

Christmas Celebrations with Unity and Love

"True Christmas is celebrated only in Prasanthi Nilayam", said Bhagavan Baba in His Divine Christmas Message on 25th December 1998 in Prasanthi Nilayam before a huge gathering of devotees from all parts of the world. "Elsewhere people drink, eat non-vegetarian food and make merry in the name of Christmas. But Christmas in Prasanthi Nilayam is celebrated in a holy atmosphere", observed Bhagavan Baba.

Christmas in Prasanthi Nilayam is unique not only because people of all religions join together to celebrate it, but also because it is celebrated in the true spirit of Christ in the Divine Presence of the Avatar, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. That is why people from many countries including Russia, Croatia, Romania, Hungary, Argentina, Malaysia, Uganda, South Africa, USA and U.K. etc. had come in large numbers to celebrate Christmas in Prasanthi Nilayam.

When Christmas Programme was presented to Swami, He said, "Very, very, very, very, very happy". And a happy time it was, as the overall theme of the Christmas Programme this year was love and unity.

Overseas Devotees Choir:

The first event was after the afternoon Darshan on December 24". Swami came to the Sai Kulwant Hall, the venue of the programme, at 3.30 p.m. With Swami's permission the programme of choir singing and Bhajans started at 3.45 p.m. The first item of the programme was a unique choir of over 300 voices singing a spirited collection of songs from different cultures with an emphasis on African-American spirituals and its urban gospel music. This included a Zulu song from Africa, a French song, a Spanish song, and some rousing Gospel numbers, including "Oh Happy Day," "Swing Low," and "Lift Him Up" This was followed by Hindi Bhajans led by the choir. Naturally, Swami was very happy and said to the choir leader, "Very nice". The afternoon programme concluded with Arati to Bhagavan at 4.40 p.m.

Children's Choir:

At 6.00 p.m., the evening programme began in Poornachandra Auditorium with an absolutely adorable children's choir. 83 children from different countries, aged 6-14, dressed in white choir robes with red bows, and carrying hearts made for Swami, sang with spirit and sweetness, songs such as "Oh Come Let Us Adore Him" and "Super Duper Christmas." They ended with "This Little Light of Mine" waving their flashlight candles in the air showing, like the lyric says, "This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine." This was followed by the annual Christmas drama by children.

Children's Drama:

The drama entitled "The Joy of the Lord" begins with six angels in heaven saying that today is Christmas and everyone should be happy. But they notice a man who is very sad, so they decide to go and cheer him up. The angels realise that they cannot be seen or heard; they find some children singing in praise of the Lord and seek their help. We see a group of six-year-old absolutely loveable girls sing "God Loves the Little Ones Like Me, Me, Me:" The children express their love to the sad man trying to make him happy. When the sad man tells the children that no one has ever loved him, they realise that this is his problem. They sing "God Loves You

and I Love You", and assure him that God loves you when you are happy, sad, good, or bad. The sad man will not be convinced. He thinks if he were someone else, may be then God would love him. There follows a rousing number where the children, some dressed in incredible animal costumes, come on stage and sing:

If I were a butterfly
But I just thank you
Father for making me 'me,'
For making me 'me.'

The sad man begins to soften. He is told about the spirit of Jesus, how God is always with us, that He created us and will take care of us. They sing "The Joy of the Lord is My Strength" and, at last, the sad man experiences love. It is, as Swami told us in His Christmas discourse, "By Love you can transform anybody." The children tell the sad man, "Jesus said, 'He who has sent me will come again, and His name will be Truth' He is here with us now ... You can see Him ... Nothing can compare to His wonderful beauty. We call Him Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba." The audience was thrilled with this proclamation and cheered. A beautiful video projection of Swami giving Christmas Darshan on the balcony was superimposed on the backdrop, as the cast gathered on stage for the finale. In the spirit of unity, they sang "Make Us One" Our beloved Swami, obviously happy, came on to the stage and handed out Dhotis and Saris to all the children in the play and also materialised a glittering gold chain for a child artist.

The programme came to a close at 7.00 p. m. with Arati to Bhagavan.

Christmas Morning:

Red and silver sparkling hearts and green and gold wreaths rimmed the Mandir balcony. Red velvet curtains adorned with golden angels, balls and bows were tastefully placed on windows as well as on candy cane pillars. The holiest of mornings was there again. The devotees were seated in Sai Kulwant Hall well before 5.00 a.m. on 25th December to have the holy Darshan of Bhagavan Baba from the Mandir's balcony. The devotees chanted Omkaram and Suprabhatam in devotional fervour. A special Nagarsankirtan began after Veda chanting. It was led by six angels with golden wings, followed by the children and choir carrying lanterns and candles. After the conclusion of Nagarsankirtan, all eyes were fixed on the silver door of the Mandir's balcony. Then He came in white, beautiful, our Beloved Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. "Joy to the World, the Lord is Come" we sang, as He gave us His glorious Christmas blessing sending the whole congregation into ecstatic bliss.

Later in the morning, students of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning presented their Christmas programme. After a marvellous display of band music, the students sang carols and Bhajans. The morning programme came to a close after Arati and distribution of Prasadam.

Messengers of Sathya Sai:

In the afternoon of 25th December, the "Messengers of Sathya Sai" held their Annual Meeting in the Sai Kulwant Hall in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Baba and sought His blessings. The Secretary of the organisation presented the Annual Report, which reflected how the 'Messengers' were silently working in a number of countries to bring about a spiritual reawakening in the

world through their selfless service activities. The 'Messengers' later presented a beautiful drama in the Poornachandra Auditorium at 6.30 p.m.

Before Bhagavan's Christmas Discourse, Mr. Arthur Hillcoat made a brief speech exhorting the devotees to look within for illumination as God Himself had come on earth to teach us.

Bhagavan then gave His Christmas Discourse (given separately).

—Judy Warner Scher

Treasure of Divine Grace

You should not pray to God for seeking this favour or that. The reason is that no one can know what immensely precious, divine, and magnificent treasures lie in the treasure house of Divine Grace. No one can know what God intends or desires to give to a devotee. In such a situation, by asking for trivial and petty things, man is demeaning his divine estate. No one can understand what valuable, sacred, and divine favour God chooses to confer on a deserving devotee. Hence, man should not seek from God nor desire nor pray for some petty trifles. More precious and desirable than anything else is God's love.

—Baba

AVATAR VANI:

BHAGAVAN'S DASARA DISCOURSE-II:

Know Your True Identity

*One may master all forms of knowledge,
One may vanquish one's adversaries in debate,
One may fight with valour and courage in the battlefield,
One may be an emperor reigning over vast kingdoms,
One may offer cows and gold as an act of charity,
One may count the countless stars in the sky,
One may tell the names of different living creatures on the earth,
One may be an expert in eight forms of yoga,
One may reach even the moon,
But it is impossible to control the body, mind and senses.
Turn the vision inward
And achieve the supreme state of equanimity of the mind.*

(Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of Love!

In this world for a man to accomplish any task, Ichha Shakti (will power), Jnana Shakti (power of discrimination) and Kriya Shakti (power of action) are essential. Ichha Shakti refers to the determination to undertake a task. Jnana Shakti refers to the ways and means to be adopted to fulfill the task undertaken. It is not enough if you have Ichha Shakti and Jnana Shakti; you need to have Kriya Shakti too.

If you want to weave cloth, you need to have cotton. The cotton has to be made into thread, which in turn has to be woven. This relates to Kriya Shakti. An enquiry into the type of equipment needed to do this relates to Jnana Shakti. Man has got all these three potencies in him, but that is not enough. He needs to bring them together.

Primordial Cause of Creation

Here is a small example. Supposing you have flowers, thread and a needle; can you have a garland? Should not there be someone to make a garland out of them? You have a container for oil, a wick and a lamp. But, will this alone produce light? No. There must be someone to light the wick. You have gold, gems and precious stones; can you have jewels out of them? No. A goldsmith is needed to make them. Here, you have two types of causes: One is Upadana Karana (primary cause) and the other is Nimitta Karana (instrumental cause). A goldsmith makes ornaments using gold, but who is the one who has created gold? He is God. So, God is Upadana Karana and goldsmith is Nimitta Karana. Without the primordial principle, Upadana Karana (God), Nimitta Karana is useless. God, the Upadana Karana, is the creator of this world. Man, the Nimitta Karana, is trying to experience and enjoy this creation. But, man forgets the Upadana Karana (God) and thinks, he is the doer and prides himself on his achievements.

Without the primordial basis, man cannot achieve anything. Students of science are aware of this. Two parts of hydrogen and one part of oxygen are combined to make water. Scientists pride themselves on this achievement and ignore God, who is the creator of hydrogen and oxygen. In this modern age, man is carried away by the sense of doership forgetting the Principle of Mooladhara (primordial basis). The potter makes pots, but without clay and water he cannot do so. The potter is only an instrument and hence he is the Nimitta Karana and God who has created clay and water is the Upadana Karana.

Bharatiyas believe that there are 84 lakh species in this world. These can be classified into four categories—1. Andaja (born out of eggs) 2. Pindaja (born out of womb) 3. Swedaja (born out of sweat) 4. Uthbhija (born out of earth). There are 21 lakh species under each of these categories. They make a total of 84 lakh species. Beings are many, but the living principle is uniform in all of them. There are innumerable waves in the infinite ocean, each looking different from the other. Waves may vary in form, but ocean is the basis for all of them. Likewise, all the 84 lakh species have emerged from the ocean of Sat-Chit-Ananda. All have their origin in Sat-Chit-Ananda.

Man is essentially divine

What is Sat-Chit-Ananda? 'Sat' is Being, that which is changeless and eternally present. 'Chit' means total Awareness. 'Sat' is like sugar, 'Chit' is like water. When water and sugar are mixed, you have neither sugar nor water, but syrup. Similarly, the combination of 'Sat' and 'Chit' results in Ananda (Bliss). In all the living creatures, you find this Sat-Chit-Ananda. But man is not able to understand his true identity, which is Sat-Chit-Ananda and is in search of happiness outside. It is like searching for his own self outside. How can he find his own self outside? He has to look within.

In the waking state, there are four aspects—Kala (time), Karma (action), Karana (reason), and Kartavya (duty). Suppose you have decided to go to Bangalore by car to participate in a programme. You start at 5 a.m. and reach Bangalore at 8 a.m. Here Kala (time) is 3 hours, Karma (action) is travelling by car, Karana (reason) is the programme and Kartavya (duty) is participating in it. All these four aspects are present in the waking state. Now consider that at 10 o'clock in the night you had a dream. In the dream, you went to Bangalore and participated in a programme. When did you start? How did you travel? When did you reach? What was the reason? You do not know. This only means that the above four aspects do not exist in the dreaming state. In the Sushupti (deep sleep state), there is no time, no reason, no duty and nothing that you do; you only experience bliss.

In the waking state, you undertake different tasks with your body. In dreaming state, you create everything including your own self. In deep sleep, you enjoy bliss. You are one and the same in all the three can be said that man is changeless in all the three periods of time and experiences bliss directly or indirectly. He experiences oneness in all the three periods of time. When once he understands this spirit of oneness, there will be no scope for differences and conflicts. So long as you identify yourself with the body, you find only multiplicity.

Three Sins of Sankara

Once Adi Sankara went to Kasi and prayed to Lord Vishwanath thus: "O Lord! I have come here to redeem myself of the three sins I have committed." He had not harmed anyone nor did he steal anything. Then why did he call himself a sinner?

He explained the first sin in the following words: "It was I who declared, *Yatho Vachho Nivarthantho Aprapya Manasa Sah*. Though I know that you are beyond the ken of thought and word, I tried to describe you in a string of words: *Isha, Gireesha, Naresha, Paresha*. I have committed the sin of not practising what I preached. This is my first sin. Though I declared that God is everywhere, I have come all the way to Kashi to have Your Darshan as if You are present only in Kashi. I have committed the sin of saying one thing and doing another. This is my second sin. It was I who said, *Na Punyam, Na Papam, Na Sukham, Na Duhkham*, which means there is no sin, no merit, no joy and no sorrow. Yet I am praying for the atonement of my sins. This is the third sin I have committed."

The significance of Sankara's statement is that the disharmony of thought, word and deed is in itself a sin. "*Manasyanyath Vachasyanyath Karmanyanyath Duratmanam*", the evil one is he who does not observe the unity of thought, word and deed. "*Manasyekam Vachasyekam Karmanyekam Mahatmanam*", he is the noble one who has achieved the unity of thought, word and deed.

Lord's Name, the only Saviour

Every action of Sankara is a teaching to humanity. When he was returning from Kasi, he found a person who was trying to memorise Panini's grammatical formula by constantly repeating, "*Dukrun Karane, Dukrun Karane*". Sankara decided to give him a teaching. He went and asked him what benefit he would get by repeating Panini's grammar. That man said, he could become a great pandit, join the court of the king and earn lots of money and lead a happy life. When Sankara asked him, what would happen to him after death, he said he did not know. Then

Sankara told him, "O foolish man, understand that the body, money and power are temporary. Attain the eternal bliss, which you can enjoy even after your death:" Sankara sang the following verse:

*"Bhaja Govindam Bhaja Govindam Govindam Bhaja Mooda Mathe,
Samprapthe Sannihite Kale Nahi Nahi Rakshathi Dukrun Karane."*

(O foolish man, chant the name of the Lord. When the hour of death approaches, it is only the Lord, who can save you and not your grammar.) Though Sankara had no personal gain, he strove hard for the emancipation of humanity.

Engage Yourself in Sacred Actions

Not only Sankara, Krishna too did the same. In Bhagavad Gita, He declared:

*"Na Me Parthasthi Karthavyam Trishu Lokeshu Kinchana,
Nanavapthamavapthavyam Varthayevacha Karmani."*

"I don't have to do anything in these three worlds, nor do I gain anything. But yet, in order to teach humanity, I constantly engage Myself in action from dawn to dusk, so that people follow My ideal and sanctify their lives." Only through action man can redeem himself.

Karmanyevadhikarasthe Maphaleshu Kadhachana", you have got right on action, not on the results. *"Karmanubandheeni Manushyaloke",* humanity is bound by action. No one can spend his or her time without involving in action.

When I ask some of the foreigners, what they are doing, they say, they are doing nothing. They think action is related to involving in some kind of job or business. In fact, our inhalation and exhalation process is also a kind of action. Even the movement of eyelids is action. Day in and day out, body is engaged in some kind of activity or the other. The noblest way is to engage the body in sacred actions such as Shravanam-listening to the Lord's stories, Kirtanam-singing His glories, Smaranam-remembrance, Padasevanam-service to the Lotus Feet, Archanam-worship, Vandanam-salutation, Dasyam-servitude, Sakhyam-friendship, Atmanivedanam-offering oneself to the Lord i.e., self-surrender.

You should understand that whatever Sadhana you do, be it Japa, Tapa, Yoga, Dhyana or Bhajan, it is for your own satisfaction. God does not need them. Some people think they worship for God's sake; it is a mistaken view. Whatever man does is for his own sake and to meet his selfish ends.

Vision of the True Self

As you inhale, you make the sound 'So' and when you exhale, you utter the sound 'Ham'. Together 'Soham' means "I am That", which means you are God. When you go on repeating, 'Soham', 'Soham', where is the need for any Sadhana? Where is God? How to see Him? These questions of seeing and experiencing God have been there since ancient times. In fact, you have to take to spiritual path in order to know your true identity i.e., Divinity. He who knows his true identity is a true aspirant. Without realising this truth, all spiritual Sadhana will be a waste of time.

"Sareeramadhyam Khalu Dharma Sadhanam," body is gifted to undertake righteous actions. What is our Dharma? Love is our Dharma. Truth is our Dharma. Peace is our Dharma. We should follow our Dharma. The quality of sugar is sweetness; if it is not sweet, then it is not sugar. Similarly, Love is your natural quality. Without Love, you cannot be called a human being. There is love in you, but you are limiting it to your family, friends and relations. But remember that your relations will come with you only up to the burial ground. It is only God, who is with you always, even after your death.

"Janthunam Narajanna Durlabham," human life is the rarest. Such a sacred and noble life should not be wasted. Having taken birth as a human being, you should set an ideal. A dancer always keeps the rhythm in her mind, while dancing. Similarly, you should always remember your innate divinity in whatever you do. Maya (illusion) is like a Nartaki (dancer) always trying to distract you. In order to control this 'Nar-ta-ki', you have to reverse the order of the letters and do 'Kir-ta-na' i.e., singing Lord's name. (Cheers)

*"Harernama, Harernama Harernamaiva Kevalam,
Kalau Nasthyeva Nasthyeva Nasthyeva Gathiranyatha."*

In this Age of Kali, Lord's name is the only refuge.

Many people aspire for 'Sakshatkaram' (vision of the true Self). Westerners say that they want Liberation. But they do not know what it really means. If you want to see your Self, you should give up body attachment and develop attachment towards the Self. Only then you will have 'Sakshatkaram'. At birth, you cry, 'Koham', 'Koham', which means 'Who am I?' 'Who am I?' You should not die with the same question on your lips. When you die, you should be able to assert cheerfully, 'Soham', meaning 'I am God'. Finding out the answer for the question, 'Who am I?' is true Liberation.

Today you have endless worries such as birth, death, old age, losses, failures, family life etc. All these are of your own making. They arise because of your attachment and delusion. God does not give them. Who is the giver and who is the receiver, when you are God yourself. So long as you have 'Bhrama' (delusion), you cannot attain Brahma (God). Just as ash covers the fire, likewise Maya conceals your true identity. Fire is seen when ash is blown away. Similarly, you can have the vision of the Self, when you give up body attachment.

Divinity through Unity

Vedanta says, *"Ekam Sath Viprah Bahudha Vadanthi,"* Truth is one, but scholars refer to it by many names. The same water has different names in different languages. Similarly, God is one, but He is worshipped in many forms and names. 'I' is the first name of God. Right from the pauper to a millionaire uses the letter 'I' while introducing himself. This 'I' is your true identity. The single letter 'I' refers to the Atma, while the three-lettered 'eye' refers to body. Body has three attributes; whereas, the Atma has none. Atma is Supreme Bliss. It is the eternal witness and beyond all descriptions. *"Ekatma Sarvabhoothantharatma,"* it is the same Divinity that is present in all beings.

Embodiments of Love!

Try to enjoy and experience the love that is in you. If someone says there is no God, tell him, "May be your God does not exist for you, but my God exists for me. You have no right to question the existence of my God." You have to argue with conviction. Such an argument will silence the person. Each one is mad in his own way. The world itself is like a mental hospital. There are some who derive delight in self-praise. There are some that beat and accuse others. But the madness for God is the noblest. God sees to it that you give up madness for the world and become mad for Him. Only a fortunate few will be blessed with this madness for God. If only the entire humanity develops this madness for God, the world will be rid of disturbances and peace will prevail.

Students! Embodiments of Love!

After every Bhajan session, you are praying for the peace of the world (*Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavanthu*). You find only 'pieces', but no peace in this world. In fact, if you develop love and tolerance towards fellow beings, there will be no need to pray for peace; the world will automatically become an abode of peace.

Develop love in you and share it with at least ten persons in a day. There are 95 crore people in this land of Bharat. If each one goes on sharing his love with others, then all will be one. Out of this unity, you will attain Divinity. Where there is mistake, there is fear; where there is love, there is no fear. Why *fear when I am near and dear?* (*Cheers*) You should have full faith in Divinity. Many devotees come here, but how many are firm and steady in their faith? All the worldly desires are negative in nature. The negative feelings stand in the way of attaining the positive. So, do not imbibe negative feelings. Develop positive feelings and think of God with unwavering faith.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the Bhajan "Hari Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahi..."

From Bhagavan's Discourse at Prasanthi Nilayam on 26th September 1998

AVATAR VANI:

BHAGAVAN'S KODAIKANAL DISCOURSES-VI

Man, Truth, Love and God

The Vedas, sacred texts and other scriptures cannot help man to cut off the curtain of illusion. While man is in front of the curtain, God is behind it. The cause is behind and the effect is in front of the curtain.

(Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of Love!

From ancient times, Bharat has treasured the spiritual wealth and spread the message of "Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavanthu" all over the world, praying that all people in the world should Be happy. Today man has attained considerable progress in science and technology, but moral values and righteous conduct are on the decline. He has become slave of selfishness. Whatever one thinks, speaks or does is only based on self-interest. Human quality has become rare among men, and animal quality is predominant.

Value of Discipline

Human life is extremely sacred and it is a matter of shame that man is not living upto his ideals. Man today lives as he likes without following any discipline. Discipline is needed in every aspect to maintain the right course of life: "*Na Sreyo Niyamam Vina*". A river has two banks. But for this, the river may flow in all directions flooding the fields and villages and causing untold hardship and disaster. If it has banks to regulate the course of flow, it will be useful for irrigation.

In the similar manner, the river of life has to be contained between the two banks of eight-lettered axioms. One is "*Sraddhavan Labhate Jnanam*" and the other is "*Samsayatma Vinasyathi*". Both these declarations are made by Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita. The meaning of the first one is, "it is only by faith that one attains wisdom" and the second one means "one who doubts will perish." So long as one has doubt, one cannot achieve anything. He who has no doubt and has full faith can achieve anything. The river of human life flowing between these two banks reaches the goal successfully.

A tree that needs water is provided water only at the root. Though the root cannot be visible to your eyes as it is buried under the earth, it is the basis for the tree to thrive. If the root is dry, the tree becomes dead. So, you have to safeguard the root. Similarly, you have to safeguard the root of life, i.e., you should have firm faith in the Self. Therefore, these two eight-lettered axioms are the essential needs of life. "*Samsayatma Vinasyathi*" is comparable to the root and "*Sraddhavan Labhate Jnanam*" is comparable to the tree of life. You have branches, leaves and components of a tree. The purpose of planting a sapling is to get fruit from the tree. The goal of human life is Poorna Jnana (perfect knowledge). Total faith is needed to achieve this goal.

Three Aspects of Divinity

One should expand the broad feelings of the heart to foster the tree of life to grow and retain its vitality. That is why ancient teachers used to pray: "*Annam Brahma, Raso Vishnu, Vak Maheshwara*". This was the prayer chanted by the ancient seers before taking food. Food maintains the energy of the body by its essence getting distributed to all parts of the body. To safeguard the functions of all the limbs and sense organs, the mind has to be in fine fettle. For this 'Vak' or speech should be truthful and purposeful. Therefore, these three important requisites for human life, i.e. body, mind and speech (Mano-Vak-Kayam) are treated as the three aspects of divinity—Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara. Vishnu is all-pervasive; so also mind is all-pervasive. It is said "*Manomoolam Idam Jagat*". Maheshwara represents Sabda or sound (Vak). That is why God is described first as *Shabda Brahmayi*, then *Characharamayi*, *Jyotirmayi*, *Vangmayi*, *Nityanandamayi*, *Paratparamayi*, *Mayamayi* and *Srimayi*. By expansion of love, we acquire all the eight types of divinity. Everyone should realise the divinity within. Only then he or she may be considered to lead a true life.

The body is not just the physical one consisting of all the limbs and organs. God has gifted this body to man to discharge his Dharmic duties. The mind creates the Bhavam (feeling or thought) which is expressed through the tongue in words and done by the limbs in action. Human life is a combination of the functions of thought, speech and action. The Divine is manifest in man, though many do not realise this.

(Bhagavan sang a song to spell out the omnipresence and all-pervasiveness of God: *Can you limit the One, who created the universe, within a frame of picture? When even demi-gods cannot understand Him, how can a mere mortal understand? What name can you give the One, who manifests in all names and forms? What can you offer to the supreme power who has the universe as His stomach? One whose effulgence is equal to crores of suns, what light can you use for illuminating Him?*)

We cannot worship such a supreme power in narrow ways. Even though He is so vast, you can still comprehend Him in the human heart just as you see the outside world in a small mirror. He is Hridayavasi. Who are you? Who is He? If you enquire, 'I' the inner self is the seer and all this is the seen. The entire world is a combination of seer and seen. Many people are sitting in this Hall. 'I' am the seer. All the people are seen and My body itself is seen by Me. So, 'I' the seer is different from the body that is seen. 'I' is the eternal witness. Let us not be carried away by the 'seen'. We must make efforts to perceive the 'seer'. We cannot do this with physical eyes. We have to develop the 'wisdom eye' (Jnana Chakshu) in order to see the 'seer'. It is only through inner vision that you can attain liberation and not by your physical vision. The Chaitanya (Awareness Principle) is prevalent all over the world. But we ignore the Chaitanya and visualise Jada (inert).

To understand the truth of spirituality, you may take the example of the animals which get sanctity and become objects of worship when they are associated with the Divine. The snake, when it is around the neck of Lord Siva is worshipped by all. When it is encountered elsewhere, people do not hesitate to kill it. Similarly, the mouse which is the vehicle of Vinayaka is an object of worship when it is with Vinayaka, but when it is seen in your house, you trap it and try to do away with it. When we see the bull made of stone in a Siva temple, we worship it. But when we see a bull in daily life, we do not hesitate even to beat it. This teaches the lesson that when we are in the company of God, we are held in high esteem.

Just as the limbs are a part of our body, we are all the limbs of the body of cosmic form (*Sahasraseersha Purushaha Sahasraksha Sahasrapad*). The cosmic form is of thousands of heads, feet, hands and eyes. All forms are His. If we develop strong faith in this, we can understand divinity in its true spirit. (Bhagavan sang a song in Telugu conveying the truth that God is beyond description. *"Is it possible to describe You with the limited human intellect? You are minuter than atom and mightier than the macrocosm. You are present in a subtle form in all the 84 lakh species. You are pervading everywhere. Who can describe You?"*)

There is no question of your searching for truth. It is everywhere and in everyone. When you have light in your own house, where is the need for going to your neighbour to borrow, a lamp? Develop the infinite light of love within yourself. The light of life is shining with effulgence within you. In order to see a light, you do not need another light. In order to see the moon, you do not need a torch. Similarly, there is no need for any other light to realise the self-effulgent Atma within. The light of life is divinity. God says you are a fragment of His Eternal Self. Every individual is the spark of the Divine.

Satchitanandam who spoke earlier mentioned about Sharanagati or surrender. Surrender involves three entities: one is the person who surrenders, the other the one to whom he surrenders and the

third is the act of surrender. If we analyse carefully in the spiritual sense, you have a person, mirror and reflection. When you remove the mirror, the reflection is automatically gone. So, you find three minus one becomes one only. It is the person only that remains. Similarly, Prakriti is the mirror, Jiva (individual) is the reflection of the Divine. When Prakriti, the mirror, is removed, what remains is only one, that is, the Divine. The individual is only a reflection. When your vision is towards Prakriti (world), you have duality. When your vision is turned inward; you are One, that is, God and nothing else. Even Prakriti is the creation of God. When everything is divine, there is no second. This divine is nothing but love which is in all beings. Love is God, live in love. It has no beginning and no end. It is infinite, you cannot fragment it. All spiritual paths are paths of love. The goal is also love. It is that, which always exists in this world. You should never give up love at any time.

In earthly parlance jealousy, pride, etc. are evil attributes. But if you see them all with love, you will never have hatred. There is no question of hatred when there is only one and not two. The current of Atma is flowing in all beings as love; you have to develop the spirit of love and expand it. You should not care about names and forms. See only the unity in the diverse forms and names. You will realise the Divine. Just as the Bhramara (humming butterfly) injects the humming sound in the insect and turns it into its own form, you should concentrate on the Divine and become divine.

You are Brahma, Vishnu, Maheshwara as already said. Parents have given you the physical body and name. But the heart (spiritual) is given by God. No one else can give this. To have a compassionate heart is the attribute of human nature. It is giving and forgiving. It is not at all keen on getting anything. Develop oneness with love. People do several types of Sadhana like turning the Japamala and meditation. While the body may be still, the mind goes about wandering all over! Even a little mosquito disturbs you and you strive to kill it while engaged in Dhyana. You should cast off the attachment to body. Body is the temple of God. But God is the indweller. This truth you should never lose sight of. Nature is also a manifestation of God. The ancients saw the truth that food is Brahma, mind is Vishnu and Vak is Maheshwara. Man is a combination of these three. That is why when we pray to Siva we say we offer the three-fold body to Him just as we offer the Bilva leaf with three parts. This is the principle of surrender (Sharanagati).

Shun Bad People and Places

Lakshmana is a superb example of the attitude of surrender. When Rama, Sita and Lakshmana went to the forest and reached Chitrakoot, Rama told Lakshmana, "I am feeling tired and Sita too is tired. It is better we stay here for some time. So, I would like you to put up a cottage in which we can stay for a longer duration, if necessary for the whole period of 10 years. You can put up the cottage in any place of your choice"

Hearing these words, Lakshmana felt hurt and bent down his head with grief. Noting this, Sita asked Lakshmana, "Why are you perturbed, Lakshmana? Your brother did not speak anything harsh. Why do you feel so?" Lakshmana said, "Have I ever had any choice of my own? I left my mother; wife and all comforts of life and accompanied you both to serve. I have surrendered myself to Rama. Where is the question of my command of Rama is what I want carry out. While so, how can I withstand the impact of Rama asking me to put up the cottage at a place of my

choice?" Rama realised the sacred feelings of Lakshmana and the true attitude of his surrender and pointed out the site himself.

Such an ardent devotee of Rama, with the attitude of complete surrender, once suddenly turned hostile and said, "Rama, I am leaving You and returning to Ayodhya. Why should I come with You? Only you were asked to go to forest. I shall go back to Ayodhya to join my wife and mother." Rama was surprised at this unexpected turn in the mind of Lakshmana and asked him to wait for a while, and walking away some distance halted under a tree for shelter. Then Lakshmana repented for his lapse and said, "I am sorry, I don't want to leave You and go. I do not know why I got such an unnatural attitude all of a sudden!" Rama said, "You were then in the region of Surpanakha, the demoness. So, your mind wavered. Now we have come out of her territory and you are normal" This is a lesson to show that even a great devotee like Lakshmana could be upset by traversing the region of a demonic person. Rama saw that Chitrakoot was the seat of Rishis and so decided to stay there.

That is why you should shun bad company and bad places haunted by bad people. Discriminate between what is good and what is bad, which gives permanent joy and which is transient. Do good deeds. If you surrender to the Atma and be constantly in touch with it, God will be with you, around you, above you and below you.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the Bhajan "*Govinda Krishna Jai*".

From Bhagavan's Divine Discourse at "Sai Shruti", Kodaikanal on 23.4.1998

The Most Deserving Devotee

Humility and obedience are the qualities of a devotee. Excessive humility that often goes with devotion might act as a barrier in forging the spirit of intimacy with God which is so vital for attaining Atmajnana or Supreme Wisdom. On the other hand, close friendship and excessive familiarity might make a person take undue liberties. For these reasons, Krishna referred to Arjuna as both 'devotee' and 'friend' or one in whom friendship is enriched by humility and devotion is tempered by intimacy. As Arjuna was both a devotee as well as a friend of the Lord, he was the most deserving recipient of the Bhagavad Gita.

—Baba

AVATAR VANI

BHAGAVAN'S CHRISTMAS DISCOURSE

Sacrifice Leads to Immortality

*Adored by the Muslims as Allah,
As Jehovah by the Christians,
As the lotus-eyed Lord Vishnu by the Vaishnavites,
And as Sambhu by the Saivites,*

*God is worshipped as the one Supreme Self,
Who confers health and wealth.
People may worship God in various names and forms,
But the very same God responds to the prayers of all.*

(Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of Love!

Everyone is aware of the fact that human life is highly valuable, noble and sacred. Keeping in view the welfare of the society, the alumni of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, Anantapur, calling themselves as "Messengers of Sathya Sai", are undertaking many service activities. First and foremost, one has to understand the true meaning of the term "messenger". Every human being is a messenger of God. Everyone is born in this world by the Will of God. Only constant enquiry will reveal the reason behind God sending His messengers to the world.

*Man's foremost duty is to make the stream of Divine Love flow to one and all.
Man is born not merely to live for himself.
Only by dedicating his life to the service of the society will he ennoble
himself and achieve self-satisfaction.
God has sent man to this world to practise and propagate this message.
Of what avail is human birth if man remains like a lump
of clay without serving the society?*

(Telugu Poem)

All are Messengers of God

Having taken birth as a human being, one has to realise the divinity within. The primary duty of every individual, as a messenger of God, is to practise and propagate the principles of truth, love and peace, and experience the bliss and share it with others. The one, who propagates the worldly, fleeting and ephemeral matters, cannot be called a messenger of God.

When Jesus was born, three Arabian kings came to see Him. They were overjoyed on seeing the newborn babe. While returning, the first king said to Mother Mary, "Mother, you have given birth to a child who loves God" The second king said, "Mother, you have given birth to a child who will be loved by God." The third king said, "Mother Mary, your child is not different from God, both are one and the same." Once we understand the inner meaning of these three statements, we will know the Truth. The one who loves God is the messenger of God; the one whom God loves is the son of God; the one who understands the unity of God becomes one with God.

Today there are only a few who are propagating the message of God, but the majority of the people are doing just the opposite. Having been the recipient of divine love, man should propagate the same principle to his fellow men. This is what Jesus proclaimed at the time of leaving his mortal coil, "All are one, my dear son! Be alike to everyone." Give up body attachment. The body is bound to change and will perish ultimately. God is the embodiment of Truth. Truth is that which does not change in all the three periods of time. One has to follow the path of truth to propagate the Principle of Truth and Divine Love. God loves those who follow the path of truth. Jesus propagated the divine message of Love. He said, "Death is the dress of

life." So, He said, one has to give up body attachment and develop attachment to the spirit. Body is like a water bubble. It is merely a vesture of the individual soul.

The culture of Bharat declares, "*Deho Devalaya Prokto Jeevo Deva Sanathana*" (body is the temple of God and the indwelling spirit is eternally divine). The ancient and eternal Divinity assumes human form in order to show the Path of Truth to man. Just as the son is the rightful heir to the father's property, man has equal claim to the God's property of love, truth, forbearance, peace and empathy. The Principle of Love is supreme. Love is the underlying principle of all human values. Love is God, live in love.

Every human being is a messenger of God. Man should not waste his life in merely eating, drinking and sleeping. In fact such a life is a blot on human nature itself. Every activity of man should reflect the divine message. Unfortunately, this is not the case with man today. Some people claim that they have dedicated their lives to the mission of God. But in reality it is not so. They are wasting their precious time in materialistic pursuits. There is nothing wrong in studying, doing jobs and earning money provided they are done in the right spirit, which is beneficial to one and all.

You see many people suffering. In what way are you helping them? Jesus opposed the practice of animal sacrifice in Jerusalem. As a result, he had to face strong opposition. People who help mankind are put to harm.

Worship God in Pleasure and Pain

The dualities of life such as pain and pleasure go hand in hand.

*Pain and pleasure co-exist,
It is impossible to separate them,
Pleasure does not exist separately,
The fructification of pain is pleasure.
(Telugu Poem)*

This message of truth must be taught to the entire world. Without pain one does not realise the value of pleasure. The value of light can be realised only when there is darkness. This was the teaching of Jesus. One has to overcome difficulties to be successful in life. Give happiness to those who are suffering. Consider every activity as God's work. Right from birth man has been experiencing pain and pleasure. But, he is unable to realise that there is happiness in pain. What type of happiness? Is it related to the body or the mind? No. It is related to the Atma.

Peace is essential for man at all the three levels—body, mind and spirit. This is the reason we chant Santhi three times. Man can attain peace at these three levels only by developing love for God. The one without love for God will never be peaceful. All worldly pleasures are fleeting and momentary. The same sentiment was echoed by Sankaracharya:

*"Ma kuru Dhana Jana Yauvana Garvam
Harathi Nimeshath Kalah Sarvam."*

Do not be proud of your wealth, progeny and youth; the tide of time may destroy them in a moment. What is happiness? Is it sitting in an air-conditioned room or partaking, of delicious food? These confer happiness only at the physical and mental levels, not at the level of the Atma.. True happiness is that which is related to the Atma. You should not be afraid of difficulties; they are passing clouds. Do not waver. Follow the heart, which is steady and unwavering. Unity of head, heart and hand is essential for man. This is the true significance behind the Christians making cross sign (*cheers*). (Swami made a sign of holy cross to show how it covers heart, hands and head). Install God in your heart. Contemplate on Him and undertake good deeds. Consider every activity as God's work and act accordingly. Merely feeding the poor and distributing clothes to the needy do not constitute Seva. Along with this one has to cultivate love, which is eternal. Right from dawn to dusk all our actions should be suffused with love.

*Start the day with Love,
Fill the day with Love,
Spend the day with Love,
End the day with Love,
This is the way to God.*

There are very few who publicise this message. It is not enough if you call yourself a messenger; you have to spread the divine message. Fortunate are those who pay heed to God's words. Whether people listen or not, discharge your duty of spreading His message.

Many people call themselves devotees without understanding the meaning and significance of the term devotion. Devotion does not mean performing rites and rituals. True devotion lies in obeying the command of the Lord and spreading His message. In spite of innumerable difficulties, King Harishchandra never swerved from the path of truth. One has to worship God both in times of pain and pleasure. Unfortunately, due to the effect of Kali Age, people worship Him when everything goes well, but criticise Him in times of difficulties. When it was ordered that all the devotees of Jesus should be crucified along with Him, even His closest devotees, Peter, Matthew, and Paul refused to identify themselves as His followers. Can these be called true devotees? One should be prepared to sacrifice everything for the sake of God. Under any circumstances, do not disobey the command of God. That is determination. Determination gives rise to sacrifice, which leads to immortality.

"Na Karmana Na Prajaya Dhanena Thyagenaike Amrutathwa Manasuhu", it is only sacrifice, not wealth, progeny and action that confers immortality. If money and health are lost, they can be regained, but if character is lost everything is lost. Today man is striving hard for wealth and happiness, while neglecting character. Truth and divine love constitute true wealth. If you earnestly follow the path of truth, you will not encounter any difficulties. How can you expect God to protect and confer His grace on you if you do not adhere to truth? True devotion lies in accepting both pleasure and pain with equal-mindedness. Such divine message should be passed on to others. The true message is the message of Love. Share love with everybody. There is no greater wealth than love. Once, an angel appeared in the dream of John and handed a book asking him to read and digest its contents. Here, digestion means putting into practice the essence contained therein. Valmiki described Ravana a fool, though he had mastered 64 types of

knowledge, because he did not practise what he learnt. Rama on the other hand practised what He learnt.

Follow the Ideals of Jesus

Vedanta says, "*Brahmavid Brahmaiva Bhavath* ", the knower of Brahman becomes Brahman himself. John resembled Jesus in all respects, as he constantly contemplated on Him. "*As you think, so you become.*" If you think of God incessantly, you will assume His form. Prahlada never gave up the Lord's name even in times of adversities. As he surrendered himself to Lord Narayana completely, he was protected. When he was thrown into the ocean, the waves assumed the form of Lord Narayana. When he was pushed from mountaintop, Lord Narayana held him in His arms, and when he was bitten by venomous snakes, the poison became nectar. Never feel depressed when you are weighed down by difficulties. God will never impose on you the ordeals, which you cannot bear. He tests his devotees in various ways. Test is the taste of God. Never fear any test. Be ready to sacrifice even your life for the sake of God. Only then God will protect you.

Initially, Paul hated Jesus. One day Jesus appeared in his dream and asked him lovingly, "Paul, what harm have I done to you, why do you criticise Me? All your travails are consequences of your own actions; I am not responsible for your suffering." Then Paul was transformed and attained sainthood. Thus, Jesus transformed many sinners into saints. Worship Jesus by following His ideals. Jesus pointed to three stages. The first one is, "I am the Messenger of God". He wanted to propagate the message of God. The second one is, "I am the Son of God". The son has a claim to father's property. What is the property of God? Truth, love, forbearance, peace and righteousness are the properties of God. So, man has to strive to attain these qualities. He has to practise, experience and propagate these virtues. Only then man deserves to be called Son of God. The third one is "I and My Father are one". This stage is attained when the principle of unity is realised. When Jesus reached this stage, He had no suffering at all; He was always blissful and was prepared for anything. Even at the time of crucifixion, he was smiling, because he realised that He was not the body. Body is bound to perish, but the indweller has no birth and death. Truly speaking, the indweller is God Himself. Jesus understood that body was merely vesture, and He was the indweller.

You should have the firm faith that you are the Messenger of God. Propagate Swami's message to the entire world. Some people may like it and some may not. Do not bother about what others say, be it 'yes' or 'no'. 'No' and 'yes' relate only to you, but for Sai everything is yes, yes, yes (*cheers*). There are no defects in God. All words and deeds of God are perfect. You see the reflection, reaction and resound of your feelings. They are psychological in nature. God always gives good alone. Understand and experience this truth.

Matthew was a tax collector. He would meet fishermen regularly and enquire as to how they acquired faith in Jesus. Thomas used to doubt the divinity of Jesus. Such doubting Thomases are on the rise in this Age of Kali. Never be in the company of such people. God is like fire and you are like coal. When coal comes in contact with fire, coal becomes one with fire. Similarly, when you come in contact with God you become one with Him. Have total faith in God.

Embodiments of Love!

All are messengers of God. All are embodiments of love. There is nobody without love. But, you are misusing it by diverting it to worldly relations. No doubt, you need to take care of your wife and children. But, that is not all. God alone is important. Zero gains value when one precedes it. Moon is zero, sun is zero, world is zero, only God is the Hero. Everything comes to nought in the absence of this Hero (*cheers*). A hero becomes zero if he forgets God. Have total faith in the Hero, God. Never give scope for any doubt. Then you are bound to be successful. Jesus experienced and propagated this truth.

Divine Proximity, the Greatest Wealth

The term Christmas has been derived from the Roman language. Truly speaking, Christmas falls in the month of March, not in December. Since it is very cold in December and people are confined to their homes, they utilise this time to celebrate Christmas. Actually, Jesus was born in the month of March. With the passage of time, this fact has been distorted and misrepresented in the Bible. "*Munde Munde Mathir Bhinnah*", (opinions vary from person to person). Each one interpreted Bible in his own way. Some wrote that Jesus was never born. Some wrote that it was the brother of Jesus who was crucified, not Jesus and that He was in Japan at that time. This is all imagination. Jesus is Truth.

When Jesus was a small boy, His parents took Him to Jerusalem to attend a fair. After some time, Mother Mary not finding her son Jesus by her side believed that He had lost His way in the crowd and searched for Him frantically. Ultimately, she found Him listening with rapt attention to the sermon of the priest in a temple. That scene reminded her of the prophetic, words of one of the Arabian kings, who visited Jesus at the time of His birth, that He would love God. She hugged her son and shed tears of joy. Jesus said, "Mother, you can find Me in the company of God, but you have been searching for Me elsewhere. I consider divine proximity as My greatest wealth."

There is a profound message in this. Man is in search of God without realising that He is all-pervasive. He is the embodiment of love and can be attained only through love. When you realise that you are with God, for God, from God, you will find God everywhere. Strengthen the feeling that God is in you, with you, above you, below you and around you. How can you search for God who is all-pervasive? Saint Thyagaraja expressed the same feelings in a song, "*Nenendu Vedakudura Rama...*" (O Lord Rama! Where am I to search You?). "You are my only refuge. I cannot live without You", so saying he jumped into a river. To his joy, he found the idol of Lord Rama in the river. "O Rama! You are so great and compassionate; you are with me always. Not realising this truth I have spent my life in total ignorance." He extolled Rama in manifold ways and expressed his feelings in a song, "*Raara Maa Intidaaka...*" (O Lord! Please come to my residence). Only an ardent devotee can understand and experience the bliss of oneness with God. Sugar tastes bitter to a person suffering from malaria. Defect lies in his tongue, not in the sugar. So is the case with a person immersed in worldly desires. He cannot experience the sweetness of Divinity. Have the firm conviction "God is in me, with me, around me, behind me" When you think on these lines, you become divine. Never entertain the thought that you are separate from God.

Total Surrender Earns Divine Grace

When I distributed Saris to the 'messengers' yesterday, they expressed their gratitude by saying, "Thanks, Swami". I exhorted them, "Do not thank Me. I am not a third person. Do you thank your mother who serves you food everyday? You may thank an outsider from whom you receive a favour, but I am not an outsider" (*cheers*). So, never say thanks to Swami. Consider Swami as your own. Only then you will have the right to approach Swami. I do not desire anything from you for Myself, nor do I say or do anything for Myself. I do not want anything except one - your love. Even that is not your property, that also is My property (*cheers*). Love cannot be earned by any means. It is a gift of God. Gift this gift of love to God. Only then you will have self-satisfaction. That is your duty. The ancients used to pray: *"Oh Lord! I offer you my heart, which is but your gift. I offer you what you have bestowed on me. What else can I offer you? Kindly accept my humble and prayerful salutations."* (Telugu Poem) A person with such noble feelings is a true devotee and the one of sacrifice.

Extolling one's own devotion to the exclusion of others amounts to being egoistic. Never give scope for ego. Great devotees like Tukaram, Ramadas and Thyagaraja had to face many ordeals before they could win God's grace. Difficulties are part and parcel of lives of great devotees. God subjects His devotees to tests so that their faith in Him can be strengthened and their hearts are purified. It needs a great effort on your part to cleanse a stained vessel. Difficulties are meant for cleansing the vessel of your heart. When the idol of Rama was taken away from Thyagaraja, he was grief stricken. He questioned the divinity of Lord Rama. "Don't you have the power to solve my problems or do I lack devotion? Definitely I have devotion, it is only you who lack power." He continued in, -this vein extolling his devotion and in the process,` he became egoistic. When he sat in meditation, wisdom dawned on him. He realised his folly in doubting Rama's divinity. He reflected, without the grace of Lord Rama, could a monkey cross the ocean? If Rama lacked power, would Lakshmana worship Him or for that matter Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, serve Him and the extremely intelligent Bharata offer his salutations? "Oh Rama! Certainly your power is immense. It is because of my ignorance and meanness that I doubted your Divinity." He sought His pardon and surrendered himself to Lord Rama.

When you purify your heart and surrender yourself completely to God, He manifests instantly. He does not delay even for a moment. This was proved in the case of Ramadas also. When Ramadas surrendered himself to the Lord completely, Rama and Lakshmana went to the King Thaneesha in disguise and paid the tax on behalf of Ramadas. On being questioned as to who they were, they replied that they were the servants of Ramadas. Thus, we find that the Lord becomes the servant of His devotee, when there is total surrender (*cheers*). This is the power of devotion.

There are many obstacles along the path of devotion. Some people accuse, criticise and censure God in times of difficulties. Each one has to bear the consequences of his own actions. God remains unaffected. God is pure, unsullied and sacred. Let people say anything, be cool and calm. Do not enter into unnecessary arguments with them. It only breeds enmity. Speak softly and sweetly with a smiling face. That will silence the critic. Smile is the best answer to criticism. When Paul went on accusing Jesus, He lovingly went up to him and gave a pleasing smile. The sweetness in the nectarine smile of Jesus transformed the poisonous heart of Paul. Be always cheerful, even in times of adversities. Always put up a smiling face, never a castor-oil face. "Happiness is union with God".

True Christmas in Prasanthi Nilayam

Embodiments of Love!

We have been celebrating Christmas every year here. True Christmas is celebrated only in Prasanthi Nilayam, where people of all religions join together to celebrate it (*cheers*). Generally, the Hindus celebrate Hindu festivals, the Muslims celebrate their festivals, and the Christians celebrate their festivals, so on and so forth. It is only in Prasanthi Nilayam that people of all religions - Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Parsis, etc., come together to celebrate Christmas (*cheers*). Prasanthi Nilayam symbolises the unity of all religions. Elsewhere people drink, eat non-vegetarian food and make merry in the name of Christmas. But Christmas in Prasanthi Nilayam is celebrated in a holy atmosphere. Christmas in Prasanthi Nilayam is a 'holy day', not a 'holiday'.

Practise whatever you have learnt here, even after you go back to your respective countries. Strengthen the feeling that you are the messenger of God and propagate the divine message far and wide. That is your primary duty. There is no greater service than this. Strive for the welfare of the whole world. The world is like a big mansion. Countries may be compared to its different rooms. Do not have the narrow feeling that only your country should be happy. Be broad minded. Pray for the welfare of all nations. On this basis, the ancients prayed, "*Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavanthu*" (Let the whole world be happy). Cultivate love. That is true Sadhana. Yesterday, children presented a magnificent drama, wherein the power of love was depicted. Love can transform even the wicked. It is only a matter of time before the wicked are transformed. Be patient. Develop love more and more. None can comprehend the divinity and sanctity of Swami. Twenty years ago when Christmas was celebrated for the first time in Prasanthi Nilayam, I sang a song:

*"Love is My form,
Truth is My breath,
Bliss is My food,
My life is My message,
expansion is My life,
No reason for Love,
no season for Love,
No birth, no death..."*

If anyone asks you to tell about Sai Baba, sing this song. It will convey the whole message. Tell him, Love is His form and His life is His message. Develop the feeling of brotherhood of man and fatherhood of God.

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajan, "*Prema Mudita Manase Kaho...*"

**—From Bhagavan's Christmas Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall at Prasanthi Nilayam on
25th December, 1998**

Unity is our Life Breath

*Punar Viththam Punar Mithram Punar Bharya Punar Mahi,
Ethath Sarvam Punar Labhyam Na Sareeram Punah Punah.*

Embodiments of Love!

Wealth once lost can be regained by one way or the other; if a friend is lost, one can make many more through good feelings; if wife is lost, one can marry again; if land is lost, it can be reacquired through some means; but once the body is lost, it can never be regained.

Worrying Affects Health

"Sareeramadyam Khalu Dharma Sadhanam", body is gifted to man to undertake righteous actions. So, it has to be sanctified by performing sacred deeds. Health is very essential in order to do so. In fact, health is the very foundation on which human life rests. If health is lost, you have to suffer in many ways. There is no greater wealth than health.

The body is a combination of different limbs. So, only when all limbs are utilised for sacred purposes can one have Pushti and Samtushthi (good health and happiness). For a healthy mind, one should have a healthy body. The Spirit (Atma) sustains human life on the basis of health of the body and the mind. A healthy human body is the very foundation for all virtuous and good actions. It is the primary requisite for the realisation of the four objectives of human life - Dharma (righteousness), Artha (wealth), Kama (desire) and Moksha (liberation).

We have to investigate why we lose our health. Excessive thinking, worrying and studying is the main cause for man's illness. Some students are absorbed in studies all the time, because of which they lose their health. There is a limit to everything. The Greek philosopher, Aristotle, conducted extensive research on the digestive system of man, and as a result of too much of thinking, his health deteriorated and ultimately he died of digestive problems. Constant investigations into cardiac ailments made the heart specialist, Dr. Herin, a heart patient and ultimately led to his death. Excessive activity in any field is harmful to health. Bear in mind the limitations of the body and act accordingly.

The main cause for your illness is psychological. This is nothing but illusion and delusion. We start imagining that a disease that is present in another person may also be present in us. 80% of the diseases are psychological. If you check your pulse rate under anxiety, you will find it abnormal. Do not bestow undue attention on your health; discharge your duties peacefully and happily, then everything will be all right.

Practise before You Preach

We are propagating principles of human values among the students. You should be aware of the capabilities of each student. Weak students should be equipped adequately both physically and mentally before they are taught higher values. The truth that health is wealth should be imprinted in their hearts. The word 'Vidya' has its origin in the Sanskrit root Vid', meaning wisdom, effulgence and bliss. The equivalent term for Vidya in English is education. Education is derived from 'educere', meaning 'to bring out' or 'to elicit'. It refers to manifesting that which is latent in man.

Educere comprises two aspects; one *is* related to the head and the other to the heart. Those faculties that enable man to carry on the activities like reading, writing, undertaking a job and earning a livelihood are related to the head. Sacred qualities like compassion, love, patience, truth, righteousness and justice etc. originate from the heart. These are meant for life, not for a living. The former relates to Pravritti, which is external and negative in nature and the latter to Nivritti, which is internal and positive in nature. Compassion, love, truth and patience cannot be acquired through the study of books. They are latent in our hearts. Education manifests these latent qualities in man.

All that emanates from the head is transient. Good health is ensured by the proper utilisation of head and heart. There are many unseen qualities in man. But man values only that which he sees, listens and experiences. But, no importance is given to that which is unseen. That which is unseen is actually responsible for experiencing the fruits of one's action. All human qualities spring from the heart only; they cannot be obtained from teachers or texts. Today we are human only in form, lacking human qualities. We should bring out our latent human qualities and start practising them. This will foster good health in us.

Teacher should practise before they preach. Be good, do good, see good and tell good. Practice speaks louder than precept. Modern students are highly intelligent. They observe the actions and behaviour of their teachers. They respect and follow their teacher only when they see harmony in their thoughts, words and deeds. Earlier teachers were called 'Acharyas', meaning those who practise what they preach. Today, the term Acharya has lost its significance since the teachers teach not from practical experience, but from bookish knowledge. That is why the desired results are not realised.

Everything in God's creation follows certain rules and regulations. The rising and setting of the sun is regulated by the Divine command. But, man today is not following the dictates of God, though he is endowed with supreme intelligence. Today man is acquiring knowledge, which is information oriented, not transformation-oriented. This information-oriented knowledge makes man a machine, a computer; whereas, transformation-oriented knowledge makes man a composer (*cheers*). The transformation-oriented knowledge confers human values. Today everyone is crazy after computers. What is the benefit accruing from it? Human brain is being under utilised. Today people depend on calculators for simple arithmetic. One should make use of the original computer, brain, gifted by God. We are giving up the original for the artificial. Art is outside; heart is inside (*cheers*). People follow the art, not the heart. Art should come from the heart.

Ladies Show the Way

A lot needs to be modified in the present educational system. Today, I do not find men taking an active part in the Bal Vikas movement. The number of certificates awarded to the lady teachers today bear ample testimony to this fact (*cheers*). Bal Vikas movement has gained momentum because of the active participation of ladies (*cheers*). Men should take a cue from the ladies and play an active role in Bal Vikas. Some men excuse themselves from Bal Vikas activities in the name of office work and other responsibilities. But they have time for watching television, playing cards, reading newspapers and attending clubs. Can they not utilise this time in Bal

Vikas as the ladies do? The country will prosper on the day when men cultivate the qualities of sincerity and devotion inherent in ladies.

Take Prasanthi Nilayam as an example. There is a Primary School, a Higher Secondary School and an Institute here. There is an ocean of difference in the quality of Primary School students on the one hand and those of the Higher Secondary School and Institute on the other. The reason is all teachers in the Primary School are ladies, who treat the children with motherly love and affection (*cheers*). On the contrary, men teach like fathers with all authority and power. Education should be imparted with all love and concern for the children, which unfortunately is lacking in men of today. A lady teacher, if she comes to know that her student is sick, will visit him at home to enquire about his well-being. This type of love and concern for the children should develop more and more among men.

Men in position should discharge their duties commensurate with the salaries received. Women have been setting an example in this regard. There is a telephone factory in Bangalore, wherein only women workers are employed. In reply to the question, why only women are employed in the factory, the Chairman clarified that their output was much higher than that of men (*cheers*). Ladies are more determined, dedicated and devoted to their work as compared to men. Here is another example. Today you find both men and women driving cars. But, more accidents occur when men are behind the wheel (*cheers*). This is due to lack of concentration in men.

In countries like Malaysia, Singapore, Japan, Germany etc., women are practising human values more than men. They are following Swami's command under all circumstances. Here is a small example. It is not for any glorification that I am relating this. Last week, the mother of a Mahila volunteer expired suddenly. She spent that night in the hospital and reported for duty as usual the next morning. I asked her as to how she could attend to her duty immediately after the demise of her mother. She replied, "Swami, You have said that both birth and death are, but, natural. Both are like twin birds that move together. Anyone who is born is bound to die. Whatever had to happen has happened. But I must discharge my duty. This is duty towards God. Everything else is ephemeral and transient, only God's work is permanent. So, I have come here to do that work." She is a resident here in the Mandir and has been serving for long. Since then she has not taken a single day's leave. The untimely death of her mother did not deter her from discharging her duties sincerely. She withstood all this by diverting her mind to God. Women have that sort of determination. She is none other than Asha, seated beside Mrs. Shourie (*cheers*). Her husband Shiv Pandit is a lecturer in the Institute.

Unity is Divinity

There are crores and crores of such sincere workers in this world. They are not striving for name and fame, but for Swami's grace. This shows that they have received Swami's teachings in their proper spirit. Even if a man practises one or two of these teachings, he can achieve a lot. Lord Krishna declared in the Bhagavad Gita, "There is nothing in this world that I want. Yet, I am constantly engaged in activity for the welfare of humanity." When God Himself is engaged in selfless activity, why not man? Success prevails where God and His ardent devotee come together. So, we should determine to follow the path shown by God. Wealth and property are passing clouds. "Money comes and goes, but morality comes and grows." Nothing is great in earning money. What happened to all the great kings of yore, who ruled over vast kingdoms?

Could they take even a pie with them when they left this world? No! So, utilise the money earned for the welfare of humanity. Do not be proud of your wealth. Greatness lies in sacrifice alone. One who sacrifices is a true Yogi. One who is immersed in worldly pleasures is a Rogi (diseased one). It is only sacrifice that confers immortality. Serve in your respective villages. Service does not mean sweeping the roads, cleaning the temple and feeding the poor.

Discharging one's duty sincerely is true service. Work in accordance with the salary you draw. That is service to the nation. Ensure that the Government is not put to loss under any circumstances. We are compelling the Government to borrow, because we are not contributing our share in sufficient measure. All those who are members of the Sai Organisation should work hard and wholeheartedly.

Embodiments of Love!

Develop love, take care of your health and serve the society. Then God will confer on you the necessary strength and happiness. When God can make a dumb speak and a lame ascend the mountain, why will He forsake those who are sincere and hard working? Develop faith in God. Mere chanting of the divine name will not confer peace of mind. Only selfless service coupled with total faith in God can do that. Treat everyone as your brother and sister. There may be difference of opinion at times but that should not lead to hatred and enmity.

The Pandavas are an outstanding example of this. When the Pandavas were in exile, Krishna visited them. On finding only Dharmaraja, Krishna enquired about the whereabouts of the other brothers. Dharmaraja replied that four of them had gone to fetch food and the remaining hundred were in Hastinapur. Krishna chided Dharmaraja for considering Kauravas also as his brothers. To this, Dharmaraja replied, "Krishna, don't you know this? When there is an internal conflict among ourselves we are five and they are hundred in number. But when there is an external threat, we all unite and are 105 in number.' Differences should not divide us. Members of the Sai Organisation should foster such unity. Let there not be any conflicts. Live like children of the same family. Get a good name, so that there is no other organisation comparable to the Sai Organisation in the world (*cheers*). Develop love and work unitedly.

Only when five fingers of the hand come together can any task be accomplished. One may be the President of the Organisation. That does not mean that one can act according to one's whims and fancies. But I am aware of the fact that there are no such people in Sai Organisation. Yet, I am cautioning you.

Once there was a quarrel amongst the five fingers of the hand. Each one claimed that it was the greatest and the most important one. The little finger felt that it was the chief of all, as it always took the lead in punishing the wicked. The ring finger claimed that it was the king of all as it bore the precious gems. The middle finger felt that it was the one of authority as it had two fingers on either side as bodyguards. The forefinger claimed that it was the ultimate authority as it evaluated who was good and who was bad. And in the end, the thumb said that it was the greatest as other fingers were ineffective in its absence. Each finger is unique in its own way, but it is only when all are united that success can be achieved.

Similarly, all are great, be it the President, Secretary, Co-ordinator or a Member. But, to make the work successful all should unite. All the wings of the Organisation—Samiti, Seva Dal, Bal Vikas etc. should work in harmony. Consider different wings as the fingers of the same hand and work unitedly. So, unity is very essential. You feel the stress and strain when you walk or work alone; not so when you are in a group.

*Let us all grow together, enjoy together,
Let us perform heroic deeds by working together,
Let us live without any conflict.*

(Telugu Poem)

The Vedas echo the same sentiments in the following verse:

*Saha Na vavathu, Saha Nau Bhunakthu,
Saha Veeryam Karavavahai,
Tejaswi Navadheethamasthu,
Ma Vidvisavahai.*

This togetherness made India a land of sacrifice, a land of spirituality and a land of purity.

Just as each limb is as important as any other in the body, so also is each individual in the society. All limbs have to work in unison for the effective functioning of the body. Unity is most essential for man. Unity leads to purity, which in turn leads to divinity. Cultivate the feeling of brotherhood of man and fatherhood of God. People may come from varied cultures, languages and countries, but all are the children of God. Since you make distinctions based on country, culture and language, you are unable to comprehend divinity. Everyone is a member of the universal family. Teachers must understand this truth and teach their students.

Lack of unity can lead a country, community or society to fragmentation. So, we should first and foremost achieve unity. *Members of Sai Organisations should consider unity as their very life breath. They should not differentiate between people on the basis of caste, creed and nationality. Follow the example of Sai. When Sai Himself treats everyone equally, why not you? Never give scope for any differences True independence lies in fostering unity. Therefore, to develop sacred divine human values, you should have unity first.*

Keep in view the prestige and honour of Sathya Sai Organisations. Whatever you do, be it good or bad, will reflect on Sathya Sai. To keep up the dignity of Sathya Sai, act in a truthful way. There should not be any differences or in-fights among the members of the Organisation. Resolve all conflicts through love and understanding. Love is God; live in love.

Work is Worship

Understand this point clearly. People engaged in various activities take at least a day off in a week. Why? For effective functioning of man and machine, rest is essential at regular intervals. It is good to take rest. Does Sai take any day off? No! (*Cheers*). Every day, every minute, every moment, I discharge my *duties* (*cheers*). Discharging one's duty is true Yoga. So, do your duty. Duty is God; work is worship.

When elders set an ideal, children will follow their footsteps. Elders should lead from the front. All elders should resolve to practise and propagate the human values. Chairmen, Secretaries and Co-ordinators should plunge into action. Only then there will be transformation, otherwise the whole life will be spent in giving and receiving information. Information relates to quantity; whereas, transformation relates to quality. Quality is essential, not quantity. Leaders should introspect and find out what transformation is effected in the individuals rather than keeping track of the number of certificates they have awarded. There is a lot of work going on abroad. Students consider human values as their very life breath. Though reluctant in the beginning, parents are sending their children to the Bal Vikas classes after observing a remarkable change in them. Human values will spread on the basis of interest evinced by the teachers. Everyone should work with sincerity, honesty, devotion and discipline.

Embodiments of Love!

In order to realise the goals you have set for yourself, work unitedly. Dr. Goldstein and Dr. Jum Sai spoke very lovingly. They want many more Bal Vikas Centres to be started and new institutions founded right from primary school to college level. Very good. Peace will reign supreme only when such noble things take place in this world.

If you all stand united, these things can be achieved in a moment. I am always in you, with you, around you, above you and below you (*cheers*). I am not confined to Prasanthi Nilayam and India alone. I am there wherever you are. Your heart is my temple. There will be no scarcity whatsoever. You will never fail in your endeavours. Work with total faith. Have total love. You are bound to achieve success. The whole world itself will be transformed into Sathya Sai Organisation and Sathya Sai will be installed in the hearts of one and all. Realise that Seva is for the benefit of one's own self and not for others. You need not wait for My approval of your projects. I bless all your projects and plans (*cheers*).

Bhagavan concluded His Divine Discourse with the Bhajan "*Govinda Krishna Jai...*"

Embodiments of Love!

Just as all of you joined together in perfect harmony and unison in following My Bhajan, have the same principle of unity in undertaking the service activities. You should take part not only in community singing but also in community work. Only then you will be blissful. I wish that you have this kind of harmony, integration and unity in singing Bhajans and rendering service to the society and derive the joy therefrom.

From Bhagavan's Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall at Prasanthi Nilayam on 20th November 1998 on the occasion of First Overseas Convention of Chairpersons of Sai Centres

Making a Precious Jewel

Give the guru your mind as you would entrust gold to the goldsmith. The guru may need to melt, mould or beat your mind, but do not worry, as He will return to you a precious jewel. Do not say, 'Swami give me peace, but don't give me pain' as Swami may need to inflict pain before the process of purification is completed.

—Baba

Divinity Protects and Safeguards Man

*If you cannot achieve what you want, do not waver or get depressed.
He is a realised one who is cheerful in the face of all adversities.*

(Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of Love! Students—Boys and Girls!

"Ekaamsena Sthitham Jagat", the whole universe is based on one aspect of divinity. Just as the sun's rays do not exist in the absence of the sun, so also the world cannot exist without divinity, the primordial basis. Here on this table you find a flower, a cup, a mike and a handkerchief. The word 'is' is used to connote the existence of all these items. Here the emphasis is on the word 'is'. There is a picture, there is a pot and there is a person. The word is proves their existence.

Power of the Elements

This 'is' explains the principle of divinity in full. The Shakti (power), Leelas (divine play) and the effulgence of God are limitless. The five elements are responsible for the protection and sustenance of the world. The first element, the earth, is the basis for mountains and hills, rivers and oceans, villages and cities, and forests. You can very well imagine the immense power of the earth, which supports all these. The earth is endowed with infinite power. Scientists have discovered that the earth rotates. True. Logically speaking, the rivers, oceans, mountains, villages and the cities should also rotate when the earth, the basis, rotates. It is not so in reality. It is only the earth that rotates. The railway track is the basis for the train to move. If the track also starts moving, what would be the plight of the passengers? From this it can be inferred that the track is the Adhara (basis) and the train, the Adheya (the object based on it). The table is the basis (Adhara) for the mike (Adheya) to rest upon. Make an effort to understand the relationship between the support (Adhara) and the supported object (Adheya). The earth, which is the repository of all powers (electrical, magnetic etc.) forms the basis, sustains and protects all the objects on it. There is no power, which is not present in the earth. The earth is able to support all the beings on it because of its infinite power.

Seen or unseen, water, the second element, is present all over the earth. It is water that sustains the life principle of humanity. It supports life on earth and is responsible for the evolution of life.

The third element, Agni (fire), is also all pervasive. It is present in the form of *Jataragni* in the human body. It is this *Jataragni*, which maintains the temperature of the human body at 98.4 degrees Fahrenheit. There is fire even in the ocean. That is termed as *Badabagni*. There is fire even in trees. When two branches rub against each other, fire is generated. Fire is immanent even in a stone. Fire emerges when two stones are struck against each other. Investigations on these lines will reveal that there is no place without fire.

Similarly, the fourth and fifth elements Vayu (wind) and the Aakasa (ether) are also all pervasive. The Aakasa is the basis for all. It is the origin of sound. In fact, all the other elements originated from Aakasa.

Therefore, we can conclude that the divine power which is omnipresent and omnipotent is present in all the five elements. When the five elements themselves are so powerful, how much greater the power of God should be! (*Cheers*). Though the five elements, which are essentially divine, are present in man, he is in quest of divine power which he feels is present elsewhere. These powers are insignificant for God who is aware of the past, present and future. So, make an attempt to understand the omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent nature of God.

Swami has no Body Attachment

The whole world is also a conglomeration of the five elements. The world cannot exist in the absence of even one of the elements. Whether you see them or not, the five elements are present everywhere. Here is a small example. Though air is invisible and intangible, it is everywhere. Similarly, divinity is invisible and intangible, yet is omnipresent. Without realising the divinity within him, man becomes egoistic and feel that all his accomplishment are due to his education, intelligence and physical prowess. But in reality it is the divinity that protects and safeguards man at every step from womb to tomb. No one has the power to protect one's own self. It is only the divine power and divine will that enables man to protect himself. Only divinity has free will, none else.

Whatever God says or does is for the welfare of humanity. God is selfless. There is no trace of selfishness in God. What is the benefit accruing to the sun by rising and setting? None at all. Sunrise and sunset are for the benefit of mankind. It enables man to discharge his duties during the day and rest during the night. Similarly, every act of God is for the benefit of mankind, not for His own.

As Narasimhamurthi pointed out, Kasturi once urged Me not to neglect this body in the process of saving a devotee. I replied, "This body has come for the sake of devotees and shall be utilised for doing anything and everything for their welfare" (*cheers*). Body attachment is human and total detachment is divine. Attachment to the body is responsible for all suffering and misery. Since God does not have any body attachment, He does not attach any importance to the suffering of His body. Once He assumes a body, many things are bound to happen to the body. Whatever happens is for the welfare of the whole world.

Students' Safety Pleases Swami

Students, both boys and girls, are very good. Students participate in various activities, be it academic or sports, only with a desire to please and satisfy Swami. I am very well aware of this fact. No doubt, students strive to please Swami and make Him happy. But, they do not enquire what actually pleases and satisfies Him and makes Him happy. Will Swami be pleased if you display your valour by jumping through a ring of fire or for that matter from a lorry moving at a high speed? Will it satisfy Swami if you display your courage by doing dare-devil stunts on motorbikes like jumping over 10-20 people lying on the ground? I am pleased when you are safe and sound and the audience is pleased and happy with your performance. He is the blessed one who conducts himself in a manner in which neither he is hurt nor others. You should be safe and

secure and at the same time desist from activities, which cause apprehensions in others. This is what I want. I am pleased with *Nidarshana* and not with *Pradarshana* (I give importance to feelings, not exhibitionism). Even a small action done-with a heart full of love pleases Me.

While returning from Bangalore (in the month of December), I instructed the Warden not to bring the boys for the Sports Meet. They attributed various reasons to this word of Mine. There may be many reasons (*Karana*), but what I am interested in is the action (*Karya*). After coming over here I told the Vice Chancellor that I do not object to boys participating in various sports and games such as badminton, tennis, volleyball etc. At the same time, I cautioned him to ensure that no harm is caused either to the participants or to the audience during the course of the programme scheduled for 11th January.

What Happened on 11th January?

Students are tender hearted, full of noble feelings and love for Swami. They planned various programmes with a view to please Me. I was very well aware of the impending danger. But, students were not receptive to My words. I felt there was no point in advising them in such a situation. Only when they face the consequences of disobeying My command will they realise the value of My words. Till this moment nobody is aware of what exactly happened on the 11th morning. They said that the Sports Meet was a grand success. I am also happy when you are successful. Students performed extremely well. Each contributed to the success of this event based on his capacities and capabilities.

That morning as I entered the stadium, I spotted two lorries. Immediately, I could visualise the danger lurking in the corner. I saw the lorries with huge scaffoldings placed over them. The boys planned to perform a few acrobatic feats on them. I knew that one of the rods was not fitted properly and was about to give in. If that were to happen, the boys would suffer a major head and spinal injury. I willed that the boys should be saved and decided to take it upon Myself.

Prior to this, one boy had suffered a spinal injury and had been admitted to the Manipal Hospital in Bangalore. Without any delay, I arranged for an ambulance to shift the boy to the hospital in Bangalore and gave 10,000 rupees to defray the immediate expenditure. I also ensured that our doctor accompanied him. Parents shed tears of gratitude when they came to know of the love showered by Swami on their son. The doctor said that the boy would not be able to sit or lie down as his spinal column was badly damaged. I told him, "Don't entertain any misgivings. Do as I say". Miraculously, by the time the boy reached the hospital, he could sit (*cheers*). He could sit on the bed in the hospital. He regained sensation in all his limbs which were numb till then. No danger whatsoever (*cheers*). He was protected because of My infinite mercy and boundless grace. I willed that such an untoward incident should not recur. Once the spinal column is fractured, it is impossible to set it right. All students should be safe and secure. I have repeatedly declared that students are My property (*cheers*). I consider students' welfare as My welfare and their happiness as My happiness. I never think of My happiness and My comfort. My only concern is that the students should not be disappointed or put to any inconvenience.

A day before the Sports Meet I had instructed four boys to surround the chariot and keep a vigil. They are also full of love and devotion for Swami. But I noticed that none of them was

present at that spot. Nobody is to be blamed. No one does this deliberately. Swami is the very life-breath of the students. (*Cheers*) I asked for the chariot to be stopped. A senior devotee was driving the chariot with all sincerity, love and devotion. He stopped the vehicle in accordance with My command. Just when I was about to speak to the Vice Chancellor, he accidentally lifted his foot from the clutch. That resulted in a jerk and I fell down in the chariot. As a result, I suffered injuries on my head, hand and spinal column. What the boys had to face, I took it upon Myself.

A Glimpse of Swami's Divinity

Many men and women were seated in the gallery, but I took care that none noticed My injuries. I pretended as though nothing had happened. The Vice Chancellor was worried thinking that Swami was unable to get up. I knew that any further delay would cause anxiety in the minds of devotees. So, I immediately got up forgetting the pain and started blessing the devotees waving My hands. The pain was very severe, and the cut on My hand was so deep as though it was pierced with a knife. Actually the sleeve of the robe covering My hand should have been torn before I got the injury. But the cloth was not torn at all. This incident gives you a glimpse of the infinite power of Divinity.

I found Myself in an awkward situation. I had to walk up to the dais without My injuries being noticed. So I willed that no one should notice My injuries, lest they should become anxious. I walked up to the dais and took My seat. But in the meanwhile the dhoti below the robe was drenched in blood. Concerned that the devotees may get to know of this I walked into the bathroom discreetly. The available towels were insufficient to wipe the oozing blood. I did not want to leave the bloodstained towels in the bathroom, lest someone should notice them. Though there was excruciating pain, I washed the towels Myself with soap, squeezed them and put them up for drying. Under no circumstances do I reveal My suffering, pain and fatigue. Some boys were curious to know why I went to the bathroom repeatedly. I replied, "Why are you concerned? It is My job." Usually, I go to the bathroom only twice a day, morning and evening. Since it was bleeding profusely, I had to go to the bathroom 5-6 times in that short duration.

In the meantime, two students came and prayed that the flag may be hoisted. When I got down from the chair, the sensation was such that it seemed as though I was subjected to electric shock. I smiled at My own Divine Leela. I could not stand firmly on the ground. I thought I should not be deluded by the attachment to the body and walked forward smilingly to hoist the flag. Then I lighted the lamp. I found Myself in an embarrassing situation. I could not sit in any posture comfortably. When I exhort all devotees to give up body attachment, I should set an example Myself in this regard. Saying this to Myself, I conducted Myself accordingly.

The Primary School children performed extremely well and desired to have a photograph with Me. Acceding to their prayers I walked up to them to be photographed, as I did not want to disappoint them. Subsequently, I had to walk up to the playground five more times to be photographed with the remaining students. In this manner, I detached Myself from the body. My body was numb. There was no sensation whatsoever. My head was reeling. I resolved to make them happy no matter what happened to the body. I decided to keep this to Myself. Concerned that the bloodstains may be visible while returning to the dais from the playground, I ascended the steps leading directly to My seat. Is it possible for a human being to conceal such a major

injury from the public gaze for a long time being amidst such a huge gathering? No. I was seated on the chair for five long hours.

I am relating all this so that students and devotees may comprehend the nature of divinity. Anyone in My predicament would not have been in a position to sit in the chair even for a second. It would have been impossible even to put a step forward. It was as though the electric shock was piercing My body. It is the electric current which gives shock, but when I am the current Myself, where is the question of Myself being subjected to shock? (*Cheers*) With that feeling I sat through the whole proceedings and returned to the Mandir. The Central Trust members followed Me, but they were not aware of what had happened to Me. I asked them to have their food. The senior devotee who drove the chariot apologised for what had happened. I told him, "Why do you worry about the past? Past is past. I am happy. Do not worry about Me." All of them had their lunch. After the lunch, it started bleeding again. Students and band boys were waiting outside for photographs. Again I went into the bathroom to wipe the blood. Noting this Indulal Shah cried out, "Swami, what is this?" I told him lovingly, "Indulal Shah, whatever had to happen to the body has happened", saying so I showed him My injury. All of them cried out in agony. They noticed blood all over the body. I told them that I would not reveal anything in future if they expressed their sorrow like this. No one knew about it until I reached the Mandir.

Likewise, I take upon Myself the untold suffering of students and devotees at various points of time in order to protect them. No one is responsible for this mishap. You may find fault with one individual or the other, but no one is to be blamed for this. Whatever had to happen, happened, that's all.

You are bound to experience the pain and pleasure that you are destined to even if you hide yourself in a dense forest. When the time comes, your body is bound to perish, in spite of utmost precautions. (Telugu Proverb)

Even mighty emperors and kings who had taken all precautionary measures had to give up their body at the appointed hour. Whatever is bound to happen will happen. One should not resist this unduly.

January is the first month of the New Year. If you experience happiness in the beginning, you will be happy throughout. *Start early, drive slowly and reach safely.* The year Pramaadi (Telugu New Year) is fast approaching. There will be dangers in all fields. This is an indication of the forthcoming dangers. No one needs to worry about My welfare. I can do anything and everything. (*Cheers*) Here is a small example.

During the Mahabharata war, Krishna was the charioteer of Arjuna. Bhishma was shooting arrows at Arjuna. Krishna diverted these and all other arrows aimed at Arjuna towards Himself protecting Arjuna in the process. As a result, every arrow wounded Krishna and He was bleeding profusely. As Krishna was the charioteer, He had to receive instructions from Arjuna regarding the direction in which the chariot should move. In those days, there were no indicators like left and right as we have today. Therefore, Arjuna had to press the region beside the right eye of Krishna with his iron shoe to indicate that the chariot should move to the right. Similarly, he had

to press the region beside the left eye to indicate to Krishna to turn the chariot to the left. Consequently, Krishna's face was also bleeding. The whole body of Krishna was drenched in blood. No one observed this, as it was wartime and all were busy in discharging their duties and also due to the fact that Krishna was seated at a place much lower than that of Arjuna. Therefore, only Arjuna could be seen and not Krishna.

Krishna protected Arjuna as promised by Him earlier. When Arjuna and Duryodhana approached Krishna for help before the war, Duryodhana opted for Krishna's seven lakh strong army, whereas Arjuna preferred Krishna to the army. Then Krishna assured him "Arjuna, you don't need to fear. The army is comparable to the compartment of a train whereas I am the engine." (*Cheers*). Compartments can move only when the engine pulls them. So, do not worry, the engine is with you, Arjuna." Arjuna also responded saying "Krishna, it is enough if you are with me". Therefore, all the dangers that were to befall Arjuna were taken by Krishna upon Himself. Many such incidents of God protecting His devotees have taken place in the past.

So, whatever happened on that day was entirely due to My Will. Neither the students nor anyone else are responsible for this (*cheers*). Everyday the students used to enquire as to why I was walking so slowly. I told them, "I don't have enough place to run, if only it was there I am ready even to run." I was conversing with them with a smile on My face. I am narrating this episode only to affirm the fact that I go to any extent to protect My devotees who obey My commands (*cheers*).

When I returned to the Mandir, I called those four boys. They noticed My injuries and were crestfallen. I chided them for not obeying My command. I asked them, "Why were you not present there at that time as commanded by Me? If only you had obeyed My command, this incident would not have occurred." I told them not to feel sorry about it.

All those things that were destined to happen during the course of this year have already happened (*cheers*). So, follow the divine command, be safe and secure and earn a good name for the institution and make your parents happy.

Free Food for Seva Dal

Tomorrow marks the commencement of holy Uttarayana. It is for this auspicious moment that Bhishma waited for 56 long days lying on a bed of arrows to give up his mortal coil. Tomorrow the sun begins its northward journey, which is most auspicious. In olden days, people used to sing songs describing the arrival of Sankranti:

*The sun appeared cool and serene,
The day started getting shorter,
The cold wind blew fiercely,
The fields were filled with golden harvest.
The farmers rejoiced in singing at night
With the moon shining bright.
The buds of flowers blossomed
Like garlands of pearls
On the banks of rivers;*

*Chillies were looking red,
Farmers were bringing home
The newly harvested grain,
Hailing the advent of
The joyous festival of Sankranti.*

(Telugu Poem)

Whatever I will has to happen and none can come in My way. I would like to mention one more point. Last year, on the 19th of November all the ladies gathered to celebrate Ladies Day. They said, "Swami, we are wearing the Saris gifted by You and experiencing the bliss of Your divine presence. What can we do in return to express our gratitude to You? Please give us a chance to serve You." I replied, "You don't need to do anything, be always happy. That is enough." But some of them pleaded that they be given a chance to provide food to the Seva Dal, who are coming in large numbers from various parts of the country to render service in Prasanthi Nilayam. I assured them that I had already willed it and that it would materialise in a short time. I have willed that the Seva Dal should be provided good food entirely free of cost for all the 365 days of the year. Everyday we have about 3000 Seva Dal here. They will have very good food. (*cheers*) I have already made arrangements for this. I have got the sheds put up. All the necessary items like gas cylinders, utensils, plates, spoons, rice, dals etc., have already been procured. None is aware of this. Sathya Sai is a *silent worker*. (*Cheers*). From tomorrow onwards food will be served to Seva Dal free of cost forever.

Then I summoned the members of the Central Trust and asked them as to what work they were doing. What is the use of occupying high positions if you do not discharge your duties sincerely? People from all walks of life and from different strata of society are coming to serve as Seva Dal every year. I may give them food free of cost, but who will bear their travel expenses? The railway fare is increasing day by day. In olden days, just 20 rupees were enough to reach Madras from here, but these days even 200 rupees are insufficient. I commanded them to approach the railway authorities for travel concession for the Seva Dal. I talk sweetly, but at the same time I am stern when it comes to the question of discharging one's duty. I told them either you do this work or resign. The Central Trust members have negotiated with the railway authorities and got the travel concessions sanctioned for Seva Dal. (*Cheers*). Due to the effect of Kali Age, people have become selfish. This selfishness makes them lazy. So, they plunge into action only when told strictly. The railway authorities were very happy. They thanked Me saying, "Swami, it is our good fortune that we got an opportunity to serve Your devotees."

Puttaparthi Railway Station

Not only this, in order to ensure that the Seva Dal and devotees reach Prasanthi Nilayam without any inconvenience, the Central Government has sanctioned 50 crore rupees for the construction of a railway station near the petrol pump (*cheers*). We will have trains connecting Penukonda, Dharmavaram and Puttaparthi. The other day, the officials of the railway department had a meeting in Delhi and arrived at this decision. Everybody should be able to reach Prasanthi Nilayam comfortably for Swami's 75th birthday. One may board a train in Bombay, Madras, Delhi, Hyderabad etc. to reach Prasanthi Nilayam.

Unprecedented Marvels!

Once upon a time, this Puttaparthi was a small hamlet with a population of barely 100 people. In such a small village as this, who would expect a University, an Airport, a Super Speciality Hospital and a Railway Station to come up in such a short period of time? All these things are happening during the lifetime of the Avatar, which is unprecedented in the history of mankind. During the time of no other Avatar were such stupendous tasks achieved in such a short period of time. Many more wonderful things are going to happen. Today you are able to see Me from close quarters. But after some time, you may have to see Me from a distance of a few miles.

So, make the best use of the divine proximity of Sai. Once you lose this precious chance to serve the Lotus Feet, you will never regain it. Sai confers devotion, power and ultimately liberation on you. Never get misguided by the words of others. Keep this in mind and redeem yourself. (Telugu Poem)

I had taken upon Myself this suffering only for your sake, and in response to your prayers I have decided to cure Myself now for your sake. Do not give room for any anxiety. Now Swami is 100% perfect, perfect, perfect. (*Cheers*)

Follow Swami's command, earn a good name, secure good marks and set an ideal to the rest of the world. That is what I want. In addition to more facilities for the volunteers, we are making efforts to provide adequate accommodation to the devotees by constructing 100 more sheds. To provide accommodation to the foreigners, a suitable piece of land of 150 acres has been acquired on the hillock. On the 75th birthday, who knows where one would be placed? But, if you have Swami's grace, you belong to Swami, wherever you may be. Swami is always with you. Never entertain the feeling that Swami will be away from you. Have firm faith in Swami.

Spirituality is the Sole Remedy

Students! In future, you can conduct your programmes without hindrance. In the coming year, you can organise the Sports Meet in ways more grand than this. I will not put any brake on your activities. But in certain aspects, you must follow My commands. It is for your good and not Mine. Be safe and secure and lead an ideal spiritual life.

Today we find restlessness, anxiety and worry prevalent everywhere. Spirituality is the only solution to all these ills of society. Due to lack of spirituality, man is a victim of depression and disease. Diseases are the products of the mind, not the body. Lack of peace of mind results in depression, which in turn leads to disease. Develop physical strength, have faith in God, experience bliss and share it with your fellow beings. Whatever may happen, never give up spirituality. It is only devotion to God that protects Bharat, nothing else. Distance yourself from animal qualities and develop human qualities and be one with the divine. How can you understand divinity when you are not able to understand the importance of human values? First practise human values, then divinity manifests itself. Take to the path of spirituality, and go to the four corners of the country propagating spiritual ideals and strive for the welfare of the world at large.

Bhagavan concluded His Divine Discourse with the Bhajan "*Govinda Krishna Jai, Gopala Krishna Jai...*" "*Be always happy ... from tomorrow*"

**—From Bhagavan's Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall at Prasanthi Nilayam on 14th
January, 1999**

SPORTS AND CULTURAL MEET OF SSSIHL

Grand Display of Skill and Strength

The Annual Sports and Cultural Meet of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, held in Hill View Stadium on 11th January 1999, was a spectacular show of courage, confidence, balance, skill and concentration along with rhythm and harmony displayed by the students before a huge gathering of spectators.

Bhagavan Baba, the Chancellor of the Institute, came to the Hill View Stadium at 7.15 a.m. in a sparkling silver chariot, preceded by a grand procession of the Institute band and escorted by a squad of motor bike riders. On reaching Santhi Vedika, Bhagavan lighted the ceremonial lamps to inaugurate the proceedings.

The proceedings started with a very impressive March Past programme led by the girl students of Anantapur Campus. Students of all other Sai institutions in their respective contingents participated in the March Past and paid their respects to Bhagavan as they passed by Santhi Vedika.

Bhagavan hoisted the Institute Flag at 7.50 a.m. The oath of fair participation was then administered to the participating contingents by the Sports Captain of the Institute. After this Bhagavan lighted the Sports Torch, which was mechanically carried by a 'Swan' to the top of the Vidyagiri Hill where it lighted the Sports Meet Urn. Bhagavan also released a couple of white doves and a bunch of balloons to fill the atmosphere with colour and gaiety.

The first to send the audience into raptures were the Primary School children of Prasanthi Nilayam Campus. The entire stadium presented a riot of colours with brilliant dresses of the tiny tots who displayed their dances and rhythmic movements with excellently synchronised formations. Most spectacular of them were penguin and clowns dance and roosters and angels dance. They also showed admirable athletic skills and their performance on the horizontal bar was appreciable.

Next to present their programme was the girl students of Anantapur Campus. The programme had a grand beginning with the cosmic dance of Siva. The dare-devil motorbike stunts by the girl students, which were repeated throughout their performance, were really astounding. Another item of the programme was the display of martial arts by the students who showed marvellous skills by breaking slabs with hands and legs.

The Brindavan Campus programme began with the depiction of Sri Krishna amidst the Pandavas in the battlefield of Kurukshetra. The scene became doubly impressive with absolutely exquisite paintings of Mahabharata War in the background, painted by the students themselves. The first programme of the Brindavan students was a variety of callisthenic feats on the roman

rings, parallel bars, horizontal bars, vaulting horse and the trampoline. This was followed by a display of martial arts, which showed wonderful concentration and agility of the students. Skill and balance were also witnessed in the synchronous display of gymnasts balancing themselves on wooden planks, which were only one foot wide. Several feats of self-defence, somersaults and jumping through the fire rings were also significant.

The programme by the students of the Prasanthi Nilayam Campus began with a rhythmic dance of Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. Then came the gymnasts performing wonderful somersaults.

The students made many formations on moving trucks and performed wonderful feats including the one of hanging upside down on a horizontal bar in a moving truck and lifting four boys in Padmasana. The game of handball on 6 ft. high stilts was remarkable. There were clowns on stilts, a model of an ostrich, which was carried by a student on a stilt.

Bhagavan gave trophies to students and came down from the stage to bless the students several times. Arati was performed at 12 noon. With this the most spectacular display came to a conclusion.

Prize Distribution function of the Sports and Cultural Meet was held on 14th January, 1999. On the same day, the holy festival of Makara Sankranti was also celebrated in Prasanthi Nilayam. Bhagavan came to the Sai Kulwant Hall led by the band of Anantapur Campus (girls) at 7.20 a.m. After Veda chanting by students, Bhagavan inaugurated the programme by lighting the sacred lamps. Before giving away the prizes, Bhagavan graciously permitted three speakers to make a brief speech.

Sri B. N. Narasimhamurthi, Warden, Brindavan Campus, referred to the pledge of the Lord in the Bhagavad Gita that whosoever remembered Him and chanted His name, the Lord would take care of his welfare and protection. This, he said, was true of all Avatar as also of the present Avatar, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Describing in detail what happened on 11th January 1999 before the beginning of the Sports and Cultural Meet in the Hill View Stadium, Sri Narasimhamurthi disclosed how Bhagavan was injured when the chariot suddenly gave a jerk. In spite of the injuries, He did not let anybody know about it throughout the five-hour period of the Sports Meet. This He did to save the boys who would have otherwise suffered severe injuries during their performance. The entire audience was stunned to hear this description of Sri Narasimhamurthi, who himself became emotional and said, "This was the love of Bhagavan for His devotees!"

Dr. Jayalakshmi Gopinath, Warden, Anantapur Campus, also referred to Bhagavan's unfathomable love for His students. Drawing a beautiful analogy of the sun and the lotus, she said, as the lotus bud opens up its petals and becomes a shining flower on the touch of sun's rays, Bhagavan's benign and loving beam had touched the students and they were sure to bloom in His own image to spread the fragrance of Bhagavan's Divine Message of Love to the world.

Sri S. V. Giri, Vice Chancellor of the Institute, informed that the unique feature of this Sports and Cultural Meet was that almost all the students took part in one or the other of the events. The

spectacular show presented in this Meet indicated what importance sports and cultural events were given by Bhagavan in the curriculum. Calling the Sports Meet an essay in character building, Sri Giri remarked that sports were meant for conditioning the heart and the mind besides imparting strength and vigour to the body. Referring to the large number of prizes worth lakhs of rupees, Sri Giri expressed gratitude to Bhagavan and congratulated the winners who were fortunate to receive them from the divine hands of Bhagavan Baba.

Bhagavan then gave away the prizes to the winners. After the conclusion of prize distribution, Bhagavan gave His divine discourse (given separately). Prasadam was distributed after Arati to Bhagavan. Thus concluded the twin functions of Prize Distribution and Makara Sankranti. Bhagavan was led to His residence by the girls' band at 10.00 a.m.

The Ocean and the Waves

Be simple and sincere. It is sheer waste of money to burden the pictures and idols in the shrines and altars of your homes with the weight of garlands and to parade costly utensils and vessels and offerings to show off your devotion. This is deception; it demeans Divinity, imputing to it the desire for pomp and publicity. I ask only for purity of heart to shower grace. Do not posit distance between you and Me; do not interpose the formalities of Guru-shishya relationship or even the altitudinal distinctions of the God-devotee relationship, between you and Me. I am you; you are I; that is the truth. There is no distinction. That which appears is the delusion. You are the waves; I am the ocean. Know this and be free, be divine.

—Baba

AVATAR VANI

Install God's Feet in Your Heart

*Whether one is a great scholar in the Vedas and sacred texts,
Or a hero who has won great victories,
Or a destitute gruelling in poverty,
Without devotion he is worthless.
A servant with devotion in his heart
is worthier of veneration than a king bereft of devotion.*

(Telugu Poem)

Right from the beginning of the creation, human life has been the rarest and most valuable of all living beings. Having taken such a noble birth if one fails to know one's innate divinity, life becomes meaningless. When the diamond is cut repeatedly, it shines with added brilliance and its value also increases. Similarly, in order to experience divinity within, one has to face many obstacles. So, devotees naturally face all types of trials and tribulations. But the devotion should never diminish.

*Devotion alone bestows the supreme good;
Devotion alone is the destroyer of the disease*

*of the repeated cycles of birth and death;
Devotion alone is the means of recognising divinity;
Devotion alone is the means of liberation.*

(Sanskrit Sloka)

The Story of Manikavachagar

One may face problems, blames and accusations of all types, but it is devotion that protects one from all these. Once upon a time, the Pandya kingdom in Tamil Nadu reigned supreme. The Pandya king was very fond of horses. Once he sent his minister to buy horses. He gave him all the money and manpower required to procure the horses. The minister reached a village named Perundurai. There he came across a holy man, Balayogeeswara. He did not want to waste that pleasant evening, so he joined the congregation and listened to the discourse of the holy man with rapt attention. He forgot himself as he listened to the discourse. He developed strong faith in that holy man. He forgot even the task assigned to him by the king, spent his time listening to the discourses and got immersed in the contemplation of God. One day, he found a Siva temple in a dilapidated condition. He used the money given to him by the king for renovating the Siva temple.

The king came to know that the minister had used all the money, given to him to buy horses, to renovate the Siva temple. The king was also a devoted man. But since the minister disobeyed his command, he sent his soldiers to bring him back. The king summoned the minister to his presence and asked him what he had done with the money given to him for procuring horses. The minister said, "O king, I used the money for God. Everything is God's gift. What God had given, I gave it back to Him. Not only that I have offered myself to Him" But the king asked, whether he was justified in spending the money for a different purpose other than for which it was intended. The minister replied that he did not use the money for worldly purposes, but used it for a sacred purpose. The king became furious at the minister's audacious reply, had him arrested and put in prison.

The minister was unruffled. While in prison, he continued to recall the teachings of the holy man, Balayogeeswara, and started writing them down in the form of Slokas. He composed many Slokas everyday. He was immersed in bliss while composing hymns in praise of God and thus lost track of time. Later the king realised his mistake and summoned him. He was surprised to see the aura of radiance and brilliance around his face. How did he acquire such an aura? It was due to the constant contemplation of God. That minister was none other than Manikavachagar. Each Sloka composed by him reflected the essence of the Vedas and the sacred texts. This work is known as *Thiruvachakam*, meaning sacred reading.

Since ancient times many such great saints took birth in Tamil Nadu. Divinity that blossomed in sacred Tamil Nadu is not noticed elsewhere. Right from day break people go to temples, make sacred offerings and divinise their lives. That is why there are more temples in Tamil Nadu than anywhere else in the country.

Where there is money, there is ego. Ego gives rise to bad qualities. Once the money is lost, all bad qualities too disappear. One day, the rich man's son came to Thiruvalluvar and asked for the price of the Sari. Thiruvalluvar said it cost four rupees. The boy was known for his arrogance

and mischief. He picked up the Sari, tore it into two pieces and asked for the price of one piece. Thiruvalluvar replied, it cost two rupees as he had made the Sari into two halves. The boy tore it again into another piece and asked for the price. Thiruvalluvar replied that the price was one rupee. This brought about a transformation in the mind of the boy. He wondered how the businessman was calm and composed even after he tore the Sari into pieces. Then the boy fell at Thiruvalluvar's feet and repented for his behaviour. The boy said there was the son of a rich man who was wasting his time wandering aimlessly.

Thiruvalluvar Reforms a Young Man

There was another great saint by the name Thiruvalluvar. Initially, he was a weaver. He used to weave just one Sari per day, sell it in the bazaar and earn money for his family. Good and bad exist together; it would be impossible to separate them. In the same village due to his pride and arrogance he made this mistake. Then he went to his father, got the required money for the Sari and kept it at the feet of Thiruvalluvar.

Many such great saints lived in Tamil Nadu who set an ideal to the society. Unfortunately, people do not follow the teachings of these saints. But their statues are installed and adored. It is not the statues of saints that are important, but their teachings. The best way to propagate their teachings is to practise them.

Humanity and Divinity

Just as hands, legs, ears, eyes, etc., form the limbs of the body, human being is a limb of the society. Society is a limb of humanity. Humanity is a limb of Nature, and Nature is a limb of Divinity. Nature has been sustaining humanity. Humanity is based on the twin principles of Truth and Righteousness. Without the individual, there is no society and without the society the country does not exist. So, the individual is important in a society. For an individual, the limbs are very important. So, the limbs have to be used in a sacred way.

*See no evil; see what is good,
Hear no evil; hear what is good,
Talk no evil; talk what is good,
Think no evil; think what is good,
Do no evil; do what is good.
This is the way to God.*

Here lies the sanctity of human life. "Sareeramadhyam Khalu Dharma Sadhanam ", body is gifted to undertake righteous actions. Manikavachagar prayed, "O Lord, accept my heart, which You have given. The working of the heart is also Your gift. I cannot offer anything other than this. I offer whatever You have given me."

Kerala is the neighbouring state of Tamil Nadu, where Adi Sankara was born. He said:

*"Asthiram Jeevanam Loke,
Asthiram Yauvanam Dhanam,
Asthiram Dara Puthradi,*

Safhyam Keerthi DwayamSthiram."

(Life in the world is impermanent. So are youth and wealth. Wife and children are also not permanent. Only truth and good name are permanent). So, earn a good name and always speak the truth and follow the path of truth. *Truth is God. The entire creation has emerged from Truth and merges in it. Is there any place where this non-dual Principle of Truth does not pervade?* (Telugu Poem) Just as the water bubble originates in water, is sustained in it and ultimately merges in it, the entire world has originated from Truth, is sustained by Truth and ultimately merges in Truth.

Man is born out of Amrita (immortality) but is merging in Anrita (falsehood). What is the use of leading such a life? Today man is highly intelligent and acquires all types of education. He should set an ideal to the society. Man should understand that education is for sharing and serving and not for earning money. Education is meant for Dharmacharana (practice of Righteousness) and not for Dhanarjana (acquiring wealth). *"Dharmamoolam Idam Jagat"* (This world is based on Dharma).

Body should not be used for fleeting pleasures. The Bhagavad Gita declares, *"Anithyam Asukham Lokam Imam Prapya Bhajasva Maam"* (having taken birth in this impermanent and sorrowful world, worship the Lord). Many people think that there is happiness in this world, but it is temporary. *"Ma Kuru Dhana Jana Yauvana Garvam, Harathi Nimeshath Kalah Sarvam"* (O man, do not be proud of wealth, relations or youth. All these may be taken away in a moment by the tide of time).

God's Permanent Address

It is the feet that help us to move. It is said, *"Pada darshana Papa Nashanam"* (Vision of the Lord's feet destroys all sins). Feet are so sacred. Feet carry the body, which is the temple of God. The Lord's Lotus Feet have to be installed in your heart. No doubt, the external worship of feet is also important. As you continue to worship the Lotus Feet, they will naturally get installed in your heart.

Once Narada went to Lord Narayana and said, "Narayana, I come for Your Darshan whenever I have any problem. But I do not know where exactly You reside. Where can I find You? In Kailash, Vaikuntha or Swarga?" Then Narayana said, *"Mad Bhakta Yatra Gayanti Tatra Tishthami Narada"* (wherever My devotees sing My glory, I install Myself there). Kailash, Vaikuntha and Swarga are My branch offices." God is not present in a foreign land, He is present in our heart. Heart does not mean physical heart. It means spiritual heart. It should be full of compassion.

Man has all comforts and conveniences. He has good intellect, yet he is not able to reach his destination. Man should have a strong will. For example, a small ant can travel any number of miles if it has the will to do so; whereas an eagle cannot move an inch if it does not have the will to move.

Thyagaraja said, "O Rama, you are present in all right from an ant to Brahma. You are present in Siva and Keshava. You are everywhere. There is no place where you are not there; there is no

name which is not yours." But, today man is carried away by delusions and does not realise this truth. If Brahma were to manifest in front of him, he would offer his salutations with reverence and devotion. But if the same Brahma comes in the form of an ant and bites him, he will immediately kill it. The evil one is he who does not observe the unity of thought, word and deed. You say God is present even in an ant, t h e n why do you kill it? You are so weak that you are not able to bear the pain of an ant bite or a mosquito bite. In this modern age, man is becoming weaker and weaker. All our ancient Rishis did penance for years together. They were unmindful of the movement of snakes and scorpions on their body. But, modern man has developed body attachment. He is not attached to the Atma.

Ramakrishna and Rani Rasamani

Today there is no steadiness of mind in man. Some people think of their footwear when they sit for Bhajans inside. Once Ramakrishna Paramahansa was giving a discourse in a temple. Rani Rasamani, the owner of the temple, was sitting in the front row. All were listening to Ramakrishna's discourse with rapt attention. All of a sudden Ramakrishna got up, went to Rani Rasamani and slapped on her cheek. Everyone was surprised. They thought Ramakrishna had become mad. Ramakrishna told the public, "O people, you may think it is a great mistake on my part to have slapped her. What for have you come? You are here to listen to my teachings. Whether you practise or not, at least you should listen to what is being said. If you do not like to listen to the discourse, you better stay back at home. This Rani Rasamani is thinking of her legal disputes. Why should she come all the way to think of the court affairs?" She accepted her mistake and promised not to repeat it. In the modern age, many people attend spiritual discourses and get impressed by them. But they do not put them into practice.

Rama and Ravana were equally well versed in all the forms of knowledge. But Valmiki described Ravana as Moorkha (fool) since he did not practise what he learnt. Rama followed Truth. He put his knowledge into practice. He is therefore an ideal to be followed by everyone. Ravana merely accumulated knowledge without practising it. He could not digest all that he learnt. As a result, he suffered from 'indigestion'. He is a fool who does not practise what he learns. One who practises is a truly educated one. Education should confer humility.

In society, there are agitations and disturbances. Students, you should join the society and see that everyone follows Sathya and Dharma. You should become ideal citizens. That is what I desire. I do not expect anything from you. I expect only one thing that you put into practice what you have studied and be an ideal to everyone in the society. "*Sarveloka Hithe Rathah*" (one who delights in the welfare of all people). You should aspire for the welfare of all. Do not hate anybody. "*Sarve Samudhitha Gunaihi*" (you should have all good qualities). Today man does bad deeds, but is not prepared to face the consequences. If you want to earn merit you should do good deeds. Do good, be happy and share your happiness with others, this is your duty. With such sacred feelings, contemplate on the Lotus Feet of the Lord.

Gopikas' Love for Krishna

Uddhava has described Gopikas' devotion for Krishna in the following words: "Though their mothers-in-law were not happy with them and their husbands were against Krishna, they neither uttered a single word, nor got angry". They bore it all with patience. They were never afraid of

anybody. Just as a picture is imprinted on a paper, Krishna's form was imprinted in their hearts. Gopikas had no other thought than that of Krishna.

Once Gopikas came to Krishna's house; Krishna pretended to be asleep. They tried to wake him up by catching His feet, but Krishna turned the other side and continued to snore. Then they sang, "It is possible to wake up someone who is in deep sleep, but it is impossible to wake up someone who pretends to be asleep. Krishna, You don't sleep at all. If You sleep, the whole world will sleep. We know that in this world there is none who can understand Your mystery. You are smaller than an atom and mightier than the mightiest. You are present in all the 84 lakh species. Right from the atom to the entire cosmos You are present everywhere. How can we know You, Krishna? Please put an end to Your pranks and make us happy. We cannot be separate from You any longer."

Krishna's Flute and Radha

Before giving up her mortal coil, Radha was sitting on the bank of the river Yamuna and feeling very sad that Krishna was not with her. She intensely prayed to Him to grant her His Divine Darshan. She sang, "O Krishna, speak to me and fill my heart with bliss. Distil the essence of the Vedas and make it flow into the eternal music of your flute. O Krishna." When she sang like this, Krishna appeared and fulfilled her desire by playing on His flute and while listening to this Divine Melody, she breathed her last. Her Jivan Jyoti (life principle) merged in Krishna. Krishna threw the flute away and He never touched it again. In films you would find Krishna with a flute, but truly speaking after Radha's departure Krishna never touched the flute again. This was the promise given by Krishna. Every incarnation upheld the Principle of Truth. Anyone may forget, but God never forgets to keep up His promise.

Who is Radha? People consider her to be an ordinary woman and distort the facts. She had no attachment to her body. She had attachment to Krishna alone. This Dhara (Nature) itself took birth as Radha. This Dhara is the Adhar (basis) for the creation. In the name 'Radha', 'R' stands for Radha, 'A' stands for Adhar, 'D' stands for Dhara (continuous) and 'A' stands for Aradhana. It means Dhara Aradhana (continuous worship) is the Adhar (basis) for Radha. She was in constant contemplation of Krishna. Even in her sleep, she would chant Krishna's name.

How to attain Desirelessness?

Krishna had always eluded the Gopikas after playing His mischief. One day, they all lay in wait to catch Krishna. Krishna out of compassion for them wanted to provide a clue by which they could trace Him. Krishna went into a house stealthily and broke a pot of milk and dipped His feet in it. When Gopikas came to catch Him, He ran away. He just vanished in a trice. Then the Gopikas followed His footprints, which revealed to them His hide-out. Krishna revealed to them the spiritual truth that if they clung to the feet of the Lord, they could win His grace. In order to please God, follow His footprints. Those who take refuge at the feet of the Lord, will neither sin nor be miserable. With sincere devotion when you take refuge at the feet of the Lord and contemplate on them, you will not have desires. Yesterday Dr. Gadhia in his speech said that by worshipping Padukas, marriages were settled and the childless begot children. These are all worldly results. Is this to be expected from Paduka worship? No. You should not worship Padukas for worldly gains. You should worship them for gains in the inward path. When you can

get mighty results, why are you concerned about worldly gains? Why do you go after small pebbles? Aim at the Meru (gold) Mountain itself, that is, the Lotus Feet of the Lord.

Once upon a time, Jaya and Vijaya (doorkeepers of Vaikuntha) approached Lord Vishnu and asked Him, "Swami, why have you created the gold mountain?" Then Vishnu replied, "One who is desireless will be unmindful of its existence. But the one full of desires will never be satisfied even if hundred such gold mountains are given to him. Who is the richest man in this world? One who has much satisfaction is the richest man. Who is the poorest man? He who has much desire is the poorest man. So I have created this Meru Mountain in order to make people desireless"

God does not have any desire. His only Chintana (thought) is His devotee. Devotees should be good and develop the society and should consider the welfare of the society as their own welfare. They should not get immersed in selfishness and self-interest. Their mind should be as broad as ocean. You can never surrender completely to God, if you are narrow-minded. Do not give scope for worldly desires. Develop divine thoughts.

Though there are many devotees, yet there are difficulties in this world? It is because the devotion is not proper. The devotees are immersed in Archana (worship), but what is required is Arpitam (total surrender). Arpitam is greater than Archana. When Arpitam takes place, you and God become one. The fulfillment of worship of the Lotus Feet lies in the unification of the individual with the Divine.

Students, you should always have the welfare of the society and the world in view. You should not have the feeling that education is for job. Always question yourself, "What is that I can do for the society?" Enquire what is that society expects from you. This should be your constant endeavour. Only then you can work for the progress of the nation.

Devotees, Embodiments of Love!

Many people from different countries have come here and celebrated their functions. For example, last year Chinese came and celebrated their New Year. Devotees from Andhra Pradesh conducted Paduka Puja. Devotees from different States came here to celebrate their festivals. But one thing that made Me happy is that the devotees from Madurai have celebrated this function in the most systematic manner. Their discipline has been exemplary. Others should learn from their example. Subrahmaniam Chettiar is very old. Yet everyone followed his word. Each one followed the discipline on his own. The Paduka Trust, Madurai adheres to the principle of discipline. Not only here, wherever you go observe this discipline.

Devotion, Duty, Discipline

The three important principles of Sri Sathya Sai Organisations are Devotion, Duty and Discipline. These three D's are to be followed sincerely. Do your duty. See that your devotion is steady and observe discipline. When you follow these three D's you will always be happy. Let this culture and tradition be passed on to your progeny. This culture and tradition should not end with you, it should continue. Under any circumstances, do not give up chanting of God's name. You should have fear of sin, love for God and morality in society. Sanctify your life by leading an ideal life and experiencing the Divine Atmic Principle.

Bhagavan concluded His Divine Discourse with the Bhajan, "*Hari Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahi*"

—From Bhagavan's Discourse at Prasanthi Nilayam, 12th October, 1998, on the occasion of sixth Anniversary of Paduka Pratishtha Mahotsav

AVATAR VANI

BHAGAVAN'S DASARA DISCOURSES - II

Obey God's Command

*Just as dogs bark at the mighty elephant,
Some people may heckle the noble souls.
Neither the elephant nor the noble souls
Suffer any loss on this account.*

(Telugu Poem)

Due to the effect of Kali Age, we come across many such situations. On hearing the melodious singing of cuckoo birds, crows out of jealousy start cawing at them. But that does not deter cuckoo from singing. In the same way, seeing the swans, cranes make fun of them. But the swans are least affected. Similarly, one who has realised his true identity will neither be elated by praise nor depressed by blame.

Detachment Confers Peace and Happiness

Human life is the gift of God. If only you make proper use of this gift, your life as a human being will find fulfillment. Human beings can be classified into three types: 1. Adham (Low and mean) 2. Madhyam (Average) 3. Uttam (Noble). Human body can be compared to a sacred vessel. 'Uttam' is one who makes proper use of this vessel gifted by God. 'Adham' is one who uses the body for unsacred purposes without understanding its value. 'Madhyam' is one who makes use of the body both for sacred and unsacred purposes.

What is the use of having a cosy bed, a soft pillow and a ceiling fan, if one does not get proper sleep? Likewise man, in spite of being endowed with a heart like a bed, a mind like a soft pillow, and an intellect like a ceiling fan, does not enjoy peace and happiness. Then what for are these - the heart, the mind and the intellect?

We describe the heart as pure and unsullied. We also attribute the quality of all-pervasiveness to the mind (*Mano Moolam Idam Jagat*). We describe the intellect as the transcendental principle (*Atheendriyam*). God has gifted these instruments to man, so that he enjoys peace and happiness. In spite of these valuable instruments, man does not have peace and happiness. We say that human life is the rarest and the most precious (*Janthoonam Nara Janma Durlabham*), but does your conduct deserve such a description? You are not making proper use of the mind and the intellect, and not keeping the heart pure. As a result, you do not experience peace and happiness. Life devoid of peace and happiness is no life at all.

Great men say that in order to enjoy peace and happiness in life, you need to develop a sense of detachment. Detachment does not mean leading a life of seclusion in a forest, leaving family and property. Students should understand the true spirit of the word 'renunciation'. You should realise that this gross world is inert. Consider the subtle aspect of this world as illusion and the causal aspects of this world as illusion and the causal aspect as only a reflection. Only when you understand the gross, subtle and the causal aspects of the world, you can have renunciation. But man believes this gross world as real, forgetting the Primal Cause, God.

These three aspects that constitute the apparent world will delude you. You should understand the Primal Cause, the Atmic Principle. Only then you can experience bliss and peace. You should make an effort to know the value of human life. Human being is called 'Nara'. What is the meaning of 'Nara'? It means the embodiment of the Self, the Atma.

Gopikas used to pray thus: "*Kleem Krishnaya, Govindaya, Gopijanavallabhaya Swaha.*" 'Kleem' means the earth. 'Krishnaya' means water. 'Govindaya' means fire, 'Gopijanavallabhaya' refers to air. 'Swaha' refers to ether (Aakasa). There is no life or place in this world without these five elements. They are present everywhere. This is how Gopikas described Krishna as all-pervasive.

God, who is in the form of five elements is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient. So, the main duty of mankind is to make proper use of these five elements. Misuse of these five elements amounts to misuse of Divinity.

Man considers his body as everything and spends his entire life in the pursuit of bodily comforts and conveniences. Body is bound to perish. Though 100 year life –span is stipulated, you cannot take it for granted. Death can occur either in boyhood or in youth or in old age. Nobody can say when one would die. Then why should you take such great pains for the sake of your body, which is like a water bubble? Having taken a human birth, you should lead an ideal life and make everyone happy. You should not give undue importance to the body; treat it only as an instrument. Mind is like a fan. Only when you turn the fan in your direction, you can enjoy the breeze. Similarly, only when you turn your mind towards God, you can experience the breeze of bliss. But if you turn your mind towards the world and say that you are not able to experience bliss, only you are to be blamed. You have to turn your mind towards God, not the body. All the actions that you do for bodily comforts are useless.

You cannot find peace outside, it is within your heart. So, search within. The heart is always filled with peace, love and bliss. It is the basis for all sacred qualities such as compassion, love, tolerance, etc. All that emanates out of your heart is sacred. Body is the root cause of all the six evil qualities (desire, anger, greed, pride, attachment and jealousy). So, do not be attached to the body.

The Worst Enemies of Man

Human life is very sacred and highly valuable. The mind, the intellect and the senses are mere instruments. But you are not making an effort to know this. You are only trying to understand the nature of the instruments, but not the Atmic Principle, which is the primordial basis of life. Your life will be sanctified only when you understand the Atmic Principle. People undertake many

spiritual practices in order to sanctify their lives, but without purity of heart all these will be of no use. First, purify your heart. Do not give scope for wicked feelings such as desire, anger and greed. In the spiritual path, these three are the worst enemies.

In the Ramayana, Ravana is a symbol of lust and desire. Ravana was one who did great penance and received boons from the Lord. He had mastered all the 64 types of knowledge. Such a mighty and great person like Ravana succumbed to desire and ultimately ruined his life.

In the Bhagavata, Hiranyakasipu symbolises anger. He was a great scientist. He had control over the five elements. Modern scientists are able to reach the moon, but Hiranyakasipu attempted to reach the sun. He even tried to stop the rotation of the earth. Such a great scientist was ruined due to his anger. *The one with anger will never be successful. He ruins his property and loses his respect. He will commit sinful deeds and will be rejected by one and all.*

(Telugu Poem)

In the Mahabharata, Duryodhana stands for greed. *In order to kill a miser, there is no need to harm him physically. Just ask him for money, he will 'die' immediately!* (Telugu Poem)

Duryodhana was such a miser. What could he achieve ultimately? Therefore, for a spiritual aspirant, desire, anger and greed are his worst enemies. The merit acquired through several years of spiritual practice will be ruined in a moment of fury. One should therefore control all these three.

In this world, there may be at least one good person out of every ten persons. Out of every ten good persons, there may be at least one who has love for God. Out of every ten persons who have love for God, there may be at least one who wants to attain Divinity. Out of every ten persons who want to attain Divinity, there may be at least one who is ever ready to obey God's commands. Only he who obeys God's commands is redeemed. There is no point in undertaking spiritual practices without obeying God's commands.

Today, everyone wants happiness without understanding what it means. True happiness lies in being desireless. Desire is the cause of misery. A rich man may have no dearth of money, food and other material comforts, but still he may lack peace and happiness. Material objects may provide physical comforts, but not mental peace. Money may give reputation, but not respect. There may be a number of servants, but they are not friends. All of them serve only out of compulsion, not out of love. There is only one true friend who is always with you, in you and around you. He is God. As long as there is water in the tank, thousands of frogs gather. But once the tank is dry, not a single frog will be seen around. Likewise, so long as you are rich and in position of authority, everyone acts like a friend. But once you lose your position and money, your so-called friends will desert you, without even caring to say good-bye.

Sweet Words, the Best Medicine

In this world, nothing is permanent. Only the principle of love in your heart is permanent. Only love can win people's hearts. If you have love within, the whole world will be with you. What is the reason that so many people from so many countries gather here? There is something here, which is not there in your country, in your village and in your family. That is the all-encompassing love. (*Cheers*) Only through love, you can establish intimate relationship with

each other. The hearts bereft of love are like barren lands. There should be love in the field of human heart. Gopikas prayed to Krishna thus:

O Krishna, play on your flute so that the seeds of Love germinate in the barren fields of our hearts and make the rain of love and the rivers of love flow incessantly.

(Telugu Song)

Love always gives and never receives. Such selfless Love is only with God. You have gathered here to experience that Love. No one has sent you any invitation. It is only Love that has brought you here. What is that I am giving you? When I just ask you, "When did you come?" you become ecstatic. There is so much of sweetness even in the words that I utter. You too should learn to speak softly and sweetly. *"You cannot always oblige, but you can always speak obligingly."* Harsh words are like atom bombs. When someone visits your house, even if you do not give anything to eat, at least talk to him sweetly and softly. It can even appease his hunger. Instead, if you speak harshly, that will not only increase his hunger, but also dishearten him.

Charity is the true ornament for the hand.

Truth is the true ornament for the throat.

Listening to sacred texts is the true ornament for the ears.

Why need any other ornaments?

(Sanskrit Sloka)

You should not have the feeling that only your country should be happy. You should pray for the welfare of the entire world. (*Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavanthu*) Let everybody and every country be happy. Only when you have such broad feelings, you will be respected. No one will respect you if your behaviour and words are not proper.

Students! Try to understand what human life is. The Upanishads declare that human life is most valuable. It is not easy to understand the divine quality immanent in man. All forms and all powers are in man. Man thinks that gold and diamond are most valuable, but actually it is man who endows value to them. *"Men are more valuable than all the wealth of the world."* So, do not waste such a precious human life.

Ancient sages like Vasishtha worked very hard in order to sanctify their lives. Why did Vasishtha join the court of Dasaratha? One day Vasishtha himself explained this to Dasaratha in the following words: "O king, I have come to you not because you are wealthy and powerful, but because Lord Narayana Himself will be born as your son. I want to sanctify my life in His company." Vasishtha always used to think of divinity. So, he had the appellation, Brahmarishi; whereas Vishwamitra was called only a Rajarishi as he was full of Rajasic qualities. In spite of repeated efforts, Vishwamitra could not get the appellation that Vasishtha could get. So, he developed hatred towards Vasishtha. Due to this hatred, Vishwamitra lost all his powers. You all know that Durvasa, one of the great Rishis, also had the bad quality of anger in him. Even if you were to search with a 'torchlight', you would not find even an iota of love in him. What is the use of being a Maharishi, when there is no trace of love or peace? Only one with sweet words and sacred actions can be called a true Maharishi.

Bharat could progress in ancient times because of saints and noble souls. In spite of repeated foreign invasions, this country could not be destabilised because of the greatness of its spiritual power. In order to preserve and sustain the strong spiritual foundation laid by the saints and noble souls, we have to foster the human values such as Truth, Righteousness, Peace, Love and Nonviolence. If you protect these values, they will in turn protect you. *"Dharmayeva Hatho Hanthi, Dharmo Rakshati Rakshitah"* If you protect Dharma, you will be protected by Dharma. Similarly, if you destroy Dharma, you will be destroyed by Dharma.

Love is your true form. Only through love you can achieve anything. There is no need to search for God and no need to undertake any spiritual practice. *"Love is God, Live in Love."* Without spending a penny and without even crossing your doorstep, you can attain liberation. How? It is only through love. So, develop love.

Embodiments of Love!

Do not have hatred towards anybody. Start loving even those that abuse you. It is only through love that you can bring transformation in them. By loving them more and more, you can get relieved of the pain inflicted by their harsh words. Harsh words are like sharp arrows that pierce deep into the heart. There is no medicine in this world that can cure you of the pain inflicted harsh words. When you are shot with the arrows of harsh words, in reply speak sweetly, softly with love. It is the best medicine. It gives quick relief. Any incurable disease can be cured with love.

Love is Beyond Description

What is the cause of disease? It is mental tension, which is man's own making. Tension gives rise to temper and the two together ruin man. If you want to fill a cup with milk, which is already filled with water, what have you to do? You have to pour out the water and then fill it with milk. In the same way, remove all wicked thoughts and wicked feelings from your heart and then fill it with love.

*"Start the day with Love
Fill the day with Love
Spend the day with Love
End the day with Love
This is the way to God." (Cheers)*

You can develop Love in you by sharing it with others. Love never diminishes. It is nectarine and eternal. Once Narada asked Narayana if there was anything sweeter than nectar. Narayana replied, "Love is sweeter than nectar". You may even get fed up with drinking nectar, but that is not the case with Love. The more you taste it, the more you ask for it. First remove all dirt (bad qualities) in you. As soon as the calf is born, the cow removes all dirt from its body by licking it repeatedly and then feeds it. When a Pashu (animal) has got so much of Love for its young one, then you can very well imagine the Love of Pashupati (God) for His creation. Love cannot be expressed in words. Narada said *"Anirvachaneeyam Prema"* which means Love cannot be described in words.

People think that Narada is fond of creating differences (*Kalahapriya*), but it is a mistaken view. Yes, he was a 'Kalahapriya' in his early days, but later on he realised his mistake, did severe penance and rectified himself. He ultimately became a great teacher. It was Narada who brought Nara (man) and Narayana (God) together. He worked for attainment of bliss and total removal of grief. He said, "The Atma, the Spirit, is God". It is Narayana who makes you forget your body attachments and gets you intoxicated with the love of God.

Love is the principle of God. Having got this Love in you, why should you suffer? Why do you have problems? In fact, you have no difficulties and no anxieties. There is only bliss. But, how can you experience bliss? You have to follow the path of Love. Just by repeating the names of the dishes, your hunger will not be appeased. You have to use your hands and mouth to fill your stomach. In the same way, you have to speak sweet words and do sacred actions. Through these, you will enjoy the sweetness of life and you will be blissful.

All are the children of immortality. You are all the embodiments of Ananda. The Upanishads say, man is "*Ananda Pipasi*" (seeker of bliss). Since he has emerged from bliss, he wants to return to his source. Just as fish, born out of water, always wants to get into water, so also man, born out of bliss, always craves for bliss wherever he is and whatever he does. Until he returns to his source, man has no rest at all. Man is always restless because he cannot find bliss in this world. That is why the Gita said, "*Anithyam Asukham Lokam, Imam Prapya Bhajasva Maam*", (having got this joyless and transient human life, constantly worship Me). You may engage yourself in your daily activities; there is no need to give up your jobs and business, but keep your mind on God always. Only then you will have peace and happiness. After tasting honey, can you say it is bitter? You have actually not experienced bliss. Once you experience Divine bliss, your mind will never crave for worldly pleasures. So, try to experience this bliss, which is within you. Bliss is your source, bliss is your breath and bliss is your life. And it is there with God. Be successful, attain Divinity and enjoy Divine bliss.

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajan, "*Govinda Krishna Jai Gopala Krishna Jai*"

—From Bhagavan's Discourse at Prasanthi Nilayam on 27th September, 1998

EDUCATION AT CROSSROADS

Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning: A Beacon Light

—Prof. G. Venkataraman

*It is said that living with God is true education.
Blessed are those who have that chance.*

As an academic I have visited universities all over the world, but there is nothing anywhere like the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning. Swami's Institute is unique, remarkably distinctive and pre-eminent in many ways. One might wonder how this is possible, especially

since the Institute is tucked away in a small town in a backward district, a town that barely thirty years ago was described as being just "ten minutes past the Stone Age". The answer is simple: It is Bhagavan Baba the Revered Chancellor, Who makes all the difference.

Eternal Wisdom of Bharat

Swami's Avataric Mission is to make man realise his innate Divinity. This is not a new mission. God has incarnated many times before in this land, and for this very same purpose. As Bhagavan explained to Hislop, there is something unique about Bharat, which is why the Lord repeatedly incarnates here. In the Gita, Krishna pointed out to Arjuna that He was reminding man once more about Eternal Wisdom, forgotten over the ages through indifference. From the earliest days of His Avatarhood, Swami has been doing precisely the same. In the process, He has also repeatedly drawn attention to the uniqueness of Bharat and its ancient culture.

The culture of ancient Bharat lays enormous stress on the Omnipresence of Divinity and the Oneness underlying the extraordinary diversity of the phenomenal world. Thus, an important step in the quest for Inner Divinity ought to be, at least for the people of India to go back to the roots of their ancient culture. It is partly for this reason that Swami draws frequent attention to the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita.

The ancients of India led a very regulated, structured and disciplined life. Time there was, even in this century, when discipline was intrinsic to school and college education, and moral classes were a must. But, alas, over the years, both have gone into a near total eclipse, needless to say with disastrous consequences. Swami founded three colleges, starting in the late sixties, in a move to reverse this undesirable trend. Later, these were integrated into one framework, namely, the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning (SSSIHL), with Deemed University status.

Education is for Life

Like every other University, SSSIHL also offers various Undergraduate and Postgraduate, as well as a few Professional Courses. What then is special about the Institute? It is the basis and the emphasis that make all the difference. Whereas in other Universities and Colleges, the focus, consciously or otherwise, is on the job market, Swami's Institute trains students for life. As Swami often says, "Education is for life and not for (making a) living." This noble objective is translated into practice by a delicate blend of the old and the new, and in such a manner that the head, the heart and the body all receive due attention in balanced proportion. It is this synthesis that Dr. Gokak, the first Vice Chancellor of the Institute, often referred to as 'Integral Education'.

Hostel living is a must for students, and the daily routine draws inspiration from the ancient Gurukula principle, with of course due concessions to the compulsions of modern life. Thus, the needs of the body are catered to via Yoga as well as sports. In sports, the emphasis is on camaraderie, enjoyment and co-operation, rather than on aggressive competition.

In the classroom, the focus is on the development of the mind. The syllabi followed are not much different from those adopted elsewhere. In fact, the Board of Studies and the Academic Council both have representatives from sister Universities. What is different in the Institute is the overall approach. Vivekananda once remarked that education must not stuff the brain but shape

the mind. This is the philosophy that guides classroom teaching. Stress is again laid on co-operation rather than on competition, and the fact that knowledge being a gift of God must be utilised for serving society. It is pleasing to note that, thanks to this philosophy, employers find our students to be excellent team players. Increasingly, the ability to cooperate and get along easily with colleagues is valued more than individual brilliance by prospective employers. The so-called whiz kids often suffer from Himalayan egos, but Swami's students having been better trained for life fit in smoothly, wherever they are placed.

Swami and His Students

Where the heart is concerned, Swami takes direct charge. Swami may be Chancellor by title, but His relationship with students cannot by any stretch of imagination be described as that between the Chancellor of a University and the students of that University. It is something much more for, to the students, Swami is father, mother, Guru, friend, philosopher, guide, God, and everything else one can think of, all rolled into one. But many devotees do not seem to appreciate this. In Vedanta it is said that what seems real is not real but what does not seem real it Real. I would say that this applies to many devotees where their impression about the Institute is concerned. When I was the Vice Chancellor, many parents approached me and asked, "Why does not Baba start engineering and medical colleges? We can then send our children to your Institute" No doubt, I gave tactful replies as the circumstance demanded, but what amazed me was that these people who claimed to be devotees had more faith in engineering and medical degrees than in Swami Himself! When they have personal or medical problems, they all come running to Swami, hailing Him as Narayana, the Universal Protector and what not. But when it comes to the education of their offspring, they would rather trust a B.E/ B.Tech/ M.B.B.S degree than one from Swami's Institute!

Few care to realise what exactly Swami means when He says (and He does this often) "Students are My only property." The Love that Bhagavan showers on students is indescribable, and even a Valmiki or a Vyasa would not be able to do justice in describing it. The way He drenches them with Love all the time is just unbelievable. It is not merely the sweets that He constantly distributes or the gifts that He gives away (watches, clocks, T-shirts, calculators, pens, cameras, films... anything one can think of except may be refrigerators and washing machines!), but His concern for matters which would never ever receive attention from anyone else. He wants to know about the food served in the hostel, so that He can be sure that it is adequate and balanced, especially with respect to proteins, vitamins, etc. If a student falls sick, He ensures that he receives proper medical attention. Often, one can see Him in the veranda, making enquiries of the doctors. It is not only the students but also their parents who receive attention. At examination time, He wants students not to be overloaded with extraneous work, so that they can have enough time for study. While exams are in progress, He would often enquire as to how the boys are, whether they are tense, whether the question papers were difficult, etc.

A Play within a Play

As the Convocation approaches, Swami begins to take active interest in the drama to be staged by the Institute boys, after the conclusion of the formal Convocation ceremonies. He asks the boys what they are planning and when they hesitantly unfold the theme He guides, adding embellishing touches to the story. Next He takes a look at the dialogue, improving it to make it more effective as well as forceful wherever necessary. Then come the songs. God, Swami often

says, is Ganapriyudu or a lover of music. One sees this in action during these sessions! Many a time, Swami will sing the song again to show how it must actually be sung, how the feeling or Bhava must be conveyed, etc. When the character portrayed is a great devotee of the Lord, like Surdas for example, Swami is very demanding about the Bhava aspect. After all this, come the actual rehearsals. Swami attends many of these, offering comments, suggesting improvements, etc. For Bhagavan, the Convocation drama is not just routine cultural entertainment, it is meant to be a message, a message that educates, inspires and elevates, a message that would be remembered for a long time, and above all, a message from Swami Himself. Life itself is a drama, in which the Lord takes on a cameo role, and here we can see a play within a play, and itself relating to a play; altogether, it is absolutely fascinating.

A Unique Opportunity

It is but rarely that mankind can witness such a spectacle. Tens of thousands of years ago, the Lord came as Sri Rama to protect the sages and bless the pious. Roughly five thousand years ago He came again, this time as Krishna, not merely to annihilate the evil doers, but more importantly to teach, through Arjuna, an eternal lesson to mankind. Now, the Blessed Lord come as Sathya Sai, teaches these same lessons times without number to the students of the Institute in numerous ways and on numerous occasions. But, alas! blinded by the false glitter of engineering and medical degrees, many parents choose to deny themselves the unique opportunity to place their children under the loving and personal care of the Lord Almighty Himself. In so denying, they also deny their children the opportunity to enjoy something that even the Rishis of yore could not hope for.

It is said that living with God is true education. Blessed are those who have that chance. That is why Professor Sampath, the third Vice Chancellor of the Institute said while relinquishing office, "Swami, You must bless me so that when I am born again, I will be a student of this Institute. Thus one day, I would have the supreme blessing of receiving the degree directly from Your Divine Hands. There cannot be a greater joy." Professor Sampath certainly knew what he was talking about.

A Necklace of Beads

There are thoughts, words and deeds,
And these are like beads;
You have to thread them together,
To make a bead necklace.

And when you wear this necklace,
You'll need no jewels;
So, hurry up and string these beads,
Thoughts, words and deeds.

—By *Tharindu Denuwara, 11 years,*
Auckland, New Zealand

AVATAR VANI

BHAGAVAN'S SIVARATRI DISCOURSE - I

Cultivate Love in Your Heart

One who cultivates the crop of love in the field of one's heart is a true Christian, a true Sikh, a true Hindu and a true Muslim. In fact, he is a true human being on earth who cultivates love in his heart.

(Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of Love!

Love is the life breath of man. It is the consciousness in all the beings. It is the goal of human life. Human life is suffused with love. Unable to comprehend the eternal principle of love, man is weighed down by the physical, worldly worries and anxieties.

Man, Devil or Demon?

There is the principle of *Hiranyagarbha* within every individual. *Hiranya* means gold. When gold is mixed with other metals such as copper, silver, brass, it loses its brilliance, value and identity. Then it becomes impossible to ascertain whether it is gold or silver or brass or copper. Similarly, man's heart, which is *Hiranmaya* is losing its brilliance, value and identity on account of its association with *Vishaya Vasanas* (sensual desires). Consequently, it is impossible to ascertain whether one is a human being or an animal or a devil or a demon. There is no love at all in human beings today. Life devoid of love is a devil's life. Can a man be called a human being, if he has qualities of devils, demons and beasts? Man is leading the life of a demon unaware of the path of truth, righteousness, peace and love. God has not created creatures such as devils and evil spirits. These are the creations of man.

Here is a small example. During the exile of the Pandavas, Krishna visited them to enquire about their welfare. He spent a night with them. The Pandavas had to undergo untold suffering during the period of their exile. As they had Draupadi also with them, the Pandavas would keep

vigil in turns for one hour each every night. Krishna also volunteered to keep vigil for one hour. Dharmaraja wondered, "When You are the protector of the entire universe, what is the meaning in Your offering to do security duty for an hour to protect us?" But at the same time he cautioned Krishna saying, "Krishna, beware of the devil in the vicinity. My brothers and I encounter it every night. On many occasions, it tried to attack us. Therefore, we pray to you to desist from this act. You have come to enquire about our welfare. It is not proper on our part to put you in danger. So kindly take rest." Krishna replied, "Dharmaraja, is this what you have understood of My divinity? On the one hand, you extol Me as the protector of the entire universe and on the other you are apprehensive that I cannot protect Myself. You are worried that demon will harm Me. Rest assured that no demon can touch Me. Therefore, permit Me also to join you all in doing the security duty." Having completed one hour's duty, Krishna sat on a rock smiling to Himself. Thereafter it was Arjuna's turn. He rushed to Krishna a bit worried thinking that the demon might have attacked Him. Seeing Krishna smiling Arjuna fell at His feet and enquired whether He had vanquished the demon. Krishna replied, "Arjuna, I have never created demons and evil spirits. Then, how can the non-existent demons appear in the forest? The demon you are referring to is not a demon at all. It is just a reflection of the evil qualities within you such as hatred, anger and jealousy etc. The anger in you is manifesting in the form of a demon. Its power is increasing in proportion to the intensity of anger in you."

The evil qualities of man are the real demons troubling him today. Man is under the mistaken notion that demons exist and that they are responsible for his suffering. These are all nothing but creation of his imagination and psychological fears. In fact, it is only man who puts another man to suffering. There are no demons and evil spirits in this creation. Arjuna realised the truth of Krishna's words and thereafter did not encounter any demon. Arjuna was beholden to Krishna for opening his eyes. He fell at His feet and expressed his gratitude. Good and bad are man's own creations.

Buddha and Ambashali

After Buddha became a renunciant, he travelled far and wide. People were wonder-struck to see his brilliant and handsome form. Attracted by his effulgence, a lady named Ambashali approached him and said, "O great one, you look like a prince in ochre robes. May I know the reason behind your donning ochre robes at this young age?" Buddha replied that he had taken to the path of renunciation in order to seek solution to three problems: "This body which is young and handsome is bound to become old at some point of time and will be subjected to sickness and will perish ultimately. I want to know the cause of old age, sickness and death." Impressed by his quest for truth, she invited him for lunch. In no time, the entire village came to know of this. The villagers started coming to Buddha one by one and requested him not to accept her invitation as she was a woman of bad character. Buddha listened to all their complaints patiently. Then he smiled and asked the village headman, "Do you also affirm that she is a woman of bad character?" The village headman replied, "Not once, but thousand times I will vouch for the evil character of Ambashali. Please do not visit her house." Holding the headman's right hand, Buddha asked him to clap. The headman said that he could not do so as one of his hands was in Buddha's hold and it was not possible for anyone to clap with a single hand. Buddha replied, "Likewise, Ambashali cannot be bad by herself unless there are men of bad character in this village. If all the men in this village were good, this woman would not have turned bad. Therefore, it is men and their money that are responsible for the bad character of Ambashali"

Saying so, he wanted to know if there was any individual in that gathering without any trace of evil in him, so that he could visit his house for lunch. No one came forward. Then Buddha said, "When there are so many bad men in the village, it is not proper to point an accusing finger at one woman. She turned bad due to bad company." That is why it is said, "Tell me your company, I shall tell you what you are" Realising their folly, the people fell at Buddha's feet and sought his forgiveness. Since then they started treating Ambashali as one amongst them. Inspired by the teachings of Buddha, Ambashali also took to the path of, renunciation and led a pious life.

No one else is responsible for the good and bad in an individual. Each one is responsible for his own good and bad. Who is good, who is bad? First eliminate all that is bad in you and then imbibe all that is good. It is a sin to accuse others when there is a mountain of evil within you. The same sentiment was echoed by Jesus.

Man today is not making an attempt to recognise the innumerable faults in him, instead he is magnifying the minutest faults in others. In fact, he is searching for mistakes in others with thousand eyes. This is the sad state of man today. Man is losing his true identity because he has allowed the evil qualities to enter his heart. People today are more interested in finding others' faults rather than seeing their merits. He is a true human being who sees only good in others.

Who is True Hindu?

He is a true Christian, a true Sikh, a true Hindu, a true Muslim, who cultivates love in the field of his heart. Unfortunately, today no one is sowing the seeds of love in his heart. Then how do you expect the harvest of love? How do you call a person a true Hindu if there is no love in him? When the members of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad came to Me, I asked them the meaning of the word 'Hindu'. Many answers came forth. One said, the word 'Hindu' refers to a person with compassion and righteousness. I asked them for the spelling of the word Hindu in English. They replied H-I-N-D-U. Then I told them: H - stands for Humanity, I - for Individuality, N - for Nationality, D - for Divinity, U - for Unity. (Cheers)

A true Hindu is one who embodies these qualities in him. Love is the underlying principle in all these five qualities. A true Hindu or a Muslim or a Christian should be the embodiment of love. Muslims pray "*Allah Ho Akbar*," which means God is great. Islam means peace. So, a true Muslim is one who leads a peaceful life. Peace originates from a heart that is full of love. Without love one cannot be peaceful. So, for any caste, creed or religion love is the basis. Love is *Sivam* and *Mangalam*, which means auspiciousness. Love does not hurt anyone. That which does not hurt is referred to as *Sivam*. Man bereft of love is *Shavam* (corpse). The one with love is *Sivaswarupa* (embodiment of auspiciousness).

Do not distort Scriptural Teachings

Today we are celebrating Sivaratri. What does it mean? Ratri (night) is associated with darkness. The Vedas declare: "*Chandrama Manaso Jatha, Chaksho Suryo Ajayatha*" (the moon was born out of the mind and the sun out of the eyes of the Purusha). Moon is the presiding deity of the mind. So, mind should be pure and unsullied. There is an immense significance in every statement of Vedanta. Confusion prevails when these are misunderstood. There is a practice of sacrificing innocent and dumb animals such as goats, sheep, etc., on this day in the name of Yajna and Yaga.

One day, a noble soul noticed some animals being taken in a grand procession. On enquiry, he was informed that they were being taken to the sacrificial altar. He asked the owner of the animals what benefit was derived from sacrificing the animals. The reply was that the animals would attain liberation as a result of being offered to God. Then the noble soul said, "O man, your mother, your father, your wife and your son—all crave for liberation. Why don't you sacrifice them and fulfill their desire in the process? Why don't you grant liberation to the people who aspire for it instead of the innocent animals, which do not know what liberation means? If you firmly believe that sacrifice grants liberation, then why don't you sacrifice your parents, your wife and your children?"

Follow the Inward Path

Today some people advocate the need for Bhajans, charity and service saying that they confer *Moksha* (liberation). If they really believe in what they are saying, why don't they practise what they preach? It is easy to preach, but difficult to practise. *Moha Kshayam is Moksham*. (Total detachment is liberation). Attachment leads to suffering. So first and foremost, give up attachment. Prior to their marriage, even if the girl is down with serious ailment the boy is least affected. Subsequent to the marriage, if the girl develops a mild fever, the boy is extremely concerned. What is the reason for this? It is attachment. Before the marriage, there was no relationship between the two whatsoever. But after the marriage, the boy feels that she is his wife. It is only this attachment that is the cause of all suffering. The closer we move towards attachment, the farther we drift from liberation. Attachment should be within certain limits.

One who is immersed neck deep in water may be able to speak, but not a person who is totally immersed. Likewise a person who is immersed in divinity completely will have no words to describe the glory of God. Only those who have understood God partially will try to describe Him in various ways. You should immerse yourself completely in divine feelings and pure love. It is due to lack of love that there are today conflicts between individuals, villages, states and countries.

Vedanta declares: "Know thyself." A person who follows *Pravritti Marga* (outward path) is interested in collecting information about others and their whereabouts. He keeps asking others "Who are you?" "Where do you come from?" etc. A person who treads along *Nivritti Marga* (inward path) looks within and enquires "Who am I?" "Where do I come from?" *Nivritti Marga* is positive and *Pravritti Marga* is negative in nature. How can you expect positive results when your heart is full of negative feelings? External is the reflection of the internal. You will reap what you sow, having eaten mango how can you expect the belch of a cucumber? So, in order to get positive results you should fill your heart with positive feelings. Love, peace, compassion which originate from the heart are positive in nature. All the negative thoughts are the products of the head.

Heart is more Important than Head

Science and technology are associated with the head. Today technology has become 'tricknology,' because you are traversing along the negative path. What is the use of having high intelligence in the absence of positive qualities? *Man today has acquired all forms of knowledge, yet he does not know himself. In spite of having acquired various forms of knowledge, a*

mean-minded person cannot give up his evil qualities. All this worldly knowledge bolsters excessive argumentation, but not total awareness. After all, one has to die in spite of acquiring all the worldly knowledge. So, study that which makes you immortal. (Telugu Poem) Today as the acquisition of worldly knowledge is on the rise, noble qualities in the heart are on the decline. What is the use of ten acres of barren land? A small piece of fertile land is better than ten acres of barren land. Develop at least one noble quality, which emerges from the heart instead of ten from the head. All the thoughts that emerge out of the head are useless. Most of the activities of the scientists are based on the head rather than on the heart. Students are well aware of the fact that it was Newton who discovered the existence of the gravitational force. As a result of excessive dependence on head, Newton had to spend five years in a mental hospital before his death. So, you should not overstrain your head.

Today students spend most of their time in studies. While travelling in the car many a time, I have noticed small children carrying big load of books on their backs. You yourself can imagine the plight of the young children who have to stuff their head with lots of information contained in the books. As a result, their tender hearts are being polluted with unnecessary information. So, your studies also should be within certain limits. Only then you can retain your intelligence and memory power.

The feelings that emerge out of the heart are immortal and nectarine. But are you making use of at least one of them? It is enough if you can develop peace. Everyday at the conclusion of the Bhajan session, you chant Santhi three times, but there is no trace of Santhi (peace) in you. Even if there is the slightest disturbance caused by the person sitting beside you, you feel irritated and your tone of Santhi becomes harsh due to anger. Even while chanting Santhi, there is no trace of Santhi in you! How do you expect to experience peace if you do not cultivate love in the field of your heart? Instead of cultivating love, you are cultivating the evil qualities of jealousy and hatred. If someone criticises you, do not take it to heart; consider that is for your own good. It is the worst of the sins to search for mistakes in others. In the first instance, correct your mistakes and accept the good in others.

Partners in Sin

If you do not grow the harvest of love in your heart, you are not a true Christian, a true Sikh, a true Hindu or a true Muslim,

You are a demon in human form. When you develop love in your heart, you are verily God. You become God or demon on the basis of your feelings. Do not find fault in others. Buddha was criticised by many when he accepted the invitation of Ambashali. She alone was not responsible for her bad character. There were many who encouraged her.

For every act of sin, five persons are mainly responsible. One who commits the sin, one who is the cause, one who encourages the act of sin, one who shows the ways and means to commit the sin and one who witnesses it. All the five will have to face the consequences. When Draupadi was being humiliated by Duryodhana and Dussasana in the open court, elders like Bhishma and Drona remained as spectators. They did not oppose Duryodhana's heinous act. It is in this context that Vidura has pointed out that not only the sinner but the other four persons mentioned above will also go to hell. Since Bhishma, the one of wisdom, was a silent spectator

to the humiliation of Draupadi, he had to lie on the bed of arrows for fifty-six days. Had he prevented the humiliation of Draupadi, he would not have suffered thus.

Plunge yourself in Sacred Activities

It is rather difficult to say how one gets merit or sin? In order to escape from sin, one should take to the path of spirituality. Knowingly or unknowingly, you commit sin. Consequently, you are suffering. You are unable to trace the root cause of your suffering. So, undertake meritorious deeds. Cultivate sacred feelings. Serve your fellow beings. Taking to this path amounts to devotion. Devotion does not mean performing worship and offering flowers to God. Worship amounts to good actions alone. One should have good thoughts within. One will not be redeemed if one undertakes good actions with bad intentions. For instance, if someone offers a donation of 10 lakh for a charitable cause, another person may come forward with a donation of 15 lakh only to attract the public attention. In reality, he may not give even 10 rupees. Such people are heroes at platform and zeroes in practice. There should be unity in thought, word and deed. That is what is meant by "the proper study of mankind is man." This is true humanness.

Embodiments of Love!

In order to redeem yourselves, you should grow the harvest of love in the field of your heart; water the field of your heart with love. Water is the very life of man. How can you sanctify your life if you cannot provide at least drinking water to the people who are in need of it? Water is divine. Water in Sanskrit is called *Naaram*. Eye is known as *Nayanam*. So, the *Naaram*, which comes out of *Nayanam* should be for the sake of Narayana (God) alone. One should shed only tears of joy, not tears of grief. When do you get tears of joy? Only when you are successful in your endeavours.

You all know that here are many people from Mahaboob Nagar and Medak districts in this gathering. Swami has consented to provide drinking water to these two districts. Many people hailing from these two districts have never seen Swami before. Their joy knew no bounds when they came to know the love and grace showered on them by Swami. Men and women, young and old were ecstatic. Every week many people from these two districts come to Swami to express their gratitude. You should all plunge into such sacred activities for the benefit of mankind at large. Sage Vyasa declared: *Paropakara Punyaya Papaya Parapeedanam*, which means "Help Ever, Hurt Never." If possible try to help others. Never hurt anyone. Love even your enemies. Never use harsh words and hurt the feelings of others. If you hurt someone today, you will have to suffer ten times more in future.

You will be observing Sivaratri in the true spirit of the term only when you give up bad qualities and cultivate divine love. Merely observing vigil on Sivaratri is not sufficient; you have to contemplate on God incessantly. Many people claim that they have observed *Jagarana* (vigil) on Sivaratri night by playing cards. The fisherman goes on watching intently to trap the fish in the net. Can this be termed meditation? If one abstains from food on account of quarrel with one's wife, can it be called fasting? No. Similarly, observance of sacred vigil on Sivaratri night is not achieved by playing cards the whole night. You should spend this night by chanting the name of God, using the time in doing good deeds.

Follow in My Footsteps

You should not waste your valuable time in vain gossip. Instead undertake service activities in villages and slum areas. Provide the basic necessities of life such as food, clothing to the poor and needy. It amounts to greatest service. I am practising this right from My childhood.

When someone appeared at the doorstep begging for alms, the people in the household would say 'not now, not now', but I would surreptitiously dole out alms. If anyone needed clothes, I would provide them. The *Griham Ammayi* (mother of this body) used to recollect and narrate all these incidents. Believe it or not, I had only one pair of school uniform to be used throughout the year. Everyday after returning from school I used to don a towel and wash My only dress, put it up for drying and then press it by using a container with embers as iron box. When I was provided with a new dress, I used to give My old dress to the poor and needy. The *Griham Abbayi* (father of this body) never reprimanded or punished Me. He would compliment Me by saying, "You are a *Mahatyagi* (one of great sacrifice). It is impossible for us to be like You." He would endearingly address Me Vedanti (philosopher).

The same was the case with *Griham Ammayi* too. She looked after Me with great love and affection. People used to fall at her feet, pour out their tales of woe and plead with her to recommend their case to Me. But, I used to put her off softly by saying, "Don't worry about others' problems." In spite of this, she used to carry on, saying, "Swami, what is the use of My human birth if I don't help people in distress? My sincere feeling is that they will be relieved of their suffering if I convey their problems and feelings to You. So, I will not refrain from doing this even if you object or scold Me." In this manner, the parents of this body led a very pious and sacred life. The whole clan has benefited from this.

The Real Worth of Human Head

Develop good qualities. Do not give scope for evil by joining bad company. In this train of life, youngsters are the long distance passengers. The elders may get down at the next station, but you have a long way to go before you reach your destination. First and foremost, you need to have self-confidence. Today people suffer because of lack of self-confidence. If you have total faith in God, you will be able to overcome all difficulties. There may be a few difficulties in your way, but do not be unduly perturbed. You should face all hardships with courage and conviction. Only then you will attain true happiness. Never blame God for your difficulties. You are bound to face the consequences, whether good or bad, of your actions. But if you have God's grace, even bad will be turned into good. So, develop faith in God more and more.

You trust your friend whom you have met only a few years ago, but not God who is with you, in you, around you, throughout your life. You believe in the dhobi and part with your valuable clothes. You are prepared to bend your head in front of the barber. You are prepared to put your life in the hands of the driver. But you do not believe in the omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient divinity. Why can't you bend your head in front of God? There are some evil-minded persons who criticise people for bending their heads before God. Such people will never have the good fortune of bending their heads before God.

One day, King Bhoja was proceeding to a village in his chariot along with his minister. On the way, he found a Buddhist monk coming from the opposite direction. Immediately, he got

down from the chariot and paid his respects to him by placing his head on the feet of the monk. The minister did not relish this act of King Bhoja. He said, "O king, how could you keep your most valuable head on the feet of an ordinary monk?" The king waited for an opportune moment to give his reply. One day the king, giving his minister the head of a sheep, a goat, and a human being, asked him to sell them in the market. The minister succeeded in selling the head of the sheep and the goat, but not that of a human being. He returned to the king and said, "O king, no one is willing to buy this human head." Then the king said, "O minister, do you remember the day when you objected to my falling at the feet of a Buddhist monk saying mine was the most valuable head. At least now you would realise the value of the human head." One should prostrate at the feet of noble souls when one is alive, for even the vultures and dogs do not value human head after death.

The Fortunate Few

Self-confidence cannot be purchased or obtained through learning. It is based on deservedness. Develop the divine thoughts to attain deservedness. In fact, you are the most fortunate people. Otherwise, how could only a few thousand of you have come here when there are millions in this world? Make the best use of this golden opportunity. Follow the divine path. If you have faith in God, He will protect you in the face of all adversities. He is always with you, in you, above you, beside you, around you. Do not give scope for bad feelings and bad thoughts. Do not criticise anyone. You are well aware of the fact that everyday in the newspapers you find headlines describing the conflicts between various parties. One party criticises and finds faults with the other. They are accumulating sins by doing so. That is why I do not read newspapers. Why should I go through all this? Many people waste so much money buying these newspapers. It is a form of madness. Read good books. Slander is the worst of the sins.

Embodiments of Love!

As pointed out by the Vice Chancellor in his speech, I used to bring out *Atmalingams* from this body on the occasion of Sivaratri in the earlier years. Lingodbhava (emergence of Linga) used to take place on every Sivaratri. To witness this sacred event, lakhs would gather in a small hall. Consequently, there used to be stampede resulting in injuries to devotees. Due to this, I discontinued Lingodbhava in public.

There is a specific time for this. It may take place at any moment between 8 and 10 in the night. It takes place at the right time irrespective of the place I am in. It is bound to take place. It is natural on Sivaratri night. Those who are fortunate to witness this sacred Lingodbhava are freed from all sins. One must see how it emerges. But, some people may not be able to see this even if they are sitting close by. Witnessing the emergence of the Lingam is of utmost importance. Once it emerges, everyone will be able to see it and it has its own benefits. There are many such important aspects attached to this auspicious occasion.

You will be immensely benefited if you keep awake and sing the glory of God at least on this night. Moon is the presiding deity of the mind. Moon has 16 *Kalas* (phases). On Sivaratri, 15 *Kalas* merge in God and only one remains. By constant remembrance of God, the 16th phase also merges in God. Can you not spend a single night in the whole year singing the glory of God? Sanctify this night by participating in Bhajan. The bliss that you get from Bhajan, the sweetness you experience in the divine name, the happiness you derive from visualising the

divine form cannot be obtained elsewhere. Everything is possible only through love. So, cultivate love and sanctify your life.

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajan, "*Hari Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahi...*"

—From Bhagavan's Sivaratri Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam on 14th February, 1999

AVATAR VANI

BHAGAVAN'S DASARA DISCOURSE - III

Entire Universe is within You

*Even a millionaire has to be content with ordinary food,
He cannot live on a diet of gold.
When time is not favourable, a stick may turn into a snake,
While, when it is favourable, dust may turn into gold.
The wheel of time can turn a scholar into a fool
And a fool into a saint.
A wealthy man may become a plaything of adversity at some time.
Whatever your efforts may be,
You cannot get what you are not destined to get.
O man, don't be over ambitious,
Lead instead a noble life making proper use of the intellect.*

(Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of Love!

In this vast world, among all living creatures, human life is the noblest. One is born as a human being as a result of meritorious deeds done in past lives. Just as a small gramophone plate contains many songs, poems and dialogues, likewise the human heart contains the entire universe in a subtle form. You can neither see the script of the dialogues and songs by keeping the gramophone plate close to your eyes nor can you hear the sound by keeping it close to your ears. Only by playing it, you will be able to hear the music and the dialogues that are in it.

Universe Imprinted on Human Heart

The human heart, which can be compared to a gramophone plate, contains in it all the traits of past lives. The reaction, resound and reflection of all that you have seen, heard and experienced are contained in it. The vast oceans, the mighty mountains and all the different places that you visited are imprinted on your heart. In short, the entire universe is imprinted on the human heart. So, it can be said that human being is *Viswaviraatswarupa* (embodiment of Cosmic Principle). But, man not being able to realise this truth considers himself low, and is affected by pleasure and pain, good and bad.

Wherefrom has this universe originated? The Shrutis (the Vedas) have given a proper answer to this. The universe has originated from where the 'I' principle has originated. That is '*Hridaya*'.

The Shrutis declare that 'Hridaya' is the origin of 'I' principle. This 'I' is all-pervasive. Everyone uses this letter 'I' while introducing himself or herself. There is no place or person without this 'I' principle. Even the birds and beasts have got this 'I' principle, though they are not able to express it. Wherever 'I' is, there is 'Hridaya'. Hridaya is not limited to body alone, it is all-pervasive. 'I' is the name of the Atma. So, in everybody, the *Atma* is present in the form of 'I'. It is associated with *Buddhi* (intellect).

Unite the Mind and Intellect

Right from an illiterate person to a scholar, everyone defines *Buddhi* as the power to discriminate between the transient and the permanent. This is not the correct definition. People use it only in the worldly sense. In fact, *Buddhi* has five aspects. They are: *Shraddha*, *Ritam*, *Sathyam*, *Yogam* and *Maha-tattwam*.

Shraddha has two powers: one is interest and the other is steadfastness. *Ritam* refers to unity of thought, word and deed. *Ritam* expressed in the form of words becomes *Sathyam*. *Yogam* refers to controlling the aberrations of the mind. (Yoga Chitta Vritti Nirodha). The fifth aspect *Mahatattwam* is that which is sacred and divine. When *Buddhi* has all these five aspects, is it not an understatement if we define *Buddhi* as that which only discriminates between the transient and the permanent?

Today, many people talk of *Manas* (mind) and *Buddhi* (intellect) without understanding their true meaning. They think that the mind is only a combination of thoughts, but even the actions are associated with it. When the mind and the intellect unite, humanness reaches a state of freedom, which is referred to as *Moksha* (liberation).

It is a mistake to undertake any spiritual practice to control the mind. The nature of the mind is mysterious. It is unsteady and associated with ego. Who can control such a mind? So, never try to control the mind. Follow the intellect, then the mind naturally submits itself. The master of the mind is the intellect. The master of the intellect is the *Atma*. The *Atma* has coo, master. So, *master the mind and be a mastermind*.

Nearness and Dearness to God

Search for Truth is search for God, because Truth is God. So, worship Truth, follow Truth and practise Truth. People may deny God, but none can deny Truth. You cannot fragment Truth by saying, this is Pakistani Truth, this is American Truth, this is Indian Truth and so on. Truth is uniform for people of all nations and all religions in all periods of time. Truth is one, so God is one. But people worship God in different forms. This is *Bhranti* (delusion). As long as there is *Bhranti* in you, you cannot attain *Brahma*. This *Bhranti* is the cause for all your sufferings. So, first and foremost give up *Bhranti*.

It is a mistake to consider that God is separate from you. Once you realise that you are one with God, you can never be separated. For example, when a pot full of water is emptied in the ocean, the water of the pot becomes one with the ocean. You cannot separate them. Similarly, once you unify your love with God, you become one with God. How to unify? When fire and coal are placed apart, they remain as they are. Only when both are brought close to each other, does fire enter coal. If fanning is also done, coal gets transformed into fire. Likewise go closer to

God and love Him wholeheartedly. Going close to God can be compared to coal coming in contact with fire (nearness), and loving Him wholeheartedly can be compared to fanning (dearness). Such nearness and dearness to God will ultimately make you one with God. This is what Vedanta declared: "*Brahmavid Brahmaiva Bhavathi*" (the knower of *Brahman* becomes one with *Brahman*).

Divinity is within You

Human body contains all the three worlds: *Devaloka* (head), *Naraloka* (throat) and *Nagaloka* (heart). The head is referred to as *Devaloka* (heaven), as it has got all the five senses of perception that recognise *Shabda* (sound), *Sparsha* (touch), *Rupa* (form), *Rasa* (taste) and *Gandha* (smell). *The body is made of five elements and is bound to perish, but the Indweller is immortal. The Indweller has no birth, no death and no bondage. Truly speaking, that Indweller is God Himself* (Telugu Poem). Such a sacred body, the temple of God, is being misused. Yesterday I told you that the world is made of five elements. Human body is also made of five elements. God is present in the form of five elements all over the world. The Vedas declare: *Antarbahischa That Sarvavyapya Narayana Sthitha*, which means Divinity is present in you, with you, above you, below you and around you.

Every human being has five sheaths: *Annamaya Kosa* (gross sheath), *Pranamaya Kosa* (life sheath), *Manomaya Kosa* (mental sheath), *Vijnanamaya Kosa* (wisdom sheath) and *Anandamaya Kosa* (bliss sheath). In order to acquire wisdom, you do not need to go through sacred texts or hear the teachings of elders. The sacred sheath of wisdom itself is present in you. Once you experience the sheath of wisdom, you will experience the sheath of bliss. Just as the water bubble is born out of water, sustained in it and ultimately merges in water; so also human being is born out of bliss, sustained in bliss and ultimately merges in bliss. But being unaware of this, you are wasting your time, money and energy in search of bliss.

Know Thyself

Truly speaking, man is wasting a lot of time in worldly pursuits. But he does not spend even a moment to know his Self. "Who am I? What for am I born? What am I doing?" Man does not put these questions to himself. Instead he questions others, "Who are you? Where do you come from? What are you doing?" He has got the inquisitiveness to know about others, but not about himself.

What is the purpose of life? It is not *khana*, *peena*, *sona*, *marna* (eating, drinking, sleeping, dying). Body is gifted in order to follow Dharma. Your Dharma is to know your own Self. Consider everyone as divine and the whole world as the mansion of God. Offer all your actions to God. Let every word that you utter be a Mantra and every step you take be *Pradakshina* (circumambulating God). Instead of leading such a sacred life, man is wasting his time and energy in amassing wealth. Due to excessive desires, his life becomes a big zero.

Zero gains value when number one (hero) precedes it. As the number of zeroes increases, the value too increase if number one precedes them. Similarly, if you keep God (Hero) in view, all the zeroes such as your body, mind and senses also gain value. Hero becomes zero if he forgets God. The world is zero, human life is zero, the sky is zero, the sun is zero and the moon is zero. All these zeroes have got value only because of the Hero i.e., God.

Embodiments of Love!

Take to service, but do not think that you are serving others. You are serving only yourself. Similarly, all the spiritual practices such as *Japa*, *Thapa*, *Dhyana* and *Bhajan* are for your own satisfaction.

God does not need them. God wants only one thing—you should know your Self. Only then you will know God. Confidence in self and confidence in God—this is the secret of greatness. Prahlada had total faith in Narayana, while Hiranyakasipu had faith in the body. God will always protect the one with strong faith like Prahlada.

Today, man visits temples and pilgrimage centres in search of peace, but peace is not found in pilgrimage centres. Peace is not found outside, it is within you. You are the embodiment of peace, truth and love. So search within, tread along the path of love. Only then you will be peaceful. Through love, you can achieve anything. God is Love, live in Love. Without love, you cannot be successful. Love helps you to know your Self. In order to experience love, you do not need to approach anybody nor do you need to exert yourself. Turn your vision inward.

Reduce your Desires

Krishna said, "*Mamaivamso Jeevaloke Jeevabhutha Sanathana*" (human beings are the sparks of My Divinity). Serve anybody, it amounts to serving God. The best way to love God is to love all and serve all. If you lead such a life, all your actions will be pleasing unto God.

Embodiments of Love!

You need food, clothing, shelter and some money to purchase medicines if you were to fall sick. That is why I said in the beginning, "O man! Never be over ambitious, lead instead a noble life by making proper use of the intellect." Happiness lies in contentment. Dissatisfaction will lead to misery. In order to experience peace, keep your desires under control. Misery is the birthplace of all desires. In this journey of life, desires can be compared to luggage. "Less luggage, more comfort make travel a pleasure." So, reduce your desires. This is called *Vairagya* (renunciation). As the desire for the world decreases, the desire for God increases. This is what the Vedas declare: *Na Karmana Na Prajaya Dhanena Thyagenaike Amruthathwamanusu*" (Neither by actions nor by progeny nor by wealth, it is only by sacrifice that one can attain immortality). Offer all your actions to God, consider all as children of God, treat money as God's gift and make proper use of it. So long as there is no sacrifice in you, you will have only *Anruthathwa* (falsehood). Only sacrifice will give you *Amruthathwa* (immortality).

Experience Happiness through Divine Love

What is the way to immortality? Removal of immorality is the only way to immortality. Without getting rid of wicked qualities such as lust, anger, greed and jealousy, how do you expect to attain immortality? When the tumbler is already filled with water, you cannot fill it with anything else. Similarly, when the head is filled with evil qualities, good qualities have no place in it. You have filled the vessel of your heart with all types of worries. Then how do you expect to be happy? Vyasa gave the essence of all the eighteen *Puranas* in one sentence: Help Ever, Hurt Never. Only then you can be happy. If it is not possible to help, at least do not harm anybody under any circumstances. You should serve wholeheartedly, not for name and fame.

Today, man is leading a worldly life, devoid of all ideals. Instead of trying to know his true identity, he is wasting his time on useless pursuits. *"He knows the route to America, but not to Kashi. He knows a lot about Botany, but not the use of Tulsi plant."* (Telugu Poem) What is the use of leading such a life? Develop *Daya* (compassion) in your *Hridaya*. Today, there is only fashion, but no compassion. What is the meaning of mankind? Man should have kindness. The one without kindness is not a man, but a demon. The proper study of mankind is man. There should be harmony in thought, word and deed. Whatever originates from the heart should be expressed in words, and the words in turn should be put into action.

Once a devotee prayed thus: "O Bhagavan, people send many applications to you expressing their desires. How do you find time to go through all this? When do You reply? We get headache even if we read two letters. But You read so many letters and send so many replies, yet You remain happy and cheerful in spite of your busy schedule. This itself is a sign of Divinity." I am doing all this not for My happiness, but for your happiness. Many people greet Me 'Happy Birthday'. I am always happy. You do not need to greet Me thus. Give happiness to those who are not happy. Happiness cannot be experienced through spiritual practices. It can be experienced only through Divine Love. You will never fail in your life if you have love for God. As the previous speaker said, there are people who have failed for lack of faith, but people with strong faith will never fail. Man is suffering because he lacks faith.

In order to experience bliss, you need to develop love. Love is like a rose and lust is like a thorn. Cut the rose without touching the thorn and offer it to God. You should offer yourself to God. That is surrender. Love within you should be merged with the Divine Love. There lies the bliss.

Think of God from Early Age

In Ramayana, Vali and Sugriva suffered because they lacked unity. In the same way Ravana, Kumbhakarna and Vibhishana also suffered due to lack of unity. Though the Pandavas had difference of opinion among them, they stood united. Therefore, their name and fame have spread far and wide. With unity you can achieve anything. There are 95 crore people in India. If there is unity among them, this country can be transformed into very heaven itself. But there is no unity, no purity. Only enmity exists. Heart is like a single chair, not a musical chair or double seated sofa. So, let Love be seated in that chair, then bad qualities have no place in it. Modern devotion has become artificial. People say something and do quite the opposite. There is no harmony in their words and actions. This is not proper. It amounts to cheating themselves.

Each one has to face one's own destiny. So, you should be ready to face difficulties. There can be no pleasure without pain. Do not feel dejected on seeing a dark night. Think of the moonlight that can be seen on the following night. Without dark night, there cannot be full moon night. There is happiness in sorrow too. You cannot have happiness out of happiness. You can have happiness only from difficulties.

Though you are the embodiment of love, you have to do Sadhana and Seva necessarily till you realise your true identity. Some people say, "Swami, why do we need to be devoted at a young age? We can as well think of God after retirement" When the messengers of death come

to seize your life, when your relatives make arrangements to keep your body outside, and when your wife and children cry bitterly, is it possible to remember God at that moment? So, right from an early age, you should think of God. That is why I say, "Start early, drive slowly and reach safely."

Embodiments of Love!

Fight against bad thoughts and bad deeds. Run away from bad company and join good company. Develop good thoughts, good feelings, undertake good actions and attain Divinity.

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajan, "*Hari Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahi..*"

—From Bhagavan's Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam on 28th September 1998

AVATAR VANI

BHAGAVAN'S SIVARATRI DISCOURSE - II

Manifesting Divinity in Lingodbhava

He is a realised one who forgets the past, doesn't worry about the future and discharges his duties in the present.

(Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of Love!

Past is past, future is uncertain, only present is in our hands. It is the foremost duty of man to live in the present and share his joy with his fellow beings. Truly speaking, human being is the most fortunate one among all the living beings. Compared to the entire cosmos, man is very small like an atom, yet he is able to comprehend the magnitude and vastness of the creation, which is very startling indeed. He attains immortality by understanding the unity between the microcosm and macrocosm. As mentioned by Me yesterday, whosoever cultivates the harvest of love in the field of his heart is a true Christian, a true Sikh, a true Hindu and a true Muslim. In fact, he is the true human being on earth.

Love Originates from Hiranyagarbha

Man cannot exist without love. This Principle of Love is Hiranyagarbha. This Hiranyagarbha is situated on the right side of the human body as the physical heart is on the left. The physical heart on the left side has to be left one day or the other in some circumstance or the other. Hiranyagarbha, located on the right side of the human body is always right. It is immortal, divine, eternal and all encompassing. It is present not only in human beings, but also in birds, beasts and all other living beings. The Vedas declare: "*Easwara Sarvabhoothanam*" (God is present in all living beings), "*Isavasyam Idam Jagat*" (God pervades the entire cosmos). Love is the reflection of *Hiranyagarbha* and originates from it. The three principles of reaction, resound and reflection have also originated from *Hiranyagarbha*. Unable to recognise his true identity, man is wasting his life in the pursuit of temporary, fleeting, transient and ephemeral pleasures. As I told you yesterday, gold loses its value, brilliance and identity when it is mixed with different metals such as silver, copper, brass. So also the heart, which loses its value, brilliance

and identity on account of its association with the impurities of worldly desires. This is the present plight of mankind. Man is behaving like a demon, devil and a beast because he has forgotten his divine nature. Divine love originates from *Hiranyagarbha*. This selfless divine love lives by giving and forgiving, whereas selfish love lives by getting and forgetting. Such divine love is essential for man.

Here is a small example to illustrate this. After Ravana was killed in the battle, Hanuman went to Sita and conveyed her the good news. Sita was overjoyed and started extolling Hanuman thus: "O Hanuman, you are the *Puravarashoura* (the valiant one), who entered Lanka in the face of all dangers; you are the *Bhadraparakrama* (the performer of acts of valour) who crossed the ocean in a single leap, and you are the *Kapirajashikamani* (the crown jewel of the monkey clan) who fulfilled the command of Rama" But Hanuman did not relish any of these titles conferred on him by Sita. Sita then said, "O Hanuman, I have not seen a virtuous one like you. There is none equal to you in terms of physical strength in this world." She also conferred the titles of *Gunavanta* (full of virtues) and *Balavanta* (full of prowess) on Hanuman. None of these titles pleased Hanuman. In the end, Sita blessed Hanuman saying, "May Rama love you forever and install Himself in your heart." Then Hanuman leapt in joy. He said, "O mother, there is nothing greater than God's love in this world. I do not crave for any title. I pray only for Rama's love. In the absence of the love of Lord Rama, I will not be happy even if the whole world were to come under my control. My life will find fulfillment only when I am the recipient of His love." Such a virtuous, valiant and ardent devotee like Hanuman craved only for the love of Rama, nothing else. So, a sincere devotee should yearn for God's love and love is everything. Human quality lies in kindling love within, speaking with love and acting with love. On this basis, it is said, "The proper study of mankind is man."

Controlling the Senses is the Highest Sadhana

Once a Pundit challenged Buddha to enter into a debate with him. The terms were that if he was the loser, he would follow Buddhism along with his 3000 disciples and serve Buddha lifelong. But, if Buddha was the loser, it would be obligatory on his part to become a follower of the Pundit. Buddha smilingly said, "*Pundita Samadarshina*" (a true Pundit is one who has equal-mindedness). A true Pundit makes no distinction between the dualities of life, such as pain and pleasure, joy and sorrow. A person with anger and ego is unfit to be called a Pundit. In pilgrim centres such as Haridwar, Rishikesh, Badrinath, Kedarnath and Amarnath, you find *Pandas* who give Mantras that would grant liberation to the departed souls. These *Pandas* cannot be called Pundits. In this world, there are many who have gone through sacred texts. The knowledge of the Self cannot be acquired by mere scholarship or by sitting at the feet of a guru. There are many who go through voluminous books, but is there a person who practises at least one teaching? When you spend all your life in reading, when are you going to practise it? Scholarship bereft of practice is futile. The Bhagavad Gita declares: *Kavim Puranamanushasitharam* (the Supreme Being is all-knowing, Indweller and Ruler of all)

Who is a *Kavi* (poet)? A *Kavi* is one who knows the past, present and future; not the one who merely plays with words. This implies that God alone is *Kavi* (poet). What is the inner meaning of *Purana*? Body is *Pura* in which divinity pervades. The divine principle that pervades from top to toe in the body is referred to as *Purana*. So, God Himself is *Purana*. Next comes *Anushasithara* (one who commands and controls). You may imprison a person who has

committed a crime, but you cannot prevent his mind from going all over the world. There is no judge in this world, who can punish the mind. It is only God who has the power to command the mind of man. Therefore, God alone is *Anushasithara*.

Explaining thus, Buddha silenced the Pundit and advised him to shun the pride and ego of his scholarship. He told the Pundit not to get carried away by the worldly knowledge. He exhorted him to acquire and practise divine knowledge and surrender to God. Buddha said, "I undertook spiritual practice for a long time and went through various sacred texts in quest of knowledge of the Self. Ultimately, I realised that mastering the senses is essential for acquiring knowledge of the Self. The five senses are the gift of God. Make proper use of them. Only then you can realise the Self. What is the use of going through sacred texts and undertaking spiritual practices without proper utilisation of the five senses? I have controlled the five senses and put them on the right path, as a result of which I am experiencing bliss."

Buddha attained *Nirvana* by controlling his five senses and making proper use of them. What is *Nirvana*? It is nothing but merger in bliss. Water bubble is born in water, is sustained in water and ultimately merges in it; likewise, human being is born in bliss, is sustained in bliss and ultimately merges in it. Bliss can be experienced by controlling the five senses. This is the true Sadhana. Mere chanting of Lord's name will not suffice. First and foremost, the senses have to be controlled. At the time of attaining *Nirvana*, Buddha saw his cousin, Ananda, shedding tears. He called him near and said, "Ananda, true to your name, you should experience Ananda (bliss). You should never shed tears of sorrow. You are the embodiment of Ananda. All of us are embodiments of Brahma." Saying so, Buddha put his hand on Ananda and attained *Nirvana*.

Whoever understands this truth can experience bliss and attain divinity. When attaining liberation is so easy and simple, why do you struggle hard for it? It only means that you are not making any effort to understand the inner truth. You are mixing the metals of worldly desires with the gold of your heart. As a result, the heart has become polluted and has lost its true identity, i.e., bliss. Ancients have said that bliss lies in visualising and experiencing your true form, that is the Principle of the Atma. Proper utilisation of the senses will lead to the knowledge of the Atma. Sage Patanjali said, *Yoga Chitta Vritti Nirodha* (the control of senses is true Yoga). No Sadhana is greater than this. All the spiritual practices such as Japa (chanting of Lord's name) and Thapa (penance) will be of no avail if senses are not controlled. You may be under the impression that it is not possible for a human being to control the senses. Here control does not mean total cessation. Discharge your duties as a householder, student or businessman. But whatever you do, do it with a feeling that it is to please God (*Sarva Karma Bhagavath Preethyartham*). Once you develop this feeling, all your senses will naturally be controlled.

Embodiments of Love!

You feel that *Arpitam* (total surrender) to God is rather difficult, but according to Me nothing is easier than this. It may be difficult to make a garland out of flowers or to pluck the petals of a flower, but total surrender to God is easier and simpler than this. You find it difficult because you do not have steady and firm faith in God. God is. There is no place without God. There is no being without divinity. Each and every being is the embodiment of God.

Total Faith Makes Surrender Easy

If you have total faith in this truth, you will never have difficulties. When your faith is defective, you find it difficult to achieve anything. Have faith in God and love Him. Love is God. You are bound to be successful in all your endeavours if you have faith in God. Any task, however difficult it may be, can be accomplished with God's grace.

That is what happened in the case of Hanuman. With Rama's grace he leapt across the ocean, reached Lanka and found the whereabouts of Sita. He returned to Rama and described the untold suffering of Sita: "*O Rama, please listen to what I say. I have seen Mother Sita surrounded by demons, shivering like a fear-stricken parrot in a cage.*" (Telugu Poem) On hearing this, Rama and Lakshmana immediately took their bows and arrows. Rama said, "I cannot bear the suffering of Sita. Let us not waste even a moment, let us go to Lanka." Rama reacted in this manner not because of attachment towards His consort. Sita symbolises *Prakriti* (Nature). God cannot bear the suffering of Nature. In order to alleviate the suffering of Nature, Rama decided to go to Lanka immediately.

Objectives of Human Life

Dharma (righteousness), *Artha* (wealth), *Kama* (desire) and *Moksha* (liberation) are considered to be the four objectives (*Purusharthas*) of human life. In fact, these correspond to the four stages of human life, namely, *Brahmacharya*, *Grihasta*, *Vanaprastha* and *Sanyasa*. They do not correspond to *Purusharthas* in the true sense of the term. Today people are under the mistaken notion that the term *Purusha* corresponds to man, but not to woman. But actually *Purusha* means *Atma* or *Chaitanya* or *Prana* or *Jivi*. For the *Atma*, there is no gender like masculine or feminine. So, *Purushartha* means *Atma Dharma* or the Dharma of the Awareness Principle or the Dharma of Life Principle. This is the true *Purushartha*, the prime objective of human life. Without understanding the true meaning of the term *Purushartha*, people talk of one Dharma for men and another for women. *Saayujya* (merger) is the true *Atma Dharma* and that is true *Purushartha*.

The second objective is *Artha*. *Artha* does not mean money or gold. Earning money or gold is not the objective of life. Money comes and goes. Wisdom is the true wealth. *Advaita Darshanam Jnanam* (vision and experience of Divinity is true wisdom). One has to earn this wealth of wisdom.

The third objective is *Kama* (desire). This does not correspond to sensual desires. One should have desire for liberation (*Moksha Kama*). One should have the desire to understand the Atmic Principle and attain divinity.

These are the main objectives of human life. Each word in Vedanta has many meanings associated with it. Different people interpret it in different ways. Today what people understand of the four objectives of human life corresponds to the *Ashram Dharma* such as *Brahmacharya*, *Grihasta*, *Vanaprastha* and *Sanyasa*. They do not correspond to *Adhyatmic Dharma* (Spiritual Dharma). Spiritual Dharma is the true Dharma. Only that can confer liberation. What is liberation? It is not just reaching God, it means complete merger with the Divine. The rivers such as Ganga, Godavari and Saraswati have different names and forms, but once they merge in the ocean, they lose their name, form, taste, and become one with the ocean. Similarly, once you

merge in God, there will be no difference whatsoever. Experiencing such non-dualism is the true objective of human life.

Embodiments of Love!

Today is the sacred day of Sivaratri. Legend has it that when Siva, in order to save the world, swallowed *Halahala* (poison), He lost consciousness and fell down. The resultant heat affected the world. In order to cool down the world, Siva created the Himalayas. Then He placed the Himalayas on His stomach. As a result, the Himalayas absorbed all the heat from His body and He got up. People celebrate this event as Sivarathri. But, this is only a worldly interpretation.

Unity of Purusha and Prakriti

Truly speaking, the Himalayas is within you. In fact, the whole world is within you. The Divinity within you has neither birth nor death. The body may undergo change, but the Divine Principle remains the same. Love never undergoes any change. It remains love always. The quality of sugar is sweetness. It does not change whether it is added to coffee, tea, water or rice pudding. That which remains changeless is referred to as *Sat* (Being). This *Sat* is within you. Love is its sweetness. We have to turn this love towards *Vishweshwara* (God), but not towards *Vishayas* (sensual pleasures). *Sat* can be compared to sugar, *Chit* (Chaitanya) to water. When sugar is added to water, it becomes syrup. Likewise, when *Sat* and *Chit* come together, what results is *Ananda* (bliss). *Sat* is associated with the *Atma* and *Chit* with the body. The *Atma* is *Purusha* (*Brahman*) and the body is *Prakriti* (Feminine Principle). The unity of *Purusha* and *Prakriti* is human life. So, every human being is *Ardhanareeshwara* (androgynous). The Principle of Siva (*Sivatattwa*) teaches the unity of *Prakriti* and *Purusha*. This is the true meaning of Sivaratri. Forgetting this principle, man considers this physical body to be made up of merely blood, flesh and faecal matter. No doubt, it has these constituents, but one should not forget the fact that divinity permeates this body. To set an ideal to this world, the body is very important.

Embodiments of Love!

The body is Parvati and the Atma is Easwara. There was a spiritual aspirant who used to repeat the *Mantra Sivoham* as commanded by his guru. One day someone asked him the meaning of the *Mantra* he was chanting. He said *Sivoham* meant, "I am Siva." But when questioned what his relationship with Parvati was, he slapped his own cheeks and said with a tone of having committed a great sin, *Aparadham! Aparadham!* (Blasphemy!) If he really had faith in the *Mantra* he was chanting, he would have surely said, "Parvati is a part of my own being." He could not say so as he was attached to his body. Attachment to the body leads to dualities, because of which man is suffering.

Easwara and Parvati are present in every individual. The combination of these two aspects constitutes *Manavatvam* (mankind). *Manava* refers to human being. *Ma* means 'not', *Nava* means 'new'. So mankind is not new, it is ancient and eternal. But you are not able to understand this truth. Here there are three letters—Ma-Na-Va: *Ma* means Maya (illusion), *Na* means without, *Va* means *Varthinchuta* (to conduct oneself). He is a true human being who conducts himself without being under illusion. But today man is acting in a contradictory manner. At least from today try to understand the truth. Your *Deha* (body) and *Desha* (country) can be compared to object and reflection. Just as you safeguard your body, keep in mind the welfare of the country too.

Significance of Lingodbhava

Understand the true meaning and inner significance of Sivaratri. (Showing to the devotees the *Hiranyagarbha Lingam*, Bhagavan continued...) This is present in everybody's *Hridaya* (spiritual heart) and is on the right side of the body. The principle of Hiranyagarbha permeates My whole body. It assumes a form when I will it. Whoever has seen this Lingam at the time of its emergence will not have rebirth. (Cheers) One should see its form as it emerges. In order to sanctify your lives, such sacred manifestations have to be shown to you every now and then. Only then you can understand the divinity in humanity. This Lingam will not break even if it is dropped from a height with force. This is Amrutatwam (symbol of immortality). It is changeless. You cannot see such a manifestation anywhere else in the world. It is possible only with Divinity. This is the manifestation of changeless Divinity. (Cheers)

(After singing the Bhajan, "Siva, Siva, Siva, Siva Anarada..." Bhagavan continued...) For the past 20 years, devotees did not get the opportunity of witnessing Lingodbhava. The reason was that lakhs of devotees used to gather in the Poornachandra Hall to witness this grand spectacle. As Poornachandra Hall cannot accommodate large gatherings, there used to be stampedes. As a result, devotees were put to a lot of inconvenience. In order to avoid this, Lingodbhava was discontinued.

Not only this, three types of Lingams emerge. They are Bhur, Bhuvah and Suvaha. Bhur refers to materialisation (body), Bhuvah refers to vibration (Prana) and Suvaha refers to radiation (Atma). I often say, you are not one, but three: The one you think you are (physical body), the one others think you are (mental body), the one you really are (Atma). On every Sivaratri, all the three Lingams used to emerge. Even now the other Lingams had started to emerge, but I prevented them, because there are many things to be told to you. In future, you will be a witness to many more manifestations of Divinity. Understand that this bliss can be experienced only in the proximity of the Divine and nowhere else. Don't get deluded just because I am talking, laughing, walking and eating like you. Don't get deluded by the body feeling. All My actions are selfless, selfless, selfless. There is no trace of selfishness in Me. Have firm faith in this truth. If you have total faith, wherever you are, all your desires will be fulfilled without your asking. Only those who don't have total faith suffer. Develop self-confidence. That is the first Sadhana you have to undertake.

Truly you are all most fortunate. Today is Somavar (Monday), very endearing to Somasekhara (Easwara). That is why Siva is extolled as Someshwara and Somasekhara. This body was also born on Monday. In every Siva temple, special prayers are offered on Mondays.

Hanuman is worshipped on Mangalavar (Tuesday). When Ravana was killed in the battlefield, Hanuman rushed to Sita to convey the good news. Sita was overjoyed and blessed Hanuman profusely saying, "Hanuman, I don't know what day it is, but since you have conveyed the much awaited Mangalakara Vartha (auspicious news), this day shall be called Mangalavar (Tuesday) and may you be worshipped on this day!"

In the Treta Yuga, names of the days such as Monday and Tuesday, were not in existence; they are of recent origin. Therefore, in the culture of Bharat each term has an inner significance.

But, the Bharatiyas themselves are not making any effort to understand them and are going along the wrong path. Culture is important, not caste. We have to uphold the culture.

Embodiments of Love!

Understand the truth that love is the Atma and the Atma is love.

—From Bhagavan's Sivaratri Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall at Prasanthi Nilayam on 15th February 1999

Sivaratri and Lingodbhava

The holy festival of Sivaratri became the holiest this year when Bhagavan gave a glimpse of His divinity once again by Lingodbhava (emergence of the Linga) before a vast multitude of devotees gathered in Sai Kulwant Hall at Prasanthi Nilayam. Every year since 1940 when Bhagavan declared that He was Siva-Shakti Avatar Sai Baba, this emergence of the Linga (one or many) had been happening on Sivaratri till 1977 when Bhagavan discontinued this divine manifestation as the number of devotees to witness this divine event became too large. A wave of divine ecstasy ran through the vast assemblage of devotees when Bhagavan in His mercy showed this divine Leela again on the morning of 15th February 1999 at 6.15 a.m. by manifesting a golden oval Linga before His morning Sivaratri Discourse (given separately) at the conclusion of night-long Sivaratri Bhajan. The Divine manifestation of the Linga on the Sivaratri of 1999 is a profound reminder of Bhagavan's Divinity to mankind, as Bhagavan says, "I manifest My Mahimas to express the Love I bear to mankind and to demonstrate My Grace and to make you realise who I am."

Sivaratri at Prasanthi Nilayam

Sivaratri programme started in the morning of 14th February 1999 in Sai Kulwant Hall with Bhagavan's Darshan at 7.00 a.m. to a huge gathering of devotees. After Darshan, the students chanted Siva Stotras and Bhajans and the morning programme came to a conclusion with the distribution of Prasadam and Mangalarati to Bhagavan.

In the afternoon of 14th February, Bhagavan graciously permitted three speakers to make a brief speech before His Sivaratri Discourse. The first speaker Gen. S. P. Mahadevan revealed how he was saved by Baba in all dangers in several wars when he was face to face with death. As Prahlada preferred God to his father, Bharata to his mother, Lakshmana to his wife and Mira to her husband, we should prefer God to everything in life and chant His name with full faith, he advised. The second speaker Prof. G. Venkataraman referred to the Pauranic story of Siva swallowing the Halahala to exhort that it was the purity of Siva that solved the greatest problem of deadly poison. We should therefore imbibe purity in our life. The third speaker Sri S. V. Giri emphasise that Sivaratri was the holiest of the festivals because this gave us an opportunity to control the mind and suffuse it with divinity. Referring to the olden days when Swami manifested the Linga on Sivaratri, Sri Giri said the emergence of the Linga added a new dimension to our consciousness.

After this, Bhagavan gave His Divine Discourse (given separately), which was followed by night-long Bhajans, in which a large number of devotees participated with devotional fervour.

On the morning of 15th February 1999, Bhagavan showered His rare benediction on the devotees by Lingodbhava and nectarine discourse and the Sivaratri programme concluded at Prasanthi Nilayam with distribution of Prasadam and Arati to Bhagavan at 7.30 a.m.

How the Linga Emerged?

The night-long Sivaratri Bhajans was going on uninterrupted when Bhagavan came to Sai Kulwant Hall at 6.00 a.m. on 15th February 1999. After giving Darshan to the huge concourse of devotees, Bhagavan came to the dais and sat in the chair. Everybody was ready for Bhagavan's Divine Discourse on this holy morning. The mike had already been placed on Bhagavan's table.

After sitting in the chair, Swami placed His hand on His chest a couple of times because he was feeling the emergence of the Linga from His stomach. In spite of these signs, very few could guess that the divine manifestation of the emergence of the Linga was imminent as the usual signs of swaying, coughing, etc. were not discernible this time. And then exactly at 6.15 a.m., the Linga emerged out of Swami's mouth, and He took it in His cupped hands. Then He held it aloft in His right hand to show it to the devotees. A wave of bliss and ecstasy ran through the assembled devotees, who responded with a joyous loud applause. The Linga that emerged from the body of Bhagavan Baba this year was oval in shape and golden in colour.

The ways of the Divine are inscrutable. No human conjecture can work as to when, where and how Swami would manifest His Divinity. About Lingodbhava also nobody can guess how many Lingas, of what size and material will emerge from Swami's body. Moreover, nobody can witness it unless Swami Wills. The place for the emergence of the Linga has also been changing since this Divine Leela started in 1940.

Why Lingodbhava?

To those who sometimes question why Swami manifests the Linga on Sivaratri, Swami tells, "Let Me tell you, it is impossible for you to understand the attributes of the Divine and to measure its potentialities or to gauge the significance of the manifestation of Divinity. He is Agamya (unreachable) and Agochara (ununderstandable, mysterious). Therefore, in order to bear witness to the fact that the Divinity is amidst you, it becomes necessary to express this attribute. Or else, the atmosphere of hatred, greed, cruelty, violence and irreverence will overwhelm the good, the humble and the pious:'

Lingodbhava in the Past

Until 1956, Sivaratri was celebrated in the Mandir Prayer Hall since the devotees were less in number. Here is a description of this divine event as it occurred in the olden days from Prof. N. Kasturi's book "Loving God":

"Until 1956, the Sivaratri all night vigil and Bhajan could be held in the Prayer Hall itself. Baba sat on the silver chair placed over a tiger skin on a low platform; when the slower hand of the clock hovered near eight, the Linga or Lingas indicated the desire to emerge and Baba

showed signs of physical struggle to smoothen their way out. Year after year, I have stood on His left, holding a silver jug of water. Seshagiri Rao stood on the right, with a silver plate to receive the Linga as it fell out. At predeterminable moments, proceeding through the gullet the Linga presented itself for public view and personal use. One year eleven Lingas emerged in a row, one behind the other. Another year, there were nine. He has given me one of the nine. It is worshipped with Mantras prescribed in the scriptures. The Linga miracle does happen annually on every Sivaratri day wherever Baba happens to be"

Bhagavan kept manifesting His divinity in the form of Lingodbhava year after year on every Sivaratri till 1977 when He announced that He had decided to discontinue Lingodbhava in public. The devotees who witnessed this Divine phenomenon again in 1999 were really very fortunate as it happened after a long gap of more than 20 years.

The 'Form Symbol' of God

THE manifestation of the Linga is a part of My nature. You have to recognise in this event a glimpse of Divinity, a sign of infinite Grace. Just as Om is the 'sound symbol' of God, the Linga is the form symbol' or the visible symbol of God-the most meaningful, the simplest and the least endowed with the appendages of attributes. The Linga means, that in which this Jagat (world of change) attains Laya or mergence or dissolution (Leeyathe). All forms merge in the Formless at last. Siva is the Principle of Destruction of all names and forms, of all entities and individuals. So, the Linga is the simplest sign of emergence and mergence.

—Baba

An Appointment with Divinity

Recently Delhi and Mumbai devotees enjoyed supreme moments of Divine Bliss showered on them by Bhagavan Baba by His visit to the two metropolitan cities. Eminent scientist and former Vice Chancellor of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, Prof. G. Venkataraman, who accompanied Bhagavan, gives an eye-witness account of these divine visits.

Delhi's Four Days of Divine Ecstasy

For years and years, devotees have been praying to Bhagavan to visit their towns and cities. At last the prayers seem to be yielding results, with the Lord paying brief visits to Delhi (after seventeen years) and to Mumbai (after four years).

Swami left Bangalore for Delhi in the early hours of 11th March. As the motorcade streamed out of Brindavan, hundreds of people ran behind for quite some distance, reminding one of what happened when Rama left Ayodhya. It was still very dark but devotees had lined up alongside the road at many places, just to catch a fleeting glimpse as Swami's car sped by.

Swami was to travel by a private, eight-seater executive jet. The aircraft was parked in an exclusive area in Bangalore airport, and despite security restrictions over two hundred people had gathered there on the tarmac to see Swami off. As Swami got down from the car and walked along the long red carpet towards the aircraft, it looked like a regular morning Darshan, with people giving letters, taking Padanamaskar and receiving Vibhuti from Swami's Divine hands! Some people managed to give letters even after Swami had boarded the aircraft!

The plane took off at 6.38 a.m. and touched down in Delhi at 9.16 a.m. Shortly before landing a message was received saying that the Air Traffic Controllers of Delhi were eagerly awaiting Bhagavan and would receive Him on the tarmac. As plane came to a stop and the door opened, the Traffic Controllers lost all control and simply rushed towards the door. Swami stood there smiling and waving but could not get out! After distributing materialised Vibhuti in copious amounts, Swami managed to extricate Himself, get past airport officials and walk towards the large crowd of VVIP's waiting to accord a formal welcome.

In Delhi, Swami stayed at the residence of the State President, Brother Kulwant Rai. As the motorcade made its way to the Rai residence, children lining the route waved flags and cheered loudly. Posters, banners and floral arches en route gave ample evidence of the eagerness with which the capital city was awaiting the arrival of Bhagavan. At the Rai residence, there was a ceremonial welcome with Poornakumbham, Veda chanting, Nadaswaram music, band in attendance and dances by children.

Elaborate and meticulous arrangements had been made for Swami's visit and over ten thousand Seva Dal volunteers had been lined up for service duty. The Seva Dal workers took care of everything, from traffic management to crowd control. The police were hardly in evidence and the newspapers were amazed how private volunteers alone could manage such a

Herculean task; it speaks volumes about how devotion and love for Swami can evoke cooperation from both the general public and the devotees alike.

Darshan was arranged at three different locations, at the Rai residence, at the Rai School (about 2 km from the Rai residence) and the sprawling Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium (about 2 km from the Rai school). At each location, Bhagavan gave Darshan twice everyday. The lawns of the Rai residence could accommodate about two thousand people, and naturally, admission was by passes. Swami would come out around 7.30 in the morning but people would start gathering from 5 o'clock, even though it was chilly and damp. And the people who came were VVIP's—judges, senior officers, tycoons etc! After giving Darshan at the Rai residence, Swami would go to Rai School where a special Pandal had been erected. Notwithstanding the fact that the capacity of this Pandal was at least twice that of Sai Kulwant Hall in Prasanthi Nilayam, admission was once again by passes only; yet, the Pandal was always full. From the school, Swami would next go to Nehru Stadium, where admission was unrestricted. A golf cart had been arranged for Swami to go round but the merciful Lord chose instead to walk amidst the devotees so that He could receive letters from them and also they could have Darshan from close quarters. In every location, devotees would be singing Bhajans when Swami came. When Swami left, there would be the customary Arati.

Darshan formed only a part of Swami's daily routine. In between, He had to repeatedly crisscross the vast city to visit the houses of various devotees. Moreover, there were many formal functions, at each of which a discourse was mandatory. At the Rai residence too there was hardly any rest since any number of VVIP's would be waiting for an Interview at all hours! It was amazing to see all these usually unapproachable and security protected dignitaries waiting for Bhagavan like patients in the ante-room of a consulting physician! On no day was Swami able to retire before 10.30 p.m.

The first major public event during the Delhi visit was the inauguration of Sri Sathya Sai International Centre, the construction of which has been possible through the munificence of Mr. Kulwant Rai (to whom we owe Sai Kulwant Hall also). Located in a central spot in the city, the Centre is barely at a stone's throw from Shirdi Sai temple. When Swami arrived, a Yajna was in progress. Swami received the Poornahuti and then unveiled the inaugural plaque. After this, the speech-making started. The Chief Guest was the Prime Minister who made a short but effective speech. After referring to his long association with Swami, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee said that the country was now passing through troubled times and that everyone, including himself, very much needed Swami's advice. He therefore hoped that Swami would come often to Delhi, at least once a year!

Swami's Discourse was down-to-earth and revolved largely round the country's problems. Mincing no words, Bhagavan squarely blamed the politicians for the present mess. The country was well endowed with everything one could ask for. It had a glorious past. It was the land of saints, sages, seers and also Avatars. There was Sathya in the air, Dharma in the dust and Prema in the waters of this country. And yet, today everything was in shambles. People had sacrificed much for winning freedom. But what had been achieved in the fifty years after Independence? Crime, arson, murder, hijacks and terrorism had gone up beyond all limits. People lived in fear.

All this because people in power had become selfish and excessively greedy. There was absolutely no concern for either the country or the common man.

Swami did not merely criticise but also spelt out in detail what must be done to set matters right. Unity was the prime need of the hour, and everyone, including political parties, must learn to put the country ahead of party politics and inter-party rivalry. Selfishness must be totally eschewed. All this would be possible if we returned to our roots, namely, Bharatiya culture.

In the evening, there was a cultural programme in the auditorium of the International Centre. Preceding this there was a formal function during which the Vice President, Krishna Kant and the Human Resource Development Minister, Murali Manohar Joshi spoke. Bhagavan who spoke next amplified what precisely He meant by Bharatiya culture. This was not the culture of one land or of one religion but of the entire humanity. It was firmly rooted in the concept of the Brotherhood of Man and the Fatherhood of God. Its basis was Sathya, Dharma, Santhi, Prema, and Ahimsa. The uniqueness of Bharatiya culture had been recognised even by various invaders from the time of Alexander. In daily life, Sathya, Dharma and Prema translated into Tyaga (sacrifice) and Daya (compassion).

Swami also visited Sri Sathya Sai Vidya Vihar, a school for girls run very much on the pattern of the Primary School in Prasanthi Nilayam. The love with which the children greeted Bhagavan, the programme they presented and Swami's loving response were all strongly reminiscent of Puttaparthi.

Shortly before emplaning for Mumbai, Swami addressed a mammoth gathering in the vast Nehru Stadium, the scene of many a historic sporting event. This time, the Stadium breathed a purely spiritual air. Conspicuously absent were all the commercial hoardings that normally dot the periphery. In their place, one saw huge banners proclaiming various teachings of Bhagavan.

On the afternoon of 14th, Swami left for Mumbai. As the Delhi visit was drawing to a close, it was clear that the devotees were filled with sadness; four days had just flown by. Swami was to leave the Rai house at noon but crowds began to gather outside on the road from 4 a.m.! There were crowds all along the road to the airport and this time the floral arches said: "Thanks for the visit. Please come back soon."

Mumbai Has Showers of Divine Grace

The plane took off at 1.00 p.m. and reached Mumbai at 2.40 p.m. On arrival, Swami went straight to Dharmakshetra with an impressive motorcycle escort provided by the Seva Dal. A huge crowd was eagerly awaiting Bhagavan's arrival and every inch of available space was packed. Many could not get in, and this included even celebrities like Sunil Gavaskar (who managed to enter a neighbouring house and watched the proceedings on cable TV which was covering all engagements live). Almost immediately after arrival, there was Darshan followed by Discourse.

The Mumbai routine was somewhat different from that followed in Delhi. The day always began with Nagarsankirtan. It was most heart-warming to see thousands coming from distant suburbs for participating in the procession and beginning the day with Love. The singing groups came like different rivers to Dharmakshetra where our Ocean of Compassion gave Darshan. It was a glorious sight, Swami standing at the edge of the ridge next to the Sarva Dharma Stupa and devotees singing away to glory on the road down below.

Darshan was always in Dharmakshetra with one exception, and that was the Darshan He gave in Goregaon one evening. The venue was a parade ground and a large crowd of over twenty thousand from north Mumbai could have Darshan comfortably without having to travel the long distance to Dharmakshetra.

In Mumbai, Swami gave four discourses, two of which are particularly memorable. On the evening of 15th March, a public meeting had been arranged in the football ground at Cooperage in south Mumbai. The ground, the scene of many a keenly-contested tournament, was now transformed into a spiritual centre. The ground was packed to capacity with professionals, businessmen and executives. The gathering obviously represented the elite of Mumbai. Those who could not get admission waited outside, and the balconies of all the high-rise buildings in the neighbourhood were packed. The programme was carried live not only on cable TV but also by a commercial TV channel. The meeting was something like a public reception to Bhagavan, but the speakers who preceded Him sought refuge rather than felicitate! They uniformly lamented the decline of moral values and the sharp rise in crime and corruption. They complained about extortion, kidnapping and violence, and appealed in desperation to Baba to save the city that now had become the crime capital of India instead of being the commercial capital.

It was now Swami's turn, and His discourse was one of the most spirited delivered in recent years. Bhagavan severely admonished the rich people of Mumbai and declared that they alone were responsible for all the evils they were complaining about today. They were all busy piling up wealth and living in luxury in skyscrapers while those who contributed to their wealth lived in abject poverty in numerous slums scattered around the city. If they wanted things to change, then they must immediately transform their life-style. They must become compassionate, and take up social activities benefiting the poor. They must start schools, dispensaries and hospitals. Little did the audience expect this! They came for sympathy but got admonishment instead.

Swami told them in no uncertain terms that Dharma alone would protect them and that the most important duty enjoined by Dharma was sacrifice. People must look into their hearts, discover the latent Divinity, and, deriving strength from it, must be ready to serve humanity. Love all and serve all, He spiritedly declared. The elite of Mumbai had never heard anything like this and when they recovered from the shock they all loudly cheered. The press hailed Swami's discourse and said, 'Sai Baba thundered!' The message had apparently gone home because the following day Swami received a couple of letters from industrialists with a pledge to adopt a village or two. In addition, the Health Minister of Maharashtra showed up at Dharmakshetra with a health plan for the poor and prayed for collaboration with Swami's Super Speciality Hospital.

Another memorable discourse was that Swami gave in Dharmakshetra to a mixed audience of Bal Vikas students (mostly slum children), active workers of the Seva Organisation and some parents, again mostly slum dwellers. Unlike the elite crowd of Delhi and Mumbai who came to Bhagavan largely driven by fear and insecurity, these people had nothing to fear. They were following Swami's teachings and doing Swami's work. Thus, they were already enjoying the protection of the Lord. There were a large number of women in the audience, not surprising since it is they who bear the brunt of the Bal Vikas work. Their presence and enthusiasm resulted in Swami extolling women to such an extent that many began to wonder whether it was Ladies' Day!

The schedule on 16th was really very hectic. In the evening, after the Goregaon Darshan, Swami went to far off Borivili to the house of a devotee, where He climbed four storeys—no lift! On His way back, He stopped near the Borivili National Park where two thousand devotees had gathered to do Bhajan. It was past 9 p.m., and these people did not know whether Swami would stop there. All they knew was that Bhagavan's car would pass that way. The ever-compassionate Lord stopped, got down, went round, collected letters and finally took Arati. Back to Dharmakshetra, where a cultural programme awaited Him. When it ended, it was 11.15 p.m.!

Swami returned to Bangalore on the 17th, reaching Brindavan around 12.30 in the afternoon. Everyone thought that evening Darshan would be late, but no, it was not. Swami came out on the dot, and, what is more important, quite unusual for afternoon Darshan at Brindavan, went around and received letters before going to His chair and sitting down to hear Bhajans. He looked fresh as a rose in bloom and not like one who had just got back after a hectic tour. That is our Loving God, always concerned about devotees than about Himself.

Welcome Everything

On Yugadi day, it is the practice among the rural folk to eat what is called Yugadi Pachchadi (Yugadi chutney). This chutney is made from neem flowers, mango juice, honey, sugar and other ingredients with different tastes. The inner significance of this preparation is to indicate that life is a mixture of good and bad, joy and sorrow and all of them have to be treated alike with equanimity. Everyone should make a resolve that he would face calmly whatever happens, accepting it with good grace. Welcome everything. Do not bemoan over anything. Consider everything as for your own good. This is the primary message of Yugadi festival. Everything that occurs should be treated as a gift from God.

—Baba

AVATAR VANI

Love God Wholeheartedly

*Manam Hithva Priyo Bhavathi, Krodham Hithva Na Sochathi,
Kamam Hithva Arthavan Bhavathi, Lobham Hithva Sukhi Bhavathi.*

Embodiments of Love!

As long as a person is egoistic, no one will love him including his wife and children, though they may pretend to do so. So long as there is anger in an individual, grief is inevitable. Satisfaction eludes one who is full of desires. One with greed can never be happy. Ego, anger, desire and greed are the root cause of restlessness in the world.

How to Attain the Effulgent One?

Man feels that happiness and peace of mind result from spiritual practices, but in reality it is not so. Mind is the source of happiness and sorrow. So, conquer the mind. Conquering the mind will lead you to the state of equanimity, wherein you treat the dualities alike. Vedanta has declared: "*Manayeva Manushyanam Karanam Bandhamokshayoh*", mind is the cause of both bondage and liberation. Once you control your mind, you will grow beyond the dualities of sadness and happiness.

Welcome sorrow just as you welcome happiness. In fact the happiness that you derive out of pleasure is negligible compared to the happiness that results from difficulties. History is replete with examples of people who stand, testimony to this fact. All noble and idea people had to undergo ordeals before they experienced happiness. *Na Sukhath Labhyathe Sukham* (happiness is no derived from happiness). It is derived from pain and suffering, but man wants only happiness, not difficulties. This is quit contradictory to the principles of spirituality People should understand this truth.

*Punyasya Phalamichchanthi
Punyam Nechchanthi Manava
Na Papaphalamichchanthi
Papam Kurvanthu Yathnatha.* (Sanskrit Verse)

Man desires to have fruits of meritorious deeds, but does not perform any. He does not want the fruits I of sinful actions, yet he indulges in them.

Whatever you want to achieve, you can do so by proceeding along the right path. Do not go on the wrong path if you are not prepared to face the consequences of it. All spiritual practices today are going in the wrong direction. There are nine paths of devotion before man to experience divinity and to achieve self-realisation. They are: Shravanam (listening), Kirtanam (singing), Vishnusmaranam (remembrance), Padasevanam (serving the Lotus Feet), Vandanam (salutation), Archanam (worship), Dasyam (servitude), Sneham (friendship), Atmanivedanam (surrender). Love is the life-breath of all these forms of devotion. It is the inner current passing through all these nine paths of devotion. It is their cardinal principle.

How can one attain the Principle of Brahma? Brahma means the all pervasive cosmic principle. According to the Puranas Brahma originated from the navel of Vishnu. Who is Vishnu? He is the one who is all-pervasive. Vishnu and Brahma are synonymous with the Atma. 'Atma' is derived from the root word 'Ahas', meaning `day time'. Ahas dispels darkness of ignorance. Therefore, the cosmic form is described as the Effulgent One. This Brahma is not limited to a specific name and form. It is also referred to as 'Brihat', meaning all pervasive. One

has to follow the truth to attain the Effulgent One. “*Yath Drisyam Thannasyam*”, all that is seen is bound to perish.

*Asthiram Jeevanam Loke,
Asthiram Yauvanam Dhanam,
Asfhiram Dara Puthradi,
Sathyam Keerthi Dwayam Sthiram.*

Life in the world is impermanent. So are youth and wealth. Wife and children are also not permanent. Only truth and good name are permanent and remain forever. That is why Brahma is referred to as 'Sathyam'. Jnanam (wisdom) emerged from Sathyam. Sathyam and Jnanam are all-pervasive. That is why the Vedas have declared: "*Sathyam Jnanam Anantam Brahma.*" God is Truth, Wisdom and Eternity. The embodiment of Truth can be experienced only by following the path of Truth. Truth transcends time—past, present and future.

Ash Covers the Embers

Why does God incarnate? To enable man to understand and experience his latent divinity, and unity in diversity. The essence of spirituality lies in visualising unity in diversity. This is the goal of human life. The Atma is the same in all irrespective of their name, country and life style. This

Atma is referred to as conscience, which permeates the body from top to toe. The goal of spirituality is to realise oneness of the Atma in all. Man on account of attachment to body is oblivious of his innate divinity and visualises diversity in unity. This is due to ignorance. God incarnates in order to teach the underlying unity in diversity. Krishna has declared: "Mamatma Sarvabhoothantharatma" (I am the indweller in all beings).

Body can be compared to a mirror. This mirror (body) is made of clay. This body, Mrinmaya (made of clay) has to be transformed into Chinmaya (one of awareness). No spiritual practices are required to do so. Realise the truth: Chinmaya is within Mrinmaya. But you are not making any effort to realise the true nature of yours. Ash covers the neglected embers. The embers can be seen only when the ash is blown away. Similarly, the Atma, which is inherent in man, can be seen only when the ash of ego, anger, desire and body attachment is blown away by chanting the name of the Lord.

Body attachment gives rise to ego in man. Success eludes one who is egoistic. Egolessness is true humanness. There is no trace of ego in man at the time of birth, but it develops as he grows up. Feelings of I and mine are responsible for man's bondage. Man will enjoy bliss only when he gets rid of ego and attachment. Bliss cannot be achieved through any other spiritual practice. Spiritual practices confer only temporary mental satisfaction. Only the awareness of the Atma is true and eternal. We should develop this awareness more and more.

The Final Goal of Life

As pointed out by Bozzani (previous speaker) each individual should question himself, ‘who am I?’ On the contrary, each one asks ‘who are you?’ which is information-oriented. No gain accrues from acquiring this information. What is required today is transformation, which can be effected by questioning oneself ‘who am I?’ Once you know the answer to this and reach the

state of transformation, you need no further spiritual practices. This is possible only when you control your mind. Sage Patanjali has enunciated the same: "*Yoga Chitta Vritti Nirodha*" (controlling thoughts and aberrations of the mind is true Yoga). Yoga does not mean physical exercise. Yoga means 'to unite with' the Atma. There is no greater happiness than being one with the Atma. But today, no one is making any effort to attain the Atma, the final goal of life.

The senses are above the body; the mind is above the senses; the intellect is above the mind; and the Atma is above the intellect. Man does not travel even up to the level of the intellect. He travels only up to the level of the mind. As man is unable to control his mind and senses, he is subjected to confusion and depression. As a result, he forgets the Principle of the Atma.

Body, which is made up of the five elements, is transient and may perish at any point of time. Attachment to body brings in attachment to money, which leads to multifarious attachments. Today, people value education and money more than anything else. Money and education by themselves are not bad. Good or bad lies in their utilisation. Water by itself is colourless, but assumes the colour of the container in which it is poured. Similar is the case with money and education; their value depends on the nature of the person who has acquired them. Good and bad are the reflections of our mind, they do not exist in the persons around. Defect lies in vision, not in creation. So, purify your vision and sanctify your heart. Only then you can experience unity in diversity.

I have received letters from delegates to this conference seeking clarification of their doubts. What is the root cause of doubt? It is the absence of total faith. Jesus had a disciple, Thomas, who doubted everything he came across and was appropriately called 'doubting Thomas'. In the path of spirituality doubts do arise at times, even though one may have faith in God. One of the doubts is this:

"Did Jesus really declare that He was the Truth, the Path and none superior to Him?"

Enquire into the truth yourself. Jesus was never egoistic at any point of time and never made any such declarations. There was a tax collector who recorded the conversation between Jesus and the fishermen. It was during one of those conversations that Jesus assured them that He would take care of them, but at no point of time did he mention with a sense of ego that He was the only One and the ultimate One to protect them. He did this only with a view to increase their confidence and enthuse them into action.

At the time of Divine Birth, three wise men visited Jesus in the manger. One of them, looking at child Jesus, remarked: He looks as though He was a 'Messenger of God'. The second wise man exclaimed that the child looked as though he was the 'Son of God'. The third wise man disagreed with both and concluded that He and God were one and the same. These three statements have been interpreted in varied ways.

Jesus had no trace of ego in Him. He was filled with compassion at the sight of the meek and the afflicted. Paul opposed Jesus in all matters from the very outset. Once Jesus appeared in the dream of Paul and questioned him—"What harm have I done to you? Why do you criticise Me so?" This caused Paul to ponder and realise that his ignorance and ego blinded him to reality. Thereafter he became an ardent disciple of Jesus. In every age, every noble soul had to put up

with criticism. People always have mistaken notions about good and bad. If only we understand the truth in the Bible, we will come to the conclusion that there has been no fault in Jesus at all. Jesus always aspired to put people in God consciousness.

At the time of crucifixion, Jesus prayed: "O Father! What sin have I committed? Why am I put to suffering thus?" When Mother Mary stood crying at the foot of the Cross, an ethereal voice was heard. "*All are one, My dear Son; be alike to everyone.*"

In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna declared *Chaaturvarnyam Mayasrishtam*. (All the people of four Varnas have been created by Me). Varna means colour, but it has been misunderstood to be caste. Therefore, do not make any distinction based on colour. The four colours are: black, yellow, white and red. The Negroes and the Bharatiyas are black in complexion. The Japanese and the British are white in complexion, while the Chinese are yellow and the Russians are red. What God has declared is broad in nature and not narrow. Do not give room for any constriction of thoughts.

You may be a Christian, a Muslim, a Hindu or a Zoroastrian, but you must consider yourself to be a child of God. Jesus said that He was 'Persona' meaning that He was the spark of the Divine. This Roman word has been translated by the British as 'Person', 'Persona' has originated from the Roman language. 'Persona' means that which is sacred. Since man has divinity inherent in him, he is called a person. In Hindu scriptures, e.g., the Puranas, the Vedas, the Sastras and the Ithihasa this has been declared as 'Purusha'. *Yallabdhwa Puman Ichcharamo Bhavathi Trupto Bhavathi Mattho Bhavathi Atmaramo Bhavathi* (After attaining That, man gets total satisfaction, fulfilment, ecstasy and bliss). It means God is in everyone. We should visualise this unity in diversity and try to experience it. Consider this as the chief goal of Sathya Sai Organisations (*cheers*). You should not give rise to differences/hatred of any sort. There is only One that is present in all. If you realise this Truth, that in itself would be spirituality in practice. Practice is more important than publicity.

There are two mikes in front of Me. There is one mike in front of the translator. The words that emanate from the mikes may differ, but the underlying sound principle is the same. Similarly, we must experience the divinity in various names and forms. Words that emerge from heart constitute *expansion talk*. Some people speak only from lips in order to suit the situation. Such words constitute contraction talk. Such contraction talk is equivalent to death. People who indulge in such contraction talk have no connection between their speech and heart. When all that which is in the heart finds expression in speech, that is termed as *expansion talk*. Those who speak from the heart speak the truth; others, whose speech does not come from the heart, speak untruth to suit the occasion. Your words should emanate from the heart. This is possible only when there is complete confidence in the Self. The one with total conviction does not give room for doubts.

The enquiry into the fact whether that which is applicable to others is applicable to individual self also constitutes search for Truth (*Sathyanveshana*). One may ask why there should be a search for Truth, when Truth is all-pervasive. In each human there is the dual aspect of truth, untruth; righteousness, unrighteousness; and nonviolence, violence. There is an example to illustrate this. Suppose you have pure 24 carat gold with you. After some time, you add copper to

it. Later you add silver to it and then aluminium and brass. As and when new metals are added to the gold, its true nature undergoes a change and it loses its value. Today man also is undergoing such a change. When he is a child, he is pure. As he associates himself with others he acquires violence and non-violence, righteousness and unrighteousness, truth and untruth. This is the root cause for the cycle of birth and death. When you are one with the Self, there is no scope for birth and death. Body attachment, educational and monetary attachments reduce the Self to the present state of man. Man thus forgets his true nature. Man has to be cleansed by the process of Samskara (refinement) to get rid of all the bad qualities and regain his resplendent pristine purity.

Man has been acquiring evil qualities such as jealousy, hatred and ego. Due to such a tendency, man destroys his very human nature. Do not let it be debased by evil tendencies. We have to foster our faith firmly. Only pure gold should be mixed with pure gold and truth should be mixed with truth. Similarly, one should join good company and run away from the bad company, which is harmful.

*Tyaja Durjana Samsargam,
Bhaja Sadhu Samagamam,
Kuru Punyamahorathram,
Smara Nithyam Anithyathaam.*

Run away from bad company; join the good; do meritorious deeds day and night and ponder over what is permanent and what is transient.

Some may appear very pious through their words and deeds, but if you observe their behaviour, it would be demonic in reality. Do not have faith in such people and do not lose your purity. Impure gold of this nature is increasing. You must become pure gold. Even a small quantity of pure gold is better than a mound of debased gold. Quality should be preferred over quantity. Half an acre of fertile land is better than ten acres of barren land, so that you can grow crops on it.

Man today is proceeding on the wrong path. You need not follow anybody. You should follow your conscience, which is your master.

Follow the Master,
Face the devil,
Fight to the end,
Finish the game. (Cheers)

Your duty is to follow the four F's. Since you respect and follow the words of those who have disharmony in their thought, word and deed, you tend to forget your Swami, your true Self. This situation is of your own making. Follow your conscience. I never force anybody to do anything. What is the reason? The reason is one has to follow the dictates of one's source, conscience. Force connotes external imposition. Source relates to the Atma, which is verily love. So cultivate love.

This is the answer to the first question about Jesus. Jesus said, all are the embodiments of truth and purity, all are children of God. His teachings were based on such broad-minded feelings. He emphasised the need for refraining from hurting others. The second question raised is this:

"Swami appears in the dreams of many persons. How is it that Swami does not appear in my dreams?"

It is naive to think in such a manner. You cannot have such dreams as and when you would like to. You think of many people, but do they all appear in your dreams? No. It is a mistake to think that Swami does not have compassion on you just because He does not appear in your dreams. Dreams are nothing but reflections of the subconscious mind. Swami appearing in dreams is very auspicious. Now I will explain the different types of dreams. Sometimes you experience nightmares and at times you experience dreams which fill you with happiness. All these dreams occur since they are accumulated in your subconscious mind. It is good that they find expression in dreams. Dreams are the reflection, reaction and resound of that which is within you. The same does not apply to the dreams in which Swami appears. *Swami appears in dreams only when He wills if and not when you want. (Cheers)*. The Mohammedan musician who performed yesterday had not seen Me on any prior occasion. I asked him, "Son, do you remember that when you met with a car accident in America I appeared before you at that very instant?" Hearing this revelation, he exclaimed, "O my God!" and shed tears of joy. The same night I appeared in his dream and told him that he would be coming to Puttaparthi for the ensuing Birthday celebrations. It happened accordingly; he came here yesterday.

There are certain confusing dreams in which your feelings play an active role. You may be seeing Swami but at the same time your feelings get mixed up and cause confusion. You may see yourself in Puttaparthi at one point of time and in America in the very next, so on and so forth. These dreams are not willed by Swami. These result from indigestion and improper food. Dreams which are willed by Me are very clear and give no room for confusion or doubt. I come to you and convey what I want to in the most direct manner (*cheers*). Swami's grace is very much there on one and all whether He appears in their dreams or not. The third question:

"Everyone is undertaking spiritual practices, but I am unable to do so for lack of time. Due to my preoccupation with my business and profession, I am unable to think of Swami and participate in service activities."

It is a big mistake to think on these lines. There is no need for a specific time and place to think of Swami. Discharge your duties sincerely with the conviction that everything is Swami's work. "Work is *worship*, duty is God" (*cheers*). You do not need to sit and chant 'Sai Ram' repeatedly. *Sarva Karma Bhagavad Preethyartham*, do all acts with the feeling that they are for pleasing God. That is the greatest Sadhana. Suppose on a Sunday, you sat for meditation. But could you concentrate even for a minute? So, instead of wasting your time in meditation devoid of concentration, better attend to your household work. "*Karmanubandheeni Manushyaloke*" human society is bound by Karma (action). What is Karma and what is its inner significance? Karma does not mean sweeping the roads and serving the sick. Vibration is Karma. Even your breathing process, batting your eyelids, eating, sleeping, reading can be termed as Karma. Life without Karma is impossible even for a moment. Life will be sanctified only when you do all Karmas (actions) to please God. Do not make any distinction between God and yourself, His

work and your work. Work with the conviction that you and God are one. Then even a small work will assume magnificence. Greatness lies in small things. No doubt sweeping the roads and visiting hospitals are good deeds, but they in themselves do not constitute service. Discharging one's duty properly is true Sadhana. In the name of Sadhana or spiritual practices if you neglect your office work and if your work is not commensurate with the salary you draw, then it would amount to cheating the government. True service lies in discharging one's duty properly. Hence service can be done even in office. Any work undertaken without discriminating it to be a personal work or God's work would become service. Suppose you work in office for eight hours, and you need six hours for sleep. Then what do you do in the rest of the time? Never give an excuse of lack of time.

There is a small story. A devotee wanted to know his life span so that he could set aside sufficient time for spiritual practices. He prayed to God to let him know his life span. God replied that he was given 80 years. The devotee felt happy, but he continued: "Out of 80 years allocated to me, 20-25 years will be spent in studying and playing. Next 25 years are required for family and household activities. The next 25 years are needed for planning my future and for the well-being of my children. So, I am left with practically no time for spiritual practices.

Therefore, O Lord! Grant me 20 more years so that I may think of You and attain You." God laughed and said: "O mad man! Do you need 20 years to attain Me? Even two seconds are enough. How long does it take to put on the switch to get light? Not even a second! Granted that you need 20 years to think of Me wholeheartedly, what is the guarantee that you will not use it for other activities?" It is nothing but laziness. *Slow and steady wins the race*. Even a second spent in contemplation of Me with a steady mind is enough to draw you to Me. *Do not waste time; Time is God, time waste is life waste*. Proper utilisation of time is true spiritual practice. Consider time as the very form of God and your life will be sanctified. Some people lament saying that they do not have enough time to contemplate on the Lord. Whoever has raised this point is lazy by nature. Once you give up laziness, you can easily tread the path of sacredness. *Laziness is rust and dust; realisation is best and rest. (cheers)*. The fourth question raised is:

"Being in a foreign land, we are unable to do Swami's work. So, we want to come and stay in Bharat to serve Swami wholeheartedly."

This is another sign of laziness. To do a service activity can there be a distinction between a foreign land and Motherland? God is everywhere. Whether the service is done abroad or in Bharat, it does not lose its significance. It is utterly selfish to come to Prasanthi Nilayam to do service activity. You may come after retirement for service at Prasanthi Nilayam. You have your own duties to your children, for their education and career. If you were to come here without fulfilling the same, you would begin to develop frustration after some time. Don't come now. It is better that you stay in your place and serve. Swami does not expect any service from anyone. Many of my boys are here. But, I attend to My own work. They all aspire to do service to Me. Only a few noble souls have the opportunity to serve Me. Others, for this reason, should not get disheartened. Attend to your own duty. That is service in itself. I am 73 years. My legs, hands, eyes are in perfect condition. I attend to My own work. So, serve those who are incapacitated and weak. This can be your service to Swami. You may wonder that Swami may suffer from leg pain as He moves around much. Let Me tell you, I have never suffered nor will I ever suffer. Only when I take upon Myself the suffering of others do I appear to be suffering; otherwise this

body does not have any suffering. I call Dr. Alreja to check the blood pressure. He always replies, "Swami! Normal, perfect normal! 120/80" Not even that, it is 117/78, which is absolutely correct blood pressure. Then I ask him to check My pulse. Normal pulse rate is 70. But not so with Me. My pulse is always 68—perfect normal. I may move about or speak for a long time, but My blood pressure does not increase. Three qualities keep My body perfect. They are: Purity, Patience and Perseverance. None of you ever need to serve Me. You may perform your own duties and look after the welfare of your family. The fifth question:

"How are we to clear the debts of the consequences of our actions?"

In order to be free from the consequences of your Karmas, you have to use the medicine of Love. There is nothing greater than Love. Love God wholeheartedly. All the effects of your action will be nullified. All your diseases will be cured. If it does not happen so, you should not think otherwise. But, if you pray wholeheartedly, it would come to pass. Some people sit for prayer in the Puja room chanting 'Sai Ram'. Suddenly their mind wanders towards the washerman and they enquire if he has brought the clothes. If you are really chanting the Lord's name wholeheartedly, why should the mind go to the washerman? Some others sit in meditation, but are easily distracted by the smell from the kitchen. If this is the nature of your spiritual pursuit, how can it be termed as a prayer to the Lord? All your spiritual practices are done with a wavering mind. Do them with a steady mind. You are bound to reap the fruits. You may undertake any type of spiritual pursuit, but love wholeheartedly. Love can eradicate any type of disease and act as a panacea for all afflictions. You must, in the first instance, develop love. This can be possible if you believe that God is the embodiment of Love. How can you develop love when you do not believe that God is the embodiment of Love?

Love is the perfect medicine. If you were to put a plant in a tin and water it, the plant would die in due course of time; but if you were to plant the same in the soil and water it, the plant would grow into a fine tree. Similarly, God's name and form should be implanted in the soil of your heart and nurtured with water of love. This will ensure good results. If one cultivates love, one need not undertake any other spiritual pursuits. Sixth question is very strange.

"In our Puja room, we have the photographs of Rama, Krishna, Siva and Jesus. We also keep Swami's photograph amidst them. Is it right or wrong?"

Once you are convinced that all forms are of one God, why should you fear to keep any particular photograph? You may worship Rama, Easwara, Jesus, Allah, Zoroastra or Sai. Develop the feeling that all are one (*cheers*). I often give a small example— In Bharat there are various types of sweets, viz., *Godum Halwa*, *Badam Kheer*, *Gulab Jamun*, *Jilebi*, *Laddu*, *Mysore Pak*. Though their names and forms are different, the sugar in all of them is the same. You may worship Rama, Easwara, Vishnu, Allah, Jesus or Sai. But, you should realise that the undercurrent of divinity is the same in one and all. Then the difference of name and form will not affect you in any manner. If you do not like other gods, you can remove their photographs and replace them with those that you like. If you do not like Sai Baba's or Rama's photograph, you may remove the same. But this will not serve any purpose. What is essential is recognising unity in divinity.

Here is a small story. A student was to appear in an examination. He was weak in Mathematics. Since the exam was the next day, he worshipped Swami and went for the exam. He

failed in Mathematics. With the result he removed Swami's photo in the altar and placed it in a cupboard. Second day, he had Mathematics Paper, Part II. That day he worshipped Rama's photograph. He fared even worse. Third day, he was to go for the Accounts examination. Thinking that Mother Goddess would be more benevolent compared to other gods, he brought Devi's photograph and did Puja. That day he could not even understand the questions in the examination. He came back and put this photograph also in the cupboard. Fourth day was Accounts Paper, Part II. Realising that Vinayaka is the remover of all obstacles, he brought incense sticks, coconut and garlanded the idol. When he lit the incense sticks, the smoke began to waft towards the cupboard in which the discarded photos were placed. Then he thought, "I brought incense sticks for Vinayaka; why should I let the benefit of the fragrance be experienced by these gods—Rama, Sai Baba and Devi, who have betrayed me?" He went into the house and brought a piece of cloth to tie the nose of Sai Baba, Rama and Devi. Having assured himself that the fragrance would not reach them, he sat down for prayer. At that very moment, Sai Baba, Rama and Devi appeared. He was amazed and questioned the deities: How is it that you did not appear when I worshipped you and now that I have punished you, you have appeared before me? Then Sai Baba replied: "Son! Till this day you had limited Me to a picture. Today you have got the feeling that this photo is a living entity and so tied a cloth around the nose to prevent the fragrance from reaching Me. The photographs will not help you. Picture will remain a picture. You may worship picture as God, but not God as a picture. Today you have begun to believe the picture as God Himself and tied the cloth. So, I have appeared before you." Nowadays, we worship God as a picture. It is only when we take picture as God in form that our desires will be fulfilled. It does not matter what form you worship or what name you chant. Realise that all names and forms are His. Nothing wrong with any name. All are the forms of the same Godhead. You may even worship your own parents.

*Matru Devo Bhava,
Pitru Devo Bhava,
Acharya Devo Bhava,
Atithi Devo Bhava.*

In such a case, how can you have doubt about various forms of God? At no point of time, you should entertain doubts regarding God. God is God. Never comment or criticise the names or forms of God. Have any photograph and chant any name. God is one; Truth is one. "*Ekam Sat Viprah Bahudha Vadanti*" (Truth is one, but scholars refer to it by many names). Do not go about changing photographs. Have the photograph of your choice and worship. The seventh question:

"In the worldly path, which spiritual practice will satisfy Swami? I am ready to do the Sadhana by which Swami is pleased."

There is only one answer to that. I do not advocate any specific Sadhana. Consider all people to be the forms of Divinity. Have faith that God is in all. That pleases Me the most. Refrain from doing that which causes grief to others even if it were to give you happiness. Do unto others as you would like to be done by. "Help ever; Hurt never" (cheers). Help everybody. Do not harm or hurt anyone. Do not develop ill feelings towards anybody. Even if people were to hurt you or curse you, do not refrain from loving them. This is the main point of Swami's teachings. That is what Swami expects of you. There are people, who do not worship Swami. Some worship and

some others criticise. I remain unaffected by both. I do not take note of any of these. I continue to love all. Each one has to bear the consequences of his actions.

If you do good deeds, you would reap good results, and bad results, if you have done bad deeds. Realise this in the first instance and act accordingly. *I do not hate anybody. I do not doubt anyone. I love even those who do not believe in Me. That is My nature. Some tend to doubt My power, because I repose faith in them, though they themselves do not have faith in Me. That is a mistaken notion. My Love is the same for all. I desire that all be blissful.*

Water is colourless. It, however, assumes the colour of the bottle in which it is poured. *Good or bad are within you and not in Me and they shall never be in Me. I am always for the maxim—"Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavanthu" (let the whole world be happy) (cheers). Even If you were to hate Me, I shall love you. That is My nature. That is the divine quality. You may worship Me today and censure Me tomorrow, and vice-versa. When drunk, one talks in a certain manner, while when sober, in another. When you are deeply drunk with worldly desires, mind oscillates from one side to another. But one who is filled with wholesome and unsullied love remains the same under all circumstances.*

You may forget Me, but I will never forget you. I am always with you, in you, around you and above you. People who are in divine proximity are extremely fortunate. It is a culmination of the merit acquired in various births. It has not come in this birth. Therefore, do not waste your energy brooding over what pleases Swami and what displeases Him. Do not entertain such doubts. I am pleased with whatever you undertake with purity of heart. I only desire the purity of your heart. With pure love in your heart, you may undertake any type of service. Have total faith in Swami's words, implicitly obey His commands. I do not misguide anyone at anytime. Whatever /say is for your own good. Whatever I tell, whatever I do is good for you; not for Me. I do not have any work of My own. Everything is done for your sake. On no account, you should entertain the thought that I do not have love for you. Fortunate people get a chance to undertake sacred deeds in close proximity to the Divine. But those who do not get such an opportunity should not entertain any jealousy that others have received what they have not. The most incurable disease of all is jealousy. Cancer may have a remedy, but not jealousy. Cancer may be cancelled, but jealousy has no remedy whatsoever. Jealousy would frustrate and depress one to such an extent that one would perish in the process.

Embodiments of Love!

Members of Sai Organisation should develop broadmindedness without giving room for jealousy, hatred and ego. Consider all as brothers and sisters and immerse yourselves in bliss by doing service. Today, you have resolved to bring change in the education system. Education is very essential. It can neither be stolen by thieves nor burnt by fire nor diminished by sharing with others. Education always grows. Share this eternal wisdom with one and all. Practise all that you have learnt. Teach good virtues to the children, "Son! Do not study for money. Affluence, friendship and physical strength are of major importance in a worldly sense. But money is here today and gone tomorrow. *Money comes and goes.* A friend may turn into a foe in a day. You are strong today, but you may become weak tomorrow. However, your virtues will never desert you. Develop that permanent character which does not desert you. Develop sacred virtues."

Enter the society with noble virtues. Help everyone. Do you know why the hands are given? Is it for eating? It is for helping others! Charity is the ornament for hand. Do you know why throat is given? Not to sing cinema songs! Not to criticise or blame others, but to chant the name of God. That in itself is the beautiful necklace. Wear that necklace and sanctify your throat. Do you know why intelligence is given? Is it for becoming egoistic? It is to ponder over the means of contemplating on Divinity and reaching and experiencing the same. One must engage each limb and all senses in sacred activities.

Embodiments of Love!

Delegates from 180 countries have assembled here. All occupy exalted positions. If you tread the right path, you can mould thousands of people in turn. Office-bearers should be very careful, because if one office-bearer goes wrong, many people can go astray. Help ever; Hurt never. Be good, do good and set an ideal; then all would follow the ideal path. Without practising, if you were to tell others, it would be of no avail. If you are unable to follow all the teachings, practise at least one or two. That is enough.

Be ideal members of Sathya Sai Organisation and bring about proper development and transform the nation itself. *I do not desire for My name to be upheld. I do not require any name or fame. If only I wanted, the whole world would have been at My feet by now (cheers). But, I do not want. I only want to help you. Foster the sense of service amongst yourselves. Entertain noble thoughts.*

Goldstein said that Swami always gives and does not take anything. Except one, I do not ask for anything. That which I ask for is your love (*cheers*). I do not desire anything else. Whatever you ask, I will give. But I aspire only for one thing—Love. Therefore, give your love and accept everything.

Strive for developing and bringing about transformation in the system of education. Members belonging to the Organisation should discuss among themselves and do what they consider good. They need not wait for orders from the Centre. In fact, the Centre would be happy to know of such an initiative. What else can give Me more joy than the news that you do not have any differences, jealousy, in-fights, and are conducting yourselves as brothers and sisters. Work in accordance with Swami's ideals. This gives joy to Swami. *Happiness lies in union with God.* That is true happiness. You cannot attain happiness by experiencing worldly comforts.

Leaving aside all differences, you must mingle with each other and undertake service activities. You should not form separate groups. Realise that pain inflicted on others is pain inflicted on Me. If all are united, I shall be extremely happy. If you were to meet someone whom you may have hated, greet him lovingly. You must conduct yourself with love. This is real penance, meditation, Japa and Sadhana.

One should give and take love for love's sake. If you continue this way, the entire country would become happy. We can experience that kind of joy that has not been experienced hitherto in any previous Yuga.

When you greet others, do so wholeheartedly. Let there be no disharmony in your thoughts, words and deeds. Talk sweetly and smilingly. This makes all happy. *Happy mood, happy face, happy talk and happy work* should be your guiding force. You should not smile artificially, smile wholeheartedly. Forget your past differences and live in the present. This present is not ordinary, it is omnipresent.

Develop unity. There is immense strength in unity. In unity, not only you, but also the country would have a chance to develop. Only love brings about unity. For the past four days, you have been debating and discussing various issues. Keep away all the hatred. Cleanse yourselves. Be pure, be happy. Go back happily.

This is a big workshop. Your body is like a car. All the worn-out bolts, nuts, brakes, springs and seats have been repaired and replaced. When you get back to your places fully transformed, people should observe this transformation in you and emulate you. I am teaching you all this prompted by love, so that you also develop love.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the Bhajan, "*Hari Bhajan Bina...*"

—From Bhagavan's Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam on 24th November, 1998 on the Valedictory of First Overseas Convention of Chairpersons of Sai Centres

Sai is my everything!

Holding my hand from dawn to dusk,
My Sai, my friend, guides me - He always does!
Through good times and bad, He's always there,
Leading, protecting - showing me He cares.

Sometimes, indeed my hand slips from His
It's a terrible feeling; I tell you it is!
As I feel lost, deserted and friendless,
With nothing to give or feel, so loveless!
I remember then my Sai is there,
My lifelong friend with time to spare!

The dark clouds He moves away,
The night within me He turns to day,
The tears in my eyes He changes into smiles
He's been there always, from all those miles!
As Krishna He came to Draupadi's aid,
As Rama for Sabari, a long trip He made!
As Mother Sai, He's always here for me,
Guiding and consoling, so lovingly!

So, what is Sai to me, you say?
He's a friend who's here to stay.
He's more than a kin, this I know,
My role model from head to toe!
Mother, father, guide and friend,
A reason to love, my source of strength.

He's the fragrance in a flower,
The sweetness in a fruit,
The song of a stream,
The innocence of a child,
The wisdom of the saints,
The gentleness of a breeze,
The swaying of the trees,
The darkness of the night,
The sunshine in each day,
The depth of the ocean,
The vastness of the skies,
And my most important finding,
He's a cloud's silver lining!!
Indeed, my Sai is my everything..!

(Nishi Kanukollu, Age 15, New Jersey)

AVATAR VANI

BHAGAVAN'S YUGADI SANDESH

Start New Year with Spirit of Love

If the feelings and intentions behind your actions are good, the results will also be good. If your intentions are bad, you will certainly meet with failure.
(Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of Love!

Thoughts are the permanent asset of man. Thoughts are based on feelings and feelings on the mind. As the thoughts, so the mind. If thoughts are good, humanity will blossom into Divinity. Today man's behaviour is not good because his thoughts are polluted. As the thoughts and actions of man have become perverted, the country is passing through troubles and turmoil. Man has filled his mind with thoughts about mundane, ephemeral and transient things. This is totally negative in nature. Only thoughts based on Truth are positive.

Spiritual Wealth of Bharat

In ancient times, the Bharatiyas, before partaking of food, used to chant the prayer. *Annam Brahma, Raso Vishnu, Bhokta Devo Maheshwara* (food is Brahma, the essence is Vishnu and the one who partakes of it is Maheshwara). The essence of food permeates the whole body and gives physical strength and satisfaction. It is the food that sustains the physical body. The subtle part of the food becomes the mind and the subtler part of the food becomes speech. Human quality is expressed through thoughts, words and deeds. The gross part of food is Brahma, the subtle part is Vishnu, and the subtlest part is Siva. So, the Divine Trinity is present in the food that we partake

of. Sacred thoughts, good words and noble deeds are the true human values. But, modern man lacks in human values.

Today, man is bereft of gratitude, which is one of the most essential qualities. He forgets the help rendered to him by others. So long as man is alive, he should be grateful for the help he received from others. There are two things you have to forget—the help you have rendered to others and the harm others have done to you. If you remember the help you have rendered, you will always expect something in return. Remembrance of the harm done to you by others generates in you a sense of revenge. You should remember only the help you received from others. The one with these sacred qualities is an ideal man.

In this ephemeral and transient world, man always aspires for peace and security. But money, education, position of authority and physical comforts cannot confer peace and security. Peace originates from the heart. Man can experience peace and security only when his heart is filled with love. Love is God, love is Nature, love is life and love is the true human value. Bereft of love, man is equivalent to a corpse. You should lead a life filled with love. Love even the worst of your enemies. It is on the basis of the principle of love that the culture of Bharat has declared: *Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavanthu* (May the whole world be happy!).

Since ancient times, this sacred land of Bharat has shared its spiritual wealth with the rest of the world to foster peace and security. It is because of its immense spiritual wealth that Bharat continues to be a land of peace and security in spite of many foreign invasions in the past. Without Bharat there will be no trace of spirituality in this world. There is truth in the air of Bharat; there is Dharma in the dust of Bharat. The land of Bharat is suffused with love. The water of Bharat overflows with compassion. Having taken birth in this sacred land of Bharat, you must uphold and sustain the principles of truth, love, righteousness and compassion. For whose sake should you uphold these principles? Is it for the sake of society or for the country? No. You should uphold these principles for your own sake. Only when everyone fosters these principles will the country prosper.

Today man is engulfed in selfishness and self-interest and is leading an unsacred life. Our ancient seers used to partake of food with the feeling that food is Brahma, the essence is Vishnu and the one who partakes of it is Siva. Such a feeling would foster pure and sacred thoughts in us. Today man has strayed away from the path of truth and righteousness. People criticise those that follow truth and righteousness. It is very easy to criticise, but very difficult to understand. The Vedas say: *Sathyam Vada, Dharmam Chara* (speak the truth and follow righteousness). Since ancient times, the Bharatiyas have considered these two as their two eyes.

True Spirit of Celebrating Yugadi

You would have celebrated many Yugadi (New Year day) festivals in your life. Certain traditional practices go with every festival, such as having a sacred bath, wearing new clothes, cleaning the house and decorating it with buntings of green leaves. Greatness lies in purifying our thoughts, not merely the transient human body. The significance of a festival does not lie in wearing new clothes, but in cultivating new and noble thoughts. The house should be decorated not merely with the buntings of green leaves, but with buntings of love. Share your love with everyone who visits your house. Only then we would be celebrating the festival in its true spirit.

Today we are celebrating Yugadi, which means the commencement of a new era. It denotes the beginning of Kali Yuga, not Krita Yuga or Treta Yuga. This is the beginning of *Nuthana Samvathsara* (New Year). *Vathsara* is another name of God. That is why God is extolled as *Vathsaraswarupaya Namah* (salutations to the one who is the embodiment of *Vathsara*). Time is God. *Vathsara* is its cosmic form. So, Time and *Vathsara* connote the same Divinity.

The New Year has to be sanctified by sacred thoughts and broad feelings. Today humanity is stricken with fear and restlessness. Courage and strength are on the decline because you have unsacred thoughts and wicked feelings. Your enemies are not outside. Your bad thoughts are your worst enemies and thoughts based on Truth are your best friends. But, today people do not befriend the thoughts based on Truth, which are essentially divine. You have to make friendship with Sat, the eternal truth. Sat means Being, the ever-existent God. The worldly friends and enemies change with the passage of time, but Sat is the true and eternal friend. This friend is always with you, in you, around you, above you, below you and protects you just as the eyelid protects the eye.

Exemplary Devotion of Delhi Seva Dal

Embodiments of Love!

There is nothing great in going round the world and getting accolades. Lakhs and lakhs of people in Delhi and Mumbai enjoyed the divine bliss during Swami's visit last week. It was not temporary joy; it was the everlasting love etched in their hearts. That is why, while I was leaving Delhi, they expressed their feelings by putting up a huge banner with the words, *'Thanks for the visit. Please come back soon!'* The aerodrome is situated miles away from the city. During Swami's drive, thousands of youth of the age group of 25 to 30 flanked both sides of the road with devotion, discipline and enthusiasm. Usually one does not find such well behaved youth in cities like Mumbai and Delhi. It was a clear indication of the transformation brought about in them. What wonderful service they have rendered! I have been observing the service activities of various Seva Dal groups for the past 50 years, but the service rendered by the Delhi Seva Dal was of very high standard. They discharged their duties forgoing even food and drink. They said, "Since Swami says *duty is God* and *work is worship*, we are ready to sacrifice even our lives in following Swami's commands. Only then we shall have pleased Swami." Such was their devotion!

No one exactly knew Swami's schedule. Therefore, one could find a Seva Dal in every nook and corner of Delhi carrying a cellular phone to exchange minute-to-minute information regarding Swami's movements. There was no complaint whatsoever from any quarter. You are all aware of the fact that neither the police nor the media take note of our Seva Dal activities. But this time in Delhi, the police personnel as well as the newspapers extolled our Seva Dal sky high. They said such selfless and dedicated youth are found only in Sri Sathya Sai Organisation. *(Cheers)*

The Seva Dal youth were ten thousand in number. Whomsoever I asked, "What do you want, boy?" the reply was one and the same, "Swami, I want You, I want Your love." They were very humble in their approach and spoke softly and sweetly. I often say, "You cannot always oblige, but you can speak always obligingly." That obliging nature was very much evident in Delhi Seva

Dal. They brought a good name to Sri Sathya Sai Organisation by their exemplary behaviour. In other States also Seva Dal are doing good work. The whole world has recognised the truth that if there is any organisation where love, unity, friendship, cooperation and selfless service are practised, it is only Sri Sathya Sai Organisation. *(Cheers)* There are many organisations in this world, but nowhere would you find the idealism that is found in Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation.

Revival of Ancient Culture of Bharat

While I was in Mumbai, the Health Minister of Maharashtra came to Me and said, "Swami, we have many doctors here and we would like to work in collaboration with the Super Speciality Hospital in Prasanthi Nilayam. Every little activity that Sri Sathya Sai Organisation undertakes is, an ideal to the rest of the world. We have seen many organisations, but the spirit of sacrifice that is found in Sri Sathya Sai Organisation is not found anywhere else. We have spoken to many members of Sai Seva Dal. They are all highly devoted, dedicated and disciplined. Such an ideal organisation should spread all over the world:'

Swami does not ask anything for Himself. Today there are many Swamis and Ammas who are making money in the name of spirituality. Sri Sathya Sai Organisation has no connection whatsoever with them. You should not have anything to do with them. Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation should progress with the spirit of sacrifice. Only then will the pristine culture of Bharat be firmly re-established. It will not be long before you will be a witness to this. *Very soon we are going to revive the ancient culture of Bharat. (Cheers)* All the members of Sri Sathya Sai Organisation should develop sacred thoughts and noble feelings. We should perform all our actions based on Truth. Then victory will certainly be ours.

You should keep this in mind: never ask anything from anybody. If you want *anything, come to Me, I will give. (Cheers)* Only beggars stretch their hands in front of others, not devotees. You should be 'bigger,' not beggar. Help the poor and the needy, serve the society and lead an ideal life. Only then you will be called a true devotee. I have explained to you many times the qualities of a true devotee. They are: virtues, good intellect, truth, devotion, discipline, duty. Participate in service activities. This morning I am going to Kadugodi to inaugurate a Vriddhashram (home for the aged). There are many old people in the society who are leading a miserable life, since they have been deserted by their children. Anybody is welcome to this home for the aged. This is started to see that the old people may lead a peaceful life till their last breath. One should be in bliss at the time of death, and not be shedding tears of sorrow. One's last moments are the foundation for one's next birth.

All members of Sri Sathya Sai Organisation should cultivate the spirit of sacrifice and service to help others. There are many affluent people in the society, but few have this spirit of sacrifice. Life bereft of sacrifice is inhuman. The Vedas said: *Na Karmana Na Prajaya Dhanena Thyagenaike Amruthatwamanasu* (one can attain immortality neither by rituals nor by progeny nor wealth; only sacrifice confers immortality). We do not need any publicity or advertisement. Work silently. Before leaving for Delhi, I instructed Kulwant Rai not to give any prior publicity about My impending visit. Why worry about newspapers? There should be heart-to-heart and love-to-love connection. Love expands automatically all over the world. We are able to listen to the programmes broadcast from the Delhi radio station through radio waves. Similarly, good

thoughts are like radio waves. These waves should spread through love, not through publicity. Prachar (publicity) is not the Achar (practice) of Sai Organisation. We should work for the progress of the Organisation through practice and spread the message of love throughout the world. The entire humanity should unite and live like one family.

Ushering in an Era of Peace

The name of the New Year is Pramadi, which implies dangerous prospects. But no danger would befall this world. The name may imply danger, but in reality the world will attain prosperity. We shall escape from all dangers. Be prepared to face anything with love and broad-mindedness. There are no dangers either for the world or for the nation or for the society or for the family. A person bearing the name Dharmaraja may not follow Dharma at all. Similarly, this year although named Pramadi will not bring any calamities.

Embodiments of Love!

Do not get elated by listening to what happened in Delhi and Mumbai. They have done it for their satisfaction. I have nothing to do with that. Praise or censure does not affect Me. Your devotion also should be steady. Some people shower praise on Me only when their desires are fulfilled. Happiness is obtained not when desires are fulfilled, but when desires are destroyed. Whether your desires are fulfilled or not, you should always be happy. Strive to attain this state of bliss. Develop friendship with God. Worldly friends have their dwellings outside, but God, your true friend, resides in your heart. So, you need not search for Him outside. Turn your vision inward and there you will find God.

Love is the most essential of all the qualities we should possess. So, cultivate selfless love. Love is God, God is love. Today is the New Year day. In this New Year drive away all bad thoughts, breed good feelings and spend the time in contemplation of God. When you tread along this path, you can achieve anything. You will not have any problems. Many of you are apprehensive of what lies in store for you this year. Nothing will happen. What we encounter depends on our thoughts. So, entertain good thoughts and you are bound to be successful.

Embodiments of Love!

I bless you with a long, happy and healthy life. (*Cheers*) Set an ideal to the rest of the country. *Very soon all countries will come together and will attain peace and security.* I told Vajpayee, "Vajpayee, you are a good person, making efforts in the right direction. But, develop friendship with Pakistan and China. If India, Pakistan and China become united, they will make a formidable force." I told this on 11th evening. Vajpayee came on 13th and informed that he was happy that both Pakistan and China had responded positively to his invitation. He said, "It is Swami's Divine Will that has made it possible"

But, in fact, there is no unity amongst Bharatiyas themselves. Today, one finds several groups in a single party. Parties may vary, ideologies may differ, but all should stand united. Never attach undue importance to parties and ideologies. Keep in mind the welfare of the nation. The welfare of the world depends on the welfare of the nation; the welfare of the nation depends on the welfare of the society. So, whatever you do, bear in mind the welfare of the society and the nation. There may be differences of opinion, but they should not stand in the way of unity. This is what the ancient culture of Bharat taught in the beginning.

Let us move together, let us grow together in intelligence and share the knowledge that we have acquired, let us live in peace and harmony without any conflicts." (Telugu Poem)

Only then Bharat will prosper. Bharat is the leader and an ideal to the rest of the world in the field of spirituality. So, all Bharatiyas should foster broad feelings. Today the country is facing problems because people have become narrow-minded.

The Worst Enemies of Man

Every human being has the evil tendencies of Kama (lust), Krodha (anger), Lobha (greed) etc. in him. The great epics, the Ramayana, the Bhagavata and the Mahabharata teach us very good lessons to control lust, greed and anger, which are the enemies of man. Ravana, who had mastered all the 64 branches of knowledge and was a great scholar and a mighty warrior, lost his life and caused the ruination of his entire clan because of lust. It is not enough if you merely read the Ramayana; you should grasp its real significance.

Hiranyakasipu was a great scientist. Today scientists have travelled only up to the moon, but Hiranyakasipu could travel even to the sun. He had control over all the five elements, but he became a victim of his anger. His anger was directed at God Himself. Ultimately, what happened? He ruined himself. He subjected his son to all sorts of trials and tribulations and sought to kill him by many means, like throwing him from the hilltop, casting him into the sea, putting him in a pit of poisonous snakes and making the elephants trample upon him. As Prahlada was chanting the name of Narayana ceaselessly, all the obstacles became Narayana for him and he came out unscathed. That is why it is said, *Yad Bhavam, Tad Bhavathi* (as is the feeling, so is the experience). God manifests on the basis of the feelings of the devotee. If you pray to God with purity of heart and love, you will experience God.

In the Mahabharata, Duryodhana personified greed. He refused to share the kingdom with the Pandavas and denied them their rightful share. Due to this greed, he perished along with his entire clan.

These three illustrations echo the need for the eradication of the feelings of lust, anger and greed. The Pandavas emerged victorious because they practised all the human values of Sathya, Dharma, Santhi, Prema and Ahimsa. If you follow the values, success will follow automatically.

Cultivate the Spirit of Love

Today New Year has begun. With sacred feelings and divine thoughts, cultivate the spirit of love in you. God is not found separately in a temple or in an Ashram etc. Truth is God. Love is God. Dharma is God. When you worship God by following these principles, He will manifest Himself then and there. There is no doubt about this. You should love God wholeheartedly. Pray to God and make friends with Him. You can achieve anything if you have God as your friend.

What you have to learn today is to fill your heart with love and adorn your hand with the ornament of sacrifice. Sacrifice is the jewel for the hands. Truth is the necklace one should wear. You must develop the habit of adorning these jewels in the New Year. In this New Year, develop divine love and foster peace in the country. You must pray with a broad feeling: *Loka Samastha*

Sukhino Bhavanthu (May the whole world be happy!). Start the New Year with this prayer. Then you will lead a blissful and peaceful life full of enthusiasm. To lead such a life, you have to cultivate noble thoughts. So, love God, make friendship with Him and you are bound to be successful in all your endeavours.

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajan, "*Hari Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahi...*"

From Bhagavan's Yugadi Discourse in Sai Ramesh Hall at Brindavan on 18th March 1999

Do Sadhana with Pure Feelings

*Truth is your true mother and Wisdom the true father,
Dharma is the true brother and Compassion the true friend;
The true wife is Peace and the true son Forgiveness,
These six are in fact the true relations of man.*

(Sanskrit Sloka)

Embodiments of Love!

Life is like an ocean with the waves of joy and sorrow. Spirituality is the lighthouse to the people who are travelling in the ocean of Samsara. Spirituality does not mean rituals and worship alone. Spirituality is that which demonstrates unity in multiplicity. God is love personified, and is installed in the heart of every man. That is why since times immemorial, the Bharatiyas have prayed for the welfare of all the people in the world. Spirituality has a certain discipline. *Na Sreyo Niyamam Vina* (Nothing noble and great can be achieved without discipline).

Spirituality and Welfare of Humanity

In Tamil, there is a sacred book named Thirukural, which is equivalent to the Vedas. It was written by Thiruvalluvar. He took to the path of spirituality, worked for the welfare of the humanity and led a disciplined and peaceful life. He used to ask his wife to keep a cup of water and a needle by his side while he ate his food. As per the command of her husband, his wife did accordingly day after day, but not even once did she find him putting them to use while having food. When his wife asked him for the reason, he replied, "I don't want to waste even a single grain of rice. The purpose of this needle is to pick up the grain of rice if it were to fall outside my plate and to wash it clean with water before putting it back in the plate. So far I have not used this needle as I have been very careful not to spill rice grains." *Annam Brahma, Raso Vishnu, Bhokta Devo Maheshwara* (food is Brahma, the essence is Vishnu and the one who partakes of it is Maheshwara). Food is called Brahma since its essence pervades the whole body and gives it strength. The prayer to Vishnu is to purify the mind, so that the body may be utilised in a proper way. The Easwara Principle demonstrates how to make use of the strong body and pure mind in a proper way. God resides in the heart of everyone in the form of love. But, no one is making any effort to realise the Principle of Love in the heart. There is no life without love. Love is God. God is love.

Today man is leaving no stone unturned in order to experience happiness. But his desires are increasing day by day, just as the ants that come out of an anthill. Increase in desires will only lead to restlessness, but not happiness. Man aspires to be happy through the fulfillment of his desires; on the contrary, he is becoming more and more restless. The lesser the desires are, the greater the happiness will be. The Vedas teach that all the education that man acquires should be utilised for the welfare of the society. The Vedas say: *Sarvaloka Hithe Ratah* (man should involve himself in the service of the society). *Sarvajnanopasampannah* (man should be a treasure of wisdom), *Sarvasamudhita Gunaihi* (man should cultivate all good qualities). But today's education does not confer these noble virtues. Modern education "bestows mere bookish knowledge, which in turn becomes superficial knowledge. Today there is no trace of practical knowledge in man.

After his education, man should work for the welfare of the society and the world at large. He should not have the narrow feeling that he and his family alone should be happy. Without the world, where is the family? Man and his family are dependent on the society and the world at large. So, man and his family can be happy only when the world is safe and secure. Today in all the fields of life, be it political or social, no one seems to be concerned about the welfare of the world. Selfishness and self-interest are widespread in all the fields. As long as there is selfishness and self-interest in the people of a country, it cannot prosper.

Brahma and Bhrama

Today man aspires to have the vision of Brahma, but is getting immersed in Bhrama (illusion). Unity in multiplicity is Brahma and viewing multiplicity in unity is Bhrama. Man has lost the vision of unity in diversity. He has become highly 'intelligent' so as to divide unity into multiplicity. Fie upon such intelligence! Man should make an effort to see the unity in diversity. That is the real Sadhana.

Reading the sacred texts such as the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Puranas does not confer the vision of Brahma. Narada had studied the four Vedas and six Shastras. He was a great exponent of the Brahma Sutras and the Upanishads. In spite of all this, he could neither attain peace nor get rid of his delusion. So, he approached the sages Sanaka, Sanantana and Sanat Kumara and requested them to grant him peace and wisdom. Sanat Kumara asked Narada as to what made him feel that he deserved to attain peace and wisdom? Narada replied that he had studied the four Vedas, the six Shastras, the Upanishads and the Brahma Sutras. Then Sanat Kumara said, "Narada! No doubt, you have studied the Vedas and the Upanishads, but have you put them into practice? It is a mistake to think that mere study of the Vedas and the Shastras can confer peace and wisdom. One has to practise the teachings of the Vedas and the Shastras in order to experience bliss."

Will the darkness in the world be dispelled by the message of light? Can the disease be cured by merely listening to the efficacy of medicine? Can the poor get rid of poverty by listening to the principles of Economics? Can the hunger be satiated by mere repetition of the names of various delicious dishes? No. Similarly, you can attain bliss only when you put your knowledge into practice. (Telugu Poem)

Sanat Kumara went on to say, "Narada, you say you have gone through the Upanishads. But have you understood the first declaration of the first Upanishad: Isavasyam Idam Sarvam (God permeates the entire cosmos)? Have you recognised the Truth that God exists in everybody? You are chanting the Slokas, but you are not trying to experience them."

Dharma Leads to Divinity

Today spiritual aspirants are wasting their time in such futile exercises. Time is God. Time wasted is life wasted. Instead the aspirants should try to enter a path which will endow them with wisdom. There are nine paths of devotion. They are: Shravanam (listening to the stories of the Lord), Kirtanam (singing the glory of the Lord) Vishnusmaranam (contemplating on the form of the Lord), Padasevanam (serving the Lotus Feet), Vandanam (salutation), Archanam (worship), Dasyam (servitude), Sneham (friendship of the Lord), Atmanivedanam (self-surrender). Are you

putting any of these into practice in your daily life? No. You are merely mouthing words, but not practising. *The proper study of mankind is man.* What is the proper study? Your thoughts, words and deeds must be in harmony with each other. *Manasyanyath Vachasyanyath Karmanyanyath Duratmanam* (he is a wicked one whose thoughts, words and deeds are not in harmony). In the modern world, you find such wicked people everywhere. But, there are good people also. If there are no good people in the world, how can the sun rise? Good people are there in the world, no doubt. But, the present-day scenario is such that only the wicked seem to be prospering.

Sathyam Mata, Pita Jnanam (Truth is your mother and Wisdom is your father). A true father is one who imparts the knowledge of non-dualism to his son. But the present-day parents are not concerned about truth; whatever untruths their son utters to cover up his mistakes, they take that as truth! It is only because of such parents that the children are going in the wrong direction. Parents are to be blamed if the children take to wrong path. As the parents, so are the children. If the parents themselves are found arguing with each other, the children will go a step ahead and engage themselves in fighting with each other! The condition of the country depends upon fathers and mothers. But, today the situation of the family is very unfortunate.

Since ancient times, Bharat has radiated peace and happiness to the rest of the world with its power of spirituality. All the aspects of the culture of Bharat are suffused with divinity. The eyes, the ears, the nose and the hand are the different limbs of the body. Body is a limb of the society. Society is a limb of mankind. Mankind is a limb of Nature. Nature is a limb of God.

It is because of the impact of modern education that man is misusing his limbs. He has forgotten the truth that humility is the hallmark of true education. Education confers humility. Humility bestows deservedness. Deservedness will lead to Dharma. It is through Dharma that one can attain Divinity. The modern education has become job-oriented. Without Yoga, what is the use of Udyoga (job)? One has to attain Yoga, which means control of the senses.

Buddha did penance (Tapas) for many years in order to attain Yoga. Ultimately, Buddha attained Nirvana (liberation). But, today people are ruining themselves because they are immersed in Tamas (dullness). Buddha laid emphasis on *Samyak Drishti, Samyak Vak, Samyak Shravanam, Samyak Chintanam and Samyak Karma*. This can be interpreted as:

*See no evil, see what is good
Talk no evil, talk what is good
Hear no evil, hear what is good
Think no evil, think what is good
Do no evil, do what is good.*

Buddha made proper use of the five senses, experienced bliss and shared it with others. But, today all the five senses are being misused. Actions are based on thoughts. So, man has to cultivate noble thoughts. Hridaya is the temple of God. Thoughts, words and deeds will be pure, steady and selfless only when man has a pure Hridaya and noble feelings. Purity, patience and perseverance are very essential for mankind. Without firm faith, man cannot achieve anything in life.

Ages have passed, years have rolled by, but there is no transformation in man. When you have a bitter thing in your mouth, even the sweet tastes bitter. Sweet will taste sweet only when you spit out the bitter thing and rinse your mouth. What is that you have to do in order to pour milk into a glass, which is already full of water? You have to pour out the water and then pour in the milk. Likewise, man has to get rid of evil thoughts in order to cultivate sacred feelings.

Man's life is like an ocean full of opposite waves of union and separation. These waves co-exist; in fact one cannot exist without the other. So, one has to be equal-minded. *Happiness and sorrow co-exist. It is impossible to separate them. One cannot have comforts alone. Comforts accrue from troubles and sufferings.*

(Telugu Poem)

Today we find pollution everywhere. The air that we breathe, the water that we drink, the sound that we hear, the food that we partake of, all are polluted. The root cause for all this is that the mind itself is polluted. It is because of evil feelings in the mind that everything appears evil. *Mano Moolam Idam Jagat* (the whole world is based on the mind). Even if man dies, mind will not die. So, man should purify his mind with pure thoughts. Pure thoughts can be cultivated only by chanting the divine name.

Some people may talk derisively about the efficacy of the divine name. But, the joy and bliss that you derive by chanting it is supreme. Today people think of only worldly matters, but not God. What is, the benefit that accrues from thinking of the mundane matters? Nothing at all. In fact, it makes you more and more restless.

People find the reflection of their own defects in others. Those that find mistakes in others do not know their own mistakes. How can you get the belch of a mango if you have not eaten it? The belch you get depends on the food you take. The good and bad that you see and experience are the results of your own thoughts. First recognise the defects in yourself and get rid of them. It is a great sin to criticise others. God is in everyone. So, criticising others amounts to criticising God Himself. Do not criticise or ridicule anyone. Respect everyone, only then you will be respected. It is foolishness to expect others to respect you without yourself respecting them.

Cultivate Noble Qualities in New Year

If your feelings are good, you will see only good in everyone. Mind is the root cause for everything. Man cannot exist without the mind. A torch cannot function without cells. Body is like a torch, eyes are like bulbs and intellect is like a switch. But, without the mind, which can be compared to a cell, the body cannot function. So, the mind has to be kept in good condition.

Embodiments of Love!

You have been celebrating the New Year Day year after year. But, are you cultivating new and sacred qualities? No. You are unable to give up your bad qualities. With each New Year, new and noble qualities should be cultivated. Desires have to be controlled. The lesser the desires, the lesser will be your sorrows. Excessive desires lead to the ruination of the will power (Iccha Shakti). Decline in will power leads to loss of power of action (Kriya Shakti). You should develop unity of Iccha Shakti, Kriya Shakti and Jnana Shakti (power of wisdom). The will power will increase only when the desires are reduced. Happiness is eluding man due to his limitless

desires. Excessive desires spoil our health and cause depression in the mind. Reducing the desires amounts to reducing the burden on the mind. Less luggage more comfort makes travel a pleasure. Life is a long journey. How can you enjoy the journey if you are carrying heavy luggage? Go on reducing your luggage. The same message is conveyed in the Vedas too. *Na Karmana Na Prajaya Dhanena Thyagenaike Amrutathwamanasu* (immortality can be attained only through sacrifice; neither wealth nor progeny nor good deeds can confer it). You should have fear of sin and love for God. Only then there will be morality in society.

If you do not have fear of sin and love for God, you will not be respected even by your own mother, wife and children. If you have fear of sin and love for God, the whole world will love you. Sage Vyasa has given the essence of 18 Puranas in the dictum, *Paropakara Punyaya Papaya Parapeedanam* (to help others is merit and harming others is sin). Help ever, Hurt never. If you cannot render help, at least restrain yourself from hurting others. That itself is a great help.

The sacred land of Tamil Nadu is the birthplace of many great saints and sages, who undertook many spiritual practices with great determination and led a noble life of peace and happiness. They gave up body attachment and developed love for the Atma. But, today man is developing attachment to the body more and more, forgetting the Principle of the Atma. *This body is a heap of rubbish and is full of diseases. O mind, do not be under the illusion that body is permanent. Take refuge at the feet of the Lord. (Telugu Poem)* The body and the mind are negative, only the Atma is positive. You say, my body, my mind, my intellect, my senses, so on and so forth. When you say, this is my handkerchief, the handkerchief is separate from you. Similarly, when you say, this is my body, my mind etc., you are separate from them. Then who are you? Put a question to yourself. All this is matter and you are the master. Master the mind and be a mastermind.

On the spiritual path, Japa and Dhyana are not that important. Purity of mind is most important. You do not need to undertake any spiritual practice. Love everyone. Do not limit your love to you and your family alone. Do not spend your life in narrow-mindedness. All belong to the same universal family. All are one, be alike to everyone. The divine love is pure, selfless, attributeless and eternal. He is a sinner who tries to find faults with the divine love. Worldly love is negative and full of selfishness. Man can attain Divinity only when he gives up selfishness.

Develop morality. Money comes and goes, but morality comes and grows. Today man entertains only negative thoughts. Man cannot expect to have positive rewards when his heart is filled with negative thoughts. When the heart is full of worldly desires, how can you have love for God? It is impossible. Cultivate positive feelings, only then you will have positive results.

Only God is Your True Friend

If you have selfless love, you need not be afraid of anything. Even if the sky were to fall on your head, be fearless. Never be afraid of following the truth. Truth is God, love is God. Live in love. Get immersed in the divine love. The wicked and evil-minded people cannot understand the divine love. Do not enter into friendship with such people. Only God is your true friend who has no trace of selfishness and who helps you always under all circumstances. Have the firm conviction that God always helps and never hurts anyone. Whether you are in the forest or in the

sky or in a city or in a village or on the top of a hill or in the middle of a river, God is always with you, in you and around you.

The worldly friends are such that they say hello to you only when you have money and power. Hello becomes hollow once you lose both. As long as there is water in the pond, thousands of frogs gather there.

Once the pond gets dried up, not even a single frog will be seen around. Same is the case with worldly friends. But God's friendship is not like that. He is with you at all stages and in all situations. Love him from the depth of your heart. Take refuge in Him. He will definitely protect you. Did He not come to the rescue of Prahlada who surrendered to Him completely? *Yad Bhavam, Tad Bhavathi* (as is the feeling, so is the result). God will come to your rescue if you have total faith.

Some actions will yield instant results, whereas some other may take a few hours, a few days, a few years or a few births. For example, when your finger is cut, bleeding starts immediately. It takes a few hours for the food to get digested. It takes a few years for a seed to grow into a tree and yield fruit. Be it good or bad, you have to face the consequences of your actions. So, do not indulge in bad actions. Always do good, be good and see good. This is the way to God. Do not say 'I will try,' you must do it.

Some people, when faced with difficulties; think that God is punishing them. It is a mistake to think so. God will never punish anybody. It is only the king who gives punishment, not God. God is love, so He always gives only love. The punishment you suffer is the result of your own actions. God neither punishes you nor protects you. You are punished by your own sins and protected by your own good deeds. You may utilise light for writing wrong account or for reading the holy Ramayana. But, the light is not affected by what you do. Similarly, God is the eternal witness. He is like the light, not affected by what you do, be it good or bad.

Spiritual Practices and Purity of Mind

Embodiments of Love!

Many New Years have come and gone, but what is that you have achieved? You may have participated in Bhajans any number of times. But, you still continue to be immersed in negativity. Put a question to yourself what is that you have gained by participating in Bhajans. Bhajans should develop positive feelings in you. Any Sadhana done with noble feelings will yield good results. You may be doing a lot of spiritual practices for many years without any result. But, never give up any spiritual practice. Continue your Sadhana. One day or the other, you will get the reward.

You think that you have attained Swatantrata (independence). Swa means Atma. So, the true independence lies in following the Atma Dharma. Body is like a water bubble. Mind is like a mad monkey. So, do not follow the body; do not follow the mind. Follow the conscience. Your conscience always gives you the right prompting. It is a sin if you do not follow the dictates of your conscience. Conscience is your master.

Follow the master

*Face the devil
Fight to the end
Finish the game.*

Some people say that they have not got any benefit in spite of chanting the divine name for twenty to thirty years. No benefit accrues from chanting the divine name if the mind is filled with impurities. First purify your mind and fill it with positive feelings. Only then you can experience the benefit of chanting the divine name. Bad thoughts and bad feelings will not help you in any way. Even if you happen to come across anything bad, do not let it enter your mind.

God's work will never fail. So, all the work that is done with divine feelings will never meet with failure. If you fail in your endeavour, it means you do not have divine feelings. You will always be successful if your feelings are pure and divine. At least from today onwards cultivate noble feelings. Talk sweetly and softly. You cannot always oblige, but you can speak always obligingly.

Embodiments of Love!

On New Year day, it is a practice to mix sweet, sour and bitter things and eat them. It is to indicate that joy and sorrow have to be treated with equanimity. It is the tongue that tastes the delicacy and it is the heart that tastes love. The taste of love is peerless. It is sweeter than even nectar. Love alone can match love. God is love, love is God. Live in love. Whatever Bhajans you sing, sing with love. God is *Bhavapriya*. He sees your feelings, not the rhythm or tune. If your feelings are pure, God will take care of everything.

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajan, "*Prema Mudhitha Manase Kaho...*"

—From Bhagavan's Tamil New Year Day Discourse on 14th April 1999 in Sai Ramesh Hall, Brindavan

AVATAR VANI:

BHAGAVAN'S SRI RAMANAVAMI SANDESH:

Relevance of Ramayana to Modern Life

*The whole universe is under the control of God. God is governed by Truth.
Noble souls are the guardians of Truth. Such noble souls are verily the embodiments of Divinity.
(Sanskrit Sloka)*

Embodiments of Love!

ALL ARE ESSENTIALLY the embodiments of Divinity. *Easwara Sarva Bhoothanam* (God dwells in all beings). *Isavasyam Idam Jagat* (God permeates the entire universe). Where is the need to search for such an all-pervasive Divinity?

*Sarvata Pani Padam Tath Sarvathokshi Shiromukham,
Sarvata Sruthimalloke Sarvamavruthya Thisthati.*

(Sanskrit Sloka)

How can you search for Him who is moving about with thousands of feet, thousands of eyes and thousands of ears? So, it is utterly foolish to search for God. God is within you. As you have forgotten your true Self and are carried away by the temporary and transient physical body, you are unable to understand the Divine. When you get rid of body attachment and develop attachment towards the Self, only then you can understand the divine Atmic Principle.

Values Contained in Rama's Story

Embodiments of Love!

Life is like a game of chess; not merely that, it is like a battlefield. The story of Rama teaches us the three old Dharma (code of conduct) pertaining to the individual, the family and the society. You have to make every effort to understand the duties of the individual, the family and the society. Rama is the ocean of compassion. He is love personified. It is possible to understand His divinity only through the path of love. Love is the undercurrent of human life. Man will be able to manifest his innate divinity only when he develops love within.

The modern society needs to follow the Dharma that is contained in the epic Ramayana. What is the reason? Today, the son is not paying heed to his father's advice and the parents are not concerned about the future of the son. Devotion to the Guru should be the aim of the students. But, the students are not having regard for their teachers and the teachers are not imparting anything good to them. In such a situation, everyone needs to follow the ideals of the Ramayana. The Ramayana speaks of the true identity of the individual, the real significance of the family and the sanctity of the society. The Ramayana teaches the importance of human values. Today corruption is rampant in all fields such as business, education and politics. Under these circumstances, the principles of the Ramayana are very important. It explains in detail the relationship that should exist between brothers, the father and the son, the preceptor and the disciple.

All of us live on the same earth. The same sky is above all of us. We breathe the same air and drink the same water. Ignoring this underlying principle of unity man visualises multiplicity, which is a big mistake. The Ramayana centres on the principle of unity in diversity. Today as man has lost the ability to see unity in diversity, he is immersed in restlessness. What we need today is to see unity in diversity and the divinity behind this unity.

The culture of Bharat says: *Sathyam Bhruyat, Priyam Bhruyat, Na Bhruyat Sathyam-apriyam* (speak the truth, speak sweetly and softly and never utter truth in an unpalatable way). *Sathyam Bhruyat* is the moral value. *Priyam Bhruyat* is the social value. *Na Bhruyat Sathyam-apriyam* is the spiritual value. So, the moral, social, and spiritual values are all contained in the above statement. The Ramayana teaches these values in the simplest way. But, man has forgotten the message of the Ramayana and is leading the life of a Ravana. Ravana did not understand this principle of divinity. There was no transformation in him though he had acquired all forms of knowledge and had done severe penance. He ruined himself on account of excessive- desires. Before his death, he gave a message to the people: "O people; with all my skills and expertise in different forms of knowledge I became a victim of desires. I lost my sons, ruined my clan and

burnt my kingdom to ashes, as I could not control my desires. Do not become a victim of desires like me. Follow the path of truth and righteousness and be like Rama. Experience divinity."

Put Ramayana's Teaching into Practice

The relationship that existed between the brothers of Rama is an ideal to the rest of the humanity. They lived in unity in spite of troubles and turmoil. Mother Kaikeyi wanted her son Bharata to ascend the throne of Ayodhya, but Bharata never had any such desire. He went to Chitrakoota mountain, fell at the feet of Rama and prayed, He, being the eldest, should take over the kingdom of Ayodhya. But, Rama did not yield to his request. Quoting the Vedic dictum *Matru Devo Bhava, Pitru Devo Bhava*, He exhorted Bharata to obey the command of the father and fulfill the desire of his mother by becoming the king of Ayodhya. Rama promised him that He would render all help and support. That is why even today people extol Rama as *Sathya vakparipalaka* (one who adheres to truthful speech).

Today many people read the holy Ramayana, but few understand its essence. They spend their time in acquiring bookish knowledge and superficial knowledge, but fail to have practical knowledge. There are many people who can explain the teachings of Ramayana in a beautiful way, but how many of them obey the command of their fathers in their daily life? Not many! What is the use of reading various texts, if we do not put into practice the message contained in them? Can anyone enjoy the taste of various delicious items such as Mysore Pak, Gulab Jamun, Jilebi, etc., by merely repeating their names? No. One can enjoy the taste only when one eats them. Mere textual information is of no use. But, man today is interested only in information, and not transformation. Intellect will blossom only when there is transformation.

If your ambitions are not fulfilled, do not waver or get depressed. He is a realised one who is cheerful in the face of all adversities.

(Telugu Poem)

One has to face many obstacles in one's life, but one should never get depressed. Life is a challenge, meet it. Life is a dream, realise it. Life is a game, play it. Life is love, enjoy it. (*Cheers*) Be cheerful and courageous in the face of adversities, never give scope to any weakness whatsoever. The Vedanta declared: *Na Ayamatma Balaheenena Labhya* (a weak-minded person cannot realise the Atma). A weak-minded person cannot accomplish anything. So, you should be strong-minded. Develop faith in that which is good.

As there is no fear of sin and love for God, humanness is on the decline in human beings. This is the cause for lack of peace in the world.

(Telugu Poem)

Therefore, man should cultivate *Daiva Preeti*, *Papa Bheeti* and *Sangha Neeti* (love for God, fear of sin and morality in society). Though Rama and Ravana were equally well-versed in all forms of knowledge, sage Valmiki extolled Rama as Divine and condemned Ravana as a foolish one. What is the reason? Ravana did not translate into action the knowledge he had acquired and on the contrary he used it for wicked purposes. On the other hand, Rama translated all his knowledge into action and gave joy to one and all. *Sarvaloka Hithe Ratah* (Rama was engaged in the welfare of all). *Sarvajnanopasampannah* (He was the master of all forms of

knowledge). *Sarvasamudhita Gunaihi* (He was the embodiment of all good qualities). These are the three aspects that manifested Rama's divinity. Whoever has these three aspects is essentially divine. In fact, everyone is divine. But because of attachment to the body, man is not able to understand his divine nature. Man can experience and enjoy divinity only by treading along the path of love. Love is God; God is love. So, live in love.

*Start the day with love
Spend the day with love
Fill the day with love
End the day with love
This is the way to God.*

The Best Sadhana: Love Everybody

The cause for man's suffering is that he has constricted his love to himself and his family. He should develop the broad feeling that all are his brothers and sisters. Expansion of love is life; contraction of love is death. All are the children of God. All are sparks of the Divine. Lord Krishna declared in the Bhagavad Gita: *Mamaivamso Jeevaloke Jeevabhutha Sanathana* (the eternal Atma in all bodies is a part of My Being). So, man should have the broad feeling to identify himself with everybody. Humanity can never progress without broad feelings.

*See no evil, see what is good
Hear no evil, hear what is good
Talk no evil, talk what is good
Think no evil, think what is good
Do no evil, do what is good
This is the way to God.*

When there is such an easy path to divinity, why do you trouble yourself by undertaking rigorous spiritual practices such as Japa, Tapa and Yoga? Divinity cannot be attained by all these austerities. How easy it is to love everybody!

Love all and think of divinity. Moses used to think of Jesus all the time. As a result, his face shone with divine effulgence. He resembled Jesus so much that people used to mistake him for Jesus. Ratnakara, a robber, on being advised by Narada started chanting the name of Rama incessantly, as a result of which the radiance of Rama was seen on his countenance and he became sage Valmiki. Rama is Lokadata (the giver of the world) and Valmiki became Slokadata (composer of the holy hymns). There is no difference between the giver and the composer. The Vedas declare: *Brahmavid Brahmaiva Bhavathi* (the knower of Brahman becomes Brahman himself). So, you should always think good, do good, talk good and hear good. Only then you can become good. A true human being is one who is good. A wicked person can never be called a human being.

There are four qualities in man—the divine, demonic, animal and human. What is the divine quality in man? *Sarvaloka ithi Ratah* (engaged in the welfare of everybody). That is the divine nature. What is the human quality? Always undertake meritorious deeds (Punya). Never indulge in sin (Papa). *Paropakara Punyaya Papaya Parapeedanam* (rendering help to others is merit,

harming others is sin). Help ever, Hurt never. What constitutes the animal quality in man? *Jnanena Sunya Pasubhir Samana* (devoid of wisdom man is equivalent to an animal). The purpose of human life does not lie in merely eating, drinking, sleeping and indulging in materialistic comforts. Even animals indulge in such activities. But unlike man animals do not possess the evil qualities of amassing, robbing and stealing. Today man is human only in form, but not in behaviour.

Less Luggage, more Comfort

Janthoonam Narajanma Durlabham (human life is the most difficult to attain of all living beings). The good that you experience in this life is the result of meritorious deeds done in several past lives. This human life is not new. This message is contained in the word *Manava*. *Ma* means 'not' *Nava* means 'new', which means human life is not new.

Today man has degenerated to the level of an animal due to excessive desires. Less luggage more comfort makes travel a pleasure. But, the desires (luggage) in man are multiplying day by day. Human life is a long journey. One should lead a divine life (*Divya Jeevanam*), not a mean life (*Deena Jeevanam*). Always be happy. Difficulties do come in life. That is the law of nature. Never get disheartened by them.

Difficulties are like passing clouds. Difficulties come and go, but morality comes and grows. Unfortunately, there is decline in moral values in the society today.

Rama stood as a shining example of upholding the moral values in the society. Even when he was asked to leave for the forest at a time when he was supposed to be coronated, he was not perturbed in the least. *Sukhadukhe Samekruthva Labhalabhau Jayajayau* (he is an equal-minded one who treats the dualities of life—pain and pleasure, victory and defeat, gain and loss—alike). Rama displayed this virtue of equanimity. Today, man aspires for positions of authority though he does not deserve them. But, Rama relinquished the position even though He deserved it. Rama was courageous in the face of adversities. He never gave any scope for weakness. He led the life of a Dheera (courageous one), not a Deena (weak-minded). Same is the case of one who is in His company. Hanuman, by contemplating on Rama incessantly, became a Dheera. He displayed this quality of courageousness in the court of Ravana. But the same Hanuman stood like a Deena (humble one) in Rama's presence. This drives home the point that one should be a Deena (humble one) in front of divinity and Dheera (courageous one) in the face of evil.

Annihilate the evil qualities of Kama (desire), Krodha (anger) and Lobha (greed). Ravana ruined not only himself, but also his dynasty because of Kama. Therefore, to the extent possible control your desires. Today Government has imposed ceiling on land and property through legislation, but what is essential is ceiling on desires. Not only did Hiranyakasipu refrain from chanting the name of Lord Hari, he also insisted that his son Prahlada should follow suit. He developed hatred towards his own son for singing the praise of Lord Hari against his wishes. This evil quality of anger led to his doom. Duryodhana was greed personified. He was not prepared to part with even a small piece of land. He subjected the Pandavas to enormous hardships. What happened to him ultimately? He became a victim of his own greed.

Desire, anger and greed are the greatest impediments in the path of spirituality. Render help to others, if possible. Never hate anybody under any circumstances. The essence of 18 Puranas is contained in these two maxims: Help ever, Hurt never.

Spirituality Promotes Spirit of Unity

The story of the Ramayana reveals the ideal relationship that should exist between brothers. Lakshmana and Shatrughna served Rama and Bharata respectively with utmost devotion and sincerity. When Lakshmana fainted in the battlefield, Rama lamented, "in this world I might find another mother like Kaushalya, a wife like Sita, but definitely not a brother like Lakshmana" A brother should be like this—one who respects elders and brings name and fame to the whole family. It is the unity amongst the brothers that brought reputation to the whole family.

The same was the case with the Pandavas also. The five Pandavas could defeat hundred Kauravas as they stood united. Even though Vali and Sugriva were just two they fell apart because of lack of unity. Rama restored the kingdom to Sugriva as he completely surrendered to Him. Similar was the case with Ravana, Vibhishana and Kumbhakarna. Any big task can be accomplished if the five fingers are united. Otherwise even a small task becomes extremely difficult. So, everyone should strive for unity.

Spirituality destroys narrow mindedness and confers unity, cooperation and universal peace.
(Telugu Poem)

Unity is very essential. Through unity you can understand spirituality. Do not hate anybody. Do, not develop ill-feelings towards others. Then you can become a true human being. Spiritual practices are just a waste of time if you cannot overcome your selfishness. Do not engage in spiritual activities aspiring for your own liberation as it would amount to selfishness. Work for the redemption of one and all. Let everybody attain divinity and experience divine bliss. You should have such broad feelings. Your welfare lies in the welfare of the society.

Embodiments of Love!

You do not need to undertake any spiritual practices. Experience the innate divinity in everyone by following the path of love. Love is God. Spend your life in selfless service. This is the teaching of Rama.

Lakshmana's Sterling Character

In order to demonstrate to the world the ideal character of Lakshmana, Rama subjected him to a test. When Sita, Rama and Lakshmana were residing on Chitrakoota mountain, one day Lakshmana went into the forest to fetch some food. Taking this opportunity, Rama decided to test Lakshmana. He requested Sita to play her role in this divine drama. As Lakshmana was returning with food, Sita pretended to be asleep under a tree, keeping her head on the lap of Rama. Rama asked Lakshmana to keep Sita's head on his lap without disturbing her sleep as He had some other important work to attend to.

Rama wanted to observe the feelings of Lakshmana. So, He assumed the form of a parrot and perched on the same tree. Considering Sita as his mother, Lakshmana closed his eyes and went into deep contemplation of Lord Rama. Rama in the form of a parrot started singing: *"It is*

easy to wake up someone who is fast asleep, but is it possible for anyone to wake up a person who is pretending to be asleep?" (Telugu Poem) Sita pretended to be fast asleep and even started snoring! In all respects Sita and Rama were a perfect match for each other. After some time, Rama returned as if from somewhere and 'woke up' Sita. Sita opened her eyes as if from deep sleep and expressed her satisfaction to Rama that she had a sound and undisturbed sleep. The Leelas (pranks) of God are mysterious, wonderful and sacred. God tests a devotee in order to shower His grace on him and protect him. Lakshmana fell at Rama's feet and said, "I am Your servant. It is my duty to serve You in the way You want me to."

When Sita was being taken away forcibly by Ravana, she bundled all her jewels and dropped them from above. The Vanars found the jewels and took them to Sugriva. When Rama and Lakshmana met Sugriva, he showed them the jewels and asked if they belonged to Sita. As Rama did not know, He asked Lakshmana to see. Lakshmana replied, "Brother, I don't know whom these earrings and bracelets belong to. But I am sure that these anklets belong to Mother Sita" On being questioned as to how he could recognise Sita's anklets, Lakshmana said, "It was my practice to prostrate at her lotus feet every morning. While doing so I had noticed Mother Sita's anklets." Rama was pleased with Lakshmana's sincerity and devotion and showered praises on him and said, He could not find a brother like Lakshmana anywhere in the world. Later Rama said that it was because of Lakshmana's strength and support that He could defeat Ravana and bring Sita back to Ayodhya.

The Ramayana demonstrates that anything can be achieved through sincerity and devotion. The story of the Ramayana is so enchanting and captivating that one feels like listening to it again and again. Bharatiyas have been singing the story of Rama since ancient times. Everyone should try to understand the essence of the Ramayana. The Ramayana teaches that one should have a good character, one should obey the command of the father and respect the parents, and there should be unity among brothers. If you follow these teachings in letter and spirit, your life itself will become a living Ramayana.

Heart is the Real Temple

Students should understand that God is their best friend. All the worldly friends are lured by your position, power and pelf. Once your position and power are gone, gone are your friends too. God is the only friend in the real sense of the term. The whole world is a book and your conscience is your real Guru. Why trouble yourself going after various worldly Gurus? Follow your conscience and experience divinity. The Principle of the Atma, which reveals the secrets of your mind, is your true Guru. Guru is one who is formless and beyond all attributes.

*Gurur Brahma Gurur Vishnu Gurur Devo Maheswara,
Guru Sakshath Param Brahma Thasmai Sri Gurave Namah.*

Consider God as your mother, father, friend and everything. Take God as your Guru, follow Him and merge in Him. If you have God as your Guru, you can achieve everything in life. Develop love for God and be recipients of His love and grace. Develop friendship with God and the whole world will be under your control. Troubles and turmoil are part and parcel of one's life. Overcome them by chanting the divine name. Be fearless.

Do not restrict God to temples and pilgrimage centres. He is Hridayavasi (indweller of the heart). He is in you, with you, above you, around you. You do not need to visit various pilgrimage centres. Your heart is the real pilgrimage centre. Mira also echoed the same feelings. When her husband asked her to leave the temple premises, she said to Krishna, "None can separate You from me. My heart is Your temple." In the Gita Lord Krishna declared: *Kshetrajnam Chapi Maam Viddhi* (recognise Me as the indweller of all beings). The body is the field and the Atmic Principle is the indweller of all fields. So, the Kshetra (field) and the Kshetrajna (knower of the field) are within you. Bliss is not present in a foreign land; it is present within you. In order to experience bliss, develop love in your heart. You should pray to God to grant you that which He possesses and you do not. What is that you lack? Peace and bliss. Ask and it shall be granted. Do not ask God for the fulfillment of mean desires. All the worldly things are fleeting and momentary. Only God is immutable, pure, eternal and immortal. So, spend your time in singing the glory of God. By sincere prayer, you can discover your latent divinity.

At the time of his departure to the forest along with Rama and Sita, Sumitra counselled Lakshmana thus: "Never be under the impression that you are going to the forest. Wherever Rama and Sita are present, that itself is Ayodhya. This Ayodhya without Sita and Rama is a veritable forest. Consider Sita and Rama as your mother and father and serve them to the best of your ability with all love, sincerity, faith and devotion." You cannot find a woman greater than Sumitra in this world. She blessed her son to serve God wholeheartedly. The term Sumitra means good friend (Su - good, Mitra - friend). Such noble mothers like Sumitra and sons like Lakshmana with total devotion to God are needed today.

Unity is the need of the hour today. It is unity that protects the world. The prosperity and welfare of the society depends upon the individual. Our thoughts are our greatest asset. If the thoughts are sacred, you will have sacred results. Pleasure and pain are the consequences of your thoughts. So, sanctify your thoughts. When thoughts are good and powerful, you can achieve anything.

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajan, "*Hari Bhajan Bina...*" and "*Rama Kodanda Rama...*"

—From Bhagavan's Sri Rama Navami Discourse on 25th March 1999 in Sai Ramesh Hall, Brindavan

AVATAR VANI:

BHAGAVAN'S VISHU SANDESH:

Royal Path to Divinity

*Run away from bad company; join good company.
Perform meritorious deeds day and night.*

Embodiments of Love!

Since times immemorial, Bharat has been the treasure house of spirituality and has been radiating peace and serenity to all the other countries. But, today people do not understand even

the sacredness, significance and uniqueness of the human body. Many people are under the false impression that the body is meant to eat, drink, sleep and make merry. You can understand the purpose behind God gifting you this body only when you understand the sacredness and mystery of human birth. The primary goal of man is to recognise the Truth in daily life.

The Mystery of Human Body

Every man has a body. It not only acts as an instrument, but also sets ideals in every respect. What are the ideals? It inhales the life-sustaining oxygen and exhales the poisonous carbon dioxide. It partakes of delicious items and excretes foul smelling faecal matter. What is the inner significance of this activity? Man has to accept those things, which are beneficial to the society and the country and discard those which are maleficent to the interests of the society and the nation at large. Thus, the body demonstrates that man has to take in noble and sacred feelings and leave out the unsacred and worldly thoughts.

Unfortunately, today man takes in unholy and unsacred thoughts discarding pure and sacred feelings. What is truth and what is untruth? What is permanent and what is temporary? What is good and what is bad? Man does not undertake such an enquiry today. He is using his power of discrimination for wrong purposes. He is accepting bad and giving up good. Do you prefer a rotten fruit to a luscious one or inhaling carbon dioxide and exhaling oxygen? No. If you do that you will not only spoil your health, but you will put your life also to risk. Man should achieve physical health, mental satisfaction and Atmic bliss. Man's life is a combination of the body, mind and Atma.

The body performs actions, the mind enquires and the Atma remains a witness. These three are essential for the human life to blossom. But, no one is trying to understand this mystery.

Nature also shows the truthful and right path. If you do not breathe out the air that you breathe in, your health will be spoilt. Likewise, if you do not excrete the body waste, your health will suffer. The lesson one has to learn from this is that one must accept good and give up bad. *Tyaja Durjana Samsargam* (discard bad company). Bad company does not mean the company of bad people alone. Even the bad thoughts constitute bad company. You should not only discard bad company, but give up bad thoughts also. One, however, does not become a noble soul by just giving up bad company and bad thoughts; one has to join good company and also cultivate good thoughts. One can have good thoughts only by constant contemplation on God. *Kuru Punyam Ahorathram* (perform good deeds day and night). At all times, at all places and under all circumstances, man has to contemplate on God and involve himself in His work. *Bhaja Sadhu Samagamam* (join good company). You will get sacred feelings only when you are in good company.

Start Early

Right from early age you should develop devotion to God. It will be of immense help in old age if you undertake spiritual Sadhana right from your childhood. It is impossible to think of God in your old age if you squander your precious time in worldly matters in the early stages of your life. The divine feelings that you develop from your childhood are your true treasure. Thoughts based on Truth (*Sathya Sankalpas*) are your true wealth. But, you are giving up such sacred wealth and are hankering after the transient and ephemeral wealth. *Start early, drive*

slowly and reach safely. It is impossible to remember God and contemplate on Him in old age unless you think of Him right from your childhood. It is easy to remember Him in your old age only when you practise contemplating on Him in your childhood. When the messengers of death start dragging you away, when the relatives make hurry to shift you outside the house saying there is no hope and when the wife and children start weeping and wailing bitterly, is it possible to think of God at that moment? (Telugu Poem)

I keep telling the students often that the childhood of man is like a tender banana leaf. At this age, this 'banana leaf' is very pure, attractive and lively. This 'leaf' containing the delicacies of five senses (sound, touch, form, taste and smell) should be offered to God. But, due to the impact of Kali Age, man is offering these five types of 'delicacies' to the six demons: Kama, Krodha, Lobha, Moha, Mada and Matsarya (lust, anger, greed, attachment, pride and jealousy). After the demons eat away the 'delicacies', spoiling the 'leaf' in the process, man is offering the leftover unsacred food to God in old age. Is it proper to offer to God the remains of the food eaten by the demons? If man cannot recognise the uniqueness of humanness, what is the use of taking the human birth? *Janthoonam Nara Janma Durlabham* (among all beings, human birth is the rarest and noblest). Having got such a sacred human birth, man should turn his senses Godward from his early age. From early age, man should contemplate on God and win divine grace. *In old age, when you cannot see properly, when there are wrinkles on your face, when your hair turns grey, when children start making fun of you calling you a decrepit monkey and when your limbs start shivering, how do you expect to think of God? (Telugu Poem)* Those that start thinking of God only in old age have no sense of shame.

Today man is wasting his youth by misusing his senses. He is seeing and listening to unsacred things and indulging in talking ill of others. In the early age, the five senses are like five delicacies. Your life will be sanctified, only when you offer them to God. Otherwise better to be a deaf, dumb and blind! For what purpose are the eyes given to you? Is it to see anything and everything? No. Eyes are given in order to see God. The eye, which is not even an inch in size, is able to see the stars millions of miles away. Such a powerful and sacred eye is being used for seeing unholy things? Why don't you use your eyes for seeing the omnipresent God, the beautiful panorama of Nature and having the Darshan of holy men? Peddalu or Gaddalu?

Today the so-called *Peddalu* (elders) are discouraging the young from taking to spiritual path. They say one can start contemplating on God after retirement. Can such people be called *Peddalu*? No. They are *Gaddalu* (hawks)! They neither think of God nor allow their children to do so. Actually, some elders are spoiling the lives of their children. They are trying to make their children tread the wrong path as though they had benefited immensely by doing the same earlier. *Tyaja Durjana Samsargam*, give up the company of such evil-minded elders, even if they happen to be your parents.

This was the ideal set by Bharata in the Ramayana. Rama, being the eldest, was the legal heir to the throne of Ayodhya, but Kaikeyi sent Him to the forest, as she wanted her son Bharata to become the king. When Bharata came to know of this, he became very furious. He even did not like to look at his mother and set off to the forest immediately to bring back Rama.

Hiranyakasipu could not tolerate to hear his son, Prahlada, chant the name of Lord Narayana. He would at once close his ears whenever Prahlada uttered *Om Namo Narayanaya*. He even tried to kill him as he continued to chant the name of Lord Narayana against his wishes. Ultimately, Prahlada disassociated himself from his father as he was a *Durjana* (wicked person).

Shukracharya warned Emperor Bali that the Vamana was none other than Lord Vishnu Himself and that it would be disastrous for Bali to make the gift sought from him by Vamana. Bali reacted to the preceptor's warning saying that there was no greater sin than going back on one's word. He had given his word to the Lord Himself. Is it not a sin on the part of Shukracharya to ask him to break his promise? That is why Bali told Shukracharya, "You are not my preceptor, you are my enemy." So saying he forsook Shukracharya and fulfilled his promise to Vamana.

Mira all the time thought of only Giridhara (Lord Krishna) and chanted His name. Her eyes were filled with the form of Krishna and her mind was filled with the thoughts of Krishna. But, her husband thought that she was crossing her limits in the name of devotion to Krishna. So, one day, he threw her out of the Krishna temple for the sake of false worldly honour. Then she wrote a letter to Tulsidas seeking his advice as to what she should do, whether to give up Krishna, the eternal companion, or to forsake her husband. Tulsidas sent a reply saying, "Mother, God is the greatest of all and the path leading to God is the noblest of all. Husband is like a passing cloud, but God is always with you, even before your birth and after your death. *Trikalabhadhyam Sathyam* (Truth transcends all the three periods of time). How can you give up God who is the Embodiment of Truth? Husband entered your life in the middle and will go away in the middle. You may serve him as long as he is alive. But, when he himself discards you, there is nothing wrong in leaving him for the sake of God." It is not proper to expect the wife to suffer at the hands of a wicked husband. If the wife commits a mistake, the husband may punish her. But, it is a sin to punish a woman who is absolutely faultless. Mira prayed, "*Krishna, I went deep into the ocean of Samsara and caught hold of the pearl of Your divine name. How can I allow it to slip away from my hand? I will safeguard this 'pearl' even at the cost of my life.*"

(Tamil Verse)

Worldly life is Pravritti Marga (outward path) and spiritual life is Nivritti Marga (inward path). It is a great mistake to give up God and His name for the sake of worldly gains. You need not be afraid of anybody when your conscience is clear. Truth and sacrifice are like your two eyes. *Sathyam Nasti Paro Dharma* (there is no greater Dharma than adhering to Truth). But in this Age of Kali, people are giving up truth and righteousness. Better die, rather than lead an untruthful life. It is better to live like a swan for a few minutes than to lead the life of a crow for hundred years.

Education is for Serving Society

Today students are becoming highly educated, acquiring degrees and occupying positions of authority. They think they are great intellectuals. What is the use of education and intelligence if they are misused? Why study and die ultimately. Study to be immortal. Bookish knowledge may feed your stomach, but will not help you attain Divinity. You should experience the bliss of your life after offering everything to God. The Vedas declare: *Sarva Karma Bhagavad Preethyartham* (whatever you do, do it with a desire to please God). It is enough if you have God with you. Lord Krishna declared in the Bhagavad Gita: *Sarva Dharman Parityaja Maam Ekam*

Saranam Vraja (give up all the worldly Dharmas and surrender only to Me). All the worldly Dharmas are burdensome. They are like ten thousand naya paisas. A hundred rupee note is equal to ten thousand naya paisas. It is rather difficult to bundle up ten thousand naya paisas and carry them with you. So, offer all the ten thousand 'naya paisas' to God. He will give you a 'hundred rupee note,' which is light in weight as also safe and secure. The former refers to quantity and the latter to quality. You should look for quality, not for quantity. One teaspoon of cow's milk is better than barrels of donkey's milk.

This country Bharat is the land of sacrifice, the land of love and the land of Yoga. If you do not have love for your motherland, you are as good as a living corpse. The modern students are neglecting their motherland and are going abroad in search of greener pastures. You may go abroad, but never give up motherland. It is foolish to give up motherland and get enticed by foreign countries.

Once Vivekananda had gone to London and America and while returning to India, the American journalists asked him as to what he thought of his motherland, Bharat. He said, "I have a great regard and love for my country. I respect even the dust, the air and the environment of Bharat. I offer myself completely to the service of my motherland." He who has no love for his motherland, mother tongue and religion is no better than a living corpse.

Today people waste their time and energy in amassing wealth. But, they do not realise that one day or the other they will have to leave everything and go. *Many great kings like Harishchandra, Nala and Mandatha ruled over this land, but now, where are they? Is Sri Rama, who built a great bridge across the mighty ocean, alive today? Many kings have come and gone, but none could take even a fistful of earth when they left their mortal coil. (Telugu Poem)* If the people could take even a fistful of mud with them when they die, there would have been ration for mud also! No one can take anything. Only good and bad follow you.

Rama and Ravana were equally well versed in thirty six forms of knowledge. But, Valmiki called Ravana a foolish one and Rama a noble one. Why did Valmiki say so? Did he receive any favour from Rama? No. Here Rama and Ravana can be compared to a cuckoo and a crow respectively. *The crow did not steal anybody's property, but the people hate the very sight of a crow. The cuckoo did not do any favour to anybody, but still it is loved by one and all. One is respected if one's speech is good. (Telugu Poem)* Though both look alike, people eulogise the cuckoo and criticise the crow. They throw stones at the crow when it caws, but feel joyous listening to the mellifluous singing of the cuckoo. Similarly, though Rama and Ravana were equally well versed in all forms of knowledge, Rama set an ideal by practising what He learnt, whereas Ravana suffered from 'indigestion' as he merely acquired knowledge without practising it.

Education is for life, not for money. Every educated young man should serve the society. Youth is very precious, let it not be wasted. Start early, drive slowly, reach safely. You must resolve to work for the welfare of the society even if your parents at first oppose you. Never mind if they do not give you a share in their property. Only God is your true property. Do not aspire for the temporary and ephemeral wealth. Enter the path of truth and lead a sacred life. That will make your parents also happy. If the parents are not happy when the son leads a sacred life, then they are no parents at all. Such parents are fit to be called demons.

Inner Significance of Festivals

Today is the holy festival of Vishu. All the Indian festivals are sacred and demonstrate great ideals. The Keralites celebrate their festivals Onam and Vishu in the most sacred way. With each festival one should cultivate divine feelings. When you contemplate on God with all sincerity and devotion, you become God yourself. This is what the Vedanta says: *Brahmavid Brahmaiva Bhavathi* (the knower of Brahman becomes Brahman himself). You will become what you think. Ratnakara, a highway robber, was transformed into a great sage Valmiki because he thought of Rama continuously with pure mind. His face shone with the divine effulgence of Rama. Even the young Prahlada's face reflected the divine radiance of Lord Narayana as he contemplated on Him continuously. He had no sense of fear; he always put on a smiling face in the face of adversity. All the time he was chanting the name of the Lord. How can anyone, who steadfastly chants the divine name, be afraid of anything? Fear and grief will overpower those who forget the Lord and get immersed in worldly life. You will become divine if you contemplate on the Divine continuously. God is not somewhere else, He is within you.

Embodiments of Love!

Every festival in India is suffused with divinity. On each festival day, people go to temples and offer their prayers to the Almighty. This is a positive trait. Forgetting God and always thinking of the world is a negative quality. Today we find elaborate arrangements and gala celebrations in marriage functions. One is filled with joy when one gets married, but one does not realise that the happiness of married life is but momentary. Even dogs and foxes experience this happiness. This is not true happiness. Thyagaraja said, "O mind, tell me what gives the real happiness, is it the Nidhi (wealth) or the Easwara Sannidhi (divine proximity)?" Consider Sannidhi (proximity) as your Pennidhi (great treasure). Then your life will be full of joy and bliss. Only devotees can understand this joy and bliss. A true devotee always keeps singing the name of the Lord. Radha and Mira were always deeply immersed in Namasankirtan. They had broad feelings and broad mind. Broad mind is life, narrow mind is death. Mind can be broadened only through divine contemplation. Peace is a precious jewel; without peace man is just pieces. So attain peace and bliss by contemplating on the divine. Divine contemplation is possible only for the fortunate. They wear the crown of peace. The unfortunate ones can never contemplate on the divine and can never attain peace. You may get fed up of eating laddus and other sweets, but you will never get fed up of chanting the divine name. The more you chant, the more you will feel like chanting.

Embodiments of Love!

Today injustice, unrighteousness and falsehood are on the rise because faith in God is on the decline. The nation can attain peace only when people think of God. God is always with you, in you, around you, behind you, above you and below you. Today some people are prepared to give up God for the sake of worldly relations. But, how long will the relations last? This body is only a doll, which may perish at any moment of time. Bliss cannot be attained as long as one has body attachment. This body is Sivam (auspicious) as long as there is the divine breath of life in it. It becomes Shavam (corpse) once it loses the divine breath.

When man is born, he cries asking the question, 'Koham, Koham' (who am I). What is the use of living if he has the same question on his lips at the time of death too? At the time of death,

man should be able to declare cheerfully, 'Soham, Soham' (I am God). Realising one's own divinity is the purpose of life.

Leaders should have Spirit of Sacrifice

Man is never satisfied. He is greedy for more and more wealth. There should be a limit to greed for wealth. What man has to earn is divine grace. No matter what he earns, he cannot take a single pie with him when he leaves the body. Alexander conquered many nations and became a mighty emperor. But, when the hour of death approached no doctor could save him. Before passing away, he summoned his ministers and told them to keep his empty hands raised above when his body was taken for the final journey through the streets so that the people would understand that even a great and mighty emperor like Alexander who achieved so much in life had to go empty-handed.

Alexander wanted to conquer the entire world. Today also we find one country trying to overpower the other. People are becoming power crazy. People who have greed for power can never be good leaders. In fact, they are the persons who destroy the nation. Many ministers, prime ministers, kings and emperors have come and gone. But, everybody was concerned only about his or her position and power. Fie upon such leaders who had no concern for the welfare of the nation! Such leaders are not human beings; they are demons. Leaders should have a sense of sacrifice. Only sacrifice will lead to immortality.

Students! After you complete your education, do not confine yourself to your jobs alone. Work for the welfare of the society. The culture of Bharat says: *Sathyam Vada, Dharmam Chara* (speak the truth and follow righteousness). Uphold these principles even at the cost of your life. Help the poor and the downtrodden. Have the national interest foremost in your mind. Your welfare depends on the welfare of the nation. Creation (Srishti) emerged from the Creator (Parameshti); society (Samashti) emerged from the creation. From society emerged the individual (Vyashti). There is no individual without the society. So, the Vyashti should serve the Samashti, then serve the Srishti and ultimately merge in Parameshti. This is the royal path to Divinity.

I am not perturbed by criticism. What I am teaching you is good, only good and nothing but good. If you follow these teachings, you are bound to attain your goal. Take to the right path right from your young age, otherwise you are bound to repent in your old age. Cultivate sacred thoughts and offer them to God right from the young age. Knowingly or unknowingly, you might have committed some mistakes. There is no point in worrying about the past. At least now wake up from your slumber, think of God and sanctify your life. Divinity is the goal of life. You can attain divinity by following the path of truth, righteousness and love. Give up body attachment and develop divine feelings. Body is weak, made up of five elements and is bound to perish some time or the other. People say that the life span of a human being is hundred years, but you cannot take it for granted. No one can predict when death will occur. It may occur either in childhood or in youth or in middle age or in old age. Death is certain. So, try to know yourself while you are alive. Contemplate on God till your last breath. That is your primary duty. Discharge your other duties also such as taking care of your family and children, but consider even that as God's work and treat all your family members as divine. All actions should be undertaken for the pleasure of God. Many people undertake Japa and Dhyana only after their

retirement. Their hand turns the rosary, mouth utters 'Ram, Ram, Ram', but the mind wanders in the market, goes to the club and starts playing cards as they might have indulged in all this earlier in life. What is the use of such a Japa? So, it is better to take to spiritual path right from childhood. It is a great fortune and merit to take to spiritual path from childhood.

Embodiments of Love!

Today the people of Kerala are celebrating the festival of Vishu. The inner significance of Vishu is to cultivate sacredness. It does not end with preparing *Payasam* (pudding) and partaking of it. Sanctifying your heart is true pudding. You will be celebrating Vishu in the true spirit only when you make efforts to purify your heart.

You may not undertake any Sadhana, but never forget the Principle of Love. Never be afraid of troubles; sanctify your life with love. Love everyone. Where love is, there God is. Love is God. God is love. All the time we should think of God and contemplate on Him.

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajan, "*Pibare Rama Rasam...*"

—From Bhagavan's Vishu Discourse on 15th April 1999 in Sai Ramesh Hall, Brindavan

SAI SPIRITUAL EDUCATION:

Teaching Self-Discipline to Children

*As of now the children are driving without using the brake of discipline.
They are out of control.*

—By Rita Bruce

Have you ever thought that if we don't tell our children NO, how will they ever learn to tell themselves NO? Stop and think about it. This is very important. Swami says, "*Parents have the primary responsibility to mould the character of their children.*" The character is moulded through our example, instruction, love and discipline. The subject of discipline has been continuously emphasised by Bhagavan Baba. He says, "*Ninety percent of the blame for spoiling the behaviour and character of children goes to the parents. They show too unintelligent affection and give too indiscriminate freedom to them.*"

Driving without Brakes!

Why is discipline so important? Because we would not even get out of bed in the morning without discipline. It is the function of the conscience that tells us to STOP To stop sleeping too long, eating too much, crying too long etc., etc. It is the mechanism that controls our behaviour. Would you put your child in a car without a brake? Can you imagine driving a car yourself without a brake? It is the same with our behaviour; discipline is the BRAKE. The car is our body, our behaviour. As of now the children are driving without using the brake of discipline. They are out of control. Their behaviour is not according to Swami's teachings.

Now, what we are seeing in the Western culture is that children have more control over their parents. In a way, children are ruling the parents, instead of parents disciplining them. This is not a correct situation. Sai says, *"The parents are to blame for three-fourths of their children's behaviour. When parents allow the children to go astray, some time or other they will suffer the consequences. It has become fashionable in the Kali Age to let the children have their own way. The parents give a free rein to the children instead of controlling them."*

Have We Failed Our Children?

My parent's generation experienced the greatest advancement in technology. They could have indoor plumbing, electricity, and cars. Imagine the changes they saw in the material or physical world.

But my generation has seen the greatest *Annihilation of Morality*. We have experienced the great revolution of immorality. Many of the values that existed for my parents are non-existent today. We have had to emotionally and psychologically accept *what is* while longing for what family values once existed. Divorce did not exist then, it was only done in extreme cases. Swami says, *"When materialism goes up; morality goes down. When morality goes up; materialism goes down."*

This is our dilemma. We have become so proficient in making products that enhance our physical life that we focus on these instead of realising that we are losing our moral fibre. The moral strength of struggling to overcome difficulties that sustained the pioneering spirit of the older generation has been lost. We live in such physical comfort that our children are pampered to indolence. It is the death of their spiritual character. Spoiling them has made them weak. They do not know how to fight for survival. We have certainly failed them.

Programmed to be Consumers!

Because of the industrial and technological age, we have become consumers of comfort and pleasure. We want our children to have everything. We watch the commercials on television, and purchase and purchase, and purchase things to make ourselves and our children 'happy'. And when we finally get these pleasurable items, we realise that they do not make us or our children happy. The children only want more ... why? Because we did not teach them how to apply the BRAKE of self-discipline. Swami says, *"Teach children not to receive anything for nothing. Let them earn by hard work the things they seek."*

We are programmed to be consumers. We have been bought into the marketing strategy, hook, line and sinker. We work, work, and work. Why? To have a higher standard of living? Do we really need as much as we have? When we keep purchasing goods, we are teaching our children by our example to continue the same behaviour. The manufacturing companies love it. Swami says, *"Waste of money is evil."*

Love and discipline have been replaced by purchasing power. We buy items to tell our children how much we love them. We reward our children with gifts if they study, do a chore, or correct a negative behaviour. We are controlling them with rewards, physical rewards, not teaching them self-discipline that can build their self-esteem. It is the inner reward that is important. They cannot take material possessions with them when they leave your home and face

the challenges of the world. It is only character they can use to sustain themselves. It is the same when we exit our bodies.

Just think about yourself. Don't we all want to earn our own way? We seek independence, not dependence.. Isn't it more difficult to receive from others than to give? But we are not teaching our children to GIVE, thus we have a "me" generation, with very low self-esteem.

One night, Swami gave me an insightful dream. I could not understand fully what was the cause of the "me" generation. Swami in the dream told me that my generation, the first to raise children with television, was programmed with the commercials on television unknowingly. All of the commercials were targeted at the parents who had the money to buy items for the children and family, e.g., the best detergent for diapers, the best baby food, the best products for cooking etc., etc. We have been subtly programmed, as well as every other household. Thus, we have parent peer pressure as well as peer pressure for our children. If the neighbour's child gets a Barbie Doll, that was seen on television, it forces other parents in the neighbourhood to do the same for their child. The same is extended in countless ways, viz., birthday parties, dancing lessons, sports events etc., etc. There is nothing being programmed for the children to focus on giving to the parents.

Cultivating Giving Attitude

In previous generations, they had children to help them. The parents taught the children to support them. To help them grow crops, take care of the small children, do chores, assist in the family business etc. The emphasis was on "Children Helping Parents." In this modern age of material comfort, the emphasis is on parents doing everything for the child. Do you ever see anything on television, in commercials, films or sitcom's that addresses the issue of children helping and respecting their parents? How are they to learn? How do we stop this avalanche of self concern instead of selflessness?

Swami says, "Apart from educational programmes, do not look at television at all, specially while taking food. Concentrate on the work at hand, whether it be eating or anything else." Now since parents are responsible for developing the character of their children, it is our duty to teach them the joy of giving to others. No one is going to teach them in our Western society. We parents must take the reins.

How can we do this? When the children are very young, we talk to them about the joy of giving to others. The small child can bring the newspaper for dad to read, the diaper for the newborn member in the family, the napkin for grandma's lap, the cookie for a friend. This is character development. The emphasis is on the child helping first his parents, and family members, and friends which eventually extends outwardly to society.

The husband and wife set the example by giving to each other. The child will observe and learn. But example is never enough. Teaching them must also exist, by speaking Swami's truths and using discipline to influence the behaviour that is desired.

If the child will not bring a napkin to the grandparents, then you tell him why he needs to help others. "We can only give love through serving others," says Swami. It is the joy and love that we give to others that brings true happiness.

Swami says, "Discipline means the observance of certain well-designed rules. Without such regulation, it is not possible to maintain humanness." Now a small child may not understand what you are teaching, but it is programming his subconscious with Swami's Wisdom, and you are creating and developing his future behaviour. If your emotions express joy while telling this teaching, the child will respond to the emotion. If the child does not comply with the wish of the parent, you will need to correct his behaviour with a lot of patience.

Deserving Rama's Grace

In Kali Yuga, there are any number of persons chanting Rama's name. But, chanting alone is not enough. Whatever name you recite, you must also be active in the service of the form associated with the name. What is implied by the term, Rama-Karya (service to Rama)? Rama is immanent in the entire cosmos. Rama is present everywhere. Hence, you have to love all and serve all. By rendering service to one's fellow beings, by offering help to the helpless and by performing sacred acts of dedicated service, one becomes eligible for Rama's grace.

—Baba

Bhagavan Inaugurates 'Ananda Nilayam' In Madurai

On the 22nd of April 1999, Bhagavan gave the devotees of Madurai the joy of His physical proximity and inaugurated a Sai spiritual centre. Otherwise also famous for its temples which can be found in every nook and corner of the city, this spiritual centre inaugurated by Bhagavan added to its sanctity and spiritual charm. The devotees of Madurai will remember for all time to come the visit of the Avatar as it filled their hearts with the sweetness of nectarine divine love.

A Flight of Divine Bliss

Bhagavan came out of Trayee Brindavan at 8.00 a.m. and amidst singing of Bhajans and breaking of coconuts, the convoy left the portals of the Ashram at 8.10 a.m. The destination was the Bangalore Airport, for instead of covering the entire distance by road, the Lord had decided to charter a 140-seater Indian Airlines plane to Madurai and cover the remaining distance to Kodaikanal by road.

This year's Kodaikanal trip of Bhagavan was unique for another reason too. The group of 68 which accompanied Bhagavan comprised of students, staff and senior devotees and their families. The convoy reached the airport and after the formalities were completed the group boarded the plane. But, Bhagavan was surrounded by the airport staff and others who had laid a red carpet for Bhagavan up to the aircraft and were squatting on its either side for a long time.

Wherever Bhagavan goes, His routine is the same: collecting letters, giving Padanamaskar and solving the problems of all without any distinction. Airport too was no exception. In fact, even after Bhagavan had occupied the seat in the plane, a long queue of senior airport staff kept Bhagavan standing for the next 15 minutes by doing Padanamaskar and offering bouquets of flowers. Bhagavan disappointed none. The plane took off at 10.20 a.m. and within a few seconds it seemed to ascend to heaven for where else could God take you? As the plane left the clouds far below that appeared as white cotton balls floating in the blue of the sky, one was reminded of Lord Rama who had taken His devotees in the Pushpak Vimana. Though the Lord was the very same, our Lord Sai Rama took the fortunate devotees by an Airbus 320 Vimana. At 10.52, the landing instructions were given and all were requested to fasten their seat belts. The plane landed in Madurai at 10.58 a.m.

New Spiritual Awakening in Madurai

Though Madurai was experiencing severe heat with temperatures touching up to 44' C, but on that day, the temperature was only 26°C due to the heavy showers on the previous day. It seemed as if Nature had paid its obeisance to Bhagavan by facilitating the people to have the opportunity of His Darshan and Sambashan. On the way to the city, one could see people on tops of houses trying to catch a glimpse of Bhagavan. There were banners along the way offering humble Pranams to Bhagavan and thanking Him for His visit after a gap of over 20 years. Also built were big arches, decorated with flowers displaying the teachings of Bhagavan. A huge concourse of devotees had gathered outside the complex to welcome Bhagavan. An elephant from the Meenakshi temple led the procession and the ceremonial welcome of Bhagavan to Madurai. The priests chanted Vedic Mantras holding a Poornakumbham accompanied by Nadaswaram. Thus, the whole milieu became charged with divine vibrations. Bhagavan was led by Bal Vikas children chanting Veda Mantras amidst singing of Bhajans by devotees.

The spiritual centre is a very beautiful building with a big hall in the centre with laminated photographs of Shirdi Sai Baba and Bhagavan on either side. Bhagavan went up the stage that had an exquisite background and a chair for Bhagavan, and lighted the sacred lamps amidst cheers heralding a new spiritual awakening in the lives of the devotees of Madurai. Bhagavan then went to the first floor of the complex and blessed the large number of devotees from the balcony.

Ananda Nilayam

Thereafter, Bhagavan came down and took His seat. Bhagavan's Divine Discourse was preceded by Veda chanting by the Bal Vikas children. Bhagavan exhorted the devotees to follow the good living style and teachings of our saints and sages like Thiruvalluvar, the author of Thirukural, which is regarded as Tamil Veda. The discourse of Bhagavan was translated into both English and Tamil for the benefit of devotees.

After the discourse, the organisers requested Bhagavan to name the spiritual centre. Bhagavan said, "There is Sathyam in Mumbai, Shivam in Hyderabad and Sundaram in Chennai. Let this be called Ananda Nilayam." All those present were gladdened by the beautiful name Bhagavan had given to the complex. Bhagavan also inaugurated the Ganesha temple and consecrated the temple of Shirdi Sai Baba made in marble.

At 2.05 p.m., Bhagavan started His onward journey to Kodaikanal. All through Bhagavan's journey to Kodaikanal, people had lined up on both sides of the road to catch a glimpse of Bhagavan.

Flying High

A bird in flight in the heights of the sky needs two wings; a person moving on the earth below needs two legs to carry him forward; an aspirant eager to attain the Mansion of Moksha, the Abode of Freedom needs two virtues: renunciation and wisdom, Renunciation and worldly desires and wisdom to become aware of the Atma. When a bird has but one wing, it cannot rise into the sky, can it? In the same manner, if man has only renunciation or wisdom, he cannot attain the Supreme Self, Brahman.

A Divinised Society

Human society has always been a conglomeration of various classes. The word 'society' has become a misnomer. A true society is a community of selfless individuals. An ideal society must have a scale of values and a code of morality which should be applicable to all individuals. There is no scope for the efflorescence of Dharma in a society dominated by absolute selfishness and predatory competition. Man is not an island unto himself. A gregarious creature, he lives as an integral part of the society. He cannot also exist without Easwara. A spiritualised world and a divinised society should be established for the transformation of man into a divine being.

—Baba

Give up Enmity, Develop Unity

*In this sacred land of Bharat, forbearance is the real beauty
Of all forms of rituals, adherence to Truth is the greatest penance.
Is there any ritual more sacred than the feeling
of love towards the mother?*

*What else is to be communicated to you more than this
O members of this noble and august assembly!*

(Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of Love!

Bharat is the birthplace of spirituality, charity and righteousness. It is the abode of peace and non-violence. Having been born in this sacred land of Bharat, it is the bounden duty of every Bharatiya to foster the noble qualities of truth, peace, charity and non-violence. This sacred land is the birthplace of the Adi Kavi (first poet), Valmiki and sage Vyasa, who classified the Vedas. This is the meritorious land that gave birth to Gautama Buddha, who declared *Ahimsa Paramo Dharma* (nonviolence is the highest Dharma). This is the noble land, which was ruled by Lord Rama Himself. This is the divine land, where Lord Krishna sang the song celestial, Bhagavad Gita. It is most essential for the Bharatiyas to follow the ideals of these sages and Avatars. Having taken birth in this sacred land of Bharat, the Bharatiyas should make every effort to keep their hearts sacred.

This Motherland of ours gave to the world noble souls renowned in all the continents. It is the land, which ousted the foreign rulers and achieved freedom. This Bharat is reputed for its scholarship. It is the sacred land, which stood forth as the exemplar in the realms of music, literature and sacred lore and is noted for its fine arts and natural beauty. Born in the land of Bharat, oh devotees, it is your bounden duty to foster the glory and prosperity of the Motherland.

(Telugu Poem)

Bharatiyas should Develop Unity

Embodiments of Love!

The Bharatiyas achieved independence, but not unity. The pristine glory of Bharat can be restored only when the Bharatiyas achieve equality, integrity, unity and fraternity. These sacred values should be imprinted in the heart of every Bharatiya. There are many men of sacrifice, highly educated and affluent people, eminent statesmen and politicians and very good administrators in this country. But what is the use? There is no unity and cooperation among them. That is the reason for the present plight of the country. They should give up individual differences and work for the welfare of the society. If all the Bharatiyas stand united, none can ever attempt to attack us. (*cheers*) Since the unity is on the decline, others are trying to take advantage of this situation.

Embodiments of Love!

In the past, foreigners ruled over the country for hundreds of years treating the Bharatiyas like slaves. At least from now onwards take care that no foreign force enters our country. That is the vow all the Bharatiyas should resolve to take. The Bharatiyas have immense strength and power. But, they are facing hardships because of lack of unity.

Spirituality is very essential for the welfare of the country. Since ancient times, Bharat has radiated peace and happiness to the rest of the world through the message of spirituality. It occupied the exalted position of teacher to the rest of the world. Bharat stands first in respect of adherence to truth. No other country in this world can ever match Bharat in respect of charity and sacrifice. Our ancestors took great pains and made great sacrifices in order to protect and safeguard this country. But, unfortunately that spirit of unity and sacrifice is lacking among the youth today. Moreover, it is not enough if we have unity unless we resolve to work for the welfare of the society. Only when you realise the value of service to the society, can you achieve the noble qualities of unity, integrity and fraternity. For this you have to take to spirituality. *Easwara Sarva Bhoothanam*, the same divinity dwells in all beings. The same was declared by Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita: *Mamaivamso Jeevaloke Jeevabhutha Sanathana* (the eternal Atma in all beings is a part of My Being). The culture of Bharat has propagated this principle of unity in diversity.

Uphold the Culture of Bharat

Since ancient times Bharat has advocated the ideal *Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavanthu* (May the whole world be happy!). But, due to the effect of modern age selfishness and self-interest are on the rise. The need of the hour is to develop spirituality, love, unity and forbearance. All these can be achieved only through God's grace. In fact, you do not need to undertake any rigorous spiritual practices. Japa, meditation and yogic practices confer only temporary satisfaction. It is enough if you develop love in your heart. There is no God other than love. Love is God, live in love. It is only love that can bring about unity. But, today everyone is struggling for his selfish ends. Individual differences are on the rise. There may be individual differences and party differences and differences in ideology, but when it comes to protecting the country, you should stand united giving up all differences. Sacrifice all self-interests and develop love. Experience bliss and share it with others. This is what the culture of Bharat teaches.

There is no culture greater than the culture of Bharat. (*Cheers*) This culture is eternal, universal and acceptable to everyone. But, unfortunately today the Bharatiyas are imitating the Western culture ignoring their own culture. As a result, they are losing their identity. There is no greater misfortune than forgetting one's own culture. A true Bharatiya is one who upholds Bharatiya culture. The epithet Bharatiya does not mean a person born in the land of Bharat. Whoever follows the culture of Bharat is a Bharatiya. But, the modern educated people are not fascinated by this culture because they have not understood it properly. The culture of Bharat is vaster than oceans and mightier than mountains. In order to understand this glorious culture, you need to develop broad feelings, become broadminded and expand your love. Extend your support to those administrators who adhere to these sacred principles. Do not get carried away by those who give platform speeches, but practise none. You should be prepared to sacrifice even your life in order to uphold the culture of Bharat.

Unity Rests on Truth and Love

Hastasya Bhushanam Danam (charity is the true ornament of the hand), *Sathyam Kanthasya Bhushanam* (truth is the true ornament of the throat), *Srothrasya Bhushanam Sastram* (listening to sacred texts is the true ornament of the ears). This is the teaching of the culture of Bharat. *Sathyannasthi Paro Dharma* (there is no greater Dharma than Truth). It is truth that protects the world. It is love and nonviolence that sustain the world. Unity can be achieved only through truth, nonviolence and love. My advice is that all parties should unite. Only then Bharat will become a divine land. Very soon this is going to happen. The present-day administration is noble and good. You should safeguard it as it supports spirituality and divinity. It was lack of unity among the Bharatiyas that was responsible for Bharat to be under British rule for hundreds of years. Past is past. At least in future take care that India will never be under foreign rule. (*Cheers*) Do not hate anybody. Love even the worst of your enemies. Develop love. Only then the country will progress. Imagine what a formidable force India will be if all its 98 crore people stand united! Bharat will not have any problems. Very soon peace and security will prevail in this land. Today we do not find peace anywhere, only pieces! Peace is present in the Hridaya (heart). You can experience peace only when you develop heart to heart relationship with your fellow beings.

The Vedas declare: *Anoraneeyan Mahatomaheeyan* (God is subtler than the subtlest atom and vaster than the vastest object). The Vedantins say the Atma pervades the entire world. The scientists say the whole world is made up of atoms. Names are different, but the power is the same. Einstein referred to matter and energy. But matter and energy are not separate from each other. Matter becomes energy and vice-versa. This energy is divinity. You should lead your lives taking divinity as the basis. You will ruin yourself if you take the world as the basis. All the worldly matters come and go like passing clouds. Money comes and goes, morality comes and grows. Morality fosters spirituality. Humanity will progress only when there is morality. So, today we have to foster morality.

A good government should always be supported. One should not hate the government on the basis of individual differences. It has been fifty years since this country attained independence. But what is it that we have achieved? Murders, hijacks and kidnappings! Is this what we dreamt of? Today fear and restlessness are rampant all over the world. Man is haunted by fear wherever he is: at home, in a car, in a train or in a plane! What is the reason? It is because the human mind is polluted with desire, greed, anger etc. If man wants to enjoy peace and security, he should get rid of these bad qualities and lead his life keeping in view the welfare of the society. He should give up selfishness and develop unity. Only then the pristine glory of Bharat can be revived.

Motherland is greater than Heaven

Our ancient sages coronated Tyaga (sacrifice), welcomed Truth and upheld righteousness. Today there is no trace of Tyaga in man. He is always immersed in Bhoga (worldly pleasures). As a result he is subjected to Roga (disease). The culture of Bharat teaches that only sacrifice confers immortality. But today, unfortunately, the Bharatiyas themselves do not have faith in the Bharatiya culture. After the annihilation of Ravana, when Rama was requested to take over the reins of Lanka, He declared: *Janani Janmabhoomischa Swargadapi Gareeyasi* (mother and motherland are greater than heaven itself). One who does not have love and regard for one's own motherland, one's own mother tongue and one's own religion is a living corpse! But, one should

not show disrespect towards other countries. *Adveshta Sarva Bhoothanam* (one should not hate anybody). One should not criticise anybody. But, today if one goes through the newspapers one finds one party criticising and abusing the other. It is nothing but mean-mindedness. No one has any right to criticise others. Each party should see to it that it is free from all defects instead of pointing an accusing finger at others.

All of you know what a nice person Vajpayee is. Even in olden days whenever Vajpayee or Jayaprakash Narayan would visit Andhra Pradesh, people, especially the youth, used to gather in large numbers to listen to their speeches. Naturally, the people are attracted to those who adhere to truth and righteousness. Such a leader should be given all support.

You should strive hard to uphold Dharma. In the process one may have to face hardships, but one should not get disheartened. Pleasure is an interval between two pains. One should be prepared to face all challenges and work for the uplift of the society. Today no one seems to be interested in the welfare of the society. Each one is concerned about his position and power. A true leader is one who works for the well-being of the society. The government is safe only when the people are safe and secure and vice-versa. So, the government and the people should stand united and work for the progress of the nation.

Bharat is the land of merit, the land of sacrifice. When Humayun, son of Babar, was ruling over this country, one day his father wrote a letter to him describing how fortunate he was to become the ruler of this sacred land. He wrote, "Humayun, it is your great good fortune that you have become the ruler of Bharat. See to it that Bharat does not suffer any hardships. Understand the cultural values of Bharat and put them into practice. Make the people of Bharat happy." So, you see, even the Muslim rulers had great regard for the culture of Bharat. Since ancient times, the Hindus, the Muslims, the Christians and the Sikhs have been living in amity in this sacred land. Due to the effect of Kali Age, hatred and enmity are on the rise among different religions. There will be no scope for hatred and enmity if people realise that there is only one religion, the religion of love, there is only one caste, the caste of humanity and there is only one language, the language of the heart. Give up hatred and enmity from today. Develop unity. The country cannot progress unless and until hatred and enmity are uprooted.

When the safety of the country is at stake, all parties should stand united giving up individual differences. Dharmaraja stood as an ideal in this regard. Once, while speaking to Krishna, he said, "Krishna, the Pandavas and the Kauravas belong to the same family. When there is any difference of opinion within the family, we are five on one side and they are hundred on the other. But if there is any external threat and the safety of the country is at stake, all 105 of us will join hands." Similarly, all political parties should come together to safeguard the interests of the nation.

Develop Friendship with other Countries

I have been observing Vajpayee for the last so many years. Now this body is seventy-four years old. Vajpayee always keeps the welfare of the society in mind in whatever he speaks or does. He is broadminded. There will certainly be peace and security in the country if these principles are followed.

Vajpayee and Kulwant Rai have requested Me to visit Delhi at least once in a year. Today we have inaugurated the International Sai Centre. We should cultivate broad and noble feelings. I will certainly come to Delhi every year provided you develop broad feelings, and put them into practice. (*Cheers*) In Sai Organisation, there should be no differences of opinion. All should live like brothers and sisters. More than a hundred years ago, when Vivekananda spoke in a religious congregation in Chicago, addressing the audience as brothers and sisters, he was greeted with a thunderous applause. In olden days, brothers and sisters attained supreme state living in harmony with each other. But, today brothers and sisters go to Supreme Court due to lack of unity.

Develop love. Devotion bereft of love is no devotion at all. You may undertake any number of spiritual practices, but love should be the underlying principle. Friendship is one of the nine paths of devotion propagated by the culture of Bharat. So, develop friendship with God. God is not separate from you. You are God. God is in you and around you. God is all pervasive just as an atom. Conduct yourselves with the firm conviction that God is everywhere. Only then Bharat will regain its pristine glory of being the leader of all nations.

I want Vajpayee to develop friendship with countries like Russia, Japan and Pakistan. (*Cheers*) How nice will it be if all these countries come together! Vajpayee is also making efforts in this direction. He has full control over his mind, but how can he be expected to have control over the minds of others? He has spiritual feelings in him. That will give him all the necessary strength and courage and ultimately confer success. Vyasa declared: "*Paropakara Punyaya Papaya Parapeedanam*," (helping others is meritorious, harming others is sinful). So, Help ever, Hurt never. This is what I want you to do. Delhi is the stomach of Bharat. If the stomach is good, the whole body will be good. Likewise, if Delhi is good, the whole country will prosper. So, you should see to it that there is peace and harmony in Delhi. The people of Delhi should stand united. If you have unity, there is nothing that you cannot achieve in this world. I bless you all and bring My discourse to a close.

—From Bhagavan's Discourse in Delhi on 12th March, 1999

AVATAR VANI:

DASARA DISCOURSE-IV:

God Dwells in Pure Heart

*Punar Vittham Punar Mithram Punar Bharya Punar Mahi,
Yavath Sarvam Punar Labhyam Na Sareeram Punah Punah.*

Embodiments of Divine Love!

If man loses money, he can get it back; if his friend leaves him, he can get another; if he loses his wife, even then he can remarry and have another wife; if he loses his share of land, he can procure another. He can regain all these things, but he cannot get back the body once it is lost. Therefore, we should consider that for all spiritual pursuits and for all types of endeavours in life, body is the main instrument. Of all the living beings in this world, human life is the rarest, noblest and most sacred. It is a great fortune to have this vesture of human body. However, in this human body there is mind, which is mysterious. Everyone is aware of the presence of the

mind in the human body. But, no one knows the vagaries of the mind. Though it does not have feet to move, it can travel faster than air and light. It has no death, no fixed life-span and it always remains youthful. You may be born again and again, but the same mind follows you. Once you understand the nature of the mind, you will be able to understand your 'true Self'.

Man's Relationship with God

The whole world is a mansion and the entire humanity is one family. There is no multiplicity. We live under the same sky, tread the same earth, breathe the same air and drink the same water. So, it is foolishness to develop diversity in this underlying principle of unity.

In fact, our life would be redeemed if we can understand the underlying unity of the elements. What is the Sadhana (spiritual practice) we should undertake? You should purify your body, mind and speech. How to purify the body? It is not enough if it is cleaned with soap and water, which amounts to only external cleanliness. It has to be cleaned with good thoughts, good words, good deeds. This signifies purity, which is very essential on the inward path. Whatever work you do, do it with sacred feelings. Divert the body from all unsacred activities; use it only for good purposes.

In what way can you purify the mind? You can purify the mind through sense control. Use the ten senses for sacred purposes.

*“See no evil see what is good
Hear no evil, hear what is good
Talk no evil, talk what is good
Think no evil, think what is good
Do no evil, do what is good
This is the way to God.”*

In order to purify the senses, you should make use of them in a sacred way. Purity of the senses is purity of the mind. The mind is the master of the senses. If the mind is to be pure, the senses have also to be pure.

How can you purify your speech? You can purify your speech by speaking Truth, following Dharma and cultivating Love and Peace.

The moment the human body is born, Aham ('I') also follows it. The Atma is the origin of Aham; so, Aham is the son of the Atma. From Aham the mind is born; so, the mind is the grandson of the Atma. And from mind speech originates, so speech is the great grandson of the Atma. In short, the Atma, Aham, mind and speech belong to the same family. So, you should have the conviction that the 'I' principle in you is the dear Son of God, the mind is the grandson and the speech is the great grandson. Once you understand that your Aham, mind and speech belong to the Divine family and act accordingly, your life will be sanctified.

Man finds it very difficult to have control over the senses. Due to the effect of modern education, high intelligence and advancement in science man has become a slave of his senses. Unable to control his mind, man is leading a life of fear and delusion. From where does this fear

arise? Where there is mistake, there is fear. What is the mistake made by man? He has forgotten that the 'I' principle in him is the Son of God. He has forgotten that his mind is the grandson of God and he has forgotten that his speech is the great grandson of God. Since he has forgotten his relationship with God, man is fear-stricken and gripped in anxiety.

Character is the End of Education

Today, man's life has become highly artificial. Even food and drink have become artificial. As everything is polluted in this life of artificiality, human mind has also become polluted. We feel happy that science is progressing and technology is advancing. But at the same time, human values are declining day by day and man is moving away from Divinity.

In this artificial life of man, there is no trace of love in his thoughts and in his relationship with others. Even the relationship between the mother and son has become artificial. Nowadays when one finds a son talking to his mother, one finds only artificial exchange of words, but not true love.

Students are leading an artificial life without sense control. Even animals have sense control to some extent, but not the modern students. This is due to the advancement in modern education. I do not say that education should not make progress. I Myself have established a University. I only say that along with education students should imbibe human values and develop good character. Can you call mere bookish knowledge as education? Can you call all those who can read and write educated? Can you call all those who have degrees to their names educated? If education were to be only for a living, do you not find birds and beasts living? Education is for life and not for earning a living. The objective of human life can be realised when you try to know the purpose of life. You should not be content with bookish knowledge and superficial knowledge; you should have practical knowledge. To have practical knowledge, enquire within.

God never Forsakes Man

You should understand My ideal. Once I say that you are Mine, I will never forsake you. (*cheers*) You may forget Me, but I will never forget you. You may develop hatred towards Me, but I do not have any hatred towards you. In this world I have no enemies and I have no dislike towards anybody. I always uphold My promise. I always go forward to protect, never do I retract.

But, some may question that even after Swami accepts them as His, why do people have problems? Why should they suffer? This is not My mistake. I always keep My promise. They suffer because they forget their promise and lose their sacredness. I never go back on My word. I never make anyone suffer. Till the last moment, I will be with you, in you, below you, above you and around you. Many are not making an effort to understand this truth. They do not enquire into the reason for their suffering. Their wavering mind and their ingratitude are responsible for this. The previous speaker Ravi has said, God is nearer to you than your mother. Though I shower much more love than their own mothers, some people do not show their gratitude. I do not look forward to your gratitude. But, when I do My duty, you also have to discharge your duty at your level.

Some people blame God for their suffering, ignoring their own defects. They argue, God does not keep His word. But God will never go back on His promise. Man does not understand this truth. Being fully immersed in physical and worldly feelings, he blames God for his suffering. God will never make anyone suffer at any point of time. But, each has to face the consequences of his actions.

Every action has a reaction. It may take place immediately or in a few hours or in a few days or in a few months or in a few years or in a few births. For example, when your finger is cut with a blade, it starts bleeding immediately. If you fall from a staircase, you may suffer a fracture immediately. In both the cases, the reactions are instant. The food that you eat takes a minimum of two hours to get digested. For a seed to grow into a tree and yield fruit, it may take a few years. Good or bad, you cannot escape the consequences of your actions. Then you may question, why one should pray to God? One should pray to God not for the alleviation of suffering, but for peace of mind. Once you have peace of mind, all your problems will vanish. You can even escape the consequences of your actions if you have God's grace. After the expiry date, the medicine loses its potency; similarly, once you acquire God's grace, the consequences of your actions will have no effect on you. In order to make the consequences of your actions to 'expire', prayer is essential. You have to pray wholeheartedly.

Your heart is the seat of God. So, think of God who is installed in your heart. You cannot expect happiness in the outside world. Bliss is not in the material world, it is within you. So, when you search within, you will find bliss.

Embodiments of Love!

Never blame God for your difficulties. Come what may, pray to Him. That is your duty. So long as you have the feeling that you are separate from God, you have to pray. Once you realise that you are one with Him, you need not pray.

Be Alike to Everyone

Your breathing process teaches you a lesson. When you inhale you make the sound 'So', and when you exhale you make the sound 'Hum'. This process goes on for 21,600 times a day. 'So' refers to Divinity and 'Hum' to ego, which means you have to take God in and drive ego out. This is an important principle of life. We have to understand what we should receive and what we should reject. We breathe in oxygen and breathe out carbon dioxide. Divinity is like oxygen, which supports our life and ego is like carbon dioxide, which is dangerous for our health. So, ego and other bad qualities should be driven out and Divinity should be taken in.

In your daily life, knowingly or unknowingly, you commit some mistakes. You are only keeping the physical body clean, but are not making any effort to know how to purify your mind and speech. It is the internal purity that is real and not the external purity. It would be a mistake to consider the external purity as real. In our wrong notions we sometimes treat bad as good and good as bad. We should make efforts to know what is good and what is bad. All service rendered to others or the welfare of the humanity is good. You are a member of the society. So, your welfare depends on the welfare of the society. The country will prosper if the society is good. Individual prayer, family prayer and community prayer, all the three are very essential.

The Vedas have declared: "*Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavanthu*" (May the whole world be happy!). Since ancient times, Bharat has been sharing her spiritual knowledge with other countries of the world to ensure peace and security of the entire humanity. Saints and sages have also been preaching for the welfare of the whole world. You should also have such broad feelings. Your love should be as vast as an ocean. Then the world will recognise your love. When Jesus was being crucified, people around were weeping. At that moment, an ethereal voice declared: "All are one, My dear son! Be alike to everyone" The same thing is taught by the culture of Bharat wishing the welfare of entire humanity. Unfortunately, with the passage of time, selfishness and self-interest have become rampant. Though spirituality is the only permanent thing, while everything else is transitory and impermanent, yet spiritual aspect of life is non-existent today. Everywhere people have become selfish and self-centred. The need of the hour is to work for the welfare of the society, recognising the innate divine power in all. This divine power is Maha Durga. What is the meaning of 'Durga'? Durga means 'high mountain'. This high mountain Durga actually connotes God's grace.

Real Meaning of Uttarayana

According to Bharatiya culture, Uttarayana is considered to be very sacred. The great warrior Bhishma lying on a bed of arrows waited for 56 days for the advent of Uttarayana to give up his mortal coil. During Uttarayana, the sun travels towards the north. What does this signify? In the north, we have Himachala (Himalaya mountains), which is said to be the dwelling place of Easwara. When Easwara is all-pervasive, how can we limit him to Himachala? What is the significance of this statement? The word 'Himachala' is made up of two words: '*Hima*' + '*Achala*'. '*Hima*' means snow, which is white and pure. '*Achala*' is that which is firm and unshakable. What is the place to which this description applies? It is the pure heart, where Easwara is installed.

It is said, "*Easwara Sarva Bhoothanaai*," which means Easwara is the indweller of all beings. So, in order to see God, you do not need to go anywhere, turn your vision inward. We cannot call an unsteady and impure heart as Himachala. Only the heart, which is pure, peaceful, sacred, unpolluted and unwavering can be called Himachala. So, when you turn inward, you are in Himachala.

Parents should Set Good Example

There is no trace of spiritual thinking among modern students. When the parents and teachers themselves have not realised the importance of spirituality, how can we blame the students? First the parents must teach their wards to pray to God everyday. But the modern parents themselves do not pray to God. As soon as they return from office, they go to clubs and spend their time in drinking and playing cards. Naturally, children follow in their footsteps.

In some houses, parents quarrel in front of their children, which is an unhealthy practice. If there is any difference of opinion between parents, they should resolve it in the absence of their children. Children cannot concentrate on their studies, if they are disturbed by the family problems. So, parents should never discuss them in front of their children. They should instead teach them all good things and show them good ways of life. There are a few parents who set a bad example to their children by speaking untruth. For example, if some unwanted person makes a phone call, they instruct their children to tell him that they are not available. Thus, they teach their children how to tell lies.

Some children are like pure gold as long as they are here. But, when they go home for vacation, their minds get polluted. But, some students remain the same. Some return much before their vacation ends in order to spend time with Swami. Their Samskaras (inherent tendencies) acquired as a result of meritorious deeds done in several past lives shape their behaviour.

Students! Embodiments of Love!

You should try to know what Divinity is. In this age of science, some say that there is no God. But there is God in all periods of time. There is no other matter. "*Yath Drishyam Tannashyam*" (Whatever is seen is bound to perish). Therefore, the Vedas say what you see now would be unseen. Only God is permanent and eternal. We forget God who is permanent and put faith in fleeting things and waste our time.

My Life is for Devotees

Time is most precious in human life. Misuse of time is evil. Time is God. Don't waste time; time waste is life waste. I feel very sad when I find you wasting time. I always say, "My life is My message." I never waste even a moment. You think that after supper Swami goes and sleeps. But, actually I do not know what sleep is. I never sleep. (*Cheers*) As you know, I collect letters from you. I see some of them immediately. I spend time in a most sacred way.

I do not need anything in all the three worlds. I do not need anything for Myself. Still, I am engaged in activity from dawn to dusk in order to set an ideal. From top to toe, there is no trace of selfishness in Me. Believe it or not, I always spend My time for others. I always give, but never receive. I ask for only one thing and that is pure love. I am ready to give My life for those who offer their pure love. You cannot understand My work. Only men of sacrifice can understand this. I am always engaged in activity. I do something or the other. Even while resting I am working. I have to take rest for others' sake. Otherwise, they too do not take rest. To give them rest, I take rest. What is My rest? Doing devotees' work is My rest.

The previous speaker Narasimhamurthi spoke about this incident. One day, all of a sudden I left this body. Gangadhar Shetty and Narasimhamurthi were surprised at this. Only these two were there inside as it was not possible for others to come in. I told them that there was a widow who always thought of Swami. She had two children. After the death of her husband, she took up a small job to maintain her family. The loss of her husband and her inability to run the family made her depressed. As the money was not sufficient, she joined a part-time job. But, every moment she used to chant Sairam, Sairam, Sairam... wholeheartedly. In such a situation, she suffered a heart attack. In fact, she was to die. So, I took over the heart attack on Myself. (*Cheers*) For seven days, I did not come down. I took upon Myself all her suffering and pain and made her healthy. After three days, she sent a telegram, "Swami, You came and protected me and my children" She did not know that I had taken her disease on Myself. After a week, she came here with her children.

Spirituality not Limited to Bharat

I am ready to do anything for the sake of those who have total faith and pure love. But it is very difficult to find such devotees. However, there are a few of them. If there are no noble

people, how is that you find goodness in this world? There are many sacred people in this country as well as in this world.

Do not limit spirituality to Bharat; it is present all over the world. Truly speaking, it is more in foreign countries than in Bharat. Indians do not know much about the Brahma Sutras, the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita. But, many foreigners have learnt the Bhagavad Gita by heart. In Italy, there is a devotee who has learnt the Brahma Sutras by heart. She can chant Rudram. There, she constructed a building named 'Mother Sai', spread over 25 acres of land. Having full faith that one day Swami would certainly visit that place, she also built a spacious hall like Poornachandra Auditorium, so that public meetings could be held there. She has also constructed some rooms to accommodate students that follow Swami.

Do you know, how clearly and with perfect accent our Primary School children from foreign countries chant the Vedas! This is the result of being in good company. If the company is good, children's future will also be good. *Tell me your company, I shall tell you what you are.* As is your company, so you become. So, wherever you go, join good company.

Fill your Heart with Divinity

Let your heart and mind be purified. Speak always the truth in a palatable and acceptable way. This is the spiritual path which you have to adopt. People may wonder as to why one should do meditation and Bhajans. They are all good actions meant to spend the time in a sacred way, but God is not interested in them. What is that you should do to please God? You should involve your body in good deeds, fill the mind with good thoughts and speak sweetly and softly. Only these actions please God. Bharatians refer to this as "*Trikarana-shuddhi* (purity of thoughts, words and deeds). With sacred feelings, students should undertake sacred actions and lead an ideal life. This is what I teach the students in particular.

Those students who study here should transform thousands of students outside. It is not enough if you merely preach; first practise what you preach. Only then your study in this Institute will find fulfillment. We do not receive even a Naya Paisa from you. Education is offered free. How can you express your gratitude to this Institute? Share with others all that you have learnt here. This is true gratitude. Do your jobs, take care of your parents.

Fill your hearts with Divinity. When there is pure water in the tank, you get the same water out of the taps. Your heart is like a tank. Thoughts, words and deeds are like taps. So, fill your heart with love and experience love. I expect and bless the students to take to this path of love and lead an ideal life. Thus, I bring My discourse to a close.

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajans: "*Bhavabhaya Harana Vandhitha Charana and Subramanyam, Subramanyam*".

—From Bhagavan's Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall at Prasanthi Nilayam on 29th
September 1998

Mantra

When spoken by the tongue of mind
A Mantra helps mankind to find
The light of truth which lies before,
And always was. Like eagles we shall soar

Into the heights of silence and of love:
Elevating consciousness glide above
Until the words give birth to God's good Light
To lead us safe through life's dark night.

—*Geoffrey Speechly*

A Lumious Orb

Through Life I glide with wings of East and West
My environment juxtaposing the two cultures' best
I am indebted to this land, and to my heritage grand
Whose unique blend composes the person I am.

My grandmother instilled in me an affection for all:
“A true friend is loyal through every rise and fall
With his divine might, broad vision foresight
May God propel you to unparalleled heights!

Respect those saints who have not a single need
Who renounce riches, rewards, power and prestige
Practise the aphorism olden, ‘silence is golden’,
For life and liberty, to Him be forever beholden.”

My grandfather cautioned me to our mercurial world
And the maelstrom of men's emotions unfurled:
“The profligate and proud, the verbose and loud
Are eternally entrapped in the materialistic crowd.

Refrain from evil in speech thought and deed
Execute your duty without expectation or greed
Manner of living is more crucial than standard of living
Spiritual wealth is attained by selfless giving.”

My aunts guide me in the worth of one's family:
“Love and loyalty are vital to household stability
Personal turbulence collapses ephemeral friendship

Faith and trust are the foundation of true kinship.”

My uncles often reminded me of legendary epics
The Ramayana and the Mahabharata, poetic classics:
“When evil’s cataclysm leaves a gaping moral chasm
The Lord re-establishes virtue and dooms diabolic swarms.”

Indian saints explained to me the law of Karma
And the necessity to adhere to the path of Dharma:
“That which goes around, surely comes around
May your actions be morally judicious and sound.

It is crucial that one’s motives are carefully chart
In **Words, Actions, Thoughts, Character and Heart**
For the quality of our deeds are as metaphorical seeds
Which germinate in our heart as destiny’s breed.”

From the elders I learned their lesson of life
Their relentless pursuit through poverty and strife:
“Touch your elder’s feet, heed the words they speak
For in their messages are life’s first hand keys.”

I have since put these lessons to personal use
Never do I tease or render hurtful verbal abuse
I respect all my friends, and to their needs I tend
Helping ever, hurting never, worthy deeds I commend.

These experiences are golden treasures in my soul
They are prized jewels that may never be sold
May my culture be glorified, precious heritage of mine
A luminous orb scintillating on the horizon of time!

—*Gunjan Verma, Grade 11, Freehold, NJ, USA.*

AVATAR VANI:

EASWARAMMA DAY DISCOURSE:

Women Symbolise Sacrifice

*Rama's divinity blossomed under Kaushalya's loving care;
Lava and Kusa could become powerful and famous
due to their noble and virtuous mother Sita,
The love and care of Jijabai made Shivaji a great warrior,
Fostered with the love of his mother Putlibai, Gandhi became a Mahatma.
Is there anyone in this world who can take care of you the way your mother does?*

Amma (mother) is the first word that man picks up in life. The first letter of the word 'Amma' also happens to be the first letter of the alphabet.

(Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of Love!

In this world there are many types of relationships, but none equals the relationship that exists between the mother and the child. It is because of this intimate relationship with the mother that one's own country is called motherland. Similarly, one's own language is called mother tongue, not father tongue. Among the parents, first place is given to the mother, next comes the father. Not only in day-to-day life, but also in the field of spirituality mothers and women are given the highest regard. For example, when we mention the names of Divine couples such as Sita Rama, Radha Krishna, Lakshmi Narayana, etc., names of the goddesses come first. What is the inner significance of this? Mother represents Nature, which is the manifest aspect of Divinity. Similarly, the body and the Atma, the creation and the Creator, are closely interrelated. The body cannot function without the Atma. The Atma cannot be experienced without the body.

The Bhagavad Gita refers to Swadharma and Paradharma. *Swa* refers to the Atma and *Para* to the body. But, today people are under the mistaken notion that Swadharma refers to the Dharma of one's own caste and community such as Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra. Swadharma is Atmadharma. The letter '*Sa*' denotes Divinity. It also signifies the four stages such as Saalokya (contemplation on God), Saameepya (nearness to God), Saarupya (identity with God) and Saayujya (merger with God). Today man performs all his activities having faith in the external world. All that is physical and external is temporary. Only the Atma is permanent and eternal. In fact, the Atma is the real mother. It is not proper on your part to forget this divine mother.

Mother is one's First God

Mother is given the utmost importance in human life. There may be a wicked son, but not a wicked mother. It is because of the noble feelings of the mothers that sons become virtuous, intelligent, attain exalted positions and earn name and fame. The Vedas declare: *Matru Devo Bhava, Pitru Devo Bhava, Acharya Devo Bhava, Atithi Devo Bhava* (worship the mother as God, the father as God, the preceptor as God and the guest as God). It is the mother who fosters you and nourishes you. It is she who knows your choices and preferences, and fulfils all your needs. So, you should be grateful to your mother always. Though you cannot see Rama, Krishna, Siva and Vishnu, you are worshipping them because you believe in scriptures and what the elders say. But, how is that you are forgetting your parents who are responsible for your progress in life? First and foremost, you should show gratitude to your parents, love them and respect them. Your blood, your food, your head, your money are all the gifts of your parents. You do not receive these gifts directly from God. All that is related to God is only indirect experience. It is only the parents whom you can see directly and experience their love. So, consider your parents as God. God will be pleased and will manifest before you only when you love and respect your parents.

Children can understand the meanings of the word fox or dog only when they see their pictures. Similarly, it is only after seeing the parents that one can understand the existence of

God. When you love and respect your parents, only then you can understand the love of the Divine Parents (Jagatmata and Jagatpita). This is what I tell you often—if you understand the 'I' principle in you, you will understand the 'I' in everybody. Vyashti (Individual) has emerged from Samashti (society), Samashti from Srishti (creation) and Srishti from Parameshti (Creator). Only when you understand the principle of creation, can you understand the Creator.

It is the mother who teaches you the sacred principles like love, compassion, forbearance, tolerance and sacrifice. Mother shows the father, father takes you to the preceptor and preceptor directs you to God. That is why among mother, father, preceptor and God, mother comes first.

Woman is Embodiment of Virtues

When Hanuman went to Lanka in search of Mother Sita, he found her sitting surrounded by demons under a tree in Ashokavana. Hanuman felt very sad seeing Sita being harassed by the demons. He went back to Rama and told Him, "*Lord Rama, I have seen Mother Sita being harassed and frightened by demons pointing sharp swords at her. She was shivering with fear like a parrot in a cage.*"

(Telugu Poem)

On hearing this, Rama and Lakshmana immediately set out to Lanka with the army of Vanars, fought a battle with Ravana and killed him. As per the command of Lord Rama, Hanuman went to Sita and conveyed her the good news. Then he requested Sita to permit him to punish the demons surrounding her who had put her to great suffering. Sita said, "O Hanuman, it is the responsibility of the subjects to obey the commands of the king. Just as you obey the command of Lord Rama, these demons also had to obey the dictates of their king. It is not their mistake. They acted according to the instructions of the king. So, it is rather unfair to punish these demons. In fact, I suffered not because of these demons, but because of separation from Sri Rama. So saying, she narrated the following story.

Once in a forest, a hunter, on being chased by a tiger, felt tired and climbed up a tree. There was a bear sitting on the top of the tree. The tiger was waiting under the tree as it could not climb up. It was very hungry, so it wanted to gobble up the hunter. It requested the bear to push the hunter down, so that it could kill him and appease its hunger. The bear refused to do so, saying that the hunter was its guest and it was its moral duty to extend hospitality to guests. But, the tiger continued to wait under the tree. After some time, the bear started to doze. Noticing this, the tiger addressed the hunter, "O man, I am very hungry. It does not matter whether I eat you or the bear. I will go back once my hunger is satiated. The bear is dozing. So, push it down without delay. I will eat it and spare you." The man did not have the morality of even the bear. He thought he could escape from the clutches of the tiger by offering the bear as bait. So, he committed the ungrateful act of pushing the bear down. As luck would have it, the bear, as it was falling, caught hold of a branch, climbed up and saved itself from the tiger. Then the tiger said, "O bear, you should never believe the human beings. This hunter tried to harm you, though you were kind enough to give him shelter and protect him. So, without further delay, push the ungrateful wretch down, I shall devour him." But the bear said, "I have done my duty. Each one has to face the consequences of his own actions. I will not harm him just because he tried to harm me."

Narrating this story, Sita said, "No doubt, these demons have put me to a lot of suffering without knowing what is truth and what is Dharma. Being the consort of Lord Rama, I cannot stoop down to their level and seek revenge. I do not want to cause harm to anyone." Hanuman said, "O Mother, it is but natural that you, being the consort of Lord Rama, are broadminded and noble hearted. You are the embodiment of Dharma. It is a mistake on my part to think that you would permit me to punish these helpless demons." Then Sita said, "Hanuman, not only me but all the women are endowed with the noble qualities like compassion and love."

There is a proverb in Telugu that the house mirrors the qualities of the housewife. The women, barring a few exceptions, never stray away from the path of truth and righteousness even in the face of adversity. When the mendicant stands at the doorstep stretching his hands for alms, the husband may possibly drive him away, but the housewife always comes forward to give alms. There may be dispute over property matters between the father and the son, but the mother always tries to calm down the son with good counsel. The mother will always pray for the welfare of the son wherever he may be. At times, she may be angry or have a difference of opinion, but such differences are only passing clouds. One should not disregard one's parents yielding to the vagaries of the mind.

Easwaramma, the Divine Mother

Easwaramma, the mother of this physical body, was first christened as Namagiriamma at the time of birth. But after her marriage, Kondama Raju, the grandfather of this physical body, being a Jnani (one of wisdom) and blessed with a vision of the future, started calling her Easwaramma (mother of Easwara). He used to worship Venkavadhuta. His was a joint family. He had two sons. The elder son Pedda Venkama Raju was the father of this physical body. His younger son was Chinna Venkama Raju. Two sons of his deceased brother, Subba Raju and Venkatrama Raju, also lived with him. One day, as there was some difference of opinion, it was decided to divide the property.

At that time, this body was eight years old. Kondama Raju said he did not want any share in the property and told them to divide it among themselves. The four brothers requested Kondama Raju to spend the rest of his life staying with each one of them. But Kondama Raju said, "I do not want to stay with you, I do not expect anything from you. Whatever I have earned, distribute among yourselves. But give me one property, Sathya. (*Cheers*) If He is with me, I do not want anything else." Then He asked me, if I was willing to stay with him. I readily agreed. Both of us were staying in a small room. I used to get up early in the morning, clean the vessels and cook food for both of us. After making the food ready, I used to run to Bukkapatnam to attend school. There the lunch bell would go at 1 o'clock. I would run back to Puttaparthi, serve him lunch, have it Myself and then rush to school for the afternoon session. I maintained punctuality both at school and at home. Kondama Raju, being the one with wisdom always craved for Me. One day, he called Pedda Venkama Raju by his side and told him to change his wife's name to Easwaramma. He told this because he felt the divine vibrations originating from within. His intention was to convey that she was the mother of Easwara, God Himself. (*Cheers*) But, Pedda Venkama Raju was not aware of the inner meaning of this name. He implicitly obeyed the command of his father and changed the name of his wife to Easwaramma.

Kondama Raju's Last Desire

The new Mandir was built before Kondama Raju left his mortal coil. He lived for 116 years. But, even at that ripe old age his eyes and legs were in good condition. So, he used to walk from old Mandir to the new Mandir everyday, without a walking stick. I used to say, "Why do you walk the distance? There may be cows and buffaloes on the way. You can take the help of a walking stick at least." He would say that his legs were in perfect condition and that he did not need the help of a walking stick. He was an ardent devotee of Swami. He used to come to Me early in the morning at 5 o'clock. Seeing him coming at a distance, I used to cover Myself with a blanket pretending to be asleep. He would come slowly, lift the blanket, touch My feet and return. He used to come early in the morning because he did not want anyone to notice him touching My feet. He was a little apprehensive about what the villagers would think if they noticed a 116-year-old grandfather touching the feet of his grandson.

On a particular evening, I went to Puttaparthi to see him. At that time, he was sitting on a cot, deeply immersed in singing a ballad, which described Rama lamenting over the fainting of Lakshmana in the battlefield. He was very fond of this particular episode from the Ramayana. Rama lamented, "In this world I might find another mother like Kaushalya, a wife like Sita, but definitely not a brother like Lakshmana." This is what he was singing to himself when I entered his room. I said, "O grandfather, what are you doing?" He exclaimed, "O Swami, You have come," and fell at My feet. He said, "Swami, I am fully aware that You are not an ordinary child, but Easwara Himself. You are born in our clan to redeem all of us. But, I pray that You fulfill a small desire of mine. Dasaratha did not have the good fortune of drinking water from Rama's divine hands at the time of his death. But Jatayu was fortunate enough to be the recipient of such an act of grace in his last moments. Swami, let me also have the good fortune of sipping water from Your divine hands when my end approaches" I promised that I would certainly fulfil his desire.

The following week, I went to see him again after visiting Subbamma's house. Kondama Raju came to know that I was coming to his house. Immediately, he called Easwaramma and told her, "I am not going to live any longer. Having known that my end has approached, God is coming to shower His grace on me" She responded in an innocent way saying, "Where is God? How do you know that He is coming?" Then Kondama Raju said, "O mad woman, still you are deluded by the feeling of a mother towards her son! Look there, God is coming." So saying he pointed at Me as I was entering his house. She too was aware of My Divinity. But she used to get carried away by her motherly affection towards Me. Similar was the case with Yashoda. Though she had seen all the fourteen worlds in Krishna's mouth, she thought it was a dream or an illusion.

Kondama Raju told Easwaramma that Swami did not take sweets. Right from birth till today, I have not touched sweets. What is the reason? If I were to take sweets, thousands of devotees would start bringing sweets for Me. I do not take fruits either. I do not even touch milk or curds. I lead a very simple life. I take only Ragi gruel and groundnut chutney. Kondama Raju also used to relish this food. He used to say, "Sathya, serve me whatever you eat." Early in the morning, I used to prepare tasteful Ragi gruel, groundnut chutney and some green leaves curry. The whole street was very fond of My cooking. Sometimes, on My return from Bukkapatnam, I used to find all those afflicted with fever make a beeline in front of the house waiting for Me. Kondama Raju would tell Me that they were all waiting to take the pepper Rasam from Me as it

would give them relief. Immediately, I used to prepare pepper Rasam and distribute a glassful to each of them. They used to feel very happy and later on expressed their gratitude saying, "Swami, your pepper Rasam has given us great relief."

In those days, on festival days, such as Sankranti and Yugadi, etc., the dhobis and barbers used to come to the house for food. In the house, there was no one else other than Kondama Raju and Myself. So, I had to prepare food for many people. Easwaramma (Swami's mother), Venkamma and Parvathamma (Swami's sisters) used to prepare various delicious items including sweet puris in their respective homes on festival days. When they could prepare sweet puris, why not I also prepare and serve the grandfather? So, I also would prepare sweet puris and serve not only the grandfather, but also the washerman, the barber and others. On one such occasion, Pedda Venkama Raju (Swami's father) came to see us at lunch time. Kondama Raju invited him for lunch, as it was a festival day. Pedda Venkama Raju had his lunch with us and felt that the food items were very delicious. He went home and chided Easwaramma and Venkamma for not being able to make the items tasteful. He said, "Look at Sathya, what a fine cook he is! Why can't you prepare the food items the way Sathya does?" From the next day onwards, he started sending them to Me asking them to bring whatever food items I prepared. They would come and complain that it was because of My cooking that they were being blamed at home.

When I was nine years old, Seshama Raju, the elder brother of this body, decided to take Me with him to Kamalapur for studies. He felt that I was wasting My time staying with Kondama Raju. But, the grandfather objected to this, saying that I did not require any studies. But, things happened the way they were destined to happen.

After the construction of Prasanthi Nilayam, one day I went to see Kondama Raju. He asked Easwaramma to get a glass of water. He told her, "God has come to take me away. He made a promise that He would pour water into my mouth with His Divine hands, before I leave this body. He has come to fulfill His promise." Puzzled by Kondama Raju's request, Easwaramma said, "You are not suffering from any disease, you don't even have fever or a cold. What makes you think that your end has approached." Then Kondama Raju said, "Death occurs as per the Will of God. Just as birth has no reason, death too has no reason. This is the Truth of truths." Easwaramma did not want to argue with him. According to his wish, she brought a glassful of water and gave him. He sat down on the floor and made Me sit on the cot. He kept his head on My knees and said, "Swami, please listen to My prayer: Easwaramma was watching all this. She wondered, how is that he had so much LOVE and regard for his young grandson Kondama Raju said, "As You know, I was doing a small business to make both ends meet. Perhaps I may still have to pay a paisa or an anna to certain people. Please bless me so that I am not indebted to anyone in my death." I said, 'so shall it be' and started pouring water into his mouth He breathed his last as he was drinking water. His desire was fulfilled. Before leaving his mortal coil, he told Easwaramma not to get deluded by body attachment. He said, "Bodily relationship is temporary, whereas Atmic relationship is permanent. So, give up body attachment and develop attachment to the Atma."

Three Wishes of two Noble Mothers

From that day onwards, Easwaramma never stayed at home; she started staying in Prasanthi Nilayam. Everyday both in the morning and evening she used to come upstairs and talk

to Swami. She also understood My Divinity very well. When I appeared in the form of Lord Siva to her, she would ask, "What Swami? Why are you adorning the snakes around your neck?" I would act innocent, "Well, I don't have any snakes on Me." She would move away saying, "Look, there are some snakes inside." But later on not finding any snake inside, she would ask for forgiveness. Like this on many occasions, she had the experience of My Divinity. Similar was the case with Kaushalya and Yashoda. Though they knew that their sons were Divine, they used to get carried away by their motherly affection towards them. Mothers are highly noble and virtuous. Their nobility cannot be described in words. It does not matter if you do not acquire worldly wealth, but you should try to win the wealth of your mother's grace. Only then your life will be sanctified.

Ishwara Chandra Vidyasagar was a noble soul. He was born in a poor family. He was living with his aged mother. He used to feel very sad seeing his mother wearing old and torn Saris. After he completed his studies, he took up a job and started earning some money. One day he sat by the side of his mother and said, "Mother, please tell me if you have any desires. Now that I have started earning money, I am in a position to fulfill them." She said, "Son, I don't have any desires. It is enough for me if you lead a noble life." After some time, he got a better job and started earning thousands of rupees. Then again he asked his mother to tell him if she had any desires. She said she had three desires and could not live in peace unless and until they were fulfilled. "Ours is a small village and there are many children who are wasting their time without going to school. So, please construct a small school out of the money you have earned." As per the wish of his mother, Vidyasagar got a school constructed in his village. Then he asked his mother to express her second desire. "Our villagers are suffering for lack of medical facilities. There is nobody to take care of them when they are afflicted with fever, cough or cold. So, I want you to construct a small hospital." Vidyasagar built a hospital too. Then after some time, he asked his mother, what her third wish was. She said, "The villagers are suffering due to lack of drinking water. They are being afflicted with various diseases as they are drinking polluted water." Immediately, he got a few wells dug and provided drinking water to the villagers.

As the days rolled by, Vidyasagar's name and fame spread far and wide. He was a good orator. His speeches were not based on bookish knowledge. He used to speak on matters of daily relevance. So, people in large numbers used to throng his meetings to listen to his speech. He was a very simple and humble man. One day he was going to a neighbouring village to address a gathering. He boarded the train carrying a small suitcase. An I.A.S officer, who was going to attend his meeting, was also travelling by the same train. He was carrying a small handbag with him. He had not seen Vidyasagar before. As soon as he got down from the train, he started calling out for a coolie. Seeing this, Vidyasagar went up to him and asked where his luggage was. The officer showed his handbag. Then Vidyasagar said, "Why do you misuse your money? Do you need a coolie to carry your handbag? Let me carry it for you." He took the bag from the officer and carried it. After reaching the destination, the officer asked Vidyasagar how much money he wanted for carrying the bag. Vidyasagar said, "I do not want your money, I did it only as an act of service." The officer proceeded to the meeting place where Vidyasagar was supposed to deliver his speech. He was stunned to see the same person who carried his bag giving a speech on the dais. What a humble person he was, he thought to himself and felt ashamed of his behaviour.

Ishwara Chandra Vidyasagar spent all his earnings to fulfill the desires of his mother. Easwaramma also had similar desires. Once she told Me, "Swami, our Puttaparthi is a small village. As there is no school in this village, the children are forced to walk long distances to attend schools in the neighbouring villages. I know that You are the ocean of compassion. Please construct a small school in this village." I asked, where she wanted the school to be built. She said she had a piece of land behind her house. She wanted the school to be constructed there. As desired by her, I got the school constructed. Though it was a small school, the inaugural function was a grand affair, attended by many devotees. The next day, Easwaramma expressed her happiness over the inaugural function and said that she had one more desire. She wanted a hospital also to be built in the village. She said, "Swami, I don't want to put You to trouble. If You are troubled, the whole world will be in trouble and if You are happy, the whole world will be happy. So, if it gives You happiness, please construct a small hospital." As per her wish, I got the hospital constructed. Bejawada Gopal Reddy, a highly reputed person in those days, was invited to inaugurate the hospital. The inaugural function was a grand one, attended by thousands of people from the neighbouring villages. Easwaramma did not imagine that this would be such a grand affair. Next day, she came up to Me and said, "Swami, it does not matter even if I die now. I have no more worries, you have fulfilled my desires and mitigated the suffering of the villagers to a great extent." I said, if you have any more desires, ask Me now. She replied hesitantly that she had yet another small desire: "You know that the river Chitravati is in spate during the rainy season. But, in summer it dries to a trickle and people do not have drinking water. So, please see that some wells are dug in this village." I told her that I would not stop with these small wells and that I would provide drinking water to the entire Rayalaseema region. (*cheers*) Easwaramma said, "I don't know what Rayalaseema is. I am satisfied if our village is provided with drinking water."

Once on a Sivaratri day, after I had completed My discourse, the Lingas were ready to emerge from My mouth. I sat on the chair and was in severe pain. Seeing Me suffering, Easwaramma got up from the gathering, came up to Me and said, "Swami, why do You suffer like this? Come inside, come inside" I said I would not come inside. She cried and tried to persuade Me, but I did not budge an inch. Unable to see My suffering, she went inside. As soon as she left, Hiranyagarbha Linga emerged. All the devotees burst into thunderous applause. Listening to this, she came back, but by then the Linga had already emerged and I was showing it to the devotees. All the people got up to have a glimpse of the Linga. As a result, Easwaramma could not see it. Next day she pleaded with Me to show the Linga to her. I said I had given it to somebody. But she said, "Swami, I have not seen. I want to see." I told her that she would see in future anyway. She said, "I do not want to put You to inconvenience," and went away. She never had put Me to trouble any time. Whenever she asked Me for something, she would come back and enquire if she had given any trouble. To all the devotees who came, she used to entreat not to cause any inconvenience to Swami. She used to be very much worried whenever any minister came to have My Darshan. The situation in those days was such that even a policeman with a red cap was enough to frighten the villagers. Easwaramma used to be very much afraid of the ministers thinking that they might cause some problem to Me. This was only the result of her sacred love for Me. That is the greatness of mother's love. That is why she could lead a life of fulfillment and peace. In order to propagate this sacred ideal, this day is being celebrated as Easwaramma Day. This is to emphasise that each one of you should make your mother happy. If your mother is happy, Swami is happy.

Sacrifice everything for God

Everybody should love and respect his parents. But, if any relation becomes an obstacle in your path to God, there is no harm in leaving him. Here is a small example. Mira was the wife of Maharana of Chittor. She was always seated in Krishna's temple, forgetting herself while chanting His name. One day, Emperor Akbar came to the temple and offered a gold necklace to Lord Krishna. Mira accepted it and put it around Krishna's idol. Akbar was an enemy of Maharana. When Maharana came to know that Mira had accepted a necklace for Krishna from his enemy, Akbar, he became very furious. He took it as an insult and threw her out of the temple. Mira felt very sad. Crows start cawing at the cuckoo when it begins to sing, but that does not deter the cuckoo from its singing. The people of the world are like crows. They speak as they like. But the noble souls will not be affected by what others say. Mira was in a dilemma, whether to give up Krishna or her husband Maharana. She resolved that she would not give up Krishna even at the cost of her life. Then she wrote a letter to Tulsidas seeking his advice in this regard. Tulsidas sent her a reply: "From the worldly point of view, you should respect your father, mother, preceptor and husband. But when it comes to God, everything else is secondary. God alone is important. Bharata left his mother Kaikeyi for the sake of Lord Rama. Prahlada gave up his father Hiranyakasipu for the sake of Lord Narayana. Emperor Bali forsook his preceptor, Shukracharya for the sake of God. So, there is nothing wrong in giving up your husband for the sake of Krishna." Taking the advice of Tulsidas, Mira left her husband. She sang, "*O mind, go to the banks of the sacred rivers Ganga and Yamuna, the pure water of which cools and purifies the body.*" (Hindi Song) These two stand for the primal nerves, *Ida* and *Pingala* that converge at the centre of two eyebrows. She started singing the praises of Krishna and proceeded towards Brindavan.

There are many such great devotees who sacrificed everything for the sake of God. Women symbolise sacrifice. The Vedas declare: *Na Karmana, Na Prajaya, Dhanena Thyagenaike Amruthatwamanasu* (immortality can be attained only through sacrifice; neither wealth nor progeny nor good deeds can confer it). You can sacrifice anything for the sake of God. But, sacrifice should not be love with a selfish motive or for self-satisfaction.

The Bhagavad Gita says that a woman has seven qualities, whereas a man has only three. So, never look down upon women. They are most virtuous. They are the very embodiments of Nature. Some women may think that they would have enjoyed greater freedom had they been born as men. This is a wrong notion. In fact, women are more powerful than men. With all the sacred feelings in your heart, respect women and be respected. Respect your mother, obey her commands. Mother protects her children in many ways. Even after death, she comes back and helps you in various ways. Never disrespect your mother or disappoint her. Do not hurt her feelings. Try to satisfy her in all respects. Only then the seed of devotion will sprout in you. Everyone should follow the dictum, *Matru Devo Bhava* in letter and spirit, and be a recipient of his mother's love.

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajan, "*Pibare Rama Rasam...*"

—From Bhagavan's Discourse at Sai Shruti, Kodaikanal on 6th May 1999

Control Your Senses

*If money is lost, one need not be worried about it, for one can earn it again.
If a friend leaves, one can have another. If wife is lost, one can marry again.
If one loses one's piece of land, one can purchase another piece of land.
All these can be regained; but if body is lost, one cannot get it back.*

(Sanskrit Sloka)

Embodiments of Love!

If wealth is lost, nothing is lost. If health is lost, something is lost. If character is lost, everything is lost. This is the teaching of the culture of Bharat. But, for the modern man, everything is lost if wealth is lost; something is lost if health is lost and nothing is lost if character is lost. Since time immemorial, the Bharatiyas have been adhering to the principles of spirituality. Thus, they attained bliss and shared it with others in the world. The Himalayan Mountains form the boundary of Bharat on the northern side. 'Hima' means pure and sacred. Mountains symbolise steadiness. Purity, sacredness and steadiness are the hallmarks of the Bharatiyas. The perennial rivers, the Ganga, the Yamuna and the Saraswati (underground) flow in this land. These three symbolise the threefold path of work, worship and wisdom through which man can attain Divinity. The holy texts of the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Bhagavata set noble ideals before mankind. What is the inner meaning of the word 'Bharat'? 'Bha' means light effulgence and divinity. So the Bharatiyas are those who spread light and effulgence of wisdom. The Indian scriptures like the Bhagavad Gita, the Upanishads and the Brahma Sutras are shining resplendently, showing the path of divinity to man.

Spirituality Starts with Faith

Buddha was born in this sacred land of Bharat; he declared to the world *Ahimsa Paramo Dharma* (non-violence is the greatest Dharma). He undertook penance for several years, met many noble souls, listened to spiritual discourses and studied various scriptures. But he was not satisfied. Man aspires for bliss, but how can he attain it? Where there is faith, there is love. Where there is love, there is peace. Where there is peace, there is truth. Where there is truth, there is God. Where there is God, there is bliss. The path of spirituality starts with faith and ends with bliss. Bliss cannot be attained from materialistic pleasures or people of the world. It can be experienced only when the five senses are put to proper use.

Today man reads sacred books to attain bliss, but all these books have their own limitations. One cannot get infinite bliss by studying scriptures. One must study an infinite book in order to experience infinite bliss. This world itself is an infinite book. There are so many things to be learnt from this world. Who are your friends? Not your classmates or roommates. Only God is your true and eternal friend. (*Cheers*) It is only with the help of this friend that you will be able to study the infinite book, the world. When one undertakes the study of this infinite book one has to put into practice the five important teachings of Buddha. They are Samyak Drishti (right vision), Samyak Bhavam (right feeling), Samyak Shravanam (right listening), Samyak Vaak (right speech) and Samyak Karma (right action). A true human being is one who follows the path of truth. Truth, righteousness and sacrifice should be the way of life. Buddha said: *Buddham Sharanam Gachhami, Dharmam Sharanam Gachhami, Sangham Sharanam Gachhami*. It means

Buddhi (intellect) should follow the path of Dharma and Dharma should be fostered in the society. Only then the country will prosper. This is also the inner meaning of the word SAI. S denotes 'spiritual change', A denotes 'association (social) change' and I denotes 'individual change'. Man's mind will become pure and sacred only when these three changes take place.

Life Principles of Man

Divinity is latent in every individual. But, today man has forgotten his divine nature and is getting deluded by the worldly, ephemeral pleasures. Sathya, Dharma, Santhi, Prema and Ahimsa are verily the five life principles of man. They are like his Pancha Pranas, namely, Prana, Apana, Vyana, Udana and Samana. If he loses Sathya, it amounts to losing one part of his life-breath. And when he loses all the four, viz., Sathya, Dharma, Santhi, and Prema, he loses four parts of his vital life -breath. As a result he is confronted with sufferings and violence from all sides. Who is responsible for this? Man himself is to be blamed for this. Buddha said non-violence is the greatest Dharma. Love will be fostered only when non-violence is practised. When love is fostered, there will be peace in the world. When there is peace in the world, man will naturally take to the path of Dharma. When man follows the path of Dharma, he will attain Truth. It is, therefore, the primary duty of every man to foster these life principles.

Once Buddha was travelling from village to village giving spiritual discourses. One day, he felt tired and asked one of his disciples to address the gathering. He went inside to take rest. The disciple during the course of his speech said, "In this world, there has never been a spiritual master greater than our master Buddha and there will not be another like him in future." The audience gave a thunderous applause. On hearing this, Buddha came out. One of the disciples told him the reason for the people's joyous applause. Buddha smiled and called the disciple who delivered the lecture. "What is your age?" he asked. The disciple said he was thirty-five years old. "How many kingdoms have you visited so far?" Buddha asked him again. The disciple said he had visited only two kingdoms. Then Buddha said, "You are thirty-five years old and have seen only two kingdoms. You have not understood the present completely. Then how can you say anything about the past and the future? It is meaningless to say that a master like Buddha was never born before and will never be born again. Many Avatars and sages have taken birth in this sacred land of Bharat. Many more Avatars and noble souls will be born here in future also. There are many noble souls in this world, I offer my respects to all of them." In this way, Buddha reproached his disciple. It is foolish for a man with little knowledge to behave like a learned man.

No one can estimate the sacredness and greatness of this country, Bharat. To be called an Indian is in itself a great qualification and honour. (*Cheers*) How can one describe the great good fortune of the Bharatiyas, for the Lord Himself has taken birth several times in this sacred land to show the path of divinity to mankind? Many saints, sages and men of sacrifice were born in this country. The sacredness and renown of Bharat are unmatched. That is why Buddha chose this country as his motherland.

First Control your Vision and Tongue

The story of Buddha is highly noble and sacred. He sacrificed everything and went around in search of truth. He said, "*Dharmam Sharanam Gachhami*" (I take refuge in Dharma). One has to practise, propagate and experience Dharma. But, today Dharma has declined. People think that

money is everything. Just as the earth revolves around the sun, people go around money. *"Some people take to corrupt ways to earn money. They may cheat others, but can anyone hoodwink God? They will certainly reap the consequences of their misdeeds."* (Telugu Poem) This was the teaching of Buddha. Character is important, not money. Bliss can be attained only through control of senses, not through penance, Japa or meditation. Neither by penance nor by going through scriptures nor by having a dip in holy rivers can one attain liberation. It is only by serving noble souls can one cross the ocean of Samsara. There is no easier path to peace and bliss other than controlling one's own senses.

But, man today has given up this easy path and is craving for sensual pleasures, which confer only misery and grief. Even the birds and beasts enjoy sensual pleasures. The happiness that results from sensual pleasures is no happiness at all. So, first and foremost man should try to control his senses. This is possible only when the vision is properly utilised. Once the vision is controlled, other senses can also be easily controlled. But, today man has no control over his vision. He looks at things, which he is not supposed to look at. Whatever man looks at gets imprinted in his heart. So, develop sacred vision. There are forty lakh light rays in the human eye. But, their radiance is destroyed on account of wrong vision. When you look at wrong things, you waste the enormous power of radiance of the eyes. There are thirty lakh taste buds on the tongue. But, they get destroyed because of bad talk. So, first and foremost vision and tongue should be kept under check. Otherwise man may lose his humanness and ultimately ruin his life. Along with right vision and right talk, man should cultivate right listening. If someone were to indulge in bad talk in your presence, leave the place at once. Right vision confers double promotion. It strengthens the will power and enhances the power of radiance of the eyes. Having understood this truth, Buddha made a concerted effort to control his senses. Meditation and penance confer only temporary happiness. Eternal happiness results only from control of the senses. Buddha was the crown prince and had the entire kingdom under his control, but he sacrificed everything and tried to control his senses. He could experience bliss and attained Nirvana only after controlling his senses.

Understand the Principle of Love

Man can get limitless powers through love of God. But, today man is not making any effort to understand the Principle of Love. Man's love is like an atom when compared to divine love, which is infinite, eternal and nectarine. It is foolishness and ignorance on the part of man to think that he knows everything without understanding the Principle of Love. He should see through the eyes of love, hear through the ears of love and cultivate the feelings of love.

No benefit accrues from doing spiritual Sadhana if man does not have unity of thought, word and deed. The unity of these three constitutes humanness. The proper study of mankind is man. What does MAN stand for? M stands for giving up Maya, A is for gaining the vision of the Atma and N denotes attaining Nirvana. Man has to give up materialistic pleasures in order to attain liberation. What is Moksha (liberation)? Getting rid of Moha (attachment) is Moksha. Giving up body consciousness is liberation. But, today man is immersed in body attachment. He can attain liberation only when he develops attachment towards the Atma. *"Humanness has declined in man as he lacks fear of sin and love for God. This is the root cause of unrest in the world."* (Telugu Poem) Man should develop love for God and fear of sin. Only then there will be morality in society.

Embodiments of Love!

You may celebrate any number of festivals and undertake various types of spiritual exercises, but all this will go waste if there are no divine feelings in your heart. Do not look at things, which are unsacred. Let your vision be suffused with divine feelings. You will understand and experience the sacred principles: *Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma* (Brahman is immanent in everything), *Vishwam Vishnumayam* (Vishnu pervades the entire universe), *Easwara Sarvabhoothanam* (God is the indweller of all beings) only when you cultivate noble qualities. In order to cultivate divine feelings and noble qualities, you have to control your senses. Your life will be ruined if you do not control your senses.

Individual, Society, Creation and Creator

A river should flow within its banks; otherwise it will flood the villages causing untold sufferings. Similarly, human life, which can be compared to a river, should also have two eight-lettered dictums as its banks—*Sraddhavan Labhate Jnanam* (only a person with steadfast faith can attain wisdom) and *Samsayatma Vinashyati* (a doubting man perishes). Only then the river of life will merge in the ocean of grace. If your river of life does not flow within its two banks, not only will your life be wasted, but you will also be causing harm to others. One who has doubts about God cannot have divine grace. One who has no sincerity of purpose cannot come up in life. A man with sincerity will make the best use of even the smallest opportunity given to him. For example, he can turn even a small bit of live ember into a big fire. On the other hand, a man who lacks sincerity cannot make fire even if large quantities of live embers are given to him. He will turn all the live embers into charcoal with his lackadaisical attitude. You should have utmost sincerity in matters pertaining to divinity.

You are struggling hard to acquire worldly education. You are spending hours together concentrating on it. What is the benefit that accrues from it? You acquire this education merely to fill your belly. Even this education can be used for the welfare of the society. We should leave selfishness and aspire for the happiness of all. *Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavanthu* (May all the people of the world be happy!). This should be our prayer and aspiration. That is the true spiritual practice. Vyashti means individual, Samashti means society. So, you should progress from Vyashti to Samashti, from Samashti to Srishti (creation) and ultimately merge in Parameshti (God). You should attain the unity of individual, society, creation and the Creator. Only spiritual transformation can bring about social welfare. The first letter S in the name Sai stands for service (work), A stands for adoration (worship) and I for illumination (wisdom). So, the very name of Sai symbolises the unity of work, worship and wisdom.

Today man has failed to understand the sacredness and purpose of human birth. Having taken human birth, you should try to experience bliss. You have the desire to attain bliss, but you are not making the necessary effort. You cannot collect even a drop of water if you keep the vessel upside down, although there may be a heavy downpour. Some water will be collected in it if the mouth of the vessel is turned upwards. So, if you want to attain divinity, you have to practise Dharma. That is the meaning of *Dharmam Sharanam Gachhami*. But, this must also lead to the welfare of all (*Sangham Sharanam Gachhami*). This is the inner meaning of the teachings of Buddha.

Once Buddha entered a village along with his disciples. A lady approached him and requested him to have food in her house. Buddha blessed her and accepted her invitation. Seeing this many villagers, including the village headman, warned Buddha, saying, "O Buddha, you are one of wisdom and have renounced everything. She is not a woman of good character. It is not proper for you to have food in her house." Buddha smiled and asked the village headman to come forward. Buddha, holding the right hand of the headman, asked him to clap. The headman said, it was not possible for him to clap as one of his hands was in Buddha's hold. Then Buddha said, "True, it is possible to clap only when two hands come together. Likewise, this lady cannot turn bad by herself unless there are men of bad character in this village. The men of this village are the root cause of her bad character." On hearing this, the villagers realised their folly, fell at Buddha's feet and sought his forgiveness. Through his teachings, Buddha instilled sacredness and wisdom in people. Buddha's teachings are highly sacred with profound inner meaning.

Develop Friendship with Truth

Buddha's mother, Mayadevi, passed away when he was just 8 days old. His stepmother Gautami brought him up. That is how he got the name Gautama. He was christened as Siddhartha at the time of his birth. He came to be known as Buddha because he developed Buddhi (intellect) and discrimination power. Discrimination is of two types: individual discrimination and fundamental discrimination. Individual discrimination arises out of selfishness, whereas fundamental discrimination is concerned with the welfare of one and all. One should discard individual discrimination and have only fundamental discrimination. This was the teaching of Buddha to Ananda, son of Gautami, before he attained Nirvana. When Buddha was on the verge of attaining Nirvana, Ananda started shedding tears of sorrow. Then Buddha consoled him, saying, "Ananda, why are you unhappy over my attaining Nirvana? I have been craving for this state of Nirvana for the past many years. Why do you shed tears of sorrow when I am experiencing supreme bliss?" Ananda understood the truth and followed the teachings of Buddha. Ultimately, he too attained Nirvana. True ideal is to give practical knowledge of Dharma to others. One should be a hero in practice, not merely in preaching. This was the ideal of Buddha. All the Avatars and noble souls led their lives in the most exemplary manner and helped people experience divinity. Buddha said, "O man, you don't need to search for God anywhere. You are God yourself" The Bhagavad Gita, the Upanishads and the Vedas also echo the same principle. The Vedas declare: *Tat Twam Asi* (Thou art That). Man today does meditation in the morning like a Yogi, eats sumptuous food during the day like a Bhogi (pleasure seeker) and sleeps at night like a Rogi (sick person). This is not the way one should lead one's life. *Sathatham Yoginah* (one should be a Yogi all the time). One should be filled with divine feelings all the time. *Sarva Karma Bhagavad Pretyartham* (whatever one does, one should do it to please God). Divinity transcends space and time. *Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma* (everything is Brahman).

In order to understand this truth, one should cultivate Sadgunas. Sadgunas do not denote good qualities alone. Sat means Being, that which is permanent. So, Sadgunas mean having divine feelings. Similarly, the word Satsang means being in the company of the Divine, not merely in the company of good people. Divinity is within us. That is Sat. One has to develop friendship with Sat. That is true Satsang and true friendship. Never depend on worldly friendship. Worldly friends come and go. Only friendship with God is true and eternal. God is your true friend, world is a text and Hridaya is your preceptor. Your life will find fulfillment if you understand this truth

and put into practice. All the worldly gurus are not gurus in the strict sense of the term. How can they be called gurus if they cannot tell you the goal of life? Mind itself will become your guru once you understand its mystery.

Embodiments of Love!

You may call Him by any name, be it Jesus, Buddha, Allah, Rama, Krishna; God is one. *Ek Prabhu Ke Anek Nam* (one God has many names). If you understand this truth, you will realise that all are divine. *Sarva Jiva Namaskaram Kesavam Prathigatchhathi* (saluting the individual amounts to saluting God). Your life will be sanctified only when you cultivate such broad feelings. Develop broadmindedness. Never give any scope for any doubt on divinity. All such doubts are but imaginations. Never succumb to them. Follow only divine feelings.

*Follow the Master,
Face the devil,
Fight to the end,
Finish the game.*

That should be the goal of your life.

Embodiments of Love!

Many devotees from Hong Kong, Japan, Thailand and many other countries have gathered here today with great devotion and dedication. Truly speaking their hearts are highly sacred. Though they do not have many comforts and conveniences here, they have considered it as Sadhana, treated everything with a sense of equal-mindedness and are experiencing bliss. Their devotion is true devotion. In the path of spirituality, one should have the determination to face any constraint that one may come across. That determination is the true Tapas (penance). Bereft of determination, it becomes Tamas (sloth). *You are determined to achieve something, do not give up until you achieve what you want. You have desired for something, do not give up until your desire is fulfilled. You have asked for something, do not give up until you get what you have asked for. You must pray to God forgetting yourself and make Him accede to your request. It is not the quality of a true devotee to give up half way.* (Telugu Poem)

Cultivate the spirit of sacrifice and be prepared to face any difficulties. *Na Sukhath Labhyathe Sukham* (happiness cannot be attained through happiness). Ancient sages and seers had to undergo a lot of difficulties. They had to live in the forest eating leaves and tubers. They could have the vision of God only after all this suffering. They declared to the world: *Vedahametham Purusham Mahantham Aditya Varnam Tamasah Parasthath* (O people, we have seen God who is beyond the darkness of ignorance, shining resplendently like a thousand suns.) They also declared, "He is all-pervasive. We have seen Him not outside, but within ourselves. You can also see Him if you turn your vision inward."

In order to attain divinity, one has to undertake spiritual Sadhana. What type of Sadhana? Not penance or meditation. One has to control the senses. Talk less and work more. Only then the individual, the society and the country as a whole will prosper. Don't waste time. Time is God. Time wasted is life wasted. The Upanishads declare that human life is highly sacred and unique.

So, sanctify your life by contemplating on the Divine. Offer all your actions to God. Only then you can attain peace.

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajans, "*Hari Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahi..., Prema Mudhita Manase Kaho... and Pibare Rama Rasam...*"

—From Bhagavan's Discourse in Sai Ramesh Hall, Brindavan on 30th May

Do we have free will?

Baba tells us that we are divine, and His life is the example of what we must become.

—By Jack O. Scher

When I first started to learn and hopefully practise some of Baba's teachings, I read and heard the words, "You are not the doer..." or "Not a blade of grass moves without My Will..." This seemed to mean that we do not actually make things happen, and that everything is predetermined or preordained.

Karma and Free Will

This new idea made me uncomfortable. It implied that I was not really responsible for the success and accomplishments that I had thought were my personal achievements. Reluctantly I decided to surrender to this idea that I was not the doer, and I personally had not overcome all of the obstacles in my chosen path. Instead I had to accept that my achievements, and the precious victories I have cherished, were never really mine. I was humbled by the thought that Baba, through His grace, had given me the ability to win the battles, and that He personally had chosen the battlefields and guided me at every step of the way.

Surrender to this concept meant that I was giving up my pride and sense of accomplishment. I was somewhat let down, or let's say my ego was greatly diminished. But, isn't that exactly what we are taught to do, to let go our ego? Swami teaches us that ego is what drives us to create most of the problems we face. Accepting the concept that we were not the doers could free us from the evils of pride and prejudice.

This idea that we were not the doers seemed so overwhelming. It was such a radical change in my whole concept of life, and the way I think the game is played. So, I began to partially accept that Baba did everything, and that I was merely an actor in the play that He had both written and directed. There was also part of me that found it difficult to accept that we were all just robots or puppets. The whole idea of meeting the challenges in this life, and hopefully winning the game, was hard to give up.

I asked myself and Sai friends, how we could be responsible for our deeds. How could we earn Karma if we did not have free will? There were no easy answers. Some said that there was

such a thing as levels, that on the ordinary day-to-day level, we did have some free will, but, that on the ultimate level we did not. Others echoed this idea by saying that free will was intermittent. It was here one minute and gone the next. A Sai teacher once answered my question about free will by saying that he could, at that moment, choose whether to stand and continue to talk with me, or he could choose to go over and talk to someone he knew on the other side of the room.

I have always cherished the idea of choosing. It conjures up a certain feeling of freedom and delight that I can choose whatever I want to do. Yes, I know all about the limitations of heredity and environment but still, from moment to moment, I have felt the juice of life was in making personal choices and learning if you were right. There was always the element of luck, but overriding everything was the idea that we make our own reality. I found this attractive and exciting. It was hard for me to give this up and just be an actor on the stage.

Faith, Effort and Surrender

I decided that the best thing to do was to put aside this conflict. I would accept the idea that we were not the doers, but at the same time I would live my life as if we did have free will, so that I would continue to be responsible for my actions. I did not want to use the concept that we were not the doers as an excuse never to accept the blame when things did not turn out well. I thought if things went well, then it was His grace, and when things did not, then I would accept the responsibility, if I did not make a sufficient effort. Baba says that everything is the result of His Grace and our effort.

In the meantime, over the years, I continued to read and look for a clear statement from Swami on the subject. I read sometimes that He said in answer to some question that we did not have free will. Since Hislop questioned Swami specifically on this point, I read his account very carefully. It only confused me, because it did not make a clear statement that we did or we did not have free will.

I listened to Baba say: "Life is a game, play it. Life is a challenge, meet it. Life is a dream, realise it." I thought, here was the answer. He was saying we were doers. When I repeated these statements to prove that we were doers, my Sai friends laughed and said that I was missing the point; Baba was just trying to help us accept our roles in life, and play the game as well as we could. But, no, we were definitely not doers.

I decided to get on with my life and look at the bright side of the idea that we did not have free will. We are safe, and we do not need to fear anything, because everything that happens is for the best. Our only job is to accept and love God and our fellow men. We are not responsible for the world or the events that take place. We can get rid of pride, envy and jealousy by simply learning to accept what He has chosen. In the back of my mind I still felt that I had to make the effort, and in that way be responsible.

I learned to enjoy the magic of His special interventions, when things that we were working on would miraculously fall into place. I would be writing an advertisement for one of our books and, suddenly, a perfect way of describing the book's special quality would come to me. I would be trying to come up with the design for the cover of a new book, and almost by accident a very exciting layout would almost materialise before my eyes. Each time these wonderful things

happened I would stop and thank Swami. I realised that He is always in our lives, and if we surrender and accept that He is the doer, He will do the job for us as long as we continue to make the effort. So, it is a combination of faith, effort and surrender.

All is for Our Good

It has been several years now since I have put the debate about whether we have free will or not to rest. In one of the Christmas celebrations in Puttaparthi I was helping the man who was in charge of putting together the Christmas programme. We only had ten days to complete the entire production: choose the play, the staff, the director, department heads, costumes, chorus, musicians, choreographers, make-up, stage design, props, lighting, stage hands, and even child minders, and the male and female service workers.

On the 4th day we were told that no people could be part of the Christmas programme, if they lived outside the Ashram. This created an enormous crisis, since many people that were part of the production lived outside. We lost one or two department heads plus some of their valued assistants. We lost actors, members of the chorus, stagehands plus props and lighting people. Many of us were full of anxiety when we went for a staff meeting with the man in charge of the production. He is both a strong and compassionate leader. He looked directly into our eyes, and said quietly, "It is all for our own good; whatever happens it is all for our own good."

Somehow these words of wisdom calmed our fears, and together we went on and carried out the job that needed to be done. In the remaining days before the festival, we had to face many difficult problems. But, somehow, each time we were in a jam, someone found a way to solve it. We lost the male lead, and a replacement was found. A crucial lighting component failed, and someone miraculously fixed it. The sound equipment malfunctioned and at the last minute new adapters materialised. Swami was certainly standing there with us, guiding us, all the time. The children gave a delightful performance and Swami and the audience showered them with applause.

On Christmas day, Swami gave me the gift that I had so long been seeking. In His Christmas discourse. He said, "Whatever happens, say it is good for me;" and then He repeated, "Say it is good for me." The words thundered through my brain. There was no ambiguity here. Clearly Baba was telling us what He wanted us to do, how He wanted us to see events, and how to behave. He was telling us loud and clear we have a choice. We can accept what happens, and say it is good for me, or we can choose not to accept it. The great importance to me is that we do have a choice.

Do we have a Choice?

When I realised that Baba was telling us what to do, it became clear that we had a choice. The very word acceptance signifies choice. The word surrender requires that we choose to surrender or not to. In an instant, my mind was flooded with His words, "Do good, be good, see good. Duty, Discipline, Devotion. Watch your words, thoughts and actions." Finally, I realised that again and again, over and over, for years Baba had been telling us how He wanted us to behave. He is gently teaching us and leading us but, in the end, He is allowing us to make the choice.

I carefully examined those crucial words, "Whatever happens, say it is good for me." Did He mean that we should just accept and embrace everything that happens? I do not think so. If the ceiling falls, we are thankful if we survive unhurt, but we go ahead and repair it to keep the rain out. We could certainly ask ourselves, why the ceiling fell, and determine if we were negligent, or whether Swami was sending us a special message. If we get sick, we can understand that it is for our own good, perhaps it is a cleansing. Or, may be it is to make us realise how fortunate we are when we are not ill. But, it does not require that we accept our condition to the extent that we give up all or any attempts to heal ourselves.

Surrender the Fruits of Action

I believe that what Swami means when He says that whatever happens, say it is good for me, is that we should accept and not resent. But, I think He also means that we should make repairs and get on with our lives. I think He is helping us to experience and accept painful events where there is no remedy. When there is nothing to be done, we can surrender in accepting and loving God, understanding that it is all for our own good.

Baba tells us that we are divine, and His life is the example of what we must become. But, He is leaving the choice to us. Yes, life is only a game if there is both a chance to win or lose. He tells us to meet life's challenge, again indicating that we have a choice. Finally, He tells us to realise our dream by doing things without the feelings of doership, surrendering all actions and their fruits to Him.

I am quite happy now. I believe that a great deal of Swami's teachings are coming together for me. I think that we have the God-given right and responsibility to make a choice. The secret is to voluntarily surrender the fruits of our actions to Him. Further, we have the responsibility to make every effort to accomplish the task and, at the same time, pray for His grace. This is how in prayer we can surrender the fruits to Him. Prayer calls for His divine help. Therefore, when our efforts are successful, we can be grateful for His grace and thereby avoid any sense of pride or ego.

Serve Man Serve God

The best way to please Me is to see Me in all beings and serve them just as you would like to serve Me. That is the best form of worship, which will reach Me.

—Baba

Give Up Envy

Above all, recognise this truth: Sai is in all. When you hate another, you are hating Sai; when you hate Sai, you are hating yourself. When you inflict pain on another, remember that the other is yourself in another form with another name. Envy causes pain to those who are envied. When another's fortune is green, why should your eyes be red? Why get wild when another eats his fill? Give up this vice of envy; be happy when another is happy. That is more pleasing to the Lord

than all the Mantras you recite or all the flowers you heap on His picture or image or even the hours you spend in Japa or Dhyana.

—Baba

AVATAR VANI:

DASARA DISCOURSE-V:

Love Symbolises Divinity

Nirguno Nishkriyo Nithya Nirvikalpo Niranjana

Nirvikaro Nirakaro Sarva Mukthaihi Labhya

(Sanskrit Verse)

Attributeless, unattached to actions, eternal, beyond all thoughts, ever pure, unsullied and formless (Brahman) is accessible to all liberated souls.

There is one principle, which is attributeless, formless, eternal and beyond thought, word and deed. That is the principle of Love. The Upanishads call this Love as the Atma. How can man understand this Love, which is attributeless and formless? This Love is not an intellectual exercise, nor is it a psychological phenomenon; nor a reflection in the dreaming state. It is the life principle of all living creatures. Noble souls propagated this principle of Love in various ways. Many elders, youngsters, scholars lecture on this principle of Love and sing its glory. But, no poetry, no composition, no language can describe Love. "*Yatho Vacho Nivarthanthe Aprapya Manasa Saha*" (It cannot be described by speech and is beyond the reach of the mind). So, it is beyond human comprehension and narration.

Understand Love, Understand Divinity

If one were to ask, what is the form of Love, it can be said Love is God. Who is God? Where is God? What is His form? How to search Him? This has been the continuous enquiry since ancient times. But, none can describe Divinity. The Vedas said: "*Vedahametham Purusham Mahantham Adityavarnam Thamasa Parasthath*" (the Supreme Being shines with the brilliance of a thousand suns and is beyond the darkness of ignorance). Divinity is beyond human understanding and expression.

How can one recognise Divinity which is the embodiment of Love? In this world, love assumes various forms as expressed by mother, father, brother, wife, friends and relations. In this worldly love, you find selfishness and self-interest. But, the Divine Love is absolutely selfless. Just as God loves all, you should also make efforts to love all, because in the Bhagavad Gita, the Lord says, "*Mamaivamso Jeevaloke Jeevabhutha Sanathana*" (the eternal Atma in all beings is a part of My Being). So, as He loves you, you should also love all and make all happy. But, today one does not find such love between human beings. Divine Love does not expect anything in return. In order to cultivate such Divine Love, man should have the faith that he is the spark of the Divine and He should understand that the same God is present in all. Once he understands and develops faith in this truth, he can love everybody. Today one does not find such love, it only means that man has no faith in the statement of God

Just as a Mariner's compass always points towards the north, likewise under all circumstances Love is directed towards God. Time, space and individuals do not affect Love. Love is the true sign of Divinity. Understanding Love amounts to understanding Divinity.

Primordial Basis of the Universe

None can decide the form of God. When you enter a cinema theatre, you find a white screen. Merely watching the screen does not satisfy you. Once the show commences, you find different scenes projected on the screen. Without the screen, can you see the picture? No. But, when the picture is projected, though the screen exists, it is not seen; it merges itself with the picture. The screen exists all the time—before, during and after the show. The Vedas declare: "*Anthar Bahischa Tath Sarvavyapya Narayana Sthitha*" (That all-pervasive God is present within and without). As the screen is to the picture, so is the Atma to the creation. The screen of the Atma is the primordial basis for the entire creation. When the picture (creation) is projected on it, it becomes a part of the picture. Therefore, it is said: "*Sarvam Vishnumayam Jagat*" (Divinity pervades the entire cosmos). Divinity is present within, behind and around the picture (creation). So, who can know the form of such a Divinity?

Divinity is present in the form of Love in all beings. On the screen of Love, you find the picture of the universe. What form can you attribute to the Love present in you? It is not possible. How can a person who does not understand his true nature understand God? So, first and foremost one should make efforts to understand one's own Self.

The Atma has no definite name and form. "*Ek Prabhu Ke Anek Nam*" (the one Lord has many names). The Atma is the fundamental principle, which is pure, immutable and unsullied. It forms the basis of the entire universe. Without the basis of the Atma, the universe cannot exist. The Vedas declare: "*Pashyannapi Nacha Pashyathi Moodha*" (he is a fool who sees, yet does not recognise the truth). The same principle of Atma is reflected in all beings. God is the basis of the entire universe. It appears rather strange when we enquire where God is. God is in forest and also in mansion. He is present in your heart and also in your speech. He is present everywhere. So, never make an attempt to investigate Divinity. Instead have faith in God, follow Him, worship Him and experience bliss.

See Divinity with the Eyes of Faith

In order to experience Divinity, understand this example. The very nature of mother is love. Mother has a form, but love has no form. You can experience love through your mother as she is the very form of love. Similarly, due to the presence of the Atmic Principle, you are able to see its reflection in the form of the world. The whole world is nothing but reflection, reaction and resound. The Atma is the only reality But, man has forgotten the reality and is seeing only the reflection. You cannot have reaction without action, you cannot have resound without sound. Though the reality is everywhere, you are not able to see it. How will you be able to see it? With unflinching faith and selfless love, think of God continuously. God will certainly manifest before you. Today man chants the name of God and desires to see Him. But as he lacks steady faith, he is not able to experience Divinity. Faith is most important. Modern man has become blind having lost the two eyes of faith. Self-confidence is the foundation on which one can build the walls of self-satisfaction. On the walls of self-satisfaction, one can lay the roof of self-sacrifice. Under the

roof of self-sacrifice, one can lead a life of self-realisation. You cannot have walls without foundation and roof without walls. So, self-confidence, the foundation, is very important.

Our Vice Chancellor described Swami's love as that of a thousand mothers. But, one who cannot understand the love of one mother, how can he understand the love of a thousand mothers? So, first and foremost try to understand and experience the love of your physical mother. Go on adding to the physical mother's love a million times. The divinity principle of the goddess lies in this love, which is your life principle. Experience this love and understand the significance of Mother worship in Navaratri.

The Creator and His Creation

Love in human heart finds expression in the form of culture and scholarship in this world. The culture of the heart is the main standard of life. What is this culture? It is the divine feeling that originates in the heart. The power of divine consciousness is present in your heart. Men may vary in name and form, but the cultural principle of the heart is one and the same. God resides in this divine heart. What is His form? The Vedas describe Him as formless, attributeless, ancient and eternal. No one can attribute a name to God. Had anyone existed before God, he would have named Him. But, none existed before God. Creation itself did not exist.

For crores of years, there existed only darkness. At that time, the sun and the moon did not exist and there was no living creature. Then it rained heavily for lakhs and lakhs of years, which led to the formation of oceans. Then there was light in the world with the creation of the sun and the moon. Oceans resulted in the formation of rivers. Human habitation came into existence only after this entire process, which took many crores of years. Then how do you expect man to understand Divinity?

First and foremost, man has to kill the Tamas (sloth) quality in him. Though water has no colour, it appears red when poured into a red-bottle. Similarly, the Atmic Principle, which is pure and unsullied, appears 'red' in a person with Rajasic quality, 'dark' in a person with Tamasic quality and 'bright' in the heart of a person with Satwic quality.

In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna said He created four 'Varnas' (Chaturvarnayam *Maya Srishtam*). But, people make the mistake of equating them with four castes—Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra. Here Varna refers to the colour and not the caste. The Russians are red complexioned, the British are white complexioned, the Japanese are yellow complexioned and the Africans are dark complexioned. The remaining colours are only the combinations of these four colours.

Students chant a prayer and offer food to God before they partake of it. How do they pray?

*Brahmarpanam Brahma Havir
Brahmagnou Brahmana Hutham
Brahmaiva Thena Ganthavyam
Brahmakarma Samadhina.*

They think they are offering the food to Brahman. But, where is Brahman? He is within. He gives immediate response. What is it?

*Aham Vaishvanaro Bhoothva
Praninam Dehamasritha
Pranapana Samayuktha
Pachamyannam Chathurvidham.*

What does this mean? It means, Brahman who is present in the form of Vaishwanara (digestive fire) in you digests the food that you eat. Who is responsible for your blood circulation? Who makes your heart beat for 24 hours a day? It is all God's creation. None can understand this. In His creation, God has given human beings a special place. He has endowed them with Buddhi (intellect). The Vedas call it Prajnanam and declare "*Prajanam Brahma*". (Brahman is Constant Integrated Awareness). It is immutable and constant.

Once King Vikramaditya convened a meeting of scholars. He asked them, which was greater - Buddhi (intellect) or Medha Shakti (intelligence)? The scholars came to a conclusion that Buddhi was greater than Medha Shakti. They said Medha Shakti was only worldly intelligence, which was temporary, whereas, Buddhi consisted of five aspects—Shraddha, Sathyam, Ritam, Yogam and Mahattattvam. All the worldly achievements are based on Medha Shakti, but not on Buddhi. Buddhi is transcendental and beyond all senses. It relates to Nivritti (inward path), whereas Medha Shakti relates to Pravritti (outward path).

The principle of Love is the most important of all. Love is Atma, Love is Wisdom, Love is Truth, Love is Righteousness, Love is Peace and Love is Non-violence. Where there is Love; untruth, violence and restlessness find no place. Human heart is a single chair, not a double-seated sofa or a musical chair. So, once you fill your heart with Love, wicked feelings have no place in it. Everything is contained in Love. Love is the life principle. But, man has forgotten this principle of Love and is ruining his life in worldly love. The love between the mother and child is Vatsalya (affection); the love between wife and husband is Moha (attachment); love between friends and relations is Anuraga (fondness). You cannot call all this as love. It is only the Divine Love that is true Love in the strict sense of the term. Love applies to God only, none else. This Prema (Love) has two letters, which are all-pervasive.

Here is a small example. Valmiki composed the Ramayana consisting of hundred crore Slokas. Devatas (gods), Rakshasas (demons) and Manavas (human beings) came to know that whoever read the Ramayana and put it into practice would be liberated. Immediately they approached Brahma and requested him for a share of the Ramayana. Brahma divided the Ramayana into three parts consisting of 33,33,33,333 Slokas each and distributed among them. One Sloka remained consisting of 32 letters. Then Brahma again divided these letters into three parts consisting of ten letters each and distributed to them. Ultimately, two letters remained. These are the two letters of the holy names of God—Rama, Krishna, Hari, Siva, Sai, Baba. (*Cheers*) Then Brahma said, "It is not possible to divide these two letters. Therefore, these two should be shared by all" These two letters and the two letters of Prema (Love) convey the same meaning. So, Love is the primordial principle of life. It is permanent, whereas everything else is temporary.

Good Actions Yield Good Results

Only through Love, world peace can be achieved, non-violence can be practised. Buddha said, non-violence is the supreme Dharma. He did penance for many years. He approached elders and listened to their teachings, but he could not get any benefit out of them. Ultimately, he enquired within and found out the Truth. He said Samyak Drishti (right vision) led to Samyak Bhavam (right feelings), which in turn led to Samyak Vaak (right speech). Right speech led to Samyak Karma (right action). Spiritual Sadhana does not mean doing meditation or Japa. Undertaking sacred actions is true Sadhana. Krishna has said: "*Karmanyevadhikarasthe Maphaleshu Kadachana*" you have right on action, but not on the fruits. Human society is bound by action. So, undertake good actions. These principles are as important as the five elements.

Divinity pervades everything, right from an ant to Brahman, but man does not realise this and misuses his body. Body is the gift of God. To misuse it is a great sin. Sin and merit are not present in a foreign land; they are attached to your actions. Good actions yield good results and bad actions yield bad results. Therefore, make proper use of the body, mind and the intellect, which are the gifts of God.

What is Sadhana? Service is true Sadhana. Serve the society. Treat everyone as your brother and sister. Only through selfless service, your life will be redeemed. Consider service unto others as service to God. Unfortunately, today man takes to service expecting something in return. He has become money minded. Excessive wealth makes one egoistic. Ego leads to bad qualities. Excessive desires make one suffer. As the desires increase, misery too increases. "*Asamthruptho Dwijo Nashtha*" a discontented man suffers both ways (i.e., he is not happy with what he has and feels unhappy over what he has not got). So, be contented with what you have. Experience bliss and share it with others. If you have devotion, God Himself will confer bliss.

As our Vice Chancellor said, when Hanuman was to go to Lanka in search of Sita; Sugriva, Jambavantha and others doubted if he could cross the ocean. Then Hanuman smilingly replied that as Rama Himself had commanded him to search for Sita, He would also grant him the strength to cross the ocean. (*Cheers*) He leaped across the ocean chanting the name of Rama and reached Lanka. Having been commanded by Rama, he never doubted whether he would accomplish the task. Once God commands you to do something, He will certainly grant the necessary skill and strength. So, act according to the command of God without a trace of doubt, you will certainly be successful.

Essence of Education

Today as science is progressing, doubts are also increasing in the human mind. The more intelligent you are, the more doubts you have. So, do not aspire for more intelligence (Medha Shakti). Make proper use of the intellect God has given you. Then you will be happy in life.

Happiness lies in union with God. God is the embodiment of eternal, unsullied, pure and non-dual bliss. It is most unfortunate if you forget God. *Never give up Sai. Make the best use of the chance given. Once you lose the opportunity to serve the Lotus Feet of Partheesha, you will not get it back. Sai grants you devotion, strength and liberation. Do not ruin yourself by listening to others.* Do not believe anybody; believe your conscience and follow it. Once you follow your

conscience, you will attain consciousness, the Atma. Develop self-confidence, worship God, attain Divinity and be an ideal to the rest of the world. That is the essence of education.

The man who studies and studies without discrimination fails to understand himself. A mean-minded man can never give up his meanness in spite of his vast learning. Why should one waste one's life in the pursuit of useless learning? Better acquire such wisdom that confers immortality.

Worldly education leads to argumentation, but not total knowledge. It is all waste of time. It is a sign of ignorance. So, never argue with anybody. "*Vade, Vade Varjathe Vairam*" arguments will lead only to enmity. Today what we need is unity, purity and divinity.

Mantras Develop Sacred Feelings

Embodiments of Love!

For the last seven days, you are a witness to this holy Yajna. Why is it conducted? It is for the welfare of the world. The name of God should spread everywhere. For example, Delhi is far away from here, but when you tune your radio to a particular wavelength, you can hear the songs that are being broadcast in Delhi station. This is possible because of the presence of electric waves in the atmosphere.

All over the world there are electric waves and magnetic waves. So, the effect of Mantras chanted during the Yajna will spread all over the world and purify the atmosphere. Once the Mantras enter the air that you breathe in, you will develop sacred feelings, because there is also a Mantra in you. The body is Yantra, Hridaya is Tantra and the breath is Mantra (*Soham*). *Soham* means, "I am God". There is no greater Mantra than this. Therefore, chant this sacred Mantra, lead an ideal life and make the world an abode of peace.

No Heaven beyond Sacrifice

In this train of society, youth are the long journey passengers. As the youth have a long way to go, they should work for world peace. Teach the principle of Divinity to others. Instill Divine feelings even in hard hearted people. Sow the seed of the holy name of God in every heart. Then the world will become verily the heaven. Your happiness is heaven; your grief is hell. So, be happy and serve everybody. Do not have the narrow feeling that only Bharat should be prosperous; pray for the prosperity of the entire world because all are your brothers and sisters. Have such broad feelings and sacred thoughts. Only then the dictum *Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavanthu* will be realised and everyone will be happy. Share this immortal principle with everybody.

The Upanishads address you as the sons of immortality (*Srunvanthu Viswe Amruthasya Putra*—listen O children of immortality). You should lead your life befitting your name like saint Thyagaraja. Thyagaraja said, *Nidhi Chala Sukhama, Easwara Sannidhi Chala Sukhama, Nijamuga Thelupumu Manasa* (O mind, tell me, is it money or proximity to the Divine that confers happiness?) He rejected the money sent by the king saying Rama was his only wealth. Thyagaraja means one with sacrifice. So, his action befitted his name. There is no heaven beyond sacrifice.

Embodiments of Love!

Do not have excessive desire for wealth. Lead a life of sacrifice. Lead a peaceful life.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the Bhajan: "*Prema Muditha Manase Kaho Rama Rama Ram...*"

—From Bhagavan's Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall at Prasanthi Nilayam on 30th
September 1998

AVATAR VANI:

MUMBAI DISCOURSE-I:

Put Ceiling on Your Desires

Forbearance is the real beauty in this sacred land of Bharat. Of all the sacred virtues, adherence to truth is true penance. The nectarine feeling in this country is the feeling towards one's mother. Character is valued far more superior to the very life itself. People have forgotten the basic principles of the culture of Bharat and are following and adopting Western culture today. Bharatiyas are not aware of the greatness of their own cultural heritage just as the mighty elephant is not aware of its own strength.

(Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of Love!

Today man has taken too many paths to acquire wisdom. All the knowledge that he has acquired is not true knowledge in the strict sense of the term. Knowledge of the spirit, Atmic knowledge, is the true knowledge. That is Brahma Jnana. Atma, Brahman and Jnana are synonyms. On this basis, the Vedas declare: *Sathyam Jnanam Anantam Brahma* (Brahman is truth, wisdom and eternity).

Work, Worship, Wisdom

Since ancient times, the culture of Bharat has laid emphasis on these three aspects—work, worship and wisdom.

Work, worship and wisdom all begin with service. No matter what service it is, if it is done with love and divine feelings, it becomes Upasana (worship).

What is wisdom? All that is related to our senses, the fleeting objects of the material world and our actions, speak of our ignorance. Wisdom dawns the moment the mind is withdrawn. The thoughtless state between two consecutive thoughts is Brahma Jnana. Man is not able to experience this thoughtless state of Brahman and is carried away by fleeting, ephemeral and momentary things. True wisdom dawns when all thoughts are decimated. Sai's philosophy speaks of the unity of work, worship and wisdom.

Light the Lamp of Love within

The culture of Bharat believes in unity in diversity, which is true wisdom. There are many intellectuals who observe multiplicity or plurality in unity, but there are very few men of wisdom

who observe unity in diversity. Since ancient days, the inhabitants of this holy land have been practising these principles and have been sharing them with the rest of the world. This country has always prayed for the advancement and welfare of the whole world. That is the meaning of the Vedic dictum, *Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavanthu* (May the whole world be happy!) Our prayer is not limited to Bharat only. We pray for the welfare of the whole world. But, the modern Bharatiyas are not able to know the culture of Bharat, which is endowed with noble virtues of broadmindedness.

Embodiments of Love!

You have to understand the sanctity of the culture of Bharat: You may go through any number of books, you may visit noble souls, you may listen to sacred teachings, but the reality is one. People read hundreds of books, but very few translate them into action. It is enough if you put into practice at least one principle.

Man is making every attempt today to be happy, blissful. Where do you get bliss? Is it in the material things, in the world, in individuals, in books? No, not at all. Bliss is within one's own Self. You have forgotten your true Self, the source of bliss. You are struggling hard for artificial happiness outside. You are not aware of the reality that lies in the heart. In fact, all the bliss is there. The principle of love originates from the heart, not from the world. Everyone should develop love more and more. But, today, there is hatred and anger everywhere. Wherever you see, there is desire, enmity and fear. How do you expect to be in peace? How do you expect to be blissful? Light the lamp of love within. Then fear and illusion can be removed and you can have the vision of the Self. Otherwise you are bound to suffer.

Less Luggage Makes Travel a Pleasure

You have to exercise a ceiling on your desires. There are rules for ceiling with regard to land and property. But, you have no ceiling on your desires. Ceiling on desires means exercising control over them. You can be happy once the desires are controlled.

Your life is a long journey. You should have less luggage (desires) in this long journey of life. Therefore, it is said less luggage more comfort makes travel a pleasure. So, ceiling on desires is what you have to adopt today. You have to cut short your desires day by day. You are under the mistaken notion that happiness lies in the fulfillment of desires. But, in fact happiness begins to dawn when the desires are totally eradicated. When you reduce your desires, you advance towards the state of renunciation.

You have many desires. What do you get out of them? You are bound to face the consequences when you claim something as yours. When you claim a piece of land as yours, then you will have to reap the harvest. This instinct of ego and attachment will put you to suffering. You will be blissful the moment you give up ego and attachment.

Independence without Unity is Meaningless

The Prime Minister, Ministers, Chief Justice of India and other high officers assembled in the capital, Delhi. All of them mentioned that we underwent tremendous sufferings and hardships, and lost many lives to achieve independence. But, we have not achieved unity in this country. What is the use of achieving independence without unity? We find that murders, kidnappings,

hijacks have increased after attaining independence. Is this the type of independence we wanted? No. Independence is meant to confer peace, and it should develop the culture of the nation. We should not be dependent on others. We should be independent in every way.

Bharat is a sacred land. Noble souls were born here. Bharat was ruled by Sri Rama Himself. This is the land of the Song Celestial, the Bhagavad Gita. This is the birthplace of the first composer, Valmiki. This is the birthplace of Veda Vyasa, who classified the Vedas. This is the land traversed by Lord Buddha. This is a land of merit and sacrifice. This is the birthplace of spiritual aspirants, seers and sages. But, the modern man does not have even an iota of sacrifice. *Na Karmana Na Prajaya Dhanena Thyagenaike Amritatvamanusu* (immortality can be attained only through sacrifice; neither wealth nor progeny nor good deeds can confer it). So, cultivate the spirit of sacrifice. It is possible only when you develop love within.

Develop Love, Practise Sacrifice

There are many rich people in this country. There are many intellectuals. We have also men of valour. All are here, but what is the use? There is hatred between person and person. There is hatred and enmity between people of the same profession. It is a very bad quality. All are one; be alike to everyone. You have to love everybody. But, today people are not broadminded. There should be expansion love. Today, there is only contraction love.

The man who goes by the mind will ruin himself. He is worse than an animal. The one who goes by the intellect (Buddhi) is the one of wisdom. (Telugu Poem) So, you have to grow in intellect. So long as the mind persists, you are bound in illusion, you are bound to suffer.

It is the mind that causes misery. It is the mind that is full of desires. It is the mind that makes heaven or hell. *Mano Moolam Idam Jagat* (this world is the creation of the mind). As you are caught up with the whims and vagaries of the mind, you have forgotten the eternal path.

Embodiments of Love!

Love everybody, but do not trust anybody. You have to repose your trust only in God. What is the reason? Why should you not trust man? Man is not permanent. The Gita says the world is transitory, fleeting and impermanent.

Human body is not permanent. It is full of dirt and diseases. It cannot cross this ocean of life. Oh man, never think that this life is eternal. (Telugu Poem) People go by this body and forget the divinity within. You should have strong faith in God. Do not have faith in this body, which is temporary. Body is like a water bubble, mind is like a mad monkey. Don't follow the body, don't follow the mind. Follow the conscience. That is the principle of the Atma. You will experience divinity only when you follow your conscience.

You may worship God in any name and form. God does not take into consideration your caste or community. He expects only love. You don't need to do any penance or undertake any rigorous spiritual practice. You can cultivate love easily. Love is within you. Love which is already existing should be developed. You have to share this love with everybody. You should love even the one who hates you. To harm a person who harmed you is nothing great. Real greatness lies in loving the person who harmed you.

Know Your True Identity

Embodiments of Love!

Human life is full of love. What is the purpose of life? It is love and love alone. Love is God. Live in love. Divinity manifests only when you develop love. There is no need to search for Him anywhere. The Bible said so. Today, man is in search of God. Why should you search for God when He is everywhere? You are God. All Sadhana will go in vain if you do not know your true identity. Instead of asking others 'who are you, who are you', better ask yourself 'who am I, who am I'. This is my book. This is my tumbler. Then who am I? This feeling of 'my' is Maya (illusion). First know who you are.

All this is matter. All this is negative. You are the master of this material world. Master the mind and be a mastermind. You should make an effort to know your true identity. To know this, you should first give up body attachment. This is my handkerchief. When I say this is 'my handkerchief,' I am separate from the handkerchief. Similarly, when I say this is 'my body', I am separate from the body. My mind means I am separate from my mind. Then who am I? Constant enquiry on these lines would lead you to self-realisation. People are heroes in doing experiments in the laboratory, but zeros in experience. You should be heroes in the practical field. It is useless to be a hero in reading books or in giving lectures. There is only one hero, and He is God. *Ekam Sat Vipra Bahudha Vadanti* is the teaching of the Vedas. God is the only truth. All the rest is falsehood. Everything becomes truth in the company of God. Zero preceded by one becomes ten. As the number of zeros increases the value also increases. If the number one is erased, nothing remains. Therefore, hero becomes zero if he forgets God. You may be an intellectual with great erudition and exalted position. But, you cannot call yourself intelligent if you forget God.

Easy Way to Know God

Science has progressed to a great extent in Bharat. Man has undertaken space travel also. But, what is the use? Man wants to know what is there in space. He wants to know what is there at the moon. He wants to reach even the sun. First recognise the divinity within yourself. Open the doors of your heart. Develop love more and more. Understand the truth. Experience God. There lies the bliss. It is very easy to know God, but man does not understand this.

You have to make every effort to understand the immanent divinity. The divinity within is covered by ego and anger. Therefore, it is said, *Moham Hitwa Punar Vidya* (real knowledge dawns when attachment is destroyed). Where does this attachment come from? Excessive desires lead to attachment.

Embodiments of Love!

All are embodiments of God. *Sahasra Seersha Purusha Sahasraksha Sahasrapad* (God has thousands of heads, eyes and feet). You will experience it once you enquire deep within.

You may attain peace by undertaking Japa, Dhyana and Yoga. But, this peace is not permanent; it is temporary. To attain permanent peace, you should develop love within. Love can turn earth into sky and sky into earth. This sacred love is within you. But, you direct it in the wrong direction and thereby it gets perverted. You are responsible for the loss and suffering. You are responsible for the wicked actions and agitations outside.

The previous speaker spoke about diseases and their cure. Why do diseases arise? The number of doctors is increasing day by day. Today, we have a doctor for every family. Each house has at least two patients. Most of the diseases are psychological. You are bound to be sick if you go on feeling you are sick. Never think you are sick. Always have the feeling that you are happy and healthy. Develop sacred love and experience your innate divinity. This is the culture of Bharat. Bharata—*Bha* means effulgence. Effulgence is God. *Rata* means to love. One who has love for God is a true Bharatiya.

Intelligence is gifted to mankind to know God, not to amass wealth. Why do you study? You have to study to get rid of ignorance. True education lies in giving up ignorance and recognising divinity.

Embodiments of Love!

Repeated teachings do not help you to understand Divinity. You are not able to understand Divinity due to the consequences of your actions done in many past lives. Today human values are on the decline. Man originated lakhs of years ago. But, he has not understood human values till this day. It is said, "Proper study of mankind is man." What is this proper study of mankind? It is the unity of thought, word and deed. Man faces problems in life, because he lacks unity.

Let there be perfect harmony in thought, word and deed right from this day. You should say what you think and do what you say. You do not need to search for God. You are God. God is in you, with you, above you, below you and around you. Understand this truth and turn your vision inward. Only then you can attain bliss.

I have been coming to Mumbai for many years. What is it that you have achieved during this period? What spiritual practices have you undertaken? What truths have you known? Today people crave for bookish knowledge, superficial knowledge and general knowledge, but do not have practical knowledge. The one who has practical knowledge will have understanding of the divinity. But, today people are heroes at platform and zeros in practice. You should be heroes in practice. You should put into practice at least one sacred principle. At least speak the truth or develop love. That is enough. There is no greater Sadhana than this. *Sathyannasti Paro Dharma* (there is no greater Dharma than adhering to Truth). What is Dharma? True Dharma lies in developing love. It is love that unifies all. This love will help you to experience unity in diversity.

Embodiments of Divine Atma!

Whatever spiritual path you tread, it should help you to uproot ignorance. What is ignorance? It is the belief in all that is outside, the external scenario. You have to discriminate whether it is right or wrong, good or bad. You should have Samyak Drishti—right vision. Then you will attain deservedness.

I am always ready to tell you the easy path to Divinity. I will be happy only when you are happy. Make every effort to put into practice what you hear.

Bhajans are highly sacred. Bhajan singing makes the heart sacred. What is important is that it should come out from the heart. Bhajan is not just rhythm, tune and beat. You should sing God's

name with love. You will see the manifestation of Divinity with your physical eyes when you sing His glory with all love.

Many noble souls merged in God through love. Don't you know Mira who attained liberation by chanting Krishna's name? Prahlada, bitten by serpents, trampled upon by elephants, given poison, yet chanted God's name and attained liberation. He considered everything divine. *Yad Bhavam Tad Bhavati* (as is the feeling, so is the experience). So, you should think of God with love.

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajan, "*Prema Muditha Manase Kaho...*"

—**From Bhagavan's Discourse in Mumbai on 14th March 1999**

Glory of Bharatiya Culture

*Punar Vittham, Punar Mithram, Punar Bharya Punar Mahi
Btath Sarvam Punar Labhyam Na Sareeram Punah Punah*

(Sanskrit Verse)

Embodiments of Love!

If money is lost, one need not be worried about it, for one can earn it again. If a friend is lost, one can have another. If wife is lost, one can marry again. If one loses one's piece of land, one can purchase another piece of land. All these can be regained; but if body is lost, one cannot get it back.

Cultivate Selfless Love

Human body is highly sacred and invaluable. So, it has to be looked after with utmost care. *Janthoonam Narajanma Durlabham*, human birth is the rarest and noblest of all living beings. But man, unable to understand his true identity, is wasting his life. Since time immemorial, the culture of Bharat has propagated three important values. *Sathyam Bhruyat* (speak the truth). Never utter a lie to please someone. This is the moral value. *Priyam Bhruyat* (speak in a pleasing way). This is the social value. *Na Bhruyat Sathyamapriyam* (do not speak unpleasant truth). This is the spiritual value. The Bhagavad Gita says, *Anudvegakaram Vakyam Sathyam Priyahitham Cha Yat* (one should speak only truthful, pleasing and well-intentioned words, which are beneficial to others).

Man today has forgotten his true Self and is getting carried away by illusion. What is the reason? A small example to illustrate this. Pure gold shines brilliantly and has a very high value. However, when it gets alloyed with metals like silver, copper, brass, etc., it not only loses its identity, but also its value. Similarly, man, who can be compared to pure gold, has lost his true identity and also his value as his mind is polluted with worldly thoughts and unsacred feelings. Man today cannot be called a human being in the strict sense of the term. He has lost his humanness because of bad thoughts and bad company. What man needs to cultivate today is the value of the ever brilliant and effulgent Self. Human values cannot be acquired from outside. They are innate and inborn. But, man has forgotten these values which are inherent in him right from his birth. Modern man is human only in form, but not in behaviour.

Right from ancient times, Bharat has been in the vanguard of human values, namely, Sathya, Dharma, Santhi, Prema and Ahimsa. Man is gifted with love, but he has highly adulterated it with selfishness and self-interest. He should cultivate selfless love. Only then will his life shine brilliantly. When the electric current enters the bulb through the wire, you get the light. Truth, righteousness, peace and love can be compared to the electric current, wire, bulb and light respectively. *(Cheers)* So, in order to experience the light of love, you must cultivate truth, righteousness and peace. Love is God, God is love. So, live in love. Right from a pauper to a millionaire, none can survive without love. Man loves his wife, wealth and children. But greatness lies in sharing your love with everyone, not merely with your kith and kin.

Vedanta says, love everybody, but do not trust anybody. The reason is that the human body is temporary. *"It is made of flesh and bones and is full of dirt. It is afflicted with many diseases. It cannot cross the ocean of Samsara. O mind! realise that this body is ephemeral and take refuge at the lotus feet of the Lord."* (Telugu Poem) This body is valued and considered to be Sivam (auspicious) so long as there is life in it. It becomes Shavam (dead body) and absolutely useless the moment life principle forsakes it. So, understand the transient nature of the body and conduct yourself accordingly. Share your love with everybody. Your entire life is based on love.

Protect your Senses from Evil Effects

Embodiments of Love!

Since ancient times, the culture of Bharat has laid great emphasis on the need for good thoughts, good company and good actions. *Sathyam Vada, Dharmam Chara* (speak the truth and practise righteousness). Man can attain exalted heights by following this dictum. Only the Bharatiyas understood this truth. But alas! today the Bharatiyas themselves have forgotten it. *Today the Bharatiyas themselves are not making any effort to understand their own culture, which is suffused with noble and divine feelings. Humanness has become extinct in man due to the lack of fear of sin and love for God. What greater misfortune can befall on humanity than this!* (Telugu Poem)

Man should realise his innate divinity. This is possible only when man makes proper use of the five elements and five senses gifted by God. The primary duty of man lies not in protecting his wealth and valuables, but in conserving the five elements and protecting the five senses from evil effects. The same message was propagated by Gautama Buddha also. In the beginning he studied many scriptures, approached many preceptors and undertook various types of spiritual exercises. But, his spiritual thirst was not quenched. Ultimately, he realised that proper utilisation of the five senses would alone confer peace of mind. First and foremost, he stressed on the importance of Samyak Drishti (right vision). All that you see, be it good or bad, gets imprinted in your heart forever. So, see no evil, see what is good. Hear no evil, hear what is good. This is called Samyak Shravanam (right listening). Samyak Drishti and Samyak Shravanam will lead to Samyak Bhavam (right feelings). Your life will be sanctified once you cultivate Samyak Bhavam. Human life is based on feelings. Human life sans feelings cannot exist. Today man lacks peace of mind because he does not have Samyak Drishti, Samyak Shravanam and Samyak Bhavam. We blame others for our sufferings. Do not accuse others for your sufferings, because you are yourself the cause of your misery. Happiness or sorrow is of your own making. All that you experience is nothing but the reflection, reaction and resound of what is in you. Buddha, having understood this truth, put his five senses to proper use through which he could attain Nirvana. He was in a state of supreme bliss at the time of attaining Nirvana. That state could be described as ever blissful, granting happiness, embodiment of wisdom, beyond duality, infinite as the sky, primordial, final goal, one, eternal, pure, immutable, omnipresent witness, beyond emotions, devoid of the three Gunas.

When Buddha was at the verge of attaining Nirvana, his stepbrother Ananda, who was by his side, started shedding tears. Seeing this Buddha smiled and said, "My dear one, it is rather surprising that you should feel sad about my attaining the state of highest bliss. Instead you should also try to attain this state of supreme bliss by controlling your senses."

Sacred Values of Bharatiya Culture

Bharat is the motherland of many noble souls. It is therefore essential for all the Bharatiyas to understand the sacred history of Bharat. But, today no one seems to be interested in knowing the history and culture of Bharat. The culture of Bharat is based on Dharma. The word Dharma has been misinterpreted as religion. Dharma is like a vast ocean, whereas religion is like a pond. The culture of Bharat is pure, unsullied, eternal and immortal. In olden days, the children were taught the sacred values of Indian culture right from the age of five. Their education would begin with the sacred Mantras like Aum Namah Sivaya and Aum Namoh Narayana. But in the modern education system, the divine names such as Siva and Narayana have no place. The children are taught meaningless rhymes like "Ba... Ba... black sheep". People are not making efforts to understand the efficacy of these Mantras.

No doubt the worldly education is required, but along with this secular knowledge, one has to make an effort to imbibe the cultural values too. It is because of the growth of worldly knowledge without cultural values that man has become a repository of doubts. Even the parents and children, wife and husband lack faith in each other. During the times of Jesus, there was only one doubting Thomas, but in the Kali Age everyone is a doubting Thomas!

Rama and Ravana were equally proficient in 36 forms of knowledge. But sage Valmiki, the composer of the Ramayana, portrayed Ravana as a fool and Rama as a noble one, because Ravana misused his knowledge, whereas Rama put his knowledge to proper use. That is why Valmiki described Rama as virtuous and noble. Ravana became the root cause for the death of his sons and brothers as he was unable to control his lust. His entire clan perished due to his wicked qualities and wicked actions. Rama led an ideal life. Today many people aspire to occupy positions of authority in the political field though they do not deserve. But Rama renounced the kingdom itself though, being the eldest son, He richly deserved to be the king. He sacrificed everything for the sake of truth. He had firm belief in the Vedic dictum, *Sathyannasti Paro Dharma* (there is no greater Dharma than truth). He made such a great sacrifice and went to the forest to uphold his father's word. The Vedas also clearly state *Na Karmana Na Prajaya Dhanena Thyagenaikena Amruthatwamanusu* (immortality can be attained only through sacrifice; neither wealth nor progeny nor good deeds can confer it). In fact, Tyaga (sacrifice) is true Yoga. If you do not exhale the air that you inhale, your lungs will be affected. If you do not excrete the food you eat, you will have stomach disorders. Likewise, you should give money that you earn in charity with a spirit of sacrifice. There lies the bliss.

The culture of Bharat does not give scope for differences based on caste, creed, colour, religion and nationality. It says, *"Let us move together and let us grow together, let us share the knowledge and improve upon it. Let us live in amity and peace without any differences whatsoever."* (Telugu Poem) It speaks of the principle of equanimity. It says, *Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavantu* (May the whole world be happy!). It treats everyone alike irrespective of caste, creed, colour, religion and nationality. The same principle was stated by Jesus also. He said, "All are one, my dear son, be alike to everyone. In fact, the underlying principle of all the religions is one and the same. But, the people have forgotten this unity and have become narrow-minded.

Search for Truth

Embodiments of Love!

Love is life. So, one has to channelise this love in the proper direction. Do not let it go in the wrong direction. You can accomplish anything in life if you exercise control over it. The culture of Bharat speaks of Sathyanveshana (search for truth). Why should one search for truth, which is all-pervasive? What is the inner meaning of the word Sathyanveshana? The culture of Bharat gives a beautiful analogy for this. The eyes that see your mother, your wife, your daughter and your daughter-in-law are the same, but the feelings with which you see them vary. Here Sathyanveshana refers to the enquiry into the feelings that you should have when you look at each of them. The culture of Bharat lays great emphasis on self-enquiry.

Some people say, since God has no form He does not exist. But, God has form. In this world, there is nothing that exists without form. According to science, the entire world is made up of atoms. They too have form. The Vedas say, *Anoraneeyan Mahatomaheeyan* (God is smaller than the smallest atom and bigger than the biggest object). The atom is God. Right from the water you drink and the food you eat, everything is pervaded by atom. It took thousands of years for the scientists to understand this truth. But, the same truth was proclaimed by the tiny tot Prahlada ages ago. He said, "Do not have the feeling that God is here and He is not there. In fact, He is everywhere. You can find Him wherever you search for Him." Bharat has been the birthplace of many noble souls like Prahlada who had experienced the omnipresent Divinity. Since ancient times, the Bharatiyas worshipped earth, trees, anthills and mountains because they believed that God is everywhere and in everything.

*Sarvata Pani Padam Tat,
Sarvatokshi Siromukham,
Sarvata Srutimalloke,
Sarvamavritya Tishtati.*

With hands, feet, eyes, heads, mouths and ears pervading everything, He permeates the entire universe.

God is everywhere. This is the teaching of our ancient culture. As human mind has become weak, man is losing faith in these ancient values. Just as the alloys mixed with gold make the gold lose its shine and value, so also the bad qualities and bad feelings have made man lose his value and brilliance.

Embodiments of Love!

Develop faith in God for your own happiness and bliss. If people develop faith in God, the whole country will be happy. You are subjected to misery because you lack faith in the Self. Self-confidence is very essential. Do not get carried away by the worldly education. In fact all that is related to the mind and the senses is nothing but ignorance. The annihilation of mind is true wisdom. Mind is a bundle of thoughts and impulses. So, all that is related to the mind is subject to change. Only the Atma is true and eternal.

Many changes occur in man with age, but man remains the same. At the time of birth, you are a child. After ten years, people call you a boy. After thirty years, you become a man. After 75 years, you are called a grandfather. The child, boy, man and grandfather are one and the same.

But, you are getting deluded seeing the physical changes. You should always have the changeless truth in your mind. That is the real human value. The worldly knowledge is also required, but that is not the be all and end all of human life. Worldly knowledge is for the happiness in this world and spiritual knowledge is for the happiness thereafter. It is only the spiritual knowledge that is in you, above you, below you, around you and protects you.

Some people deny the existence of God because He is not seen by the naked eye. Can you, with the same analogy, deny the existence of air, which is also not visible to the naked eye? Though the human eye cannot see God, the Hridaya can see Him, hear Him and experience Him. This is the teaching of our ancient culture. This great culture has remained vibrant for thousands of years. Einstein said, energy can neither be created nor destroyed. It only changes its forms. The same thing can be said about our ancient culture also.

Business of God

Among the numbers one and nine, one is greater because you cannot have the latter without the former. It is only out of the number one that millions have emerged. Zero gains value if the number one precedes it. The value becomes more and more with the increase in the number of zeros. One is the hero, world is zero. That hero is God. You are all like zeros. So, try to have the hero by your side. Develop the faith that God is. Mere repetition of the names potato and chapati will not appease your hunger. Likewise, merely reading the spiritual texts or listening to the discourses of holy men will not grant you fulfillment. Instead put into practice at least one sacred teaching. Only then can you experience happiness.

Consider this example: Put two spoons of sugar in a tumbler containing water. The sugar gets collected at the bottom of the tumbler. If you drink the water without mixing the sugar, the water will not have any taste. Take a spoon and stir it; then the whole glass of water will taste sweet. The human heart is like a tumbler containing water. Divinity can be compared to sugar. Stir it with the spoon of Buddhi (intellect). The process of stirring is enquiry. Once this is done, the sweetness of divinity will spread to all the limbs of the body. Then all that you see, hear, talk and do will be suffused with divinity. Your life itself will be filled with love.

You have to grow in faith in order to develop love. Many people consider faith as mere foolishness. But truly speaking, bookish knowledge sans practical knowledge can be termed as foolishness. You should never be satisfied with mere bookish knowledge and superficial knowledge. You need to develop general knowledge and discrimination knowledge also. Only then you will attain practical knowledge, which is very essential. But, today very few seem to be having practical knowledge. Most of the people are wasting their lives in acquiring superficial knowledge.

In the field of spirituality, you cannot attain anything if you do not have faith and determination. When you go to the market, you cannot get even a small handkerchief if you do not pay a certain amount of money. Likewise, you cannot attain divine grace unless you offer your love to God. God is also like a businessman! What sort of business is He engaged in? Not worldly business, purely spiritual. He receives your love and showers His grace on you. Surrender all your thoughts and worries to God and receive bliss in return.

This is the business you are supposed to do with God. But in this Kali Age, people are engaged in a different type of business with God. Students go to temple and pray, "O God, I will offer two coconuts if You make me pass the examination:" What will God do with your coconuts? It is because of such foolish vows that spirituality has become a matter of ridicule in the eyes of many. Many of you may be aware that in Andhra Pradesh, there is a very famous pilgrimage centre named Tirupati, where Lord Venkateshwara is the presiding deity. Some people go there and pray, "Swami, I will offer my hair to You if I win the lottery." They do not realise that God is not in need of their dirty hair. You have to offer all your wicked qualities and wicked thoughts to God and receive sacred qualities and sacred thoughts in return. Suppose you have a damaged currency note. None will accept it except the Reserve Bank where you can get a brand new note in exchange of the damaged one. Likewise, your mind and heart, which are polluted with wicked thoughts, can be compared to damaged currency notes. Not even your wife and children would accept them. So, offer them to God who, like the Reserve Bank chairman, will give you good mind and good heart in return. Thereafter, you will lead a happy life.

Proper Utilisation of Wealth

According to the Vedas, human life is highly sacred. Do not make it profane by wicked thoughts and wicked actions. Fill your life with love and take to the path of spirituality. Spirituality does not mean outward worship and rituals alone. You should have the feeling of worship within. You may also do it externally if you are interested. There is nothing wrong in it. But, it will be a futile exercise if it is not done with the proper feelings. All these rituals should awaken the spiritual awareness in you. Otherwise, you will be leading the life of an animal, always aspiring for the worldly pleasures and comforts.

*Ahara Nidra Bhaya Methuneshu Samanyametat Pasubir Naranam
Jnanam Naranam Adhikam Visesham Jnanena Soonya Pasubhissamana.*

(Food, sleep, fear and progeny are common to mankind and animals. Only man is endowed with wisdom. Man bereft of wisdom is equivalent to an animal.) Today people are amassing wealth, but only a few of them are making proper use of it. Many are receiving high salaries. But, their work is not commensurate with the salary they receive. *Sarvakarma Bhagavad Preethyartham* (whatever you do, do it to please God). Only then your life will be redeemed.

Embodiments of Love!

There are innumerable rich men, educationists, judges, scientists and intellectuals in this country. But, not many are putting their wealth and resources to proper use. Very few are discharging their duties properly. This is the reason the country is facing hardships today. All those that amass wealth must realise that they cannot carry even a naya paisa with them when they leave this world. The money that you earn from the society should be used for the welfare of the society only. You all know that Kulwant Rai spent crores of rupees to build this magnificent building. There are many rich people in this country, but how many are engaging themselves in such acts of service and sacrifice? Sacrifice is the highest virtue. Some people are building hospitals and educational institutions with business motive spending crores of rupees. If they invest 50 crores on a hospital, they expect a profit of 100 crores. Similarly, with the investment of 50 crores on an educational institution, they want to make 200 crores. This sort of business is an unhealthy practice. Whatever you do, do it for the benefit of others. When you

stepped into this world, you did not bring anything with you nor can you take anything with you when you leave this world. No benefit accrues to you from having palatial buildings and huge bank balances if you cannot use them for the service of the society. Spend your money for the welfare of the society. Only then you can win divine grace. Serve the needy by providing comforts and conveniences.

There are many poor people in Delhi who cannot afford medical care. There are many more who are unable to send their children to school owing to financial constraints. Establish hospitals and schools, which will render free service to the poor. A third person need not tell you these noble ideas. You should take the initiative on your own. I never instructed Kulwant Rai to construct this building. It was his own idea that took this shape. Such noble ideas originate due to the merits done in past lives. There may be many people who feel jealous of him. It is his good luck to have built this building and that is their misfortune to feel jealous about it. Everyone must undertake good work. Consider every good work as God's work. (cheers) Truly speaking, Kulwant Rai has done a great service to the Sai Organisation by getting this beautiful building constructed. He has done this not for his benefit, but for the service of others. Every rich man should develop the spirit of sacrifice.

It is a mistake to think that Bharat is a poor country. It is the very abode of Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth. In the olden days, in Punjab, there were houses made of silver. The foreign invaders plundered those houses and took away all the silver on camels. They looted all the gold from Somnath temple. If Bharat were a poor country, it would not have suffered such foreign invasions in the past. There is no dearth of wealth in Bharat. It is unfortunate that some people call Bharat a poor country. Bharat is the land of plenty and prosperity. Bharatiyas are not poor, they are very rich. Who is the richest man in the world? He who has much satisfaction is the richest man in the world. Who is the poorest man in the world? The one who has too many desires is the poorest man in the world. The one imbued with the spirit of sacrifice is the richest man. If you have ten rupees in your pocket, give at least one rupee to the needy. However, the beggars are not satisfied with one rupee because they cannot buy even a small piece of bread with it these days.

Secret of Happiness

Our ancients used to attach more value to their word than to money. It is your good fortune that you are born in such a sacred land of Bharat. You should uphold and propagate Dharma to the rest of the world befitting your nationality. It gives me great joy to find anyone practising and propagating Dharma. Believe it or not, there is not an iota of selfishness in Me from top to toe. Whatever I do, it is only for the welfare of others. Be good, see good and do good. That is true human quality.

God is the embodiment of Sat, Chit and Ananda. Sat means Being (that which is permanent). Chit means Awareness. The combination of Sat and Chit results in Ananda. So, in order to experience bliss, one has to make friendship with God. God is the only true friend. All of you are aware how the worldly friends are. As long as there is water in the tank, you find thousands of frogs living there. But, all the frogs desert the pond once it gets dried up. Likewise, all the worldly friends swarm around you saying hello, hello as long as you are in position of authority and have wealth. Once you lose both, none will look at your face even to say goodbye. But,

friendship with God is true and eternal. God is always with you in times of both pain and pleasure. King Harishchandra underwent many trials and tribulations to uphold truth. He always had the protection of God because he stuck to the path of truth. So, have faith in God and tread along the path of truth. Money comes and goes like passing clouds and makes many rounds, but morality comes and grows. (*Cheers*) This is the thing you have to note today.

Delhi is the capital of Bharat. So, if Delhi is good, the whole country will be good. Anything can be achieved through unity. Give up individual and political differences. Have the national interest uppermost in your mind. Stand united and be prepared to sacrifice even your life for the welfare of the country. Uphold the prestige of the country and spread it far and wide.

Embodiments of Love!

If you strive hard to put at least five of your fellowmen on the right path everyday, you can bring about unity and transformation among the 98 crore Indian population. Pray for the welfare of the nation. Develop the spirit of patriotism. Then the society and nation would prosper. I hope I am not causing inconvenience to you by speaking for a long time. But, such sacred teachings have to be imparted. Truth has to be conveyed in a fearless manner. There is no need to fear if you are following the truth. Human life is governed by four F's:

*Follow the master
Face the devil
Fight to the end
Finish the game.*

Your conscience is your master. So, follow your conscience. Life is a game, play it. Life is a dream, realise it. Life is love, enjoy it. If you understand this and put at least one teaching into practice, your life will be redeemed. Always contemplate on God. The secret of happiness lies in chanting God's name. You can chant any name of God and redeem your life.

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajan, "*Hari Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahin...*"

—From Bhagavan's Discourse in Delhi on the evening of 12th March 1999

GURUPOORNIMA CELEBRATIONS AT PRASANTHI NILAYAM:

Homage to the Divine Guru

The holy festival of Gurupoornima was celebrated at Prasanthi Nilayam with great devotional fervour. On this auspicious occasion, many excellent musical and cultural programmes were held in the Divine Presence of the Universal Teacher, Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Presented below is a glimpse of these programmes.

Ashadi Ekadasi (24-7-99)

Bal Vikas students and youth of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, Mumbai (Maharashtra) presented an inspiring cultural programme on this auspicious occasion.

Bhagavan Baba came to the newly renovated and glittering Sai Kulwant Hall at 6.45 a.m. After showering love and grace on the assembled devotees on this auspicious day, Bhagavan graciously permitted the programme to be started. The programme began with an invocation song to Bhagavan Baba. This was followed by the traditional Varkari dance performed by the youth of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, Mumbai. With Sai Vitthal seated before them, the joy of the dancers knew no bounds as they danced in their traditional costumes.

The next item of the programme was an allegorical play entitled "Spiritual Kar Rally" enacted by the Bal Vikas children of Mumbai. Devotees in Maharashtra begin their journey to Pandharpur, the abode of Lord Vitthal, on the auspicious day of Ashadi Ekadasi, symbolising the journey of man to God. This play beautifully depicted how man should perform this most important journey of life safely and successfully.

In the play, two persons are shown to choose the 'Kars' (vehicles) of "Ahamkara" (ego) and "Mamakara" (attachment) and they suffer total breakdown. When they are stranded on the way, they pray for God's help and as a result are rescued by the grace of the Lord in the form of the taxi of "Chamatkara" (miracle). This happens in the life of every man. This can become the turning point of his life as it shows him the grand highway of "I to He". If he take to this highway and follows the "rules of traffic" (the nine point code of conduct which Bhagavan has given for the benefit of mankind) he can perform this journey in the divine vehicles of "Namaskar" (humility), "Sanskaras" (values) and "Paropakara" (service) as the two characters in the play do. He can attain "Sakshatkara" (self-realisation) if he surrenders his broken vehicles of "Ahamkara" and "Mamakara" to Him.

This excellent programme concluded with Arati to Bhagavan and distribution of Prasadam to the devotees.

Sant Jnaneswar (25-7-99)

A short play on the life of Sant Jnaneswar was presented by the Bal Vikas children of Maharashtra in the Poornachandra Auditorium at Prasanthi Nilayam in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Baba on 25th July 1999.

The play opens with the parents of Sant Jnaneswar preparing to leave home. They write a letter to their four children to communicate their decision to leave home in the hope that the social stigma of excommunication would not affect their children, so that they would not be subjected to this ordeal in their life. It is revealed that orthodox priests had enforced social boycott of the family since Jnaneswar's father Vitthal Pant entered Grihastha Ashram at the instructions of his Guru after he had taken Sanyasa (renunciation).

But, the supernatural powers of the divine child Jnaneswar vanquish the opposition of the orthodox priests. One of the powers of Jnaneswar is revealed when his sister cooks Chapattis on his back.

This is not the only miracle performed by the child Jnaneswar. He causes a buffalo to recite Vedic hymns in the presence of Pandits of Paithan, who fall at his feet and take back the order of excommunication of the family.

Another scene shows how the children take rest in a mosque and offer flowers at a tomb and the priest of the mosque hears a voice from the tomb. In another incident, Sant Jnaneswar brings back to life the dead husband of a devotee. The scene in which Sant Jnaneswar goes to meet a great and proud yogi Changdev who rides on a tiger is beautifully depicted on the stage when the wall becomes a vehicle of Sant Jnaneswar. At the age of 22, Sant Jnaneswar entered Samadhi.

At the end, Bhagavan Baba went up the stage and blessed the children who participated in the play. He gave clothes to all the participants and also materialised a gold chain for the child actor who played the role of Sant Jnaneswar.

Pandit Bhimsen Joshi's Musical Homage to Bhagavan (25-7-99)

This drama was followed by a soul stirring musical performance by Pandit Bhimsen Joshi, one of the greatest exponents of Indian classical music. Sri Joshi sang three songs in his mellifluous voice and was cheered by the audience time and again. At the end of his performance, Bhagavan came up the stage and materialised a gold bracelet for Sri Joshi. The evening programme came to a close after Mangalarati to Bhagavan at 7.45 p.m.

Valedictory Function of the First Sri Sathya Sai Seminar on Values Parenting (26-7-99)

On 26th July 1999, Valedictory Function of this Seminar was organised in Sai Kulwant Hall. Bhagavan came at 3.30 p.m. to deliver His discourse. Before the Divine Discourse of Bhagavan Baba, two speakers made a brief speech. The first speaker, Dr. Pal Dhall, Director, Institute of Sathya Sai Education, Australia, emphasised the role of parents in the education of children and felt that the problems with children were increasing in the Western countries. Therefore, at present there was all the more need to cultivate values in children from early age, in which the contribution of parents was very important. The second speaker Dr. Jumsai informed that so far there were 12 Sathya Sai schools in several parts of the world. Moreover, Sathya Sai Institute had adopted about 500 schools all over the world.

Bhagavan then delivered His Divine Discourse at 4.25 p.m. The day's programme came to a close with Mangalarati to Bhagavan.

Gurupoornima Function (28-7-99 Morning)

The holy festival of Gurupoornima was celebrated in the tastefully decorated Sai Kulwant Hall in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Bhagavan came to Sai Kulwant Hall at 6.45 a.m. in a procession led by the Primary School band and followed by the Members of Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust.

The students greeted Bhagavan Baba by reciting Guru Stotras in Sanskrit. An important item of the programme was the release of the video cassette of the telefilm "Shirdi Sai Parthi Sai Divya Katha" by Bhagavan. This telefilm has been produced by the renowned actress Ms Anjali Devi, an ardent devotee of Bhagavan. Bhagavan gave His blessings to her and also materialised a glittering gold necklace for her. An audio cassette of the songs of the telefilm was also released.

Ms. Anjali Devi expressed her gratitude to Bhagavan for fulfilling her long cherished wish of making a film on Bhagavan. Her speech was followed by two excellent music performances, the first one by the music maestro Pandit Bhimsen Joshi and the second by the well known singers, Radha Jayalakshmi sisters. After this, Bhagavan gave His Gurupoornima Sandesh (given separately).

Sathya Sai Universal Symphony Orchestra (28-7-99 Evening)

One of the most impressive and enchanting programmes of the Gurupoornima celebrations this year was the delightful performance of Sathya Sai Universal Symphony Orchestra on the Gurupoornima evening, in which 44 musicians from 19 countries took part. Bhagavan Baba came to the Poornachandra Auditorium at 5.40 p.m. With Bhagavan's blessings, the programme started at 6.00 p.m. and continued up to 7.15 p.m. transporting the entire audience to a celestial plane by the spiritual symphony of the divine music. Though the instruments were mostly Western, the themes were all spiritual, from the West as well as from Indian scriptures like the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. This programme came to a close with playing of Bhagavan's Arati in music. Bhagavan went up the stage, blessed and honoured the musicians by giving shawls and also materialised a gold chain for the Director of the orchestra, Mr. Giuseppe Savazzi.

That Day is Gurupoornima

Gurupoornima is the day on which you desire to worship the Guru and please him by praise. But, that is not the real significance of this holy day. Man is endowed with the mind. The mind can plunge him into bondage or lead him to freedom. When it helps him to attain liberation, it becomes the guru. The mind has to shine in serene splendour without any trace of evil. It is to be fixed on the Supreme Being alone. When the victory is gained, that day is Guru Poornima, the full moon of the mind, for the moon is the deity presiding over the mind.

—Baba

AVATAR VANI:

KODAIKANAL DISCOURSE-I

The Ephemeral and the Transcendental

Life without love is like an electric wire without power supply, a field without water, a temple without deity and a school without teacher.

(Telugu Poem)

*Speech is the cause of prosperity
Speech is the cause of friendship
Speech is the cause of bondage
And speech may even cause death.*

(Sanskrit Verse)

In this world speech carries more value than the currency note. In ancient times, people used to give immense value to speech. With the help of speech they were able to become rich and prosperous; they could even win kingdoms. Man becomes virtuous only when his speech is good; he becomes evil when his speech is bad. Speech promotes friendship. It also brings about differences between friends. Speech promotes affinity among relatives. It also creates discord. Effects of speech are not confined to ephemeral and worldly matters only; speech affects our spiritual progress also. Speech may even cause death. Speech can save one's life too. Sweet speech brings you name and fame. As man today has lost his pleasant speech and sweet temper, he is subjected to innumerable ordeals and sufferings. That is why I tell the students now and then, you cannot always oblige but you can speak always obligingly. When the speech is good, man becomes a hero. But, man will become a zero if the speech is not good. Who is hero? God is hero and the world is zero. So, you should make friendship with that hero. The eternal nature of the Divine Love, which is blemishless, selfless and pure alone stands the test of true friendship. When you enjoy the proximity of such a friend, you will be free from fear even in the face of insurmountable difficulties. Lack of faith is the cause of fear in man. So, cultivating faith in the Divine is the foremost task of man. Endowed with such faith, one can achieve success in every kind of task.

What is the root cause of disturbance and restlessness in the world? *Due to their ignorance, people have lost fear of sin and love for God, resulting in the depravity of human nature. What a blow to the cause of peace in the world!*

(Telugu Poem)

Seek Love Within

Man today has made giant strides in all fields. But, the progress he has registered can be compared to an electric wire without current since he does not possess human values. Love of God has infinite power. Here is an example. People are coming here from far off places in India and from different countries spending a lot of money and time. Why do they gather here? What is the reason? They find something here which they do not find in their family members, in friends, in relatives, in the society they live in and also in their countries. If they were able to find it in themselves or in their societies or in their countries, they would have never come here. What do they find here? You find love here. For the sake of experiencing Divine Love, you all embark on long and arduous journeys. But, if you make a thorough observation and investigation into the matter, you will be able to know that love is present within you only. In the Gita, Lord Krishna declared: *Mamaivamso Jeevaloke Jeevabhutha Sanathana* (the eternal Atma in every human being is a part of My Being). Hence, the Divine Love is present in every individual. But, the human being, unable to realise the truth that love is present within himself, thinks that it is something separate or different from him, and undertakes long journeys searching for love. Know that the Divine is not different from you. *Sarvata Panipadam Tat Sarvathokshi Siromukham* (That omnipresent Brahman has His hands, feet, eyes and mouth everywhere).

To have a vision of God, who is omnipresent, you have to make certain enquiries. The Vedas proclaim that Brahman is all-pervasive. *Easwara Sarva Bhutanam* (the Divine is immanent in every being). Man should cultivate good qualities if he wants to realise the truth of these statements. Without such qualities, man cannot realise even a fraction of the truth of the statement *Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma* (verily all this is Brahman). By means of good qualities

only one can recognise the Divine who is omnipresent. Cultivating good qualities is the basic tenet of devotion. Cultivation of virtues, right attitude, and adherence to truth, discipline and sense of duty are the signs of devotion. Only those who develop these qualities can be called devotees.

Our foremost task is to cultivate Sadgunas (good qualities). The Sanskrit word "Sat" stands for eternity, which is called "Being". We should acquire the qualities of "Being". What are these qualities? They are attributelessness, purity, steadfastness and enlightenment. It is not an easy task to acquire all these qualities. However, there is one way out. As all the virtues are embedded in pure, selfless and divine love, if you develop love, all the virtues will manifest in you. The true nature of love should be cultivated to experience the Divinity latent in you.

Who am I?

Several ways were enunciated in Vedanta to clarify one question—"Who am I?" What is its inner significance? The "I" is all-pervasive. Question yourself, "Who am I?" A doubt may also arise as to why I should try to know "Who am I" when there are so many other things of interest in this age of information. If you find out an answer to this question, you will be able to realise not only your true nature, your true identity, but also the true identity of the millions of people in the world. You will be able to recognise the true nature of every individual.

Whenever you come across a stranger you ask him, "Who are you?" and waste your time. Instead, question yourself, "Who am I?" By finding out the answer to this question you will be able to very easily find out who he is, as the true nature of every human being is one and the same. Every human being refers to himself as "I". The word "I" is applicable to every individual. If you understand this one word "I", you can understand the real nature of every being in the world.

Here is an example. Look at these bulbs and tube lights. Their colours, wattage and shapes are different. You know that the electric current that flows through these different bulbs is one and the same. *Ekam Sat Viprah Bahudha Vadanti* (Truth is one, but scholars refer to it by many names). Likewise, forms are different, names are different, but the divine vibration is one and the same. So, there is only One without a second. That is Divinity. If you recognise Divinity, you will be able to understand the nature of the Self-immanent in all individual beings. Everything has emanated from the Divine.

Here is an example. First you were alone. Later you got married. Before marriage you had only two legs and you enjoyed greater freedom. You could go wherever you wanted to go. After marriage, you acquired two more legs and your movements were restricted, as you did not feel like leaving your wife alone at home. This is bondage. Your wish to have a son might be fulfilled after two years. With the arrival of the son, you added two more legs. Your movements were further impeded. With the passage of time, you might feel bad for not having a baby girl though you had a son who could uplift your family and bring name and fame. Two more legs were added with the birth of a daughter. The greater the number of legs, the lesser the freedom would be. You would give away your daughter in marriage. Members of the bridegroom's family would become your relatives. With the arrival of the daughter-in-law, the members of her family too would become your relatives. In this manner one becomes many. Here oneness is the cause of

multitudinous. If you realise this truth, the Vedantic axiom *Ekoham Bahusyam* (one Brahman multiplies' Itself into many) can be understood easily. To realise this oneness as the unifying force of the multitudinous is the *summum bonum* of the Indian Culture. But, man today is not thinking on these lines. He is dividing oneness into many. He is carried away by attachments at physical level and is fully immersed in worldly relations like son-in-law, daughter-in-law, grandson and the like. This attachment leads to bondage. If he realises the truth that the nature of the Self is one and the same in every being, there will be no suffering.

Cultivate Purity and Divinity

The world is like a cinema and the Atma is the screen. The different projections that appear on the screen are transient, whereas the screen remains as it is. That is why Vedanta proclaims *Brahma Sathyam Jaganmithya* (Brahman is Truth, the world is an illusion). The pictures in the form of projections on the screen come and go, but the screen does not change. Let us analyse this from the standpoint of the Vedantic statement *Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma* (the entire universe is Brahman). When the pictures appear on the screen, it becomes invisible. Where does it go? It is there within the picture, but it is invisible. But, without the screen you cannot see the pictures.

Observation reveals the fact that the screen is not at all affected either by the innumerable visuals or by the sound effects. The fire that appears on the screen does not burn it. A tempest appears. It may even uproot the trees. The screen depicts the scenes, but it is not affected by them. Sometimes, we see floods on the screen. Rivers like the Ganga, the Yamuna and the Godavari may overflow. But, the screen is not drenched. What is the reason? Floods, earthquakes and tempest that appear on the screen are not real and so the screen is not affected by them. It remains as a witness. Your heart is a big screen, which is changeless. On the screen of the heart, you see sufferings, happiness and ordeals. All these are transient scenes like passing clouds. None of the scenes is permanent. Only the screen of your heart is permanent. That is Divine. It is also called conscience which is the eternal truth.

The conscious perception of what is going around and the people we come across through bodily senses and mental powers is transient. Conscience is within. It vibrates throughout the body, whereas conscious perception is associated with the senses. Where do these two, conscience and conscious perception, come from? Both have their origin in all pervading universal consciousness. Where do you find consciousness? It is not confined to one place. It is infinite, immutable, invisible and all pervasive. First, you should understand this consciousness. You can then attempt to merge it with Divine Consciousness. This merger leads to bliss and liberation.

What should we do to attain this? Air is everywhere. It is invisible and we cannot catch it. But nobody has got any right to deny its existence. It is our life force. So, it does exist and it is all pervasive. In your body this air is in a limited quantity. If you inflate a balloon, the air, which is all pervasive, enters the balloon. But, its quantity is limited. If you tie the balloon securely with a string, the air in it cannot merge with the air outside. What is the reason? It has a limitation as it is encased in a balloon. What should be done to overcome the limitation? The encasement should be destroyed. How? Pump more and more air into the balloon till it bursts. Then the limited air in the balloon will get merged with the infinite air outside. Likewise, the body, which is only a

vesture of the divine, is the cause of bondage. In the body too there is the air of divinity. But, it is limited and bound. If you cultivate purity and divinity more and more, attachment to the body gets destroyed, which will lead to liberation.

The body is composed of the five elements. It is subject to change and death. It is stated that lifespan of man is hundred years but do not trust these words. It may drop away in childhood or in youth or in the middle age or in old age. It may fall away, Oh man, in a village or in a forest or in the midst of waters. The body is full of filth and is subject to all sorts of afflictions and diseases. It is bound by the cycle of birth and death. It cannot cross the ocean of life. Oh mind! Believe not that it will exist forever. Take refuge at the feet of the Lord. (Telugu Poem)

Rise above Earthly Joys

For the sake of physical gratification, you undergo many ordeals from dawn to dusk. What do you gain out of it? You are able to experience ephemeral pleasures only. But, you should realise the truth that eternal bliss is within you. You should strive to experience that bliss.

God is not different from you. He is not confined to places like temples, mosques and churches. He is omnipresent. He is the resident of your heart. The body is the temple of God. So, you should strengthen the feelings of love within you. You do develop love, but it is based on bodily relations. You love your son, father and mother. You identify yourself with the body, so you direct your love towards those with whom you have got a relationship at physical level. You are not able to manifest the kind of love, which is beyond name and form. Love has no form. It does not differentiate between young and old or man and woman. Love is love. It cannot be compared to anything else. Love is the very form of the Divine. Love is God. Live in love. How to do that?

*Start the day with Love
Spend the day with Love
Fill the day with Love
End the day with Love
This is the way to God.*

You can cultivate love in several ways. But, you should not limit it to the bodily needs and relations. However, as long as you live in the world, you do need the warmth of relationship. You can wish for the welfare and progress of someone else. You can also share his happiness. But, all these feelings are limited to the physical relationship, which is transient.

The human being has both the head and the heart. Whatever comes from the head is related to the worldly affairs only. Reading, writing, walking, feelings of pain and pleasure belong to the head. These are all ephemeral. Eternal values like truth, love, patience and compassion emanate from the heart. What comes from the head is worldly and ephemeral. What comes from the heart is transcendental and eternal. That which comes from the heart leads to Nivritti (inward path). But, all that comes from the head lead to Pravritti (outward path). The head carries responsibility, whereas the heart is bestowed with right. Whatever is done by the head is temporary. You feel hungry. You go to canteen and eat two chapatis to satiate your hunger. But, after two hours you

feel hungry again. It is cyclic in nature. You feel hungry, you eat something, the food gets digested and again you feel hungry. This can be compared to the cycle of birth and death.

Sankaracharya said:

The cycle of birth and death is repetitive. World is an ocean of woes; win the grace of God and transcend it. Oh fool! Chant the Lord's name instead of memorising the rudiments of grammar. Grammar would not come to your help at the time of death.

(Sanskrit Verse)

The three States of Consciousness

As long as you are awake, you aspire for many things and indulge in many activities. You are also subject to manifold experiences. But, you forget everything while sleeping. The state of sleep can be compared to a short death and death can be compared to a long sleep. It is not easy to understand the true meaning of birth and death. You forget in sleep state what you experienced during the day. So, sleep state can be considered as a short death. Similarly, waking state can be considered as long life. However, the waking state and the sleep state are temporary. But, in both the states witness-consciousness exists, which experiences everything.

Here is an example. During waking state you move around with the help of the body, listen to many things and experience happiness. When questioned, you claim that it is you who is experiencing all this. But, in dream state, who is experiencing the dream? It is you only. In deep sleep state, you forget everything and enjoy bliss. Here who is experiencing bliss? Again, it is you only. So, in all these three states—waking, dream and deep sleep—you do exist and it is you who experience everything. *Trikal Badhyam Sathyam* (Truth is changeless in all the three periods of time). You remain the same in all the three states. So, you are the very form of Truth.

Live in the Present

Embodiments of Love!

Time undergoes change. Waking, dream and deep sleep states are subject to change. Matter, worldly things and bodies composed of the five elements also undergo change. Mind, intellect, feelings and senses too undergo change. Senses are afflicted with various diseases. So, they are all transient. But you are permanent and you experience everything. Do not brood over the past. Past is past, forget it. Future is not certain. It is beyond your perception. So, live in the present as it is permanent. It is not ordinary present; it is omnipresent. How? Past is in the present as the present is the result of past actions. Future is also in the present as it depends on the present actions. So, you should pay attention only to the present. Instead of giving importance to the ephemeral pleasures, you should follow the right path. That is all you are supposed to do now. But, you are not doing what you are supposed to do. You simply brood over the past and worry about the future. In this way, you ignore the present. As a result, you are subjected to suffering. Why should you not derive happiness from the present state of affairs? Brooding over the past and worrying about the future are the main causes of man's suffering. Why do you think about the past? You treaded that path consciously. Then why do you look back? Be happy in the present. That is all you should aspire for. You may face many ordeals. But, do not pay too much attention to them. Lead your life happily till the end.

Man yearns for happiness in every act, in every kind of experience. He pines for happiness. All his actions are aimed at deriving happiness. Whether he does business or work in an office, his aim is to derive happiness. But does he find it? No. It is a temporary phase only as it is worldly happiness. He may be happy for a while, but permanent happiness is attained only by contemplation on God. So, contemplate on the Divine. You must understand that the final product depends upon the original material. From clay you can make a doll of clay. Is it possible to make a doll of gold from clay? Your bodies are composed of the five elements. They survive on food. You may prepare a several course meal. But, you should eat it before it gets stale. If you waste time, the food may decay and become unfit for consumption. Likewise, you should experience the eternal divine bliss at the right time before the body decays and becomes decrepit. This is the task of the human beings today. You try to experience many things. Instead, experience the divine bliss, which is within you. *That is the supreme bliss. It is the very form of supreme wisdom. It is one without a second. It is expansive and pervasive like the sky. It is eternal, pure and changeless. It stands as a witness of everything.* (Sanskrit Verse)

Cultivate Divine Love

Look at those glowing lights. In this assembly, some persons are listening to My discourse, some are moving away and some are sleeping. Different people are doing different types of work. The light stands as a witness. It is not affected by your sleep. It is not affected by your movements. It is not affected even though you do not listen to My discourse. It simply remains as a witness. Divinity like light is the witness of everything. Its effulgence illuminates everything else. Where does it exist? We find Santhi (peace) within Asanthi (unrest). In the depth of the Santhi (peace) there exists Prakanti (supreme splendour). In this Prakanti, one can experience Param Jyoti (Divine Effulgence). Param Jyoti in the form of Atma Jyoti (the light of the Atma) is within you. That is the light of non-duality and eternity. That is the light of immortality. That is the light of the Self. As you possess that light within yourselves, why should you be afraid of anything else? Why should you worry? Be happy. Where is happiness? How to experience it? Union with God is happiness.

You should realise that love is the form of God. As long as Divinity, in the form of love, exists within you, unrest cannot reach you. But, these days people are subjecting themselves to unrest and unhappiness by misinterpreting the nature of love and by attributing to it certain impure feelings. It is a blunder. Know that the Divine Love is unsullied, selfless and pure. Without any hesitation you should try to acquire that love. You should strive to possess it.

The world today is full of misery. There is no place without fear and grief. People are afraid of travelling by air, by trains or by cars, as they are wary of evil elements. Even walking has become unsafe. People are not happy at home also as they are haunted by numerous fears. They are terribly fear-stricken. What is the reason? They are unable to bear difficulties and ordeals. But, think who is facing ordeals? Who is undergoing suffering? It is the body only, which is the composition of the five elements. Reduce attachment to the body. Then you will experience eternal bliss. Reducing body attachment and increasing attachment to the Self is the true meaning of devotion. Attachment to body leads to Pravritti (outward path), while attachment to the Self leads to Nivritti (inward path). The combination of these is human life.

Embodiments of Love!

Strengthen love, saturate your lives with love and live in that Divine Love.

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajan, "*Prem Muditha Manase Kaho Ram Ram Ram.*"

—From Bhagavan's Discourse in "Sai Shruti," Kodaikanal on 26th April 1999

AVATAR VANI:

GURUPOORNIMA SANDESH:

The Power of Love

A deep enquiry will reveal that nothing equals Love in this world, be it charity, sacred rituals, penance, wisdom, purity or adherence to truth and Sanathana Dharma.

(Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of Love!

The main aim of human life is to acquire the knowledge of the Self. This is the true Purushartha (goal of life). Human life will find fulfillment if this goal is attained. The ability to distinguish between that which is permanent and that which is transitory, the ability to control the senses, yearning for liberation and self-enquiry, all these four (the four auspicious qualities) depend on devotion. The word 'Bhakti' is derived from the root word 'Bhaj', which means pure, unsullied and selfless love for God.

Develop Love, Experience Bliss

In this world, no other virtue is greater than love. Love is truth, love is righteousness and love is wealth. This world has originated from love, is sustained by love and ultimately merges in love. Every atom has its origin in love. There are innumerable powers such as atomic power, magnetic power, etc., in this world, but the power of love surpasses them all. Life bereft of faith and love is meaningless and useless. For man in this world, love is life and love is everything. It is from love that the Pancha Bhutas (five elements) have emerged. It is love that shines brilliantly in every individual. But man, not being able to comprehend the significance of love, attributes physical relationship to it. The love of a mother towards her child is Vatsalya (affection), the love that exists between wife and husband is Moha (infatuation), the love between friends and relations is Anuraga (attachment) and the love for material objects is Iccha (desire). Love directed towards God in totality is Bhakti (devotion).

It is love that encompasses and permeates the entire world. None can exist without love even for a moment, be it human beings or animals or birds or insects. This love is the very form of God. But, today man is misusing this sacred love by diverting it towards the ephemeral world. Never underestimate the power of love. Our ancient Rishis, leading a life of solitude in dense forests, could live in harmony even with wild animals only because of the power of their love.

There is nothing that love cannot achieve in this world. It can even melt the hardest of rocks. When the principle of love in every human being is unified, it becomes cosmic love (Vishwa Prema). If you want to quench your thirst for love, yearn for God's grace and worship Him. In

order to experience bliss, develop love more and more. The more you develop love, the more you will experience bliss. Bliss (Ananda) cannot be attained without love. In fact, it is love that takes the form of bliss.

Hiranyakasipu made every attempt to wean Prahlada away from the God-ward path. But, never did Prahlada give up chanting the divine name of Narayana. One day Hiranyakasipu, on being prompted by Narada, called Prahlada and asked him, "Son, what is that you have learnt so far?" In reply, Prahlada sang this verse in praise of Narayana:

*Narayana Param Brahma,
Narayana Param Prema,
Narayana Param Tapa,
Sarvam Narayana Sama.*

He said, "Father, I have learnt that Narayana is the Supreme Lord, He is the embodiment of love, repetition of His name is the greatest penance and everything is Narayana only.' Like Prahlada, you too should chant the divine name always. Saints like Jayadeva, Gauranga, Tukaram and Ramakrishna Paramahansa prayed to the Lord fervently and yearned for His love. Cry for the Lord, just as Sakkubai and Meera cried, unable to bear the pangs of separation. They could have His vision and earn His grace only due to such intense yearning. But, due to the impact of Kali Age, people want to attain divine grace without making any effort whatsoever. Wickedness, misery and violence are on the rise because love for God is waning. Transform all your wicked qualities like jealousy and anger into love.

Love Leads to Immortality

God is the creator of this world. He is the presiding deity of action (*Karmadhyaksha*). You cannot have a table unless there is a carpenter to make it. You cannot construct a house unless there is a builder. Likewise, for everything there is a creator. All that you see, mobile and immobile, is the creation of God. That is the reason, He is extolled as 'Karmadhyaksha'. He presides over every activity.

Today the spiritual aspirants undertake various types of Sadhana such as meditation, penance, Yoga and chanting of Vedic hymns. Love should be the undercurrent of all these spiritual exercises or else it will be a sheer waste of time. No benefit accrues from chanting the Mantras if they are not coupled with the feeling of love. The Vedas declare: *Na Karmana Na Prajaya Dhanena Thyagenaikena Amritatwamanasu* (neither wealth nor progeny nor good deeds can confer immortality; it can be attained only through sacrifice). Immortality is nothing but ,love. Love is nectarine, it is infinite and all bliss. Today people are not making any effort to understand this principle of love. It is only the power of love that can nullify a curse or a sin. It is only love that can remove all the bitter feelings and enhance the sweetness of life.

Every human being is expected to be a friend and well wisher of the world. But, such feelings of friendship and love are lacking in man today. Just as a honeybee sucks nectar from flowers, so also man should be able to see good in everything. You should be able to draw the water of happiness even from the well of misery. That is the true quality of love. Pleasure is an interval between two pains. Pleasure and pain co-exist in God's creation itself. Take, for instance, how

God has made the human body. The bright and beautiful face has pitch-dark hair above it. But, in fact that adds to the beauty of the face. Likewise, pleasure has value only when pain is associated with it. Good and bad co-exist in everything. But, today man is not attracted by good; he sees only bad in everything.

Incredible Speed of Love

Every action is under the control of God. Earth rotates at the rate of 18j miles per second. It takes one year to revolve around the sun. Light travels at an incredible speed of 1,86,284 miles per second. It takes 22,000 crore years for the light to go around the universe. According to the *Vishnu Sahasranama Stotra*, the entire universe is the very form of Vishnu (*Viswam Vishnuswarupam*). Even if man were to travel at the speed of light, it will take him 22,000 crore years to circumambulate Lord Vishnu. Who can live for such a long period of time? Due to the evil effects of Kali Age, man is not able to live even for hundred years, leave alone 22,000 crore years!

But, it is possible to go around the *Vishwa Swaroopa* (God in the form of universe) in one second. It is love that makes it possible. The speed of love is such that it can go round the universe in one second. The speed of light may be estimated, but not the speed of love. But, man has put barriers around such a transcendental and infinite love and is using it for trivial purposes. That is the reason, the world has become chaotic today. People may attribute various reasons for the lack of peace and security in the world. But, the main reason is that man is not able to develop love within. He is not making any effort to realise the presence of the infinite, immortal and nectarine love inherent in him. Let your thoughts, words and deeds be suffused with love. Let your life be filled with love. Nothing else is required to have the vision of the Divine (Sakshatkara). Love is God, live in love.

Divine Grace is True Wealth

Today love finds no place in the human heart as it is full of desires. Where there is faith, there is love. Where there is love, there is peace. Where there is peace, there is truth. Where there is truth, there is God. So, develop faith in God. Yesterday someone asked Me how to develop faith? I replied, faith is the way of life. It is but natural to man. The feeling of I *am* itself signifies faith. I am means I exist. Am (existence) itself denotes faith. Without faith in your existence, you cannot live even for a moment in the world.

Truth, sacrifice and righteousness constitute humanness. Truth is Neeti (morality), Dharma is Reeti (code of conduct) and sacrifice is Khyati (reputation). The combination of all these is Manava Jati (human race). (*Cheers*) One cannot be called a human being on the basis of one's form. One has to adhere to truth, uphold Dharma and develop the spirit of sacrifice to deserve the title of a human being. *"Visualise the unity among all beings and conduct yourself with compassion in your heart. With intense yearning contemplate on God at least once in a day. Only then can you have the vision of God. God does exist, but He cannot be seen by the naked eye. He can be seen only when you get rid of worldly delusions. What is the state of man today? He is overjoyed when he has wealth and grief-stricken when he loses it. He indulges in pomp and show and loses everything in the process. He conceives of dubious ways and means. Just as earth revolves around the sun, he revolves around money."* (Telugu Poem)

Money is not important. Divine grace is true wealth. Acquire that and you would have acquired everything. Character is important, not wealth. But, man is wasting his life hankering after wealth. No doubt money is necessary, but it should be within certain limits. Spend your time in serving others. Love your fellowmen. Surrender yourself to God. Nothing surpasses divine love. The entire world is permeated with love. The Vedas declare: *Anthar Bahischa Tat Sarvavyapya Narayana Sthitha* (That all-pervasive God is present within and without). All names and forms are His. Names and forms may vary, but the Atma is the same in all. Recognise the unity of all beings. That will result in universal love. The world is a mansion. All belong to the caste of humanity. Unity should prevail in such a mansion.

Let the Mind Shine like Full Moon

Embodiments of Love!

Today is Gurupournima. What is its significance?

*Gurur Brahma Gurur Vishnu
Gurur Devo Maheshwara
Guru Sakshath Param Brahma
Tasmai Sri Gurave Namah.*

The trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara are within us. That is why I often say you are not one, but three. This is the meaning of the three words *Bhur, Bhuvah, Suvaha* in the Gayatri Mantra. *Bhur* means *Bhuloka* (earth). The earth is made up of matter. Therefore, the human body, which is also made up of matter, is called *Bhuloka*. This can also be referred to as materialisation. *Bhuvah* means life force (Prana). It is this life force that makes the body move. This is vibration. *Suvaha* means wisdom. This is radiation. The Vedas declare: *Prajnanam Brahma*. This *Prajnana* is nothing but radiation. Human being is a combination of materialisation, vibration and radiation. You don't need to search for God outside. Turn your vision inward. There you will find God.

Today is full moon day. The Vedas say: *Chandrama Manaso Jatha Chaksho Suryo Ajayatha Mukhadindrascha Agnishcha* (the moon was born out of the mind, the sun out of the eyes and the fire and Indra out of the mouth of the Supreme Purusha). Moon is the presiding deity of the mind. That day is Poornima in the true sense of the term when the mind is filled with pure love. Let your mind shine brilliantly like the moon on the full moon day. This is possible only when you fill your mind with love.

Currency for the Divine Bank

Embodiments of Love!

Today we find people depositing their money in banks. Likewise, deposit the power of your senses, your mind and the wisdom in the bank of God. They will never diminish; they will continue to grow forever and will be returned to you in times of need. Sustain and safeguard sacred love. Never give vent to hatred. Consider whatever happens is good for you. You might have seen in newspapers, the Indian army had recently a confrontation on the borders. But whatever has happened is good for India in the sense that the Chinese, the Americans and the Russians have become friendlier with India, and India has earned a good reputation in the

international community. It is the peace loving nature of India that has made this possible. Peace is the real virtue of India. (*Cheers*)

Once when I went to Bombay, the then Chancellor of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Sri K. M. Munshi, convened a conference of intellectuals. He requested Me to address them. One person from the audience asked Me, "Swami, America and Russia are manufacturing more and more weapons. But, India is lagging far behind in this respect. Should not India too manufacture weapons?" I told him, "Dear one, what Bharat needs today is not arms and ammunition. It needs to uphold Dharma. *Dharmo Rakshathi Rakshitha* (if you protect Dharma, Dharma will protect you in return). We should not waste money in manufacturing weapons." Some countries are spending huge amounts of money on defence and as a result the people of those countries are suffering for want of food. Only divine love and grace and not weapons can protect a nation. You might have read in Mahabharata that Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva implicitly obeyed the command of Dharmaraja, who was the embodiment of Dharma. Likewise, India, America and Russia can be compared to Dharmaraja, Arjuna and Bhima respectively. Just as Arjuna and Bhima obeyed Dharmaraja, so also America and Russia will follow India provided India upholds Dharma. What India needs to possess is *Sathyastra* and *Dharmastra*, the weapons of truth and righteousness. Both are inherent in the principle of love. Just as a gigantic tree emerges out of a small seed, the entire universe has originated from love.

Music College in Prasanthi Nilayam

Embodiments of Love!

In this world, you can achieve everything with love. I am the best example for this. Love is My greatest property. I love everybody and do not desire anything except love. The power of love can transform earth into sky and sky into earth. There is nothing in this world that cannot be achieved by love. Here is a small example:

Many students are coming here for studies. But, modern education is not doing any good to the world. All the subjects like Physics, Botany, Chemistry help only to eke out a livelihood. But, none of them can attract the human heart as music does. Even God is attracted by music. Once Narada asked Vishnu, "Swami, You have various branch offices like *Vaikuntha*, *Kailash* and *Swarga*. But, I want to know the address of Your head office so that I can contact You without delay." Vishnu said, "*Madbhaktha Yathra Gayanthi Tathra Thistami Narada* (you will find Me installed wherever My devotees sing My glory)." (*Cheers*) That is why God is extolled as Ganapriya and Ganalola (lover of music). It is music that melts human heart and literally moves everybody. So, music should be started in our colleges. I wanted to start a music college here. But, I did not tell anybody about this. I usually do not tell what My plans are. Whatever I Will certainly happens. Last week, a devotee named Puri from Indonesia came here and prayed to Me to start a music college here for which, he said, he would donate 10 crore rupees. Modern music is also essential. But along with that, street plays, Harikathas (singing the stories of God), etc., have to be encouraged. Music plays a vital role in fostering Indian culture. The construction of this college will commence in the next month i.e., Shravana. The current month is Ashada, in which, according to the elders, a new project is not undertaken. That is the reason I postponed the commencement of construction to next month.

Super Speciality Hospital in Bangalore

Last month when I was in Bangalore, one day, the Chief Minister of Karnataka came to Me and said, "Swami, You have constructed a Super Speciality Hospital in Prasanthi Nilayam, which is of immense benefit to the poor. But diseases are common for both the rich and the poor, the urban and the rural. It will be of great help to the people of Bangalore city, if You would be kind enough to establish another Super Speciality Hospital here:" I just smiled and did not say anything.

The very next week, the Chief Minister, the Finance Minister, the Revenue Minister and many other dignitaries came here with the documents concerning the offer of 70 acres of land. This plot is situated adjacent to the Information and Technology Park. They are supplying water and electricity. If you are prepared to undertake noble tasks, the whole world will come to support you. An American devotee named Sinclair has come forward to donate money for this hospital. Previously he had donated for the Super Speciality Hospital in Prasanthi Nilayam also. I have not told about this project to anyone else, otherwise there would have been a shower of gold. There are many men of sacrifice in this world. But, I do not like to ask anybody. One should never doubt whether the good task undertaken will find fruition or not. Many more things are going to happen in future.

Education of Love

Fill your hearts with love. There is no wealth, no Dharma, no meditation greater than love. I expect all of you to live in unity like brothers and sisters. If you become the embodiment of love, you will become divine. *Brahmavid Brahmaiva Bhavati* (the knower of Brahman verily becomes Brahman).

Students are the long journey passengers travelling in this train of society. All the elders are bound to get down soon. So, it is the paramount duty of students to develop sacred love. The main education offered in our institute is love alone. Do not love God for the sake of worldly desires. Love Him with spiritual outlook. Gopikas prayed to Krishna, *"Let us listen to the melody of Your divine music so that the seeds of love germinate in the field of our heart, which has become barren due to the absence of love. Let there be rain of love in our hearts and let the stream of love flow incessantly through it."*
(Telugu Poem)

I am giving you all free education and free medical care; in return you have to give Me only one thing and that is love. Develop love. That is all I want from you. I want you to take a vow that you would lead a life suffused with love from today onwards. With this, I bring My discourse to a close.

From Bhagavan's Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam on 28th July, 1999

A Rural Service Camp by Former Students

Vengalammacheruvu, a remote village situated at a distance of about eight kms from Prasanthi Nilayam, was chosen for the tenth service camp by the former students of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. The camp was scheduled for two days, i.e., the 3rd and 4th of July 1999.

The morning of 3rd July saw 1922 villagers queue up for medical check-up. Specialists in the field of Ophthalmology, ENT, Orthopaedics, Gynaecology, Paediatrics and Dentistry examined the patients and also provided medicines.

The dental department, apart from fixing minor problems, also provided advance treatment. This was possible due to its mobile unit, which was specially brought from Bangalore. Twelve doctors accompanied the van.

A unique feature of this camp was a veterinary unit, which was organised alongside the medical camp. As many as 4244 animals—cattle, sheep and goats were treated for various diseases. They were also vaccinated.

In order to promote awareness regarding health and hygiene, a video show was arranged which provided useful information about general and oral hygiene. This was followed by distribution of toothbrushes and tongue-cleaners among the villagers, especially the children. A video show on Bhagavan's life and His message was also shown.

The forenoon session came to a close with Narayana Seva, where food was served to all the villagers.

The afternoon session began with the distribution of clothes along with a pair of slippers to the poor and needy.

The last event of the afternoon was tree plantation—108 saplings were planted all over the village.

Evening was filled with music and folklore, as 'Harikatha' on Bhagavan's life enthralled the audience.

A Maha Nagarsankirtan, in which Bhagavan's photograph was taken in a procession along with the singing of Bhajans, marked the culmination of the first day of the service camp.

On the 4th of July a medical camp was conducted for the inmates of the SC Boys Hostel situated at Enumunapalli. New clothes were stitched for the boarders. All the inmates were small children aged between 6 and 13 years. A pair of slippers for each boy was also provided.

The service camp came to a close with six people being given artificial limbs, also popularly known as "Jaipur foot". They were selected from the Sathya Sai Taluk.

Three Steps of Land

The Lord's first foot covered this world and the second foot covered the other world. How huge the Lord's foot would have been to cover the whole world! How can such a huge foot be kept on Emperor Bali's head for the third step of land? The inner significance of the three steps is that the Lord entered Bali's body, mind and soul as he offered them to Him. Once the ego or body consciousness is surrendered, there is no bar to one's realisation. It is the body consciousness that stands in the way and makes you forget God. Vamana opened Bali's eyes to help him realise the Divine.

—Baba

AVATAR VANI:

KODAIKANAL DISCOURSE-II:

Dwell In God Consciousness

*Bend the body
Mend the senses
End the mind.*

This is one of the chief governing principles of the culture of Bharat. Every Bharatiya is the inheritor of this legacy. So, the Bharatiyas should make proper use of this legacy to redeem their lives. If a person abuses another, he really abuses his own self, because the abuser and the abused are both one and the same, as the indwelling Atma is the same in both. Who reprimands whom? The principle of the Atma is the same in all. On this basis, the scriptures declare: "*Ekam Sat Viprah Bahudha Vadanti*" (the truth is one, but wise men speak of it in many ways).

Fundamental Unity of Mankind

There is water in this tumbler. Telugu people call it 'Neeru', Tamilians call it 'Thanni', Hindi speaking people call it 'Pani', Englishmen say 'water', while those who speak Sanskrit say 'Vaari'. Though it is called by different names, yet water remains the same; its basic quality does not undergo any change. In this vast world of diverse species, human beings have different names and forms. Despite these outward variations, the Atmic principle in all of them is the same. The recognition of this unity in diversity constitutes spiritual Sadhana. When one enquires deeply into the question whom one is praising or denigrating, loving or trusting, it will become evident that one indeed praises, denigrates, loves or trusts only one's Self and none else.

Though lakhs of years have, passed since the advent of man on this earth, yet he does not know his real Self even today. The entire creation has divine origin and the Creator is God. He willed: "*Ekoham Bahusyam*" (I am alone, let Me be many) and the creation manifested by His Will. Srishti (creation) has its origin from Parameshti (supreme power). So, Srishti is a limb of Parameshti. Samashti (society) is a limb of Srishti. Similarly, Vyashti (individual) is a limb of Samashti. Without Srishti, Samashti has no existence, and without Samashti, there can be no Vyashti. As man has limbs such as hands, feet, head, etc., which constitute his body, likewise man is a limb of the society and the society is a limb of creation (Srishti). Man is therefore not

separate from Samashti, Srishti and Parameshti. All human beings are just the limbs of the same body of God. If man realises his intimate relationship with Samashti, Srishti and Parameshti, he will not hate or abuse anybody because all are the limbs of the same body. To recognise the truth of the relationship between the limbs and the body, i.e., the relation between the part and the whole is a major element in Sadhana. One who recognises this truth will be unaffected by praise or blame.

Once a noble person was proceeding from one village to another. He was followed by an ungodly man, who went on criticising and abusing the noble person all the way. But, the noble man was unaffected by the abusive attacks on him. He never paid any heed to it nor did he show any anger or worry. As they approached the village, the villagers came in large numbers to welcome the noble man. This was noticed by the other man also. Then the noble soul spoke to one of the villagers from the group, "Before attending to my needs, please serve this person with some butter milk and food, as he is very much tired from continuously abusing me all along the way." The critic then realised the greatness of the person whom he had abused all along. He thought to himself, "He is unaffected by abuse and is indifferent to praise or blame. He must be very noble and worthy of veneration" He then fell at the feet of the noble soul and said, "Swami, even though I abused you so much, you did not show any anger." The saintly man replied, "You simpleton, you do not realise that the same spirit resides in you and me. What is that you are condemning—the body or the self? If you are condemning the self, you are condemning yourself, because the same self is present in you and me. But, If you are abusing my body, I am, myself, every moment condemning this body of mine which is made up of the five elements and is full of foul smelling dirt and faecal matter. I am decrying my own body because I am myself disgusted with it. So, if you are abusing my body, you are only helping me.

The Nature of Brahman

Thinking that you are only a body is delusion (Bhrama-tattwa) since you see multiplicity in unity. On the other hand, when you see unity in multiplicity, you attain self-realisation (Brahma-tattwa). So, the perception of unity as diversity is Bhrama-tattwa, while discerning unity in all things is Brahma-tattwa (perception of the divine). The stories of the Lord (Vishnu Charitra) are full of wonder (Chitra). They sanctify the lives of the people of all the three worlds (Trailokyapaavitra) and are the tools that cut the creepers of worldly bondage (Bhavalatalavitra). They are like noble friends (Sanmitra). For the gardens of sages and seers, they are like spring season (Munijanavanachaitra).

The Divine is beyond description. Even great sages like Narada, son of Brahma, could not understand the majesty and mystery of God. Some people have a wrong notion that Narada is one who always creates discord. But, this is not correct. Narada means one who propagates wisdom. It was he who proclaimed that understanding non-duality is wisdom. He could go to Kailash (the abode of Siva) or Vaikuntha (the abode of Vishnu) in a moment.

The ever-wandering Narada once went to Vaikuntha. He met Vishnu there. Vishnu wanted to test Narada. He said, "Narada, you have no attachments. You are constantly wandering in the three worlds chanting My name continually. But, have you tried to understand the mystery of My creation? I created the five elements. This entire cosmos is made up of these five elements. Have you considered which of these five elements is most important?" Narada replied, "How can I not

know this, my Lord? I have cognised everything in this creation. If I cannot understand this truth who else can?" The Lord then asked, "Which among the five elements is the most important?" Narada replied, "Water is most important, for three-fourths of the earth is enveloped by water. Land is only one-fourth of the earth's surface." Vishnu remarked, "But, the sage Agastya drank up the ocean in a single gulp. So, is Agastya greater or water?" Narada replied, "You are right my Lord, Agastya is greater than water." Vishnu asked again, "But, this Agastya is a tiny star in the sky (Akasha). Now is this star greater or the sky?" Narada replied, "It is the sky that is greater". The lord agreed and said, "Your understanding is correct. The sky indeed is greater. In His incarnation as Vamana, the Lord asked for three steps from king Bali. And in the course of taking the gift of three steps, Vamana assumed the form of Trivikrama and covered the entire earth in one step, and the space from the earth to the sky in second and there was no room for the third step. King Bali had to offer his head for the third step. So now, is God great or the sky?" Narada replied, "Swami, when the mere foot of the Lord covers the entire sky, how much greater His full form would be? God indeed is greater". "God, who envelops the entire cosmos dwells in the heart of His Bhakta (devotee). So now, is the heart of the devotee greater or God?" asked Vishnu. Narada replied, "Indeed, the heart of the devotee is greater." So, you see there is nothing greater than the heart of the devotee. The infinite God is enshrined in the heart of a true devotee in His subtlest form. That is why He is described as *Anoraneeyan Mahato Maheeyan* (subtler than the subtlest and vaster than the vastest). How can anyone grasp or describe the truth about the Divine?

Live like a Lotus

If you want to understand the divine principle, you have to understand the essence of Bharatiya culture. The culture of Bharat teaches that to be reputed as a great man is of no consequence. To acquire a good name is all that matters. Ravana was a great personality in the story of the Ramayana. But, Rama was the embodiment of goodness. Ravana was great, Rama was good. What is the difference between greatness and goodness? A great man sees Nara (man) in Narayana (God), while a good man sees Narayana (God) in every Nara (man). Greatness lies in seeing the divine in man. This is true Vedanta. *Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma* (all this is verily Brahman). *Sarvam Vishnumayam Jagat* (the universe is permeated by the Divine). *Easwara Sarva Bhutanam* (God is immanent in all creatures). The one who knows this truth is a good man.

What is the difference between man and God? The one with the feeling of separateness and individuality (Vyakti) is human while God sees everything in the cosmos as His manifestation. Recognising the truth that all are His forms is the perception of the divine. A noble man will perceive himself as part of the society (Samashti). The nobler man will perceive himself as part of the entire creation. The one who perceives the entire creation as the manifestation of God (Vishnumayam) is a Paramahansa (fully self-realised one). He sees the divine in every part of this creation. What are the attributes of a Paramahansa? The heart of a Paramahansa is like a lotus. Where is the lotus born? It is born in mud. Where does it live? It lives on the surface of water. The lotus is not defiled by mud nor is it wetted by water. Yet it cannot survive even for a second without mud and water. Man's accumulated Sanskaras of past lives are like mud. The present life can be compared to water. A Paramahansa is one who is not affected by his past life. Though his present life is the consequence of his past Sanskaras, yet it can be pure and free from the mud of past traits.

The divinity present in man endows him with sacred qualities. But, man uses these sacred qualities as mere means of his worldly existence. He wastes time by spending it in mundane activities. What is the reason for this? The main reason is man's Ahamkara (ego) and Mamakara (attachment). Besides these two, man is also a victim of Asuya (jealousy). Jealousy is the source of great danger. No matter how great a scholar one may be or a man of authority and position or one may have acquired great virtues, when once one falls prey to jealousy, one loses everything in life. Here is a green tree full of blooming flowers. A pest enters this tree and destroys it in a short time. The pest is not visible as it eats away the roots of the tree. Jealousy is like this pest. The Kauravas met their ruin due to jealousy. A jealous man is not happy to see the happiness, health, wealth or higher performance of others. The feeling in a person that no one should excel him in life is the root of jealousy. Jealousy has three sons. They are Kama (desire), Krodha (anger) and Dwesha (hatred). But, this jealousy has a sister named Anasuya (one without jealousy). Anasuya, the wife of sage Atri, made Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara, the Supreme Trinity into babes. She could make the gods forget their Divinity. She could make Divinity her child. However, in this world jealousy is growing beyond limits. It is highly dangerous. It is jealousy that causes the fall of man. Therefore, one should eschew jealousy. Jealousy is totally contrary to the culture of Bharat. Bharatiya culture has always considered humanity as one entity. That is the import of the Vedic prayer:

*Saha Navavathu
Saha Nau Bhunakthu
Saha Veeryam Karavavahai
Tejaswi Navadheethamasthu
Ma Vidvisavahai.
Om Santhi Santhi Santhih.*

(May we be protected and nourished together! May we perform heroic deeds! May we be filled with divine effulgence! May we never have any hatred between us! Om peace, peace, peace.)

How sacred are these words of the Vedas which are a part of the heritage of Bharat! There are so many similar sacred tenets in the Samskriti (culture) of Bharat. What is Samskriti? That which refines is Samskriti. This tenet of refinement is now forgotten by man. He has also forgotten his humanness. He is fostering animal nature. This animal nature in turn becomes demonic. You should strive to get rid of the animal traits and develop human qualities.

Start Early

Man undertakes several spiritual practices today. But, what is their effect on him? The body of man is like a tender plantain leaf. On this fresh green leaf you serve five items of delicious food of nectarine qualities. These items of food are composed of the five elements (earth, water, fire, air and ether), the five life principles (Prana, Apana, Vyana, Udana, and Samana) and the five senses of man. To whom do you offer this sacred food first? Instead of offering to God first, you offer it to demons of Kama, Krodha, Lobha, Moha, Mada, Matsarya (desire, anger, greed, attachment, pride and jealousy). Thus, you offer all your five senses to these demons. After these demons have satiated themselves, and when the tender plantain leaf of the body has become a tattered remnant, you turn to offer it to God. Is this what you should do? As soon as the food is

served, it should be offered to God. Then you partake of it. Why do you offer this wonderful feast to the demons of desire, anger, greed, pride, jealousy etc.? *"When old age overtakes you, the body becomes weak, vision fails, the face is full of wrinkles, urchins surround you and tease you as stuffed monkey and your body itself becomes a burden of misery, is that when you should offer your body to God? No, not at all. You should offer yourself to God in your youth when all your faculties are at their peak performance and the body is full of vigour and vitality."* (Telugu Poem)

How can you do that? You can do it by following the principles of Sathya, Dharma, Santhi, Prema and Ahimsa. In fact, these are sacred delicious items of food to be offered to God. And these must be offered on the fresh, green plantain leaf of tender, supple and efficient body. Prayer and devotion to God at early age will bring fulfillment in your life. You have forgotten this truth. When somebody asks why you don't think of God, you say, there is still time for it; you can do so after retirement. Even after retirement, some people run after re-employment. *"What is the use of all your earnings, when your end is near? You fool, think, who will follow you in death. It is a folly to forget God while striving to live. Look after your family, perform your duties, but hold in your heart always God."* (Telugu Poem)

That is the real meaning of Manava (human being). What does Manava imply? *Ma* means ignorance, *Na* means without and *Va* is to act. Thus, Manava is one who acts without ignorance. There is another interpretation of Manava, viz., *Ma* = not, *Nava* = new. Man is not new. He has had several previous lives. He has not become a human being all of a sudden. So, it is quite natural for him to know how to lead a worthy and noble life as a human being. Here is a small example. A cow gives birth to a calf. The newborn calf instinctively goes to the udder of the cow to drink milk. Who has taught the calf? Similarly, a newborn babe seeks mother's milk. All this is only carryover from several previous births. Any newborn animal needs no training to seek milk from its mother. You must realise from this that you are not a brand new creation, but one in fact truly ancient.

You have taken several births, but you are yet to realise God. Merely repeating Krishna, Rama, Govinda is of no use. You must have full faith in God. Only then can you attain salvation. You should consider Vishwasa (faith) as your Swasa (life breath). Without Swasa (life breath), you cannot live. *Where there is breath, there is life. Where there is faith, there is love (Prema). Where there is love, there is peace (Santhi). Where there is peace, there is truth (Sathya). Where there is truth, there is God. Where there is God, there is bliss (Ananda).*

Experience Inner Bliss

Human life should begin with faith and end in bliss (Ananda). When you have no faith, how can you attain happiness? Increase your faith in God and attain peace (Santhi). Through truth experience God. God is bliss. The experience of divinity is true bliss (Ananda).

Bliss is with you. Bliss is in you. It is behind you, above you, below you and all around you. When you are immersed in bliss, what is it that you need to search? The way to experience this bliss is what I mentioned in the beginning—bend the body, mend the senses, end the mind. This is true culture. Have faith in this culture, lead a pure and meaningful life and attain the goal of human life.

Perform your duty. *Karthavyam Yogamuchyate* (performing your duty properly is indeed yoga). Duty is God. Today you have forgotten yoga and are running after Udyoga (job). In the job you may get promotion but you have to face retirement too. There is no retirement in Yoga. It is *Nitya* and *Sathya* (eternal and true). *Yoga Karmasu Kausalam* (perfection in action is true Yoga). Discharging one's duty efficiently and with love is yoga. Duty is God.

Divinity permeates everything in this universe. God has ingrained mystery and beauty in Nature. Everyone must try to discover this divine mystery in Nature. Nature is invested with divine beauty. No man can create this wonderful beauty. At sunrise everything looks golden. God's creation is described in various ways. If God's creation is so beautiful, how much more beautiful would God be? Before trying to visualise the beauty of the Creator, you should discover and appreciate the beauty of the Nature.

So long as you are in this world, you should carry out your duties diligently. While discharging your duties, you should spend your time in thoughts of divinity. Today, you waste time. Time is the very form of God. The Vedas says: "*Samvatsaraya Namah*". In fact, *Samvatsara* is God's name. We even say *Nutana Samvatsara* (New Year). God is ever new. This ever-new effulgent God takes the form of man, and is called Avatar. Actually, every new human birth is an Avatar as God resides in each heart as the Atma.

There is no living body without the Atma. It is not possible to realise the Atma without the body. The body and soul are related to each other. They are interdependent. The body should be maintained strong and healthy to experience the divine bliss. You should not waste all your time in eating, sleeping and sensual pleasures. You should perform your worldly duties at their proper time and set apart the time when you offer yourself to God.

You should perform all your actions in the service of God. "*Sarvakarma Bhagavad Preethyartham*" (all your actions should be to please God). You should not have any worldly preferences. Actions performed for personal satisfaction are attributed to Pravritti Marga (worldly path), while those to please God relate to Nivritti Marga (inward path). You should not wait till you are unable to move, your vision fails, folds and wrinkles appear on the face, and hair turns grey. Why don't you think of God from the beginning? Start early, drive slowly, reach safely. This should be your guiding principle for your life's journey as well.

"Think of God early in life. Be not proud, oh man, of your beautiful body, youth and power. Do not forget the fact that very soon you will have to face the misery of old age. Your body is nothing but a mere puppet, a doll of skin. Understand the truth of this 'puppet dance'." (Telugu Poem) This is not life. Make proper use of the body and experience the ultimate reality. Within this Mrinmaya (the body of clay) is Chinmaya (the awareness of the Atma) which imparts value to the body. *"The body is a box of rusty tin. Inside the box are priceless gems—diamonds, emeralds, and sapphires. The box is worthless, but the gems are highly valuable. The body is of little worth, but the indwelling Lord is of real worth. The body is a mud doll, leather puppet, a delusive toy."* (Telugu Poem) But the nectarine, non-dual, eternal bliss (Amritananda, Advaitananda, Amarananda) is in you. With this treasure inside you, you search around and undertake pilgrimages. No need. Bliss is inside you. Make it come out. This is real Sadhana. Do

not bother about worldly problems. They are passing clouds. There is only one permanent truth. This is the principle of the Atma. The body is temporary. But what is inside is the permanent, eternal Atma-tattwa.

Embodiments of Love!

All of you are embodiments of divinity. God is in you as the Atma. Make proper use of the body. How? Speak in a pure way, speak the truth. Act righteously. Discriminate between right and wrong and act accordingly. Do not act under the impulses of anger and hatred. Do not lie or abuse. Do not cause hurt to anybody.

We see pollution everywhere. We should not give room to this. What is the solution? Fill your heart with love.

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajans, "*Prema Muditha Manase Kaho...*" and "*Govinda Krishna Jai...*"

—From Bhagavan's Discourse in Sai Shruti, Kodaikanai on 27th April 1999

GURUDEV VANI:

VALEDICTORY DISCOURSE:
SEMINAR ON VALUES - PARENTING

Heart is the Source of True Education

*Sadayam Hridayam Yasya Bhasitham Sathya Bhushitham,
Kaya Parahithe Yasya Kalisthasya Karothi Kim?*

(Sanskrit Verse)

What can the evil effects of Kali Age do to a man whose heart is full of compassion, whose every utterance is truth and whose body is dedicated to the service of others?

Embodiments of Love!

Man should fill his heart with compassion, should always speak the truth and dedicate his body to the welfare of the society. The thoughts, words and deeds of man should always be sacred. The heart unpolluted by desire and anger, the tongue untainted by untruth and the body unblemished by the acts of violence—these are the true human values. It is because of lack of these human values that the country is facing hardships today. Bharat has been the treasure house of spirituality since ancient times. But, today it has lost both Sathya and Dharma, and is enmeshed in unrighteousness, falsehood and injustice. It is therefore incumbent upon students to dedicate themselves to the task of restoring the ancient pristine glory of Bharat. Just as the parents are worried and sad if their children lag behind in studies, so also Mother India feels aggrieved on seeing its citizens lacking in moral and ethical values. You have to remember that all those whom you revere as ideal citizens and noble souls were once students themselves. Never forget that students of today are the future citizens and leaders of this country.

Worldly Education vs. Spiritual Education

The value of an individual depends on his or her culture. The real significance of culture lies in giving up bad thoughts and bad actions and, cultivating sacred thoughts and performing noble deeds. The country is not a mere piece of land; it is an assemblage of citizens. For the country to progress, the citizens have to cultivate moral, ethical and spiritual values. It is not possible for the citizens and the leaders to cultivate these values unless they practise them right from their childhood. Life becomes meaningless if one does not take to righteous actions from an early age.

Students are not able to refine their lives themselves. So, the parents and the teachers should play an active role in shaping the lives of the students. First and foremost, they have to enquire as to how the students can get rid of their evil tendencies. Just as a boulder becomes worthy of adoration and respect when it is carved into a beautiful idol by a sculptor, so also the students will become ideal citizens if they are brought up in the right environment. The teachers and parents are responsible for the good and bad in students. But, unfortunately, they have not understood their role in shaping and moulding the lives of the students.

No doubt, the teachers teach the students in the class. But, what is 'Vidya'? It is derived from the root word 'Vid,' meaning 'to know'. What is it that one should know? Vidya is termed as education in English. The term education has its origin in the Latin word '*Educare*' which means 'to elicit'. *Educare* has two aspects, the worldly and the spiritual. Worldly education imparts the knowledge pertaining to the physical world. Spiritual education brings out the inherent divinity in man. So, both worldly and spiritual education are essential, without which the human life has little value. But, in the modern education system spirituality finds no place. Only worldly education is given prominence. Just as two wings are essential for a bird to soar high in the sky, two wheels for a cart to move, so also the two types of education is needed for man to attain the goal of life. Spiritual education is for life, whereas worldly education is for a living. Only when man is equipped with these two aspects of education can he be deserving of respect and adoration in society. Possession of these two aspects of education will bring not only veneration and adulation, but also self-satisfaction.

Worldly education, which relates to the head, is ephemeral. Reading, writing, eking out a livelihood and attaining name and fame—all these result from worldly education. Worldly education makes man great, whereas spiritual education makes him good. Spiritual education relates to the heart, which is the origin of sacred qualities like compassion, truth, forbearance and love. Today parents expect their children to go in for higher studies, amass wealth and become great, but very few want their children to be good. Goodness is long lasting, whereas greatness is temporary. Goodness forms the basis for spiritual life. There are crores and crores of people who have become great, but what is their contribution to the welfare of the society? Absolutely nil. You can earn good name only by serving others. Therefore, strive to be good, not great.

Modern students are going to various countries for material education without realising the fact that the heart, the source of true education, is within. True education is that which makes man ideal. Parents are the first teachers. They should show their children the way to goodness. Man cannot become good by merely being highly educated. Worldly education confers only *Artha* (wealth) and *Swartha* (selfishness). Such education is responsible for the downfall of man. Worldly education is information oriented, while spiritual education is transformation oriented.

Information oriented education makes man a computer, whereas transformation oriented education makes him a composer. Man should become a composer, not a computer. Who made the computer? It is the composer who made it. Man should therefore understand the meaning of real education.

Today the moral, ethical and spiritual values are on the decline. Modern students have no trace of these values in them. They have no respect for their parents and society. In that case, how can they expect to be respected by their children? Our ancient culture exhorts: *Matru Devo Bhava, Pitru Devo Bhava, Acharya Devo Bhava* (revere your mother, father and teacher as God). Respect and be respected. Practise before you preach. Only then you can become a composer.

There is a story of a king named Dushyanta in the Mahabharata. Having been born and brought up in a palace, he was inclined towards worldly and material pursuits. On the other hand, his son Bharata who was born and brought up in Kanvashram (hermitage of sage Kanva) was a repository of moral, spiritual and ethical values. Ashram education inculcates all noble values in man. Bharata became a paragon of all virtues because he received ideal education right from his childhood. This enabled him to lead a life of peace and happiness. That is why it is said, start early, drive slowly and reach safely. Dushyanta had worldly and material wealth. He was a mighty emperor. What was the use of all that he possessed when he could not achieve spiritual growth? This clearly demonstrates the difference between urban education and Ashram education.

Values are our Life Principles

The five human values of Sathya, Dharma, Santhi, Prema and Ahimsa can be compared to the five life principles of man, viz., *Prana, Apana, Vyana, Udana* and *Samana*. A true human being is one who practises the five human values. Today man is afraid of speaking truth, lest it should bring him harm, and he does not practise Dharma as he does not know what it really means.

Under no circumstances should you give up human values. Losing any of the five human values amounts to committing suicide. If you do not speak the truth, you lose one of your life principles. Truth is your Atma. So, till your last breath uphold truth. The culture of Bharat teaches *Sathyam Vada, Dharmam Chara* (speak the truth and follow righteousness). These values are the same for one and all.

People all over the world are praying for peace. How can peace be attained? It is only through the practice of Sathya and Dharma. Today man is leading a life bereft of Sathya and Dharma. This has resulted in lack of peace (Santhi), which in turn has led to the absence of Prema (Love). How can non-violence exist in the absence of these four values? Violence is rampant everywhere, be it home, bazaar or factory. Man, bereft of these five principles, has become a living corpse. Life has to be infused into man today, for which faith in God is very essential. Where there is faith there is love. Where there is love there is peace. Where there is peace there is truth. Where there is truth there is God. Where there is God there is bliss. Human life has to begin with faith to achieve bliss.

Ancient Acharyas and Modern Teachers

Today even the parents and the children, the husband and the wife lack faith in each other. The love they exhibit is only artificial. Under such circumstances how can love prevail? One should have deep faith in order to experience true love. Whatever you do, do it wholeheartedly. Fill your heart with compassion. When the heart is full of love, all actions will be suffused with love.

Jumsai, in his talk, referred to EHV as 3HV. The first H stands for heart, the second for head and the third for hand. The harmony of heart, head and hand symbolises true human life. *Manasyekam Vachasyekam Karmanyekam Mahatmanam* (he is a noble soul whose thoughts, words and deeds are in perfect harmony). *Manasyanyath Vachasyanyath Karmanyanyath Duratmanam* (he is a wicked one whose thoughts, words and deeds are at variance). The very name of Hridaya (Hri + Daya) indicates compassion (Daya). So, the heart should be filled with compassion. When there is love in the heart, all that you utter will be truth. Love in speech is Truth. Love in action is Dharma. Love in thought is peace. Love in understanding is Ahimsa (non-violence). So, love is the underlying principle of truth, righteousness, peace and non-violence.

In olden days, the teachers were called *Acharyas*, meaning those who practise what they preach. Today the teachers cannot be called Acharyas because they do not practise what they preach. The modern teachers are experts in giving platform speeches, whereas the Acharyas of ancient times were proficient in practical science.

How can the students heed the advice of the teachers if the teachers themselves do not practise what they preach? If the cow is grazing in the field, can we expect the calf to remain a mere witness? The calf naturally follows the cow. The relationship between the teacher and the student should be like that of the cow and the calf. It means the teachers should treat the students as their own children. But, today one does not find such relationship between the teachers and the students. Both the teachers and students have become money-minded. As a result, the students do not respect the teachers and the teachers do not have love for the students.

Education should be Free

In many educational institutions, seats are allotted to those who can pay large sums of money. This quota system has brought about all-round degeneration. As the government is also encouraging this trend, the education system has become totally bereft of values. To stop this unholy trend, education should be offered free of cost. Everyone has equal right on education. Education is the gift of God. No one has the right to sell it. Education should lead to elevation, not agitation. But, today we find agitation everywhere.

Today, money can buy admission, attendance, marks and even degrees for that matter. The medical seats are readily offered to candidates who pay a sum of twenty to thirty lakhs. In order to earn the money spent by them to secure the medical seat, the doctors charge exorbitant fees from the patients. The same is the case with engineering too. Even for admission in first standard, some institutions are charging twenty to twenty five thousand rupees. Modern education has made man a beggar. One should be bigger, not beggar. I am not saying this out of sense of pride, but Sathya Sai Institute is the only institution offering free education. (Cheers) Jumsai said that more and more institutions should be established. It is a matter of pleasure, but

care has to be taken to see that education is offered totally free of cost. Only then can we shape the students into ideal citizens. Teachers should share all their knowledge with the students wholeheartedly. They must practise before they preach. This is what I expect from the teachers. The education that is acquired by paying large amounts as donation is no education at all. Only people having black money resort to such illegal means to acquire degrees. 'Do (for the) nation,' that is the real donation.

Make use of your education for the welfare of the society and the nation. Share your knowledge with others. It is not necessary that you should become a teacher to do so. There may be a few poor students in your locality. Conduct special classes for them in the evening. Today people struggle to earn money and property right from dawn to dusk. They take to corrupt ways to earn every single rupee. One should not live just for the sake of money. It is better to die rather than to lead a life just for the sake of money. If you have money in excess, help others, provide free education and free medical care to the poor. In Zambia there is a devotee named Victor Kanu. He is here right now. He has established a Sathya Sai School in Zambia. Many poor children are studying there. Both he and his wife are teaching the children with all love and care. (At this juncture Bhagavan asked Mr. Victor Kanu, sitting nearby, as to how many children were studying in their school. Mr. Kanu informed that 520 children were studying there.) (*cheers*) They are imparting Swami's teachings and human values to all the children. It is going to become a college very soon.

There are many affluent people in the world. But, they do not have the spirit of sacrifice to help such sacred institutions. Some of them who do contribute something, do it for name and fame. They expect their names to appear in letters of gold. Sathya Sai institutions are not for name and fame. I would like to narrate a small incident in this regard. At a particular place when I was about to give discourse, one person switched off the fan. I asked him, "Why did you switch off the fan? We need it now. It is very hot here." That person replied that it was he who had donated the fan and his name was written on the blades of the fan; unless it was switched off his name would not be visible.

Education Leads to Immortality

The culture of Bharat declares: "*Na Karmana Na Prajaya Dhanena Thyagenaikena Amrutathwamanasu*" (Immortality can be attained only through sacrifice; neither wealth nor progeny nor good deeds can confer it.) All the activities and rituals you undertake must be for the welfare of the society. You must inspire your children to work for the progress of the country. It is only sacrifice that confers immortality. Participate in every good work according to your capacity. Select a few deserving students and give them free education.

Education is not for worldly progress. It is to set an ideal, experience happiness and share it with others. All the elders, the educationists, the rich and the students should come together and strive for progress in the field of education. Just as a thread binds flowers of different hues to make a garland, likewise the feelings of love and sacrifice should bring you all together. Flowers are many, but the thread is one. The flowers may fade away, but the thread remains changeless. A bud changes to become a flower. Similarly, with the passage of time, the child becomes man, man becomes father and father becomes grandfather. But, the feeling of love is changeless. It is true and eternal.

Man should never lose any of the five values. Leaving the values amounts to committing suicide. But, man today is no better than animals. The spirit of sacrifice that is found even in animals is not visible in man today. The cow partakes of grass and yields milk. But, man partakes of sacred milk and indulges in wicked deeds. *What is the use of all the education he has acquired if man cannot give up his evil qualities? All the worldly education will only lead him to vain argumentation, but not total wisdom. It cannot help him to escape from the clutches of death. So, man should acquire that knowledge which will make him immortal.* (Telugu Poem)

Education should enable us to cultivate sacred qualities. Worldly education is negative and spiritual education is positive. What is the use of having a bulb without electric current? Secular knowledge is like the bulb and spiritual knowledge like the current. Both are essential for the progress of man and the world at large. Make proper use of the knowledge you have acquired. The parents should take active interest in the education of their children. Never desire that your son should become a great person; instead pray that he should become a good person like Bharata. That is true human life.

The Good and the Great

If one goes through the sacred texts of the Ramayana, the Bhagavata and the Mahabharata, one understands the evil effects of Kama (desire), Krodha (anger) and Lobha (greed). In the Ramayana, Rama symbolised goodness, whereas Ravana greatness. Though Rama and Ravana were equally proficient in all the forms of knowledge, Ravana could not make proper use of his knowledge as he had no control over his senses. On the other hand, Rama exercised control over his senses and sacrificed everything for the sake of truth. The Ramayana is known as *Ramacharitra* (the story of Rama) and the story of Ravana is known as *Kamacharitra* (the story of desire).

The Bhagavata tells about the consequences one has to face if one becomes a victim of anger. Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakasipu were all-powerful, but ultimately perished because of their anger towards God. Hiranyakasipu was a great scientist. Today man has travelled only up to the moon, whereas Hiranyakasipu could even reach the stars. But, he was ruined by his anger.

In the Mahabharata, Duryodhana and Dussasana symbolise greed, which is a negative power. On the other hand, the Pandavas stand for the positive power. They adhered to Dharma under all circumstances. Similarly in the Bhagavata, Hiranyakasipu symbolises negative power and Prahlada, the positive power. Thus, you find that positive and negative, good and bad co-exist wherever you see. Accept what is good and give up all that is bad and earn a good name. Then you are not merely great, you will be good also.

Give Importance to Values, not Money

Teachers! You have participated in this conference for the past three days. All of you have noble ideas, but you have to think of a proper way to implement them. Attach more importance to values than money and see that students make all round progress.

Students! I want you to become ideal leaders. Make use of your education to serve the poor. Conduct free tuition classes for the poor children and share your books with them. Only then the feeling of brotherhood of man and fatherhood of God will develop.

As I have told you earlier, *Educare* has two aspects: one that comes out of the head is *Pravritti* (outward) and the other which comes from the heart is *Nivritti* (inward). God is *Hridayavasi* (indweller). So, all that originates from the heart is essentially divine. Therefore, let all your thoughts, words and deeds originate from your heart. Do good, be good and see good. This is the way to God. (*Cheers*) Accept both pleasure and pain as gifts of God. In order to get cured of Malaria, one has to take a bitter mixture. Likewise, one has to face hardships in order to attain happiness. That is why it is said, pleasure is an interval between two pains. Light has no value if there is no darkness. Similarly, pleasure has no value without pain.

Students! To the extent possible serve the society. Of course, you need to take up jobs and earn your livelihood. But, do not be avaricious. Be satisfied with what you get. Alexander conquered many kingdoms and amassed a lot of wealth. When his end approached, he realised that he could not take even a single penny with him. He asked his ministers to keep his hands out of the bier during his final journey, so that people would know that even the mighty emperor Alexander had to leave the world empty-handed. Likewise, everyone has to leave this world empty-handed. Even a millionaire has to partake of only food; he cannot eat gold. So, be satisfied with the basic necessities of food, clothing and shelter. Do your jobs properly and undertake service activities in your leisure time. Develop faith in God. If you do not have faith in God, you will not have fear of sin. Then you will become a demon. So, fear of sin and love for God are very essential. If you have these two, you will be successful in all your endeavours. Consider every good work as God's work.

Embodiments of Love!

Stop hankering after foreign lands after you complete your studies. Serve your Motherland. Lord Rama said, *Janani Janmabhoomischa Swargadapi Gareeyasi* (mother and Motherland are greater than heaven). So, work for your Motherland and serve the poor. The best way to love God is to love all and serve all. Serve others when it is necessary. You are born to experience love. Your life is full of love. But, you are not able to understand this Principle of Love. There is nothing greater than love in this world. Love is God, God is Love. So, live in love.

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajans, "*Bhava Bhaya Harana...*" and "*Sathyam Jnanam Anantam Brahma...*"

From Bhagavan's Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam on 26th July 1999 on the occasion of Valedictory Function of First Sri Sathya Sai Seminar on Values-Parenting

A Great Opportunity

"Cultivate nearness with Me in the heart and you will be rewarded. Then you too will acquire a fraction of the supreme love. This is a great chance. Be confident that you will be liberated. Know that you are saved. Many hesitate to believe that things will improve; that will be happy for all and full of joy and that the Golden Age will recur. Let Me assure you that this

Dharmaswarupa, this Divine Body, has not come in vain. It will succeed in warding off the crisis that has come upon humanity."

—Baba

Oh Sai, my dear Sai!

As a child runs into its mother's arms,
I came running to you by the charm
Of Thy smile so sweet as the morning breeze,
Oh Sai, my dear Sai, how can I thank Thee?

For showing me the right way,
Pulling me back when I go astray,
Teaching me to sit back and pray,
Oh Sai, my dear Sai, how can I thank Thee?

For helping me be all I can be,
Revealing the wonder ways of Divinity,
Letting me discover Thee within me,
Oh Sai, my dear Sai, how can I thank Thee?

For unfolding life's insights,
In Thy divine glorious light,
Giving courage to choose the right,
Oh Sai, my dear Sai, how can I ever thank Thee?

—Latha Swaminathan, New Jersey, U.S.A.

Onam Celebrations at Prasanthi Nilayam

Like previous years, this year also, Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, Kerala organised the Onam festival at Prasanthi Nilayam with great devotional fervour. The celebrations started on 22nd August 1999 and ended on 25th, the day of Onam. The entire Mandir was aesthetically decorated and wore a festive look.

The festivities began in Sai Kulwant Hall on the morning of 22nd August 1999 with Mangala Vadyam by the well known Nadaswara Vidwan, Sri M. Kodandaram & Party of Bangalore in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Baba. Thereafter, Sai Kulwant Hall reverberated with Nadaswara Vadyam and Pancha Vadyam music on all subsequent days of celebration. The evening programme started in the Poornachandra Auditorium in the Divine Presence at 6.00 p.m. with the invocation prayer rendered by students of Bal Vikas, Ernakulam District. This was followed by a vocal music concert by Sri Naveen N. Namboodiri of Calicut accompanied by Sri Ajithkumar on

Violin and Sri Trichur R. Mohan on Mridangam. Another interesting item of the programme was Santoor instrumental music by Sri Haridas of Kozhikode accompanied by Sri Philip V Francis on Tabla. In the end, Bhagavan came on the stage and blessed the artistes. The programme concluded at 7.00 p.m. with Arati to Bhagavan.

The evening of 23rd August was made lively by three cultural items presented in the Poornachandra Auditorium at 5.00 p.m. in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Baba. The first item entitled "Nadalayam" (playing of different musical instruments) was presented by Sri Trichur R. Mohan & Party. This was followed by devotional songs rendered by singers led by Sri T.S. Radhakrishnan. The last item of the evening was the dance drama "Bhaktavatsalyam" staged by the Bal Vikas children of Trivandrum District. Excellent acting by children, impressive dialogue, simple but beautiful make-up and lofty theme earned the appreciation of the audience. In the end, Bhagavan came on the stage, blessed the artistes and distributed clothes. The programme came to a close with Mangalarati to Bhagavan at 6.55 p.m.

On 24th evening Bhagavan came to Poornachandra Auditorium at 5.00 p.m. The programme began with devotional songs in the mellifluous voice of Smt. Seethalakshmi, accompanied by Smt. Balambal on Veena, with Ms. Lalitha, Girija and Smt. Bhavana Radhakrishnan providing vocal support. This was followed by a symbolic play enacted by the youth wing of Trivandrum District, showing the conflict of a modern man. This superbly performed dance drama depicted how modern man was ruining his life by falling prey to the evils of desire, greed, power, attachment and jealousy. Man can be rescued by using his intellect and by taking refuge in Divinity. The last item of the programme was another dance drama by the very young Bal Vikas children of Quilon District, who won the hearts of the audience with their marvellous acting and perfectly choreographed dance. At the end, Bhagavan went up the stage and blessed the children and distributed clothes. The day's programme came to a close with Mangalarati to Bhagavan.

The four-day celebrations culminated on Onam Day on 25th. Bhagavan was ceremoniously received with Poorna Kumbham, Vedic hymns, to the accompaniment of Nadaswara music and Pancha Vadyam. At 7.00 a.m. Bhagavan lighted the sacred traditional lamps, in Sai Kulwant Hall marking the inauguration of the celebration. A variety of programmes added colour and lustre to the occasion. The programmes included Puja dance by the children of Pathanamthitta Bal Vikas; group singing of one of the Pancharatna Kritis; Kavadi attam by the children of Allepey District Bal Vikas; rendering of devotional songs by Kum. Radha & Sri Kavalam Sreekumar; Kolattam by Trivandrum Bal Vikas; Peacock Dance by Kozhikode Bal Vikas, followed by Bhajans by Kerala team. Bhagavan blessed the occasion with His Divine Onam Message (printed separately elsewhere in this issue). The morning programmes came to a close with distribution of Prasadam and Mangalarati to Bhagavan.

The cultural programme on the Onam evening was conducted in the Poornachandra Auditorium in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Baba. Bhagavan came to the Auditorium at 5.00 p.m. and the cultural programme started with devotional songs by Sri Sreekumar & Party. Not only did the melodious singing of Sri Sreekumar earned the acclamation and appreciation of the audience, but also the song rendered by his son, a tiny tot, sent the audience into raptures. Bhagavan showered His love and blessings on the child and materialised a gold chain for him when He came on the stage. The second item of the programme was a dance drama entitled

"Ashwamedha" by the Bal Vikas children of Cannanore District. The theme of the play was the performance of Ashwamedha Yajna by Sri Rama in Ayodhya. His sons Lava and Kusa, living with their mother Sita in the hermitage of sage Valmiki, hold the sacrificial horse and defeat Bharata, Hanuman and their army. In the end, Rama Himself meets His two sons and Sita. Sita however returns to her mother Bhudevi (mother Earth). The last item of the programme was a play entitled "Work is Worship". The theme was taken from a story of the book "Chinna Katha" (a compilation of short stories narrated by Bhagavan in His discourses). The play enacted by the students of Sri Sathya Sai Vidyapeeth, Srisailam (Calicut) depicted how Lord Vishnu taught Narada a lesson when he became too proud of his devotion to the Lord. The Lord sent him to a farmer, who had to do hard labour to earn his living, yet he never forgot God. When put to test in trying circumstances, Narada forgot to chant the Lord's name. At the end of the programme, Bhagavan went up the stage and blessed the artistes. With offer of Arati to Bhagavan, the four-day Onam celebrations came to a close.

AVATAR VANI:

ONAM SANDESH:

Recognise the Principle of 'I'

Embodiments of Love!

Where the mind is active, all the three worlds exist there. Where there is no mind, nothing exists there. Mind is the main cause of man's suffering and misery. In order to control the mind man has to keep his desires under check.

Nature is a Great Teacher

The trees demonstrate the sacred principle of equality by providing shelter to everyone irrespective of their caste, creed, religion and nationality. The mighty mountains withstand the cold, rains and the severe heat, thereby teaching man not to be unduly attached to the body. The birds are satisfied with what they get to eat each day. They do not store food. Thus they teach the sacred lesson that one should not be worried about the future. Death conveys the message that body is temporary and the feeling of I and mine is but an illusion. Nature is the only school which confers on man true wisdom and God is the only Sadguru.

(Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of Love!

Nature sets an ideal to the entire humanity to imbibe the spirit of sacrifice and lead a spiritual life. *Anityam Asukham Lokam Imam Prapya Bhajasva Maam* (the world is temporary and full of misery, so contemplate on God). Under these circumstances, why is it that man is not able to cultivate the spirit of sacrifice? In spite of his knowing the truth that the body is temporary, he is still bound by desires. As there is no end to desires, man is subjected to endless misery. In order to get rid of his misery, man should follow the ideals of Nature. Nature is the best preacher. It exhorts man to cultivate love, compassion and spirit of sacrifice.

Since ancient times, in this sacred land of Bharat, many sages, seers and also the kings propagated the spirit of sacrifice and the principle of spirituality, showing to mankind the way to peace and security. Bali was one such king who propagated the spirit of sacrifice through his own example by undertaking many sacred rituals like Yajnas and Yagas. He even discarded the

advice of his Guru, Shukracharya, who tried to dissuade him from keeping up his promise to Vamana. He told his Guru that there was no greater sin than going back on one's own promise and that he would abide by his word to Vamana, come what may.

Let Intellect Control the Mind

Bharat, which has given birth to such noble kings and has been the land of sacrifice, spirituality and peace, has now become a place of injustice, untruth and restlessness. One should never get carried away by this body, which is bound to perish one day or the other. Only the principle of the Atma is true and eternal. One should lead one's life keeping this eternal Atmic principle in view and not the fleeting materialistic pleasures of the world. Nature is endowed with two aspects. One is related to the worldly view and the other to the spiritual view. All that you see, hear and think is related to the physical world. The unmanifest principle of the Atma is the basis for this manifest Nature. Here is a mansion. You can see its grandeur and beauty, but not its foundation. The body can be compared to a mansion and the mind to its foundation. Just as the mansion is based on its foundation, likewise the body is based on the mind. If the mind is steady, so too is the body and vice-versa. Having attained the human birth, it is necessary to understand the nature of the body, the mind, the intellect and the senses in order to make proper use of them.

Before driving a car, one should know where the brake, clutch, accelerator, etc., are located and how to operate them properly. Our body is a car, the mind is the steering, eyes are the headlights, heart is the engine, stomach is the petrol tank and the four objectives of human life, namely, *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama*, *Moksha* are the four tyres. The tyres, which are outside, are under the control of the steering, which is inside. Likewise, mind is the steering which controls the direction of the journey of human life. So, one should make every effort to understand the nature of the mind. Mind exists even after death. Purity of man depends upon the purity of his mind. If the mind is polluted, it pollutes all his life.

Though the mind of modern man is highly polluted with negative thoughts, he aspires to live in peace and happiness. But, how can he expect positive results without giving up negative thoughts? The peace and happiness that he experiences in the world are only temporary. In fact, real happiness is not in the world outside, it is within. Mind is the cause for everything, good and bad, happiness and misery. The Vedas declare: *Manah Eva Manushyanam Karanam Bandhamokshayo* (mind is responsible for both bondage and liberation of man). If man follows the dictates of the mind, he becomes worse than an animal and ultimately ruins his life. His life will be sanctified only when he follows the dictates of *Buddhi* (intellect). He who goes by the vagaries of the mind can never be steady in life. How can he then attain permanent happiness? So, first and foremost man should make his mind steady and sacred. Before undertaking any activity, he should discriminate whether it is good or bad, right or wrong. But, man is using his power of discrimination (*Viveka*) only to suit his selfish ends, which is individual discrimination. What is needed today is fundamental discrimination, that which is based on the sacred principles like truth, love and righteousness. Truth is God, love is God. So, live in love. Truth is one and the same for all countries in all periods of time. Truth originates from the Hridaya. The mind can be controlled once you have total faith in truth and follow it implicitly.

The primary effort of man should be to control the mind. This is not possible unless the desires are put under check. But, today man is filled with excessive desires. No doubt one can have desires, but they should be within limits. Today even the Sanyasins (renunciants) do not have control over their desires, leave alone the common men. When their Ashrams grow, their desires also grow more and more. Why should one have unlimited desires? Adi Sankara declared: "*Ma Kuru Dhana Jana Yauvana Garvam, Harathi Nimeshath Kalah Sarvarn*" (Do not be proud of wealth, progeny or youth, the tide of time may destroy them all in an instant). Youth and wealth are like passing clouds. One should keep one's mind under control and act according to the situation. You have just heard a singer singing Thyagaraja's composition, "*Samayaaniki Thagu Maatalaadene*". Thyagaraja was one who understood the truth and had love for God. But, one cannot keep control over one's mind in times of great difficulties. It is because of this weakness that one even starts blaming God for one's own troubles. Thyagaraja was no exception to this. When he was unable to withstand suffering in the face of difficulties in life, he put the blame on Rama, saying, "O Rama, my Bhakti (devotion) towards You is very strong, but You do not have the Shakti (power) to protect me." Then he enquired deeply within and repented for his indiscreet statement. He sang, "O Rama, if You lacked power, would a mere monkey jump across the mighty ocean? Would Mother Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth, become Your consort? Would Lakshmana worship You? Would the intelligent Bharata serve You? How can I, with my limited mind, understand the greatness and grandeur of Your divine power?"

(Telugu Poem)

One has to have a broad mind in order to understand the infinite Divinity. Today man has become so narrow-minded that he has given up *Asayalu* (ideals) and is leading his life only to fulfill his *Asalu* (desires). Lead a life full of sacred feelings. Give up worldly feelings. Have total faith in God. You can accomplish anything with faith.

Sathya (truth), Dharma (righteousness) and Tyaga (sacrifice) constitute humanness. Sathya is *Neeti* (morality), Dharma is *Reeti* (code of conduct) and Tyaga is *Khyati* (reputation). The combination of all these three is *Manava Jati* (human race). But, all these are missing in modern man. So, we find only *Akara Manava* (human in form), but not *Achara Manava* (human in practice). Today man is restless due to the vagaries of the mind. But the mind is essential for man. Only the one with the mind is *Manava* (man). Bereft of the mind, he is not man. Therefore, man should conduct himself fully aware of the divinity within. Unfortunately, many do not believe in the existence of God. Where is God? He is all-pervasive.

*Sarvata Pani Padam Tath
Sarvathokshi Siromukham
Saravata Srutimalloke
Sarvamavruthya Thisthati.*

(With hands, feet, eyes, mouth, head and ears pervading everything, He permeates the entire universe.)

Embodiments of Love!

More than physical prowess, man needs power of the mind. Man should have control over his emotions and keep them under check in times of distress.

*Life is a challenge, meet it.
Life is a game, play it.
Life is a dream, realise it.
Life is love, enjoy it.*

Man bereft of love is lifeless. Love, love, love. Love is everything. Live in love. Love lives by giving and forgiving; self lives by getting and forgetting.

Experiencing Oneness is True Wisdom

The present population of the world is approximately 600 crores. But, the principle of 'I' is one and the same in everyone. Each one refers to himself or herself as 'I'. How can one know these 600 crore people? Once you recognise the principle of 'I', you would have recognised all. Here you find many bulbs glowing; the same current flows through all of them. Similarly, the principle of 'I' is the same in all. Instead of questioning, "Who are you?" question yourself, "Who am I?" Know yourself first, then you will know all.

What is the cause of conflicts and restlessness in this world? Lack of recognition of principle of oneness is mainly responsible for this. If someone were to criticise you, do not get agitated. Remember that the same Atmic principle is present in both of you. The one who accuses and the one who is accused are not two different entities. There will be no scope for agitation if you understand this truth. Peace and serenity will reign supreme in the world once this principle of oneness is recognised. Likewise, God and devotee are not separate from each other. The one who worships and the one who is worshipped are one and the same. The devotee worshipping God actually means worshipping himself. *Ekatma Sarvabhuthantaratma* (the same Atma is present in everyone). This principle of oneness is Brahma. Viewing this oneness as many is Bhrama or Bhramthi (illusion). It is this Bhrama that is responsible for the restlessness in the world. True spiritual practice lies in cultivating the spirit of oneness. There is no greater Sadhana than this. Whatever Sadhana one undertakes, one should do it with love. Then there will be no scope for anger and jealousy. In order to understand the Vedic dicta, *Easwara Sarvabhuthanam* (God dwells in all beings), *Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma* (all this is verily Brahman), one should inculcate noble qualities. *Na Karmana Na Prajaya Dhanena Thyagenaikena Amrutathwamanasu* (neither wealth nor progeny nor good deeds can confer immortality; it can be attained only through sacrifice). People respect you as long as you occupy exalted positions in society. But nobody follows you when you lose your position and power. The Vedas address human beings as *Amrutasya Puthra*. You should live up to that title. You are *Amrutasya Puthra* (sons of immortality), not *Anrutasya Puthra* (sons of falsehood).

There is *Chinmaya* (awareness) in *Mrinmaya* (physical body). That awareness is true wisdom. The Vedas refer to this as *Prajnanam Brahma* (constant integrated awareness). It is this constant integrated awareness that makes the body, the mind and the intellect function. All the four *Mahavakyas*, namely, *Prajnanam Brahma*, *Ayam Atma Brahma*, *Aham Brahmasmi* and *Tattwamasi* speak of this constant integrated awareness. Understand the truth that you are God. You may think that you are separate from Swami. But in fact, I and you are not separate. 'I am yours, you are Mine,' 'You and I are one'. (*Cheers*) Understand this truth and act accordingly. "*Abheda Darshanam Jnanam*" (experience of oneness is true wisdom). There is only one

without a second. If you go on adding the number 1 to itself, the value increases. On the other hand, even if crores of 'I's are added to 'I', it still remains 'I'. That 'I' is Divinity. Once you understand this truth, you will realise that all are embodiments of Divinity. The essence of Vedanta is contained in these four Mahavakyas.

Vision of God through Love

You have all come from Kerala. You might have heard the arguments of many atheists that they do not believe in the existence of God as He is not seen. Where can you find anything without form? One cannot deny the existence of air just because it is not seen. Likewise, one cannot deny the existence of God. God exists, but you cannot see Him. All the names and forms are His. Once you develop this faith, you will develop love for God.

Gopikas could not bear the pangs of separation from Krishna when He left for Mathura. On deep enquiry, they realised that there was no separation between Krishna and them as He is present everywhere at all times. The one that went to Mathura was not 'Krishna', but his body. Realising this truth they sang this song, *"O Krishna, can we ever understand You? You are smallest among the small and mightiest among the mighty. You are present in all the 84 lakh species."* None can decide that God is here and not there. He is everywhere. Only through love can one have the vision of God. One can see one's own reflection in the mirror only when a particular chemical is coated on the other side. Likewise, coat the chemical of love on your Hridaya in order to have the vision of God. Fill your heart with love, then there will be no place for evil qualities like jealousy, anger and hatred. Wax melts when it comes into contact with heat. The heart also melts like wax when the rays of love fall on it.

The story of Prahlada is a direct proof of this. He constantly chanted the name of Narayana with all love even in the face of innumerable hardships. He was pushed from the mountaintop and thrown into the sea. Attempts were made to get him trampled upon by huge elephants and bitten by poisonous snakes. But, not even once did he give up chanting the name of Narayana. Love of Prahlada melted the heart of the Lord and He came to His rescue in times of need. True devotion lies in being in a state of equanimity both in pleasure and pain. Prahlada stands testimony to this. He had neither grief nor fear in the face of severest sufferings. He had total faith that God was within him. There can be no room for grief or fear wherever God's name is chanted as God Himself manifests there. *Sukhadukhe Samekruthwa Labhalabhau Jayajayau* (one should remain equal-minded in happiness and sorrow, gain and loss, victory and defeat). Such equanimity can be attained only through love.

Embodiments of Love!

All are the embodiments of love. Love is the fundamental force. When once you develop love within, you will never hate anybody. Today hatred is on the rise everywhere. Ego is the root cause for hatred. Give up ego and you can have the vision of the Atma. All this can be accomplished only through love. You should lead your life with love. There is no greater devotion than this.

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajans, *"Prema Muditha Manase Kaho Hari Bhajan Bina... and Subrahmanyam, Subrahmanyam"*.

**—From Bhagavan's Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam on 25th August
1999**

Develop Intense Devotion

Where the six noble qualities of Utsaha (enthusiasm), Sahasa (determination), Dhairya (courage), Buddhi (intelligence), Shakti (energy) and Parakrama (valour) are evident, God's protection and grace prevail there.

(Sanskrit Verse)

Embodiments of Love!

Lord Krishna has said that Karma (action) is responsible for man's birth as well as death. Man is bound by action in his daily life. Right from birth to death, man spends his time in performing some activity or the other. The path of action (Karma Marga) is very dear to God. In fact, He is the very embodiment of action and He is present in every activity.

Karma and its Consequences

"It is Karma (action) that is responsible for birth, sustenance and death of every being in this world. Karma is God for all beings. It is the cause of both pleasure and pain."

(Telugu Poem)

While Karma is responsible for pleasure, pain, birth, death, etc., Kala (time) is also very essential for every Karma (action). Without these two, man cannot live even for a moment. However, action is the cause for everything. What was the cause for King Harishchandra to become the caretaker of the cremation ground, for the separation of King Nala and his spouse Damayanti, and for the imprisonment and suffering of Sant Ramadas? It was the Karma alone. As is the Karma, so is the consequence thereof. These two are inseparable and interrelated. Time acts as a link between these two. A day is one unit of time. Seven days make a week, fifteen days a fortnight, thirty days a month and twelve months a year. Time is moreover divided into three periods—past, present and future. Multifarious activities take place in these three periods of time. What is time? What is space? Here are two flowers. The distance between these two flowers is space. They were buds yesterday, today they have blossomed and will fade away tomorrow. A bud cannot become a flower instantly and the flower does not fade immediately. The change takes place gradually. That which is the root cause for this change is time. You all know that the second-hand in a clock rotates continuously making the sound 'tick, tick, tick...' You might wonder whether it takes rest at all. Yes, it does. The time gap between two consecutive ticks is its period of rest.

This world is a combination of Kala (time), Karma (action) and Karana (cause). Every action has a reaction. When your finger gets cut with a knife, blood oozes out immediately. Here the reaction is instantaneous. There is no time gap whatsoever. On the other hand, the food we partake of takes at least two hours to be digested. Take the case of a seed. A seed sown today takes three to four days to sprout. Here the time gap between action and reaction is slightly more as compared to the previous instances. On the other extreme, we have a case where it takes years for a sapling to grow into a gigantic tree and yield fruit. Thus, the time gap between action and reaction may vary depending on the nature of action. But, know for sure that none can escape the consequences of his or her actions. It is impossible to say when, how and where one will face the

consequences of one's actions. In that case, why should one pray, meditate, contemplate on God or engage in good actions when one is anyway bound to face the consequences of one's actions? You may not be able to see the transformation that comes within you by your good actions and prayer. You may not even be able to visualise it with your mind. Yet this transformation in you is sure to attract God's grace. The benefits derived from prayer or good actions may not be visible to the naked eye. Yet the benefits do accrue in the form of God's grace. Take the example of a bottle of pills. You may note the date of expiry mentioned on the bottle as the year 1994. You may also find the bottle and its contents intact even in the year 1999. But, this does not mean that the pills will be effective if used today. The pills may be there, but they lose their power after the date of expiry. Likewise, the consequences of one's actions are inevitable, be they good or bad, but Divine grace will let their effects lapse. (*cheers*)

Once the demon Dundubhi challenged King Vali for a duel. Vali killed Dundubhi and in a fit of rage threw his battered and bruised body at a distance. It so happened that the bleeding body landed on the Rishyamuka Mountain splashing blood on sage Matanga, who was deeply engaged in meditation there. Enraged, Matanga cursed Vali thus: "Whoever is responsible for this reprehensible act will have his head splintered into pieces if he were to set his foot on this mountain." That is why Sugriva, Hanuman and others chose to live on Rishyamuka Mountain, when they were banished from the kingdom of Vali. They were certain that Vali would not dare to come there. Who was responsible for all this? It was Vali's himself. He could have stopped with the killing of Dundubhi. Instead, he flung the body away, driven by his anger, ego and hatred. These three evil qualities were responsible for his ruin.

Ekapada was a great and diligent teacher. But, he was a hard taskmaster too. He would not permit his students to relax at any point of time. His wife was in the family way. The babe in the womb of his wife questioned his father, "Father, how is it that you go on teaching the student without giving them any break for rest?" To this Ekapada replied, "Students should never be given free time, for an idle mind is a devil's workshop. It leads to many perversions." Furious at the impudence of his son, Ekapada cursed him, "You have the audacity to question my acts! May you be born as Ashtavakra (one with eight bends in the body)." Ashtavakra had to blame himself for this unfortunate situation because he questioned the propriety of the acts of his father without understanding the reasons behind them.

King Shantanu, father of Bhishma, wanted to marry Sathyavati, daughter of Dasaraja. In order to fulfill the desire of his father, Bhishma approached Dasaraja and requested him to give Sathyavati in marriage to his father. Dasaraja agreed on the condition that only the one born to Sathyavati would be made the crown prince. Consequently, Bhishma took avow that he would remain unmarried. He earned Divine grace by his devotion to his father.

Vinatha and Kadru were the two wives of sage Kashyap. While playing a game, they entered into a competition. The terms of the competition were that the loser and her son would serve the winner and her son for the rest of their lives. Kadru emerged victorious. As per the terms of the competition, Vinatha and her son served Kadru and her son. One day, Kadru told Vinatha, "You are like my sister. I will make you free if you procure the Amrita Bhanda (vessel of nectar) from heaven" Unable to bear the sufferings of his mother, Garuda undertook this stupendous task and brought Amrita Bhanda from heaven, thus freeing himself and his mother

from bondage. Pleased with the devotion of Garuda, Lord Vishnu showered His grace on him by making him His vehicle. What was the reason behind Garuda becoming the vehicle of Lord Vishnu? It was Sat sankalpa (noble resolve) that earned him proximity to the Divine.

For every happening in this world, Kala, Karma and Karana are essential. God acts after taking into consideration the three factors of Kala, Karma and Karana. Such noble truths have been expounded in the ancient scriptures of Bharat. But alas! the modern students are not making any effort to understand them, leave alone practise them.

Vastness of Ancient Indian Knowledge

Today we are celebrating the birthday of Lord Krishna. You attach importance to His body, but not to His teachings. You will be celebrating Krishna's birthday in true spirit only when you put His teachings into practice.

Mysterious are the ways of the Divine. It is difficult to comprehend how the Divine grace works. There are innumerable instances of God coming to the rescue of His devotees in times of need. Sant Kabir was a weaver by profession. One day he fell seriously ill and was unable to attend to his duties. The all-merciful Lord, in the form of Kabir, wove yarn and thus came to his rescue. Similarly, God came in the form of a potter and helped Gora Kumbhar by making pots Himself, when he was in distress. Sakkubai, an ardent devotee of Lord Panduranga, continuously chanted Lord's name. One day she could not perform her daily chores as she was running high temperature. Even under these circumstances, her husband and mother-in-law would not allow her to take rest. At this juncture, Lord Panduranga assumed the form of Sakkubai and performed all her duties. It is indeed difficult to understand how, when and where God would come to the rescue of His devotees. Absolute faith is essential for God to manifest.

Dasaratha had to send Rama to forest for 14 years as a consequence of his promise to Kaikeyi. Though, unused to any form of hardship, Sita had to endure the difficulties of forest life. But Lakshmana had no obligation to go through such an ordeal. Because of his intense devotion to Rama, he also followed Him like a shadow. He brought fruits, flowers and tubers from the forest to serve Rama and Sita, and himself fasted. Every moment of his life, he spent in the service of Rama. He put both his body and mind in the service and worship of Rama as a Sagunopasaka. Bharata requested Rama to return to Ayodhya, but His efforts did not succeed as Rama refused to return. So, Bharata reconciled himself to returning, but stayed outside Ayodhya in Nandigrama. His body was in Nandigrama, but his mind was with Rama. Lakshmana worshipped Rama with body and mind, whereas Bharata's worship was purely mental as his mind was united with Rama. As Bharata's worship was purely mental, he was a Nirgunopasaka.

In science, there are two modes of perception, direct and indirect (Pratyaksha and Paroksha). That which is directly perceived (conscious) is Pratyaksha, while that which is indirectly perceived (subconscious) is Paroksha. This difference between direct and indirect perception is similar to the relation between hypnosis and hypnotism. What is hypnotism? A hypnotist has the ability to enter the consciousness of the object irrespective of distance or time. He can experience Divinity both with body and mind. The one who undergoes the experience with mind alone without the body is the hypnotised. Lakshmana was well versed in this knowledge. The names of Rama and Lakshmana are inseparable. This happens naturally with no special effort as we

always say Rama-Lakshmana. One hardly ever hears the combination Bharata-Rama. Though Bharata's mind was one with Rama, his body was separated from Him by time and distance.

Hypnosis and hypnotism are not modern terms. These are found in the Vedas. Since people do not know these facts, they find new terms or new words for these concepts. Hypnotism is referred to in the Shastras as 'Ateendriya Shakti' (power beyond the senses). It means that one having this power can converse with one who is in deep sleep. Even the dead will come and converse with one having such power. Not only this, one can enter the mind of another sitting in front of him. One with such powers can perceive a far away object. Hence, the term 'Ateendriya'. It is not the object of the senses, since it is beyond them. Our ancients possessed such powers. These powers are obtained by Karma only. Therefore, all our actions should be pure and sacred. For this, purity of mind, heart and thoughts is absolutely necessary. Only a person with pure body, mind and intellect can be called a true human being.

There should be complete harmony in thoughts, words and deeds of man. That is what we mean when we say, "The proper study of mankind is man." The axioms like "Work is Worship," "Duty is God" are not of modern origin. These were the teachings of our ancient seers, though they used different terms for these. Consider all activities as an offering to God and all work as God's work. Just as two wings are essential for a bird to soar high in the sky, two wheels for a bicycle to move, Prema (love) and Seva (service) are essential for man to reach his destination. No benefit accrues from rendering service devoid of love. Do not expect any returns for your acts of service. The satisfaction that you derive from rendering service is itself a reward.

Be Like Lakshmana

Today many people are undertaking rural development activities. They come and tell Me, "Swami, we are doing Grama Seva (service to villagers)." For whose sake are you rendering service? Is it for My sake? No. You are serving for yourself. (*Cheers*) So long as you have the feeling that you are serving others, you are an egoistic person. It is not service in the true sense of the term, so long as there is the sense of ego in you. You think that you are worshipping Me. It is a great mistake to think so. When the same Atma is present in everyone, who is the worshipper and who is worshipped? In the path of spirituality, it is a mistake to think, "I am your devotee, You are my Guru." True wisdom lies in realising that you and I are one. Krishna said to Arjuna: "Arjuna, you call yourself My devotee. When once you have surrendered to Me, then there is no difference between you and Me. So, there is no separate identity of devotee and God." "*Ekatma Darshanam Jnanam*" (visualising the one Spirit in all is true wisdom). Likewise, if someone were to criticise you, do not get disturbed. Remember that the same Atmic principle is present in both. There will be no room for misunderstanding if you realise this truth. Seeing unity in multiplicity is the principle of Brahma and viewing unity as diversity is Bhrama (delusion). This delusion is the root cause for your suffering.

Embodiments of Love!

First develop faith in yourself.

*Where there is faith, there is love.
Where there is love, there is peace.
Where there is peace, there is truth.*

*Where there is truth, there is God.
Where there is God, there is bliss.*

True devotion lies in having faith and attaining bliss. If you have no faith, how can you have bliss? Many devotees ask Me, "Swami, I want happiness." Where is this happiness? Can you buy it in the market? Will any company supply you bliss? No. It is very much in you. You are not able to experience it since you do not have faith in yourself. You do not have love for God. Love is within you, but you are diverting it towards the world, not towards God. Worldly love is like passing clouds. Develop the love that is unwavering. It neither comes nor goes, it is in you always. Have unflinching faith in its existence. Question yourself, "Do I exist?" You get the reply, "Yes, I do exist." That is the true faith. Here is a flower, here is a handkerchief, here is a tumbler. The word is denotes true faith. Have faith in your existence, "**I am**". That is true faith.

You do not need to enquire into the nature of God or to search for Him. Have total faith in Him. What is the use of living in Prasanthi Nilayam if your mind is constantly going around the market? Be like Lakshmana, whose body and mind were both engaged in the service of Rama. Bharata was physically away from Rama, yet his mind was always with Him. Consequently, Bharata resembled Rama in all respects. You might have seen in photographs of Rama's coronation that Rama and Bharata have the same blue complexion. Bharata's mind was totally centred on Rama. Because of such intense concentration, both became one. Similar was the case of Lakshmana, who not only served Rama physically, but also contemplated on Him day in and day out. Rama's love for Lakshmana was so intense that when Lakshmana fainted in the battlefield, Rama lamented, "O Lakshmana, I cannot live without you. I may get another mother like Kaushalya, a wife like Sita, but not a brother like you." How can God lament! It was only a divine play enacted by Rama to show to the world the nobility and the greatness of Lakshmana. Such sacred love is like a powerful magnet. Such selfless, unattached love transcends action, space, time, cause and effect. People ask Me, "Swami, temples are built for Hanuman and Rama. Why is it that no one has built a temple for Lakshmana?" I ask them "You simpleton, is there a temple for Rama where Lakshmana is not there?" If you realise this fact, such a doubt will never arise.

Renounce Trishna, Attain Krishna

At the time of Krishnavatara, there were two sisters Radha and Radhika. Radhika was a Sagunopasaka and Radha, Nirgunopasaka. Radha constantly chanted the name of Krishna, while Radhika was engrossed in the physical form of Krishna. She was extremely sad because Krishna had gone away to Mathura. She gave up food and drink and said, "Krishna, in my heart I have been keeping Your lotus form fresh with my tears. Now even my tears have gone dry. How can I now preserve Your form in my heart? My heart, which is Your gift, I am now returning to You. What else is there that I can offer at Your feet? Accept my salutations and myself." She surrendered herself to Krishna. Radha saw this. She had thought that Nirgunopasana was superior to Sagunopasana, but after seeing the total surrender of Radhika, she realised the greatness of Sagunopasana. After this, she constantly meditated on the name and form of Krishna.

You must have heard this song of Tulsidas: "*Nava Kanja Lochana Kanja Mukha Kara Kanja Pada...*" In this song, the hands, feet, face, eyes, etc., of the Lord are all compared to lotus

flower. He prays for that lotus to stay in his heart forever. Both Radha and Radhika prayed to Krishna to dwell permanently in their heart. Such intense devotion is rare these days. Today, people merely say, "Krishna, Krishna," as they go round or pass by a temple. Of what value is such part-time devotion? They are Bhaktas merely for name's sake. You must strive to earn the great wealth of God's love. Only then will you enjoy the experience of unity. *Sarvatha Pani-padam Tath Sarvathokshi Siromukham, Sarvatha Sruthimalloke Sarvamavruthya Tisthati* (with hands, feet, eyes, head, mouth and ears pervading everything, God permeates the entire universe). Ramadas also had this experience of God's omnipresence. Thaneesha put him in jail, but he never gave up the name of Rama. "O Rama! When all is Your form, how can I be separate from You?"

Devotees today have some form of divinity in their mind, but they perform rituals in a mechanical way without any consistency. All your charity and worship are of no significance to the Lord. Show your charity and wealth to the income tax department. God needs only your love. There is no tax on love. (*Cheers*) You may face any number of difficulties or hindrances. The Lord Himself may subject you to test. You should not waver because of these. All is for your good only. Do not grieve over any loss or exult over gain. Equal-mindedness in loss and gain is true Sadhana. There are some who sit in Dhyana (meditation), but, their minds are in the market or in the hair dressing shop. Is this Dhyana or Japa? The mind should be immersed in Krishna. Instead it is filled with Trishna (desires). What is needed is Krishna, not Trishna. Krishna will fulfill all your Trishnas.

Dear Devotees!

Mere chanting of the Lord's name is not enough. Offer your love to God. Love is not your property. In fact, it is the property of God. Surrender to God what is His: What is the use of a long life without this offering? You have no right to offer your love to anyone other than God. When you offer all your love to God, He will look after all your needs. There is nothing that He cannot do in this world. In city or in hamlet, in forest or in sky, on the high peak or in the deep ocean, God is everywhere. Space and time are pervaded by Him. All beings are His forms. Realise this truth, transform it into practice and enjoy the bliss. This is true devotion. Human life attains true meaning only then.

Embodiments of Love!

These days, wherever we go there is unrest, ego and conflicts. You should develop love and share it with all—relatives, friends and even enemies. Then everything will be enveloped in love. Therefore, live in love.

Bhagavan concluded His Divine Discourse with the Bhajan, "*Prema Muditha Manase Kaho*"

—From Bhagavan's Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam on 3rd September
1999

Krishna Janmashtami and Ganesha Chaturthi Celebrations

Festivals in Prasanthi Nilayam assume unimaginable significance because they are celebrated in the Divine Presence of the Avatar, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Both Sri Krishna Janmashtami and Ganesha Chaturthi fell in the month of September this year, making it the blessed month of the year.

Krishna Janmashtami

On this holy day, 3rd September 1999, there was a brief programme in the morning in Sai Kulwant Hall. After Darshan, Bhagavan signalled to the students to start the programme. They chanted Stotras and sang Bhajans in praise of Lord Krishna and Bhagavan Baba. This was followed by distribution of Prasadam. The programme concluded with Mangalarati to Bhagavan. There was a little change in the programme this year. Instead of students bringing the cows in a procession from Gokulam to Sai Kulwant Hall as was done in previous years, Bhagavan Himself went to Gokulam to bless and feed the cows on this auspicious day.

In the afternoon, Bhagavan came to Sai Kulwant Hall at 3.30 p.m. Just after that, the programme started with Veda chanting by the students. After this, two speakers addressed the devotees before the Divine Discourse of Bhagavan Baba.

The first speaker, Dr. G. Venkataraman, eminent scientist and former Vice Chancellor, Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, drew the attention of the devotees towards the significance of celebrating Krishna Janmashtami, the birthday of Poornavatar Sri Krishna in the Divine Presence of His reincarnation as Poornavatar, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. This, he said, was a continuous process as the sun never rises or sets; it always shines with all its brilliance. God is also present always, but sometimes He takes human form. Since man has forgotten the message of Lord Krishna to Arjuna, Bhagavan Baba has incarnated to give the same divine message for the benefit of mankind.

The second speaker, Sri S. V. Giri, Vice Chancellor, Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, emphasised the importance of the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita, which the sages and seers consider as the fifth Veda. He said, the core of the Gita is faith. If we have faith, Lord's grace would automatically flow towards us since the all-merciful God is always in a state of readiness to shower His grace on His devotees. Quoting an incident from the life of Bhagavan Baba, he narrated how the compassionate Bhagavan came to bless His grandfather in his last moments. In the end, he prayed to Bhagavan for Bhakti and Shakti so that we might become deserving of His grace.

After these brief speeches, Bhagavan Baba gave His nectarine Discourse (printed separately in this issue) on this holy occasion, and concluded it with the Bhajan "*Prema Muditha Manase Kaho*" in which all the devotees participated in unison. Thus concluded the celebrations of the holy festival of Krishna Janmashtami in Prasanthi Nilayam.

Ganesha Chaturthi

On this sacred day, 13th September 1999, Bhagavan came to Sai Kulwant Hall at 6.45 a.m. After blessing the devotees with His Darshan, Bhagavan graciously permitted the programme to be started. The students chanted Stotras and hymns in praise of Lord Ganesha and Bhagavan Baba. This was followed by an excellent presentation of devotional songs by the famous playback singer and an ardent devotee of Bhagavan, Smt. P. Susheela. At the end of the programme, Prasadam was distributed and Arati was offered to Bhagavan. The morning programme came to a close at 8.30 a.m.

The afternoon programme started at 3.25 p.m. with Veda chanting by the students. Thereafter Sri Sandipan Chatterji introduced three speakers who were permitted by Bhagavan to make brief speeches before His Divine Discourse.

The first speaker was Sri Shiv Raj Patil, former Speaker of the Lok Sabha and an ardent devotee of Bhagavan Baba. Sri Patil said, "Bhagavan Baba is the embodiment of all Divine names and forms. He is also the embodiment of all power, knowledge and love. He is all in one and one in all. He is the Living God. We are fortunate to be in His Presence. He showers love on one and all. The only way to express our gratitude is to surrender to Him." Referring to Ganesha Chaturthi festival, Sri Patil emphasised its great cultural value in uniting all Indians.

The second speaker, Dr. G. Venkataraman, said that Ganesha worship was very ancient. Referring to the unusual form of Lord Ganesha, Dr. Venkataraman said it was customary to associate intelligence with elephant. He further elaborated that intelligence was of two types—worldly intelligence (Medha Shakti) and higher intelligence (Buddhi). The problems arise when we depend more on Medha Shakti and ignore Buddhi. Without Buddhi, Medha Shakti can be extremely destructive as in the case of scientific applications.

The third speaker, Sri S. M. Giri, dwelt in detail on the symbolism of Lord Ganesha's form. He said that elephant possessed very powerful memory, and perception faculties, but it was always careful in its reaction. We should also note that Lord Ganesha always rode on Mushika (rat), which represented attachment, ignorance and confusion. Ganesha's head is shaped like Aum, which is auspicious and divine. He also taught the lesson of hard work as a scribe of sage Vyasa. He showed the simplest way of getting to Truth as He did by circumambulating His mother and father.

After these brief speeches, Bhagavan Baba delivered His Divine Discourse (printed separately in this issue) and concluded it with the Bhajans "*Hari Bhajan Bina...*" and "*Pibare Rama Rasam...*" The programme came to a close with Arati to Bhagavan at 5.15 p.m.

As a grand finale to the Ganesha Chaturthi celebrations, a large number of colourful processions carrying the consecrated idols of Lord Ganesha converged in Sai Kulwant Hall in the afternoon of 15th September 1999 in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Baba. The processionists all along chanted Veda Mantras and sang Bhajans, which charged the atmosphere with devotional fervour. These processions started arriving at 3.00 p.m. and continued coming one after the other up to 3.30 p.m. They all circumambulated the Mandir and stationed their vehicles with Ganesha idols in front of the Mandir in a row. Bhagavan Baba blessed all the groups of students, teachers and other staff members and posed for photographs with them. In the end,

Bhagavan broke coconuts in front of all the Ganesha idols while the entire Mandir reverberated with Bhajans and Veda Mantras. The programme came to a close with Mangalarati to Bhagavan.

Renunciation

In Rishikesh, there was a choultry by the name 'Kali Kamaliwala'. It is a tradition to feed all those who come there. One Sanyasi got a wheat bread and since he could not find any place, went to the river Ganga and sitting on a rock, began to partake of the same. In this manner, he spent some years using the rock as his dining place. As it happened, a relationship developed between him and the rock. On a particular day, by the time he could procure alms, it became later than usual. Meanwhile some other Sanyasi got his alms and sat on that rock. The older Sanyasi got his wheat bread and came to the rock. He began to have an argument, "Ai! this is my rock, you go somewhere else." They began to quarrel. At that place, there was a saint by the name Satchidananda. He came and enquired of the quarrelling Sanyasins as to the reason for their fight. When he became aware of the reason, he admonished them, saying, "You have left behind your wives, children, parents, relatives and shaved your head to lead the life of mendicancy. Now due to your attachment, you have developed anger against each other." So why develop unnecessary contacts which may lead to attachment?

—Baba

AVATAR VANI

KODAIKANAL DISCOURSES -III

Nature of the Self

*Trees bear fruit for the benefit of others
Rivers flow for the betterment of all
Cows yield milk for the benefit of others
Human body has been given to man to help others.*

(Sanskrit Sloka)

In this world, trees, rivers and cows help others without any trace of selfish motive. They do not expect anything in return. Without trees, rivers and cows, the world cannot exist. In fact, it is they which sustain it. But, the irony is that man does not make any effort to help and serve others. The spirit of sacrifice evident in trees, rivers and cows is absent in man today. He spends all his time in fulfilling his selfish desires and does not give even a moment for doing good to others or for helping them. Sai Avatar has incarnated in this Kali Age with the divine mission of making every individual realise his relationship with the community, and ultimately with Divinity. (*Cheers*)

True Individuality of Man

Transformation at individual level is absolutely essential. But, today man is wasting his time in evil practices. He indulges in unholy activities day in and day out. He demeans himself by his evil habits. He kills animals and eats their flesh. Instead of purifying his mind, he debases it by taking intoxicants. He defiles time, which is the very form of Divinity, by gambling. He nurtures

evil qualities by indulging in evil activities. In addition to this, he involves himself in demeaning activities like stealing and denigrating others. He reads vulgar books, which generate evil thoughts and violent feelings in him. As he indulges more and more in wicked activities, he pollutes and corrupts the society also. When individuals take to evil ways, the entire society degenerates. Teaching and propagation of spirituality is essential for the purification of the individual and the society.

What is spirituality? That which destroys man's animal nature, nurtures humanness and finally transforms him into a Divine being is spirituality. Worshipping, singing devotional songs and performing rituals are acts of secondary importance. They cannot be identified with true spirituality. The word SAI spells out to the world the significance of transformation at three levels. The letter 'S' stands for transformation at spiritual level, 'A' for transformation at association (social) level and 'I' for transformation at individual level. Individual transformation is the basis for the other two. Therefore, this is the first step. But, these days, the word Individual is not properly understood. You usually take only the human form into consideration and identify it with an individual. Who is an individual? He, who manifests his Avayakta (unmanifest) Divinity through his conduct is an individual (Vyakti). This latent divine principle permeates the entire being of an individual from head to foot and is called conscience. To manifest and demonstrate the presence of this conscience is the characteristic of a human being. Instead of manifesting the pure inner being, the Self, man today is manifesting evil qualities and evil tendencies, which are related to his outer being i.e., the body. The Chaitanya (Divine Consciousness) latent in every human being is his true individuality. This consciousness should be put on the right track.

Put Your Senses in Right Direction

I said the other day, "*Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma*" (verily all this is Brahman). This is a Mantra. "*Easwara Sarva Bhutanam*" (God is the indweller in all beings) is another Mantra. It is essential for everyone to understand and realise the inner significance of these Mantras. Every Mantra is pregnant with deep inner meaning. It is impossible to understand the true meaning of the Mantras without acquiring virtues. What are these virtues? Right vision (Samyak Drishti) is one. Humanity will be in danger without right vision. The image of every seen object gets imprinted in the mind. Therefore, first of all one must have right vision. Right vision is that which is untainted by the baneful influence of evil feelings, evil thoughts and evil deeds. See no evil, see what is good. That which develops your insight to understand what is good, eternal and true is right vision. Next comes right listening (Samyak Shravanam). You should lend your ear only to good speech. Under no circumstances should you listen to evil talk. For this you should listen to sacred texts, Bhajans and talks about sacred acts.

Everything in this world is impermanent. The Vedas say, "*Yath Drisyam Thannasyam*" (all that is seen is bound to perish). All that you see will disappear one day or the other. For the nine-fold path of Bhakti (devotion) good listening (Shravanam) is the beginning. Shravanam, Kirtanam, Vishnusmaranam, Padasevanam, Archanam, Vandanam, Dasyam, Sneham, Atmanivedanam (listening, singing the glories of the Lord, constant remembrance of the name of Vishnu, serving the Lord's feet, worship, salutation, servitude, friendship and self-surrender are the nine paths of devotion. The first step to the final act of self-surrender (Atmanivedanam) is Shravanam (listening). Shruti (divine sound e.g. Vedas) is derived from Shravanam only.

The next virtue is right speech (Samyak Vaak). Right vision and right listening lead to right speech. Your speech should be good. Never utter harsh words. Speak softly and sweetly. That is why I tell you often, "You cannot always oblige, but you can always speak obligingly." Say what you have to say without harshness. Speak softly so that only the person for whom your words are intended may hear you. Such soft and sweet speech should be developed. Good vision, good listening and good speech lead to good thoughts. "*Yad Bhavam Tad Bhavati*" (as are your thoughts, so is the result). Right thoughts lead to right action (Samyak Karma). Without good thoughts it is not possible to perform good actions.

Buddha performed Tapas (penance) for many years to put his five senses on the sacred path. Mere bookish knowledge is of no consequence. It is related to art, and is in fact artificial. Mere textual knowledge will not lead you to right vision. Similarly, your sense of hearing does not become holy by listening to the expositions of a teacher. Good thoughts cannot be acquired by reading scriptures or by listening to the teachings of the preceptor. By self effort you should put your senses of Shabda (sound), Sparsha (touch), Rupa (form), Rasa (taste) and Gandha (smell) to right use. That alone leads you to proper Sadhana (spiritual practice). When you put your senses in the right direction, your life too will enter the right path. For the wrong attitude of man today, senses are the cause. As the senses become impure, the entire life too becomes impure and unsacred. If you want to make your life sacred, you have to first sanctify your senses. So, Buddha who did penance for several years understood that all ritualistic practices were useless. He declared that right vision, right listening, right speech, right thoughts and right acts as the five primordial principles for the guidance of man.

These five principles are the Pancha Pranas (five life forces) and five Kosas (life sheaths) of man. Physical body is Annamaya Kosa (food sheath). Body is transient. But you should nourish it, because only a properly nourished healthy body can support the Pranamaya Kosa (life sheath) and Manomaya Kosa (mind sheath). Pranamaya Kosa helps in the balanced flow of Prana (life force) in the body. Human beings limit themselves up to these three Kosas. Nobody attempts to reach fourth sheath, Vijnanamaya Kosa (wisdom sheath) which is beyond food sheath, life sheath and mind sheath. This sheath is reached only after transcending the first three sheaths. What is the nature of these three sheaths? The one you think you are is the food sheath (physical body). What others think you are is the mind sheath. The one you really are is the life sheath. When the human being enters the wisdom sheath, only then he experiences true bliss. So, man has to maintain sound body. But, he should know that as the body is associated with the senses, he should channelise them into the right path. When the senses follow the right path only then the life force vibrates in the body properly. This vibration is Divine in nature.

In the Gayatri Mantra, the word 'Bhur' refers to the body. Body is composed of gross materials such as water, lime, lead, iron, etc. All these materials may not cost more than one rupee. But, the value of the body is not one rupee. Its value is immeasurable. 'Bhur' also stands for the earth. The earth is made up of matter, which is transient. The word 'Bhuvah' in the Mantra stands for vibration. The body is made up of gross matter, which cannot have any movement without the life force of vibration. In the absence of this vibration, the body is mere lifeless matter. What is the source of this vibration? This vibration originates from radiation (Suvaha) which is related with spiritual knowledge.

Purity in Thought, Word and Deed

This spiritual knowledge comes from the Vedas. The four Mahavakyas (profound statements) of the Vedas which give this knowledge are *Prajnanam Brahma* (knowledge is Brahman), *Ayamatma Brahma* (Atma is Brahman), *Aham Brahmasmi* (I am Brahman) and *Tattwamasi* (That you are). Life force (Prana) or vibration works only through radiation. Without the radiation of Prajnana, vibration cannot have any movement. It becomes inert. True humanness lies in harmonising these three principles. Man should therefore achieve the unity of materialisation, vibration and radiation. Harmony in thought, word and deed is referred to as Trikarana Shuddhi.

I shall relate to you an example from the Mahabharata to illustrate this. Dharmaraja, the eldest brother of the Pandavas, was an embodiment of Sathya, Dharma, Santhi, Prema and Ahimsa. Draupadi, born out of fire, represented Prana. Bhima, the son of the wind god, symbolised Chaitanya Shakti (power of awareness). You know that life without awareness is Jada (inert). Arjuna symbolised the Antahkarna Shakti (power of the inner motivator). Nakula and Sahadeva represented the Jnanindriyas (organs of perception) and Karmandriyas (organs of action) respectively. Truth, righteousness, peace and love join the senses of action and cognition, enter the Antahkarana (seat of thought and feeling) with the help of life force called vibration and live there. So, Divinity which exists in every individual is associated with the five cognitive senses—sound, touch, vision, taste and smell. To recognise the nature of this truth, man should first attain the unity of thought, word and deed and bring about complete harmony in them. This is the real spiritual practice. Today, the typical individual thinks something, speaks something else and acts in altogether a different way. "*Manasyanyath Vachasyanyath Karmanyanyath Duratmanam*" Such a manner of functioning is typical of a wicked person.

Arjuna was the epitome of Trikarana Shuddhi (purity of the triad—thought, word and deed). Nakula and Sahadeva, who symbolised the senses of cognition and action provided the right sources. Bhima, the son of the wind god, stood by the side of Dharmaraja. His presence was as vital as the presence of oxygen in the environment. Draupadi symbolised life force. With the help of this life force only, Dharmaraja could foster truth, righteousness, peace and love. The Pandavas thus represent the proper use of all the powers in the body in purity and harmony.

Idealism of Draupadi

Epics like the Mahabharata and the Bhagavata and other Bharatiya scriptures expound these spiritual realities. Though Bhima and Arjuna were seethed with anger and revenge when their sons were killed by Aswathama, Draupadi pacified them. Though she was grief-stricken at the loss of her children, she maintained a perfect state of equanimity. When Arjuna, in a fit of anger, was ready to kill Aswathama, she quoted the scriptures and changed his mind. Draupadi was known for her immaculate character. She was also called Panchali. This word is often misinterpreted as a woman married to five men. No, it is not correct. She was able to co-ordinate the functions of the five cognitive senses—sound, touch, vision, taste and smell in an impeccable manner. When Arjuna was about to kill Ashwathama, she advised him in the following manner:

"Oh Arjuna, it is an unrighteous act to kill the one who is fear-stricken, the one who is in distress, the one who is asleep, the one who is unaware, the one who has surrendered himself, the one who is helpless, the one who is unarmed, and the one who is a female."

(Telugu Poem)

"Your speech is full of anger. It is a dangerous trait. No human being should possess anger. The one who is filled with anger achieves nothing but disgrace. Anger motivates one to do evil deeds. Such an individual is despised by everyone."

(Telugu Poem)

Bhima was also furious. Draupadi spoke to him thus:

"Anger destroys one's riches. It destroys one's respect. It distances one from relatives. It causes loss of everything."

(Telugu Poem)

Ashwathama had killed all her five sons. One can imagine the state of her mind. She would have been justified to use the harshest language. But, she did not have harsh feelings. She ran and fell at the feet of Ashwathama and questioned his ruthlessness in a gentle way:

"They didn't wear weapons and rage against you. They were not in the battlefield. They didn't cause even the least harm to you. They were not adept in fighting. How did you feel like killing such innocent children who were asleep?"

(Telugu Poem)

Draupadi spoke in such a gentle manner. She never used harsh words. Even in moments of extreme distress, Draupadi could speak softly and graciously. In fact, every individual should speak softly.

What should a man learn today? He should utilise his senses in the right way and thereby make an endeavour to attain Divinity.

Purpose of the Avatar

In this human life, the most significant thing to know is devotion. Jnana (wisdom) is the root of the tree of love. Its fruit contains sweet juice. It is the juice of devotion. This juice or essence (Raso) is the very form of the Divine. *Raso Vai Saha* (He is sweet essence). So, Bhakti is the very essence of Divinity. Sweetness of Bhakti should reflect in your speech. Hence, every word uttered by you should be sweet. Only then do you deserve to be called human being. When can you speak sweetly? When you contemplate on the Divine, your speech becomes sweet. However, it may sometimes become necessary to use harsh words to correct some people who act and behave in evil ways. Though the words may appear to be harsh, the feelings behind them should be saturated with love. Sometimes when it rains, hailstones too fall along with the gentle raindrops. They too are nothing but water in frozen form. In this context, I shall give you an example.

During the Mahabharata war, one day Ashwathama vowed that he would behead the Pandavas before the sun sets. Draupadi came to know of this vow. She prayed to Krishna, "I

don't want anything. I don't want the kingdom. Save the Pandavas." Krishna said, "That is not in my hands. The vow cannot be changed." Draupadi pleaded with Krishna, "There is nothing in this world which is beyond Your capacity. Everything is in Your hands. If You will, You can do anything." So saying, she fell at His feet.

Lord Krishna blessed her and immediately chalked out a plan. In the darkness of night, He went to sage Durvasa. The Pandavas who accompanied the Lord waited outside as instructed by Krishna. To protect His devotees, the Lord has to enact many roles. If He does not act, the play simply loses its significance and it becomes uninteresting. Durvasa gave an ecstatic welcome to Krishna.

Krishna said, "I have come here with a purpose. It is a very difficult task. You have to help me." Durvasa said, "I am ready to do any task except telling a lie." Krishna said, "Uttering lies is not acceptable to Me also. I am Divine Myself. I always adhere to truth. How can I tell you to utter a lie? I have made a plan. Please act according to it. That will fulfill My desire."

"Lord, do You have a desire?" asked Durvasa? "I have desires for the sake of others. I have no desires for My own sake. Whatever I do, whatever I speak, it is for the welfare of others. I never seek My own welfare," Krishna replied.

"Lord! What should I do?" asked Durvasa. Krishna said, "Dig a big pit. Put a strong plank over it and place your throne on it. Then sit on the throne. The Pandavas will hide in the pit. When Ashwathama comes here along with his accomplices and asks the whereabouts of the Pandavas, tell him that the Pandavas are under you. But say this in a harsh tone."

Durvasa was known for his temper. Ashwathama searched everywhere and at last came to Durvasa. He offered salutations to Durvasa and enquired about the Pandavas. Durvasa said in an angry tone, "Pandavas are under me." He spoke truth but changed the intonation. Fearing that the sage would curse him, Ashwathama ran away from that place.

In this way, God has to contrive some situations for the protection of the world. His attempts are not only to protect the holy people, but to protect the holiness itself. This sacredness is present in every being. To protect this sacredness the Lord incarnates. "*Paritranay Sadhunam Vinashay Cha Dushkritam Dharma Sansthapanarthay Sambhavami Yuge Yuge*," (to protect the righteous and destroy the wicked I incarnate from time to time to establish Dharma). Righteousness can never be annihilated. It is ever present in every age. But occasions arise when its very existence is threatened. The Lord incarnates to re-establish Dharma and to accord proper place to it. If Dharma is vulnerable to destruction, how can we call it Dharma? So, Dharma can never be vanquished. But, it becomes obscure. To make Dharma more manifest is the purpose of the Avatar.

Saturate Your Life with Love

The question arises, "Who is God?" You are all the forms of God. The Atmatattwa (Self) present in every being is in fact God. It is Divinity in its true sense. "*Mamaivamso Jeevaloke Jeevabhuta Sanathana*," (an aspect of My Divinity is resident in each being). Do not search for God. Look within. Divine will manifest in you. Spiritual texts may be many, the teachings of

spirituality may be different, but the Atma is the same. In any country, at any time, in any surroundings, the Atma is the same. There is no such thing as a Japanese Atma or American Atma or Atma of any other country. It transcends all divisions of creeds and castes. It has no distinctions like man and woman. It is beyond all distinctions. *Nirgunam, Niranjanam, Sanathanam, Niketanam, Nitya Buddha Mukta Nirmala Swarupinam* (The nature of the Self is described as attributeless, pure, eternal, free from bondage, unsullied and immortal). This eternal Atma is present in every human being.

At one time, someone questioned Shirdi Sai Baba, "Are you God?" What was His reply? "All are the forms of the Divine. I am not only Divine, but also the Divinity that is present in the Divine," said Baba. So, the same Divinity is present in every being as all are the forms of the Divine. But, people are not able to realise the Divine because they drink intoxicating wine of worldly desires. Wine leads to ignorance but not to the Divine. So, you should consume something that promotes Divinity. What is it? It is love. If you taste the fruit of love, you need no other nourishment. Love is the essence of all fruits. It is the goal of all goals. It is the end of all spiritual practices. You should cultivate such love with pure and steady mind. For this, you should keep the body, mind and senses on the right track.

I told you yesterday the three ways, which would help you to streamline your life: "*Bend the body, mend the senses and end the mind.*" What does the maxim, 'bend the body' stand for? Is it bending the body to carry out some task? No. You should bend your body with humility, respect and love when you see elders and your parents. In olden days in town and country, the entrances to the houses were a bit low. Visitors had to bend their heads to enter the houses. To highlight the significance of the maxim, 'bend the body,' the ancients used to keep the height of the entrances low deliberately.

Mend the senses. Through right vision, right listening, right speech, right thoughts and right actions you have to control your senses. That is the end of the mind. Here is an example. This is a piece of cloth. You call it cloth as long as the threads are intact. If you remove the threads one by one there will be no cloth. The threads symbolise your desires. It is said, "Less luggage more comfort, make travel a pleasure." You are increasing your luggage day after day. This burden has become a great hindrance to your progress and happiness. You should remove this hurdle and move closer to Divinity. Saalokya is closeness to Divinity. Saarupya is to attain the form of Divinity. How is this possible? The Vedas say, "*Brahmavid Brahmaiva Bhavati*" (the knower of Brahman becomes Brahman). Prahlada, who contemplated on Lord Narayana, became Narayana himself. The dacoit Ratnakara recited the name of Lord Rama and transformed himself into sage Valmiki. Hanuman contemplated on the name of Lord Rama. He is worshipped by the devotees of Rama. Saayujya is complete integration or merger with the Lord. This is the end of all Sadhanas.

Several ways of spirituality are enunciated in the Vedas, the epics and the Puranas, but love is the essence of all these ways. Love is changeless. There should not be any change in love. You should cultivate this changeless love and redeem your life.

*"Start the day with love,
Fill the day with love,*

*Spend the day with love,
End the day with love,
This is the way to God."*

You should saturate your life with love and end your life with Divine love. All other thoughts will disturb your equanimity.

Gifts of God

Man possesses all types of wealth except two. These two are possessed by God. You can attain them by praying to God. These two are Santhi (peace) and Ananda (bliss). You may feel happy otherwise too, but know that such happiness is transient. Eternal peace and eternal happiness are the gifts of the Divine. So, you should pray for these gifts. Your prayer should be like this: "My Lord, I do not want anything that can be found in this world. Please grant me that which is with you alone, Santhi and Ananda (peace and bliss). I want nothing else other than these two." Pleasure and happiness obtained from objects of this world are short-lived.

"Anithyam Asukham Lokam, Imam Prapya Bhajasva Maam," says the Gita. Let not your prayer to God be for these impermanent things. Pray to God for Santhi and Ananda. With such prayer you can win God's love and grace. Once God's love is obtained, you can win the whole world. When you pray to God for His love, your worldly desires also get fulfilled automatically.

Once a king did penance. He had no children. God manifested before him and asked him to tell his wish. The king said, "Lord, I want to see my great grandson ruling the kingdom." How many desires are contained in one desire! He should have children. His children should also beget children. The kingdom should be under his control till his great grandson grows up and rules over it. His eyesight should be intact to watch this progress. This single desire expressed by him contains all the other desires. Likewise, if you pray to God for love, all your worldly desires too will be fulfilled.

"Man is seated under a tree bearing twelve worries. Birth is a worry, life is a worry, family is a worry, death is a worry, childhood is a worry, old age is a worry, success is a worry, failure is a worry, action is a worry, obstacles are a worry, joy itself is a worry, all uncertainties are a worry. Oh ye, all come and carry away this gift. All your worries will end." (Telugu Poem)

This tamarind tree of worries is not a fit tree for shade. If you receive God's love, all these worries will vanish. This is your only need. This should be your only desire. All other spiritual practices are of no use. Love cannot be acquired by these practices. Prayer and Bhakti with intense yearning for God's love and grace will fill your heart with love. Chant the Lord's name ceaselessly to attain that love.

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajan, *"Pibare Rama Rasam..."*

—From Bhagavan's Discourse in "Sai Shruti," Kodaikanal on 28th April, 1999

The Human Value of Love

—Ritoo Ahuja

Without loving God, it is not possible to love all. By loving God, our love becomes purified as it is revealed to us in due course of time that the whole universe is nothing but Him and Him alone.

There are five major Human Values that form the greatest treasure of mankind. They are Truth, Right Conduct, Peace, Love and Non-violence. But they do not exist separately; they are interlinked. The primary value is Love. All others are essentially dependent on it. Baba has beautifully said:

*Love as thought is truth
Love as action is right conduct
Love as feeling is peace
Love as understanding is non-violence.*

When you saturate every thought of yours with love, then you are immersed in truth. When you practise love in your daily life, it is Dharma (right conduct). When you feel love all the time, you are established in abiding peace. And when you have deep understanding of the divine principle of love, you become steeped in non-violence. Therefore, love is the basis of everything. Love is the basis of peace of mind. Love is the birthplace of truth, and love made visible is right conduct. Love is the very foundation of non-violence. That's why Baba very often says, "Love is God and God is Love; therefore, live in Love."

God is Love Personified

God and love are synonymous. The loving aspect of God is what we should emphasise on in our lives and to the children around us. Yet I have found myself saying many a time to my children that if they do such a wrong, remember God is watching. This seems to give a wrong message to the child. The child might feel that God is someone who is waiting to punish him for the least bit of wrong that he does. And he begins to fear God. The truth is that our own actions bring pain or happiness to us. God has nothing to do with it. He is so loving that He accepts even the most evil person if he/she turns to Him in love. He is ready to burn a mountain of sin if we but turn to Him in love. Did He not do it with Valmiki? Valmiki was a dacoit who earned his living by looting and murdering people. He turned to Lord Rama in love and he not only came to be known as a great devotee, but reached the highest goal of life—self realisation.

To experience the One who is Love Itself, what do we really need to do? All that we need to do is to develop our love. To see the moon, do we need a candle or a torch? No. The light of the moon is sufficient to see the moon. In the same way, if we want to experience God or our own Self (Baba says we are all God too), all we need to do is to immerse ourselves in love.

Love connects all the other four values which are themselves interconnected. If we practise just one, very soon we will have the other three also in us. It's like pulling one leg of the table,

which has four legs. What happens when we do that? Of course, the other three will also follow. That is the beauty and strength of Love.

Understanding Love

The word 'love' as you can see is one of the most used and perhaps misused words in the world. Perhaps it is the most misused word in the English language. Whereas many other languages have different words to express different types of feelings, the English language has only that one word to describe the loving relationship with God, the affectionate regard in which we hold parents, children, husband and wife, and the degree to which we find objects pleasing. So then, what is love?" and "What are the expressions of love?" "What is this love we talk of in the context of promoting human values?"

As mentioned earlier, God is love and love is God, which means that I must understand love to understand God. All human beings have this potential to understand God as there is not a soul in this universe who does not love. We all love something or the other. A criminal might not seem to love anyone, but he definitely loves his own self. Most of us may say yes to the following statements:

- I love my parents.
- I love my furniture.
- I love God.
- I love chocolate/ ice-cream/ sweets
- I love my friends.
- I love my husband/wife.
- I love music.
- I love my children
- I love good clothes.
- I love my jewellery.

If we analyse this, it would be clear that our love is for objects, people and God. There is no fourth entity. Why do we love the objects that we like, e.g., furniture, chocolate, jewellery, music etc. We might say that they please us or bring happiness to us. Is it just by possessing these objects that happiness comes to us or is there something else in it? We might say that being related to these things I get accolades from people, which actually brings happiness to me.

It becomes clear that I am loving these objects so that people (X,Y,Z) may love me. In all my cravings for objects, I am letting out a silent cry of "Love me, please". It is love that brings fulfillment and happiness to me. To love and to be loved is all that I actually want in all that I do.

Analysing Love

Let us analyse our love for people. Why do we love the people we claim to love, e.g., parents, husband/wife, children, friends, etc? The answers can be many—because they love me, because they care for me, I feel fulfilled in this relationship, because they bring a lot of happiness to me, because I feel secure with them, because no one has loved me more than X,Y,Z, because they always look up to me.

Here also, I am afraid, the same thing is happening. We love these people because of what we are getting from them, e.g., love, care, respect, friendship, security, etc. There is a reason in this love. It is like a business transaction. We give with one hand and receive with the other. The moment we stop getting what we want, we are unable to give love and the relationship turns sour. So, can we say that we really love them with our attention always on our happiness? No. This too cannot be love -pure love. We can call it worldly love. Baba says, "Any love that is related to the body has an element of selfishness in it." Worldly love is also nothing but attachment. And we know that attachment is selfish. I do not love them for their own sake, but for my sake. I have noted in myself that I am attached most to that person who gives me the maximum happiness. Thus, in the different stages of life, my attachment was also changing. Earlier it was my parents, now my husband and children. But, pure love never changes. Swami says, "Love is selflessness and self is lovelessness." That means there is no thought of self, i.e., 'me' or 'mine' in pure love.

When I first understood love as this, it came as a shock to me that I did not love anyone but my own little self. All my imaginations of being a thoughtful, loving, kind person and good devotee crashed with a soundless bang. Yes, I even loved God, my Swami, for my own sake. Why? Because He fulfilled all my needs and desires. He always gave me what I asked for. Did I ever think of His well being? Did I ever think of serving Him? Well, He's God, He can take care of Himself was the attitude. Gush! And I had the audacity to claim that I loved Him! This attitude was also nothing but attachment. Attachment brings pain even if it is of Satwic nature, even if it is with God. Chain, whether it is made of iron or gold, will bind.

Love is Giving and Sacrificing

Love when directed towards a higher source like God, motherland, religion, etc., is devotion (pure love). Love for God, etc., can also be selfish, but the pure love that we are talking about now sacrifices all with no thought absolutely of oneself. Pure love has no expectations. The only thought that the lover has is that of the well being of his beloved. Thus, it was pure love that prompted the two young sons of Guru Gobind Singh to give up their lives for their religion. It was pure love for the country that prompted the freedom fighters in India to give up their lives or to undergo persecution at the hands of the British Government. It was pure love of God, which made Prahlada undergo all sufferings with a smile. It was pure love for his mother and father that Sri Rama was ready to go into the lonely jungle straight from the luxurious life in the palace at Ayodhya. Pure love sacrifices everything for the happiness of its beloved. No sacrifice is too great for the beloved's sake. And love itself is its fulfillment. It seeks nothing in return, only the happiness of its beloved matters. A sincere concern for the happiness of the beloved is the first essential factor of love. Suppose someone says he loves flowers or a friend and then forgets to water the flowering plants or help the friend in trouble—then it is not real love.

Expressing love is not restricted only to devotion and self-sacrificing service. It can be expressed in simple kindness of ordinary life. Thus, to love is to will good for another. It may mean writing with enough care so that our correspondent can read without spending much time. It is also to keep things in order so that the husband's/wife's work is made easier. It means arriving on time or giving your full attention to the one who is talking to you. It is to sit in your own specified seat in the bus so that your neighbour has enough space to sit. Love expresses itself in serving, and all these little acts fall under the category of service. Service is not only just

when you formally go to an old people's home for "Narayana Seva". The list of the ways you can serve can be endless. Everyday numerous opportunities are coming our way. We can see them only if we develop this eye of `love'; it means to recognise the silent need of our beloved and then to do the needful.

Love is Divine

Thus, in short, we can say that love is compassion, care and sacrifice. Love is sharing, tolerance, thoughtfulness. Love is forgiveness, consideration, and forbearance. Love is generosity, gentleness, and patience. Love is sympathy, friendship and empathy. Love, like Truth, is unchanging and eternal. It always is. Therefore, Swami says, `Love is God'.

Pure love sees oneness and it links the hearts, whereas worldly love sees separateness. However sublime the love of a mother may be for her child, it is in its quality worldly love, as she loves the child because it is hers'. Likewise is the love of a father, a sister, a brother, a friend, a daughter, a son, a husband and a wife. This type of worldly love has the quality to give man great joy and equally great sorrow, pleasure and pain, comfort and worry. It takes one on a roller coaster ride with its ups and downs. If the wife does not live up to the expectations of the husband, then all negative feelings begin to manifest. That can never be love. It is only attachment, because in love there is no attachment. Swami says, self gets and forgets, love gives and forgives.

It is not only difficult but impossible to love all, if we see separateness, e.g., mine, yours, or this is my husband, child, friend, enemy, etc. Pure love sees oneness, not separation. There has to be something, which is common in all of us. So, what is that One, seeing which we feel one with all? What is that factor which is common to everything and every being in the universe? It is seeing that one Lord who is seated in the hearts of all beings. If we see Him in everyone, then we are seeing the One in all and like this it becomes very easy to "love all and serve all," even strangers, even the sickly, even the poor and helpless, even the ugly (not just in appearance, but in mind also). Love sees all others as `oneself'. Baba says, "Love can never entertain the idea of revenge. When the teeth hurt the tongues, do you seek revenge against the wrong doers? No, for they both belong to you and are an integral part of your being." This then becomes a manifestation of pure love—love that seeks no reward, no recognition, no name or fame, is divine in its nature. This love goes beyond duty and beyond reason. It is unconditional. It is given as the sun gives light to all. Even if you curse the sun, it remains unaffected and continues to shine on friend and foe alike. This quality of total giving without any expectation or condition is what we are seeking to foster in ourselves.

How to Love God?

To reach this level of intense loving, all we need to do is to connect ourselves with the source of Love, the headquarters of Love, i.e., God. Baba says, "When you love Me, you love all, for you begin to feel and know and experience that I am in all" This connection is possible only if you love God. Without loving God, it is not possible to love all. By loving God, our love becomes purified as it is revealed to us in due course of time that the whole universe is nothing but Him and Him alone.

So, the million-dollar question now is, how to increase our love for Him? Looking back into my own life, I saw my husband as a stranger whom I married then, since mine was an arranged marriage. I did not love him as much as I do now. Why? Simply because I know him better now. Living with him I have come to know the beauty that lies in his character. So to love the Lord more, I have to know Him. I have to know Him in His totality, His Nirguna and Saguna Swarupa (form). I have to know how He is in all? The scriptures are full of it. So, I must read them. And I must join the study classes where I can get answers to all my doubts. I have to know and feel how much and how unconditionally He has always loved me, loves me and will continue to love me. Swami says, "Through love alone can you merge into the ocean of love. Seen through the eyes of love, all beings are beautiful, all deeds are dedicated, all thoughts are innocent. The world is one vast kin."

Be My Instrument

Krishna was born during the Krishna Paksha (the dark fortnight of the month). The effulgence of the Lord is seen with greater effect when it is dark. In a world of disorder, Krishna was born to establish order. He was born on Ashtami day. Ashtami is associated with troubles and difficulties. When do troubles arise? When righteousness is forgotten. Krishna's advent therefore signifies removal of darkness, end of troubles and effulgence of Supreme Wisdom. Krishna's primary role was that of a teacher. He taught the Gita to Arjuna. He told Arjuna: "Be only My instrument." Krishna thereby declared: "Using you as an instrument, I am reforming the whole world."

—Baba

AVATAR VANI:

GANESHA CHATURTHI SANDESH:

Truth Emerges From Wisdom

Jiva is Siva and Siva is Jiva; one who sees the identity between the two is the realised one.
(Sanskrit Sloka)

He who has understood the truth that Siva (God) and the Jiva (individual) are one and the same is the true Brahmajñani (one who has known the Brahman). Siva and Jiva are not different from each other as the same divine Atmic principle is present in both. One who has realised this truth is a true human being. The objective of human life is to understand this truth. One cannot be called a human being by his physical form alone. Human life is the noblest. Man must think how to lead his life in a befitting way. Man is called Manava, meaning not new. But man has another name, Partha, which means Prithvi Putra (son of Mother Earth). All the powers that are present in the earth are present in man also. None can visualise the powers that are latent in the earth. One can understand the presence of these powers by deep enquiry and investigation. These powers are infinite, unfathomable and unrevealed. Man, as he is born of the earth, naturally has all these powers.

Perverted Intellect Ruins Man

It is stated in the Mahabharata that the Pandavas spent 12 years in Aranyavasa (exile) and one year in Ajnathavasa (incognito), i.e., living amidst people without revealing their identity. Likewise, though there are infinite powers in man, they are not revealed. These are known as Ateeta Shaktis (transcendental powers). These are psychic in nature and have been termed so by scientists. Man is thus a repository of enormous energy of various kinds, viz., light energy, electric energy, radiation energy and above all energy of the Self (Atmic Shakti). But for this energy, man cannot eat, drink, move, laugh or do anything for that matter. Man, though blessed with such powers, is forgetting the latent divinity and is leading the life of an animal. The reason for this is the perversion of Buddhi. Our ancient epics like the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Bhagavata give many instances to illustrate this.

Krishna went to Hastinapur as an emissary to bring about a compromise between the Kauravas and the Pandavas. Duryodhana, due to the perversion of his Buddhi, did not pay heed to Krishna's counsel. Though he knew what was Dharma, yet he did not put it into practice. What happened to him ultimately? He ruined himself. Similar was the case with Ravana. Though he was one of great penance and wisdom, he did not pay heed to the good counsel of his wife Mandodari, and the teachings of Narada and other saints and sages. Ultimately, he too ruined his life. The same can be said of Hiranyakasipu also. He was a great scientist. Modern scientists could only reach the moon, but Hiranyakasipu could even go beyond the sun and the stars. Such a great scientist did not adhere to Dharma and ultimately met his doom. Vali, on being questioned by the sages as to why he banished his own brother, Sugriva from the kingdom, gave a concocted version of the truth, magnifying Sugriva's mistake and concealing his own. Again, the reason was perversion of his Buddhi. In the Mahabharata, Amba put the entire blame of her predicament on Bhishma, ignoring her own folly, and developed hatred towards him. Similarly, Vishwamitra developed enmity with Vasishta for no fault of the latter. Great scientists also could not comprehend the reality and understand the difference between truth and untruth due to lack of power of discrimination. Today, modern man considers truth as untruth, Dharma as Adharma and vice versa. Since ancient times, Bharat has given utmost priority to Sathya (truth), Dharma (righteousness) and Nyaya (justice). In spite of knowing what is truth and righteousness, modern man is not adhering to them due to the perversion of his Buddhi. Modern society is not able to protect Dharma and control injustice. Not merely that, man is forgetting the truth and distorting the meaning of Dharma itself. He gives various contradictory definitions of Sathya and Dharma. Does the fault lie with Sathya and Dharma? No. Mistake lies in the manner in which Buddhi is utilised. That is why we pray to God to illumine our intellect as stated in the Gayatri Mantra.

Sincere Prayer Earns Divine Grace

Ganapati is the embodiment of Buddhi and Jnana (wisdom). Truth emerges out of wisdom and ultimately leads to Ananda (bliss). This is the teaching of Ganapati. Where there is no truth, there can be no bliss. "*Trikala Badhyam Sathyam*" (Truth is changeless in the three periods of time). Dharma is also changeless in the three periods of time. The injunction of the Vedas is *Sathyam Vada, Dharmam Chara* (speak the truth and follow Dharma). But nobody pays heed to this dictum. Today people misinterpret Truth as that which is expressed, seen, heard and experienced by the senses. Similarly, Dharma is also misinterpreted. This is in fact Prakrita Sathya and Prakrita Dharma (worldly truth and worldly Dharma). This is related to outward path (Pravritti). The inward path (Nivritti) is related to the fundamental truth and righteousness (Mooladhara

Sathya and Dharma). But today no one seems to be taking cognisance of this, leave alone practising it. *Vedokhilo Dharma Moolam*. (The Veda is verily the basis of Dharma).

God is the embodiment of Sathya and Dharma. So, whatever God says is Sathya and whatever He does is Dharma. It is the primary duty of man to obey the command of the Lord. Disobeying the Divine command amounts to transgressing the fundamental principles of Sathya and Dharma. Truth is God. Today the world is in disarray as the principles of Sathya and Dharma are not scrupulously followed. Man feels proud of his Medha Shakti (intelligence). Greatness does not lie in merely possessing intelligence. It has to be converted into skill. Only then will there be balance in human life. Man can acquire wisdom only when he converts his intelligence into skill. But due to the effect of Kali Age, man, instead of converting intelligence into skill, kills it. As a result, his Buddhi is perverted and there is imbalance in his life.

Under any circumstances, one should never disobey God's command. The consequences will be disastrous if one warps to disobey the Divine command *"Is it possible, oh man, to escape the consequences of your actions? You may be a great scholar, worship the family deity or even go to the forest and undertake severe penance, yet you are bound to face the consequences of your actions. Whether you dip the container in a small lake or a mighty ocean, the amount of water collected depends on the size of the container; you cannot expect more. Likewise, you get what you deserve. You may don ochre robes and turn the rosary innumerable times, yet you are bound to face the consequences of your actions. However, if you are the recipient of Divine grace, you can overcome the effects of any Karma (action)."* (Telugu Song)

Sunlight enables man to perform various actions. Yet the sun remains unaffected by what man does. It is just a witness. Likewise, God is the eternal witness. He is unaffected by what happens around. Clouds, which owe their existence to the sun, cover the sun itself. But that does not in any way diminish the brilliance of the sun. Similarly, God does not stand to lose anything if man, who owes his existence to God, derides Him. Man will certainly reap the consequences of his actions; God is not affected by them. Just as the clouds originate from the sun, likewise, Manas, Buddhi and Chitta are formed out of the Atma. Mind is responsible for all suffering and even rebirth. So, mind has to be diverted towards God in order to escape from the cycle of birth and death.

One can overcome the evil effects of one's actions by focusing one's mind on God. Mountains of sin will vanish like mist by God's grace. For every action, there is bound to be a reaction. Divine grace can provide an escape from the consequences of one's Karma. In fact, one can rewrite one's own destiny if one gets Divine grace as was the case with Markandeya. He was given only 16 years of life span. But he was unaware of this until the night before he turned 16. That night he found his parents full of sorrow. On enquiry he was informed that his end had approached and that was the cause of their sorrow. Hearing this, he went to the temple of Easwara, hugged the Sivalinga and prayed intensely. At the appointed hour, Yama (God of Death) cast his noose around the neck of young Markandeya. As he was hugging the Linga, the noose fell around the Linga also. Easwara manifested there and remonstrated Yama, "How dare you cast the noose around Me?" He cursed Yama to death. Pleased with the devotion of Markandeya, He blessed him with the boon of immortality. This only drives home the point that

through sincere prayer, you can earn Divine grace, which helps you to attain everything. God is not separate from you. He is present in your body. Body is the temple of God.

Universe is Divine Creation

Newton wanted to know whether the creation had emerged on its own or there was an unseen force governing it. He conducted extensive research for several years to know the truth. Ultimately, he gave up all the scientific experimentation and turned inwards. Within a span of 9 days, he realised that there was a 'divine hand' that was responsible for the entire creation, its sustenance and its annihilation. Other scientists like Einstein, Schrodinger, etc., came to the same conclusion.

Many eminent modern scientists are also trying to find out the truth about the Divine creative principle of the universe. They are not aware of the magnetic power and the electric power that are present in the human body, which is verily a small generator. The Jataragni (digestive fire) is the source of heat energy in the body. Before partaking of food, you chant the Sloka:

*Brahmarpanam Brahma Havir
Brahmagnou Brahmana Hutham
Brahmaiva Thena Ganthavyam
Brahmakarma Samadhina.*

Immediately, you get the reply from within:

*Aham Vaishvanaro Bhoothva
Praninam Dehamasritha
Pranapana Samayukta
Pachamvannam Chathurvidham.*

God who is present in the form of Vaishwanara in you digests the four types of food that you partake of. Jataragni is like a generator and is responsible for the electric power in the body. Human body is a conglomeration of different powers—heat, light, sound, electricity etc. Unfortunately, such divine powers of the body are wasted in pursuit of worldly comforts and luxuries.

You should not crave for luxuries, but bear with patience whatever comes your way, because whatever happens in life is good for you. Never be disheartened when you are faced with difficulties or sufferings in life. Have firm faith in the power of the Atma. One who recognises the power of the Atma will not suffer. The panacea for all suffering is chanting of God's name. Have the firm conviction that you are God. Never be under the mistaken notion that God is the master and you are His slave. You do not have a master, you are the master. Master the mind and be a mastermind. Never forget God's name. Never be away from God's love. Never leave truth and never forget Dharma. With one-pointed concentration contemplate on God. Nothing else matters in this world. Many are under the illusion that they have achieved something great in life by amassing wealth, but they do not realise that they have to go empty handed when they leave this world. Do not get carried away by this illusion (Bhranti). Do not waste your life in this

illusion. You should understand the difference between Brahma (God) and Bhrama (illusion). The principle of unity in diversity is Brahma and viewing multiplicity in unity is Bhrama.

*Nations are many, but earth is one;
Stars are many, but sky is one;
Jewels are many, but gold is one;
Cows are many, but milk is one.*

Who is Ganapati?

This is how you should visualise unity in diversity. Try to understand the significance of the names Ganapati, Vinayaka and Vighneshwara. You are Ganapati yourself. This morning, you have all heard Susheela sing a song, "*Adugaduguna Gudi Undhi*" (there is temple at each and every step). Our body itself is a temple of God. "*Deho Devalaya Proktho Jeevo Deva Sanathana*" (body is the temple and the indweller is God). The Jeevanajyoti (light of life) that is present in the body is Paramjyoti (the Supreme Light) itself. This light is not subject to change and cannot be extinguished. The body is bound to perish one day or the other. The body may die, but not the mind. Such a mind has to be controlled. That is the true Sadhana. You will not have any troubles if you offer your mind to God. Mind is very fickle. It is not steady even for a minute. So, it should be ever engaged in work. Only then can it be brought under control. What is the work you should assign to the mind? Let the mind be a watchman at the gate of your nostrils. Let it observe what is going in and what is coming out. 'So' is inhaled and 'Ham' is exhaled. 'So' symbolises that which is good (Divinity) and 'Ham' stands for that which is bad (ego). Then the mind will understand that the Divinity has to be taken in and ego has to be given up. Mind is like a mad monkey. Unless it is kept busy, it will go according to its whims and fancies. The only way to keep a monkey busy is to make it go up and down a pole repeatedly. Likewise, the mind also has to be kept busy by contemplating on Soham Mantra.

Who is Ganapati? He is the Adhipati (master) of all Ganas—five senses, five elements and five life sheaths. Human body consists of five Kosas (sheaths)—Annamaya Kosa (food sheath), Pranamaya Kosa (life sheath), Manomaya Kosa (mind sheath), Vijnanamaya Kosa (wisdom sheath) and Anandamaya Kosa (bliss sheath). Man progresses only up to Manomaya Kosa. He is unable to go up to the sheaths of wisdom and bliss. Since Ganapati is the master of all the five Kosas, one has to take refuge in Him in order to reach the state of bliss.

Elephant is known for its intelligence. Ganapati is depicted as having elephant's head as He is very intelligent. Ganapati is also known as Vinayaka, meaning one without a Nayaka (master). He is the master of Siddhi (spiritual attainments) and Buddhi (intellect). So, one has to pray to Vinayaka in order to acquire Siddhi and Buddhi. You have to make proper use of your intelligence in order to earn the grace of Vinayaka. Shun bad company. Seek good company. Only then will your life be redeemed. Very often I remind the students that by joining bad company, you become slaves. You should be masters, not slaves. You all know what happened to Kaikeyi on listening to the words of Manthara. No one loved Rama more than Kaikeyi. But, when her intelligence was clouded, she believed the words of the wicked Manthara. To one with perverted intellect, truth appears as untruth and vice versa. Due to the effect of bad company mind gets polluted. So right from the tender age, "*Tyaja Durjana Samsargam, Bhaja Sadhu Samagamam, Kuru Punyamahoratram, Smara Nithyamanithyatham*" (run away from bad

company, join good company, undertake righteous actions day and night, enquire into that which is permanent and that which is ephemeral). One should not develop unnecessary contacts. Your interaction with others should be limited to basic courtesies like, "Hello, how are you? etc."

Embodiments of Love!

You are under the false impression that today is the birthday of Vinayaka. He has neither birth nor death. He has neither beginning nor end. He is the eternal witness. This life is temporary. You should suffuse it with spirituality. All the festivals of Bharat have deep inner meaning. They are highly sacred. Festivals are not just meant for preparing delicious items and consuming them. They are meant to remind us of Divinity. On festival days, you decorate your houses with buntings of green leaves and also you wear new clothes, discarding the old ones. Likewise, you should give up your old rotten habits and cultivate new and sacred ideas. You should step into new life with sacred qualities. Never disobey the command of God. If you do so, you will ruin yourself like Ravana and Hiranyakasipu. They developed hatred towards God and ultimately met their doom. Never doubt the existence of God. He is everywhere. *Ek Prabhu Ke Anek Nam* (one God has many names). Never forget Him. Contemplate on Him incessantly. That is the main objective of human life.

What is it that you have to offer to Vinayaka on this day of Vinayaka Chaturthi? Today people spend a lot of money in offering various fruits and preparations to God. All these offerings are made only as a ritual. Ultimately, people themselves consume them! No benefit accrues from making these offerings. Patram, Pushpam, Phalam, Toyam—these are the four things that you should offer to God. Here Patram (leaf) means body. This body may wither away at any moment. So, never develop attachment towards the body; instead offer it to God. Pushpam (flower) means Hridaya, the flower that will never fade. Mind can be compared to Phalam (fruit) and Toyam stands for tears of joy. All these should be offered to God. This is the offering that God expects. I hope that you will put into practice what has been said and sanctify your lives. I bless you all and bring My Discourse to a close.

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajans, "*Hari Bhajana Bina...*" and "*Pibare Rama Rasam...*"

—From Bhagavan's Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam on 13th September
1999

A basket of Chocolates

—Samuel Sandweiss

Swami is always with us during times of happiness and times of troubles, protecting and guiding us through the path of purification to perfection

Swami helps us see correctly. Our mind tricks us into foolishness, and Swami comes to set us right. How glorious is Swami's teaching, how protective and saving are His words and His love! He attracts us and we become more and more absorbed in His love until we feel His Presence all the time and we want to follow His lead to perfection.

A Close Relationship with the Avatar

Swami teaches that we are divine, pure love and bliss, and that through His love we can realise our own divine love. He has come during such a dark time in human history when families, nations and religions are warring. What He offers to the beleaguered humanity is something quite unique and extraordinary—an intimate relationship with a living Avatar. This is a blessing beyond comprehension, and a force that can protect and guide us through rough and troubled times.

The personal relationship with Swami is vital and fresh and filled with the unexpected—with humour, drama, and a love that is beyond description. This love gives great confidence and strength. By His grace, our family has had steadiness and direction during these troubled times. I am sure we will never in a million lifetimes be able to comprehend the full scope of Swami's protective Grace.

Once my wife and I were talking with Swami about the troubled school system that our daughters were in. Drugs and violence had made their way even into elementary schools. We asked Swami if we should find a better school for the children. Swami sweetly and gently said, "I know the schools are not good—but it is the same all over. Keep them in their school, but talk to them often and find out what is on their minds. Give encouragement and guidance." My wife Sharon said with alarm, "Swami—the world is so dangerous now—if it were not for You..." Swami stopped her and with a serious, almost chilling look said, "Yes, if it were not for Me—everything would be lost"

And so we begin to see how vital Swami is to everything we do. He shows us that the cornerstone of spiritual life is a living loving close relationship with God. Then we become aware that His omnipresent love is the source of all our strength and success. As the relationship becomes deeper and more intimate we see more clearly how He is always with us protecting, guiding, leading, saving and giving us strength to overcome our Karma and the rough seas of the outer world.

Part of the path teaches us how to deal with suffering. Pain and suffering must be expected on the spiritual path and the antidote is God's love. In fact, it is God's love which allows us to go through our Karma more quickly and safely—it is His love which teaches proper attitude to suffering. As a psychiatrist I daily draw on Swami's teachings to help me and my patients face their problems.

First to remember is that all `this' is `that' that all life is a spiritual journey bringing us home to our pure divine love. And Swami is the guide and goal. He helps us have courage and teaches us how to release ourselves into Him. Expecting suffering, accepting it and knowing that sacrifice is the key to liberation, leaning to stay close to Swami and offer Him everything, feeling His loving omnipresence and with the power of Sohum releasing ourselves into Him—this is part of the path of release into His love.

Rachel's Stress

A year ago, our daughter Rachel went to the gym. She and her twin sister, Ruth, were stressed by a deadline for a book they were writing, entitled "Twins", and Rachel hoped that a workout would reduce stress. When finished, she found that she couldn't open the lock to her locker. She panicked, thinking that someone had broken into her locker and taken her clothes and valuables, including her wallet, money, identification and credit cards and keys to her car and apartment.

Rachel fervently prayed to Swami for help and called Ruth for moral support and asked her to come fetch her, as she had no car key. Ruth told Rachel that a friend who they hadn't seen in months, had just brought a lovely, large, beautifully decorated basket of chocolates and little stress-reducing items. Evidently he knew they were worried about their book. Ruth described the gift—there was a tension-reducing squeezable bean bag, a cute lizard-looking animal that sits on top of the computer monitor and makes you smile, some stress-reducing items, and of course, the lovely chocolates. 'You really must see it—it is so beautiful!'

The manager of the gym helped by cutting through the lock. As the door swung open, Rachel cheered to find her property untouched. But why couldn't she open her lock? Rachel ruffled through her bag and found another lock, the one she usually used. Evidently, when she reached for this lock, she picked up another that she forgot she had, and thus, the answer to the riddle. Ruth arrived to find Rachel happy and thankful for Swami's protection. When they arrived home, they enjoyed the lovely basket of chocolates and stress reducers.

A Wonderful Visitation

Later that night, Rachel had a dream. She and Ruth were on a walk and had to part. Ruth went to visit a nearby temple, and Rachel went into an old two-storey house. She heard Swami would be coming, and people were preparing for His visit. The house was barren and crowded. A pack of people slowly shoved up a circular staircase. She felt uncomfortable and wondered why Swami would visit this unlikely place. At the top was a drab room with few windows and no furniture. Surely Swami wouldn't be visiting this place, she thought, and pushed against the crowd to descend the stairs. Just as she started down, a sound of excitement signalled Swami's approach. Immediately her mood changed to excited anticipation.

In a moment, Swami appeared, radiant and beaming with love. His orange robe settled softly over His body, and He walked with grace and authority. Rachel was thrilled and lit with happiness. As Swami passed, He turned towards her—and her heart melted. She became one with Swami's smile and felt pure sweetness from His attention. Swami softly said, "How did you like your basket?"

Rachel didn't understand what He meant, and wondered, 'What basket?' She then realised—THE BASKET OF CHOCOLATES—"Oh Swami, was that from You? Did You send the basket?" She began to cry. Swami looked at her with great compassion and said, "Yes, it was from Me. I am always with you, always protecting and providing. I am with you in the heat of summer and in the chill of winter—I am always with you."

Rachel wept with love for Swami. She was hurled out of sleep and sat straight up in her bed, crying with wonderment, delight, and love. She held the glow of Swami's Darshan in her heart for days after. When she told the story to Ruth and then to my wife and me, we all shed tears of love and gratitude for Swami. What a wonderful visitation!

Swami is always with us, during times of happiness and times of troubles, protecting and guiding us through the path of purification to perfection. His promise, "Why fear when I am here," must be held firmly in our hearts. Let us rejoice about our intimate relationship with Swami and pray that we remain steady and full of faith throughout the turbulence of life and are good instruments of His peace and love.

DIVINE REMINISCES:

Baba: Physician of the Soul

—Dr. R. S. Padmanabhan

Bhagavan is with us all the time! We must deserve and pray for His grace!

I first went for Swami's Darshan in November 1944 at the residence of a devotee in Chamarajpet, Bangalore on my sister Sundaramma's advice. There was a large gathering of 250 people. Swami in His inimitable style went round the group of people and gave Darshan and Padanamaskar. To my utter surprise, I was called for interview. It was a Divine experience. I was totally lost in His Presence. He told me my life story and assured me of His abundant grace, saying, He would take care of me and my future. He wanted me to dedicate myself to Swami's ideals of service and love towards humanity. When I asked for a message, He told me that His life was His message. He blessed me, produced Vibhuti and gave me in plenty for my use. I have surrendered myself to Him since then and have never looked back afterwards.

Omniscience of Bhagavan Baba

On 1st December 1949, five years after I started my first practice in Basavanagudi, Baba called me for interview and told me that I would be starting my second clinic at Malleswaram by the end of the month. It looked impossible, but by His grace, I got a place and equipment through a senior doctor friend, though it was not available in the market during that post-war period. Swami had given 25th as the date when He would inaugurate the clinic. It happened accordingly. Swami came and inaugurated the clinic on 25th December 1949 in the evening. He materialised His earliest stamp size photograph (Photo 1) with the name 'Sathya Sai Baba' on it and gave it to me asking me to keep it with me always. I was wonderstruck at this materialisation. As commanded by Him, I have kept it with me since then. Then He asked me what else I wanted. I said, I did not want anything else except His blessings. He said 'You will have it in plenty.' Since

I did not want anything, He produced a silver idol of Udipi Krishna (Photo 2) as my wife was a great devotee of the deity. The Udipi Krishna was an exact replica, a small version of what is present in Udipi. He asked me to give that idol to my wife as she was not present there.

Experiencing Bhagavan's Motherly Love

In August 1953, Bhagavan Baba told me that I would be going to Vienna for postgraduate training, which did materialise according to His Will. Due to lack of space I cannot give the details of various things that happened, which led to this impossible trip to materialise. It is a fantastic experience. Before my departure in August 1953, He came to our house and blessed me. He then materialised a small silver casket filled with Vibhuti (Photo 3) and said it would last till I came back after one year. It did last for one year though I was using it everyday. Some time after my return, it became empty. Now I refill it whenever Swami gives me Vibhuti Prasadam.

In the year 1970, I handed over my Malleswaram evening practice to my junior doctor. For the first time, I had free time in the afternoon and I was able to look after Sai Organisation work. At this juncture, Swami gave me a unique experience which is unparalleled in my life. Due to my work for 12 hours everyday, I had developed spinal pain. My orthopaedic surgeon phoned me that I should go to Vellore and have a routine check-up by a visiting world famous orthopaedic surgeon, who was his friend, and he made an appointment with him. Suddenly, I was forced to go to Vellore. I did not tell about this to Swami as I thought it was unnecessary, since it was a mere check-up. On Sunday morning, my wife went to Brindavan as usual. Swami had noticed my absence and He went straight to my wife and asked why I was absent. She had to tell the truth of my visit to Vellore. I returned on Sunday night from Vellore. On Monday morning, I got a phone call from Swami much to my astonishment and He asked me to see Him in the evening. When I went to Brindavan that evening, He told me that He felt my absence on Sunday morning, and asked me not to go away without telling Him in future. I had no words to express my gratitude for Swami's loving concern for me. I promised that I would not repeat it in future. This experience of motherly love of Swami for me was something I will remember forever in my life. With a broad smile, He materialised a Rudraksha (Photo 4) and asked me to take sanctified water after praying and doing Puja, which I am doing since then with most beneficial results. It is only by Bhagavan's grace that my spinal pain has remained under control since then. Even now, in 1999, I am managing without treatment by His grace. Swami always enquires about the pain and assures me of well-being. His motherly love is unique and has to be experienced to be believed.

A Porter who Disappeared

In May 1973, Swami asked me to go to USA for the admission of my son's Postgraduate training, who was in his Final B.D.S. I planned my visit as per Swami's instructions. My ticket was booked via Bombay/Bonn/Dusseldorf/U.S.A. I alighted at Bonn where my patient, Vice Consul of the Indian Embassy, had organised a special visit to Dental Hospitals. He is the grandson of Sir C.V. Raman and son of Sri C. R. V Subban. After staying with him at Bonn for a week and visiting hospitals in the weekend, I went with my host to Bonn airport at 9 a.m. to go to Amsterdam. After dropping me at the airport he left the place to attend to his Embassy work. The flight was at 10.10 a.m. from Dusseldorf to Amsterdam. Suddenly, the flight was cancelled and I was asked to go the next morning. I was in a dilemma. My friends at Amsterdam—two old devotees of Swami were waiting for me at the airport to receive me. They were Swami's those

devotees whom we were looking after at Bangalore under Swami's instructions. You can very well imagine my plight. My friend had left me at the airport, I had missed the flight and my friends were waiting in Amsterdam.

Swami had materialised a ring with a Topaz stone (Photo 5) before my leaving Bangalore and had assured me that my trip would be successful. The ring was given to me in Brindavan in the presence of Col. Joga Rao, Dr. Bhagavantham and a few other VIPs. It has a fantastic story, which is relevant to be mentioned. The materialised ring with a plain yellow stone was given to me. I wore it and received Swami's blessings. Col. Joga Rao, who was inquisitive, asked Swami whether His image was present in the ring. Swami said: "Whether it is present in the ring or not, I will be present in his heart and will take care of him." He took the ring back, blew three times and returned it to me. After this, I could see Swami's image in the ring. With this background information, I will proceed further.

I waited at the airport and started praying to Swami. The airport authorities suddenly told me that there was one possibility of reaching Dusseldorf, that is, by taking a taxi. I was told it was only 110 miles and if I had any luck, I could reach Dusseldorf at 10.10 a.m. just in time to catch a flight for Amsterdam. At 9.10 a.m., they got me a taxi and gave instructions to the driver explaining the situation and asked him to take me to Dusseldorf airport straight, which he did.

As soon as I reached Dusseldorf airport, a porter in white dress came near the taxi, picked up my baggage and straight went to the plane along with me, and handed over the baggage—there was no security check or anything of that sort. I was emotionally upset to imagine how I could make it. In the meantime, the porter had left. I wanted to pay and thank him, but could not find him. The plane left at 10.15 a.m. I reached Amsterdam as per the schedule and met my old friends at 11.15 a.m. at the airport. This is one aspect of the story. I returned after fulfilling my work in Washington and came to India.

After my return home, I went to Brindavan. The unexpected happened; Swami, after His morning Darshan, called me and asked about my trip. I explained everything to Him. Then He said: "Well, everything was all right except that at the Dusseldorf airport, I had to carry your baggage from the taxi to the aircraft—you never thanked Me for carrying it!!" You can imagine how I would have felt. *I realised that Bhagavan is with us all the time! We must deserve and pray for His grace!* The providential sequence of events was truly amazing.

From Local to World-wide Akhanda Bhajan

For the last 25 years, we had been doing Akhanda Bhajan in our family. On the completion of 25 years of the Akhanda Bhajan in 1975, Swami came to our house. As my uncle Sri Seshagiriiah was getting very old, I took initiative to assist him. Swami told me to inform the group that since the number of devotees was ever increasing in thousands, in future it should be done on a world-wide basis to give delight to all the people. I recognised and appreciated Swami's advice, but my sister Sundaramma, who was the oldest ardent devotee amongst us, refused to accept this idea, since we were losing the opportunity of bringing Swami and celebrating the function in our family. Swami, with great difficulty, convinced her to start the Bhajan.

It is worth mentioning here that Swami used to materialise wonderful things like silver idol of Shirdi Sai Baba, continuous flow of Vibhuti on Shirdi Sai idol, gold Bilva leaves and many other things every year. After the conclusion of the Bhajan, Swami, as usual, came for Arati. He materialised a Navaratnamala with a locket of His figure (Photo 6) and put it around my neck. I was astounded because usually it was offered at Shirdi Sai Baba idol. I said: "Swami, what have you done!" He said in whispers: "Keep quiet. I know what I am doing." Then, in His speech, He said that since this was the last Akhanda Bhajan our Samithi was doing, He had blessed me and given the Mala. Thus ended our 25 years of Akhanda Bhajan which now has become a historic world-wide event.

Blissful Divine Memories

—Dr Jayalakshmi Gopinath

He conveyed to me an unforgettable message that God's ways cannot be understood by us. Let us not analyse or judge Divinity with our limited perceptions

Our dream to see God, to speak to Him, to touch His Holy Feet has come true. Suffice it to say that we are indeed blessed. What greater fortune can one aspire for than to be at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba!

By divine ordain, I was drawn to the Lotus Feet while yet a student. As my father, Sri Kesava Vittal, was about to retire, the whole family came to Bangalore to settle down prior to his retirement since we belonged to Bangalore. My father was a senior officer in the Forest Department of the erstwhile Madras State, which comprised Andhra and Tamil Nadu, under the British rule.

Father, having led an active and adventurous life in service, was habituated to take long walks in the early hours of the morning. On one such routine, he met a person who struck a conversation with him. This person casually mentioned about one Sri Sathya Sai Baba, a person hardly 20 years, who had miraculous powers and was then residing in the house of a rich coffee magnate, Smt. Sakamma. However, the predestined bond between Divinity and our family slowly unfolded itself some time after mid-forties.

We had our first Darshan of Swami at Smt. Sakamma's house. She was a simple and amiable lady. She was kind to us, and we had access to Baba as the number of devotees was small during those days. We were all totally overwhelmed by Swami's love and graciousness.

When we embarked on our journey to Puttaparthi for the first time, we were not aware of the hardships and difficulties we would have to face. In those bygone days, the only mode of transport was bullock cart from Bukkapatnam to Puttaparthi, and vehicles had to be left behind at Bukkapatnam at the mercy of the villagers.

The villagers would crowd around us and ask strange questions: "What do you find in Sai Baba? Just the other day He was going about in knickers and shirt. We have all seen him since

his boyhood days. We do not find anything extraordinary in Him. Rich people from far off countries are coming to Him. We do not know what they find in Him." Nothing deterred us—we had seen Divinity and we were intoxicated with His love.

The poor bullocks struggled and panted as they had to pull us through rocks, ravines and rubble, and we were reduced almost to dismembered individuals, unable to balance ourselves in the rocking and racking undulations.

To describe what always awaited us at the end of the arduous journey, when we reached the holy precincts of the Old Mandir, now Pedda Venkama Raju Kalyana Mandapam, is beyond my powers of expression. Beloved Swami would be waiting at the portico to receive us; He would enquire solicitously about our journey and shower on us His t bounteous love. Every ache and pain was forgotten and we would be filled with bliss. Nothing mattered to us except Swami.

During those days, Swami would never send off any devotee without an interview. On one of our visits to Puttaparthi, when the time to leave drew near, I was busy cleaning the altar at that time. Some devotees came to me and said, "Why did you not go? Swami has taken your parents for interview." I could not hold back my hot tears. I did not want anyone to see me; so, I went behind the curtain of the altar, sat and sobbed bitterly: I knew I had missed something precious. It was all over. I could hear my father calling out to me that we should leave. I did not want my parents to see my tear-stained face; so, I wanted to wipe my tears. I lifted up my head and to my utter surprise, Swami was standing right in front of me, so benign, so merciful. He asked me, "Why are you crying?" The loving query brought forth another profusion of uncontrollable tears. I saw resplendent Divinity standing in front of me, exuding loving compassion. All that I could ask for was a photo of Swami. He said, "Why photo? If you throw it in fire, it turns to ashes, in water it will fade away and if you tear it, it is reduced to fragments. Install Me in your heart, I shall always be with you" Yet, He materialised a small photo for me. It is still with me and is an invaluable gift of grace to me. The message went home, never to be forgotten.

When the Old Mandir could not accommodate the large number of devotees, a new Mandir was constructed, which Bhagavan named Prasanthi Nilayam (the abode of peace). It was inaugurated by Bhagavan Baba on 23rd November, 1950 on His 25th birthday.

Another incident, which conveyed a profound message, happened in 1954 in Prasanthi Nilayam. By this time, small units had been built for devotees in the Mandir Complex and father's unit was at the place where South Prasanthi is situated now. The dwelling units of Dr. Subramanyam, Prof. Kasturi and my father were in a row. It was for the Birthday celebrations that we were planning to come. I came ahead to get the unit cleaned and get it ready for my parents, as my mother was not keeping well. I was also to arrange for the maid servant in Parthi, as in those days it was easy to get them and each time we came, the same women would come. Such was the loyalty and love then.

I was there for two days when Swami sent for me. I went up to the interview room, which was on the left hand side of the Mandir in the middle floor. Swami beckoned to me sweetly, asked me to sit at His Feet and said I had to vacate our unit because one V.I.P. was coming with his wife. I could, He said, keep a corner for myself. I was bewildered, because in another three days my

parents were arriving. This person and my father could never become friends, because the person was too proud, conscious of the important post he held while in service. He had been abroad and in those days it was considered an added merit. He was highly westernised. My father too had held a high post, but was simple and he could not stand this person. This person's wife was a great devotee, but had no unit of her own as her husband never came to Parthi and was contemptuous of the lack of minimum facilities in those days. I had to obey Swami's command. The hurt was too deep. I kept telling myself what my parents would do. I also dreaded the encounter between my father and this V.I.P

The V.I.P and his wife came with their paraphernalia. The lady was an invalid and so the cot, the wheel chair, the dining table, the kitchen equipment, two cane chairs and two servants, all arrived promptly. I had to welcome them and watch dumbfounded their occupation of the whole unit and I had hardly any place to keep my suitcase. Our V.I.P. made himself comfortable on the cane chair and did not condescend to give me even a glance. Bhagavan came down smiling greeted the V.I.P with great warmth, and made much of him. Then He turned towards me and said, "Tell him to make himself comfortable." This was the last straw or the camel's back. The tears of humiliation were almost spilling out of my eyes and I did not want Swami to notice it. The lady, a good and ardent devotee, offered Swami a lovely fragrant garland. At this moment slowly slipped out by the back door. I stood behind the house and gave vent to my hurt feelings in a flood of tears which were unending. I was young then and sensitive. It was time for Bhajan. So, I thought, I must go, as I never missed Bhajan. I waited for Swami to leave, as it would be discourteous to go before He left and perhaps He might give further instructions. I was stupefied when Swami came through the back door, drew near me and said gently, "Pichi! (endearing word for stupid) Why are you crying? I played a drama. Wipe your tears, take this garland and go to Bhajan". I smiled gratefully in the midst of tears and touched His holy Feet. He had conveyed to me an unforgettable message that God's ways cannot be understood by us. He has a difficult role to play. All are the same to Him. Beloved Swami has to satisfy all. He had to play this drama for the sake of the lady who was a great devotee. Let us not analyse or judge Divinity with our limited perceptions. As soon as my parents came, Swami got the unit vacated and saw to it that the lady was comfortably accommodated in a tent. The whole incident is so vivid in my memory, as if it happened yesterday.

I would like to end with a delightful personal experience of Swami's Leela. It is so beautiful and wonderful that I would like to share the joy with all. I shall go back to 1948. We had no bathrooms to bathe in the Old Mandir and the ladies bathed near the well behind a temporary makeshift screen. One day I had to wash my hair and as was my habit I gave my diamond earrings to my mother to keep them, so that I would take them after my bath. I finished my bath in a hurry and as it was about to be Bhajan time, I got ready and sat for Bhajan. Bhajan was over and we were going inside the small room, where the idols of Shirdi Sai and our Baba were installed. Swami looked at me gravely and asked sternly, "Where are your diamond earrings?" Mother was beside me; so I said, "Swami, I have given them to mother." Swami looked at my mother quizzically and enquired, "Has she given the diamond earrings to you?" I was amazed when my gentle mother said a firm categorical 'No'. I could not comprehend my mother's answer. Surely, she could not be uttering an untruth? I was bewildered. I looked at Swami and at my mother. My mother was serious, but a mischievous smile hovered around Swami's lips and my eye caught Swami's hand movement as His fingers were twiddling around something in his

Kafni (robe) buttonholes. A smile broke out spontaneously on my lips. "My beloved Lord" I said to myself, "How fortunate I am, how wonderful it is, my diamond earrings are your button studs!" I could have danced with unbounded joy. Then Swami took them out of his buttonholes and gave them to me and added with feigned seriousness and a half jocular tone to my mother, "Don't give her diamond earrings again." I was in bliss. It was only later that I came to know from my mother that Swami had taken the diamond earrings from her and entered into a secret pact with her to say what she had said to me. I still wear those sacred earrings touched by God. Blessed indeed are we who have kissed the dust under His holy Feet.

If you cannot see God because of your ignorance as you cannot see the stars during daytime because of light, do not say that God does not exist.

—Baba

FESTIVALS AT PRASANTHI NILAYAM

Dasara and Paduka Puja Celebrations

A grand function to worship Bhagavan's Padukas was organised by Sri Sai Paduka Trust, Madurai in Prasanthi Nilayam.

Installation of Idols and Paduka Puja

Before the main function of worship of Padukas of Bhagavan, a solemn function was organised on 30th September 1999 to install the idols of Sri Rama, Lakshmana, Sita and Hanuman near the main entrance of Sai Kulwant Hall at the place where thousands of books of Likhita Japa of Rama Nama written by devotees were earlier placed in a vault. Amidst the chanting of Veda Mantras and Bhajans, Bhagavan installed the idols at 9.00 a.m. Bhagavan materialised a Lingam which was placed under the idols to surcharge them with His Divinity.

The main function of Paduka worship was held on 1st October 1999 at 7.00 a.m. in Sai Kulwant Hall, in which 4005 couples participated. The chief priest guided the devotees to perform nine Abhishekas of the Padukas with different Puja materials while the priests chanted Puja Mantras. After the Abhishekas, Puja with Sandal, Sindoor and Akshata (sacred rice) was performed. The morning programme concluded with Arati to Bhagavan. In the afternoon, Bhagavan delivered His Divine Discourse. Before Bhagavan's Discourse, Sri Srinivasan, President, Sri Sai Paduka Trust paid homage to his beloved father, late Sri Subramania Chettiar who started Bhagavan's Paduka Puja and established the Trust. After this, Dr. D. J. Gadhia from the U.K. spoke about the significance of Paduka Puja and narrated the beneficial experiences of the devotees who performed this Puja. On 2nd October 1999, a magnificent procession of Paduka worshippers came to Sai Kulwant Hall, keeping the Padukas reverentially on their heads. Bhagavan went between the rows of the Paduka worshippers and blessed them with sacred rice. With the offer of Arati to Bhagavan the celebration of Paduka worship came to a conclusion.

Veda Purusha Saptah Jnana Yajna

A Yajna for peace in the world is performed in Prasanthi Nilayam as a part of Dasara and Navaratri celebrations. This year the Yajna started on 13th October 1999. After Puja in Prasanthi Nilayam Mandir, the Ritwiks went in a procession to Poornachandra Auditorium at 8.20 a.m. to start the Veda Purusha Saptah Jnana Yajna in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Yajna-agni (sacrificial fire) was lit at 9.00 a.m. and placed in the decorated Yajna Kundam with the chanting of the Veda Mantras. The Yajna continued for six days and concluded on 19th October, the auspicious day of Dasara with Poornahuti performed by the Veda Purusha Bhagavan Baba Himself. After Poornahuti, Bhagavan sprinkled Yajna Teertham (sanctified water) on the devotees in the entire Poornachandra Auditorium and outside it. With Mangalarati to Bhagavan at 9.20 a.m. the Yajna came to a happy conclusion.

Prasanthi Vidwanmahasabha

The programme included the Discourses of Bhagavan Baba and speeches by scholars and students during the Navaratri celebrations. A gist of the speeches made during these days is given below.

With Bhagavan's blessings, three speakers addressed the devotees on 13th October 1999. The first speaker, Sri G. V. Subbarao, told that Yajna meant sacrifice. The purpose of holding the Yajna was to transform us, so that we could imbibe the virtues of Sathya, Dharma, Santhi, Prema, Ahimsa, Tyaga and Ananda. The second speaker, Sri Sanjay Sahni, narrated a few incidents to show how Bhagavan Baba revealed His Identity in an extremely subtle way. Once in Kodaikanal, Bhagavan asked an elderly devotee, "How old are you"? When the devotee said, he was younger to Bhagavan by 5 months, Bhagavan remarked "No, No, you are younger to this body. I am ageless." Similarly, Bhagavan once stood with a boy and asked him, "Who is taller?" When the boy replied that Bhagavan was taller, Bhagavan revealed that He was "Anoraneeyan Mahatomaheeyan" (He was smaller than the smallest and greater than the greatest). Bhagavan always identifies Himself with the whole creation. The third speaker of the afternoon was a senior student, Sri Y. Arvind. He noted that sometimes Bhagavan did not accept a devotee's letter or respond to his prayer immediately. He said that by doing so, Bhagavan gives us an opportunity for self-introspection and purification.

The first speaker of the afternoon on 14th October was Sri Sudhindran, a student of Brindavan Campus. He said that the Vedas bring home the immense importance of Yajna as means of liberation and immortality. The importance of Veda Purusha Saptah Jnana Yajna in Prasanthi Nilayam was unparalleled as this was being performed in the Divine Presence of Veda Purusha Bhagavan Baba Himself, he said. The second speaker, Sri V. Ashwin, a student of M. Sc. II Year, Prasanthi Nilayam Campus, made a beautiful analogy between his mother and Mother Sai. While his mother gave him physical sustenance, Sai Mother gives physical as well as spiritual sustenance. The third speaker of the afternoon was Sri B. N. Narsimha Murthy, Warden, Brindavan Campus. Dwelling on the concept of Avatarhood, he said, "An Avatar is a Divine mystery. It is therefore futile to try to understand the Avatar. Man should make sincere efforts to experience the Divinity of the Avatar" In the end, Sri Narasimha Murthy prayed to Swami for His Divine Discourse as the devotees were thirsting for His nectarine words. Thereafter, Bhagavan Baba blessed the devotees with His Discourse (printed separately in this issue). The programme concluded with Arati to Bhagavan.

On the afternoon of 15th October 1999, the third day of the Prasanthi Vidwanmahasabha, the programme started at 3.50 p.m. with Veda chanting by the students. Sri Sriram Parsuram, a student of M. Sc 1st Year, was the first speaker of this session. He lamented that modern man had forgotten to love. "If a man hated his brother, how could he love God?" he asked. That was why man was suffering from the ailments of hatred, jealousy and greed. The second speaker, Dr. T. Ravi Kumar, a faculty member of Brindavan Campus, narrated some of his personal experiences as to how he had lost his eyesight twice in accidents in the Chemistry lab and how Bhagavan showered His grace by restoring his eyesight to the surprise of the eye specialists. The third speaker of the session was Dr. G. Venkataraman, former Vice Chancellor, Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning. He said, Navaratri was celebrated to worship God as Sakthi or Divine Mother, who was not only the ocean of compassion, kindness and love but also energy. The entire universe, he said, was filled with energy. "When we worship Devi, we actually worship the source of all Shakti," he said. After these brief speeches, Bhagavan Baba blessed the devotees with His Divine Discourse. The programme came to a close with Arati to Bhagavan at 5.40 p.m.

On the afternoon of 16th October 1999, the first speaker was Sri T. G. Krishnamurthy, President, Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, Tamil Nadu. Referring to the Veda Purusha Saptah Jnana Yajna, Sri Krishnamurthy said that Bhagavan Baba Himself was Yajna Purusha to whom all the sacrificial offerings were being made. "But in His love and compassion, He gives us several times more than we offer to Him," he told. The second speaker of the session was Sri K. Raghupati, a B.Com (Hons.) student of Brindavan Campus. He told that God was the only true friend of man and all other worldly friends were not dependable. He said, we were most fortunate to live during a period when God Himself had incarnated on the earth. The last speaker of the session was Sri Sandipan Chatterjee, a faculty member of Prasanthi Nilayam Campus. Sri Chatterjee narrated several incidents of Bhagavan's miracles and exhorted the devotees to follow the teachings of Bhagavan to raise their consciousness to a level that their will and Bhagavan's Will would become one. After this, Bhagavan Baba gave His Divine Discourse. The programme came to close with Mangalarati to Bhagavan at 4.50 p.m.

On the afternoon of 17th October 1999, Sri V. Srinivasan, All India President, Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation and Central Trust Member, was the first speaker. Sri Srinivasan dwelt on the auspiciousness of the Navaratri festival and said that Bhagavan Baba Himself was auspiciousness personified. Commenting on the information boom of present-day world, Sri Srinivasan said information was not power, it was weakness. It made man servant and not master as it did not bring about transformation in him. The next speaker, Major Gen. S. P Mahadevan, said that science had brought about material progress in the world, but it could not give peace of mind to man. Man had therefore become victim of the evils of attachment, anger, jealousy, hatred and greed. To annihilate these evils, Sai has incarnated in this Kali Age. The last speaker was a member of the Faculty of Commerce, Brindavan Campus, Sri Ruchir Desai. Sri Desai said, Bhagavan Baba has incarnated to teach mankind the message of love and service by His own example. He said, Bhagavan is a World Teacher, a real Acharya who teaches by practice and not merely by precept. After these brief speeches, Bhagavan narrated some of His childhood Leelas in His Divine Discourse. The programme came to a close at 4.35 p.m. with Mangalarati to Bhagavan.

In the afternoon of 18th October 1999, the first speaker, Sri S. V. Giri, Vice-Chancellor, Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, spoke about the importance of nine days' festival of Navaratri. He said that this festival was celebrated in all parts of India and some people observed fast on these nine days for purification. He explained as to how these nine days were in fact nine steps to ascend gradually to the highest level of spiritual attainment, the Brahman. The second speaker of this session was Bhattam Sri Rama Murthy, a former Minister in the State of Andhra Pradesh. He narrated a few touching personal experiences to bring home the point that Swami's life was only for His devotees. When Sri Rama Murthy bowed at the feet of Bhagavan after his speech, Bhagavan created a big crystal for him. The third speaker was a Sanskrit scholar from Rajamundry, Dr. Rama Somayaju. He expressed his heartfelt gratitude to Bhagavan for this opportunity to speak in His Divine Presence. He said that he had tried to come to Puttaparthi on several occasions, but all his earlier attempts were in vain. It was only Bhagavan's grace that he was in Puttaparthi this time. After these speeches, Bhagavan showered bliss on the devotees by speaking about His childhood Leelas in His Divine Discourse for the second consecutive day. The programme came to a close at 5.10 p.m. with offer of Mangalarati to Bhagavan.

The first speaker on 19th October 1999 was Sri Indulal Shah, Chairman, Sri Sathya Sai World Council. Sri Shah referred to the significance of Dasara and said, "It reminded us of the victory of good over evil. It also brought home the message of self-transformation through genuine spiritual practice." Transformation, he said, would be achieved by experiencing spiritual information. He advised that we should become genuine spiritual aspirants by imbibing in our lives spiritual practices like Sohum Mantra.

The second speaker, Sri V. Srinivasan, All India President of Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, referred to the Navaratri festival which was celebrated to commemorate the destruction of demons by the Mother Goddess. He said, "Bhagavan Baba, who is the embodiment of all gods and goddesses, destroys the demons of greed, ego, hatred and attachment through the weapon of love."

The third speaker was Sri C. Srinivas, Member, Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust. Sri Srinivas said that one was filled with awe and wonder when one thought how Bhagavan had totally changed this small hamlet of Puttaparthi into one of the biggest pilgrimage centres of the world. He is the Creator of the universe; so, when He creates something, the world only wonders at His concept and skill of designing. He referred to a book published in America, which gave the designs of 100 best designed hospitals of the world, in which Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences had been given on the first page.

After these brief speeches, Bhagavan delivered His Dasara Sandesh. The programme came to a close with Mangalarati to Bhagavan.

AVATAR VANI,

DASARA DISCOURSES

Follow Divine Commands

*Though the Vedas were classified so that people could find them easy to study and experience,
yet they were ignored*

Selfishness has become the motivating force for all activities of man today. His mind is filled with all types of desires, and violence has become the way of life. He is wasting his life, not knowing its purpose. He is straying away from the path of Dharma and Prema. Desires of man are crossing all limits and are ultimately leading him to misery. Man is in a state of confusion as he is unable to comprehend the true objective of life.

Put Bhagavan's Teachings into Practice

I have been giving discourses for the past 60 years, but you are not making any effort to put into practice even a few of the teachings. Students are like gold. Their hearts are suffused with sacred feelings. Their behaviour should also be in accordance with their feelings. Man will be ruined `if his behaviour` is not on the right fines: Not only the students, but the teachers and administrators are also not coming up to expectations. The situation is the same in the case of Samitis and Organisations. No doubt, devotees have immense love for Swami, but the same love is not expressed in the form of gratitude and Sadhana. It is rather surprising, even to Me, that for the past few days I did not feel like speaking at all. As there was no marked change in you, I thought there was no point in continuing to speak to you. Hence, I decided to confine Myself to a few words. What do you expect Me to speak? I have already taught all that ought to be taught. There is nothing more to convey. I am pained to see that all My teachings have gone waste and all My sweet words have become tasteless to you.

Today ego is on the rise in the devotees. They are becoming more and more ostentatious. They pose themselves as great persons before the world, thereby setting a wrong ideal to others. The knowledge acquired and the experience gained by them are not being put to any good use. They are not able to recognise that their ego will lead them to their downfall. They are not following the ideals set before them by Swami and are also not grateful for the love and grace showered on them by Me.

Understand Profound Truths of the Vedas

Since ancient times, the Vedas have been teaching profound truths. They form the basis for a peaceful and prosperous society. The term `Veda' refers to `wisdom,' 'discrimination' and 'being'. There are many people who chant the Vedas from dawn to dusk, but no one is trying to understand the utility and significance of the Vedas. What is the benefit derived by chanting them? Many people attend Veda classes to study the Vedas, but they do so only for the sake of money, name and fame.

Sage Vyasa thought that it was well nigh impossible for man to study the infinite Vedas within his limited life-span. Therefore, he classified the Vedas into four broad categories—Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda and Atharvana Veda. Yajur Veda was further divided into Krishna Yajur Veda and Shukla Yajur Veda. The vastness of the subject of the Vedas is conveyed by their several other names, such as Shruti, Trayee, Chandas, Swadhyaya, Nigama and Agama, etc. Each name is pregnant with a deep inner significance. Each Veda consists of three parts: Mantras, Brahmanas and Upanishads, including Aranyakas. The Mantras are the hymns in praise of gods. The Brahmanas deal with the performance of sacrifices—Yajnas and the Yagas. Aranyakas consist of the Mantras chanted and practised by the Vanaprasthas in the forest.

Though the Vedas were classified so that people could find them easy to study and experience, yet they were ignored. Unfortunately, no one is giving due importance to the Vedas, which are very sacred and are replete with profound truths. As a result, Indian culture is on the decline. People from other countries understand the value of the Vedas better than the Indians. The Japanese and the Germans studied the Atharvana Veda deeply with the result that they could excel in the manufacture of arms and ammunition. But, unfortunately, the Bharatiyas are not trying to comprehend the greatness and the grandeur of the Vedas. They are ruining their lives in the pursuit of materialistic desires. They undertake even spiritual practices only to fulfill their worldly ambitions. They can nourish this sacred culture only when they develop steady faith in Divinity. They are taking to Pravritti Marga (outward path) and forgetting the Nivritti Marga (inward path).

Wrong Concept of Education

Modern man wants everything to be done in a trice without any hard work on his part. He is not prepared to put in any effort or bear any hardship. Today people are not prepared to accept truth; they are carried away by untruth. This is similar to the situation wherein people refuse to take milk delivered at their doorstep, but are prepared to traverse long distances to consume illicit liquor.

What is the meaning of education? Education is meant to know oneself, not to amass wealth. In spite of his education, a mean-minded person cannot give up his wicked qualities. Modern education leads only to argumentation but not to total wisdom. If the elders themselves take to the wrong path, the young are likely to follow in their footsteps. Modern man thinks he is highly educated, but in fact he is totally ignorant. As he is unable to understand the significance of education, he is using it only to earn his living. He is going through various scriptures and joining various spiritual organisations, but is not making any effort to put into practice even a few sacred teachings. There is no sin worse than this. It is all right if a mistake is committed unknowingly, but committing a mistake deliberately amounts to great sin. Though man is fully aware of what is good and what is bad, he is not able to practise good and give up evil. This is the reason he is unable to progress in the field of spirituality.

Since ancient times, Veda Purusha Saptah Jnana Yajna has been associated with a profound spiritual significance. Yajna means sacrifice. In this Yajna, you have to sacrifice your bad thoughts, wicked feelings and evil tendencies and cultivate noble qualities. Before the commencement of the Yajna, fire is produced by keeping one piece of wood over the other and churning vigorously. The piece of wood which is below can be compared to the mother and the above to the father. The resultant fire, the son, burns the parents themselves. You have to understand the mystery and inner significance of such concepts of the Vedas.

First Deserve, then Desire

Students!

Many of you are feeling bad, thinking that Swami is angry with you and is not talking to you. I do not have even a trace of anger or dislike towards the students or the elders. I consider students as My very life. In such a case how can I be angry with them? But I do not wish to talk to anybody, because I do not want My words to be devalued. I feel it is better not to speak than

to speak and lose the value of My words. There is no point in feeling bad that Swami is not talking to you. Make efforts to attain the deservedness, so that Swami would talk to you. I have taught you on innumerable occasions, but have you made any sincere attempt to practise even one of My teachings? When you do not give up evil tendencies like hatred, jealousy, pomposity, how do you expect Swami to talk to you? Hatred is the greatest enemy of man. Ostentation gives rise to ego, which will in turn ruin humanness. Love is the common property of one and all. You can attain happiness and peace only when you develop love. But, today love is on the decline and hatred is on the rise. We find hatred among the members of the same family, students of the same college and inmates of the same Ashram.

What is an Ashram? It is a place where there is no Shrama (hardship). But, you are making this Ashram into a place of burden! You have no right to stay in the Ashram if you do not obey Swami's command and understand His love and Divinity. No benefit accrues to you if you merely stay here without putting Swami's teachings into practice. It is better that I do not speak to you if you do not practise what I say. In fact, overseas devotees have better understanding of Swami's love. They go into ecstasy if Swami talks to them even once. On the other hand, you do not understand the value of love and grace showered on you day in and day out. You merely waste your time by indulging in mean actions like slander and backbiting. Slander is the worst of sins. Do not criticise or abuse others. The Upanishads declare that man is highly valuable. But, he is losing his value, respect and honour by his wrong acts. Man alone is to be blamed for this.

Here is an example. You are all worshipping Me. But, the Atma in Me is the same as the Atma in you. So, your worshipping Me amounts to the Atma worshipping itself. If an individual indulges in criticism, he does so as he considers himself separate from others, not understanding the oneness of the Atma. The Atma does not criticise itself. If you want to be near and dear to Swami, develop the principle of love. All the Mantras you chant and the worship you do will go waste, if you give scope to evil qualities like hatred, jealousy, pomp and show.

Wisdom of Gargi

Embodiments of Love!

Love everybody just as you love Swami, because Swami is present in one and all. There is the same divinity present in all beings. *Easwara Sarva Bhutanam* (God is the indweller of all beings). One who realises this truth can achieve anything in life.

Once, a great Yajna was performed by king Janaka. Great scholars both men and women like Yagnavalkya, Gargi and Narada were present on this occasion. The king told the assembly to ask any question they wanted. Gargi enquired if she being a woman was permitted to ask questions. Janaka was wisdom incarnate. He said, "*Advaita Darshanam Jnanam*" (knowledge of non-duality is true wisdom). There is no difference between man and woman in the domain of true wisdom. Hence anyone is free to ask." Then Gargi addressed Yagnavalkya, "You are preparing to leave with cows given to you by the king. You may do so after answering my questions. My first question is - what is the basis of all the objects in this universe?" All the scholars present were astonished that a woman could dare to put such a bold question to Yagnavalkya. "Aakasa (sky) is the basis for all that exists," he replied. She then asked, "What is that which is above the sky, pervades the earth and extends below the earth?" "The substance that pervades all these is Aakasa only," replied Yagnavalkya. In this manner, the assembly of great

scholars went on discussing the ultimate source of Aakasa. It did not merely mean what was above our head. Gargi then explained the uniqueness of the sound principle by defining Aakasa as Shabda Brahman. It was also explained that for everything in this universe Aakasa was the basis. And Surya (the sun) was the basis for Aakasa. The source of the sun was Prakriti (Nature). In this way, Gargi participated in this discussion. All were amazed at the discrimination and wisdom of Gargi.

People generally think that Narada loves quarrel. He got up and asked Gargi, "Respected lady, what is your life's ambition?" "My only desire is to attain Divinity," she replied. "It is impossible," replied Narada. "Why?" asked Gargi. Narada replied, "Moksha and the attainment of Divinity are not ordained for unmarried women." Then Gargi said, "The only difference is in the body and the mind, and not in the Atma." Narada said, "The moment you are married, you will attain Moksha" Gargi said, "That is impossible, for I have surrendered myself entirely to God already. Such being the case, do I have no possibility of attaining Moksha?" As this dispute was going on, Janaka intervened and said, "Mother, you can get married. What are you going to lose?" She thought for a while and considered the contents of all the Upanishads and Shastras. She then said, "All right then, I shall have a one-day marriage." Even Narada was perplexed as to what this one-day marriage meant. Gargi then said, "A marriage is a marriage, be it for a day or a hundred years. So, I shall have a one-day marriage; who is ready to accept this?" One of the sages named Sringi agreed. *Tadeva Lagnam, Sudinam Tadeva, Tarabalam Chandrabalam Tadeva, Vidyabalam Daivabalam Tadeva*—as the Mantra was being chanted, and the sage tied the marital knot, Gargi immediately broke it and promptly attained liberation. Thus, Gargi attained her goal without transgressing her vows or any of the Shastric injunctions. Janaka said, "Gargi, your entire life is devoted to the fulfillment of the Divine Will. Then, how can Moksha elude you? You are destined for Moksha. You are indeed a great scholar. Today I shall get myself crowned by your hands." Gargi then explained the Dharma of the householder in the court of Janaka and said that such worldly relationships were temporary and not permanent.

Countless such illustrious women were born in this sacred land of Bharat. It is unfortunate that people born in this sacred land are going down to such a low state. Ego and attachment are the cause for this state of affairs. Whatever I say is for your good and not for My sake. Many of you do not realise this. Arrogance of one's own level of knowledge is the main cause for this state of ignorance. Educated people should have humility. Education confers humility, humility confers deservedness, deserving one obtains wealth, and when wealth is used to practise Dharma, one attains true happiness. You can thus attain the goal of your life here and hereafter through true education.

Students!

First get rid of your ego. Cultivate humility. Respect your elders. Speak sweet words. When you practise these virtues, j Swami will always be with you and will guide you always. You do not know, many marvellous things are going to happen in the near future. You will be delighted to see, hear and experience these Divine events. Do not miss this sacred opportunity which is before you. If you lose it, you will never get it again. Once you obtain it, you will never lose it. Keep these sacred thoughts in your heart, respect your parents, please your elders and make your life meaningful. This is My blessing to you all. With this blessing, I bring My discourse to a close.

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajan, "*Hari Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahi...*"

From Bhagavan's Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam on 141 October 1999

Devotion

Devotion is not a uniform to be worn on certain days, when you gather for worship and then to be laid aside, when the service is over. It must mean the promotion of an attitude that is ever present.

—Baba

Janamdin Upadesha

Seep much, you become dull,
Eat less, of joy be full
Talk much and earn a turgid brain;
Reduce Desire and goodness attain.
Be composed—how well you shine!
Be angry—how fast you decline!
 Contentment showers happiness;
 Jealousy breeds unhappiness.
 Stick to Truth, Truth will save,
 Gladly suffer, it enriches you.
 Love and gather affection best;
 Hoard! And Shani is your guest.
Give up, and roll in joy;
Worry, and illness plays with-you as toy.
Satwic character is wisdom pure,
Rajasic wildness is ruin sure.
Living for oneself is Yamabadha;
Living for the Self is Sivabodha.
 Pride! You are a Danava!
 Dharma! Thou art Madhava.
 Doubt is ceaseless torture,
 Concord, the finest teacher.
 Excess knowledge brings much harm;
 Fame comes from mirth, moderate and warm.
Himsa! O it is Kamsa!
Ahimsa! 'Tis Paramahamsa!
The greedy struggle for the "Here".
The godly struggle for the "Hereafter"
Vasana is a wily tick,;
Hate is a noose so thick.

Obstinacy is rude and rough,
Mischievous is crude and tough.
Learn these lessons well—
And be from Triple Gunas free!

23.1 1.59 Sathya Sai Baba
(From Sanathana Sarathi, December 1954)

New Education for a New World

—B. N. Narasimha Murthy

*The soul of education is the education of the soul.
Bhagavan Baba is putting back the 'soul' into the soulless education system of today.*

Concept of New World

The choice before mankind today is between a 'New World' and 'No world'! The 'New World' is not a world without suffering, but it is a world in which man will not inflict suffering on man. It is not a world without darkness, but it is a world in which man believes that he can conquer darkness. It is not a world without death, but it is a world where man knows that there is life beyond death. The 'New World' is not a world that looks up to God in the heaven for its redemption, but it is a world where men join hands with God on the earth for bringing down the heaven onto the earth. In this heaven on earth, no one will be allowed to starve or go without raiment and shelter; none will suffer without medicines and care when needed. None of the children born in this 'New World' will be denied opportunity for right education. This is a vision and a dream of the Golden Age that is being ushered in.

Role of New Education in the Creation of New World

The 'New World' can be built only by the 'New Man' and the 'New Man' can be made only by 'New Education'. The 'New Man' is not really new, he is a synthesis of 'New' and 'Old'. Likewise, 'New Education' is not really new, it is a combination of the 'Ancient' and the 'Modern'. This 'New Education' has already been given to mankind by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. It is the fulfillment of the dreams of all visionaries and thinkers in recent times. All of them stressed: "The soul of education is the education of the soul." Bhagavan Baba is putting back the 'soul' into the soulless education system of today. The New Education is founded on Sri Sathya Sai Philosophy of Integral Education, which guides the governance of schools and colleges founded by Bhagavan Baba and His devotees. The foundations of this philosophy can be found in Vidya Vahini—a treatise on education written by Bhagavan Baba.

New Education in Practice

Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning is a deemed university founded by Bhagavan Baba. He has given the Institute its philosophy of integral education and has been inspiring and guiding the administrators, teachers and students of the Institute since its inception in the practice of this philosophy. The Institute is now eighteen years old and it has two campuses for boys at Prasanthi Nilayam and Brindavan and one campus for girls at Anantapur.

Integral Education

Integral Education seeks to make the 'New Man' with an integrated personality. What is an integrated personality? According to Bhagavan Baba, "One should have the head of Sankara, the heart of Buddha and the hands of Janaka." An integrated personality is a harmonious synthesis of a sharp brain, a kind heart and competent hands; he is a beautiful combination of nobility and ability. Nobility without ability is useless to society and ability without nobility is dangerous to it.

Spiritual education is the basis of Integral education. The education that takes into consideration only the intellectual aspect of the human personality and neglects the body and ignores the Spirit is not complete and it can create only an unbalanced and lopsided personality. Bhagavan Baba says, "Man is a composite of the body, mind and Spirit (Atma). As a consequence, he has three natures—1) a low animal nature, 2) a human nature replete with worldly knowledge and skill and 3) the genuine nature of man—the divine Atmic nature. 'Vidya' or Education is to be aware of this divine nature and to establish oneself in that."

Integral education seeks to develop all the aspects of the human personality—physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual. Inculcation of spiritual insight alone can provide the foundation for a noble, able and stable character. The surest sign of spiritual insight is the blossoming of true 'Love' in the heart, because true 'Love' springs out of recognition of the 'oneness' of all existence. Experience of this 'oneness' is the highest spiritual wisdom. The cornerstones of Baba's philosophy of life are Sathya (Truth), Dharma (Right Conduct), Santhi (Peace) and Prema (Love). But Love is the undercurrent in the other three. Bhagavan Baba says, "Love in action is Right Conduct, Love in thought is Truth and Love in feeling is Peace." Love for God and fellow beings is the foundation of an integrated personality. Some salient features of integral education as practised in the Institute are given below.

High Academic Standards

Maintenance of very high academic standards in the Institute is ensured by highly motivated and dedicated teachers who live on the campus either in the hostel with students or in the quarters provided. Students who live in the hostel are provided best opportunities and environment in and outside the classroom for achieving academic excellence, which they do with single-minded dedication. The institute is totally residential. Apart from teachers on the campus, we have highly competent visiting faculty members from all over the country and abroad, supplementing academics in special areas. Research programmes in the Institute are designed keeping in view their relevance to the social needs. The laboratories and workshops of the Institute are provided with the most modern equipments, instruments and amenities.

Character Moulding

Character moulding is the most important aspect of education in the Institute. In contemporary times, moulding of character of students is taken up seriously in a few Institutions at school level. But at the university level, no serious attempt is made in colleges because of the adverse conditions prevailing in the society at present. Many times even parents do not dare to tell their children as to what is right and what is wrong, once they cross seventeen or eighteen years of age. Bhagavan has taken up this challenging task of character moulding at the university

level. His infinite love for His students is the basis of this successful experiment. Apart from His sublime and inspiring interaction with the students, Bhagavan also exhorts and inspires the teachers to set shining examples of noble character. Many of His own students have stayed back to become teachers in the Institute, and this makes the task easier. The relationship between Bhagavan Baba and His students is unique and eludes description. The students' spontaneous response to His call and their thirst for God marks this relation.

Community Living

Sri Sathya Sai Institute is a modern 'Gurukula'. It is a completely residential Institute with all the students living in the hostels on the campus. The Warden and many teachers live with them in the hostels and set inspiring examples for them to emulate by their single-minded pursuit of spiritual illumination and selfless service. Each hostel is a 'mini India', nay a 'mini world' with students drawn from all over the country and abroad. The much talked about objective of 'emotional integration' is achieved silently in community living in the hostels. The daily routine begins with prayer before sunrise and it sets the pace for the day filled with many activities designed to develop an integrated personality of the students.

Physical Education

A healthy body with good stamina forms the basis of all pursuits in life. Physical education is given great importance in the Institute. It is one of the integral items in which a student is assessed periodically and the grade secured is reflected in the Grade Card along with academic grades at the end of every semester. Physical education includes health run (jogging), exercises, sports and games, and yogasanas. Training and coaching facilities are provided to the students every morning (compulsory) and evening (optional). Each of the campuses has vast and well-equipped playgrounds and a gymnasium. The benefits of systematic physical education are reflected in the strong and proportionate physique of the students with their faces radiating health and energy.

Extra-curricular Activities

These activities add variety and colour to campus life apart from providing opportunities to students for the cultivation of their talents in music, dance, drama, elocution writing, photography, painting, sketching, clay modelling, thermocol art etc. The students get an opportunity to see and meet doyens in various fields of such activities when they visit Bhagavan Baba to seek His blessings and perform in His presence. These include renowned personalities from East and the West.

The campus life provides ample opportunities to the blossoming orators among students. Also they are exposed to stirring discourses and speeches by Bhagavan Baba and a host of luminaries in various fields. There are talks by students both in the Institute and the hostel at least twice a week. Periodically, Bhagavan grants His students opportunity to speak to large audiences in His presence during festival. He takes keen interest in encouraging and training students who are chosen to speak in informal meetings in His presence.

Spiritual Education

Bhagavan Baba Himself initiates students into spiritual education. He inspires the young minds to mystery of life and death and reminds them spiritual origin and spiritual destiny. He convinces

them how only a life based on spiritual aspiration can be successful and joyful. Interaction with Bhagavan lays the foundation for spiritual education in the Institute. The campus life is woven round the silken bond of love between Bhagavan and His students. This bond is strengthened by prayer. The day begins and ends with prayer. Also the morning session in the Institute begins with universal prayer based on the unity of religions. At the sunset, we have community singing of Bhajans in the hostel. Before retiring for the night, students sit around the altar in their respective dormitories and chant prayers dedicating all their day's activities to the Divine.

Awareness Course

This is a very unique foundation course in the Institute that attempts to systematise spiritual education. The objectives of this course are:

i) To provide an intellectual and rational foundation for the spiritual way of life, which alone can confer true joy and success in life, ii) To inspire and cultivate willpower to pursue the spiritual path. iii) To synthesise spirituality with life in the world, and iv) To provide an insight into the teachings of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Conclusion

Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning is the realisation of the dreams of great spiritual leaders of modern India, who believed that man making and character building education was the foundation for restoring the glory of this ancient land. The dreams of Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore find fulfillment in this divine experiment in education. When the time comes for a practical assessment of the contribution of the students of this Institute, towards the revival of our national glory and the achievement of the divine mission in the world, we believe and hope that our students will stand up to the scrutiny of history, which is being rewritten by their Divine Chancellor!

Reminiscences of Shirdi and Parthi

—Dr. D. J. Gadhia

Shirdi Sai Baba acknowledged the great devotion of Kakasaheb Dikshit and revealed to him about His next life, that He would come back on this planet eight years after His Mahasamadhi.

Although Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba is an incarnation of Sai Baba of Shirdi, we must not forget that He is also the 'Sarva Devata Swarupa Avatar' i.e., the incarnation of all incarnations. He has proved this by giving visions of several incarnations to many devotees throughout the world.

Madhav Dikshit's Life Prolonged

When the late Madhav Dikshit was ten years old, he used to stay with his uncle Hari Sitaram Dikshit, a very close devotee of Shirdi Sai Baba. As he (Madhav) addressed him as Kaka (uncle), all devotees used to call him Kakasaheb Dikshit and Baba also called him Kaka. Madhav Dikshit stayed with Baba for eight years from 1910 to 1918 until Baba left His mortal coil on 15th October 1918 (Dasara day). During his stay with his uncle, Madhav used to get severe headache

(migraine type) everyday and he used to complain about this to Kaka. One day Baba called Madhav near Him, took Uddi from the live fire and with it slapped him heavily across the forehead. The little boy of ten started crying and told Kaka that he would never go near Baba again. To this Kaka replied, "You are a very lucky boy because Baba has blessed you and we are all anxiously waiting for such a slap!" From that moment, Madhav Dikshit never had headaches, and this was one of the confirmations of the supernatural powers of Baba. During His lifetime, He performed many miracles, which are recorded in 'Sri Sai Satcharitra', now available in various languages.

Shirdi Sai Baba acknowledged the great devotion of Kakasaheb Dikshit and revealed to him about His next life, that He would come back on this planet eight years after His Mahasamadhi. Kaka noted this statement after a long time and hence forgot the exact words of Baba and recorded that He would come as a boy of eight!

I came in touch with Madhav Dikshit at Mangalore when he was 65. But, he was not prepared to believe that Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba is an incarnation of Shirdi Sai Baba! To verify this truth, he came with me to Puttaparthi in 1962.

Swami came out of His room and told me, "So, you have brought Dikshit with you? He was with Swami at Shirdi for eight years!" Madhav Dikshit was shocked, but the real proof was given in the interview room! The first question Swami asked him was, "Did you get any headaches after I slapped you *across the forehead with Udi* at Shirdi?" Dikshit exclaimed, "You are my Baba!" and touched His Divine Lotus Feet. Then beloved Swami took him in the inner room to grant him a private interview, where he gave details of his family history and the happenings to all the family members and also mentioned that Kaka was a lazy fellow who noted down the wrong statement! Beloved Swami corrected this by publishing it in "Sanathana Sarathi" and He also gave the exact birthday of Shirdi Sai Baba as 27th September.

By now Madhav Dikshit was convinced beyond any doubt of the identity of Sathya Sai Baba. After talking to everyone, Swami asked me, "Can I give a present to Dikshit to commemorate his stay with Swami at Shirdi?" and then he waved His right hand vertically and materialised a gold statue of ten tolas (in weight) of Shirdi Sai Baba, approximately 6 inches in height and handed it over to Dikshit and said, "Do Abhishekam with water everyday and drink it. It will give you good health." Dikshit also asked if he could share this sanctified water with others. Many patients who drank this cosmic water recovered from ailments.

Swami then asked me, "Are you giving injection to Dikshit?" I replied, "Yes, Swami, he has high blood sugar level and hence I give him 40 units of insulin everyday." He said to me, "Stop the injection from tomorrow as Swami will cure his diabetes today!" He waved His hand in His usual manner and materialised chocolate coloured Vibhuti and asked Dikshit to swallow it immediately. As it happens with everyone, I had some doubts too about Swami's supernatural powers. I thought for a while that Swami perhaps wanted to *send* the old man to heaven. But to the surprise of everyone, his blood sugar level was normal within a week!

Apart from giving the experience of His supernatural powers, beloved Swami had proved on numerous occasions that He is God. The Merciful Lord made me a witness of the following

incident: Swami said to Madhav, "Your time has come to go to heaven, but Swami has decided to increase your life by eight years because you stayed with Shirdi Baba for eight years!" and further asked, "What would you wish to do in these eight years?" Dikshit replied, "I wish to remain as your gatekeeper." Swami then handed over the charge of Brindavan to him where he lived in a house right in front of the gate of old Brindavan. Dikshit died exactly after eight years. Who else but God alone can prolong the life of a human being?

In early 60's, I used to stay at Madhav Dikshit's residence in Mangalore to conduct Bhajans every Thursday from 7 p.m. to 8.30 p.m. The programme included Bhajans, Divine Messages, Teachings of Sathya Sai Baba and Readings from Sai literature.

Swami Shradhanand's Visit

Swami Shradhanand, a disciple of Swami Nityananda of Ganeshpuri (or Vajreshwari) near Mumbai, attended one of these programmes in 1962. Soon after the Arati, he went into meditation. Later, he came to us and said, "My Guru has suggested that I should have the Darshan of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba only with Dr. Gadhia" So, we proceeded to Puttaparthi on the very next day.

A very memorable incident happened in the interview room. When Swami started waving His right hand to materialise Vibhuti, Swami Shradhanand caught hold of His hand! All devotees in the room were stunned. I was utterly shocked because it seemed to me that Swami was insulted by a person that I brought.

This was the right time Swami taught us the lesson as He used to teach often, "My life is My Message." He was not offended and on the contrary, He smiled and spoke softly and with loving care, "Why did you hold My hand?" Swami Shradhanand replied, "I have not come here to see peppermints and chocolates You distribute everyday to these children; I have come with a very great expectation from You!"

Bhagavan replied, "Swami knows that you recite Gayatri Mantra everyday and your Sadhana (spiritual exercise) has reached up to the point of saturation so much so that you are going to get liberation soon. So, continue with your Sadhana." Nobody was aware of this. Swami Shradhanand was surprised and became happy and apologised for his mistake. Then Swami said, "Don't worry, mistakes are like passing clouds. Let Swami distribute peppermint and chocolates to these children." He waved His hand and materialised Vibhuti and distributed to all, except Swami Shradhanand!

Bhagavan then asked Swami Shradhanand, "Would you mind if Swami gives interviews to these children first?" When I was granted interview, Swami assured me by saying, "Don't worry, Swami will give him (Swami Shradhanand) realization."

When Baba granted him a personal interview, Swami Shradhanand started shedding tears of joy and prostrated at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan, saying, "Oh my master! you are residing here in the form of Sri Sathya Sai. I am very grateful to you for granting me this Vision!" Swami Shradhanand would just not stop crying.

Having come out of the interview room, Swami Shradhanand gave a vivid description of his wonderful experience. He said, "Baba did not ask me anything nor did He give any opportunity to ask questions, but straightaway said, 'Look here!' and opened His gown (Kafni), revealed His chest and gave a vision of my Guru, Swami Nityananda! I am really fortunate for having had such a realisation. I am also grateful to you, Gadhia, for having brought me here!"

We learnt a great lesson. Swami can give realisation of any form or Guru or any incarnation to anyone deserving, and that is the reason why He is known as 'Sarva Devata Swarupa'.

The Medallion

After this interview, Swami called me near, waved his right hand and materialised a beautiful medallion and handed it over to me and asked, "What do you see in it?" I replied, "Lord Sathyanarayana" "Who is in the heart of Narayana?" I replied, "Lord Shirdi Sai Baba:" Bhagavan said, "Correct, who is in the heart of Shirdi Sai Baba?" I replied, "Yourself". He further questioned, "Who is in the heart of Swami?" I said, "Baba, I cannot see anything" Swami said, "Pass it on to all the devotees and then to Swami Shradhanand." Thereby, Swami Shradhanand's tears stopped and he concentrated upon the object handed to him and scrutinised it, but could not say who he was.

Swami then said, "It is Prema Sai as a boy sitting behind a black flower. Gadhia, have you seen black flowers in Africa?" "Yes, Baba." Baba continued, "Prema Sai's right leg is on His left leg, just like Shirdi Baba. His hairstyle is like Swami, and do you know why He is sitting behind a black flower?" Everybody said, 'No,' and Swami inverted the medallion upside down and said, "Black flower becomes the hair of Swami, and the body of Prema Sai becomes His face; if you concentrate carefully, you will be able to see it. When the medallion is in the right position, Swami's left eye (in the heart of Lord Shirdi Sai Baba) is covered with the hair of Swami and hence we cannot see the left eye. When you invert it upside down and look at the figure of Prema Sai as Swami—even there the left eye is covered with a tuft of hair."

Swami further explained, "In this Vishwa Swaroopa, Narayana is standing over sea water and you see the sky at the top and trees on both sides. Therefore, Sathyanarayana is seen amongst all the elements of the earth. This is therefore Vishwa Swaroopa!" He then handed it over to me.

Swami is our Divine Mother, Father and Guru and Daivam (God). We are really fortunate to come to Prasanthi Nilayam, and also very grateful to Him for giving us Darshan (vision), Sparshan (touch) and Sambhashan (talking to us). May our beloved Swami shower His blessings on all!

SSEHV IN PRACTICE

Sai System of Education: A Model to Follow

—Victor Kanu

Perhaps the most profound impact that SSEHV has had on our students is the awakening of their understanding of spiritual matters such as life and death

I had my early schooling in the colonial system of education and higher education in the post-independence education system. I received my primary and secondary education in Sierra Leone. Later, I went to Oxford University, England for further studies. I taught for many years both in Sierra Leone and Oxford. So, I am reasonably familiar with various educational thoughts, processes and practices, but never have I found an educational system that could be so intellectually and spiritually satisfying, philosophically sound and universally acclaimed as the Sathya Sai Education in Human Values (SSEHV) System, gifted to the world in the early 80s by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

My wife and I were among the first overseas teachers to be introduced to and trained in SSEHV since the programme's inception. There was no doubt in our minds that this system of education would bring about a fundamental transformation in the lives of the children of Africa in particular, and their parents and extended families in general. To substantiate this assertion, it would be essential that some visible, quantitative and qualitative evidence is produced. To do this, I would like to refer to the Sathya Sai School in Ndola, Zambia (a full-fledged school from Grades 1 to 12)—the first of its kind in Africa and the first of such schools to be built outside India on the directive of Bhagavan Baba.

The main reason for setting up this school in Zambia was to provide a vehicle through which SSEHV could be channeled and implemented effectively so as to assess its relevance to the African children, its validity as a sound input to the world's principles of education and methods of teaching, and as a potential recipe for the perennial problems that afflicted the continent of Africa for so long.

After seven years of its operations and using SSEHV as the foundation upon which the school rests, it was felt that the time had come for a full assessment of the impact of the programme to be made. In order to avoid vested interests from carrying out the exercise, Dr. P.C. Manchishi, Ph.D. of the School of Education, University of Zambia (UNZA) was approached. He was a Christian and an independent scholar whom members of the Sathya Sai Organisation in Zambia had never met. I made enquiries about a capable educationist who could carry out an independent research on SSEHV as practised at Sathya Sai School in Ndola, Zambia. When I contacted Dr. Manchishi, he readily agreed and accepted the following terms of reference for his assignment:

(i) To investigate the impact of Sathya Sai Education in Human Values (SSEHV) Programme at Sathya Sai School in Ndola, Zambia. In other words, to find out the impact of the programme on pupils, teachers and parents in terms of personalities.

(ii) To examine and determine the suitability of the SSEHV Programme as an educational input for schools in Zambia.

The source of Dr. Manchishi's data was from the existing literature on the subject, from pupils, teachers, parents, Education Ministry officials in Ndola, and the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), and Executive Members of the school. He sampled Grades 7 and 12 pupils, all the teachers at the school, many parents and officials at the Ministry of Education such as the Examinations Officer, the Provincial Education Officer (PEO), the Deputy PEO and the PTA Executive Members. His research instruments included questionnaires and semi-structured

interviews and lesson observations. He analysed his quantitative data by using statistics, frequency and percentages and his qualitative data by content grouping, i.e., grouping the respondent views and opinions.

At this stage of our discussion, it would be important that Dr. Manchishi's conclusions and recommendations be stated:

Academic Success Par Excellence

"Three things came up clearly in the findings especially from the interviews-character excellence, academic excellence and spiritual and moral excellence. For the sake of clarity, the three will be discussed separately in detail.

"The school at present recruits Grade 7 'failures' i.e., pupils who fail to secure places in Grade 8. It also recruits Grade 1 pupils from the surrounding townships. In terms of character, it was put to me that most of these pupils (especially those in Grade 8) were bullies, truants, rebellious and stubborn. They used to do all sorts of things like stealing, dodging from classes, had no respect for elders and teachers. In short, most of these pupils were undisciplined. Today, these pupils have completely changed for the better. They have become disciplined; they have developed respect for teachers and elders. They also offer voluntary service to the school, etc. The change in character was confirmed to me by the teachers, parents and pupils themselves during the interviews I had with them. Some statements of pupils, teachers, parents clearly indicate this. A student, for example remarked: 'I feel that Sathya Sai School has influenced my character and dignity.'

"I was also able to see for myself the good behaviour displayed by the pupils during the time I was there doing the research. I noticed, for example, that vandalism at Sathya Sai School was nonexistent unlike in other government schools. It is because of the discipline that prevails at the school. Sathya Sai School has for the past five years been registering academic success at Grades 9 and 12 levels. In 1993, the school registered 100%, in 1994—100%, in 1995—100%, in 1996—100% and in 1997—100%. The school owes its academic success to the discipline that prevails at the school and the regulation, which requires that each pupil pass each grade in order to proceed. A pupil who fails Grade 8, for example, at the end of the year is not allowed to proceed to Grade 9; he has to repeat the grade.

"Experience has shown that it is always schools with good discipline, which excel academically. Academic success will normally not be achieved in a school where there is indiscipline. This applies to most government schools. It is because of the type of education offered at Sathya Sai School (the integration of SSEHV in the school's curriculum) that pupils have developed a liking for academic work. They always do their homework on time. In this regard, a parent said: 'SSEHV has changed my son's attitude towards work, teachers, parents and friends. He has now adopted a good attitude towards his work. At Primary School, for instance, coming later to school, not doing work and playing about were his usual habits. However, since he came to Sathya Sai School, he is now a completely new boy, doing things in a proper way.'

"Spiritual and moral excellence is one of the three aims of the school. It should be noted that the school is non-denominational. It accepts all religions and forms of worship as being valid in

essence. However, the life and teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba as well as His type of running educational institutions are the guiding spirit of the school. There is no indoctrination. At Sathya Sai School, pupils are encouraged to be good followers of their respective religions and respect other religions.

"The integration of the five human values in the curriculum has had a positive impact on the pupils spiritually and morally. It was put to me during the interviews that many pupils had changed spiritually and morally for the better. Parents and teachers confirmed to me during the interviews that their children had changed a lot morally. This change has contributed to the discipline and academic successes at the school. It should be mentioned here that three aims of the school—academic excellence, character excellence and spiritual excellence are interrelated. Thus, spiritual and moral change will lead to one being disciplined and a disciplined pupil will normally perform well academically.

Impact of SSEHV on Teachers

"SSEHV has also had an impact on the teachers at the school. They have also changed for the better. It should be noted that the teachers at Sathya Sai School came from Government schools and were trained in Government institutions. In short, they came from schools where indiscipline was the order of the day. Today these teachers have become more dedicated to work, more conscious, and have developed a broader and deeper understanding in education and their professional competence has been enriched. It is common at Sathya Sai School, for example, to see teachers teaching on Saturdays or in the evenings for no allowance. In this regard, a researcher comments: "The teachers are more caring, punctual, friendly and committed to duty."

"To some extent, apart from SSEHV having an impact on the teachers, the administration has played its part. Teachers are accommodated and those staying in the campus do not pay for water. They are also well paid and their performance is linked to pay. A teacher who registers 100% pass in his/her subject, is remunerated.

SSEHV's Benefit to Parents

SSEHV has also had an impact on parents. Most of them have become more interested in the academic work (homework) of their children, and have developed respect for other people's religions. They have also developed confidence in their children. There is a case of one parent who has since stopped drinking beer because of the impact of teachings from Sathya Sai School taken to him by his child. One of the parents commented: "The type of education the school gives has really made a great impact on the whole household as we are all able to share different values." Another said: "Sathya Sai School has made an impact in Ndola." Some parents made these comments: "Yes, we approve the type of education given at Sathya Sai School and all our family have benefited from it."

Conclusion

"Judging from the impact of a programme that involves looking for evidence as proof, one finds that change has really taken place after going through such a programme. For example, if a pupil was indisciplined before joining Sathya Sai School and after being exposed to SSEHV, he or she has become disciplined. There are many such cases at Sathya Sai School. Most of the children were indisciplined, poor academically and also weak spiritually and morally. Today

most of them have changed for the better. This is ample testimony to the fact that SSEHV has had a positive impact on them.

"All the people interviewed have agreed to the viewpoint that SSEHV should be extended to other schools in the country. It will help build the nation through education which is the bank from which the nation draws. If the bank is poor and has no assets, the nation will be poor. It is therefore appropriate that SSEHV is exposed to the young who are the future leaders of the world."

Recommendations

- The school should continue organising workshops/seminars for school managers and teachers from other schools. Schools outside Ndola should also be included. In this way, SSEHV will spread countrywide.
- The school should hold discussion with the Ministry of Education officials with a view to introduce SSEHV to other schools in the country.
- SSEHV should be Zambianised. In other words, SSEHV teachers should draw examples from 'Zambian traditions' in their schools.
- Sathya Sai School in Ndola is a day school. When pupils go home in the townships, they are exposed to many distractions (films, friends, etc). It is being recommended to make it a boarding school.
- The school should continue organising induction courses in SSEHV for new teachers at Sathya Sai School. Perhaps the most profound impact that SSEHV has had on our students is the awakening of their understanding of spiritual matters such as life and death.

Virtues for Higher Life

The higher life, which makes man human and fit candidate for unfoldment of Divinity that is his reality, depends on the cultivation of the five cardinal virtues—Truth, Right conduct, Love, Peace and Non-violence. These virtues elevate the individual as well as the society of which he is a part. The teacher has to watch his/her every word and gesture, every action and reaction in order to avoid any infringement of these virtues. For, the teacher is the ideal, the example, to whom the parents have entrusted their children...

—Baba

Sri Sathya Sai Temple of Healing

—Dr. A. N. Safaya

The message of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba by establishing this hospital is quite loud and clear that the healing arts and treatment of suffering mankind should not be exploited for making profit

During the last two decades, medical science and technology has advanced so much and so fast that health services in every country, more so in developing countries, have been put under great strain. India is no exception to this and the last few years have witnessed a phenomenal multiplication of centres, professing advanced medicine, both in public and private sectors. While the facilities might have increased, the prohibitive cost of many of the advanced procedures like heart, kidney and brain surgery has made many of these life-saving measures out of reach of the common man, particularly in rural areas. Location of the centres of advanced medicine in the cities has also made them logistically inaccessible to the vast rural population. This unfortunate situation has prompted Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba to establish a Super Speciality Hospital at Puttaparthi, a small village in Andhra Pradesh with the sole purpose of making available the advanced techniques of diagnosis and medical care, totally free of cost, to all the needy people without any geographical restrictions, to the rich and the poor alike, irrespective of religion, caste, creed and country.

Objectives of the Hospital

In November 1999, SSSIHMS will become exactly six years old—to be precise, the Departments of Cardiology and Cardiothoracic Surgery will become six years old, since these departments started functioning at that time. It was at 9 o'clock in the morning of 22nd November 1991 that the knife of the surgeon of this Institute touched the skin of our first patient Sri Vijayabhaskar K. B., aged 14 years, of Anantapur, and the work of the hospital started with full speed. Since then there has been no looking back. With the blessings of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the hospital has grown since then by leaps and bounds in its efficiency of patient handling capability as well as in its ability to give high quality professional care to its patients belonging to underprivileged members of the society.

In this regard, Bhagavan's declaration on 23.11.1990 for establishing the Hospital is of immense significance. He declared, "When any educational or medical institution is established, the sole aim is to make a business out of it. There are only a few who are ready to set up institutions to provide free facilities for the poor. Therefore, from the start we decided to set up a hundred crore hospital near Prasanthi Nilayam. Even as higher education is free here, "higher medicine" also will be free. People spend lakhs of rupees to get heart surgery done in the U.S. What is the plight of the poor? Who looks after them? If they go to the cities, they will not get even basic medicine. Recognising this fact, we have launched this big hospital project. Whether it is heart bypass operation or a kidney transplant or a lung operation or brain surgery or eye surgery, everything will be done free. This has been decided upon from the very start of the project. The hospital will be opened on 22nd November, 1991."

Elaborating on the objectives of the hospital, Bhagavan said in His Discourse of 23rd November 1991, "Puttaparthi has become the cynosure of all eyes in the world. Above all, you should enquire why a highly sophisticated and most modern hospital, which should be located in a well developed metropolis has been set up in this rural area. The wealthy can go anywhere and get medical relief with their abundant resources. But the rural poor cannot go far from their

villages for treatment. It is for the sake of such poor folk that this hospital has been established. This is a gigantic project. It is intended to benefit people for a thousand years. This hospital has been set up to provide relief to villagers suffering from ailments. No distinction is made however between villages and cities. Diseases do not afflict only villagers. Sickness makes no territorial distinctions. Likewise, there will be no differentiation in providing relief. Our intention is to provide relief to all who come, without any charges whatsoever."

Hospital's Role

There is no ambiguity or illusion about the symbolic role that this hospital has to play in the world affairs of tomorrow. A single hospital of this size cannot lay claim that it will treat and cure all diseases of all patients of heart, kidney and eye in the world. The work it will do is a drop in the ocean, but it will serve as a working model for making available complicated medical technology free of charge to the deserving patients, who cannot otherwise afford it. It is a reduplicatable model that can be started anywhere and in any society, on the threshold of determination, unity of thought, word and deed. A very small fraction of money that goes in manufacturing the weapons of human destruction in the form of defence budget of even the poorest country can raise funds for many such hospitals to be built and to be functional for constructive purposes. Emerging as a bright star at the horizon of the contemporary world medical affairs, the experiment in launching Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences has certain clear messages to give for shaping the policies for the delivery of medical help to the humanity. These are:

(a) *Globalisation of Medicine*: To get proper relief from any Medical Institution should be the very birthright of any diseased person irrespective of distinction of country, religion, colour or ideology on global basis.

(b) *Decommercialisation of Medicine*: The art of healing and giving medical relief to the deserving patients should not be priced and should not be sold in the market as a commodity. The cost of providing such a medical care should be absorbed by the human society itself.

(c) *Human Values in Medical Care*: The human agents of delivery system of health care, be it the health administrators, doctors, nurses or technicians, they all should be perfectly 'human' in thinking, in word and deed. They should in actual practice demonstrate the use of five principles of Human Values—Sathya, Dharma, Santhi, Prema and Ahimsa. After all, it is the human being behind who is diseased that matters.

(d) *Spiritual Well-being as a Medical Concept*: Present-day medicine stops at laying down health practices and policies to provide physical, mental and psychological health of the individual. It makes little or no attempt at strengthening the Spirit of man which is the divine force in him that energises his physical, mental or psychological systems. Modern medicine has lost its inherent and intrinsic proximity to spirituality. Unless that proximity is restored, medicine or health care will never be holistic and fully satisfying.

Divine Will and Human Effort

The idea of providing the best diagnostic and therapeutic facilities of modern medicine to the underserved population in a rural part of India, all free of charge and within the time-frame of a

year, would be considered an impossible undertaking by any government or private organisation. Yet, this is exactly what was proposed in November 1990 by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba when He declared that starting from scratch on a previously undeveloped site, a new building would be erected, staffed and equipped so that the first operations in open heart surgery could be carried out one year later.

The story of how human effort was able to execute the Divine Will is a remarkable one. The impressive building rose miraculously within a six-month period, and stands as a magnificent temple of healing. Its inspiring architecture imparts an aura of divinity and peace to all who enter the hospital for investigation or treatment and to those who work there. As declared by Bhagavan, the first cardiothoracic operations were carried out successfully exactly after one year. The Super Speciality Hospital was inaugurated by the then Prime Minister of India on 22nd November 1991.

This hospital is also a living monument to faith in Human Values, and demonstrates compassionate loving care and selfless service in an age where high cost specialised medicine is beyond the reach of the great majority of the world's population. A well-coordinated international effort has made it possible for every department of the hospital to have the most modern equipment and to be staffed by highly qualified and dedicated surgeons, physicians, nurses, other health care practitioners and technicians.

The hospital's development and expansion have continued since its inauguration. The Departments of Cardiology and Cardiothoracic Surgery, with all the necessary ancillary and support services, have been functioning since November 1991. A year later, in November 1992, the Uro-nephrology Department was commissioned and the unit for kidney transplantation was inaugurated a year after that. In November 1994, a Super Speciality Department of Ophthalmology was inaugurated. A Lithotripsy Centre for breaking the stones in urinary tract with the use of high energy waves was inaugurated by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba on July 15, 1999 and is functional now.

The message of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba by establishing this hospital is quite loud and clear that the healing arts and treatment of suffering mankind should not be exploited for making profit.

Arogya Nilaya in Anandalaya

To many it may appear strange that in this anandalaya (abode of bliss), there exists an Arogya Nilaya (abode of health) or hospital. They may wonder why prominence is given to the bodily health in a place that is dedicated to the health of spirit. But, for attaining the four aims of human life, Dharma(righteousness), Artha (wealth), Kama (fulfillment of desires) and Moksha (liberation from bondage), the basic requirement is the health of the body and the mind.

—Baba

Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning— An Instrument in Bhagavan's Mission

—S. V Giri

*The medium of instruction in this Institute is discipline;
The first, the second and the third languages are Love,
Service and Sadhana*

Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning is perhaps one of the few institutions in the country in the field of Education which emphasise character building as much as if not more than mere academic excellence. It is based on Bhagavan Baba's outstanding contribution to the world of learning in the form of Human Values as extended to Education. As its Revered Chancellor, He has provided constant guidance at every stage in evolving the programme at the Institute and seen to its meticulous implementation. The twin pillars of the system of education here are Tyaga (sacrifice) and Yoga (spiritual discipline). The uniqueness of the Institute lies in the academic environment being suffused with Love, and the students being moulded in a spirit of sacrifice and service to the community. The single golden thread that runs through the gamut of all the activities of the Institute—curricular, co-curricular and extra curricular—is that education is for life and not mere living.

Real Meaning of Education

Swami says that education must be a holy and sacred process, as indeed it was in olden times. He observes:

"What exactly is education?... It means opening wide the doors of the mind. It means cleansing the inner tools of consciousness, the mind, the senses, ego, and reason... Education, when it gets linked with egoism, loses its wider purpose. It becomes supremely purposeful only when it is directly related to spirituality...

The end of education should be character. And character implies the capacity to shed greed and selfishness. Education should fill the heart with compassion; then alone it acquires fullness. Education is not for a living; it is for life. Education without refinement of character is like a rudderless boat—no one knows where it will take us!"

The Seed, the Flower and the Fruit

The first step was taken way back in 1968 with the founding of the Sri Sathya Sai College in Anantapur. Interestingly, this college was for women, which shows the importance Swami attaches to women's education. Next to come up was the college for boys in Brindavan; this was established in 1969. After this, it was Puttaparthi's turn and with this there were three colleges.

All the three campuses of the Institute—Prasanthi Nilayam, Brindavan and Anantapur are residential and located in a quiet and peaceful environment suited for healthy, intellectual and emotional development. The campuses and hostels have spacious, beautiful and artistically designed buildings. The institutions stand out for their simplicity and elegance. Hostels provide reasonable amenities to the students.

The university is a non-profit autonomous institution. More than two thirds of the student population hails from States other than Andhra Pradesh, where the Institute is located. They come from almost all the States, even those that are as far away as Himachal Pradesh and Assam. They thus represent the whole of India and form a national stream. That is the main reason for the Institute to adopt English as the medium of instruction.

The University Grants Commission's Visiting Committee, after a visit to the SSSIHL in 1997, made the following observations:

"The Committee members were impressed by the underlying philosophy at the Campus. This reflected a combination of most modern pursuits in the area of science and technology with cultural, spiritual and traditional values of various religious traditions of India. The Committee was also impressed by the fact that despite the emphasis on spiritual and cultural values, no emphasis on any specific religion was given. In this sense, the approach is spiritual, secular and universal."

The Uniqueness of the Institute

Spelling out the uniqueness of the university, in terms of value-oriented education as the basis of formal courses of studies in the Institute, the Revered Chancellor gave the necessary directions in the following terms:

"The university will not be imparting in Botany merely a knowledge of trees in Nature; it will spread the knowledge of the tree of true living.

"It will not be imparting the knowledge merely of economics; the knowledge of theistic ethics too will be included.

"It will not be teaching mere Chemistry (Rasayana Shastra); it will also unravel the mystery of "Raso Vai Sah", the Supreme Embodiment of nectarine sweetness, the Atma.

"It will teach not only the science of the material world (Padartha); it will also teach the science. of the non-material world (Parartha). It will not differentiate the material from non-material or treat the nonmaterial as irrelevant to the material.

"We have decided that this shall be the uniqueness of this university. This will not be like all other universities which adopt a few faculties and burden their alumni with degrees, which they can present as begging bowls while clamouring for jobs."

"This university will confer on its alumni the courage and confidence, the knowledge and skill to shape their careers by their own efforts, relying on their strength.

"So, we have proposed that spiritual education be integrated harmoniously with ethical, physical and metaphysical teachings in this university."

The consistent endeavour of the university since its inception has been to develop core courses, bringing out value-orientation in an appropriate manner, blending of science and

spirituality, providing interaction between head and heart through self-reliance programmes and co-curricular activities, designing Awareness and Foundation courses and incorporating these as part of the curriculum.

The most outstanding feature of life in the three campuses is discipline at all stages and in every activity. We are entirely guided by the following observations of the Revered Chancellor which reads:

"The medium of instruction in this Institute is discipline; the first, the second and the third languages are Love, Service and Sadhana".

In terms of the courses offered, the Institute is on a par with other reputed universities. It has Arts Courses, Courses in various Sciences, (including Home Science) and Professional Courses in Education, Business Management and in Computer Science. There is also a Postgraduate Diploma Course in Indian Philosophy and Culture. However, there are many unique things about Swami's university. First and foremost, it is the only university in India that has campuses in more than one State. In fact, the founding objectives of the Institute permit it to have campuses all over the country and across various States. Secondly, instruction is absolutely free; no fee of any kind is charged. Hostel residence is a must, and hostel life is based on the Gurukula pattern, with due concession to the needs of modern times. The Institute runs like a clock. Admissions are always made at the same time of the year; examinations are never postponed; the results are never delayed; and the Convocation is always held on 22nd November.

Swami and Students

What makes the Institute truly unique is Bhagavan's constant and direct personal interest in the students. The latter requires some elaboration. Every university has a Chancellor, and by statute, Bhagavan is the Chancellor of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning. As Dr. Gokak once put it, "The Chancellor of the Universe is Himself the Chancellor of this University!" But there is more to it.

In no university does the Chancellor come into daily contact with the students. It is not merely that Swami sees the students everyday. He moves among them, talks to them, advises them, jokes with them, constantly showers gifts on them, directs their plays, cares for them, protects them, makes sure they receive medical attention when sick, and above all, immerses them in Divine Love. Does this happen in any other university anywhere in the world? Has it ever happened anywhere at any time? Swami repeatedly declares that students are His only property. Does one hear such a statement anywhere else? In fact, no Chancellor anywhere can name one student in his or her university. But our beloved Swami? He knows everything about all of them! Swami's love for students has to be seen to be believed. Swami himself describes it as the love of a thousand mothers—even that is an understatement.

Many wonder whether our graduates get jobs. They somehow seem to think that our academic programme is diluted by spirituality, and therefore not comparable with those of other universities. Where employment is concerned, our students are certainly not at a disadvantage. In fact, in recent years, employers are hard put to get people with good work ethics, people who are honest and have good character, and people who are prepared to work readily as a team. In these

areas our students excel, so much so that many employers actually come to Prasanthi Nilayam looking for talent even though the Institute does not encourage campus recruitment. As a policy, education, examination and employment are kept apart and no nexus should be read into them. This might sound somewhat strange in the current context; but there it is, providing the logic and the rationale for the type of education provided at the Institute.

Our Duty and Obligations

Swami says that the current indiscipline amongst students and teenagers is to a large extent due to the negligence and permissive attitude of the parents themselves.

What is it that Swami expects from students? Nothing, nothing at all. He merely says, "Wherever you are, be good. Protect your character, and earn a good name for the Institute and your parents." Yet, in a manner of speaking, Swami would like to see the youth of this country, and particularly His students, to be actively involved in the service of the country. Swami often reminds us that it is because of the society we are what we are, and therefore, we owe a deep debt of gratitude to the society.

People often ask, "Where is the Golden Age that Swami promised?" As Swami made clear to Hislop, Swami will never wave a magic wand. WE have to work for the Golden Age. If we do so with sincerity, HE will then make it happen. But, WE have to take the first step. Are we ready to? As we await the grand events of the Convocation and the Birthday, these questions must occupy our minds. Unless there is a seed, there will be no tree. And unless there is a tree, there will be no fruit. WE have to plant the seeds, and WE have to nurse the saplings. Only then can we enjoy the fruits.

Whatever job a student may take up, wherever he may be working, he must continue to practise spiritual discipline. Without a spiritual basis, education would be wasted.

—Baba

The Avatar and His Mission

There are certain periods in the history of mankind when the mortal beings of this earth witness epoch-making divine events with their own eyes. By far the most astounding event of this century is the Advent of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Birth and Family

Bhagavan Baba was born on 23rd November 1926 in Puttaparthi, a remote village of Andhra Pradesh in India in the Ratnakar family of Sri Kondama Raju, who was the grandfather of Bhagavan's physical body. Sri Kondama Raju, who lived separately from the family contemplating on God day in and day out, had full faith in the prophecy of his Guru Venkavadhoota that God would incarnate in his family. He lived a long life of 116 years to realise and experience the divinity of his grandson, who was by his side to fulfil his last wish of

pouring water into his mouth when he breathed his last in 1950. He had two sons, both named after his Guru Venkavadhoota, Sri Pedda Venkama Raju and Sri Chinna Venkama Raju. The divine child Sathyanarayana Raju (called Sathya or Raju in childhood) was the fourth child of the devout couple, Sri Pedda Venkama Raju and Srimati Easwaramma.

Childhood

Sathya as a child was enchantingly charming. The entire village was enthralled by His unearthly beauty and majestic demeanour. Even at the age of five, He earned the titles of Brahma-Jnani (one endowed with the knowledge of God) and Biddalaguru (child teacher). He was a born renunciant and never let a needy person go empty-handed. He was a vegetarian and abhorred cruelty to animals. He spent most of His time in the house of Karnam Subbamma, who lived in the next house, and whose boundless motherly affection for Sathya was reminiscent of Yashoda's love for child Krishna.

One of the favourite activities of child Sathya was Bhajan singing. He not only sang and composed Bhajans, but also organised a children's Bhajan group in Puttaparthi even at the age of ten. Later, in Old Mandir as well as in New Mandir (Prasanthi Nilayam), Bhajan singing became an essential part of the daily programme. Who else but Divinity could know that one day Bhajans would become one of the main instruments in Divine hands to put the deluded humanity on the path of devotion and spirituality? No wonder, today Sai Bhajans are sung in all parts of the world and in all the languages as a means of elevating and ennobling human nature.

Puttaparthi

Puttaparthi in the early 40's consisted of only two lanes, which met each other at right angles in addition to a few mud huts. A Western author, Arnold Schulman, who visited this hamlet in late sixties described this cluster of scattered huts as "ten minutes past the Stone Age". Bhagavan Baba has transformed this so-called Stone Age village into a modern township with a unique educational complex and a university, a super speciality hospital with all modern facilities and an airport of its own. The crest jewel of this now world-known place is Prasanthi Nilayam, where millions come every year from all corners of the world to receive the blessings of the Avatar.

Bukkapatnam

After finishing his elementary education in the school in Puttaparthi, Sathya was admitted to the Higher Elementary School in the nearby town of Bukkapatnam at the age of eight. Bukkapatnam is about 2½ miles from Puttaparthi across the river Chitravati.

Sathya's conduct in school was a model for others. He excelled in studies, games, sports, plays, etc., and invariably sang the prayer song at the start of the school everyday. He earned the love and admiration of not only his classmates, but many teachers also. Janab Mahbub Khan was one of those teachers who adored and loved Sathya and recognised His Divinity. After the famous incident of a teacher getting stuck to his chair as he made Sathya stand on the bench, Sathya came to be recognised as a divine child not only in the school, but in the town also. Another fortunate teacher of Sathya was Sri B. Subbannachar. Since the entire family of this teacher adored Sathya, He often lived in their house. He also visited the house of another teacher Sri V. C. Kondappa, to whom He used to narrate the story of Shirdi Sai Baba. On this basis, Sri

Kondappa wrote the life story of Shirdi Sai Baba in 102 Telugu verses and published it as a small book entitled "Sree Sayeesuni Charithra".

Uravakonda

After completing His studies at Bukkapatnam, Sathya went to Kamalapuram (Cuddappa District) with His elder brother Seshama Raju for further education at the age of ten. The fame of the wonder child Sathya reached Kamalapuram also. In school, He earned the love and admiration of His schoolmates and teachers. While Sathya continued His studies at Kamalapuram, Seshama Raju went elsewhere to undergo training. After completing his training, Seshama Raju was posted as a Telugu Teacher in a High School at Uravakonda, a town in Anantapur District. Naturally, Sathya accompanied His brother to Uravakonda, where He was admitted in the same school where His elder brother worked. Stories of Sathya's manifestations and miracles were already on the lips of not only the students and teachers but all over Uravakonda. As in Bukkapatnam school, Sathya's proficiency in music, dance, drama, poetry was immediately recognised in the Uravakonda school also.

When Sathya turned 13, history took a sharp turn. Divinity of Sathya as an Avatar was in full readiness to bloom, but mystery of the Divine is impossible to fathom. The effulgence of the Supreme Being comes only after the darkest period. The body of the tender child Sathya had to undergo a terrible persecution before the rays of Divinity could spread in the universe in full effulgence from it. On the 8th day of March 1940, a shocking news spread in the town of Uravakonda that Sathya was stung by a big black scorpion, as Sathya shrieked and held His right toe at about 7.00 p.m. on that day. Nobody saw the scorpion, but exactly after 24 hours, Sathya became unconscious and remained so throughout the next night. On regaining consciousness, Sathya behaved in a most extraordinary way as if possessed by a spirit. Alarmed at the condition of Sathya, His elder brother Seshama Raju called the parents who brought Sathya to Puttaparthi. After consulting doctors and other village healers, the parents took the tender child Sathya to the house of a terrible exorcist at Brahmanapalli, who put the child to such horrible treatment that every onlooker was moved with fear and shock. The dismayed parents could not bear all this and brought Sathya back to Puttaparthi.

Early Declarations of Avatarhood

Exactly after two and a half months of the scorpion incident, Sathya made His first declaration of Avatarhood on 23rd May 1940. The household of Pedda Venkama Raju was crowded with people as Sathya was materialising flowers and sugar candy and distributing to the amazed villagers. Pedda Venkama Raju was informed about what was happening in his house. Enraged and puzzled by the behaviour of his own child, he threatened him to disclose his true identity. And pat came the reply from Sathya "I am Sai Baba" in the form of the first declaration of Avatarhood. Later when He was asked to give proof of what He said, He threw a handful of jasmine flowers on the ground which formed into Telugu letters "Sai Baba". Not impressed by these extraordinary acts of Sathya, Seshama Raju stuck to his plan of giving Him higher education to make him fit for "Public Service". So, only a few days after this incident, he took Sathya back to Uravakonda in June 1940 and admitted him in the same school. Sathya was already a celebrity in Uravakonda. Crowds of pilgrims started coming to the miracle boy's house to seek His blessings. The headmaster of the school and several teachers recognised the divinity of the child Sathya. His teacher Thammiraju adored and worshipped Him.

Sathya provided another proof of His Divinity to His unbelieving elder brother when in Dasara holidays they all went to Virupaksha temple in Hampi near Hospet. When Seshama Raju and party entered the sanctum sanctorum of the temple, they found to their utter amazement, Sathya standing in place of the Lingam, though they had left Him outside. Baffled by this extraordinary happening, Seshama Raju rushed out and found Sathya leaning against a wall. This in fact was the prelude to the momentous declaration the Avatar wanted to make about His Divinity, as He seemed to have resolved to declare to mankind that God had come on the earth in human form to usher in the promised Golden Age.

After their return from Hospet, Sathya went to school as usual, but returned soon from midway. It was 20th October 1940. History of mankind was rewritten on this glorious day when Sathya, throwing his school bag in the house, cast away the veil of Maya and assumed the role of Sathya Sai Baba to start His mission of transformation of mankind which He has been performing for the last 60 years for the benefit of the beleaguered humanity in all corners of the world.

From Uravakonda, Baba was brought in a grand procession to Puttaparthi, where He first took residence in the spacious house of Karnam Subbamma who served Him all her life with devotion and dedication. This old lady served Baba with tender care and looked after all the devotees who came to meet Him. Bhagavan stayed at her house for several years after declaring His Divine Mission in Uravakonda before he shifted to the Old Mandir.

Old Mandir

When the number of devotees increased, need for a Mandir was felt by the devotees. Thus, the Old Mandir was constructed at the place between Sathyabhama and Gopalaswami temples, which was inaugurated by Bhagavan Baba on 141st December 1945. The Old Mandir had four rooms. Bhagavan shifted from Karnam Subbamma's house and occupied one of the rooms to the left of the verandah. One room was used as a store room and the other two rooms were for devotees.

Divine Leelas on Chitravati Sands

After the inauguration of the Old Mandir, the daily flow of devotees to Puttaparthi increased substantially. During those days, devotees would get ready at 3.00 p.m. in the afternoon to witness Bhagavan's Leelas (divine pranks) on the sands of Chitravati. By 4.00 p.m. all would reach there. Baba would ask the devotees to choose the place of their liking and all would sit in a circle. Baba would then start playing with the sand while eager eyes of the devotees watched His divine play. From the mounds of sand, He would bring out idols of gods and goddesses, sweets of various kinds and numerous other objects. In fact, anything He willed would come out of the sand. From 1946 to 1949, this was almost a daily event. On certain special days, Baba would take out a Kalasha (vessel) full of nectar from these sands and distribute this ethereal liquid to devotees. At other times, nectar would flow from His fingers and the fortunate devotees would receive it. In later years also some devotees were privileged to see such Leelas of Bhagavan.

The tamarind tree, now called Kalpavriksha (wish-fulfilling tree) standing on the hill on the west bank of Chitravati, was another object of Bhagavan's Leelas. Sometimes, Baba would take

the devotees to this tree and ask them what they wanted. And in an instant, Baba would pluck them from the tree and give them.

Prasanthi Nilayam

The number of devotees kept on increasing with the result that in a few years the Old Mandir could not accommodate them. Even sheds and makeshift Pandals around the Old Mandir were inadequate during festivals. In answer to the prayers of the devotees, Baba agreed for a more spacious place. Thus, the idea of New Mandir was conceived and the same was constructed at a place to the south of the village of Puttaparthi. Bhagavan Baba inaugurated it on 23rd November 1950 on his 251st birthday and named it Prasanthi Nilayam (the abode of supreme peace) Prasanthi Nilayam, the abode of Bhagavan Baba, bears testimony of Bhagavan's Divinity. The millions who throng this small township in a remote part of Andhra Pradesh in India experience its divine vibrations, which are soaked in its atmosphere. They come from all parts of the world, from nearly 180 countries spending their money and time to have Darshan and blessings of Bhagavan. When they return to their countries and places, they carry with them numerous stories of experiences, which describe the divine love of Bhagavan for the entire mankind. Bhagavan's presence has made Prasanthi Nilayam a township of love and peace. It is a different world altogether where Sathya, Dharma, Santhi, Prema and Ahimsa permeate the entire environment. Though there are crowds everywhere, there are no jarring noises. There is cleanliness, order, discipline, courtesy and humility everywhere. This is a mini world in itself. People from different countries following different religions, speaking different languages live together, dine together and mingle with each other with sacred feelings of love and brotherhood. If one wants to see "brotherhood of man and fatherhood of God" not merely in theory but in practice, one can see it in Prasanthi Nilayam.

Divine Mission

Bhagavan announced His Mission in the following words way back on 25th May 1947, when he wrote to His elder brother Seshama Raju in reply to his letter:

"I have a Task: To foster all mankind and ensure for all of them lives full of Bliss (Ananda).

I have a Vow: To lead all who stray away from the straight path again into goodness and save them.

I am attached to a Work that I love: To remove the suffering of the poor and grant them what they lack.

I have My definition of 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.

When I am thus engaged in My beneficial task, how can My name be tarnished as you apprehend?

You can yourself see the full glory in the coming years. Devotees must have patience and forbearance."

Bhagavan's Mission spread rapidly after the construction of Prasanthi Nilayam. Publication of "Sanathana Sarathi" was started on Sivaratri day in February 1958 in which all the 14 books of Vahini series written by Bhagavan Baba were published in serial form. Besides, Bhagavan's Discourses now run into 30 volumes of "Sathya Sai Speaks". Sri Sathya Sai Organisation was started in 1965, which now has branches in nearly 180 countries all over the world. Some remarkable changes have also taken place in and around Prasanthi Nilayam, including those on the growth of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning (commenced in 1981), the functioning of Sri Sathya Sai Super Speciality Hospital (1991) and the Drinking Water Projects (1995). A few articles highlighting the significance of these and various other aspects of Bhagavan's Mission have been given in this Special Issue of "Sanathana Sarathi," which is offered at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan to mark the 74th year of the Advent of the Avatar. A brief account of Bhagavan's early life and Mission has also been included for the benefit of the ever-growing community of devotees.

—Editor

The Sea is vast and unfathomable. However, to know the taste of sea water, one need not drink the entire ocean. It is enough if one has a few drops. Similarly, the one who understands, assimilates and experiences the Lord in human form has understood, assimilated and experienced the Immutable, the Imperishable and the formless Brahman as well.

—Baba

Howard Murphet:

The Twain—Our Meeting

East is East and West is West—And Never The Twain Shall Meet says the well-Known line of Rudyard Kipling, but, he does go on to prophesy a time when they will meet and that will be at the feet of God. Today the twain are meeting, in truth, at the feet of God, not only East and West but races of all the world are coming to the feet of the Living Avatar of God. This must surely signify the approach of a great change in the consciousness of mankind. But before considering this, let us talk about what we understand by the term 'Avatar' and what it has always signified in the history of man.

Concept of Avatarhood

It was during my first visit to Prasanthi Nilayam Ashram in 1966 when I first heard Swami being called an Avatar. I was sitting with a small group of young Indian men on the ladies side of the Mandir; when Swami suddenly appeared and started walking across the large square of sand that has now become a green park. He was walking barefooted and red-robed towards one of the terraced houses that then stood in line with their backs to the road, and their doors and front windows facing the square of golden sand. We watched the progress of Swami in silence for a time, then the young man sitting beside me with whom I had a great deal of discussion, said in a quiet voice 'Many of us regard Him as an Avatar'. This gave me something of a shock—did he mean that this little figure, with the mop of fuzzy black hair above his soft luminous eyes was

God? I looked at the speaker again. It was the serious face of the Crown Prince of Venkatagiri. From our previous discussion, I had learned to respect the knowledge and insight of this young man. Now he spoke in all seriousness about one that I had considered to be a great yogi with miraculous powers and understanding, being an Avatar of God. I remained silent; but mentally decided that when I got back to the Theosophical Headquarters, I would get any books I could find from the library, and try to learn what I needed to know about the term 'Avatar'.

However, I did not, in fact, learn very much from the books available. Lord Krishna, who lived some five thousand years ago, seemed to have been the last of the Avatars. He brought great changes to the people of the earth at that time as did, indeed, the former Avatar—Rama. Did such Beings, when they came to the earth, always shake and move and change the world? Later on, I remember hearing Swami that Jesus Christ was a partial Avatar—Jesus did in fact change the Western half of the world from the pagan, power seeking, egotistical values of the Roman Empire to the compassionate Christendom. If a partial Avatar could do so much, what might a full Avatar do for the whole world? But first, I must get clear in my mind, what was meant by an Avatar, and find out if this small red-robed figure, whom I had begun to respect and love deeply, was really one. While I pondered this question, I continued to be with Sai Baba as much as I possibly could, which was most of the time.

'God as Man on earth!'—this seemed to be a far-fetched and incomprehensible idea certainly in my early years. Christian theology had taught me that God had come to earth once, but only once, in the form of Jesus Christ and that He would never come again, except at the end of the world. Certainly, my own thinking and Theosophy had knocked this idea out of my mind. It was not now a part of my belief system. I knew that Theosophy did accept the truth of the earlier Avatars, Krishna and Rama—but this was all so long ago.

The idea of God Himself coming to the earth in the form of a man in this modern world was a concept that seemed impossible for me to accept. And if Almighty God did in fact decide on such an unlikely move, why should He choose to be born in a remote, primitive village, hidden away in southern India, where the mass of the mankind was unlikely to hear of Him for a very long time, if ever?

Then suddenly, the whole idea became acceptable to my understanding and to my belief. It happened this way. One day, I was strolling quietly in a small garden that fronted the doorway of Swami's interview room in the two-storey house that stood where the white, lotus-shaped Mandir now stands at Brindavan, Bangalore. We were all expecting Swami to emerge from the doorway at any moment. Appearing suddenly, Swami walked into the garden among us. He stopped not far from where I was standing. A young Indian, probably in his early twenties, stepped boldly in front of Sai Baba, and even more boldly asked the question 'Are you God?' The hush that fell over the group of men seemed expectant, and yet somehow fearful. But Swami was his calm, normal self. He pointed his finger at the young man and replied, 'You are God!'

Then, standing among us in that small quiet garden, He gave a simple revealing talk that taught me so very much about the nature of man and God. The gist of it was that God incarnates in every man and woman born on earth—but we are not aware of this wonderful truth, although perhaps sometimes dimly aware. Our very purpose in being born as a human being, He told us, is

to work towards the realisation of the great truth of our Divinity. We are, in fact, when born—Avatars, without the knowledge of this stupendous truth! The ones who are called Avatars are those who are born with the knowledge of this great truth of their identity with God. And so He said, 'The only difference between you and Me is that while you are Avatars and you do not know it, I knew it from the time of My childhood. When I tell you as I do, that you are God, that God is within you all, you may or may not believe it, but you have to do more than believe it, you must by the life you live, and through your Sadhana reach the point where you experience your own Godhood. Then you will not only believe, but realise that you are God. That is the one step that you must take to know in your mind and experience in your whole consciousness that you and I are one.'

Journey to Godhood

I knew at that moment that Sai Baba was an Avatar. And then as the weeks, the months, the years passed in close proximity to Him, the conviction that He was the Avatar of this age who came for a certain wonderful purpose became firmly rooted in my belief system. Now after more than thirty years of His Presence, physical or subtle, the understanding and belief that Sai Baba is God on earth, has become firmer, broader and more understandable.

Now let me try to give you in a few words an overall view of the day-to-day work of an Avatar in this modern age, and the special work for the world, the way in which He will change the world before leaving His body as Sathya Sai Baba. When I speak of His day-to-day work, please remember that it is a seven-day week for fifty-two weeks of every year, for He never takes a holiday. This day-to-day work of God is about the transformation of individuals. His aim is to place the feet of every individual, who is ready, on what He calls 'the ancient road back to God'. There never has been any other road than this, although within it there are many laneways. He leads the feet of the individual along whatever laneway or Yoga path that is most suitable to his temperament. For the majority of people in this age, the most suitable Yoga pathway is that of devotion. This may be called the Yoga of Love. For this, Swami opens the Heart Centre of each individual who is ready and lets the love flow out towards Him as God and towards every individual in the world at whose centre God is seated. I know this because this was my own initiation on my first visit to the Ashram in 1966. Love is the super glue that binds us all together to God. Karma Yoga or Yoga of service to mankind is a very important part of His devotional path. So, the devotional path is the main one for the majority of people in this age.

Beginning of a New World

As part of His work at the level of the individual, there is the establishment of the Super Speciality Hospital at Prasanthi Nilayam with another one planned near Whitefield. There is also His remarkable work in the educational field. As all the devotees may know, His educational institutions range from kindergartens to colleges, and to the Institute of Higher Learning, which has all the powers and authority of a university. To academic excellence is added the spiritual guidance and authority of the Avatar. Years ago, when the university was first established I heard one of the very old and learned devotees say, 'That a boy who has spent only one year at high school should become a Chancellor of a university is one of Sai Baba's greatest miracles: But to me, there are some that seem even greater, and establish Him beyond question as Almighty God in human form. Such, for example, is His suspension of His own Laws of Nature, by making apples and pears and other fruits grow on the branches of wild bush trees.

This Divine work, among so many individuals over the face of the earth, has already brought Rudyard Kipling's prophecy true. *'East is East, West is West—And never the twain shall Meet, Till Earth and Sky Meet presently, At God's great Judgement Seat.'* The twain are meeting—East and West are gathering at the feet of God. But, does this mean the end of the world as the poet seems to suggest? It certainly does not mean the end of the planet, but I believe that it does mean the end of the old world and the beginning of an entirely new one. In early days, when there were not so many of us gathering at His feet, I have heard Him say 'The Golden Age will begin before I leave this body'. He has said it since and He has said several times that the new world will be ushered in before He leaves His present body. He has said it in a quiet casual voice, as if it was nothing at all. But it is in this manner that He makes all world-shattering announcements. He did not say what year that this great change of the world would take place, only that it would be in the first two decades of the coming 21st century—the beginning of the new millennium.

There are many, many workers on what the late Sir George Trevelyan used to call 'The Force field of Light' helping the great living Avatar in His work of changing the old world into the new. Among these many first grade assistants to Almighty God are two, what are called Ascended Masters. These two are Ascended Master Kuthumi and Ascended Master El Morya. In the book entitled 'The Light will Set You Free', they have made two statements of interest that I give you in this article. One is 'Avatar Sai Baba is carrying the Christ Consciousness in the world today'. The Christ Consciousness means of course the same as the Krishna Consciousness or the Divine Consciousness in man. The other statement they make is that the Golden Age would begin in 2011 and 2012. It is explained in other parts of this same book and in other spiritual books that by the year 2011, due to the work of Sai Baba and His Helpers in the Light, a sufficient number of human beings will have raised their consciousness to create what they call 'the critical mass' that will bring about a quantum leap in the consciousness of all mankind to bring us into the fifth dimension from the third dimension in which we are now. And as man's consciousness creates the world in which he lives, the Golden Age or the new Sathya Yuga will begin. Any stragglers will be brought up to the fifth dimensional level by Prema Sai. And, so it may seem, in the century just about to begin, the members of the human race, who have suffered hell itself in the last century, will find themselves back in the metaphorical Garden of Eden talking and walking with God.

There is Only One Religion—The Religion of Love

—Madeleine Guillemin

We think that going regularly to the Church, Temple or Bhajan Hall, singing devotional songs and performing rituals is sufficient proof of our devotion to God, but there is only one proof: showing our love for God by loving our fellow human beings.

As in all things that come from the mouth of an Avatar, there are depths upon depths of meaning encompassed in that one, all-embracing statement of Bhagavan Baba. As a small offering to place at the feet of Bhagavan, I would like to put on paper some of the thoughts that

well up in my heart as I contemplate on this totally complete and perfect enunciation of a profound truth.

Religion is Synonymous with Love

Religion! The word 'religion,' as used in that statement of Swami, evidently has a different meaning from that which it has acquired in common parlance. Clarifying its meaning, He goes back to its Latin roots and says, *"It consists of two parts, 're,' meaning 'again' and 'ligio' meaning 'to come together or unite.' Religion therefore means to reunite with God. People think of religion as a bundle of doctrines and rigorous do's and don'ts. This is totally wrong. The sacred aim of religion is to remind people of their divine origin and lead them back to God."* (Discourse: 24-3-1991) That is the spiritual way, the way of love.

Again, consider Swami's use of the word 'Love'. Love is the most powerful force on earth—nay! in the universe! It is, in fact, God for *"God is Love and Love is God."* It manifests as electro-magnetic energy and is the power of attraction that controls everything from the sub-atomic particles to the planets, stars and galaxies. It is, in fact, the gel that holds everything together. Baba puts it neatly and concisely: "The world cannot exist without love; love is the cement that bonds it together. All are embodiments of love, and God resides as love in the hearts of all." (Discourse: 17-7-1997) So, the only link that can bind us human beings to God is Love. And, as religion is that which is supposed to bind a person back to God, then religion should be synonymous with Love. Unfortunately, it isn't.

There are many people who think of themselves as very religious, but whose behaviour is very unloving. Religion may be compared to a telephone line through which our devotion for God is meant to flow, and through which we receive His answers in the form of peace and consolation. But the wires are often faulty and we find we cannot get through. We dial God's number by pushing the buttons of various set prayers and rituals, but His 'phone' never rings because the wire is broken. God knows this, and He smiles benignly at our efforts, but nothing much will happen until we find the fault and repair it. The key connection needed is Love. We think that going regularly to the church, temple or Bhajan hall, singing devotional songs and performing rituals is sufficient proof of our devotion to God, but there is only one proof: showing our love for God by loving our fellow human beings.

As St. John (often called the apostle of love) wrote very truly, *"If a man says, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar: for he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?"* (1 John, Ch. 5 V.20) I think part of the problem lies in the fact that we tend to equate love with a feeling, an emotion. Basically, love is a force, not an emotion. It is much easier to love someone who loves us in return, but Jesus and Baba both tell us to love even our enemies. That often seems impossible, but it is not impossible to show them compassion, forgiveness, and respect for their point of view. "Help ever, Hurt never" is the secret recipe for loving our neighbour as ourselves. And that is putting the *"Religion of Love"* into practice.

When Baba says, "There is only one religion, the religion of love," I think this is what He means. It is not religion in the way in which most of us picture religion, but rather an all-embracing spirituality manifesting as universal love. He does not say that rituals and religious

practices are bad, but He does say that if they are devoid of the love content, they are useless as links between mankind and God. He also asks us to respect all religions, for all are worthy paths to God. All are useful frameworks for fostering spirituality, and all teach us that the way to God is through loving our fellowmen.

The Destination is One

We think, of the various religions of the world as very different, but they all foster devotion to God, and there is only One God. This is something that struck me very forcibly when I first started to study the writings of the various religions. All speak of God as eternal, as existing before all time, and as suffering no modification or alteration. All say that He is omnipresent, that there is no place where He is not. All see Him as being all knowing (omniscient), and of having no limitations to His power (omnipotent). 'Creator of all that is' is an epithet bestowed on God by all religions that have ever been. And all, ultimately, acknowledge that God is unknowable, except that He can be experienced through love.

So, how can anyone speak of "my God" as being different from "your God," when all define Him in the same terms? One is drawn to the inevitable conclusion that each and every one has been given a perception of the same Being - that which just is. Not only do all religions describe this 'Unknowable Being' from which all has sprung, in the same words, but all mystics—to whatever religious background they belong, in whatever age or country—have all experienced God in the same way. That experience has been one of all-pervading Love and intense bliss. In those moments, their spirit was one with the Universal Spirit whom we call God.

Mystics are those great souls whose telephone line to God really works. They burn with love for Him, and are blessed by being given an experience of oneness with the Divine. When they speak of God, it is from first-hand experience, so they transcend the boundaries of the various religions from which they have sprung. It is admittedly correct to say that, whereas the Vedic philosophy teaches that God is the Self of all living beings, Christianity sees Him as eternally separate from His Creation, yet it is not all Christian mystics that have subscribed to that view. St. John of the Cross, for instance, wrote *"It should be known that the Word, the Son of God, together with the Father and the Holy Ghost, is hidden by His essence and His presence in the innermost being of the soul."*

(*"The Spiritual Canticle"* Commentary on the first stanza, No.6)

Then there was St. Augustine, who wrote in his 'Confessions,' *"Beauty so ancient and so new; late have I found Thee! For behold Thou wert within me, and I outside; and I sought Thee outside, and in my loving fell upon those lovely things that Thou hast made. Thou wert within me and I was not with Thee."* (Bk 10: 27) The more one reads the mystics of all faiths and climes, the more it becomes apparent that there is tremendous similarity in their experiences. So, from whence do the differences spring? The primary impetus for each religion has always been some divine revelation—an experience of Divinity. This may have been an Avatar (Incarnation of God) or some chosen prophet or messiah whom God has sent to set mankind back onto the right path. These are major events that occur only from time to time. In each case, the impact on people's spiritual understanding is enormous, and it is treasured in memory for many centuries. But those memories are mostly kept alive and vibrant through rituals. Moreover, the sayings of the original founder become interpreted by lesser men and fossilised in dogma.

All of this, of course, happens within the context of some specific cultural background, and at a certain time in history. The way in which the original divine message is presented, therefore, becomes clothed in the ways of thinking of the people in which that message took root. The rituals that surround the worship were adapted from practices that were familiar at that time, and in that place. Naturally, also, each religion places emphasis on the recorded life of its own founder. There is nothing wrong in any of this, but, as I see it, these are merely external trappings that are meant to help us towards the goal. That goal is the same for all: it is union with God.

Spirituality is the Motive Force

None of all this precludes someone from rising to the heights of spirituality and, thereby, having a direct, mystical experience of God. But nor do any of these religious practices automatically ensure that one will reach those heights. Religions are excellent paths by which God can be reached, but they are the ways only, not the destination. The destination is an experience of God, nothing less. For that to happen, we need to transcend our lower natures, to put a rein on our uncontrolled emotions, and begin to weed out some of the negativity with which we are burdened. In other words, it is transformation that is required, and a determination to become transformed is what spirituality is really all about.

If human nature did not have a strong spiritual side to its make-up, none of the great religions of the world would ever have arisen. Yet I see spirituality as the motive force, and religion merely the casing through which that force can function in society. If you are thirsty, you can choose water, fruit juice, etc. which will be handed to you in either a cup or a glass. The needed refreshment cannot be handed out without a 'container'. Similarly, I see our spiritual nature as the thirst that longs for a drink, the experience of God as the refreshing liquid we yearn to receive, and religion as the glass or the cup by which it can be handed out. The cups may look different, but their usefulness lies in their content, not the cup.

In His great wisdom, Baba reminds us, *"Just as trees and plants, birds and beasts differ from one region to another, the rituals, practices, disciplines and ideals may differ from community to community. Each is good for that region and that stage of development. You cannot transplant one from one human community to another. The atmosphere in which you have grown up is the most congenial for you."* (Discourse: 17-7-1968). I think we Westerners need to ponder these words, and search our hearts for ways of presenting Baba's teachings—the greatest spiritual teachings the world has ever known—in a way that can be more easily assimilated by the starving souls that His words are destined to feed.

We also need to constantly remind ourselves that the Sai Way is the Way of Love—the Religion of Love. If we constantly manifest that Love, then the wheels of the Sai Organisation—Baba's own magnificent organisation—will run more smoothly. Love manifests as compassion, sympathy, broadmindedness, generosity, forgiveness, humility, tolerance. One of the last injunctions that Jesus gave to His followers was: *"By this shall men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."* (John, Ch.12, V: 35) And I feel that the same applies to us, the followers of Lord Sai.

Water—the Sustainer of Life

—R. Kondal Rao

Within a year of Bhagavan's declaration, the massive drinking water project for Rayalaseema became a reality

A new dimension was added to the Avataric Mission of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba when He willed to start a project to supply safe and clean drinking water to more than 700 villages of Rayalaseema region in Andhra Pradesh. At a special function held in the Poornachandra Auditorium on 22nd November, 1994, when the then Prime Minister of India was present, Bhagavan drew the attention of the Prime Minister to the 45 years old water problem that was affecting most parts of Rayalaseema, especially in remote villages where people had to walk several miles to get a pot of drinking water. Bhagavan emphasised that it needed immediate redressal.

Water for the People of Rayalaseema

He pointed out, "Rivers are the gift of God and in rivers like the Krishna and the Godavari, a lot of water is allowed to flow waste into the sea. Instead the water of rivers like the Krishna and the Tungabhadra can be harnessed to supply the much needed water to Rayalaseema" Bhagavan further declared, "if there is constraint of finance, I am prepared to meet the cost, even if it is 100 to 200 crore rupees for fulfilling this dire need of the Rayalaseema people. The devotees are prepared to make any sacrifice but I have not stretched My hands to anyone."

It is the good fortune of the people of Anantapur District that Bhagavan Baba not only provided sufficient funds for the execution of a massive drinking water project but also saw to it that it was completed in record time.

Soon thereafter, Bhagavan gave the guidelines as to how to implement this scheme with long-term solutions for the scarcity and fluoride-affected villages. This drinking water project, started on war footing, became a reality on 12th July 1995 (Guru Poornima Day) when Bhagavan inaugurated the massive drinking water scheme for the chronically drought-stricken people of the area. The drinking water project for Anantapur Town was inaugurated by the then Prime Minister of India on 18th November, 1995 when the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh was also present.

Thus, within a year of Bhagavan's declaration, the massive drinking water project for Rayalaseema became a reality.

The salient features of this drinking water project are as follows:

1. No. of Villages Covered 731
2. Population Benefited.... 9 lakh (present) (Designed Population 12.50 lakh)
3. Project CostRs 250-300 crore
4. Pipelines2500 km
5. No. of Overhead Reservoirs 268

6. No. of Ground Level Reservoirs	145
7. No. of Booster Stations	56
8. No. of Summer Storage Tanks	8
9. No. of Infiltration Wells	20
10. No. of Bore wells	280

To ensure proper maintenance of the completed "Sri Sathya Sai Water Supply Project," the Government of Andhra Pradesh has formed an autonomous Board for the first time.

Drinking Water Project in Medak and Mahaboobnagar Districts of Andhra Pradesh

After alleviating the suffering of the people of Anantapur District, Bhagavan has blessed two more drought-affected districts for the drinking water projects. They are Medak and Mahaboobnagar, which are some of the worst-affected districts in Telangana region of the State.

Medak:

In this District also there is a high concentration of fluorides in the ground water due to frequent failure of monsoons and severe drought conditions. Further, the ground water table is depleting very fast and fluoride level in the ground water is increasing.

Eight comprehensive schemes and about 20 individual protected water supply schemes with bore wells as source are taken up under this project to provide drinking water to more than 130 villages.

Mahaboobnagar:

There are 3191 habitations in this District. Out of these, 1543 habitations are partially covered by drinking water supply. There are more than 467 habitations having excess fluorides and almost the entire District suffers from drought situation due to erratic rainfall and the fast depletion of ground water table.

Four comprehensive schemes and about 60 individual protected water supply schemes with bore wells as source are taken up in this District to provide drinking water to cover about 140 villages. For this comprehensive water supply project, water will be drawn from the Krishna river through pipelines.

Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust has taken up these projects for execution. These schemes are expected to be completed before next Guru Poornima, i.e., well before 75th Birthday of Bhagavan. By 23.11.1999, i.e., 74th Birthday of Bhagavan, 74 habitations are expected to be provided with drinking water.

The salient features of this project in Medak and Mahaboobnagar Districts are as under:

1. No. of Villages 270
2. Length of Pipelines to be Laid 900 km
3. No. of Treatment Plants to be Covered ...9
4. No. of Overhead Reservoirs30
5. No. of Ground Level Reservoirs and Sumps ...65

6. Approximate Cost Rs 66 crore

Manasa Bhajare ...

The very first lesson I gave when I declared My Identity at Uravakonda was: "Manasa Bhajare Gurucharanam, Dusthara Bhavasagara Tharanam." That is to say, first know that you are in Bhavasagara (ocean of worldly life); then resolve on Taranam (crossing it); then fix on a Guru or the name and form of God which appeals to you; lastly, dwell on His glory, do Bhajan, but do it with all your mind. He, who is deluded by this relative reality is the Samsari (worldly person); he who is aware that it is only relatively real is the Sadhaka (Spiritual aspirant).

—Baba

Another Blessed Month of November

Bhagavan Baba's Birthday is the greatest event of Prasanthi Nilayam. It is not only an occasion to celebrate the Advent of the Divine on the earth, but an opportunity for spiritual awakening for the devotees. A large number of programmes are held to commemorate this day and spread the Divine Message of Bhagavan to the entire mankind.

Deepavali Celebrations

This year, the festive mood was set in with Deepavali, the festival of lights, which was celebrated on 7th November 1999. Prasadam was distributed in the morning on this auspicious occasion. There was a grand display of fireworks in the evening in the lawn in front of Bhagavan's residence. Bhagavan symbolically started this magnificent display by igniting the crackers with the help of a remote controlled button. The deafening sound of crackers, the fountains of light from the flowerpots and beautiful display of rockets making myriad designs of light illumining the sky, filled the hearts of viewers with ecstasy. After nearly 40 minutes of this grand display, the Deepavali celebrations in Prasanthi Nilayam came to a happy conclusion with Mangalarati to Bhagavan.

Akhanda Bhajan

Another spiritual event of great significance was the Akhanda Bhajan held in the Sai Kulwant Hall from 6.00 p.m. on 13th November to 6.00 p.m. on 14th November 1999. The Akhanda Bhajan started after Bhagavan lighted the sacred Akhanda Jyoti inside the Mandir. Non-stop Bhajan singing for 24 hours was carried out with great devotional fervour by students of three campuses, viz., Prasanthi Nilayam, Brindavan and Anantapur as also by groups of devotees. At the successful conclusion of the Akhanda Bhajan, Bhagavan Baba broke coconuts in the Prasanthi Mandir as a sign of auspiciousness. Prasadam was distributed to all the devotees at the conclusion of the Bhajan. This programme came to a close after Mangalarati to Bhagavan.

Rathotsavam

The 74th Birthday celebrations of Bhagavan Baba actually commenced on 18th November with Rathotsavam. The programme started in the morning after Swami came to Sai Kulwant Hall at 6.40 a.m. Nadaswaram music and excellent decorations in the Sai Kulwant Hall created a festive milieu. As soon as Swami came inside the Mandir, the students started Veda chanting. The idols of Rama, Sita, Lakshmana and Hanuman as also of Sri Krishna were then taken out of the Mandir. The procession carrying the idols started from the Gopuram gate preceded by Sai Geeta and Veda chanting and Bhajan singing students and ended at the Old Mandir, where Arati was performed.

Narayana Seva

Narayana Seva is one of the greatest means of service to the poor and needy. Bhagavan Baba always teaches by His own example. Even as a young boy, He never let a beggar go empty handed from His house. The compassionate Lord showers His love and compassion in a special way on the poor during the Birthday celebrations. This year also Narayana Seva was performed on 18th November 1999 in the sprawling Hill View Stadium. Bhagavan came to the Stadium at

about 9.00 a.m. and ceremoniously started the distribution of food and clothes to more than 20,000 people gathered there.

In the evening, a beautiful dance drama "Krishna-Kuchela" was presented by the Bal Vikas children of Tamil Nadu in the Poornachandra Auditorium.

Ladies Day Celebrations

Ladies Day on 19th November has become an integral part of Bhagavan's Birthday celebrations. All the programmes on this day are conducted by the ladies.

The morning session commenced in Sai Kulwant Hall at 7.00 a.m. when Bhagavan came in procession preceded by the band groups of Anantapur Campus and Primary School. Swami was greeted by Nadaswaram music and loud applause of the vast gathering. Swami lighted the twin lamps, which marked the inauguration of the function. A group of dancers dressed in traditional attire offered obeisance in Bharat Natyam to Nataraja, Lord of eternal dance. This was followed by a programme of vocal and instrumental music and a brilliant exposition of Sai Charitra (glory and Leelas of Bhagavan) by a seven year old girl, Sai Praveena.

In the afternoon, Bhagavan arrived in Sai Kulwant Hall at 2.20 and the proceedings commenced with Veda chanting by the girl students of the Primary School. The first item of the afternoon programme was invocation songs in English, Latin and Spanish, which were sung in chorus by different groups of ladies. Thereafter, Mrs. Srinivas expressed her gratitude to Bhagavan for giving them the opportunity to celebrate the Ladies Day. She said that they had learnt from Swami how women should act, being tough and yet compassionate, should lead and yet follow and that they should stoop to conquer. After this, Mrs. Sarala Shah in her welcome speech spoke of the grace of Bhagavan in allotting 19th November as Ladies Day in 1995 as part of Birthday Celebrations and how it had come as a great boon to them. Mrs. Geeta Reddy, former Minister of Andhra Pradesh, considered Easwaramma the mother of the Avatar as the mother of the millennium. She narrated the role of women in spiritual field giving examples of Maitreyi and Gargi who shone as Vedic scholars in the court of Janaka. Ms Uma Bharati, Minister of State for Tourism, Government of India, paid handsome tributes to Bhagavan for the glorious work in the fields of education, social service and spiritual enlightenment. Then Bhagavan delivered the Divine Discourse (given separately in this issue).

In the evening, there was a cultural programme of "Ram Leela" presented by a Delhi group of professionals, Sri Ram Bharatiya Kala Kendra. It was a spectacular display of highly skilled actors performing with graceful dance movements.

Grand Birthday Celebrations

There was a sea of humanity in Prasanthi Nilayam to experience the bliss of Bhagavan's 74th Birthday celebrations on 23rd November 1999. All hearts were filled with bliss when Bhagavan alongside the Central Trust Members came in procession preceded by several band groups and Veda chanting students to Sai Kulwant Hall at 6.30 a.m. clad in a pure white dress. The huge concourse of devotees went into raptures and greeted Bhagavan with loud cheers.

Three speakers paid their tributes to Bhagavan before He gave His nectarine discourse. The first speaker Prof. Chitti Babu, former Vice-Chancellor of Annamalai University, observed that it should be our constant endeavour to move from darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge and freedom. He said, this was a rare opportunity in the history of mankind when the Avatar had come as a World Teacher to remove the suffering and show the light of wisdom to the mankind. The second speaker Prof. G. Venkataraman, former Vice Chancellor of SSSIHL, pointed out that Avatar's advent was a great blessing to the mankind: "Though God is beyond birth and death yet we celebrate His birthday to bask in the glory of the Avatar's love;" He said. The third speaker was Sri Kondal Rao who retired from Andhra Pradesh Government as Chief Engineer and was associated with Sri Sathya Sai Water Project. He said that it was Bhagavan's love for people that had resulted in the supply of fluoride free water to the people of Anantapur District even in summer months—a task that no government or private agency could achieve for decades.

Later, a postal stamp was released by Bhagavan commemorating Sri Sathya Sai Water Project. After this, Bhagavan delivered His Divine Discourse (printed separately in this issue).

Delightful Musical Programme

In the afternoon, there was a programme of music by several famous artistes including Mrs. Parveen Sultana, Sri Rahul Sharma, son of Santoor Maestro Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma, playback singer Poornima and two sons of Sarod Maestro Ustad Amjad Ali Khan, Aman Ali Bangash and Ayan Ali Bangash. A dance performance by Sri Anand Shankar, son of famous dancer Sri Uday Shankar also enthralled the audience.

The delightful and highly devotional music programme provided a fitting finale to the 74th Birthday celebrations. The celebrations came to a happy conclusion with Arati to Bhagavan.

—K.S.S.R.

SRI SATHYA SAI 2ND WORLD YOUTH CONFERENCE

Bhagavan's Clarion Call to the Youth

"Only young men and women are capable of eradicating the evils prevailing in the society," said Bhagavan in the Inaugural Discourse of Sri Sathya Sai Second World Youth Conference held in Prasanthi Nilayam on 18th November 1999. The conference was held for three days—8th, 20th and 21st. Nearly 7000 youth from 63 overseas countries and India participated in this conference.

Bhagavan Inaugurates the Conference

The inaugural session of the conference was held in Sai Kulwant Hall on 18th November 1999 in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Baba. Bhagavan came to Sai Kulwant Hall at 3.00 p.m. Youth from all parts of the world sang group songs to welcome Bhagavan to the conference. The programme started after Bhagavan formally inaugurated the conference by lighting the sacred lamps amidst a thunderous applause by a large concourse of devotees and youth who had occupied every inch of space in the glittering Sai Kulwant Hall. Soon after this, an impressive

programme of March Past started from both sides of the Sai Kulwant Hall. While the young women came before Bhagavan to pay their obeisance in the traditional dress of their countries holding the placards of their country's name, the young men came with flags of their countries.

The deliberations of the conference started after Veda chanting by the students. Sri V. Srinivasan, President, All India Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation welcomed the delegates and observed how Bhagavan Baba's glory had reached every nook and corner of the world. He said that it was a fact that no other individual had influenced humanity more than Bhagavan Baba in human history. Explaining the theme of the conference "The Role of Youth in the Divine Mission," Sri Srinivasan told that Bhagavan Baba had emphasised the need of service to mankind from His very childhood. He observed that the objective of the global programme was to make 21st century a century of spiritual transformation. In the end, Sri Srinivasan introduced the four youth conference delegates who made brief speeches before the Inaugural Discourse of Bhagavan.

The first speaker Sri Billy Fong from Malaysia narrated how the people of Malaysia were experiencing the "Presence" of Bhagavan Baba in their homes by the manifestation of Vibhuti, honey, Amrita (divine ambrosia), etc. on the photographs of God forms. He informed about the several service programmes being carried out in Malaysia, including Action for the Betterment of Community project, Human Values Parade and family integration programmes that have been undertaken in Malaysia by the Youth Wing of Sai Organisation. Bhagavan later materialised a gold chain and gave it to the speaker. The second speaker Sri Vijay Menon from Kerala (India) briefly explained the service activities being carried out in various parts of the country including the nutrition project for children by the Sai Nutrition Cell.

The third speaker, Ms Puja Sharma from Himachal Pradesh (India) explained the service activities of the youth in Mandi area of Himachal Pradesh. The last speaker of the afternoon was Ms Wendy Wart from USA. She referred to the inspiring message of Bhagavan at the end of the 1st World Youth Conference in 1997 and narrated how the youth activities had spread world-wide after Bhagavan's call. Youth, she said, were privileged to participate in the Divine Mission of Bhagavan.

After these brief speeches, Bhagavan delivered His Discourse (printed separately). The programme came to a close with distribution of Prasadam and Mangalarati to Bhagavan.

Workshops and Plenary Sessions

The World Sathya Sai Seva Organisation is now divided into five zones:

Zone 1: USA, Canada, Southern Europe, West Indies and Israel.

Zone 2: Latin America

Zone 3: Far East

Zone 4: Northern Europe

Zone 5: Africa and the UK

Zonal workshops were held, allowing greater opportunities for individual expression and for ease of language. Zone 2 for example conducted their workshops in Spanish. It was particularly interesting to note the diversity in style of presenting these workshops as well as to observe the creative flexibility in their methods. Never was there a loss of spiritual direction and impact. For

example, some used short on-the-spot skits to enliven and illustrate teachings of human values. Delegates held their discussions in smaller groups and then reassembled to share their findings together.

Two pre-inaugural workshops were held to evaluate the results of the projects undertaken after the First World Youth Conference. This brought all the participants up-to-date on what had transpired including problems encountered and solutions found.

There were two plenary sessions entitled "Leadership and You" and "Challenges to Humanity in the 21st Century". Many outstanding speakers included Dr. Art Ong Jumsai, who distilled major EHV principles to 3HV: Heart, Head and Hand. Many delegates particularly appreciated the question and answer period. Among other speakers were Sri V. Srinivasan and Sri J. Jagadeeshan, who motivated youth to rise to the challenge of leading lives dedicated to love and service.

At the end of the conference, the youth zonal coordinators put together the recommendations for individual, family and society service. In this latter category, stress was placed on teaching EHV in the community and choosing a national service project for each country, with special focus on service by youth for youth. It was also recommended that long-term sustainable projects based on community needs be established. Most importantly, the great challenge ahead for all the delegates was to maintain the enthusiasm experienced here, when back home.

Valedictory Function

The Valedictory Function of the Youth Conference was held in the afternoon of 21st November 1999 in Sai Kulwant Hall. This also included the celebration of World EHV Day. The programme commenced in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Baba at 2.45 p.m. with Veda chanting by the students.

The first speaker Sri Indulal Shah, Chairman, Sri Sathya Sai World Council, exhorted the importance of Human Values for the transformation of mankind. Bhagavan, he said, had fixed our goal of life, i.e., to see Divinity in all. Sri Shah then requested Sri J. Jagadeeshan to present the recommendations of the overseas delegates. Sri Jagadeeshan placed the recommendations of the conference before Bhagavan, which included following the nine-point code of conduct for individual transformation and adopting one village/ urban slum for the benefit of rural and urban poor.

Thereafter, Sri V. Srinivasan placed the recommendations of Indian delegates before Bhagavan. These recommendations included self-transformation of youth by taking part in spiritual activities like Bhajans, service activities under the Sai Samiti of the area, and by taking up one community development project.

After this, Dr. Art Ong Jumsai presented a report on the working of EHV and establishment of Sathya Sai Schools all over the world. Bhagavan graciously acceded to his request by giving diplomas to the EHV teachers who successfully completed the training courses in the Sathya Sai School in Thailand.

The last speaker of the session was Sri S. V. Giri, Vice Chancellor, Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning. Sri Giri observed that the objective of education was not to get a degree or acquire a skill, but to develop the spirit of sacrifice. Referring to Bhagavan's teaching, "bend the body, mend the senses, and end the mind" Sri Giri emphasised that we should follow the prescription of Bhagavan to realise the goal of our life.

Bhagavan then gave His Valedictory Message in which He exhorted the youth to get prepared for taking over the work of transformation of the society by practising the human values themselves first.

Exhibition and Cultural Programme

The magnificent "Global Youth Exhibition" put up on this occasion displayed the service activities undertaken by Sai Youth in various parts of the world. The most memorable was the inspiring evidence of Grama Seva in the villages of India. These efforts were replicated by countries such as Argentina, Singapore and South Africa. From the USA, free computer—EHV classes are being given for disadvantaged as well as immigrant New York City teens. This points the way to replication elsewhere, for it involves tutoring, mentoring, and doing community service with Sai youths. Many visitors who came learnt a great deal and their comments in the guest book touch the heart. It is a visual recording of what the Sai Mission is all about.

On 20th evening, a varied and enjoyable cultural programme "The Millennium Challenge" was presented by the overseas delegates in Poornachandra Auditorium in which 221 youth from 63 countries took part. Each zone gave a ten-minute values presentation that was tied together by a delightful and inspiring dialogue between a roaring lion and its cub. Inspired by the teachings of Bhagavan Baba, the cub (representing the youth) overcomes its initial inhibitions in the end and accepts the millennium challenge to become an instrument of Sai Mission for the transformation of mankind. Swami showered His love on the cast following the performance.

—Hal Honig

Experiencing Divinity

The Lord incarnates as man to help him comprehend that which apparently cannot be understood and to enable him to attain that which is seemingly unattainable. By this, however, the Lord who is Infinite, Immutable and Immanent, does not suffer any diminution. Neither is He, though embodied in human frame, influenced by the taints and blemishes that normally affect a human being. To grasp the significance of the Divine Incarnation it is imperative that man should rise above the Rajasic and Tamasic Gunas. Satwa Guna alone can lead him through the path of true devotion to the Lotus Feet of the Divine. For this, a favourable environment and Satsang (company of good people) are essential.

—Baba

Complete Surrender Confers Bliss

Embodiments of Love!

The Vedas, the very source of all spiritual principles, have been enlightening the whole world from ancient days from this holy land of Bharat. They are the very forms of God. Divinity pervades everything, living and non-living. *Anoraneeyan Mahatomaheeyan*—from the microcosm to the macrocosm, the entire universe is pervaded by Divinity. This Vishwa (cosmos) is the form of Divinity. From dawn to dusk, you experience this form of the Divine, and yet fail to realise this fact.

Divinity Pervades the Entire Universe

All that your eyes see are forms of the Divine. All the sounds you hear are similarly pervaded by Divinity. Even the thoughts in your mind are the forms of the Divine. The bliss that emanates from the heart is also Divine. When everything that is seen, heard, experienced and enjoyed is Divine, how foolish it is to search for God elsewhere! You are seeing God in the form of the world every moment. Since you lack divine feelings, you see God as the world instead of seeing the world as God. Once you understand that *Vishwam Vishnu Swarupam* (the universe is the form of Vishnu), you will certainly be able to see the world as God. *Yad Bhavam Tad Bhavathi* (as are the feelings, so is the result).

Divinity pervades the entire cosmos. Do not have the feeling that God is present at one place and not at another. He is everywhere. Wherever you search for Him, you will find Him there. But you should give up worldly feelings and fill your vision with divine feelings. Only then can you understand and experience the Vedic dictum, *Sarvam Vishnumayam Jagat* (the whole world is pervaded by God). Do not limit God to a particular name and form. He exists in all beings and in all forms as Atmic Principle. In fact, it is the power of the Divine that makes you see, hear, talk, experience and enjoy. In that case you may ask whether difficulties, worries and misfortunes are also divine? Yes indeed! They too are forms of the Divine. Here is a small example.

Lord Narayana protected Prahlada, who constantly chanted His name and contemplated on Him. But he became the Lord of Death for Hiranyakasipu who had no God consciousness and led a worldly life. So, both God and Yama (Lord of Death) are one and the same. He acts according to the feelings of the individual. Even the most evil of men have some good in them. This goodness is the aspect of Divinity in them. The Upanishads say, *Easwara Sarva Bhuthanam* (God is the indweller of all beings), *Isavasyam Idam Jagat* (God pervades the whole world). Do not be misled by the various terms like Atma, Brahman, Easwara, Vishnu, etc. These are all different names of one and the same Divinity.

The term 'Bhagavan' stands for Divinity. What is the inner meaning of this word? The syllable 'Bha' stands for effulgence, 'ga' for one who gives and 'van' means one who is capable. So, 'Bhagavan' means the one who is capable of spreading light and effulgence to the world. This Divinity is latent in you. The principle of Atma is one and the same in all, be it a Yogi (renunciant), a Bhogi (pleasure seeker), a Jogi (itinerant renunciant) or a Vairagi (dispassionate one). It is present in theists and also in atheists. Forgetting this all-pervasive Divinity, you

undertake various spiritual practices, limiting Divinity to a particular name of your individual preference. Spiritual practices should confer the awareness that Divinity is all-pervasive. Just as fire is needed till the rice is cooked, so also the spiritual practices are needed till you realise the innate Divinity.

Contemplate always on Divine Name

Even if you sow seeds, you cannot expect the crop if there is no rain? Even when there is rain, you cannot expect the crop if you do not sow seeds. Likewise, both human effort and Divine grace are needed to achieve success in any endeavour. Though butter is present in the milk, one cannot see it, unless one makes it into curd and churns it. Likewise, though Divinity is all-pervasive, one cannot experience it unless one makes appropriate efforts. Human effort can be compared to the process of churning. Once the butter is separated from the curd by churning, it will not get mixed with it again. If you partake of the churned butter, your entire being experiences it. Likewise, you will become one with Divinity once you experience it.

Before partaking of food, you offer it to God by chanting the following Sloka from the Bhagavad Gita:

*Brahmarpanam Brahma Havir
Brahmagnou Brahmana Hutham
Brahmaiva Thena Ganthavyam
Brahmakarma Samadhina.*

Where is Brahman? He is very much present in you. That is why you get the reply immediately from within:

*Aham Vaishvanaro Bhuthva
Praninam Dehamasritha
Pranapana Samayukta
Pachamyannam Chathurvidham.*

God is present in you in the form of Vaishwanara. He digests the food that you partake of and distributes the essence to all parts of the body. God, who is present within, is called Vaishwanara and the all-pervasive Divinity is known as Vishnu.

Devotees attribute different names and forms to God on the basis of their feelings. But God is one. Worship Him with the feeling that He is not separate from you. He is in you. He is the embodiment of love. He will manifest from within only when you develop pure and selfless love. Spiritual practices done without the principle of love are useless. Some people sit for hours together in meditation, but are unable to experience Divinity because their mind is unsteady. Instead of wasting time in this manner, better do some useful work. God is the embodiment of time. So, do not waste time. "*Sarvada Sarvakaleshu Sarvathra Harichinthanam,*" think of God at all places, at all times, under all circumstances. Pure and selfless love is the only way to attain Divinity. Fulfillment of worldly desires will confer only temporary happiness. So, put a check on your desires. Your goal is permanent and eternal bliss. It is within you and can be attained only through love.

Every cell in your body contains the details of your whole being. In fact, every cell in your body holds your whole form. There are billions of cells in your body. While your form is immanent in each cell and in each limb in the microcosm, your body is your own macrocosmic form. In the same manner, each one of you is the cosmic divine form (*Vishwa Viraat Swaroopa*). You must make efforts to fully appreciate this reality.

You go to a village to see your friend, but you do not know his address. How can you expect to meet him unless you know his correct address? Here is another example: Many people have gathered here now. You want to meet a particular boy. You say that he is wearing a bush coat, a pant and has got a good hairstyle. But this information is not sufficient to trace the boy, because there may be many boys in this crowd who fit this description. Instead if you announce his name, say Ramakrishna, from the stage, immediately he will get up from the crowd. It is the name that leads you to the form. That is why the ancient sages and seers started *Namachintana* (continuous contemplation on the Divine Name) to have the vision of God. They undertook various spiritual practices with total devotion and earnestness. Do not dismiss this effort as meaningless.

God is Indweller of Your Heart

The other day, I spoke about Bhavani-Shankara. Bhavani symbolises Shraddha (steadfast devotion) and Shankara stands for Vishvas (faith). You can achieve anything in life if you have steadfast devotion and faith. As this world is the very form of Bhavani-Shankara, it is called Ardhanareeswara Swaroopa (androgynous). It is on this basis that we use 'Srimati' to address women and 'Sri' to address men. The ancient sages and seers said, "*Sraddhavan Labhate Jnanam*" only the devout can attain wisdom. You should consider Vishvas (faith) as your Swasa (life breath).

God has many names and forms. Sambhartha and Bhartha are two of these names of God. Sambhartha is one who creates everything taking nature (Prakriti) as the means and Bhartha is one who sustains and protects the creation. Telugu speaking people use this word Bhartha for husband, but actually Bhartha means master, sustainer and protector.

People waste their time and do not make any effort to know Divinity. Out of 24 hours in a day, you should allot six hours for personal work, six hours for social service, six hours for sleeping and the remaining six hours for spiritual practices like Japa, Dhyana and Yoga. Some people say they do not have time to think of God, but they waste hours together in mundane matters. Life becomes meaningless if you do not think of God. Body is gifted to make proper use of time. Body will be sanctified only when it is used for sacred activities.

You should understand the relationship between Kaya (body), Kala (time) and Kartavya (responsibility). Do not waste even a single moment. Ramakrishna Paramahansa used to contemplate on the Divine Mother day in and day out. Before going to bed, he would feel sad thinking that another day had passed without the vision of the Divine Mother. He used to think, "Perhaps my heart has not become ripe to deserve the Divine grace. What is the use of eating an unripe fruit? So, I shall ripen my heart and offer it to the Mother." That is the true spiritual practice in its subtle essence.

Make use of the Body to Attain Divinity

There is no constraint of time, place, distance or complexity to the actions of God. There is no creature that can impose limitations or constraints on God. God is utterly selfless. All His actions are sacred whether they seem pleasant or unpleasant to you. Students are sometimes confused. They feel, if Swami is God, will He do this or that? How can you decide what God should do? No one has the authority to question the powers of God. He alone decides whether to reward, punish, protect or destroy anything.

*"Yada Yada Hi Dharmasya Glanir Bhavati Bharata,
Abhyutthanamadharma-sya Tadatmanam Srujamyaham."*

God incarnates from age to age, whenever righteousness is on the decline. Sathya (truth) has to be upheld and Asathya (untruth) is to be destroyed. Dharma is to be protected, Adharma is to be destroyed.

How do we expound the unity principle (Advaita)? There are three forms of this principle of oneness: unity of substance, unity of matter and unity of action. This piece of cloth is a single entity. There is yarn in it. The yarn is made of cotton. When the yarn is woven, you get a piece of cloth. If you shred the cloth, the yarn and cotton fall apart. When such a combination of matter in different forms is made, a simple object is produced. This is one kind of unity—material unity.

While the names and forms are different, the elements (Pancha Bhutas) of all bodies are the same. All are suffused with the same five sensory perceptions (Sabda, Sparsha, Rupa, Rasa and Gandha) and the same five life principles (Prana, Apana, Vyana, Udana and Samana). No matter where you are, your body is composed of the five elements only. There is no sixth element anywhere. *"This body is a heap of filth, full of diseases, continually changing, how can it cross the ocean of Samsara? Oh mind! for certain, this body is transient. Keep your mind firmly on the Feet of the Lord and surrender to Him."* (Poem in Telugu) When the five elements disintegrate, the body loses its identity. Once the life goes out, the body is fit only for burial or cremation as the elements fall apart into their original form. Therefore, before the body perishes, make all effort to experience the Divinity within. It is only through body that one can experience Divinity. So, body has to be properly taken care of.

The body is Karmakshetra (field of all activities) and the heart is Dharmakshetra (field of righteousness). When Divinity is enshrined in the heart, it forms Brahmakshetra (field of Brahman). So, to understand the pure Brahmakshetra, it is necessary for you to purify your Dharmakshetra, that is, your heart. Karmakshetra and Dharmakshetra are in the same body. That is why the Bhagavad Gita begins, *"Dharmakshetre Kurukshetre ..."*. All thoughts arising in the mind also pertain to Karmakshetra (Kurukshetra). Thus, Karma and Dharma are performed in the same field of the body, which comprises Dharmakshetra and Karmakshetra. Divinity intervenes and separates Dharmakshetra from Karmakshetra (Kurukshetra). A man of discernment is able to make this discrimination between Dharma and Karma.

In this world, there is nothing easier than attaining God. You face hardships and feel dejected because you do not understand this truth. Last night, you would have seen the drama staged by the students, wherein a businessman weeps for not being able to get a business license from the

government authority. Instead of shedding tears for such mundane things, why don't you pine for the vision of God?

Once Vivekananda asked Ramakrishna Paramahansa whether he had seen God. Ramakrishna Paramahansa emphatically replied, "Yes, I have seen God. I have seen Him just as I am seeing you and you are seeing me." "Then how is it that I don't see Him?" asked Narendra (Vivekananda). Ramakrishna gave an appropriate answer, "You weep for your family, you suffer for your business and wealth, but do you ever weep or yearn for a vision of God? Do that and you will certainly see God! All the time I am pining only for the vision of God. Therefore, God is visible to me at all times in every human being" The purpose of our birth should be achieved by the sacrifice of everything. Therefore, the Vedas say: *Na Karmana, Na Prajaya, Dhanena Thyagenaikena Amrutatwamanu* (sacrifice alone ensures immortality).

Sacrifice Leads to Ananda

In the process of breathing, we inhale and exhale. If we do not exhale, the lungs will not be able to function properly. We eat food. If we do not excrete, our stomach becomes upset. Similarly, in our circulatory system, blood is traversing an enormous distance each day. If it is blocked a little at any location in this journey, a clot develops. The flow of blood works for the removal of all kinds of toxic wastes produced in the body and helps in the ejection of the same. Without the evacuation of unhealthy substances from the body, good health is not possible. Thus, in sacrifice also there is satisfaction. In fact, there is Ananda (bliss) in sacrifice. The practical man of today questions the usefulness of sacrifice. Man is so selfish that he refuses to give even a handful of food to a starving beggar. How much joy is experienced when one is able to satisfy the hunger of a hungry person! Would you not feel joy when some starving people are fed? In human society, narrow-minded selfishness is rampant.

Once in Mumbai, Indulal Shah, Dr. Keki and Swami were going from Dharmakshetra to the city. As a beggar approached, Indulal Shah gave him a two rupee note. The beggar threw back the note, saying that it would not fetch even a loaf of bread. This is the state of our society today. Money has lost its value. Why money alone, even human life has very little value in today's society. People struggle hard to amass wealth, comfort and happiness, even risking their own life. When somebody dies in an accident or calamity, the government gives a few thousand rupees as compensation for the life lost. Is human life worth a few rupees only? Has it become that cheap? No, human life is worth a lot more. When the body is dead, the life principle is not altogether lost.

Offer Unconditional Love to God

People look for short cuts in everything, even in spirituality. But, surprisingly, spirituality does have a short cut. There is no need to wander here and there. God is residing in your heart. Turn your vision inward. You can see God instantly. This is the easiest path. Have full faith that Divinity resides in you. If you keep reminding yourself constantly that you are a part of Divinity, you are bound to become Divine yourself. On the other hand, if you harbour the feeling that you are something apart from the Divine, you shall remain far from Divinity always. There is no need for you to give up your vocation, keep doing your function in the society, but always remember that you are essentially Divine. God Himself intervenes when His devotees are in distress in the performance of their functions in society. You all know the story of Gora Kumbhar and Kabir.

When they were confronted with impossible tasks, they were helped by God in person, who completed their task of making pots or weaving cloth. God is capable of taking any form that He Wills. Hence, He is known as the Viraat Swaroopa. The Purusha Sukta (in the Rig Veda) says, *Sahasra Seerasha Purusha, Sahasraksha Sahasra Pad ...* while describing the Viraat Swaroopa. The Viraat Purusha has innumerable limbs.

Become worthy of His love. You can achieve everything. This is possible only through Nishkama Prema (selfless love). By cultivating such selfless love, you become Divine yourself. And this Divinity is non-dual. Hence, it is said, "*Advaita Darshanam Jnanam*" (perception of non-dual Divinity is true wisdom). Cultivate your faith and make it firm. There should be no ups and downs in this faith. If you allow such vacillations, you are likely to lose whatever faith you have. A firm faith results in your attaining Brahmananda (divine bliss). The happiness experienced with the body is human (Dehananda). The joy felt in the mind is Chidananda (mental pleasure). Chidananda is much greater than the bodily happiness (Dehananda). When the mind is transcended, the joy experienced is Chidananda, which is immeasurably greater than the joy of the mind. You are needlessly losing your opportunity of attaining this level of bliss. Step by step you have to rise through these levels of happiness until you attain Brahmananda. In this way, you merge your personal bliss into the universal bliss of Brahmananda, which is eternal.

One has to experience this bliss, which is none other than Satchidananda. Sath is being, which is eternal. Chit is total knowledge i.e., omniscience. When these two are united, total joy i.e., Satchidananda is realised. As Sat, Chit and Ananda are present in each individual, it is said that God is present in everyone in the form of Satchidananda. Therefore, you need not perform any Sadhana, and if you are following some such practice, there is no need for you to abandon it. But in any event, surrender your heart to God. This is called Sharanagati (surrender).

Once Lakshmana told Rama that all his wealth, family, possessions and his very body was for the service of Rama. Rama said, "I do not need all this. What use have I for all these? Just purify your thoughts, words and deeds and your heart. With that you will experience heaven itself." Happiness is heaven itself. Happiness is obtained by the control of the senses. So, you can attain heaven by controlling your senses. Many people say that they experience the very heaven in Prasanthi Nilayam. How long will this happiness last? This will vanish the moment you leave this place. True heaven is inside you. This again is described as immortality.

What is meant by immortality? The body is mortal, but the life principle is imperishable. If you have to attain this level of immortality, extend total love to God. This should be unconditional love. There should be no conditions to love. It is like going to a goldsmith with a piece of gold and asking him to make some jewellery of the design of your liking. Your business is only to leave the gold with him with the condition that the weight and design should be to your specification. You have no business to interfere in the manner in which he converts your lump of gold into the piece of jewel you want. If you start stipulating that he should not burn it in fire, or beat it with a hammer, how can you get the ornament that you ordered? In the same way, if you surrender your heart to God with conditions and reservations, how can you attain the bliss that you seek? Once complete surrender is effected, God will grant you the bliss you deserve. What He does with it in the meanwhile is His business. Love full of conditions will only result in very sad state of your body and mind. Therefore, pray to God with unconditional surrender. When all

that you possess, your body, your mind, your intellect are His gifts, where is the need for your laying conditions?

Divinity is within Your Reach

Be fearless. Lead your life without fear disturbing it. Do not be guided by the opinions and advice of others around you into actions not in line with your conscience. There are a few who piously place the mark of Vibhuti on their forehead while at home, but wipe it off the moment they step out. There are some that are even ashamed to say that they are coming to Prasanthi Nilayam and tell their friends that they are going to Anantapur. Why should you worry about their opinion? Is it something wrong to come here? There are so many wrong things that people do without any fear, then why are you afraid of saying that you are going to see God? One should never be afraid of expressing one's faith in God. Be courageous and bold. These days people are afraid of performing their cultural and spiritual practices as also good deeds. (Swami sang a song in Telugu describing the plight of those who are constantly fear-stricken).

Give up fear and live in bliss. Involvement in worldly life engenders a sense of fear in you and you forget your spiritual way of living. The bliss that is experienced when you are with God is beyond words; it is unimaginable. Words and thoughts return in utter futility, unable to describe this experience. It is this type of divinely bliss in which you should lead your life. That is how a human being should live. Having been born as a human being, you should not waste your life living like an animal. Eating, drinking, procreation, sleep, etc. are common to men and animals. What distinguishes man from other living beings? Man is the only living being endowed with wisdom. A man without wisdom is no better than an animal. From living at a human level, one should aspire to reach the divine level. Of the several levels of living, the lowest level is the demonic, then the animal, higher than this is human and ultimately the divine. When such a divine life is within your reach and sight, why should you fear? Be fearless and seek the company of good people; bad company can lead you astray.

Do not wander in Search of God

Three main principles are expounded in spirituality. These are:

- don't put all your faith in your body for you do not know what will happen at any moment of time.
- don't put your faith in the world.
- never abandon your faith in God.

Once you are fully aware of these three principles, you can achieve anything.

Swami's message for you today is that Swami is you and you are Swami. In fact, Swami is not separate from you.

Who invited you here? You have all come here out of love for Swami. Out of this love alone, so many thousands have assembled here. Here is Bhagavan ready to be taken away by you. Carry Him away with you as you like. Those who love Bhagavan wholeheartedly, to them He belongs wholly. All that Bhagavan asks of you is your wholehearted unconditional love. Recognise this truth and lead your life filled with love. Take this as Swami's gift to you. Do not hate anybody.

Hating anybody is no different from hating God Himself. Surrender your whole being to God. Experience unalloyed divine bliss.

Students!

Pursue your study diligently. Obtain good position in your examination. Get good jobs in your appropriate chosen fields and serve your motherland. Swami has no desire to stop anybody from working in any profession or getting married or going abroad for study or work. Go wherever you please. Do whatever job that is your lot, but never forget God. Anything you do with God in your heart is pleasing to Me. Forgetting God is no different from forgetting yourself.

One who is wandering in search of God is a fool. Is there anyone in the world who will go about searching for himself? If you go to somebody and ask, where am I, you will be promptly put in a mental asylum. As you are Divinity itself and Divinity is your own self, where is the need for any search? Search for God is an expression invented by fake scholars. There is no need for such an expression. You can search for the things of the world, but do not go in search of God, for He is everywhere. If you have this faith, you cannot help seeing Him and for certain you will enjoy bliss. Strengthen your faith.

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajan, "*Hari Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahi*"

—From Bhagavan's Birthday Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall on 23rd November 1999

XVIII CONVOCATION OF SSSIHL

Education for the Transformation of the Society

"Education should help one to blossom into a total person. What is the use of education when it cannot make one a compassionate person? Modern education is making man hard-hearted. The heart should melt at the sufferings of others. If one has no such heart, of what use is the intellectual faculty?" said Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Chancellor, Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning while delivering His Divine Discourse on the auspicious occasion of 18th Convocation of the Institute held in Sai Kulwant Hall on 22nd November 1999.

As the Academic Procession preceded by the Institute band came to the Sai Kulwant Hall a few minutes before 3.00 p.m., it was accorded a tumultuous welcome by a thunderous applause of the devotees, guests and students. The Chancellor, Bhagavan Baba, Chief Guest, Dr. Michael G. Goldstein, Vice Chancellor, Sri S. V. Giri, Members of the Governing Body and Academic Council of the Institute, Deans of Faculties and other dignitaries formed part of the procession. The function started at 3.00 p.m. with Veda chanting by the students. Thereafter the Chancellor, Bhagavan Baba, declared the Convocation open as requested by the Vice Chancellor.

Vice Chancellor's Address

Welcoming all the dignitaries, devotees and students to the 1811 Convocation of the Institute, Sri Giri in his Introductory Address informed about the academic excellence achieved by the

students during the last year and gave details of the courses of study in the Institute. He had a special word of welcome for the Chief Guest Dr. Goldstein, an ardent devotee of Bhagavan for over 20 years and at present Central Coordinator of USA and Deputy Chairman of World Council of Sai Organisation. Explaining the unique features of the Institute, Sri Giri observed, "It is perhaps one of the few institutions in the country in the sphere of higher education, which lays emphasis on character building as much, if not more than, mere academic excellence. It is based on Bhagavan Baba's outstanding contribution to the world of learning in the form of Education in Human Values extended to university level education. The twin pillars of the system of education here are Thyaga and Yoga. As its Revered Chancellor, Bhagavan has provided constant guidance at every stage in evolving the programme, at the Institute and seen to its meticulous implementation. The single golden thread that runs through the gamut of all the activities of the Institute, be it curricular, co-curricular or extracurricular, is that education is for life and not merely for a living."

Sri Giri also expressed the gratitude of the students and staff of the Institute for Bhagavan's constant personal guidance and inspiration which made the Institute shine as a model in academic brilliance and Human Values.

Graduates Presented to the Chancellor

After Sri Giri's Introductory Address, the candidates for the various degrees were presented to the Revered Chancellor, and the pledge was administered to them to uphold the lofty principles of the Institute. The students who secured top ranks in various subjects were then introduced to the Chancellor, Bhagavan Baba, who felicitated them with gold medals instituted by several eminent personalities.

Dr. Goldstein's Convocation Address

Delivering his Convocation Address, the Chief Guest, Dr. Michael G. Goldstein, congratulated the students for their rare good fortune of receiving education under the omniscient Lord of the universe. He observed, "Never in the course of human civilisation has the Lord of time and creation and of that which is beyond time and creation directly and tangibly participated in the function of any human institution. Here, at Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, you have studied at the feet of the Lord, in His full glory as the Poornavata of Kali Yuga, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba." Admiring the faculty of the Institute, Dr. Goldstein observed that in this particular Institute the teaching faculty was suffused with human goodness and was inspired by the spiritual teachings of Bhagavan Baba. It was therefore a great blessing to be a student here, he said.

Dr. Goldstein had a special word of advice for the graduates, who were awarded their degrees on this auspicious day. They should all get the benefit of Bhagavan Baba's spiritual teachings in their lives and should participate in the Divine Mission of Bhagavan. He said, "Working in Sri Sathya Sai Organisation is an application of the lessons learned at the Divine Lotus Feet of Bhagavan Baba. It is a good way to follow the Divine decree and accelerate your spiritual progress."

After the Chief Guest's Convocation Address, Bhagavan gave His Divine Discourse emphasising the significance of education for the transformation of the society. He advised the

students thus, "You can call yourself a student only when you know the significance of education. Education does not mean mere acquisition of bookish knowledge. There are many who are experts in bookish knowledge. Many have become educational wizards and scholars. What is the service these intellectuals are doing to the world? Having been born and brought up in the society, having acquired their knowledge from the society, what is it they have done for the society? What is the use of their scholarship and education, if they do not show their gratitude to the society?" (The full text of Bhagavan's Divine Discourse will be published in the next issue of "Sanathana Sarathi".)

Drama by Institute Students

One of the greatest attractions of Bhagavan's Birthday celebrations is the annual convocation drama by the Institute students on 22nd evening. This is a unique event, in the preparation of which Bhagavan Himself takes great interest and also supervises the minutest details of the drama before it is presented. This year's drama "*Dharmo Rakshati Rakshita*" (Dharma will always protect those who protect Dharma) was staged in the Poornachandra Auditorium on the evening of 22nd November 1999.

The story opens with five young entrepreneurs preparing to launch their new product 'Kiran Lamps' on the auspicious occasion of Deepavali. But all their plans and hopes are shattered when the Secretary of the Licensing Board finds fault with their application for license and refuses to grant them the license to launch their product. At this crucial moment, one of their uncles takes them through the stories from the Mahabharata, teaching them the lessons which Krishna taught to the Pandavas. The two scenes from the Mahabharata and a 'Burra Katha' (folk story with a moral enacted with song and dance) teach them the lessons of humility, purity, patience, perseverance and Dharma. The young boys follow these teachings and the teachings of Bhagavan Baba and engage themselves in the service of the society in their town to spread the light of love instead of selling ornamental lights. This not only builds up their moral strength, but their reputation in the town also. In the end, the Secretary of the Licensing Board is himself drawn to them and through them to Bhagavan Baba and His teachings. They not only get their license, but a new insight into life also. In their journey to light, they are protected by Dharma.

The audience were impressed by the entire presentation and responded with applause several times as a token of their appreciation. Bhagavan Baba, obviously pleased with the performance, came on the stage and distributed gifts to the cast of the drama. The programme came to a close with Mangalarati to Bhagavan.

AVATAR VANI:

LADIES DAY SANDESH:

Importance of Mother's Grace

More fragrant than the sweet-smelling flowers like the Jasmine and the Champak, softer than the cheese and the butter, more beautiful than the eye of the peacock, more pleasant than the moonlight, is the love of the mother.

(Poem in Telugu)

Embodiments of Love!

This world, with its movable and immovable objects, is nothing but the Cosmic Dance of Siva (Siva Tandava). This blissful Siva Tandava is full of awe and wonder and is beyond human comprehension. The dualities of night and day, pleasure and pain, birth and death are endless. Just as birth and death are natural, so also is the existence of Dharma and Adharma (righteousness and unrighteousness). When Dharma is on the rise, Adharma is on the decline and vice versa. Men and women are responsible for the rise or decline of Dharma and Adharma. Man, unable to realise the divinity within, is under the delusion that divinity is different from him.

Principle of Siva Shakti

Sumathi could even stop the sun from rising to save the life of her husband. Savitri could bring her dead husband back to life. Wherefrom did they derive their strength? It was the power of their devotion and chastity. When man worships the Divinity with devotion and earnestness, the divine qualities—Sathyam, Sivam, Sundaram (truth, goodness and beauty) manifest in him. This resplendently shining divine power is latent in man. When Kamsa tried to kill his own sister Devaki, her husband Vasudeva came to her rescue. It was possible because of his innate divine powers. You need not make any special efforts to acquire the divine powers. They are immanent in you. They will manifest only when you contemplate on God, forgetting yourself.

Man, forgetting his own divine nature, thinks that God is separate from him and undertakes various spiritual practices to attain Him. People adore Him by different names such as Rama, Krishna, Jesus and Allah. But there is only one fundamental power, which is the very form of Siva-Shakti. This principle of Siva-Shakti is all-pervasive. This world has a very significant name, Bhavani-Shankara. Bhavani means Shraddha (steadfast devotion) and Shankara means Vishvas (faith). It is to say that the world is based on the twin principles of Shraddha and Vishvas. Bhavani and Shankara are inseparable, interdependent and all-pervasive. So, the whole world is the form of Ardhanareeswara (androgynous). It is on this basis that the terms 'Srimati' and 'Sri' are used to address women and men respectively. 'Srimati' denotes Bhavani and 'Sri' symbolises Shankara. Whatever may be the name and form you worship, you need to have steadfast devotion and faith. Without these two, you cannot achieve anything in life. *Shraddhavan Labhate Jnanam* (only the one with steadfast devotion attains wisdom). It is only through faith that one can realise the divinity within. The divinity in man is the combination of Bhavani and Shankara.

The whole world is a combination of *Ichha Shakti* (will power), *Kriya Shakti* (power of action) and *Jnana Shakti* (power of wisdom). *Ichha Shakti* is related to the mind, *Kriya Shakti* to the body and *Jnana Shakti* to the Atma. That is why it is said, you are not one person, but three -the one you think you are (physical body), the one others think you are (mental body) and the one you really are (principle of the Atma). You are essentially divine, but you are unable to understand this. The Vedas declare: *Sarvatha Pani Padam Tat Sarvathokshi Siromukham, Sarvatha Srutimalloke Sarvamavritya Thisthathi* (with His hands, feet, eyes, head, mouth and ears pervading everything, God permeates the entire universe). God is the witness to all that you do. You may hoodwink anybody, but not God because He is always in you and with you.

Without the grace of Bhavani-Shankara, all your efforts will be futile. Names and forms are not important as they are subject to change. Body is like a water bubble, mind is like a mad monkey. You cannot rely on them. But there is something within, which is true and eternal. That is divinity. In order to manifest this latent divinity, you need to develop devotion, which in turn strengthens your faith. Tree becomes bigger and stronger as the roots go deeper. Likewise, faith becomes stronger as the devotion increases. No name and no form can ever help you if Vishvas and Shraddha are lacking in you.

There is infinite divine power latent in everybody. If you can manifest it, you can even stop the sun from rising like Sumati did and you can even bring the dead back to life as Savitri could do. When you manifest the divine power, you become God.

Experience the Bliss of the Atma

The Atma is all-pervasive. In order to experience the Atma, you need to have steadfast devotion and faith. Today people pray, *Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavantu* (May all the people of the world be happy!) It is possible only when Shraddha and Vishvas are fostered. Joys and sorrows are like passing clouds. They come and go. It is only the morality that comes and grows. So, develop morality. Do not aspire for wealth, position and power. God will give you whatever you deserve. Develop love for God. That is the highest Sadhana.

Today people undertake various spiritual practices to attain God. But all these confer only mental satisfaction. Sage Narada propagated the nine paths of devotion—Shravanam (listening), Kirtanam (singing), Vishnusmaranam (contemplating on God), Padasevanam (serving His Lotus Feet), Vandanam (salutation), Archanam (worship), Dasyam (servitude), Sneham (friendship) and Atmanivedanam (self-surrender). These practices cannot confer everlasting joy. Have unflinching faith that the universe is the very form of God (*Viswam Vishnuswarupam*). Vishnu is the cause and the Vishwam is the effect. These two are inseparable.

The Vedas declare: *Acharam Chamevacha* (though immobile He is apparently mobile). Here is an illustration: In dream state, you may visit various places and experience happiness or sorrow, but in reality your body remains steady on the bed—immobile. So, all that you see and experience in this world is but a dream. Only the Atma is true and eternal. The Atma is Sthiram (permanent) and the world is Charam (changing). Human life is the union of Sthiram and Charam.

Janthunam Narajanma Durlabham (human birth is the rarest among all beings). All beings are not fortunate to get human birth. All human beings do not experience Divinity. Some people undertake spiritual practices like idol worship to attain Divinity. Gradually one should turn one's vision inward and experience the oneness of the Atma.

It is not all that important how much you love God; what is more important is how much God loves you. God is the embodiment of Sat Chit Ananda. Sat means that which is eternal. Chit is total awareness. When water and sugar are mixed with each other, you get syrup. Likewise, the combination of Sat and Chit results in Ananda. The Ananda that you experience out of worldly pleasures is momentary. You will attain true and everlasting bliss, only when you turn your vision inward and experience the Atma. It has no form, but is full of bliss.

Embodiments of Love!

You should experience the endless bliss of the Atma. *"At the time of birth, man does not have any garland of precious jewels around his neck, but definitely he has a heavy garland—a garland made up of the consequences of past deeds, be they good or bad."* (Poem in Telugu)

Adore the Mother as God

The Vedas declare: *Matru Devo Bhava, Pitru Devo Bhava* (revere the mother and father as God). Once Ashok Singhal, General Secretary of Vishwa Hindu Parishad, came to Me with the plea: "Kindly let us know the birthplace of Rama so that we can construct a temple there." I replied, "The true birthplace of Rama is the womb of Kaushalya." (*Cheers*) Mother's womb is the birthplace of one and all, be it a commoner or the Avatar Himself. Therefore, adore the mother as God. Uphold her name and respect her.

Today is 19th November. It is celebrated as Ladies Day to remind you of the importance of the mother. You should conduct yourself according to the wishes of your mother. Do not disobey her. Chaitanya, the great devotee of Lord Krishna, married Lakshmi on the insistence of his mother, though he was not in favour of marriage. But as fate would have it, Lakshmi passed away soon after the marriage. His mother Sachidevi felt very sad for having got him married against his wishes. Chaitanya told her, "This is what happens when one goes against the dictates of one's conscience." So, if you feel what you are doing is correct, then try to convince your mother, but never hurt her feelings.

You may be under the mistaken notion that women are weak in body and mind. But, in fact, they are stronger than men. In the epic Mahabharata, there is a story of a queen, Pramila, who wanted to marry Arjuna. But Arjuna was reluctant to marry her. Pramila sent her commander-in-chief Malayavati to capture Arjuna. Malayavati waged a fierce battle against Arjuna, ultimately captured him and brought him to the presence of Pramila. She requested him to marry her, but Arjuna refused to marry even if it were to cost his life. Pramila was a great devotee of Lord Krishna, so too was Arjuna. Both of them prayed fervently. Krishna, being the director of the cosmic drama, had his own master plan. He appeared there, called Pramila and Arjuna to his side, brought their hands together, chanted the Mantras and solemnised their marriage.

God can do anything and everything. He can transform earth into sky and sky into earth. But, man lacks devotion and faith in God. He has faith in worldly matters, not in spirituality. There is nothing superior to Bhakti (devotion). In the word 'Bhakti,' the letter 'Bha' stands for lustre and luminosity and 'kti' denotes that which attracts. From Bhakti, you get Shakti (power) for the body, mind and spirit. Through this Bhakti and Shakti, you get immersed in Rakti (attachment) towards God and develop Virakti (detachment) from the world. Then God confers on you Bhukti (food) and also Mukti (liberation). Thus, man has to travel from Bhakti to Mukti. As I told you yesterday, human life is a journey from 'I' to 'We'. In order to go to Tirupati, Varanasi, Gaya and Prayag, you may have to take great pains and travel long distances. But the journey from 'I' to 'We' is very short in the sense that you have to detach yourself from the body and develop attachment towards the Self. For this, mother's grace is very essential.

When Abhimanyu was in the womb of his mother Subhadra, Arjuna used to tell her many stories. One day Arjuna was explaining to her the intricacies and nuances involved in entering *Padmavyuha* (a military formation in the shape of a lotus). Before he could explain to her how to come out of the *Padmavyuha*, Lord Krishna, the supreme director of the cosmic drama, entered the scene. God comes whenever the need arises and plays His role appropriately. Krishna asked Arjuna, "What a mistake are you committing? It is not Subhadra, but it is the child in her womb, who has been listening to you all the while. Where is the necessity for you to teach the child about *Padmavyuha*?" He took away Arjuna with him.

Later on in the Kurukshetra war, Abhimanyu lost his life in *Padmavyuha*, as he did not know how to come out of it. Why did Krishna do this? It is because Abhimanyu had to attain *Veera Swarga* (heaven of the heroes). In fact, when Kauravas challenged Abhimanyu to enter *Padmavyuha*, he came to his mother Subhadra and sought her permission and blessings. Subhadra tried her best to dissuade him from going to the battlefield. She said, "My dear son, it is not an ordinary task to enter *Padmavyuha* and come out of it. Moreover, your wife is in the family way and your uncle Krishna and father Arjuna are not here. So, give up the idea of going to the battlefield." But Abhimanyu did not pay heed to her advice. He said, "Mother, I am a Kshatriya by birth. There is no greater insult for a Kshatriya than to shy away from the challenge posed by the enemies. In fact, you should encourage me and enthuse me to fight and annihilate the enemies. It is not proper on your part to discourage me from going to the war." Abhimanyu knew what he was doing was correct, but he did not understand his mother's love. He lost his life because he went to the battlefield against the wishes of his mother.

Divine Grace and Human Effort

There is nothing greater than mother's love. Mother's words are always sweet. At times she may use harsh words, but they are meant only to correct you, not to hurt you. There may be a wicked son, but there can never be a wicked mother in this world. Ladies Day is celebrated only to make you understand the value of mother's love and her concern for you. Among the mother, the father, the teacher and God, the mother is given the topmost priority. Modern youth do not care for the mother. They think they are highly educated and that the mother does not know anything. It is a great mistake to think so. Never look down upon the mother. Even the mother should not compel her children to accede to her wishes. Through love and sincerity she should put the children on the proper path. She should aspire that her children be good, they need not be great.

Rama was good, whereas Ravana was great. Rama put into practice whatever he had studied and thus earned a good name. But Ravana was immersed in ignorance, as he did not practise all that he had studied. As a result, he did not earn a good name. Man needs to have fear of sin and love for God to earn a good name. As man lacks fear of sin and love for God, humanness is on the decline. This is the cause of restlessness in the world today.

Embodiments of Love!

God is *Ganalola* and *Ganapriya* (one who is attracted by singing). Poems and prayers do not attract God as much as songs sung with devotion do. All of you have listened to the melodious singing of M. S. Subbulakshmi. She has earned the title *Gana Kokila*. I have also seen her play the role of Meera, when she was very young.

Many artistes have earned name and fame in dance. Uday Shankar was such a great dancer that one could hardly see his two feet on the ground while he danced. His wife, daughter-in-law and other disciples have come here and will be staging a dance programme tomorrow. These fine arts cannot be mastered by practice alone; Divine grace is also very essential. Negative and positive both are essential for the current to flow. Likewise, human effort and Divine grace should come together before success is achieved.

Students! Young Men and Women!

God responds according to your feelings. So, do not entertain negative thoughts. Only a peacock comes out of peahen's egg, even if it were to be hatched by a hen. A diamond does not lose its value or brilliance even if it falls in dung. Likewise, good people will always earn a good name wherever they are. Ego, hatred and anger are the worst enemies of man. You may show a little anger on somebody in order to put him on the right path, but never hate anybody. Never give scope for anger and ego.

Man Bereft of Love is a Demon

I am showing you by My example all that I preach. Some people feel that Swami does not talk to them because Swami hates them or is angry with them. It is nothing but their imagination and guilty conscience. I do not hate anyone. In order to put you on the right path, sometimes I may pretend to be angry with you. But in reality, I have no anger or hatred towards anybody.

Some people do Grama Seva (service in the villages) with the expectation that I should fulfill their desires. Is that enough to please Me? Give up all the desires and cleanse your heart. Then I will grant you all that you require without your asking for it. How can you expect positive results without giving up negative thoughts? Fill your heart with positive thoughts. Fill it with love. Then all your thoughts, words and deeds will be suffused with love.

Embodiments of Love!

Never forget the love of your mother and under all circumstances make her happy. I am pleased with you only when you make your mother happy. As Uma Bharati pointed out, make efforts to understand the oneness of all. If you think that you are separate from others, then there will be scope for hatred. Realise that I and you are one. Bodies may be different, but you are bound by the same love principle. Just as your mother loves you, you should love everybody. All are the children of Vishwa Mata (universal mother). All are brothers and sisters. You should not have any differences whatsoever. The sun is one and the same for all the worlds. Just as the sun is reflected in a water tank, in a river, in an ocean, likewise the same Divinity is reflected in the hearts of one and all. *Ekam Sath Viprah Bahudha Vadanti* (truth is one, but scholars refer to it by different names). It is not correct to say that you like only Rama or Krishna or Siva or Sai Baba. There is only one God and He is omnipresent. Do not hate other religions. A Hindu should become a better Hindu, a Christian a better Christian and a Muslim a better Muslim. The one without love can neither be called a Muslim nor a Hindu nor a Christian nor a Sikh. In fact, he is verily a demon on this earth. Only those without love give scope to differences based on religion. You will find the unity of all religions only when you fill your heart with love.

The culture of Bharat has given utmost importance to the mother. One refers to one's country as motherland, not fatherland. Lord Rama declared: "*Janani Janma Bhoomishcha Swargadapi Gareeyasi*" (mother and the motherland are greater than even heaven). Country is the mother and the culture is the father. Never forget your country and its culture. Since ancient times, the culture of Bharat has been propagating the message of peace and love with the prayer: *Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavantu* (May all the people of the world be happy!) You have to uphold this sacred culture.

You may worship God in any name and form you like, but understand the truth that God is One and One only.

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajan, "*Hari Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahi*"

—From Bhagavan's Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall on 19th November 1999

Oh! The Experience of Breaking Away

*Experience, Oh Man! The joy of breaking away
Art thou not tired of clinging on night and day?
You search for Happiness, but you cling on.
You crave to be Free, but you cling on.
You want Peace, but my oh my, how you cling on!
You speak of Liberation, but you cling on.*

*Tear away, Oh Man! From these shackles that bind,
`Cause if thou see, the only shackle is thy mind.
Who can bind you, what withhold you?
Know that for your bondage, the only cause is you.
Has the world any limbs, that clasps you?
The one that clings is not the world, but you.*

*Free thyself, Oh Man! Of this madness of I and mine,
And thou shalt find thyself floating in Bliss Divine.
You are so busy entertaining `friends' and endearing `relations',
So engrossed in making money and appeasing passions,
You scant realise you are spiralling down a deep dungeon,
Of worry and misery, pain and separation and final destruction.*

*Elevate thyself, Oh Man! Beyond the reach of these petty ties
High above this apparent mesh of intertwined lives.
The bird on the tree can fly away, `cause `tis free,
But the fruit is bound `cause `tis attached to the tree.
Living in the Present, one is ever Free,
What binds is the Past and the Family tree.*

*Break free, Oh Man! `Cause thou art verily Divine.
Unchain thyself, `cause it ain't thy Destiny to crave and pine.
Thy Destiny is to blossom forth thy Divinity,
Not to hanker after this world-so petty.
Thy Destiny is to reach out for the stars,
Not to be jailed in this shell-these bony bars!*

—Satyajit
Prasanthi Nilayam

BHAGAVAN'S INAUGURAL ADDRESS:

SECOND WORLD YOUTH CONFERENCE:

Youth Should Transform the World

One who practises and propagates the ideals such as goodness, morality and truth is a youth in the strict sense of the term. In fact, only such people are your best friends and My best friends too. (Poem in Telugu)

Embodiments of Love!

GOODNESS MEANS good behaviour, good conduct, good discipline and good character. Truth, Righteousness, Peace, Love and Nonviolence are verily the five life principles (Pancha Pranas) of man. Human life is a journey from 'I' to 'We'. This journey is subtle and the goal is very near, but man takes many births to reach the destination. Why should he take such a long time, undergoing hardships, to attain the goal, which is so near?

Artificial Life of Modern Youth

Modern youth are making every effort to know all that is happening in the world, but are not making any effort to understand the fundamental truth of human life. No benefit accrues from acquiring such information, which does not lead you to the goal of life. There are thousands of intellectuals, scholars and eminent educationists in the world today. But all the worldly knowledge and skills will be a mere waste if one does not know oneself. The primary duty of man is to understand who he really is.

In this world, if money is lost, one need not be worried about it, for one can earn it again. If a friend is lost, one can have another. If wife is lost, one may get married again. If one loses one's piece of land, one can purchase another. All these can be acquired again. But the body once lost is lost forever. (Sanskrit Sloka)

Man has achieved everything in life, but has lost human values, which amounts to losing his five life principles. As a result, he has become a living corpse. Faith in God is very essential for man. You may question who is God and where is God. Truth is God. Truth is one and the same for everyone, irrespective of caste, creed, religion, language, nationality and ideology. *Sathyannasti Paro Dharma* (there is no greater Dharma than adherence to truth). This fundamental Truth is God.

Likewise, Love is God. So, live in love. True love is related to the heart, not to the body. Divine Love is "heart to heart, not body to body." Body is like a water bubble, mind is like a mad monkey. Don't follow the body, don't follow the mind. Follow the conscience. Only then can you experience the Truth.

Young Men and Women!

Your life is a long journey and your desires are the luggage. "Less luggage, more comfort makes travel a pleasure" So, reduce your desires. Human birth is gifted to serve others, not just to eat, drink, sleep and make merry. *The best way to love God is to love all and serve all.* Man's foremost duty is to serve his fellowmen and make them happy. Your life will be redeemed only when you involve yourself in the service of the society. The highest Sadhana is to transform love into service. Service will lead you to devotion. The Kerala boy who spoke earlier mentioned various diseases that affect the body. There are many instances in the history wherein even mighty kings had to leave their mortal coil in spite of having access to best medical facilities and the best doctors. Doctors by themselves cannot cure diseases. Divine grace is essential. There is no point in safeguarding your body if you do not uphold morality. For this, one should lead a life of truth and love. Modern youth do have love, but their love is artificial. It is limited up to saying 'hello, 'hello,' and is in fact hollow within. So, their life has become artificial like a drama.

First Eradicate Your Evil Qualities

Man can rise to the level of the Divine only through the path of service. When man is not able to understand humanness, how can he understand Divinity? First know thyself. Human life is noble, as it is essentially divine. In fact, man and God are not two different entities; they are one and the same. *Ekam Sath Viprah Bahudha Vadanti* (truth is one, but scholars refer to it by many names). Your life will be redeemed once you understand this truth.

The divine power latent in man is not found in any other being. Since man is unable to understand his own divine nature, he is undertaking various spiritual practices such as penance, meditation and Yoga. Spiritual practices bereft of love are a mere waste of time. Love is most important in life. Whatever you may say with love, it is bound to be true. Any work you undertake with love is Dharma. So, in the first instance, develop love. Lust, greed, hatred, jealousy, anger and pride are animal qualities. These qualities are the result of the impurities in the food man partakes of. These are of man's own making. Man is forgetting his divine nature due to the effect of these evil qualities.

Man should make proper use of his Mati (intellect), Gati (destination), Stithi (situation) and Sampati (wealth). Wealth here does not mean worldly treasures. It refers to the power of the senses. This power should be utilised for the service of the society. *Neither by penance nor by undertaking pilgrimages nor by going through sacred texts nor by Japa can one cross the ocean of Samsara. Only through service of the noble can one redeem oneself.* (Sanskrit Verse) The words *Seva* and *Prema* may be very small, consisting of only two syllables, but they possess infinite power.

Be a Mastermind

Embodiments of Love!

Enquire and understand who you really are. Know yourself and you would have known all. Since many of you are newcomers, you have to understand simple things to begin with. When you say, "This is my handkerchief," it means handkerchief is different from you. Similarly, when you say, "This is my body, my mind and my intellect," it means you are different from all these. Then the question naturally arises, "Who are you?" Enquire into this. Body, mind and intellect are mere instruments. Identifying yourself with these instruments is absurd. You are the master. *Master the mind and be a mastermind.* You should never be a slave to your body, mind and senses. In fact, they should be under your control; you should not be, controlled by them.

One of the speakers quoted Swami, "My life is My message." She also referred to the statement, "Your life is My message." You should understand the meaning of these statements clearly. Saying that your life is Swami's message and indulging in wicked activities and unrighteous deeds is treacherous. That constitutes 'your' message, not My message. You can declare that your life is Swami's message only when you take to the path of truth and righteousness, install peace and love in your heart and uphold non-violence.

All that you see outside is a reflection of the inner being. Good and bad do not exist outside, they are mere reflections of what is within you. No one has the right to judge others. Give up all that is bad in you and you will find goodness all around. As is the colour of the glasses you put on, so is the colour of the world you visualise. The defect lies in your vision, not in the creation.

Heart is the dwelling place of God. So, only noble feelings should emerge out of it. If there are any evil qualities like lust, greed and anger in it, then it ceases to be a human heart. It is verily the heart of an animal. If your conduct is devoid of humanness, then you are not a human being. Act in a manner that befits your human birth. When you are angry, remind yourself, "I am not a dog, I am man" When your mind wavers, tell yourself repeatedly, "I am not a monkey, I am man." Patiently think about your real nature. Never act in haste. Haste makes waste. Waste makes worry. So, do not be in a hurry. Take time and think calmly. All these evil qualities can be eliminated by developing good thoughts and feelings. The remedy for all your mental ailments lies within you.

Undertake Service with Love

Only young men and women are capable of eradicating the evils prevailing in the society. If we have virtuous youth, all ills of the society can be removed. Today the whole world is embroiled in wicked thoughts, wicked company and evil acts. Excessive desires are the main cause for the suffering of man. Keep a check on your desires. As a student discharge your duties diligently. Study well and obtain good marks. Respect your parents and serve them. Keep in mind the welfare of the society and nation at large. Earn a good name in the society. Do not feel proud of your education. Your education is a mere waste if it is not utilised for the welfare of the society. The education you have received from the society must be dedicated to it by way of service. The essence of education does not lie in merely acquiring degrees, securing good jobs and amassing wealth. Service is the hallmark of the educated one.

Morality is most essential for human life. No doubt money is essential, but it should be under certain limits. Excessive money makes many wrongs. Money comes and goes, morality comes and grows.

Students, Young Men and Women!

First and foremost, make efforts to understand your true nature. The difference between God and man is very subtle. As long as you do not understand the Truth, you remain a human being. Once you recognise it, you are God. Service is the best way to understand your innate divinity. Service should be for self-satisfaction, not for name and fame. Experience the bliss that you derive from selfless service. Share it with others. Before serving others, serve yourself by making your mind broad and pure. Get rid of the narrow feeling of 'I' and 'mine' and extend your love to one and all. Love is the binding force that brings together the entire world as one family. I wish that you develop love and live like brothers and sisters. This body has been engaged in service right from birth. You should also spend your life in serving others. This is My message. I practise whatever I preach. I love all and serve all and exhort you to do the same. You are not able to understand My love as your feelings are narrow. That is your mistake, not Mine. Today conflicts are on the rise as there is no proper understanding and adjustment among people. Adjustment will be possible only when there is proper understanding.

Embodiments of Love!

Only love has been constantly with you right from birth. It is love that remains with you all the time, not your relatives or friends. This love is God. Enjoy the bliss of love and share it with others. Absence of love is the root cause for all the unrest in the world. Develop love and uphold truth. Truth does not mean describing what you have seen, heard or done, as it is. Truth is that which is changeless in all the three periods of time. The Vedas call this permanent truth as Rutham.

Just as you change your dress, you have to change your body one day or the other. That is why it is said, "Death is the dress of life". Therefore, you should have no fear of death. Life is not permanent. It is like a passing cloud. So long as there is life in the body, use it for the service of others. Engage yourself in service till your last breath. Service to man is service to God. Have control over your senses, because loss of sense control engenders demonic qualities in man. Service without sense control is an exercise in futility.

Cultivate Noble Thoughts

All of you have gathered here without being extended any invitation. It is your love for Bhagavan and Bhagavan's love for you that has brought you here. (*Cheers*) If there is love in your heart, you will never be put to any hardship whatsoever. Your love should be extended to one and all; it should not be limited to your family and friends alone. Today we do not have ideal parents. There are no ideal teachers either. We do not have ideal friends and relatives too. How can then we find fault with the youth? First of all, the parents should be good. The teachers should also do their job of teaching in right earnest. Good company is very important. Tell me your company, I shall tell you what you are. As is your company, so you become. How can one be good if one is in the company of bad people always?

Embodiments of Love!

You are all virtuous and noble. Make every effort to enhance this goodness. Make the best use of your stay here. Run away from bad company and bad feelings. Cultivate noble thoughts and noble qualities. Develop the Atmic relationship with all as all are your brothers and sisters. Lord

Krishna said in the Bhagavad Gita, *Mamaivamso Jeevaloke Jeevabhuta Sanathana* (the eternal Atma in all beings is a part of My Being). The sun is one, but it has many reflections. All that you find in this world is the reflection, reaction and resound. Do not get carried away by them. Aspire to attain the reality. In order to experience the reality, give up body attachment and try to understand the divinity within.

Embodiments of Divine Atma!

Divinity is latent in everyone, but you are not making any effort to realise it as you are deeply engrossed in worldly matters. You are the embodiment of pure, unsullied, true and eternal Atma. Experience this reality. Discharge your duties keeping this truth in view. Help ever, Hurt never. This is the essence of the Vedas and sacred texts such as the Bible, the Bhagavad Gita and the Quran. All these holy texts speak of the same fundamental truth. It is a mistake to entertain differences based on religion. 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. Travel from 'I' to 'We' through the path of service. I will tell you how to go about doing it in due course of time.

There are millions of people in this world, but only you, the fortunate few, have got the golden opportunity of coming here. Make the best use of this opportunity and share this joy with everybody. Serve the whole world. Understand the truth that you are born to serve the society. It is not government service. It is the service of mankind. Do not lead a selfish life amassing wealth. Do not be satisfied by filling your own belly; understand that there are millions in the world, who are hungry and suffering. Your life will be sanctified only when you help the poor, the sick and the down-trodden. That is true spirituality. Spirituality is a way of life. It is not something separate from life. That should be your way of life. In order to acquire a worldly degree, you need to study various subjects. But in spirituality there is only one subject and that is love. Undertake service activities in a spirit of love. Being young, you may have a few doubts. I will clarify all of them. Do not give scope for hatred, jealousy and ostentatiousness. Be a humble devotee and render humble service. That is the true human quality.

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajan, "*Prema Muditha Manase Kaho*"

—From Bhagavan's Discourse on the Inauguration of Sri Sathya Sai 2nd World Youth Conference on 18th November 1999 in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam