this place by the sea in order to perform the last rites of my brother, Jatayu. Seeing you, I recollected the words of that sage, uttered so long ago. Why? As soon as I recollected, his words have come true!"

At this, the Vanaras exclaimed, excitedly, "Sampathi! Keep aside the story of your life. Our term is fast ending. Tell us quick the clues to know where Sita is. Tell us what you know, what happened to her!"

Suparna

Sampathi lost no time in elaboration. He said, "O Vanaras! One day, when I was afflicted with uncontrollable hunger, I called my son, Suparna, to my side and told him, 'Son! Fly quick. Get me some food. I am old; I am hungry; my wings too have fallen off.' Seeing my condition and moved by my pleadings, he flew into the forest, but, did not return. My anxiety for him suppressed the pangs of hunger. At last, he appeared with some quantity of venison. My hunger made me forget the restraint natural to a wise being; I was enraged at the inordinate delay and I decided to pronounce a curse on my son. Fearing this, my son caught hold of my feet in

supplication and said, 'Father! I did not waste a single moment while away. Please listen to my prayer. Pardon me for the delay that was unavoidable'. He placed the venison before me, and when my hunger was appeased by eating it, I asked him to relate to me the cause for the delay.'

He said, "When I was flying into the forests, a person with twenty hands and ten heads was hurrying along. With him was a woman of indescribable beauty. She was weeping and wailing most pitifully. I knew it was a monster and so, I attacked him and saw the woman inside the chariot. She was crying out just one Name, 'Rama! Rama! Rama!' no other word emerged from her mouth. My futile attempts to stop his progress and to save that woman caused this delay."

When I heard these words, I felt terribly ashamed that I had lost my wings and that I had grown old. I was overcome with grief. I guessed he must be a Rakshasa; so, I asked my son, in which direction that ten-headed monster was proceeding. He answered that he had taken the southern direction. Immediately, I exclaimed, "Alas! That monster is the Ravana, whom the sage had mentioned; that woman is the, Divine Mother, Sita! There can be no trace of doubt in this. That monster has stolen her like a dog, a fox, and he is running away with his prey. I gnawed my teeth in anger. What else could I do?" Thus, Sampathi explained what had happened and what he knew of the incident. "I have been awaiting the arrival of the army of Vanaras, as the Sage had informed me; I was hoping everyday that they would be passing my way. Today, my prayer is answered. My life has been sanctified."

Then, Sampathi announced, "O Vanaras! The City of Lanka is situated on the Triple Peak Hill by the shore of the sea; that City has many charming gardens and parks. There, Sita is in the Ashokavana, moaning her fate. She is awaiting your arrival. So, proceed further south." Angada asked the bird, how it came to know that she was in the Ashokavana, under a tree grieving over her misfortune. Sampathi answered, that the vision of the eagle does cover an area of 400 yojanas and that had he not been handicapped by age, he would certainly have helped them even more in their mission.

Estimates of Capacity

The problem now was: crossing the ocean! Sampathi said, "O Vanaras! You can achieve success in the task allotted to you by Rama, if there is one among you who has the strength and the heroic intelligence to leap a distance of 100 yojanas." As he was saying thus, the wings of Sampathi grew and flapped a little. He could hop a slight distance and within a short time, he could actually fly. The words of the sage had proved true. Sampathi was wonderstruck at the regaining of the wings. He said, "O Brave Vanara heroes! To fulfill the command of Rama, you have carried out the search with great efficiency and enthusiasm, without allowing even hunger and thirst to hinder your efforts. You have evinced steady faith and deep devotion; you have risked your lives often, while engaged in the search. It is Rama who has been conferring endurance and strength on you; He is having His task executed by you. Your duty now is to contemplate on Him and pray to Him with a full heart. When that is done, you can see Sita without fail and give satisfaction to Rama. You can, with His Grace, leap over the ocean with ease, see Sita and bring joy to Rama's heart. The joy that we cause in the heart of God is the only worthwhile achievement; what can we say of lives that do not offer this gift to God? Only those who live on the lines laid down by God and who by their acts carry out His Wish are valid; the

rest are fallow and futile, they only consume valuable food and move about, burdening the earth." With these words, Sampathi took wing and flew away.

The Vanaras who watched him fly aloft were struck with pleasant surprise at the sudden recovery of his powers. They said among themselves, that Ramanaam can achieve the impossible; for, as the saying goes, the dumb can speak, the lame can climb hills. The wingless Sampathi could get back its wings and fly into the sky, only through the Grace won by recital of the Name. By means of Sampathi's words, the Vanaras were enabled to see and know things correctly.

Each of the monkey leaders started estimating its strength and leaping capacity. Meanwhile, Jambavantha addressed them thus: "Friends! Old age has overwhelmed me; my skill and strength have declined. Somehow, prodded by the joy of executing the commands of Rama and encouraged by His Blessings, I have been able to stay on till now and move about with you. I was in the full possession of my strength and intelligence, and in the best adult stage of life, when the Lord incarnated as Vamana and demonstrated His Trivikrama Form." Hearing this, the Vanaras gathered around the Crown Prince of their kingdom, Angada.

"O Prince," they pleaded, "Search for some feasible means. Decide who amongst us has to attempt to leap over the ocean." Then, Angada called together a full session of all the Vanaras, and -announced that he would like to know the capacity of each of them for this enterprise.

At this, Vikata rose and said, "I can leap over thirty yojanas at the most." Nila declared, "Prince! I can manage to leap at one jump forty yojanas, but, I regret I will not be able to exceed the distance by even finger-breadth." Durdhara rose next, and said that he could easily jump a distance of fifty yojanas. Nala came forward and with a good deal of flourishing of hands, he said he could jump sixty yojanas. While such competitive boasting and parading of skills were going on, Angada declared, "Listen. I can leap over this ocean once, but, I have my doubts whether I would have enough strength left to leap back. One has not only to reach the other shore; one has to fight with the Rakshasas there, if need arises. That would make me still weaker and I would have no strength left. I am afraid my resources won't last so long and for all these three operations."

When Angada spoke in these depressing terms, the leading Vanara elders rose as one and pleaded, "Prince! You are the heir apparent to our kingdom. The discussion whether you are capable or not to take up this mission is irrelevant. It is not right and proper that you should cross over to the land of Rakshasas; it is against the canons of royalty. This is a task which you have to assign to some servant of the kingdom. When you have millions of servants eager to do what you did, it is not right that you should consider the pros and cons of your undertaking this task." Jambavantha suggested that some one might be charged with the errand.

Hanuman Persuaded

Angada looked around, and looking at Hanuman, he said, "O, Son of the Wind-God, you are the dedicated servant of Rama. Your devotion is indeed very deep. You were blessed first among all of us with the Darshan of Rama. Through your intelligence, diplomacy and moral pressure, you established friendship between Rama and our ruler, Sugriva. And, now, you are observing

silence, when we are involved with difficulties in the execution of the mission of Rama. I find it difficult to understand the meaning of this silence." Angada extolled Hanuman still further and said, "There is no adventure that you cannot tackle successfully. You are strong; you are highly intelligent. You are endowed with all the virtues. Evaluate your own skills, capacities and excellences, and rise."

The words of Angada filled him with his erstwhile strength. He rose with a sudden gesture and said, "O Vanara! Wait here, all of you, awaiting my return. Wandering all these days through hills and dales, jungles and plains you have had no time to rest awhile. Eat the fruits and tubers available in this area and station yourself here. I shall on this instant leap over the ocean, enter Lanka, see Sita and come back. I have no other work than carrying out the command of Rama. How else can we make our lives worth-while than by earning His Grace?" With these words, he raised his folded palms in salutation before the vast gathering of monkeys; he took leave of Angada, the Crown Prince. The monkey hordes were raising in unison the exultant cry, "Jai Rama" "Victory to Rama". Hanuman pictured in his mind the glorious Form of Rama, and, with one leap into the sky, he was off, over the sea.

Unable to with stand the tremendous air-flow caused by his leap and flight, trees on the hills were uprooted and carried along. The impact of his leap was so great that the peak on which he stood was pushed into the nether regions. Seeing him fly across, the sea thought within itself thus:

Obstacles

This Hanuman is a servant of Rama; he is proceeding on the mission of Rama. Ah! How lucky is he! He has the strength and intelligence necessary to win victory in that mission of Rama; he is indeed the foremost among the devotees of Rama." The sea was boisterous with the joy it felt at the sight of Hanuman going over and across.

The Mainaka Peak which was submerged in the sea rose over the waters, for, he wished to serve the person who was engaged in the service of the Lord. He said, "O Son of the Wind-God! It will be exhausting for you to cover the full distance in one leap. Please take rest for a while on my head and confer on me the good fortune of having a share in the service you are devoted to."

Hanuman gave ear to the prayer of Mainaka, but, did not halt at all. He touched the peak as a token of halting and sped on. He bowed to the hospitable peak in gratitude, but, "O Mainaka! I am going on Rama's errand; till I fulfill it, I have no thought of rest or even food and drink. It is not proper for me to stay awhile on the way," he said.

A little further on, a Serpent-demon called Surasa and an Ogress named Simhika obstructed his passage by various means; but, Hanuman overcame them all and reached the Lanka shore.

There, splendid in the sunlight, he found many gardens and parks as well as pleasure centres which made Hanuman forget where he was; he was sunk in bliss. He was amazed at the variety of multi-coloured birds that flittered to and fro in clusters within the parks: Hanuman climbed on to a charming mound that was, near by and thought within himself, "This success does not owe anything to my skill or strength; it is entirely due to the Grace and Blessings of Rama only."

Entry into Lanka

Seeing the uniquely grand houses, the long wide streets, the attractive gardens, etc., in that City. Hanuman was moved with wonder and doubt, doubt whether it was a replica of Heaven itself. Wherever one cast his eye, one saw well-built Rakshasa soldiers parading the streets. Rakshasa women, famed for their skill and powers to assume whatever form they wanted to, were found by Hanuman indulging in licentious sports. Deva, Naga, Gandharva and human damsels enslaved by Ravana were pining and wailing in the palaces, awaiting the day of release. Hanuman concluded that it will not be wise to move about in his genuine form among the vast crowds that filled the streets. He assumed a subtle imperceptible form and entered the City.

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness

(To be continued)

The Challenge

Many ancient Scriptures have prophesied the nature and characteristics of the Kali Age, through which we are passing. As late as four centuries ago, Saint Tulsidas, spoke of them in the Uttara Khanda of the Ramacharitamans. He wrote, "It is an era in which people are prone to sinful conduct and the Holy Scriptures are neglected. It is an era when, bereft of true Dharma each plies his lonely furrow, the ignorant masquerading as men of learning; it is an era when deceit flourishes and virtues languish, and the vast majority is immoral, irreligious, agnostic or atheistic. It is an era when Mammon is the Deity to whom all bend their knees, and there is a pathetic decimation of good conduct both among the rulers and the ruled."

Which other age can approximate to this era as closely as our own? We are in the thick of Kaliyuga and constitute the human mass, caught in the sty of modernity. Yes, we are advanced and backward; learned and foolish; scientific and yet equally irrational, inflated but hollow, and hopelessly bewildered amid all the glare of neon lights.

Tossed on the breast of this sea of fright and vice, Baba is for us the only Beacon ready and eager to save us from wreck. Baba has accepted the Challenge of the Age—the Challenge of Science and Modern Civilisation. He is the Avatar, the Unmanifest, manifest in human Form. He knows His role. It is the role that Rama played. It is the role that Krishna played. But, His role is played in the last and the worst of the Four Yugas, when humanity stands poised on the brink of ruin, if not positive extinction. This makes his position both unravellable and unprecedented. His methods too are unique.

The challenge is one from new gods and no-gods, new norms and no-norms; there is an imbalance in present culture-pattern. "Rabbits" out of the conjurer's bag (of science) have dazzled humanity. The newfangled gadgets he resulted in a mono-track channelisation towards material pursuits and sense pleasures. The machine has advanced, but, man has fallen behind.

The flesh is fattened, but, the spirit has become weak. As a result, priests and pundits, scriptures and holy commandments are neglected and ridiculed. The sky-scrappers, space-ships, and night-clubs have superseded them all.

The inordinate proliferation of Reason has created a tendency to condemn faith and piety as antiquated relics. The attempt to debunk all established values has become the sine qua non of the 'modern' man. The discovery of the atom, a great achievement, in itself—has made us oblivious of the One behind the Atom. Dazzled by the pyrotechnics of a theatrical stage, the Director is forgotten or even denied! But, here comes the Role of Bhagavan. When the scientist has exhausted his analysis and his probes and declared that the piece of stone is a collection of electrons, He reveals that it is in essence, Sweetness and Light, as Its Creator Himself is.

The Vedas say, "Truth is One; but, the Intellect speaks of it in many ways." It is this Truth that forms the common denominator between man and man—his Divinity. The forging of these sundered bits of divinity into a homogeneous chain is the aim of human existence. Baba emphasises for us the unity of all religions and all paths. He insists on Name-chanting, but, not necessarily His Name. Any Name or Attribute of Humanity, any Form of any Avatar, any Concept would do. But, chant it with devotion and faith. That is His instruction.

The transformation of a complex society debased by corrupt practices and loyalty to corrupt values is the venture on which Baba has set his heart. But, Baba has decided to revolutionise the Individual as the First Step towards this consummation. Only when the Individual becomes mentally and spiritually robust can Society become healthy and whole.

Therefore Baba trains children in the true art of living, through the Bal Vikas Classes, so that when they grow up they can face the challenge of speed and spuriousness. Add to this, the vast network of the Sathya Sai Seva Samitis with their sections for Youth and for Service among Women, besides the educational services and the Sadhana camps, Baba is teaching us to tackle the problems at the grassroots. To win the fight, one's weapons have to be better than those of the opponent. The weapons of the men of science have been instrumental in demolishing the grand truths of religion. Spiritual Science should have tools sharp enough to guard the edifice of faith. Baba tells the scientist that what they deem as the Laws of Science are only an infinitesimal part of hitherto unknown Laws which govern all phenomena—seen and unseen. Whereas scientific laws go on changing from step to step, the eternal laws abide, like the sea on whose shore, men gather a few shells and call them, 'knowledge'.

To haul a drowning man it is necessary for the rescuer to jump into the swirling waters. To pull out the cow caught in the bog, the Yogi had to wade through the marsh. This is the role of the Incarnated Being. That is the reason why the Supreme Being dons the human garb. Thus does the Kingdom of Heaven come down on earth. Thus and thus alone.

—*Paramananda Sarma, (Dharmasala, UP.)*

Do not talk cynically about Sadhakas. What do you know of the moods and merits of a Bhakta that dare pass judgement on him? Never discuss the spiritual standards reached by

others; persevere in your own path. Be moderate in talk, sleep and food. Never be ashamed or hesitant in singing Bhajans or calling on God in prayer. Be proud that you get the chance; be glad that your tongue is put to the best use. The Lord is the Sun, and when His Rays fall upon your heart, unimpeded by the clouds of egoism, the Lotus Bud therein, blooms, until the petals unfold their fullest.

—Baba

The Company You Keep

Kamal Sahani, of the Second B. Com. Class of the College spoke now, using fine simple appropriate words, on the human body and the purpose for which it has been given to you. He said that the world is a stage and that the body is a costume that one has to wear in order to, act the role that God has allotted to you in the play produced and directed by Him.

This is a correct interpretation. But, when you are allotted apart, your duty is to do it well and earn the appreciation of the Director.

The stage on which you play your role is an infinitesimal dot when compared with the vast unlimited Cosmic space. The time when you strut about the stage in this Costume or in any other is also infinitesimal. Deepak of this College acted as Sankaracharya on the stage at the Shanmukhananda Hall, Bombay. But, his Deepak-ness was not lost thereby; even while he was Sankaracharya, he was Deepak. His Sankaracharya-hood was but a temporary phase. So too, the Atma is the eternal truth; the body which it dons is temporary and the role it induces is also short. Or, to illustrate this in another way—the time spent in dreams is infinitesimal, when compared with the time spent awake. The 'waking' stage is the representative of the stage of wisdom and illumination, of the Atma; the dream stage is the representative of the 'ignorance-wisdom' hazy stage of human life.

The question may legitimately be asked, why or how did this eternal universal Atmic principle take up residence in this temporary, particularised Body box? Well. You do not keep diamonds in a diamond casket, do you? If you do, the robber would be doubly benefited. You keep it in an iron box only. Of course, the iron box or safe will be artistic and charming, for; the container is chosen, to suit the value or sanctity of the thing contained. To drink milk or some such beverage, you select a clean attractive tumbler or cup. But, for a spittoon, inferior metals or mud is felt ample.

The Body is a chalice, wherein you collect the nectar of Divine Grace. That is the prime purpose for which it has been gifted, to you. For, without a cup or chalice, casket or jug, how can the nectar be taken? Raso vai sah: say the Vedas; "He is sweet nectar, no less." And when His Graces is showered, the body is thrilled. The Body has to be kept ever clean and pure, unaffected by dirt, disease, distress, or defeatism. Nara and Narayana, man and God are like iron and magnet. God by His very nature attracts man near, for in man, there is the Divine. When the magnet fails to attract the iron piece, the iron foolishly concludes that the magnet has lost its

power! The real fact is: the piece of iron is too thickly covered by rust and dust. It does not realise its own defect; it rushes to blame God (the magnet) or even to deny Him!

The easiest and the most fruitful method of keeping yourself free from dust and rust, is the Satsang. The company of the good and the godly will slowly and surely chasten and cleanse the persons prone to stray away from the straight path towards Self-Realisation. Care has to be taken to see that you select and stick to the proper Company. A cup of water has no cash value; but, if it is poured into ten cups of water, it acquires the value that people attach to milk! If on the other hand, one cup of milk is poured into ten cups of water, it loses the value it had and is condemned as useless. So, the Satsang you join must be purer, more venerable, and sticking to higher ideals of virtue and truth than you yourselves, when a smoker joins a group of non-smokers, there is every likelihood of his giving up that bad habit; but, when a non-smoker falls into a den of smokers, he is certain to become a victim soon! Such is the subtle influence of the company one keeps. The company you join must be qualitatively and quantitatively greater and higher than the one in which you are now caught.

There are precious gems of wisdom within your hearts, which require excavation, in order to be of any benefit to you. Intelligence is the instrument you have to use, in order to gain them. At the very start, you will encounter a boulder barring your way—that is the Body Consciousness, the Ego. Desires are the loose rocks that have also to be dug out and kept aside. Then, you come to a bed of sand—good thoughts, good words, good deeds; when this stratum is reached, you are nearing success. If you keep on in Satsang, every day, your hearts will, maintain their purity unimpaired; but, if you seek one, only off and on, it will be difficult to win Grace or partake of it, for, the vessel will be tarnished and untidy. In your own households, you must have noticed that a vessel in daily use is bright and clean; but, vessels stored and used only now and then will have to be scrubbed with great vigour to become bright.

You must take all the trouble and welcome all the patience needed, to seek Satsang and remain therein. For, It is not being born a man that is the sign of the Glory; it is living as a man that confers the dignity.

—*Baba's Discourse Brindavan: 7-7-75*

The Middle Path

Through Sadhana, continuous and consistent, man can control the vagaries of the mind, which by their variety and vanity cause disappointment and distress. "Sadhana can achieve what appears impossible," says a Telugu proverb.

What is required is the awareness of the vicious game that the mind plays. It presents before the attention, one source after another of temporary pleasure; it does not allow any interval for you to weigh the pros and cons. When hunger for food is appeased, it holds before the eye the attraction of the film, it reminds the ear of the charm of music, and it makes the tongue water for

the pleasant taste of something that it craves for. The wish becomes very soon the urge for action; the urge soon gathers strength and the yearning becomes uncontrollable. The burden of desires gradually becomes too heavy and man gets dispirited and sad. Train the mind to turn towards Intelligence for inspiration and guidance, not towards the senses for adventures and achievements. That will make it an instrument for reducing your vagaries and saving time and energy for more vital matters.

Desires when fulfilled breed further desires; when unfulfilled, they lead to further installments of life on earth, in order to calm the urge. The only method by which the delusion-of desire can be destroyed is to dedicate all activities to God and engage in them in a spirit of worship, leaving the consequences to Him and ceasing to attach yourselves to them. Look upon every one as the embodiment of the Divine and worship each, as such, by offering Love, Understanding, and Service. Only the blind will be indifferent to the dismal condition of others; only the deaf will be unaffected by the sobs of others. In fact, there are no `others'! You are all, `living cells' in the Body of God, each performing its function to promote His Will.

The joy one gets while promoting another's joy is incomparable. Your heart must melt in compassion when the eye sees another person suffering. That is the sign of the Satwic individual; the Tamasic individual will be indifferent, he is too dull, too bovine, to be affected. The Rajasic man will rush to punish the person who caused the suffering and might even forget to relieve the misery of the person affected! Callousness is the root cause of all the cruelty that defaces the Divine Nature of Man, in all the lands on the earth.

There are thousands of Bhajan Mandalis, under the auspices of the Sathya Sai Seva Samitis active all over the world. They hold Bhajan Sessions for about an hour, once or twice a week, and disperse thereafter. They sing the glory of God, under various Names and in various Forms, and are elated by that experience.

The purpose of this type of loud, congregational prayers is different from the silent individual prayers. It is a joint concerted and mutually helpful effort or Sadhana to overcome the six internal foes of man, Lust, Anger, Greed, Attachment, Conceit and Hatred. These nocturnal birds infest the tree of life and foul the heart where they build their nests. When we sing aloud the Glory of God, the heart is illumined and they cannot bear the Light. Besides, the Voice that rises from many throats frightens them and they fly away.

It is advisable to all to follow the Middle Path. "Athi Sarvathra Varjayet" is an ancient axiom; it means, "Avoid excess, in all places." You must respect the limits set by the experience of ages in the sacred texts. They act like embankments that curb the floodwaters; they direct the raging passions towards harmless channels and save you from ruin. Of course, man has elementary needs, physical, mental and intellectual; these have to be fulfilled in some measure. But, there is no need to cumber one itself with unwanted food, superfluous furniture and multi-roomed mansions. Luxury enervates and enslaves.

Leaders of people have to set an example in this respect, for men usually try to imitate and emulate. Example is more effective than precept. An ounce of practice is worth more than a ton of preaching. That is why I declare "My Life is My Message." You must transform your lives

into examples of the ideal you preach. Parents must set good examples for children; teachers must set good examples for students; leaders must set good examples for those whom they expect to follow them. Preaching austerity and practising luxury will only reveal one's hollowness.

Parents talk of honesty but they utter lies in the presence of children and even encourage them to speak falsehood. The father, while at home, asks the child to tell the unwelcome visitor that he is not at home! The child is thus taught his first lesson in prevarication, by the father himself. There is no use blaming him if he grows into a social menace.

Really speaking, the best way to gain happiness is to choose God as the leader and guide. Then, He will guide and guard, from the heart itself. Emperor Sivaji once sent some persons from the Court to Samarth Ramdas, his preceptor, with a large quantity of provisions-grains, clothes, sweets and vessels. He asked them, "For whom have you brought these and why?" They replied, "For you. You have no one who can provide for you, and so, Sivaji Maharaj has sent all this." Ramdas laughed and said, "I have Providence Itself to provide for me; God alone has no one to provide for Him. Ask Sivaji to send these things to God!"

Now, there is a wave of anxiety spreading over the world as a result of rising prices, and attempts are being made frantically to bring down the level. The fundamental cause for, the rise in prices is the decline in the price of man. Man must realise his pricelessness; he should not regard himself as a cheap nut or bolt, that has no higher purpose in life. He should know that he is the imperishable unconquerable Atma and the body is only a vehicle for the Atma.

Every one should respect all others as one's own kin, having the same Divine Spark, and the same Divine Nature. Then, there will be effective production, economic consumption and equitable distribution, resulting in peace and the promotion of Love. Now, Love based on the innate Divinity is absent and so, there is exploitation, deceit, greed, and cruelty. If man becomes aware of all men being 'cells' in the Divine Body, then, there will be no more 'devaluation' of man. Man is a diamond; but, he is now treated by other men and by himself as a piece of glass!

Man can realise his mission on the earth only when he knows himself as Divine and when he reveres all others as Divine. And, man has to worship God in the form of Man. God appears before him as a blind beggar, an idiot, a leper, a child, a decrepit old man, a criminal or a madman. You must see even behind those veils, the Divine Embodiment of Love, Power and Wisdom, the Sai and worship Him through Seva.

God cannot be identified with one Name and one Form. He is all Names and all Forms. All Names are His; all Forms are His. Your Names too are His; you are His Forms. You appear as separate individual bodies because the eye that sees them seeks only bodies, the outer encasements. When you clarify and sanctify your Vision and look at them through the Atmic eye, the eye that penetrates behind the physical (with all its attributes and appurtenances), then, you will see others as Waves on the Ocean of the Absolute, as the 'thousand heads, the thousand eyes, thousand feet of the Supreme Sovereign person or Purusha' sung in the Rgveda. Strive to win that Vision and to saturate yourself with that Bliss.

Everybody is saying, "I want peace." Peace is like a letter in an envelope. The I of "I want peace" is the front part of the envelope and 'want' is the back. The "Peace" itself is the letter inside. Throw away the envelope, with its I and want; keep the precious letter of Peace.

—Baba

Vyasa

Vyasa, who is revered on Gurupoornima Day as the First and the Most Universal of Gurus (Preceptors of Mankind), was born in a family of sages. He was the great grandson of the famous Vasishtha, the spiritual guide of the Royal Dynasty of Ayodhya and the author of the renowned text of monism, Yoga-Vasishtha. He was the grandson of Parasara, the saint who composed a Code of Law and Morality for the people of this land and for all forward looking people everywhere. His son is Suka, the indomitable ascetic and incomparable exponent.

Vyasa codified the hymns, formulae, verses and songs that were current among scholars and aspirants, priests and pundits, under the generic name of Vedas and gave them the classification so necessary for correct instruction and understanding. He made an authorised version of the scripture and grouped it under Four Titles according to the subject-matter and the purpose. So, he is adored by all lovers of Veda as Veda Vyasa. A modern Sanskrit author Sri E. Vedavyas, I. A. S., writes, "He was a Prophet, a Seer. When deep and fast in a mystic Samadhi, he reached the memory of Nature and the eternal record of all events, past, future and present; all things, images; and mystical Beings; and where all the Laws of Nature are seen, by the sharpened Consciousness of the Seer as realities." Vyasa's Vision of Truth was seen in Timelessness. The author describes. "He saw everything as a living reality. He saw the birth of the elder Brother, Sun and his little brothers, the planets; he gazed with loving eyes on all elements, spirits, animals men and gods, not as a dry prosaic fact, but, as living Truth—an emotionally alive Vision charged with Life" (Hinduism in the Space Age). Out of this vision emanated the 18 Puranas, which present it in the most palatable and pleasant form clothed in myth and legend, paeans and poetry. "Puranas," says the author of the book quoted above, "is the Imprint of the Eternal on the sands of Time, left to us as a cherished gift, by the loving Vyasa, the Venerable Seer." Purana means 'Timeless Wisdom', Sri Vedavyas says. "It refers to a Body of Knowledge of great antiquity and unity."

Sri. R. C. Hazra says, about the Vishnu Purana, considered to be the Mother of all subsequent Puranas, "It gives in six parts and 126 chapters the story of the primary creation of the world, its periodical dissolution followed by secondary Creation; it records details of the genealogies of Kings and Sages, with accounts of their activities and describes the cosmic cycles. There are also chapters on the geography of the Earth and its atmosphere, on the distribution of the different races on the surface of the earth, on worlds other than our own, and on the division of the Vedas and the composition of the 18 Puranas."

"The Puranas in their Ancient Esoteric Teachings have taught the fundamental Unity, or oneness of all creation." The Unity is the cause of all the similarity which we find in the life-cycle of creatures. This basic unity of pattern from the atom to the galaxy in an ascending order is the result of such supreme Synthesis, which rules the Laws of Nature everywhere—either in man, or atom or the Solar System," says Sri. Vedavyasa.

Vyasa also composed the Mahabharata Epic, which is valued as really the fifth Veda. For, through the interpenetration of the Divine Will as represented by Lord Krishna in every scene and sequence of the story, the epic lays down norms and ideals for all types of social and political relationships. The epic has, within its womb, the immortal Poem, Bhagavad Gita, which has provided and is, even now providing, courage and counsel to millions of harassed souls, all over the world. Krishna Himself is the example for the unmoved hero who takes victory and defeat as but the reverse and obverse of the same coin. So, the Gita appears to be the genuine Teaching of Krishna to the redoubtable warrior, Arjuna, who was overcome by a sense of false values at the most critical moment in the career of the Pandavas. The lessons Krishna taught have forced the confession out of his lips "I have lost my delusion; I have remembered that I have to be in that condition of supreme ecstasy always."

Though Vyasa had done all these great spiritual adventures successfully, and helped the world to orient its direction correctly, he was still steeped in melancholy, as the story goes. He was in a hermitage on the banks of the Saraswati and Narada saw him in that plight. He advised him that he must himself experience the sweetness of the Name of God and the Description of His Majesty and Mercy. That step alone can give the ecstatic thrill, without which life would be drab and dry, for him and others.

Vyasa accepted the advice and composed the Bhagavata, but, he could not easily shake off the monism that marked the Brahmasutra; which he had written as a text for advanced Vedic studies. The Bhagavata, though primarily concerned with the Attribute-full God with Name and Form, engaged in direct involvement with His Creation, Vyasa has included many hymns denoting the Impersonal, Infinite, Formless Principle, which can be realised when the heart of man is purified by Devotion, Dedication and Surrender. Karma leads to Bhakti and Bhakti to Jnana.

The very first stanza of the Bhagavata reveals that Vyasa involuntarily made the work into an elaborate commentary on his previous book, the Brahmasutra, which was a short, epigrammatic, aphoristic collection which sought to give the case of Vedanta. It has achieved a status equal to the Upanishads and the Bhagavad-Gita, as authoritative books on Sanathana Dharma. In the hands of Vyasa, the Bhagavata became a monism-oriented dualistic epic on God's Omnipotence and Omniscience, The very first words of the first line in the first stanza are, Janmadyasya yathah (from whom the origin) and they are found in the Brahmasutra. In the same Stanza, two other aphorisms from the Sutra are also elaborated upon.

The contribution of Vyasa to the codification of the most ancient scriptures of man and the most valid and valuable interpretation of those scriptures, besides his massive efforts in mellifluous Sanskrit to popularise the precious teachings enshrined in those scriptures by means of two epics and a number of Puranas have entitled him to the adoration and reverence of generations of grateful aspirants.

Bhagavan who has come to revive the basic values of life and lead mankind away from pettiness and perdition to liberation and fulfillment has allowed devotees to gather in His Presence on the Day set apart to honour Vyasa and all the Gurus who succeeded him in all lands; this year, on that day, Bhagavan is laying the Foundation for a Stupa (which will soon be one among many; all over the Globe) to proclaim that the Sanathana Dharma that Vyasa established is the faith that inspires and subsumes, includes and reveres all faiths that lead man to God. Bhagavan's Advent is to ensure Peace among the Faiths and Love among all.

—*Taraka Das*

Advice to Seekers

If somebody says Sai Baba's powers have been given to him, then we run to him. Sai Baba's powers are such that they are not given to anybody else. Nobody has the ability to take powers from Sai Baba, nor the ability to give them to someone else. Sai Baba's powers are not given like that, and you should not be led away by such statements. Each one's power is within him; it is not possible to give such power to another person. In this manner, by allowing a weak mind to get control over us, if we begin running from place to place, when are we going to get strength of mind, and control our own mind? We must be able to follow one thought, one path. One does not have to search for spiritual power, going around the world and spending a lot of money. Be in your own house, develop it in yourself; such spiritual power is in YOU! You don't have to run for it here and there. God is not external; God is not outside you; God is inside you. You are not a man, you are God yourself. You are not one person, but three: the one you think you are (physical); the one others think you are (mental); and the one you really are is God. Don't be under the delusion that God is somewhere and you have to search for Him. God is in you, and when you are able to realize, that, and when you are able to develop the spiritual power from within you, then you will see God. You are going in the path of worldly consciousness; you are not taking the path of super-consciousness. When you take the path of super-consciousness, you will get realization, and you will be able to see the Truth.

The first thing you have to do is develop self-confidence. It is such people who have no confidence in their own self who begin to wander about and to waver, and take to various different paths. When you take your body to different places, and when you go about moving aimlessly, the mind also goes to different places. The first thing is to steady your physical body. If the body is moving all the time, then the mind is also moving. If you have a container filled with water, if the container is continually moving, then the contents will continually be moving. So in this context, we should not keep moving our body and our limbs in an aimless manner; this is a very essential part of our practice of meditation. We should sit quiet and the body should be steady. Why do we ask people to sit straight and to sit quiet in meditation? Because when the body is straight and quiet, the mind inside is also straight and quiet. If you cannot control your body, how can you control your mind? The FIRST thing is to control your body by having all the limbs and body organs in a steady manner. The basis for the mind wandering is that your physical body is also continually wandering. So the first thing you have to do is to give up this continual wandering of the physical body.

Many people think that concentration is the same thing as meditation, but there is no such connection between concentration and meditation. Concentration is something which is below your senses, whereas meditation is something which is above your senses. But many are under the false impression that concentration is identical with meditation, and they take to a wrong path. Concentration is something which we use involuntarily in our daily, normal, routine life. Just look at this, I am now reading the newspaper. My eyes are looking at the letters. My hand is holding the paper. My intelligence is thinking now. Mind is also thinking. Thus when the eyes are doing their work, the hand is doing its work, when the intelligence is doing its work, and the mind is also doing its work, and there is the coordinated action of the mind, intelligence, hand and eyes, I am able to get the contents of the newspaper. It means, if I want to get at the matter

that is contained in newspaper, all these enumerated senses are concentrated and they are all coordinated and are working on the newspaper.

Not only this, if one wants to drive a car, unless one has concentration, one cannot drive a car on the road. All the normal routines, like walking, talking, reading, writing, eating, all these things we do only as result of concentration. If concentration like this is part and parcel of your daily life, than what is that we practise to get concentration? What we have to practice something which is beyond these normal senses. We must rise from being below the senses (that is the state of concentration) to the senses (that is, the middle position, called contemplation); and from there we must rise above the senses, that is called meditation. Between concentration and meditation there is border area which covers both and that is the area of contemplation. To be in that area of contemplation is to free yourself of worldly attachments. If you break away all the worldly attachments—all the routine attachments in the world—then you will enter the region of contemplation. When you have completely broken away ALL your attachments, you break through this area of contemplation and you get into the area of meditation.

These steps can also be described as starting from self-confidence, and then getting self-satisfaction, and then self-sacrifice, and the last step is self-realization. The ultimate step of self-realization depends upon the base of self-confidence. You must therefore develop as a first step confidence in your own self. Without having and developing confidence in your own self, if all the time you are talking of some power being with someone and some other power being with someone else, if in this way you travel all the time and depend upon power which is with someone else, when are YOU going to acquire any power and confidence in your OWN self. Peace and bliss are within you they are not something which is external to you. You may think of going to the Himalayas for getting peace. Yes, your body may go to the Himalayas for getting peace, but your mind may be left behind in the city. How are you going to get peace? You have brought your body to India; but still, if you have the same habits which you are used to in America, what is the use of bringing the body to India? Body is not the essential thing. The transformation should come in your mind, the change should come in your mind. Many people collect a lot of information, they take a lot of information, but they do not use it to bring about a transformation of their own self. Information is useless, but the transformation in you is important. You can go on mentioning the names of many eatables. Are you going to relieve your hunger in this way? But even if you actually eat one thing only in practice, you are going to relieve your hunger. Therefore, instead of saying so many things in your talk or in your speech (all that is simply book knowledge), if you are able to put into practice one of the things you say, that is going to be useful.

Baba: Good Friday: 1975

Full Minus Full is Full

That is Full; This is Full; When Full is taken from the Full, Full remains—this the Upanishadic axiom! The Divine is Full; Creation is Full; even when Creation happened and the Cosmos appeared to be produced from the Divine, there was no diminution in the Fullness of the Full.

Fullness is the attribute, the nature of the Supreme. It cannot be diminished by the process of creation of the Cosmos. Why is creation also called the Full? Because, it came from the Full.

You go to the bazaar to purchase a kilogram of jaggery. The keeper of the shop brings from his store a big lump, and he slices off a portion, weighing about a kg; he then weighs it and gives us, in return for the price amount, one kg of jaggery. We sample a piece from the big lump and we expect the portion to behave as sweetly as the original lump. We go home and take a little to prepare the sweet refresher called panaka. The panaka is sweet; the kg of jaggery and the mother lump—all are equally sweet. Fullness is the quality of the Divine; it is found in part or portion or in half or whole. Quantity is not the criterion; quality is. In the visible world that has been taken from the substance of the Divine, this quality is found equally full. We shall not consider the world as anything less than God.

Of course, there are scholars who proclaim that the world is a hollow zero, that it has no latent or potent strength, being but a dream and a delusion. This is a sign of the blindness of ignorance. God is very much in the world, in and through every thing in it, with no exception. In the Gita the Lord announces, "I am man among living beings, the cow among animals, the lion among beasts, the cobra among snakes, the eagle among birds, Prahlada among Rakshasas etc. No item is discarded as not worthy of God. There is no body that He does not activate; no Form that He does not reside in. He is fragrance, brilliance, sweetness and taste, intelligence, valour, austerity, fame, contentment—all desirable and even undesirable things and qualities. One can acquire unalloyed bliss only by knowing this universal all-inclusive glory of the Lord.

There are four stages in securing the Grace of the Lord, by this means (1) Attaching the mind to God (2) Loving the Form of God to which the mind has been attached (3) Installing that Form in the heart and (4) Dedicating all that one has and does to the Form so installed. You have a great example of one who successfully travelled through these stages and realised the Goal of Life, in the Mahabharata, namely, Ekalavya. Though Dronacharya refused to accept him as his pupil, Ekalavya attached himself mentally to him as Guru; he installed him in his heart; and finally, he offered at his feet all the skills and fame that he had won through the grace of Dronacharya!

It has become a routine affair—this observance of the Festival of Gurupoornima. This day, the Guru is adored, and Gods are worshipped, praised and propitiated by song and feasting. But, are these enough, let me ask. The observance can yield fruit, only when the deeper significance of the Day is grasped and meditated upon. Guru is the Person who destroys the darkness of ignorance by his own illumination. Most Gurus have only feeble, borrowed light; the removal of darkness has to be complete, with no trace of lurking shadow. Like the Full Moon that happens every year on this Day, the mind of man has to be charmingly fair, cool and full. This gift of Light can come only from God, for, he is self-illuminated; He is the source of Light for all planets and stars, as well as for all beings.

In Vedantic vocabulary, Chit and Achit are two terms set against each other, comprehending between themselves, the Created Universe. Chit means 'Intelligent' and A-chit means 'non-intelligent'. There are no two opposites like this. There are grades, slowly passing from one

to the other, from the less intelligent by the fully intelligent. In fact, there are three grades, not two!

The first is: Shuddha Tattwa, the second is: Mishra Tattwa and the third is: Vasana Tattwa. (1) The Shuddha Tattwa is what Christ referred to as the Kingdom of God. It is far far beyond the reach of Mind; it is the realm of pure equanimity. (2) Mishra Tattwa is this earthly kingdom, alternating between repose and activity, sloth and adventure, Tamas and Rajas. While the first is spoken of as the Nitya Vibhuti (the Everlasting Glory of the Divine), this the second is spoken of as Leela Vibhuti, the scene of the Ever-changing ever-fresh sport of God. (3) This is the region of inactivity, ignorance and inertia, the Tamoguna.

The Universe is the Field where God sports. Be aware of this fact, every moment of consciousness, and there is nothing more you need for a happy existence. For, you will than contact God in every thing through every thought at every place and at every moment. His Leela is evident in the smallest flower and the most distant star. The joy that you can derive from the contemplation of these proofs of providence is indescribable. Krishna has said in the Gita that He is ever by the side of the joyous being. Be joyful yourself and make others too share in that joy. To limit oneself and be happy while self-centred, is bad.

The third stage is called Vasana Tattwa. This is where your narrow selfish will takes charge of you, and enslaves you. Vasana is the ingrained force of eons of enslavement to the senses. You have to overpower its subtle impact and liberate your will from its hold.

Cultivate the attitude of un-attachment, of neglect, of by-passing the urges through prayer and systematic practice. This will lead you to Dharma (Righteous behaviour) and Truth; you are then entitled to the Dharmastambha, or Sathya stambha, the Pillar of Righteousness or Truth. This is also referred to as the Vedanta Point of View. Vedanta does not mean, running away from home and the company of men and escaping into the solitude of the jungle (Home is certain to haunt you, wherever you may take refuge). It implies recognition of all this (the idam) as Divinely Poornam (full) and dedication of all thoughts words and deeds to the Divine. When you have the Vedantic Vision, the place where you are will thereby be Kailasa for you.

The Sun cannot illumine God; God is the source of the illumination of the Sun. The waves can say they belong to the Sea; but, they cannot claim, the Sea belongs to them. The Individual can say, "I am Yours" to God; it cannot say, "You are mine" to God. God is the support; you are the supported. The Nitya-vibhuti is the support of the Leela-vibhuti the Sea is the base on which waves happen. When Leela entices God, it takes eight forms: Shuddhabrahmamayi (the Pure), Chara-charamayai (the Moving and the Movement-less), Jyotirmayi (the Luminous), Vangmayi (the Vocal), Nityanandamayi (the ever-Ecstatic), Paratparamayi (transcending this world the next), Mayamayai (enrapturing by its charm) and Srimayi (resplendent with wealth). The Attributeless God assumes the Mind, the Intelligence and the Ego, and the magnificent Leela is inaugurated!

The experiences of the waking stage are laid aside when dreams start; dream experiences disappear when sleep supervenes. Being too is lost in becoming. Christ said, 'Life is lost in dreams'. But, whatever is experienced in any of these three stages, they happen on the basic

Truth, that is, God... just as, all the fear and anxiety, the activity to beat and kill the serpent is based on the Rope that was ignorantly mistaken for a snake.

So, man must endeavour to escape from this delusion, and reach the state of fully illumined wisdom. The best spiritual discipline that can help him do so is Love. Foster the tiny seed of Love that clings to 'me' and 'mine', let it sprout into Love for the group around you, and grow into Love for all mankind, and spread out its branches over animals, birds and those that creep and crawl, and let the Love enfold all things and beings in all the worlds. Proceed from less Love to more Love, narrow Love to expanded Love. The statement, "From untruth to Truth" is not correct. The progress is always from the Lesser Truth to Truth, which is God.

Righteous activity is prompted by Truth. Truth is the basic teaching of all Faiths. Also, Morality and Love. These three, I have come to establish. This day is Gurupoornima. This morning I laid the Foundation for the Pillar of Truth, which supports and sustains the twin virtues of Love and Morality. In the Vedic Rite of sanctifying the spot where the Pillar will be erected, you must have noticed that nine different grains that grow on the earth and nine precious gems that are got from under the earth were used. These represent the Nine Forms of Bhakti, the Nine Stages in man's journey to God, the Nava-vidha-bhakti. Of these, the most vital is Seva or Service to Fellow-beings. I exhort you to dedicate yourselves fully to this task and live in the full cognisance of this primary duty to your own self-service.

—*Baba's Discourse - Gurupoornima, 1975*

Gifts of Gold

This is a story about the Gods. It deals with the greed of men. It was a fine day in Heaven; Sriman Narayana and His Consort Lakshmi were talking away the hours, when Narada, the Wandering Minstrel, entered and attracted their attention. Narayana asked Narada whether the denizens of the Earth were happy. Narada replied that since they worshipped Him and won His Grace, men everywhere were quite happy and prosperous.

At this, Lakshmi (who was the Goddess of Wealth) was afflicted with jealousy and anger, for, Her share in conferring happiness on man was not acknowledged. She challenged Narada to prove that Narayana was more adored than Herself down on Earth.

Narayana accepted the challenge. Donning ochre robes, He transformed Himself into a Monk and went down amongst the villages and towns, preaching the Path. Thousands flocked at these meetings and listened to the enchanting oratory. They followed Him from place to place and adored Him with effusive enthusiasm. He was being carried along on a huge wave of devotion and adulation.

Lakshmi saw this and could not contain herself; She was overwhelmed by envy. So, she too donned the Sanyasi robe and came down to the very region which Narayana had conquered for

Himself. The people were drawn towards her by the effulgence of Her Presence; many came away from the meetings addressed by Narayana to bask in Her Presence.

A few invited Her to their homes for dinner. She agreed but, declared that it was a vow she had undertaken, not to eat out of plates other than her own. She said, she would bring Her own plate, cup, drinking vessel etc. The host was only too glad to comply with Her request, for, that helped him to overcome one bother among many!

Lakshmi took with Her when She went to the houses of Her hosts, a plate of gold, a cup and a water-vessel, all three of gold! The host admired and adored Her the more for this display of pomp and wealth. But, he was astounded and delighted, when, after dinner, Lakshmi said that she was leaving the plate etc., at the hosts's home, since that too was part of her vow!

When the news spread that it was highly profitable to invite Lakshmi to Dinner and to adore Her, there was a huge clamour for Her Grace and millions deserted Narayana's Discourses and hovered around the Giver of Gold. People prayed to Narayana to go back to whence He came, for, they had no time to receive Him or listen to Him. Lakshmi was monopolising their attention!

So, Lakshmi came back to Heaven, to meet Narayana who was already there. She asked Narada, "Who is being worshipped more, Narayana or Lakshmi?"

Narada replied with another question "Whom are You worshipping, please?" Lakshmi answered, "Why? Worship Narayana." Then, said, "Narada, know that it is Narayana's Grace that is helping you to bestow those gifts of gold, which make men worship you."

Lakshmi's pride was humbled; but, man's foolishness continues. He worships Vasudeva, not Vaasudeva, Lakshmi, not Narayana!

—*Baba's Gurupoornima Discourse*

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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Two Blows on Lanka

There was at the very entrance gate of E Lanka a demoness, named Lankini, placed there on purpose to prevent any foreigner or outsider from entering the City. She saw the strange figure, of Hanuman, venturing to enter and accosted him in a threatening manner. "Hallo. Who goes there? Where do you come from? Who are you? We have never before seen such a creature in this region. You could not have come from outside the bounds of Lanka, for, Lanka is surrounded by the sea. Did you, by any means, come across the sea? How can you avoid me and enter the City? Halt! Stop where you are!"

Hanuman paid no attention to her vapourings; he moved forward, dragging his tail behind him, as if he had not heard her threats. Lankini became even more furious and ferocious. She roared in anger, "O, ill fated fool! Do not my words fall on your ears?" Hanuman brushed aside her protests and questions; he walked towards the gate, with a smile on his face. Lankini shouted, "O, ugly beast! Who ever goes against my orders will be eaten up by me, remember. I will chew your bones in seconds. Be warned." She rushed forward to catch the tiny monkey that Hanuman had become, while he sought to enter Lanka City.

When she came right in front of him, Hanuman tightened his little fist and hit her a mighty blow. She rolled unconscious on the ground. Blood flowed in streams from her mouth. She recovered after a while and rushed madly forward to catch hold of Hanuman. But, when Hanuman dealt another blow, she could not bear the impact; she fell and could not rise again.

But, she managed to sit up after great struggle, and with folded palms, she supplicated, " O Person of wonderful form! Long ago, when Brahma, the first of the Trinity, was turning back from Ravana, after granting him many boons, he faced him all of a sudden and said, 'The day your Guardian of the Gate is fatally hurt by a blow from a monkey's hand, know that your downfall begins; your powers can no longer help you. Be warned by that incident that death is drawing near. That monkey will enter Lanka at the command of God, for fulfilling His Mission. His arrival heralds the destruction of the Rakshasas, be conscious of this'.

You are the messenger indicated; how fortunate that my body was sanctified by contact with your sacred hand! Ah! How soft and thrilling was the blow you gave me." Saying thus, she fondled the spot where Hanuman had hit her.

Meanwhile, paying no heed to her words, unmoved by praise and unconcerned with blame, Hanuman entered Lanka, repeating 'Ram' 'Ram' 'Ram' with every breath. Still a thought tormented him: Who would give him the clue, about where Sita was? How to identify Sita, when one sees her? He adopted a subtle form to escape notice and moved from one tree-top to another. He roamed in the bazaars and among groups of Rakshasas, unknown to any one.

Hari in Lanka

Suddenly, his eyes fell upon a building that seemed a temple of Hari, (Vishnu, whose Avatar Rama was). It had a garden of Tulsi plants all around it. Over the entrance door, the Name, Hari, was carved beautifully. The house was undoubtedly a Temple of God Vishnu. Hanuman was surprised! "How came the name of Hari over this door?" he wondered. "Surely, this is a holy spot," he decided.

The curiosity of Hanuman was awakened; he jumped on to the roof of that place and peeped through the window to find out what exactly was happening. Just at that moment, a person was stretching his limbs prior to rising from bed, pronouncing the Name of Hari. When that Name fell on his ears, Hanuman was extremely delighted. He was also emboldened when he knew that even in Lanka there were people reciting the Name of Hari. So, he felt like searching for Sita with greater courage and less apprehension.

"The man of this house appears to be devout and good. Perhaps, he may be able to tell me the whereabouts of Sita. He might be persuaded to befriend me, since we are both loyal to the self same Form of God." With this idea, Hanuman changed himself into a priest of the Brahmin caste, and made his entrance into that house.

Though for a moment, he had some doubt regarding the stranger, Vibhishana the owner of the house, decided that, whoever he is, he surely must be honoured since he was a Brahmin; so, he came forward and prostrated before Hanuman. "Master! Which is your native place? Where are you coming from? How could you avoid being noticed and harassed by the Rakshasas in the streets?" Vibhishana asked. He described to his guest the horrors indulged in by the Rakshasas and extolled the audacity and fearlessness of Hanuman.

Hanuman replied, "I am a Servant of Hari. My name is Hanuman. I have come because Rama sent me," and he spoke thereafter of the virtues and excellences of Rama in some detail. Hanuman noticed that, while he was describing Rama, tears rolled down the cheeks of Vibhishana. "O, What a happy day! How great is my fortune! As soon as I rose from bed, I could hear today these glorious words which bring peace and joy," thought Vibhishana to himself.

Tongue Amidst Teeth

Hanuman interpreted these incidents to mean that they were caused by the Grace of Rama. He was wonderstruck that in Lanka, the Land of Fear, there could be one such person soaked in Hari. He asked him, "Sir, how is it that you live without fear in this vile atmosphere?" Vibhishana replied, "It is due to the Grace of God. For however long He resolves that we should live, we have to live that long, there is no escape. He is the master of the objective world and so, His law cannot be overruled, or changed by any one. Does not the tongue move about incessantly in the cavity of the mouth where sharp teeth with sharp edges surround it? Who helps it to escape being bitten? So, too, I am living here. Enough about me; tell me on what task you have been sent here."

Hanuman realised that he was a good man and that association with such men would without doubt yield good results. Before answering the queries of Vibhishana, he repeated the Name many times in joyful gratitude, Ram, Ram, Ram, Ram; and prayed for permission to disclose his mission to the pious pure-minded Vibhishana. He felt, it will not be correct to hide things from him. He knew that he must open his heart out to him. As a preliminary, he asked, "Sir, what is your name? What are you doing in this Lanka?" Touched by the humility and good manners of Hanuman, Vibhishana replied, "Sir, I am an unfortunate person, the brother of Ravana. My Name is Vibhishana. I am in a pathetic fix, for I am unable to recite the Name of Hari, to my hearts content." Hearing this Hanuman felt he had his answer; he performed one high skip in joy and said, "I am a Messenger of Rama. I have come in search of Sita."

In an instant, Vibhishana fell at the feet of Hanuman, and asked, "Sir, where is my Rama now? I am long yearning to see Him, but, I lack the virtues that alone can entitle me to receive that gift. My tribe is the demonic Rakshasa tribe; can I have the chance to have His Darshan? I have not engaged myself in Sadhana; I have no freedom here to practise austerities and rites. I have earned no right to the good fortune. Will I be blessed by Rama?" Listening to his appeal, the heart of Hanuman melted in sympathy.

Rama, the Merciful

Hanuman consoled Vibhishana a great deal; he said, "Vibhishana! Rama will heed only your heart; He will not be affected by your family affiliations, religious affinities, or Sadhana attainments. He is pleased best by the feelings and their purity. He will bless you for the loftiness of your ideals and the cleanliness of your daily life. He will grant you the Darshan you are yearning for; do not grieve. Why, you can take me as the best proof for what I am saying about His compassion and grace; I am a monkey; waywardness is the hall-mark of my tribe; the word 'monkey' has become a by-word for a prankish, playful, petty mind. I am not versed at all in the Sastras. As for Tapas (Asceticism), I have no idea what it means. I have not repeated, according to prescribed rules, the Name of God, nor have I gone on pilgrimages seeking holy rivers I How then has Rama blessed me? Because He heeds only the Love that animates and the feelings that activate people.

In your case also, He will pay attention only to the Love and to the Purity of Feelings. Be confident; do not doubt."

Relieved by these words, Vibhishana informed Hanuman details of how Sita was brought to Lanka. Hanuman refused to partake of any food or drink, since he had resolved to refrain from both, until he could see Sita and communicate to her the message of Rama. He was eager to renew the search without delay, but, Vibhishana advised him to proceed cautiously and slowly, and inform himself of the strength and weakness of Ravana's Empire before he left. He himself acquainted him with these points in some detail. Thereafter, he permitted Hanuman to leave on his errand.

Ashoka Vana

Hanuman was so delighted to learn that Sita was in Lanka that he actually forgot to ask where she actually was! He entered many mansions to find out whether she was anywhere therein. He saw bevvies of women, fallen on their beds, intoxicated by drink and dance, and overwhelmed by the banalities of luxury. Keeping in mind the characteristics and excellences of Sita that Rama had described to him, he observed closely, every woman in those houses; but he could not meet Sita. In near despair, he jumped on to the peak of a hill and thought over the situation, deeply for long. "How can I go back to Rama, without completing my mission of meeting Sita and consoling her? Better far to drown in the sea yonder. Alas. Mine is a wasted life. Fie upon it," he said to himself.

That very instant, he saw a beautiful garden, trim and green, shining in the distance. Coming down the peak, he realised that since the garden was in a valley surrounded by tall mansions, he could not discover the place from the ground. Not knowing what to do next, he hied fast to the house of Vibhishana and discovered him immersed in reciting the Name of Rama.

Seeing Hanuman, Vibhishana rose and approached him in a friendly and pleasing manner. He asked, "Hanuman! Did you see Sita?" Hanuman expressed his disappointment, but, Vibhishana gave him the information. "Hanuman! There is in this City a garden named Ashoka Vana. There, in the midst of terrible and mighty Rakshasas, Sita is kept; my wife and daughter are with her,

doing service." He also disclosed to him the route by which he could reach the garden and the spot.

Hanuman could not stay with Vibhishana a moment longer; he reached the garden in a trice. Those who saw him hurrying along began shouting and accosting, for, his figure was strange and peculiar to them. Noticing this, Hanuman felt that his figure was making him too prominent and public, and so, he assumed a diminutive size. Jumping unnoticed from branch to branch, hiding himself behind clusters of leaves, he reached the Ashoka Vana.

There he saw a woman, sitting under a tree, weak and worn, through want of food and sleep. The fierce Rakshasas sitting guard around her were threatening her, in order to force her to change her will and to break her determination. Meanwhile, a grand cavalcade neared the place, heralded by the beating of drums and the blowing of trumpets. Behind them Hanuman could see a royal personage, bejewelled and be-robed in magnificent style. Hundreds of maidens followed him, carrying plates full of jewels, sweet and fragrant presents and soft silks. Ensconcing himself within the shade of leaves, Hanuman watched the scene from the top of a nearby tree.

Listening from tree top

It was Ravana, evidently, for, he pleaded before Sita and prayed to her that she might offer her love to him. He tried to extract a promise by threats of cruel punishment. Hanuman heard him exhort those around him to inflict pain and injury on her. That frail feeble woman did not raise her eyes towards Ravana even once during all the tirade. She only said, "Fool! Vile, vicious fellow! Rama alone has rights over me; no one other than Rama has any. I shall reduce this body to ashes in the flames of sorrow at separation from Him. I shall never stray from my resolve. Believe in this and beware!" Hanuman heard these emphatic words and realised that the woman was Sita and no other. His mind gained peace and calmness, when he knew this.

Very soon, Ravana stung by disappointment and angry at the discomfiture became even more violent in speech. He gave her a month's interval and respite, to think over and accede. The cavalcade and the maids with the plates also accompanied him out of the garden.

When they had all left, Sita raised her head towards the heavens and sighed "Rama! Has not compassion yet entered your heart? Why have you condemned me to this torture? When am I to be freed from this?" and she burst into weeping at her lot.

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness

(To be continued)

Rational Approach to Reality

—Dr. M. V. N. Murthy

The most important distinction between man and the rest of the animal world is the high degree of development of what we call the reasoning faculty. This faculty is again related to the development of another faculty, viz. memory—the record of all experiences in the brain. Reasoning focuses our attention on our experience in order to discriminate, choose and act. Obviously it is neither the external nor the internal organs connected with the eye (sight), the ear (hearing), the tongue (taste), etc., that determine our actions; Intelligence controls them. Man is the only animal who can use Intelligence.

It is this reasoning power which has been responsible for Man's pursuits of, and progress in Science all through the ages. He has studied the stars, the sun, the moon, and the planets. He has wondered at and feared the yet unpredictable natural calamities such as earthquakes. He developed medicine for fighting disease. He learnt to predict the recurrence of eclipses of the sun and the moon; he developed astronomy, geometry, etc. This ability to foretell events in the external world led him to attempt forecasting events in his own life; he developed the science of astrology and related his future to movement of planets!

During the last three centuries or so he has turned his attention to the invisible world, the microcosm. He was anxious to know the nature and composition of the various natural substances, organic and inorganic. He analysed them by various chemical methods, dissolved them and prepared 'new' substances! His study of minerals led him to realise that matter has some remarkable regular pattern expressed in regular geometric shapes. Look at common salt which occurs as well developed cubes, or at glistening tablets of sugar with several faces as if somebody had chiselled them! The hand lens extended his vision; small grains whose shapes were not clearly discernible with the naked eye, appeared large revealing the details of their form. Then he devised the microscope which further enlarged his vision. He could peer at his own blood and discover several types of cells, their structure, etc. However, much to his disappointment optical microscopy was limited by the wavelength of the rays constituting visible light. Later he developed electron microscope which gave him enlargements of individual particles to 100,000 times or more. He could even photograph atoms of some metals. The discovery of X-ray with wavelengths smaller than the inter-atomic spaces in solid substances, helped him to get pictures of crystals and their geometric internal structure; he found that the geometric external shape is the outer expression of an inner orderliness and architecture! He had now entered the microcosm! He delved into the atoms, discovered their structure and composition and found that there were at least 92 elements, adding latter some more through his own 'creation'. He discovered natural radioactivity and transmutation of uranium and thorium into lead. He smashed the atom; released tremendous energy by blasting the atom in the atom bomb; he imitated the sun and developed the hydrogen bomb by fusion of atoms and releasing enormous energy! His quest for the unknown continues. In the words of Baba, "... scientists seek to find a law that will explain all sources of energy and all matter."

Man's scientific discoveries have revealed that the visible world of chairs and tables, pots and pans is 'true' and 'real' only within the range of our faculties of cognition limited by the senses. The eye can discern only shapes of bodies of a certain size range, which reflect light in the visible range of the spectrum; the microcosm is beyond its ken. However, the detailed picture of the microcosm obtained with the aid of instruments is also 'true', 'valid' and 'real' at that level of observation. The photograph of a grain of salt, its microscopic shape, and the pattern of its

structure, obtained through X-ray, are different pictures of the same substance and all the three are 'real' on the different scales of observation. As man probed deeper into the atom he reached a stage when he was dealing with several 'particles' which appeared real enough to explain certain observations; they could also be construed as electro-magnetic waves to explain certain other observations. The view-point from each approach was `real' and `valid' in so far as the different explanations were concerned. Thus scientific research has led us to the conclusion that matter which appears to our eyes as visible and solid with definite shapes and sizes has several degrees of reality, all of which are equally `true' and `valid' depending on the scale of observation and interpretation. The Scientist also joins the ancient Rishi of the Upanishad in proclaiming that the visible phenomenal world is true and also untrue Mithya; it is relatively real. The mango that we eat and enjoy is real; but viewed in its ultimate aspect it is not a fruit but mostly empty space with scattered centres of energy!

Man's study of the Universe including the World around him also led to understanding several other "truths." He realised that nothing around him was permanent! Even the mountains crumbled to dust through decay of millions of years. Sthira and chara are relative terms measured on the time scale of our lives. Man found that ultimately all matter comprises atoms and molecules, which come together in a definite pattern for a short time. The solid cube of salt disappears in water; even solid rock comprising different combinations of atoms disintegrates due to prolonged chemical action and new combinations of new minerals are formed. Some of the atoms are carried in solution in water to find their ultimate resting place in the sea.

Plants take up water, metallic and nonmetallic ions from the soil, oxygen and carbon-dioxide from the air and with the aid of sun light build molecules of carbohydrates, etc., which go to form cells. The leaves die after they perform their duty, decay and the elements are separated to seek new sites and new combinations. The concept embodied in the ancient Indian term "Jagat" for the world (meaning flux or change) is also confirmed by modern Science! Everything is in a continuous state of flux, the stars, the nebulae, the sun and the planets! Each is relatively real. Viewed even from the scientific viewpoint, name and form, by which we may describe objects, are all temporary descriptions of a certain combinations, real and valid in relation to a certain time and place!

Although Man's quest for understanding the phenomenal world was based on his deep urge to know the `how' of things, naturally he began to ask about the cause of the phenomena taking place around him. His quest has been to understand the fundamental law that controls all phenomena! His studies of Science have led him to believe that irrespective of their present temporary form, all matter can be explained as states of different energy levels, Baba has said: "There is a deep urge in man to visualise the One behind the Many; Scientists seek to find the law that will explain all source of energy and all forms of matter." Elsewhere Baba has expressed this most poetically: "You feel that there is something behind and beyond all this fleeting fantasy... but you are unable to grasp it and realise that it is the same entity that underlies the entire Universe. You are one with the most distant star and the least little blade of grass. You shine as a dew on the petal of the rose; you swing from star to star; you are part and parcel of all this manifestation." This cosmic vision of man, the real Vishwarupa-darshan, is possible only when man realises his intimate relation with cosmic phenomena.

Unlike other animals, "creativity" is a unique field of man's activity, a consequence of his Intelligence. For the first time in the evolution of life there emerged an animal which was not a helpless victim of circumstances. The Dinosaurs which lived 150 to 180 million years ago roaming about the earth, disappeared into oblivion when food supply became scant and they could not adjust to drastic climatic changes. But man shapes his destiny using his Intelligence. He can live in the icy Arctic or the hot deserts. He grows his own food without depending, on whimsical Nature, he develops hybrids to provide increased yield. He has created machines and hundreds of gadgets using natural resources. He has activated, sustained and interfered with natural processes using his Intelligence. The magnificent achievements of Science and Technology are tributes to his ability to alter his environment to suit his needs!

This ability to shape his destiny has given man immense Power and has led to his developing a strong sense of Ego and feeling of possession. His desire to possess has no limits; he feels that he is entirely responsible for the creation of material wealth using his brains. He has also developed an unquenchable thirst for enjoyment of the products of his creativity. These strong desires are at the root of the refining and development of his senses and the resulting feelings of anger and hatred, when his attempts to possess are thwarted by others. Related feelings such as envy, jealousy, pride, etc., also developed leading to a head-strong Ego.

Man also has another dilemma; he cannot possess anything permanently! He finds that he is also a victim of change; his body also decays and disappears like all other material objects. "Sceptre and crown and must tumble down"; "Dust thou art and to dust thou returnest" sings the poet! His quest for prolonging his life has led him to discover cures for diseases and also increase his life span. He is now on the search for means of prolonging the life of the cells that constitute his body! However, much he may try he cannot make his body permanent!

Thus man is unhappy; he cannot have his fill of joys; the more he enjoys, the more insatiable they become! Man's unique gift of memory, the base of his intelligence is responsible for his misery. He "looks before and after and pines for what is not." Baba says: "You multiply grief by recollecting the past and picturing a lurid future. You fill the present moment with dread, recapitulating the past and reflecting on coming events." Thus in spite of all the enormous strides in the development of his mental faculties and the extraordinary creations of his intellect (or because of them) he has no peace of mind!

All scientific thinking must end in wonder and lead to the inescapable conclusion that there is a Super-mind which controls and regulates all this phenomenal world including man. The so called creation around us, cognisable through the senses is really a continuous re-arrangement of atoms and molecules in which is embodied the principle of life or consciousness! Although we do not admit consciousness in minerals, their origin in which specific atoms come together in pre-determined positions in a well defined and distinct geometric fashion, extraordinary in architectural design, cannot be by sheer accident, wherever, whenever the individual mineral crystallizes, it always has the same architecture! One cannot but stipulate the role of an invisible omnipresent Architect guiding the atoms! Consciousness becomes increasingly manifest in the Plant and Animal kingdoms (including man). Creativity being a product of intelligence, we must admit, that the entire Cosmic Process must be the result of 'activity' of a Super Intelligence or Consciousness. Such orderliness and architecture cannot be the result of random accidental

processes. Now we can grasp the tremendous import of Baba's saying: "It is the same entity that underlies the entire Universe." The Upanishads declare thus: "For fear of Him the Sun burns and the wind blows!" It is the same Supreme Intelligence that controls the fusion of atoms releasing tremendous energy in the Sun, without which life would be impossible in this Planet. Baba makes the distant star our kinsman! We share the same hydrogen atoms that occurs in the distant star and also in the cells of our body or in the water we drink. We are all part and parcel of this Manifestation, the Universe!

Man's present troubles arise because of his mistake in thinking that his intelligence is personal; this leads him to selfishness and possessiveness. But this is a wrong notion. If only he could remember constantly that his Intelligence is but a ray of the Supreme Intelligence that governs the Universe, he could feel one with the Cosmic Process or Easwara, and also view this entire drama of life as a witness. Baba reminds: "God is shining announcing Himself through you. He is expressing Himself through every thought, word and deed that emanates from you"; "Who granted you the chance, the intelligence, the success? The Lord. You are helpless without Him. He chose, He prompted. He executes." This realisation should also help man to accept gracefully and gratefully the inevitability of the body's death and decay! The realisation that we are part and parcel of all creation then should also lead to his creative activity not being motivated from possessive feelings which lead to grief and misery. With this attitude he should be able to view so called "disasters" with greater equanimity and detachment. Baba says: "Man has to manipulate Nature, live in Nature, live by Nature, always dedicating his activity to the further glory of God, resigning himself to the worshipful activity, unconcerned with the fruits of his activity for they are in the hands of God; leave the rest to God!"

It is childish and immature to grieve and blame God over the death of son or daughter. It is foolish to weep over the loss of property or wealth. Baba says: "The needle runs over the phonograph record and causes the music to play. The record is inert matter. When the mind (the needle) contacts Nature, the song of joy-grief is heard. The fault lies not in Nature, nor in the mind, but in the contact! Keep aloof detached—then there is no reaction at all. That is the path to mental peace!" It is irrational to fear God or the devil; He is concerned neither with reward nor punishment. We reward ourselves; we punish ourselves. Baba says: "God is not involved in either rewards or punishments. He only re-flects, re-sounds and re-acts. He is the Eternal Unaffected Witness! You decide your own fate." Elsewhere He has explained: "God has no will or want. He does not confer or withhold. He is the eternal witness. He is like the Postman who is unconcerned with the contents of the letter, that he hands over to the addresses! A letter might communicate victory, another defeat; you receive what you have worked for. Do good and have good, in return; be bad and accept the bad that comes back to you. That is the law and there is really no help or hindrance."

Baba has said: "God too is shaped by human imagination, inclination and intellect into various forms, grand or grotesque, frightening or charming. Man erects these images, and pours out before them his fears, fancies, desires, dreads and dreams. He accepts them as masters, comrades, teachers as the moment dictates. But whatever man may do with God, God is unaffected. He is Gold which subsists in and through all the jewels"; "He is in you and it is He who has prompted you to project Him into the outer world, as this idol or that image to listen to your outpourings and give you peace"; "Really speaking you are He; not this body which you are

carrying with you, like the snail, loaded with its own house, the shell! When the fascination for the body goes, the light of the God within will illumine your thoughts, words and deeds.”

When this state is achieved, no longer do we become subject to the vagaries of the mind goading us to indulge in possessive feelings. Then we will realise that our Creativity is part of a Cosmic Process, in fact Easwara creating in and through us! We are actually co-sharers in the Cosmic Process! Our Intelligence will then be in tune and merge with the Universal Intelligence; this is Samadhi! When this feeling is constant and steady it is Sahaja Samadhi! Thereafter we will be aware all the time that our individual activity emanates from the Cosmic Intelligence!

Only then will we be able to "liberate" ourselves from the dualities of pain and pleasure, sorrow and joy, inevitable when we think that our activity is related to and limited by our body and mind. We are not the body or the mind! Baba says: "Who am I? I is the most frequently used word; it recurs many times a second in conversation. I said, I saw, I went, I heard, I have this, I am king, I am a ryot, I am child, I am a Pundit, I am tall, I am lean-but who is this I that has those attributes and possessions. The Upanishads declare that I is not the personalised Individual. That is delusion. It is not limited to the body which it inhabits. It is the most universal of categories, it is the Eternal, Absolute, the Param-atma. It is the Omnipresent Universal Consciousness—Sat-Chit-Ananda.”

We will then realise that the wealth we create using the Intelligence which actually emanates from Him, is actually His. Only then will we understand the Truth that all this phenomenal world is pervaded by the Divine; only then will we recognise the wisdom of Baba's advice: "The dog will stop barking at its own shadow in the stream, when it knows that it is not another dog, but is only itself. All are shadows, and so whom are we to hate and whom are we to prefer? That is the attitude of the wise. Give up attachment, give up entanglements Tyaga, or renunciation that alone can grant freedom, say the Vedas. Renounce the idea of being separate, see in all beings yourself and yourself in all beings. That is the highest renunciation, the renunciation of the sense of ego, which makes you cling to this temporary habitation, this bundle of bone and flesh, this shell with a Name and Form.”

In the entire creation, only Man is endowed with this Intelligence to be conscious of the fact that he is part and parcel of the Cosmic Process. This awareness should help him to become free from the agitations of the mind. This is liberation, Moksha or Mukti. Baba says: "When you know yourself as yourself you are liberated, that is Moksha. Moksha is not a Five-starred Hotel or a De-luxe Tourist Home. It is not a special suburb of Select Souls; it is not a closed monopoly of expert Sadhakas. Liberation is just the awareness of your reality and the rejection of all contrary conceptions. It is just the awareness, Truth, the falling off of the scales of delusion from the eyes. Like the Godavari losing its form, its name and form, aptitudes and attitudes, you are no more separate, particular, individualised.”

Jivan-mukti is thus the constant feeling that we are one with the all pervading Supreme Consciousness; to obtain this sustained feeling, we need a rational approach. Without the use of the Chitta-shakti, the power of Intelligence, man cannot hope to liberate himself. Baba says: "Use the stick of intelligence and throw it at the problem of you and the world. That will yield fruit.” Science, which initially started attempting to understand the phenomenal world through a

rational approach, was inevitably led to speculate on the Basis of all this creation. It has also reached the same conclusion intuited by Bharat's Sages and Seers, that the Basis is the all pervasive Supreme Intelligence or Consciousness and that the Phenomenal World is also an expression of that Ultimate Reality cognised as such on a level of observation conditioned by our senses. Sakara and Nirakara, the formful and the formless are actually two levels of observation rather than two different things! Thus modern science also leads ultimately to the same understanding of the Reality!

If a mere intellectual understanding or rational cognition that we are part of this Cosmic Process and that our Intelligence is part of the Supreme Consciousness were enough to attain Liberation, then every scientist would be a Sage! The truth is far from it. This is possible only by purifying the impulses which should lead us to a constant remembrance that the body and the senses are only instruments for the creativity motivated by Intelligence. Baba says "Recognising the immanence of the Divine, one has to dedicate all acts to the Divine. What is the act, when you analyse it deep enough? It is the manipulation of the Divine by the Divine, for the sake of the Divine through the skill endowed by the Divine; there is no I or mine in it, except the Universal I and the Divine My."

Such an understanding of ourselves in relation to the world, will lead us to expand ourselves and envelope the whole universe through love. We will realise that individual Intelligence is but a ray emanating from the same Source, the Supreme; differences in the nature of the bodies and the related tendencies, will become less valid and important.

Together with the rational approach to understanding the Reality, we must carry out spiritual exercises which lead to eliminating the domineering influence of the senses. Baba says: "The first step is the control of the senses, the second is the control of the emotions and impulses. The third is the mastery of balance and equipoise, the next is the regulation of breathing and movement of the vital airs, the next is the prevention of outer influences from deviating the mind, the next is one-pointed attention on one's own progress, and then we come to real Dhyana or meditation in one's real Reality, which easily leads to its realisation in Samadhi"; "Daya Dama Dana—these are the three qualities that have to be cultivated by man: Daya: Compassion to curb the Asuric tendencies and Dana: charity and Dama: to hold in check the greed that is natural to man"; "If you seek to transform yourself into Madhawa, you have to pour the mind in the fire of Jnana; the mind can be melted only after it has been strewn into pieces by means of various acts like Seva, Sankirtan, Tapa, Dhyana, all sharp with the edge of renunciation."

Baba reminds man that his destiny is to attain this Atmic Vision: "Man has not come into this world to strut about for a while on the stage, consuming food and gaily gallivanting. Man comes into the world so that he may bask in the Presence of God, through the exercise of Love and the cultivation of Love. The earth is a great enterprise, a busy factory, where the product is Love. By means of Sadhana it is possible to produce Love and export it to millions and millions of people, in need of it. The more it is shared the deeper it becomes, the sweeter its taste, and the vaster the joy. By means of Love, one can approach God and stay in His Presence, for God is Love and when one lives in Love, he is living in God."

We may conclude this essay by also attempting to understand the Avatar through this rational approach. The Avatar is the Reality embodied in Human form. Baba has often said that He is God; we are also Gods. The difference is that Baba is conscious that He is God; we are under the illusion that we are mere men, because of the strong inherited tendencies of the many lives which have contaminated the `soul'. He has said often that His body also is like a bubble and that it too will fade away as other bodies. The main difference is that His "Intelligence" is the Supreme Intelligence. Easwara is only an aspect of the immanent Reality, known as the Parabrahman. Baba's Power's of "creation" which we term "miracles" can be explained by the fact that in Him creation is instantaneous with his Sankalpa; in a mere human being it takes several indirect steps, such as mentally conceiving the idol, and removing the extra stone through effort. It is as if the entire act was telescoped, without the several intermediate steps. Raynor C. Johnson in his book `Imprisoned Splendours' says "Just as man's highest creative achievements are at present indirect—embodied in art, sculpture, and architecture, with all their beauties of line and form, rhythm and colour—it may well be that the world of Nature, wholly or in part, is the direct creation of higher intelligence and higher creative minds than ours (p. 398). Explaining His deep knowledge of each one of our past and present, He says that he is not trying to read our mind and that He is within our heart. This is the all-pervasive Supreme Intelligence which manifests in each of us as Intelligence and it is not difficult to conceive that the Avatar's "Mind" is the Universal consciousness! Awareness of past and the future is natural to such a Mind.

Let us close with this historic Divine declaration of Baba, which we can now understand on the basis of the rational approach outlined in this essay: "I eat as you do, move about as you do, talk in your language, and behave as you can recognise and understand for YOUR sake—not for My sake! I turn you towards the Divine, winning your confidence, your love, your submission, by being among you, as one of yourselves, one whom you can see, listen to, speak to, touch and treat with reverence and devotion. My plan is to transmute you into seekers of Truth (Sathya-anweshakas). I am present everywhere at all times; my will must prevail over every obstacle; I am aware of the past, present and future, of your inner most thought and carefully guarded secrets. I am *Sarvantaryami*, *Sarva Saktha* and *Sarvajna*. Nevertheless, I do not manifest these powers in any capricious manner or for mere display. For I am an example and an inspiration; whatever I do or omit to do. My life is a commentary on My Message."

I am in you, and for you; you are in Me and for Me. Even so, I have an urge to tell you a little about Me and to guide you. I am not won by adulation; or lost by denunciation. I am won by Truth, Genuineness and Sincerity. I have come wearing this human apparel for upholding Truth, the Truth of all of you. I am the Truth of truths; the Truth in all truths. This Sai Form bears the Name, Truth. You may ask, why has Truth come on earth in human form? To plant in man's heart the yearning for Truth, to place man on the road to Truth, to help man reach the Goal, Truth, by instruction and final Illumination.

—Baba

When Beauty was Being

The experience was unique. It appositely happened at Prasanthi Nilayam, where the extra-ordinary, is ordinary the supernatural, natural.

It was around 7 O' Clock, on the evening of January 27, 1974. It must have been an exhausting, exasperating day for Swami, if only He were not Swami. That morning, He started granting audience around 9-30, and the interviews lasted until 12-20 P.M. Since the *Bhajan* at the Nilayam is rounded off by Swami whenever He is physically present there, we had an unusual spell of 80 minutes-long *Bhajan* before He came to the Hall and ended the session.

I wondered at His marvellous freshness, when He came out after granting interviews for nearly three long hours. And, I knew, in the `interviews', it is He who does all the talking and that too, in a strained muffled voice so that others do not hear. Moreover He knows the minds of each and every one of the interviewed, and the majority of those minds are sure to reveal an abundance of black spots, or, only a few bright spots in a black circle. An atmosphere which is bound to depress most of us!

What happened in the evening was even more astonishing. He began the interviews as early as 3-45. Again, it was a marathon session, extending to near 7 O' Clock. Thus, on that particular day, He had talked for nearly six hours, with people suffering from physical and mental maladies. It was not only talking; He gave them the balm of His Benediction. What astounding energy! Enters the Swami into the *Bhajan* Hall, vivacious as the Ganga, and lithely ascends the Dais to sit with a hop on the silver chair. O, What a sight! There sits Nishkama Karma, in pristine freshness and joy, utterly untouched by strain or tedium ...Five hundred throats sing in unison: "Sundara Rupa, Sri Sai Deva": (Lord Sai, of Charming Form)....

I feel the thrill all through me. `Sundara Rupa!' Yes. How beautiful! How very beautiful! Breath-taking beauty; Breath-giving Beauty! The breath of the I is suspended and the breath gets near the Breath of *Life* itself. How am I to describe that experience of being face to Face with Beauty? There was, it must be stated, the Face to be looked at and a face looking at It. But, the notion of separateness was very thin. Shedding their smallness, my eyes were slaking their thirst avidly at the Sundara Rupa before them. They were wide and un-winking, and experiencing the immenseness of His Beauty. My eyes did not allow my ears to listen any further to the *Bhajan*.

As we came out of the Hall, I told my friends, "It does not matter if He does not grant me the interview this time. It does not matter even if He leaves Prasanthi Nilayam, this moment. I am filled up." And, believe it or not, when we woke upon the morn, to hear that Swami had left Parthi!It made no change; the indelible impress and the irrepressible aroma of the Superb Darshan were pulsating in my core.

Even now, four months later, that Darshan continues to baffle analysis and beggar description. The trailing cadences of the actual experience are still sweetly resonant, within. O, It was Beauty, sui generic. It was the Beauty of Beauty, itself.

I must say that I have been blessed to drown my heart in the flood of Beauty many a time before January 27, 1974, when I looked at the setting sun, or the billows of the sea, or a

mountain cliff or a moon-lit scene. I have seen the beauty of Peace on the face of Anandamayi. I have seen the beauty of Purity on the face of the Sage of Kanchi.

Speaking of the physical beauty of the human form, I have seen many, far more 'handsome' than Swami. But, what was it that elevated the beauty that evening, above the holy beauty of sea and mountain of sun and moon, and placed it along with the consumingly Divine Beauty of, say, the entrancing Idol of Kamakshi at Kanchi, or of the Nataraj at Chidambaram, or Balaji at Tirupati? The Beauty was identical with Truth and Goodness. It proved Keats right: "Beauty is Truth; Truth, Beauty." And Sappho too, who wrote, "What is beautiful is Good." Our own see-err experienced the coalescence of this Trinity of Truth, Beauty and Goodness, when they proclaimed that God is Sathyam, Sivam, Sundaram. It is not the beauty of God; but, Beauty that is God. So, it is identical with Being, with the Self. I am ever grateful that Swami did the supreme miracle that evening, of maintaining a thin line of separateness between the seen Face and the seeing face, so that I could taste the 'nectar to my fill.

It is now clear to me, why the Shakti (the Potency) of Brahman is named Tripura-sundari; I now understand, why God is called Pra-nava, 'Pra' is that which is most primeval; 'nava' is that which is newest. Pranava means that Time cannot exhaust or extinguish Its freshness. In the words of Tagore, It is chira-nutana; eternally new.

How I wish that the Rishi of the Saundarya Marga (the Path of Beauty), Tagore had the Darshan on the evening of 27 January, so that we could share his thrill through poems from a new Gitanjali, in place of this pedestrian account in prose.

But, Swami has a partiality for the prattle of His little ones; I know He would lovingly accept these lines, which do not even touch the fringe of the experience He vouchsafed to me.

—R. Ganapati

Why Colleges?

Embodiments of the Pure Atma!

This day is a meeting between the past and the present, as all days are; for, we, in this College, are wishing well for those who have passed out and welcoming those who have just joined the classes. All moments are moments of crisis, when crucial decisions are urgently needed. Life is a struggle between the forces of good and evil, of joy and grief, of success and failure.

The doubt may arise whether, in the face of this perpetual fight, man can ever escape from the bonds of duality. Is it after all a vain hope, or a tantalising prospect is it the sport of God? It is really the inescapable destiny of man, and it is to prepare you for this destiny that this College has been established.

The student who spoke a few minutes ago said that the perusal of a load of books cannot be education. Yes; it has to tend the body, mind and spirit, in addition to the intelligence. It cannot

be confined to the four walls of a building. The Universe is a University for those who care to watch and learn. Awareness is life; so, the farmer, the carpenter, the smith, the sculptor, the merchant, all have the need to be aware of their duties and responsibilities, their skills and standards, which education must foster and fix.

Education is no book-worm affair; the process must include the study and appreciation of all trades, professions and guilds. It must encourage the acceptance of the good and the rejection of the bad. Spiritual education is not a distinct and separate discipline; it is part and parcel of all types and levels of education. In fact, it is the very foundation on which a lasting edifice can be built. Secular and spiritual education are like the two halves in the seeds of pulses; the germ that sprouts is in between; it is fed by both.

The feminine is the foundation on which a peaceful and happy world is to be raised. When women are true and brave, kind and compassionate, virtuous and pious, the world can have an era of peace and joy. Youth has the capacity to grow into strong straight Sadhakas, who can scale the heights of spiritual adventure; but, it has no proper guidance. On the other hand, youth has evil temptation, evil example and evil advice are spread around on all sides, most attractively.

There are two evil sirens that entice them into futility and frivolity, diverting them along the paths of ruin. One of them is called, Dame Cinema and the other is named, Dame Novel. The film contaminates and corrupts; it pollutes young and innocent minds; it teaches crime, violence and greed; it destroys the basic human-ness and degrades it into bestiality. Even ochre-robed monks are steadily dragged down to sin by its insidious influence.

Dame Novel too corrupts equally, with salacious pictures of bestiality. They both lead the young away into the wilderness of vice. They do not know, nor do they care to know, how to shape the young into self-reliant self-confident, self-knowing citizens. The vital need is ignored.

There was a student once who held out his palm before a palmist for scrutiny. He examined the lines with care and announced that he would advance very much in education. The student was very happy. He predicted that he would amass large sum of money; the student's joy knew no bounds. He declared that the lines indicated fame along with fortune. This filled the cup of joy to the brim; it could hold no more. Then, the palmist announced that the 'life-line' was short and it ended abruptly, quite quick! The student fell in a faint.

Education too has no life-line, now; it does not ensure the skills and attitudes essential to live a life of peace and contentment. It is not 'full', nor does it function in a comprehensive manner, taking all the needs and goals into its orbit. It is satisfied now with cramming books, reproducing from memory, research into trivialities and awarding degrees which mean nothing special. And, its products parade their purposelessness, shouting that God is dead and that virtue is a superstition. How can man exist without God, or God, apart from man? There can be no garland without the string that runs through the flowers; there can be no men without the inner kinship that God ensures for each. He is the Brahmasutra—the Brahman String, invisible, but, inevitable.

Millions of rupees have been spent on this College, not with a desire to add one more to the hundreds of colleges scattered all over the country, but, to train a generation of women who know how to live the ideals treasured in Bharatiya Culture and who will uphold the dignity and destiny of womanhood.

The reason which prompted the establishment of this college is: the need for women who as mothers will foster the expansion of love to include fellow-beings everywhere. The first step for this expansion is the home, where you must revere and please the parents who gave you this chance .to live and learn. If you ill-treat them or inflict grief on their minds, how can you ever gladden others by service and understanding? Expansion is the keynote of education. You know that when a balloon is blown, it bursts and the air inside it merges with the vast limitless expanse outside. Your love too must fill your home and your society, and finally, burst even those bonds and become world-wide. A drop of water held in the palm is soon evaporated; it is too much alone. But, drop it into the sea; it survives as a part of the sea. It assumes the name and the taste, the majesty and might of the sea!

Cultivate Love; sow the seeds of love in all hearts. Shower Love on the desert sands, let the green shoots, the lovely flowers, the luscious fruits, the sweet harvest of nectar be earned by mankind. That is My Wish, My Mission, My Vow. When you earn a degree and go out of this College, do not ask, "What is the country giving me?" ask rather, "Now, what can I give my country?"

Students, when they find distress or despair anywhere, do not now set about to reduce it. They pour oil on the flames and relish the damage they cause! My aim in starting and running this College is to train here the ideal mother, the ideal sister and the ideal wife, the ideal woman, in fact. The curriculum which is followed in order to prepare you for the University Examination is just a bait to draw you into this higher curriculum of character formation and development of Universal Love. The acquisition of a few bits of information without the transformation that is necessary is, for you, a matter of pride, though there is very little justification for the same.

The earth is but a speck in the vast Cosmos; India is a minute portion of that dot; Anantapur is a microscopic particle therein and you are one of the many lakhs of human beings living here. What reason have you to thrust your pride on the attention of others and feel superior?

Women students and teachers have to be ever vigilant that they do not attract the eyes and tongues of young men by their dress, movements, laughter, or behaviour. Be a little behind the times, it does not matter; it is better than adopting fashions that outrage the traditions and conventions of this country and its culture.

Do not bring dishonour to your parents or disappoint them by acting contrary to their dearest plans. The reverence that you offer at the feet of your parents is, let me assure you, reverence that reaches Me. There are some special lessons and items laid down in this College to instil into you faith and spiritual discipline. Teachers and students must show special interest in them, for they are the unique features of this College, designed for your good and the good of the country. Teachers too must be examples of, sincerity, simplicity and mutual co-operation and love; they too must evince interest in prayers, and other items of spiritual importance.

Baba: Anantapur, Sathya Sai College for Women: 25/7/75

Baba's Gift Through Cowan

Let us take a look into the 1971 Cowan episode and the Grace He showered.

Cowan depicts: "While in the Connemara Hotel at Madras, two days after I arrived, I was taken very sick with pneumonia and was in bed. As I gasped for breath, suddenly all the body struggle was over, and I died. I found myself very calm, in a state of wonderful bliss and the Lord Sai Baba was by my side. Even though my body was laid on the bed, dead, my mind kept working throughout the entire period of time, until Baba brought me back...."

In between his death and resurrection, he was taken to a very large hall there were hundreds of people milling around. "The records were brought into the hall.... arm-loads of scrolls. They seemed to be in different languages. As they were read, Baba interpreted them. In the beginning they told me of countries that have not existed for thousands of years and I could not recall them. When they reached King David, the reading of my lives became more exciting. I could hardly believe how great I apparently was, in each life that followed. As they continued reading my lives, it seemed what really counted was 'my motives and character'—as I stood for outstanding peace; spirituality and political activity. I do not remember all the names; but, I am included in almost all the history books of the world, from the beginning of time. As 'I' incarnated, in the different countries. 'I' carried out my mission, which was peace and spirituality."

Baba later on explained to Cowan that every person will not have a similar experience. Unfortunately, each of us do not know what we had been doing since the time of creation.

Lord Krishna declared: "I am the Atman, conscious in the heart of all life; and I am also the beginning, the middle and the end of life." "I am the father and mother of this world, I maintain it and purify it; I am the goal of knowledge, I am OM, and the three Vedas." Jesus Christ said: "Before Abraham was made I... I am the Way, and the Truth and the Life." Lord Buddha said: "Tread the path you will reach the Goal (Enlightenment)"—"Many with deflected perception cannot know see ME." "I am not the first Buddha who came upon earth, nor shall I be the Mast."

They, and all elevated souls we know, were the Effulgence of the Atma, manifested in different ages and needs for different to remove Dharma-Glani, to dispel ignorance which obstructed man's efforts to establish his identity with the Source, the Sat, out of which he sprang.

And what is this I? Not a single part of our body can claim the I-entity, though each of us has continuity of I-awareness. When we keep associating this awareness with our physique and physical environments, our inner-eye remains eclipsed to see know the ONE.

Let us try to have the glimpse of That I and use our best efforts, through Baba's Grace and try to immerse ourselves in IT.

Baba dispels our ignorance "I was one, I became Three; the Three became Five and many." With this point, we go to the scriptures: We find: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God" or "There was NADA, the Sound out of which evolved Wind, Fire, Water etc." Ultimately, our mind whirls when we think of the inconceivably long time it took to become

gross. In "Dhyana Vahini" Baba says: "Consider the condition of this world hundreds of thousands of years ago. On one side was the fiery lava which poured forth from the volcanoes and crevices that scarred the surface of the earth. The flood of destruction descended on all sides and spread fear and death in the regions around, as if the end of everything had come. On another side, the scarcely noticeable molecules of living matter, the microscopic amoeba floated on the waters or clung to the crevices among the rocks keeping the spark of life safe and well protected... At that time, surely no one would have believed that the future was with the amoeba or the animalcule. Who could have foreseen that these minute specks of life—that speck of Chaitanya or Life-Consciousness would win through, nevertheless. In process of time, by the sheer force of the Life-Principle it embodied, it blossomed into unimaginable Jivis encased in varieties of form and with Antahkarana (Manas, Buddhi, Ahamkara and Chitta) the human being was processed—this being began to evolve into goodness and strength of character, into art and music; into song and dance, into scholarship and Sadhana and martyrdom, into sainthood and even replicas of Godhead! And, particularly, to this being with Manas, the urge to know this Ultimate Source by the Chit was given. To see the All-Pervaded-Atma (Vishnu), or the Ever Effulgent (Siva) and to get ourselves immersed in IT, became man's primary effort, which, however, was distracted by Ahamkara. That is why in Cowan's experience (and forces) what really counted was the 'motives and character' with which he kept on incarnating in different countries from the beginning. Baba says, "Death means the fading out of the I-consciousness. Re-birth happens when I-consciousness comes again. Ahamkara is born, Ahamkara dies, that is all."

So when we try to find out the I-ness that flowed down from the subtle stage to the Gross stage, we get deflected, because our polluted Antahkarana veils us from IT. That is why Lord Krishna said to Arjuna:

"You and I have been many births Arjuna,
I can recall them all, but you cannot.
Though birthless and unchangeable and Supreme,
I am born through my Maya, defying the laws of Nature."

When He was in Shirdi, Baba expounded who this ME (or I) is, in His Nectar-like words: "You need not go far or anywhere in search of ME. Barring your name and form, there exists in you, as well as in all being, a sense of Being or Consciousness of Existence. That is Myself. Knowing this, you see ME inside yourself, as well as in all beings. If you practise this, you will realize all pervasiveness and thus attain oneness with ME." Swami Abhedananda explains: "You can never get rid of this sense of 'I' unless you attain to the highest liberation or the freedom of soul and become one with God, when the individuality of a Sadhaka reaches infinity." Baba provides the solution: "Maya is only the Buddhi as affected by everything, as warped and twisted by the impressions of everything. Therefore, the Chaitanya which is unaffected by Maya, upon which the world has failed to produce any impression; that Chaitanya is Ishwara."

But when we consider the magnitude of mental and physical difficulties, we often lose courage. Because IT is a state of Qualitylessness. Beyond Time, Space and Form. Lord Krishna declared: "Giving up all Dharmas, come unto ME alone for refuge; I shall free thee from all sins; grieve not."

Here again Baba, the Loving Avatar and Jagad Guru extends His hand saying—Lord Krishna said "Sarva Dharman parithyajya" (Come to MY refuge) and not "Sarva Karmam parithyajya." Man who exists in Time, Action and Cause can never hope to grasp IT. When you transcend the three Gunas, you too attain THAT, but, not till then. So, without spending time in such un-understandable problems, engage yourself in the things you urgently need, traversing path which will lead you to the Goal. Do not go to extremes; be steady; be patient."

"There are some who try to be qualityless; but they achieve only living death. This is the result of unreasoned haste in spiritual discipline. Though becoming quality-less is ultimately needed there should be no hurry to reach the goal; even though a person may have the ardour, it very often leads to dilemmas, which many solve by means of suicide! First, one must accumulate wealth of character, knowing that one cannot exist without activity; so, one must of necessity act through good qualities. One must put down all desires and become free from it, while trying to act. The mind filled with good qualities will help in this process, for it will bear other's prosperity gladly. It will give up doing injury. It will not only suffer, it will also pardon. It will remain unruffled by lust, greed, anger and conceit. From such a mind will flow an uninterrupted stream of LOVE."

Lastly, in the place of Ahamkara, we have been advised by Baba to instal any FORM of the Satwic-I, in order to transcend the Bhavasagara, the cycle of birth and death.

O Lord! Bless us to have the courage, and understanding and help us maintain the correct virtuous action in our daily doing.

—*Dorjelingpa*

Baba—The Embodiment of Divine Love

—*S. D. Khera*

When we gaze at Baba, His sparkling radiations which emanate from Him, are penetrating. His wonderful smiles are pregnant with immensity of Divine love and His Majestic looks with sparkling radiant eyes enchants, and captivates one, and then one desires, "to gaze and gaze on His most beautiful Face And in that gaze desires to lose himself"

Baba is not only Goodness and Truth but also is Embodiment of Infinite Divine Love. In his presence one feels security and inner peace.

Do we know Him when we look at him? Behold a mystery—these eyes, these lips, this crown of hair, see we Him in them—no, we would see Him, beyond these, and penetrate to the Tatwa behind this Form and know that this body too is but a dress worn for a purpose.

The sun can be revealed only to the eyes and not to the mouth or the ear; in like manner Baba is only revealed to the pure and pious ones. Baba is Love and Love is Baba, there is no difference between Baba and Love. This Divine Love is one with Him, so it is also Omnipresent and Infinite as Baba Himself when this is true, then nothing in this world, nay, even the smallest atom could not be devoid of this heavenly ELIXIR. So love is Infinite and is perfect heaven, it is peace, it is Bliss, it is light and might. Every minutest thing has an ocean of Divine love in itself. It sounds a queer logic that the limited has the capacity of having the unlimited in itself. One may think it to be impossible.

Take for instance, one of the minutest thing in this world, say a poppy seed or mustard seed. Sow it and let it germinate, out of this original seed, thereby we get hundreds of such tiny seeds in time. Take one from these and sow it again, and we get hundred fold again. What does this imply? Wonder of wonder what an infinite potentiality, what an infinite power; latent in the seed form. This is the "Infinite" in the "finite". This "Infinity" remains the same even in the quintillionth descendant of the primary seed. This 'Infinity' within is unchangeable and is immutable.

Thus we see that every atom, from the ultimate point of view of Reality are not what they appear and seem but are illusory and false. Hence these shapes and forms dwindle into nothing.

A question naturally arises, when Divine Love is Omnipresent, then why do we see hatred, jealousy, enmity, varieties and diversities in this world?

It is ones faulty vision to see variety and diversity as such. It is Love itself which assumes all these various forms of variety and diversity, just as water assumes the various shapes and forms such as tide, wave, bubble, whirlpool, ice, vapour, etc. These various names and forms of water do not possess any reality. For Reality always remains the same. These various formations of water are nothing but water and are nonexistent in water. It is love itself which assumes these various diverse forms, just to give us the pleasure to enjoy the Bliss of Unity which would not have been possible unless we were conscious of duality.

When Love is alone, it is no longer love, it is some thing which is inexpressible by words and thought. It is something which exists, but cannot be explained; we never say "One" unless we feel the existence of "Two". It is "Two" which gives the feeling and pleasure of "One." So the inexpressible love manifests to the Jiva. In like manner the All PERVADING Love exists only in the Universe and nothing else but Divine Love.

It is only the superficial human outlook which makes one feel and see hatred, jealousy, enmity and various other myriad things in the world. But when we go deep into these things and peep behind the veil which is cast upon us by the EGO, we vividly perceive that in the reality of this world, there is nothing but Divine Love which pervades everywhere, even in the minutest atom, and all the rest is merely illusion. One should not be illusioned by the magic of all these disturbing elements (produced by our ignorance) and these masks (names and forms). Gold cannot undergo any change, in spite of the change in forms of ornaments into which it may be cast, one or another. It is gold at every moment and in every form. The form comes and goes, appears and disappears, and so are unreal.

Drop of water cannot wound a person, but an ice block can do so. When we heat the ice, it becomes water again; in like manner, when we remove the Solidity of Ego, everything will look like an Image of Love. People say how can we love others, when their response for love is false? It is wrong to think so, we have to love for the sake of love. We should not assume the role of a trader, to expect for love, love in return. Love is its own reward. It is lack of love which creates the feelings of imperfection for this world in our minds.

It is when we stand on this earth and look at life, we find injustice and chaos everywhere, but when we rise above it and look below, then it appears that it is all just and perfect.

Atharva Veda says in XII, 3, 17 "EKAM JYOTI BAHUDA VIBHATI." The One Light manifests It-self in various forms, and in Geeta X VII-30.

"YO MAM PASYATI SARVATRA SARVAM CA MAYI PASYATI" He who sees ME everywhere and sees all in ME.

Baba has emphasised several times on us that we are all Divine and should revere all others as Divine. In His recent speech at Delhi He said, "God appears before man as a blind beggar, an idiot, a leper, a child, a decrepit old man, criminal or a mad man. You must see even behind the veils, the Divine Embodiment of Love, Power and Wisdom and see Sai and worship HIM through Seva."

O; Baba We Implore Thee to kindly

Give us thy love, for
Love is a gift which only Thou must give;
And without love, life is empty, vain
As shadows on the wall,
Tis love that snaps the shackles of sin;
Tis love that burns all base desires;
Tis love that melts the "ego" quick
And remove the only barrier
That stands between us and Thee"

His Onam Gift to me

Although I was reluctant leave home during the Onam Holidays, I now feel I am really fortunate in being able to attend the 9-days Intensive Course in Spirituality and Indian Culture, Organised by the Kerala State Sathya Sai Organisation. I could get here a glimpse of the greatness of India, in the field of spirituality and Cultural advance. The moving Spirit behind this course was, as we could experience, Bhagavan Baba Himself. Days before Mr. Kasturi brought

His Message, we heard it in our hearts. Baba has shown by His Teachings and Activities that Spirituality is concerned very much with the world and with the peace and happiness of mankind. He has come amidst us in India to awaken this slumbering people and revitalise them with the Message of Vedanta.

During my years at school and college-a period of 12 years so far-I have had no opportunity to learn anything about religion or the powers and possibilities of the spirit of man. I believe this has resulted in the most disturbing factor in the lives of young people today, namely, waywardness and fickle mindedness. Character is an integrated system of traits, and behaviour patterns that enables one, to reach, despite obstacles, in a relatively consistent way, in relation to moral issues. Character formation may be understood as the problem of forming morally good habits with such firmness that they are never broken, even under the most adverse circumstances. To attain this objective, youth needs impressive and inspiring models and examples. These nine days have helped me to contact some examples and models, and be inspired by them.

I had some clear instruction also on the aim of human life. I now know that it is the realisation of the Self, as a wave of the vast sea of Divine Love, Power, Wisdom and Joy. I am also convinced that the best way to become aware of the Divinity is the cultivation of discipline, duty and devotion. Devotion to God must express itself as service to those in whom God resides, especially the distressed, the diseased and the disabled.

The lectures on the Unity of Religions given by Prof. Rajaratnam regarding multiplicity of religions and the conflicts between those who seek God through them. I am now convinced that carping at others for their being different from us is a sign of ignorance. If we practise any Sadhana sincerely and regularly, we can reach the highest Truth, whatever be the label of the religion we profess. We got in this place, during the lectures, all the intricate principles of Sadhana condensed into ambrosial epigrams by Baba, explained to us by persons whose faith in Baba inspired us very much.

Another aspect I observed was the `humility' of learned scholars and venerable elders. This Satsang we got in plenty, and the sloka where Sankaracharya speaks of Satsang leading to the wisdom that develops detachment was proved by our experience. Frequent contact with true devotees and elders and the earnest, selfless Seva Dal members who treated us so kindly, provided us with Satsang and helped us to learn many lessons in brotherhood and intelligent service.

The Pranava recitation and the Suprabhatam song gave a joyous start for each day and we shall not drop this habit we have learnt to love. In spite of the rain, the Nagarsankirtan was good spiritual experience; it was indeed heartening to note the joy we were able to spread on the faces of people who came out of their doors to greet us with thankful faces. The lectures on the Gita, the Bhagavata and the Ramayana will draw us to Baba's books, Gita Vahini, Bhagavata Vahini and the Ramakatha Rasavahini. We did not know these ancient texts had so much relevance even today.

In short, this camp has revolutionised my outlook and attitude. I came as a defective car, as Baba is said to have told the Summer Camp students at Brindavan; I am leaving 'in good running

condition' along the road He has marked out for the youth of the land. May Baba shower His choicest Blessings on us, correcting our steps in our journey towards the attainment of the Sat-chit-ananda that He is.

—*Camper, Ernakulam*

Light Unto Light

Bless me, with concentration on the Goal
Bless me, that, never again shall I
to hear a single syllable or tune
Of Siren's maya song. May I
attune manas and buddhi, only to the Formless
and, your Form.

Grant Grace that I may merge
in Holy Silence, your servant-child
Transformed into a particle of All.

Keep Your child, a prisoner within Your heart!
Never let me let You go.
Be You bound within my heart
until this purified pellucid drop
is merged within
the Ocean of Light.

Dip me into Your Ocean of Light, my Lord!
Submerge me in Your Ocean of Love!
Till every body-cell in joyous gratitude
Dissolves—shining, singing—Into the Ocean of Mercy
—You? Yes.... I AM.... I.

—*Anon*

Dedication inspires the body, mind and speech. If what you speak is not approved by the mind, if what is felt in the mind is not whole-heartedly put into action, then it becomes sheer hypocrisy. Be convinced that the doer, the deed and the doing are all He; be devoted to Him, rather than to riches, wife and children.

—*Baba*

On, to Gokulam

As you approach Prasanthi Nilayam by road, the first sign of Bhagavan's Love that you can see is the `Gokulam', a vast expanse of green, dotted with flowering trees and patches of well-kept gardens, with clean hygienic well-lit sheds for cows and buffaloes. Baba had taken personal care to prepare the lay-out, to plan the sheds, to build the houses for the persons who tend the cattle and store the feed and to beautify the area in order that it may serve as an attractive park for visitors to the Prasanthi Nilayam.

Baba selected the Janmashtami Festival, when the world celebrates the Advent of the Avatar, Lord Sri Krishna, as the Day on which the Gokulam will be inaugurated. That Festival fell on 29th August. And, thousands from all parts of India converged on Prasanthi Nilayam, as they do every year, to be blessed by the Holy Darshan of Sai Krishna on that sacred day.

But, on account of unprecedentedly heavy downpour of rain in the area, several tanks breached and the waters streamed into the Chitravati River, which roared down, in over-full floods, damaging vast areas on both banks for miles, threatening the holy village of Puttaparthi! But, Baba stepped on, to the top terrace of the East Prasanthi Block of flats, and casting His Divine Look at the merciless sheets of water, He waved His Hand, commanding the flood to recede, and *it did*.

Breaches on the railway lines and the roads forced the visitors to resort to long detours, but, every one was able to reach the Nilayam, in time. On the Sacred Day, the cows and calves, of the Gosala at Prasanthi Nilayam were decorated with auspicious marks, painted in ceremonial colours, clothed in gorgeous costumes, jingles were attached to their feet; bells were hung on their necks and garlands were put around their necks. Each one, reminded one of Kamadhenu, described as the denizen of heaven.

There were more than 30 of them, belonging to various far-famed breeds, lovingly chosen and welcomed by Bhagavan Himself into His Gosala, and fed and fostered by Him, as in ages gone by on the banks of the Yamuna. Some members of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Dal and many students of the Sri Sathya Sai College, Brindavan, Kadugodi, led the cows and the calves (which were also sharers in decoration and costume brilliance), in procession, as the Gopa Balas did during the days of Balagopala in Brindavan.

Pipers and drummers were the first in the line that marched; behind them, Saigeeta the Elephant led the proud pompous Gokul cows and after them, the frisky frolicsome, mooing calves, and about 20 gigantic but calm buffaloes with wondering eyes; after them the girl students from the Sri Sathya Sai College for women, Anantapur, singing Bhajans, in chorus; then came the Bhajan parties, women and men, from the Prasanthi Nilayam; and, after them, Bhagavan also moved in His car, as the cynosure of all eyes and as the Krishna of the Kali Age come to tend the good and the godly.

Bhagavan had invited Sri K. Chakravarthi, I. A. S., the Collector of the Anantapur District to formally inaugurate the `Gokulam'. Bhagavan had the Collector in the same car, and when He reached the gaily decorated gate of the new Gokulam, He requested the Collector to cut the tape and declare the Gokulam open. He then took the Collector and the devotees round the sheds and when the cattle had all come into their new quarters, He proceeded to the holy spot which was

the heart of the area—the rocky promontory, on which a charming marble idol of Lord Krishna playing the flute, with the captivating smile and the mischievous twinkle in the eye had been installed; Baba unveiled the Idol—and a wave of joy rolled into and over the six thousand devoted hearts that had gathered there. Even the cows must have thrilled at the sight of their age-old Guardian and God. In fact, a life-size image of a cow and calf was also there: the cow lost in the contemplation of the lotus face of the Cowherd God, Gopala and filling its heart with the nectarine music of the Flute He is playing before her, and the calf deriving the same divine ecstasy through the milk flowing from her udder.

It was indeed a page from the Bhagavata unrolling before our eyes, events that had happened when Krishna played on Yamuna sands. Baba distributed sweets to the vast gathering as a token of Grace, and returned to the Nilayam, about 10-30 A. M.

Baba was busy in the forenoon and afternoon hours, directing various Committees charged with different duties in connection with the World Conference and other items of the Programme for celebrating the Golden Jubilee of the Advent of the Avatar.

At 4-30 P. M., thousands of devotees gathered at the Poornachandra Auditorium, to listen to Bhagavan's Janmashtami Message.

Sri Kasturi first addressed the gathering, on the significance of Day's events. When he said that the Bhagavata can be understood and believed in, now that Baba is proving it true, it struck a chord of appreciation in every heart. Referring to the disastrous floods in the Chitravati that threatened to wipe Puttappathi off the map, Sri Kasturi related the story of Indra's anger at Gokula where as Indra said, 'a talkative boy priding himself on his powers and scholarship was misleading the people and condemning their ancient practices', and of Indra's futile attempt to sink the village in the rains he sent.

Kasturi quoted instances when Baba had stopped monsoon rains by a mere verbal order or by the raising of the palm, on which there was no visible Govardhan Hill as in the Dwapara Yuga! He described the plight of the villagers during the floods that Indra ventured to send on the 26th, and also, how Baba went on top of the East Prasanthi Block of Flats to observe the fury of the waters before commanding it to subside. The humiliated Indra brought all the Gods and the Divine Cow, Kamadhenu, into Gokulam and crowned Krishna as Govinda, the Lord of Gods, presiding over all Gods or Souls or Jivas (Go means Soul). Kasturi said, quoting from the Bhagavata, that it was Govinda Abhishek Day.

He quoted from the Bhagavata a verse (X-19/2) which said that Krishna, like the Sai Krishna now, tended not only cows but also, buffaloes. Then, he explained in detail another verse, X-15/2) which describes how Krishna, on Gopalshtami Day, moved behind the cows and calves into Brindavan which was shining in lovely colours as a result of the blossoming of flowers, himself playing on the flute and his playmates singing his glory. He concluded by saying that Bhagavan confined faith in Krishna Avatar.

Then, a student, Raghu Iyer, of the I B. Com. Class of the Sri Sathya Sai College, Brindavan, spoke on the Love and affection that the Sai Krishna is showering on the students and how He has won for Himself lasting loyalty and worship of the youth of the land.

Bhagavan then blessed the devotees with His Divine Discourse. He said, "The one seed that is planted in the soil manifests itself soon as leaves, branches, trunk, flowers and fruits—each distinct from the other but all contributing to the growth and health of the other. So too, the Will of the One has transformed itself into this multifarious world. All manifestation involves vibration, movement, and that results in sound, however slight or unheard. The very first and the most universal sound is OM, the Pranava. The Vedas are only an elaboration of the mystery that is OM. That is why the Pranava is called Veda-sara, the core of the Vedas, their essence. And, the sound of the Flute, the Venu-nada, is nothing but Vedanada the sound of the Vedas, the call of the Vedas, the message of the Vedas. That is the reason why it was so magnetic, so attractive to those who heard it.

The name Krishna that the sage Garga gave was significant, because he knew that the child of Vasudeva and Devaki would save the world by His Leelas. The name Krishna has three meanings—one who draws people's minds, one who promotes the cultivation of the field that lies in the hearts of men and who is the source of perpetual Joy. Krishna was Anandaswarup and Premaswarup—His Ananda being Sat-chit-ananda and therefore, inexhaustible and free. Whether He was in the tense atmosphere of a battlefield just before the clash of arms when the fate of every one was hanging by a thread on the whims of destiny, or in the midst of the holocaust of war when blood flowed full and free, or in the calm aftermath of battle when the participants were quiet and at rest, Krishna was so happy and unaffected that He spoke in song (Gita).

The Birthdays of Krishna, Rama or Swami has to be celebrated by the reverential practice of the teachings, rather than by feasting or fasting. The entry into Gokulam that was celebrated this morning is also symbolic. Gokulam is the refuge, not only for cows but, for all living beings, for, Go means soul, and all living beings have souls. Man too is an animal like the cow, and he has still in him the traits of animal nature. So, he has also to be led into Gokulam.

God is known as Pashupati, the Lord of Animals or Animate Beings. He is also known as Go-pala, the Protector and Guardian of Animals or Animate Beings. Both words mean the same, though the former is used by Saivites and the latter by the Vaishnavites Krishna is Premaswarupa. His Flute filled the desert sands of the human heart with the cool waters of Love; thereon, when the seeds of Prema were sown, saplings of Prema grew and a rich harvest of Prema was made possible.

Since man is a social being, a product of society and a promoter of social relations, he must develop Prema in order to establish unity and peace. Unless you love another as much as you love yourself, you are committing treason to the Krishna in you; for, the Krishna in you is the same as the Krishna in the others.

The Gopas of the Sathya Sai College led the cows and calves into Gokulam this morning; and the Gopikas of the Anantapur College sang Bhajans all the way. But, whether they follow the

directions and commands of the Krishna whom they adore is known only to me. They do so, only for a day or two, immediately after I reprimand them or, direct them, but, in a short time, they lapse into their old ways. You who are not students are not any better. Or, many of them, follow the instructions in a wooden mechanical manner. If I say, "Do not talk too much," they start showing gestures and indulging in gesticulations, when even their parents ask them something or when the teacher puts them some questions! You must have general knowledge in order that you can interpret and understand the directions given, and decide how and when you have to follow them, and act.

If you develop Prema and an attitude of worship when you are engaged in work of any kind, you can be examples for the youth of the land. And, provide very good leadership not only for the people of this country, but, for the whole world.

On the 31st, in the morning hours, Bhagavan blessed every one with Vibhuti Prasad, and gave gracious permission to leave for many to leave, since the railway tracks and the roads had been put right and journey was made safe. In the evening, Baba left for Brindavan, Bangalore.

—Ed.

If one is able to control his senses, even if he is a blind person, he will reach the destination of Moksha or attain liberation. On the other hand, if one's senses are not controlled, even if he is the best of men, he will not be able to reach the divine destination.

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

69

A Dream of Deliverance

A Rakshasi (demoness) named Trijata was one of the warders of Sita; she was deeply attached to the Lotus Feet of Rama; she was a pious devotee, who had both worldly wisdom and spiritual experience. She spoke to her companions keeping watch over Sita, "Comrades! Last night, I had a dream, which I must relate to you. But, first, let us serve and revere Sita and win her grace. For, listen to the story that revealed itself to me in my dream. A monkey entered our Lanka, slaughtered the Rakshasas and set the city on fire! Ravana had no clothes on; he was riding, of all animals, a donkey; and moving fast in the southerly direction. And, his head, I noticed, was shaven close. Besides, I found that his arms were severed from the body. Vibhishana was crowned the emperor of Lanka. Throughout the length and breadth of the land, the Name of Rama was resounding. Then, Rama sent for Sita.

Sisters of the Rakshasa clan! Take note. I never get dreams. I haven't seen any so far. So, if I dream at all, I know it will certainly come true; it will happen just as I see in the dream. Moreover, the realisation, in actual fact, of this dream will not take long; things must happen just

as I dreamt, within four or five days." The Rakshasa women were amazed at this revelation; they forth-with prostrated at the feet of Sita and silently resumed their usual routine duties.

Seeing the behaviour of Trijata, Sita addressed her, "Trijata! Rama Himself must have sent you here to be one of this group that is around me. Truly, it is because there are a few women like you in this Lanka that unfortunate persons like me are able to sustain our chastity and virtue. Or else, what will be the fate of women like me? You heard, didn't you, the expressions Ravana used just now? He has given a month's respite. If Rama does not come within that month, I, or, rather, this body, will be cut to pieces and it will be plucked and eaten by vultures and crows. Being the consort of Rama, I can never tolerate that horrid fate for this body. Tell me some plan through which I can get rid of this body sooner."

Hanuman was hearing these words from the branch of the tree; he was overcome by sorrow, when Sita spoke in this strain of despair. At this, Trijata fell at Sita's Feet, and assured her, "Mother! Do not lose hope. Rama is no ordinary being. His might and majesty are unequalled in this world and all other worlds. It will ever be so. You are certain to be saved by him. He will arrive very soon and hold your hand in his. Do not lose courage." She consoled Sita by her loving words and left for home.

The Ring

Availing himself of this chance, Hanuman jumped from his perch to a lower branch; he dropped right before Sita the ring that had been given by Rama; it fell shining like a flame of purest ray. And, he kept on repeating "Rama! Rama" in ecstatic bliss.

When her eyes fell upon the ring, Sita was astonished much at what she saw. "Is this true, or, am I dreaming? Can it be true? How can this golden ring worn on the golden finger of my Lord be found in Lanka? Is this Rakshasa magic or mere hallucination? No. I should not hesitate any longer, even after recognising it as my Lord's, to take it with my hand. It will be a sin if I refrain from handling it. So saying, she took it and placed it on her eyes in reverence.

Tears of gratitude flowed from her eyes. "Rama! Are you granting me your Darshan, the joy of your presence through this ring?" she said and raised her head. There she saw a small monkey sitting on a branch of the tree and reciting in deep devotion, "Rama, Rama, Rama," continuously. In a flash, she remembered the incidents in Trijata's dream as related by her. "Ah! Good days seem to be fast approaching. For ten long months, I have not heard the name of Rama pronounced in this Lanka. This day, I am able to see a living being reciting that holy name. I also received the dearly loved ring of my Lord," she exulted. She could not keep her joyful excitement down.

Sita, who had not talked to any stranger for long, looked at the monkey-form and addressed it thus: "O monkey! Who are you? Wherefrom is this ring?" She could not put full trust in the monkey, for, she had been deceived for months by the tricks of impersonation which the Rakshasas could easily indulge in. She interrogated the monkey in various ways in order to verify his credentials. Off and on, she would ask the monkey about the welfare of Rama and at the very thought of His being in the forest alone, tears would flow profusely from her eyes. Sita was swung alternately between joy and grief. Hanuman watched her plight; he could not keep

away from her the bond of love and loyalty that was holding him on to Rama. He related the dynastic story of Rama and His exploits, as well as his own story until he met Rama. When she listened to that story, she felt as happy as when Rama stood before her; she could picture Rama standing beside her at Ayodhya and in the forest retreats; she felt so thrilled that she forgot herself and her condition.

Soon, she recovered consciousness and knew where she was. She said, "O Monkey! I am glad you told me all this; but, let me ask one question: How were you able to enter into this astutely guarded city, in spite of your being only a weak little monkey? How could you escape being caught by these Rakshasas and succeed in spotting out this place and coming to me?"

Hanuman replied, "Mother! What skill and strength have I? I am the servant of Rama, His slave. He makes me do everything He wants or likes. Without Him, I cannot survive even a moment. I am a doll in His hands. I play as He pulls the strings; I have no will of my own." Then, Hanuman elaborated on the glory of Rama and manifested his devotion and dedication in the most impressive manner. It was most thrilling to hear those words of his.

Stories to confirm Faith

Rama had told Hanuman for communication to Sita some incidents which no one else knew. He had said, "It may so happen that Sita may not believe your words; she may doubt your genuineness. Then, you can remind her of these events, which are known only to her and me." So, Hanuman began relating those special incidents. "Mother Sita! He has asked me to tell you of the attempts made by the demon Crow to cause injury to you and of His attempts to save you and prevent his attempts and to kill that demon." At this, Sita wept aloud, saying, "Hanuman Why is Rama who was so kind to me then delaying to release me from this torture? Rama is the ocean of mercy. Yes. But, why has He become so hard hearted at my fate? No. No. I am wrong. Rama is the embodiment of compassion. He has to play a role that involves all this apparent hard-heartedness, that is all. Hanuman! You are no ordinary individual! For, Rama will not associate Himself so close with ordinary individuals. Nor will He send His ring with inferior persons. How fortunate you are to be His messenger! Show me once your full stature and form."

Then, Hanuman landed on the ground and stood before Sita with palms folded in adoration. When Sita saw him, growing into a huge and terror-inducing size, she half suspected it to be some demonic trick; she closed her eyes and turned aside!

Realising her fear and the suspicion that was at the bottom of that fear, Hanuman said, "Mother! I am neither Ravana nor anyone of his devilish Rakshasas. I am the faithful servant of the Rama, with the pure sacred body of unequalled splendour. He is the very breath of my existence, believe me, I am speaking the Truth. Guessing that you may not have faith in my being His authentic messenger, He took off His finger this golden ring and placed it in my hands to be given to you. With me, there came Sugriva, Jambavan, Angada and thousands of others of extraordinary- heroism. But, I alone was able to cross the ocean through the Grace of Rama. The others are all on the other shore. We were able to hear from Jatayu and Sabari the story of your having been brought here by this villainous Rakshasa. When we came to know three days ago from Sampathi the news confirming your being here, we felt as happy as when seeing you before

our eyes. Rama and Lakshmana are awaiting my return with the good tidings. If you permit me, I shall get back immediately and communicate to them news about your welfare."

Sita pleaded, "Hanuman! I do not know whether you will be back at this place or when. Please stay for a day more and delight me, by telling me about Rama and Lakshmana." But, since the demonesses gathered around in groups to carry out their separate assignments, Hanuman resumed his miniature size and hopped on to a branch of the tree.

Mother and Daughter

Sita sat under the tree, ruminating on all that Hanuman had related to her; she derived great delight while doing so, and she cast her eyes showering benediction, on Hanuman sitting on the branch above her head. That day, she had no thirst or hunger; she did not touch the fruits and drinks that the women-guards brought for her; her pathetic condition, hurt the kind heart of Hanuman. She appeared to him as the very picture of misery. Hanuman heard the harsh and sharp-pointed words used by the women guards, and, he gnashed his teeth in anger, for, he could not deal with them as he wished to; Sita had to give him orders what to do.

After some time, Sarama, the wife of Vibhishana and her daughter, Trijata, came to the tree and fell at the feet of Sita sitting disconsolate there under. They enquired about her health. Since they were partial towards her, Sita spoke, to them about how the dream of Trijata had come true, and how, a monkey had actually entered Lanka in accordance with it. Sarama and Trijata showed extreme enthusiasm and excitement when they heard the account of what had happened; they plied Sita with questions, in their eagerness to know all details. Sita showed them the monkey perched on the branch and the Ring it had brought. They both pressed the ring on their eyes in reverend adoration.

Hanuman's hasty proposal

Hanuman was watching for an opportunity to see Sita while alone and very soon he got it. Hanuman jumped to the ground and whispered to Sita "Mother! Do not be anxious and grief-stricken. Sit on my back, and I will transport you in a trice to where Rama and Lakshmana are awaiting news about you." Hanuman pleaded in many ways for the acceptance of this plan. Sita replied, "Hanuman! I am indeed very glad to hear you speak thus. I am sunk and struggling in the sorrow of separation; your sweet words give me solace like a boat on a stormy sea. But, do, you not know that I will never contact a person other than my Lord? How then can a woman such as I sit on your, back; consider that." These words of Sita were a sharp repartee which hit Hanuman in the heart and wounded his pettiness and pride, for having suggested a dishonourable step.

But, Hanuman recovered soon and said, "Mother! Am I not your son? What is wrong when the son carries the mother on his back? What evil consequence can follow from that? He supported his idea with various pleadings and points. In reply, Sita declared, "Hanuman! Of course, for me and for you, the feelings of mother and son is real; but, imagine what the world will think of it. We have to consider that aspect, also haven't we? We must so live that we are ideals for the lives of others. We should not draw upon ourselves by our acts the ridicule, contempt or condemnation of others; no one should point the finger of scorn at us. And, above all, we must derive self-satisfaction, as a result of our acts. When I know I cannot derive it, I will never

attempt such acts. Even if my life departs, I don't need or crave for another's assistance; it is best left alone."

Moreover, my Rama has to destroy this vile demon who tortures me since long; he is the person who has to discharge the responsibility, no one else can. He must come himself into this Lanka, kill this Ravana, and lead this Sita back holding her in His hand-that is the sign of the true hero that He is. That is the sign of genuine valour. Look at this Ravana; he came like a thief in a false form and stole me from my Lord. But, Rama is the embodiment of righteousness; he observes the norms of right behaviour. He honours the spoken word. When news spreads that this Rama sent a monkey and brought away Sita without the knowledge of Ravana, it would be dishonouring his reputation. Getting out of here in the way you suggest will surely be treason against Rama. So, we should not resort to mean stratagems. We should guard the fair name of Rama as our very breath. His fame is the deity we adore in our hearts. We have to preserve it unimpaired by thought, word and deed. Your proposal has not given me any satisfaction for this reason."

Hanuman admired her untarnishable virtue and her steadfast adoration of her Lord, and the loftiness of the ideals she maintained.

Men can bear

He extolled her in his mind and recollected her words in order to draw inspiration there from. He said, "Mother! Pardon me. Since I saw with my own eyes the tortures you are undergoing and the pangs of separation which Rama is suffering, I entertained this idea to take you as quickly as possible to the Lotus Feet of the Lord. Pardon me, if it was wrong," and fell at her feet, again and again, in great remorse.

At this, Sita questioned him many times over, on the condition of Rama and Lakshmana and how they were faring in the forest. "Why worry about men? They can bear any burden of travail. They can bear separation from women with fortitude. Women suffer most, for, it is life of terror for the wives to live apart from their husbands." Hanuman told her, "Mother! Rama and Lakshmana are keeping well, of course; but, do not compare them with ordinary males. It is not fair. Alas! Every moment Rama is spending in thoughts of you and separation from you, and so, He is not paying heed to either thirst or hunger. He does not eat or drink, unless pressed lovingly by Lakshmana to partake of a few fruits or a little drink. I do not remember a single occasion on which Rama drank a gulp of water even, on His own initiative, by Himself. Do not be under the impression that they have forgotten you or are neglecting you."

Lakshmana is spending his time, watching over Rama as the lids guard the eye; he is the breath of the breath of Rama; he is overcome by the agony of separation from you and of witnessing the anguish of his brother; he has become a rock, unaffected by any feeling other than concern for Rama. He is the source of courage and sustenance that is unflinching and full. He has not slept these ten months. Nor has he taken food.

When Hanuman was describing the pathetic condition of the brothers, Sita acted as if she was amazed at the love and affection that Rama had towards her. Again and again, she said, "Yes. You too describe only the misery of the men; what do you know, how can you gauge the sorrows

of women?" She pretended not to believe all that Hanuman related to her! She watched Hanuman and appreciated his wisdom and powers; she recalled the story of how Rama and Hanuman had met and came to be bound in love and loyalty, and derived great joy and content there from. At last, she got firm faith in Hanuman and his mission.

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness

(To be continued)

Sai Family News

Village Service

Under the National Service Scheme, girl students of the Sri Sathya Sai Arts and Science College, Anantapur held a Social Service Camp at Puttaparthi, from August 23 to 31. Bhagavan inaugurated the Camp and blessed the participants. Dr. T. Hemalatha, Chairperson of NSS Camp spoke to the girls on the ideals of Service, emphasised by Bhagavan. The girls did valuable flood relief work, at Puttaparthi; they visited the affected areas in and around Puttaparthi and helped to move the victims to safer places. Bhagavan had arranged to feed and give clothes to about 3000 homeless people; the girls helped in their distribution. Dividing themselves into small groups, they collected data on literacy, supply of food grains through fair price shops, family planning, provision of drinking water and power, and other essential needs of the villages. They led the villagers in cleaning the streets and educated the people on problems of sanitation and infectious diseases. Kottala, Enumalapalli and Brahmanapalli were visited by them and special attention was paid to the maintenance of shops and hotels clean. Miss. C. Sujatha and Miss. B. Sai Mani, Members of the College Staff were in charge of the Camp; they guided the girls in their study and discussions on village problems. Dr. Dakshinamurthy, D.Sc., Special Officer, of the College, said that the Camp benefited the students very much. Dr. Venkataseshiah, Director, NSS, Venkateswara University, to which the College is affiliated, visited the Camp and appreciated the spirit of service that permeated it and the ideals that were being realised through it by the students of the Sri Sathya Sai College.

New York Project

The President of the Sai Baba Meditation Centre, writes that they are planning to build a Temple of all Faiths with sculptured Gopurams and statues brought from India, in the shape of a seven pointed Star. Each of the points will be the shrine for the worship of God as conceived by different faiths. The five major religion, represented on the official symbol of the Sai Organisation will have a shrine or meditation altar for each; the sixth will be a shrine for the Divine, as Mother. And, the seventh point will have installed in its shrine, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Trinidad Letter

Bhagavan's Divine Love is flowing throughout Trinidad as a stream of crystal clear water, quenching the thirst of thousands of people from various races. His is a nectar of Love, Peace and Goodwill which we are experiencing daily, writes S. Mathura, Producer-Announcer, Radio

Trinidad. "The LP Record of Bhagavan's Discourse and Songs which we played on the Programme was welcomed by all. I had to play it again on another Day," he says.

Mid-day Meals

Touched by the fact that more than a hundred students of the Sri Sathya Sai College for Boys at Brindavan, Bangalore are starting from their homes in distant villages to attend College and are therefore without sustenance for hours, Bhagavan has graciously arranged mid-day meals for all of them, from the first day of September this year.

Onam Celebrations

The Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, Kerala State, celebrated this year the holy Kerala Festival of Onam in a new meaningful manner. They arrange a Study Camp for 150 College students and held it successfully for ten days at Ernakulam. It was a well planned Course on Indian Culture and Spirituality, with the boys and girls enthusiastically participating in Bhajan, Nagarsankirtan, and Yoga Classes and imbibing avidly the discourses of eminent exponents. Bhagavan graciously blessed the Campers with His Divine Message. Dr. V. K. Gokak, Prof. G. P. Rajaratnam, Sri. N Kasturi and others spoke to the students. Dr. K. S. Krishnan, D. Sc, Vice-Chancellor, University of Kerala gave the Convocation Address and administered the oath of Love, Light and Service.

—Ed.

Seva Through Banks

Your riches go on diminishing, only when you spend them; but, your term of life goes on diminishing, whether you spend the days well or ill or even when you do neither. So, one has to be aware of this inevitable clipping of the period of stay and spend the days in promoting love co-operation and mutual happiness. You cannot escape society and so you have to take a share in promoting its welfare, by your skills and your outlook. Banks are penetrating even the remotest parts of the country and assisting the needy to rehabilitate themselves. This is a good sign, for, many are saved from anxiety and calamity by the timely help and advice they give.

Banks advance loans, when you have deposits therein; or, when you mortgage the landed or other properties that stand in your name; or, if you have neither, on the strength of the sureties you can offer. This is the rule, even in the Bank of Grace. If you must win Grace, you must have deposited in the Bank of God, good deeds, good thoughts and good words. Or, you must have earned the right to Grace, by such deposits made during previous lives; or, you must have a Guru or Preceptor who will stand surety for your habits, Sadhana, devotion and sense of duty.

Banks are also Service Institutions. They provide the wherewithal for better farming, for village industries and other gainful occupations away from the din of the cities. They rely more on the character and integrity of the clients, in order to lighten your burdens alleviate your troubles and bolster up your self-confidence. The officers there are your best friends and so, whenever you have a plan or a problem, go to them and get their suggestions. They have the experience and the finance, and you can take from them these valuable things.

This Branch of the State Bank of India, now inaugurated in, its new premises has also another great responsibility. Thousands come here from far-off places and the Bank must serve as their best friend, helping them to stay without fear or loss. You can ensure the safety of their documents, jewels or money and thus contribute to the peace that they endure great hardships for. Treat them gently, deal with them softly and be aware of the ideals of service which this Prasanthi Nilayam has been instilling in the hearts of all. The Second World Conference of Sai Devotees which is scheduled for November will bring here thousands who will, in various ways, need your help and guidance. Character and morality are the two sureties you have to demand from your customers; they are two needed in the Bank of Grace also. Develop these two and you are rich. For, you have heavy deposits in God's Bank as well as the State Bank.

—*Baba: 16-8-75*

In one of His Discourses, Bhagavan explained that we should not slip back into the habits we have given up, but that we must march on, along the path of Sadhana we have adopted. He said, "People have many bad habits which they hold dear. They live carelessly. Smoking is bad habit, But, in spite of my cautioning them, they continue to smoke. And, when they are affected by cancer, of the throat and lungs, they run to Swami for succour."

Saying this, he threw a glance and a smile at me. He said, "Do you remember?" I did remember. Four years ago, my husband had a cancerous throat. He had lost his voice completely. He was in great pain. On the fifth day of our stay at Prasanthi Nilayam, Baba called us in. He told us all that had happened during the five months of anxiety and suffering. Then, he assured us, "Swami knows; Swami is ever with you." He stroked the cancerous throat gently with His hand, and said, "It is serious; doctors call it cancer; but, Swami is with you. Nothing will happen to you." My husband spoke (yes; he spoke!) words of gratitude; he was in tears and could not speak any further. Bhagavan laughed. Bhagavan said, "You are all right!" And, he was!

—*Prof. Santha Nair, M. Sc. Bhopal*

Suyoga - Udyoga

Students: Accept my Blessings, which come to you, on Onam Festival. Because I am now immersed in activities that do not allow a moment's break, I do not have the opportunity to talk to you directly and in person.

Sai is always with each of you, wherever you are. Be assured. The problems, of the country can be solved only when the special role of education is recognised and efforts made to realise it. On you, the students, depends the progress or decline of the country. You are the builders of future India; you are as the roots to the tree, the basement for the building. You have to journey longer than the others; so it is not enough if you pore over plenty of books. You must equip yourselves to be the guardians of society and the pillars of the nation. You must fill the consciousness with a sense of responsibility. You have to revive the culture of Bharat; discipline

and the sense of duty have to blossom in you. Do not struggle only for `marks'; try to avoid `remarks'; decide not to get `remarks' on your conduct. You must act as the supporters of peace in the country; you must not, like the uneducated, lose control of yourselves and take part in anti-social activities and destructive incidents. You must shape yourselves as divine messengers of the ideals of intelligent service that is the hall-mark of a good citizen. For, the inner purpose of education is: the transformation of all aspects of life into full strength and joy. It is not the provision of begging bowls called degrees to youth. Jobs are not so fundamental; inner Joy is the important gain. Suyoga is more important than Udyoga. From the menial to the minister, the current cry is for Jobs; Udyoga means really the higher yoga, and it is available for every one at all times.

Education must confer humility; it must transform moral, mental and spiritual fields, and purify thought, word and deed. The educated must gladden the hearts of their parents; when that is done, it bears fruit. Education is for the sake of life, not for earning a living remember.

May you all be earnest and skilled builders of a happy prosperous country; may the anxiety that has enveloped be soon dissolved; may all of you contribute to the establishment of Ananda in all hearts.

*With Blessings, Baba
Message to College Students of Kerala*

The Tidal Wave

There is a passion in the heart of every human being to `SEE' God. This is evident from the way multitudes throng to temples to gain a glimpse of the deity or go on pilgrimage for such Darshan. Many may be just satisfied with the sight of an image of God, but the urge of most is for a Manifestation of the presence of God in their midst. The human soul desires that he should come in flesh and blood before his eyes. Such was the longing of Mira Bai, Sant Kabir and all sages & saints. Man longs to SEE GOD, and carry that Picture forever in his heart as own. A man cannot be satisfied by the philosophical theory that God is omnipresent but invisible, in-expressible and unapproachable. He wants something tangible. The True Bhakta is not content with an Image he can keep on a pedestal or Idol he can lock up in a box. He wants the real experience of God in a living loving encounter.

Swami Vivekananda has said, "GOD understands human failing and incarnates and becomes man to do good to humanity." "Whenever virtue subsides and wickedness prevails I manifest myself to establish virtue, to destroy the evil, to save the good, I come from age to age." Having come as man, He declares, "Fools deride me without knowing my real nature as the Lord of the Universe," such is Lord Krishna's declaration in Gita.

"When the huge tidal wave comes," says Swami Ramakrishna Paramahansa, "all the little brooks and ditches become full to the brim without any effort on their part; so when the

Incarnation comes, a tidal wave of spirituality breaks upon the world and people feel spirituality almost full in their hearts.”

The Omnipresent God of the Universe cannot be seen until He is reflected fully in the Incarnation and partly in the Lamps on earth: the prophets, the sages and the seers.

A personal God is necessary to soothe our hearts; we love to look upon and to pray to the living God walking in our midst, these Gods are dearer and nearer to us than any imaginary Deity, the creation of the imagination of some Poet or Pundit, Whenever extraordinary spiritual power is manifested in human form, we sense that GOD is shining there.

The Absolute cannot be worshiped, so we must worship a Manifestation; Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba as the Incarnation has the Love, Power and Wisdom of God. He is the embodiment of Sathya, Dharma, Shanti and Prema, the four Pillars of Kingdom of God.

What has Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba to offer, to one who is searching hungrily for the sight of a living God? God `Bhagavan' is too holy to meet a mere man face to face. His Glory is too intense to look upon. But that does not prevent God making himself known to man. The wonder of Bhagavan is that He is God, who is physically with us. We can meet Him at Prasanthi Nilayam or Brindavan at Bangalore, or wherever He is on tour. But, to meet Bhagavan it is not necessary to seek Him in any particular place. He is everywhere. He is in your own hearts. Peep in and have His Darshans. Nevertheless, when we do meet Him, that experience is so immediate, so breath-taking and so real. With most people who have not had an opportunity to meet Him in person, a quiet inner voice makes Him real to them, and they can contact Bhagavan through His books. But when you really meet Him, the Light HE emanates is impressive, convincing and real. Whenever Bhagavan does meet with a person HE SPEAKS. The voice of Sai is continually singing in this noisy world. If we do not hear it, it is because we are too distracted and deaf to His flute. Even now Bhagavan is speaking to us, trying to arouse your yearning to know and to see Him, but we are deaf. Bhagavan will reveal Himself to us when He receives our complete surrender at His Blue Lotus Feet.

He has repeatedly promised and said, "Bring your offerings of grief and pain, and doubts, distress and disease. Take in return, the gift of Ananda, I am Anandaswarup. Come! I will not give you up, even when you stay away. For I have come for such as you that do not know the path, or knowing have no faith. If you have the Thirst and Stretch of the palm I shall come (Wherever you are Whatever the time) and give you Amrita Grace.”

—*Prof. G. B. Kanuga*

His Poem

"Brahmanda manthata prabalu chundedi neeku
Aalayambanu amarcha nalaviyaguny?
Koti Surya kiranamula kanthini kaligi metivaina neeku
Pramida deepamu netlu patta galanu?
Ajaharadulakaina andani vaadavu
Neerupukanugona nevariki tharamu?
Sarva Jeevulayandu sancharinchedu neeku
Sariyaina perida saadhyamagune?
Vasudha thelupa chunnadi Sai Baba yanuchu
Itharamainadi nenemi eruganaiya!
Sarvamu neevey yani ninnu sannuthinthu
Maruvakepudu Baba naa manasu theera
Telladainapaalanu nallanaina neelanu viduvanepudu
Punyapapamulu sukhadukhamulu samamani bhavinthu
Prema vedajallu jeyumu mee Leelapaina
Sarva lokaika Sree Puttaparthi Sai."

So wrote Bhagavan in my Autograph Book in the year 1944. It is pregnant with deep meaning. Little did I realise then that I have to chant it daily in front of His Idol installed by Him in His Temple. I now mentally prostrate at His Lotus Feet to unravel its deep suggestions:

"O! Lord, is it possible to limit the limitless. Can you who pervade the whole Universe be confined in a temple! Never can it be possible.

Illumination (Jyoti)

Lights are to illumine objects. You are the very source of all light more effulgent; than crores of Suns shining in all their glory. How can I hold a tiny little lamp before you? Can the very source of Light which illumines everything ever need a light!

Form (Rupa)

You are the Lord of all Lords. The greatest Jnanis failed to comprehend Thy Form! How can anyone find the Form of Formless?

Name (Nama)

You are all-pervasive and there is no object in the Universe without your Presence. Then when you are everything, can I give you the Nameless, a particular name? All over the Earth, mankind acclaims the name of Lord Sai. You and you alone are Supreme. There is nothing other than you.

You are my all. You are in my constant thoughts. Bless me Lord, that I may never forget this. I accept, Lord, all things alike. Be it milk or water, gain or loss, happiness or sorrow, victory or defeat. All Dwandas (the opposites) are alike to me, due to your Grace.

O! Lord of the Universe, Sri Sai of Puttaparthi, Shower Thy Grace on this Leela of yours, to whom there is none but you and you alone. Bless me. Protect me to realise your Reality."

Mother Sai: His maternal nature with Love immense is drawing us like a magnet; those with mothers forget their mothers. To the motherless He fills the gap as the Eternal Mother His miracles and cures are plenty; let us forget them for a while. For, is He not lifting us to the Pinnacle of Ananda in His Prasanthi Abode? That is the greatest miracle. Do us not feel immensely sad to get away from Him?

To the women devotees, Bhagavan says, "this is your Puttina Illu" (your own home, the home where you were born). He will never allow us to leave Parthi on Tuesday or Friday. Hindu daughters will not leave the mother's house those days. He is the mother for us giving us everything we need and making us feel contented by the thought that He is with us, true to His saying "Ventaney, Intaney, Kantaney, kanti rappavaley," I shall guard you like the lids guard the eye I shall be behind you, beside you, before you."

As Father: Like a father with reserve and discipline He trains us, as His children for our day-to-day life, our behaviour with the world outside, and in our studies. To those who have committed a mistake His Silence itself is a punishment. Denial of His glimpse strikes you within and you feel for the unpalatable action you have done! He is moulding the character of many a student silently and shaping their future. The dishonest, corrupt and commercial-minded who flock around Him get corrected unawares. He is shaping the Bharat of Kali Yuga slowly and transforming it to the Bharat of Sathya Yuga.

As Jagat Guru: He is the Centre of all spiritual centres drawing all the Sadhakas to him. He answers and cures through dreams in remote parts of the world! His Amrita droplets accumulate in His pictures without moistening the Paper base! Showers of Vibhuti fall like Ganga. It is the Spiritual Ganga meant for making the undevoted to become devotees, unbelievers to get faith. His Life full of Leelas gives us His Message of Prema. Bhagavan as the "All Knower" handles the Vedas and Prasthanathrayas in His discourses without ever touching those books ever in His life! He never prays or meditates. Mantras are given by Him in dreams. Japamalas of various types are manifested and given to Sadhakas for Japa. Doubts in Sadhana are cleared in visions and by indirect messages. Deeper doubts clear like mists while hearing His words Divine!

As Sai Baba of Shirdi: He is Sai Baba of Shirdi in the form of Sathya Sai of Parthi. In His composition of Life of Sai Baba "Gopala Bala rara." He had composed "Shirdiyandhu neevu бага, chithonthitheevi Sayi; Puttaparthi grama mandu Puttonthi theevi marala; Punyamula kaka rammu Puttaparthi Puranivasa." He has shown His Previous Roopa to many and to me. He gave us Shirdi Sai's Pada Impression with His own sweet little beautiful Lotus Feet! He had identified places of visits and articles He had used as Shirdi Sai, and had recollected and had narrated the direct speeches, incidents of His a Shirdi Sai to the astonishment of old devotees like the Rani of Chincholi who were the devotees of both the Old Rupa and This!

O! Doubtful human mind! Does Sathya Sai gain any additional glory by calling Himself as Shirdi Sai Incarnation? No. His glory only becomes secondary. Why? He can shine as one more of those primary Avatars and there is accommodation for Him in our Bharatiya Dharma! Even the Great Bhakta Hanuman Himself disowned Lord Krishna as the Incarnation of Sri Rama. He believed only when Lord Krishna showed the Rama Roopa!

Here, I recollect an instance that gave a shock and thrill to me when I was a student. One Thursday, I was garlanding the Idol of Shirdi Baba in my Puja room. As I was garlanding, suddenly the cloth which was wound close on the Head of Shirdi Sai shook violently and became the curly haired Head of Sathya Sai! I dropped the garland, with horripilations in my body and perspiring profusely; with tears of Joy and shock I ran out of my Puja Room, calling out for my mother

These 35 years Bhagavan has been protecting me with his Divine Shield. I am neither a Poet nor a great devotee to express my rapture and compose Stotras. Physical tortures, unbearable ailments, vilifying abuses, blackmailing stunts, black magic effects were heaped on me. Just as He helped the Pandavas as boatman in crossing the Rana Nadhi of Mahabharata war He is guiding me on, lifting me from the mire of the ocean of Samsara. True to His own saying "Sree Puttaparthi Nilaya Kaapa dumu Nannu eppudu Karunaakarudu, Caepatti paika lepumu." "Oh Resident of Puttaparthi! The Compassionate One! Guard me ever; raise me by the hand."

O! Lord, make me worthy to receive Thy Immeasurable Raise me at least to the level of devotion of my Father—Loganath—and like him merge me in Thee!

—*Kumari M. L. Leela. M. A.*

Whether it is meditation that you encourage or discourse that you arrange or Bhajan that you organise or worship that you conduct, the object is just cleansing the mind of the tarnish of egoism, greed, hatred, malice, lust and envy. The one quality that you must acquire as a result of all this, is mutual love. That is the sign of the Sai Devotees and also of all the Forms of God.

Journey to the Divine

That evening Baba presented himself much earlier than usual, at a quarter to four. No sooner had he finished his stroll among the two or three thousand people gathered and started back toward the temple than a heavy rain began to fall. People began scurrying for cover, and Elsie Cowan was knocked to the ground. "I feared being trampled," she said later. "Then in the blurred confusion of that moment I looked up and saw a flash of orange and there was Baba smiling peacefully and being all-protective. He helped me up and brought me to shelter and I was thrilled with this sense of protection."

Baba invited Helen Vreeland—a devotee from Santa Barbara, California—along with Elsie and I in for an interview. There was one other person present, an English-speaking woman in her late forties who appeared to be from the Middle East. Obviously in quite a bit of distress, she told Baba that she had two children and pleaded with him for help. She felt unloved and unhappy and worried about the care of the children because of a serious physical illness she had. "I know, I know," Baba said sympathetically. "Feeling unloved is not unusual, it's general now in this world—one must be strong."

He spoke about the importance of character, perseverance and faith. "Emotions come and go: pain is the place between two pleasures, pleasure is the place between two pains—transient always changing. These come and go like waves in the ocean, like a breeze, and one shouldn't pay much attention to them. Remember, you are the unchanging, infinite, Immortal." Everybody is saying, "I want peace"; he continued Peace is like a letter in an envelope. The 'I' of 'I want peace' is the front part of the envelope and the 'want' is the back. The 'peace' itself is the letter inside. Throw away the envelope of 'I' and 'want' and keep the precious letter of peace." He mentioned a number of familiar saying which took on new and deeper meaning. Gesturing expansively from his heart he seemed too full of the bliss he naturally and spontaneously radiated to us. "Most routes to God are circuitous," he said; "like Japa (recitation of the name of God with the aid of a Japamala, similar to use of the rosary) meditation and bhajans. But the direct path is Love. "Start the day with love, spend the day with love, end the day with love: That's the way to God, that is the quickest path." As he said this, he gestured to the suffering women and to all of us as if he were in the heavens soaring in space.

"But, Baba, I am ill. I hurt." was her response.

He nodded softly and gently. "I know: your left side, it cramps; there are glands there."

She was surprised. "Yes, Baba, glands. Yes, it is cramping hard."

"I know, I know," he repeated in his soothing voice. "You don't sleep well at night, worrying this way and that. Your insides are in turmoil; sometimes you pass blood."

"That is right. Baba, that is right." She began to calm and soften with this experience of Baba's omnipresence and omniscience.

"Yes, these eyes are x-rays," he said, smiling. He continued to describe her condition, mentioning specific symptoms which she acknowledged. She kept pleading asking anxiously whether she would recover. "Surely, you will be all right." he answered emphatically. "Don't worry about the body. You are the I that is behind the body, you are eternal."

"But my children, Baba, my health," she persisted. He produced the curative Vibhuti for her and told her to take a little in water at bedtime for three or four nights and she would sleep soundly; her side would start getting better and she would be well again.

It was during this interview that I began to see Baba less in the role of controlling great forces and being able to change history from afar, but more simply, as a manifestation of pure love. One might speculate that Baba's purpose in America is to usher in a spiritual awakening in the West, or to help the chaotic political, social, or economic conditions, or perhaps to do something about the tinder box in the Middle East, or as part of some great design; but when we ask Baba, he smiles sweetly and says, "I am only proposing to do this for Elsie and Walter and to bring happiness."

Baba produced some more Vibhuti for us, and Helen looked filled to the brim with love for him. "You have given me everything, Baba," She said. Hesitantly she asked Baba if she could lay her head on his feet. He consented and stood up. Helen knelt, her face filled with a soft radiant glow, a mist of loving tears in her eyes and slowly and gently pressed her cheek to Baba's feet. She rested there a moment her eyes closed, floating in a state of peace from this contact with the divine. Baba stood quietly, smiling, recognizing the genuineness of Helen's feeling and pleased to grant this heart-felt request. The moment was touching, full of devotion and love.

Elsie gave Baba letters from American devotees and showed him enlarged photographs of the Christ on the cross which he had manifested for Jack Hislop. Talking business, she asked Baba if she could sell the picture and how much she should charge. He smiled. "No, no, I am not interested in the money; don't talk about money with me. Do your duty—it is your business Money comes and goes, morality comes and grows." Again, such sayings take on a deeper meaning in Baba's presence. It is apparent that he really means it when he says that he is not interested in money and does not want to talk about it, that it is a source of a great deal of conflict from which he intends to stay entirely free. At the same time, he understands and accepts its significance in the lives of his devotees. Suddenly He referred to the late Walter Cowan, who is ever with Him, as He has declared.

"Walter and I paid you a visit this morning," he said to Elsie.

"Yes, yes, at six o'clock. I felt so filled."

"No five minutes to six," he corrected her, smiling lovingly, looking again as if he were floating in heaven. Here is an older woman weakened physically, having difficulty seeing and moving about, yet driven with devotion and love—always moving towards Baba. And, she had a vision of Walter and Baba at 6 in the morning. No wonder. She also urged us on, further and faster towards God come as Sai Baba.

Baba helped her up. I recalled a friend telling me before I had met Baba: "He is capable of filling your cup until you simply cannot hold more, and he still continues to give."

The woman with the illness rose to thank Baba. He smiled lovingly at her and began to stir the air with that marvellously acquisitive hand of his. Soon, there it was: a magnificent ring. This was the final touch. She fell into a swoon at Baba's feet, crying "Thank you, thank you." Her change from the agonizing fear at the beginning of the interview to this intense radiance of devotion and love was so overwhelming that my own heart seemed a reservoir of vicarious and personal joy, and I struggled to keep its gates from bursting. Never had I felt this exquisite experience so deeply. Baba showed me in an instant what years of psychiatry could not: the means for igniting this love. Such deep love is born out of the devotional yearning for the journey to the divine.

—*Dr. Sam Sand Weiss*

'OM'—Try to fill every moment with the thought of God in some form or other. Repeat 'SOHAM' with every breath, 'SO' when you take in and 'HAM' when you exhale. 'SO' means 'HE' and 'HAM' means 'I' and when you complete the inhalation and exhalation, feel that 'SO'

.namely the Lord and `HAM' namely 'I' (i.e. You) are one; after a long practice the idea of `HE' and `I' as separate—entities will disappear and there will be no more 'SO' and `HAM'. Those sounds will be reduced to `O' and `M'; that is to say, it will be `OM' or the Pranava. Repeat that sound afterwards with every breath and that will save you from bondage to birth and death and this is the Pranavapasana recommended in Vedas.

My Teacher

—Dr. Devaprasad Bhattacharya, M.A., Ph.D.

The advent of Sri Sathya Sai Baba is a significant event in the spiritual and cultural lore of India. The whole of creation reveals an aim of evolution of consciousness and energy in all aspects and all departments through stages and often by leaps. Sanathana Dharma or the ageless religious heritage of India provides a master key to this evolution which concerns us all directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, Often times Sanathana Dharma is held to be identical with the evolution already referred to. Sai Baba stands for this Sanathana Dharma. The teachings of Sanathana Dharma are as ancient as the hills since they are the basic principles of humanity itself. Truths spiritual are revealed to the seers as much as the scientific laws, truths and properties are perceived by scientists alone.

Sai Baba is a living emblem of Sathya, Dharma, Shanti, and Prema which find their living and perfect embodiment in what we call Sanathana Dharma. If we keep these basic concepts of humanity in our view, questions concerning theism or atheism, pantheism or materialism or asceticism should not perturb us much since there can be no two views as to the benign efficacy of Sathya, Dharma, Shanti and Prema in our existence. We cannot dare even to dream of what life would be without truth, religion, peace and love in the human mind. Religion is not something mysterious or occult and reactionary. Religion is the bond of truth, peace and love which binds all human souls in the composite form of society. Bricks alone cannot make an edifice. There must be cement too. Human beings by themselves cannot build a society without religion which supplies us with the cementing bond of truth, peace and love.

Some dogmatists do not like to attach much importance to miracles. But we are to note-at the very outset, what is baffling and miraculous with us is quite natural or common place with the great souls much lifted higher than our levels. We should not judge everything in terms of the limitations of our own reason. How a wireless telegraphy can operate is known not to a layman but to an expert. Even the Patanjali Philosophy has this to say `asti kascit visesah Pratyak-sikartavya'. There is certainly something to be perceived beyond the bounds of the normal range of knowledge. Miracles are really benignant concessions the Divinity grants for the weak human minds. Sterling traits of character, Psychic manifestation and spiritual evolution enable a man to be conversant with the laws of the miraculous. Sai Baba works wonders, but he is mere interested in the Satwaguna and spiritual evolution of humanity.

Sai Baba's teachings are enshrined in a number of articles and books—especially the seven volumes of Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Prema Vahini, Jnana Vahini, Dhyana Vahini, Prasanthi

Vahini, Dharma Vahini, Sandeha Nivarini, Gita Vahini, Upanishad Vahini, Bhagavata Vahini, etc. His other writings are being published regularly in the pages of Sanathana Sarathi.

In his discourses Sai Baba makes abundant use of the wealth of illustrations, stories and strong evidences which certainly remind one of Sri Ramakrishna or Jesus Christ's style of presentation. They all reveal the basic wisdom and brings it up-to-date. He says, "As life is latent in an egg, the Divine is potentially existent in the Universe. As the hen is present in every portion of an egg so every corner of the Universe is pervaded by the Divine."

"The Divine calls upon all hearts through the enchantment of his flute. Damsels, cowherds and even cows of Vrindavana, utterly oblivious of everything, flocked to the Divine flute player. This Vrindavana is not simply a geographical site to be stopped somewhere. Vrindavana symbolises the eternal here and the entire universe where all men are cowherds and all animals are cows. Krishna moved all hearts through the enchantment of his music." Sai Baba says in an illuminating manner that through Bhakti one can be endowed with Shakti or real energy leading to yukti. Yukti is not an end in itself. It will help stabilise our devotional attachment to the appropriate object. When Bhakti is thus mellowed and carried over through these stages and processes of development Bhakti or devotion merges in to Mukti or liberation. Sai Baba reminds a devotee that Krishna likes Murali of all things. He urges the devotee to be the Murali. The flute player can breathe through the flute only when it is hollow. The Lord of creation can peep and breathe through the devotee only when he is divested of egoism.

There is no meditation if one is always conscious of one's meditation. In a like manner one who is always conscious of the faith one nourishes, can never be stable in faith. When the meditation is automatic, the Sadhaka gets immersed in meditation day in and day out. Meditation must go on along with Japa in order that the imaginary picture is transfigured in to the emotional picture or Bhava-chitram and the Bhava-chitram is mellowed in to the picture of intuition. Perfect faith and surrender can be obtained only through Sadhana. At the initial stage of Sadhana one goes ahead with impulsion of winning an uplift and galloping advancement in one's life. High morals and the perfection of the traits of character certainly needed for obtaining this end. But the next stage is that of the seeker and knower. This is a stage surcharged with actual realities concerning 'this' and 'that'. Finally Samadhi is the supreme stage of the Sadhaka where the bliss of Ananda is intuited by the Sadhaka. The bliss incarnates itself in Samadhi.

Sai Baba points out that there are many as five stages of consciousness- (a) unconscious, (b) Subconscious, (c) Conscious, (d) Super-conscious, (e) the Divine Consciousness, throbbing with Divine existence. As we ascend higher from one stage to another we feel and realise that we are not only human. Matter and consciousness, Jada and Chaitanya are the two factors playing in the universe and are merged in the Divine Consciousness and existence. We find different stages of teachings in the Gita. Gita at the outset asks a man to devote himself to work in the material world. The next task for man is to renounce the desire for fruits of works in the world of mundane pursuits. The Gita then inculcates that religion is the only aim of man and the essence of religion is the realisation of liberation. But even the desire of liberation has to be renounced. But the supreme teaching is 'Surrender totally unto Me'. Different stages of consciousness are brought to perfection as and when the realisation dawns that the Divine is the Supreme will and

is the be all and end all of all that is. So Sai Baba assures that the Divine will do everything for the devotee if the surrender is total and without reserve.

The Divine is all pervasive. The future flashes across the present and the past drops out from the present. The Divine is all-compassing. Thus the present is the Divine. This is the path of knowledge. Finally the road of surrender, love and devotion. I do everything in the name of the Divine. This is not self-surrender or Sharanagati. Total surrender to the Divine is possible only when the unshakeable realisation becomes a permanent feature in life that the Divine is everywhere and the entire expanse of the universe is but the nature of the Divine. One cannot bring about this stage of realisation perforce since this stage is self-revealing and automatic. Faith constitutes the rock-seated foundation and self-surrender is the supreme culmination. The process may be understood as follows. First, dawns the belief in one's own self, then contentment, afterwards dedication of the self and finally the realisation of the self. There may be a number of flowers in a garland, but the thread running through the flowers is one and the same. Bodies may be many but the self-same self permeates all bodies equally.

Worship has to be taken in a very comprehensive way. It is nothing mechanical and ritual or habitual in a conventional manner. Just placing a garland of flowers upon an image on the altar is not worship. Even a gardener who nourishes a plant and helps blossoming a flower is a worshipper, nonetheless. There is a ladder of perfection, so to say, reverence grows out of love. Reverence only can give rise to knowledge and knowledge is really the harbinger of Supreme Devotion. Paramatman dawns only in supreme devotion.

The individual is on a pilgrimage. And for the matter of that one is an alien to the other. Discord and discrepancy are piercing and tormenting. The individual wails over this state of affairs. But the matter is other wise with Sadhakas. The mind is Mathura, heart is Dwaraka and the body is Banaras. That is to say concord and perfect symphony prevail with them. An ass carries only the weight of a bundle of sandalwood but can hardly smell the sweet fragrance. But the elephant does not care the weight and smells the fragrance all the way. Sadhakas can have a fragrance of real truth from a study of the scriptures, Vedas and Upanishads. But those who read the Sastras for the sake of learning or arguments alone are burdened with the weight of arguments and miss the fragrance or truth. There is really no essential chasm of difference between knowledge and devotion.

Prema Ganga

In the Bhagavata there is the `story' of Bhagiratha who prayed intensely for the descent of Ganga to revive the sons of Sagara who were the victims of curse. A famous Kannada Poet, Dattatreya Ramachandra Bendre has composed a powerful poem in which he cries out to Mother Ganga to descend again to revive and rejuvenate the almost dead children of Bharat. Baba the Avatar of the age descended 50 years ago on the holy kartik somvar of 1926 for this very purpose and to establish Dharma and bring back the glory of this great land. Baba has said: "Bharat is celebrated as a holy land, for here the people renounce desire and earn fulfillment. The

saints of this land liberated themselves and lived in joy and peace; they also inspired the common man and sweetened his days with love and faith; unaffected by the Ego and its greed, they skipped the years in joy and lived for over a Century. But, today, on account of the impact of egoistic desires life is becoming shorter and more miserable.” During the 36 years, after He declared that He is Sai Baba incarnated again for the purpose of not only reviving Bharat, but also for rejuvenating the entire Universe, Saiganga is bringing back to life all the peoples of the earth by giving them the amrita of India's ancient wisdom.

When Baba was a mere lad of 20, He wrote to His brother (who was very much worried at the adoration and adulation of all and sundry for Him) about this task for which He has incarnated: "I have a 'Task': to foster all mankind and ensure for all of them lives full of Ananda. I have a 'Vow': To lead all who stray away from the right path, again into goodness and save them. I am attached to a 'Work' that I love: To remove the sufferings of the poor and grant them what they lack. I have a 'reason to be proud', for I rescue all who worship and adore Me, aright. I have My definition of the 'Devotion' I expect: Those devoted to Me have to treat joy and grief, gain and loss with equal fortitude. This means that I will never give up those who attach themselves to Me." That is how Baba clarified the purpose of His Advent way back in 1947! Subsequent events during the past 28 years have gradually unfolded the Grand Design and the Grand Strategy!

Baba defined His Task: to foster all mankind and ensure for all of them lives full of Ananda! What a stupendous Task in which He has been engaged! This task has been accomplished in various ways. He has drawn all mankind as it were into His fold; through His overflowing Love. A small 'Mandir' where He lived and conducted Bhajans later became at the out skirts of the village what looked in 1950 an arduous feat, the construction of Prasanthi Nilayam. The story of the difficulties of transporting the girders, is vividly described in Sathyam Sivam Sundaram (Part D). The throng of eager devotees, sceptics and neutrals has increased thousand-fold over the years, with the publication of His biography. Baba consoled all those who came, took them into the 'private room' for an intimate talk on their lives and problems. To each He whispered, "Why fear when I am here I am in your heart. I am with you; you are not alone. Leave all your problems to Me, I shall take care of them." To a father worried over his son's waywardness, or education, or regarding a daughter's wedding He has taken over the responsibility, and arranged everything! How many have been consoled, how many have recovered their faith, how many have turned a new leaf in that 'Private Room'! The hundreds who have returned from Him, have brought Him with them, in the 'Private room' of their hearts!

But Baba's promise was that His Task is to foster all mankind! In fulfilling this promise, He allowed Sanathana Sarathi to be started in 1958 since when His Message has spread to many. Around 1965 another remarkable phenomenon started all over the world! From Baba's pictures, or from the pictures of other Godheads, Vibhuti started appearing; in some places kumkum, haldi, amrita, honey, started flowing. The devotees were grateful. The sceptics suspected tricks. But everybody wondered! What is the power that acts from such a long distance and creates such wonder to a bewildered humanity? Chits fall from photos answering questions and providing advice! Baba comes in dreams, even on appointed days! A sign, a story, a miracle, these have awakened the dormant interest of hundreds who have ultimately found their refuge at His Lotus Feet in Prasanthi Nilayam. The World Conference in 1958 was a part of this grand strategy! To a

confused misguided world, Baba spoke words of succour; He assured that He had incarnated to lead Humanity to its destiny;

Baba had promised His brother that His task included the whole of Humanity! True to this assurance Baba Himself drew a symbol which has now become the beacon of the Sai movement. Within a blossomed lotus, are the symbols of Hinduism (Om)! Christianity (the Cross), Buddhism (the Wheel), Islam (the Crescent moon and the star) and Zoroastrianism (the Fire). In the centre is the Yoga-danda with the blossoming lotus, representing the various stages of spiritual evolution culminating in the awakening of the Soul, becoming aware of its innate Divinity. He has been repeatedly stressing that all religions are facets of the one truth. The essence of all religions is love and all ultimately lead to the same goal, the goal of recognising the God within.

The Prasanthi Nilayam has become transformed into a Temple for the Living God. The magnificent facade of the Poornachandra Auditorium has all the symbols of the major religions of the world before which will stand a mighty Stupa symbolising the unity of religions. Even inside the Mandiram where there is daily worship and Bhajan, we see the symbols of the major religions. But the most vital expression of this unity is Baba Himself, not the outer symbols seen everywhere. His Divine Love which knows no caste or community, which is all-inclusive, is verily the unfolding of the fulfillment of the task, which includes all humanity!

Baba wrote to His brother that He had a vow! To lead all who stray away from the right path, again into goodness and save them. This is what He has been doing all these years. In the little private room, He has gently admonished the wayward, in that inimitable way in which He and He alone can. A mere twinkle from His eye reveals His knowledge of a cherished secret of which we are ashamed, or a habit which has overpowered us. That twinkle is enough to give us the strength of mind to overcome the habit. How many have given up smoking, drinking, beating their wives and making the family life miserable! How many have surrendered to His all-knowing wisdom, and taken refuge in his all-inclusive compassion. He has saved, as He promised, those who have strayed away from the right path. This is the purpose of the Avatar: To show each one of us what is right and what is wrong, to guide us along the path. He has often declared that He has come to lead Manava to an awareness of His Reality, i.e. Madhava. Baba has been also repeatedly asking us to follow His Life which is a commentary on His Message.

Baba wrote to His brother; "I am attached to a `Work' that I love: To remove the suffering of the poor and grant them what they lack." The story of His life during the past 50 years amplifies this statement. Baba is untiring in His work for the poor. Anybody who has seen Him serving the poor on a day specially ear-marked for feeding them know how kind and considerate He is. The day prior to the feeding, Baba has the entire Prasanthi Nilayam decorated, for as He tells the volunteers, "Your kith and kin will come tomorrow for food. We must make the place beautiful for them!" How many have been helped monetarily, how many have been given food and clothing cannot be counted. He is known to say to those near Him: "Give this money to that fellow standing there near the tree with tears in his eyes. But, put it in an envelope, lest he should be hurt!" What compassion!

We should not think only those who are economically stringent are helped. All of us are in fact poor! We are poor in faith, poor in devotion, poor in spirit, poor in our knowledge of the methods of deriving joy. Baba had assured His brother that He will grant us what we lack. And this is what He has been doing, giving us what we lack, faith, devotion, love and joy. He is showing us the methods of obtaining these. Baba has told devotees, "the giving of Bhakti in exchange for Dukha is the most powerful business of all."

Baba wrote to His brother: "I have a `reason to be proud', for I rescue all who worship and adore Me, aright." On the face of it, it would appear that Baba was advocating only His worship. But this is contrary to the spirit which He has been instilling throughout. The Bhajans are of all godheads, or any godhead. In fact He has often said "Don't limit Me to this Form only!" In the First World Conference of Sri Sathya Sai Organisations, He was explicit when He declared: "This Human Form is one in which every Divine Entity, every Divine Principle, that is to say, all the Names and Forms ascribed by man to God, are manifest." The statement in Telugu was: Sarvadaivathaswaroopamulanu dharinchina Manavaakaarame Ee Aakaramu. "Do not allow doubt to distract you." The key word is "aright" in the statement of Baba. What is important is the sincerity with which we worship, not what figure or godhead we worship. All worship is after all a means to purify ourselves, to elevate ourselves so that we can transcend Name and Form and become aware of the one all pervading Divine Essence.

Baba wrote to His brother: "I have My definition of the Devotion I expect. Those devoted to me have to treat joy and grief, gain and loss with equal fortitude. This means that I will never give up those who attach themselves to Me." This is a most extraordinary definition of Devotion, on the face of it. However, if we examine it carefully, the definition takes on the best meaning as defined by Baba. True devotion implies that we surrender totally to the Lord; we accept that whatever happens to us, good or bad, joy or grief, gain or loss, are His Prasadam. Baba has chided us saying that we are not full-time devotees, but only part-time devotees. Our faith wavers like the pendulum, one moment yes, another, no. Baba does not address the vast concourses which assemble at His feet, "Devotees." He says, "You do not deserve to be called devotees. That is why I address you as Divyatmaswaroopulara, embodiments of the Divine spirit! You are all potentially divine!"

Baba has often explained that joy and grief, loss and gain are all related to our desires. If we obtain what we want, we feel joyful; if we lose what we have we feel grief. In fact joy or grief is in proportion to our expectations or disappointments. The only way to become free from the torment of grief is to recognise that all joy has within it the germs of grief and all grief has within it the seeds of joy. We can escape from their entanglement only if we recognise that it is by overcoming the senses that we can get liberated from the cycle of dualities. To achieve this we must begin with faith in God and in His infinite Wisdom, and accept the limitations of our intellect and accept that He knows what is best for us. This implicit surrender is the hall-mark of Bhakti.

Then comes the assurance, an assurance that Lord Krishna gave a confused Arjuna Surrender to me; I shall liberate you; don't grieve "Giving up all dharmas surrender to Me." In that letter, Baba assures: "I shall never give up those who attach themselves to Me." To Baba's devotees this means that He takes care of them; that He is with them all the time, correcting and

consoling and protecting them. Initially we try to remember Baba's charming Face, His benign Assurance, His bewitching Smile. We try to get attached to Him by remembering Him when we are in trouble. We look at the ring which He materialised from nowhere and inserted gently on our finger. Instead of asking for promotions or transfers, we start accepting that what ever we get is His Prasadam. The "Me" in the sentence actually means, that we start beginning to feel His presence within us, right in our hearts.

That is the Sai-Ganga which has come for reviving Humanity. It is our good fortune to be contemporaries of the Avatar of the Age.

—*Sri Venkatanarayana Murthy*

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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Sita's Reply

Again and again, Hanuman pleaded, "Mother! Why this feeling of separateness? Why spend days and months in agony and pain? Please sit on my back and I shall take you in a trice to the Presence of Rama." Sita noted the anxiety of Hanuman to win his point in spite of the arguments advanced by her from various points of view, moral and spiritual, legal and worldly; she decided therefore to stop further conversation on this score by a sharp repartee. She said, "Hanuman! Are you or are you not one who obeys strictly the commands of Rama?" Hanuman replied, "Yes. I would rather give up my life than go against the commands of Rama or disobey His orders." He banged his chest with his fist in order to lend emphasis to his declaration.

"Well. Consider this. Did Rama command you to seek me out and bring him information about where I am after seeing me, or, did He ask you to bring me with you?" Hanuman was rendered dumb, by this question. He could not continue his pleadings. He said, "Mother! Pardon me. I did not think so deep into the consequences of my proposal. I ask pardon again." From that moment, he never broached that matter.

Taking Leave

Hanuman knew that it was wrong to spend any more time in Lanka. He felt that the sooner he communicated to Rama the welcome news about Sita the better for all concerned. He prayed for permission to leave. She said, "Go. Go safe and soon. Tell Rama to come soon and take me with Him," and shed tears of hope and sorrow. Hanuman was moved by the pathos of the scene. Sadness overwhelmed his brave heart. Hanuman consoled her and said, "Very soon, Mother, Rama will lay siege to this Lanka, with his Vanara (monkey) hordes; he will destroy these Rakshasa forces, rescue you and restore you to Ayodhya. He has given word that He will do so."

But, Sita was inconsolable. She had her doubts. "Hanuman! What is it that you say! Can the monkey hordes fight against and destroy these Rakshasas who have mastered many a mysterious stratagem and subterfuge, and who are themselves much stronger? How can the two brothers, Rama and Lakshmana stand up against these demons and win? Victory over the demons is an

impossible dream. This can end only in my death. Rather than causing the death of so many of you on the battlefield, I would fain breathe my last and save all your lives."

Sita was lamenting thus, while Hanuman interrupted her and said, "Mother! Do not weep. We of the monkey horde, are the bond-slaves of Rama. All of us believe that Rama is our strength and our courage. We take in as our very breath the Name, Rama. We have no other source of life. Therefore, even if each of these Rakshasas increase a thousand fold in devilry, we monkeys can easily destroy them. We can win victory over them in spite of their wiles and wickedness. You are doubting the extent of our strength and skills, since we appear in our wonted forms. Let me show the Form I can assume in battle."

Thus saying, Hanuman rose sky-high, and stood before Sita—a mountain-peak of shining Gold. Sita was astonished at this; she said, "Hanuman! Stop. Stop. Enough. Limit yourself. If the eyes of the Rakshasas fall on you, you may not be able to return to Rama." Sita protested and pleaded with him to assume his old form. Hanuman gave up the terrible form he had converted himself into, and became a quiet little monkey in no time. Hanuman fell at the feet of Sita and turned his steps away. But, the plight of Sita and her anguished face were so deeply imprinted on his heart that his feet would not move away; he turned towards her, for, he could not leave her.

Blow on Blow

While returning to the place where she was, he saw an orchard and plucking some tasty fruits, he ate his fill. He cast aside those that were unripe and the extra ones he had plucked. Sighting this, a Rakshasa guard wanted to frighten him away but Hanuman gave him a blow which felled him to the ground. He ran to the head of the gang of guards; he fled in terror to his superior in office and he in turn approached his master; thus, the news of a monkey rioting in the garden reached the Imperial Ears of Ravana himself

It struck Ravana as an evil omen. He could not restrain his anger at the mischief and the insult. The flames of his ire rose to the skies. He ordered a few hundred Rakshasas to overwhelm and catch the audacious animal. Since they could not succeed in their mission, he sent a few thousand trained and heavily armed soldiers—Rakshasas—into the garden where Hanuman was awaiting their onslaught. Even that formidable force could not harm the monkey or persuade him to move off! Hanuman broke a bit of dry branch from the tree on which he sat and with that tiny weapon which he waved to the recital of Ram, Ram, he warded off every missile that was directed at him.

Seeing this, the Rakshasas wondered who he was. Was he an emissary of the Gods? Or, was he the harbinger of the destruction of Lanka? The defeated heroes returned to camp, filled with premonitions of disaster. They had no courage left to report their discomfiture to their Ruler, Ravana. "You sent on this expedition countless Rakshasas selected for this special assignment; but, we could not achieve the object. When the monkey roared once, hundreds of our men died for sheer fear. The earth shook under our feet. That roar echoed and re-echoed from every mansion in the city. Seeing our plight, our leaders decided to come- to you and report that this is no ordinary foe, and that this presages some evil calamity." This was the statement made before Ravana. He was told the plain fact, without any reservation; if the monkey was allowed to roam about and ruin the land, serious danger was certain to envelope the land.

A Son Sacrificed

At this, Ravana sent his own dear son, Akshaya Kumara, at the head of thousands of seasoned warrior Rakshasas. But Hanuman slaughtered his host in a trice, and Ravana had to mourn the death of his beloved son. The entire land shivered in fear at the news of the death of the Prince and the decimation of his army. People whispered in fear that this was no ordinary monkey, that it must be a Divine Phenomenon, and that it was the terrible avenger for the sin of bringing Sita over to Lanka. Many prayed to Sita in their heart of hearts to deliver Lanka from the monkey, for, they feared it was her vengeance that had taken shape as that strange beast.

Another Son for the fray

Ravana sent word for Meghanada, and commissioned him to destroy this new invader. He, placed at his disposal a huge army of several thousands. Meghanada ascended his chariot and led the heroic army in great pomp. As they marched along, earth and sky were astounded at their might and their angry tread. Their war cry rended the heavens. All who witnessed that pageantry and panoply were struck with wonder and admiration.

Hanuman watched their march and heard their trumpeting with absolute unconcern, he sat unmoved, on a little branch of the spreading tree, and enjoyed the antics of the Rakshasas until they drew near. The soldiers rained arrows on Hanuman from all sides, with one ear-splitting roar, Hanuman jumped down and plucking a giant tree by its roots, he waved it round, beating off the rain of arrows that tried to reach him. The arrows were swept off so fast that when they hit back the Rakshasas who shot them, the impact killed them in such large numbers that very few were left to carry on the fight. Meghanada was felled by a blow; he rolled spouting blood. So, he resolved to resort to the sacred arrow of Brahma that he had with him. He knew that Brahma, the first of the Trinity, had told Ravana that he had to meet his death at the hands of man and monkey. So, he decided to do his best to prevent that calamity. The Brahma-astra was released, with appropriate ritual formulae. Hanuman had great reverence for the weapon that is sanctified by such mantras and dedicated to Brahma. So, he did not counteract it; he reverentially prostrated before it. So, it was easy for Meghanada to bind with the Serpent Rope.

The happy news was immediately carried to Ravana by the exultant Rakshasas. Lakhs of eager faces crowded the streets to see the monkey that had been bound. Hanuman was unaffected by fear or anxiety; he moved calm and collected watching the crowds with an amused smile. At last, he reached the Audience Hall of Ravana.

The courtiers and ministers who were assembled there were aghast at the insulting indifference shown by Hanuman to the display of power and luxury that the Hall contained. Ravana laughed aloud at the absurd figure of the monkey; but the next moment he was overcome by inner fear of impending death. However, the prospect of death did not affect him adversely, since he was a Rakshasa; anger was the over-riding emotion at that time in him.

He asked, "Hey, you monkey! Who are you, really? Whose is the might that you have been exhibiting and using? Why did you destroy this orchard and this park? Though bound, you have no sense of shame; you look around with your head high up. Come. Give me the right answers."

Hanuman had a hearty laugh at his interrogator. He used for his replies a style of speech and a vocabulary which were beyond the understanding of the people who stood around him. But, Ravana, who was an expert in Rhetoric and Grammar, understood him quite well and the dialogue between them appeared to the listeners like a disputation between two intellectual giants.

My Master

Ravana demonstrated before Hanuman several magic feats in order to impress him with his invincibility. He manifested many powers and feats. But, Hanuman remained unmoved. He said, "Ravana! I know your prowess. I have heard that you fight with a thousand arms. I am aware also of your famous fight with Vali. But, what wrong have I done? I was hungry; I plucked a few fruits and ate them. I am a monkey; I plucked a few trees by their roots; it is my nature. I was in my element, my natural habitat, the treetop. Of course, each one has the desire and the determination to safeguard his own life, to protect his own body. Your soldiers are awfully wicked. They hurt me; so, I hurt them, and unable to bear the hurt, they died. I fought with them in order to save myself. The arrow of your son forced me to enter into this bondage. But, I am not trying to deceive you in return. My only desire is to carry out the orders of my Master.

Listen to me, carefully. Give up all sense of personal pride and reputation. Reflect on the grandeur of the clan, the family to which you belong. Remember you are the great grandson of Brahma. You are the grandson of the great Pulastya. You are the son of Visravas. Give up this delusion, of accumulating pomp and power; adore in your heart the Destroyer of fear from the hearts of those devoted to Him, the Crown Jewel of the Ikshvaku Dynasty, the precious Gem of the Raghu Dynasty, Rama! Surrender to Him, take refuge in Him. Even Time shivers in fear before Him. It is not good for you to harbour enmity towards Him.

Listen to me: Place Sita at the Lotus Feet of Rama, and meditate on the Grace that flows from those Feet. Strengthened by that Grace, rule over the state of Lanka forever and ever. Make the glory of your grandfather, Pulastya, reach the far corners of the world, without blemish, so long as the sun and moon illumine the sky. The fair name of your line should not be tarnished by you in the least. Give up your pride and your delusion.

"O Emperor! Rivers taking birth on mountain ranges get flooded in the rainy season and roll furiously along; but, within weeks, they run dry with just a trickle of water. Your power and wealth too will soon dry up and vanish. Adore Rama as the source of power and wealth; they would never get dry; for, He is the inexhaustible spring of peace and prosperity. He is ever full. He won't lose, when you benefit from Him. O Ravana! I am telling you with nothing held back, with an open mind. No one can rescue the unfortunate person who is blinded by hatred towards Him. Accept my advice"

These words of Hanuman were soft and salutary; they were full of wisdom and morality. But, Ravana was not prepared to benefit by the counsel, He said, "Fool! Dare you advise me what to do? Fie on you, fie. Death has drawn near you; or else, you would not have the courage to lecture thus long in my presence. Enough of your prating; keep your mouth shut!"

Hanuman did not obey. He retorted, "Ravana! These, your words spell your doom. Alas! You have become insane. You will know the truth of my diagnosis as time passes. In a few days, you can know to whom Death is drawing near, to you or to me!" When Hanuman spoke thus, in utter fearlessness, with no bounds or limits, Ravana was enraged beyond control. He rose, spouting fire and slapping his thighs in challenge; he roared an order to his henchmen to kill the impertinent monkey. And, everyone rushed to where Hanuman sat, bound in snake ropes.

Wiser Counsel

Just at that moment, Vibhishana, Ravana's Brother entered the Hall, followed by his retinue. He prostrated before his elder brother and said, protestingly, "Master! It is not right to kill an emissary. Rajadharma will not approve the deed. Punish him in any other manner, but, do not pronounce the sentence of death." The ministers of Ravana supported this stand and declared that what he had suggested was the noblest truth. Ravana laughed in scorn at their absurd ideas of right and wrong; still, he climbed down and said, "Well. Mutilate him and send him off."

The ministers gathered in a group to decide on the mutilation. They came to the conclusion that monkeys are proud of their tails and would fain keep them intact long and strong. Some one suggested that the best punishment would be to wind sheets of cloth on the tail, pour oil until it soaks and drips and then set fire to the tail. This idea got unanimous acceptance.

They exulted among themselves at the brilliance of the idea. "The tail-less monkey will proceed to its master and bring him here for avenging the loss. Then, we can witness the manliness of his master and his own might. There was a spate of whispers in the Hall. Hanuman was watching their movements, listening to their confabulations, and laughing within himself all the while. When they had finished he burst into a thunderbolt of laughter! The Rakshasas were enraged all the more by this display of insulting behaviour. They procured cloth and oil and started the process of winding and soaking. But, the more they wound and soaked, the longer grew the tail 1 Miles of cloth and tanks of oil had to be ordered. News of the wonder spread all over the City and crowds of men, women and children ran towards the Hall to witness the miracle.

Meanwhile, bands of musicians led the procession. Crowds began clapping hands. Hanuman was led along the streets with the oil-soaked cloth wound along the whole length of his tail. At last, the Central Square of the City of Lanka was reached. There, before a huge crowd of eager citizens, a burning flame was applied to the tip of Hanuman's tail.

The Trail of the Tail

Suddenly, Hanuman assumed his subtle form, and so the ropes that had bound him became too loose and fell off. He could now assume his natural form and jump about. He rose in one jump on to the top of a golden mansion; he shouted, Rama, Rama, and made the Rakshasas shudder in, fear, for, a strong wind rose from nowhere and blew with uncontrollable speed. Hanuman somersaulted in the air and was beside himself with joy. He jumped from one mansion to another, with the burning tail trailing behind him. And, the tail grew longer and longer. The conflagration swelled in size as he moved from street to street.

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness

(To be continued)

Self-estimates

Here are few 'extracts' from answers to questions, set at the Sri Sathya Sai Pre-Seva Dal Examination held in Bombay on August 31, 1975. These will be of interest to readers and may well serve as inspiration to Seva Dal candidates and their leaders.

For the question "Narrate your views and experience of Bal Vikas and Pre-Seva Dal Courses," one student wrote:

With Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's blessings, I have been able to raise myself from the darkness of the material world to the illumined world of spirituality. I have understood the meaning of the Shanti Mantra, we recite.

That is 'Asatoma Sat Gamaya'

Yes, certainly, I have derived great pleasure in going through the words of spiritual Masters through 'Swadhyaya'. I now understand that knowledge of 'sat' is the real knowledge which is to be realised by me. I have not much interest now in acquiring merely worldly knowledge only.

'Tamasoma Jyotir Gamaya'

I have been raised from the darkness of ignorance to the illumination of knowledge by getting proper education from Pre-Seva Dal classes. Yes, by Baba's Grace I am being led in the divine and glorious path by my elders.

'Mrithyor ma Amrutham Gamaya'

I was anxious to get real 'Vidya' as Bhagavan Baba puts it i.e. to know the true meaning of knowledge which I missed as I did not get a chance in 'Bal Vikas'. But Bhagavan Baba being an ocean of kindness allowed me or rather gave me a golden opportunity to join Pre-Seva Dal course where I imbibed real knowledge worthy of absorption. Death is the ultimate experience of those who pass through the unreal material world: but I have had a glimpse of 'Amrutattwa', the world of immortality, by undergoing the Pre-Seva Dal course. Through swadhyaya, I now know a number of authors who are enlightened souls and in this I feel that Bhagavan's blessings are with me.

As regards 'sadhana', I try to follow the life and teachings of the great saints of India and by Bhagavan's blessings, I am able to do my spiritual sadhana, following their examples in my own humble way.

Meditation, the real key to the kingdom of spiritual experience is the valuable present I got from the Pre-Seva classes. Oh! Really, this grand instrument has brought many changes in me. To be frank, I can do meditation only once a day though I am asked to do twice. I am trying hard to do it twice a day. Regarding the impact of meditation on me, my power of concentration has increased to a great extent. Memory power has also increased. These are but minor gains but the most powerful impact I have had is the feeling that Bhagavan Baba is so kind to me and that really it is He who wakes me up from my sleep at the `Brahmi' hour for my meditation. I pray to Bhagavan Baba to bless me to do my meditation.

The subjects I learnt in Pre-Seva Dal classes have been selected properly for us to enable us to enter into the splendour of spiritual kingdom. The subjects have influenced me so much that I am feeling very happy when I see the power I get through them to understand Bhagavan and such other great Avatars.

Finally, I am very grateful to Almighty Baba for giving me this Real `Vidya' through Pre-Seva Dal "course".

Hear is another student's answer to the same question:

When I first joined the `Pre-Seva Dal' course, I was not sure whether I liked the course of training. I was not convinced though Baba often used to tell us that young people should take interest and involve themselves in spiritual activities. Well, initially I just came, I know not why! And then gradually I got interested. In course of time, my interest increased and I began to believe in many things which I did not believe before. For one thing, Meditation vastly increased my self-confidence.

Gradually the talks started taking hold of me. I tried to practise in daily life some of the things I learnt at the classes and I discovered that love never goes wasted. Like a kindly word, it goes round and round and comes back to you again replenished many fold in intensity. I found real joy in working as such. The feeling of `boredom' which some of my friends said they experienced had no place in my dictionary at all. Faith too works wonders and the example set by our dedicated teachers indeed proved a boon. In short, I'm glad I got the opportunity.

The same question is answered by another student in an emotional manner with a touch of poetry.

"Lo"! The Time has come; The Time has come for my spiritual progress!

What a tremendous influence the 'swaydhaya' and the `sadhana' classes had on me is a matter of personal experience. It is just ineffable. Although I was led astray by the distractions (which were formerly `attractions' to me), yet, Baba was very kind enough to hook me by his fishing rod and close me in his fishing basket. In Bhagavad-Gita, KRISHNA Says: `whoever has a little inclination towards me, although he is not able to rise up, I shall lift him up'. Bhagavan KRISHNA through Baba has exactly implemented his saying by lifting me up to the higher and nobler level.

Bombay city has many glamorous attractions to which any person can be easily drawn away. Like many of my age, I too was vulnerable and susceptible to this, but the excellent follow-up programmes undertaken by the Seva Dal revitalised and changed me every Sunday. I am now a new and a chastened man.

I am reminded in this context of Swami Vivekananda's words

"A boat should be on the water; not the water on the- boat; similarly, A man should be in 'Samsara' not 'Samsara' in man"

Thanks to Pre-Seva Dal classes, I am trying to follow this great saying in my life.

Another saying also comes to my mind

"A man may commit mistakes; but he should progress from every mistake he has committed."

These classes have given me a sense of perception. I have been inculcated the power to discriminate between right and wrong.

Before having a glimpse of spirituality, I was very much influenced by a saying of George Bernard Shaw:

"A philosopher is like a blind man searching for a black cat in a dark room and occasionally crying out 'I have got it; I have got it!'"

But it is only now that I understand what is spiritualism and how useful it is to a man in crossing over the ocean of 'Samsara'—Thanks to the Pre-Seva Dal classes.

In a nutshell, I may say in conclusion that the summer course at Brindavan and the Pre-Seva Dal classes at Dadar have greatly contributed to my progress.

—Ed.

The name of God is the most effective tonic; it will keep off all illness. Do not indulge in Namasmarana as a past time, or a fashion or passing phase or as unpleasant part of an imposed timetable or as a bitter quota to be fulfilled each day. Think it as a Sadhana to be seriously taken up for the purpose of reducing your attachments of fleeting objects, purifying and strengthening you and liberating you from the cycle of birth and death. Hold fast to it as the means of rescuing yourself in every way from the bonds of time and change. It has to become as much as a must, as breathing, as welcome to the tongue as sugar; as essential for happy living as sleep or food or water. Rise every day with the thought of God; go back to bed with the thought of His Glory as enshrined in His Name. Have faith in His Name and repeat it whenever you get the chance.

The Day of Days

During this, the eighteenth year of publication of the Sanathana Sarathi, we are happy beyond words to welcome you to the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the Advent of the Lord, who is the Sarathi (the Charioteer, the Guide, the Guardian, the Inner Motivator, the Real Reality) of every living being which exists, existed and shall exist in the history of the Universe.

The name that He gave to this emissary that brings you every month His message (as delivered by him, directly through the Vahinis or Discourses or Letters, or through the many contributors who communicate their experiences or interpretations, or through the descriptions we give of his Love-showering visits to various regions of his spiritual empire) is very significant and revealing. He named it after himself! The Upanishads declare that each one of us is a chariot with him as charioteer, anxious and eager to hold the reins of the senses (horses) and, drive us safe along the road of worldly lives, to the Goal of Realisation and Liberation.

He declared that the first sixteen years of His career here with us will be mostly spent in juvenile play and sportive pleasantries, though, of course, the main task of instilling faith in God and in the possibility of man recognising Him as his own inner core will be patent to those who care to probe. The next sixteen years, He said, will reveal His uniqueness, His superhuman Power and His universal Love—all drawing out from mankind the responses of awe and wonder. From the age of thirty-two, He said, He will embark upon a continuous programme of Upadesh (Instruction) which will enfold in His Love and Care millions all over the world. Conversations, discussions, discourses, letters, books—all media known to man and many known only to Himself like dream-dialogues, Dhyana-messages, warnings and counsels written on note-paper and dropped from pictures of His in the shrines of persons in far-off homes—were devoted during this period for this central purpose of transforming the minds of man through illumining Instruction. The Sanathana Sarathi has been all these years the devoted vehicle—in twelve different languages—of this Divine Compassion.

When asked a few months ago, whether a new emphasis was imminent, on and after the lapse of a further period of sixteen years, Bhagavan replied, in His characteristically epigrammatic way, "Look at the Prasanthi Nilayam; it is now a Mandir." The implication is, "The residence of the Lord has now been reshaped to reveal its true nature; it is a temple; and so, you can infer that I am standing forth from now on as the Lord Himself, in all My Glory, at the dawn of a new Era of Grace, when the entire mankind will receive from me, not only Joy, and Instruction not only Counsel and Courage, but, the unalloyed Bliss of the Awareness of your Real Reality."

On the occasion of the Golden Jubilee Celebrations, when the World will offer him grateful homage recounting all that He has done and anticipating all that He is in love bound to shower, (not only at Prasanthi Nilayam, but, in whatever other place men gather that day to revere Him and adore Him with other members of the Sai family), each of us has to look back on the decades He has been with us and for us, and examine how far we have followed His footsteps, and how fast.

He has written that He has no anger in him. But, he has confessed that, when his Grace is unused or misused, when his persistent warnings are neglected, when the chances he grants as

profusely for self-improvement and self-correction are not avidly accepted, he feels hurt and he is pained as a mother is hurt at the intransigence of her children. There can be no greater `sin' than the willful disparagement or disobedience of the Lord, especially when he fondles us and fosters us, and is so full of sweetness and softness, while engaged in correcting our 'sins' which he affectionately calls only 'faults, failings and foibles'

This magazine comes to you on this historic Birth Day with a picture of Bhagavan on the Jhoola. When devotees persuaded him to sit on the Jhoola that day, I remember he said, before the vast gathering of 30.000 persons from all over the country, "I do not like this Jhoola at all. Make for Me a Jhoola in your heart, each of you. Let the heart be pure, cleaned of all sensual desires, and entanglements."

"I shall gladly swing in that Jhoola and give you the Ananda of seeing Me in you and of seeing you in Me." That is the lesson, the inspiration, the mantra that one needs, must get from the picture, which is only symbolic of the Jhoola in our heart, the seat in the chariot for the Charioteer (Sarathi) to install himself.

We are indeed fortunate that we are contemporaries of the Avatar. It is not an accident at all that we are so! The poet sang, "Bliss was it in that Dawn to be alive; but, to be young, was very heaven"! To be alive now is to breathe the same fragrant atmosphere; to be able to see, and listen to the sublimest Divine Phenomenon, and to liberate ourselves from the dark chains of egotism with which we have bound ourselves. And, to be young...O, what great things can youth achieve, inspired and instructed by him, the Embodiment of Power, Wisdom and Love!

Come, let us all transform our hearts into Prasanthi Nilayams, so that Bhagavan may install Himself 'therein, and be our Sarathi, until the Goal is reached. Come one, come all, hearken to the Call!

The Master Architect

The task of writing about Baba is never an easy one, because in truth, a personal relationship with Him fosters, not so much an understanding about who and what HE is, as it questions and perhaps clarifies who and what we are.

"My dear ones!" He says, "The true Sadhaka should be like a good farmer. The farmer removes wasteful and wicked thoughts from his heart. The farmer plants, ploughs, waters, sows, manures, and then fills his granary with rich harvest. The Sadhaka plows the heart with good deeds, waters it with love, manures it with faith, plants the saplings of Nama, fences the self with discipline and Satsang and Smaranam, and then, reaps the harvest of Jnana."

But, to watch Baba in the conduct of affairs on a day-to-day basis is to immerse oneself into a world of service. With the overwhelming and Herculean tasks, of administering to the physical and emotional needs of thousands each day, guiding and directing the colleges, the ashram, the

various Samitis and trusts, and most significantly the spiritual needs for all those who thirst and truly reach out, His selfless love searches out and beckons with a beacon.

"Whichever the subject," says He, "whatever the institution, whoever the Guru, the goal is the same. It is like climbing a four-storeyed building: the ground floor being Karma yoga, the next floor Bhakti yoga, and then Jnana yoga and the Vairagya yoga. The mansion can be reached to its full height by degrees of Sadhana. Prema is the motive power of karma yoga, Bhakti yoga and Jnana yoga."

And, in His Presence, there is an ease, a gentle out flowing of love and grace, that, for many, captures the heart with all of the poignancy and pain, with all of the bliss and subtlety of a truly remarkable spiritual experience. It is, as are all spiritual experiences, an affair of the heart, transcending the mind, and for the most part, indescribable.

Baba gave us a message in 1974 from Whitefield, which said, "Where is God? Not in the temples of stone or marble, nor in documents and parchments of the past is the Living Lord. Thy God is in the sphere of work, the field of Duty."

Bhagavan Sathya Sai gently exhorts Sadhakas to be as the farmer and the architect; just as He Himself carefully prepares the soil, and plants the seeds, just as He lays the foundations and tends to its construction. Baba is the master farmer, the Master Architect.

—Steve W. G. AU, Honolulu

On waking, pray every morning of your life; "Oh Lord, I am born now from the womb of sleep. I am determined to carry out all tasks this day as offerings to Thee, with Thee ever present before my mind's eye. Make my words, thoughts and deeds sacred and pure; Let me not inflict pain on any one; let no one inflict pain on me; direct me, guide me, this day." And when you enter the portals of sleep at night, pray, "Oh Lord the tasks of this day, whose burden I placed on you this morning, are over. It was You who made me walk and talk and think and act; I therefore place at Thy Feet all my words, thoughts and deeds. My task is done. Receive me, I am coming back to You." Adopt these as your daily prayers.

—Baba

The One in All

How can one intuit the Great Atma—begininglessness and endlessness, which is of the essence of eternity, universality, and purity, if one cannot recognise the holiest human body, encasing the purest mind, with infinite and inexhaustible powers composed in the form of a living Avatar, bearing the name and form of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba? The appearance of Baba is Sahakara, whereas Himself is Nirakara. Any attempt, even to describe an aspect of the highest divinity, is bound to be a feeble one, because the divinity ascends the human instruments. The mind has to be purified so as to enable it to mirror God. In order to understand or to merge in the great divinity of God, an individual should remain constantly immersed in the thoughts and

teachings as communicated in the discourses of the Divine Baba. An effort should be made to spell them out in words and deeds. In other words, the mind should be so saturated and focused upon His Divinity that the feeling of the objective world apart from Brahman, and a sense of separation from Brahman diminishes and ultimately disappears. On all occasions Baba keeps on reminding us of the oneness of the individual soul and the Super Soul, the reality behind them both being Brahman or Pure Consciousness. The Knowledge of the non-duality is the knowledge of the Reality, and the means for the attainment of liberation.

Some years back the Guru of Gurus, on the auspicious day of Gurupoornima, had in His discourse explained the ideal characteristics required to inhere in persons who claimed to be teachers or disciples. Concluding His discourse, He started that in the ultimate analysis there is neither any guru, and nor any disciple. You are Me and I am You. You can either view all as one, or conceive of nothing apart from the one. If one turns aside from the world, the world and its Creator will vanish together, and the Self alone will remain. God manifests in human form to help us to be less Matter bound, and more Light bound. Bhagavan advises to undertake work, exercising self-control, and making the mind steady, in worship to achieve detachment, Wisdom to achieve light. Baba exhorts us to treat the mind as a servant; it if unchecked, goads you to run after Maya. One should not obey the wavering mind but be its master. Mind should be used not merely to satiate the physical needs but it should be harnessed to mitigate the sum total of the past impressions which chain the humans to the cycle of joy and grief, birth and death. Saints and sinners both worship God, saints out of love, and sinners out of fear. A yogi does a lot but expects little whereas a bhogi does little but expects a lot, because a bhogi revels in the material objects which he likes to own, possess and consume himself; whereas a yogi lives in the bliss of Atma and as such he enjoys sharing the wisdom which he has attained through self realisation. Subtle objects one likes to share and enjoy with others, whereas gross objects one is always jealous to guard for oneself. A beautiful landscape you would like to enjoy with your friends but not a piece of bread if you are hungry. Atma pervades the body, it sees but cannot be seen, hears but cannot be heard, knows but cannot be known, and because we cannot see, hear, or know the Self, we mistake it for the body which can be seen, heard, and known. Thus get lost in the world of inert matter from which only our Sadhana-aspiration and the Divine Grace of the guru can save us.

As long as a man remains ignorant, and under the spell of Maya, the world is near to him, and so are the pairs of opposites, such as good and evil. Therefore worship and devotion enables an aspirant to fix his mind on God and strengthen his power of concentration. Though the worshipper realises in the end that both he and God are non-different, being the manifestations of Brahman, yet as long as he retains even a trace of his ego, the distinction between himself and God holds good, and the latter is to be regarded as the highest reality on the relevant plane. Likewise in the world of name and form a toy lion and a toy sheep though both made of cotton cannot be regarded as identical. God knowingly wears a temporary robe in order to awaken and lead men towards the goal of eternity; whereas men rolling in Maya mistakenly consider the temporary as permanent. Change is not real, because what ever can be changed basically cannot be real.

Bhagavan Baba, the embodiment of Siva Shakti, administers the entire creation. He is the noumena behind the phenomena. The moon cools and radiates light, the sunrises, shines and sets,

the planets revolve, the stars shine in the sky at night. In fact, the dame Prakriti dances to the tune of His Will.

The knower of Brahman, it is stated in our scriptures, becomes Brahman. In order to understand the nature of matter, scientific approach, research, and experimentation are necessary. Likewise, in order to understand Atma which is subtler than the subtlest and devoid of all limitations and characteristics, the seekers have to develop faith and purify their minds by various Sadhanas prescribed by Bhagavan. In the present day world, an organised endeavour is necessary to induct moral fibre and to rehabilitate the spiritual values.

Begawan has been counselling on several auspicious occasions the sanctified message contained in the philosophy of Vedanta in His simple stories, mentioning parables, to huge gatherings as well as to individuals individually, so as to enable the modern mind to grasp the abstract thoughts expressed in our Upanishads for the benefit of mankind. He teaches and practises that the one Atma dwells in all regardless of psychological or geographical frontiers. Spirituality is necessarily secular because it believes in the oneness of the entire creation. It is sheer ignorance to consider secularism to be contrary to spirituality. According to Vedas, every human being has a right to worship God and recite any name of God in a manner chosen by him in conformity with his temperament. Baba advises the performance of duty, discipline, and devotion based on Sathya, Dharma, Shanti and Prema.

Listening to His Divine message, people of all ages, believing in different faiths, have Hocked together at His Lotus Feet so as to learn the international language of heart. Therefore His impact is perceptible not only in all the states of India, but also in many other countries.

Many years back His devotees spontaneously started bhajan mandalis or group singing in the glory of God. Such organised groups and centres have been established in various parts of the country. Since 1967, practically every year an All India Conference of the office bearers of such organisations has been held at different places. Such conferences have been held in the immediate presence of Bhagavan. He has been in these conferences guiding and counselling the groups of individuals emanating from different states. The first World Conference of His devotees was held in Bombay in 1968, and now again it is being held in Prasanthi Nilayam this year on the auspicious occasion of His 50th birthday. As a result of these conferences many other activities have sprung up amongst which is Bal Vikas for the young children, who are related by trained teachers the stories from the various scriptures. In the age group of ten to eighteen there is a pre-Seva Dal Course. From eighteen to thirty proper Seva Dal Courses are held. All these are being conducted practically in every nook and corner of India. There is a separate Mahila Vibhag—ladies wing, also organised particularly to look after the Bal Vitas activities and bhajans. In all states of India under a state president, service organisations, known as Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations have been constituted with a local chairman and a secretary.

Bhagavan has been holding Summer Courses for the students from all over the country during the summer vacations so that the students may supplement their information by a transformation in their character and sense of values. Educationists from various parts of the country are invited to give lectures in these summer courses which have so far been held in Bangalore, and Bhagavan Himself has been addressing the gatherings every evening during the courses. It has

also been planned to hold these courses at state levels. Bhagavan Baba has been laying special emphasis for the right type of education which should be imparted to the younger generations during their impressionable ages. For this very purpose, He has blessed the starting of educational institutions in different parts of the country which will be initiated and run on the basis of His teachings. It is true that man has learnt to some extent the technique of controlling external nature, but he has yet not learnt the technique of controlling his own nature. By disciplining ourselves we can be at peace with ourselves and with our fellow beings, and also ultimately attain the goal of life. A Being—Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba—has become to teach us the method of realising the goal by understanding our ancient view and way of life. It is hoped that through His blessings and guidance, these educational institutions will be able to so shape the children of today that they will be able to improve the destiny of tomorrow.

—*Ratanlal*

The Relevance of the Avatar

During the four hundred years after the emergence of the Renaissance in Europe, a World Culture developed for the first time in History. It brought the intrepid explorers of the West European Nations into the placid waters of the Americas and the ancient lands of the East. The lure for profit and for material pleasure brought the mariners and adventurers to the virgin lands in the New World and the bazaars of the India and China. They discovered the immense profit that awaited them in the slave trade, and so, Western captains penetrated into Africa and committed atrocities against human conscience and Christian morality in the nefarious business of dealing with man as if he was a dumb beast.

This World Culture was variously characterised as a Culture of the Intellect, of Reason, of Science and latterly, as the Culture of Humanism. But, in the perspective of history, it is nothing other than the Culture of Commerce, buying cheap and selling dear. It was a quantitative culture based on the calculation of plus and minus. Vivekananda called it the Vaisya Culture. John Needham has stated that it was the rise of the mercantile class and the spread of its attitude in society that created what is called the Age of Rationalism. It emphasised the importance of measurable phenomena, facts and figures, mathematics and statistics. .

It was the spread of the trader's attitude that created the new experimental philosophy characterised by the search for mathematical methods applied to quantitative regularities. A world of quantity was substituted for a world of quality. But, this Culture flourished on material wealth amassed by exploiting the East and the Far East by the use of glittering merchandise, coupled with cold-blooded subjugation in order to facilitate the opium trade or the slave trade. Such iniquities led to empire building, civilising missions, and the white man's burden. When the nation of `shopkeepers' had become rich and powerful, they sermonised on humanism and humanitarianism.

Some among the advanced nations disapproved the swamping of alien cultures by the flood of the World Culture of Quantitative Values. They spoke of `cultural relativism', by which they meant that each culture has an innate validity for the people whom it has fostered and who have cherished it. Paul Deussen and other Indologists, as well as many anthropologists who studied

the simple satisfied lives of 'primitive groups' hailed this idea, of allowing a variety of cultures to flourish side by side, without allowing one monster culture to swallow all.

This view, if it had prevailed, might have helped India to survive as 'India.' In fact, Gandhiji toiled for Indian Independence, because he knew that free India had something special of her own to offer to the world, rather than jute, iron ore, or engineering goods. But, as Levi-Strauss writes "It is out of a deep feeling of respect toward cultures other than our own that the doctrine of cultural relativism was evolved; and, it now appears, that the doctrine is deemed unacceptable, by the very people on whose behalf it was upheld! Those ethnologists who favour uni-linear evolutionism find unexpected support from people who desire nothing more than to share in the benefits of industrialisation and prefer to look at themselves as 'temporarily backward' (or, developing), rather than permanently different." We in India want to develop as full beneficiaries and promoters of the World Culture of Science and Technology. We have ignored the truth that people may be different and yet, not backward at all.

The world has been fed on science and technology for the last few generations. They have produced a glittering world of newer and newer things and a huge bewildering mass of objective knowledge. But, the culture of commerce has overplayed itself; it is exhausting itself by its own excesses. It has used up natural resources at an alarming rate. It has polluted and poisoned the air we breathe and the water we drink. The study published under the title, 'Limits to Growth' has come as a jolt to technologists who believed the sky was the limit. The reign of reason and rationality is fast ending. Roger Bacon, wrote as early as the thirteenth century, "There are two modes of knowledge, through argument and through experience. Argument brings conclusions and compels us to concede them. But, it does not cause certainty, nor remove doubts in order that the mind may remain at rest, unless this is provided in experience. Science took the word to mean experiment and made the experimenter stand strictly outside the experiment. Experience was taboo; the senses were enthroned and argument, logic, reason—these became the masters."

But, the knowledge has become dry, barren and unsatisfying. Bored with the pragmatism and objectivity, the young people of the West are moving today into an age of myth and irrationality. The dream of total unbroken progress through production and distribution that had held credence for years through the prestige of this culture of commerce, euphemistically called 'industrial humanism' is being dismissed as unreal by the pessimism, that is growing up. Science, industry and a morality of shared materialism, linked together in a powerful secular religion of consensus have not created happiness on earth. Industrialism has failed; the world communist revolution has not succeeded. The proletariat has not dispossessed capitalism or banished God. Existentialism failed; numerous causes which it supported have only exposed the fragility of the notion that human will can dictate history.

It is in this context that Indian culture is relevant and Baba who has appeared as its greatest exponent and symbol, becomes supremely relevant. The veneration of rationality was the special myth of modern man. Bhagavan guides us from experiment to experience. The worldview created by the enthronement of reason included a universal belief in individualism and competition. Now, that myth has been exploded. Faith in science has been replaced by fear. Baba says that Science deals only with a fraction of reality and even that in a fractional way. We are at the end of an era when the measure of all things is a material measure. And, at the beginning of

an era when the measure is Sat-chit-ananda, of which Baba is the embodiment and living source. The Renaissance of the spirit already evident in the Eastern sky will spread over the globe on the wings of His Message, especially after the historic World Conference at Prasanthi Nilayam in November next.

Baba makes all aware of the inner path, the inner entity which is the basis of all cognition. Baba exhorts all to sink in the stream of beatitude that flows in his heart. He emphasises, in a world torn by sectional, ideological, geographical and Religious factions, the cardinal principle of the kinship, nay, the identity of all in the body of God. Over the centuries, this supreme vision invested the attitudes, achievements and aspirations of Indians with a transcendental grandeur, before which the march of mundane events became meaningless.

It is only a higher consciousness (Buddhi) that can resolve the contradictions in which the lower thought bound up with the senses and their deficiencies and defects is hopelessly involved. Subject and object have become indistinct at the sub-atomic level! It is felt that the human personality needs something more than speculation in philosophy or even in science. The deepest secrets of the world and of man are inaccessible to these disciplines.

Baba has shown that the laws of science can be transcended by the highest Intelligence and the Sovereign Power of Divine Will. More scientists than ever before are disposed today to consider non-rational approaches to reality—confronted by ESP, yoga, eastern and Middle East teachers, acupuncture, Kirlian photography, psi research, alpha waves study and a host of supplementary studies. But, very soon the world will have to accept the Sanathana Dharma way of life and thought as interpreted by Baba. He declared that this consummation is bound to happen, when he spoke at the First World Conference at Bombay. The second World Conference will confirm that prophecy and make the World welcome it.

From Notes of Dr K Bhaskaran Nair's Lectures Ernakulam. Ed

If you know where, inside the egg, resides the chicken you will know where inside this creation, dwells the Lord. The chicken is everywhere in the center, the circumference and the radical space.

—Baba

TRUTH

Truth is One; the sages call It by various Names.

To the philosopher Truth is Supreme Consciousness. —the Nameless, Formless, Changeless, Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Omnipotent Spirit.

The theists say, Truth is the Personal God whom we adore in different climes under

different Names.

The atheists say, Truth is that which conforms to the law which governs the Cosmos.

The scientist says, Truth is the formula that can explain the Universe.

Truth is Dharma to the moralist, the

eternal guardian and saviour of humanity.

The godly, the Bhakta says, Truth is pure unalloyed Love for all, tempered by discrimination and discipline.

The Jnani says, Truth is the Light that illumines darkness out, before which ignorance cannot exist.

The aesthete says, Truth is Beauty, Harmony, Melody.

Truth, others say, is perfection in character. Truth is compassion, simplicity, sincerity, humility, equanimity, fortitude. Truth, in short, is Sai.

—*J. Paransothy, Colombo*

Hearty Greetings

Come hither all, who have weakened hearts;
You can take, them back full strong.
Attacked by pride, damaged by pomp,
Not once or twice, but; for years and years,
It does not matter; He can set them right.
The Lord assured, with whip in hand,
"Get up, give up the frailty of heart"
"Kshipram hrdayadourbalyam thykthothishta paranthapa"
He has come again; to heal our hearts—
For, ours, too, does beat so falteringly
When, face to face, with righteous fight.

Is your heart enlarged many times the size
With ego fluid dripping from swollen head?
He has the expertise to drain the ego dry.
Is your heart too narrow, to let Love in?
Have you to break it, to receive the Lord?
Is there no gate, no open door for Him?

Do you, sweat and swear in endless toil?
Are you too shaky to fold your palms
Or to lift the drooping face to Him?
Do you gasp, when you take an upward step
On the royal road to Him in you?
Take heed. Your need is the Sai Touch.

Do you miss a beat, when Duty calls?
Do you faint when a crash alerts?
Or, when faith demands a firmer foot?
Does a fog confound your kindly eye
And hide the brother pining by your side?
Do you behave as if, inside the chest,
There is no heart that pumps fresh Love,
Along the lonely lanes of pain?
Come hither, all such hapless souls,
He locates every dislocated heart.

Even the heartless, when they moan—
Or even if they don't— or when they jeer
At others' tear or fear,
He listens to their dumb, dry, dusty, drear;
And gives them all, good warm hearts,
Red and rich in Sai Grace and Sai Love

To win at last their lives-long race to God.

—*Kasturi*

(*Read on 23-11-75, in the Divine Presence*)

Where I wander... you! Where I ponder... you!
Only You, You again, always You. You, You, You.
When I am gladdened... You! When I am saddened... You!
Only You, You again, always You. Sky is You. Earth is You.
You above, You below. In every trend, at every end.
Only You, You again, always You, You, Baba! You.

—*Anon.*

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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Fire and Fear

The mansions all over the City of Lanka were caught in the conflagration, and changed into heaps of ashes; the Rakshasas fled desperately with their wives and children, forsaking their burning homes, eager to save their lives. To add to the confusion, cattle, horses, mules and elephants broke away from their sheds and ran helter-skelter in panic and pain. The entire City was enveloped in a shroud of wails, cries, roars and trumpeting. "O! Save us," "O! Take us to a safe place"... agonising appeals like these rose from the throats of women and children and echoed from the sky.

Queen Mandodari heard that wail. She summoned the soldiers guarding the Palace, and ordered them to give refuge therein to women and children. She confided in her maids, and poured out in her confession, the grief she suffered. "Alas! The foolish obstinacy of Ravana is causing the extinction of the Rakshasa clan; this is a blow that will end only with the holocaust. I and Brother-in-law Vibhishana advised him a great deal. We prayed with folded arms. He refused to pay heed. We lamented that it will end in the destruction of every single Rakshasa. But, as they say, "When extermination is near, discrimination goes far." Bad times are approaching him, and so, he is behaving in these nefarious ways. Wherever she turned her eyes, ferocious tongues of flame glared at her.

And, Hanuman too was very much before her eyes, jumping about in the midst of the flames. From every household there rose the cry, "Hanuman! Save us." "Spare this house." With folded palms, they prayed, "Take pity on our children." The wife of Kumbhakarana, the younger brother of Ravana, ran forward with her prayer, "O, Messenger of Rama! My husband is sunk in deep sleep. Do not set fire to our home. Save my husband from being burnt to death."

Catch The Monkey

Lanka was caught in the throes of total destruction. Ravana himself came to know of the calamity pretty soon. He ordered that the monkey be surrounded by soldiers with weapons and mortars. Those who proceeded towards Hanuman scattered in panic when the burning tail of Hanuman flailed them mercilessly. Many were killed by that flaming tail.

Women clamoured and called on the clouds to shower rain and stop the fire from spreading. Malyavantha saw their plight and said within himself, "No, this is not fire that can be put out by rain! This is the unbearable grief of Sita." Others said, "This is the flame of anger against Ravana; it is the fiery form of the curse he has to go through. It will burn his city to ashes."

The huge flame of the chief of the monkeys hopped from roof-top to roof-top, without any sign of exhaustion. Sometimes, he made himself small, sometimes gigantic, but, the pace of destruction was the same, whatever size he assumed. The crackle of the flames and the incessant thud of falling walls could be heard from all sides.

Sita's Prayers

Sita heard the news; she raised her head and had one long look at the smoke and sparkle surrounding the garden. The sky was darkened by smoke; the garden too had become uncomfortably hot.

Sita called upon the God of Fire without delay and prayed that He should save Hanuman, who is a genuine Bhakta of Rama. Since she prayed out of a compassionate heart, it became suddenly cool and comfortable for Hanuman.

Ravana suffered loss and dishonour for discarding the advise given by elders and for indulging in vulgar talk, when he was shown the Proper road. In just under a wink, the capital city of his empire was wiped out by fire. The house where the owner, Kumbhkarana was asleep, and the house of that supremest among devotees, Vibhishana, were the only two ones that were not erased by the fire. Hanuman leaped into the sea and dipped his tail in the waters to put out the flame. Then, he assumed the form of a miniature monkey and reached the place where Sita was; he prostrated before her, and said, "Mother! I shall relate to Rama all that you have asked me to. Give me something so that I could prove that I have met you "

Then, Sita thought a while, and taking from her coiffure, a gemset jewel she gave it into Hanuman's hand. Hanuman pressed it on his eyes in reverence, and fell at Sita's feet again, overcome with joy. Sita blessed him, and said, "Hanuman! You saw with your own eyes the tortures Ravana is inflicting on me, and therefore there is no need for me to dilate on that. Tell the Lord that he must grant me the fortune of his Darshan; tell him that I' prayed for it again and again. Tell him that, with Lakshmana, he must lay siege to Lanka, within a month.

Hanuman! These three days, I spent happily, speaking to you of Rama and listening from you of Rama. My heart has become calm and cool. I cannot imagine how I shall spend both night and day, hereafter, when you are gone. I shall be a fish in a dry pond. Of course, the omniscient Lord is ever watching over me; but, when, O when shall I feast my eyes on those lotus-eyes of His?"

Hanuman tried to infuse faith and courage in her mind by his assurances and assertions; he prayed, pleaded, and prostrated again and again; at last, he turned towards his path and left.

The Return Jump

Before leaving the Ashoka garden Hanuman bellowed a farewell roar, which shook the earth, and made the man, women and children of the island shiver in terror. Without delaying any more moments, Hanuman reached the shore of the sea; he filled his mind with the thought of Rama and his eyes with His charm; and even while meditating on that Name and Form, he leaped over the sea and reached the other shore in a trice.

That day was the Full Moon of the month Kartik. The cool moon-light was as balm to the heart; the name of Rama implanted strength and joy; and Hanuman won.

The monkey groups who had espied Hanuman from distance coming through the horizon were elated beyond words. They were filled with joy; their faces blossomed. They shone with a new splendour, as they saw him nearer and nearer. They exulted that they had fulfilled the mission on which they were sent by Rama.

Three full days they had waited for his return, and their hearts had gone dry with despair; now, they clothed themselves in leaves and flowers. They ranged themselves along the shore, pressing forward to clasp Hanuman to their bosoms as he landed.

As soon as Hanuman touched ground, they hurriedly asked him about what happened in Lanka, about Sita and her welfare, and circumstances and conditions of Lanka. Hanuman told them all they wanted, with high enthusiasm, and left for Pampapura, where Rama was.

The Celebration

In a short while, they entered the Madhuvana of Sugriva, and gorged themselves with- the fruits that grew there on, for Sugriva had promised them all, a free run of the garden, as soon as they had discovered the whereabouts of Sita. The guards posted there prevented the entry of the horde but, they streamed in, nevertheless. So, they ran to their master and reported that they were helpless to prevent the loot. When Sugriva heard them, he exclaimed, "O, they have won; they have fulfilled the task set for them by Rama!" and was exceedingly happy. He knew that they would not break into the Madhuvana. Sugriva told the guards, "This is a celebration; this is a Festival of Ananda. Go, do not worry at what they have done," and sent them back.

Meanwhile, the groups of monkeys arrived and fell at the feet of their King and Master. Sugriva smiled at them and said, "Well. I came to know that you have attained the fruit of your expedition." They replied, "Lord! Through your Grace and good wishes we succeeded in our endeavour. It was a great hero who won the victory. He gave us new life. If we are standing before you alive and talking to you, he alone is the cause," then they gave him details of the situation in Lanka and the plight of Sita there. At this, Sugriva rose suddenly, declaring, "We shall not delay a minute longer," and hastened to where Rama was.

Rama Listens

Realising that the monkeys were proceeding towards him with the news of a successful mission, Rama and Lakshmana seated themselves on a huge boulder watching the group hurrying forward. They advanced in leaps and bounds, quite excited, and fell at Rama's feet. First, Rama inquired about their health and welfare. Meanwhile, Jambavan, the senior most among them rose and said, "Those who have earned your compassion are indeed blessed. That very sign endows him with all virtues. Such a one's renown will encompass the three worlds." He praised Hanuman in various ways. Hanuman rose and prostrated before Rama. He described in detail the island of Lanka; he told Him of the plight of Sita with tears of joy and commiseration flowing from his eyes, and placed in Rama's hands, the crest-jewel that he had brought with extreme care and caution. Rama clasped Hanuman to his bosom. He said, "O Son of the Wind-god! Tell me more of Sita, her plight and her feelings."

Hanuman said, "O Lord of my Life. It is impossible for me to describe the splendour of the city of Lanka, situated on the Triple Peak. Sita is reduced to mere bones, for she does not take food nor does she sleep. She is counting every minute praying for your Darshan. She has no other thought than the recitation and contemplation of your name. She wanted me to inform you of her countless prostrations."

She remembered Lakshmana often and shed profuse tears. The sharp dagger-thrusts that Ravana administers every morning and evening when he comes to her and speaks to her, I have heard with my own ears. Mother does not listen to his prattle in the least; she is ever melting away in the agony of separation and in thoughts centred on you." Hanuman then described how Ravana was wounding Sita by his words and causing agony.

"Save Sita this very moment!" cried Hanuman falling at the feet of Rama. Hearing these words, Lakshmana rose in vengeful anger and wept at Sita's condition. The picture of Sita in Lanka burnt his inner being like fire. He said at last, "Brother! Do not delay. Save my sister-in-law!" Rama replied with a smile, "Lakshmana! Do not hurry. Bide your time. There is a time when each step has to be taken. Do not be dejected when grief invades or exult when joy flows in." Rama consoled him with soft and soothing words.

Only a monkey!

Then he called Hanuman near, and invited him to sit close to him. He drew him and seated him near his feet. He asked him, "Hanuman! What is the nature of the rule that Ravana has established in Lanka? How did you set Lanka on fire?" Hanuman said, "Lord! There is nothing you do not know. What shall I say of the strength of we, monkeys! We are only animals that jump about from branch to branch. How can we jump from one shore of the sea to the other? How can we overpower the Rakshasas? How can we destroy the City of Lanka through fire? All these were due solely to your Grace and Glory. The strength and courage that your Name confers helped us to achieve those things. I am absolutely of no use, unable by myself to do anything. The Ring of yours that I had with me guarded me and guided me aright. Lord! Seeing the Ring and holding it in her hand, how happy was Mother! Is this a dream? Or, was it really sent by Rama to me? She wondered thus, doubted thus, and finally become firm in faith, Lord. Her grief, the extreme anguish of hers, they set fire to Lanka and destroyed it, not I. You chose me as an instrument and you achieved these great tasks with me as a tool. All this is a blessing bestowed.

on me, since you have great affection towards devotees. Lord! Nothing is impossible for one who has won your Grace"

Preparations

When Rama heard these words soaked in sincerity and humility, he was very pleased. He turned to Lakshmana and said, "Brother! Prepare for the campaign, without delay." And, watching the earthshaking forces that were gathered and the preparations that Jambavan and Sugriva made, quite soon, the Gods themselves were astounded, and gratified.

The monkey warriors touched the feet of Rama and raised a triumphal roar. Rama blessed them all by his glance of compassion and benediction. Each warrior became a mountain peak that had grown wings! And, they marched forward with exultation at every step. Auspicious omens greeted them as soon as they stepped forward.

Sita too at Ashoka Garden sensed suspiciousness at that very moment. And, Ravana was beset by ominous forebodings indicated by inauspicious happenings.

Jambavan and others plucked huge trees and waved them as arms; they raised such war cries on their way that the earth shook under their feet and the skies rumbled all around. Off and on, they cheered, "Victory to Lord Ramchandra."

Meanwhile, in Lanka every Rakshasa was struck with anxiety as to what was in store for him in days to come. They were afraid that disaster was imminent to the entire race; they were convinced that they cannot escape the calamity. They could communicate their fears to each other only in whispers, since they were mortally afraid of Ravana.

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness

(To be continued)

Surrender to Sai

Sathya Sai Baba says, we have forgotten our own name and our village of permanent residence and are wandering from place to place taking one birth after another. This way, we have completed thousands of births so far, and that has made us feel wrongly, that present name and place of residence is true. In fact, we are the "Spirit" (The Divinity) by name and are permanent residents of Vaikuntha (abode of God) to which SAI also belongs. He emphasises the urgency of returning to that place. The way to reach it, is known as "the Spiritual Path." It is arduous; however, if we depend on SAT, he guarantees, we will definitely succeed. He asserts that this path is not for materialistic gains Such gains are yours, if you do good deeds in the world. SAI also says that, there is no need to get his interview and ask for grace to secure material benefits; these are available freely to those who do good deeds, even though they have not prayed or met SAI anytime. In fact, the interviews are necessary to pass over the obstacles when we travel on spiritual path.

While we undertake the actual journey on the path, the main obstacle is the stock of "Fate" accumulated during thousands of past births and are continuing to accumulate even in present birth. We take one birth after another, in order to undergo the effects of "fate"; thereby, the journey on path is made difficult and liberation impossible. However, due to one's Ego, one does not accept this fact whole-heartedly, although very sound proof is available to prove it. Therefore, let us examine the evidence. Our "Fate" has bound us and made us a "Prisoner of circumstances." We must get convinced about same in order to plan ahead to cross over the obstacles in spiritual path. If we have done good deeds (like helping all) in past births, our fate is on good lines; as a result, we are born under good auspices, otherwise in a family which is not very congenial. Even after birth, the imprisonment by fate is vividly clear, e.g. for no apparent fault of ours, we are involved in accidents, or get permanently disabled. While doing routine work in daily life, we confidently feel we are masters of circumstances, but no, suddenly as a bolt from blue, things happen beyond our imagination e.g. during festivals in house if death occurs, we forget things like money and lose them. It is a fact that we can't continue to think mentally of one subject only, also we can't remain calm even if we want to be. Obviously, we are not masters of our own mind, somebody else is the master and we are his prisoners. As unhappy incidents happen suddenly, happy ones also in a similar manner. We cannot stop the former or continue the latter indefinitely. They come and go by themselves according to our horoscope and position of stars at particular time. We are not prepared to believe in it due to ego, but the fact remains. A traveller on spiritual path must accept it whole-heartedly, do the actions to overcome it and continue his onward journey to reach his destination VAIKUNTHA (place of residence of God the Almighty).

With the imprisonment thus proved, we must plan to get out of it. We will get released from this imprisonment of Fate, if, we know the process through which we get entangled and fall in this prison. All of us want 'happiness' in daily life and crave for it from birth to death and do various actions to get it all through life. Due to our wish to get this happiness for ourselves primarily, the basic ego gets inflated. It collects imprints of all such desires made in life. This is proved from the fact that we remember very well our actions and the incidents concerning them, especially those about ourselves. In next birth, we do not remember these item wise but they exercise a positive influence over our thoughts and actions then e.g. progress in spiritual matters is seen in life during next birth. While doing actions to secure happiness, we mostly forget normal ethics of human behaviour, do not care for others happiness and thus for selfish motives we injure others physically or mentally in thousand and one ways. This injury done is SIN. Since objective is selfish, it gets imprinted on us. Similarly, if we do not harm others while doing or not doing selfish acts, it is GOOD DEED that also gets imprinted on us. Even if we only think of actions without doing them, we get the imprint on us. Thus, the Fate is gathered in form of imprints and consists of (1) desire after desire for happiness to Self, (2) Good deeds done for others with or without selfish motive 3) Bad deeds done to others with selfish motive. In this manner, everybody of us has gathered imprints during thousands of past birth so far which has developed into fate. If our deeds are good, fate is good i.e. there is no obstruction to fulfill our desire for self-happiness otherwise it is bad. Thus good fate assures happiness, bad one sorrows, prolonging happiness. But we do not recognize this fact and when sorrows come, we feel that somebody else is responsible and become his enemy, start hating him, do bad deeds and thus spoil the fate further. Thus, entanglement gets not only more but stronger also. This is our story

today. This process of formation of fate is centred around "self" i.e. EGO. This, as if, the central 'rod' around which particles of desire for self happiness and those of good and bad deeds which decide time of its fulfillments get stuck up, e.g. iron particles on a magnet. We must study this process and then take action to wipe out existing fate without collecting new one. This action is taken when we are on "spiritual path of surrender to SAI", which is the title of this booklet.

Since Fate develops on EGO, you must reverse the process. This happens very easily if you surrender whole-heartedly to SAI, the Lord. So far, you have fought a battle against Lord Almighty by behaving in snobbish, egoistic manner in the world for getting happiness, ignoring completely even the existence of the paramount power. Now taking initiative on your own, stop the fighting, surrender and accept whole-heartedly the role of a servant at the feet of master for salvation. A servant cannot keep or think of any wish for his own happiness. He cannot act to secure the happiness and has to accept whatever the master grants. By such a behaviour all your desires to secure happiness will lose the vigour, prominently or seen so far. You will become a servant doing actions, but not expecting fulfillment of any desires there from, leaving them to master. The master will fully take care of you, because you have surrendered on your own initiative. As a surrendered servant in Castle of Master; you must follow his orders, be humble, be diligent and remember the master all time (repetition of NAME). Such a disciplined behaviour will firstly dismantle house of fate and later due to dissolution of Ego and desires, make you forget slowly all worldly attachments by which you will prefer to go into seclusion for further progress. By living alone in secluded places you can repeat NAME with full quality and slowly. You will forget, even your surroundings, which is stage of eternal trance. All fate will be burnt to ashes, due to this rigorous discipline and on death of body you are freed once, there is no re-birth. In this manner, the old imprints melt away and new ones do not form and imprisonment by Fate is over, you are your own Master. Then you can enter Lord's house in Lord's village finally, which is liberation. That is exactly what SAI desires.

By following this "spiritual path of surrender," you will from the beginning experience peace of mind and ever-lasting happiness there from. In time to come, your fate is wiped out and you are liberated from cycles of births and deaths and resulting unhappiness there from. Those who do not follow this path, lead unsteady, unhappy miserable life, get birth after birth to undergo imprisonment.

Even if you know principles mentioned above, yet you must take the oath to follow path and follow it without hesitation with full determination. In this path, certain disciplines have to be rigidly followed. You may feel them impossible, due to burden of family and unscrupulous ways of present selfish world. In reply, Sathya SAI has given two promises to the followers of the path of surrender. He will look to personal needs of follower and the other is, He will take over and handle all family responsibilities. The promise is valid only if the follower is walking on path sincerely and is making steady progress day by day. Believe in him firmly and go ahead. After all, in this selfish world you cannot get success through own efforts without God's help. Many have experience of such help granted by Sathya SAI as a matter of grace. Take that opportunity and be one among them forthwith.

While following the path, you have neither to leave your family, job or surroundings. You have to start the day remembering name of God, do your job or business as servant of the master

throughout the day, remembering that you have surrendered after losing the battle of EGO. At night you have to report mentally daily to the Master, telling mistakes, asking for pardon. Conduct self-examination periodically to know your progress and march forward on spiritual path. And never forget your oath to follow the path, comes what may. Then alone you will succeed.

—*J. P. Mirikar*

The Festival of Festivals

The World in Adoration

The grateful Adoration of the World was offered at the Feet of the Avatar of the Age during the Golden Jubilee Festival, celebrated at Prasanthi Nilayam, from 14th November to the 24th, centering around the 23rd November, which marked the Birthday of Bhagavan. The Revival of Righteousness and the Restoration of Moral Strength for which the Avatar has come are being vigorously worked out in India and outside by instilling spiritual light, love and courage among children through Bola Vikas classes, among boys and girls through Pre-Seva Dal Courses of Instruction, and among Youth through rigorous routines summed up in the word, 'Sadhana'. And, for adults, Bhagavan has established hundreds and thousands of Seva Samitis (Service Units), Mahila Vibhags (Women's Groups), Bhajan Mandalis (Prayer Gatherings) and Study Circles,

In consonance with this all-inclusive programme of total uplift of humanity, the Festival highlighted a Rally of 1000 Bal Vikas children, selected from all the States of India, and an exhibition of Folk Dances by them, demonstrating the charming diversity of Indian Folk Culture.

Over 1000 Gurus (Spiritual Teachers) of the Bal Vikas classes also deliberated for two days under the inspired leadership of Bhagavan on the means and methods, the ideals and targets of the basic task they were engaged in. Seva Dal Youth had assembled in thousands from all over the country, for preparing the sheds, providing the needs and helping the organisers in the tasks of service—to maintain sanitation, watch and ward, medical relief, help in the kitchen and dining halls, etc. They too had a two-day Conference, under Divine Guidance. The Seva Samitis from India and 46 Nations of the World represented by their delegates had a Three Day World Conference, which helped to clarify ideals, purify practices and inspire the units for the further expansion and intensification of their efforts.

The Gods

More than five lakhs of people witnessed the Festival, with-exuberant joy. For the devotee and the pilgrim, there were two significant events, providing outlets for unexcelled enthusiasm. On the 18th, November, the Full Moon Day of the holy month of Kartik, streams of pilgrims reciting Sai Ram came into the Prasanthi Nilayam dressed in all the varied styles of this multicultural subcontinent and talking all the varied languages and dialects of India and the World. The simple serene and superb Gopuram erected as the Main Entrance of the Prasanthi Nilayam was inaugurated that morning and its exquisitely carved wooden doors flung open for all. Bands of pipers from Tamil Nadu, of drummers from Kerala, and the well-trained Band of Sathya Sai

College students from Brindavan, roused the mammoth gathering to unprecedented heights of spiritual elevation.

The Golden Jubilee of the Advent of the Avatar marked the beginning of a new era of adoration and affectionate worship for all the Gods installed in the temples of the villages around. Foremost among these was the Venugopaldaswami (Krishna, with the Flute, the Cowherd, immanent in the Stone which, as the legends say, was the foundation for the name of the village of Puttaparthi). Venugopaldaswami had an imposing chariot prepared for Him at Bangalore; it was devotedly decorated by an earnest group of villagers and, along with other silver "procession idols" (of Siva and His Consort, installed in the village temple as Chandramouliswara and Parvati, Anjaneya bearing on His shoulders, Rama, Sita and Lakshmana) The chariot moved majestically along the broadened village road into the respective temples, from the Gopuram Entrance of Prasanthi Nilayam. It was a sight which would have made even the crassest pessimist believe in the happy world that dawned, the very moment the Avatar came on earth.

The Congregation

'All roads lead to Puttaparthi' was the headline in one of the Nation's leading dailies, about the Ten Days Festival that centred on the 50th Birthday of Bhagavan. Special trains carrying eager participants from all the corners of the country, hundreds of special omnibuses from every nook and corner of the vast sub-continent, cars and scooters by the thousands, cycles, horse-drawn vehicles and even the proletarian bullock-carts brought and deposited devotees in the Prasanthi Nilayam grounds.

At least seven lakhs of pilgrims were gathered around the Prasanthi Mandir and in its environs, on that auspicious day! Bhagavan had once declared that in future accommodation for the vast multitudes that are bound to be drawn to His Presence would be well-nigh impossible, and that He Himself would be for most people, just an 'orange speck on the horizon'! He had said that the sky would then be the 'shed' which would provide shelter for the uncountable congregations. Those who were at Prasanthi Nilayam during this Festival realised the truth of this prognostication.

From about two miles beyond the Nilayam, movement of vehicles or even of men became a slow strenuous adventure. Bhagavan graciously permitted the pilgrims to protect themselves from the sharp heat of the sun and the sharper chill during the nights by putting up ad hoc shelters, improvised with whatever they could secure or procure, and so, all the space not covered by thatched sheds, or tubular constructions or flats was dotted thick with multiform tent-like structures, covered with tarpaulins, rugs, and multicoloured cloth, under which the grateful groups sang and studied, cooked and dined, and lived in joy and happy camaraderie.

The Chitravati flowed full and deep throughout the Festival, and so the people had the supreme luxury of an invigorating cold bath, every morning. Remarkable enough, the Seva Dal workers, the volunteers and the students from Bhagavan's Colleges at Brindavan and Anantapur, served the pilgrims with such extreme devotion and care that every one of the vast congregation was full of gratitude. The Sanitation Batch was particularly vigilant and earnest in removing all sources of pollution and infection; and so, in spite of the fact that Puttaparthi had never entertained such

a mammoth gathering for so long on any, occasion, the volunteers rose to the full height of their Sadhana and won the thankful appreciation of all, and the Grace of Bhagavan.

The Darshan

Puttaparthi is holy land; it is the Birth Place of the Avatar; His Academy; His Arena; It is the Centre of the Sai World, the Focus of Prayers in all languages from all parts of a distracted world. It is the Spot towards which a billion hearts turn, when calamity threatens, despair descends, hearts are shocked, or when joy enters the home, success crowns efforts, visions are granted of vastness, content is established and paths to Heaven are illumined.

The Person whom every one yearned to see was the Purushottama, the Person in all Persons, the Personification of all Personalities, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Bhagavan knew that if He moved among the massed populace, walking, or on a vehicle, or riding on the elephant Sai Geetha, only a microscopic fraction of that ocean of humanity could get the Darshan, for which they had come from long distances braving untold hardships. Therefore, in His Infinite Compassion, He had arranged for a helicopter, into which He entered from near the Gokulam, about a mile away.

Circling low over the vast area of about five square miles, He could fill the eyes and hearts of every one of the hundreds of thousands, with the picture of Divine Bliss and Beauty, of Divine Love and Power. Men, women and children who stood thick upon the hilltops, in the valleys in between, on the terraces of the flats, on the Water Reservoir built on the highest hill in the area, and the packed masses on the open plains were all thrilled into ecstatic cheering, when they saw the smiling Countenance of their Lord, hovering over them, when they observed Him waving to them from the sky, enthusing them on the spiritual path of ever-widening and ever-deepening Love. It was difficult at that glorious hour to determine who was the more joyous of the two—Bhagavan or the Bhaktas!

As a sign of His special Grace that day, Bhagavan showered flowers on the Samadhi wherein the `parents' repose.

The Hindu Sacred Texts describe one auspicious ceremony that the Gods observe, on occasions when Right triumphs and Evil is vanquished by Divine Intervention. They gather in the higher regions and shower celestial blossoms on the concourse below, and on the Central Figure of Divinity. Karuna Sri, a Telugu Poet who was present at the Nilayam that day, wrote, "The Angels were surprised that day when Heaven's Gardens were flowerless; not a speck of colour or whiff of perfume was there. When the Angel asked the caretaker, "Why?" the answer she received was, "Don't you know this day is the Golden Jubilee of the Advent of the Avatar, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba? Every bloom has been plucked by the Gods for showering thankfulness on Him at Prasanthi Nilayam!" This did not appear to us as a mere poetic fancy, that day.

The Stupa

The Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh Sri. J. Vengala Rao was awaiting the landing of the helicopter to receive Bhagavan, in the open quadrangle by the side of the Mandir. From thence,

Bhagavan moved in procession with the Chief Minister, towards the Stupa of All Religions (that reflect the One Religion of Love). This Stupa, a 50-foot high five-fluted pillar blossoming on top into a perfect Lotus with five petals, signifying the Five Major Religions of Humanity (the Sanathana Dharma of the Hindus, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam) is an imposing but captivating piece of art, at once inspiring and illumining. On the five faces of its base, the Five Symbols of Om, Fire, Dharmchakra, the Cross and the Crescent-and-Star are carved in marble, with appropriate explanatory notes on the significance of each in English and Telugu languages. They are also ensconced in circular rings at the bases of the flutes that make up the tall lotus-stalk pillar. Stupas such as this one are proposed to be erected in many parts of the world to mark the inauguration of the Sai Era of Human History, when the human family shall pray in unison in various languages and various lands to the One God, who guards and guides them all. There is already one, 'another thing of beauty and a joy for ever' on the heights of Dharmakshetra, at Bombay. There is a small Stupa, at Madras, in the grounds of the Temple at Guindy, where Bhagavan installed the idol of the Sai Baba of Shirdi nearly thirty years ago.

The procession towards the Stupa was colourful and elevating. The Students of Sathya Sai College for Boys at Brindavan, Bangalore, led with Bhajan songs played on the College Band; Vedic scholars followed, with the recitation of Hymns from the ancient scriptures. When the Chief Minister inaugurated the historic Stupa, sacred hymns from the Vedas, the Zendavesta, the Tripitaka, the Bible and the Quran were recited by Bal Vikas children trained for that holy assignment. And the vast congregation that swarmed every vantage point sang in unison a special Song, which highlighted the special lesson that each religion sought to emphasise for the uplift of man into Divinity through its sacred symbols and scriptures.

The atmosphere of cordiality and fraternity, of the Brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God that pervaded the area and permeated every soul was something to be cherished for years. The large numbers of Muslim, Christian, Jewish, and Buddhist devotees and aspirants that had gathered for the Festival of Thanksgiving were knit into one family by the silken strands of Love and Understanding that flowed from every heart in that concourse.

Bhagavan arranged for the distribution of Divine Prasadam (packets of two varieties of rice preparations) to every man, woman and child, at the place where each was. It was an impossible task, considering the vast crowds, the massed phalanxes of people, the long distances and the short time during which the consecrated food had to be placed in the bands of every one. But, the energy and enthusiasm, the discipline and sense of duty of the Seva Dal and the volunteers and the College students were so remarkable that the distribution was accomplished, in record time, to the full satisfaction of all.

The Homage

In the evening, the Poornachandra Auditorium was overflowing on all sides, with the devotees. Homage was offered at the Lotus Feet by Members of the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust, and the State Presidents of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations from the various countries of the World, as well as from all parts of India. The Hon'ble Sri T. A. Pai, Minister for Heavy Industries and Civil Supply of the Government of India, and Ministers of the Andhra Pradesh Government, Sri Subbarayudugaru and Sri Sagi Suryanarayana Rajugaru felicitated the devotees on the occasion and expressed their loyalty and reverence to Bhagavan. Sri T. A. Pai dealt on the

ideals of conduct and character as emphasised by Bhagavan and declared that they were the surest spiritual foundation for a truly socialistic reconstruction of the human community.

The Message

Bhagavan began His Birthday Message with the singing of a verse that rose spontaneously from His lips. It announced that, in all lands, at all times, from every throat there was one Name, of Sai, that rose in grateful reverence; that prayer from every heart was directed to one Name, Sai. It declared that Sai was present everywhere at all times; that He was available to devotees at all times and in all places.

He was willing and anxious to confer devotion on all and attach them to Himself so that they may be saved. And, He asked, "How then can Sai fail to support you and save you?" This sent a thrill of joy and courage, of faith and firmness, through each of the seven hundred thousand hearts that received the Message of the Avatar. Where else, from whom else, can mankind earn such assurance, such strength and such sustenance?

Baba expressed His satisfaction at the gathering together in His Presence of so many thousands of seekers, who are intent on the revival of righteousness in the world and who are determined to lead exemplary lives themselves towards that consummation. He said that it was some need, some defect of which each of them was aware, that had brought them to the Presence. A healthy individual does not resort to a doctor or hospital or invite an examination of his condition. Each one feels a gap within himself, athirst, a pang, an unfulfilled urge, a divine discontent, a call to which the response from within is as yet weak and vacillating. That has persuaded you to travel long distances, and brave many obstacles, and put up with strange discomforts for the sake of securing strength and guidance from here," Baba said.

"The life of man begins with the rising sun and ends with sleep, after the sun goes down. The place where the rise is apparent is called East, and the place where the sun apparently sets is referred to as the West. So too North and South are determined. But, actually, the sun does not rise or set; there is neither east nor west, nor north or south, on the sphere, we call the Earth. It is only based on the false experience of our senses. The truth is otherwise. Even those who know that the earth carries us towards the sun or away from the sun deal in the false currency of words like sunrise and sunset, east and west. This only reveals how firmly rooted the habits of ignorance are.

The experience derived through the senses can therefore be totally different from the Truth. Take another example: When the chair on which we sit moves, we feel that we too move. When the omnibus or car in which we are seated moves, we too move and we feel the movement, slow or fast. This earth on which we are is moving at the rate of more than a thousand miles per hour, but, yet, we feel that we are on firm ground and that the earth is stable and unmoving. Here too, is our experience real or is the fact of the earth's rotation and precession real? The basis for the experience may be quite opposite to the nature of the experience itself!

Let us inquire into the basic nature of this Cosmos or Jagat. The word Jagat means, 'That which is ever moving'. This shows that the ancient Rishis had, after years of intense meditation and introspection realised that the Cosmos is just a bundle of moving atomic waves or particles,

each atom having vast open spaces inside it, as vast as the sky with its stars. The electron, proton, neutron and other particles are but waves of energy. The atom is Energy or Shakti, a centre of power or strength that pervades and permeates the entire Universe. People laugh at the Hindu Puranic legends that consider the Moon as a Deity, the Sun as a God and the Earth as Bhudevi, or Goddess Earth. Yurin Gagarin and other astronauts have discovered that the Moon is but an inert mass, and they have announced that there is nothing super-natural or ultra cosmic in the moon. So too, it is said, the Sun has no special Divine attributes or claims and the Earth is but a globe of matter, more or less akin to other planets in the Solar system. But, those who declare thus seem to have no understanding of the characteristics of `inert' and `live' substances. Why? The entire Cosmos, from the minutest microcosm to the largest macrocosm is a conglomeration of overactive, alert, waves of energy, derived from the Primeval Source of All Energy, namely, the Para-shakti, the Supreme Sovereign Energy Principle, which is God.

You see this wall. We call it a wall, because, it has height, thickness and the quality of opaqueness, so that it separates that side from this, and prevents us from seeing what happens on the other side. But, to the knowing eye, this wall is also a heap of waves, a quantity of energy particles, not different from anything else anywhere. That is the reason why the Rishis taught man the great Truth, "Iswarassarva bhoothaanaam: God is the core, the truth of every thing. Sarvam Vishnu mayam: All this is God. But, this great discovery was forgotten or derided, and so, man began to see multiplicity, where unity prevails.

Even scientists who have grasped this Unity of all Creation in the basic Truth of Shakti, do not proceed further to delve into the origin of the Shakti. The bulb gets its brilliance from the current that flows into the filaments; where does the current originate? If only they analyse the mind which is the instrument for understanding the Universe, and make it pure and unsullied, they will discover the Source of all this Shakti, as the One and Only God, known by many different Names and adored in many different Forms.

Once they become aware of That, This and That will merge; all differences will cease; wisdom will dawn; and man will grow into Godhood. At that stage, everything will be seen and experienced as Divine, including the `inert' Moon, the Sun and the Earth.

The Rishis said the Moon is the presiding deity of the mind, and that the Mind has the potentiality of binding man or liberating him. In fact, the Mind of man is the reflection of the Divine Mind that created all this Cosmos through the sovereign Shakti. Therefore, it has tremendous creative power within it. The mind designs in dreams peoples, the cities and mansions; it makes us prisoners sleeping on hard planks, when, in actual fact, we are sleeping on soft beds in our homes. When we dream, the dream is as real to us as if we are awake. This power the Mind has, because as the Vedas say, `Inside and outside, it is Narayana alone that operates'. To realise this, the inner search is recommended.

Scientists look outward, rely on machines and appliances. Saints rely on mantras, not, yantras. They travel within and analyse the inner reactions. The outer is the region of the senses; one has to transgress even the mind. The Divine is the base; the outer world is but the unreal temporary appearance on it. This is the Truth that the Seva Samiti has to discover and spread. Once this

base is reached, all difference and distinctions disappear. This is the real A-dvaita. Christ said, "All are one, my son, be alike to every one."

The Bal Vikas, the Mahila Vibhag, the Seva Dal, the Bhajan Mandali and the Samiti should be like the five fingers on one hand, all engaged in the systematic progress towards the understanding of the basic Unity behind the Diversity.

Again, consider how much Love is present in this Auditorium, bringing people from all the religions and races, creeds and castes, languages and climes, under one auspices and one ideal! Learn from this the great lesson that Love binds, Love liberates, Love expands the hearts. When we speak of the Viswa Viraat Swarooma of God, as demonstrated by Him before Arjuna, and as you can see before you here, you must infer that all beings are Divine, for they are all cells in the body of God, inseparable from Him and sharing in the Divinity.

No one need despair about the future of humanity; I assure you that within a very short time, Bharat will spread the Message of Love and Unity all over the world and the world will enter a golden era of peace and prosperity. I call upon every one of you to stand up as soldiers in the Sai Army, infused with Discipline, Devotion and Duty, and determined to live the ideals laid down in the scriptures and to purify and widen the emotions and feelings of sympathy and service. Do not pay heed to jealousies, ambitions or aspersions but, move forward with faith and courage along the spiritual path; until you establish yourselves on the unshakeable foundation of your Atmic core, your Divine Reality.

The Third World Conference

Over 8000 Delegates from all over the World deliberated for three days, in the inspiring Presence and Divine Guidance of Bhagavan, and reached certain conclusions which can enthuse the members and the units in the years ahead. The Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, it was found, should have the objective—the sublimation of human personality and the evolution of man into the Divine. This is the only way to ensure that all humanity has Peace, Prosperity and Harmony, under the banner of the Brotherhood of Man and the Fatherhood of God.

The three wings of the Organisation—the Mahila Vibhag, the Seva Dal and the Bal Vikas—have to expand their activities, modifying and reviewing them as they grow in experience and stature. Each of the three should have a short-term programme and a long-term programme.

The Organisation is also a medium for Sadhana, since Sadhana becomes easier and more fruitful when done collectively under proper guidance on an organised basis.

Mahila Vibhag

The Mahila Vibhag should also encourage art and culture among the Bal Vikas pupils. They shall provide guidance and assistance through Vocational Information Bureau, so that they may

continue their studies after the Secondary stage, and specialise in appropriate vocations or disciplines.

Seva Dal

Service activities among the handicapped have to be taken up more vigorously. More intensive training for social service has to be provided for. The spiritual basis of Seva has to be emphasised much more.

Bal Vikas

The Sathya Sai Central Trust has presented to each State a slide Projector along with filmstrips and slides. This can be used while training Bal Vikas Gurus and in Bhajan centres for conveying the Divine Message on Educational Ideals.

The Central Trust has set apart funds to finance the College education of two students from every State, students who have been trained through Bal Vikas classes, Pre-Seva Dal Course and the Seva-Dal course, and who are adjudged the best candidates. This scheme will start from the next academic year, 1976.

Every Office-bearer of every Unit of the Organisation can follow what was done on the auspicious Day of the Golden Jubilee of the Avatar, in the Divine Presence, at Prasanthi Nilayam. That Day, a solemn Pledge was taken and offered at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan, in the following terms, and, inscribed on a silver and gold plate, it was placed in the Divine Hands.

"Sat-chit-ananda Swaroopa Sri Sathya Sai Bhagavan! O Eternal Existence, O Light of our Intelligence! O Source of all Joy, on the most auspicious Golden Day of the 50th year of Thy manifestation, on Earth, we the Sai family all the world over, offer our humble Pranams at Thy Lotus Feet.

O Sarvantaryami Sai! Thou knowest full well how blessed and grateful we feel to Thee for having taken us under the canopy of Thy Grace and Love. How shall we prove ourselves worthy of this great blessing? In answer, our grateful hearts prompt us to renew our pledge to adhere to Thy teachings of Duty, Discipline and Devotion, so that through this Triveni, we attain to the Sangam with the Ocean of Sat-chit-ananda which Thou art.

O Kalpataru Bhagavan! Bless us with the strength to fulfill this Pledge and make us worthy instruments in Thy great mission of leading mankind towards the One God (of Truth), the One Religion (of Love), the One Language (of the Heart), and the One Caste (of Humanity). Pray illumine our hearts with Sathya Dharma Shanti and Prema, so that the light of Thy Divine Message spreads through our thoughts, words and deeds.

Above all, fill our hearts with pure and self-less for Thee, so that our lives become a spontaneous flow of dedicated service unto Thee, the Indwelling God in all our hearts. It was decided at the Conference that the year 1976 will be observed all over the World as SEVA DAL YEAR. Service activities will be intensified and expanded during the year. Every State shall plan to develop three out of the 4 activities that were recommended by the Conference. These are: 1. Health and Hygiene 2. Village uplift and rural services 3. Service to the handicapped and adult

education. 4. Information Bureaus for students, and for the general public, and establishment of Book Banks.

It was decided by the Conference that every year, commencing from 1976, the sixth day of May, being Srimati Easwaramma Day, will be observed as "Sri Sathya Sai Bal Vikas Students' Day," with programmes which shall include a rally of the children a public meeting and cultural entertainment items.

One very significant offering that was made to Bhagavan on behalf of the students of Bal Vikas classes from all over the country was: three-tiny grains of rice. On one of these grains was written the Prayer sung by the children at the All India Rally in the Divine Presence, on 22 November. On another grain was written the song sung by the pre-Seva Dal students when the Sarva Dharma Aikya Stupa was inaugurated at Dharma Kshetra and Prasanthi Nilayam. On the third grain was written also in equally microscopic characters the joyful Birthday Song sung by the College Students. While offering the grains, the student-representative who had executed the well-nigh impossible task of devotion said, "Accept' these grains, O Bhagavan, as you accepted the grains of arched rice that Bhakta Sudama offered you while you were in Dwaraka as Lord Krishna. We do not expect in return the City of Gold that you gave him then. We pray that our bodies may be transformed by you into Golden Temples with you installed therein, spreading through us, your golden message, and the golden light of the Golden Sai Era which begins today."

Dr. S. Bhagavantam announced at the Conference, on behalf of the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust, that the Corpus Fund raised during the Golden Jubilee Year has exceeded the fifty lakh rupees target. The Fund will be utilised solely for educational and medical services sponsored by the Trust, either for capital expenditure or for running expenses. The Trust is a Public Charitable Organisation, registered with the Government of India, and all payments are exempt from Income Tax. Dr. Bhagavantam mentioned that he has been authorised by the Sole Trustee and the Council of Management to the Corpus Fund received through donations collected by the Bank Scheme will be utilised only for educational and medical activities.

The World Council of Sathya Sai Organisations

The Second World Conference of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations held during the Golden Jubilee Celebrations decided to establish "The World Council" of the Sri Sathya Sai Organisations, with the following objectives: 1. To guide and supervise the Organisation in all countries of the world 2. To maintain liaison between the Founder President and the Centres of the Organisation in all countries and to receive and transmit His decisions on all subjects requiring such decisions and directions. 3. To receive reports from the Centres of the Organisation in all parts of the World and present the same before the Founder-President for His Divine Guidance.

Bhagavan nominated as members of the "World Council" the following members: Sri Indual H Shah 2. Dr. J. Hislop 3. Dr. K. Pani 4. Sri S. Sitaram 5. The Rajamata of Nawangar 6. Dr. S. Bhagavantam 7. Sri Sohanlal 8. Sri. Balesingham and 9. Mrs. Natalie Santos.

Sri Indulal H Shah has been nominated as the Convenor of the Council. Its Office will be at Dharmakshetra, Bombay.

—Ed.

When You Pass By

Buds beautiful dance;
Flowers fair smile;
Gardens green bloom;
Winds wild soften;
Fountains rapid pause;
Streams O' love shower;
Hearts thirsty quench;
Wavering-mind stays;
Dull darkness dies;
Light bright prevails;
Clouds O' sorrows disperse;
Flood O' bliss pervades!
When You pass by—

It is sheer waste of money to burden the pictures and idols in your shrines and altars with plenty of garlands and to use costly utensils and offerings, in order to show off devotion. This demeans Divinity and leads to self-deception. Divinity seeks only a pure heart to confer Grace. Do not posit any distance between you and me. Fundamentally, I am you; you are I. You are waves; I any Ocean. If you achieve inner content, I am content, for, I am you. That is the Truth.

—Baba

The Voice Divine

Spiritual aspirants and seekers can, with the aid of their limited and recalcitrant mental, rational, visual, aural and oral faculties, only feebly attempt to experience and enjoy the limitless bounty of the manifestation of the Divine in Human Form, that is now among us as Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Baba has said that the tongue of man is best used when it helps chant the myriad names of God, each name reflecting, however dimly, some *one* attribute of the Universal Absolute.

Speech is a vital function of the human tongue, an accomplishment that has to be revered and utilised for uplift and liberation, rather than for pollution and precipitation into doom. The tongue articulates `shabda-brahman', as the Upanishads say. It is the acoustic manifestation of the Absolute that the tongue expresses. Shabda-brahman is all pervasive and is contained in the cosmic sound, Pranava, which is the ceaseless immanent pattern of cosmic vibration. This is the reason why the Vedas declare that AUM is Brahman, the Universal Absolute, no less.

The music of AUM or Pranava is filling the unbounded universe from beyond time. When you are in a tranquil spot, far from the madding crowd attuning yourself to the beauty, and glory of the infinite, you can hear around you and in you, the AUM. The golden realm of literature is the efflorescence of AUM; the Vedas, the science of grammar, rhetoric, prosody, music, and the epics, Sastras, drama-are all evolutes of the primordial symphony inherent in the Pranava.

Avatars are the authentic oracles of the Divine; their teachings are variations of the Divine Theme, designed to teach man to escape from self-inflicted shackles, restricting love, light and liberty. The Avatars made themselves available to the hungry and the thirsty and by precept and practice, they led them to sustenance and sweetness—the sustenance that satiates most and lastingly.

Today, we are privileged to be present before the perfect Incarnation of the Universal Paramatman. He has come for the redemption of humanity from disaster. His gifts of love and compassion are infinite in number, range, amplitude and magnitude. More than all, His Divine Discourses are an integral part of the shower of Grace and Compassion; they are, as He says, prescriptions of curative significance for a world in the throes of 'Kama-induced coma'.

Baba lays stress in His Discourses on `Trikarana Shuddhi (the triple cleanliness of thought, speech and action) as the key to Godliness. If speech is the body, then thought is the head and act is these limbs.' Baba says, `Speech that fails to reflect correspondence between conception and execution is a trunk, with severed head and limbs." Baba insists on the cultivation of Truth (Sathya), Righteousness (Dharma), Peace (Shanti) and Love (Prema). Disciplined senses, emotions and passions are what He desires us to possess.

Sweet speech must sprout from virtuous thoughts and flower into loving deeds. Baba always greets the questioner, however ignorant or irrelevant he may be, with a smile and a soft answer. Baba is setting the example also of superb Karma yoga; He has founded schools, colleges, hospitals, and social service centres, all over the land. He works round the clock. He contributes to the Sanathana Sarathi, writes and directs dramas, answers devotees' letters, tours continuously, gives discourses, sends messages to conferences, supervises building works, and grants personal interviews to hundreds every day. In the midst of these activities, He finds time to fondle and foster a miniature sanctuary of animals and pets.

Baba's discourses are characterised by unpremeditated eloquence and effortless extemporaneity. His Telugu is simple, sweet and straight. He stands on the dais and casts a sweeping glance at the thousands sitting before Him. With that look, He comprehends the feelings and falterings of every one. He incorporates in His discourse convincing answers to all their unexpressed doubts, so that every one feels that it was addressed mostly to him alone. The discourse is unique, because of its transparency, euphony and depth. He can be understood and appreciated by pandits and plebeians. His diction is picturesque and popular. It has universal appeal.

One feature of Baba's discourses is the emphasis He lays on the inner meaning of scriptural texts, holy hymns, ritual practices, and ancient beliefs. The Vedas and other ancient texts are replete with allegory and myth, and, Baba reveals the deep significance of these legends and

tales, so that they are no longer fabulous or false to us. Our eroded faith has been fertilised by these interpretations that has given to the Puranas and Epics. Many a sacred book has been thus rescued by Baba from the limbo of oblivion.

An example of this re-interpretation can be given. The Bhagavad-Gita says, "patram pushpam phalam thoyam yo me bhaktya prayachchati—whoever with devotion offers Me, leaf, flower fruit water. Baba says, the emphasis is on `bhaktya', `with devotion'; and, so, it is not ritualistic worship with material articles, that is advised here. God is pleased when you offer Him the flower of your Heart, the fruit of your deeds on the leaf of your body, cleansing them with tears of ecstasy. Thus, Baba elucidates the esoteric subtleties of sacred texts, and of the myths and legends of the past. Let me give another example. The texts say, Sarva Deva Namaskarah Kesavam Prathigachchati—The reverence you pay to all Gods reach the One God. Baba supplements this statement with another equally magnificent line—Sarva jiva thiraskarah Kesavam prathigachchathi—The rebukes you administer to all individuals reach the One Supreme Individuals of which all are images, Kesava! Such meaningful elaborations of sacred texts can be found in plenty in the writings and discourses of Baba.

Baba's discourses are enlivened by exquisite captivating parables. The stories ensconced in the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagavata etc are often long and tiresome; but, they have all precious lessons for man even at the present age of science and technology. Baba retells them, emphasising the main lesson, and highlighting the essential outlines. When He relates them, they become explanatory addenda, not superfluous digressions. They are architecturally part of His main theme. Very often, Baba spins a story on the spot, with the statement, `Deeniki oka chinna katha' (For this, one little story!). The katha makes us understand clearly a profound truth of ethics or philosophy.

"Speak truthfully, and pleasantly. Do not hurt while speaking truth; do not please by uttering falsehood"—this is what Sanathana Dharma advises us. But it is very difficult to be truthful, without being disagreeable, at least on most occasions. But, Baba tells us the most unpalatable truths and no one is hurt in the least. His Love is the balm that does the soothing. He chastises and admonishes every one without distinction, for, He loves all. He exposes the most bitter truth without embittering the persons who are the targets of loving care.

"Many words harm the mind; few words charm the soul," says Baba. He condemns mere talkativeness, bragging, scandalising, and boasting. Speak soft and sweet; speak gently and to the point, in as low a voice as necessary. Garrulity is a dis-ease; it leads to restlessness and faction." Baba expects us to adhere to the ideals He enunciates and upholds in practice.

Baba is the Guru of Gurus, the Poet of Poets, the Master of Master. His voice His words, His counsel, His commands are all Divine.

—*Rama Sarma*

Use all your talents, your senses, the intelligence and memory for the realisation of the Glory that fills the Universe of which you are a fraction. Transform values; sublimate desires; let the higher always over-rule the lower. The senses will drag you away from the higher purpose;

so, they must be kept under strict control by rigorous training. Without mastery over senses, all the elaborate Puja, all the long hours of Dhyana, all the Vows you observe, are mere mummery.