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1. Dedicated for defence

Date: 05 January 1973 / Location: Bengaluru

INDIA is a land dedicated to Truth, Right Action, Peace and Love; you are dedicated to the service of the Motherland, to defend her and preserve her independence. This is in accordance with the ancient injunction, Mathru Dhevo Bhava - Revere the Mother as you would revere God. You are ready and prepared to sacrifice even your lives in her service, whatever others may do or may not do. I am glad your devotion is so strong and so sincere. Truth, Right Action, Peace and Love - these are the four pillars on which the mansion of happiness, here and hereafter, is built. India too must build her happiness on these columns only. They are the real supports of India, of India's security, prosperity, and glory. We have forgotten this truth; we have neglected the foundation; hence all this suffering today. God will always be with you in your struggle for the defence of this land. From within you, He will be guiding and inspiring you, to discharge your duty. Truth is God, and work is worship. By unselfish service, strict adherence to duty, and dedication to the cause of peace you are promoting the welfare of India and of all humanity. The Mahabharatha War is a good example of the guidance that God grants when virtue defends itself against the forces of evil. Krishna was the very heart of the Pandava body; Dharmaraja, the eldest of the five brothers was the Head; Bheema, the second brother, was the Stomach; Arjuna, the third, was the Arms. Nakula and Sahadheva, the twins, were the Legs - and Krishna was the Heart. God will not merely speak and guide from the heart; He will Himself be the Heart, provided you pray to Him to bless you so.

Be ever aware of God who is the real 'you'

We achieve Peace and Joy, only through sacrifice. Giving yields more joy and grasping. Since you are all prepared for the highest sacrifice, you are genuine sons of Bharath. Many do not realise the joy that can be derived from unselfishness; they waste their years and their lives in the pursuit of selfish ends. They are so conceited that they do not revere parents, elders, the saints and the sages. They do not invoke the Grace of God through prayer. As

a result, India is leaving off its age-old traditions and taking on new fashions and ,patterns of behaviour, thus landing people in misery.

The body is referred to in the Geetha as kshethram, that is to say, a holy place where God is installed. Kashi is a kshethram, Bhadrachalam is a kshethram. The body-kshethram is Dharmakshethram as well as Kurukshethram, the abode, of virtue and of Activity. God in the Kshethram is the Kshethrajna (divine knower), the Shivam (eternally good) without whom the body is but shavam (corpse). Therefore, be ever aware of the God who is the real .'you,' and seek solace, sustenance, and guidance from Him through prayer.

2. Pretenders

Date: 14 January 1973 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Sankranthi

WHEN the Buddha sat under the Bodhi Tree in Bodhgaya, after the illumination that revealed to him the Four Noble Truths, gangs of disbelievers gathered around him and poured ridicule and abuse on him. His disciples were enraged; they prayed to the Buddha, "Lord, Give us leave; we shall beat this insolence and ignorance out of these traducers." But, Buddha only smiled at their anger. He said, "Dear ones, know you not how much joy they derive from this exercise? You derive joy worshipping me. They derive joy pelting me with abuse. You pour reverence; they pour ridicule, and receive equal satisfaction. Control yourselves; do not hate any one, that is the teaching. This is the ancient ordinance." Some people cannot tolerate glory in others; some are filled with the venom of envy; some are demonic in nature and cannot tolerate holiness and divinity; some are perverted by disappointment and cast the blame on God; such people will indulge in abuse. If you associate with such people and their followers, you will only be contaminating your mind. Even ordinary men will feel ashamed to cast aspersions on the great, but, these expose themselves by their tactics as lower than the lowest.

God is above and beyond dualities

You might say, we are the ordinary kind; when the Form we adore is traduced how can we bear it silently? Suppose some one sends you a letter by a registered post. When you sign and take it, you become aware of its contents, though you may not accept the contents. If you do not sign, the letter goes back to the person who sent it and his purpose in making you aware of the contents is defeated. So too, don't give ear to the abuse; keep cool and uninterested; then, the foulness goes back to the sender, and cannot affect you at all. It will affect him as a re-sound, reaction and reflection. Instead of harming you, it will only recoil on him. Look into the Bhagavatham. What was the fate of Jarasandha, Kamsa, Shishupala? Shishupala ridiculed Krishna and his hatred reacted on him alone. The Lord is not affected by either praise or

blame. He is above and beyond the dualities that agitate man. He has neither favourites nor foes. Your goodness yields good to you; your badness brings about bad for you. Your virtue is your shield; your vice is the weapon that inflicts wounds on you. Happiness and misery are but the reflections of the good and bad which fill your heart and shape your activities. In the Bhagavatham, there is mention of a certain Poundraka, who sought to become a passable 'imitation', of Kaishna. He added unto his name the name of Krishna, viz., Vasudheva. He announced himself as Poundraka Vasudheva. He got made an imitation Conch and an imitation Wheel (out of wood) and carried them about, in his two artificial extra hands. He discovered the style which Krishna adopted while wearing his yellow silken robe and he scrupulously followed the same. He skilfully imitated the gait and gestures of Krishna. Some fools gathered round him, mistaking him to be the Lord they were seeking. His insanity finally brought about his downfall and humiliation.

Nature is the best preacher

In this Kali Yuga also such imitations are cropping up just as Poundraka shaped himself into a Vasudheva. We have today even Sri Sathya Sai Babas. They get the same type of robe stitched, they strain themselves to cultivate the crown of hair, they study photographs and hold their hands up very nearly like I do and make themselves ridiculous by frantic attempts to imitate Me. They forget that "imitation is only human; but, Creation is Divine." Those who attempt to become Sri Sathya Sai Babas by this ludicrous process of imitation only destroy whatever faith some people have placed in the Divine. They are poisonous pests which injure the peace and harmony of society. They collect around themselves insects of like nature. For only birds of the same feather can flock together. These 'pretenders' fall into ruin themselves and bring ruin on the society where they operate, as the proverbial horde of monkeys that ruin themselves and bring ruin on the forest which they inhabit. Let Me tell you this' There is no need for you to follow this person or that person in the search for a Guru. The heart full of compassion is the altar of God. Nature is the best preacher. Life is the best teacher. Fill yourselves with awe and reverence at the handiwork of God, the manifestation of His Power and Glory that is called the World. This is enough Instruction and enough Inspiration for

you.

Undigested food brings about illness in the body; similarly undigested knowledge imparted by the present day educational system has brought several illnesses in the social organism and the body politic. The disease is promoting contrary feelings that are expressed in mutual conflicts.

The educated are reacting with envious emotions towards those who have secured jobs; when they are unable to get jobs, they impute, motives of nepotism, etc. and develop resentment, anger and hatred.

The system of education is the root cause of the prevalent discontent and resentment.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

3. The fruit and the tree

Date: 04 February 1973 / Location: Chennai

BHAARATH is the most ancient of all the centres of civilisation that is surviving today with her heritage intact. But, out of a false sense of values, the leaders and the youth of the land are ignoring the traditions of this precious culture, and are adopting the ideas and ideals of the West. Therefore, they identify themselves with the body they spend their energies and skills in catering to its needs and whims, and they believe that the material world is the only field 'for study and subjugation.' The result has been here as everywhere else, as even, in the most advanced Western Countries, fear, anxiety violence, corruption and pollution. Physical comfort, individual advancement, personal progress, these are held to be desirable. However, though each person might declare that he cares for himself only, no one can live in isolation. Persons, sleeping on the same cot are caught having different dreams; each one has an inner life of his own, his own path and speed. But ask him why he is engaged in work, what he is bringing from the shop, why he looks worried. The reply would be that he was engaged in building a house for his family, that he was purchasing clothes for his children, that he was worried about his wife. So he is living, not for himself, but for others whom he is attached to, who are his near and dear ones. Man is under an inescapable obligation to shape his activities and attitudes in consonance with those of others, amidst whom he is placed. He is given parents to revere and obey; brothers and sisters to love and learn with; playmates to mix and move with; society to be changed by and to change. His affection and attachment are attracted by others, and his reactions are determined by others.

Man has to expand his knowledge

He might be sitting at a table, before his plate on which dinner has been served; if some one rushes in to tell him that his child has been injured in an accident on the road, he runs out of the room and on to the road, without caring for the hunger and the plate. The call of the one he is attached to is

louder and stronger than any call from within. In spite of such experience, man still believes in his ego, in an exclusive type of individuality. The family is essential for the blossoming of human personality; how can the helpless baby grow and learn, talk and move forward without the home? The home needs the community around it to keep it safe and happy. Even a bird in the bush cannot survive isolation from its kind. Man has to expand his knowledge, his emotions, his sympathies, his love. Expansion is life, expansion is love. When the community or the safe-guarding, sustaining Society is rendered weak, the family too tends to disintegrate and the individual suffers.

Loyalty to society is essential for man

The individual's fulfilment, in the joy of liberation, is undoubtedly, the fruit of the tree of humanity. But, when you yearn for the fruit, you cannot neglect the roots, the trunk, the branches, the leaves, the buds and the blossoms of the tree; they all help the fruit to manifest and to be filled with sweetness. When Pakistan invaded India last year, their armies did not attack Madras; but, yet did you not rush forward to teach them a good lesson? Attachment to the nation, affection to the language, reverence to religion and loyalty to Society are all essential. They are all facets of the overwhelming sense of gratitude one feels for all that has shaped one. Each such loyalty, instead of running counter to another, must feed and foster all the rest. Then they are most desirable.

Patriotism prompts man to understand the ideals of the past and the teachings of one's forefathers, based on their deeper experiences; it urges him to live for those ideals and gain experience for himself on the paths laid down by the sages of one's country. But, there are in India people who call themselves patriots, though they are neglecting and even harming those ideals and ridiculing those experiences and those paths. Adhering to one's own likes and dislikes, however harmful it may be to the interest of the culture of the country, is very injurious to both. When the hand is amputated, it is not merely the limb that suffers, a great quantity of blood also flows out from the rest of the body and makes the system weak and exhausted. So too, when one separates himself from the Society or Nation and insists on a path

that is not part of the culture and traditions, not only does he lose support, he harms the nation too.

Love is the secret source of all sympathy

The world is one vast Society. Every individual in it is part of this Society, bound to it by the love that draws man to man, to be kith and kin. This love is there, deep in the heart of man. Only, it is unrecognised, ignored, doubted, denied, argued away. It is the secret source of all sympathy, and Service; it creates the urge to live in and for Society.. It is the Vishwa-Prema, that flows from One spark of the Divine to all sparks. When the eyes shine illumined by the highest wisdom, Jnana, they see all as the One. Man realises that Sarvam Brahmamayam (All is pervaded by Brahman) Jagath (all that is apparently changing and transforming and moving). To have this One revealed as in All, one has to develop faith and discipline the mind. The mind has to shed its fancies and foibles; the Truth has to be known and experienced. Learning things by heart will result in only heartache. Learning shlokas or verses can only help you from not being engaged in anything worse during that time. They cannot take you an inch nearer the goal. How can mastery of the map equal the joy of the journey? Faith is an individual asset; it is acquired and preserved by one's own efforts. Manikkavasagar, the Thamil sage, used to say, "You have the freedom to say No; I have the right to say Yes." What he meant was, when one denies or asserts a thing, it is the outcome of his experience. How can any one dispute the experience of another? God may not exist in the horizon of your experience, but he has already risen in mine - that is what the thiest tells the atheist. The time indicated by the watch on his own wrist is the correct time for him and he asserts so, though others might not agree. And, he has the freedom to do so. Have faith; do not allow it to shake, because some one else has no faith. Until you realise that you are Divine, that God is your Core and Reality, you will have to undergo these entrances and exists; the same newspaper should not be pored over again and again, day after day; one life must be enough to know the mystery. So, at least, recognise that there is a mystery, search for the secret, and unravel it for yourself.

Yearn for the ecstasy of Divine Mother's vision

Ramakrishna used to cry in agony at the loss of another day, without the vision of the Divine Mother. Have that yearning; feel that sense of urgency: Seek to know now, yearn for that ecstasy this moment. Do not postpone or spend time in discussing others. Trying to satisfy the sense is a dreary desert path. Do not imitate other nations, and compete with other cultures in external pomp. Yours is a mind, intelligence, ear and eye shaped by Indian tradition and culture, Indian history and Sanathana Dharma (eternal religion). Move along those lines and success is certain. You may have only a picture of Sai Baba before you, or an image in metal or an idol in stone. But, if you have the faith that He is alive and present in it, and that He is in your heart and the hearts of all beings, then, you can get the ecstasy of that knowledge, the knowledge that He is omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. While meditating, first imagine and feel that you are in the Light, then, gradually, you can feel the Light is in you, not outside you; and finally, you will realise the Truth, that You and the Light are One and will ever be One. The Divine is a wine, that would intoxicate you. It is produced by the nectar that the Name of the Lord is saturated in. Taste it and you forget everything else; you are transformed. Man is, they say, a monkey that has lost its tail; well, he must lose many more attributes of the monkey before he is entitled to call himself man. He must dedicate his thoughts, words and deeds to God, and surrender to His Will. Then only is this animal entitled to become a Man, in whom the Divine is enshrined.

There is a distinctive type of devotion by which you worship God with a good, clean mind and good conduct. This has been given the name of Para Bhakthi.

By worshipping God always with puuja (ritual homage) and flowers, the sadhaka (seeker) will remain stationary in his place. This is good in a way but to remain in one place all the time and failing to rise to a higher position is not good.

It is a superior type of worship - to worship God through good qualities, good

conduct, good thoughts and good company.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

4. Teacher of teachers

Date: 05 March 1973 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Shivarathri

SHIVARAATHRI observed every month, on the fourteenth night of the dark half of the Moon, which is the presiding deity of the human Mind, has only just one night more to be a non-entity; with no influence on the agitations of the Mind. In the month of Magha, the fourteenth night is named Maha (Great) Shivarathri, for, it is sacred for another reason too. It is the day on which Shiva (Supreme God) takes the Linga Form, for the benefit of seekers. Shiva is revered as the Form to be adored for the acquisition of Jnana (Supreme Wisdom). As the Vedas advise,

Jnanam Maheshwarath Iccheth
(Pray to Shiva for enlightenment, through Wisdom).

So, do not treat this Day lightly, and reduce the disciplines prescribed by the sages for its celebration, such as fast and vigil and uninterrupted recital of the Name of God, into a routine ritual, or a chance for picnic, revelry, rivalry or factious fun. Contemplate this day and this night, on the Atma Linga (elliptical idol which emanates from Shiva as His symbol), the Jyothir Linga (Symbol of the Supreme Light of Wisdom), and be convinced that Shiva is in every one of you. Let that Vision illumine your inner consciousness.

Feed the mind with good thoughts and Godly acts

A fence is necessary to protect growing crops; but, when no crop is growing, why spend time and money on a fence? The orange is covered by a rind which is not very tasty, in order to protect it from too early consumption. Outer ritual is prescribed to shelter the inner message from being tampered with. Shivarathri too like all other holy days in the Hindhu and other religious calendars has many such outer ceremonial observances and a deep core of

inner significance. But, human nature prefers the easier path of outer formality to the path of inner discipline and direct experience.

Visiting Shiva shrines, arranging for worship through priests of Shiva Lingams, pouring sanctified waters, potfuls of them over consecrated idols, fasting, vigil and such other activities are resorted to on this Day. But, these are not quite relevant to the real purpose of the festival. To fulfil these rites and vows, one need not wait one full year and consult the astrologer and his calendar of holy days. When man takes in food four times a day, in order that his body may keep functioning, efficiently, is it too much to ask him to feed the mind with good thoughts and godly acts, at least once every day? The mind too needs clean and sustaining food.

Eeshwara, a Name of Shiva, means that He has all the glory that is associated with Godhead. *Shamkara*, another name of Shiva, 'means that He causes by His Grace, Sham, that is, *Ananda* (bliss) at the supremest level. Shiva is the embodiment of Ananda; hence the Thandava Dance, which He enjoys so much, with the Cosmos as His stage. To set apart just one day among the 365 for the worship of this Universal Omnipresence is an insult to His Majesty and Mystery. Consider the significance of the Form that Shiva has assumed for human adoration: In His throat, He has the holocaust-producing poison, Halahala, that can destroy all life in a trice. On His head, He has the sacred Ganga river, whose waters can cure all ills, here and hereafter. On His forehead, He has the eye of Fire. On His head, He has the cool comforting Moon. On His wrists, ankles, shoulders and neck He wears deadly cobras, which live in life-giving breath of air. Shiva lives in the burial ground and the burning ghat, the Rudrabhumi, as it is called - the land of Shiva or Rudra. The place, is no area of dread; it is an auspicious area, for all have to end their lives there, at the close of this life or a few more lives. Shiva is teaching you that death cannot be shunned or frightened away. It has to be gladly and bravely met.

Linga is the Form in which all forms merge

Shiva, again, is said to go about with a begging bowl. He teaches that

renunciation, detachment, indifference to good fortune or bad, are the paths to attain Him. Shiva is known as *Mrthyunjaya* (He who vanquishes death). And, He is also the *Kamari* (the destroyer of Desire). These two Names show that he who destroys desire can conquer Death, for desire breeds activity, activity breeds consequence, consequence breeds bondage, bondage results in birth and birth involves death.

Eeshwara is also symbolised in the Linga Form. Linga is derived from the Sanskrit root, Li, which means *Leeyathe*, 'merges'; it is the Form in which all forms merge. Shiva is the God who blesses beings with the most desirable gift of meaning in the Universe. That is the end, beyond death, which one should strive for, the end which Shiva can vouchsafe. Realise the God in you first; then, if you involve yourself with the material world, no harm can come to you, for you will recognise the objective world as but the body of God. But, if you try to involve yourself with the objective world first, and then try to discover God, you will see the material world only. Again, you can direct your spiritual efforts in either of two ways: Follow the commands of God, and He will be pleased to raise you up. Follow the path of inquiry and discover where He resides, and realise Him there. You can follow either means. But, reaching Him is the inescapable task of man.

Shiva is all Graciousness, ever Auspicious

Shiva means, Graciousness, Auspiciousness, Mangalam. He is all Graciousness, ever Auspicious, *Sarva Mangalam*. That is the reason why the epithet, Shri, which indicates these qualities, is not added to the name Shiva, Shankara, Eeshwara etc. It is added to the number of Avathars (divine incarnations), for they have taken on perishable bodies for a specific purpose. They have to be distinguished from other humans, by the epithet, but Shiva is eternally gracious, auspicious, mangala and so the epithet is superfluous. Shiva is adored as the Teacher of Teachers, Dakshinamuurthi. The Form of Shiva is itself a great lesson in tolerance and forbearance.

The Halahala poison is hidden by Him in His throat; the beneficent Moon which all welcome, He has worn on His head. This is a lesson for man to keep

away from others all harmful tendencies and to use for their benefit all useful tendencies that he can command. If one uses his skills for his own advance, and his evil propensities for putting down others, he is only taking the road to ruin.

Man is inherently Divine; he ought therefore demonstrate in thought, word and deed the Divine attributes of love, tolerance, compassion and humanity. God is Truth; man too must live in Truth. God is Love; man too must live in Love, eschewing anger. Master hatred through Love; master anger through sweet tolerance. There are many who bargain with God, and offer Him gifts, of money or articles if He would confer Grace. If one believes that God can be mollified by the gift of a coconut or a purse of 116 rupees, I wonder what kind of God he has in his mind? Is his conception of God so mean, so contemptible? Those who plan to have their desires granted through riches can never deserve the name, Devotee. Those who encourage the payment of money for spiritual gains or for gaining Divine favour are also to be condemned. This is the reason why the Geetha lays down that God will be pleased by offering leaf, flower or fruit or even a drop of water. But even these four articles are materials.

How can men give to God what is not theirs?

The Geetha does not intend that you should pluck a leaf or flower or a fruit from some plant or tree and place it before God. Nor does it ask you to bring water from a well or river or the roadside tap. The Leaf is your own body, which like the leaf, sprouts green, fades, and finally falls off from the branch. The Flower is the heart freed from the insect pests of lust, anger, greed, attachment, pride, hate, etc. The Fruit is the mind, the consequence of its yearnings, which have to be dedicated to God. The Water is the stream of tears that flow from the eyes when one is in ecstatic Bliss at the contemplation of God's Glory. Giving these four is the real act of surrender, *Sharanagathi* (total surrender). The offering of leaves or flowers or fruits or river water is at best a way of helping the plant or tree or river to secure a little merit. There are some who declare glibly, "O, I have surrendered my body, mind, intellect, my everything to God." These people have no control

over their minds and the emotions and passions they are filled with. They have no mastery over their reason. They are not even able to regulate their bodies. So, it is indeed ridiculous for them to claim that they have offered them to God. How can they give to God what is not theirs? What right have they? How can any one accept the gift of something which does not belong to the giver? In fact, you need not surrender anything at all. Love all beings - that is enough. Love with no expectation of return; love for the sake of love; love because your very nature is Love; Love because that is the form of Worship you know and like. When others are happy, be happy likewise. When others are in misery, try to alleviate their lot to the best of your ability. Practise Love through *Seva* (selfless service). By this means, you will realise Unity and get rid of the ego that harms.

We should not aspire for acclaim and praise from those around us, but do service only to secure the grace of God and not for any other reward from anyone.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

5. Valour of the Spirit

Date: 16 March 1973 / Location: Mogha, Punjab

I AM very happy to be in the Punjab Region, which has earned the respect and gratitude of the entire nation, by its heroism and sacrifice, for defending the country. It is a sacred land and, though my visit to this place was planned long ago, the time has at last ripened, and I am here. A fruit takes a long time to ripen and fill itself with sweet juice. This nation has sown the seeds of tolerance and friendship among all the peoples of the world for centuries. It has led the world both in materials and spiritual progress. It has been emphasising the fundamental need of man - to understand himself, before he attempts to understand others. When you do not know your position in the Universe, your fate and your future, of what use is it to wander about in space? Let me tell you what the true nature of man is, so that you may make an all out effort to guard it and develop it. Truth is man's nature; to be untrue is to be false to one's nature. Dharma (right action) is the practical application in real life of the ideal of Truth. Shanthi (peace) is the result of Dharma and Prema (love) is the effulgence of Shanthi. Devotion should not be confined to the four walls of the shrine-room, or the few minutes you perform Dhyana (meditation). It is a fulltime Sadhana (spiritual discipline). Your devotion has to be expressed as worship of every one, as a living embodiment of Divinity. See God in every one, even in persons whom you regard as your enemies. Practise that broad, inclusive type of Love. How can you derive happiness by showing love and reverence to a stone idol, that does not respond or reflect the feelings? Living beings will return appreciation and gratitude and wish you well. You can see joy growing in their faces. That will confer satisfaction on' you. If you cannot educate yourself to love your fellow man, how can you follow the path of dedication to God?

Share your joys and sorrows with others

Find out the difficulties and troubles burdening others and help them, to the extent you can, to tide over them, and, to lead their lives so that they may not recur. Learn to live with other men; share your joys and sorrows with

others; be forbearing, not overbearing. When you live together in amity, the village will be happy and safe; and, when the villages are well-knit and strong, the State too will be strong and impregnable. Jealousy, anger, hatred and greed will disintegrate the State and make it fall into disorder and distress. Drive away the divisive forces that keep man away from man, and prevent hearty co-operation and mutual help. Punjab has won special fame in our country, because of the valour of its people. I desire and bless that it should become equally famous for Adhyathmic (spiritual) valour. Inculcate discipline in the field of Sadhana also and insist on people performing their duty to themselves and to their destiny. Devotion is like the head; duty is the trunk; discipline is the feet. Let devotion be linked with duty and led by discipline; then, success is certain. The life of man should not be a wasteful round of eating, drinking and sleeping; man has the Atma (soul) as his reality and so, he must learn to become aware of that unfailing source of Bliss. By the proper use of his intelligence, man can tap that spring and be supremely blissful. Happiness can be won only by proceeding towards God, not by following the urges of the senses.

Essential requisites to earn God's Grace

This day, happiness also rose with the dawn and sunrise in this town. The depth of your devotion can be clearly gauged from your faces. You have been waiting for many long hours for the joy of this moment; that is itself proof that matters of the spirit are more attractive to you than material things and comforts.

Of the twenty four hours that are available to you each day let Me advise you to devote a small fraction to meditation or prayers or reading the scriptures or listening to discourses on the leelas (divine sport) of the Lord. Think of God, and the gratitude you owe to Him for the human life He has gifted you and the various material, moral and intellectual talents He has endowed you with; do this before you commence any task or piece of work. You will certainly experience great benefit, and you will have peace, joy and success in your endeavours through Divine Grace. Do not get disheartened, if you do not progress in meditation. Utter the Name of the Lord, dwelling on the Glory and

the Grace; that is equally effective. No one particular Name is necessary; all names denote only the One. The steadiness, the faith, the love that you cultivate in the heart and express through your words, deeds and thoughts are the essential requisites for earning the Grace of God.

Perform your bhajans (group singing), perform your puujas (external worship), but when you enter society, recognise society as a form of God, recognise what exists as Omnipresence in society and thereby acquire good qualities in serving society. Forget the agitations in the world. Then you can have peace, joy and bliss.

If you develop an idea that God, who is Omnipresent and is in the entire creation and the universe, is confined in a picture which is three inches by four inches,' you are narrowing your conception of God.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

6. The prescription

Date: 17 March 1973 / Location: Mogha

THERE is only one path to God that will satisfy the aspirations of the Jeeva thathwa (essential nature of individual entity). That is the path of Bhakthi (devotion), of dedication of all activity to God and surrendering to His Will. This is called the Bhakthi marga (path of devotion). But, Bhakthi has to be built on conviction, not on blind unreasoning belief. That is why, I always emphasise the role of intelligence. Intelligence is a special gift from God to man; it confers the power of discrimination between right and wrong. Peace or happiness depends on the choice of the right means and this is a matter to be decided by the Intelligence. Prosperity too depends on the intelligent exploitation of the resources available, human and other. The wavering 'intelligence' of man, that has lost its one-pointedness and purity is responsible for all the conflicts and quarrels that are prevalent today. So, I would ask you to pray to God to grant you the capacity to think straight and right, and to stick to the correct decision once decided on, without being affected by egoism, greed or hatred. Pray for a balanced mind unaffected by prejudices and passions.

Attempt to acquire knowledge of yourself

Man has to pay attention to three basic duties in his quest for happiness: (1) He should forget what he has to forget, namely, the world around him and its tantalising pleasures. (2) He has to reach where he has to reach, namely, the goal of the Divine, the Presence of the Almighty and (3) He has to give up what he has to give up, namely, material desires and pursuits. The Vedhic prayer Asatho ma sath gamaya, Thamaso ma jyothir gamaya, Mruthyor ma amritham gamaya (Lead me from untruth to truth, lead me from darkness to light, lead me from death to immortality) summarises these aspirations very nicely. Strive to move away from untruth towards truth; attempt to acquire knowledge of yourself and of the origin of all Selves and thus shed your fundamental ignorance. Move away front thoughts and anxieties about this body, subject to decay and death and become aware of the Immortal Soul,

which you really are.

This garland can teach you a great spiritual lesson. This one thread has strung all these different flowers together in beautiful harmony. It is called Suuthra (connecting thread) in Samskrith. So also, there is the Brahma Suuthra, the Universal Brahma Principle which passes in and through every jeevi (individual) and binds them all in the athmic bond. All the children of this motherland, all sons and daughters of this country are bound into one inter-independent group by the thread of Divinity that passes through them. Embodiments of the Divine Atma as you are do not be afraid of sorrows and losses that might come in your way. An orange is enveloped in bitter skin. You have to remove the skin and eat the sweet fruit that it has protected so long. The sweet fruit, that is, your life, is enveloped in the bitter skin of lust, anger, greed, arrogance, attachment and jealousy. Remove the skin and throw it away, so that the sweetness can be tasted.

God is present only where good pervades

Be always devoted to good and self-less activities. See that by your word, deed or thought, you do not hurt others, physically or mentally. When you see injustice and wickedness in others, examine your conduct and character first; for, what you see in others might be the result of what is in your own self. Wear the eyeglasses of Prema (Love); the whole world will be filled with Prema. God is present where only good pervades and prevails. If you examine the present behaviour of men, you will find that the vision is bad, listening is bad, thoughts are impure, and .so, even the human nature in you is being besmirched and made bestial, if not worse. When God enters the vision, the things listened to, and the subjects thought of, your lives will be rendered happy and useful.

Control the mind and regulate the impulses emanating from it by means of a clarified intelligence. These are primary requisites for a happy life. Keep the name of God ever on the tongue and the Glory of God ever in the memory; seek the company of the good and the godly. These prescriptions, if you follow, you can be free from anxiety, fear and falsehood.

7. Restore the balance

Date: 17 March 1973 / Location: Shimla

MAN is a pilgrim set on a long journey; he has started from the stone, moved on to the vegetable and the animal, and has now come to the human stage. He has still a long way to go, to reach the Divine,; and so, he should not tarry. Every moment is precious; every step must take him further and nearer. Those born in Bharath are really fortunate, for here, millions have gone along that road, and there are available many kind guides who can lead you along the easiest and the shortest paths. They tell you the address of the place where from you have come; for, you have forgotten it and so, you are helpless when asked about it. They tell you also the goal which you ought to reach, when the toil of travel is over, and of the enticing attractions on the way, which you must avoid.

Man is the synthesis of all the feelings, emotions and reactions that arise in his mind. The mind is the seat of all urges, desires and thoughts. When the mind is clean, the world cognised by it will also be clean. When the mind is turbid and fiddled with fear, the world will appear miserable and depressing. Many people blame the world, without knowing that the fault lies in themselves. Their thinking is crooked; their thoughts are not wholesome; their minds are restless, because they are too full of unfulfilled desires. Rich or poor, educated or uneducated, high or low, they see the world through the glasses of their own prejudices and predilections and they condemn or extol it in order to please themselves!

Money comes and goes, morality comes and grows

The proper study of mankind is man. For, man is the centre of things. And, in man, the mind has to be studied and controlled and regulated. His thoughts originate in the mind, they express themselves through words and are materialised through deeds. These three have to be properly co-ordinated by the Intellect; or else, life becomes a tragedy. The mind has to be trained to develop a taste for the good and the godly; not, for money and material

gains. Money comes and goes; but, morality comes and grows. Man, in his ignorance, asserts that he lives for himself only, eats and drinks to appease his hunger and thirst, looks after his health and comforts only. Two persons may be sleeping on the same cot, but, each has dreams that stroll independently into strange regions of its own. But, the truth is quite different! This selfish attitude which curbs and curtails his interests to himself and his aggrandizement is really 'death.' Contraction is extinction. Expansion is life. Man has to feel himself a limb of the society into which he has been born and which has fostered him and fed him with ideals and ideas. Spiritual life is not isolated existence. Man has to sow the seeds of love in his heart and harvest peace. He should share that peace with all. Bhooma eva sukham, say the Vedas. There is happiness only in the vast, the limitless, the huge; not in the little, the small, the limited. Love leads to expansion; hatred leads to contraction and death. This is the basic teaching of the scriptures of Sanathana Dharma.

Peace has to emerge within

But, seeing the advances made in science and technology, you have lost balance. Man has learnt to walk on the moon, to live in the depths of the ocean, to penetrate into the deepest crusts of earth, but, alas, it is a pity, he has not learnt how to live on the earth and let other men too to live on the surface of the earth. How can man achieve happiness and peace of mind, flying high or swimming deep? He has to carry his troubles and worries, fears and failings, with him to those places also. Unless he rids himself of these burdens, he cannot feel light and loveable. Peace has to emerge within; it cannot be added from without. Science has its vision, directed outside, towards gadgets and machinery providing external comfort and convenience. The scientist examines the objective world of matter; he tries to excel in external vision. The one who examines the soul and develops the internal vision is the Saint; the Scientist plans machines, the Saint relies on manthra (sacred formula). The balance can be restored only by cultivating the Inner Vision. This has to be done even in schools and colleges. They have neglected this aspect far too long. If you examine the nature of mind, you will find that it is very much akin to the lens of a camera. The body is the camera, the mind

is the lens, the heart is the photographic plate, the thought is the flash, and the intelligence, the switch. Turn the lens towards the source of happiness, not, to the seat of anxiety and fear; then, you will be-rewarded with a fine picture imprinted on your heart. It is difficult, nay, well nigh impossible, to turn the lens to the direction we are told by saints and seers; for, the mind is very truly characterised as a monkey! Why, it is even more wayward than a monkey for it jumps from one perch to another that is miles away in space and centuries away in time, in less time than a wink! The mind jumps from one desire to another, and entangles us in its coils. Reduce desire, evict the ego, eject anger, and the mind will be your slave, instead of being your master.

Duty without Love is deplorable

Prema is the master key which can achieve all this. That is why, I say, "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." On this path, you will not be waylaid by anger, lust or greed. You will have only the company of the good and proper facilities for speedy progress. Do your duty, with Love, as if you are 'thereby adoring God. Many leaders are today clamouring for freedom to follow Sweccha, that is, swa-iccha, one's own inclinations. But, real freedom is gained only when you are free of the pernicious influence of passions like lust, envy, pride, greed and hate. Swa-iccha does not mean any and every, desire that arises in your mind; it means the inclination of your true self towards God. If you incline towards God, the passions that enslave you will be rendered powerless. Then, you will do your 'duty' as sweccha, for you will love it with all your heart. Duty without love is deplorable; duty with love is desirable; Love, without Duty, is Divine. Sweccha means, the best interests of the individual, the purest thought that emerges from within him, for his own best. That means, all imitation is barred. Follow the dictates of your own clear conscience. Do not copy wishes and resolutions from some one; that is what the blind man does; but, very often he follows an equally blind man. God is enshrined in your heart; He is ever ready to guide you. He does not appreciate external pomp and exhibitionistic behaviour. He does not calculate the number of hours you did bhajan (congregational music) or japam

(repetition of Lord's Name), or the number of miles you walked during Nagarasankeerthan (street singing of spirituals). He examines the purity of your heart, as evident from your words and deeds. Do not preach; practise. In politics, in the field of administration, in schools and colleges, in spiritual institutions, everywhere, we have a surfeit of preachers but a famine in practitioners. Heroes on platforms prove themselves zeros when they descend to the ground. Therefore, demonstrate in your own lives, how Love can confer peace and joy, how all faiths lead to the same goal, how all men are brothers of one another. The only message, the only lesson I can impart to you today is to remind you of the great traditions of Bharath and ask you to spread Love throughout the length and breath of this great land. Then, India can again be the spiritual leader of humanity and fill the whole world with Divine Love.

8. Bypass the bylane

Date: 22 March 1973 / Location: New Delhi

I OFTEN tell young college students that they may worship a picture as God, but, should not worship God as a picture. They can entertain the concept that a carved stone is God, or that a piece of wood is God. For, in that process, they are raising that substance into that high status. But, I also warn them that they should not degrade God into the status of paper, wood or stone. Of course, God is immanent in every atom and cell of the Universe and if-you are able to recognise Him and adore Him therein, you are indeed blessed. Do not move towards God, through the world around you. Confirm in your faith that you are the Atma, which is the Divine Spark in you, and then, move into the world as heroes whom success cannot spoil or defeat cannot dishearten. It is not my intention to turn men towards God; for they have already God residing in them. There is no need to proceed towards Him, or call on Him to come from somewhere outside you. Become aware of Him, as your inner motivator (the Antharyamin - that is enough. Travel outward, with the conviction that you are the Atma; then, you will adore the world and not exploit it.

You are bound inextricably with all others

You must realise by constant contemplation that the world is the Body of God. And, you are a cell, in that Body. The prosperity of the world is your prosperity; feel so, act in that spirit; think in those terms. That is real spirituality. The Sadhak (spiritual aspirant) cannot cut himself away from the world and escape into solitude, for, the world will follow him into the deepest cave or the darkest forest. The Sadhak can claim progress only when he has established in himself faith in the one-ness of humanity. Ishwarah sarvabhoothanam hriddhese, Arjuna, thishthathi, says the Geetha - "O Arjuna, the Lord is seated in the heart of all beings ." Ishavashyam idham sarvam - " All this is enveloped in God." Everything and every being are but waves on the surface of the vast unbounded timeless ocean, which is God. Waves belong to the ocean and depend on it for their .individual existence; but, the ocean has no need of waves. Therefore, you are bound inextricably with all

else and all others. The world will inevitably react on you; it will reflect your thoughts and plans: it will resound with your cries and creeds. Your thoughts, words and deeds will shape others, and theirs, will shape you. It is your duty to be good, do good, and see good. That is the way to make the world good, and be yourself good. These ideas and directions are 'the principal constituents of Indian Culture; but, they are honoured today only in the letters. Acts unworthy and damaging the fair name of Indian culture are done with pride, by the very sons and daughters of Bharath. Temples are neglected; places of pilgrimage are deserted; the very idea of holiness is ridiculed. Elementary rules of social conduct and individual behaviour, like revering parents and elders, revering teachers and guests, speaking the truth and treading the righteous path are disregarded as unnecessary restrictions on individual freedom.

People obey the whims of the moment

Uncontrolled living habits, unrestrained social behaviour - these are extolled as signs of freedom. It is only freedom to slide into the animal from which man has risen. The education system has not cared to instil the elevating ideas and ideals that fed Indian Culture for ages and so, youth is being guided into the bylanes of sensuous licence. People obey the whims and caprices of the moment; they do not delay to discriminate. When the ideals of detachment and simplicity were held forth as valid and valuable, India was really strong and happy; but, now, character has lost priority in the educational system. Animals have their seasons and reasons for behaviour; but, man does not pay heed to these. What has happened to the knowledge that has been accumulated by our sages and saints? What has happened to the wisdom enshrined in our scriptures? What has happened to the noble examples of the 'great men and women of the epics and puranas? Since they are ignored, life has become dry, barren and miserable. Restore them in the estimation of the people, and follow their teachings; life will again become useful and purposeful.

Today, we have factions everywhere - at home, between husband and wife, in the school, between teacher and pupil, in society, between group and group.

This is deterioration indeed! Peace and harmony between members of the same family are the foundation for peace in the land. The individual must be at peace with himself. Just as the coordinated effort of all the organs of the body is essential for healthy life, coordination between village and village is essential; so too, between State and State and nation and nation. But, the Truth, if only you open your inner eye and visualise, is - there is only one nation, the nation called 'humanity'; there is only one religion, the religion of Love.

Divinity is inherent in every human being

Feel happy that this is your mother-country; love of the country is the basis on which you can build love for the world community. Love expands; it does not limit itself to boundaries. Love your mother-tongue; then, you will discover that all languages are as sweet as yours, for, a language is as sweet as the tongues of the speakers. I want you to recognise that the human body has been gifted to you, so that you may use it for the good of the country where you first saw light and tasted love; and, for the good of the culture that your country has treasured for ages so that you may grow in its shade. If you neglect the roots, how can you harvest the fruits? Consider, what is it that gives us safety and security in this enormous structure, this Vijnana Bhavan? We pay attention now only to superficial items like the seats, the cushions, the balcony, the sound systems etc. But, the foundation hidden in the ground, we pass over as out of sight. So too, the culture of Bharath is the basis of our prosperity, peace and progress. The whole world is One Single Tree; the different countries are its branches; its root is God, human beings are the flowers. Happiness is the fruit and the Bliss of Self-realisation is the sweet juice therein.

How then can any one justify his anger against another man, or be jealous on account of another? All are fed by the same sap; all share the same Sun; all are Divine. Divinity is not something separate and isolated, which has to be earned by toil. It is inherent in every man, woman and child. By means of some simple practices, and through some little effort, you can tap the springs of Divinity in your hearts.

Some people have asked Me whether Sadhana (spiritual discipline) has to supplement study and enquiry. Read the necessary texts, perform the prescribed exercises in logic - are these not enough, they ask! It is like asking, we have laid cables to bring electric current to every part of Vijnana Bhavan; is that not enough? Why bulbs, tubes, and fans? Sadhana is the bulb, the switch, the fan! Insulin injection for the diabetic patient is the 'inquiry'; restriction in dietary habits is the 'sadhana'. Both inquiry and sadhana are needed to discover the Divinity latent in you and to manifest it.

This means that you must devote some time every day, regularly, for study, and for Sadhana. Now, you are wasting time till late at night, in clubs and frivolous company. A portion of that time, if spent with God, can confer valuable results. This mother-land has given you a culture that is attracting, distracted people from all parts of the world. Be grateful; study the culture; practise the disciplines it lays down. Serve the poor and the helpless, and those who eke out their livelihood by hard work.

9. The year named Aanandha

Date: 24 March 1973 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Ugadi

IN every country today, men have become power-mad and they resort without any compunction to self-praise, and dry declamation. They develop hatred against others, foster envy and feed their fatal egos. They plunge the society to which they belong in fear, anxiety and disorder. They do not know that if elevating ideals are adhered to and practised, they could gain eternal fame; they are content with cheap applause and shortlived publicity. You have gathered here today, since this is Yugadhi Festival day, the day reckoned by you as the day that ushers in a new year with a new Name. This day is New Year Day only because you have decided to call it so; it is not astronomically or climatically or meteorologically different from yesterday or tomorrow. Even as New Year Day, many hundreds of thousands of such Days have happened on this globe and many thousands have been celebrated as Festival Days too. So too, this day has come and this too will be gone. If the New Year Day is used by any one to begin a new way of life, a new step towards self-realisation or self-enlargement through service, then the Celebration has a meaning and significance. Otherwise, it is devoid of value. The red letter on the calendar, which indicates this Day as separate from others is a warning and a reminder of this duty that you owe to yourselves.

Do not anticipate anything, leave it to Him

The Name of the New Year that begins today is inspiring and auspicious. It is called Anandha - -Spiritual Bliss, inner joy, unshakable calm. That name is a clarion call, which must ring in your ears all the 365 days of the New Year - earn Anandha, be Anandha, become Anandha. Cleanse your instruments of Consciousness, devote yourselves to Service so that you might weaken the forces of Ego and strengthen the forces of Social Unity and cultivate Japa and Dhyana (repetition of Lord's Name and meditation) so that you might rise towards Godhood - these are the steps by which you can earn and establish yourselves in Anandha. Engage yourselves in your duties as intelligently and as devotedly as you can; but, carry out your duties as if they are acts of

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

Man has to earn just enough for his upkeep

Man cannot reap the full fruits of his life here below if he only gathers riches, or collects popular votes, or loads his head with tons of tomes. He has to cultivate and practise virtues too. He has to adhere to Dharma. The Shruthis (sacred texts) direct that man has to earn just enough for his upkeep by honest means and use the rest of his time and skill for the general good, Dharmartha. Earn artha (wealth) through Dharma (right conduct). Then, he will certainly have plenty of Divine Grace. Dhritharashtra, the father of the 100 Kuru Brothers who fought against the five Pandava Cousins - legitimate claimants to a share of the ancestral patrimony - had neither of these two, though he had abundant riches, superior armies and greater military skill and strategy. So, Dhritharashtra had to witness the total extinction of his dynasty and kingdom. Most men like Dhritharashtra pursue falsehoods and ignore Truth; they amass the trivial and ignore the crucial.

They do not realise that Death is stalking silently behind them; they do not notice the quick paces of Time.; they do not know how precious is the chance that the human body, the human intellect, the human society and the heritage that it has accumulated for him has brought him, here and now. They are unaware that the same spark of Divinity that illumines every

thought, word and deed in them is activating every other being too, in the Universe. They do not sense the brotherhood, they are not thrilled by the feeling of universal kinship.

Man has to be above brutes and beasts

They are sprawling in the slime of self-praiser they are slaves of their egos. And, consequently, they are never free from fear or anxiety. They also spread scandal about others, and so, they bog themselves in sin. Though they claim the respect of others, they are objects of ridicule and hatred. They seek faults in others and so, their eyes revel only in faults. They cannot see good in any; so, they are consumed by envy and greed. Do not try to master others; master your own self, your own senses, your own mind. That is the real victory; they are the real enemies. Do not waste time in unprofitable talk. Do not change your beliefs in accordance with changing loyalties, and changing surroundings. While accusing others of time-serving, be careful that you do not fall into the same evil. God is inherent in everything, in every being. You can find Him in and through all that. you see or do. In the golden chalice of your heart, He is the Wisdom that fulfils. Closing your eyes to this fact, you are spreading your hands outwards to snatch it. You may be compassionate, but, that emotion must be regulated and .pure. A compassionate man once brought home a fish he found struggling on the bank of a river in full flood; he placed it between the folds of a warm blanket and poured hot coffee down its throat. He thought it was suffering from a fit of cold. The hot coffee killed the poor thing. He could have saved it by throwing it back into the floods. He lacked the intelligence which would tell him what to do. Many leaders at the present time have compassion, but, possess no intelligence. They do not know how to solve the distress that they see and sympathise with. They talk of the need to establish peace at home and prosperity abroad; but, their acts betray their ignorance of the means by which they could succeed. How can they succeed, if they promote hatred and dishonesty? Any success won by adopting wrong means will only be trivial and temporary. Peaceful means alone, means that are wrought out of Love alone can ensure lasting benefits and real Peace. Fear not; frighten not. That is the message of God to man. Brutes fear; beasts frighten. Man has to be above both the weaknesses. Have

faith in Truth and be fixed in Morality. You need not fear any one, for God will be on your side. You will not frighten, for all will be seen by you as Divine.

"I am the Witness of activity, not a Participant"

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

Truth knows no defeat, nor fear

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

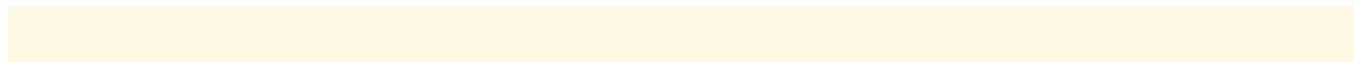
Do not attach yourselves too much with the world, for, it is ever changing fast and furiously. Be ever ready to fall into the hands of Death, gladly and gracefully, with .gratitude for the chances afforded while alive. Never grieve, for God is resident in you as your Truth. Later, in the last stages of your life, when you look back upon your failures and successes, you will have to say, as Purandharadhasa said, "Alas, we do not find Joy in this life as man." Do not spend your days in such manner. Be warned now itself. Use the days allotted

to journey towards Love, Joy and Peace.

The New Year Day is called in this part of the country, Yugadhi - the Inaugural Day of the Age, as if a new big epoch is opening today. This is an opportunity to contemplate on the vastness of time, of its speed, of the short span of time which we share, in this life of yours, and which has to be put to the best use. Contemplate on the beginning of things, of nature, of life, of man, of the heart - all emanating from God and journeying towards God. Dwell on the grandeur of this procession from birth to Liberation, through life after life. Become aware that you, Nature and all that is, was and will be, are God. To attain this awareness, Love is the surest means. Do not inflict pain on any one, through word and deed. Control your passions, emotions and impulses, especially, anger, envy and greed. They thrive on the ego and make it a dangerous weapon. When you are enslaved by your passions, how can you stand forth and claim respect? Only cowards yield to their senses or passions. Brave men face up to them and win. The hero is he who overrules his mind and curbs his impulses; the zero is he who is overruled by them. Stand fast, like a rock, when the waves beat. Have faith in your ideals, in God. Do not allow faith to falter when failure comes into your door. Meet it as a new challenge, and triumph. Your Vishwas (Faith) must not be like your Swas (Breath); for swas comes in and goes out, it is now in and now out. Let your vishwas be firm, with no alternations of entrances and exits. If faith is one full continuous stream, Grace too will be showered on you in one full continuous stream.

The four goals laid down by Sai, are in fact those laid down by the Vedas. They are Sathya, Dharma, Shanthi and Prema. Mankind has to understand the importance of these four goals, accept them, adore them, and practise them in daily life. Only then can the Divinity latent in man shine forth in all its glory.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba



10. Sabko sanmathi

Date: 30 March 1973 / Location: Chembur, Mumbai

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

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

Be equipped with humility to win God's Grace

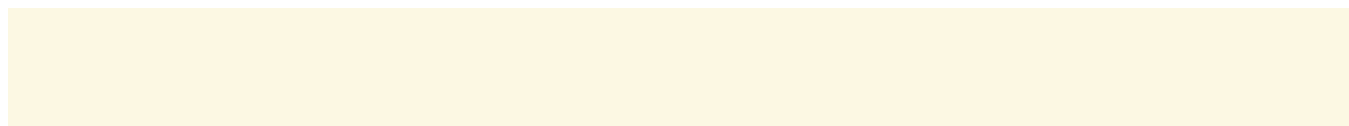
Good ideas have to be accepted and bad ones eschewed. Each idea has to be judged in the Supreme Court of Viveka (Wisdom). And, the 'ruling has to be treated as inviolable. It is in this context that we have to remind ourselves of the prayer of Gandhiji, Sabko san mathi dhe bhagwan - "O God, Bestow right

under- standing on all." Again, the individual born in the lake of Society must swim and float in the calm waters, and joining the river of Progress, merge in the Ocean of Grace. Man has to move from the stance of "I" to the position of "WE;" this day, we see only the wild dance of ego-stricken individuals, who hate society and behave most unsocially. Water flows from a higher, level to the lower levels. God's Grace too is like that. It flows down to those who are bent with humility. So, give up the ego, overcome jealousy, and cultivate love. How can man be truly at peace with himself and with others, if he does not endeavour to win the Grace of God? While trying to get the best out of Nature's Gifts, you must first be equipped with humility and simplicity; otherwise, you will only be dragged along into ruin, through many unfulfilled desires. Ravana desired Nature (Seetha, who was found as a child in a furrow of ploughed land); but, he was not chastened by the effort to win the Grace of God; and so, he met his downfall. Desire leads to anger, when it is foiled; and anger weakens the body. It impairs the digestive system and chases him fast into old age. Remember, when Prema (Divine selfless Love) is installed in the heart, jealousy, hatred and untruth will find no place there. Live in Prema, live with Prema, move with Prema, speak with Prema, think with Prema, and act with Prema. This is the best and the most fruitful Sadhana (spiritual effort). Do not want Prema from others, while yourself refusing Prema to others. This is not a one way traffic.

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

The Divine Prema is not easily comprehensible. So, My emphasis is not generally understood in its full significance. Prema is God. God is Prema. TO consider it as a method of speech, an attitude of mind or as physical behaviour is to sorely demean it. Prema has no trace of selfishness; it is not bound by motives.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba



11. Drastic overhaul

Date: 01 April 1973 / Location: Rajkot (Gujarat)

BUILDERS of Future India, Patrons and Well-wishers of Educational Institutions!

In this holy land of ours education is straying today into wrong directions, and encouraging wrong notions and patterns of behaviour. You are all aware of this trend, and its consequences. The sooner we set things right, the better for all concerned. For, whether the students master the curricula or not, whether they understand, appreciate and assimilate the culture of India or not, the years roll by inexorably; time rushes past with no possibility of return; the span of life allotted to each is undergoing subtraction, every minute. Therefore, delay in this matter of reform is unpardonable. The years spent by these persons as students in schools and colleges are the most crucial years of their lives. The heart of youth is pure, clean, full of enthusiasm and optimism. They are eager to achieve happiness to enter upon an adventure and earnest to serve others. It does not involve much effort to direct them along beneficent channels. Of course with equal ease, they can be directed along maleficent channels too. The educational system must decide to direct them to the achievement of the Divinity latent in each one. Striving towards such a goal is an essential step, for ensuring social, national and world peace and prosperity.

Student life must be filled with cooperative activity

Humanity is like a train full of passengers, moving in one direction. Some alight at the little halt, some get off the station after that. Some alight a little further off. But, young persons travel longest. So, intensive care must be accorded to the problem of their education. Their lives must be made happier, more full of activity and contentment, more useful to the human community and this can happen only when the Divinity in them is allowed to blossom. The nation is looking forward to these young men and women to realise its dreams of unity, integrity and prosperity; these bright young people have to

confer confidence and courage, joy and enthusiasm.

But, judging from the nature of the students today and from the patterns into which they are being moulded, one feels that the hope of the nation might not be realised. The coming years might witness the decline of the fine ideals of Indian culture, cherished through the millenia.

Beautiful, fruitful ideals must be planted in the tender hearts of the youth. They are lovely creepers which can yield clusters of fragrant flowers, spreading the fragrance of truth and virtue. They have to be fostered with love and care, by parents, teachers and all those interested-in the progress of the nation. It is a sacred responsibility which cannot be by-passed. The years of student-life must be saturated with cooperative activity, social service, eager search for truth and readiness to sacrifice one's interests for the good of those who are less fortunate. Moral and spiritual values have to be honoured as much as, if not more than, economic and material values. Life must be a harmonious blend of these values with emphasis on moral strength.

Education must fill students with self-confidence

Students, Embodiments of the Divine Atma (soul)!

There is a great and urgent need that you should delve into the problem - who exactly you are, and realise that you are Divine, so that you can raise yourselves to that level, instead of remaining merely human or degrading yourselves into the lower level of animality.

What exactly are the degrees which you earn now, after such elaborate and exhausting studies? The degrees are only begging bowls, which you can hold while presenting yourselves in front of office after office, seeking jobs. Education does not fill you with self-confidence, self-reliance and self-knowledge. How can even parents, teachers and the elders give you these, when they are themselves suffering from their absence? Since they do not have these qualities, the country is in the throes of poverty, faction and

sloth.

Imbibe knowledge in schools and colleges with your minds, fully engaged in the task, with your hearts welcoming the acquisition and with your souls fully concentrated. Do not try to achieve distinction, through expenditure of money.

How can money bring you knowledge? Yet the temples of the Goddess of Learning (namely the schools and colleges) have become this day temples where the Goddess of Riches is worshipped. Saraswathi, the Goddess of Learning is described in the *Puranas* (ancient legends) as the rival of Lakshmi, the Goddess of Riches. They are both as unfriendly as the proverbial mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. How can they be together in the same home?

So, Saraswathi has been practically driven out of her temple and Lakshmi has installed herself therein. Money is demanded and being paid, for admitting a child to the school, for testifying that he has attended the required number of classes, for accepting his application to sit for the examination, for declaring him to have passed it, and to certify that he has secured the desired number of marks. The entire field of education has been thus degraded and disorganised, with incalculable harm to the country's prospects in the coming years.

Students have their minds polluted by hatred

The emotions that spring from the minds of youth have to be canalised and sublimated, now, while they are yet elementary and in the nascent stage; this is their primary duty. When you neglect it, youth runs amok and ruins its own destiny. At the present time, youth is exploding and running into extreme actions of arson and acts of disorder. The blame lies at the door of those who incite them and inflame them, letting them loose on society. Many lament the injury to life and property that these acts result in. But the more dangerous results are not so clearly recognised. The students, for example, are injuring themselves, their careers, and their usefulness to the community even more lastingly. They waste a great deal of hard-earned money; they waste

something that cannot be recovered later, namely, Time; they have their minds polluted by hatred.

Politicians are to be blamed and avoided, for they inject hatred and prejudice in the minds of youth, in order to use them as instruments for their own aggrandizement. Students must keep themselves away from them. Their first duty is to spend the time for study; after completing the present task of acquiring knowledge they can take part in political activities, and distinguish themselves as leaders and pleaders. Now, they have to acquire skills, insight, balance and the spirit of service. They have to revere their parents, teachers and the elders. They have to understand the ideals of their country's culture and learn to mould their daily lives in accordance with them.

Students must learn discipline and reverence

Of course, the system requires drastic overhaul. For, the sons and daughters of this land have to know the standards set by our scriptures and sacred texts, the story of the origin and development of our ancient culture, and the life-giving principles of law and justice that took root on this soil.

Another point. Young persons have to join school, or college, not merely for getting instruction in the classes, or studying some books with the help of teachers, for if that were so they could as well sit in their own homes, and the instruction can be imparted to them while they reside there. They have to join the institutions so that they may learn to live and move with persons of their age but from different social and economic backgrounds with different intellectual equipments and emotional peculiarities, so that they may learn discipline and reverence, tolerance and cooperation. Some years at school and college will train them to react properly to society and to the outer world.

What happens at the present time is the result of the undue importance attached by parents and society to a pass in the examination. Students cram their hardest just a few days prior to the date of the examination; then they start to vomit the whole lot on to the answer papers, and return home, with a

vacant head; for the knowledge gained has not affected their behaviour or opinions or attitude in the least.

Education is not to be taken as a process of filling an empty sack and pouring out its contents, making the sack empty again. It is not the head that has to be filled through education. It is the heart that has to be cleansed, expanded and illumined.

Education is for 'life', not, for a 'living'.

The sign of the educated man is humility that he has not been able to know the vast unknown that still remains to be explored. The educated man must realise that he has more obligations than privileges, more duties than rights. He has to serve the society amidst which he is placed and the heritage that has been handed down to him by his forefathers. He should be delighted to serve, and not desire to dominate.

For service is divine; service makes life worthwhile;
service is the best way to use one's skills, intelligence, strength and resources.

Nature is the best teacher

I must tell you of the paramount importance of Love.

Love is God; Live in Love;
God is the embodiment of perfect Love; so, He can be known and realised, and won, only through Love.

You can see the Moon only with the help of Moonlight. You can see God only through the rays of Love, the one Quality of Love, expresses itself as attachment to things, affection towards kith and kin, desire for objects, love in human relations, reverence towards the great, and devotion to God. Cultivate Love and all its aspects will be fed and fostered. Through education, you have to interpret (in the light of the principles of Indian Culture) the knowledge of Nature and its components, and the knowledge of man and his various victories and failures. Of course, Nature is the best teacher; so be vigilant to imbibe useful and lasting lessons from Her.

This college is the result of the generosity of many donors, specially, the Rajamatha of Nawanagar. You must rejoice that a lady of such magnanimity is associated with your college. Be grateful to her; show your gratitude, by bringing into your daily lives, the ideals of spiritual progress, moral elevation and intellectual attainment which she holds before you. Develop the faith and the steadfast persistence needed to rise to her expectations.

I bless this Institution, so that from its portals may emerge brilliant young persons ready and able to serve the Motherland and to add lustre to Her Glory. I love students and educational institutions very much. I bless that each one of you may reach high attainment in education and earn good marks (not bad remarks), give your parents who have toiled long for your upkeep, the happiness they are hoping for and reward the Rajamatha and other elders who are watching over your studies and upbringing, with such great affection, presenting them the fame you earn by goodness and scholarship.

We can be successful leaders, only if we are disciplined followers, who do not issue commands to others, but rather set an example of service in our actions.

- *Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

12. Bhaarithi-Bhaaratham

Date: 04 April 1973 / Location: Hyderabad / Occasion: Ugadi, Sivam Inauguration

KARMA (activity) is primarily movement, motion. Movement results in energy and matter is but condensed energy. Ether, air, fire, land, water - all are the cause as well as the consequence of this incessant movement. All things that move are active, engaged in karma. To live is to change, to move; you may not move the entire body or any of its parts, but still, movement is taking place in you. Food is being digested, blood is being circulated, air is being drawn in, analysed, absorbed and exhaled, impressions are welcomed or resisted and conveyed or rejected.

Life is karma; the Body is a *karma-kshethra* (abode of activity). All living things are engaged in karma offering themselves in sacrificial rite of ceaseless activity. The fruit of that Sacrifice is Selfrealisation. When you have your eyes open, you see thousands here; when you close them, they are not here! Or, if your sight is impaired, you don't see them. You cannot therefore say, they are non-existent. Since your sight is impaired by doubt, pride, or prejudice, you don't see God, who is in you as well as outside you. You long for a thing that is not; you ignore the treasure that is within your grasp. You swear you have no bird in your hand; you struggle for the birds, that you believe, are waiting for you in the bush. The bird in the bush is only the image of the bird you have in your hand but you are unaware of this truth. You have faith in the senses and the knowledge they garner; you have faith in the fancies and fantasies of your mind; you have faith in the syllogisms of your reason; but you have no faith in God who cannot be bound or found by these. So, you fear, you grieve, you doubt.

It is wrong to cast blame on others

Have the curtain of "Thought of God" all around you; then, the deadly mosquitoes of desire and distrust cannot harm you. That curtain will confer health on you, through immunity from disease. You will have undisturbed ease, with nothing to pine for, nothing to fear from. You will love all God's

creation, you will welcome opportunities to serve and assuage the pain of others. This morning, while conversing with a group of persons, the problem of suffering was analysed; it was ascribed to one's own past deeds and one's own mental tendencies. It is wrong to cast the blame on others. But, some one pointed out that God was the originator of both joy and grief, that without His Will no blade of grass .can waver in the wind. Yes. If that Truth be firmly established in the heart, one gets the unique bliss of liberation. God gives everything, whatever we get is His Grace. You have no right to judge whether what you get is good or bad. In order to get God so firmly installed, worship of idols or pictures, meditation on His Glory, recitation of His Name are all useful as preliminary *Sadhana* (spiritual effort). I won't say that temples or houses of worship, altars-and shrines where God is invoked and adored are wrong or wasteful. Until the letters are learnt, illustrations are necessary in the primers. The letter A is learnt in association with the Apple of which a picture is printed above it. On that account, you cannot be constrained to remember that Apple whenever you have to think of A.

Be in perpetual contact with God

I am always emphasising the value of Service as a Sadhana for realising the one-ness of all in God and the one-ness of one-self with God. I do not recommend the giving up of karma; for it is not possible. What is generally meant by *Karma-Sanyas* (renunciation of activity) is the giving up of rites and rituals prescribed by the Scriptures. I call upon you to adhere to a new rite, *Seva* (selfless service), a new yagna, sacrifice of the ego, a new ritual of worship, *Sharanagathi* (total loving surrender), dedication of all thoughts, words and deeds at the Lotus Feet of the Lord and acceptance of all that happens as Gifts of Grace from Him. Be in perpetual contact with God - let the pipe that leads into the tap which is you be connected with the reservoir of His Grace. Then your life will be full of unruffled content.

Without that awareness of the constant presence, any service that you do to others will be dry and barren. Be aware of it; then any little act of service will yield plentiful fruit.

Sarvathah pani padham: "God's hands and feet are everywhere."

Sarvathokshi Shiro mukham: "God's eyes, head and face are everywhere."

Sarvathah Sruthimalloke: "God's ears are all over the Universe."

Sarvam avruthya thishtathi: "He remains, enveloping all."

When you pray for the Vision of the Feet, you are rewarded with it. When you cry out in agony and call on Him to listen to your woe, His ears are there to respond. When you plead with Him sincerely to come, He comes, to give; He gives. But, the best Sadhana is to behave as you do, when you get a parcel of books by post. To get at the books you unwrap the parcel, and throw off the material used to pack the books. Now, take the prayer that is the deepest and the most significant - "Naku Shanthi Kavali" - "I require Peace". Unwrap it of the "I" (the ego) and of the "require" (desire); get hold of Shanthi, in the core of the packet. When you are burdened with egoism and desire, how can you attain Shanthi? So, throw away the packing and hold on to the thing packed and protected.

There are three stages in Spiritual Life

Man is Divinity humanised; in him is concentrated vast power, awaiting manifestation. But, man condemns himself into poverty, disease and despair. He begs for alms from all and sundry and debases the Lord within. He tells himself that God is far away, in an unreachable Heaven. He exiles himself from the Kingdom which is his legitimate heritage. He deludes-himself into the belief that it is he who feels, thinks, speaks, and acts. He curses himself as a fool or as a victim of fate, committing wrong with every such imprecation!

Examine, each of you, your own minds and avoid this cowardice which denies your birthright. Some years are spent in studies and apprenticeship; then one reaches the years of active participation in the building or upkeep of social progress through a job; later, in the evening of life, one lives on earned

income, pension, rent or interest.

So, too; there are three stages in Spiritual Life - first as a *Jijnasu* - the seeker, curious, inquisitive, earnest, thirsty, enthusiastic. Then as a *Mumukshu* - the Sadhak steady, straight, adventurous, hardy. Finally the *Abhimukha* - the realised person, face to face with Reality, strong, intelligent, good, showering Love on all. The dull inert temper leads man to sloth and slavery; the passionate temper entices him to faction, competition, conflict; the balanced unruffled equable temper leads man to peace, justice, love and truth. Overcoming the tempers by the development of Sadhana, one must discover the Truth of oneself and others, namely, God.

Be happy when grief strikes you

Yan na Bharathi than na Bharatham

"What is not Indian is not knowledge; all knowledge is the domain of the Indian intellect."

And all knowledge is synthesised, harmonised and summarised into the highest Wisdom, here, so that its alchemy can be experienced. And what is that Wisdom? Every individual is a spark of the effulgence of God; God is dancing in every cell of every being. Do not doubt this, or ignore this, or dispute this. This is the Truth; this is the entire Truth; this is the only Truth.

Loka is Lokesh. (The Universe is God.)

All this is He, His Body.

To run away from the place which you have been assigned is cowardice, it is foolish, it is fruitless. Don't honour such men as heroes. You can be engaged

in any profession, employed in any job - for all professions are His, all jobs are His. He is the Universal Master, the Universal Provider. And when troubles pile up or disappointment confronts you, be thankful for the toughening it gives to your character for the trial which you are privileged to face. You overcome the distress of the heat by resorting to a cooler; you overcome the distress of freezing cold by resorting to joy. Be happy when grief strikes you. Be calm when anger tries to inflame you. How can you put down fire with fire? Reason out and convince yourself that tolerance, forbearance, love and sweetness can alone ensure peace for yourself and for society.

The touchstone for virtue in a person is his keenness to give up, to sacrifice, to develop detachment. I exhort students on many occasions to associate with good and Godly people only so that the precious aspect of divinity in them can manifest.

Many of them are humble and subdued and disciplined as long as they are in hostel and college, but once they enter the outer world, they resume the routine and ruin themselves. This should not happen.

Once Truth is accepted as an article of faith, one should sacrifice one's entire life to its practice. Or else, man degrades himself below the level of birds and beasts.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

13. Know the Knower

Date: **April 1973** / Location: **Hyderabad**

MEN everywhere are frittering away the precious years allotted to them on earth, in three vain pursuits: praising oneself, thrusting one's interests forward, aggrandizement at all costs; defaming others, blackening the reputations of others, scandalising the good and fawning upon the bad; talking frivolously, or irresponsibly, stoking the fires of hatred or slinging mud, helter skelter, with no care for the injury done. Men try to know everything about everybody else; but, they do not try to know about themselves! The attempt to know about the knower is called sadhana; knowledge about the knower is Atma Vidhya. It is only through that knowledge that man can live in peace anywhere. For, when you know that you are but a spark of the Divine and that all else are the same Divine sparks, you look upon all with reverence and true Love; your heart is filled with supreme joy; and the assertions of the ego are rendered ineffective. Man seeks joy in far places and peace in quiet spots; but, the spring of joy is in his heart, the haven of peace is in himself. Even when he walks on the moon, man has to take with him, his fears, his anxieties, his prejudices and his pet aversions. Have faith in God, and in the correctness of moral living. Then, you can have peace and joy, whatever may be the fare that fortune offers you.

Love alone confers lasting happiness and peace

Goodness, compassion, tolerance - through these three paths, one can see the Divinity in oneself and others. Softness of heart is condemned by people today as weakness, cowardice and want of intelligence. The heart has to be hardened, they say, against pity and charity. But, that way lies war, destruction, downfall. Love alone confers lasting happiness and peace. Sharing alone can reduce grief and multiply joy. Man is born to share, to serve, to give and not to grab. When you instal faith in God as a .precious truth in the altar of your heart, you will welcome with equal' alacrity the blows and blossoms of fortune. Man can have the highest joy and can share that joy with others; but he is now having only grief and sharing that grief with others.

A king once granted a woodcutter in the forest an extensive sandal wood plantation as inam (gift), in return for an act of hospitality that he had the chance to offer him. The fellow did not realise the value of the wood nor did he investigate the meaning and mode of the fragrance that emanated from the wood; he cut all the trees in a short time and burnt them for selling as charcoal. Most men waste their lives; they make charcoal out of sandalwood and are happy at the few chips, they get in exchange! By means of prayer you can win the Grace of God; prayer saves you from slavery to the senses; when you extol God and feel that you are activated by His Will, you will become free from anger, anxiety, prejudice and envy; these passions ruin physical and mental health. Whenever you feel greed or resentment, try to control the emotion. Treat it as you would treat an illness; find the cure and master it. A monk was going along a jungle track when he was followed by a gang of tribals who showered abuse on him. He sat down on rock before the edge of the forest was reached; and encouraged them to do their worst for, he said, there he would be met by a group of his devotees who might beat them off enraged at their behaviour.

Discipline is the mark of intelligent living

Man is basically love, peace, joy and truth. He is the embodiment of all these, that is to say, of Divinity. He ought to behave only in accordance with his basic traits; but he overlays upon them the false traits of I and mine, and tarnishes his own personality. How to get rid of this tarnish is the problem of religion, everywhere. Bhajan (group singing of devotional songs) and Namasmaran (remembering God's Name) are fine cleansing processes. Only, the mind must dwell on the sweetness of each name, and become sweet as a consequence. They must be done as a regular discipline, with the awareness that they will yield good results. They should not degenerate into mere mechanical routine items of a crowded schedule. Discipline is the mark of intelligent living. Parents should not allow children to fall away from their control, and wander about without compass or anchor. Many parents feed and fondle their children, and then, in the name of freedom, leave them to find their own friends and pleasures. They take them to films regardless of the impression they create on their tender minds. They entertain the friends of

their children, but, do not inquire their antecedents or habits. They even encourage their children to smoke and drink, not knowing they will one day have to rue their action. They thus declare by their actions that they are the enemies of their own progeny!

The path of life has both ups and downs

I like children; I take great care of them; I pay them great attention. I give, and advise parents to give them, proper advice at the proper time. I insist on discipline, on reverent obedience to parents, on regulated food and play, on rigorous allocation of time for study, bhajan, meditation, etc. I also recommend some items of service, like nursing the sick. I condemn frivolous talk, luxurious living, deleterious habits, addiction to films, horror-comics, pen-friends, exotic dress, outlandish coiffures designed to draw attention to oneself etc. By these means, boys and girls are slowly drawn into unrighteous and immoral ways. Discipline trains you to put up with disappointments; you will know that the path of life has both ups and downs, that every rose has its thorn. Now, people want roses without thorns, life has to be one saga of sensual pleasure, a picnic all the time. When this does not happen, you turn wild and start blaming others. If each one cares for his own pleasures how can society progress? How can the weak survive? Mine, not thine, this sense of greed is the root of all evil. This distinction is applied even to God! - my God, not yours! Your God, not mine! I am indeed very happy today that I could spend some time with you, children of the Remand Home. To spend some time in Divine Presence is a fortune which is the reward of past merit. You are here going through sentences from coups for delinquencies. Let me tell you that all men are undergoing sentences for long or short periods, with simple or hard labour, to atone for misdemeanours and crimes done by them in past lives. Every fall makes a dent; every fault has to be corrected; every sin has to be-cleansed. Every one is a prisoner.

Learn the Golden Rule of Life

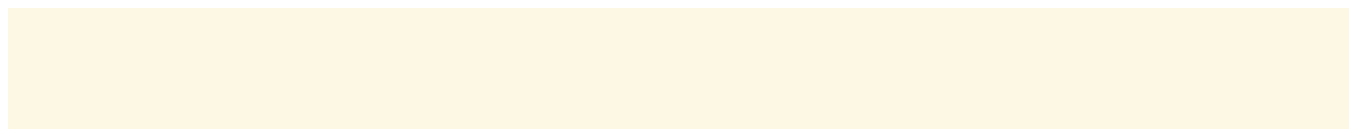
For, wherever he goes, two officers accompany them, and watch each action. It is only when one can go alone, that one can be said to be free. But, now, I

as well as Mine, do not leave men alone; they walk on each side exercising their subtle influence over each step. I insist that you are the body, the mind, the senses, and the intelligence. It encourages you to care for the strengthening of the body and its beautification; to cater to the fancies that attract the mind, to pursue the fleeting pleasures of the tongue and eye; it tells you that reason is the only instrument for measuring truth, and decries intuition, and experience. Mind teaches you to grab, acquire, and possess, merely for the joy of possession, and the joy of depriving others of things of value. But, the mind can also be used for liberation from these two shackles: I and Mine. Let it be fixed on God; they will both disappear. You must examine every act to find out. whether it will cause pain to others; if it does, withdraw from it. Don't do to others what you do not like to do unto you. This is called the Golden Rule. Yes, It is the best test for. distinguishing right from wrong. If another person has with him what you like to have, do not make him miserable by snatching it from him. Would you like something you like to be snatched away from you by another? Learn to serve people to the extent of your capacity. Learn to revere your parents, teachers and elders; they have your progress always in view. When you go back to your villages, join the Seva Samithis (service organisations) there and engage yourselves in bhajan, service programmes and study with the members there.

This is Sai's Message to you all. May you all develop this Divine Love and stand out as the harbingers of a new age free from selfishness, greed, hatred and violence. Let each of you be light unto himself or herself and thereby be a light unto others. There should be no differences among devotees in the Sai Organisations. There should be no scramble for power or position. What matters is the purity, intensity and sincerity of the devotion and the spirit of selfless sacrifice in which each devotee renders service to the needy and the suffering.

14.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba



14. Your image in His eye

Date: **April 1973** / Location: **Hyderabad**

MAN preens himself that he knows everything; but when asked about himself he hangs down his head in shame. Man knows the news of every land but he is ignorant of the nuisance that he himself is to himself and others. He is moving in darkness, but, yearning for anandha (bliss). He does not know the means of securing anandha prayer, seva (selfless service), study of spiritual texts, meditation, silence. He has no faith that he is anandha and that anandha is his own nature. He is blown off by calamity; for he has no strength to withstand the blow. Faith in the God within is the toughest shield against the thrusts of fate. Nests laboriously built by birds are torn away by storms; the fragrant petals of flowers are felled by rain. Defeat and victory are the obverse and reverse of the same coin; when you welcome one, you have willy-nilly to welcome the other too. Forbearance, compassion and incorruptible virtue are the three pillars of a happy life. Only such a life can be called civilised; the rest is barbarian existence. This meeting began with a Prayer. Good. But, prayer for some benefit or gain should not be addressed to God. For, it means that God waits until He is asked! Surrender to Him; He will deal with you as He feels best and it would be the best for you. God does not dole out Grace in proportion to the praise He receives! When you pray for a thing from God, you run the risk of condemning Him, if for some reason the prayer is not answered the way you wanted it to be, or as quickly as you wanted it to be. This contingency arises because you feel that God is an outsider, staying in some heaven, or holy spot, far away from you. God is in you, God is in every word of yours, every deed and thought. Speak, do and think as befits Him. Do the duty that He has allotted to the best of your ability, and to the satisfaction of your conscience. That is the most rewarding puuja (ritualistic worship).

Inner cleanliness is Godliness

When you stand before another, his image is in your eye, and your image is in his; haven't you observed this? You are in me, I am in you, that is the truth

this phenomenon proclaims. When you have faith in this, and when you cultivate love, humility, reverence for life, and tolerance, you are on the right path. When you are not on this path, that is to say, when you are travelling left, you are certainly left out, when it is a question of sharing Divine Grace. The body is the temple of God, isn't it? Well. What does the priest do in the temple every day? First, he cleans the utensils and sacred vessels in the shrine. He sweeps the room and washes the altar. The senses are the utensils for the puuja of the God within; they have to be cleaned and assiduously kept free from dirt. Inner cleanliness is Godliness. That is possible only through sense-control, and mind-control; or what amounts to the same sadhana, dedication of all desires and activities to God. There are various habits which can be learnt in order to ensure equanimity. When some one insults you or defames you or ignores you, accept it with a smile; this is the way of the world; it is basically ungrateful, ill-mannered, they are doing me a good turn, my strength is under trial, I should not yield to anger or resentment, tell yourself such invigorating things, and be quiet, with a smile of triumph on your lips. There was a sanyasin (mendicant) once who was roundly abused by a gang of mischievous young men. He said, "Carry on! Enjoy yourselves! I see that you are very happy at the chance. This is exactly what I desire for you." When you do not accept the insult some one casts on you, it goes back to the person who indulged in it first; a registered letter that is not accepted returns to the sender. Do not damage your mental peace, by receiving the letter and reading the contents. Refuse to receive it. You have a chance of correcting the wrong-doers too; accept it and you join the gang of mischief-makers. So, be warned!

Perform duty as an act of worship

When God is recognised as dwelling within, every one will perform his duty. as an act of worship. Children have to revere their parents, that is their duty. Parents have to bring up their children as bright and willing citizens capable of earning their own food and helping others in distress; if they shirk this duty, they have failed in their worship. They should not also spoil them by allowing them too much of freedom and catering to their fancies. I know many parents who dote on their children, and admire them when they learn

the bad habits of gambling or drinking! They do not curb them, when they swagger about in the bazars, teasing and bullying those who pass by. They do not instil into the young minds the attitude of reverence towards property belonging to others. As a consequence, their children land themselves in trouble, and then, the parents repent and curse themselves for their unpardonable foolishness.

Lean on your own strength and skill

There is also another responsibility that devolves upon the parent. He must live the householder's life, as laid down in the Dharma Shasthras (Scriptures on Righteousness), so that a picture of a pure happy life may be imprinted on the young mind. If the parent is a drunkard; a gambler, and a cheat, no amount of textbook ethics can cure the son. I like children and the young innocents. I will not allow them to be blamed. The fault lies wholly on the shoulders of the elders, the parents the leaders who shape the norms which they imbibe. Dhritrashtra, the blind father, encouraged his hundred sons in their nefarious plots to bring about the destruction of the five Pandava cousins and thus paved the way for their own total annihilation. He did not teach them by precept and example, the lessons of love, sacrifice and contentment. Do not lean upon others; lean on your own strength and skill. Live on your own earnings, your own resources. Self-reliance is the best food for growing young men. It is best to live with honour for just a day than with dishonour for many decades; better a short lived hamsa (swan) than a century-lived crow. The hamsa is adored by all; the crow is detested and stoned off. Do not crave for the property of others or for things that can be got by trickery or dishonourable means. Earn by the sweat of your brow, then, you can be proud and happy, when you spend it.

Life is a mosaic of pleasure and pain

Then again, I will advise children not to read horror comics, books on crime and sex, and novels of vice and wickedness. Avoid also films, for though they may be advertised as very educative and inspiring, the producers, in their greed for profits, smuggle in low vulgar debasing scenes in order to please

raw untrained minds. Don't allow the virus of vice to infect your brains. If that happens you descend to levels worse than the beasts. Do not imagine that it will be possible for you to live happily, without any anxiety or bother. Do not build castles in the air, and hope to live in them. Life is a mosaic of pleasure and pain; grief is an interval between two moments of joy, peace is the interlude between two wars. You have no rose, without a thorn; the diligent picker will avoid the pricks, and gather the flower. There is no bee without the sting; cleverness consists in gathering the honey nevertheless. Troubles and travail will haunt you, but you must not allow them to deflect you from the path of duty and dedication. When you go back after some years here to your villages, seek out the Sathya Sai Seva Samithi or Bhajana Mandali, in the place; join that Sathsang (good company). Share the Anandha (bliss) of the seva (voluntary service) that they do - visit the patients in the hospitals, read nice story books sitting by the side of the patients in the beds, write letters for them, and generally be kind and friendly to them in their loneliness and pain. Go to the slum areas, move like lighted lamps full of love and sympathy, and help the people there to get things done which will improve their health, add to their income, and advance their education. When the sugar of Divine thoughts is added to the routine tasteless water of daily life, it becomes sherbet, and delightful to drink. So, do so yourself and help others to do so.

Man is the image of God; when you injure His image, when you discard him, or dishonour him, or keep him at arm's length, how can God confer Grace on you? "Mine is mine, yours in yours"- if you declare, God too will keep you beyond the reach of His love. Annie Besant said once that more than man seeking God, it is truer to say that God is ever seeking man, a man who loves and serves His Children, and treats them as endearingly as He does.

Look out for chances to serve others

Many are dispirited at their poverty, or misfortune; they hang their heads and fold their arms, and blame God for their plight. It is like the magnet and the piece of iron. The iron weeps that the magnet does not draw it. "I have no legs to walk, no wings to fly, no muscles to crawl or creep! How can I reach the magnet?" it wails. The magnet replies, "you are encrusted with rest, dust,

and layers of mud; get rid of them and automatically, without any other ado, you can contact me and be with me for ever." It is sheer audacity to say, with all the rust and dust on, that God has no power to grant Grace; nor is it a sign of intelligence to say that God has no compassion in Him. Examine yourselves, purify the heart and fill it with love towards all men and God will be with you.

God is not somewhere away from you, some one distinct from you. He is in you, before you, behind you, beckoning, guiding, guarding, warning, prompting, the Inner Voice speaking ever with you. You need not seek Him, He is there ready to respond to the call from the heart. Call on Me and I am always by your side. Prizes were given today only to a few boys; I wish to give prizes to all of you, when next I come. So behave that the Grace is deserved. Look out for chances to serve others, speak soft and sweet, revere your teachers and all elders, study well to the best of your abilities, do not waste a single moment in idle talk or pastimes. That is the message I leave with you today.

The world is a huge house of correction

Dear Children, Embodiments of Purity and Holiness, I am glad I am able to meet you again and spend some time with you. Bhagavantham said that this day is My birthday, being the Monday of the month Karthik, the day according to the Hindhu Calendar Celebrations at Puttaparthi and elsewhere are done on the 23rd of November, since that is the date according to English Calendar. But, Bhagavantham said that you must congratulate yourselves on this coincidence.

Four days are said to be days of luck; man must be congratulated if he gets this luck.

The first is the day on which brothers and sisters, kith and kin are sitting around and attending a domestic festival showering joy on all.

The second is the day on which one gets the chance to feed the hungry, the

distressed and the defectives who cannot earn the wherewithal for livelihood.

The third is the occasion when one gets the atmosphere and the opportunity to meditate on God.

The fourth is the day on which a great person comes to us and instructs and inspires towards the higher life of the spirit.

They feed the mind with anandha (divine bliss) and teach us to overcome the obstacles towards God-realisation. You have today the great good fortune of being in the Divine presence, a gift which is the most precious man can acquire. Chance circumstances have brought you into this remand home; but, do not get disheartened. The others who consider themselves free are also in jail, for, the world is a huge house of correction. When a prisoner is transferred from one place of confinement to another, say, from Rajamundhry to Warangal, he will have a police constable on each side of him, isn't? Whenever he moves about, these two will be with him. When he can journey without these two, all alone, then, he is free. All men have two constables ever with them; they are the symbols of his sentence of imprisonment. They are abhiman and mamakar - the egoistic feeling and the pride of possession.

You can ever be free from worries and fears

Man is a prisoner of his senses so long as these two keep him under guard. Man strays away into misery and pain, because he loses the sense of value, and runs after the temporary and the trivial. He ignores the voice of God that warns and guides from within, and pays the penalty for the transgression. Life is to be dedicated not for mere food and drink, or mere catering to the cravings of the senses. It has to be devoted to the attainment of the anandha that God alone can confer. Of course, worries and fears there will always be, along the road that you take from birth to death. But, you can ever be free from both, provided you have as the Giver of Light, the name, Sai Ram. At least from now on, recite the name and dear children, you will have joy and peace. Never care for the obstacles that may come your way; the name will clear the path. The Gopees (milkmaids) of Brindavan were chastised and

punished by their parents, parents-in-law and even husbands for taking the name of Krishna, but, they had the name printed on their hearts, just like the pictures in the books you read, and they could not remove the Name, just as you would find it impossible to remove the picture from the paper! When you have the Name in your heart and on your tongue, you will never go astray, your hand will be clean, your eyes will be bright, your face will beam with courage and self-confidence. Man has been endowed with jnana (spiritual knowledge), the capacity to distinguish what is good and bad, for himself, for the family into which he is born and for which he is indebted for bringing him up until adulthood when he was a helpless dependent stripling, for the village where he first saw light, for the country which gave him the rich heritage of culture, and **for** humanity of whom he is a valuable, a significant member.

God will never desert His obligation

Every culture has a body of customs and conventions laid down by the sages, to maintain peace and prosperity in the community. They are tested in the crucible of experience, and they are often grouped under the word, Dharma (duties). Or, they are known as neethi (ethics). To go against them-is to break the rule which binds man to man, and man to God. When you have not grown enough and understood how hard it is to work and earn the fruits of work, it strikes you as easy to take hold of some one else's book or pencil or money and derive satisfaction therefrom. This tendency leads you to trouble, and to this place. Resist that temptation; be bold; tell yourselves that it is wrong, it will disgrace your parents, the reputation of your family, of your village, of your country and its ancient culture. If you feel you must have something to be happy, pray to God; "God! You have the responsibility to keep me healthy, happy, good and intelligent; give me this thing, which I believe is necessary for my happiness; but, if you think, I am wrong, give me whatever you think best." God will never desert His obligation; He will feed you and foster you. Once a sanyasin (ascetic) was proceeding to the forest for austerities, so that he may win the Grace of God. He saw a cow being led by a villager; drops of milk were shedding from its udder! He asked the villager, why? The reply was, "She is about to calve; this is the indication; the milk is already flowing so that the calf may have its milk, as soon as it is born." The sanyasin then realised

that God will give him, too, wherever he was, the thing most needed for his progress; He knows best, He is all-knowing, He is compassion itself, he felt; so, he turned back and contented himself with prayers and the constant contemplation of God as Providence.

Food got by foul means will injure you

Have patience; do not in your hurry to enjoy cheap joys fall into error and unrighteous deeds. Have faith that God will add unto you all joys that you desire for and deserve. People ask of men for favours; they extend their hands towards others and plead dhehi (give). But, dhehi also means, "He who dwells in the dheha (body), that is to say, God!" So, don't humiliate that Dhehi by calling out dhehi before others. Ask Him; say dhehi to the Dhehi; He will respond generously, graciously.

Food got by foul means, clothing procured through falsehood, these will only injure you. Do not think that ease and comfort are the main things in life. Disappointment, disease, distress are the lot of all, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, young and old. They are the common lot of all. Let not your pure, immaculate hearts be rendered dirty by falsehood and wrong. Do not soil your tongue using it for uttering dirty words. Utter the name of God; it acts like a spark which can burn into ash a big hill of cotton! All evil thoughts, and wicked plans and plots will disappear like fog before the Sun when the Name of God is remembered sincerely. As soon as you are back in your villages, join the nearest Seva Samithi (service unit) and share in their seva sadhana (effort of service) and spend your days in sathsang (holy company), so that you become good and useful sons of the land. God is the refuge of the forlorn. This day, some devotees came to Me and impressed Me to spend some time with them. But, it is your call that I answered. I have spent more than an hour and half with you; but, I am not satisfied. I am sorry a good deal of time was spent in reaching this place; that could well have been spent with you. You are fortunate to keep Me so long with you. Remember the directions given to you, and start the sadhana of Namasmarana (spiritual discipline of remembering God's Name) this very moment.

Of course, you can and do announce, "I surrender my mind, my thoughts, my feelings and imaginings, to God." But your monkeymind escapes from your hold; how, then, can you capture it and claim it and surrender it to God? What authority do you possess to offer something you are not master of?.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

15. Love is the key

Date: **April 1973** / Location: **Hyderabad**

MAN is so designed that he can derive anandha and maintain it only through association with his kind. To divest oneself of all contacts with others, and tread a lonely path is a sign of weakness, of fear - not of courage. Lively association alone produces morality, justice, compassion, sympathy, love, tolerance, equanimity and many other qualities that toughen and train character, and mould the personality of man. Culture is the consequence of the co-mingling of hearts and heads. A group of individuals, who are charged with hatred or contempt of each other, cannot produce any beneficial effect on any of its components; a common outlook, or rather, a common inlook, is the essential factor, Sama-chintha - the sameness of beliefs, opinions and attitudes - is the prime factor. This Sama-chintha must result in a flood of anandha (divine bliss) that envelops and enthuses the entire group. If the individual knows he is Divine and that all else are equally so, that consciousness is the best bond for Society, that anandha is the best atmosphere to sustain the Society. How can a person who knows that all are Divine keep away from the God He recognises? "I am he, he is I, both I and He are kith and kin in Him." This awareness is so thrilling, so satisfying, so uplifting, that such Society is the noblest Sathsang (holy company) man can ever come into.

This Universe is enveloped in God

Shutting yourself in a room and offering incense and flowers to a picture or image of God, singing or reciting His glory are very poor substitutes for the discipline that will liberate you from ignorance. All beings are images of God; all men are His pictures; then, why shut yourselves in? All creation is marching on a pilgrimage to Him; why then behave as if you are trekking it alone? You believe that the time spent in church or temple or the domestic shrine in adoration and in ritual worship is devoted to God and the rest is spent for other purposes. But, you cannot demarcate and delimit the realms of God and man like that. God is ever with you everywhere.

Vasudhevassarvamidham - "All this is God." Society is the school where this lesson is taught to those who earnestly seek. The sages of this land resorted to the hermitages in the forests, and mixed with the steadfast seekers there is scholastic discussion and disciplinary practices. They drew inspiration and instruction from each other, and learnt the Truth, Ishavasyam idham jagath - "This Universe is enveloped in God" - that God is the string on which the worlds are strung. When man gives up his conceit and becomes nature's pupil, rather than its tyrannical master, he can hear her voice advising, admonishing, and illuminating. Man has all the resources he needs in himself. He can tap them by identifying them and manifesting them, and by sharing them with others. He is Sath, Chith and Anandha (Being, Awareness, Bliss Absolute); He is Shiva-Shakthi Swaruup (Form of divine-energy). When man extols himself, he is extolling God. Do not cultivate the conviction that you are mere men; be assured that you are destined for Divinity. When Divinity takes on the human form as described in the Ramayana, the Mahabharatha, and the Bhagavatha, one has to interpret the actions as providing examples and lessons, and not as human stories enacted for entertainment.

Mind of man has to be a garden of flowers

The five Pandava brothers are five qualities in human character, all observing the norms set by the eldest, which is the noblest and the most righteous. Rama is the example of the uncompromising adherent of the principle of righteousness, whatever be the temptation to bypass it. Rama was charged with a love that transcended all considerations of advantage, of caste or creed, and extended to animals and birds, human beings. Love is the key to open the doors locked by egoism and greed.

If you allow your behaviour towards others to be contaminated by contempt, scorn, cynicism or hatred, then, you are spoiling the fair name of India, its culture and tradition will not tolerate it. It has proclaimed that God is One, and that He is known and can be known through various names and forms. It has declared that God is installed in the heart of every being. Look at the emblem of the Sathya Sai Organisation! It tells you that the Hindhu, the Muslim, the Parsi, the Buddhist and the Christian are all adoring the same

God for the same consummation. The mind of man has to be a garden of many-coloured flowers, a Nandhanavana. Krishna will certainly delight in dancing there, and playing on the enchanting Flute in the bowers of that garden. A heart saturated with love of God can never entertain thoughts of violence. It is sheer hypocrisy, to kneel before God and, then, force men to kneel before you. God is love, God is peace: God is strength. How can a person be in contact with God, and yet, be proud and acrimonious? Agitated and angry? Weak and vacillating? His claim to be in contact with God is only a laughable foible; it cannot be true. A tree is judged by its fruit. Leaders of peoples have to develop this universal feeling of love, not limited to political boundaries which change from decade to decade, or religious labels which are affixed and erased to suit temporary needs. The prayer that rose from millions in this country from all its temples, yajnasalas, theerthas, holy seafronts, shrines and altars for centuries, has been Sarve janah sukhino bhavanthu - "Let all the 'peoples of the world be happy and prosperous;" samastha lokah sukhino bhavanthu - "May all the worlds have peace and prosperity." So, pray for all humanity, for the welfare and happiness, the peace and progress of Russia, China, Africa, Pakistan, all countries of the world, and all beings everywhere.

Love as thought is Truth. Love as action is Right living. Love as feeling is Peace. Love as understanding is Non-violence.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

16. The garden of God

Date: **April 1973** / Location: **Hyderabad**

MAN has to recognise his indebtedness to society and his duty towards it; this is the best way to solve the troubles of the day. Attention is paid only to arguments and counter-arguments, propositions and oppositions, plans and programmes; the aim of the egocentred is more to win a verbal victory than achieve a valid target. No attempt is made to foster the social virtues of honesty, tolerance and cordiality. Society is the expression of Divinity into manifold phases, with its love, its ardour, its eagerness to comfort and console. A chance conglomeration of humans does not become a society. It has to be welded into a unity by the consciousness of kinship of God, by the sharing of each other's joys and sorrows, and the cultivation of Samarasa (empathy). The individual has to manifest through word and deed, the Anandha (Divine bliss) inherent in him and in society. Turning the beads of a rosary between the fingers or sitting erect contemplating the tip of the nose are only harmless ways of spending time; active participation in society in a spirit of dedication and surrender, conceiving all acts as acts of worship, all men as embodiments of the Supreme, is a more beneficial form of sadhana (spiritual discipline). For, there is no spot where He is not, no object which is not He. For, as the Shruthi (holy scripture) declares, He willed that He become all this! Worship, adoration, and pilgrimage cannot be the end-all! The goal is the realization of "I am He, He is I." That alone can fill the heart will Bliss.

Dharma fosters those who foster it

When you separate yourself as an individual, envy, resentment, jealousy and pride start defiling you. Love alone can weld you into kinship with all. You are Shivashakthi - the latent-potent, positive-negative, inert-alert principle. Be ever cognisant of this secret truth about yourself. Dhivakarla Venkatavadhani recited verses welcoming Me, in which he piled praise on praise. Of course, the style was sweet and the sentiment, sincere. When once you transcend the human scale, and reach out to the Divine, the eagerness to adore will drop off. You can evoke the Divine in you by adherence to dhama (righteousness);

that is the message of the Mahabharatha. Weighed down by sorrow, Arjuna one day laid all the blame on his eldest brother Dharmaraja. He said, "On account of you our dear mother is separated from us, our wife is disgraced in the open court, my only son is slaughtered by our wolfish cousins, our dynasty is forced into exile and our heritage is stolen before our very eyes." Dharmaraja replied, "When you blame me, remember you are blaming dharma; no one can ever suffer through dharma. Dharma fosters those who foster it. The pain which Dharma inflicts is a blessing, it is a shower of joy. Since we have stuck to Dharma God will fight our battle and win victory for us."

To attain God, Love is enough

God is the embodiment of compassion. He watches for a grain of goodness or humility so that He can reward it with tons of Grace. In a certain temple for Shiva, the priest had silver basin with a hole in its base for water to drip continuously. He filled it with water and hung it over the Lingam (the idol of Shiva) so that the God who swallowed the poison which would have destroyed the Universe could be cooled and comforted! Even at night when the doors of the shrine were locked by the priest as he went home, the silver basin of water, was in its position. So, a thief broke into the sacred apartment; his eyes were on the silver: he could not reach the rope that kept the basin in position; so, he climbed on the Lingam itself in order to take the costly booty down. Even as he was standing on the holy idol Shiva manifested Himself in all His glory before him, saying, "Son! I appreciate your surrender; you have cast on me your entire burdan!" The thief prayed that Shiva may help him to secure the silver;-there was no ladder or bench or any other article on which he could climb. So, the Lingam was his only refuge.. Once a Guru sent a pupil for further guidance to a mendicant in a Shiva temple. When he reached the temple, he found the fellow reclining in the central shrine with both his legs resting on the sacred Lingam. The pupil was naturally enraged at the man's insolence; when he spoke angrily against the behaviour, the man said, "Please lift my legs and place them where the Lingam is not." When he did so, there was a Lingam under the feet in the new position. Wherever he deposited the man's legs, a Lingam rose to give them rest! That was the

lesson the beggar taught him - God is everywhere; only win the vision to see Him so. To attain God, feats of hard Sadhana are superfluous. Love is enough; avoid hating, envying or even disliking anyone. Put love into practice, through seva (selfless service). When the loveliness of the seed blooms, you have the flower. And God is the loveliness which blooms as mani In the Geetha the Lord has announced, "I am the Seed of all Beings" - "Beejam mam sarva bhoothanam." When the seed is immortality, the tree too is immortal, the flower and the fruit are immortal. When He is rasa (juice), sweetness and love, all His manifestations are sweet and loving. When He is light, nothing can be dark. When He is Chaithanya, Chith (Supreme, Awareness), nothing can be Jada (insentient), without awareness or intelligence or consciousness.

The Universe is a pleasant garden

You may pride yourselves on being God-minded and Godward-bound; but your pride proclaims that God is only on the circumference of your activity. You must be humble; you must not limit God to any particular Name and Form. How can you fix a label on God and compel Him to conform to your specifications.:' Study the emblem of the Sathya Sai Organisation; it declares that all faiths feed the heart with anandha, all faiths cleanse the mind of littleness, all faiths confer courage on the weak and the vacillating. The Universe around you is a pleasant garden full of charming patches of many-hued flowers filled with fragrance and nectarine elixir - each flower-bed being a Religion, which attracts the loyalty of millions of seekers. The garden too is God; God dances in that garden at His own handiwork, gladdening the flowers with the magic melody of the flute. Be full of joy and love; share that joy and love with all. If you utter "God, God," and inflict pain on man, you will be spumed as a cheat. You need not cry out God, God! But, if you confer joy on brother man, God will respond with His presence, though uninvited. There are, however, many in positions of authority-and influence who adore God and, at the same time, abhor mani They behave as if their God is a person of very limited intelligence who-can be easily deceived, who will. take their words at their face value and never look behind them for the motive and the. intention. Believe that God resides in all beings; speak such words, as would spread goodness, truth and beauty; do such acts as would promote the

happiness and prosperity of all; pray that. all worlds have peace. Expand yourselves; do not contract into your own tiny individuality. Expand into Universal love, unshaken equanimity, and ever-active virtue. That is the Path which will bring out the Divinity in you to the fullest.

Swami is always with you, in you and around you. When all differences are eradicated and devotees in Sai Organisations conduct themselves with selfless devotion, you will all realise that Swami and you are one.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

17. The ladder and the steps

Date: 21 May 1973 / Location: Brindavan

INDIA was the nursery of heroes who adventured into the realms of the spirit, and achieved victories against the forces of evil; they opened up the paths to God that are described in the texts of Sanathana Dharma (Eternal Universal Religion). India is the sacred land from where the Voice of the Vedas (sacred scriptures) rang over the world. It is the land which still retains the splendour of Yoga (Divine communion), and the glory of Renunciation. But, every Indian has now to question himself whether he is aware of this fact and whether he is helping by his acts, words and thoughts to promote that glory and that splendour. One has to admit that the glory is being dimmed, the splendour is fast fading out. The Gayathri Manthra (Vedhic prayer to illuminate the intellect), enjoined on all, because it is the crucial manthra (sacred formula) of the Vedas, has become a ritual of holding the nose while mumbling illegible sounds. Pranayama (breath-control) and its later stage of Prathyahara (the control of the senses and of their listless pursuit of external pleasure) are discoverable only in dictionaries. Yama and Niyama (abstention from evil doing and various observances of devotion to God) - the first steps in spiritual discipline are not practised at all, even by those who claim to teach and guide. Members of the monastic order, who have vowed to detach themselves completely from worldly involvements and attachments are running about frantically; accumulating and investing money, with even greater fanaticism than householders. One wonders whether this is the same land that one reads about, the land that held high the ideals of the spirit.

Shankara's mission to revitalise Hindhu Dharma

With the return of Krishna to His abode after the incarnation interlude, the Age of Kali darkened the world. Many preceptors', saints and sages tried subsequently to remind the people of their heritage and guide them along the ancient path. Of these, Shankara, who realised the weakness of a dualistic interpretation of the Universe - and the need for a unifying philosophy, was the most effective. He was born in the village of Kaladi, situated in the Kerala

State. Initiated into the Gayathri Manthra in his fifth year he mastered the Vedas and their supplementary texts on grammar, logic, prosody, astrology, etc., and in his fourteenth year itself, he ventured forth on his mission of counteracting the forces of doubt, dissent and denial and establishing faith, wisdom and devotion throughout the land. He encountered many scholars reputed for their dialectical skill and convinced them of the validity of the non-dualistic basis of the subjective and objective worlds. He wrote commentaries on the Upanishaths (metaphysical scriptures), the Bhagavath Geetha (The Song-teaching of Lord Krishna) and the Brahma Suuthras (aphorisms on Supreme Spirit) - generally accepted as the authentic texts of the Hindu faith. He dedicated his short life of 32 years to the revitalisation of the Sanathana Dharma (Eternal Universal Religion).

The weapon to destroy the delusion

When Shankara was residing at Varanasi (Benares City) on the banks of river Ganga with his pupils, he used to visit the Pandiths in their own houses, and draw them into beneficial conversation on themes of philosophy. One day, when he went to a Pandith, he found him immersed in complicated rules of grammar. When asked why he had taken up the intensive study of grammar, he replied that it would easily fetch him a few pieces of silver. "If I am designed a Pandith, I can go to the home of some big Zamindars, and hope to receive alms and offerings from them, for the upkeep of my large family," he said. Shankara advised him in appropriate terms, and charged him with self-confidence and courage. Returning to his hermitage, Shankara wrote a verse summarising the advice he gave the poor struggling Brahmin householder: Bhaja Govindham, Bhaja Govindham, Bhaja Govindham, Mooda Mathe, Samprapthe Sannihithe Kale Nahi Nahi Rakshathi Dukrn karane. "Praise God, Praise God, Praise God, you fool, When death does knock at door, rules of grammar cannot save." Shankara exhorted his pupils to disseminate the ideal of this verse, and they too, responded with verses on the same lines, each of the 14 contributing one verse. Shankara added another twelve of his own, as well as four more verses about the transformation that the teaching would confer. Thus, there are 31 verses in all, in the text called Bhaja Govindham or Moha Mudgaram. The latter name means, "The weapon with which delusion

can be destroyed." Each one is a step in the ladder which lifts man into God. The study of these verses and the inspiration derived from them will promote discrimination and detachment, and thus, prepare the mind for the vision of the Supreme. You have to be initiated into these disciplines now itself, when you are young and entering on the adventure of living, and so, I have decided to expound to you one verse a day, during this Summer Course.

"Those who deny the Atma are fools" says Shankara

Shankara addressed these verses to "mooda mathi" (The foolish person). Now, who are these fools? He has given the answer in another context: 'Nasthiko mooda uchyaathe' - "Those who deny the atma are fools." Those who assert and believe that "I am not this perishable body; I am not this feeble intellect; I am the undying, everlasting, all-knowing, all-inclusive Atma" are few indeed. The vast majority assert and believe that "I am the moulder of my destiny, I am the captain of my ship. I choose my likes and dislikes, I fulfil my desires through my own efforts." These are the fools.

But, even this vast majority pay taxes in ordinary life for the water they use, the electricity they consume, the houses they live in, and the professions they are engaged in. Now, what tax are they paying to Him who provides them with the essential requisites for mere living - the Sun, the Moon, Fire, Water, Air, Space, etc? Those who do not recognise the giver, the provider, the principle, the person, they are the fools. Scientists can weigh, measure, and analyse materials that already exist. They can, by means of permutations and combinations, put into currency strange forms and shapes from out of existing matter. But, they cannot create oxygen or hydrogen or any other thing anew. That can happen only through the Will of God. Without any matter originally supplied, no scientist can deal with things from the very beginning. They are helpless in the realm beyond earth, water, fire, air and space, the subject matter of the senses. Their activities are confined to nature, which is but the part-manifestation of the Divine. The verse with which Shankara started off the Moha Mudgaram speaks of the moment of the approach of the end of life. This indicates that of all the fears of man, the fear of death is the fiercest as well as the most foolish. For, none can escape

death, having committed the error of birth. To get rid of the wheel of birth and death, awareness of the undying unborn Atma which is one's Reality is the only method available to man. So, Shankara advises man to pray to Govindha. He refers to God as Govindha. Govindha means, "He who is the Cowherd." Man is both an animal and divine being. He has risen from the animal level and is on the way to reveal his divinity. He should be vigilant that he does not slide into animal again. Man alone can rise into Godhood, for, he is equipped with the endowment needed for the achievement.

18. Friends you need

Date: 24 May 1973 / Location: Brindavan

WHILE in this transient world, wading through joy and grief, man has sore need of some one of his kind to whom he can communicate his feelings, with whom he can share his discoveries and depressions, his moments of bliss and sorrow, to be by his side while trekking the hard road to truth and peace, encouraging and enthusing him towards the goal. Who is one's true friend? Who is one's false, fake friend? It is clear that, as understood today, friendship and friends are far off the mark, of the ideal. Friends who can confer real counsel, comfort and consolation are precious gifts, rarely found today. A friendship knit by monetary bonds is disrupted as soon as you ask the loan to be repaid. So, when you oblige your friend with a loan, the friendship too is broken at that very moment. How can friendship be cemented by words or by coins? Heart must understand heart, heart must be drawn to heart, if friendship must last. Friendship must bind two hearts and affect both of them beneficially, whatever may happen to either - loss or gain, pain or pleasure, good fortune or bad. The bond must survive all the blows of fate, and be unaffected by time, place and circumstance. Each must correct the other; for each knows that they come from sympathy and love. Each must be vigilant that the other does not slide from the ideal, cultivate habits that are deleterious, or hide thoughts and plans that are productive of evil. The honour of each is in the safe keeping of the other. Each trusts the other and places reliance on the other's watchful love. Only those deserve the name "friends" - who help in uplifting life, cleansing ideals, elevating emotions and strengthening resolves. Those who drag you into pomp, pedantry, paltry entertainment and petty pranks are enemies, not friends. Friends cannot be got by social status, financial squandermania, outer scintillation and verbal assertions. See into the very soul, the inner motives and motivator, the deeper aspirations and achievements, and then, yield your loyalty to such.

The friendship between Kuchela and Krishna

You might have heard of the friendship between Kuchela and his 'class-mate'

Krishna. How could the friendship between these two survive the immense gap between their worldly positions and their spiritual status. Krishna was God Incarnate. Kuchela was a mere man. Krishna was a ruler, a king-maker, an unsurpassed hero, monarch, and preceptor. Kuchela was so poor that he was ever at his wit's end to procure his next meal. They **had** studied together for a few years at the hermitage of the sage Sandeepani. That had sown the seed of friendship. So, his wife sent him to Krishna, assuring him that he would not be turned from the door. Kuchela agreed to proceed but he hesitated long to send word that he had come, even when the guardsmen enquired why he had come and who he was. How could he, a broken, bent, befogged beggar dare stand before the Lord in His palatial Hall with its jewelled throne, and announce himself as a 'friend'? He was aghast at his own audacity.

God only can be the true friend of man

But, all his fears melted away, when Krishna recognised hint and came forward to receive him warmly and with evident joy. Krishna filled him with supreme bliss by His words. His acts of hospitality and His attitude of hearty welcome. Krishna also blessed his wife with enormous wealth and comfort, peace, prosperity, in quantity much more than ever she hoped for or prayed for. No one asked Hint for it; but, His love took that shape, His Grace awarded them the happiness. But, Kuchela was ever content with the friendship of Krishna; he never desired anything other than that. He was overwhelmed with delight when he experienced the compassion and love of the Lord.

The feeling of friendship must activate every nerve, permeate every blood-cell, and purify every emotional wave; it has no place for the slightest trace of egotism. You cannot elevate the companionship which seeks to exploit or fleece for personal benefit into the noble quality of friendship. Perhaps, the only friend who can pass this rigorous test, is God. To understand and practise this noble emotion, the Bhagavath Geetha is an invaluable guide. When Arjuna was dispirited and dejected, Krishna injected courage and a high sense of duty into him and helped him avoid disgraceful defeat. And, Arjuna, too like a good friend, took the advice in good spirit, with the full confidence

that Krishna meant well by him. Why, we know how confident he was of the wisdom and power inherent in Krishna. When Krishna gave him the choice, "To help you in battle, you can have either my entire army or myself alone, unarmed and determined not to fight in spite of any provocation." And, Arjuna did not hesitate to decide which of these two he wanted. He chose the unarmed Krishna, and prayed that He might be his charioteer, during the days when he rode into the field.

Friends who stand witness for ages

Long ago, there was a person who had three friends. Quite by accident,, he was charged for some crime and a warrant was issued against him by the Court. He. approached one friend and asked him to bear witness to his innocence. He said, "I will not move out of this house; I can help you only from within this." The second friend said, "I can come only upto the porch of the Court. I will not enter the witness box." The third friend said, "Come, I shall speak for you, wherever you want me to." The first friend is the 'property and possessions' which can bear witness only from within the house. The second is 'the kinsmen, the members of the family, who come as far as the cemetery but would not accompany the person to the Judgement Seat. The third, friend is the fair name earned by one's-"virtues and service," which persist even after the death and burial; they stand witness for ages, and announce the innocence and greatness of the individual. They decide the nature of the next birth too. Young as you are, you must make efforts to acquire good friends and keep them. Do not postpone this task, listening to some elders who advise that the path of spirituality can well be trodden later when you have retired from active life. They say that you can take on hand the Bhagavath Geetha, when you have grown old. But, that advice is like telling a nation that it can afford to wait till war is declared, to train an army to counter the enemy. Long years of preparation are needed to have an army that can meet any 'contingency; otherwise, if arms are distributed to the untrained, it spells disaster even to the persons wielding the arms.

Have God as your unfailing guide and friend

The good deeds and thoughts that one welcomes and entertains during the years of life will stand in good stead, firm, like a good friend, when one is nearing the end. So, you, young men and women, must resolve to engage yourselves in acts that promote your peace and progress and the peace and progress of all mankind. Do not damage your future by pursuing temporary benefits and selfish aggrandizement. Yearn for and earn good friends, who will keep you on an even keel. Have above all, God, as your unfailing guide and friend. The heart of the Gopees had struck deep roots in the love of Krishna and when Akrura came to Gokul to take Krishna with him to Mathura, the Gopees struggled heroically, to keep Him with themselves. They held on to the steeds of the chariot; they gripped the wheels and sought to prevent them from moving. Friendship is the expression of unshakeable love, love that is noble, pure, free from desire or egoism. I bless you that you may have such friendship from others and that you too make others happy by granting this holy type of friendship.

19. Light on lights

Date: 25 October 1973 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Diwali

SOME days in the year are marked out as Holy days, in the calendars of all human communities. They are distinguished by greater attention being paid for worshipping deities, propitiating the deceased, praying to the forces of nature and similar elevating spiritual exercise. They are occasions to remind man of the God without and the God within. Such holy days are prescribed and observed in India also, along with other festival days. One such festival is Deepavali, the Festival of Lights, which people are celebrating today.

Deepavali means a garland or festoon of lights, the most characteristic way in which the festival is observed by all. Illumination, such as is done today, is a sign of victory, or triumph over some foe or some obstacle to happy living. It is a way of expressing one's joy and attracting the attention of others to one's achievement of unexpected happiness. Festivals of which illumination is a part are found among the Parsis, the Christians and the Muslims. They are celebrated in Malaysia, Nepal, Japan and a host of other countries.

There are countless legends which seek to explain the origins of Deepavali. In Northern India, it is believed to be the Day when Sri Rama was crowned Emperor after his return from exile. In Kerala, it is believed to be the day when Emperor Bali, who was allowed to visit the erstwhile kingdom just for one day in the year, is welcomed by his grateful subjects. The Lord had trampled him down into the nether regions, as a punishment for his egoistic expansive programme of conquest; but, He melted a little when he pleaded for mercy, and allowed him to return to earth for just one day out of three hundred and sixty-five days. On that day his subjects could welcome him, with illumination and fire-works.

Discard worn-out prejudices on Deepavali Day

The most widely current among the legends refers to the demon Naraka whom Lord Krishna, accompanied by His Consort, Sathyabhama or Sathya,

destroyed in battle, this day. Naraka was the son of Mother Earth, as the story goes, of Bhoomatha. She asked for a boon from the Lord, that the Day should be observed, in his memory, as a day of light or joy and the sharing of joy by one and all.

Therefore, hundreds of tiny lamps are lit this evening and kept in rows before and within every home in India; but, few are the lamps that are lit in the cavity of the heart to destroy the darkness that lies thick within. Deepavali is the day when old clothes are discarded and new ones worn; when the home and its precincts are swept clean, given a new look, and made to appear fresh and fine. Flowers are arranged in lovely designs in each room and in the courtyard; festoons of green add charm to every door. But, even while doing all this, attention has to be paid to the discarding of worn-out prejudices, the adoption of new habits of love and mutual respect, the freshening of one's attitude towards one's kith and kin, brothers and sisters of all creeds and castes, the hanging of festoons of friendship and fraternity over the door sill of the heart. This will make the Festival really meaningful and fruitful; it will be saved from the calumny of being an occasion for only pomp and barren hilarity.

Profound meaning of Narakasura Legend

Who exactly is this Naraka, the demon Naraka-asura, let us inquire. He is described as a tyrant, who had no reverence towards elders and saints, who was afflicted with a severe type of landhunger, who looted and plundered unchecked, who carried away princesses and damsels by the hundred and threw them into prison without any compunction, and who never repented for any of his crimes and sins. When the good men of the world appealed to Lord Krishna for succour, He invaded his kingdom, laid siege to his capital City, and overwhelming his forces, allowed His Queen, Sathya, to slay him on the battlefield.

This legend has a profound under-current of meaning, which you should not miss. Naraka is an *a-sura* (a demonic person). His City is named, *Prak-jyothhisha-pura* - prak means, the previous, jyothi means, light; and sha

means, forgetting and ignoring. So the City's name means: the city of those who have laid aside the previous or ancient light. That is to say, the city of those who are ignorant of Atmic splendour. No wonder they are demons. No wonder they were lustful, full of hatred, greed, envy and egotism. They had become so lost in their sins that Lord Krishna did not vouchsafe to give them the honour of being killed by his Hands. He directed Sathya to destroy them. Yes. Ignorance so fundamental and so deep can be destroyed only by the sword of *Sathya* (Truth).

The lamp is also the symbol of the Atma

Egoism is of earth, earthy; not of heaven, heavenly. So Naraka is the son of Earth. And, he is called Naraka, Nara means, man, who knows his *manas* (mind), who practises *manana* (discrimination of reflection on what he has heard and what he has been taught). But Naraka which means hell, is the name appropriate to one who believes he is the body and toils to cater to its needs and its clamour. When man grows in physical strength, economic power, mental alacrity, intellectual scholarship and political authority and does not grow in spiritual riches, he becomes a danger to society and a calamity to himself. He is a Naraka to his neighbours and his kin. He sees only the many, not the One; he is drawn by the scintillating manifold into the downward path of perdition.

A-suras (demons) have another name in Samskrith *Nakthancharas* - those who move about in the dark. This is a fair description of their pathetic condition. They have no light to guide them; they do not recognise that they are in the dark; they do not call out for light; they are unaware of the light. Their intellect has become the bonds slave of their passions and their senses, instead of establishing itself as their master. When at last, truth appears before them and overwhelms them, they recognise the One and merge happily in it. The lamp is not merely the symbol of the knowledge to Truth. It is also the symbol of the One, the Atma that shines in and through all this multiplicity. Just as with one lamp, a thousand lamps can be lit and the One is as bright as ever in spite of the thousands deriving light from it, so too, the *Atma* (soul-spirit) illumines the *jeeva* (individual self) and shines in and

through them, without undergoing any diminution in its splendour.

The Atma is the cause; all else are effects.

The lesson that Deepavali teaches man

Naraka sought to act freely, as his emotions and passions dictated. But, the Samskrith word used for this kind of license has another and deeper meaning: *Sva-iccah*, one's desire, means, the desire, if at all, only for merger absorbing the sparks that have emanated from it, the waves that play upon its surface. The Upanishads call upon man to roam about in the jungle of life as the King of Beasts, the Lion, and not as panic-stricken cowardly sheep ashamed to lift its head. Face the six foes that are ferociously gnawing the heart of man - lust, anger, attachment, pride, hatred, greed - and be Man, Nara, not Naraka, who cringes before these foes and tries to propitiate them by yielding to their demands, That is the lesson that Deepavali teaches.

The Vedic Prayer is,

"Thamaso ma jyothir Gamaya," - "From darkness lead me, O Lord, into light."

Lead me from the blindness of ignorance into the vision of the truth. Cleanse the mind and the Truth will be reflected therein. This is not as difficult as some people imagine. The tiny ant can travel hundred miles, if only it puts its legs forward and starts. Faith and steadiness will achieve the rest of the journey. But, if an aeroplane that can fly faster than sound does not rise from the tarmac, it can only be where it is. Each one must first decide on what is worth living for and striving for. For this, one has to meet and converse with elders who have travelled along the same route; one has to taste the bliss of

realisation that their lives express. And, inspired by their example, one must practise what they prescribe, with single-minded confidence.

Lesson taught by careers of Naraka and Bali

When man fails to use his attainments for the welfare of others he becomes a *narakasura* (hellish demon). But, when in a competitive race for individual glory, he spends billions on getting to the Moon and bringing rocks from its crust, instead of feeding millions who starve down below and promoting the prosperity of backward nations, he is only condemning himself. Even the best of things can be misused by men. Ravana, Shisupala, Kamsa, and other demonish persons mentioned in the Indian *puranas* (ancient legends) and epics had vast scholarship, enormous economic and military power and even immense yogic and occult skills won by years of austerity, and disciplined living. But, they could not earn one skill, the skill to suppress the ego, and so, they became too obstinate, too obstructive and too dangerous to be allowed to live and prosper.

The lesson taught by the careers of Naraka and of Bali is that man should be master of his ego if he is to succeed in the art of successful living. Deepavali is also a Day dedicated to the Goddess of Riches, called, Dhanalakshmi. They celebrate the day as Dhanalakshmi Puja day in many States of India. Newspapers highlight the celebrations with big headlines. But, riches when one comes by them, have to be revered as something given on trust, and must be used for the amelioration of the wants of society, and not for personal aggrandizement. When people use it for parading their wealth, they become ludicrous specimens of humanity. How can wealth and scholarship shine, except against the background of virtue and humility? Riches may come or riches may go; scholarship may be acquired or may not be acquired; even joy may come and go. Whatever happens, man must be unmoved, he must not swerve from the path that he has chosen towards the goal.

Sai's message on Festival of Lights

There was a merchant once, who, while walking through the streets of

Benares, was suddenly confronted by two sisters who were frantically quarelling over the issue, who was fairer. They were none other than Dhanalakshmi and her famous sister Dharidhralakshmi, the Goddess of poverty. They stopped the merchant and compelled him to agree to be the judge; they pressed him to pronounce who was the fairer of the two. The merchant feared to say that Dhanalakshmi was fairer, for then, the Goddess of Poverty might inflict her boons on him; he feared to declare that Dhanalakshmi was the fairer, for then her sister, Dharidhralakshmi might deprive him of her favour. So he devised a stratagem, to save his skin. He asked that the sisters walk a few steps, forward and backward, in front of him; he stood silent for a while watching their slow deliberate comings and goings, and then, he asked them to come near him, in order to hear his judgement. He said, "Dhanalakshmi is fairer when she comes towards me; Dharidhralakshmi looks fairer when she goes away from me; How then can I give a definite verdict?" This was a clever reply, framed to escape punishment.

But you should not change the face of truth to please people; utter what you have in mind, act according to the words you utter. That is the safest, the easiest and the most correct procedure. That is how a self-respecting man should behave. Nothing is more right than truth. Do not play false to the God in your being and led into evil through fear or greed. March along, straight, never deviating towards falsehood or trickery. Do not be attached by the glamour of name and form; seek the Atma, with one-pointed zeal. This is the Message I give you on this festival of lights.

You should recognise the truth that man's life should consist of making the journey from the position of 'I' to the position of 'We'. If all the time you simply stay, sit in the place of 'I' you will remain where you are.

This creation is like the bridge which connects man with God. 'I' is one hill. 'God' is another hill. The bridge between the two is the aspect of creation. If you break and destroy the bridge, you can never reach the destination.

I am hoping that you plunge into society and do service to society and thereby use the bridge to reach God.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

20. Body without heart

Date: 15 November 1973 / Location: Brindavan

THE Ocean is a vast mystery. It is boundless and as old as time. It has, in its womb, chaotic whirlpools, raging currents, and it has a face with furious moods. No one can hope to sail over it from one shore to another land-bank, without a sturdy reliable boat. So too, man requires the sturdy boat of Divine Grace to cross the raging ocean of this samsara (ever-changing, ever agitated flow of life). This Ocean too is vast and full of mystery. It has its unplumbed depths! It tosses man about from birth to death and again from death to birth; it inflicts on him many uprisings and downfalls, many illnesses and morbidities; in it roll the waves of desires and resolutions; it frightens man by its monstrous denizens, greed; it draws the reason of man into the whirlpools of doubt.

To equip oneself with the Ocean-worthy boat of Grace, one has to develop in himself the qualities of faith and discipline. One has to clarify and purify the chiththa (past impressions). Time is the gift that God has blessed man with, for this purpose. So, man should use it as an instrument for the clarification and the purification. Contemplating the glories of God, discovering His presence in beauty, goodness and truth seen anywhere, meditating on His Form, repeating His Name - by these means the process can be made successful. Of course, these are not possible without virtuous living and kindness towards all beings. Thus, the mind will be rendered harmless, beneficent and even of great help in one's spiritual pilgrimage. Through the purified mind, one can transmute himself into the divine. Manava (human) can become Madhava (God) Himself. For, it is the destiny and the fight of every human to attain that status and immerse himself in the limitless Anandha (Divine Bliss) that it confers.

Path of devotion will cleanse the mind

All the religions emphasise the importance of devotion and dedication to the Supreme Sovereign. The means of reaching that stage may be different; the

description of the ecstasy that one can experience in the final stage and all along the path may be different; for it is beyond **all** attempts at description. Bhakthi marga (path of devotion to attain liberation), which is only another name for this devotion and dedication, will certainly cleanse the mind. And, the mind will be illumined into divinity.

Man has fallen into ignorance, egoism, and greed, because he has forgotten his real nature, which is unaffected by loss or grief. In truth, man is the embodiment of all the great virtues - love, peace, righteousness and truth. He has not realised this; he runs after low vulgarising pleasures, and so, entangles himself in falsehood, injustice, and violence. He has to cure himself of these by the remedies of thyaga (voluntary sacrifice) and yoga (renunciation and self-control). And, along with these remedies, he must regulate his ways of living and follow the regimen of faith and devotion.

As butter is inherent in milk, God is immanent in the Universe. When it is churned, the butter separates itself and becomes cognisable. So too, by means of love and the discipline of the recitation of the name, God can be concretised. Temples in villages are the places where such concretisation has been effected. The temple is for the village as the heart is for the body. In fact, the temple is conceived on the basis of the body, being the temple man carries about him. A body with no heart, a village with no temple and a tank with no water are all three without function or value. So you must maintain and foster the temple in your village as carefully and as constantly as you attend to your own heart and its condition. When you belch, you get the taste of the food you have eaten; the quality of the bread depends upon the quality of the flour; as the steadfastness in faith is, so is the devotion; as the devotion is, so is the realisation. As your sadhana (spiritual effort) is, so will be the truth revealed to you.

Religion is three-fourths character. Only those who preserve character can be pronounced truly religious.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

21. Choose your God

Date: 23 November 1973 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Birthday - 48

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

Happiness and misery are the consequences of the attributes one cultivates and foster - the three chief ones being Sathwik (selfless equanimous and tolerant), the rajasik (marked by activity, ambition, passion, emotion) and the thamasik (marked by indolence, ignorance, inactivity, sloth, dullness). When Sathwik predominates, one is happy; when Rajasik predominates, one is discontented. When Thamasik qualities are supreme, there can be no joy and no happiness. When the attributes pursue the path of attachment and pleasure, man is bound to the wheels of pain-joy, death-life. If they seek liberation and simplicity, they lead him to love, light and freedom from the birth-death wheel. Man is today caught in doubt and deviation; he does not know which road to follow, and with what preparation. He loses his precious heritage, degrades himself, and denies his Nature which is really Divine.

Mind has to be regulated and controlled by reason

People determine the nature of the Divine through the categories of logic and dialectics. But, intellect cannot grasp it; reason cannot delve into it. For, both are shaped by one's prejudices and predispositions. We appreciate only what we like; we see only what we would like to see. "When prayer is answered and one gets what one desires, God is real; when they are not answered, God is a fake, a figment of the imagination!" Arjuna acclaimed Krishna as the omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient God, when the foe was defeated, day after day. But when his son Abhimanyu was killed in the conflict, he raved in his grief that Krishna had not guided him properly and guarded him

efficiently. His mind wavered with every wind of fortune. To many, the mind is master of the intellect also. One must be vigilant and preserve the impartiality of the instrument called reason or intellect. Clarify reason; then it will reveal God everywhere, even in you. Once you accept God as the core of the Universe and yourself have that faith strong and steady.

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

Reasons for God's incarnations

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

Yes. All are parts of Him. The hand is yours; the fingers are yours; the nails are yours. Why then do you pare and trim the nails? Urine and faeces are in you, of you, but yet you have to get rid of them, to maintain health. Under

certain circumstances, one has to cut off a limb in order to save the body. In fact, the Kauravas were dangerous viruses that had caused a spreading wound; Krishna had to operate them off, through major surgery, with Arjuna as His 'assistant operator,' in order to save the 'body politic' of Bharath. When one is sunk in the slime of 'desire' one cannot distinguish with clarity between 'good' and 'bad.' In order to achieve this, the intellect has to be pure and clear, sharp and straight. There should not be the slightest trace of egotism, envy or greed in the make-up of man; for these will drag the arguments at a tangent. Vacillating minds, wandering eyes - these cannot help the intellect to decide correctly.

Give importance to ideals of tolerance and love

When one chooses a life-partner now-a-days, the first consideration is paid to external beauty and charm. Next, the economic position is taken as the basis. How rich is he or she? How much does he or she earn? Questions like, how far they are educated, what is the social status of the families to which they belong are asked later. Carried off by mere external frills and foppery, people enter into wedlock, and get entangled in misery or a destructive 'family life. The family cannot be stable if it is built on such slender foundation. Prime importance has to be paid to the fundamental requisites of a good character, high ideals of tolerance and forbearance, love and service. When beauty fades or wealth wanes, the bond too becomes less strong. It is same with the God whom you choose, adore, and yearn to live with. You should not choose God for the benefits He can shower on you Do not expect God to satisfy your worldly or materials ambitions; and when they are not realised, do not desert the Path towards God. "Baba, appear in my dream this night," you demand, and if it does not happen He is not Sai Baba, he is Rai Baba (stone Baba) and you go in search of some other God who will be at your beck and call. You must hold on. to your faith, whatever might happen, success or failure, appointment or disappointment. When God is your very core, irremovably fixed in your consciousness, there will be no room for elation or dejection. God is bliss, and when God is the undying spring in you, you will have bliss forever.

The two paths of Bhakthi Yoga

Man has to engage himself in activity, for his upkeep, as well as for the sake of happiness. But he has to choose his activity intelligently and without over-involvement in its consequences. Use the activity to earn what is really good. Seek something supreme, something of the highest value, something that is beyond diminution and decline - that is true bhakthi (devotion). Bhakthi is the love and longing directed to the attainment of such a goal. The means adopted for this are Karma (activity). They are known as Karma Yoga; for Karma becomes Karma Yoga, when activity is disciplined, dedicated and demarcated with skill. True love directed towards God can reveal His reality, and grant the highest Jnana (Supreme Wisdom). A tree has a trunk and the trunk branches far and wide, into boughs, with leaves and flowers. Karma Yoga is the trunk for the tree of life; the branches, leaves and the fragrant flowers symbolise the Bhakthi Yoga; and the ripe fruit and the sweetness, therein, is the Jnana Yoga, the Wisdom. If the tree yields no fruit and if the fruit is not sweet, then, it could as well not grow at all.

Bhakthi can flow along two paths- Saguna Bhakthi and Nirguna Bhakthi. When you feel that God is far away, far higher, far beyond you and when you plead for mercy, petition for Grace, and pray for boons, it is Saguna - you adore Him as Lord and Master, as Guardian and Saviour; you go through the ceremonials of praise, propitiation and prostration, submission and service. But when you practise the discipline of seeing Him in all beings, as the core of every cell or atom, alive and aware, and experience Unity with all Creation (for Creation is but His body and you are also in it and of it) then, it is Nirguna. The Nirguna is the contemplation on the sugar; the Saguna is the adoration of some one sugar doll, which has caught your fancy and attracted your love and loyalty. Among the ceremonials we have the yajna (sacrificial rite), the chief feature described in the Vedas.

Meaning of rites performed in Yajna

An important rite in the Vedhic Yajna is called soma-pa. In order to grasp the tuner significance of the Vedhic or other ceremonials, one has to spend some

thought on symbolism. For example, let us take this Soma-pa itself. Pa means 'drinking' and the rite is generally supposed to indicate the drinking of a juice called soma. No! Soma means the Moon; and the Moon cannot be swallowed or drunk by man. It also means the 'mind' - "the changing mind that waxes and wanes, is never the same for long," That is why the Vedas say that the mind was mothered by the Moon. So, drinking the Moon means the process by which the mind is controlled, made defunct and harmless. That is the purpose of the Yajna - the sacrifice of the whims of the mind for gaining the realm of the Universal Eternal Truth. With the mind left intact, no Yajna is fruitful, for it has a thousand tricks by which it can drag you into perdition.

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

Soak every moment in Love, in God

Cleanse your emotions, passions, impulses, attitudes, reactions. That is the essence of spiritual discipline, as laid down in all 'faiths. Examine your mind, your thoughts; do not seek the fault-ridden person. See only purity. Speak ill of none; and if, you slip into slander, repent and resolve not to give vent to the habit another time. Do not humiliate any one; respect persons for the good in them. Their grief at your behaviour will haunt you during your last moments. Let every act of yours stand as your credential when you quit the world. Let no single act be a drag, or a debit. Soak every moment in Love, that is to say, in God. Of what avail is it to spend hours in dhyana (meditation), if, when you rise and move amongst men, you spread anger, inflict resentment by your

words and deeds? The Geetha asks you to be 'sathatham yoginah' - "ever controlled, ever restrained, ever yoked with the Divine." So, be vigilant, be steady, be earnest. The steady person earns wisdom. By the absence of careful tending, a spark can be nursed into a huge conflagration; by vigilant care, even a conflagration can be reduced to a splutter.

22. Gurus - not teachers

Date: 03 January 1974 / Location: Rajamundry

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

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

Heirs to the richest cultural heritage

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

the country, you do not look forward to monetary or material benefits, and so, you have ample opportunity to make the child's heart and intellect blossom, through the rays of Love. Let Me tell you that most teachers today have specialised in western types of training, and so, they have lost their moorings in our own culture, and so are unaware of the deeper springs of the spirit. They have been rendered materialistic, worldly, and egoistic. They are caught up in the pursuit of sensual pleasure and in the earning of money. They do not know that real education consists in helping the child to manifest the Divinity latent in him. Remember that the children who come to you are all heirs to the richest cultural heritage that the world can give. They are the 'Children of Immortality' extolled as such in the ancient texts by sages and scholars of this land. Do not turn them into experts in mathematics, unable to add up a simple domestic bill; scholars in the geography of America, but, unable to direct a pilgrim who desires to know in which direction Kashi lies; prodigies in algebra who are helpless when asked to define the area of their own rooms; past masters in drill and gymnastics, but, all at sea, when requested to sit in the Padhmasana posture; proficient in Botany, but, ignorant of the uses of the common Thulsi plant, found in the courtyard of every Indian home! They can draw realistic pictures of dogs and foxes, but, their hand-writing remains an illegible scribble. How can we expect that Indian culture will be preserved and fostered by these products of our educational system? The teachers who have brought them to this pass, and the educational administrators who divised the system are both equally to blame.

Be aware of the high purpose of education

Correction of these faults must start with the teachers; they must become aware of the high purpose of education, and the goal to which it must guide the children of the land. I know that great enthusiasm prevails today among both the pupils and teachers of our Bala Vikas classes, for the spiritual ideals cherished in this land since ages. Nevertheless, I must say that there is a great and urgent need for you teachers to receive training in the methods of child education. For example, when teaching the recitation of bhajans or poems or hymns, you have to pay attention to the correct enunciation of each

sound, the correct pronunciation of each letter; for, otherwise, the meaning is liable to be warped out of recognition.

The three R's are most neglected to-day

In olden times, teachers took particular care to explain to the pupils the origins and roots of each new word, even of words like Sah and Thwam. They taught, not only the meaning of the word, but, delved into its roots, and opened up before the pupil a vast vista of related words and a huge expanse of meaningful vocabulary. Since words in Indian languages get transformed when written or pronounced in conjunction with other words, there is a duty cast on you to teach how they are to be separately recognised and identified. Boys may write Ramunithoka pivarudu itlaniye (meaning, "Rama's tail, Pivara spoke thus," (which is absurd), instead of Ramunitho kapivarudu itlaniye, meaning, "With Rama, the Lord of monkeys spoke thus," (which is quite correct).

The word, santha pakodeelu, which I once used to indicate the error involved when people desert the true path and pursue degrading objective pleasures, which I compared to the pakodeelu (savouries) sold in santha (village markets during fairs and festivals), for they attract by their colour, have ruinous components and destroy health. Kasturi who did not know much Telugu, divided the word into santhapa and kodilu, making the meaning absurd, for kodilu means fowls, and shanthapa, like pivarudu, has no meaning at all, being a mere jumble of sounds! Unless training is given in reading aloud, with concurrent attention to the meaning of the words and phrases, such mistakes are bound to recur, The three R's are the skills most neglected today. Writing has also to be taught well, for the knowledge of the correct form of each letter has to be mastered by all. Or else, even here, a tiny slip might change a sublime idea into ridiculous jargon. Rishikoti, when written wrongly in Telugu, as a consequence of the omission of a single upward curve was once mis-shaped into 'bushcoat' and the whole sentence was rendered ridiculous thereby! Scrupulous care and steady attention alone can make the pupils avoid such errors.

Study of books that is worthwhile for children

One point I have to emphasise here is, that you should be careful, while handling some books being published for school use by so-called scholars, at the present time. They cast doubts on the truth of great epics like the Ramayana, and assert that Dhasharatha and Ravana did not exist in authentic history. They characterise them as representatives or symbols of opposing Cultures, the Aryan and the non-Aryan, and sow the seeds of factionalism and hatred. By such writings, children begin to doubt the very foundations of goodness, truth and beauty; they are confused while deciding on fight conduct and behaviour, right ideals and ways of living. You must examine every story or account that you place before the children from the point of view of individual faith and social harmony. Does this lead the child to a better, more harmonious, a more God-oriented life? That is the question you should ask yourself. Prahlada has beautifully summed up this principle, in the verse he utters, in the Bhagavatha, while advising his playmates on the disciplines that should be welcomed. "The study of books that describe the Glory of God is the study that is worth-while. The preceptor who tells us about the Glory of God is the preceptor to be sought after and revered. The father who directs you to approach God is the father who deserves the reverence and obedience of the children, not the others." Hills and mountains are overlaid with rock and boulder, the sculptor gathers them, and shapes each of them into something useful and beautiful, depending upon the nature and characteristics of the stone. Out of one boulder, the artisan might carve a huge mortar and pestle to be kept in the corner of the kitchen of a populous home. Out of another the sculptor might produce a rough hewn gargoyle being incorporated into a building as an eerie object to ward off the evil eye! A third stone might get transformed into a charming little danseuse to embellish the shelf of a museum. Another stone, catching the eye and attention of a skilled sculptor might be elevated into the idol of a Divine Manifestation, fit to be installed in a temple where it receives the adoration of millions for generations.

Parents have important roles in children's education

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

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

The Guru is equal to God Himself

We have heard the Guru being praised as equal to God Himself. Gokak quoted the shloka (verse) where the Guru is referred to reverentially as Brahma, the first of the Trinity entrusted with Creation; as Vishnu, the second of the Trinity entrusted with the preservation and protection of Creation; and as Maheshwara, the last of the Trinity, charged with destruction and dissolution.

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

Teachers must inspire high qualities in their pupils

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

There are many who shiver at the prospect, when they contemplate the future of this great country. You should never entertain such doubts and fears, for you are the builders of that future and you know that it will be glorious. The Bala Vikas children whom you are guiding and inspiring, will be the leaders of tomorrow in this land. The virtues you implant in them, the

counsel you are providing them and the examples you place before them will remain carved in their memories and transform their outlook and behaviour in the days to come. Ask any one assembled here whether they can bring back to memory the book that he read this morning; ninety five per cent of this vast gathering will fail in this test. But ask them to repeat from memory some one sthothra (hymn or moral verse) that their grandfather or grandmother taught them when they were little children sitting on their knees, and I am sure most of you will be able to recite the shlokha or sthothra. The things learnt during those early years stick in the memory and act subtly and silently on the growing mind to modify and purify the conduct of later years.

Spiritual education must start early in life

Some short-sighted critics declare that spiritual matters should not be communicated to children, for they are too young and inexperienced to benefit by the instruction. But, if a thing deserves to be done, the sooner we set about it the better. The slogan, "Start early, drive slowly, reach safely" applies not merely to journeys by road or rail; it applies also to the journey from Untruth to Truth, from Darkness towards Light and from Death to Immortality. The unrest, anxiety, fear and hatred that torment the world now is largely due to the neglect which kept off from the growing child the disciplines that can regulate the passions and emotions of man. We postpone this essential task of education at our peril; for, when children are equipped with the discipline to secure balance, equanimity, harmony and peace, they can no more be drawn into wild adventures and barren activities. You have to learn spiritual disciplines along with the information-giving subjects of the curriculum. You have to earn the high Diploma which the Upanishaths offer you, namely, Amruthasya Puthrah (Child of Immortality), along with the degrees M.A., B.Sc., etc., which help you eke out a livelihood, up to a certain stage of life.

Everyone must learn the secret of happiness

But, remember you cannot take up the threads of Sadhana (spiritual discipline) all of a sudden after retiring from active service! You cannot learn

spiritual Sadhana, when you are physically debilitated and overwhelmed by the approach of death. How can a man think of God, his Saviour, when he himself is overcome by sorrow at the need to depart from this world and when all his kith and kin are weeping and wailing loud and long? No. Every one must learn the secret of happiness which consists in refusing to shed tears for anything less than God. You have won this human body, this human life, as the reward for many lives spent in acquiring merit. You have won this chance, this unique good fortune of being able to get Dharshan (sight or audience) of Sai. Plunging deep into the waters of this tumultuous ocean of Samsara (worldly life), you have heroically emerged from its depths, with this rare Pearl in your hands - the Grace of Sai. Do not allow it to slip from your clasp and fall into the depths again. Hold on firmly to it. Pray that you may have It for ever and be filled with the joy that It confers. That is the way by which you can render this life fruitful. Instruct the children of the Bala Vikas to revere their parents. This is the first thing to do. It is a simple act of gratitude, for those who endowed them with the material instrument for life. But, mere possession of the human body, however wonderful it may be, is not enough, for one's peace and joy. One must know how to unravel its mysteries and how to regulate one's own impulses and hungers. This process is accomplished by the Guru, and so the pupils must be instructed and encouraged to revere the Guru, in gratitude for the service he renders. Education must aim at providing the child, not livelihood, but, a life worth living. For this, the acquisition of skills in doing or reasoning is not enough. Faith in one-self and in the Divinity of one-self are absolutely essential. That is the precious treasure of wisdom, stored in our ancient scriptures and in the experience of the Saints and Sages of all countries and faiths.

There is only one religion, the Religion of Love

There is one more point, which I wish to emphasise. Some teachers have asked Me whether the Bala Vikas classes, can serve children of all faiths or whether they can admit only children of the Hindhu faith. The question has arisen because the questioners do not know the very fundamentals of the Hindhu Faith. There is only one religion, remember, and that is the Religion of Love; there is only one caste, and that is the Caste of Humanity. You must be

careful not to encourage or entertain the slightest trace of 'difference' on the basis of religion, caste, creed or colour, in the Bala Vikas classes. Do not tarnish the spotlessly clean minds of the children by infecting them with a sense of distinction between one child and another. Impart instructions and inspiration equally to all. Select stories from **the** scriptures of all faiths to interest the children in the values of good life. Speak to them of the moral heroes of all lands, the Saints of all faiths. For, they are all of the same stamp. No scripture enjoins violence or lays down untruth as a way of life. All religions extol Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Brotherhood, and Love. All saints are embodiments of service, compassion and renunciation. Do not compare the various manifestations of the Divine and pronounce judgement, declaring that Rama is greater than Krishna or Shiva superior to Vishnu. This line of thought is poisonous and harmful to the devout aspirant. You do not know your own self; but, yet, how dare you pronounce judgement on personalities and powers you have never experienced or understood. Rama is as unknown to you as Christ, and so, it is best to keep silent, and revere both with equal ardour. For, all are manifestations of the same Divine Effulgence. I bless you that you succeed in the great task you have imposed on yourself, and that you will be able to light the way for the children of this land into the glorious region of Everlasting Joy.

Those who seek to acquire steadiness of faith must first acquire the strength to bear grief and pain, insult and injury. The succession of joy and grief must help confirm the faith and make it immovable. That alone can evidence true devotion.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

23. Nearer and nearer

Date: 04 January 1974 / Location: Rajamundry

EMBODIMENTS of the Supreme Atma! Look at the condition of the people of this ancient land, Bharath, today. Afflicted by multiplying wants, with no faith in experience beyond the sensual, scorning the sacred scriptures of their forefathers, weakened by fear, anxiety, and lack of confidence in the capacity to overcome these, having no knowledge of the Source of Strength and even denying the' existence of a Source which can be tapped in prayer - they are revelling in untruth, injustice, and unrest. Tossed in restlessness themselves, they do not allow others any rest or peace. Here, in days gone by; Karmakshethra was Dharmakshethra; the Field of Action was also the Field of Righteousness. But, now, declaring that Action and Righteousness cannot coexist, these people are bringing disgrace on the very name of Bharath. Of course, many lovers of the glory that was India are trying to revive it through means and methods their mental and intellectual resources indicate. But, unless one removes the disease from the root, no amount of care bestowed on branch, leaf and flower can save the tree. The pests are to be found deep down, inside the roots. They have attacked and impaired the two taproots of Indian Culture - Brahmanyam and Brahmacharyam. We must also have again in this land the Brahmin, so known because he is set on the path of Brahman, the Supreme Absolute. We must also have the revival of the ideal student life earnest, humble, celibate, concentrated study. This Navabharath Gurukul, where we have assembled for this Conference is an example of student life, sought to be set on proper lines. The seekers of Brahman and the scholars of the texts on Brahman have lost their status and honour, because they did not live according to the truths they expounded.

The two classifications of Dhaiva

Character, conduct, daily behaviour, attitude towards others - these are all-important, for Dharma (righteousness) is essentially Social Morality. The Shruthi (holy scripture) says, Dharmo Vishwasya Jagathah Prathishtah - "on Dharma, the World is installed." Dharma endows man with joy and keeps

away grief. Every being in the world, whether it is aware of it or not, is dependent on Dharma, for peace and happiness. All triumphs, whether acknowledged so or not, are earned only through Dharma. Dharma is classified as general and special by the sages: general, including the virtues of truth, love, charity, etc., which every one has to cultivate and cherish; special, meaning those duties that are incumbent on one, as a result of his social obligations, professional status, etc., like the special Dharma of the Brahmin house-holder to maintain the Sacred Fire through ritually prescribed ceremonials. The Vedas lay down the ceremonies; they speak of the intimacy between the Brahmin and the rites of fire worship.

Individuals are limbs of the Society

You are aware that, at the present day, both in India and outside, there is a wave of spiritual discontent surging in thousands of hearts and, as a consequence, we have eager groups who give up everything worldly and seek God and Godly preceptors. But, many do believe that this search concerns only the individual and that society need not get involved in their yearning or their endeavours. This is as foolish as saying that one need not worry about the darkness prevailing outside the walls of his residence. The individual and society are intertwined inextricably. There must be illumination, for both. Anandha (divine bliss) must surge out of the individual and fill the lake of society, and from thence, stream into the Ocean of Grace. Society is just a name for a group of individuals; but, it has no corporeal body. Individuals are the limbs, that nourish and support the 'corpus' called society. Society shapes the individual, provides the arena for his development and sets the ideals he should plant before himself. When the individual is stronger, more intelligent, more service minded, and more efficient as a worker, society benefits; when society is more aware of its role and of the need to cleanse that role with humility and wisdom, the individual benefits. Sai has resolved to transform the individual and society by promoting this mutual regeneration, by the action of one on the other; hence, the formation of this Organisation, and the establishment of its Units in all countries, for the sublimation of the human into the Divine. I have however to tell you that the units of this Organisation have not advanced much in the task that is expected. You must identify the

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

Getting involved in Sai Organisation will induce faith

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

Bear calumny and criticism with courage

Sathya Sai Seva Organisation has to be unique, in this sense, that it is free from the slightest taint of hypocrisy, and the attempt to rationalise faults and failings. In the name of Social Service, many institutions and organisations thrive in this land but, consider, for a moment, the social service that is rendered by the Sathya Sai Seva Units in this East Godhavari District. Spontaneously, members have come forward in thousands to this place where the Conference was arranged and, offered their services freely,

sincerely and efficiently, to such an extent that the Organisers have not spent a paisa as wages for all this work - clearing this vast area, erecting these imposing sheds, laying down cables and pipes, and a host of other exhausting and expensive undertakings, so that the thousands of delegates that have come from all the States of India can have comfortable lodgings and satisfying boarding. They engaged themselves in this Seva with no desire for publicity; they simply followed a spiritual urge to do Sadhana in this form.

This is the genuine Karmayoga (path of dedicated action). Karma motivated thus will cleanse the mind, faster and better than other Sadhanas; the cleansed mind can reflect more clearly the Light of Wisdom; the Light of Wisdom will reveal the Truth and man will be saved from the consequences of the ignorance haunting him. Selfless, sincere service is therefore to be welcomed and practised. Each act of service is a step toward the Goal of Liberation. The Objectives, Rules and Regulations that the Organisation has laid down have to be scrupulously observed by you all, whatever be the difficulties whatever be the reaction of others. Bear calumny, criticism and neglect with courage; do not allow these to affect your equanimity. The good that you do will guard you; have that faith rooted in your mind. Do not exult when your desire is fulfilled; do not be dejected when it is not realised. Faith must be built on stronger foundations. Believing one moment and doubting the next, is like living and dying alternately. Faith is the very breath of Seva; doubt is death. One who wavers is as useless as a living corpse.

You have a duty to uphold and foster Dharma

When you join the Seva Samithi (Sai Organisation) and share in its activities, you are doing so not for the sake of Swami, nor for the sake of the people, but the sake of the Dharma which you have a duty to uphold and foster. Attachment to Dharma, practice of Dharma and its varied manifestations of Seva (Service) and Prema (Love), can alone help transform Manava (human) into Madhava (God). The destruction of the insidious poison of egoism is essential for the restoration of health and happiness of the mind. Unless you tap the inner spring of joy in your own Sath-chidh-anandha (Being, Awareness, Bliss) principle you cannot be established in Anandha (Divine

Bliss). This is the best way for you to offer the highest possible Seva to the Motherland. For, India is since millennia the Yogabhumi (the land of Divine communion), Thyagabhumi (the land of Detachment) and Karmabhumi (the land of Godward-leading Activity).

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

Duty, Discipline and Devotion are essential for everyone

I find that even you, who have come here as delegates selected by the members, do not strictly observe the disciplines enjoined on you. What shall we then say of the rest? Remember, Duty, Discipline and Devotion, all three, are absolutely essential for every one in our Organisation. You may have Devotion, you may discharge the Duty entrusted to you. But, unless you are saturated in Discipline, the other two are useless. Many of you rushed forward when I walked along the passage this morning and tried to reach out your hands for touching My Feet, falling over others while so doing. This is definitely an instance of devotion outrunning discipline. Discipline must regulate and control, not only your activities as members of the Organisation but, every activity of your life. I have been telling you since years "Duty is God." Work is Worship. But, it is clear that you have not as yet taken this to heart; you have only received into the ear. Duty involves loyal adherence to the rules and regulations framed for the efficient working of the Organisation. Look upon them with a pure vision, a steady mind, and an attitude of reverence in the heart. Do not talk ill of any one with contempt, do not think of any one as low or mean. Christ declared, "All are One; be alike to

everyone." Hating an individual, or institution, or a religion is a low act. The Atma (Soul) is immanent in every one; it is the spark of Divinity which gives him light, love and joy.

Do not be content by addressing gatherings from platforms, "Brothers and Sisters" that becomes merely histrionics, unless you feel the Brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God. When you have not felt in your heart the Anandha of realising that Ishavasyamidham Sarvam (All this is enveloped in God), Ishwarah sarvabhoo-thanam - (God is installed in the heart of all beings), or Vasudhevas sarvamidham (All this is God), you do not deserve to speak those words, while addressing others.

With every Conference you must arrive nearer the goal

You long to receive from others gratitude, love and respect; but, when the occasion arises for you to offer these, you hesitate or refuse. This is wrong. For, this is no one way traffic! Give and take. That is the rule. Assess in this Conference how far you have put into practice the rules framed in the Fifth All India Conference; examine where you have failed or succeeded only partially, and why. Unless this is done, gathering in Conferences like this is a mere waste of time, energy and money. The money could be spent to greater advantage in feeding the poor or helping them in some other way. With every Conference, you must arrive nearer and nearer the Goal or else, it becomes misuse of time, money and energy. All over the land, we have now Bhajan Mandalis (Spiritual Congregations), Study Circles, Mahila Vibhaghs (Women's Sections), Seva Dhal and Seva Samithis (Service Corps and Organisations) besides Schools, Libraries etc., studding the entire area. Certain of these who have strayed away into wrong lines, regardless of the ideals placed before them, have to be guided back into the Path. More than everything else, Bala Vikas (Child Development) classes have to be multiplied so that the children may be saved and trained, to shine as true inheritors of Bharatheeya Culture. May the Culture of India which is fast going dry in the land of its origin be restored to its pristine power and purity through your loving and loyal efforts. I bless you that you may be endowed with success.

Karma is the sincere discharge of one's duty, as laid down in the scriptures and as beneficial to our standard and status. Through karma done for some benefit in view, man progresses towards karma with no benefit in view, so that he does it as a rightful obligation, undeterred by defeat or unaffected by success. He does karma, regulated by dharma (virtue). Then, his consciousness is purified and elevated and can help him to become aware of his Reality as the Self which includes all, Brahman (Omniself).

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

24. The five-year child

Date: 04 January 1974 / Location: Rajamundry

THE mind of man is a bundle of desires, always in agitation, ever on the run, in pursuit of objects and sensations. When man submits to its whims, he falls. But he can master it, tame it and forge it as an instrument for achieving even Liberation from bondage to objects and sensations! It is said that the mind is the cause for both liberation and bondage. When I see a person helplessly enslaved to his mind, I get a picture of a dressed up doll squeaking and speaking through a talking disc attached and operated. He acts mechanically; as the strings are pulled by dominant desire; he talks as directed by that master; he thinks on lines that desire lays down. Therefore, there is a great deal of artificiality and insincerity. We know that the pictures in a film projected on the screen are each in its true nature, stationary. But, since they are projected fast in a series through a lamp, they appear as if the men and women are walking or fighting. The sound tracks supply the appropriate voices and noises at the appropriate time and so, it appears as if the men and women talk and sing. Though one knows that the pictures are projected on the screen in this manner, but when one sees the film, one is moved into grief or joy, hatred or sympathy.

Joy and grief are modifications of the mind

The mind is agitated and so, you too are led into passions and emotions. When the plank on which you sit moves, you too move; when the train runs fast with you sitting in the compartment, you feel that the trees too move with you. On the other hand, the mind makes you feel stationary, on the earth, though the earth revolves fast on its own axis and also around the Sun. These are all tricks of the mind, hiding the truth and imposing its own illusions on your experience. Real truth is different from the picture of truth that the mind presents. To ascribe the joys and griefs that one passes through in life to the nature of the Individual Soul is an act of ignorance. One has to dissociate one from the other. Elation and depression, pleasure and pain, joy and grief are modifications of the mind, not of the jeevi (the individual soul). It

is the mind that reacts to external objects and events and pronounces them as desirable and undesirable, good and bad. This explains why the control of the waywardness of the mind is to be achieved.

He who masters the mind can direct his life straight and steadily on the path of Truth, Right Action, Peace and Universal Love. He can become an Amruthaputhrah (child of immortality). Becoming immortal does not imply that one can avoid death and continue living in the physical body for all time. It means only that his Name and Fame will shine in the memories of people, when his character and achievements are noble and beneficial. When your deeds are holy, coming generations would emulate them and offer gratitude for the example. But, if they are harmful, even your contemporaries will condemn you, and wish that you were never born. In the Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, you have all the chances you need and all the direction and encouragement you want, to make your names cherished by generations. For, the Organisation strives to establish World Peace and Prosperity, promote mutual service in Society and cultivate selfless love in the individual. You have only to share in its various tasks, gladly and with perfect humility.

This Universe stands on the foundation of Truth

What is the 'highest objective' for man? What is his most precious ideal? The Vedas declare, Sathyannasthi paro dharmah - There is no rule higher than Truth. This Mansion named Universe stands on the foundation of Truth, Sathya. You are all members of the 'Sathya' Sai Seva Organisation; remember that 'Sathya' is My Name. It is the first and foremost ideal that has to shape and sustain all the activities of the Organisation, as well as every one of its members. Give Sathya the first place in your thought, word and deed. There was a King called Sathyavratha, in ancient times. He was named so, because Truth was his way of life, his goal and his guide. He derived great joy through the strict adherence to Truth. One day, a few hours before dawn, during Brahma muhurtha (the time dedicated for meditation on God), he proceeded alone through the Lion Gate of his Fort, in order to have a holy dip in the Sea, for the day was a holy one marked out in the calendar as sacred for such ceremonial baths.

Only Truth sustains charity, riches and good relations

While he was passing through the Gate, he saw a fair maiden with a halo of splendour going out; curious to know who she was and why she was making her exit at that early hour, he accosted her. She replied that she was the Goddess of riches, Dhanalakshmi. "I have been long here, now, I desire a change. I do not stay in one place long." Sathyavratha told her, "Go! Go! I do not object, or obstruct." Presently, a charming masculine figure was seen quietly going out through the Lion Gate. The King asked him who he was and what errand was on which he was leaving. He replied, "I am charity; when Dhanalakshmi has left, what do I stay here for?" The King allowed him to leave, and he moved on. Within a few moments, another charming person was going through. The King found that he was Sadhachara, representing goodness in social behaviour. "How can good social relations be sustained without riches and the quality of generosity?" he asked. "I am leaving, because the two are here no more," he explained. The king agreed; and he moved on. So too, the next emigrant, Fame, lamented the disappearance of the other three and himself wanted to go. The King let him go. He said, "How can fame survive the absence of riches, charity and happy social life?" and the King felt he was right.

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

And, Fame returned to the fort in a trice, for Truth is enough basis for fame to flourish. And, Sadhachara returned and grew. So too charity and riches came back and established themselves in the kingdom. All the others were delighted to share the glory of Sathya (Truth).

Dedicate your lives to the Good and to God

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

Manava (human) must achieve the status of Madhava (God). And, who is God? Truth is God, Love is God, Peace is God. Develop truth, cultivate love, establish yourselves in peace - you are on the road of divinity.

Become water, so that you can merge with water; if you remain oil, you cannot merge! So, develop Divine characteristics. You are now in His hands, in God's care, but, you do not realise it; this kerchief is held by Me; if my hand does not hold it, it falls. So too, if God does not hold you, you fall. Whatever you do, wherever you are placed, believe that God has put you there for that work. Then, it becomes an education and a sadhana (spiritual practice). In this Conference, learn this lesson: take up the work allotted to you gladly, and carry it out to the best of your ability, for the greater glory of God. Do not dedicate your lives to material goods, dedicate them to the Good and to God.

When the petromax lamp grows dim, you clean it with a pin; when it starts giving trouble, you pump vigorously, don't you? When that is done, it shines bright and gives good light. Consider the State Conferences held at more frequent intervals as the treatment with the pin and the All India Conference, such as this, as the vigorous pumping process. The objects of both these Conferences are the same: the establishment of peace and harmony in the world, through the Organisation. For the lamp that this Organisation is, the oil is Love; you know that, to light that lamp, you have to use a little methylated spirit. Well, Jnana (Supreme Wisdom) is the 'spirit'. A little quantity of that is needed for Love to be steady and Universal. And, there must be plenty of the oil of Love. Good company, good acts, good thoughts - these are of great help.

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

25. A programme for college teachers

Date: 14 January 1974 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Sankranthi

EMBODIMENTS of the Divine Atma! Open your eyes and look around with some circumspection. Ponder over the heights we had attained in ancient times and the present pitiable predicament of mankind. What an abysmal descent! Isn't our situation very much like that of a man who has tumbled down from a mountain peak to the depths below? We had, by observing and upholding Dharma (virtue), reached the pinnacle of perfection in every sphere, spiritual, material, scientific, economic. We followed with great veneration the principles and guidelines laid down in the Shruthi (sacred scriptures), and the smrithi (body of traditional law), which embody the commands of God Himself, and as a result, we were bound together by mutual love and affection, and our culture shone with supreme excellence. But, today, we are in quite a terrible situation - the very opposite of the glory of the past. Wherever we look, we find men sunk in utterly low moral and material conditions. The Dharmic duties prescribed by the Lord in the Shruthi and Smrithi in order to save mankind from these very evils have been discarded. Infected by mutual animosity and distrust, we are spouting the fire of violence and cruelty and jeopardising World Peace. Violation of the laws ordained by God is the chief factor, responsible for the absence of abiding peace in the world.

It is our paramount duty to restore Divine Dharma

Is not the transgression of Dharma (which is another name for the Commands of God to man) the sole cause for the poverty, the despondency, the despair, and the lack of spiritual knowledge and effort, that are so rampant at the present time throughout the world? It is heartening for us all to note that a few people, at least now, have discovered the reason for the crisis, through a study of the sequence and the negation, and are striving to resuscitate Dharma which alone can confer prosperity and peace on the world. If the annihilation of something is causing injury to something else, then, the only method for the regeneration of the latter is the revival of the former. Isn't this

principle universally acceptable and applicable? We are noticing that the decline of Dharma has caused the destruction of world peace. When we plan to bring about prosperity and peace to the world, isn't it our paramount duty to restore this Divine Dharma? Teachers! It is your imperative duty to wake up and strive at least now, without further delay, for the preservation and fostering of Dharma. For, today, some persons are endeavouring to destroy Bharatheeya Dharma (Indian morality code), attacking it and plucking it by its very roots. If we fail to resist their attempts, Dharma is in danger of being completely uprooted. Some persons enamoured of modern civilisation and bearing the respected designation of social reformers and reconstructors, are trying in manifold deceptive attractive ways to pollute Society itself, by depriving it of Dharma.

Bhagavan will be your unfailing support

The Dharma, for upholding which we have been all along willing and ready to sacrifice wealth, honour and even lives, is the Dharma named Sanathana Dharma. Sanathana means 'eternal', existing and effective for all time. Wake up. Get Ready. The moment has arrived, when you have to demonstrate your indomitable valour and irrepressible heroism. You are born in the ever-effulgent land of Bharath. You are the valiant and invincible descendents of heroic Hindhu warriors, who were worthy embodiments of courage, fortitude, valour and moral integrity. You are scions of the holy and lofty lineage of Rishis like Bhargava, Kaushika, Vashishtha, Bharadwaja and Kashyapa who forced even the 'three worlds' to tremble in fear, at their spiritual might and majesty, won through severe penance. You will be unworthy of such great ancestry if you remain indifferent, slothful and apathetic like cowards, when the Dharma which is as essential as the very breath to our lives is being undermined. Resolve to engage yourself in the task of promoting the welfare of the world; be assured that Bhagavan will be your unfailing support. As days pass by, the process of reshaping and reforming affects each field. Naturally, it is being applied to the educational system also. In former times, children were initiated in the spiritual path at the proper age and their studies began thereafter, under the Guru (preceptor). In course of time, when Westerners became the rulers, many were lured to the study of their language, for,

thereby they could secure the 'second' of the four goals of man, namely, riches. Thus they were transformed into supporters of the Western system of education. In the past, teachers saw to it that the pupils were' equipped with devotion to God in addition to the curricular training. So, the students were well versed in spiritual discipline and knowledge; every act of theirs was motivated by the yearning for salvation and spiritual joy.

Teachers and students lack spiritual awareness

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

The propaganda for atheism, the declaration that the Vedas have no historical validity, and the teaching through history that Hindhuism is destroyed - these are the activities of the teachers who suffer from the mania for Western culture and civilisation. Can we call such a system of instruction, education? Can we call those who instruct these things, Gurus? Vidhya (education) is the communication of the knowledge of the divine power, and the inner Reality of the Atma. This alone justifies the claim to be educated. Since they have no spiritual awareness, students are taking part in disorders and disturbances; they become easy targets to mob violence, unworthy of the educated; they descend to levels lower than the blind in their ignorance and draw down upon themselves the ridicule of the observers. They disfigure the educational institutions and bring disgrace upon them. Teachers! We have to inculcate in our College lofty ideals and take up highly noble projects. I am now communicating to you My feelings and plans, because I know that you are enthusiastic, inspired by spiritual ideals, and worthy of Sai's love and affection. 1. Mere formal teaching of the prescribed lessons in the College will not raise the students to the stature we desire. By mere planting, a sapling does not become a tree. It has to be fostered by the provision of the appropriate security, care, and periodical attention. 2. To shape the simple

innocent students from the villages into votaries of the English language, devoid of the virtues of humility and fidelity, politeness and faith, which are so necessary for happy living, is not a task which will promote the welfare either of the student or of the country. By the mere acquisition of an academic qualification which will assure them a job, they cannot progress either in morality or straightforwardness. Proper activities must be devised and adopted to make them useful to their parents. They must be able to serve them skilfully and gladly and thus earn their blessings.

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

Establish a Spiritual Centre in each village

4. Proper steps must be undertaken to put an end to the evil habits, the evil thoughts and evil talk that are rampant in these small villages. It is only then that the educated 'rural student' can maintain and develop his virtues. Or else, his attainments in virtue will be evident only as long as he is studying. As soon as he returns to his village, the behaviour, the way of speaking, the habits of life that the villagers practise will become natural for him also. Therefore, through each one of the students of our College belonging to a village, we must establish a Spiritual Centre in that village; the Centre must guard against the spread of parties and factions in that village and should not observe or honour any distinction between the villagers, on the basis of caste, creed, or family status. This will bring about a great change in the methods and message of education. 5. One day in each week or fortnight, teachers should gather the students and instruct them in certain lofty ideals of life; they should go to the villages of those students, and devote themselves to some programme of welfare activity in the village. This is very advisable. If

you do the spade work and make the preliminary arrangements I shall come (I am returning to Brindavan in February) and in the months of February and March, all of us can go to one village, one after another, and establish these Spiritual Centres. We shall transform them into ideal villages. It is only then that the value of education can be demonstrated, expanded and sanctified. 6. For each one of these objectives to be realised, it is necessary that teachers must be idealistic and enthusiastic. Then only will students follow their guidance. Our College must become the pioneer leader in translating these high ideals. This is essential, not only for the individual, but, in equal measure, for all mankind.

Students should acquire the virtue of humility

7. Consult the students, group by group, and find out who among them are interested in establishing such Spiritual Centres in their own villages; if they make proper arrangements in their villages, then I shall myself come and inaugurate the Centre and confer on the people of the village necessary enthusiasm and adequate facilities. We shall start in this way, in a small measure; we can thus rescue the villages from the chaotic influence spread by politics, and, make them wholly loving and helpful filled with Sathwik (good and noble) ideals; this is the fruit of real education. 8. When the students of our College coming from villages see a village or two, developing on these lines, every one of them will come forward, asking for the inclusion of his village too. They will acquire along with Vidhya (education), the virtue of Vinaya (humility). And, with humility, they can easily earn spiritual knowledge. This is very essential, and very urgent work. Due to the absence of these two, people are today, disgracing their humanness, though they are 'educated', behaving like fools and blind men, giving up the power of discriminating between the temporary and the eternal. It is enough progress, if men live as men! Man must be vigilant that he does not descend to the level of demons, that he does not pollute society and inflict 'earthquakes' on the country. If we do not take on hand these activities, we cannot remove the fear and anxiety that seem inevitable in the future for our students. 9. You must all meet together and take necessary interest in this matter. You need not compel any one who is not interested. It is enough if we have some five or

six who join with love and faith. If they have the desire, and if all share in this task, the greater the joy. There should be no trace of compulsion in organising this. I am placing a car at your disposal for carrying out this programme. On this holy Shankranthi Day, I have given expression to the thoughts that I was having for a long time, taking into consideration your enthusiasm for work. I wish you will take the steps necessary for implementing this programme.

What does surrender of the Self signify or imply? To experience God as Omnipresent, to be aware of nothing other than God - this is true surrender.

To see God in everything, everywhere, at all times, is true Sharanagathi. He gives, He enjoys, He experiences.

If you offer, and God accepts, you become superior; how can God be all-powerful? You should not reduce the glory of God through such high-sounding statements.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

26. You and I - Together

Date: 31 January 1974 / Location: Brindavan

A COLLEGE which does not confer the knowledge of their Athmic Reality to the students engaged in the pursuit of various objectives and material studies is as barren as a sky without the Moon, or a heart without peace, a nation without reverence for law. Colleges in India have a greater responsibility in this matter, for, here, more than the material, technological and scientific side of civilisation, emphasis was laid for centuries on the social, cultural and spiritual side. The goal of life and the ways of ensuring harmony were discovered here and propagated by saints and sages. The young men and women that emerge from the colleges of India have to cleanse this land of untruth, injustice, violence and fear. They must spread the message of peace, tolerance, righteousness and service, and be exemplars of these qualities for the people. You are not educated, if all that you have achieved is, the study of a ton of books. The body and the mind have to be illumined by the light of Love that emanates from the awareness of the Soul and its essential Divinity. Since education today deals only with the body and mind, and is unrelated to the Soul and Spirit, the youth of the land is wafted hither and thither by every gust of passing, like rootless vegetation. Awareness of the Atman will grant unshakeable power and courage. The Vedas teach the means of securing this awareness, and drawing on it to meet the challenges of life. That alone can crown education with success. That alone can strengthen youth to encounter the problems of unrest and anxiety. The colleges have to teach not only certain subjects, but, the subject-object relationship too. The process by which man can transcend this duality and cognise the Unity has also to be communicated, in order to render 'education complete.

Today deceit is the rule that guides man

Institutions where education is imparted today have no atmosphere of moral or spiritual value. Discipline is missing; honesty is at a discount; politeness and good manners are estimated as outmoded forms of behaviour; grab and not give is the rule; intolerance is held in high esteem. If a man is not

equipped with detachment, virtue, tolerance and truth, how can he raise his head and proclaim himself a human being? Man has so degraded himself that he revels in untruth in an unashamed manner - his intention is different from his words, but still his actions belie his profession. Thought, word and deed are not co-ordinated. Deceit is the rule that guides. Man should redeem himself from this downfall; he should not sacrifice his glory and his goal for the petty triumphs of the moment; if he does, he would only make himself cheaper than clay.

Men should grow straight, without any crookedness

At the present rate and under present conditions, the future of India, once the Preceptor of Humanity, is grievously poor. Students must awaken in time and decide to transform themselves into worthy instruments for the revival of the grandeur of Bharath. They must grow straight, without any crookedness. They must grow as Indians on Indian soil, in the Indian atmosphere; they should give up the itch for aping foreign fashions of thought, speech and dress. Instead of delving into their inner reality and living true to it, they are now exploring the outer delusions and imitating the outer trappings of equally deluded people. They silence the Voice of Conscience and behave in exotic styles. The heart warns, the brain protests, but, the mind prods on. He who smothers the voice of God is as good as a living corpse. Note the type of dress that is now considered fashionable - the weird uncouth bush-shirts and drain-pipe pants. Note the side-burns and the weird moustaches and beards that besmirch the face of youth. Note the value attached to slovenliness and primitivity, to foulness and frivolity. No one can appreciate this trend, except those who are victims to it; disgust is the only reaction one gets. When the exterior is reeking with untidiness, how can the interior be tidy? How can harmony and honesty be installed in such a cluttered heart and in such a lumbering brain? Young people move about like clowns; they pay no attention to the seriousness of the task which lies ahead of them. When the parents, society and the nation yearn that they should become 'biggers', they revel as 'beggars', before the fashion fabricators of other lands, the imitators of other countries and the hysterics of other cultures.

Use the present moment best to face life's challenges

And, every tick of the clock snips a length off the thread of life. Money when unspent remains in your account at the bank; but, spent is your life with every moment whether wisely or unwisely. It marches relentlessly on. Use the present moment best, to sharpen your skills, to broaden your intelligence, to expand your heart and to master the technique of facing the challenges of life with courage and equanimity. That will be the reward you offer your parents for the love and sacrifice they have poured on you; do not offer them in return, an ill reputation, a ruined career, a damaged character. Make them happy and proud; win a First Class in your studies and a First Class in your character.

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

I am depending upon you, students, for a great transformation in outlook, a great revolution. Students of the Sathya Sai College must lead this movement. The older generation can only talk; it is you who must act. You have to prove yourselves worthy of this College. Be disciplined; be sweet in manners, in speech, and in your relations with the less fortunate. Be grateful to your parents, your villagers and those who strive for your welfare. Try your best always to earn a fair name for yourselves, for your College and for your parents. Do not be under the impression that you and I have come together only now since you study in this College! You have come to Me for the sake of far higher triumphs, as a consequence of merit acquired in many previous lives. You and your teachers are destined to achieve tremendous tasks under My guidance, in the execution of the Mission on which I have come.

Days that are marked out as festivals in the calendars of all races and religions are significant because they have a deep spiritual meaning. They have to be used by man for examining habits and practices, prejudices and partialities, and for cleansing the mind of these. The attitudes and guidelines that are clogging progress have to be discarded and fresh fruitful ones welcomed. The days have to be dedicated for trimming the old and planting the new.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

27. The Shiva in all

Date: 20 February 1974 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Shivarathri

Shivoham, Shivoham - was the exclamation that rose from the souls that knew the Truth in a flash of illumination, after long years of cleansing the mind through the process of thapas (penance). I am Shiva; Shiva am I - Though denoted by many names and recognised in many forms, the Divine Principle is One, without a second. It is Shivam and it is latent in each being, including man. Holy days are to be spent in the contemplation of this Truth and in special exercises to make oneself fully conscious of one's Divinity. God is the seed, which has expressed itself as all this. But, this fact, so deeply implanted in the hearts of every Indian for centuries, has been overlaid by veils of doubt and man has lost the courage and the energy that the faith had given him so long. This was the very core of Indian culture, but, children of India have neglected and very nearly lost this precious heritage. The fascination for Western fashions of thought weakened the belief in one's religion; that led to the giving up of the disciplines which shaped one's daily life; this in turn led to deterioration in moral standards; this has bred misery, disunity, hatred and disgrace. It is time to open one's eyes to the tragedy and retrace the steps.

Meaning of worship of the Snake

The saints and seers of this land never spoke lightly or acted irrelevantly. They had the good of the generations always in view. When they invested some places as holy and named some days as sacred, they also prescribed the rules and ceremonials to be observed by pilgrims and Sadhakas (spiritual aspirants), so that time, expense and effort could be used for the expansion of Love and the education of the instincts and impulses. The object of every rule was to bring the realisation of the Atma, as one's Reality, a few steps nearer. For, the Atma in the individual is the Atma in all; Shivoham is the Truth; and the Truth alone can make man free and full of Bliss.

Take one prescription, the worship of the Snake. Those afflicted with

barrenness or serious illness or skin diseases of virulent types vow to proceed on pilgrimage to shrines of Subrahmanya (conceived in the form of a Snake). People laugh at this practice. "Indians offer adoration to snakes, because, in their opinion, they have poison in their fangs!" The Truth is quite otherwise. The inner meaning of snake worship is quite different. The spinal column of man ending with the 'thousand-petalled lotus' in the brain is very much like a serpent poised on its tail with hood widely spread. In the science of Kundalini Yoga, the vital energy of man lying dormant like a coiled snake, at the bottom of this column in the lowest Muuladhara Chakra (the Basal Plexus) is awakened and aroused, so that it courses up through six more wheels (centres of superior consciousness) until it reaches the Sahasrara (thousand-petalled Lotus Energy Centre) at the very top of the skull. The passage for the Kundalini is through the Sushumna nerve in the centre of the spinal column. The worship of the Snake, ridiculed as superstition, is the symbolic counterpart of this great Yogic Sadhana which confers vigour and vitality.

Every appellation of God has deep significance

Take the demarcation of Thirupathi as a holy place of pilgrimage; Lord Venkateshwara, the deity worshipped there is called the Lord of the Seven Hills, for Seven Hills have to be climbed before the Temple is reached. Obviously the six Chakras (energy centres) and the Sahasrara are indicated here, for in Rajayoga, the supreme is revealed, only when the individual raises the Vital Energy - the Kundalini Shakthi - up to the seventh stage. One of the hills is named Seshagiri, meaning, Snake Hill. From the plains, the range gives the appearance of a snake with a raised hood.

And, what exactly does Subrahmanya mean? Spend a little thought on that. It means, 'He who has attained the realisation of Brahman the Universal Absolute, the Primal Cause, the Cosmic Consciousness.' Every appellation of God has deep significance. In the Vedas, Vishnu, for example, is named Parama. It means Paramanu, the Atom: He is omnipresent, as omnipresent as the atom, found as the substance and substratum of the Universe. Vishnu is the cause as well as the effect, for, there was nothing else when Time began. The One became many; the many disappear, the One remains.

Cattle are different from horses; true. But, when four-footed animals are considered, they are both the same. Under 'animals' a vast variety of beings are included. Thus it goes on, until only One is.

Strengthen the belief that all objects belong to God

To teach the Unity behind the appearance of multiplicity, that is to say, to help realise the Adhwaitha (Non-dual nature of Existence), Shankara, the greatest expounder of that school of thought, established four seats of practical philosophy called Mutts in the four regions of India. The very first step in the endeavour to realise this Unity was, according to him, Upasana or Worship of the concrete symbol of God, which gives one the experience of the ecstasy of Union. One day, Shankara was seated in meditation on the bank of the Ganga River. Suddenly, he exclaimed, "Lord! I am yours; but, surely, you are not mine." His pupil, Thotakacharya was by his side then; he was astonished at this statement, which, according to him, went against the Adhwaithic stand. So, he asked him how he could ever declare any distinction between I and you. Shankara replied, "The waves belong to the Ocean; but, the Ocean does not belong to the wave. The wave is the ocean, but, the Ocean is not the wave." The main point to be attended to is, the elimination of the ego, the elimination of the identification with the body and its needs, satisfiable through the senses. For, you get joy when these needs are fulfilled; grief when they are not, anger when something comes in the way, pride when you win over that opposition. To eliminate the ego, strengthen the belief that all objects belong to God, and that you are holding them on trust. This would prevent pride; it is also the truth. Then, when you lose a thing, you would not grieve. God gave; God took away. Of course you hear almost all talking in this strain and advising this reaction. But very few follow that advice themselves. This is the sin of all sins; saying one thing and acting quite the opposite, denying in practise what you assert as precept.

Shiva is eternally auspicious

Shiva is known also as Eeshwara, the 'repository of all the resources essential for Prosperity. The most important resource is Jnana (Spiritual Wisdom). Three

kinds of Jnana are demarcated: Jeevaprajna (concerning the individualised Divine), Eeshwaraprajna (concerning the Cosmic- Manifestation of the Divine) and the Atmaprajna (Concerning the Universal Absolute of which the individual is the temporary-particular). This is also mentioned in some other texts as Delta-prajna, Jeeva-prajna and Atma- prajna, but, the meaning of the words is the same as in the other list. Eeshwara confers the Aishwarya of Jnana. He is also known as Shankara, and sages have experienced Shiva as conferring Sam or auspiciousness of all kinds, Happiness in all ways. Shiva is eternally auspicious; He does not come embodied in other forms, with other names, as often as Vishnu. So, He is not described as Shri Shiva or Shri Shankara or Shri Eeshwara. Shri is inherent in His very Person and so it is superfluous to add Shri to His Name. When you realise Shivoham (I am Shiva), then, you have all the happiness, all the auspiciousness that there is. Shiva is not to be sought on the peak of a distant range of mountains, or in some other special place. You must have heard that sin and merit are inherent in the acts that men do; so too, Shiva is inherent in every thought, word and deed, for He is the Energy, the Power, the Intelligence that is behind each of them. All energy, power and intelligence are in you; you need not search for them outside yourselves. God who is manifesting as time, space and causation is in you; why then do you feel weak and helpless? Man is tossed about by his ambitions and the craving to fulfil them. But, he must first know where he stands and where he should decide to reach. Now, his efforts are wanton and wasteful. He is an expert in mathematics, but, unable to do a small sum in arithmetic. He has mastered algebra, but unable to measure the area of his home. He knows botany, with all its Latin names; but, ask him about the uses to which the common thulasi plant and its leaves can be put; he has no answer. He has mastered all the physical exercises taught to him; but, he is helpless when asked to sit in Padhmasana. He can talk loud and long on Moksha and of its being the final goal; but, he does not know that he 'is already free; he imagines himself as bound and behaves as such.

Do not get too bound with, or give up, the world

Attachments to illusory objects bind him. When the illusory nature of the objects is revealed, the attachment falls off and he is free. These attachments

persuade him to tarnish the acts of worship also; for, he prays to God for granting him trivial boons. Pray to God for God; do not use Truth to achieve Untruth. Have the inner vision, not the outer. Do not be attracted by the objective world; concentrate on the subjective world. You do not scatter seeds on the surface; you plant them deep enough for the roots to get a foothold. Do not dig the seeds into the soil too deep. Follow the middle path. Do not tighten the strings of the violin or veena too much; nor leave them loose. Do not get too bound with the world; do not also give it up. The Shivarathri Festival, as celebrated here, is an example for you. You might ask, "Swami has often declared that all days are holy days, that there is no special rite or ritual that has to be observed on any single day; but, Swami Himself is pouting vibhuuthi (holy ash) on the Idol and calling it abhisheka (anointing the idol); is this right?" Swami is doing so, to teach you a lesson.

When desire is destroyed, Love reigns supreme

The Vibhuuthi Abhisheka has a potent inner meaning which Swami wants you to grasp. The Vibhuuthi is the most precious object, in the truly spiritual sense. You know that Shiva burnt the God of Desire or Kama, called Manmatha (for he agitates the mind and confounds the confusion already existing there) into a heap of ashes. Shiva adorned Himself with that ash, and thus He shone in His Glory, as the Conqueror of Desire. When Kama was destroyed, Prema (Love) reigned supreme. When there is no desire to warp the mind, Love could be true and full. What greater offering can you give God to glorify Him than the ash signifying your triumph over tantalising Desire? Ash is the ultimate condition of things; it cannot undergo any further change. The Abhisheka with Vibhuuthi is done to inspire you to give up desire and offer Shiva the ashes of its destruction as the most valuable of all the articles you have earned. Ash cannot fade as flowers do in a day or two; it does not dry and disappear or get soiled and unpotable as water does; it will not lose colour as leaves do, in a few hours; it does not rot as fruits do in a few days. Ash is ash for ever and ever. So, burn your viles, your vices, your bad habits; worship Shiva, rendering yourselves pure in thought and word and deed.

Shiva is the source of Bliss

Shiva is worshipped with the three-leaved bilva, for, He is immanent in the three worlds, in the three phases of Time, in the three attributes of Nature. He removes the three types of grief; He has no basis outside Him; He is the source of Bliss; He is the embodiment of the sweetness and efficacy of Nectar. Since every being is Shiva- Swaruupa (of the nature of Shiva) - for without Shiva, it is mere 'shava' (corpse) - man has to live up to that Divine status. Scholars and Pandiths who propagate Dharma (right action) in our country are doing great disservice, for, they cast doubts on the very majesty of Godhead. Swami Karunyanandha spoke now of the episode where Brahma became jealous of Krishna, and stole the cows and cowherds from Him in order to bring discomfiture on Him. He said, Krishna created the same number of cows and cowherds, every one exactly similiar, and thus, foiled Brahma's conspiracy. People who hear such tales will naturally wonder how Gods can be envious of each other just like human beings; their faith in the Divine will be undermined thereby. These scholars are more 'intent on exhibiting their textual scholarship, than revealing the Glory of God. They do not mind the damage they cause to the very cause they are pleading for. There was an old woman in a village,-some years ago. She sold a patch of land that she owned, and with the money, she had four gold bangles made, two for each arm. She wore them with great joy and went along the streets very proud of her new acquisition. But, she was disappointed, because no one in the village turned aside and looked at her bangles; she could as well have not worn them, for the villagers did not notice any difference in her. She tried various means to attract their attention towards the bangles, but, without success. One night she could not sleep at all, for, this neglect pained her much. At last she got a brilliant idea which, she decided, must succeed; the villagers must be drawn to notice the bangles.

All beings are actuated by the same Divine Power

Next day, after sunrise, she set fire to her own dwelling house! When the flames rose, and commotion ensued, the villagers rushed towards her, sitting and wailing in front of the burning house. She shook her hands pathetically, at the faces of the frightened villagers, causing the bangles to jingle and shine in

the red light of the high flames, crying out, "Alas! My house is on fire," "O, pity my fate," "God, don't you see my plight?" Everytime she shouted a sentence, she put out her arms vigorously at some one, so that she or he could not miss sighting the bangles. The pity of it! She was so anxious to exhibit her bangles that she did not care for her house itself; the house was on fire but she was happy her bangles were noticed. The scholars who are lost in admiration of their own cleverness are as foolish as this old woman. Do not say or do anything that will bring Indian culture into disrepute, or that will undermine the faith of people in Goodness and in God. Do not claim to be - orthodox and encourage heterodoxy or heresy. Cast aside the desire for happiness and prosperity, do not moan that you do not secure Heaven; it does not matter, if you are smothered by difficulties. Stand up boldly in defence of the honour of your country. That will bring you all happiness and prosperity, all the Grace you yearn for.

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

Love brings people together; hatred drives them apart. You cannot be happy, when you cause misery to others. God showers Grace when the nine steps of bhakthi (devotion) are observed. Masters or rulers can be won over by the same means - sacrifice, love, devotion, dedication in the path of duty. When success is achieved by means of unrest and violence, it has to be preserved and prolonged only by further unrest and violence. Therefore, let this be the

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

28. You are freed!

Date: 21 February 1974 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Shivarathri

Do not be misled by what you see; what you 'do not see with your eyes is much more significant. Why waste your life without achieving its purpose - namely, knowing and experiencing the truth? Come, come with Me, you can make your life worthwhile; you can succeed. Man has in him all the Bliss, as well as all the equipment needed to unravel it; but, he is caught in dire ignorance of his own inner resources. He can have supreme peace but, he does not strive to earn it; his attempts are weakened by doubt and indecision, and so, they are doomed to failure. Of course, there is the flow of water underneath the ground. But, how can we benefit by it unless efforts are made to dig down into that. source? A good deal of 'desire-for-sense-satisfaction' has to be removed before that inner spring of peace and joy can be tapped. Your lives are essentially of the nature of Shanthi (Peace); your Nature is essentially Love; your hearts are saturated with Truth. Rid yourselves of the impediments that prevent their manifestation; you do not make any attempt towards this, and so, there is no peace or love or truth in the home, the community, the nation and the world. The husband and the wife do not live in concord; the father and his sons are involved in factions; even friends do not see eye to eye! Twins take different paths. For, they live in a competitive waning world of passions and emotions. It is only when God is the Goal and Guide, that there can be real peace, love and truth. The Divine must be revered at all times; what pleases the Divine must be understood and followed

Feel that all your skill and strength are God's gifts

The Ramayana gives two examples of such consecrated lives, those of Anjaneya and Lakshmana. Anjaneya (Hanuman) dedicated every moment of his life, every wave of thought, every twitch of muscle, to his Master, Rama. When Rama sent him in the southerly direction on the mission to search for Seetha, he was neither elated on being thus recognised as an efficient instrument nor depressed at the dangerous nature of his task. He knew that

Rama would confer on him the skill and strength needed to fulfil the errand; in fact all his skill and all his strength were 'His gifts'. To feel that he was too weak an instrument was, he concluded, an insult to Rama's Omniscience and Grace. Lakshmana too was a mighty hero, for, he drew strength from the Divine itself. And, he had no other strength. Once while moving about in the forest as exiles, Rama instructed him to choose a nice spot and erect a Parnashala (green-bower) thereon, for Seetha and Himself. Lakshmana was so shocked with pain at this that he fell on the ground; he lamented that he had fallen from grace. Rama said that he had 'risen' instead, for, he was asking him to select the site himself. That was the very reason why Lakshmana felt he had fallen: "Have I a will apart from yours? How could you ever imagine that I could exercise my judgement independently and select a site myself? Tell me, where and how; it will be done. But, I have no judgement of my own; I have surrendered it long ago." That was the reply of Lakshmana.

Bhajan must become an unbroken stream of Bliss

You too declare that you have surrendered; but, that is just a verbal statement. If you sit in a car, you go along with it; on the cycle, you move with it; on a horse you go wherever the horse takes you. But, in this case, you say and perhaps you believe that you have placed yourselves in My hands and so, you are going along the path I have laid down. But, your mind and your heart are not fully in Me and so, the surrender is only in name. As a sign of this deed of surrender and in order to sustain it, nothing more is enjoined than constant remembrance of the Name. No regimen of exhausting Sadhana (spiritual discipline) is prescribed. Smarana (remembering) is enough. You have recited bhajans (group singing of devotional songs on Lord's Names) extolling the Names which summarise the Glory, all through the night, after the emergence of the Atmalinga (symbol of the elemental form of Shiva). But, this is only an appetiser. Bhajan must become an unbroken stream of Bliss on your tongues and in your hearts; it must confer on you the uninterrupted awareness of Soham - of the Unity of I and He, of This with That. It is called Akhanda hamsa japa - unbroken japa of the Hamsa manthra, Soham (inner sacred sound formula). I will ensure freedom from anxiety, fear and grief.

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

Symbol of Time-Space manifestation of divinity

The mind too must be mastered every day until, on the fifteenth day, fifteen phases have disintegrated and only a streak remains to be removed by a final flourish of effort. That is the sadhana that you did through the night, bhajan, vigil, fast. When the mind goes, there is more moha (deluding desire and attachment) and the kshaya (decline) of moha is moksha (liberation). Smarana is the surest means of mastering the wiles of the mind. You are indeed blessed, since front among the billions of people on this earth, you alone were able to come into this congregation, this presence, on this occasion. People gather in many a sacred place for. Shivarathri, but, you were able to be here on this thrice-holy day and witness the emergence of the Dhasa angula Swaruupa - the Upanishaths declare that God is athyathisthath dhasha angulam, the ten-inch-symbol of the kala (time), desha (space) - manifestation of divinity, as described by Sage Kapila, the incarnation of Narayana Himself. When Kapila who too was the personification of time and space was born, he called upon the Gods to gather in the Presence and take dharshan (audience); his mother who called upon the Gods is therefore named, Dhevahuthi (She who called the Gods). And, when the Gods came, Kapila asked them, "Don't you know who I am?" Even now all human babies ask the same question as soon as they are born - Koham? (Who am I?). Having had the unique good fortune of witnessing the emergence of the time-space-embodiment in the Linga-Form, I assure you that you are released from the bondage of birth and death. Recollect (and live in the recollection of) that moment of emergence and meditate on the significance of the Linga Form. This is the chance that is seldom gained through the performance of yajnas or yagas or other elaborate rituals; or as a result of years of arduous sadhana. When you are asked what happened at Prasanthi Nilayam, tell them that your

life's mission has been fulfilled, that you were able to witness the Lingodhbhava, see the Linga which emerged during the auspicious hour.

Mystery revealed by Shiva's three-pronged spear

The Linga, .as you can see, is dhasha angulam, ten inches in circumference. It has within it, shining with native light the Thrishuul (three-pronged spear) of Shiva, symbolising the three phases of Time - past, present and future - and the three dimensions of space - earth, sky and the nether regions, as mentioned by Me already. Time is measured in units of ten (60 vighatikas, 60 ghatikas and 360 days for the year), and in this Linga too, as you can see even from where you are sitting, the colour of the Thrishuul inside the Linga changes into a new one, every ten minutes. The handle of the Thrishuul demonstrates the One, of which the three are manifestations. This is the grand Mystery that has been revealed to you. You have witnessed the Divine Creation; you have seen the Divine Symbol; you have shared the Bliss. Out of the world's population of many crores, you alone secured this fortune. The Shruthis declare the Purusha as splendour, as Jyothi. You have seen the splendour when the Linga emerged; you have seen the triple Jyothi in the Linga itself. No greater fortune can befall a man. Live hereafter as befits the recipient of this rare Grace. Thyagaraja the Saint-singer sang of the Rama Nama, as being composed of two vital sounds Ra and Ma, Ra being the life-sound of the manthra devoted to Vishnu (Om Namō Narayana) and Ma being the life-sound of the manthra devoted to Shiva (Om Namasshivaya). The two sounds became Rama, the One which became Vishnu and Shiva, just as the Linga is the One from which all Forms manifest, the Elementary form which symbolises the First Emergence of the Will of the Divine. I repeat that you who have experienced the sublimity and splendour of this Divine Event have acquired thereby merit enormous enough to save you from the cycle of birth and death. Dwell on this mighty moment, this holy hour that you were privileged to spend here; contemplate the majesty of the event that you witnessed; sanctify your days by thoughts that are sacred, words that are suffused with love and deeds that are in accordance with the Grace you have won this day. Alert yourselves, whenever you are prone to deviate from this responsibility. Be ever vigilant that you do not stray or weaken or vacillate.

Make the mind, the voice and the actions agree in harmony. That is the right way of life.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

29. Cells of the body of God

Date: 01 March 1974 / Location: Brindavan

WHAT has sociology or the social sciences to do with the sciences of the spirit or the inquiry into the human spirit? This is a question that is commonly raised. So too, many do ask: What has the spiritual student and sadhaka (spiritual aspirant) to do with society and its problems? It must be said, that both these attitudes are wrong. No society can find its fulfilment, no social ideal can fructify, without the blossoming of the spirit of man. Mankind cannot realise the Divinity whose expression it is, without careful and constant attention being paid to the cultivation of the spirit. How else can this Divinity express itself than in and through individuals? We can apprehend only the jagath (world of change), this moving, inconstant, fantasia; we cannot see or hear, smell or taste or touch the Director of the fantasia, God. In the same manner, we can apprehend the individual, but not the entity named Society. For, Society is no separate, distinct, complex formed out of elemental components. Society is the divine proliferation produced by the Will Supreme.

Think, speak and act in the attitude of Love

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

Society cannot justify itself by planning to divide the spoils gained out of Nature either in equal shares or unequal shares. The consummation that must inspire Society has to be - the establishment and elaboration in every social act and resolution, of the knowledge of the One Universal Atma and the bliss

that knowledge confers. Sai does not direct, "the Atma has no death, therefore, kill the physical sheaths, the bodies." No. Sai does not encourage wars. Sai directs you to recognise the Atma as your closest kin, closer than the members of your family, your blood-relations and your dearest descendents. When this is done, you will never more stray from the path of right, which alone can maintain that kinship. Familial attachment operates even against the performance of one's legitimate duties. But, attachment to the Divine fills that Duty with a new dedication which ensures both joy and success. It activates man as nothing else can: it confers on him during the process of doing his duty the highest wisdom. Hence the advice, Do not enter the prakrithi (objective world) in the hope of realising the Atma; enter the objective world, after becoming aware of the Atma; for, then you see Nature in a new light and your very life becomes a long festival of love. There are many who use their scholarship and intelligence, even Vedhic scholarship, for dreary debate and competitive contests. They are enamoured of their petty triumphs. They declare that society is an arena for winning such triumphs. But, Sai calls on you to seek and strengthen another type of society, where there is **no** room for such trivial desires.

Man is too weak to keep his nature under control

Disputative Vedhic scholars crave for the fruits of their endeavour and efforts, through ritual. Nature does not crave so; the clouds bring rain, as a homage to God who is their Lord. But, they attribute it to the efficacy of their rites and use it to inflate their ego. They play about, among the far-spreading branches of the tree of desire. They are entangled in the coils of the three 'ropes' - the thamasik, the rajasik and the sathwik (the ignorant, the egoistical and the good). You have to go beyond the three ropes, the three bonds. You have to be, ever, in the unchanging eternal Truth. You must be established in the One, as the One, with no trace or taste of two. Earning and garnering should not interest you; you must not be caught in the pursuit of Yoga (Divine communion) and Kshema (well being); for, you are FULL already and have no wants. The ideal of a high standard of life, instead of a high level of living, has played havoc with human society. A high level of living insists on morality, humility, detachment, compassion; so the competitive greed for luxury and

conspicuous consumption receives no encouragement and will be destroyed. Now, man is the slave of his desires; he finds himself helpless to conquer the thirst for pleasure and luxury; he is too weak to keep his nature under control; he does not know how to arouse the Divine Consciousness that is latent in him.

Give up reliance on the vagaries of the mind

Mere moral practices or instruction cannot help you to achieve this. It can be done, only, by spiritual sadhana. For, it is a basic transformation. It involves the elimination of the Mind, which is the arch-obstacle in the path. Grace of God, if invoked and won, can endow you with power. And, the Grace is available within you, awaiting the call. Man must give up reliance on the vagaries of the mind. He must act ever in the consciousness of his innate Divinity. When that is done, his three-fold nature (composed of the Gunas - thamasik, rajasik and sathwik) will automatically express itself through only holy channels. That is the genuine Manifestation. Another point. The argument may be raised: If one has to give up the desire for comfort, luxury and pleasure, why should one be embroiled in society? This presupposes the belief that Society is justified only by the provision of such worldly joys. But, what kind of society can one build on such slender foundation? If built, it can be a society only in name, it will not be bound by mutual love and cooperation. The strong will suppress the weak. Social relations will be marred by discontent. Even when attempts are made to divide the resources of Nature equally among all, the cordiality will be only on the surface. It will not be spontaneous. We can limit the resources available, but, we cannot limit greed, desire and craving. Desire involves seeking beyond the limits of possibility. What has to be done is, to pluck out desire by the roots; man must give up the desire for objective pleasure, based on the illusion that the World is many, manifold, multicoloured etc., and not on the Truth that the world, nature, all creation, is ONE. When one is conscious only of the ONE, who desires which? What can be acquired and enjoyed by the second person? The Athmic Vision destroys the desire for objective joys, for, there is no object distinct from the subject.

Experience the unity: "the whole world is one family"

This is the true function of Society - to enable every member to realise this Athmic Vision. The men and women bound by mutual interests in a society are not merely families, castes, classes, groups, or kinsmen, kinswomen; they are ONE Atma. They are knit by the closest of family ties; not only the one society to which they feel they are bound, but, all MANKIND is ONE. Vasudhaiva kutumbakam, as the Shasthras (moral codes) declare, "the whole world is one family." This unity must be experienced by every one. Natural resources and wealth are now being misused for the boosting of one's ego. But, when the Athmic Unity is realised, they will promote the new way of life through Love. What is now 'mercy' or legally enforced mutual 'help' will then be transformed into 'Divine Love' that can effectively purify the recipient and the giver. This consummation is beyond the region of common politics, ethics or economics. They cannot transform the receiver and thrill the giver, however much they attempt to equalise. They do not have the appeal and they have no power to sustain. The equality they establish will be haunted by a shadow, the shadow of the ego. This shadow can disappear only when identity as ONE is known and felt. It may be said that not all desires are wrong; the rajasik ones which harm and exploit others can be condemned; but should one renounce the Sathwik desires? Desire is desire, though the object may be beneficial and pure. The fruit of effort, the mind that seeks it, the vitality that activates the mind, life itself - every one of these has to be turned towards the Lord, with devotion born out of the vision of the ONE.

Devotion to God goes ill with hatred towards others

Those who argue that the Spiritual Path is for the Individual only, and that the Society should not be involved in it are committing a great mistake. It is like insisting that there should be light inside the house, and saying that it does not matter, if there is darkness outside. Devotion towards God goes ill with hatred towards, fellow-men. Fellow-men and the world must be seen ever in the mirror of Sath-Chith-Anandha (Being, Awareness, Bliss Absolute). Kinship based on this recognition will alone last. That is the Sai Kinship. When you deepen that kinship, the True Presence, the Constant Presence of Sathya Sai

will be yours. Do not be led away by your fancies into the jungle of words and feelings. Be firm, true to your innermost nature. Good and evil are based on the reactions of individuals; they are not inherent in things or events. Vedantha (Vedhic philosophy) or Atheism is accepted or rejected, when one likes or dislikes it. They do not depend on logical acceptance or rejection. Only experience can establish their validity. Who can delineate Godhood as thus and thus. Those who do so are indulging in a futile exercise. They have no authority for declaring it. If they claim the right, they are but conceited people relying on their limited intellects. Divinity is fully immanent in every one, it is patent for the eyes that can see dearly and deeply. Whoever denies this is only cheating himself of his reality. He cannot dismiss it by denial, either from himself or others.

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

All men are of one Divine Lineage

The spirit of renunciation, adherence to virtue, the eagerness to co-operate, the sense of kinship - -these are the characteristic signs of man. Life which considers the as encumbrances cannot be valued as 'life.' The brotherhood of man can be translated into life only on the basis of the Athmic Vision. All men thirst for peace, happiness and bliss. They are the precious heritage which is their right, for, they are God's Treasure. They can be earned only by recognising the bond that knits man to man. All men are of one lineage; they are of Divine Lineage. All men are cells in the One Divine organism, in the Divine body. That should be your faith, your fortune, your forte, your fullness. Awareness of this alone gives you the right to call yourself a man. Learn to live as men. This is the sadhana, this is the message of Sai.

30. Full circle or half circle?

Date: 03 March 1974 / Location: Mumbai

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

You are the Infinite Universal Absolute

You tell Me that you have read the Bhagavatha Vahini and all other. Vahinis that I have written for you. Good. But, let Me ask you, have you put at least a single direction given in them into daily practice? Question yourself calmly and decide, to benefit by practising the processes mentioned in them. This is the proper plan of study - reading, reflection and regular application in life. Study is WORK. Inquiry into the value and applicability of what is studied is WORSHIP; the experience of the validity and value of the practice is WISDOM. ' You must first learn about 'what others think you are.' They deal with you as a body, with a specific name and an identifiable form. Then, you must learn about 'what you think you are.' You are aware of your mind and its monkey tricks, its prejudices and preferences, its passions and pursuits. You are aware of your individual consciousness, of your version of 'me' and 'mine.' Learn about the mind as an instrument, which can harm you if used unwisely or

help you, if used wisely. You' have to learn about yet another 'you!' The YOU 'you really are.' For, you are neither the body, nor the mind. You are the embodiment of Purity, Power, Love, Bliss. The miserable little prison named 'Individuality' has to be denied. You are free, but, you fancy you are bound and mope in the cell you imagine is limiting you. See the Truth that will set you free. It is within you, feel it. Feel it. You are not the body, the mind, the intellect, the brain, the heart, the denotable diminutive ego. You are the Infinite Universal Absolute. You have to get yourselves established firmly, unshakeably in this awareness. Paramahansas (ascetics of the highest order) have that awareness. Every one of you can attain that state; it is your destiny, your duty to yourself. Merely finishing the study of book after book serves no purpose. Practising one line from any one book is enough to save you from aeons of darkness, of ignorance, and of yearning for Light.

External and internal sadhanas are both essential

Mere gymnastics will not do; the Bhagavath Geetha (the Song of God) can be used as a Bhagavath Duutha (Messenger from God) if only you welcome It into your heart. Once a famous Pandith was expounding the Bhagavath Geetha before a massive gathering; he gave an elaborate explanation of the shloka (verse) recounting the Glory of the Lord, through the media of different epithets. The Lord, he said, is Kavi (He knows the past, the present and the future), Purana (the Ageless One, the effulgent light and life-spirit in all beings), Anu-shasitha (He who lays down the Law which regulate the Mind and lead it on to its source and sustenance, the Universal Spirit). The audience was amazed at his encyclopaedic scholarship; but, that was all. He had no experience of the God whom he was delineating in such attractive colours. He had only learnt it from books, parrot-like from teachers. You must be guarded against pride that infects the scholar who has mastered a certain number of ancient texts. Do not judge others as inferior, because they do not participate in bhajans (group devotional singing), nagarasankeerthans (public devotional singing by moving groups), or your type of Study Circles. You can be very wrong, if you estimate a person's spiritual development, by mere externals. Inner purity cannot express itself through pompous show. Only He who sees into every heart can know who resides therein: Rama or Kama (God

or selfish desire). Of course, disciplines like bhajan, Nagarasankeerthan and japa (silent repetition of God's name) are needed for cleansing the mind; to cure the terrible malady of birth and death, the external medication of these sadhanas (spiritual practices) and internal medication of dhyana and sheela (meditation and virtuous conduct) are both essential. External discipline is dharma vidhya (the acquisition of righteousness as a way of living); internal discipline is Brahma Vidhya (the acquisition of spiritual experience as a perpetual treasure). That is why the Vedas command "Sathyam Vadha, Dharmam Chara" - "Always speak Truth. Always do Right." This is. the way to God.

Have the goal of putting into practice what you read

Every one of you is a pilgrim on that road proceeding at your own pace, according to your qualification and the stage reached by its means. The advice that appeals to one of you or applies to one of you might not be appropriate to another, who has travelled less distance or reached a more advanced state. When I tell one person to follow one line of sadhana (spiritual discipline), it is specifically for his benefit; do not take it as prescription for your benefit also, saying, "Swami told him thus; let me also adopt it." Each has a different make-up - mental, physical and spiritual. The doctor directs one patient to drink curds and prohibits another from drinking it. When a man is obese, he advises certain types of food; when he is lean, he advises other types. When doctors who treat diseases of the body have to prescribe different remedies, how much more specific and personal must be the remedies for the complex and varied conditions of mental situations and spiritual yearnings and aspirations? Unless you make earnest inquiry, you cannot discover the remedy applicable to your temperament and its problems. Study with faith and devotion. Delve into the significance and the meaning of what you read; and, always have before you the goal of putting what you read into practice. Unless you do so, the Study Circle will remain a half-Circle for ever; it cannot be a full Circle.

And, pay attention to one other point also. Do not confine your Studies to this Circle and these Books. The whole Universe is University for you. You can

imbibe wisdom from the sky, the clouds, the mountains, the rivers, the daily phenomena of sunrise and sunset, the seasons, birds, trees, flowers, the insects - in fact, all beings and things in Nature. Approach these teachers, with awe, reverence and humility; they will respond with their lessons. Do not worry that you have no mastery of Samskrith; Samskar (purificatory act) is enough equipment, for the University that lies around you. Samskrith is the language of the ancient Scriptures and of Classical Literature; Samskar is the Language of the Heart, the refined medium of fruitful communion with Nature, in all the manifold outpourings of Divinity.

Where Divinity is sought after, one ought always to behave in the spirit of Love, devoid of the slightest trace of hate, envy and anger! When one cultivates the inner look, one attains the conviction of the basic equality of all.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

31. To those who are Mine

Date: 09 March 1974 / Location: Deogiri Mines

THE world is a furnace and factory; where man has to shape destiny by his honest untiring efforts. He who takes up this challenge and spends his allotted years and the skill and intelligence with which he is endowed, in purposeful activity, is really entitled to the status of *Karma Yogi*. You, who work in these Deogiri Mines are genuine Karma Yogis. For, from dawn to dusk, you utilise every ounce of your energy in work that is beneficial to yourself and the people of this country. You do not waste time in wasteful habits; you devote your strength and stamina for productive aims; you strive to feed and foster your wives and children and sit down for your meals with them in the happy family circle. Really God is delighted to reside in your hearts. Keep the heart pure, unsullied by evil or vice. Let the rays of Love illumine it. Let the foul bats of hatred and greed fly away from the cavity of your hearts; let the clean air of mutual cooperation and help render the cavity safe and sweet. You see these trees; they are able to stand firm and grow, because of the roots that have spread out of your sight. You see this garland in my hand. The hundreds of flowers are held together by a thread, which you do not see. You see this building over there; the walls have risen so high, because the foundations inside the earth are also high, though you cannot see them. So also, this world is so plentiful, so charming, so rich, so comfortable, so regular in its movements and moods, because it has an unseen master and law-giver, God. The unseen is the sustainer of the Seen.

The rich desire more and so are disappointed more

Have faith in His Grace, and lead a virtuous life, a life devoted to service of the weak, a life spent in thoughts about the might and glory of God. The nation relies on you to supply it with very essential commodities; you are in duty bound to answer that call. Pray that you may carry out that duty well. God will certainly answer your prayer, for, you are so simple and innocent. Let Me tell you that you are really more fortunate than most of the so-called rich, for, the rich do not sleep as soundly as you. Their burden of worry is much

heavier; they desire more and so are disappointed more. They are tempted into worse and worse styles of living and so, they alienate themselves more and more from Grace. When you spend your hours in thoughts about God, you are also free from evil ways. You will not be tempted to abuse others or harm them in any way. You live in Love, accepting all the events of life as His Gifts. Homes such as yours are, really speaking, heavens on earth; the joy that bubbles in your hearts is the symbol of *Vaikuntha*; the earnestness and care that you evince in your work is the sign of *Kailash*, the abode of Shiva. Hearts dedicated to these noble ideals are indeed 'golden.' They cannot be tarnished by the ups and downs of life; they can remain unaffected and pure.

Approach your work in a reverential spirit

You are drawing wealth out of *Prakrithi* (Nature). Prakrithi is the manifestation of *Purusha* (God). When you desire to master Prakrithi, and bend it for your needs, you have to earn the Grace of Purusha. So, approach your work in a reverential humble spirit. Ravana sought Seetha (who is Prakrithi, since she was the daughter of the Earth, discovered by Janaka in the furrow on the field he was ploughing). But, he did not first win the Grace of Rama, the Purusha (God), who is the master of Nature. So he brought untold disaster on his head and on the heads of all his kinsmen, clan, and followers. Everyday before you begin work, pray to God a few minutes at least; and, at the end of the day, when the work is over, gather in some consecrated spot, a mandir (hall of worship), and offer grateful thanks to the Lord, singing his name and meditating on his majesty. That will make you real Karmayogins, even heroes of the Karma path. This place is full of charm; it is quiet, with a forest all around. Such retreats are sought after by *sadhaks* (spiritual aspirants) and sages, but, you have the luck to be working in these surroundings. This is a *thapovan* (hermitage), I should say, a spot which aspirants would love to settle down in. I bless that you all have lives of joy and happiness, of love and service, of the ceaseless shower of Divine Grace.

32. The second visit

Date: 10 March 1974 / Location: Saandur

EMBODIMENTS of the Divine Atma! I am addressing you thus, so that you may recall to your minds, at least occasionally; the noble truths that are treasured for your sake in the culture of Bharath; meditate on its width and depth and derive solace and strength therefrom. That is your privilege; the Avathar (divine incarnation) has come to call your attention to the profundity and profitableness of the Dharma (righteousness) that Bharath has been upholding for centuries, but, which is undergoing neglect at the hands of the very children of this land. Bharath was the home of many centres from where the message of eternal peace and Universal Love spread all over the world; but, today; it is in the grip of fear and anxiety, hatred and greed. The ways in which man spends his days are really ludicrous in the extreme. He craves happiness and is ever on the go in all directions in its pursuit. And, when he finds that when secured, the happiness is but a flash in the pan of misery, he starts cursing himself and others. Though all the sacred books, all the saints of all the lands and all the creeds, and all the teachers and preachers have been saying that God alone is the source and spring of lasting happiness, man turns a deaf ear to the counsel and goes his own blind way.

The more you have, greater the bother and anxiety

There is the story of a young man who was riding a cycle on a dark night along a crowded road; the policeman on duty asked him to stop and alight, for, he had no lamp on his cycle. The fellow, however, shouted, "Policeman! Keep away. Of course, I have no lamp; but, beware, I have no brake, either!" That is the pathetic condition of every one now. No one has the lamp of wisdom, or the brake of sense-control. How then can they go along the road to Anandha (divine bliss), without causing injury to themselves or others? The cyclist must have both; man too has need of wisdom and self-control. Or else, he is certain to ruin this chance he has got to save himself. Man has been sent into the world, in order that he may use the time and the opportunity to realise the truth that he is not man, but God. The wave dances with the wind,

basks in the Sun, frisks in the rain, imagining it is playing on the breast of the Sea; it does not know that it is the Sea itself. Until it realises that truth, it will be tossed up and down; when it knows it, it can lie calm and collected at peace with itself. Food, clothing, shelter - these are incidental; the more you have, the greater the ill-health, the bother, the anxiety, the fear. And, nothing can save you from death, when you have to leave everything and disappear from the scene. If you are good, if you serve others to the best of your ability, and shower Love on all, then, though you may be away, your name will remain in the memory of man. That is the marble monument you can legitimately covet and work for. But, it is your duty to serve, and to be good, whether men honour you or throw scorn at you. What do you say, to your Master or Guru? "I Liberation want," or, "I Anandha want," isn't it? Well. The means of getting it is in your own hands. Liberation and Anandha (bliss) are in your hands already, packed between the upper cover (I) and the lower cover (want). 'I' means the 'ego;' 'want' means 'desire.' Remove the two covers, the ego and the desire. What remains is Liberation, Anandha. In order to remove the upper and lower covers, intelligence is wanted. That is why Gandhiji went round the country with the prayer Sabko Sanmathi dhe Bhagavan: "O Lord, Give every one good intelligence."

Discover ways and means of expanding Love

Intelligence has to be directed to good ends; to seek and discover ways and means of expanding one's Love and deepening one's compassion. It should not descend to cynicism, and the search for faults in others. When a rose is held in the hand, its fragrance can give the holder joy; the fragrance can be enjoyed by people standing near. So too, when your intelligence is saturated with the fragrance of virtue and charity you can derive contentment and joy, and those around you also can share in the peace and harmony. It was as early as 1949 that I first came to Sandur State. At that time, there was no chance like this for Me to meet so many of you and tell you about such valuable spiritual principles. Everything in its own good time, as the saying goes. A flower blooms; but, a long time elapses before it grows into a fruit and is filled with nectarine juice. A child is born; but, he takes a long time to grow into a strong intelligent member of society. I am glad I came now and was

able to meet and bless so many thousands of the people of Sandur.

When you are in bed, asleep, dreaming and wandering through varied escapades and experiences, what has happened to the body which you had fostered as you yourself?.

And while in deep sleep, where have all the levels of consciousness taken refuge? Sleep is short death: death is a long sleep. You, the T in you, endow the inert material vehicle called body consciousness. You are the Cosmic Consciousness, God,

temporarily in the role of 'I.'

The body-mind-complex is the instrument to be utilised for that Will. This is the message of Rig Veda.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

33. The poetry of Love

Date: 01 April 1974 / Location: Hyderabad

ANTICIPATING the rains at the appropriate time of the year, as dictated by previous experience of himself and his forefathers, the ryot prepares the field with plough and harrow; then, when the rains come and soak the furrows, he sows the seeds, so that they may sprout and shoot through the soil. If he delays or desists, how can he reap the harvest? Or, if, when the crop is ready for the sickle, he does not reap the sheaves and bundles them home, how can his granary be filled with the food he needs must have? The rain is the gift of God; man can only pray for it, and propitiate God by righteousness. The ploughing, the sowing, the weeding and the reaping are the sadhanas man must undertake to deserve the Grace and to get the strength to thank God for His Gifts. Without God, life is like a school without a teacher; it is a wire with no current passing through it; it is a body with no soul. God is in us, around us and beyond us; as the air is imperceptible in the absence of breeze or of things that it moves; so God too can be known only by His manifestation in man and beast, plant and bird, in things and beings all around us. No one yet knows the mystery of the electric current, why it behaves so, what is the exact nature of its origin and flow; but, yet it is manipulated into a thousand uses and it is manifesting through a thousand appliances and instruments.

God is a Reality ever present in every being

So too, God is present everywhere; but we can understand only that part of Him that manifests before our cognition. Ordinary people will swear that the earth does not move at all; it is held forth in poetry as a symbol of stability. But, it has two motions, both unbelievably fast! It rotates on its own axis at a speed which exceeds a thousand miles per hour; even while rotating so, the earth moves round the Sun at an astonishing rate of speed! But, do we notice it while it happens? God too is a reality, ever present in us and in every being; but, we miss Him, as we miss the movement of the earth. We have to infer God through proofs and evidences of His Providence, His Grace, His Majesty and His Glory, just as we infer the movements of the earth, the Moon and the

Stars, by watching the sky, the seasons and the precise procession of day and night. We cannot describe God in the vocabulary learnt upon the earth. We have to experience the Bliss of realising Him as the core of our being. Man is endowed with a sense of wonder and awe, the sense which makes him either Karma Yogi (a participant), Jnana Yogi (an inquirer into the mystery) or Bhakthi Yogi (a devout adorer). When he suppresses or ignores or bypasses this sense of wonder, he gets involved in the physical world, physical needs and physical pursuits. He starts worshipping Mammon and he strays away from the good, the just and the beautiful. He barter the Chalice of Bliss for a mouthful of dust.

Poets have to discover God first

Since we have today a few poets reading their poems before us, I am tempted to tell them something about their art. The poets of today are in the forefront of those who regard God as dead, a decorative piece, if not an encumbrance or a nuisance! They cater to their fans sweets coated with fashionable slogans and catchy phrases. They never care for the higher values of life, or the lasting ideals for living. Their poetry deals with external objects, sensuous emotions, and trivial tinsel. It is all extremely shallow and sapless. Real poetry emanates from the call of the Divine within, to express itself in sublime vocabulary. It grants lasting joy to the poet as well as the reader. It does not lower one's estimate of the world and its Creator. Readers must be drawn more often to read the poem, and each time they browse on it and ruminate over its lines, new vistas of meaning must open up before their minds. Then only can the poem be for all time and for all men. Poets have to discover God first and then, disseminate their ecstasy among those that are thirsty for that bliss. And, who has not got that thirst deep within himself? Every one is an exile, pining for his home in God. The pilgrimage towards God can be made smooth, quick and safe, by the right type of poets. A blind person or a lame person cannot cross a river at the ford, all by himself. The lame man can ride on the shoulders of the blind man and lead him across, safe. For, he has the eye and the other has the purposefulness and the strength. The poet has the eye full of experience; he knows the path; he can avoid the pitfalls and help others to do likewise. He can encourage, enthuse.

In the same manner, a person cannot, by himself, acquire the jnana (spiritual wisdom) or discover the path to realise the soul within him; the poet is the Guru (Preceptor) for such earnest Sadhakas (spiritual aspirants). He must be aware of this high role, as the Rishis (sages) of old were aware; he must train himself for this high status. When I speak to you, I do not pause to examine whether I am following your rules of grammar; the words pour from the heart, full of Prema (divine love). The heart renders all words sweet and soft. Sweet words and sweet manners lead to sweet actions and sweet reactions.

There is no power more effective than Love

Fill the heart with love; then, the words coming out of the heart will be full of vitality and power. There is no Shakthi (Power) more effective than Prema (Love). The grammar of Love makes the words enter the hearts of the listeners and moves them into acceptance, appreciation and action. A child's prattle has no grammar, but, it wins the love of the mother. Ramakrishna Paramahansa did not know the word 'pension'; he said 'pence' once, instead of pension. Swami Vivekananda interposed with the correct word, but, the Paramahansa said that the word did not matter, it was enough if what was meant to be communicated was understood. The bhava (the idea intended to be communicated) is the real thing; the bhasha (language in which it is clothed) is of superficial interest only. I want you to imbibe the bhava; I want the poets to inculcate pure bhava, not pretty bhasha. If you understand the bhava which I am transmitting, then you can become genuine devotees and Sadhakas, and progress on the path of self-realisation. Now, there are bhakthas (devotees) by the million! They are increasing daily in number.

And you might have noticed, Sai Babas too have become very large in number! Also, people claiming association with Me, claiming that I have blessed them more plentifully than others, and authorised them to go about among the bhakthas and gain importance by collecting funds or donations! Real devotees will never announce such absurd claims or listen to such claims made by others. A true devotee will be steadfast in faith, whatever the ups and downs Of worldly fortune. He prays to the Lord not for padhartham (material objects or the fulfilment of worldly desires), but, for Para-ar-tham

(the happiness that is supra-worldly). The Pandavas were such devotees and so, Krishna declared that He dwells in the heart of every one of those five brothers, as well as of their queen, Dhroupadhi. They are five examples for mankind, in this Kali yuga (Iron Age).

I exhort every one to cultivate Prema, for, I am Prema, and when you manifest Prema, you are only expressing Me, the Indweller of your heart.

Individual spiritual practice is the negative pole and service is the positive pole. The conjunction of both poles can alone bring success. The mind carries the Divine Principle (the Light of Love) and conveys it to all who contact it.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

34. Limits that liberate

Date: 20 May 1974 / Location: Brindavan

THIS is a Yajna, a holy ritual. The participants in this 'sacrifice' can consider themselves rewarded if they acquire two benefits therefrom: Understanding the true state of Prakrithi (Nature) and Visualising the true path of spiritual effort. The students and teachers who have come from the far comers of this country and from beyond the seas are the officiating priests; they have to be vigilant and full of care, lest the Yajna be tarnished by sloth, waywardness. In the sacrificial fire it is customary to pour ghee and a variety of precious articles as oblation. But, here, in the fire of this Yajna, I call upon you to offer your selfishness and false pride. This Yajna needs two ceremonial rites: fix your mind on the higher truth; expand your sympathy and love so that they may encompass all living beings and activate you towards real service. For, Life is a journey from the position 'I' to the position 'WE,' from the singular to the plural, from the imprisoned One to the liberated One, who is seen in the Many. The vision of the One, immanent in the obvious Many is the fulfilment of all the years of one's life. This is the teaching contained in the ancient texts and scriptures. But, these have been forgotten, ever since the minds of the people of this land were won over by Western Civilisation. When this happened, the goal of life became the amassing of money and not the awareness of the Self.

Man has in him a spark of the Divine

What has to be gained is not money, but, virtue. The means of sustenance are sought after and collected by birds and beasts; there is nothing specially human in this pursuit. When intelligence is used for the acquisition of food and physical comforts, man is lost. in animal pursuits. Human life is much more meaningful than that of birds and beasts. Man has in him a spark of the Divine; his body is the temple of God. So he must live in such a manner that the innate Divinity expresses Itself through Love, through service of others, and through the recognition of the Constant Presence of God, in him and all around him. When man dedicates his skills to the search for food, he

estranges himself from the light that shines within him, the Atma. Man consumes as food many living beings, plants, eggs, fish, cattle, sheep, etc. These are born as human beings, on account of this act of consumption. But, since they have not had the education which can reveal the God within, they vegetate or stay brutish, without appropriate ticket or passport for rising higher than the human status in which they have been hurriedly placed. Like most men, they roll along from womb to tomb, bondslaves to the senses and the ills that the bondage brings inevitably in its train. Do not be content with slavery; yearn to reach the Sun of Splendour, the Source of Perfect Wisdom.

Attempt to assimilate our ancient culture

Man does not discriminate and discover the special excellence of his own faith, as compared with the faiths of others, or, the difference between his beliefs and religion and the beliefs and religion that others hold dear. He does not evaluate his viewpoint, in the light of the viewpoints and attitudes of others. He does not weigh his acts and judge them, as worthwhile or waste. The seers and sages of India have laid emphasis on this discipline and prescribed measures to achieve these ends. But, now Indians have no knowledge of this discipline or of its value. As a consequence, the sons and daughters of India are pitifully silent, when cynics and purblind critics discredit their ancient culture and point the finger of scorn at what they interpret, as absurdities and inconsistencies. Do not join such people in their campaign of vilification. On the other hand, attempt to assimilate the culture and yearn to experience the Bliss it promises. It is indeed a great shame that people calling themselves Indians are not informed enough or experienced enough to silence the opponents and traducers of Indian Culture. The fault lies in the system of education that does not give them even a glimpse into the glory. The country is now sunk in fear and the cure lies in your understanding the remedies prescribed in-the ancient texts, practising them and propagating them. You are now being led away by people who do not know the true characteristics of that Culture. And, the ideas you have about the epics and the Puranas (mythological stories), the Shasthras (spiritual sciences) and the Vedas (sacred scriptures of the Hindhus) are warped by the prejudices that these people have implanted in you. For example, the story of

Virgin Mary giving birth to Jesus Christ is acclaimed as an evidence of Divine Will, but, you who accept this interpretation, are not able to affirm that the birth of Karna to Virgin Kunthidhevi is equally an evidence of the same Divine Will. You are apologetic and ashamed when the fact of Karna's birth as a result of Divine Will is twisted and turned by the so-called scholars of today.

Students are woefully deficient in general knowledge

People who are completely ignorant have no doubts or misgivings; those who are fully wise, too, have no doubts or misgivings. It is the half-baked variety of scholars and students that fall into the traps laid by the prejudiced and perverted. We hope that your contact with the ripe mind, the intelligent learning and the experience-filled hearts of those who come to speak to you during the course of this Camp will strengthen your resolve and enthuse you to foster and support the principles underlying Indian Culture. Education should not aim at merely making students get acquainted with a pile of books. It should insist on their assimilating the essence of the teaching which they elaborate. Now, students direct all their efforts towards acquiring more and more knowledge of just one specialised branch of learning. So, they are woefully deficient in general knowledge, and are unable to adjust their behaviour or conduct, and survive the vagaries of fortune. Minister Ghorpade referred to the relationship between Science and Religion. Of course, science has to develop more and more, for, science makes life more comfortable. It has given man many items that make living faster, more entertaining, and more standardised. But the trouble is that while Science and Technology have advanced by leaps and bounds, man has not learnt the art of using them in the right manner. He has allowed Science and Technology full licence to cater to his sensual desires and thereby demeaned his stature and status.

Humanness and Godness co-exist as inseparables

You must avoid this mistake. At this age-period when your intelligence, your alertness, your awareness are all in good condition, you must learn how to keep your impulses under control, and to master the senses that tend to drag you into wrong and vicious paths. When the desire for pleasure overcomes

your reason and your innate goodness, you are left only with the shape and form of a human being; you have no right to be called a human being. Humanness and Godness co-exist as inseparables; they are the negative and positive poles, that have to be together to produce the warmth of love and the light of wisdom. Once you have established your Self in the Higher Self, you would not get lost; you can then wander freely in the realms of the Unreal. If you have not experienced the Self as a spark of the Supreme Self, your wanderings will be as fruitless as the trekkings that animals do, by instinct. So try to transform the humanness with which you are endowed, into the Divinity which is its real core. The Universe is the body of God; every particle in it is filled with God, His Glory, His Might, His Inscrutability. Believe that God is the inner Truth in every thing and being. He is Truth, He is Wisdom. He is Eternal. Be humble, before the evidences of His Power and Majesty.

It is the God in you that guides and guards you

We have the example of Hiranyakashipu, the father of Prahladha. He was the repository of enormous knowledge. He had won enormous skills through his asceticism and efforts. He was so proud of his achievements that he denied God, and declared that he had no need for him. But, a day came, when even he had to call out and clamour for God. So too, you may deny or dismiss God, out of ignorance or perversity; but, a day will come when you have to pray for his compassion.

You are God in reality. It is the God in you that guides you and guards you. When you deny God, it is tantamount to your arguing, "I am born of a barren woman," or asserting very vociferously, "I am incurably dumb!" It is as absurd as denying yourself. This great Truth is well explained in the scriptures of this land, and every one of you has the right to know this heritage. The seers of this land have marked out the limits and lines, to be respected by aspiring men. The Vedas give these injunctions: Mathru dhevo bhava; pithru dhevo bhava; acharya dhevo bhava; Sathyam Vadha; Dharmam Chara. - "Revere your mother as God; Revere your father as God; Revere your Teacher as God; Speak Truth; Act Righteously." These five are as the five vital airs that sustain

the body of man. Believe them as such; have unshakeable faith, that they have been laid down for your material and spiritual progress. Practise these precepts sincerely and without slackening. That will ensure success in your pilgrimage from humanness to Divinity. If you revere your parents today, your children will revere you in the coming days; for, the present shapes the face of the future, as it was, in its turn, shaped by the past. That is why I always insist, 'Be Good, See Good, Do Good; this is the way to God'.

Pleasure is but the interval between two pains

When you return to your places after the Summer Course, each one of you must be equipped with the knowledge of these five disciplines and the fervour to practice them in your daily lives. Concentrate your attention for the full period on this task; do not mind the inconveniences, the change in diet, or the regulation of play and entertainment. Bear with these handicaps and rules patiently and gladly.

Life is all the sweeter for these restrictions and limits. You will encounter many obstacles in life, but do not be disheartened by them. Pleasure and pain alternate in life; in fact, pleasure is but the interval between two pains! And that makes it welcome and worthwhile. Have the future always in view, and put up with pain now, so that you can meet it boldly when it befalls you later in life. Thyaga (selfless sacrifice) is the real Yoga (divine communion); renounce and become a master of yourself. Bhoga (enjoyment) brings about roga (disease); indulgence is the cause of disease. Treat all who are sharing this Camp with you as brothers and sisters. Remember ever the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God. People talk glibly while on platforms facing vast gatherings "Brothers and Sisters!" But are they prepared to divide their property among the brothers and sisters? Of course, you need not go as far as that; but, you must recognise the one Divine Principle that animates all. When you are inspired by that belief, surely, your eyes and ears will refuse to note differences and distortions. Your hands will refuse to engage themselves in low activities; your tongue will not tarnish itself by low talk; your mind will not entertain low thoughts and ideas. Resolve that you will attain and maintain this purity in thought, word and deed.

That is the central message of Indian Culture, which will be explained to you in all its interesting facets by the lecturers who have responded to the invitation of the Organisers.

The message of "Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man," which Jesus Christ proclaimed 2000 years ago, should become a living faith for the achievement of real peace and the unity of mankind.

The oneness of all creation affirmed by the ancient seers and sages must be expressed in a transcendental love which embraces all people regardless of creed, community or language.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

35. Terrible and tender

Date: 30 May 1974 / Location: Brindavan

YAATHE Rudhra Shiva thanoo raghora papa Kasini

The Prajapathi, who is the Divine Inspirer of the Vedas has two natures and names, two forms and features - the terrible known as Rudhra, and the tender known as Shiva. When the Narasimha Incarnation of God, human with the head of a lion, emerged from the pillar in the Audience Hall of Hiranyakashipu, Prahladha, his little son, saw Him as tender, charming and compassionate. For, he was saturated with devotion to God. But, the father who ignored God and dared to insult Him and injure His devotees, saw before him a terror-striking form of total destruction. While Prahladha sang and danced in ecstasy, Hiranyakashipu shivered and shook in fear. It is therefore clear that man visualises in the One God the two opposites of terror and tenderness, reflections of his own mental make-up.

The One God manifests Himself in these two aspects, so that the world may be sustained and fostered, improved and cleansed. These two - the terrible and the tender - are the characteristics found together in every single thing on earth, for, are not they all parts of the selfsame God?

It is the mind that decides the desire

Take the articles of food. it has the Shivam aspect, when taken in, intelligently and in moderate quantities. It can also be Rudhram, or devastating in its effects, if taken unintelligently and in excess. Every thing or thought that obstructs the surge of Anandha (divine bliss) - every such situation, experience, idea - is Rudhra; every step towards limitation, regulation, control, progress, sublimation, is tender, Shivam, auspicious, fruitful, beneficial. It is the desire which haunts man that is responsible for

making the one item, food, either a boon or a bane. It is the mind that decides the desire and directs it. A sharp knife can be used for slicing fruit or for stabbing: in the hands of a surgeon, it can save a life, rather than destroy one.

The mind can liberate you from bondage or bind you more tightly with the objective world. God is Omnipresent, the inner motivator in every being. So, we have to posit Him as resident in, and manipulating the mind too. When He manipulates it to our benefit we can call Him, Shivam; when He playfully or purposefully turns it against our best interests, we can call Him, Rudhra. **One point has to be emphasised here. We should not identify God as Shivam when we get happiness and Rudhram when we fall into misery. For, happiness and misery are not two distinct experiences. The absence of one is the presence of the other. Each is inextricably intertwined with the other.** Undiluted happiness is a chimera; pleasure is the interval between two moments of pain; pain is the gap between two moments of pleasure .

God is eager to award victory to the aspirants

Again, God assumes or appears to assume the terrible aspect only to ensure the welfare of mankind and the happiness of the worlds. It is mentioned in the Epics and Puranas that God placed various temptations and tribulations in the path of ascetics and aspirants, thus demonstrating that He is either cruel or vindictive or positively mischievous! No! God has no desire to prevent or postpone their spiritual progress; nor has He any apprehension that they might trouble Him if they succeed! He is eager to award them the victory they seek; that is the reason why He puts them through the obstacles. Being students, you know very well, that the University has prescribed certain examinations, at the end of every academic year. Do you ascribe tiffs system to any desire for persecuting you? Do you think it is a sign of displeasure? You know that they are conducted so that you could be promoted, aren't they?

The Yogins, sadhaks, and aspirants are being tested by God, only to promote them. Instead of accepting the tests as signs of His Care and Love, people

grow desperate and defeatist; they cry out, "O God! We cannot face these tests," just as students cry out, "We don't want examinations!" How then can progress be measured and achievement recognised? Those who pilot planes or drive cars or captain ships must possess certificates of having attained the required proficiency. They are tested before the certificates are awarded. Those sadhaks, who protest and clamour when tests confront them, are only proclaiming themselves as unworthy of higher positions, as content to remain where they are.

God's test of Emperor Sibi's spirit of renunciation

The story of Emperor Sibi is an illustration of this truth. Though endowed with power and authority, prosperity and wealth, Sibi was a genuine Sadhak, having attained a high stage in detachment and the spirit of renunciation. God decided to discover whether his achievements were deep-rooted and unshakeable. Agni (the God of Fire) and Indhra (God of the Heavenly Regions) took on the forms of a dove and a hawk. The hawk (Indhra) pursued the dove (Agni) across the sky, until the frightened bird fell into the lap of Sibi sitting on his throne, pleading for protection from the hawk.

As befitted his Dharma, Sibi gave word that he would save the dove from its enemy and assured full protection for it. At that moment, the hawk presented itself before the Emperor and demanded its meal, its legitimate prey. "I am hungry, I had secured my food, you have deprived me of my meal," it complained. "Of what use is all your vaunted spirituality, if you rob me of my meal?" it lamented. At this, Sibi said, "Yes, I shall slice off flesh from my body weighing as much as this dove weighs; you can appease your hunger with that." The hawk agreed; a balance was brought; the dove was placed on one pan, pieces of flesh cut from the body of Sibi were placed in the other pan. But, lo and behold, however many pieces of flesh were laid thereon, the pan on which the dove sat did not rise at all! It was indeed a mystery how a bird could weigh so much. At last, Sibi said, "Well. You can take all of me. Eat me whole. Here am I at your disposal." No sooner did he utter these words than the hawk became Indhra and the dove was transformed into Agni - Gods effulgent in their Glory! They were supremely happy at the depth of Sibi's

spirit of renunciation; they blessed him profusely and departed. Though Indhra and Agni might appear to be terribly cruel in their dealings with Sibi, it was indeed only a test to provide him a chance to express his sovereign qualities of self-control, compassion, and charity.

Krishna's test for Emperor Mayuuradhwaja

The Mahabharatha has a fine story which proves the same point. The fact that God might assume terrible aspects in order to examine attainment and establish the truth of achievement is witnessed in the story of Mayuuradhwaja. The Pandavas celebrated the Aswamedha Yaga (Horse Sacrifice), and as part of that ceremony released the chosen horse so that it may take its own course across the length and breadth of the land. Whoever stops and binds the horse is thereby challenging the sacrificant for a fight; he has to win back the horse, after defeating the audacious obstructionist!

Mayuuradhwaja, a great devotee of Krishna, a virtuous ruler, a wise man learned in the Vedas, a man of deep compassion, held the horse, and Arjuna, the Pandava hero decided to meet him in battle. But, Krishna advised him to desist; for, he desired to demonstrate to Arjuna the devotion of Mayuuradhwaja which far surpassed his own; he also desired to proclaim to the whole world, the heights that Mayuuradhwaja could reach in the realm of self-sacrifice and truthfulness. So, He proposed that He and Arjuna proceed to Mayuuradhwaja's palace in the guise of a pair of Brahmins, seeking a meal. They were welcomed by the King, who offered them rich hospitality. But, before they could eat the very first mouthful, Krishna stopped very dramatically and recited a tale of woe.

Emperor's humility rewarded, Arjuna's pride humbled

"Listen! O Soft-hearted Emperor! As we were coming along through a forest on the border of your empire, a tiger snatched away the young son of my companion here. Before we could come up with the beast, it had swallowed half the body; but, it heard our piteous appeal, and promised to release the boy, and return him alive to us, provided it is given as substitute, one half of

the sanctifying body of the pure and holy Emperor of the land, Mayuuradhwaja. How can we relish your hospitality with this agony in our hearts? Promise to give the tiger half your body in exchange for the full living body of this Brahmin boy, and then, we shall partake of your hospitality". Mayuuradhwaja agreed most gladly; when the lunch was over, he sat on the floor and instructed his queen and his son to saw his body into two halves. They placed the saw on the head and began the process of division, with the Brahmins witnessing the operation. They saw drops of tears in the left eye of the King. Krishna said, "O You are giving us the promised gift with tears, not with unalloyed willingness. I cannot accept anything given with tears." But Mayuuradhwaja replied, "Sir, If I am unwilling or hesitating, both eyes should shed tears, shouldn't they? Only the left eye is shedding them now; and the reason is this- the right half is being used for a highly sacred purpose, to save a person from cruel death. But, what will happen to the left half? Cast away, to be eaten by dogs and vultures? So, the left half-is weeping, but the right half is jubilant that it is being put to some meritorious purpose." At that moment, Krishna manifested Himself to the great Mayuuradhwaja in all His Glory and Majesty; He blessed him that he would have Krishna always installed in his heart and that he would be ever blissful and content. Arjuna too realised that there were devotees of Krishna far more advanced than he was His pride was humbled. Mayuuradhwaja's humility was rewarded.

Tests such as these are evidences of Grace rather than of anger. The terrible aspect of God is not terrible in essence. God is described in the scriptural texts as,

Raso vai saha - "He is sweetness Itself."

How can sweetness ever become bitter? Godhead is a spotlessly clean mirror; you see in It your own reflection. When you have terror-striking propensities, the reflection you see will strike terror into you. When you have soft harmless propensities, the reflection will be tender and soft. Do not lay the blame on

Godhead, as you are prone to do. When everything goes right, you say that God has come close to you; when something goes wrong, you say that God has deserted you and gone afar! He does not move far or near. The distance from Him to you is as much as the distance from you to Him. He is everywhere. He always is in your heart. Recognise Him there; realise Him as closest and nearest to you. **He is your own Self, neither terrible nor tender, but, simply IS.**

You are not doing service for others. You are doing it always for yourselves, to the God in you, the God who is equally present in others.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

36. He sings ever

Date: 10 June 1974 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

KRISHNA is the One Name signifying all Names, the One thought comprising all thoughts, the One deed encompassing all deeds. Utilise this festival which commemorates the advent of Krishna for developing bhakthi (devotion to God). Bhakthi is defined as the means of discovering the Divine Reality within each being. Four steps are laid down in the scriptures to help man succeed in this effort: discrimination between the permanent and the impermanent; withdrawal from the process of catering to the senses; positive control of the feelings, thoughts and pursuits; incessant yearning for liberation from all bonds. Bhakthi is the urge which manifests as all these four endeavours. But, that word is applied to all sorts of desires and disciplines, so widely and so indiscriminately that it is identified even with epicureanism! Bhakthi is derived from bha or Bhagavan or God. It directs man to have God ever in mind and to cultivate love for God within him. It advises him to rid himself of egotism, to curb sensual desires. And to rise to the height of one's aspiration and achievement. Bhakthi leads man on to the Wisdom arising from the realisation of the unity called God. Just as childhood grows into old age and gets fruition thereby, devotion grows into wisdom, that is, bhakthi grows into jnana (spiritual wisdom). There are some who deny the need for bhakthi and assert that jnana can be won without the preliminary stage of bhakthi. But, bhakthi is as necessary and as inevitable a process as childhood.

Devotion is the most precious treasure

Devotion fosters the highest virtue; it is the most precious treasure; it is the truest path, the only way to God. Man must live in bhakthi, for bhakthi, through bhakthi. For, bhakthi is love of the purest and the noblest variety. Such love is the breath that sustains life, that supports the soul in the effort to merge in the Super-soul. The years of life spent without the light of love are years of ruin, of dust and disease. One could as well be dead, and decay for ever. Love can transform man into a Divine Being; it helps him manifest the Divine which is his core. Love can tame even the most ferocious of beasts. It

prompts man to fill even the world with joy and to partake of that joy. It implants a deep distressing thirst for that exultation, that elevation of the spirit. The Avathar (divine incarnation) of the Lord as Krishna and the career of Krishna on the earth were for the propagation and promotion of this Principle of Prema Divine Love), by precept and example.

Prema (the highest. Love) transcends the ego; it is pure; it is sweet, it is sacred and sanctifying. Prahladha had that prema; so, whatever befell him - pain, grief, torture, disgrace - he bore them all, for he was unaware of anything except God whom he had enshrined in his heart. Meera too was so hungry for God and so agonised by separation from Him that she was always singing only of His charm, His might and His mystery.

God is the nearest and dearest kinsman for man

You must yearn to be blessed with that earnestness, that dedication and that devotion shown by Prahladha and Meera. That alone can give you the Supreme Bliss. But, now, though many declare their desire to earn that state of mind, their efforts are all towards exhibitionism and elaborate self-aggrandizement! Those days, the sadhana (spiritual discipline) was silent and subdued; now, it is all loud and lavish. Bhakthi reveals to you that God is in every one; so, the Love that surges in your heart towards God must flow towards all, for, all are embodiments of the self-same Divine.

God is bound to you by the closest bonds of Love. Parents might fall out; brother might take up arms against brother; sister might slip away without recognising sister; children might not revere or even recognise their parents. Those are but 'social or economic ties,' they might declare. But, God will never desert you or deny you, or turn away from you. God is the nearest, the dearest, the most loving, the most eager companion, comrade and kinsman for man. This is demonstrated fully in the acts of Krishna, as related in the Mahabharatha and the Bhagavatha. Creation posits a Creator; nothing can happen without the Will to make it happen. Before the beginning -of things, there must be some Will that willed them to become. It can only be He that has become all this, whatever be the name or form that these have assumed.

That Will is Love, it is Wisdom. It is Power, It is Bliss. Each one of you must 'insure your lives' with That. Like other Insurance institutions, this One cannot suffer loss or liquidation. It can never fail or falter. Pay the premium regularly as per the rules and you can claim the 'amount,' and receive it.

Peace will dread the company of the egotist

The premium you have to pay is the 'Love' that springs from your heart towards all beings. Liberation from pain and grief, the Bliss everlasting, is the 'amount' you get. Or, we can picture the process as a Tree; which yields fruit at the end of a long process of cherishing care. Truth is the seed, faith in the Self, faith in the loving care of God - these are the roots that hold it firm and, feed it; the recitation of the Name, singing of hymns and psalms, meditation on the glory that encircles and elevates - these are the showers that feed the Tree. Bliss is the fragrant flower; Jnana (the wisdom that liberates) is the fruit. When man neglects this duty to himself 'he suffers grief. He is denied peace and security; he is restless and afraid, peace will dread the company of the self-centred egotist, the hard calculating miser, the sharp heartless demon. It keeps close to the stage, the generous giver, the virtuous earner, the wise seer. You must long to be of such type that peace can approach you and award you its presence.

If, on the other hand, you stray away from the path of love, not only men but even nature will throw obstacles which hinder your progress. For, the evil in you will manifest as obstacle in your path. They are not laid there by your enemies, but, are set there by your own feelings and impulses. Think good, feel good, act good, speak good - the path will be free and fair, easy and effortless. Think evil, plan evil, do evil - the path will be strewn with fear and failure.

Krishna taught his message by precept and example

The mind has to be cleansed for the path to be rendered smooth. Devotees do not deserve that status, merely by doling out charity or visiting holy places, or attending religious discourses; fill the mind with Love, remove

hatred and envy; adopt straight thinking and planning, that alone can justify the status of devotee. Walk steadily and silently towards the goal, merging with God. This day, being the day reminding you of Krishna and His birth in human form, it is best to remember that, He taught this Message of Love by precept and example, throughout his earthly career. The Bhagavatha and Mahabharatha are full of lessons for you in the cultivation of bhakthi - one-pointed Love for God and all God's creatures. The Pandava Brothers and their consort were devotees of this high status. When Dhroupadhi their Queen, was humiliated and publicly dishonoured by their cousins in the Royal Assembly Hall, she did not call upon her spouses, the redoubtable heroes of many a battle, armed with heavenly bows and maces; she called upon Krishna, for she knew that He was her closest kinsman, shield and sword. Many years later, she quipped Krishna for responding rather late on that occasion, with His succour, but, Krishna asked her to repeat the words with which she called Him then; she said that she had called out, "Oh Dweller in the hearts of the gopees (cowherd girls)! Oh Wanderer in the floral bushes of Brindavan! Oh Resident of Dhwaraka!" Then, Krishna explained that the delay was caused by the wrong address to which the prayer was directed. He said, "Your words forced Me to move on to Brindavan and Dhwaraka, before I could come to where you were! If only you had cried, Oh Dweller in my Heart, I could have appeared before you at that very moment."

Develop the inward vision, taste the bliss it gives

So, you should endeavour to install Him in your heart and be ever aware that He is there. Radha alone had that consciousness and the uninterrupted Bliss derivable from that knowledge. Cultivate that knowledge, that closeness. When you are aware all the time, only of the body and its clamour for attention, how can you ever concentrate on the Dweller within? Develop the inlook, the inward vision, and taste the Bliss it gives, 'at least for half 'a minute every day; that will surely confer on you great strength and security. Radha prayed that Krishna must keep her in .the cool shade of His Presence so that she might be saved from being scorched in the arid desert of earthly life.

Embodiments of the Universal Atma! Scriptures are endless; sadhanas (spiritual disciplines) are countless; opportunities are few; time is already overstocked. But, you can easily win the baffle of life, in spite of these handicaps, provided you arm yourself with Love, which is the essential teaching of all scriptures, the goal of all varieties of sadhana, the best use to which all opportunities can be put and the most profitable way of utilising the precious capital, time. The simple men and women who tended cattle in Gokul where Krishna spent His boyhood years knew no sadhana, learnt no Shastras (spiritual sciences), observed no vow, visiting no temple; they just kept the Name and Form of the God they moved with, ever in the shrine of their hearts. And they were saved.

Embodiments of Love! You are agitated, I know, since the world today is tossed on waves of unrest and insecurity. But, do not blame the world for it. The unrest is but the image of your own unrest, which you have projected on the world. The insecurity is fuming in your minds; the fear is raising its hood in your heart. The forces of the world, the beings in Nature are all unaffected, unchanged! You have changed; you are nervous; you are afraid, you have no peace!

Try to subsume the many in the One

You wear coloured glasses and see everything through those glasses. Correct your vision; the world will get corrected. Reform yourselves; the world will get reformed. You create the world of your choice. You see many, because you seek the many, not the One. Try to subsume the many in the One; the physical bodies of yourself and others, the family, the village, the community, the state, the nation, the world, thus progressively march on towards more and more inclusive loyalties and reach the stage of Unity, in thought, word and deed. This is the sadhana of love, for, love is expansion, inclusion, mutualisation. The individual has to be Universalised, expanded into Vishwaswaruupa (Cosmic Form). When you enter upon this sadhana, you have to suppress all tendencies of hatred, greed, envy and malice, and concentrate on expanding love towards all, at all times. You might have to encounter opposition from all sides; but, consider these as tests of

endurance, of sincerity and steadfastness. Your own parents, brothers and sisters, wife and children, kith and kin, friends and favourites, countrymen and others might try to turn you aside by ridicule and threats. You might even develop dislike for God for putting obstacles in the way; atheistic ideas might sprout in you trying to scotch the faith; but, you must overcome these with courage and confidence. The good are always the target of malice and envy, slander and abuse from the wicked. Be assured that your goodness can be made tough enough to stand these ordeals. Avathars (divine incarnations) too are not exempt from the attentions of these wicked forces.

Forces of evil dig for their own downfall

Krishna had to encounter these obstacles from the very cradle, right up to the finish of His life on earth. Personal spite, false slander, unfounded abuse and defamation followed Him at every step. Demons who could not tolerate the Light and the Love that He cast around Him conspired to tarnish His Name and obstruct His Mission.' They tried to bind Him, to fail His plans and pervert His instruments. But, Truth triumphed and falsehood stood exposed and disgraced. Truth may be clouded for some little time by the fog of slander but, victory is certain. The forces of hate will be defeated by their own wiles; they dig for their own downfall; their action results in reactions, ruinous for themselves. In the Court of Dhritrashtra, the Kauravas planned to bind Krishna and put Him out of action, when He went to His Court on the mission of peace; but, what happened? The stratagem recoiled on themselves and they were destroyed. Krishna was unscathed by their wiles and their campaign of defamation. When the Kauravas were indulging in their campaign of slander, many devotees were greatly distressed. For example, Sahadheva, the youngest of the Pandava Brothers, welcomed Lord Krishna back to their camp, with the words, "I am not concerned at failure of your mission; I know that it is all part of your plan. But, I am overjoyed that you have returned unharmed, from that nest of demons." Krishna is undefeatable, ever pure, ever bright and ever effulgent in renown. Those who try to fail Him are for ever tarred by their own blackness. The malignancy of those who cannot bear His Glory will cause their eternal disgrace; it cannot affect Him in the least. His Glory will increase a hundredfold with every challenge from

these pedlars of slander. Wicked men tried to bring the Lord into disrepute by persecuting and torturing devotees like Prahladha; but, when they stood up to every challenge with joyful fortitude, they failed ignominiously. Prahaladha gained vaster glory and the Lord's Truth was magnificently vindicated.

Even Avathars have faced campaigns of slander

Persons who cannot tolerate the Glory of the Avathar have indulged in such campaigns, in every Age! They have contributed to the heightening of the splendour and the spread of the message, in every age. Their activities are all instruments to the propagation of the glory throughout the world.

Even today, such things happen; but, all of you must recognise their inevitability and their fundamental falsehood, and carry on your sadhana in full faith and assurance, with undiminished enthusiasm and joy. The Sai Principle, the Sai Divinity can never be affected by any slander; it can never be shaken by any tactics; its progress can never be halted. Do not pay heed to the barkings you hear. A stray dog stops and looks at its own shadow in the stream; it mistakes the shadow for another dog and starts barking aloud. This sets all the dogs in the neighbourhood, and later in the region, bark in unison. The reason why first dog barked is its own ignorance of fact. The reason why the other dogs followed suit is that the first dog called the tune. A huge scare is built on a patent falsehood. Thus the story goes on, adding one thing to another. Just as devotees remained unruffled in the Age of Krishna, you too must stand firm and be unaffected. Faith must endow you with courage and calmness. The life of Krishna teaches you this lesson more than others' do not lend your ears or mortgage your minds to purveyors of scandal or lies.

Devotion to the Divine will give you prosperity

Krishna had to meet these traducers and destroy them one by one, through His life. His parents, His companions, His devotees, no one had peace from this tribe. The message of this Festival is that you must see the Truth that is covered by all the tales and legends that tarnish the Name. Devotion to the

Divine will give you bliss, and prosperity and peace. It cannot inflict pain, perturbation or personal anxiety. It fosters love and brings all together as one band of brothers. The Avathar will not be affected in the least by these trivial tactics. It is love itself; so, it is always bliss, always happy in song and dance. Krishna lived all His years singing and dancing in the ecstasy which was His very nature. He was humming a tune within Himself all the while, whether He was on flower bed or a battle field. I too am unaffected by praise or blame. My Anandha (bliss) never suffers diminution. Where there is love, there is anandha; where there is anandha, there is music. That is the reason why Krishna sang the Bhagavath Geetha (the Celestial song) while the clarion calls to start the holocaust were rising from the serried ranks, eager for the fray. Love knows no fear, no untruth, no anxiety, no grief. I am love; I shower love; I share love; I am pleased with love; I bless that you have more and more of love to more and more Beings. Love is God, Love is Love - that is the message of Sri Krishna janmashtami.

Just as there are three basic energies that govern man - the physical, the metaphysical and the psychical, the Adhi-bhowthik, the Adhi-dhaivik and the Adhi-athmic - Gayathri has three facets: Gayathri, Savithri and Saraswathi. Gayathri fosters the metaphysical, Savithri, the physical, and Saraswathi, the psychical. These three karanas or instruments have to be cleansed and sublimated so that man can realise the goal of life. Through the recital of Gayathri manthra and meditation thereon, this great task can be achieved.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

37. Kindle the lamp

Date: 17 June 1974 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 1974 - Brahman

DURING the last thirty days, you have been listening to expositions of the meaning and significance of Vedhic words, like Brahman, Prajapathi, Vachaspathi, Saraswathi, and Brihaspathi; you have also been told the real significance of the name Bharath that this country bears. It is necessary that you should recognise, even when you are students, that the Vedas are the basis of the culture of this country; the guides for material as well as spiritual progress. When you understand the hymns, the dedicatory verses, the ritual directives, and the invocatory formulae contained in the Vedas, life would be rendered peace-filled and secure, against the winds of fortune, both fair and foul. It is natural for every being to seek happiness. Yet, each being must know that happiness does not emanate from the material things of the objective world.

You are students and so, I must tell you that the type of education that does not confer on you abiding happiness, the unshakeable sense of equanimity, the awareness of the Divinity behind every particle in the Universe, is not entitled to that name. Education must implant elevating ideals, and kindle the lamp of wisdom. Nowadays, education is aimed at providing a living; it is a bread-and-butter trade. But, do we not have millions who have not gone through this mill, wasting money and precious time in the process like you, but yet earning a decent living and enjoying peace and joy therein?

As science advances, man becomes a menace to man

Though they have not gone through school and college, they have had the more valuable schooling in the University of Life. Any system of education that does not help you to discriminate between right and wrong, that does not instil the fear of sin and the love of God, train you in the codes of humility and reverence, widen the horizon of your wonder, encourage you to worshipfully serve your parents, and inspire you to dedicate your skill and attainments to the progress of your family, village, community, country, language and nation

stands condemned! The corruption and cruelty that are rampant in the country can be traced to this grave defect. Selfish greed, pomp and injustice are prevalent in every field. The nation has no peace and the sense of security is feeble. As science develops and technology advances, humility and mutual love should also develop to the same extent. Or else, man becomes a menace to man. Human sensitivity must be so high that no one can tolerate the misery of others. But, when one is not moved by the misery of even one's own-parents how can this trait be cultivated? Students! You are pure in heart. Do not slide down into such depths. Bring to mind the Glory of Indian Culture. Do not crave for the trivial pleasures of the senses; do not condemn yourselves to be lazy lubbers; be active, earnest; bear with all troubles and disappointments; strive on and march towards success, or else, the nation will weaken and decline.

Serve your family and be examples to others

You are a pin or bolt or nut or wheel in the huge machine called the Cosmos. If the pin is not in perfect shape, the entire machine will be hampered. Do not get disheartened and disabled; if you do, you are injuring the welfare of the whole world. Remember that Indian Culture is built on the faith Soham, 'I am that,' the undefeatable, majestic, mighty That. It is not built on the somari principle (the principle of laziness). True rest is ensured only by hard work. Sleep is the reward for hard physical labour. And, if sleep does not switch off the mind of man for some hours everyday, he would have spun out all sorts of wild fancies. Young people, that you are, work hard; serve the interests of your family and country, and be examples to others. Imagine how your forefathers during the Vedhic Age engaged themselves with no respite, in good deeds and beneficial acts, so that they could be happy and make others happy. But, alas, the descendants of those men have devised a system of education which does not ensure even a decent daily life. Education was then called, Swadhyaya: (Swa - one's own; adhyaya - study). Study for one's own best progress, (that is, spiritual progress) which gives peace and joy immeasurable. Today this type of progress has become a matter of ridicule; the run is all behind fame, sudden fortune and power over fellow-beings, and their fates. The Vedavidhs (men learned in the Vedas), had but one ideal - the

discovery of the I which they felt they were. The Vedavidhs marked three stages in the life of man and assigned one aspect of God to preside over each stage. The first - where man is deep in activity of some sort or other in Karma - is presided over by Vasu. The second, under the protection of Rudhra, is filled with reverential worship of the God in all, discovered through the impact of Love. The third is the stage of jnana, the Supreme Wisdom, presided over by the source of Illumination, Adhithya or the Sun.

Fancy and fantasy rule the mind of man

This is the genuine Bharatheeya Vision, to transform life into a pilgrimage towards the God resident in oneself, a steady march, along the straight path to Bliss. There is no such steadiness now. Fancy and fantasy rule the mind of man. You desire one thing in the morning; at noon, you change over to something else. That desire will not persist until evening. If your desire is fulfilled, you praise God and parade your devotion. But, if it does not prevail, you throw God overboard, and parade your unbelief! I am reminded of a story in this connection. A clever villager used to enter the village temple in the early hours of the day, and sit on, with eye closed, in the hope that people will honour him as a great devotee. Since he did not get up and go about his business until about midnight, the temple priest was hard put to close the doors and go home for his daily tasks there. So he struck upon a plan to stop the nuisance. He knew that the closed-eye session of dhyana (meditation) was all a pretence. He hid himself behind the Idol of the Deity, and when the villager was well set in his pretence of deep meditation, he said, in an imposing sonorous voice, "Listen! Excellent Devotee! I am mightily pleased by your asceticism and your steadfastness. Come. I shall merge you into Myself." At this, the fellow ran fast out from the temple, leaving no trace where he had gone to!

Parents should practise the values of Indian Culture

The devotion and sense of surrender of men are similiar to those of this impostor. Faith is weak, discipline is absent; earnestness is lacking. But, do not forget or ignore God; do not be misled into attachment for the world; do

not dread death; be happy with whatever you have and hold. Live ever in the remembrance of the Name of God. I wonder how you would follow this advice! For, I know you are reluctant even to repeat the Name a hundred times a day or twenty five or at least ten times. You wag and waste your breath for hours together, but, when it comes to the pronunciation of the Name of the God, you have neither the time nor the inclination. There was a son who was instructed by his aged father to repeat the sacred Gayathri exactly 108 times a day. The fellow promised to do so but, he-simplified the task by reciting it only once, and then, saying ditto, ditto, 107 times! The same boy secured a scholarship to study in America. The father took him to a temple near the airport from where he was to board the plane, and made him swear before the idol of Dhevi that he would adhere to Indian culture and tradition while abroad. But, he returned quite lost to all the values cherished in that culture and tradition. The astounded father took him to the same temple, and when the son stood before the Goddess, he accosted Her, "How do you do, mummy?" and moved forward to shake hands with Her. The father was so shocked at this impunity that he dealt him two severe blows on the spot. Fathers today do not treat their sons so; they appreciate outlandishness, brazenry, vices and foppery. In fact, they are themselves even worse examples. The parents and the teachers have to learn and practise the values of Indian Culture. When the tank is full, the taps will yield water. But, when the tank is dry, how shall the thirsty quench their pang? Parents and teachers can earn My Grace only by becoming good and worthy examples to their sons and daughters, or their wards and students. You claim to have devotion to Me; but, you must examine and discover whether I am pleased with you. You must examine yourselves every moment whether you are observing the disciplines I have laid down, the programmes of service I have marked out. That is the way to earn My Love, Love others and serve them; then, you can win My Love.

The seers of God proclaim what they have visualised, and when people put their faith in it, it is condemned as blind faith as if belief of people in the number of star clusters in the Milky Way as proclaimed by those who have

seen them is not blind! Have faith in the Divine and one can experience the Divine. Have faith in oneself and one can have faith in the Divine.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

38. Who is Sai?

Date: 19 June 1974 / Location: Brindavan

GOD is inscrutable. He cannot be realised in the outer objective world; He is in the very heart of every being. Gemstones have to be sought deep underground; they do not float in mid-air. Seek God in the depths of yourself, not in tantalising, kaleidoscopic Nature.

The body is granted to you for this high purpose; but, you are now misusing it, like the person who cooked his daily food in the gemstudded gold vase that came into his hands as an heirloom. Man extols God as omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent, but, he ignores His Presence in himself! Of course, many venture to describe the attributes of God and proclaim Him to be such and such; but, these are but their own guesses and the reflections of their own predilections and preferences.

Who can affirm that God is this or that? Who can affirm that God is not of this form or with this attribute? Each one can acquire from the vast expanse of the ocean only as much as can be contained in the vessel he carries to its shore. From that quantity, they can grasp but little of that immensity.

Each religion defines God within the limits it demarcates and then claims to have grasped Him. Like the seven blind men who spoke of the elephant as a pillar, a fan, a rope or a wall, because they contacted but a part and could not comprehend the entire animal, so too, religions speak of a part and assert that its vision is full and total.

There is only one religion, the Religion of Love

Each religion forgets that God is all Forms and all Names, all attributes and all assertions. **The religion of Humanity is the sum and substance of all these partial faiths; for, there is only one Religion and that is the Religion of Love.** The various limbs of the elephant that seemed separate and distinct to the eye-less seekers of its truth were all fostered and activated

by one single stream of blood; the various religions and faiths that feel separate and distinct are all fostered by one single stream of love.

The optical sense cannot visualise the Truth. It gives only false and fogged information. For example, there are many who observe My actions and start declaring that My nature is such and such. They are unable to gauge the sanctity, the majesty and the eternal reality that is Me.

The power of Sai is limitless; It manifests for ever. All forms of 'power' are resident in this Sai palm.

But, those who profess to have understood Me, the scholars, the *Yogis* (spiritually advanced persons), the *Pandits* (scholars), the *Jnanis* (liberated persons), all of them are aware only of the least important, the casual, external manifestation of an infinitesimal part of that power, namely, the "miracles"! They have not desired to contact the Source of all Power and all Wisdom, that is available here at Brindavan. They are satisfied when they secure a chance to exhibit their book-learning and parade their scholarship in Vedic Lore, not realising that the Person from whom the *Vedas* (sacred scriptures of the Hindus) emanated is in the midst, for their-sake. They even ask, in their pride, for a few more chances!

'Defeats' experienced by Avatars are part of Leela

This has been the case, in all ages. People may be very near (physically) to the *Avatar* (divine incarnation), but, they live out their lives unaware of their fortune; they exaggerate the role of miracles, which are as trivial, when compared to My glory and majesty, as a mosquito is in size and strength to the elephant upon which it squats. Therefore, when you speak about these 'miracles,' I laugh within myself out of pity, that you allow yourself so easily to lose the precious awareness of My Reality.

My power is immeasurable; My truth is inexplicable, unfathomable. I am announcing this about Me, for, the need has arisen. But, what I am doing now is only the gift of a 'Visiting Card!' Let Me tell you that emphatic

declarations of the Truth by Avatars were made so clearly and so unmistakably only by Krishna. In spite of the declaration, you will notice in the career of the same Krishna that He underwent defeat in His efforts and endeavours, on a few occasions; you must also note that those defeats too were part of the drama which He had planned and which He Himself directed. For example, when many Kings pleaded with Him to avert the War with the Kauravas, He confessed that His Mission to the Kaurava Court for ensuring peace had 'failed!' But, He had not willed that it should succeed! He had decided that war would be waged! His Mission was intended to punish the greed and iniquity of the Kauravas and to condemn them before the whole world.

"Do not crave from Me trivial material objects"

Now, I must tell you, that during this Sai Avatar, there is no place for even such 'drama' with scenes of failures and defeats! What I will, must take place; what I plan must succeed. I am Truth; and Truth has no need to hesitate, or fear, or bend. 'Willing' is superfluous for Me. For, My Grace is ever available to devotees who have steady Love and Faith.

Since I move freely among them, talking and singing, even intellectuals are unable to grasp My Truth, My Power, My Glory, or My real Task as Avatar. I can solve any problem however knotty. I am beyond the reach of the most intensive inquiry and the most meticulous measurement. Only those who have recognised My Love and experienced that Love can assert that they have glimpsed My Reality. For, the Path of Love is the Royal road that leads mankind to Me.

Do not attempt to know Me through the external eyes. When you go to a temple and stand before the Image of God, you pray with closed eyes, don't you? Why? Because you feel that the inner eye of Wisdom alone can reveal Him to you. Therefore, do not crave from Me trivial material objects; but, crave for Me, and you would be rewarded. Not that you should not receive whatever objects I give as sign of Grace out of the fullness of Love.

I shall tell you why I give these rings, talismans, rosaries etc. It is to signalise the bond between Me and those to whom they are given. When calamity befalls them, the article comes to Me in a flash and returns in a flash taking from Me the remedial Grace of protection. That Grace is available to all who call on Me in any Name or Form, not merely to those who wear these gifts. Love is the bond that wins Grace.

There is no creature without Love

Consider the meaning of the name, Sai Baba. Sa means 'Divine;' ai or ayi means 'mother' and Baba means father. The Name indicates the Divine Mother and Father, just as Samba-shiva, which also means the Divine Mother and Father.

Your physical parents exhibit Love with a dose of selfishness; but, this Sai "Mother and Father" showers affection or reprimands, only for leading you towards victory in the struggle for self-realisation.

For, this Sai has come in order to achieve the supreme task of uniting the entire mankind, as one family through the bond of brotherhood, of affirming and illumining the Athmic Reality of each being in order to reveal the Divine which is the basis on which the entire Cosmos rests, and of instructing all to recognise the common Divine Heritage that binds man to man, so that man can rid himself of the animal, and rise into the Divine which is his goal.

I am the embodiment of Love; Love is My instrument.

There is no creature without Love; the lowest loves itself, at least. And its self is God. So, there are no atheists, though some might dislike Him or refuse Him, as malarial patients dislike sweets or diabetic patients refuse to have

anything to do with sweets! Those who preen themselves as atheists will one day, when their illness is gone, relish God and revere Him. I had to tell you so much about My Truth, for, I desire that you should contemplate on this and derive joy therefrom, so that you may be inspired to observe the disciplines laid down by Me and progress towards the Goal of Self-realisation, the Realisation of the Sai that shines in your hearts.

If you yield to alpabuddhi (inferior thoughts), you will be losing the akhandathathwa (principle of the Universal). Never give ear to slander, ridicule or praise.

They are all bubbles on the surface. They are mere manipulations of words, the magic of vocabulary, the tamasha of style, the dance of phrases. Learn the means of winning Grace and earning purity from those who know: the elders, the scholars who have put their learning into practise.

Attachment causes pain and detachment results in joy. But, you cannot easily detach yourself from activity; the mind clings to something or other. Make it cling to God, let it do all things for God and leave the success or failure of the thing done to God, the loss and the profit, the elation or the dejection. Then, you have the secret of Shanthi (peace) and contentment.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

39. An epic moment

Date: **June 1974** / Location: **Brindavan**

THE agonising years of torment, hope, and disillusion were over; the moment of decision had come, though it was sought now, by the sharp edge of the sword and not the soft words of Lord Krishna. The armies gathered by the Kauravas from their kingdom and from their allies were standing face to face with the forces of their Pandava cousins. Cavalry, chariotry, elephantry and infantry, eager to start the destruction of the enemy, the chief actors all dressed and equipped for the fray! Conches were blown; trumpets rent the sky with their blare. The air was tense with hope, fear, anxiety and anger. Blood in million bodies became redder and warmer; hearts pounded quicker; arms grasped weapons in deadly grip. Dharmaraja, the 'eldest of the Pandava brothers, suddenly, removed his footwear; he laid aside his armour; he slid from his chariot; he walked towards the opposing cohorts, towards Bheeshma, the Generalissimo of the enemy forces. Dhuryodhana, the eldest of the Kaurava brothers, the cousin most responsible for the war, the unyielding opponent of the Pandavas, saw Dharmaraja cross over to the aged Bheeshma. He was overjoyed; he guessed that Dharmaraja had decided surrender, for, he was by nature against bloodshed and battles.

Dharma will guard those who follow Dharma

The four brothers of Dharmaraja were astounded. Bheema, the redoubtable hero of a hundred contests with the Kauravas, the person most eager for the battle to begin, felt foiled of victory. He recalled the many occasions when Dharmaraja had stood in the way of revengeful action against the Kauravas. He feared that he would apologise and withdraw like a craven from the bloody gamble of war. Arjuna, the formidable bowman, witnessed his brother's defection with horror and anger. Nakula and Sahadheva, the twins, were struck dumb at their own helplessness. Lord Krishna studied the situation from the seat of the charioteer on the chariot of Arjuna, which was in the front line of the Pandava army. He signed to the four of them to follow their eldest brother and do likewise. He said, "All these years you have revered' him, and

trod on his footsteps. Do so now. Do not hesitate; do not doubt." Dharmaraja was the very embodiment of Dharma (right action); he knew the right and he practised it whatever the consequences. He knew that Dharma will guard those who follow Dharma. He never did a hypocritical or a non- Vedic act; he never took a wrong step. He went straight to Bheeshma and fell at his feet. Standing before him with folded hands and bowed head, he prayed. "Grandfather! We had no chance to experience the love of the father; he passed away too soon. You brought us up from infancy with love and care, and made us what we are today. We have no fight to "fight against you; but, fate has conspired to bring us now into battle with you. Please have mercy on us; permit us to raise our arms against you."

Adherence to Dharma ensured Pandavas victory

Bheeshma was naturally charmed and overjoyed at the humility and righteousness of Dharmaraja; his eyes were filled with tears at the strange turn that destiny had taken; he blessed him and said, "Dharmaraja! You have stuck to Dharma, in spite of the temptations this situation has placed before you. What a noble example you have set before the world! This Dharma that you follow will itself give you victory." Next, Dharmaraja and the brothers moved towards General Dhrona, the Brahmin Preceptor, who had taught archery to both the Kauravas and their cousins, the Pandavas. Dharmaraja fell at his feet too and prayed, "Highly revered Preceptor! We five are your pupils; how can we rightfully take up arms against our Preceptor? The times have indeed gone awry. Pardon us, for this wrong. Permit us to engage with you in battle." Dhrona, the Acharya, was visibly moved by this appeal. "Ah! How great and good, this Dharmaraja is ! Even at this moment when the hounds of war are to be let loose to spread death and fury, he is sticking to the dictates of Dharma!" Dhrona was thrilled at the thought. He clasped Dharmaraja in his arms and said, "Son! You are dearer to me than Aswathama, for, I am drawn to him only by duty, whereas I am drawn to you by love. You are all my sons, for, I love you as such. Your right will certainly earn victory over our might." It is this adherence to Dharma that ensured their victory. Or else, was there any one on earth at that time who could force the redoubtable Bheeshma to lay down his arms? Could any one excel Dhrona in archery? The Kauravas, whom

Bheeshma and Dhrona sought to support were defeated because they trod the path of adharma (vice), while the Pandavas never deviated from the path of Dharma. Dharma gave them the skill, strength, courage and tenacity to defeat these great masters of military strategy.

The Kauravas went counter to their parents and their God. Their mother, Gandhari, counselled her children in a thousand ways not to continue their vendetta, against their cousins, the Pandavas. But, they did not heed her. Their father Dhritharashtra pleaded with them to desist from the path of hate; but, to no avail. They turned a deaf ear to the advice offered by their Preceptor, Dhrona, to make peace with the Pandava cousins and give them their legitimate share of the realm. When the Lord, Sri Krishna Himself, went to them as a messenger of peace, as an Ambassador with the Mission of Peace, they refused to listen to His Divine words; they attempted even to overpower Him and put Him into bonds! If you follow the same line of wilful blindness, you will have to meet the same fate - total destruction. The five Pandava brothers are, you should believe, worthy of your reverence and have to be regarded as your 'five vital airs,' 'five sheaths,' 'five sense-organs.' Have them as ideals to be followed; you can then win the Grace of God. The memory of their travail and triumph will act as a manthra to purify and strengthen you, and elevate you to the Divine status which is your heritage.

40. Vaster than the vastest !

Date: **June 1974** / Location: **Brindavan** / Occasion: **Summer Course 1974 - Brahman**

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

Brahman is the activity in every atom and cell

We can easily become aware of it, if we observe the prescribed course of sadhana (spiritual discipline) and have the elementary faith to impart sincerity for that sadhana. One must sharpen the intellect and widen the imagination to be able to conceive of Brahman, which is subtler than the subtlest, vaster than the vastest. Brahman is the very urge behind all aspiration and all achievement, even the aspiration to know Brahman. It is the activity in every atom and cell, as well as in every star and galaxy, Brahman also means sound, voice, word, manthra (sacred formulae), and, through the sound OM, as well as through various other manthras, it is possible for man to develop the superfine intellect necessary to grasp the immanent and transcendent principle called Brahmam. Brahman means Brh

or big, the biggest, the vastest. It is described as bigger than the biggest, vaster than the vastest. The Universe is the body of Brahman that emerged from it when the desire to become many arose in it. The Universe rose when Brahman uttered the first word, and so, the vak (word) is also called Brahman. The word is also called padma and all created things are referred to in Samskrit as padma-artha (the meaning of the spoken word). For, when the word was uttered, the thing was created or became manifest. The word produced its meaning, namely, the thing!

The Infinite Eternal Brahman can be cognised as having three attributes, for the convenience of awareness: Sath, Chith and Anandha. The minutest particle in the Universe has these three characteristics, and the vastest too. Man too is the embodiment of Sath-Chith-Anandha (Being, Awareness, Bliss absolute); but, since he is too attached to the body and its impulses, he is unable to dive deep into his reality and benefit from the springs of Chith and Anandha that are there.

See all as parts of the same whole

The attraction that the vast Brahman has for the anu (the small) is the attraction of the whole for the part. It is the basis of all love - the love of the mother, of the father and son, of the friend, the spouse and even of the devotee towards God. The jeeva (the individualised being) loves the Brahman or the totality of which it is part. See all as parts of the same whole to which you belong; then there can be no hatred or envy or greed or pride. Saraswathi, the Consort (the potent power) of Brahma is celebrated as the Goddess of vak (word) or the urge to express, to manifest. Her vehicle is, according to the Vedas, the Hamsa (Celestial Swan), the pure bird that is endowed with the rare power of discriminating between water and milk, even when they are mixed and receiving only the milk (that is to say, separating the valid from the invalid, the lasting from the fragile, the true from the untrue). Moreover, Hamsa is a symbol of Soham, the seed-mantra that is uttered by human breathing (Soham- Soham; Soh means He and ham means I; He is I). I and He are the same from birth to death, meaning that the Jeeva is Brahman, no more and no less. There is certainly difference in quantity but

there is no difference in quality, between the two. A drop of sea water is as brackish as any other; you need not taste the entire sea to know that. The jeeva is Sath-Chith-Anandha; the Brahman is also Sath-Chith-Anandha. That is the reason the jeeva is asked to announce itself as "Aham Brahmasmi" - "I am Brahman." It is as true as the drop of sea water saying, "I am the sea." Yogis (spiritually advanced persons) can cognise this easily. That is why one yogi sang, "Go, mind! Rush to where the Ganga and Jamuna are." This does not mean that the sadhaka (spiritual aspirant) should go on pilgrimage to Prayag, Allahabad where the two rivers meet. Ganga and Jamuna are the Ida and Pingala, the two nerve-channels through which the Kundalini (soul power) is uplifted and Prayag is the Bhru-madhyasthan (the spot on the brow where they meet between the eyes). When the Yogi is able to concentrate on that spot, his 'serpent power,' he can become aware of the sea and transcend the name-form of the drop. That is the meaning of the Call.

Man has to recognise the preciousness of time. Not even a fraction of a second should be wasted. He must be engaged always in the investigation of his own Truth and his own Duty to himself Life is dripping away, drop by drop, from the leaking pot! Time hangs over every head like a sharp sword, ready to inflict the mortal slash. But, man pays no attention to this ever-present calamity.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

41. Instruments of the Divine Will

Date: 20 June 1974 / Location: Brindavan

I AM happy to meet you and talk to you on this occasion - the very first gathering of the members of the Council of Management of all the State Trusts and of the Education and Publication Foundation. The aims and objectives of the Trusts are themselves your guides; they can certainly inspire you in your dedicated task. They can help canalise your skills and devotion into activities that can help your spiritual realisation, as well as the welfare and prosperity of your countrymen of all creeds and conditions. I am aware of this. But, yet, since we are working within the framework of the legal and administrative system, we have to pay attention' also to strict accounting and sincere adherence to the requirements of law. There are many Trusts operating in this country and in others beyond the seas. I wish to emphasise that the Sathya Sai Trusts have to shine forth among them all by their special characteristics. They must be based on mutual trust and cooperation, built on the actual experience of the One-ness of all. There is no room here for egoistic poses, compulsory tactics, greed for power, recrimination, and jealousy.

Trust depends on faith in God

Of course, wherever money is dealt with, these evils are common; there are Trusts that are compelled to enter into the process of litigation even as far as the Supreme Court, against their own members for breach of trust. Remember that Trusts are built firmly on the foundation of trust; if you do not trust yourselves and your own reality, you can never trust another. Ultimately, trust depends on faith in God, as expressed in your own actions and in the actions of others. Virtue can grow only in an atmosphere of theism; you must have faith in the omnipresence of God, that God is the witness, the guide, and the guardian. Self-confidence, confidence that you are the pure unlimited self, is the great reinforcement that religion can endow you with. When you establish this in your hearts, you can be entrusted with any type of responsibility, and any type of work.

The Vedas lay down four goals before men: Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. But they have to be pursued in pairs. Dharma and Artha (virtue and wealth) together and Kama and Moksha (desire and liberation) together. That is to say, wealth has to be earned through righteousness, and desire has to be for liberation. But, man takes these four separately, and loses all.

He puts them into separate compartments and adopts distinct plans to achieve them. So, his personality is not integrated; he leads a broken life. He gives up dharma and moksha as beyond him and wastes his life pursuing sheer artha and kama. They lead him into ruin. You have to practise righteousness in the management of wealth, especially when the wealth is to be used for human uplift and human betterment as here. Udh-yogam purusha lakshanam, it is said. Udh-yoga means, as is commonly understood, employment in some job, something that is worth doing. No, it means udh (higher) yoga (spiritual discipline), a sadhana which has assumed the status of a job. All jobs which you take up are udh-yogas (higher disciplines), which "mark out the man" (Purusha lakshanam). When artha is sought through dharma, the purushartha deserves the name 'parama-purushartha' for it is parama or oriented towards the para (the higher eternal values).

You have to struggle to ensure spiritual progress

Tiffs is a chance for service for which you must feel extremely delighted, for, here you can transmute your devotion and faith into positive acts of service for the benefit of your brothers and sisters. And, since I am with you in all that you do, you have no worry about the success of the undertakings. You have only to be 'instruments;' you need not devise devious ways or roundabout tactics. Doing your duties as members, you have the need to preserve and develop trust in Sai, too.

This is Sai work, which you are invited to enjoy. This is elevating work that brings you nearer to the heart of the Divine. When Narayana hastened to save the elephant from the jaws of the crocodile, the Bhagavatha says, He did not take with Him the weapons - wheel or even the Lotus or the Conch. He went empty handed, as far as eye could discern. The conscious hand must

have the inert pickaxe in order to break the hard sod; so too, the Divine Consciousness must have the Prakrithi (objective world or objective instrument) to carry out His plan. You have the chance to contribute to the happiness and beatitude of thousands. In order to carry out this duty, you have yourselves to lead exemplary lives. Your nithya jeevitha (daily living) must be transformed into live prayers and live sadhana. How much struggle are you now going through for ensuring physical comfort! You have to struggle much more for ensuring mental peace and spiritual progress, for sathya jeevitha (life in truth). Calculate within yourselves the benefit that would accrue to you from this sadhana into which you are initiated now, and prepare for shouldering the task assigned to you - to be instruments dedicated for advancing the mission on which the Divine has come.

Control gives power; regulation gives greater strength; discipline reveals divinity. People pine for happiness. But, can one gain it by allowing a free rein to the senses? Can one be happy eating four meals a day, or riding prestigious cars or living in many-roomed bungalows? No. Happiness consists in helping others. It is brought about by giving up, not by hoarding. Catering to the senses makes man bestial. They will drag him into dirt and disgrace.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

42. Many voices and the Voice

Date: **July 1974** / Location: **Prasanthi Nilayam** / Occasion: **Guru Purnima**

OF the many billions of living beings, man alone has the privilege of being entitled to investigate the Truth of the Universe and to merge in the Bliss of its Realisation. But, man is lost in the pursuit of wrong goals; he is struggling in the fog of doubt and divisive loyalties. He is frittering away energies and time in activities that bind him still further in the tangles of material wants. This type of activity called Moha karma, flows from delusion and leads to further delusion. Man must outgrow this tendency, and turn towards Dharma karma - moral activity; idealistic activity; activity that sublimates lower instincts and impulses and transforms every deed into an act of dedication. When this attitude is confirmed and consolidated, all. karma (action) becomes Brahma karma (dedicated activity). Man merges in the Universal and loses the inhibiting individuality. That is the karma which the Atma craves for and delights in. Even in the first stage of Moha Karma (attachment/desire oriented activity), man should endeavour to charge it with Prema (divine love). For, Prema will correct the karma imperceptibly into the path of Dharma (virtue) and lead systematically, into the further stages of human progress towards Divinity. What then is Prema? It cannot be earned or acquired; it is the natural endowment of man. It cannot be refused or thrown off the mind. It cannot be taught or learnt. If directed towards sensual objects, it may well spell ruin-if directed away from them, it can well ensure salvation.

Yearning to reach for the sublimity is alone Prema

Prema or Love is a much-misused word. Any positive response to the attraction is called Love; any feeling of attachment, however trivial or transitory, is characterised as Prema. We must certainly coin new words or set aside specific words to indicate the forms of love. The attachment of parents to their children or of children to the parents must be called affection. The response to the attraction of sex can be best described as fancy, fascination or Moha (delusion). The feeling of kinship or comradeship evokes dearness. The pleasure one gets through a sense of possession, especially of

material objects, can be known as satisfaction. The yearning to reach for the sublimity that lies inherent in Truth - this alone is entitled to be called by that holy word, Prema. For, that is the sweetest, the most charming, the most satisfying possession of Man. Prema is strong and steady enough to leap over all obstacles, confront with equanimity all changes of fortune and defeat, all attempts to delay or deviate. It does not judge one incident as good and another as bad; it does not ascribe them to different agencies. Just as the same Sun causes both day and night, the same Divine Will causes joy and grief; so the devotee does not wince or exult, when ill or well. The fault lies in man's fascination for the 'many,' instead of the 'one;' he pursues the diverse, and forgets the unity 'in the universe. Really speaking, the 'many' **are** but different vehicles for the expression of the 'one. Take the example' of the electric current. When the fan whirls, we say that there is the current flowing; when it stops whirling, we note the absence of the current. When the bulb is on, we notice its presence; when the bulb is off, we note its absence. The current, by itself, is 'invisible;' it is nirakara (formless). It activates various things and so we recognise it. So too, Divinity is in all things and behind all activity. To understand it and to recognise it, we need instruments, vehicles, upadhis (limiting adjuncts).

Clean the eyes of the cataract of ignorance

The eyes see; but, can the organ 'eye' see of itself?. It cannot function without prompting-of the Divine Atma (spirit) within. The brain thinks; but, can the cells perform the process all by themselves? No. They must be activated by the Divine within. The 'one' is the basis, the cause, of the manifestation in the many. Through Prema alone can the inherent, the immanent One be recognised. For, the Divine is Prema, more than anything else. 'Isha vasyamidham sarvam', "All is enveloped by Me, activated by Me", says the Lord. All is one. The One appears as many, to the prejudiced eye. Clear the eye of the cataract of ignorance, and it cognises all as One. In fact, you see with your eyes, only yourself, everywhere. You talk only to yourself, to whomsoever your speech is addressed. You are pleased with yourself; you hate yourself; you harm yourself. There is no other! Even when Divinity comes down as Avathar (divine incarnation), man is unable to pierce the veil

and revere the Divine. Lord Krishna says that people are unable to recognise the Divinity that is He, because they deem Him merely human. Only those who are aware of the current within, the Atma, can identify the Source of Power before them.

Always, listen to the voice of God within

Three disciplines are essential, to become aware of Divinity in all and in the Avathar: No activity should be taken up with individual aggrandizement in view; intellect and emotion must be directed to the revelation of the Resident in the Heart, Atma; every act should be done sincerely, with love, with no yearning for acquiring personal profit, fame or benefit. Above all, listen to the Voice of God within. As soon as one contemplates a wrong act, that Voice warns, protests, and advises giving up. It pictures the shame that has to be suffered, the punishment that has to be faced, the disgrace that it entails. It would appear as if there are two personalities inside you, the one that prompts and the one that prevents. The warning signal, the timely advice, is given by the Jangam (the spirit of right) in the Angam (the physical body). It reminds you of the absurdity and the danger inherent in the identification of the Self with the body, it encourages you to discriminate between right and wrong; it is God, enthroned in every heart as the Highest Wisdom, the Prajnana (consciousness), the Eternal Witness, whom you can contact easily in the depths of Dhyana (meditation). In fact, when you examine your mind, you will find there, holding sway not one but many 'counsellors' with their contrariness, causing confusion. For example, no sooner have you planned to Come to Puttaparthi to take the Dharshan (vision) of Swami, these counsellors start playing their game. One voice advises you to start only after ascertaining whether Swami is actually present there. Another voice suggests that you can put through a call to 'so-and-so' and discover whether Swami is at Bangalore or at Puttaparthi. A fourth lays before you alternative routes and means of transport, and causes a good deal of headache. This is the Sangam, around the Jangam, the Sangam (group) of voices that play around the spirit of fight, trying to distract it.

Cultivate the vision directed inward

Another voice might say, when the others have finished, "Well, my dear man! Consider from all points of view, this desire of yours. You may go there, putting yourself to a lot of expense and bother; think of this possibility also - you may or may not get an interview with Swami." Another voice might intervene and say, "O! Considering all the wrongs done and all the faults committed, it is very doubtful, if Swami will grant you the interview." In the wake of this Voice another will begin its argument of assurance. It will comfort saying, "No! Swami is the very embodiment of compassion. He will certainly pardon all errors." This principle that guides and guards you along the spiritual path is the Lingam (symbol of the formless), that is in the centre of the Sangam, clustering round the Jangam. The Lingam is in the very core of the heart of man, as the sole purveyor of bliss, power and illumination. Cultivate the vision directed inward, so that the Lingam might grant you these three. The mind will then be illumined with the cool comforting Light of Love, Wisdom. That is why the mind has as its presiding deity the Moon - Chandrama manaso jathah. Hence, the celebration of the Day of Thankfulness for all Gurus (spiritual preceptors) and the Prime Guru, Veda-vyasa, is done on the Full Moon Day. Unless you cleanse the mind with Love, the Full Moon of spiritual wisdom cannot shine therein. The recital of the Name, the observance of vows and vigils, of fasts and festivals, may scintillate on the inner sky of the mind, as stars stud the sky; but, until the Lamp of Love is lit, the darkness will not vanish.

Guru means remover of ignorance

This day is a Day set apart for the worship of the Guru. Who is the Guru? How can a person who has not reached the goal guide you towards it? When he is himself groping in the dark, how can he illumine your path? Most Gurus who profess to lead are themselves not quite sure of the road or quite convinced of the rightness of their path. 'Gu' means darkness, or ignorance; "ru" its removal. So the Guru must know the process by which ignorance can be removed in another. How can he do it when he has not done it for himself? The blind cannot lead the blind. Guru has a further meaning too. 'Gu' means gunatheetha (beyond the three strands of energy of which the Cosmos is

composed) and 'ru' means ruupa-rahitha (devoid of any particular form). Now, no mortal has transcended the guna (quality) and ruupa (form). God alone can be described as unaffected by these. And, God is the Guru, fight in your heart, ready to lead and enlighten. He is all-knowing, all-powerful, all-pervading. Scatter the dark clouds of ignorance and egoism that cover the face of the Sun shining in the sky of your heart. Your parents might disown you, your kinsmen might desert you. Your friends might give you up; your treasure possessions might be lost. But, God will be ever near, ever dear, ever ready with counsel and courage. People will gather around you so long as you have pelf and power; you will be left severely alone, when you lose these. They are like swarms of frogs that infects a full lake, croaking flattery, but, disappearing, when the lake is dry.

Guru worship can be done all days of the year

You rush here, for the Guru Pournima Festival; but, there is no need to await this annual event for revering the Guru. People spend this day in worshipping the Guru and seeking his directives. This can be done all days of the year! Selecting a special day smacks of superficiality and exhibitionism. I desire to discourage this attitude of yours; I want you to cultivate not these external ceremonies and festivals, but, the internal Sadhana, the inner vision, the spiritual longing.

I do not claim that I am a Guru; or, consider you as disciples or pupils. When I am All that is, who can be separately specified as Guru and who as disciple or pupil? Ignorance of the One leads one to this dichotomy. Realisation of the Truth will end this distinction. None need teach, none need learn. All are fundamentally Chith (Awareness). This is the Reality. The teacher - that is the more correct appellation - should not feel superior; the pupil should not feel inferior. Both are Atma in reality. There is no high and no low. All are waves in the ocean of Bliss. When your body is healthy, charming, fully content, consider how happy you are! Now, know that the bodies of all beings are you - really speaking. And, when all those other bodies are happy, healthy, strong, and full, calculate how much Bliss you can cherish in your heart! The vision of the Virat (the Cosmic Form), is given for those who surrender their ego and

take refuge in the Lord (as Arjuna did) and who imbibe with care the Geetha sung by the Lord in the silence. God is Omnipresent; He is the Inner Motivator of every particle in the Universe. To declare that He is amenable only to your style of worship, that He will answer only to the Name that you have learnt to use, is to insult His Omniscience and His Glory. See Him in all, serve Him in all. Revere Him in all. Pray, "-Let the whole-world prosper; let all mankind be happy." This is the Special Message I give you on this Day.

When you are driving a car, the car is your God. When you are doing business in a market, the market is your God.

According to the culture of Bharath, we first make obeisance to the work which we have to do. Before we undertake to do any work, we should regard that work as God.

Thasmai Namaha Karmane - "The work I have to do, I regard as God and make obeisance to God in that form" - that is what the Upanishaths are teaching us.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

43. To the mothers

Date: 10 July 1974 / Location: Bengaluru

MANY of you sit in Dhyana (meditation) and after some time start complaining, "O Why is it I am not able to concentrate? Bhagavan! Help me to fix my mind on you!" Do not get impatient and bewail. Feel rather that you must make the mind pure and clean, so that God Himself will be tempted to possess it. He is the chora (thief) of the heart. When thieves enter the house, they select things of value; they will not bother about firewood or charcoal bags! God too when He comes in the role of a thief, looks for the most precious thing, the thing He values most, the thing you have taken most pains to foster. He carries away the pure thoughts, the deeds soaked in the sweetness of sympathy and compassion, the feelings of Love that do not crave requite. God is no ordinary thief!

This Thief makes people richer by His theft! Richer in happiness, serenity and self-esteem. This thief is loved the more, the more He steals! He wakes up the sleeping and then steals what the household has kept for Him. Many times, the people pretend sleep so that He may come and steal the things they have kept for that very purpose. He calls out: Thasmath Jagratha, Jagratha! "Therefore, wake up, wake up;" and then, He carries away the treasure He seeks and finds.

What is taught must be imprinted on the heart

You have that treasure in you; but, you do not know it; hence, you do not keep it ready for Him. You feel you have nothing to give Him, and that you are poor and downtrodden. Once you offer the heart to God, there is no more wail or want. Those of you who are not affluent, have to borrow some vessels for cooking the marriage feast from some rich neighbour or acquaintance. Or, you may hire them from some institutions which keep such big vessels for helping others. The code of conduct, whether you borrow or hire, is: clean the vessels before returning them; they have to be given back just as they were brought from the owner. Cook in them; then, cleanse them before you restore

them intact to the person who lent them.

The Immortal Beings, who have assigned for themselves, this role, this venture of celebrating a 'life-time on earth,' have as it were, borrowed a HEART from God! - the Supreme Giver, in a clean condition. When finally you give it back, see that they are as clean and pure as when He gave them. That is the code of conduct; or else, He will not accept them! Even experienced teachers' nowadays delight in the mere injection into the brains of the children under their care the components of the text books! For, they endeavour only to push them through the 'examinations;' so, it is just a question of guessing correctly the questions that might appear in the paper and mugging up the answers for just those! Once the boys and girls have written the things which their heads have been stuffed, they return home, with-heads emptied and hollow. What you teach must, however, be imprinted on the heart, not stacked in the brain. That will mould their character and make them useful for themselves and society. Take the example of Dhruva,. His stepmother told him that he can win the favour of the King, his father, only through God's Grace, which he has to win through penance! So, the five-year-old boy went into the forest and practised austerities that were unparalleled in history) As a result of the penance, his desire was so sublimated that, in the end, he declared, "I do not care for royal favour, or even the worldly throne! I shall attain the Kingdom of God; I shall sit in the lap of God." Thus, he rejected the lordship over humans and preferred the joy of being a child of God, with God.

Recognise the great potentials of the child

In the tender hearts of the children, there is much potentiality of devotion and attachment to higher ideals and objectives; this can be developed and cultivated by you. Do not think that they do not know anything; that you can divert them any way you wish; this is a mistake. Recognise the great potentials of the child; adopt such methods as the child himself might suggest or indicate, Help the child to reach Godliness and become aware of its high destiny. Do not presume that the child is some inferior personality or that is incapable of attaining the heights. The parents themselves are not competent

to guide the children; they dote on them and do not know how to correct them, they have reprehensible habits and ways of life. They smoke, play cards, gamble, drink, and fight in the home; they utter falsehoods, talk scandal, boast and slander, in the presence of the children. How then can they lead their children on right lines? You will have to persuade such parents to mend their ways and be inspiring examples, rather than enemies and obstacles.

But, before you advise the parents see that you have no defect to which they can point their fingers! Learn the right to advise, before you venture on the mission. First, set right your own homes; see that atmosphere of the home is free from hatred, pride, slander and greed; see that Love is the fly-wheel of the home, that faith in God is the bedrock on which the relations between the members are built.

India stands forth as the teacher to humanity

Indian traditions and Indian modes of living are now being fast cast away; crude manners of dress and speech and personal appearance are replacing them; children should be taught to look upon these with disgust, they should know them for what they are - aberrations and vulgarities! Now, obscene posters are pasted along the roads by cinema theatres in order to attract fans; they contaminate character very subtly and silently; children must make the elders ashamed when they permit such demeaning and deleterious posters to appear in public view.! They have to waken the elders into a sense of shame, at the lowering of human values. Unless we plant these ideals in the children, India will go down to the depths of degradation. How can you tolerate these obscene pictures, these posters publicising pornographic films, this most objectionable type of dress, this brazen behaviour and appearance? Do everything possible to root out this evil. Train the children and the young, to remove this blot, from the face of Bharatha Matha (Mother India). India stands forth as the teacher to humanity, thanks to the virtue, the fortitude, the moral strength of the women of the past and the present. You have to maintain these qualities and foster them so that she might hold her head high among the nations of the world.

Children are the roots of the National Tree

Establish the status of the mother in the home, as the upholder of spiritual ideals and therefore, the Guru of the children. Every mother must share in this effort - the expansion and steady manifestation of the God-consciousness latent in every child. Children are the crops growing in the fields, to yield the harvest on which the nation has to sustain itself. They are the pillars on which the foundation of the nation's future is built. They are the roots of the national tree, which has to give the fruits of work, worship and wisdom to the next generation.

The Sathya Sai Bala Vikas has been evolved in order to feed these roots, strengthen these foundation pillars and fertilise the growing crops. Children are now growing up in an atmosphere polluted by corruption, anxiety and hollow pomp, because people are enamoured of the shallow material culture, mainly imported from the West. Parents and teachers and even the leaders of the nation are devoid of admiration and adoration, understanding and practice of the basic principles of Bharatheeya. Culture; children are denied the precious heritage which is their due; they are inducted into alien ideals, thoughts and habits. They are praised for reciting foreign Nursery Songs, to the neglect of native rhymes! The educated child cuts himself away from the village child or the children of the unschooled. The older persons have but a little distance to travel, before they disembark. But the children, remember, have many miles to go and they take the nation along with them, to perdition or progress) The rishis (sages) of old knew the value of our culture and the deep peace and security that the heritage of that culture can give in times of turmoil and strife. They prescribed three disciplines for every one, young or old. They declared, Mathru dhevo bhava, Pithru dhevo bhava, Acharya dhevo bhava. So long as a nation grows up with these three noble ideals, it can never be pulled up by its roots and get dried up. For, adoration of the mother as Divine, of the father as God and of the Preceptor as God will make the growing generation cherish the heritage, which is handed down by them and through them. The generation gap will not be an unbridgeable chasm.

One of you may be working in an office, another in a shop, a third in the press but every one must engage in sadhana with devotion, discipline and a sense of duty. Do not feel that your role is low and the other persons high. Do not be depressed when you find your role is minor; do not be proud when you discover that your role is a major one.

Give your best to whatever role is allotted to you. That is the way to earn Grace.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

44. The higher role

Date: **August 1974** / Location: **Anantapur**

Eakam sath; viprah bahudha vadhanthi - "The One alone exists; wise men call it by many names." This is the harmonising unifying Truth that India teaches through the ages. Another lesson that Indian culture embodies and Indian thought emphasises is: When the process of living revolves around the body, it is steeped in misery; when it revolves around the Atma, the Divine spark within, it is resplendent with joy. When the years of life are spent and man has not discovered at least who he is, surely, such a life is a stupid, waste. Search for the Reality, for the Witness within, the Divine that animates; this is the first duty of man to-himself. Indian .Culture calls on all to discover for themselves the special nature of his 'isness' and its sacred consequences and to shape his activities and attitudes accordingly.

Ayam Atma Brahma - This Atma is Brahma. The Individual is the Universal, 'pretending to be separate!' The individual exists, cognises and is cognised, delights and confers delight, because it is the Universal. The tiny flame of a candle can light a thousand other candles and yet burn with undiminished strength. The other flames have to acknowledge that they have with them only the flame of the first one. The One has lit the many; the One is shining in and through the many; the One is the many. Ekoham bahusyam - "the One decided to be many," to enjoy its own manifoldness. The One appears as all this diversity. That is the Truth.

Seek the Knower behind the knowing process

Air which is but One, appears as storm, whirlwind, breeze, simoom, assuming various forms by change of speed in movement. The names too differ from form to form. The insistence on the fundamental unity of all creation is the special feature of Indian thought. It is faulty vision, to see variety as variety, the world as composed of disparate elements and forces. In spite of this great heritage which Indians have come by, they are today disparaging it and devaluing it by their behaviour and beliefs.

The beliefs of man must be free from asuuya (jealousy), as the Geetha declares. Asuuya is the evil nature that cannot tolerate the happiness and prosperity of another, that prevents man from loving his neighbour, from serving the distressed, and seeing, in all, the same Divine Motivator that he himself has, as his inner charioteer. It makes man eager to pick holes in the activities of others and renders them blind to their virtues and excellences. This is a College, an institution that imparts education and prepares the rising generation to be better women and better citizens. Education must open the eyes and enable them to recognise the One behind the many. When that One is known, the many can be known easily and clearly. Pursue the vast, the cosmic, the all-inclusive Truth; do not be satisfied with paltry partial scraps of information; seek the Knower behind the knowing process. That is the Real victory.

Education must promote peace and happiness

Educationists must concentrate on methods by which unity will be imparted and distinctions relegated to a subordinate role. But, unfortunately at the present time, in the name of individuality and the sheer fancy for distinctness, every encouragement is given to idiosyncrasy and adventurism, foppishness and flippancy. Parents and elders have to hang down their heads in shame at the vagaries of their children. Education must promote, peace, security and happiness. But, as a result of the educational process through which they have passed, youth is causing anxiety, fear and unrest in the society of which they are a part. Neither have they any peace or joy or security. The Kaurava brothers sought for power, fame, selfish gain and competitive victory. They loved separatist divisive policies. Their thirst for power could be quenched, as Krishna said, only by a rain of arrows which wiped them off the face of the earth. In order to remove the terror that stalks the land from end to end, an immediate reform of the educational system is called for. Roots hold the tree firm; the foundation keeps the building from collapsing. Awareness of one's responsibilities, detachment from entangling bonds, confidence in one's own sense of righteousness - these have to be fostered in colleges. Integrity, sincerity, and the desire to use one's skills and intelligence, for the service of one's fellowmen are essential in youth. At present, educated people are

wanting in the grit necessary to act according to their convictions; they know a thing is right but lack the will to carry it through. Teach the students to discriminate in a detached manner and arrive at right conclusions, and encourage them to put their faith into practice fearlessly. Now that the cultivation of the spirit is in the name of secularism, beyond the ken of the system, teachers who are themselves unaware of higher values are leading youth into less and less firm grounds, into fear and fickleness. How can such people, who have no inner strength, no vital faith in themselves, lead others? What can the country expect from this method of bringing up the young, this foolish and futile round, where the blind lead those unwilling to open their eyes in series of fallow circles?

The God within does not fail to warn, to counsel

Nayam atma balaheenena labhyah - "The soul cannot be won by the weak." That is the pronouncement of the Vedas (sacred scriptures). Without the awareness of the source of all strength, the Atma, man is basically weak and he can only lead men into further weaknesses. There are many who swear that they have infinite confidence and faith in themselves, but, they assert they have no faith in God. How then could they have faith in themselves? For, who exactly is I? Is I a bundle of bones and muscle? Is I the name? No. The reality of I is God; the I is a wave of the Ocean of Divinity, endowed with the same sublimity, the same taste, the same depth. How then can defeat descend on I? Man has to be continually examining every desire that emerges in his mind, so that he may suppress or destroy or by-pass or obey. He must learn, from parents, elders, teachers, friends and the leaders of the land besides the books written by wise men of his own as well as of other countries, the standards by which he can test his desires. He has to accept them or reject them. There are some who are wilfully wicked, who attempt to justify by specious arguments the inequities they perform. But, even then, they know that they are on the wrong path. The God within does not fail to warn, and to counsel.

Become instruments to reestablish righteousness

Students! If you are drawn into evil in pursuit of momentary pleasure, you will have to suffer misery a thousand-fold as a consequence of the impulse. Wicked thoughts, wild schemes and frolicsome escapades might give pleasure for the moment but in the long run they are sure to land you in irretrievable ruin. Your role is something far higher. You have to correct and transform those who behave like blind men though they have eyes; those who move about as lame men though their legs are strong and straight, those who behave like insane men though they are equipped with bright minds; such men are in all fields now. There are hypocrites who talk 'peace' and practise 'war.' Your task is to expose them and educate them back into normalcy and virtue. Become instruments in the great effort to reestablish Righteousness throughout the world. This College has not been established just to prepare you for earning degrees. The main purpose is to help you to cultivate self-knowledge and self-confidence, so that each one of you can learn self-sacrifice and earn self-realisation. The teaching of the university curricula and the preparation for presenting you for the university examinations and the award of university degrees - these are only the means employed for the end, namely, spiritual uplift, self-discovery and social service through love and detachment. Our hope is that by your lives you will be shining examples of spiritual awareness and its beneficial, consequences of the individual and society.

From the tree of your life, to pick out such fruits which you have protected and which you have grown in the form of good qualities and offering them to God, there is some distinctiveness in that. In order to promote good qualities, you have to undergo several troubles. So, it is through these good qualities that your mind can also acquire a divine concentration.

Without good qualities and without good thoughts, how can you fix your mind in meditation?

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba



45. The banana and the peel

Date: 30 August 1974 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Onam

THULSI DHAAS has said in his Ramacharithamanas that he composed the great epic on the story of Raghunath for 'swanthatasukhaya,' that is to say, for his own sukha or happiness and joy. He engaged himself in that self-imposed task, not to any patron or even Rama, but to please, himself. He derived great Anandha (divine bliss) while writing it and when it was finished. That was the urge which moved him. In fact, all that a man does, is, ultimately, traceable to this urge - the urge to earn selfsatisfaction. A man builds a house, writes a book, enters a job, executes a plan - all because he gets joy therefrom. The cuckoo coos sweetly, and derives joy therefrom, far more than those who happen to listen. The rose blooms on the plant, because of an inner urge, not an outer prompting. The father fondles his baby and receives thereby more joy than he ever gives. The various disciplines undergone by sadhakas (spiritual aspirants), monks, ascetics, and those on the march along the path of self knowledge are all adopted and adhered to, because they give joy to oneself, and fulfil an inner need.

Sacrifice, is at the very basis of Bliss

This day is celebrated by you as the day when Emperor Bali was both humiliated and blessed by God, in the form of Vamana. Emperor of the three worlds, Bali called himself, so, for, he had bala (power), more than any one else. He was saturated with egotism. God came to him, while he was busy with a Yaga (an offering), in the form and guise of a Brahmin boy, and asked for a gift of just three foot-measures of land. Bali told him that he could ask for infinitely more riches and lands; but, the Boy insisted on that tiny gift only. The preceptor of Bali warned him about the identity and bonafides of the strange mendicant; he mentioned that he may be God Himself. Tiffs made Bali happier, for, if it was true, he was so mighty that even God came to his door as a mendicant. Such was the measure of his conceit. But, when Vamana drew Himself up to cosmic proportions and measured the entire earth with one foot and the vast expanse of space with another foot, Bali was

humbled; he offered his own head as the third foot-measure, and let himself be trod-down into the nether-world. This day marks the day when the Incarnation of Vamana happened, in order to teach this lesson that pride meets with doom. Once the ego was thus suppressed, Bali became cleansed and God blessed him, with various boons. He assured him that He would ever be his guardian. He permitted him every year, on Onam Day, to come up into the world and see for himself his empire and receive therefrom the homage of his people. So, this is the Festival of Vamana's Advent as well as Bali's Transformation. This day also extols the merit of gifts, renunciation, charity, however little, to any one, for, all are images of God. Thyaga (Renunciation or Sacrifice), is at the very basis of Bliss, of Grace, of Immortality. Na medhaya na prajaya dhanena, thyagenaike amrithathwam anasuh - say the Vedas. ("Not by intellect, not by progeny, not by riches, but, by renunciation alone can the Bliss of Immortality be attained"). Onam is the Festival which instils this message into those who observe it with an eye on its inner significance.

Every obstacle is a step that leads to Anandha

Kerala has contributed a great deal to the preservation of Vedhic culture, and Sanskrit learning, Keralites have a name for faith and dedication. Witness the age-old privilege the Nambuudhiris of Kerala enjoy, priest-hood of the great Vaishnavite shrine thousands of miles away from their land, namely Badhrihath among the Himalayas. Of course, wherever faith and dedication to God are evident, forces that tend to ridicule it, diminish its strength also are found. Where Asthika (believer in God) is, there Nasthika (atheist) too will raise its head. But, disbelief in God or in some Supreme Will can be only a pose, assumed for the sake of personal aggrandizement or advertisement. It cannot stand the light of reason or of experience; even so-called atheists have Love in their hearts, honour Truth while dealing with Society and live on the basis of some eternal basic principles of justice. So, they are believers in Sath-Chith-Anandha (Being, Awareness, Bliss Supreme). You have the duty to stand witness in your lives to the courage, the joy, the strength, the generosity, the humility that true spirituality and faith can impart to man, while faced with disappointment, distress, defeat, defamation and other calamities against which the atheist has no such shield. Gold gains in value

when it is melted in the crucible. A piece of diamond when it is cut into a many-faceted gem is thereby rendered more brilliant and more costly. The dull stone is not sought after by all. Prahladha, the grandfather of emperor Bali was subjected to torture by his irate father; but, that only added to his lustre. Bali himself shone all the brighter for the punishment he received from the compassionate Lord. This is the lesson you have to garner today. Every obstacle is a step that leads you to the Anandha that can never be destroyed or taken away.

It is natural of man to raise himself up

There is another duty that you owe to yourselves, which you have to recognise today. The world is the playground of Nara (human) and Narayana (God). Nara transforming himself into Narayana and Narayana transforming Himself into Nara, and playing their roles in unison. You know full well that Narayana has come in human form for reestablishing Dharma (morality) in the world, for feeding the roots of faith, in God and for interpreting God to man; you have to be assured that it is natural of man too to raise himself up, through spiritual discipline, moral elevation, expansion of love and other means to become Narayana. But, man is unaware of this high destiny. He misinterprets his skills and strength and is so absent-minded that he slides down the scale into a monster or a monkey. Of course there are many who struggle with these downward dragging tendencies and endeavour to elevate themselves; these most often grope in the dark and are badly led.

Devotion 'must flourish, unaffected by time

There are two truths that must be accepted by every pilgrim or devotee: (1) Devotion has to be full, free and comprehensive. (2) Divinity must be conceived as full, free and comprehensive. On the other hand, devotion today is almost always only 'part-time.' That is to say, whenever disease, defeat, or disappointment happen to assail you, you turn to God and pray for His Grace; but when you are happy, prosperous, healthy and in good shape, you ignore God and claim that they are all due to your own abilities and achievements. God is ignored in sunshine, He is wanted only when there is night. Devotion

must persist and flourish, unaffected by time, place or circumstance.

God too has to be experienced in His fullness, and the Anandha of that experience made one's permanent possession. Kasturi recited that poem, which,, was sweet to the ear and full of Sanskrit words. But, words seldom come out of actual experience. It is impossible to experience God and also talk about him. Words like Sarvajnana, Sarvavyapi, meaning that "He knows all," "He is everywhere" are used by people, since elders and saints have used them from ancient times; it is impossible for any one to have the fullest and the most comprehensive experience of these qualities of the Divine, and also speak about that experience. The Geetha speaks of God as achalam chalam evacha, "immoveable as well as moveable," which strikes one as impossible. God appears to move, to act, to bless, to save, to test; but, He is unconcerned basically with these. Look at a tree. The branches, leaves, etc. might be moving with the wind; but the trunk is steady and unmoved. God is but appears as not is. The body moves, the intellect moves, the mind moves, but the Atma is unaffected; it is steady, firm, unchangeable. The lake is unmoved; the surface is tickled into wavelets by every passing breeze. The colourless unmoved curtain or screen is unaffected by the pictures of fire, faction, floods, and glaciers that appear upon it in a realistic manner. When the pictures are seen, the screen is unseen; when the screen is seen, the pictures are unseen. But, without the screen (Brahman), the pictures have no meaning, carry no message, tell no story. They impart no Anandha.

God is the stealer of hearts

You may carry a match-box in your pocket, with no danger of fire emanating, though the components are there in that box. So too, there are the components of Divinity in you; only, it is not patent, it is not expressed. Take a stick and strike its head against the chemical coating given on one side of the box, and suddenly, in a flash, you get the flame of fire. So too, take the Jeeva (the individual) and strike it on the Brahman-principle that is immanent in the Universe, make it aware of it, so to say, and the Individual too manifests the Divinity latent in it. The tree is the Individual; the Forest is the Brahman. The one, apart from the Many is the individual. The Many. and the

Manifold is the Brahmana; Kasturi standing alone, apart, is Vyashti; when he goes and sits among you, the thousands who have come here for Onam, he merges in the Samashti. Samashti is Brahman; Vyashti is the Jeevatman. Prahladha's grandson, Bali whom you honour today, extolled the Lord standing before Him, as Master of the entire Cosmos, as "Arch-thief among thieves," (Dongalalo gajadonga!). For, God steals the most precious possession of man, even when its owner is awake. He steals the chiththa; He is the chiththa apahari, the Stealer of Hearts. I disappointed you; I even requested you not to come so far, away from your homes for this festival; but, yet, your hearts have been stolen by Me and so, you could not stay away. Onam is the day when you Keralites feast on the banana; when you eat a banana, you have first to remove the skin. So, too, when we desire to eat a mango or a lime fruit. The sweet substance has to be reached after removal of the bitter skin. For Bali to be received and accepted by God, the bitter cover of egoism and power-mania had to be removed. Ignorance, maya (delusion), illusion, pride, all are the components of the skin. Onams come and Onams go; but, people are no nearer the Goal. This is because though Onam is given a hearty send-off, generosity, renunciation, love and the spirit of service are not given an equally hearty welcome. You have to take this as the Onam Message - strive to manifest, cultivate and express Love, and suppress pride and egoism, so that you can win the Grace of God.

I ask only that you turn to Me when your mind drags you into grief or pride or envy. Bring Me the depths of your mind,, no matter how grotesque, how cruelly ravaged doubts or disappointments. I know how to treat them. I will not reject you, I am your mother.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

46. The Vedhic rite

Date: 10 October 1974 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

EVERY one of you ought of feel proud that you took birth in this holy land, long famous as the land of Yoga (divine communion), of Thyaga (selfless sacrifice) and of God-oriented Karma (dedicated action). You are the children of Mother Veda, whom she loves so affectionately that she has called you here to witness this great Vedhic Yajna. Bharath is the land that God loves, for, He has taken Avathar (divine incarnation) here often, and is even now moving on this land, carrying out His Mission of restoring Dharma (righteousness) to people who are ignoring it. This Yajna (Vedhic ritual of sacrifice) is an item in that great Task. It is a great pity that Bharath which earned such eminent renown in the spiritual field is today in the throes of a devil dance of vice and wickedness, in the background of falsehood, injustice, hatred and faction.

The land is sunk in anxiety and fear. Therefore, at this juncture, it is necessary to light the lamp of love and hope and impart courage and confidence, by both precept and example.

Veda means "that which makes you know"

The Vedas (sacred ancient scriptures) are the very roots of Bharatheeya Culture. So, it is the bounden duty of every son of India to observe the rites and rituals, the injunctions and instructions, laid down in the Vedas. Many have fallen into the habit of asking, what is the object of these directions, what can we gain from them? Well, let Me tell them that the one single object that the Vedas have in view is to make man Divine, through a series of spiritual exercises. They lead man from the animal stage, when he believes he is just this body suffering hunger, thirst and desires of various kinds, into the state of human-ness, when he recognises that he is far higher than an animal and later, the Vedas persuade him to use his intelligence and discrimination to sublimate his passions and emotions to the Divine level where he is in eternal bliss.

The Vedas elaborate the Sanathana Shashtra (the primal science of the spirit). Understanding this science well and practising it form the duties every man owes to himself. That science results in the removal of ignorance, the gaining of knowledge; not the knowledge of material, worldly things, which changes and gets superseded every few years! It endows the seeker with the knowledge that is the key to the entire gamut of knowledge, that which if known, everything else is known.

That is why the Vedas are called so. The word means, Vedayathi ithi Vedah, that is to say, "Veda means that which makes you know." The cosmic principle is amenable to the mystic formulae and sound patterns that the manthras (sacred formulae) of the Vedas represent; the four fundamental urges of man (Dharma, to be righteous; Artha, to earn and accumulate; Kama, to desire and get the desires fulfilled and Moksha, to expand and get liberated from the 'here and now' into the ever and everywhere') get sanctified and sustained by the Vedhic path. The material physique of God can be adored by the yantra (machine); his spiritual physique has to be propitiated by means of manthras.

There is nothing in creation that is not Divine

Coming to this ritual of Yajna which we are inaugurating, you will notice that when the sanctified offerings are laid in the holy fire, the Pandiths (scholars) utter the word, Svaha, as often as they offer. The reason why that word has to be uttered is, according to them, to enable the offering to be totally reduced and consumed by the fire. Now, it is the very nature of fire to consume and so, there is no need to call upon fire in this manner; it does not stand to reason to declare that fire has to be prayed to for being and behaving so. It is uttered to acclaim the energy and splendour that are latent in fire and to invoke the Divine Thejas (lustre) that enables fire to shine and purify. The presiding deity is called upon to carry the offering to the particular God to whom it is dedicated, saying, Indhraya svaha, Kesavaya svaha, Rudraya svaha, Varunaya svaha etc. Indhra, Kesava, Rudhra and Varuna will receive the oblation through Agni the presiding deity of Fire, only when He is invoked and aroused by the syllable Svaha. Not only is Fire Divine; all the elements

are Divine. In fact, there is nothing in creation that is not Divine. Kalidhasa in the Kumara Sambhavam Poem has addressed the Himalayas and the streams, glaciers, peaks and trees thereon as Divine, as symbols and signals of the immanent Divine. For every element and being, fire which gives heat and light is considered to be the very life-principle, the vital breath.

Activity declares whether the society is good or bad

There is another clarification which I feel I should make just now. The Vedas are countless - 'Anantho vai Vedah,' it is said. Now, the doubt may arise why countless Vedas are necessary to lay down the path of spiritual progress. Let us take an example. To make a child understand the meaning of one word, the parent or teacher uses very often a whole barrage of words. Explanation means elaboration, repetition, re-emphasising. So, to make clear to men of average intelligence or no intelligence, it became necessary to have a number of supplementary or complementary texts and scriptures, and since their number is immense, they came to be known as Anantha (countless). The aim of every Veda, however large the number, however varied the approach, is the same: to lead man from the animal stage through the human into the height of Divine self-realisation.

From the Universal Absolute manifested the Brahman, the Cosmic Principle. From the Brahman, Karma (Regulated Activity) based on Vedhic prescriptions originated; from this kind of Karma, the Gods are delighted and they shower rain, directing the rain God Parjanya to bless the world and its people; since rain falls, crops grow and food is available for consumption; through food, man gets health and strength and vitality; as a result of this vitality, man multiplies and reproduces himself. This is the cycle, according to the Vedas - Karma, Rain, Crops, Food, Fecundity. Krathus (elaborate rituals) of this type, are undertaken for invoking timely rains, congenial seasons and peace and prosperity for the whole world. It is the activity which declares whether the individual or society is good or bad. The thermometer measures the temperature of the body and announces whether the body is well or ill. The Karma or activity is the indicator of inner character. Observing one's actions, their motives, their consequences and the extent of one's involvement, it is

possible to declare one as a pashu (beast) or Pashupathi (the Lord of Individual Souls), that is to say as Divine as God Himself.

Vedhic yajna is for the prosperity of all mankind

The Krathu is also a Karma, albeit a Vedhic Karma, dedicated to the acquisition of the welfare of the world. All Karma done to ensure the welfare of others, without, any aspiration for personal benefit, is good Karma which the Gods would appreciate as a Krathu. The evil consequences that are sure to affect you when you have committed wrong karmas can be counteracted by engaging yourself in beneficial Karmas, thereby earning merit. There is no attempt now to counteract evil by good and so, the country is fast sliding into ruin. How can the country uplift itself? The country is not just a piece of the map, or a slice of earth. It is a collection of men, women and children, bound together by tradition and certain common ways of life and thought handed-down as valid and valuable by generations of patriots and leaders of spiritual life.

Once upon a time, since the vices of greed and vanity developed uncontrolled among men, the Veda was so incensed and insulted that it took the form of a black deer and fled into the forests. At this, it is said, the Vedhic Pandiths, sages and scholars followed it with prayerful importunities; but, it would not return. They had to come back, with just the skin of the deer and be content with that remnant. These rithwiks who officiate in this and other Vedhic rituals wear, as you can see, pieces of the skin of the black deer, to warn themselves against the recurrence of that catastrophe. They also take their seats on deer-skins. Every act and gesture, every accent and tone of the manthras has a meaning traceable to the deep past and the experiences of the makers of our culture. The skin is called 'charma' in Sanskrit. But, worn during the ritual it gives 'sarma,' which means joy and enthusiasm, anandha and sukha. Yajna means, as you know, sacrifice, thyaga (renunciation). The Yajna celebrated here. has no particular individual desire to satisfy. The aim is to ensure the prosperity and peace, not of any one individual, nor of any region or community or country,' but, all 'mankind. Gandhi used to go round the country praying Sabko sanmathi dhe Bhagavan: "O Lord, give every one, give

all, goodness of mind." You who are attending this Yajna dedicated for the welfare of the world should pray likewise and, yourself entertain only sanmathi, so that the world will profit by the example.

True human greatness consists of a continuous series of tiny acts executed with absolute sincerity and largeness of heart.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

47. The flag of victory

Date: 16 October 1974 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

THE hoisting of Prashanthi Flag on the Prashanthi Mandhir (Hall of Worship) is the Inaugural Function of all festivals celebrated at the Prasanthi Nilayam. This has become an event, looked forward to with eager expectation and enthusiasm by the thousands of devotees who gather here. But, most people do not know that the hoisting of the Flag is a meaningful signal of victory, and, even, those who know, do not often recall to their minds what the victory is, that is indicated by the hoisting of this particular flag. Of course, as all of you have realised, the Dhashara Festival marks the triumph of the forces of good over the forces of evil, of Parashakthi (Supreme Divine Energy) in Her three Forms of Mahadurga, Mahalakshmi and Mahasaraswathi, subduing and destroying the asuric - (demonic) embodiments of lust, greed, hate and other Rajasik (quality of pride and passion) and Thamasik (quality of inaction and ignorance) vices. But, what is your share in this struggle and this victory? What is the impact this ceremony should have on you? This Prashanthi Flag symbolises the victory that each of you has to achieve over the demonic urges that infect and torment you. The triumph that deserves to be celebrated here by you is the one accomplished over the forces of ignorance and delusion, that, by their subtle and sinister influence veil your true nature and reality and lead you into the desert wastes of the sensory world.

All that are created undergo a process of change

Of what benefit is it, to know everything about the 'object,' while knowing nothing about the 'subject'? Such incomplete knowledge is of no avail at all; to boast of it is tantamount to making oneself the target of ridicule! Examine any object of Nature; examine anything, alive or inert, in Creation. You will observe that they all undergo a process of disintegration, of transformation, of transmutation; they are never one moment what they were the previous moment! It is a flowing river, you cannot dip in the same water more than once! A seed fallen on the ground soon becomes different: a sprout! It fast becomes a sapling, a tree, with a variegated equipment of trunk, branch,

twig, leaf, bud, bloom and fruit! Each of these manifestations has a distinct colour, got evidently from nowhere; it has a distinct feel, form, taste, and name, and so, it has a unique purpose and use. The seed itself disappears from the ground, but, is found, multiplied a thousand-fold in identical forms, encased in each of the thousand fruits! What a grand mystery is this! The same heap of clay is transformed by the deft hands of the potter into a vast variety of plates and pans. The one nugget of gold is transformed by the artistry of the smith into a fascinating array of beautiful jewels. These facts are within the experience of every one. The fruit, the pot and the jewel are 'effects'; there can be no effect without a 'cause.' The seed, the heap of clay and the nugget are the material causes, the gardener, the potter and the goldsmith are the instrumental causes; the manipulative causes. So far as the creation of the manifoldness of the Universe is concerned we call Him, God.

When the Cosmos manifested through the Will of God, who is the Universal Absolute, It arose from the Absolute only, since there was then, only ONE, just as even now there is only One, inspite of all this seeming variety. That Will which emanated from the Absolute persuaded us to see and experience Many; that is all that has happened. The One Reality is still the One, it has not undergone any change. We have super-imposed on the One, the illusion of the Many!

Nature is God's Body, Cosmos is His Will

God, therefore, is the material cause as well as the instrumental cause, the gold and the goldsmith, the potter and the clay, the seed as well as the tree.. "Beejam mam sarva bhoothanam," Krishna says in the Geetha: "I am the seed of all the elements and all beings." Nature is His Body; the Cosmos is His Will; the Vedas are His Breath. The Sankhya School of thinkers declare that the objective world arose out of the conglomeration and conjunction of disparate atoms; but, they do not pursue the matter and explain what induced the atoms to join with their kind in particular designs and groups. How does this urge arise? How does this awaken, within the minute atom? Who has planted this desire in the tiny heart of the atom? These questions are by-passed. Most philosophers especially in the West, ignore the problem of identifying the

cause of all the effects we find every moment all around us. The Upanishaths (integral wisdom of Vedas) declare, Ekoham bahusyam - "I am one, let me become many," willed God; and God became all this, in response to that divine desire, the primal urge. He became all this. He is therefore the Anthar-atma (the Inner Reality); and the Anthar-yami (the Inner Motivator). The Vedas declare Vasudhevah sarvamidham - "All this is Vasudheva, God." They all say, Neha nanasthi, kinchana - "There is not the slightest trace of many-ness here." Ekam eva - There is only ONE; adhwithiyam, - Without a Second. Realising and experiencing this basic Truth, becoming blissful and aware of one's native Divinity is the victory that this Prashanthi Flag denotes. Have you won that victory? No. Why then, am I hoisting it for your exhilaration, on this Festival Day? I am only hoisting it to instruct you, to inspire you, and to remind you of the precious heritage of Upanishathic wisdom, that your forefathers have earned and left for you. You are basking today in the sunshine of their glory; you have the chance to live on the fortune they have left behind for their children and children's children. This Flag invites you all to share in that immeasurable treasure.

Every being in the Universe has the potentiality of transcending the senses. Even the little worm will one day transcend the senses and reach God. No life will be a failure. There is no such thing as failure in the universe.

Sri Sathya **Sai**

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

48. Vehicle care

Date: 16 October 1974 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

DOCTORS agree that illness is caused through faulty food habits and foolish ways of spending leisure. But, they do not seem to know that food is a Word that connotes a wider variety of 'intakes.' Every experience that is drawn through any of the senses in 'food' has an effect on one's health We say "food for thought"; whatever we see or hear or smell or touch has an effect on the body; good or bad. The sight of blood makes some people faint; or, it may be some bad news, that administers a shock. Allergy is produced by unpleasant smells, or when something intrinsically unwelcome is contacted or tasted. A sound mind ensures a sound body; a sound body ensures a sound mind. The two are interdependent. Health is essential for happiness; happiness or a capacity to be happy, whatever may happen is essential for physical health, too. The food we consume should be tasty, sustaining and pleasant. It should not be too 'hot' or too saltish; there must be a balance and equilibrium maintained. It should not arouse or deaden. Rajasik food enrages the emotions; thamasik food induces sloth and sleep. Sathwik food satisfies but does not inflame the passions or sharpen the emotions.

Five types of bath prescribed in the scriptures

Nature has many mysteries in its make-up. Man is able to unravel only those that are cognisable through his five senses; he does not realise that there is a vast unknown beyond the purview of the five faulty instruments of perception that he has. For example, from every being and thing, constantly, without intermission, millions of minute particles and millions of vibrations are issuing forth. Certain substances like camphor emanate so much of these that a lump disappears in a few days. The bodies of others affect us by these emanations and we too affect them in the same way. For good or bad, we are interacting in this manner, inescapably. Naturally, the growth of the body is affected, as well as its health and strength, by the contact or company we develop. These emanations are intensified when dirt accumulates, or sewage collects, or drains are choked. Sanitation rules are framed to reduce the possibility of

disease spreading from such areas.

Five types of bath are prescribed in the Hindhu scriptures, in order to maintain physical immunity from the emanations of others. First, we have the 'mud bath,' wherein fine mud is applied over the body and kept on for some time before being washed away. Second, the 'Sun bath' is recommended, because the rays of the Sun are powerful disinfectants; they feed as well as freshen.

Third: bath in water. If the water is a flowing river, considered holy, and if the bath is taken after propitiatory hymns etc., the bath will cleanse the body and, at the same time, elevate the spirit. The fourth type is the 'air-bath,' when the body is, exposed to the cool breeze, and its salutary effect. The fifth and last type is the 'ash bath,' where the body is given a coating of fine ash or Vibhuuthi (sacred ash), revered as the mark of Shiva. The ash guards the body from evil contacts and the deleterious effects of the vibrations proceeding from others; it also sanctifies and purifies the vibrations of the individual wearing the ash, for, it reminds him always of the inevitable end of all that one feels as one's own, except the Lord who is the very person himself.

Uncleanliness has become a popular cult

Untouchability as a social practice must have had its origin in the realisation of this truth. But, practices like avoiding contact with demeaning or defiling men or things later became a ritual, a hollow round of negations. Those who are ridiculed for observing such restrictions and taboos are finding it difficult to explain the inner significance of their behaviour. These observances originated from the anxiety to earn length of life and strength of body, so that the seeker might gain the goal. The Geetha speaks of yukthahara viharasya - "habits of feeding and recreation which are controlled and regulated." The gross part of food is discarded as faeces, the subtle part is transformed into muscle, blood, etc. and the more subtle of the subtle aspects are transmuted into the mind and its activities. That is why the sages have prescribed certain limits and levels of food, in order to promote the spiritual urges and prevent

contrary tendencies. But, nowadays, as a result of the downgraded time-spirit, food that damages the spiritual urge is being increasingly favoured! The elementary rules of personal cleanliness are neglected in the name of 'novelty and neospiritualism.' Bath is given the go-by. Oral hygiene is not cared for. Damaging habits are cultivated and tolerated. The mouth is the gateway of the physical mansion; if the gateway is foul, what can we say of the residence and the inmates! Uncleanliness has become a popular cult; it is necessary to keep away from its votaries, for, cleanliness is next to Godliness. Unkempt, dishevelled, dirty heads and bodies denote unkempt, dishevelled intellects and minds.

The body will shine if the character is fine

Of course, it is true that many sages and saints paid little attention to personal cleanliness, since they were always on the higher plane of nearness to Reality. Imitating them without the inner conviction that one is not the body but that one is the Universal Indweller .can only be hypocrisy and exhibitionism. Eeshwara swallowed the poison that emerged from the Ocean; but, mortals cannot do the same, even to remove the minor poisons of the world. Develop equanimity, install in the mind the faith in the Divine and then you get the authority to neglect the claims of the body, with impunity. You cannot challenge the wisdom of the sages and ask, what harm is there if I too behave likewise! Great harm will certainly ensue, when you venture into these realms of the spirit with the ego bloated big. The body has to be carefully and tenderly fostered; it is a precious gift, a very complicated but well co-ordinated machine, given for achieving a laudable task. Its exterior too must be clean and full of the charm of goodness. The skin of the fruit of Anandha (divine bliss) is the physical body; the succulent flesh is the muscle, bone and nerve; the hard uneatable seed is the evil that gets mixed up in life; the juice which the fruit offers, for which the tree was planted and nourished is the Bliss it shares with all. The body will shine if the character is fine; service of man and worship of God will preserve its charm. The Lord will be watching with a thousand eyes the least activity of man to discover any slight trace of selfless Love sweetening it. In the past, illnesses were cured by the simple remedies that nature herself provided, - roots, tubers, fruits, leaves

etc., rest, change of residence, regulation of diet, sadhana (spiritual discipline) etc. But, now man lives in an age of tablets and injections. Do not believe that health is retained or maintained through doctors; nor can drugs alone guarantee it. Were that So, the dead should all be alive now. Well, examine whether the doctors themselves follow the advice they offer to others. They are victims of the very habits which they advise against! They condemn smoking and drinking intoxicants as dangerous to health, but, they indulge in both, and thereby, encourage the very evils they condemn! This is the type of health-advisers that we have! In every field - spiritual, moral, .economic, political, and literary - absence of proper leaders is the root cause of all the distress, anxiety and fear that torment the world.

You are embodiments of the Divine Atma. Do not crave for recognition and respect from others; crave rather for winning Grace from the Lord. In the pursuit of that aim, do not be misled by the emergence of obstacles and obstructions.

49. Honour your kith and kin

Date: 16 October 1974 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

VOLUNTEERS! Embodiments of the Divine Atma! Service without idea of self is the very first step in the spiritual progress of man. For, it trains you to transcend all the distinctions artificially imposed by history and geography and realise that the human community is ONE, and indivisible. Learn this truth; experience it in action. That is the duty of the Seva Dhal Organisation. How can a person be held 'divine' (as every man truly is), unless he has established himself in the sense of this Unity and shaped all his actions thereby? Man has been brought forth so that he may enjoy his heritage, namely; the Bliss that comes of the realisation of the One. Any activity solely intended for the individual is, on that very account, barren. For, the community is essential for the individual, for his very survival. Your service will confer on you and on the community wherein you live untold benefits; it will also bring an invisible but potent benefit, namely, Divine Grace, Seva (selfless service) is an important ingredient in the nine-fold discipline of Bhakthi (devotion). You can see, sense, understand and sympathise with others who are akin to you, and so, you have greater reason to render them help and service.

God will not accept hypocrisy

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

means by which you can make yourselves efficient Seva Dhal workers.

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

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

Serve the community, the Community will serve you

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

and it will exterminate you. Put an end to. laziness; bury your clamorous ego; bury the greed for power and pelf; then, you get the qualifications needed for a member of the Seva Dhal. I know that some people allow others to use the scarf and badge given to them; they do so to escape work or to please their friends. This is very wrong; these symbols of Seva are as vital to reach one of you as your own breath. When you give them over, you do great injury to your own breath. Or, there are some, I know, who keep them hidden, out of sight of others, when they drink, gamble, or smoke and indulge in such harmful and shameful acts. This too is despicable.

Soft speech reaches the heart quicker

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

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

This is your home, and the thousands who come to this home are your kith

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

Peace is inherent in man. When ego becomes egoism, the Aham becomes Ahamkar by enfolding itself in a form. 'I' - pure and simple, maintained pure and simple - is still 'being'; it 'becomes' when the I identifies itself with something other: I am a man, I am a monk. I am a student. The 'I' has become an 'ism;' has put on a form, a vesture, which it is loath to give up, the akar which has rendered it Aham-kar, egoist!

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

50. The Labyrinth

Date: 23 October 1974 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

THE real and the unreal (that appears to the ignorant as 'real') are not two distinct things; one is the absence of the other, that is all. The 'absence' of reality cannot be an 'unreal thing.' The absence of light cannot be raised to the level of a distinct thing called 'darkness.' There is only One; it appears as two. In order to explain this, Brahmasri Mudigonda Pichayya Shasthry gave a good example. He spoke of a red-hot cinder, which burns the hand, since fire has entered into the piece of coal. So too, when the ego enters the jeeva (individual being), the ego develops attributes and appears many-faced. But, just inquire, how the coal itself came into being. That too was a result of fire! The jeeva itself was manifested since the feeling of aham (ego) arose in the nirguna Brahman (the attributeless, desireless Universal). The Shasthry also spoke of the difficulties involved in releasing the jeeva from the clutches of the ego. He said it is like separating the heat from the red-hot cinder, it has become part and parcel of the coal. But, by the process of cooling, the coal can again rid itself of the heat that informed every particle of its substance. He called 'life,' a labyrinth, from which few can escape, though all have entered it easily! He quoted the Mahabharatha episode where Drona, the teacher of the clans in the art of warfare (also called Kumbhaja, born in pot) had arrayed the Kaurava troops as a labyrinth on the battlefield of Kurukshethra; Drona challenged the teenage son of Arjuna, Abhimanyu by name, to come into the padmavyuha (labyrinth of the lotus shape) and fight his way out, if he dared. His father Arjuna was not present in camp; his wife was pregnant at the time and, so, as the Shasthras (spiritual sciences) declare, the prospective father had no right to gamble with his life. When the young warrior mentioned the challenge, his mother expostulated with him, and told him that he could well excuse himself from the ordeal.

The pure mind reflects the Reality of God

The reasons she gave him for this withdrawal have a deeper meaning. The labyrinth was constructed by Kumbhaja, which means, one born in

intelligence, Brahman Itself, for, Brahman is Prajnanam (the Supermost Wisdom). How can a person break through the labyrinth devised by Brahman, when he is overwhelmed by the egoistic pulls, consideration for his-wife and his child-in-the-womb and the absence of his father? These two excuses are the symbols of I and Mine.

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

"Soham" is the refrain of every breath

That vision gives immeasurable, inexpressible bliss. Of what avail is all the loud chanting, praying, singing and wailing, when the heart is soiled by egoism and selfish desire? A person behaving so might be taken by ordinary mortals as highly devoted to the spiritual path; but, deep in his disturbed consciousness, he will be tormented by anxiety and fear. On the other hand, a person might appear poor, distressed, and depressed, to ordinary mortals; he might not have the exterior demonstration of devotion. But, God would be ever installed in his heart, guiding and guarding him. He might be doing all acts as acts of worship to the God residing in his heart. The bird in this physical cage wherein man is imprisoned is always, from the moment of birth to the moment of death, chirping 'Soham,' declaring that in reality the jeeva (embodied soul) and dheha (body) are ONE. It is this affirmation that is the justification for the gift of life. When that chirp does not emanate from the breath, the body is a shavam (corpse)! When it manifests, illumines and fills the cage with the Divine fragrance, it is a tabernacle, Shivam! Identify yourselves with the mantra (sacred formulae) the bird chirps, the breath

repeats. You might forget any other sadhana (spiritual discipline) or any other duty to yourself - but, the breath never, even for a moment forgets this Sadhana - reminding you of your innate Reality, namely, Sah (He). "I am He. He is I" - that is the refrain of every breath. What deeper instruction, what greater inspiration do you require, to keep you on an even keel of equanimity?

Faith in God must be constant and firm

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

The fault lies in the belief that things happen as a result of human effort and planning, human intelligence and care. No one can succeed in any venture without Divine Grace. It is a God's plan that is being worked out through man but, man prides himself that he has worked for it. This reminds me of a story. A poor simple villager made his first rail journey. He purchased a ticket and entered a compartment; he found it occupied already by a few passengers who had kept their boxes, bundles and odd items of luggage on the racks or under the benches on which they sat. They were unconcerned with the extra effort that the engine would have to make to drag along those boxes and

bundles. How cruel of them, the villager thought. The engine has to pull along their weights, and now they are imposing on the train, this additional burden too. He for one was not going to inflict this extra trouble on the poor thing; so he kept his box on his shoulder and his bundle on his head. He believed that he was carrying his box and bundle along, and not the engine. Most people behave in the same silly fashion, ignoring the fact that God is All; man is but an instrument in His hands, for the execution of His Plan. Faith in this fact is the key to peace and joy.

Desire destroys devotion, anger destroys wisdom, greed destroys work. Hence these bad qualities must be sacrificed. With good and sweet words, keeping desires under check and control (for ultimate removal), one should start on the path of sacrifice.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

51. Diamonds in the dust

Date: 25 October 1974 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Dasara, Vijayadasami

COMPASSION towards all creatures is the greatest virtue, wilful injury to any creature is the worst vice. Have full faith in this; spread love and joy, through compassion, and be full of joy and peace, yourself. You do not have joy and peace now, mainly because, your vision is warped and wobbling. The vision is now directed towards the faults, and failings of others, never towards one's own faults and failings. The ears too delight when stories of failures and foibles of others are related. No attempt is made to examine the failures and foibles of oneself. Really speaking, inquiry and the investigation have to begin with oneself. For, what we see in others is the reflection of our own selves, our own prejudices and preferences. Besides, when your attention is focussed on faults and failures, vices and wrongs, the mind too becomes infected with the pollution and it starts relishing only experiences of such tastes. Hence, the lives of such people lose the peace and joy that are the heritage of the wise and the wary.

Let us take the example of the snake. It has two characteristics: (1) It never moves straight. Its path is always crooked. (2) It strikes at all that comes in its way. Man too is snaky, for, he exhibits these two characteristics in a marked manner. So, he shares another characteristic too of the snake, namely, poison.

Slavery to sensory objects is like snake's poison. Poison is called in Samskrith, visha. A kindred word is vishaya, which means, the sensory objects, which poison the mind of man with lust, anger, greed, craving, pride and hate. The snake's poison is the cause why it is destroyed wherever seen. Man's slavery to vishaya is the cause of his downfall. But, the situation is not without some hope. The serpent can be tamed and its poison-fangs removed, when music from the nagaswaram pipe is played and when it is fascinated by that sweet melody. The poison that vishaya exerts on the human mind can also be eliminated and countermanded, when man is fascinated by the sweet melodies of Namasmarana and sankeerthan - that is to say, by the repetitive

chanting and congregational singing of the meaningful Names of the Lord. The poison in both can thus be transmuted into pure nectar.

What happens to man when Namasmarana withdraws his mind from the sensory tangles is - the acquisition of Samachiththa - a new balance of mind, of blissful equanimity. Nature is in constant flux; nothing remains the same even for a few seconds. The sweet dish that is cooked now becomes stale and stinking a few hours hence and is ruined so much that it acts as a danger to health, when consumed. Other types of changes happen in other fields, other things and beings.

And, man not only expects these changes, he prepares himself to face them; in fact, in many cases, he is unhappy if the change does not happen! If things remain the same, it is certain to cause deep disappointment. A new-born babe must grow in weight, in movement of limbs, in the intake of food, and the output of energy through activity. Or else, parents become anxious and run from doctor to doctor. The same thing happens when the child does not walk or talk, weep or laugh.

Aim at constant consciousness of the Reality

In a normal babe, there exists real Samachiththa, for, there is no desire (except the instinctive desire for food, drink and maternal protection), to agitate it. The babe is the inheritor of Immortality; so it is unaffected by anxiety, that haunts the adult. The word Samachiththa is, in common parlance, taken to mean, sheer equanimity - an unshaken balance, when confronted by success or failure, loss or gain, pleasure or pain. But, 'Sama' has another and more significant meaning, namely Brahman, the Universal Eternal Absolute principle. Samachiththa, therefore, in its philosophical sense, means, a consciousness established in the Absolute Brahman, and as a consequence, above and beyond the storms and stillness of the world of duality. This constant consciousness of the Reality is the fruit of yajna (selfless sacrifice), the Vedhic symbol of thyaga (renunciation), as mentioned in the statement na medhaya, na prajaya, dhanena, thyagenaike amruthathwam anasuh - "not by the intellect, nor by progeny, nor by wealth,

but, only by renunciation can immortality be attained." Yajna (sacrifice) means thyaga (renunciation).

It is to emphasise this great axiom that during Dhashara every year, the Vedhic Yajna is performed; the thousands who attend the Festival can share the knowledge and the inspiration that the Yajna provides.

Master the assertive ego by the Real Self

This day is the Samapthi of the Yajna. Sama means, as I just now said, Brahman. So, Samapthi means, the attainment of Sama or Brahman, which is the summum bonum of the ritual. The realisation of this Brahmic Reality is the birthright of all men. But, though born with the fight and the responsibility, as the Amritha-puthra (Child of the nectar of immortality), man denies himself the victory, courts defeat and prides himself as an Anirtha-puthra (child of the Illusory, the delusion). The realisation which is his due is not an attainable achievement; it is a simple conquest, so simple that people never attempt it! The assertive ego that urges him to identify himself with the body and the instrument with which it is equipped, the motives with which those "instruments work and the reactions which those motives breed, has to be mastered by the Real Self, a wave of the great Ocean of Cosmic Consciousness, that is all. Now, man declares himself as aham and takes pride in his ahamkara (egoistic-consciousness). But, he is not aware of the inner meaning of the word aham! Aham is just a verbal symbol for what he really is. A is the sound that represents the Omnipresent Godhead, named also as Vishnu. In the Geetha it is asserted, aksharanam a-karosmi - "Among the letters I am A," (pronounced as in anatomy, etc). Ham means Shakthi (energy, power, force). So, when one points to himself as aham, he is unconsciously announcing that he is the hardened energy of the Omnipresent Universal Absolute Brahman called also Vishnu. Besides, the Lord says in the Geetha, maya kritham idham sarvam - "I have made all this out of Myself!" When all is He, you and all jeevas (individualised beings) are He. How then can we demarcate some as bad, and relish the stories concerning them and list their faults and failings?

Make the mind concentrate on the Brahman

The question may be raised, "The good and the bad are so obvious, how can we deny them or ignore them?" They are obvious only so long as the individual is not fully established in the truth that Vasudhevah sarvamidham (God is all). Until that moment, the body dominates thought, desires haunt the mind, ego rules the intellect; so dualities lord over man. When like the boy Prahladha, one is sunk and saturated in God-consciousness, there can be no feeling of gain or loss, pleasure or pain. He is immersed in the word, and is unconcerned about its meaning which is manifested in all its variety in the objective world. The one Word seems to have many meanings, as a result of ignorance. It is the word, the Para-shakthi (the Supreme Power) that gives value and validity to every one of the meanings. Another idea called ekagratha (one-pointedness) too can now be elucidated. Sadhakas (spiritual aspirants) often bewail that they do not earn one-pointedness. They mean, by that term, that they are not able to concentrate their attention long on a flame, light, picture, or idol. The eye concentrates on something seen; the nose, on some fragrance; the ear on some melody. But, the mind concentrates on the One, (the Ekam), the Brahman - which is described as ekam nithyam vimalam achalam sarvadhee sakshibhootham (the One, the eternal, the pure, the unmoving, the all knowing witness of all). Ekagratha, therefore, denotes the concentration of the inner vision on Brahman (Omni-self). The intellect, the ego, the senses - these should subserve this great purpose and help in attaining the ideal. They should be vigilant that they do not divert the vision or deviate it from the Brahman.

Nature is beauty, truth but man sees it ugly, false

However, it has to be admitted that such sadhana is now very rare; very few fix their inner vision on the universal and the eternal; nor do they listen to its majesty and mystery. The tragedy which has fallen upon mankind is just this: the mind of man has strayed away from its moorings, and is being tossed about on the waves of doubt and diversity. Brahman is One, unchanging, everlasting. A mind filled with the yearning for Brahman will see the One in all, it will remain unaffected by the smiles and sneers of fortune. But, man's

mind has been tempted into strange paths that can lead him only to fear and frustration. Man condemns the world and calls it a seat of wickedness and war.

The fault lies not in the world, but, in himself. He has war in him and so, he sees war; he is inherently wicked and so, he observes wickedness all around him. A brilliant lamp cannot remove the darkness which a blind man has always around him. For those who have eyes to see, it is brilliant, the light around them. The darkness the blind man swears by is in him, not outside him. So too, the man who is at peace with himself, will discern peace all around him. Nature is beauty, truth, peace. Man sees it ugly, false and violent - that is all. It is strange, but true Immortality lies enshrined in the mortal; there are diamonds in dirt and dust; wisdom dwells in this mansion of muscles; the atma illumines this tabernacle of the jeeva (individual being). Man does not look into himself; he is poor, though under his feet there lies buried treasures. Heir to inexhaustible bliss, he runs after momentary pseudo-pleasures! He gets as reward only distress, disappointment and defeat. He spends all his allotted years in this wasteful adventure, and even at the last moment of life he is beset with sorrow and fear. He has no peace when he leaves his body, for, he has lost the chance of winning peace through its instrumentality.

The Will to live in man is very strong

There was a woodcutter once, going daily into the forest and collecting a bundle of fuel which he sold in the village nearby for pittance; which just sufficed to keep his wife and children alive. One morning, while he was stepping out of his hut, the wife reminded him that it was Yugadhi (the Telugu New Year festival), the next day; she pleaded with him to collect a heavier bundle of fuel that day, so that they could get a few more paise to give the children a morsel of sweet rice each. The man nodded assent and walked on. He succeeded in gathering an extra huge bundle, but, with that heavy load on his head, he was soon exhausted; he had to deposit it on the ground, before he could approach the village. This set him thinking of his plight. He had lost all his old zest for living. He called upon the Angel of

Death, the Mruthya dhevatha, to relieve him. He cried, "O Death! Have you no mercy towards me? Why have you forgotten me, so long? How I wish I could die and escape from this daily grind?" The Angel of Death took pity on him, and appeared before him, to fulfill his wish. But, the woodcutter suddenly receded, he cleverly changed the purpose of his appeal to the Angel. He had no wish to die, though in his despair, he had called for her help. He said, "No. No. I had no one here to lift this bundle on to my head, so I called on you to come to my aid. That was the only reason behind my prayer. Please help me to lift this burden and place it on my head; I have to reach the village soon!" Since man is innately immortal, he recedes from the grasp of death, the Will to live is very strong, much more persistent than the Will to die.

The shadow of man is neither true nor false

It is like the story of the Sun and darkness, this question of meeting death or vanquishing death. The Sun-God was, one day, very much impressed by the 1008 Names with which a devotee offered Him worship. He listened to the Names, as he uttered them in steadfast faith. He was particularly alerted when he called-upon Him as Andhakara dhveshi - "He who is looked upon as the enemy of darkness." He could not tolerate the existence of an enemy alive; so, He called for a war unto death for this demon called Darkness. He went into all the places where Darkness hid himself; but no sooner did He spot him, the demon disappeared so that He could never come into grips with him. Finally, He concluded that darkness was nonexistent and was only a creation of the imagination of His adorers! Before the splendour of Immortality, the darkness of mortality too would flee in haste.

The resident in the body has no birth and therefore, no death. But, man is hugging the falsehood that he is the body and so is subject to death and birth. A silver cup can be reshaped by the smith into a plate, or later, into a pan-box; but though the name, the form and the function might change, the silver is there, in all three, unchanged in substance, in spite of the births into plate and box and the deaths as cup and plate. When a man stands on the bank of a sheet of water, his shadow appears in the water. People say it is he, but Vedantha (Vedhic philosophy) says, he is not it. When the shadow is

beaten with a stick, he is not hurt; so, it is not he; but, when some one says it is misshapen, ugly, etc., he gets angry! So, he is it. The shadow is both he and not-he. It is neither true nor false, it is real-unreal, it is mithya (only mythical). The eye is distinct from the objects it sees; the eye is an instrument used by the I, which is a ray of the Splendour of the Atma (soul). The senses are mirrors and when the light of that ray falls on them, things and objects are reflected therein. The Atma shines and all the inner organs of perception awaken to their duty of gathering knowledge and revealing Bliss. It is their duty to function according to their nature; the result is not to be aimed at. It follows when the duty is done efficiently to the best of one's ability and Will. A knife cuts vegetables; but, does not eat them. It cuts a fruit; but, is not tempted to taste their sweetness. Let us imagine a cup, full of fruit-juice. The cup is not aware of the sweetness of the juice. A straw is used to sip the juice, the juice fills the entire length of the straw-, but yet, the straw is a stranger to the taste; the tongue has the juice on it; but it has no knowledge of its calorific value or its components; it can only pronounce judgement on its taste; for other purposes, it sends the juice into the stomach. The stomach discriminates and distributes the essentials of the juice to every part of the body, every nerve and cell, and contributes to their efficiency and strength. The cup is the body of man; it has in it the Divinely sweet Atma principle. The sense organs are the straws; intellect is the tongue; the ego principle is the stomach; it converts the sweetness into spirit and confers bliss, peace and light.

52. Four steps to freedom

Date: 23 November 1974 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Birthday - 49

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

Wisdom can come only through work as worship

Indian Culture has laid emphasis on four ashramas (stages of life) for individual development in order to assure everyone with the education needed to know himself. For Atma vicharana (enquiry into the Self), Ashrama dhanam (code of duty) is very essential. Through adherence to the regulations and prescriptions of conduct and study-assigned to each stage or Ashram, the earning of knowledge and wisdom is made easy and automatic. Wisdom can come only through work as worship; the Ashrams guide man to sublimate all activity into worship. Just as we have four stages: childhood, youth, middle age and old age, we have four corresponding Ashramas: Brahmacharya, Grahasthya, Vanaprastha and Sanyas - studentship, householdership, recluseship and monk-ship. During the years of childhood

and teenage, man has to equip himself with the information necessary to share in the work of society and to derive health and happiness thereby, and acquaint himself with the tools of knowledge and the paths along which wisdom can be garnered. As a householder, raising a family and sustaining a society, he has also to uphold the ideals of justice and truth, and promote them by his actions. He must feel the innate majesty of mankind and live in accordance with that high status. As a recluse and monk, in old age, he has to be the guide and teacher of the people around him, imparting to them the fund of wisdom he has won through his experience. The Shastras (spiritual sciences) lay down the lines along which man has to direct his thoughts and activities. Sincere adherence to these laws and limitations alone can guarantee jnana (spiritual wisdom). Otherwise, man drifts aimlessly along the crosscurrents and whirlpools of life and ends up ignorant, both of the nature of loka (world) and the glory of Lokeshwara (God).

Forces of atheism have gained strength now

The higher paths must be trodden from childhood; it cannot be adopted at an advanced age. The child must learn to be truthful in word and deed, and avoid the cowardly habit of falsehood. Later, boys and girls have to become conscious directors of their senses, instead of being automatic slaves. Heads of families have to adhere to the schedules of rites and worship prescribed for them; they have to supervise the behaviour and conduct of the members of the household; they have to render hospitality to guests and deal charity to the poor; they have also to equip their sons and daughters with processes by which they can have mental peace and equanimity, under all conditions. Because these obligations have been neglected for some generations, the forces of atheism have earned strength now. When the seeds are ridden with defects, how can the tree yield richly? When parents and elders do not provide good examples to the children growing under their shade, how can the country prosper and be free from anxiety and fear? You cannot separate the rind, the pulp and the seed that a tamarind fruit has, when it is still green. But, once it has ripened, the separation is quite easy. So too, until a person becomes ripe in experience and can be pronounced wise, he cannot discard his identification with the body, the senses and the mind. He will not be able

to differentiate between Atma (spiritual Self) and non-atma, kshethra (the body) and Kshethrajna (the controller of the body). Prakrithi (Nature) and Paramatma (Supreme Self), Guna (impelling characteristic quality) and Trans-guna, and such other entities.

Man's restlessness affects society too

Let me tell you a small example: Krishna killed the Kaliya serpent that was poisoning the Kalinidi river and destroying all trace of life for miles around, by means of deadly fumes. No sooner was Kaliya killed than the 'wives' (serpents) of his harem, prayed to Krishna for succour and surrendered to Him. This story is according to the Bhagavatha. Now, what does this signify? In the Mind-lake (the Manasa-sarovar) of man, there lurks a poisonous serpent, desire. When that is destroyed, the various frailties and frivolities, triumphs, trials and failures, pains and pleasures, that desire brings in its train, surrender to God. Desire can be killed, only when faith in the Atma as the very core of being is firmly established. Since all efforts are now directed to the accumulation of material goods and the satisfaction of sensual desires, man is tossed about on the waves of fight and faction, falsehood and greed. The individual is intimately related to society and so, his restlessness affects society too.

The individual Will is ultimately responsible for the welfare and well-being of the world. The world is but a mental image of the individual. How this happens is a mystery. One can only say, that just as sleep is the cause of dreams, maya (Worldly illusion due to basic ignorance) is the cause of Creation. Doctors ascribe dreams to various reasons: indigestion, the compulsions of thought, the confusions of mental pictures, etc. But, we can be certain only of one reason, namely sleep! Dreams are nullified when the person becomes a jnani (one aware of the Truth). At that stage, one gets rid of the night-dream as well as the day-dream. The four Ashramas have been devised in order to awaken man into the jnani stage. Education today, in all grades, is a process of packing information in the brain and skills in the hands. It is useful only for parading scholarship, dialectical controversies and mutual recrimination. It does not instil humility, a sense of balance and

equanimity. Of course, spiritual training is totally absent. Perhaps, the feeling is that spirituality is a solitary pursuit, which can be undertaken only in the silence of the forest. No! True spirituality is the awareness of the fundamental unity of man in God.

The main mission of man is the march towards Unity

People celebrate the birth of a child; they are happy when the child grows tall and strong. But, the fittest event for such celebration is when the child justifies its birth, by achieving good fame as a benefactor of man or a servant of mankind. Emperor Dhritharashtra had hundred sons! He must have celebrated their birthdays, too. But, no one of them did any one good; they were all arrogant, greedy and full of spite. Therefore, they accomplished only the extinction of the entire dynasty and all who were attached to it! Sons and daughters are now keen to share the properties of their parents and spend their portion as quickly as possible. They do not care for the much more precious wealth of experience that their forefathers have earned for their sake. They waste their years in fallow efforts so much that even their health is destroyed; children wear glasses when barely ten; they dye their hair when barely fourteen; they age fast and show signs of senility when barely sixteen! To praise the habits that people adopt today as 'modern,' or 'conducive to progress' is ridiculous to say the least. As the ancients emphasised, food habits and recreation habits have to become Sathwik (conducive to health of body and mind), that is to say, such as cannot arouse and feed the passions of man, or make him dull and stupid, idle and listless. Above all, everyone must realise, (and guide himself accordingly), that the main mission of man here below is the march towards the ideal of Unity and Peace.

If you can fill your heart with love, then peace will come into you from outside. Through bad qualities, to some extent, we lose peace. With truthful thoughts, a man will have peace.

If you can get rid of all thoughts, you will become a saint. It is only when you can be free from all thoughts that you can have peace. Your own bad

thoughts are responsible for all your pain and sorrow.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

53. Never a party

Date: 23 November 1974 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Birthday - 49

EMBODIMENTS of Divine Atma! You are celebrating this day as the Birthday of Swami, and deriving Anandha (divine bliss) through various programmes here, carried on with enthusiasm by you; but, in fact, I have no wish to consider this as a special day because it is the birthday and celebrate it as such. I have come on purpose to reveal to man the mystery of his Reality and the goal of his life; I have not come to set them the task of celebrating the birthday or to get arranged any pompous and personal festivals. I have no such desire, at any time, in this or any other sojourn.

On what day do I celebrate my birthday? On that day when all of you experience genuine Anandha, in your hearts! Now, when your hearts are surging with manifold fears and anxieties, and torn by miseries and losses, and riven as under of grief, declaring this day as-My birthday seems to be barren of meaning! While on this subject, it is essential that I warn you of another subject also. Do not spend your time trying to understand Me; do not waste your time in the attempt. The reason why I am saying this is: It is beyond any one's capacity to understand Me. So, trying to do the impossible, you are only wasting your time and your effort. It is only when you succeed in knowing yourselves that you can know Me.

Need for establishing colleges by Sathya Sai Trust

I need nothing, however great or small, in this Universe. At no moment has desire affected me for any thing or activity. I am the person come to give, not to receive. And, what you can offer Me is just this: pure, unadulterated love. When you offer Me that, I derive Anandha. During the recent Dhashara Festival, some announcements were made; if you ask Me what connection I have with those announcements, I reply, the connection is that of the name only. Otherwise, I have no connection with these. Considering the wrong and undesirable paths that youth is courting and preferring all over the world at the present time, the Members of the Sathya Sai Central Trust have decided

to establish Colleges in many States and through these institutions, to provide youth opportunities to transform itself in various ways, to maintain unimpaired the ideals of Indian Culture, and to equip youth with the strength and sweetness that are the common virtues of all faiths and their basic truth. For the realisation of this plan, they resolved to utilise the fiftieth birthday of Swami and celebrate it with its unfoldment, on a grand scale. They decided thus, as a result of earnestness and depth of devotion. In order to establish colleges, funds are needed; no task can be fulfilled without money, even the smallest and least important. So, they agreed on a method by which each devotee gives as a life-time contribution, the sum of fifty rupees; thus, a corpus can be built up, out of which they could start and develop educational and health services. They were moved by high ideals and pure intentions to resolve thus.

Spending huge sums on any festival is heinous crime

This resolution they placed before Me. I responded to their proposal in this manner: Well. Do not carry out this task in a hush-hush way, swayed by the one purpose of collecting money. Be frank about it; adopt such means as will remove all doubts from the minds of individuals, of the Government and of the world outside. Finally, they made the announcement that day. But, many have imposed on that announcement their own interpretations and absurdities, and they have started propagating that it is proposed to spend fifty lakhs of rupees, for the celebration of Swami's 50th Birthday! Really, to spend 50 lakhs of rupees for wastefully celebrating either a birthday or any other such festival is a sin which cannot be compared with any other in the degree of iniquity. When people all over the world are affected by manifold miseries consequent on the absence of food and shelter, if someone spends 50 lakhs of rupees on his birthday, it has to be proclaimed a vast misuse, a heinous sin. I can never be a party to such activities. Not only this. In Prasanthi Nilayam, no misuse or extravagance can ever happen, for any festival, either Shivarathri, Navarathri or the birthday. Many people imagine that lakhs are spent here for the dhashara celebrations; but, all who come, serve their best in the fullness of devotion that dwells in their hearts and so, not a naya paisa is spent for any purpose. The rithwiks (Vedhic Priests) who

officiate at the yajna, the lecturers who deliver discourses - all come and share in the joy, out of love and faith; their comforts are looked after by the members of Seva Dhal and the Seva Samithis and by the volunteers, who dedicate their strength and skills to make the Festival a success. No paisa is spent on any item. Today, you find the Prasanthi Nilayam area clean and pleasing. What is the reason? How many sweepers have we employed, how many coolies are engaged?. You may wonder. No, not one. Everyone cleans the place where he is staying, and the area adjacent. Thus, cleanliness is ensured, without any cost. It can be asserted that at no place in the world are resources put to such good use, with the least expense, as at Prasanthi Nilayam.

Always be ready to help the sick and the poor

Prasanthi Nilayam is holding forth and exemplifying the highest ideals, in the material, ethical, economic, moral, spiritual, worldly, and even political fields. There is no place here for anything contrary. This can be asserted without any possibility of contradiction. In spite of this, some ignorant individuals rely more on their guesses than on facts, and indulge in spreading wrong conclusions. Let Me tell you that if a single person in the whole world points out a wrong step in Prasanthi Nilayam, he shall be met and convinced. For, the Prasanthi Nilayam is eagerly bent upon the task of upholding and demonstrating high and holy ideals achieving spiritual realisation. It does not seek these worldly riches; nor does it yearn for earning favours and fame. Embodiments of the Divine Atma! When you feel the desire to give away in charity, direct your minds towards the development of good educational institutions, the provisions of healing facilities for the sick, and the amelioration of distress among the poor. Not in this place, but, anywhere, the members of our Organisation must be ready and eager to help students, the sick, and the poor. Feel that this work, wherever carried out, is work that pleases Me. You need not offer Me anything; I only want that you should realise the goal of life by playing your role in the activities that help and cure, carried on by such institutions. You are all aware of this: I do not allow anyone to bring here even a flower, a fruit or a coconut. However, some persons, carded away by their devotion and dedication, or moved by sudden

enthusiasm or exultation, send by post or bring when they come here clothes for Me and place them before Me. From this day, I am directing that this should not be done; observe this as My command. If anyone brings clothes despite this he shall not be admitted to Prasanthi Nilayam. Such persons will be treated as acting against Swami's wishes and orders. What you should place before Me as offering is Pure Love; only that. Therefore, from this day, spend your days and years in activities that help those who are in dire need, and thus make this human existence of yours worthwhile and fruitful. I wish you will conduct yourselves accordingly and I bless you.

54. The mind stuff

Date: 24 November 1974 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

IT is a vain task to divide the things of the world into good and bad and it is also sacrilegious! For, when all are the products of His Will, how can anything be extolled or condemned? Besides, what is good for one may be bad for another; what is good at sometime may .be bad at another time; what is good in small quantities may be bad in large quantities. The crow relishes the bitter neem fruit; the cuckoo eats the tender leaves of the mango tree. People find joy and satisfaction in a variety of things and experiences, of the most contradictory character. Therefore, one can only infer that it is the mind of each that directs one to seek this thing as good, and avoid that other thing as bad.

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

Realisation of God instils Divine Bliss

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

transcend Name-Form and realise God.

The realisation of God instils Anandha (divine bliss), which has no form, but only a man-made name. It springs and wells up in the heart, and pervades the entire body and expresses itself in the face. The face is the index of inner bliss. Sadness, anxiety, fear, hope, determination, doubt all are reflected on the face, and can be easily spotted. The mind can remain unaffected by the storms of emotion only by bending to the yoke of buddhi (intellect). It should escape from the grips of the senses and yield to the reins of the reasoning faculty, and obey unquestioningly its dictates. The senses are inert, so long as the Self keeps away from inducing the mind to accept the information submitted by them. This mike before me helps those who are sitting all over this vast Auditorium to listen clearly to My words. But, the mike and the loudspeakers are inert metallic things. A few minutes ago, the College student made a speech which was interrupted for a few minutes, since the electric current failed. Without that current activating them, they cannot work at all. The eye that sees is inert; all objects 'seen' are inert; only the seer is 'intelligent.' And, the current of intelligence is supplied by the atma, which is your Reality. When the current does not activate, the eye might look on but it does not see; the ear might be hearing, but, the hearer does not react or recognise. For, the mind is elsewhere. It has to function with the help of the Divine Consciousness within.

The mind has to be watched vigilantly

The mind is like a fragrant flower; it emits fragrance whether it is held in the right hand or in the left, whether the person who holds it is good or bad. It walks blindly along, irrespective of the lie of the land. It is blind; and so, someone has to take it on tow. When you invite ten blind people for dinner, you have to lay twenty plates. For, each blind person brings with him, and has to so bring with him, a guide who can lead him to your home. So, the mind too must have a guide who knows the way, the obstacles, the shoals and ferries. The mind has to be watched vigilantly, and warned against its own tricks. It is a clever actor, embroiling you in many a close adventure. The mind is like the revered old gentleman who appeared alternately in the

houses of the bridegroom's party and the bride's party during a marriage festival and issued orders to all and sundry, which were honoured by both, since each party thought he was a person with authority coming from the other party! His very pomposity aroused the suspicious of both, before long, and when they jointly sought him and asked him who he was, he took to his heels and made himself scarce. The mind too is just like the gentleman. Catch it and inquire wherefrom it secured credentials to order you about; it will disappear in no time!

Let your mind repeat 'Soham' all the time

The only method which you can adopt to escape from the coils of the mind is the cultivation of pure intelligence. This is the sum and substance of all spiritual discipline. And, the intelligence gets cleansed of all partiality and prejudice, hatred and greed, only by the adoration of God through love poured out to all the beings created by God and standing witness to His Glory and Beauty. Share love with all; earn the treasure of love, store it in your heart and invite all to share in it. When you try to distribute the property earned by your grandfather or father, legal, moral, economic and practical obstacles will stand up before you. But, when you are distributing your 'self earned' property, nothing legal or otherwise can stand in the way. Remember the mind is a very talkative imp, it can never keep quiet even for a second. You have been listening to Me since more than an hour and perhaps you are under the impression that your mind has been quiet all that time. No. The mind has been holding conversation with itself, when it is supposed to be silent! Give it perpetual tasks. Ask it, (as some rishi did to a demon who acted as his servant but threatened to devour him the moment he did not have any task allotted to him); ask it to climb a pillar and slide down it, whenever it has no other work. The pillar is Soham, (I am That), a manthra (sacred formulae) that the breath is repeating from birth to death, 'So' when you inhale and 'ham' when you exhale. Let it repeat Soham all the time. Bhajans (congregational devotional singing) have to be sung and offered to God in an attitude of utter humility; they are not to be taken as exercises in an exhibition of talents and as competitions for mastery of musical skill. They have to please the Lord, not your fans. With each bhajan song, the mind must

be rendered purer, freer from passion, and stronger in faith. But, you find that you do not succeed in this task. The adoration does not arise from the heart; nor is it addressed to the Supreme by the sincere Self. It is tainted by the admixture of envy, pride and hate. How can prayers so fouled reach God?

Devotees should not develop attitudes of difference

For example, I find that when any new-devotee sings, others leave him alone and do not sing lines after him! They ignore him and insult him in this manner. But, when one of themselves, one of the usual group leads with a song, they join enthusiastically. This kind of group politics has no place among Sai devotees and cannot be tolerated in Sai Bhajan groups. I find this evil trait spreading in most Bhajan Mandalis - members divided into rival groups competing for chances to sing, trying to attract the attention and appreciation of the people. Urged by this selfish motive, they discourage the sincere bhajan singers; they keep mum when they offer their songs; this means either that they have lost their voice or that their hearts have been so deadened by selfishness.

Attitudes of difference and distinction should not enter the hearts of devotees so far as this sacred sadhana (spiritual discipline) is concerned, nor can the song of such people be pleasant to the ear; for, it is only when the feeling arises in the heart that the song will appeal to the hearts of others. It would be far better for all parties if such self-important and conceited folk stay away from bhajan, rather than pollute the sacred atmosphere by the spirit of rivalry and factionalism.

All are sons and daughters of Sai Matha

When devotees taking the name of Sathya Sai behave in such a manner, that is to say, people to whom the world is looking for guidance and inspiration, when they descend to such levels, what is to happen to the uplift of the world and the restoration of dharma? Bhajans, where you quarrel and compete, and revel in putting down others and raising yourselves, might give you satisfaction; but, let Me announce here: they do not please Me at all. I am

pleased only when love is the keynote, when the feeling of Unity prevails, when the melody comes from a cleansed Godloving heart. The office-bearers in the Units of our Organisation should be ever vigilant, that this poison does not creep into the working of the Units, either in bhajans, or in the activities of the Mahila Vibhag or Seva dhal.

Remember all are the sons and daughters of Sai Matha (Mother SAI). How can I tolerate when the sons and daughters quarrel among themselves and divide themselves into rival groups? Unless you sing bhajans for your own joy, you cannot bring joy to others. The Sathya Sai Organisation has been established to provide sacred tasks for every moment of wakeful life, to make people conscious of the vagaries and vanities of the mind and teach them the processes of disintegrating the mind and establishing the reign of the pure intellect, by which alone the One behind all this multiplicity can be realised as the only Reality.

Certainly, every human being must be educated, irrespective of race, religion, caste, colour or creed. But, like the foolish mother who is happy when her child's limb swells with disease, believing that it is getting stronger, we too mistake this increase in size and number as a healthy development! In reality, we are only witnessing a disease, which results in debility, greed, hatred and envy.

The flowers in nature fade always, drop down, lose fragrance and also develop an odour which is not pleasant. Instead of worshiping with such worldly flowers, which are impermanent, and receiving impermanent rewards from God, we should worship Him with what is truthful and thereby attain a stage which-is higher.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba