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1. Loving service forever

Date: 02 January 1987 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

THE Sanathana Dharma (the Eternal Religion) which is the basis of Bharathiya Culture is the essence of the lessons enunciated in all the Vedic texts. This Dharma (righteousness) is the source and spring of various systems of philosophy, codes of morality and even of the different forms and streams of literature. Through these means the Dharma has taught that man cannot live in peace, until he knows what ought to be known, he casts away what has to be cast away, and reaches the goal he has to reach. Veda means awareness, knowledge, discrimination. The four Vedas (scriptures of eternal value) teach us who and what we really are and how we are related to the world around us. This is the greatest gift that the Vedas offer. This is the end of all enquiry, the aim of all scientific search. Knowledge has its consummation in the discovery of Truth. Truth which survives Past, Present and Future unaffected. Sathyam, Jnanam, Anantham "Both Sathyam (Truth) and Jnanam (spiritual wisdom) are Anantham (without end)." They are eternal and limitless. The Vedas are vocal expressions of both these. To consider Vedas as literature or poetry is to devalue them. Vedic hymns are not intended for empty worship by rituals. They have been recorded by sages to help, practise and to experience. The sages had recognised this factor and therefore, the Vedas have survived untarnished until today. Their practice became Yajnas (sacrificial rituals). Their prayers became songs.

The three tools for Awareness

Speech, Mind and Breath are the three most vital instruments for adoration and awareness of Truth and Knowledge. Among the Vedas the Rig-veda highlights speech; the Yajur-veda highlights the mind; the Sama-veda highlights breath. Just as these three elements pervade the world, the three Vedas reveal three-fold Cosmic principle which is the reality of every atom in the universe. They do this in simple language, using easily understandable similies and metaphors. The Vedas prescribe the ceremonies, rites, rituals and actions necessary for the prosperity and progress of mankind, here and

hereafter. The body needs a second principle to guide it but that principle, the Atma (Eternal Spirit) is One without a second. When the attention is diverted from the 'body-mind-senses complex' the splendour of Atma becomes brighter and brighter. The body seeks gathering and possessing; the Atma seeks giving and showering Light, Love and Grace. Attachment to the upadhi (sheath) is the greatest obstacle for samadhi (communion with Divinity) which is the ultimate goal of a spiritual aspirant. Wisdom dawns when man realises, that the body he believed to be his is understood as only temporary habitation and a burden he assumed out of sheer ignorance.

Secret of Inaction in Action

Activity finds fulfillment when wisdom dawns. Karma (sanctified activity) is the path by which Jnana (spiritual wisdom) is attained. And, wisdom in action is the highest Karma. Worthwhile activity must result in purifying the mind. Therefore, no one, not even a recluse or monk can desist from engaging in good deeds. These deeds must originate spontaneously and should not leave any trace of pride in the mind. Nor should any attachment to the result of the deed lead to a craving for claiming it for one self. Renunciation must be the only source of joy. Thyaga (self-sacrifice) is the truest Bhoga (enjoyment) for the Sanyasi (ascetic). The Gita recommends 'inaction in action' and asserts that 'inaction is the most rewarding action' for those who strive for supreme peace. This attitude is named Karma Sanyasa (non-attachment to action). Action or activity is generally associated with the body only, but the mind is also busy with the world. The Atma alone is the unaffected witness. So, the secret of 'inaction in action' lies in taking refuge in the Atma and in recognising all living beings as fundamentally Atma. The wise act solely for the promotion of peace and goodwill in the human community with no consideration of I and Mine. The ego is deep rooted in man during countless previous lives. It grows fast in this life also, seeking sensual pleasure, possessions in plenty, applause and appreciation, authority over others, fame and fortune. It can be removed only by relentless enquiry into our Reality.

The Reality inherent in all

A tree has a trunk covered with bark and myriad roots to feed it and hold it firm. It has branches spreading in all directions, tapering into twigs. It has millions of leaves which breathe and borrow energy from the Sun. It fulfills itself by attracting bees to fertilise the flowers into seeds. All this variety of colour, fragrance, taste, smell and softness, of strength and toughness and tenderness has emanated from one single seed. All creation has emanated similarly from God. This is the Reality inherent in all. That Thou Art. Be firm in that faith. Ponder on a river merging in the ocean. The waters of the ocean rise up as vapour when warmed by the Sun and form clouds, which drop down as drops of rain. Each drop has inside it the yearning to return to the ocean from which it has been exiled. But, the feeling of individuality overcomes the yearning. The raindrops accumulate and flow as brooks and streams which swell into tributaries of rivers, flooding the plains. At last, the river merges into the ocean and loses its name, form and attributes. In spite of all modifications undergone in the journey from ocean to ocean, water remains as water in vapour, cloud, rain and river. Names and forms and qualities do change but the core remains unchanged. Man too emerges from the ocean of Divinity and his destiny is to merge in it. This is the Truth. This is the Reality. That Thou Art. Be firm in that faith.

Take a lump of salt and drop in a cup of water. The salt dissolves soon and disappears though we know it exists in every drop. The lump cannot be picked up but we can assure ourselves of its presence by tasting the water. God is present everywhere, though invisible. But, He can be known by the taste. You are the taste, the Divine droplet. This is the Truth. That thou Art.

Make Ashrams spiritual centers

While awake, man experiences a variety of relationships. He is interested in a multiplicity of persons, possessions and problems. He passes through joy and grief, praise and ridicule, insult and injury, honour and dishonour. But while engaged in dreams, the entire tangle fades away. He withdraws from the outer world and is wholly his own designer. He projects situations of pleasure and pain, happiness and misery. He plunges into fear and throws himself in despair. He creates both friends and foes and deals with them as the fancy

dictates. While asleep, he is no more alert or active. He is alone with the Atma, with his Reality. The Atma, The Self, was his Reality all through the three stages, even when he denied it and ignored it. This Atma is the Truth. That Thou Art. Tat Twam Asi. Persons who have dedicated their lives to spiritual search and success have to discover the Atma in themselves and others. The discovery will confer sympathy and compassion and promote loving service.

Ashrams (monasteries) of monks must be the centres of spiritual illumination, sources of Ananda and the inspiration to share the Ananda with all. Institutions and Orders arise out of unselfish enthusiasm to serve and save those who have lost their way and are flourishing on trivial pursuits. Fortunately, a long series of saints has upheld in this land these high ideals. The world is in dire distress today. It can be saved only by dedicated men setting an example of high morality, selfless service and Universal Love. Equipped with a calm and serene temper, adhering always to the Truth, man must involve himself in society with full faith in God as Protector and Provider.

When a child is born, worry too is born with it worry that it should grow up healthy and pure, learned and good, famous but humble, bringing a fair name to the parents and elders. I would advise you to postpone the celebration of a birth of a child, until the day it brings Satkeerthi (good fame) to the lineage in the country. Also, celebrate the accumulation of wealth when it is spent justly and with love, on beneficial and deserving purposes. A tree is justified by fragrant flowers bringing forth sweet fruits.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

2. Together! All together!

Date: **04 January 1987** / Occasion: **Valedictory discourse at Akhila Andhra Saadhu Parishath**

BHARATIYA culture represents blossoming of the Fundamental Truth, which is unaffected by Time, unspoiled by history, not destructible even by a cataclysm and not amenable to an iota of addition. The Veda is the basis of this Truth. The Upanishads (highest spiritual truths of the Vedas) originated from the Veda. The Bhagawad Gita gives us the essence of the Upanishads; the Brahma Sutra axioms summarise the same. Imbibe the Upanishads by listening (sravana); reflect on the epigrams of the Brahma Sutras (manana); digest and assimilate the Gita (nidhidhyasana). All three have to be valued as sacred scriptures and not treated as forms of literature. Devaluation of these texts has brought about stagnation. It is asserted by many that the Gita is a unique treasure of the Hindus which they should hold for themselves alone. But, how can the Gita be so limited? This is a narrow and restricted view. It has to receive worldwide acceptance, for it helps solve some problems as and when they arise. It acts as the breath of life to all people and all faiths. In fact, every text everywhere that reveals God to man is a Gita. Considering the Holy Quran as belonging to Muslims, the Holy Bible as a Christian Text and the Granth Sahib as the scripture for Sikhs, differences have become wider and the path to God has been split.

Carry the message of Gita to all lands

The Sadhus (noble souls) of this country have to consider ways and means to carry the message of Gita to the common man in all lands. You have to transcend the usual method of viewing Gita as mere dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna by elevating it into what it really is - a Divine dialogue between Eashvara and Jivi, God and man. The recitation of the Gita is now being encouraged as an end in itself. But that is only a method of spending time beneficially. The Gita is a Path, a Goal, an Achievement. Its purpose is gained by practice and experience. The voice of God as Message to Man, is a gift of Grace to all men. But it is interpreted by man along the lines his

temperament dictates. The pure, clear message gets contaminated thereby. Later when message is presented in a variety of forms, it produces confusion and conflict. Those who profess to teach and preach religion must avoid such consequences and concentrate on arousing spiritual hunger and satisfying it. There are many who try to cater to people's taste by means of irrelevant stories which tarnish the main spiritual theme. The message can succeed in capturing people's hearts only when it is experienced by the speaker and when his aim is only to inspire others to share his joy. The world's progress depends on the wisdom and altruism of those whom the people trust and follow. The leaders and guides should accept this responsibility and duty. They must be aware, all the time, of the Indweller and instruct others about the same. The Cosmos which is the Brahman (the omni-self) is the effect produced by Karma (action). Every act is an expression of the power of Will. In the individual this power is projected through the body. Sadhana (spiritual effort) is the method by which that projection is purified and sanctified. It must be so purified that the temporary features (like the names and forms) fade away and only the never-changing natures (sat, chit and ananda) come into consciousness.

Exponents of culture sow seeds of doubt

Being in the world and bound by the distractions it presents before our sense, one cannot renounce and become free. How can a person standing on a rock succeed in pushing it aside? He has to come down the rock and try. He must free himself from the bonds of attachment to the worldly things and thoughts.

At present, since education has spread widely and since education has meant only book-learning, people have become cynical. They doubt even the simplest statement and revel in wild discussions. The exponents of our culture speak about God being One and Only, of His Omniscience, Omnipotence, Omnipresence. At the same time, they speak of rivalry between the various aspects of the Divine. Thus, they sow the seeds of doubt in men's hearts. The Brahman principle, the Cosmic Atma, is known by different names and pictured with different forms but, like gold in a variety of jewels. All is Brahman, Atma, OM. Ayam Atma Brahma (this Atma is Brahma)

declares the Veda.

Sadhana for Sadhus

Sadhus by the very act of renunciation, have placed themselves beyond caste and creed. While engaged in the service of humanity, care has to be taken against mentioning or emphasising these divisive features of the society. God is Almighty. It is sacrilege to ascribe human weaknesses to Him. Myths and legends about the mystery of God contain symbolic meanings, which are ignored. They yield their inner truth only to those who seek. Now, rural folk have become clever enough to ask, what benefit society derives from those who don the ochre robe. They expect exemplary lives and sincere, unselfish service. In fact, 'the sadhana of service is superior to sadhana aimed at one's own liberation. Worship God. in His 'manifestation as mankind. Every one is a child of 'God, whatever the colour, caste, creed, and language. This sense of unity has to be fostered. This is the real matham (faith), the abhimatham (true faith), the fulfillment of your vratham (vow), the fruit of manava matham (humanity's faith). Service to man is worship of God.

The exhortation of the Upanishads

This Sadhana of Service should not be polluted by the spirit of competition among the sadhaks or even by dejection when obstacles loom large. God's grace will certainly be your support when you are on the march together to reveal the Atmic spring of strength, to people suffering from weakness. "Together"! That is the key to success. The Upanishads also teach the same lesson. Saha na vavathu; Saha nau bhunakthu; Saha Veeryam Karavavahai. In other words, the exhortation of the Upanishad is: Together, all together, we shall toil and travel; Together, all together, we shall steadily grow. Together, all together, we shall feed and foster Fortune and friendship, full vigour and virtue. Together, all together, the knowledge we have gained We shall brighten, and brighten, till it enlightens all. Together, all together, we shall share as friends The fortune we have earned, the vision and thrill. Together, all together, we shall acclaim Peace Till we raise its praise into worshipful deeds. Together, all together, we shall intone the Pranava OM, OM, OM, OM -

we shall together sing. You have in you both the talent and the desire to uplift your fellow men. This country needs your service urgently today. God welcomed the urge to manifest the Cosmos. Ekoham Bahusyam (I am One; I shall become Many), He said to Himself. You must also feel the need to blossom and expand. Derive Ananda in the process, 'possess it and share it, in order to increase it. The Upanishads proclaim the message of courage, of strength. Give up the idea that you are weak and helpless. Na Ayam Atma balaheenena labhyah (The Atma cannot be gained by the weak). Believe that you have in you the strength and skill you need. Those who can sing Bhajans (spiritual chorus) can, as a beginning, lead villagers in Nagara Sankirtan (street singing of spirituals) and teach them to sing in groups. Those who can speak on spiritual topics can gather the people, when they have returned from the fields, and explain to them, in simple language the mystery of God, Nature and Man. Persuade them to give up habits that undermine their health and peace. Promote in them the qualities of mutual aid, truthfulness and non-violence.

Do not tell me you do not care for spiritual bliss, that you are satisfied with delusion and are not willing to undergo the rigours of sleeplessness. Believe me, your basic nature abhors this dull dreary routine of eating, drinking and sleeping. It seeks something it knows it has lost: Inward contentment. It seeks liberation from the bondage to the trivial and the temporary. Everyone craves for it in his heart of hearts. And it is available only in one shop: Contemplation of the highest Self, the basis of all this appearance.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

3. Guidelines for Goodness

Date: **08 February 1987** / Location: **Muddenahalli** / Occasion: **Discourse at Sathya Sai Gram, Muddenahalli, while declaring open the Smt. V. Boggaram N Block at the Sri Sathya Sai Loka Seva Trust College Campus**

THIS land was the nursery of spiritual, moral and ethical ideals as well as stalwarts who embodied those ideals. But, it has become a wilderness where injustice, anarchy, falsehood and corruption are staging, their devil dance. In order to overcome this calamity and restore the reign of basic human values Truth, Right Conduct, Peace and Love - we have to rely on the young who are in schools and colleges. But, they are receiving education only in profitable skills and secular subjects. They become adult citizens with no knowledge of Indian culture, Indian philosophy and the heritage of Indian social ideals. The Vedas form the very foundation of this heritage. Sage Vyasa has collated the voluminous Vedic scripture under three headings Karma Kanda, Upasana Kanda, Jnana Kanda (branches of Vedas dealing with sacrificial rites, divine adoration and spiritual wisdom). These are three paths that lead from one to the next. Karma is activity, action, deed. The Veda insists on rites, rituals, ceremonies, etc., but not as mere reward oriented acts. Such acts are resorted to by birds and beasts. Man, who is endowed with the intelligence to pick and choose, to benefit from the past and prepare for the future, must utilise every Kamsa of his to purify his mind from the dross of low desire. Karma has to be for him an act of worship, an offering to God, a fulfillment of duty.

Raising level of consciousness is important

Sri Krishna has declared (Gita 12-18), "He who is the same to foe and friend, because he has no preference or prejudice, He who is unruffled by honour and dishonour, who is unaffected by cold and heat, by pleasure and pain, who is free from attachment, such a man of devotion is dear to Me." India is described as the Karma Kshetra, the land where action is sublimated into a holy uplifting Sadhana (spiritual effort). The only reward one must look forward to is the victory over selfishness achieved by the development of

detachment. Selfish desire, to appropriate for oneself the gains of actions, breeds pride, greed and hatred. Karma as dictated by duty and the higher impulses is the primary step in the journey to one's Reality.

The Karma path can be hailed as the Primary

School stage which equips one for the Upasana or Bhakti Marga, the High School and the College, the Jnana path. Jnana alone can help the awareness of Reality. But, present day education has only a means of livelihood as its aim. It is job-oriented, not Truth-oriented, God-oriented. Life has to be lived in love, peace and bliss. Therefore, even while in schools and colleges, boys and girls have to know about the ever-peaceful, ever-blissful, ever-loveful Atma. The body, the senses, the mind, reason and intellect, are all 'unreal' in the sense of temporary existence, Raising the standard of living is not as important as raising the level of consciousness. Accumulation of things is highlighted through education today. But, giving up is equally needed. Renunciation is not a loss; it is highly profitable, for you acquire joy thereby. For, renunciation means freedom, surrender to freedom, surrender to God and love. God. is love. He can be known only through the expansion of Love. When students leave schools and colleges and involve themselves in families, societies, communities and countries, they must set examples of simplicity, humility and mutual service. They must anchor their lives in Dharma and Jnana.

Cultivate goodness, avoid evil

Practise and preach. Mere preaching will invite ridicule. Cultivate goodness, avoid evil. Now young men relish listening to evil, watching evil, and talking evil. Parents discourage them, when they visit temples, pray or meditate, or read spiritual books. They themselves do not know the value of these practices and habits. These are really positive gains; worldly habits. These are really positive gains; worldly knowledge and interests are negative attainments. You must learn to master your senses, instead of being enslaved by them. Your mind, reasoning faculty, passions and emotions must be the tools you handle and not the instruments that handle you. The Sanskrit word

for man is manava, which means, he who behaves as if he has no ignorance. That is to say, he is aware, who he is, where he has come from and why. The ancient Indian Dharma based on the Veda and embodying the highest and most lasting wisdom has to be learnt by you, observed and practised. So, teachers and parents must imbibe it in themselves and instruct you. That will help you to lead model lives and lead others to earn peace and calm. You must learn, more than anything else, discipline and patience. Life is an exercise in the sadhana of 'give and take.' Do not derive delight from 'taking' only. 'Give' and you get the right to 'take'.

Students must stand on their own legs

I have established schools and colleges, because children receiving true and total education are the hopes for the new era. These colleges are not aimed at providing 'degrees' for students, to be used by them as bowls when they knock at door after door, begging for jobs. Students must stand on their own legs; they should not long for crutches. You must return to your villages and relieve your parents from the hard toils of ploughing, sowing, guarding the crop, and harvesting. Be grateful to the parents, for the love and care, service and sacrifice they have bestowed on you. Do not be proud that you have achieved a degree and seek a comfortable chair at home to spend your time in idleness.

Limits and bounds are essential for smooth social life. So, you should welcome discipline, and not crave for lives that do not honour limits for every facet of behaviour. One reason for indiscipline is the superior role of money in educational institutions. They have become business houses, temples of Lakshmi, the Goddess of Riches, instead of remaining temples of Saraswathi, the Goddess of Learning. The University at Prasanthi Nilayam does not charge fees for teaching or for laboratory and library facilities or for games, etc., from the first standard upto the Ph.D. course. Education is elevated as an act of service to the rising generation. Learning in this atmosphere, the students will become in later life enthusiastic for service. One must be eager to serve others, not eager to be served by them. The sage Vyasa declares that service is a holy act.

No one can deny God or ignore Him

Man may desire something good. That is due to the inner prompting, the Iccha sakthi, but he cannot fulfill that desire, unless he proceeds according to a plan which can guarantee success. The desire has to be developed into a deed. This requires Kriya sakthi or the power of action. Above all, Realisation depends on Jnana sakthi, or the force and clarity of Wisdom, the selfconfidence that flows from the mastery of the situation. This is a gift of grace from God, God installed in the heart. Whatever one plans and executes must be sublimated as an offering to God. Or else it will degenerate into barren gymnastics. God is Omnipresent. The Gita asserts that His hands and feet are everywhere; so are His eyes, head and face. No one can deny God or ignore Him. When a person denies God, he is denying himself. You must foster faith in God and know that He exists in all. That faith will plant in you, humility, courage and reverence. Like the electric current which activates the mike, the fan, the bulbs, the unseen God can be inferred through His manifestations and brought closer to the consciousness. In a glass of water, sugar lies at the bottom and so, the water tastes bland. But when the water is stirred well, the sweetness pervades all over. Now, consider the heart as the vessel of glass. Worldly desires and designs form the water. The Divine Atma is the lump of sugar. With your intellect as the spoon, if you perform the vigorous Sadhana of stirring, you can recognise the manifestation of Divinity in every drop.

Students! Expand your Love so that you recognise God in every being. This is the goal, the purpose and the fulfillment of Vidya (education). Discourse at Sathya Sai Gram, Muddenahalli, while declaring open the Smt. V. Boggaram N

4. The Four Gates

Date: 19 February 1987 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

FROM the earliest times, the ancient sages had been engaged in the quest for God. They performed severe penances and observed austerities of many kinds in remote forests to discover the nature of God. They had the faith that, by the grace of God, their earnest efforts would be successful. Sraddhavan labhathe Jnanam, says the Gita, ("The earnest seeker achieves the Supreme Truth"). By persistence even an ant can cover miles of ground. But without making the effort, even an eagle cannot move one inch. Through earnest and diligent effort, anything can be accomplished, however difficult it may be. The great sages who realised the Divine by their penance have declared that they have been able to see the infinite effulgence of the Purusha (Supreme Person) beyond the darkness of ignorance. This declaration is the first message they give to the world in the Vedas. Vedaham etham Purusha m Mahantham Adityavarnam Tamasah Parasthath. ("We have known this Supreme Person, effulgent like a thousand suns, beyond all darkness"). The divine shrines in splendour beyond the darkness of ignorance. "When man gets rid of his ignorance, he can experience this infinite Light, this spiritual flame", declared the Rishis. Where did they experience the Divine? Not in the external world. Exploring the five life-breaths and the five sheaths of the human body, they experienced the Light of the Spirit in the heart within. They realised that those who love God can find Him nearer to themselves than anything in the world. To those who have no yearning for God, He is farther than the farthest object. Duurath duure anthikecha ("Farther than the farthest and nearest as well").

The four gates one has to pass through

The sages regarded the body as a shrine in which the Divine is the Indweller. The individual is a spark of the Divine. 'He is not a fragment of Nature or a combination of the five basic elements (earth, water, fire, air, ether). He is an "amsa" of the immortal Omni-Self. To reach the Divine within, one has to qualify himself to pass through four gates' Shama, Vicharana, Thripthi and

Satsangam (self-control, enquiry, contentment and the company of the good).

"Shama" calls for steadfast faith in God and complete control of the senses and the mind. There are five sense organs and five organs of action, besides the mind, through which these ten function. Once the jnanendriyas (the sense organs) are controlled, it is easy to control the karmendriyas (organs of action). "Shama" (sense control) makes one a master of his mind and indriyas (sense and action organs), instead of being their slaves. Such a person transcends the animal nature and can go forward from the human to the Divine.

Foundations for a Godly life

Birds, beasts and other creatures are concerned with the enjoyment of external things. Man alone is gifted with the capacity to discriminate between the transient and the permanent and seek what is everlasting by controlling his senses and giving up attachment to the perishable body and the ephemeral objects of the phenomenal world. It is the consciousness in the physical body that enables man to enjoy the pleasures derived from the objects experienced through the senses. Once this truth is realised, the divine nature of consciousness will become clear. Then, every action can be regarded as an offering to the Divine. Work will then be transformed into worship. When the identification of the Self with the body goes, action which may seem to be done for personal enjoyment can be converted into actions of dedication to the Divine. When actions are performed in this unselfish spirit, one can experience a sense of liberation and enjoy bliss that passeth understanding. Control over senses is thus the first stage in Self-realisation. This Sadhana must be taken up early in one's life. It is the foundation for a godly life. One should not wait till old age to embark on this vital exercise. When death knocks at the door and one is surrounded by one's wailing kith and kin, there may be no time to think of God. Begin the Godward journey from now on. We create the shackles that bind us to the wheel of birth and death. Free yourselves from them by giving up evil deeds. Divine grace is secured only by purity. Purity is achieved through Shama (Selfcontrol).

Everyone needs to cultivate discrimination

The second gate that you have to pass through is Vicharana (Enquiry) - the process of discriminating between right and wrong, good and evil, the transient and the eternal. In ordinary life, you have to separate the rice from the stones, the grain from the chaff. Everyone needs to cultivate discrimination by the process of enquiry. Even a monkey knows that it has to remove the rind to eat the fruit inside. Likewise, man has to distinguish between the Atma and the Anatma (the Spirit and the matter), the Real and the unreal, good and evil, right and wrong, and then follow the right path. Buddhi grahyam atheendhriyam ("The light of intelligence grasps what is beyond the senses"). We have to transcend the senses so that we may seek the Real and the Eternal and reject the ephemeral and the perishable. The things of the world are subject to birth, growth, decay and death. It is by learning to discriminate between the permanent and the passing, man crosses the second stage in Godward journey. The third gate requires "Tripti" (contentment). At this stage man must learn to be content with what he has and what he gets and look upon whatever he receives as gift from God. When he is satisfied with what he has, he can be happy. When he desires for more, he gets discontented and miserable.

There is the story of a man who was bathing in the Godhavari when it was in spate. As he was bathing, he saw a stick with a golden handle floating towards him. He caught hold of it and left it on the bank to complete his bath. Meanwhile, the bank caved in and the stick was carried away by the river. After his bath, the man found the stick missing and wailed over his loss. There was no reason for his elation in getting the stick or his grief over its loss. It did not belong to, him. It was a chance acquisition and it left him in the manner it had come. The river brought it and the river carried it away. Why claim any right to it? The temporary attachment to the stick was a bondage which subsequently caused grief. If there had been no attachment there would have been no sorrow.

Cultivate contentment to realise the Divine

Today there are people who are never content with what they have and are ceaselessly seeking more wealth, position or power. They are perpetually harried by discontent. They claim rights of every kind, but have no awareness of their responsibilities. They are consumed by perpetual discontent and insatiable desires. The contented man is the most praiseworthy person. Who is the richest man in the world? Not the millionaire or the billionaire. It is the man who is fully satisfied with what he has. He who is filled with desires is the poorest man in the world. One who wishes to realise the Divine should cultivate contentment. The great spiritual masters Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Vivekananda, Tulsidas, Ramadas, Kabir and others - were men who led supremely contented lives. There were numerous occasions when they could not get even food to eat. They regarded such occasions as invitations by God to observe upavasam (fasting) as food for the Spirit. They enjoyed such fasts by contemplation of God. When they were entertained to a rich repast, they considered the feast as a gift from God to make up for the fast they had observed. Whether it was a fast or feast, they looked on both with the same sense of contented acceptance. They were not depressed by the former or elated by the latter. Samathvam yogamuchyathe, says the Gita, ("Equal-mindedness is yoga"). The ancient sages practised such equal-mindedness. And this should be taught to our young people and cultivated by them. It is the index of contentment. One who has achieved contentment can enjoy the bliss of Divine grace.

Students should eschew bad company

The fourth gate to be passed through is Satsangam (the company of good). Youth today are in great need of good company. By associating with people who use bad language, indulge in bad deeds, young men take to bad ways. Students should eschew totally bad company of every kind. You need a lamp to find a way through a dark jungle. Likewise, in the jungle of life, you need the light and guidance of good men to keep you company on the right path and to take you to the right goal. Even a bad person, by association with the good, gets reformed. But a good man, by falling into bad company, becomes bad. If you add one litre of milk to ten litres of water, the milk becomes so diluted that it is valueless. But one litre of water added to ten litres of milk

acquires additional value. When you wish to cultivate friendship, ensure that you join a group of good students., who are good in their speech, behaviour and actions. Maintain only normal relations with others.

Once these four gates are passed - sense-control, discrimination, contentment and satsang - the road to Divinity is clear. Our entire life gets transformed.

Any system of education that does not help to discriminate between right and wrong, that does not instill the fear of sin and the love of God, train you in the codes of humility and reverence, widen the horizon of your wonder, encourage you to worshipfully serve your parents, and inspire you to dedicate your skills and attainments to the progress of your family, village community, country, language and nation, stands condemned. The corruption and cruelty that are rampant in this country can be traced to this grave defect.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

5. Shivoham

Date: 26 February 1987 / Occasion: Shivarathri

ANANDA (sheer bliss), is man's real nature. But, alas, man in his ignorance and perversity, devotes all his skills, resources and time to acquisition of Ananda through his outward bound senses, rather than discover it by using the inward probing intellect and intuition. What he attains by his struggle and search is, at best, a pseudo-Ananda, a fleeting modicum of pleasure, an indistinct image visible in a murky mirror. It is not the everlasting Bliss of Atma (eternal self), indiminishable by the blows of fortune, ecstasy beyond even imagination. The delight one gathers from the objective world has to be continuously renewed and replenished, for it fades away soon. Therefore, man becomes a bondsman of Desire, which presents before him an unending series of targets.

Man is, in truth, the Atma, which is beyond the bounds of his mind. The Atma has neither beginning nor end. The mind, the senses and the body undergo decline, or development every moment and finally disintegrate and die. Man places faith in the instruments of exploration and experience that are superficial and so, he deprives himself of the supreme Ananda, inherent in the Atma. Like the sun hidden by the clouds, embers covered by ash, the retina overlaid by cataract, the sheet of water veiled by moss, the consciousness of man is coated thick with likes and dislikes; how then can the splendour of Atma shine through?

The well-guarded treasure

The body of man is a receptacle designed to keep safe a precious treasure. Legends announce that cobras guard hidden treasures. The name of the cobra that prevents access to the priceless treasure hidden in man is Aham, 'the fascination for oneself and for one's belongings. In order to reach and recover the Ananda Treasure, man has first to destroy the snake of Aham (egotism). The river is a part, a portion of the sea; it earns fulfillment when it returns to the sea and merges in its source. Fishes are of water. They live in

water and die when deprived of water. The baby is a part of the mother. It cannot survive apart from the mother. The branch is a part of the tree. Cut it off the tree it gets dry and dies. Man is an amsa (a part) of God. He too cannot survive without God. He lives because of the urge to know God, his source. In the Bhagavad Gita the Lord declares (15-7) that "all living beings are My Amsa (part). I am in them as the Eternal Atma" He indicates.

Man lives for a high purpose, not for submitting as the beast does to every demand of instinct and impulse. He has to install himself as the master, not crawl as a slave. He has the right to proclaim Shivotham ("I am Shiva") , "I am Achyutha" (I am the undiminshable Fullness), "I am Ananda." As soon as one becomes aware of his reality, the chains that bind him, iron as well as gold, fall off and he attains Moksha (liberation).

Two entities: the 'seen' and the 'See-er'

Ananda (Divine Bliss) is all around us and within us. It is Ananda that sustains and supports us, but this Truth is hidden by petty selfishness which prods us across the sea of storms in order to gather on the outer shore, the things which apparently give Ananda inherent in them. Man envelops them with a layer of the Ananda within him but, while imbibing it, imagines that the thing itself can confer Ananda on him! Really speaking, it is his own Ananda that he is receiving back. After a term of deep sleep, man declares that he had unbroken Ananda. The mind and the senses, even the faculty of reason, had no contact then with any object, nor did they have any impact from objects. So, the Ananda was derived, during sleep, from within his own reality. There are only two entities' the Drsya (the seen), and the Drk (the See-er). Drk is Atma, Drsya is the Creation. The Drk is Conscious; Drsya is inert. So long as man is immersed in the inert and the See-er the Witness or the Atma is neglected or negated, he cannot escape from distress and despair. The meat on the hook, hanging at the end of the rod, draws the attention of the fish and tantalises it, but the fish is hooked and has to give up its life. The man who yields to the desire for sensual pleasures has to suffer the same fate. The Rishis knew that the 'seen' cannot last or provide lasting joy. They renounced the lower cravings and the transitory comforts. Thyaga

(renunciation) was, for them, the genuine Yoga (path to merge with the Divine).

The three levels of space in man

There are three levels of Akasa (space) in man of which two are Drsyā and the Drk is the third. The first comprises the earth, the solar system and billions of heavenly phenomena, reaching out to stars whose light, though emanated, has not yet reached this globe. This physical space is named Bhootha Akasa. The second level subsumes the first and retains it in a miniature form. It comprises the area cognised and imagined by the mind and is therefore named Chittha Akasa (mental space). Even this area is a dot when compared to the Akasa (space) enfolded by the Atma, named Chidakasa (space of Awareness or Consciousness). The two other spaces are but tiny fragments to the See-er, the Atma, the Brahman. The human being has this journey, towards the Ananda that Chidakasa can offer, as the precious prerogative. The journey does not lead outward; it has to be inward, towards one's own Reality. The musk deer runs around frantically in its search for the source of the fragrance that fascinates it. When at last it is too exhausted to continue, it discovers that the source has been within itself all along! So, too, man expects Ananda in a career, in a job, in business or farming and believes that the satisfaction he derives from these was worthwhile. But, he can soon arrive at lasting Ananda, if his career is converted into Sadhana, his business is transformed into calm serenity and his interest in farming is sublimated as cultivating devotion in the well ploughed weedless mental field. Even intelligent persons are being tempted by the pleasure which external effort can yield, rather than the Divine Bliss which internal search can confer.

The role of intuition

The sages who declare the uniqueness of this Bliss yearned to discover their Reality and to identify that Reality with the Reality that projects, protects and absorbs the Cosmos; that is to say, to submerge their Truth in the Truth of Truths. This can happen only by Prajnana (total awareness), not by logic or reason. The Vedic declaration "Prajnanam Brahma" (God is constant

integrated awareness) supports this conclusion. Once man glimpses this Truth he can experience God in everything and everyone. Sarvathah Pani Padham Sarvathokshi Shiro Mukham ("Everywhere His Foot and Hand, His Eye, Head and Face") is what the Gita states about Him. Investigators do not visualise God in all that they study; they see the apparent, not the genuine. So they are misled into the realm of multiplicity, instead of being led into the all-comprehensive region of Light. Peace cannot prevail in the individual and society until he develops faith in the Unity of Mankind, in spite of the apparent differences. One has to renounce all thoughts of difference and derive delight from the Vision of the One, in the tiniest and the most tremendous of the God's Glory. This is the real Vairagya (non-attachment). People complain of grief, sorrow, distress. What exactly is grief? It is a reaction to the loss of something gained or the failure to gain something desired. Therefore, the only way to escape grief, sorrow, etc., is to conquer desire for the illusory. See the world as God (Brahmamayam). That vision will scotch desire. When the desire is limited to God and concentrated on God, success is assured and each step contributes its Ananda. The Gopis of Brindavan knew this and longed for the Lord, to the exclusion of all else. Pure undiluted Love expressed itself as selfless action. They were simple rural folk, with no knowledge of scriptural texts or of spiritual exercises. Unflinching faith in Krishna, endowed them with all the inspiration and instruction they needed. As Krishna told Arjuna, Sradhhavan labhathe jnanam ("Possessing faith, one acquires spiritual wisdom").

Two basic sadhanas that are important

During this Kaliyuga (age of the all round moral decline), two Sadhanas (spiritual disciplines) are important - Namam and Danam. Namam means the name of the Lord. It must activate every thought, word and deed and render them full of Love. It can certainly lead man to the Vision of the Bearer of the Name. The Name, the Sound, is the material which can reveal the non-material, the Jada which is the door to the awareness, the Chaitanya enshrined in it. This is the purpose of the Sadhana - to recognise both the Kshetra (Field) and the Kshethrajna (the Master and Manipulator of the Field) as the Lord. Danam, the second Sadhana, means gifting, caring and sharing.

The gift of food to the hungry gives immediate contentment and relieves the pangs of hunger. Annam Brahma (Food is Divine) says the Upanishad. Gifts are to be given without inflating the ego of the giver or deflating that of the receiver. They should be offered with understanding, humility and love. Love is quality, essential for propitiating Divinity. People may argue that rituals performed meticulously are effective for the same purpose. But the scriptures themselves announce that ritual worship and rites can at best contribute only to the purification of one's mind and heart (Chitthasya shuddhaye karmah). Or, as the promise reads, the rites might raise the person to Heaven. But, one can be there, only as long as his deposit of merit lasts. He has to come back to earth, as soon as the quantity is exhausted by use (Ksheene punyam, marthya lokam visanthi).

Three evils and three remedies

Love is the most direct means of attaining God. One has to love all without distinction, for the Lord resides in every one and He is the very embodiment of Love. There are three obstacles which stand in the way of the full free flow of Love from man to God. They are man's inveterate foes - desire, anger and greed. Fortunately ancients in India have devised three holy texts which, when assimilated, can equip man to confront and conquer these wily enemies. They are the Ramayana, the Mahabharatha and the Bhagavatha. Ravana is a warning to every one who fosters desire and allows it to vulgarise itself into lust. A spark of lust, if not scotched, is sure to become a calamitous conflagration. Ravana's evil deed destroyed the entire clan and reduced his capital into a heap of ash. The Bhagavatha holds forth many lessons to instruct man against the evil consequences of anger and its root, hatred. The brothers Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakasipu were angry at God Himself. Hiranyakasipu had by rigorous austerity and practice established his mastery, as modern scientists have done, over the elements. He could transport himself through the hydrospheres as a fish, through the atmosphere as a bird, but he denied God who has projected the elements and who exists inside everything and outside too. Of what benefit are powers and skills, in the face of insolence and ingratitude? Hiranyakasipu believed that he had eliminated God. He exploded in anger when his own little son dared to praise God. Anger

resulted in blind fury and heaped untold misery on his head. The Mahabharatha epic depicts the disaster that greed can bring about. Duryodhana was so greedy that he was not willing to allow even those who had the legal right, to own the possessions that he had grasped. He who keeps as his own, what is not strictly his, deserves to be named as a thief. He was so greedy that he refused to yield even a pin-point of land to his five Pandava cousins, though they had a rightful claim for a vast and flourishing area. Naturally, his greed destroyed him and his clan and subjects. The three texts mentioned can be used to cure the three mental illnesses which impede the growth of Love.

The night of goodness and Godliness

Today is Shivarathri, the Rathri (night) of Shivam (Goodness, Godliness, Good Fortune). It is an auspicious Night because the mind can be made to lose its hold on man by devoting the night to prayer. The Moon is the presiding deity of the mind, according to the scriptures. The mind is kindred to the Moon as the Eyes are to the Sun. Shivarathri is prescribed for the fourteenth night of the dark half of the month, the night previous to the New Moon when the Moon suffers from total blackout. The Moon and the mind which it rules over are drastically reduced every month on the fourteenth night. When that night is devoted to vigilant adoration of God, the remnant of the wayward mind is overcome and victory ensured. This month's Shivarathri is holier than the rest and so, it is called Mahashivarathri. With firm faith and a cleansed heart, the night should be spent in glorifying God. No moment should be wasted in other thoughts. Time flees fast. Like a block of ice, it melts soon and flows away; like water held in a leaky pot, it disappears drop by drop. The time allotted for one's life ticks off quite soon, and the span ends sometime somehow. So, be vigilant. Be warned. Be alert and aware. Seek the shelter of the Lord and transform every moment into a sacred celebration.

6. Who am I ?

Date: 30 March 1987 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Ugadi

THE Cosmos is a manifestation of the Divine. They are foolish who, while seeing the handiworks of the Divine everywhere, think that there is no God. Without recognising the omnipresence of God, men seek God somewhere or the other. This reflects the dualistic attitude of the persons who identify themselves with the body and alienate themselves from God. While God is omnipresent and can be recognised in the divine manifestations of Nature, the body consciousness prevents men from experiencing oneness with the Divine. How is God to be experienced? The first requisite is purity of heart. All religions have affirmed the basic importance of purity. The aim of all Sadhanas is to achieve peace. Compassion towards all beings is devotion to God. God cannot be experienced through the ostentatious observance of rituals and worship. Where there is pomp and show there can be no divinity. The bliss of the Divine cannot be found there. As a seed will not sprout on the rocky ground, the bliss of Divine cannot be realised by worship devoid of humility and sincerity. All sadhanas (spiritual efforts) are not pursued for realising the Atma (Divine Self). There is no need to seek the Atma, which is all pervasive and present everywhere. Sadhanas are performed to get rid of the anatma (that which bars the vision of the Atma). Man forgets his real nature and loses himself in the consciousness of what he is not. He forgets that he is the Atma in reality. In the state of deep sleep, one is totally unaware of his name, form, position, etc. But on waking, he realises that the "I", of which he is conscious in the waking state, was present in deep sleep too. The purpose of all sadhanas is to discover the nature of the "I" that is experienced in all different states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep.

Atma is the basis for everything

Man identifies himself with a particular name and form and builds up all relations on that basis. But how real and permanent are these names and forms? They are all projections of the mind and have an existence only as long as the mind and body remain. The heart represents the Atma. It is self-

effulgent. The light from the heart (Atma) illumines the mind and enables it to see the external world. Without this illumination the mind cannot comprehend the world. The mind is like the moon which receives its light from the sun. It has no light of its own. It shines because of the light from the Atma. When the sun shines, the moon is hardly visible. Likewise, when there is awareness of the Atma, the mind is not perceivable. The Atma is the basis for everything.

Men are naive in imagining that the Atma is inside the body. The truth is the body, the mind, the entire cosmos is in the Atma. The Atma cannot be inside anything else. It is the All. It is the everything. Those who perform japa, dhyana or puja (reciting God's name, meditation, worship), conceiving God as separate from themselves, are the victims of dualism. Whatever their scholarship, they are ignorant of their own true nature when they alienate God from themselves. God is in the heart of man.

Essential objective of Spiritual Quest

All man's spiritual exercises are at the mental level. By these means, the Atma cannot be realised. The Vedas have declared: Yatho vacho nivarthanthe aprapya manasasah ("Whence mind and speech turn back unable to reach it"). Neither the mind nor speech can comprehend the nature of the Atma. The mind is turned towards the external by the sense organs. It is only by withdrawing it from the sense objects, that it can be made to develop an antarmukham (inner vision).

The "I" principle is present everywhere. It begins with the Divine itself. The first word was "Aham" ("I"). Even the Pranava ("Om") came after "Aham". Before all creation "Aham" alone existed. That "Aham" became the many. One who realises the oneness of what he regards as his "I" with the cosmic "Aham" alone knows his Reality. The universal "I" appears under different names and forms in different bodies owing to time and circumstance. Even the same person goes through many changes in form and relationships in life. But the "I" remains unchanged. It is like an actor wearing different disguises, but himself remaining one and the same. The realisation of the unchanging and universal character of the "I" (the Atma) is the essential objective of the

spiritual quest.

Tapas must result in softening of heart

The sense of duality arises when the "I" (Aham) assumes a specific form and name. "Ahamkara" (the ego-sense) is the result of this change in form. It is only when one dissociates himself from name and form that he can discover his true divine self. To forget his essential divinity and identify himself with a changing and impermanent form is the cause of bondage and sorrow. It is the mind that is the cause of this wrongful identification, because of its involvement with the external world and the impressions received through the senses. When the workings of the mind are understood, the reality of the Atma, which is beyond the mind, will be experienced as the One omnipresent, immutable principle. Duality is an obvious fact of every day life. All sastras, puranas and itihisas (spiritual sciences, epics and ancient legends) have recognised this duality and sought to regulate men's lives on that basis. As long as men are engaged in activity in the phenomenal world in any capacity, the dualistic attitude is inescapable. All scriptural injunctions are designed to regulate men's conduct in the phenomenal and the temporal world. The Vedas attach great importance to time. The sastras prescribe duties in relation to time, circumstance and situation. The science of astrology prescribes what should be done according to changes in time. The Panchanga (almanac) indicates what are likely to happen on the basis of astrological data. During this new year, Prabhava, the indications are encouraging. Out of the nine grahas (planets), seven are favourably disposed. The moon is the ruling planet for the year. Kuja (Mars) is the Minister. Their influence is powerful this year. Sani (Saturn) is weak. There will be no scarcity of food and water this year. Food production will increase substantially. However beneficial the changes may be in the sphere of natural forces, without a change in men's outlook and conduct, they will be of no use. Many persons claim that they are observing rigorous tapas (austerities). What is the outcome of these austerities? If their hearts soften and they show compassion towards the ailing and the helpless, only then has their penance any meaning. A compassion-filled heart is the real fruit of tapas. All the sadhanas performed by a hard-hearted person are utterly futile.

Meditation is implied in all daily chores

Many undertake meditation as a spiritual exercise and expend many hours on it. But, in fact, meditation is implicit in almost every act that is done from morning till night. Meditation (in the sense of concentration) is implied in all the daily chores like eating, going to work, attending to business, etc. One is meditating while reading or playing or shopping. Without concentration no activity of any kind can be done. When the concentration is on God, it becomes spiritual meditation. Does such meditation call for a specific time or place? There is no special technique for meditation. By giving meditation some special names, they are forgetting its real significance. For instance, if people do not listen with dhyana (one-pointed attention) to Swami's discourse, they will not remember what Swami said. Even listening calls for dhyana. It has no specific form. No dhyana is possible with a wandering mind.

See God in everything you do

Today, in the name of dhyana, several stunts are being practised. Instead of spending hours in so-called meditation with a mind restlessly hopping from one thought to another like a monkey, it would be better to concentrate on the performance of one's household, official and social duties with earnestness and dedication. Is that not meditation? Of what use is it to sit in "meditation" for an hour, when you cannot keep your mind still for a minute? Think about God while carrying on your regular duties. Regard all work as sacred offering to the Divine. See God in everything you do. Instead of following this simple and easy path, people are engaged in all forms of gymnastics and subjecting themselves to various hazards. Devote yourselves to your duties. Meditation is not confined to any one thing. It should permeate every action you do. Some aspirants wish to seek ekantham (solitude). But being alone is not solitude. People go to Hrishikesh, Haridwar or Tapovanam in search of solitude. Only those who have not understood the real meaning of solitude will resort to such things. There is real solitude (alone-ness) only when the mind is completely stilled. If while sitting alone in a forest your mind is ruminating on affairs of the world, how can it be called solitude? Without

curbing thoughts, loneliness cannot be found anywhere. Either thoughts have to be eliminated or all thoughts should be turned towards the Divine.

Many imagine that they are deriving happiness by enjoying the things of the world. They should examine who is 'enjoying' whom. In reality, far from their 'enjoying' the things they possess, it is their possessions which are enjoying them. The hatred, anger, envy and other evils bred by possessions lead only to disease and misery. Why should the body suffer from ills if really possessions were the source of happiness? Man is losing real happiness by attachment to things which cannot give him happiness.

Set your sight on the Supreme

Those who have faith in the Gita should note that it has clearly declared that this world is ephemeral and "a vale of tears", and enduring peace and bliss are not to be found by attachment to it. The source of lasting peace and happiness is within ourselves. That is the Atma (the Divine self). It is by realising it that peace and bliss have to be secured. One must constantly develop the consciousness that the Atma is everything - the doer, the deed and the outcome thereof. When the consciousness is broadened this way, in due course it leads to Self-realisation. If your vision is broad, your destination will also be of the same magnitude. A narrow outlook can lead only to a narrow alley. If you are immersed all the time in the petty trifles of mundane existence, when will you ever understand the Reality which is beyond the physical and the mental? Set your sight on the Supreme. The illumination will come in a flash. Everyone should develop the consciousness that "I am Atma. I am Brahman". When one says, "I am Brahman" it is evident that there is "I" in Brahman. Who is that "I"? "Brahman" means pervasiveness. In declaring "I am Brahman", the consciousness of all-pervasiveness should be developed. Brahman is all-pervasive. It is equally present everywhere. You should regard yourselves as all-pervasive, omni-self. Whatever you do, whatever you see, whatever you speak, saturate it with Divinity so that you may be aware of your Reality.

You should find out what you really are

The world will exist for you as long as you have the feeling of duality. In the deep sleep state you enjoy the real bliss. You are not aware at that time of your body, your mind, your feelings, your qualities, or thoughts, but still you exist. That same pure "you" exists in the waking state, the dream state and the deep-sleep state. In the gross, the subtle and the causal states "you" exist. In all these states and stages, it is the Atmic principle which remains, without undergoing any change.

The physical body which performs Japam or Dhyanam or the various other spiritual practices is but a water-bubble. The mind which is based upon this physical body is but a mad monkey. With the help of this mad-monkey mind and this water-bubble body, how can you hope to achieve the permanent Atma? Japa, Dhyana, Bhajans, austerities, sacrifices - these are all methods for temporarily controlling the mind. But there is one practice that will have a permanent effect, and that is self-enquiry. You should go on enquiring "Who am I? Who am I?" until you reach the stage where you find out who you really are. The enquiry should go on thus, "Here is my body, here is my mind, my heart, my feelings, my intellect, my memory power . I am not any of these. Someone has praised me. Someone has censured me. But to whom does this pertain? Only to this physical body." In this way you have to develop a sense of detachment and a sacrificing nature. How can a physical body abuse another physical body? That is inert, and this is also inert. How can inert things criticize or admonish? They cannot. How can they even worship anything?. They cannot. But then, can Atma criticize another Atma? That is absurd. One person who has seen God says, 'God exists.' Another person who has not seen God, says, 'God does not exist'. If a person has not seen God, then how can he assert that God does not exist? Here, for example, is Nanjundayya. The one who sees Nanjundayya declares that this is Nanjundayya. If you point out Chakravarti to one who knows Nanjundayya, saying, 'This is Nanjundayya', the answer will be, 'No, he is not Nanjundayya'. A person who has never seen Nanjundayya, cannot say whether Nanjundayya is here or not. Only one who has seen another person is able to declare whether that person is here or not. In the same way, only that person who has seen God and knows God has the authority-to declare that God exists.

One may assert and the other may negate but the object itself remains all the same. For both God exists because all that is there is only this one Atma, this one Brahman. Brahman is Atma and beyond that nothing else exists.

Faith and God are one and the same

Many people aspire for grace, love, devotion and humility. All these are the forms of the Atma (Divine self). God is not different from faith. Faith and God are one and the same. Love is God, Devotion is God, they are not different entities. What is the meaning of devotion? Devotion is that which enables the unmanifested divine principle to manifest itself in the inner vision of the devotee. Then for that devotee nothing else will exist other than He. To reach that stage you must discharge your duties keeping the permanent entity constantly in mind. You can cross the vast, deep ocean of worldly existence and enjoy the infinite Divinity that is its reality, with the help of a small boat. That boat is the Name of God. In the beginning of the spiritual journey the name is the basis for progress, but it should not become life-long support, depending entirely on it alone. Whatever service you are rendering you should not feel that you are serving others, but that you are serving God Himself. While taking a bath or giving one to the children, consider that you are doing the purification ritual of washing God Himself. While serving food consider that you are offering it to God Himself. While giving food to a beggar, consider that God has come in this form and you are serving Him.

It seems that it is a beggar who is asking, but it is the Atma who is enjoying the food you give. When you are cutting some vegetables for cooking, consider that you are cutting away your desires and ego with the knife of wisdom. While sweeping the floor don't lament, 'O, it keeps getting dirty again and again.' Think rather that you are cleaning your own heart. If you are rolling Chapathis at home, consider what joy it is to roll and knead and expand your heart. In this way, you can consider every activity you undertake as being done for the sake of God. Then where is the need for separate meditation, separate penance or separate worship?

Love can accomplish everything in the world

Consider your heart as Atma. Soften it and make it full of compassion. That is the only spiritual exercise you need to perform. Narasimhan has told you that so many people are coming to Prasanthi Nilayam from different parts of the world. What brings them here? Are invitations sent? Does anyone ask them to come? It is only on account of love that is here and felt heart to heart. Through love you can accomplish anything in the world. Consider love as the Atma itself. However many scriptures you may read and however many spiritual exercises you may do, if you do not allow your heart to melt with compassion your life will be a sheer waste. All practices have to be directed towards softening your heart so that it will flow with kindness and love. Develop this feeling of compassion and allow it to flow fully and spread among all the peoples of the world.

7. The play of the Divine

Date: 07 April 1987 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Rama Navami

Oh Mind! Ever remember

The nectar-like name of Rama Which is sweeter than Sugar, Pleasanter to the tongue than honey. THE Ramayana is not merely the story of Rama. it is an epic which proclaims the greatness of three cities - Mithila, Ayodhya and Lanka. The Rama Principle has brought out and demonstrated the significance of these three cities. Rama is the embodiment of Dharma (righteousness), Lakshmana is the embodiment of Sraddha (dedication). Bharata embodies Bhakti (devotion), Shatrughna personifies Sakti (valour). Dharma is associated with Sraddha. The protecting cover for Bhakti is Sakti. Hence Rama and Lakshmana were always together as a pair, and Bharata and Satrughna as another. Hardly had Rama reached the age of sixteen when sage Viswamitra arrived on the scene. With his coming, the epic career of Rama (Rama-ayana) began. From then on the destruction of the Rakshasas started. Beginning with the protection of Viswamitra's yajna (religious sacrifice), it is one continuous saga of ceaseless action' liberating Ahalya from her curse, proceeding to Mithila, breaking Siva's bow, marrying Sita (the incarnation of Maha Maya), humbling of Parasurama on the way to Ayodhya, leaving for the forest as an exile, searching for Sita, invading Lanka, destroying Ravana, installing Vibhishana on the throne, and triumphantly returning to Ayodhya. During all this period, Rama's career was filled with action and adventures with no respite.

Ramayana is the joint epic of Rama and Sita

The term "Rama" means one who is pleasing and lovable. "Ayana" means movement or journey. "Ra" refers to Atma and "Ma" refers to Mind. The Rama Principle means merging the mind in the Atma. "Ramayana" means suffusing the world with the bliss of the Rama Principle. But it is not Sri Rama alone that is involved in this process, Sita is also an epic personality. "Rama" is another name for Sita. The Ramayana is thus a joint epic of Rama and Sita or Sita-

Rama Ramayanam.

Rarely in the world do we see married couples who are identical - man and wife - in their physical features, their qualities, behaviour, thoughts and capacities. But in the case of Rama and Sita the similarity was complete in every respect. There were no differences in features, qualities or other aspects. The truth of this is evident from what Hanuman experienced. Once Hanuman happened to look at Sita when she was alone. He got a doubt whether Rama himself had assumed a feminine form. Looking at Sita, he thought it was Rama himself. Hence Rama and Sita should be regarded as one identical entity and not as separate beings.

Role of three cities in Ramayana

The inner significance of the Sita-Rama story will be clear when we consider the role of the three cities in the Ramayana. First comes Mithila. Emperor Janaka was its ruler. He was a Brahmajnani (one who possesses knowledge of identity of individual self with the cosmic being) who had renounced everything. Like water on a lotus leaf, he was completely detached, with no concern for worldly things. Having no children of his own, he brought up with great love a foundling (Sita). There were two powerful entities in his kingdom' Siva's bow and Sita. Once, while engaging in play, Sita lifted the giant bow of Siva with astonishing ease. Struck by this feat, Janaka decided that Sita should be given in marriage only to one who could handle Siva's bow and be worthy of Sita's hand. With this resolve, he invited princes for Sita's svayamvara (self selection of a husband by the bride herself). Rama arrived and lifted Siva's bow as lightly as Sita had done. Janaka realised that Rama and Sita were well matched in every respects - beauty, character and strength.

Sita was no ordinary woman. She was the embodiment of Maha Maya (supreme divine illusion). Rama acquired Maha Maya as his mate. Sita, for her part, sought oneness with the Atma principle represented by Rama. The marriage of Rama and Sita represents the association of the Atma and the Maya. It is in this combined form of Atma and Maya that Rama entered

Ayodhya. "Ayodhya" means "invincible". Its ruler was Dasaratha. Dasaratha means one who has made his ten indriyas (sense organs) the five organs of action and the five organs of perception - his chariot. Allegorically, this means that Dasaratha represents the body, with its ten organs. These sense organs are related to the three gunas (qualities) Satwa, Rajas, Tamas. Dasaratha's three wives - Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi - symbolise these three gunas.

Dasarata's four sons represent four Vedas

When one is influenced by gunas, he develops desires. The four sons of Dasaratha were the embodiments of his desires. Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrughna symbolise the four Vedas Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharvana. The Rig Veda figures in the Yajur and Sama Vedas to varying extent. It is the embodiment of Dharma. Yajur-Veda embodies mantras (sacred formulae). Lakshmana was continually engaged in contemplating about Rama and immersing himself in the Rama mantra. Bharata was one who could not bear separation from Rama and who was ever dwelling on Rama's name and form. He was the embodiment of Sama Veda. Shatrughna was one who had mastered all the sciences and used his powers for protecting his brothers. He was skilled in the use of all kinds of weapons. Thus the four Vedas, taking the form of the four brothers, were sporting in Dasaratha's palace.

Symbolic meaning of characters of Ramayana

Soon after his entry into Ayodhya in the company of Sita as Maya, Rama had to enter the jungle of life. These ordeals are the concomitants of those who are associated with Maya. As a result he had to embark on a search for Sita. On the way, he met Sugriva. Sugriva and Vali - the brothers...represent the qualities of Viveka (discrimination) and Dheeratva (valour). Rama made common cause with Sugriva to overcome Vali. He got the friendship of Anjaneya who symbolises Dhairyam (dauntless courage). With the help of Sugriva and Hanuman, Rama crossed the ocean of moha (delusion) to enter Lanka. Once again he encountered the three gunas - Satwa, Rajas and Tamas (qualities of serenity, passion and passivity), in Lanka in the form of Vibhishana, Ravana and Kumbakarna. He vanquished Ravana and

Kumbhakarna (Rajo and Tamo gunas) and crowned Vibhishana (Satwa guna) as King. He recovered Sita who now assumed the form of Anubhavajana (wisdom born of experience) and reentered Ayodhya with her.

The Ramayana epic carries these significant messages when the symbolic meaning of the characters and events in it are properly understood. Here the unique features of Lanka may be noted. Its ruler was the ten-headed Ravana. Although he was endowed with all powers, he was perpetually immersed in Moha (infatuation for women). He had the appellation "Dasagriva" - the one with ten heads. In Ayodhya, Dasaratha was the ruler and in Lanka it was Dasagriva. Dasaratha had ten indriyas (sense organs) as his chariot. Ravana was the one who was enjoying the ten senses as a sensualist. Whatever one's scholarship or wealth or strength, if he has no control over his senses, he descends to the depths of degradation. Without control over his senses, a person who may have conquered the three worlds, will be a slave of his impulses. The bad traits of Ravana were shared by all the people of Lanka. As is the ruler, so are the subjects, says the adage. When the ruler indulges in sensual pleasures, the subjects also do likewise. Lanka was thus immersed in carnal pleasures. The people were not aware of human virtues, much less of divine qualities. Pleasures of the flesh were their sole preoccupation. But at the same time, they carried on ritualistic practices like yagas and yajnas (sacrificial rites and rituals).

Transformation of demonic nature to divinity

Witnessing the grandeur and beauty of Lanka with its huge mansions and beautiful gardens - and seeing the sacrificial fires burning in every home, Hanuman at first wondered whether the ruler of such a paradise on earth could commit the heinous crime of abducting Sita. Later Hanuman realised that Lanka was like the fig fruit, which is very attractive on the outside but is full of worms inside. In spite of all its external beauty and grandeur, Lanka contained within it, forces of evil and wickedness. The conversion of such an abode of evil into a kingdom of righteousness by the installation of Vibhishana is the climax of the Ramayana story.

Good exists in the midst of evil and vice-versa

The epic theme of the Ramayana is the transformation of the demonic nature to divinity. During the war in Lanka, an arrow released by Lakshmana struck a child whom its mother was carrying. Lakshmana noticed that the mother, instead of caring for the dead child, was fleeing to save herself. He remarked to Rama that this callous lack of maternal affection revealed the demonic nature of the woman. Rama counselled patience and told Lakshmana that the woman's heart had been purified by seeing Rama. She had given up all desires and attachments. He asked Lakshmana to beckon her and ascertain whether she was running away for the sake of personal safety or for higher reasons. A monkey was sent to fetch her. When questioned, the woman said: "Ramachandra, it is not as if I have no love for my child. Unfortunately, for the decree of fate it has passed away, while I have survived. I wish to live so that, after defeating Ravana, when Rama takes the Rakshasas to Ayodhya, I shall be able to serve Rama and feast my eyes on him. Some day Rama will bless the people of Lanka and take them to Ayodhya. I shall then be able to render service in Rama's palace. I am keeping alive only with this hope." The moral of this episode is that there is good in the midst of evil and evil in the midst of good. Likewise purity prevails amidst impurity and impurity exists in the midst of purity. That is why the answer to the question, "Where is the Lord to be found?" is "Out of unrest peace ensues; from peace results illumination; that illumination reveals the supreme effulgence of the Divine; in that effulgence is Divinity." Thus Santhi (peace) exists within asanthi (restlessness). But it is said that no one who lacks peace cannot have happiness. This is not quite correct. Instead of bemoaning the state of peacelessness one should strive for real peace with courage and faith. This is the difference between the optimist and the pessimist. Looking at a glass half full of water, the pessimist says, "the glass is half-empty." The optimist says, "it is half-full". The pessimist sees only the thorn in the rose stalk, while the optimist enjoys the beauty of the rose. Everyone should develop a hopeful and optimistic outlook. The hopes' should be centered not on worldly things but on self-realisation. Even in the Rakshasa dominion of Lanka there were seekers of the Atma. In Ayodhya all persons appeared to be virtuous and pious devotees of God. But even in such a sacred land, there were some petty-minded men who were ready to cast

aspersions on Divinity itself and find fault with God's ways. It was a washerman's disparaging remarks against Sita and Rama which led her banishment to the forest.

Three persons were aware of Rama principle

There were three persons who were aware of the Rama principle. They were Hanuman, Sumitra and Viswamitra. Hanuman was no ordinary person. He was a high-minded, powerful figure endowed with immense knowledge and wisdom. He was well aware of the divinity of Rama. Kausalya despite her Satwic (serene) nature, was not aware of Rama's divine power as much as Sumitra. Kausalya shed copious tears on hearing about Rama's exile to the forest. Sumitra, on the contrary, enjoined her son Lakshmana to accompany Rama and told him: "Wherever Rama is, there is Ayodhya, where Rama is not, that is the real jungle. Rama is verily Lord Narayana Himself. Go and serve Rama and Sita with my blessings." Sumitra explained to Lakshmana how he was an aspect of Rama from the circumstances of his birth.

Ramayana is a guide on human relationships

Among the four brothers there was boundless love and regard for each other. When Rama went to the forest and was in Chitrakuta, Bharatha came there to entreat him to return to Ayodhya and reign as the legitimate heir to the throne. Rama refused to return, saying that Bharatha should rule over Ayodhya in accordance with the promise given by Dasaratha. The argument between the two was ultimately resolved by Sage Vasishta who told Bharatha: "Do not cause any pain to Rama, who is Divinity itself and who has come down to protect the good-and uphold Dharma." Bharatha pleaded for taking Rama's sandals and administering the kingdom in Rama's name till he returned to Ayodhya.

There are a series of episodes in the Ramayana to show how deep was the love between the four brothers and how devoted were the younger brothers to Rama. Such fraternal love is an example to the world for all time.

The Ramayana is a guidebook on the ideal relations between mothers and children, between husband and wife, between brothers, between the ruler and the people, between the master and the servants and many other human relationships. Rama showed compassion to the dying eagle Jatayu, which had fought with Ravana when he was carrying Sita away to Lanka and Rama gave refuge to Vibhishana, even against the fears expressed by Lakshmana. These are examples of Rama's supreme benevolence and magnanimity towards anyone who revered him or sought his protection. Rama declared to Lakshmana "Anyone who comes to me in a spirit of surrender, whoever he might be, is mine and I am his. I shall give him asylum. This is my vow." Rama was a man pledged to one word, to one wife and to a single arrow. Devotees should install Rama in their hearts and celebrate Ramanavami for achieving Atmic bliss. Going through the Ramayana epic they should reach the state of "Atma-Rama" (oneness with the Universal Spirit). In such a state there is no Ahamkara (ego-sense).

When the road ends and the goal is gained, the pilgrim finds that he has travelled only from himself to himself, that the way was long and lonesome, but the God that led him unto it was all the while in him, around him, with him, beside him!

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

8. Samanvaya and Samarasa

Date: 01 May 1987 / Location: Brindavan

THE mind of man, like the waxing moon which grows to fullness and shines brightly, has the capacity to grow and expand till he becomes one with the Divine. But this does not happen today because men's minds are filled with narrow ideas and petty differences which limit their sympathies and aspirations.

Inherently men are large-hearted and they should give no room for the sense of 'mine' and 'thine'. Everyone should cultivate pure, selfless love and largeness of heart. Interlopers should not be allowed to get entrenched in the mind and control it. It is like allowing a gang of thieves to enter your house and make themselves the masters. The mind should be the master and not the slave of the senses. If the senses are allowed to hold sway, man becomes their servant and not their master. The six enemies of man are lust, anger, pride, envy, delusion and greed. They should be kept in check and not allowed to dominate the mind.

Meditate on the Divine essence of everything

Man is subjected to three kinds of bondages in life: bondages derived from the past, those arising in the present and those created for the future. There is a story to illustrate the first kind of bondage. There was once a man who was keeping a cow to earn income for supporting his family. In course of time, all his kith and kin passed away and the cow also died. He began to think what for he had striven all these years and he went to a guru to seek his advice on his predicament. The guru asked him whether he had done any spiritual sadhana in his life. The man replied that he had done no sadhana and that whenever he sat for meditation the image of the cow, on which he had lavished great affection, appeared before him. The guru said that this was because of his intense attachment to the cow. The guru advised him to look upon the cow as a manifestation of the Divine and to regard it as an expression of "Sat-Chit-Ananda" (Being- Awareness-Bliss) - the triune nature

of the Divine. He told the man that the three primal qualities - Asti, Bhati, Priyam (existence, expression, and utility) - are qualities to all things, while names and forms are varied. When names and forms are ignored, one can perceive the divine nature of everything. "Meditate on the divine essence of everything", advised the gum. Following his advice, the man meditated on "Sat-Chit-Ananda" and in due course merged in the Divine. There is no point in dwelling on the past and gloating or grieving over what is dead and gone. It is futile to think about past successes or failures, pleasures or pains. The past should not become an incubus on the present. As regards the present, one should act on the principle that he should conduct himself towards others in the manner he would like them to behave towards him. If he desires that others should respect him or honour him, he should behave likewise towards others. You cannot expect courtesy or regard from others if you don't show courtesy or regard to others. There can be no oneway traffic in life.

Selfishness creates bondages

Persons with a narrow, self-centred outlook are prone to express doubts about the powers of the Divine. They may ask how Shiva, covered with ashes and living in the burial ground, can come to the rescue of the needy, and doubt how Vishnu reclining on the bed of a serpent on the ocean and remote from the world, can protect mankind in any way. It is such perverted notions that lead man astray in the present. To correct such tendencies one should listen to sacred sayings, ruminate over them and lead a righteous and godly life. To be concerned only about one's own happiness or comfort and be indifferent to the happiness and needs of others is a form of selfishness which creates bondages in the present. Bondages for the future are created by your actions in the present. When you entertain bad thoughts and indulge in wrong actions, they lead to bad consequences in the future. Peace of mind is lost and one is caught up in perpetual worry. The way out of this vicious circle is to turn the mind towards God and refrain from causing harm to others. Contemplation of God and leading a godly life will confer peace and bliss that is beyond measure.

Qualities to be cultivated as dietary regimen

When a person is ill, the physician prescribes not only medicine for the disease but also a dietary regimen to be observed strictly. Likewise, for the diseases arising from mundane attachments, in addition to the prescribed drugs - the Karma, Jnana, Bhakti and Yoga margas (paths of selfless action, meta physical wisdom, devotion and inner communion) - qualities such as forbearance, calmness, fortitude, love and compassion have to be cultivated as dietary regimen. Without these qualities, the spiritual practices alone will be of little avail. When the two are combined, like the positive and negative ends in an electric cell, the disease gets cured. One who is engaged in the battle of life, needs the armour of spirituality. With it, he can face any situation anywhere. If instead of wearing the spiritual armour, people are enveloped in ignorance, they will be haunted by fear and anxiety. As long as rice is covered by husk, it cannot be consumed. Likewise, man cannot experience bliss until he gets rid of the cloak of ignorance. He must welcome whatever happens as good for him. He must develop the quality of forbearance. Through forbearance and sadhana (spiritual efforts), gradually the shackles resulting from past actions must be broken.

The tendency to cavil at the ways of the Divine will gradually wither away. One will begin to appreciate the lessons to be learnt from every day-to-day experience. For instance, when a beggar comes to your house and says, "Please give me food," you should not turn him away as a mere beggar, but regard him as a messenger of God. When he is begging for food he is indirectly conveying a message: "I am today begging for food because in my previous birth I did not offer food to those who begged for it. Please see that by turning me away without food, a similar fate does not overtake you in your next life." You must go to the help of others to the extent of your means.

Harmony and Tolerance are essential for life

Today such a spirit of magnanimity is lacking. It is not realised that without largeness of heart and generosity of spirit, all scholarship and spiritual efforts are of no use. That is why the Upanishads declare: "Immortality can be attained only by renunciation and sacrifice and not by wealth, progeny or

religious rites." The mere acquisition of book-lore will not lead to selfrealisation. Along with studies, one must practise tolerance, equanimity and serenity. These qualities cannot be got through books or teachers. They can be got only through persistent enquiry and discrimination. It would be desirable if this quest is made part of a collective effort instead of being purely an individual pursuit. The lone individual does not constitute a community. If his aspirations are self-centred they will do no good to society. Hence one should develop those sacred qualities which will promote the well-being of the society. "Samanvaya"(the spirit of harmony) and "Samarasa" (serenity or a sense of respect for all points of view) are essential for accomplishing anything good in life. While man's physical body is composed of five basic elements (earth, water, fire, air and space), his subtle body has pancha kosas (five sheaths) one within the other. The first of them is the Annamaya kosa (the food or material sheath). Within it is the Pranamaya kosa (the sheath, of life or breath). Within it is the Manomaya kosa (the mental sheath). Within that is the Prajnanamaya kosa (the sheath of higher wisdom). The last sheath is the Anandamaya kosa (the sheath of bliss). Starting with food man must reach the destination of Bliss. The spiritual journey is from "I" to "We". Therein lies fulfillments - the realisation of the One in the many.

Madhava, God is beyond Maya

You need the inner vision of the Spirit to see God. The physical eye can see only the physical world. Through a process of enquiry, you have to realise the Omnipresence of the Creator who permeates and sustains the cosmos. Wrapped up in his own ego, man pursues the will-o-the wisp of wealth, power, position, and strength. All these are transient. Man has overcome the eight categories of pride - pride of physical prowess, material wealth, scholarship, beauty, power and others. God's grace is needed to conquer these evil traits because they have such a powerful hold over man. When you wish to overcome a powerful enemy, you have to get help from someone more powerful than your enemy. Sugriva had to seek the friendship of Sri Rama to overcome Vali after convincing himself of the superior powers of Rama. Likewise, to overcome the power of Maya (the delusion that subjects man to the physical and the sensuous), man has to seek the grace of the Divine. Only

the Divine (Madhava) is more powerful than Maya. By surrendering to the Divine and developing a heart filled with devotion and love, one can face all the challenges of life.

You must realise, by constant contemplation, that the world is the body of God. And, you are the cell, in that Body. The prosperity of the world is your prosperity; feel so, act in that spirit; think in those terms. That is the real spirituality. The sadhak cannot cut himself away from the world and escape in 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.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

9. The Lord and the Devotee

Date: 03 May 1987 / Location: Brindavan

MAN always craves for bliss. The first requisite for achieving *Brahmananda* (Supreme Bliss) is a pure heart. Man's heart, which should be white like milk in its purity, is today filled with bad thoughts and feelings. Spiritual sadhana begins with the purification of the heart and transforming it into an ocean of milk. When the heart is filled with satwic qualities, it becomes like a milky ocean. Only then does it become a worthy dwelling for the Lord (*Vishnu*) whose abode is described as *Ksheerasagara* (the Ocean of Milk).

By yielding to Tamasic and Rajasic impulses, man today has turned his heart into *Ksharasagara* (an ocean of salt). In the saltish ocean, we have sharks and whales. Likewise, in the heart of the evil-minded, bad qualities like lust, anger, greed and envy flourish. It is folly to give room to such evil forces. They must be removed totally so that the Lord may find His rightful place in a heart that is pure and holy, filled with Satwic qualities. Each one should perpetually examine whether good thoughts and impulses are growing in his heart or whether bad thoughts are getting rooted. While doing daily worship, one should invoke the presence of various deities through appropriate *mantras* (holy sound formulae). Simultaneously, one should call upon the demoniac forces to quit the place.

People tend to ignore Internal Purity

Both inner and outer purity are essential for man's physical and mental health. Most people are concerned about external physical cleanliness. People tend to ignore inner cleanliness in the belief that the heart and mind are not visible to others. But they should realise that the physical body is made up of five elements and will return to the dust sometime or other. It is the state of the spirit that is important. Even the body should be regarded as the abode of the Spirit and cared for as such.

To ensure perfect health, it is essential to get rid of internal impurities and

take in only wholesome food. Equally for preserving mental health, similar two-fold action is necessary. The ills that afflict the mind have to be got rid of by eliminating bad thoughts and purifying the mind. Man's destiny is determined by his actions. Through righteous actions, the mind is purified and a pure mind results in an awakening of *jnana* (spiritual wisdom). When you offer worship to God in the morning, you must offer your obeisance to whatever work you propose to do.

You must pray to the presiding deity of Karma: "Let me do today only pure, purposeful and helpful actions." The circumstances of one's birth are a result of past actions. *Karma* (action), *Janma* (birth), *Dharma* (righteousness) and the *Marma* (secret of life) are all connected with Brahman. They are like the four walls of a building. The first wall is Karma (action). One should not act as his fancies dictate. Before doing anything, one should consider whether it is proper or improper. Nothing should be done in haste on the impulse of the moment. Only then will one's actions be Sathwic and free from Rajasic and Tamasic stains.

Do your duty, leave the results to God

Very often people who experience troubles in life complain: "Why is the Lord subjecting me to trials like these?" The truth is, the Lord neither punishes nor rewards anyone. The devotee has only to do his duty and leave the results to God. If the actions are good, the fruits will also be good. If the actions are bad, the results will be equally bad. Hence without examining the nature of one's actions, there is no meaning in blaming God for what one experiences.

One devotee has said to have exclaimed: "Oh Lord! Among the millions of beings on earth, how will your eyes fall on me? You are not looking at me at all. Won't you see me?" The devotee heard a voice saying: "Oh devotee! You are immersed in so many activities that you have hardly set your eyes upon Me. You have hardly devoted any thought to Me. Who, then, has forgotten whom? Is it you or me?" People are involved in mundane concerns and are deeply immersed in worldly activities. All their thoughts relate to these actions. They worry about some relation or friend in some distant corner of

the world, but cannot think of God who is so near to them. And when they are in trouble, they wail: "Oh Lord, hast thou forgotten me?"

God is the dispenser of fruits of actions

It is only when you recognise your own faults that you begin to understand the ways of the Divine. What we witness today is the tendency to forget one's faults and go about blaming God for one's sufferings. Every action, however small or trivial, has its reaction. Nothing happens without a cause. Every object has its reflection.

The Lord awards fruits according to one's actions. Good actions earn good returns. Bad actions result in bad consequences. That is why the Lord is described as *Karmaphala pradhata* (the dispenser of the fruits of action).

When Duryodhana sought to disrobe Draupadi, the consort of Pandavas, she prayed to Krishna in various ways. Although Krishna heard her prayers, he could not respond immediately to her calls for help. The reason is the stem law of Nature. This universal law operates always at all places and at all times. For instance, if a man slips, he falls to the ground. If a stone is thrown up, it comes down. These are the results of the law of gravitation. Whether he is a millionaire or a pauper, if his foot slips, he falls down. That is how the laws of Nature operate, regardless of the persons.

Hearing Draupadi's prayers, Krishna thought for a moment whether she had done any action in the past which entitled her to secure protection in Duryodhana's assembly hall. To merit Divine help one must have offered something or the other to God - a leaf, a flower, or a little sacred water. At the mundane level there is a simple role of give-and-take in daily life.

The Lord responds to spontaneous actions

Krishna remembered something that Draupadi had done years ago. It was on a Sankranti day. Krishna suffered a cut in His little finger while handling sugarcane. Immediately Rukmini sent a maid to fetch bandage cloth.

Sathyabhama rushed to bring some cloth to bind the wounded finger. Draupadi who was standing by, without hesitation, tore a piece of cloth of her sari and immediately bandaged Krishna's finger. Although what she gave was only a small bit of her sari, it was a spontaneous act of love and devotion. Krishna decided to make that little piece of cloth an endless sari. He uttered the word "*Akshayam*" (May it be unending). And Draupadi's sari became endless!

You feel happy when someone gives you something. But you don't feel equally happy in giving to others. Men desire the fruits of good actions, but will not do good actions. They wish to be saved from the consequences of evil deeds, but will not refrain from bad actions. As you sow, so shall you reap, is a relentless law. You cannot escape from the consequences of your actions, whether good or bad.

If you wish to enjoy enduring happiness, you have to fill your mind with pure thoughts and entertain fine feelings in your heart. Through good thoughts and good kindly actions, the heart gets pure and holy. In the journey of life, the body is like a cart and the heart is like a horse. Unless you feed the heart well, the journey cannot proceed properly. The heart has to be fed with good fodder in the form of Satsangam (good company), Satpravartana (good conduct) and good thoughts. And whatever is done should be an offering to God. There is a story to illustrate how God is pleased when actions are done in this spirit.

God accepts anything offered with a pure heart

There was a woman devotee, who was a worshipper of Krishna. Every morning she used to clean the Krishna shrine in her house with cowdung and throw the remnants of the cowdung outside saying "*Krishnarpanam Asthu*" ("Let this be an offering to Krishna"). The priest of the local Krishna temple noticed that every morning, after he had washed and decorated the idol of Krishna with garlands, when he was offering harathi (waving of lights) to the deity, a small lump of cowdung used to fall on the face of the idol. He was deeply distressed over this strange phenomenon and told the village elders

about it. They also witnessed the phenomenon in the temple and sent a vigilance squad to find out who was throwing cowdung at that time. In one street a scout found a woman throwing cowdung outside her house, uttering the words, "Krishnarpanam." It was found that at the same time she was throwing cowdung, the apparent desecration of the idol by cowdung was taking place in the temple. The Lord is not concerned as to what is offered to Him. He accepts whatever is offered to Him with a pure heart. In His eyes there is nothing good or bad in itself. When the woman devotee offered the cowdung as Krishnarpanam (offering to Krishna), it reached the Krishna idol. The village elders went to the lady and reproached her for her unbecoming conduct in offering cowdung to Krishna. They did not consider how the cowdung thrown outside her house reached the temple. They thought only of the cowdung as such and did not reckon with the power and intensity of the devotion behind the devotees's action.

Ways of devotees cannot be understood by all

The elders summoned the husband and other relations of the old woman to hold an enquiry. The woman pleaded before them: "I am incapable of hurling cowdung on the face of my Krishna. I am ready to lay down my life for Krishna." The elders told her to throw the cowdung and not to utter the words "Krishnarpanam Asthu." At the instance of her husband and other relations, she agreed to this course.

But from that day onwards, the doors in the Krishna temple would not open however much the priest and others tried to open them. The village elders realised that they had done a grievous wrong to a great devotee and pleaded for pardon from her. That moment the temple doors opened.

The ways of devotees can be understood only by devotees. Others cannot understand them. Phenomena such as these are happening all over Bharat. It is because of such devotion that Bharat has remained a holy land through the ages.

Meera's devotion to Krishna

Meera was a devotee who had completely merged herself in Krishna consciousness. After her marriage, she requested her husband to build a temple for Krishna. The Rana built for her a temple in marble. Meera spent all the time in the temple singing *bhajans* (devotional songs) oblivious of the outside world. The Rana, who allowed Meera to carry on her worship of Krishna as agreed to by him before the marriage, got vexed with her complete absorption in Krishna and prohibited her from going to the temple and closed its doors to prevent her from going there.

Meera felt: "The Rana may bar me from the temple which he has built. But who can bar me from seeking the Krishna who resides in the temple of my heart?" Meera's thoughts were centred on Krishna installed in Dwaraka. She ran towards Dwaraka through forests and hills, defying storm and rain, singing all the way and calling on "Krishna ! Krishna !"

Reaching Dwaraka, she entered the temple but found the doors of the sanctum closed. Despite all her efforts, the doors would not open. She cried out "Oh Krishna ! Do you think with the cymbals in one hand and tambura in the other how can I hold your lotus feet ? See, I am throwing them away. I shall not give you up and you cannot get away from me. Abandoning everything, I will cling to your feet." Crying in anguish, Meera knocked her head against the door of the sanctum. That very moment she fell into a swoon. An effluent flame emerged from her body and merged into the Krishna idol. Few can understand the ways in which devotion manifests itself among the lovers of God. Human relations come and go. But the association with God is eternal.

Offer worship to God wholeheartedly

When one offers everything to God, the Lord submits Himself to the devotee. The old woman who did everything as an offering to Krishna was such a devotee. The words "Krishnarpanam" were on her lips all the time. But they were said with deep and genuine devotion. Merely mechanical repetition of "Krishnarpanam" will have no significance. Engaging priests in temples to

perform worship by offering money is totally wrong. Such worship is a mercenary exercise and does no good to the persons who get it done. The proper thing is for devotees to offer worship wholeheartedly in their own homes. That will do them real good.

You might have heard people talk of the 'miracles'; of My 'making' this and 'giving' that, of My fulfilling your wants, of My curing your illnesses. Of course I confer on you these boons of health and prosperity; but, only so that you might, with greater enthusiasm and with less interruption, proceed with Spiritual Sadhana.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

10. From the Mother to Moksha

Date: 06 May 1987 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Easwaramma Day

WE hear in common parlance the terms mother, father, preceptor and God being used in that order. This has a significance of its own. It is the mother that a child sees as soon as it is born. The mother shows the child to the father. The father leads him to the preceptor and the preceptor leads him to God. Everyone should understand the inner significance of the four terms. We hear from spiritual aspirants the four terms - *Bhakti* (devotion), *Jnana* (wisdom), *Vairagya* (renunciation), and *Tatvam* (reality) in the same order. There is a significance in the order in which these terms are mentioned. Devotion awakens wisdom, wisdom promotes renunciation and renunciation confers the knowledge of Reality. We can reach the mansion of *Mukti* (liberation) if we walk on the stepping stones of devotion, wisdom, renunciation and the knowledge of Reality.

The Bhagavatam in its very title testifies to this truth. The term Bhagavatamu in Telugu is made up of five letters: Bha, ga, va, ta, mu.

Here, Bha signifies Bhakti (devotion):

ga signifies Jnana (wisdom):

va signifies Vairagya (renunciation):

ta signifies Tatva (the knowledge of Reality): and,

mu signifies Mukti (Liberation).

The Bhagavatha bestows on us liberation by leading us through Devotion to Wisdom, Renunciation and the knowledge of Reality. Prahlada has given us a dhvadeshakshara mantra, a twelve-lettered holy formula:

"Throva vedhuku konuta dodda buddhi."

This consists of twelve letters in Telugu. It means that the highest intelligence consists in finding the way. What is the way to be sought? It is the way to Divinity. How is it to be found? It is by knowing the source from which you have come from the Divine and you have to go back to the Divine.

From God to God

The tenth stanza in the fourteenth chapter of the Bhagvad Gita reveals that we have come from God. The Lord's utterance is:

"Mamaivamso Jeeva loke Jeeva Bhuthah Sanatanah."

This means: "You are an aspect of Me. You are not an aspect of Nature and its five elements. Since you are an aspect of Mine, there is no peace and joy for you till you reach and merge in Me."

Just as a child cannot be without the mother, as a river must seek the ocean from which it has come, as the branch of a tree cannot survive separation from the tree, and as a fish cannot live outside its sustaining element water, so also man, who has come from God, cannot have real happiness until he returns to God.

One devotee sang in Kannada language thus: "Having forgotten You, I have come to this world. Leaving the Eternal that You are, I have plunged into this transient, temporary world. What joy can I reap in this clod of earth, as all joys are in You alone?" We are born in this world because we have forgotten God. We have to find our way back to God, our destination, retracing the steps by which we have come. "All living beings have to go back to the source from which they came into existence", say's the Bhagavata. It is our misfortune that we have forgotten this vital message today. To remember the

source from which we came is the essential spiritual endeavour that every man should make.

Man should not be content to live like animals

Man who came to this earth in quest of the *Atma* (Divine Self) is wasting away his time in the frivolous pursuit of *anna* (material things). Animals are always busy seeking food. Man, who is endowed with intelligence should not be content to remain like animals. He should strive to reach Reality. Food, sleep, fear and mating are common to both birds and beasts. Man's life today is largely confined to these four things. Birth as a human being should be used to realising the Divinity within and not in frittering it away in sensual pursuits. Chaitanya declared: "We have installed today on the throne of our heart vicious thoughts and feelings, instead of making it the seat of the Lord."

Samsara and Samskara

It is obvious that most of us have to lead a normal family life, but it is not the life in which you should be wholly immersed. It is not *Samsara* (family) that follows us all through. It is the *Samskara*, the purity that you have achieved, that stands by you in afterlife. Some elders come to Swami and pray to Him to show them the way of God. What is the way? The way is journeying back to the place from which we have come. Suppose you go to a town and stay there in a hotel for a few days, you have to come back after finishing your work in town. You cannot live in the hotel forever, mistaking it to be your home. The phenomenal world is like a hotel to which we have come to experience the consequences of our actions in the past. The body is a room in the hotel in which we have to undergo the Karmic consequences. Our time and body should be used for carrying out the mission on which we have come. We are engaged in accumulating wealth, gold and other material possessions. It is true that we need money to lead our life in this world. But there should be a limit to the acquisition of these worldly objects. True welfare and happiness cannot be achieved without observing limits in life. An uncontrolled life reduces man to the level of the animal. Forgetting the primary goal of life men are wasting their time. Time is precious. Death is

dangling its sword over every head. Our life span is fast diminishing like water leaking through a broken pot, or a melting block of ice. Death overtakes many even before they realise their mission in life.

The body is made up of five elements! It has to fall one day. The Dweller in the body is eternal. Free yourself from the delusion of birth and death! The Dweller is indeed Divinity. This is the truth that all have to realise. Fulfillment in life cannot be found by indulging in eating and drinking.

The main message of the Bhagavatha is devotion. The mother is the symbol for Bhakti (devotion). Father is the symbol for Jnana (wisdom). The preceptor is the symbol for Vairagya (renunciation). God is the very embodiment of Atmic knowledge. We can reach the Moksha (mansion of Liberation) only by ascending the four steps to Divinity.

Mother comes First

Love for mother has to be fostered by everyone. Today this love is prompted by more greed - desire for wealth and greed than by spontaneous affection for mother. Barely one in a million realises that he owes food, blood and life itself to the mother. Wherever she may be, a mother is verily divine. It is said:

Matru Devobhava; Pitru Devobhava; Acharya Devobhava; Athithi Devobhava.

(Regard the mother as God, the father as God, the preceptor as God and the guest as God).

The mother stands foremost among these four. She is indeed the first teacher for everyone. It is only the mother who strives most for securing the well-being of the child by showering on him boundless affection and love and showing him the father. Children today do not care to heed their mother's

commands, but they hanker after their mother's wealth. What is the use of having children of this kind? They are a curse on the womb that bore them.

"Of what use is a son who does not lift both his hands in prayer to the Lord, who does not proclaim the Lord's name with his mouth till it aches and, who does not cherish the Lord in his heart?
He is a disgrace to the woman that bore him."

So says the Bhagavatha. This single verse says all that is essential regarding devotion, action, spiritual wisdom and renunciation. What are the duties of the hand and the tongue for a true devotee? God has given each man a single stomach but two hands to work with. If he works hard enough with both hands, he need not starve. There is no dearth of food. One who does not use his hands properly, has no right to subsist on others. The Vedas have enjoined the supremacy of Karma (sacred action).

Make the tongue holy

The tongue should be employed for doing sacred functions. One should speak sweet and sacred things and should not cause pain and hurt to others by his speech. It is a sin to abuse others. The Lord resides in everyone. The person who abuses others is in fact abusing the Lord Himself. In an exhortation to the tongue, Jayadeva said:

"Jihve, rasajne, madhura-priyatvam, satyamhitam tvam,
paramam vada madhura-akshharani, Govinda, Damodara, Madhava."
("O sacred tongue, you know what is sweet, truthful and beneficent.
Utter, then, the supremely sweet words, Govinda, Damodara, Madhava").

The tongue experiences sorrow or suffering in its own home without straying

into the homes of others. It discretely decides beforehand whether an edible should be eaten or not. If it is sweet, it shows its consent by sending it down for digestion. But if it is bitter it spits it out. If the tongue is properly used, it can be the means by which we can attain Godhood itself.

Let the name of the Lord dance on our tongue, since remembrance of the Name is the easiest path to liberation in the Kali Age. We should use the tongue for uttering sweet and truthful words. This sacred instrument is often misused. The sins that the tongue commits are four: lying, backbiting, invecting and loquacity. The tongue becomes sanctified if it refrains from indulging in these four sins.

Example of Pundarika in serving the parents

Everyone should treasure in his heart love for his mother, who has borne him, reared him with love and fostered him with care. The person who forfeits his mother's love will not earn any one's love.

Pundarika was the one who was devoted to the service of his aged parents. In doing so he was adhering to a self-imposed rule. He would not take any food until the parents had gone to sleep. Once he was massaging the feet of the parents. To test Pundarika's love for his parents, Lord Panduranga came to his residence in a disguise and stood behind him. Pundarika went on with his service to his parents who had not gone to sleep. The new-comer asked Pundarika to look at him. Pundarika said, that he was seeing the visitor.

The latter asked him: "In what form are you seeing me?" Pundarika said "I am seeing you as my mother."

Meanwhile Pundarika's Guru came there and told Pundarika that the visitor was none other than the Lord Himself. Pundarika said that the parents whom he was serving were also God. The Guru earnestly urged "Don't you realise that the one who has come is verily God?" Pundarika replied: "My parents also are God." Panduranga admiring his resolve, said: "Pundarika, won't you like to experience a vision of Me even once?" Pundarika replied: "Until my mother

goes to sleep I will not seek your vision. If you are keen that I should see You, please wait for a while. I shall come to You after my mother has gone to sleep." It was such devotion to his parents that made the Lord reveal Himself to Pundarika and render service to him.

From "Ko-ham" to "So-ham"

From the moment of birth, man is concerned about his future. The child's first cry is, "Kwa, Kwa." "Wherefrom have I come?" If you examine what is happening to you everyday, you will understand why a child cries at the time of birth. Seeing the endless troubles in store, the child cries: "Where am I?" Forgetting the place from which they came, men lose themselves in worldly desires. There are a few like Prahlada who from the moment of birth realise their inherent divinity. They utter "So-ham! So-ham" from the time of birth. But ordinary mortals ask "Ko-ham? Ko-ham" ("Who am I?") They do not get the answer till the end of their lives. They do not realise the answer is: "I am God." A few earnest seekers start with "Ko-ham" ("Who am I?") and end with the discovery: "So-ham" ("I am He"). Every man is prone to commit mistakes either wittingly or unwittingly. But one mistake he should not commit in any circumstance, that is, to forget what he owes to his mother. Love of a mother can redeem a man's life, whatever his other lapses may be. The greatest gift of the parents is the body, with all its powers. Although the Lord rules over all lives, it is the parents who have endowed the body to the child. Clay and water are the gifts of Nature. But it is the potter who makes the pots out of them. Hence gratitude to the parents is a primary obligation.

Youth, wealth and strength are transient

Students these days ask: "why should we be grateful to our parents?" They should remember that if they cause distress to their parents now by their behaviour, they should not be surprised if in the later years their own children cause similar distress. This is the law of action and reaction that is always at work. Do not get conceited because of your youth, your wealth or strength. All these are transient. Adi Sankaracharya warned in strident language:

Do not get proud because of companions, wealth or youth. Time will take away these in a moment.

Placing their trust in these tansitory possessions men are forgetting the eternal verities and the source of real bliss. Whatever things you may possess, whatever amenities you may enjoy, only faith in God will confer real peace of mind. An air conditioner may cool your body, But only grace of God can cool the heated brain and the troubled heart. That grace will come to those who are grateful to their parents and render loving service to them. Starting with mother, gratitude should extend to the father and preceptor. If you show gratitude to these three, you will realise the presence of the Triune Lord in them and you will reap the fruit of worshipping the Trinity (Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva).

Parents' fault in not correcting the children

It is an unfortunate fact that today ninety percent of the children are spoilt by the parents themselves. The parents do not exercise timely control over the children. If the wrong actions of the children are corrected then and there, they will grow in the proper way. The parents should show no indulgence towards children who go astray. It is misplaced affection to let erring children go uncorrected.

What use is there in having children who do not behave properly? What did Dhritarashtra gain from his hundred wicked sons? He would not restrain them despite the warning of Krishna and Vidura. Ultimately the entire family was wiped out. There is no meaning in rejoicing when a child is born. The time for rejoicing will come when the child grows up, earns name and fame and brings credit to the parents. Every son should see that he makes his mother happy. He should seek from the mother nothing but her love and blessings. Mothers should strive to keep their children on the straight path. Only such mothers and children are worthy of the name. When mothers and children act

properly, the nation will develop along the right lines. Righteousness will spread from the family to the whole world.

There are parents who question their children when they go to Swami: "What madness has seized you? Why are you going to the Sai?" What form of madness do these parents desire for their progeny? Do they want them to become rowdies and goondas? Do they want them to be crazy about money? What will money give them which can equal the grace of God? What everyone should seek is the grace of the Divine, which is a treasure greater than all the wealth in the world.

God above all is the destiny of human life

Nothing should come in the way of your seeking God. You must be prepared for any sacrifice or face any opposition for the sake of God. Prahlada faced the wrath and hatred of his father Hiranyakasipu in adhering to his faith in Narayana. Vibhishana renounced his brother Ravana when the latter stood in the way of his devotion to Rama. If a mother stands in the way of your devotion to God, you must be prepared to give her up, as Bharata did when Kaikeyi sought to separate him from Rama. Meera was prepared to renounce her husband rather than give up her devotion to Krishna. Emperor Bali rejected the advice of his Guru, Sukracharya, when the latter advised him to retract his gift to Vamana (Vishnu). These are the examples of the devotees who did not flinch in vindicating their devotion to God. The realisation of God is the goal and destiny of human life. From the moment of birth, suffering pursues man in one form or another throughout life. If in all these ordeals, one has to maintain equanimity and peace, he has to lead a righteous life, with firm faith in God. There is no need to give up the normal duties of a student or a householder. But everything that is done should be done as an offering to God. Thereby every ordinary act becomes sanctified. Love of God should express itself in the form of consecration of every action. This is my message to you on this sacred day.

Those attached to God, aspiring God, aware of God, adoring God have distinct marks by which they can be identified. Such people have a compassionate heart. If a person turns the rosary on the fingers and is intently engaged in watching the tip of his nose, unmindful of the distress that dances around him, we can at best name him a sloth, that is all. Get up, place the rosary in its bag, and activate yourselves in relieving distress - that is the true spiritual path. Do not waste all your years with stone images, pictures or idols. Learn to see in every living, vital, active person, the embodiment of all energy, all beauty, all beneficence, namely, God.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

11. Developing the inner vision

Date: **May 1987** / Location: **Prasanthi Nilayam**

WHETHER we are actively working in the world or have withdrawn from it, the most important consideration is not the work that we do or not do, but how effectively we have been able to uproot and destroy the Vasanas (deep-seated tendencies) which lie hidden in our heart. The removal of these impurities, which have encased themselves so deeply, is the principal objective of all Sadhana or spiritual practice. This is also the goal of all Yoga, namely to cleanse ourselves of all trace of Raga and Dvesha, the twin evils of attachment and hatred, which have harboured themselves within us.

The Gita has shown that if we can root out the entrenched tendencies that cling to our heart, we are free to perform any action without concern for the results. From that point on we will not be bound by any Karma we become engaged in; in other words, we will be completely freed from the effects of our actions. People who do not understand this truth and end up renouncing all outside activities, become mired in sloth and idleness. But the Gita has repeatedly warned us that there is no room at all for idleness in the world of the Spirit. What the Gita teaches is Anasakti Yoga, the Yoga of disinterestedness or impersonal action, in which we remain totally indifferent to any personal interest in the work that we do and in the results that accrue from it. It means working with full concentration to the limits of our capacity for excellence, but dedicating all our actions to the service of God and remaining established in God-consciousness.

Nishkama Karma and Anasakthi Yoga

Anasakti Yoga goes even beyond the practice of Nishkama Karma which has been emphasised in the second chapter of the Gita. Nishkama Karma is the stage in which all our actions are performed without desiring or expecting any fruits from our labours. No person will be able to reach the stage of Nishkama Karma as long as his Vasanas (impressions), which have arisen from past actions, are impediments to spiritual progress. A person must first remove the

bad qualities which are associated with bad actions, by replacing them with good qualities which are associated with good actions. Then when he is firmly established in the stage of selfless service, wherein he performs only good actions, he can go to the stage of Nishkama Karma (desire-free actions), where he renounces the fruits of all his actions. From there he will rise to the stage of Anasakti Yoga.

The Gita proclaims that only through good deeds, through Sat Karma, can the bad tendencies be removed and our hearts purified. But it goes further. It asserts that the true purity of the heart can be achieved only by dedicating all our actions to the Lord. For example, when food is eaten after having been cooked and prepared in a number of different ways, it is still just ordinary food, and we are subject to the good or the bad effects of eating that food. However, if this food before being consumed is offered to God, then it becomes Prasadam (blessed food), which becomes the sacred gift of the Lord. By the same token, all the activities performed by us during the day fall into the category of ordinary Karma. But when we perform these same actions, even if they are simple acts, with the intention of making them an offering to God, devoting their results not to our own pleasure but the pleasure of the Lord, then they become Karma Yoga (communion through selfless action) as well as a Yajna, a holy sacrifice. It is only through such Karma Yoga that we will be able to rid ourselves of all evil tendencies and make our hearts pure.

Offerings to God should be pure and sacred

What should be the qualities of the actions we offer at the Lotus Feet of the Lord? Before we offer anything to the Lord we must make sure that it is pure, befitting and sacred. Then it will be a worthy offering to the Lord. For example, if we want to offer a rose to the Lord, we first select a beautiful, fragrant bloom. Then we remove the insects from the flower. Next we remove the thorns or any imperfect leaves from the stem and in a number of other ways we make our offering as beautiful and pure as possible. Every action we perform should be like this. Our actions must be saturated with the fragrance of love and sacredness and must be good and pure. This is the true: Yoga of Action as laid down in the Gita. It is in the field of action, or Karma, that a

man most patently reveals his character and the type of man he is. If we want to ascertain if a person is predominantly Satwic, Rajasic or Tamasic in nature, we need only to observe his actions; they will unmistakably reveal his nature.

Satwic action is Nishkama Karma

The Gita has pointed out the type of actions that should be performed in daily life. The Gita proclaims that the secret of human life is to recognize and follow the path of Dharma, which means engaging ourselves in selfless and sacred actions that promote the welfare of our fellow men. Only then can our actions be considered Satwic in nature. Once they become Satwic then they can be classified as Nishkama Karma. No ordinary person will be able to perform actions completely without desire. We will have to orient our actions and our desires towards the purpose of seeking and experiencing God. When that sacred orientation becomes the basis of all our activities, then such Karma belongs to the Yoga of Anasakti (communion through equanimity). That is the highest level of action and leads us straight on the path of our goal. But involved herein will be the spell of Maya. There are two powerful Shaktis that make up Maya: one is Avarana (veiling power) and the other is Vikshepa (projecting power). There is no particular form and shape for these two. Avarana refers to that which veils or covers. How does it cover? If it does not have form itself, by what means does it cover? How can it be removed? These questions cannot be easily answered. Maya is mysterious and inexplicable. In what circumstances does this delusion exert its influence on us? It is during twilight or in the dark that we imagine that we see a snake when there is only a rope there. It is through darkness that the delusion comes and envelops us. In truth, no snake has covered the rope, but the delusion beclouds the mind of man and covers his clear perception. This delusion is Maya. When you turn your torch on the area you find no snake there; there is only a rope lying there. Thus, in the light, delusion disappears and the real object is seen. That which exists will always exist; it will never cease to exist. It remains forever unchanged. There cannot be even the slightest variation in its existence. It is only the delusion covering it which comes and goes. The form that this delusion takes in the mind is Vikshepa the second powerful Shakti of Maya. Vikshepa is the projection that is super imposed on the unchanging basis. In

this case the projection was the snake. Another time it will be something else.

Moods, pains, pleasures all come and go. They are something like relatives that come to visit us, but they do not stay permanently. In the same way, this Maya comes and goes as a delusion for human beings. The delusion in our mind which covers the rope and hides from view is Avarana, the veiling power. The illusion which has been projected by our mind on to the rope is Vikshepa, the projecting power. With the help of the light we see the rope as a rope, and the snake vanishes. So these two aspects of Maya have come in the darkness and disappeared in the light. Maya has no beginning. But it can permanently come to an end. When the light of wisdom shines on it, Maya will finally disappear; then the One Unchanging Reality will stand revealed. By teaching this great wisdom to Arjuna, Krishna was able to free him from delusion and make him shine with self-effulgence.

Then as now, we are developing only superficial understanding and outer vision. But it is the inner vision that is important; it alone is true and sacred. We lose sight of the One Reality, of our own Truth, because we pay attention only to the impermanent outer vision and forget completely the permanent inner vision. God comes as Avatar (incarnation) in order to bestow this sacred inner vision.

From Karma and Bhakti Yoga to Jnana Yoga

Krishna urged Arjuna to free himself from attachments and illusions that were confounding him. Krishna said, "Arjuna, you yourself must purify your heart and remove the veil of ignorance that is beclouding you. Take to the path of righteous action, work for the welfare of the world and dedicate your every act to Me, who am your very Self, residing in your heart." There is no royal road for human life other than through Karma Yoga, through the path of dedicated action. We will be able to enter into Bhakti Yoga, the path of devotion only after we have laid a firm foundation through good actions. And only after we have purified our feelings and developed our devotion will we be able to enter into the area of Wisdom and proceed on the highest path of Jnana Yoga .

Using our intellect to plan out an action whose fruits would benefit someone else, as is the case in the action of an old man who plants a tree whose fruits will be enjoyed by the future generations, can be called Buddhi Yoga (communion through intellect). In Buddhi Yoga we enquire into the consequences of our actions, and thereby base our actions on the reasoning power of our intellect. Intellect goes far above the narrow selfish considerations of the lower mind and senses. But even here there is still a tinge of selfishness. When we are completely free from all selfishness, totally indifferent to the results, acting effectively with full concentration, but without any attachment or desire, and offering all our actions to God, then we are practising Anasakti Yoga. This is far superior to Buddhi Yoga.

The best way to develop inner vision

Anasakti Yoga is not easily accessible to ordinary people. But that does not mean that we should give up trying to attain it. With whole-hearted effort and God's Grace, seemingly impossible things can be achieved. If we persist in our efforts then with practice we will be able to reach this high level of Anasakti Yoga in all our activities. To succeed in this, the inner vision must be developed. Constantly reflecting on the Divinity that is everywhere is the best way to develop the inner vision that will establish us in Anasakti Yoga. But the inner vision is very rare among men; even the greatest Pandits and scholars are steeped only in the outer vision. Here is a story that illustrates this.

The story of Ashtavakra and the Pandits

Once upon a time, King Janaka called an assembly of great scholars. Famous Pandits and logicians came from all over the realm. The assembly was composed of such giants that there

was no room at all for ordinary people to enter in. The daily meetings were presided over by

King Janaka himself, and of the highly select group in attendance, only the most outstanding and accomplished were given the opportunity to speak and

present their views. It was to this magnificent and august assembly that Ashtavakra, young in age, devoid of formal scholarship and twisted in physical form, sought to gain admission. But who would permit Ashtavakra to enter? He did not have any credentials or any recommendation whatsoever. The only help he had was his deep faith in God. Whoever has an abiding faith in God will not be put to any great difficulties. Temporarily there may be some obstacles but in the end he is sure to meet with success. For three days Ashtavakra waited at the gate of King Janaka's palace. While waiting Ashtavakra observed all the worldfamous scholars who were coming to attend the meeting. Ashtavakra was not prepared to give up his resolution to join the assembly and participate in its deliberations. He waited at the gate patiently day after day. There was one observant and sympathetic old scholar who noticed Ashtavakra standing by that gate, whenever he entered and exited through it, morning and evening. The kindly old scholar informed King Janaka that there was a young boy outside, waiting for some days to enter the assembly, although he did not have any of the usual qualifications necessary for being inside. King Janaka directed his assistants to find the boy and bring him to the assembly hall. Shortly after King Janaka had taken his seat, and the meeting began in the solemn and sacred atmosphere befitting such an august assembly, Ashtavakra entered the hall. The moment they saw the young boy with such crooked form come to take part in the assembly, most of the great scholars who had gathered there began to laugh.

Ashtavarka calls Pandits as cobblers

King Janaka who was keenly observing Ashtavakra as he entered, did not laugh. Ashtavakra looked carefully around the hall, and then quite inexplicably started laughing even louder than the scholars seated there. This loud burst of laughter from Ashtavakra was quite inadmissible and greatly surprised the scholars; it became a real problem for them. "Why should this uncouth stripling be laughing at us?" they thought. "There certainly is reason enough for our laughter, considering how funny he looks, but there is nothing at all strange about us, so what conceivable reason does he have for all this laughter?" They were very much puzzled and irritated by what they considered the boy's impertinence. The assembled scholars were eagerly

waiting to find out why this strange looking young person who had just come in, was laughing so loudly. One of the scholars was bold enough to speak to Ashtavakra. He asked, "Oh stranger, who are you? We do not know you. When we looked at you as you came in, your form made us laugh. In response to our laughter you are laughing even more loudly. What is the reason for this? What strikes you so funny about all the renowned scholars seated here that you have not even for a moment stopped laughing." Ashtavakra replied, "Well, Sir, I entered this gathering thinking it to be sacred assembly convened by the famous Emperor Janaka to discuss the holy scriptures. If only I had known what kind of people were attending this assembly, I would not have bothered to come. I waited patiently for many days and then entered this hall thinking that the greatest living scholars would be assembled here. I looked forward to being in the company of such sacred souls. But, alas, I find nothing but cobblers here, only Charmakaras (shoemakers), who stitch chappals and work with leather." When they heard this all the scholars became furious, feeling greatly insulted by Ashtavarka for using such an abusive word.

Pandits should have capacity to look inward

But Ashtavakra continued in the same vein, "Charmakara is the proper word to describe you. Only cobblers, only people who work with hides and skins will think about the worth of a particular skin; others will not be bothered about it. All of you are laughing at my skin and have obviously decided it is not worth much, but not even one of you has made an effort to know about my scholarship. Pandits should have a capacity to look inward, but you only seem to care about the outer covering. If you have not developed your inner vision but are only concerned, with the superficial outer vision, then you cannot be considered scholars at all. Then you are only Charmakaras, shoemakers, cobblers, specialists in hides." Thus spoke Ashtavakra. The scholars hung their heads in shame. King Janaka who understood very well what Ashtavakra was saying, invited him to take a seat in the assembly, and subsequently bestowed numerous honours upon him.

As was the case then, so is the case now throughout the world. However great we may be, we have developed only the external vision. We do not

bother to cultivate the inner vision. When we examine a person we pay attention only to his physical features, his wealth, his status, his education, his degrees and so on. On the other hand when God examines a person, He looks at the purity of his heart. He pays attention to the peace that is within him. It is such inner vision that we must develop.

Whatever be the circumstances we confront with, we should' not get excited or agitated. We should allow time for the nobler feelings to well up. from inside us and manifest themselves. By practising patience and forbearance we will be able to acquire all the other important spiritual qualities, such as mind control, renunciation, endurance and concentration. This will bring a state of inner purity and abiding peace. Inner purity is even more important than outer purity. The Lord is ever present both inside and out. Therefore, both inner and the outer, the entire place where the Lord is to be found, must be purified and sanctified. Then the indwelling God will protect you wherever you go.

12. Chaitanya and the thief

Date: 1987 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

KRISHNA Chaitanya was once moving about, dancing and singing ecstatically, oblivious to everything, being immersed in the contemplation of the Lord. He entered Navadhveep, where the leaders of the town joined him in his Bhajan with equal ecstasy. A thief also joined this group. He had been a thief all his life and an arrant liar. He joined in their dance and thought that as there were many rich men in the group, who were wholly lost in their singing and dancing, he could easily pick their pockets. While this was his intention, what happened was entirely different. The moment he joined the devout group, he forgot himself and began to sing and dance with the same fervour as others. After the others had left, he, sat apart for a while, watching Chaitanya. A small group of children were listening to Chaitanya's discourse.

The thief ran towards Chaitanya and said: "Swami! You are giving advice to so many persons. Please impart some holy name to me." Chaitanya replied, "Tell me first of all who you are and what is your life story. I shall then give you a message." The man confessed: "Swami! I am a thief. I have been leading the life of a thief and a liar. My name is Rama. People call me as Rama the Thief." Chaitanya said: "What a pity! I shall, however, give you a message. What will you give me as Gurudakshina (offering to the teacher)?" The thief replied: "I shall give you a share in the booty I get from stealing." Chaitanya said: "I have no need for any such thing. Give me as an offering a promise that you will not commit theft in future." He replied: "Swami! I am prepared to offer you anything, but I cannot agree to give up stealing." Chaitanya then said: "If that is so, I shall impart the sacred name to you on one condition. Whichever place you may choose for thieving you must recite the sacred name 108 times before you break into the place."

A holy person can change even a thief

Chaitanya then drew the thief near to him. The thief's heart had considerably softened after listening to Chaitanya's words. Sambhashanam

Sankatanashanam ("conversation with a holy person removes distress"). The thief was getting rid of the fear. He neared Chaitanya. Sparsanam Karma Vimochanam (the touch of a holy person frees one from the effects of past deeds). Chaitanya held the thief's head and whispered in his ear three times the mantra: "Om Namoh Bhagavathe Vasudevaya." The mere sight (darsanam) of Chaitanya destroyed the sins committed by the thief. His words dispelled the worry felt by the thief. The touch of the saint freed him from the bonds of past deeds. The thief went back with a purified heart. As he was leaving, he saw large numbers of people going to Chaitanya. Many rich persons were amongst them. The thief thought that this was a good opportunity for him to break into their houses. The richest man in the building had taken his wife and children to meet Chaitanya, leaving his house unguarded. The thief broke into the house and entered the safe-room in which all the valuables were kept. He saw gems of all kinds. He was resolved not to touch any of the valuables till he had completed recitation of the mantra given to him by Chaitanya. But before he completed the mantra japa (recitation of holy formula), the master of the house and others arrived there.

A thief is turned into a saint

The lady of the house, who had gone with all her jewels, wanted to replace them in the safe. She saw a stranger in the room engaged in deep meditation. She thought it must be some great sage who had come into the house in their absence and was meditating on God. She called her husband. The stranger continued to be immersed in meditation. He did not appear like a thief. They thought he must be some saintly person who had honoured their home by his visit. All of them began to offer worship to him and prostrate before him. They thought that in the wake of the saint Chaitanya other saintly persons were also visiting their village. Meanwhile, on the completion of the recitation of the mantra, the thief opened his eyes and to his astonishment found a large group of people standing reverently before him. The master of the house asked him: "Oh sir! Who are you? Where from have you come? We have been sanctified by your visit. Please take your food in our home and redeem our lives by doing us this honour." A great change came over the thief. He thought: "If the mere recitation of the Lord's name can bring me so much

honour and respect, although I had come here only to steal, how many greater things may be in store for me if I genuinely recite the Lord's name for its own sake? I may hope for the highest position by the grace of the Lord." That very moment he decided to give up stealing. He prostrated before the master of the house and his wife and said: "Mother! Let me tell you the truth. I am a thief. Let me go to a forest. I shall spend the rest of my days contemplating on God and leading my life of a true ascetic." Listening to his words of truth, the elders present were deeply moved and they arranged to carry him in a palanquin in procession round the village and to leave him in a forest as desired by him. Later, the man went to Chaitanya and reverently requested him to bless him so that he may become a real sage worthy of respect from the people.

13. The Human Destiny

Date: 26 June 1987 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

MOST people in the world do not know the true significance of life. Many do not even seem to care about it. One in a million may be concerned about knowing the purpose of life. The concern is the first step in the journey towards the ultimate goal. Most young men are content to regard eating, sleeping, dressing and rearing a big family as the main aims of living. All these doubtless are necessary to some extent. But they alone cannot contribute to peace of mind or fullness of life.

The phenomena of the external world are what the eyes see, the ears hear, and the mind cognises. All these are sensory phenomena. Beyond the Indriyas (senses) is the mind and greater than the mind is the Buddhi (intellect). The intellect is governed by the Atma (the inner Divine Being). The human destiny is to realise the Atma. Among the sense organs the most powerful is the mouth (which has the powers of speech and consuming food). When the mouth is under the control of the mind, all other senses can be controlled. Speech should be restrained as much as possible. Then, the attention, of the mind should be diverted towards the Buddhi (which has the power of discrimination). When the Buddhi is turned towards the Atma (the indwelling Spirit), it begins to realise the all-pervading Spirit.

Only a few enjoy the bliss of the Spirit

The inextricable connection between the phenomenal world outside and the world of consciousness inside eludes the understanding, of ordinary people. Immersed in the desire for enjoying worldly pleasures, they do not attempt to discover the boundless joy to be derived from the inner Spirit. This is because all the sense organs are open only to experiences from outside. It is not surprising that the common man is subject to the outward vision. Only a few develop the inner vision and enjoy spiritual bliss. Is it the body that derives joy from looking at a thing of beauty? Or is it the Atma? What is it that relishes the food that is consumed? The body or the spirit? What is it that

enjoys fragrance or is moved by companionship? Enquiring in this manner, it will be found that it is the Atma that is the enjoyer and not the physical body. The body by itself is gross and is incapable of experiencing joy. It must be realised that the Spirit transcends the mind and the intellect and pervades the entire cosmos. The Spirit is the basis for the cognition of the external world and experiencing the inner world.

The Vedas and Vedangas (vedic sciences), music and literature, physics and chemistry, botany and biology - all these different branches of knowledge are related to the phenomenal universe. They belong to the category of "Apara Vidya" - the lower knowledge. People devote their lives mainly to these studies. Only the knowledge of the Spirit is "Para Vidya" - the Supreme Knowledge. "Apara Vidya" (worldly knowledge) is pursued mainly for earning a living. But even worldly knowledge exists to point the way to spiritual awareness. Without spiritual knowledge, all other knowledge is valueless.

Experiences of different states of consciousness

Every man has to enquire every moment about the purpose and goal in life. Eating, drinking, sleeping and passing time cannot be the meaning of human life. All these are common to birds and beasts. What is the uniqueness of man? He is endowed with faculties which can enable him to rise above the animal to the human and divine level. Vak (speech), Manas (mind) and Prana (vital breath) are manifestations of the Atma. Each is related to a state of consciousness. They are: Jagruti (the waking state), Svapna (dream state) and Sushupti (deep sleep). In the Jagruti state man is awake and experiences the outer world through sight, hearing, speech and other senses. The phenomenal universe is what one experiences through the five sense organs. The experience in the waking state is known as Visva because experiences are the subtle form of the cosmic principle. Visva has 24 constituent elements: the five organs of action, the five sense organs, the five basic elements, the five pranas (vital airs), the mind, the Buddhi (intellect), the Chitta (subconscious mind) and Ahamkara (ego sense). In the dream state, only the four internal senses (the mind, the Buddhi, the Chitta and the Ahamkara) function. They constitute the Antahkarana (the psycho-somatic

agency). In this state the experiencer has tejas (an effulgent form) and is known as Thaijasa. Sushupti is the state of deep sleep. In this state, Prajna (intuited awareness) alone remains. Hence the experience in this state is called Prajna (the Knower). Visva, Thaijasa and Prajna are all different names of the Atma (in the different states of consciousness), according to the different forms assumed by the Atma in the various states.

Modifications of the principle of consciousness

Prajnanam Brahma declares the Upanishad. Jnana, Vijnana, Prajnana, Sujnana and Ajnana are modifications of one and the same principle of Consciousness. Prajnana comprehends all that is experienced by the Antahkarana through impressions received by the sense organs - the eyes, the mouth, the ears, the nose, etc. Prajnana is immanent in Antahkarana as the principle which absorbs and interprets the messages received through the senses. The eyes, for instance, are like the bulb in a lamp. The bulb cannot emit light. It needs the electric current to make it bum. Likewise the eyes cannot see by themselves. It is the Prajnana which sees through the eyes. The same thing applies to the ears and the other organs. They all need power of the inner current to do their work. All the sense organs are insentient by themselves. It is Prajnana that animates them and makes them instruments of the Chaitanya (Consciousness). The universe contains innumerable objects. In all of them, the one unchanging, eternal principle is the Atma. That is Prajnana. That is Brahman. It is the power of this eternal principle which sustains the evanescent and ever-changing objects of the universe. Asthi, Bhasthi and Priyam (Existing, shining and pleasing) are three indices of the Divine. Sat-Chit-Ananda are the attributes of the Divine. Sat indicates permanace. Chit indicates Omniscience. Ananda is the state of unalloyed bliss. These three attributes of the Divine are changeless and have no form or name. When these three get associated with objects which have name and form, we have Prapancha - the quintuple phenomenal universe. The cosmos is permeated by the Divine. Even if you are unable to see It, the Divine is present in everything. All our senses function because of the Consciousness that operates in every being. Without that consciousness man would be an insentient creature.

Atma is common to all states of consciousness

The different states of consciousness are mutually exclusive. You cannot experience in one state what you have gone through in another. For instance, in a dream you may weep over the death of a person. But when you wake up, you don't weep for the person who died in the dream. What happened in the dream is true only in the dream state. In the waking state it is Mithya (unreal). Likewise we do not lament in the dream for a person who died in the waking state. Each experience is real only in that state of consciousness. But the one principle that is common to all states of consciousness - -waking, dream, and deep sleep - -is the Atma. Atma is not bound by limitations of time, space and circumstance. The body is impermanent. But it is the abode of the indwelling Spirit. It is a shrine and when it moves, the Divine moves with it. Hence the body should be cared for the same way in which an iron safe which is of little value in itself, is safeguarded for the sake of the valuables kept in it. What is it that binds man to the illusory world? It is not family or property. These can be given up when one wishes to do so. But what are the most difficult to renounce are Raga (attachment) and Dwesha (hatred). As long as these are dominant in man, he cannot realise his true self. And as long as man is unaware of his true self, he is in bondage, there is no freedom from suffering or worry.

Rights and duties are two ends of a battery

Students should remember that life is precious and should not be wasted in the pursuit of trivial and temporary things. Together with academic studies they should cultivate spiritual sadhana. Even in academic studies, they should not confine themselves to merely transferring to the memory what is contained in the books. They must digest what they have studied and put their knowledge to practical use in the service of society. Try to absorb what is contained in the books and make this knowledge a part of your life. Just as water stored in a reservoir is used for irrigation through canals, the knowledge acquired by you should be diverted to useful channels for the benefit of society.

Today everyone talks about his rights and "fights" for them. But they are forgetting their duties and responsibilities. Rights and duties are like the positive and negative ends of a battery. They go together. When duties are discharged properly, rights will be secured of their own accord. How can rights be ensured without the due performance of duties? Recognise your responsibilities as students. That will make you deserve your rights.

Students should develop largeness of heart

This country has inherited a glorious culture from ancient times. You must preserve this culture, while adapting it to suit modern conditions. Most of our students are totally ignorant of our spiritual and cultural heritage. This ancient culture laid stress on unity and sought to raise the human to Divine level. It aimed at promoting religious and social harmony. Today unity and tolerance are absent and society is riddled with conflicts. The country lost its freedom in the past because of divisions. We should regard Bharat as one nation, with one heart and proclaim the Truth to the world in one voice. Students! Develop largeness of heart. The heart is not a physical organ. It derives its name "Hridaya" from the fact that it is a seat of Daya (compassion). Develop compassion for all. Go forward from the narrow feelings of "I" and "mine" to "We" and "Ours". It is not easy to comprehend the formless, attributeless, infinite Divine. The truth of the Divine has to be discovered and experienced by each one. The Divine is omnipresent. You must lead a life of truth and godliness based on this conviction. Strive to make the nation an upholder of truth and righteousness. This is the foremost duty of students today. Discourse at the Sri Sathya Sai Auditorium, Prasanthi Nilayam, on commencement of the New

If the eye does not help you to visualise God in everything it sees, it is far better to be blind. If your ears drag into filthy cacophony it is far better to be deaf. The senses should not be encouraged to plunge you into sensual muck. They must serve your real interests and sublimate your appetites. They must help you to dwell on God.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

14. Light the lamp in your hearts

Date: 26 June 1987 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Inauguration of the New Wing of 'the Institute Students' Hostel

A LAMP has a unique power, which is not possessed by any other object. It dispels darkness. For this reason, Bharatiyas have always worshipped lighted lamps. Before commencing any auspicious or religious function, the ceremonial lamp is lit. Another notable quality of the lamp is that the flame goes upwards - the path of the Brahman. The sinful path leads downwards. The light of the lamp, however, can only dispel the darkness outside but cannot remove the darkness that envelops the heart as a result of attachments and aversions carried from previous lives. Not all the blaze of light which filled Lanka when Hanuman set it on fire could remove the darkness from Ravana's heart. Because his heart was filled with lust and hate, no light could penetrate it.

Even as a lamp needs a container, oil, wick and a match stick to light it, for lighting the inner flame, one needs a container in the form of Vairagya (renunciation), Bhakti (the oil of devotion), the wick of mental concentration and Tathvajnana (the match stick of true awareness). Even if any of these four is lacking, the light of Self cannot be lit.

Where there is no attachment there is no fear

The world today is immersed in fear and suffering. The only way to get rid of fear is to cultivate Vairagya (non-attachment). Where there is no attachment, there is no fear. Only through nonattachment and renunciation can one acquire the competence to experience inner illumination. Renunciation does not mean giving up property and society and betaking oneself to the forest. What is called for is renunciation of all evil tendencies. That is Yoga. In the Gita three paths have been indicated. Mathkarmakrit Mathparamo Madhbhaktah ("Who works for me only, who looks on me as the only refuge, and is devoted to Me"), says Krishna. Here, Matkarmakrit ("Who works for Me") does not mean doing service to Krishna. The "Me" represents the Cosmic

Being. Because everything in the universe is permeated by the Divine, one who is enjoined to do service to all as the primary duty. All actions have to be done in society. You have to serve your country. The individual, the community and the world are the triune aspects of Divinity. To ignore any one of these is to court failure in the purpose of living. The goodness of the individual promotes the welfare of society. Social well-being is the basis for national welfare. The cultivation of Vairagya (renunciation) calls for practice of certain restraints and disciplines. There should be curbs on desires. One should give back to society what one has been able to acquire by the use of the knowledge and skills received with the help of society. True sacrifice consists in sharing with others one's wealth, strength and qualities, which are in fact derived from society.

One should not be remiss in discharging one's duties and responsibilities. The proper fulfilment of duties is part of the spiritual discipline necessary for getting enlightenment. No room should be given for doubts. Many are haunted by doubts of every kind. While doubts remain, there can be no liberation from bondage.

Sacrifice leads to communion with Divine

Students should strive to lead exemplary lives. No one can give up completely all social relations or actions. Hence, one should dedicate all actions to the Divine and thereby develop the sense of detachment. To remove the chaos and violence prevailing in society today, you have to become Karmayogis and devote all your knowledge, abilities and energies to the transformation of society. It is not wealth that is important. Character alone counts. Bhoga (sensual pleasures) can only lead to Roga (disease). Thyaga (sacrifice) leads to Yoga (communion with the Divine). I have lit the lamp in the hostel today as a symbol of the spiritual light that has to be lit in the hearts of all of you. Spiritual enlightenment is as important as academic knowledge. All other branches are like rivers which merge in the ocean of Spiritual Knowledge. During your educational career, develop purity of character and cultivate right habits. Even in ordinary routine actions like sitting, do not be sloppy and indifferent. If your back is bent when you sit, the Sushumna nadi (which runs

through the spinal column) gets bent and this will produce harmful consequences including loss of memory power. Discipline is vital. Avoid unnecessary talks and purposeless association with anyone. Having come for study, you must concentrate on your primary duty. Strive to make your parents happy by your conduct and performance and see that you bring credit and good name to the Institute. Only then will your life be an example to others.

There is no stepping down in your Godward march. It is a continuous journey through day and night, through hill and dale. Where the road ends, God is attained and the pilgrim finds, that he has travelled from himself to himself.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

15. God and you are One

Date: 11 July 1987 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Guru Purnima

ANTARBAHISCHA tathsarvam Vyapya Narayano sthithah ("Pervading the entire cosmos inside and outside remains Narayana"), says the Upanishad. Where can you search for the One who is all pervasive? When everything in the world is permeated by the Divine, it is dangerous to claim something as "mine" or "thine". It is not possible to realise God by Sadhanas, yajnas or yagas, dhyana (rituals, sacrificial actions, meditation) or good deeds. All these are only aids for achieving purity of heart and mind. This truth has been clearly enunciated by Sri Krishna in the 11th Chapter of the Gita in sloka 53: "Neither by the Veda, nor by austerities, nor by gift, nor by sacrifices, can I be seen in this form as you (Arjuna) have seen me." What, then is the purpose of these Sadhanas, which are being performed by earnest and knowledgeable aspirants? All these Sadhanas are intended to help man get rid of the veil in which he is enveloped by Raga (attachment) and Dhvesha (hatred). The inner meaning of all spiritual disciplines is to make man realise his true nature.

Aspects of Sat-Chit-Ananda and their unity

Man inherently is the embodiment of Sat-Chit-Ananda (Being-Awareness-Bliss). Sat is the unchanging state which is unaffected by the processes of Time (the past, present and the future). Chit is the capacity of Awareness which enables one to know the outer and the inner truth about everything. Ananda is that state of unalloyed bliss which is pure and permanent. When Sat, Chit and Ananda appear as different and distinct aspects, how are they to be experienced as a whole? Although they appear to be distinct, their unity can be illustrated by an example. The flame of a lamp has three features' heat, light and the red colour. Although these three features are distinct the flame is one.

How is Sat-Chit-Ananda to be experienced? Is it possible for the microcosm to experience the macrocosm? Such a doubt arises out of a sense of weakness.

One should not give way to this. On the surface of the vast ocean, there are endless number of waves produced by the action of wind on water. The water in the ocean has the quality of coolness, transparency and wetness. Every wave arising from the ocean has these three qualities. Likewise, every individual being who has issued from the infinite Sat-Chit-Ananda has the three aspects of the Divine. There is no need to succumb to the apparent contrast between the Infinite and the minuscule finite. All things are permeated by the divinity that characterises Sat-Chit-Ananda. The term "daiva" (Divinity) means wholeness and immanence. Divinity is immanent in the Prakriti (whole of creation), which cannot exist otherwise. The energy that is present in every object in Creation is derived from the divine (Sat-Chit-Ananda). Divinity represents the unity of Sat-Chit-Ananda and Prakriti. In modern parlance, this may be stated as: Matter plus Being is God.

The four obstacles that have to be overcome

Recognition of this basic unity calls for earnest and continuous striving. In the pursuit of this fundamental quest, four major obstacles have to be overcome. They are: Avidya prathibandhakam, Prajna prathibandhakam, Kutharka prathibandhakam and Viparyaya Duragraha prathibandhakam. Avidya prathibandhakam is the impediment that arises out of the feeling that one is too weak and powerless to seek the Divine. As long as this sense of weakness remains, man cannot understand the Omni-Self. Prajna prathibandhakam is the obstacle that is created by self-conceit. When one feels that he knows everything and is unwilling to learn from elders he becomes unfit for undertaking the Spiritual quest. The third obstacle Kutharka prathibandhakam, is faced by those who are caught up in illogical reasoning and false arguments. They give farfetched interpretations to the pronouncements of sages and engage themselves in meaningless controversies. The fourth obstacle, Viparyaya Duragraha prathibandhakam, is caused by ignorance of one's inner Reality and a refusal to make the effort to understand it. It arises out of a feeling of arrogance that one knows everything and has no need to learn from others. The cause of this arrogance is Maya (delusion). Maya is present when one sees the unreal as Real and the Real as unreal. This is the basic characteristic of ignorance. Such persons

view the Jagat (world) as a physical phenomenon. But those who have attained the inner vision see the Cosmos as the manifestation of the Lord of the Cosmos (Jagadeeshvara). The Cosmos is the vesture of the Divine. The scientists admit that matter is composed of energy. Without energy nothing can exist in the Cosmos. Prahlada and Hiranyakasipu represent the two opposing views regarding the Cosmos. Hiranyakasipu viewed a pillar as only a pillar. Prahlada saw in it the immanence of Narayana.

God cannot be seen in an exclusive way

Today we have an ever-growing number of people who are unaware of the nature of Divinity. No special Sadhanas are performed to experience Divinity. Nor all the religious rites performed by many are done for the sake of God. God cannot be seen in an exclusive way. When one realises his own true nature and rids himself of impurities like attachment and hatred, he shines in his own true Self. Hence all spiritual practices are only intended to eliminate impurities in a person.

In every man there is a combination of the Mayatatwa (the Deluding principle) and the Brahmatatwa (the Divine principle). Without the Deluding principle, the Brahmatatwa cannot be experienced. Without the Brahmatatwa, the power of Maya cannot be manifest. On the surface of the vast ocean, countless waves are seen. There must be a force that causes these waves. It is the power of wind on the water of the ocean that produces the waves. Without the force of wind there can be no waves. Maya can be compared to this wind. The water in the ocean can be compared to the form of Sat-Chit-Ananda. The Jiva-tatwa or the individual selves are the waves of the ocean.

Sixteen aspects that are undesirable to man

So, for the individual selves Maya is the primary factor. They are merely reflected images of the Divine. The images will remain only as long as there is the mirror (of Maya). When the mirror is removed, the One alone remains. Our body is like a mirror. As long as the body consciousness is there, the notion of separate individuality will persist like the image in a mirror. When

the mirror of body-consciousness is removed, the image (the individual consciousness) will also go. Only the permanent entity - the Atma - will remain. To recognise the illusory character of the world does not mean giving up all actions or family ties. Actions should be done in a spirit of detachment. Relationships should be maintained without deep attachment. It is not renunciation of action that is required. Renunciation in action is what is necessary.

That means that actions which have to be performed as obligatory duties should be done properly. Thereby the mind is cleansed of its impurities. This is the purpose of actions done in the proper spirit.

Today is Guru Poornima day - the day of full moon dedicated to the worship of Guru. On this day, the moon shines effulgently with all his 16 Kalas (aspects). On your part you have to shed 16 aspects that are undesirable to man. These 16 comprise the following: eight types of pride (pride of physical strength, of birth, of scholarship, wealth, penance, beauty, youth and power), six kinds of enemies (desire, anger, greed, infatuation, arrogance and envy), and the Rajo- and Thamo-gunas (passionate and slothful traits). It is only when these sixteen evil traits are eliminated that man will achieve fullness. These evil traits are preventing man from realising his essential divinity.

Man allows the mind to dominate him

Man has also to contend with afflictions from five Kleshos (afflictions). These are: Avidya, Abhinivesha, Asmitha, Raga and Dhvesha. Avidya (lack of true knowledge) renders a man feel weak and imbecile, incapable of recognising his inherent divine nature. Abhinivesha makes a man attached to samsara (worldly concerns) and to forget his real destiny. He allows the mind to dominate him. As a result, he is subject to sorrow and depression. Asmitha is the trouble that arises out of ego and excessive greed. When the desires are not fulfilled, there is distress. When they are fulfilled, Ahamkara (self-conceit) grows. In this process genuine human qualities wither away. Raga Klesha is the distress caused by the insatiable desire for houses, vehicles, wealth, etc. Dhvesha Klesha is the feeling of bitterness that arises when one does not get

what he seeks from others. In due course he becomes a low and pitiable creature. The scriptures have declared that among birds, the crow is the meanest; among animals, the donkey is the meanest and among men, the one who indulges in slander is most despicable. The crow is mean because it does not relish good food and prefers only rotten things. The donkey carries only dirty clothes and is always dirty. The slanderer has a foul tongue and is the meanest among human beings.

The Greatest Sin that man commits

The greatest sin man commits is to forget his divinity and failing to recognise his true nature, considers himself a distinct individual and fills his mind with desires and hatreds. We should not look upon human existence as something pitiful or weak and powerless. Man is the embodiment of Divine. Sat-Chit-Ananda (Being-Awareness-Bliss). The Divine in him is always radiating light and bliss. But, because of the barrier of bad thoughts, he is unable to experience this bliss. The Divine is not something different or separate from one's self. Although one is identical with the Divine, the dark cloaks of Raga (attachment) and Dhvesha (hatred) envelop his divine essence and prevent him from realising his inner Reality. The only truth man has to discover is the truth about himself. All the Sadhanas that are practised are intended to remove the veil that conceals this Reality in man. But all Sadhanas or enquiries that may be carried on for any length of time will be of no avail if the mind is not pure.

Sai Words and Sai Path

All the scriptures you study diligently will reveal that the Sai path is the truth. Exploring the purport of all the Vedas you will find the true path in Sai's words. All the science and scriptures will testify to the truth of Sai's words. Chanting the Gayatri full-throatedly will prove the truth of Sai's message. Of what avail is all your striving if the mind remains polluted? It is only when the mind is cleansed that one can develop a proper vision. In our daily prayers we say, "You are the mother, you are the father, you are the guru and you are the friend." Who is this "you"? Instead of saying, "You are mother, father,

guru and friend", it is enough if you say, "You are I." You have to attain the stage when you can say: "You (God) are I." This is the essence of all truths. This is the root of everything. This is the goal proclaimed by all the scriptures.

Recognise that God and you are one. There will then be no need to describe God as father, mother, guru and the like and confound oneself. We should strive to reduce the bondages created by such relationships as father, mother, etc. We should aim at realising that basic Unity that underlines and sustains everything. That is the significance of the statement Eko vasi sarvabhootha-antaratma. ("He is the one Indweller in all beings"). How meaningful are such expressions as "My people" and "your people"? How long can these relationships last? They are all momentary. The only relationship that lasts forever and does not change is the association with the Atma. Instead of seeking this permanent association, man hankers after relationships based on the impermanent body due to the power of Maya. Despite all their knowledge and study, people are groping in this dark chamber (of Maya). Until you get out of this darkness and seek the light, you will be wrapped in sorrow.

Realise "You are the fragment of the Divine"

Mamaivamso Jeevaloke Jeevabhoothah Sanatanah ("The eternal resides in every being in the world as a fragment of Mine"), says the Lord in the Gita. We have to develop the faith that it is the same Lord who dwells in all beings as a spark of the Divine. You are not the body. You are not even a separate spirit. You are a fragment of the Divine. This is the great truth that everyone has to realise fully. Without achieving this conviction, there is no use in performing any Sadhana or worship for years. Once this conviction is obtained, the vision of the Divine is experienced automatically.

The nation today needs to develop the sense of unity. Narrow loyalties such as linguistic fanaticism, provincialism, caste loyalties and sectarianism have grown to such an extent that they have totally driven out devotion to the Divine. It is this devotion that has to be cultivated, because it is the basis for

real unity stemming from a recognition that the Divine is in everyone. Embodiments of Sat-Chit-Ananda! You have been listening to my discourses for years. If you are merely content to listen, it is sheer waste of time. You have to ruminate over what you have heard and try to put into practice the teachings. Sravanam (listening), Mananam (reflecting) and Nidhidhyasanam (putting into practice what has been learnt) are the three stages in the spiritual journey. Repeating parrot-like what one has heard has not even the merit of enjoying the sweetness of the words.

Claiming to be devotees and going about as devotees, few are caring to find out what is true devotion. Bhajans and japas (singing and repeating God's name) and performance of yagas and yajnas (sacrifices and rituals) are not the real marks of devotion. They are merely exercises in washing out one's impurities. All the nine kinds of worship are also designed to achieve purity of mind and heart. But purity should find expression in action just as clothes that have been washed have to be worn. Without purity in action, the real nature of the Self cannot be recognised.

Become truly human

By being endowed with the human form, men do not become really human. The evolution from animal to the human being has taken millennia. The world is peopled today by billions of human beings. But how many of them display genuine human qualities? Man is still going through birth-pangs of real humanness. Only when human qualities are manifest can man claim to be truly human. In that humanness there is Divinity. It will wear the mantle of Truth. It will be the embodiment of Dharma (Righteousness), Prema (Love) and Santhi (Peace). It is only when men display these qualities that they can be regarded as human. If mankind is able to achieve at least this level of human-ness, it would be sufficient. Today we are celebrating Gurupoornima. The day is usually observed as an occasion for offering worship to the Guru (the religious or other preceptor). There are eight different types of gurus, who impart spiritual instructions of different kinds. Among these, the really important guru is "Vihitha Guru", the preceptor who removes the doubts in the minds of the disciples and reveals to them the process of Self-discovery

and Self-realisation. The guru should destroy the darkness of ignorance (about one's Reality) and illumine the mind of the disciple. The illumination must result in the perception of the One Reality that is beyond name and form and attributes.

Vibhuti signifies non-dualism

Swami often gives to devotees Vibhuti or Bhasma (the sacred ash). Many people smear their foreheads with this ash. What is the inner significance of this ash? When any object that has a name and form is completely burnt, it is reduced to ashes. The name and form are gone. All things are one and the same in the final state as ashes. When Vibhuti is given, Swami wants the recipient to understand this Advaitam (basic oneness). The devotee should get rid of Ahamkara (ego arising from the feeling of separateness) and sense of Mamakara ("mine" and "thine"). These two are based on name and form and when they are destroyed, the underlying unity of the Divine can be realised.

People constantly talk of Advaita (non-dualism), but hardly live up to their professions in practice. One must practise what one preaches or professes. Today there are not many gurus who live up to their beliefs or teachings. Their actions belie their words. No purpose is served by going in search of gurus. There is a guru in each of us. It is the Atma principle. It is the Eternal Witness functioning as Conscience in everyone. With this Conscience as guide, let all actions be done.

The inner meaning of the three Yugas

There are three types of Mayas which prompt men to action - Swechcha, Parechcha and Ayichcha. "Swechcha" is the kind of prompting in which one decides to follow a particular course of action, and is prepared for the consequences, for better or worse. "Parechcha" is the situation in which one is encouraged or prompted by others to undertake actions whose consequences have to be borne by him. "Ayichcha" is the state in which every action is regarded as the will of the Dime and all consequences, whether gain

or loss, pleasure or pain, are regarded as gifts from God.

Real freedom exists in submitting to the Will of the Divine and not acting according to one's caprices and fancies. What is freedom that people want? Is it to behave like dogs with no selfrestraint? Is it to descend to the level of the sub-human species? Is it to flee from one's divine nature and indulge in demonical acts? What kind of freedom is this? In this context I shall tell you today the inner meaning of the different yugas the Tretha Yuga, the Dwapara Yuga and the present Kali Yuga. In the Tretha Yuga, the Divine elements were on one side and the demonical elements on the other. At the time of the Rama avatar the divine elements were in Ayodhya and Kishkindha and the demonic forces were in the forest of Dhandakaranya. The two elements were in separate regions. Rama waged a war against the Rakshasas in Dhandakaranya and protected the rishis. This is the inner meaning of the Rama avatar in the Tretha Yuga. In the Dwapara Yuga, the divine and the demoniac elements - namely, the Pandavas and the Kauravas were in the same kingdom. In such a situation Krishna gave his army to the Kauravas and without wielding any weapon Himself, gave His support to the Pandavas in the great battle of Kurukshetra. He used others as instruments.

Unique feature of the Kali Yuga

But today, these divine and demonic forces are battling in each human being. This is the mark of the Kali age. In Tretha Yuga Rama fought the battle in person. In Dwapara Yuga Krishna played the role of a witness, using others as His instruments. He did not engage in the battle Himself. In Kali Yuga because the two opposing factors are in each individual, the Lord plays the role of a witness and as the conscience. Man has to use the power of discrimination given to him to fight the evil forces within him. He has to foster the divine elements in him. by his own efforts and listening to the voice of his conscience. The freedom to choose has been given to man for this purpose. This freedom is to be used to discriminate between right and wrong, good and evil and to foster divine qualities. This is the unique feature of the Kali age. In this age, each individual has to fight against the demonic forces himself and vanquish them. When this is accomplished man's inherent divine nature will

manifest itself of its own accord. Embodiments of love! Realise that no special Sadhana is needed to experience the Divine in you. You must get rid yourself of impure thoughts and actions. Sanctify every action you do and make it a Sadhana. The Divine is not a created object. It is self-effulgent and present in everyone.

The many that came from One

Here is an illustration to indicate the relationship between the Divine and the individual. On a hill, there is a big boulder. A sculptor sits on the boulder and sculpts out of it an idol of Krishna. The pieces of rock chiselled out of the boulder in making the idol are cast away. The Krishna idol is duly installed in a temple for worship. No one bothers about the pieces of stone left on the hill. But mutely they proclaim the truth' Tat thwam Asi. ("We are the same as the idol you worship in the temple").

The stone idol of Krishna and the broken pieces on the hill have come out of the same rock. They were one at the beginning. Later one part became an idol and the other parts will be used for building or other purposes. But they are all from the same rock! This basic truth has to be understood. Whether you worship it in one form, or walk over it in another form, or use it for building a house, it is all the same substance. Likewise, everything is basically divine. It has the three divine elements derived from Sat-Chit-Ananda, the qualities of Asthi (existence), Bhati (luminosity) and Priyam (utility). These three are common to every object in creation. When form and name are given to them, each acquires five qualities. The Universe, which is Prapancha, has these five-fold characteristics. If name and form are removed, only divinity will remain. We cannot change the appearance of the universe. But by a change in our vision, its divinity can be recognised.

Go forward from Dualism to Non-Dualism

Turn your minds towards the Divine - towards the eternal, unchanging, effulgent and pure Sat-Chit-Ananda. See the Divine in everything. Realise that there is only one Divinity immanent in all things. Do not waste all your life

immersed in dualism. What is it you have gained from all the pujas you have done and all the discourses you have listened to? If you have not progressed in the slightest extent from the state of duality, you have gained nothing from your experience. At least from now on, try to go forwards towards a higher consciousness. Proceed from Dvaita (Dualism) to Vishishtadvaita (partial non-dualism) and reach the stage of Advaitic (non-dual) Consciousness. Do not stay put in the stage where you are like a milestone. Having performed Sadhana, studied the scriptures, met the saintly men and listened to the discourses, you should realise the fruits of spiritual experience.

16. The ascent of man

Date: 23 July 1987 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

Possessing physical prowess And intellectual strength, If one lacks Divine help
He is powerless and weak. Forget not the fate of one Like the valiant Kama,

Who died ingloriously,

And learn the lesson.

Everyone knows the world of God But of what avail is it? They profess to worship God But have no understanding of God's message. WITHOUT getting rid of ignorance, awareness of the Supreme cannot be experienced. Jnana (the higher knowledge) is the embodiment of the Paramatma (the Oversoul). It is self-effulgent. It is only when man is conscious that he is that Knowledge and that Light that he can have the Advaitic (oneness with the Divine) experience. What is light? It is the means by which we are able to see various objects. During the day we see things by the light of the sun and at night by the light of the moon and stars and of lamps. What is it that enables us to know that we are seeing things by sunlight or other sources? It is through the eyes. In the dream state we see many objects although our eyes are closed. Who is the seer in that state and who is the experiencer of the dream? It is the Buddhi (the intelligence) that is able to see things by its own Tejas (luminosity).

The three aspects of Advaita principle

In the Sushupti (deep sleep) state even the Buddhi is not present, but a blissful feeling is experienced. Who is the experiencer of this bliss? That is the Atma (the Indwelling Spirit). "I am the Atma and the Atma is I" is the truth that has to be recognised by everyone. It is the Atma that activates the Buddhi, which enables the eyes to perceive objects. The Atma is the Truth and you are the Atma. It is when this truth is experienced, then alone can man realise the transcendental unity that subsumes everything. For this

purpose, an enquiry has to be made into "Advaita trayam" (three aspects of nondualism). These three are: Bhava-Advaitam, Kriya-Advaitam and Padhartha-Advaitam.

Bhava-Advaitam is the enquiry which leads to recognition of the common basis of different objects like cloth and thread, namely, cotton. To recognise the One that underlies the Many is Bhava-Advaitam. This involves recognition of the one indwelling Spirit which is common to all beings.

Kriya-Advaitam relates to the performance of actions, with purity of mind, speech and body, in a spirit of dedication to God. Padhartha-Advaitam calls for recognition of the elements that are common to all objects and all living things. The Pancha Pranas (five vital airs) and the Pancha Bhootas (five basic elements - earth, water, fire, and ether) are to be found in all beings.

There is only One Divine in all things

The understanding of these three aspects of oneness will lead to a realisation of the basic unity of the cosmos. Failing to see this divine unity, men are caught up in differences. There is only One Divine in all things. It is shining effulgently in everyone. But like the ashes that cover the fire in a burning charcoal, this light is covered by man's own ignorance of the light within. To see the fire in the charcoal, the ash covering it has to be blown off. Likewise, the light of the Atma in the individual is covered by the sense of separateness and multiplicity. When through sadhana, this feeling of manifoldness goes, the real nature of the Self is recognised. There are five types of human beings. One is the Manava-daivatvam (human-divine) type; second, the Manava-manavatvam (human-human); third, the Manava-danavatvam (humandemonic); fourth, the Manava-pashutvam (human-animal); fifth, the Manava-heenatvam (debased human).

The human-divine type consists of persons who are aware of the divinity in them. They recognise that the Atma is the real Self and regard the body as an instrument for realising the Divine. They strive to lead pure and sacred lives, always entertain pure thoughts and engage themselves in acts of charity and

righteousness. They concentrate their minds on the Divine and fill their lives with the love of God.

The term Manava has two meanings

The human-human type are those who discharge their prescribed duties in life according to the various stages - Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha and Sanyasa (student, householder, forest-dweller and mendicant) - and lead a pure and sanctified life. Such persons strive to adhere to the basic human values of Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Love and thereby live up to their true human nature.

The term manava (human) has two meanings. One is ma (not) nava (new} - one who is not new. This means that man has a long history behind him. The other meaning is: ma-na-va - one who is free from ignorance (ma-ignorance, na-without, va-living). True humanness consists of turning away from evil courses and pursuing right paths in life. Manava-danavatvam (human-demonic) type: This type of human beings follow evil practices not only in matters relating to food and recreation, but engage themselves in acts of cruelty and violence. They lead lives bereft of morality and justice. They are intensely selfish and have no thought of being helpful to anyone. The demonic quality is identified with selfishness and cruelty. If righteousness is the mark of a truly human person, wickedness is the mark of the demonic being.

The Manava-pashutvam (human-animal) type: This type of person is concerned only with eating, sleeping and sensuous pleasures. These animal qualities are described in Hindi as "Khana, Sona, Mama" (eating, sleeping and dying). These persons have no higher aims in life. Hence, they lead an animal existence. There is only one thing which is worse than this human-animal existence. That is the debased human being, who will go to the extent of subjecting himself to suffering for the purpose of doing harm to others. He will be prepared to lose both his eyes to see that the other man loses one. He will do harm to those who have done him good. This is the most degraded type of human being.

The greatness of a human being does not consist in returning good for good. It consists of doing good to one who has done him harm. It is enough if men try to be at least truly human, if they cannot rise to the level of the human-divine. Men should seek to live as true human beings. Thereby they may go towards the divine. Whatever studies you may pursue, whatever degrees you may acquire, never fail to live up to your true human estate. Without developing the true human qualities, all learning is like the howling of jackals in a cemetery. Getting by rote all kinds of knowledge without making any effort to put even a fraction of it into practice is simply an infliction on the memory.

17. Become beacon-light

Date: 30 July 1987

STUDENTS! You have to consider seriously the root cause for the chaos, the injustice, the falsehood and the disorder in which the world is caught up today. The old are lost in brooding over the past and lamenting the passing of "the good old days." The young are concerned about planning their future, their jobs, manage, family and so on. Both are ignoring their duties in the present. They do not realise that the present is both a product of the past and the seed for the future. If the present is properly taken care of the future will be good of its own accord. Decide to do your duty in the present. It will pave a royal road for the future. Duty is God. Work is worship. Make these two mottoes the guides for your life and pursue your studies in this spirit. If you are planning to do something in your future, what is the guarantee that such a time will come? Putting off obligations for tomorrow is irrational. Live in the present. Resolve to fulfill your immediate duties.

Show your gratitude to your parents, to those who have nourished and cherished you, to your teachers and your spouses. This is the primary index of humanness. Today, instead of gratitude we have cruelty. People do not hesitate to do harm to those who have done them good. This is inhuman. Instead of trying to do good even to those who have done them harm, how wicked it is to do harm to those who have done good to them?

Make life worth-while and meaningful

You have to develop the consciousness that you belong to one and the same human family. There should be no feeling of separatism on the basis of language, caste or creed. If you have not understood the greatness of your country and have no regard for upholding its stature and honour, of what worth is your education? Book knowledge is of little worth. All the energy expended on studying books will later turn to allergy. What is important is the cultivation of pure and sacred ideals. Acquiring degrees and begging for jobs is a pitiable situation. Develop self reliance and build your life on faith in God.

It is the decline of spirituality that has landed the nation in the mess in which it finds itself, with a complete loss of moral values. Parents are not held in esteem. There is little love lost between husband and wife and parents and children. 'What kind of life is this? The first requisite for children is to have love and regard for parents to whom they owe everything. Learning to earn a living is only half the job. The other half is to make life worthwhile and meaningful. Students should take note of the innumerable ways in which energy is being wasted. Seeing bad things, listening to bad things, bad speech, bad thoughts and bad deeds - energy is being wasted in all these five ways. The power of sight is a precious gift. Whenever you see, some divine energy is expended in the act of seeing. This will be evident from the fact that blind people are found to have considerable reserves of energy. There are many intelligent persons among the blind. The man with sight walks briskly during the day, but flounders in the dark. Blind people walk at the same, even pace during day or night. Deaf and dumb persons also conserve considerable energy because they don't waste it in speech or hearing. Modern students are growing like the giraffe, which has its head in one place and its heart a long way off. In the case of the giraffe, it is because of its long neck that the head is remote from the heart. But there is no such excuse for human beings. They should be able to observe unity in thought, word and deed.

You must set an example to the world

Good conduct is most essential. People without morals 'perish. It is the decline in morality that is responsible for the country's troubles. The recovery of morals is the primary need today. Morality cannot be had from the books or from the market. It has to come from the heart. With regard to professional education like engineering and medicine, many students go in for these courses after completing the 12th standard. This is too early for such courses. They may pick up some technical knowledge, but their general knowledge and awareness of conditions in the world are poor. Their command of language is also meagre. Students should have at least a degree before they are admitted to the professional courses. There is a wide gulf between what you study at the college and what you will have to face in life later. After you

finish studies, you may get married and will have to adjust yourselves to the customs and attitudes of your parents-in-law and others. Not all of you will be able to go for work. What happens to the knowledge acquired here? You must see what you learn is of use for the kind of life you will have to lead later. You have to learn how to move in society and how to be useful to society. All that you are, you owe to society and you have to show your gratitude to society by rendering service.

Your first duty is to give happiness to your parents. You should not be preoccupied with your own personal comforts and pleasure. You must set an example to the world as a result of all that you have learnt here.

Importance of women's role in Society

Remember that women have a vital role to play in the world. Our ancients recognised the primary importance of women and gave them appropriate status in every respect. Cultivate humility, which is the hall-mark of true knowledge. Develop self-confidence, without which nothing worthwhile can be achieved in life. Above all, have firm faith in God. People perform all kinds of rituals on the basis of the holy days mentioned in the almanac like Ekadasi. But they do not have firm faith in the Supreme Godhead, who is the eternal basis of everything. Students! Education in our institute is merely an opportunity for you to become exemplary human beings. Commercial or worldly motives are totally absent here. My only wish is that all of you should develop into worthy representatives of Indian womanhood when you go out into the world. Learn to lead a life of righteousness, truth, love and beauty. Become beacon-lights for the world.

The eyes of the world are on the Sai educational institutions. You must live up to your ideals without fear or pride. Let your conscience be your guide always. You have my blessings in all your endeavours.

Discourse at the College Auditorium of Sri Sathya Sai College for Women, Ananthapur, on 30-7-

No matter where you go, always know that I will be there, inside you, guiding you every step of the way. In the years to come you will experience me in different manifestations of my form. You are my very own, dearer than dear to me. I will protect you as the eyelids protect the eyes.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

18. The Avatar as the Ideal

Date: 16 August 1987 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

Men seek a good time, position and good life But will not cultivate good thoughts, wisdom or right conduct. Do you know why legs have been given? Is it to roam aimlessly in alleys and bylanes? No. It is to take to the shrine of Lord Siva. Do you know why you have been endowed with eyes? Is it to gaze on all kinds of things? No. It is to behold the Lord of Kailasa.. WHA T the nation needs today is idealism. Society and the world need the inspiring examples of ideal leaders. There are, no doubt, individuals who are exemplars in their particular fields. But it is rare to find any one person who is an ideal in every respect. It is possible for God alone to be such an ideal. Lord Sri Krishna stands out as a unique ideal figure, exemplifying the highest qualities in every respect - social, political, ethical and spiritual. That Krishna was a war-monger and not a lover of peace has long been a matter for discussion. But Krishna was essentially a lover of peace. The ways of the Divine are not necessarily intelligible to all.

Today people worship God as God but do not try to understand the ideal human qualities displayed by an Avatar. It is only when the human ideals exemplified by Sri Krishna, when He incarnated as man and lived and moved amongst men, are recognized that human life can be rendered meaningful. It is worth examining in what manner Krishna displayed these marks of human excellence.

Dharmaja and Arjuna lose patience

The great Mahabharata war was on. Each of the Pandava brothers was involved in separate encounters. Dharmaja, the eldest brother, was engaged in a fierce battle with Karna. The Pandava forces could not withstand the missiles coming from Kama. Dharmaja was under great strain. The Pandava forces were fleeing. Dharmaja retired to his tent in great anguish, unable to bear reverses in the battle. At that moment Arjuna entered his brother's tent. On seeing him, Dharmaja flew into a rage. Burning with anger, Dharmaja

burst out at Arjuna that all his prowess and the power of his mighty bow, Gandiva, had been utterly useless. He went on railing at Arjuna. Unable to suffer these accusations, Arjuna lifted his Gandiva and was about to strike Dharmaja. At that very moment Krishna appeared there. Krishna tried to pacify Arjuna. He said, "Arjuna! it is not mete that you should raise your arm against your elder brother. The primary trait of brothers is to show respect towards elders and earn their regard. Forgetting your duty you have allowed yourself to be provoked by words and resorted to wrongful action." Krishna advised Arjuna strongly in this manner. He requested Dharmaja to withdraw and gave proper advice to Arjuna on how he should conduct himself. Assuaged by Krishna's appeal and accepting his wise counsel, Arjuna retired to his tent.

Example in humility

Proceeding next to Dharmaja's tent and seeing the agony he was experiencing, Krishna bent down and held Dharmaja's feet. Krishna told him: "Dharmaja! It is not fitting that an elder brother like you should behave in this fashion. It is not right that you should blame your younger brother Arjuna in such strong language. You may have used these words only in a fit of anger. You Pandava brothers who have been an example to the world in brotherly love, should not allow discord to mar your unity. The Pandavas are looked upon as an ideal for the world. You should live up to that reputation. Therefore, you must go immediately to Arjuna and seek his forgiveness." Listening to Krishna's loving words, Dharmaja was in tears. "Swami", he said, "for you, the prop and sustainer of the world, to hold my feet makes me feel ashamed." Begging Krishna to forgive him, Dharmaja went forthwith to Arjuna and appealed to him to forgive him. Those who look at these actions as acts of God may consider them too trivial and small for the Divine to undertake. "Why should the Almighty Lord Krishna demean Himself in this way?" some critics might ask. But the ideals which the Divine seeks to exemplify for mankind are revealed only through such small incidents. Out of His abundant love for His devotees, the Lord does many things some of which may not seem right. All of them are done entirely out of concern for the well-being of the world. They are intended to serve as guidelines to society.

God declares the truth without mincing words

To set an example to the world, the Lord engages Himself in apparently trivial activities and teaches the lessons to be learnt from them. God sets an example in humility and reverence. On occasions, the Lord (in human form) can be harsh and relentless. He will declare the truth without mincing words. Here again Krishna provides the example. Dharmaja wanted to perform the Rajasooya Yajna (sacrificial ritual for Paramountcy) after getting the approval of the citizens and the ministers and priests. Dharmaja sought Krishna's blessings for the performance of the yajna. After listening to Dharmaja's proposal, Krishna smiled and said, "Only a supreme sovereign ruler, whose suzerainty is accepted by all rulers in the country, can perform such a yajna. You are not such a sovereign emperor. There are quite a few rulers like Sisupala, Jarasandha and Dhanthavakra, who do not recognise your power. As long as there are such kings, you are not qualified to perform the Rajasooya Yajna."

Krishna's actions in Statecraft

Krishna thus wanted to dissuade Dharmaja from proceeding with his plan. At all times, Krishna never hesitated to tell the truth, without regard to persons, place or circumstance. He told Dharmaja that if he wanted to perform the Rajasooya Yajna he should first conquer these powerful rulers.

Misinterpreting the purport of Krishna's advice, some people characterised him as an instigator of wars. Krishna did not call on Dharmaja to go to war. All that he told him was about the qualifications required for performing the Rajasooya Yajna. Then, Dharmaja took counsel with his brothers and effected the conquest of Sisupala, Jarasandha and others. Krishna's actions in the field of State craft should be properly understood. When the Rajasooya Yajna began, each of the brothers was allotted a specific function. Krishna also approached Dharmaja respectfully and pleaded for some function to be assigned to him, saying: "As the world sees it, you (Dharmaja) are the overlord and I am the subject. Hence, please assign to me some task in this

Yajna." Dharmaja was distressed at this request, coming as it did from one whom Dharmaja regarded as All-Knowing Omnipresent Lord. Dharmaja said: "I owe everything to you. You are the ruler and I am only your servant." Krishna replied: "What you have said as a devotee is true. But from the worldly point of view, as a king you have to respect the obligations prescribed for the king. You must distinguish your obligations to God and your secular duties as a ruler." This distinction is as true today as it was in the olden days. Individual Freedom and Fundamental Law are distinct things. What relates to affairs of State should not be linked with one's personal concerns.

Krishna urged that he should be allotted a specific task. Dharmaja said, "Krishna, you take up any assignment that you like." Krishna retorted: "For taking up any assignment of my choice I need not ask you. I wish to do what you would like me to do."

Krishna's example in elimination of ego

The argument between the two went on for a long while and ultimately Krishna said he would like to be responsible for receiving the scholars and the priests who would be attending the yajna, washing their feet and doing all honours to them. Here is an illustration of how Krishna set an example in the elimination of the ego. Why should Krishna, who was such a great and powerful personality, take upon himself such a humble task as washing the feet of pandits? The moral is clear. One who aspires to be a leader should show qualities of leadership in every field. It was to serve an example to the world in every sphere that Krishna undertook many tasks and never considered anything as too small or trivial. Out of his boundless love for the Pandavas and on account of his deep concern for the preservation of their unity and brotherly love, Krishna did several things which cannot be easily understood. Before the Kurukshetra war, Krishna was sent as the envoy of the Pandavas to negotiate with Duryodhana and the Kauravas. The love that subsisted between the Pandavas and Krishna was not based on mere kinship or political interests. It was a unity of hearts, The Pandavas were devoted to Krishna as much as Krishna loved them. They had no option but to send Krishna as their envoy to the Kauravas.

When Krishna reached Hastinapura, the Kaurava capital, he found that elaborate arrangements had been made for according him a grand welcome. (The Kauravas apparently in their narrowmindedness, hoped to win over Krishna to 'their side by this show of extravagant hospitality).

Krishna's example as an envoy

When Krishna alighted from the chariot, Duryodhana, Dussasana and others greeted him and invited him to stay in their palatial guest-house and accept their hospitality. Even at that moment Krishna taught them the proprieties governing affairs of State. He said: "Dussasana, I have come as an envoy. It is only after completing my mission as envoy can I accept your hospitality. Till then I cannot be your guest." After giving this lesson in political proprieties in unmistakable terms, Krishna proceeded to the house of Vidura. Vidura was deeply agitated on seeing Krishna and asked him: "Krishna, you are all-knowing and can see the shape of things, to come. How, then, did you agree to this mission? How did the Pandavas agree to send you here? The wicked Kauravas are capable of doing harm to you by all kinds of foul means; knowing all this, why did you come here?" Krishna replied: "Vidura, it is not as if I do not know this. But in the interest of the people and welfare of the world, I have to undertake such missions. No one can understand my purposes. My sole concern is the preservation of Dharma. I wish to see that no rift develops among the Pandavas and that complete harmony and unity prevail amongst them. Any differences among the Pandavas will be disastrous for the world. I am ready to undertake any mission, however trivial or hazardous." Krishna then went to the Assembly Hall of the Kauravas. As he entered, Duryodana and Dussasana welcomed him and invited him to take the special elevated seat that had been arranged for him. All the sages and other worthies in the hall rose as Krishna entered. Bhishma, assisted by Drona and Dhritarashtra, approached Krishna and requested him to take the preeminent seat intended for him.

What Krishna said on that occasion is an object-lesson to the world. He said: "Oh King! I shall take my seat only after all the people here have taken their seats. Until then I cannot, take my seat."

Krishna pleads for the Pandavas

When all had resumed their seats, Krishna continued standing and said: "I must first complete the ambassadorial mission on which I have come." He turned to Dhritarashtra and said: "Oh King! As stipulated by you, the Pandavas have returned after spending 12 years in exile in the forest and living one year incognito. Today you have to fulfill the pledge you gave to them that you will return their kingdom to them. It is your duty to honour your word." Krishna argued with Dhritarashtra that he should keep the pledge that he had given, to the Pandavas. He told the king: "The Pandavas are the very embodiment of Dharma . They entertain no feelings of enmity or hatred towards anyone. When I was about to leave for Hastinapura, Dharmaja clasped my hands together and entreated me to inform you that if he had committed any lapse, wittingly or unwittingly, he wished to be forgiven by you. If necessary, he was ready to come in person and seek your forgiveness at your feet. This is the noble and righteous attitude of the Pandavas towards you and your people. It is not proper to have any ill-feeling towards the high-minded Pandavas." On listening to Krishna, Dhritarashtra said, 'Why are the progeny of two brothers. Are not all of them equal in your eyes Krishna? This is one family and one kingdom. Is it proper for you to view the Kauravas in one way and the Pandavas in another way?.'

The bond of love between Krishna and Pandavas

Krishna then explained clearly to Dhritarashtra the truth of the situation, without reservation or mincing words "Dhritarashtra! There is nothing in common between the Kauravas and the Pandavas. The Pandavas are the very embodiment of Dharma. I am moving with them as their life-breath. Let me tell you what binds me to the Pandavas. A body has many limbs. In my body, Dharmaja is like the head. Arjuna represents my two arms. Bhima is like my stomach. Nakula and Sahadeva are like my two feet. Krishna is the heart of this body. My relationship with the Pandavas is like that of the heart to the rest of the body." The moment Duryodana and Dussasana heard these words, they became indignant and their eyes became red with anger. When one is

puffed up with pride and physical prowess, one has bloodshot eyes. For the evil-minded Kauravas this kind of reaction was natural. All the elders in the Assembly were in agreement with Krishna. Dhritarashtra, however, wanted to retire to take rest for a while. His real intention was to have a talk with Krishna in private, away from the presence of his sons. He retired to his private chamber. Krishna came there. Holding both his hands, Dhritarashtra pleaded with Krishna: "My sons are wicked fellows. My infatuation for them has blinded my vision. The Pandavas are undoubtedly righteous. Their adherence to truth and justice is exemplary. I am unable to see a way out."

Give no quarter to evil

Krishna spoke to Dhritarashtra in strong terms: "Dhritarashtra! Fondness for sons is a good thing. But excessive attachment to them is likely to prove harmful and dangerous. Don't we try to get rid of urine and feces from our body?." Dhritarashtra said: "These are inanimate things, but how can I get rid of my sons who are my flesh and blood?" Krishna said that what is evil should be cast away without any compunction. He declared that those who are wicked - whether it be a son, a wife or one's parents... should be given up without hesitation. "Strive your best to persuade them to return to the right path. But when these attempts fail they should be abandoned." After these talks, Krishna realised that his mission of parleys for peace would not succeed. He did not go back to the Kaurava Assembly Hall. He mounted his chariot and returned to Vidura's residence.

Meanwhile, the Pandavas were in great agony, contemplating how Krishna would fare at the hands of the wicked Kauravas. Without taking food and drink, they were brooding over what might happen to Krishna and were anxiously awaiting his return. On seeing Krishna back, alighting from the chariot, the Pandavas rejoiced beyond words. They did not ask how his mission had fared. All they were concerned about was the safe return of Krishna. That was enough for them. They had no thought about their future. Their love for Krishna was so great that they felt boundless joy to see him safe. Dharmaja was the first to embrace Krishna. Then all the brothers hugged him and bathed him with tears of joy. Sahadeva, the youngest of the

Pandavas then spoke in a choked voice: "Although I did not like Sri Krishna to go on this mission to the Kauravas, I did not speak out because of my youth and because it would have been inauspicious to object to a journey when one was starting on it. The safe return of our brother-in-law makes me feel richer than a billionaire. I do not care whether there is peace or war or whether I lose my life. It is enough for me if Krishna is safe and well."

How the Divine works for the good of devotees

Such was the love the Pandavas bore towards Krishna. Yadbhavam tadbhavati ("As one feels, so he becomes"). The Lord's love for a devotee is as intense as a devotee's love for the Lord. Having regard to the well-being of the devotee and the good of the world, Krishna performed actions whether big or small, solely for the good of others. He was indifferent to praise or blame. His sole purpose was protection of devotees and fulfilling their wishes whether small or otherwise. In His view all things are equal. Correcting the defects among men, directing them on a right path, the Lord in His human incarnation seeks to raise humanity to the highest level by all methods. Ordinary people may question whether it is proper for God to do certain things and not certain others. From a mundane point of view, things may appear trivial or big. But in the Divine calculus there are no such differences because He views everything with the same Divine love. He does not examine whether one is great or small.

A lesson to Arjuna taught by Krishna

Once Arjuna was in a greatly despondent mood. He was disgusted with life and wanted to commit suicide that very night. The All-Knowing Lord Krishna, decided to avert this. He went to Arjuna's residence and told him that he wanted to discuss some urgent matter with him and therefore he wanted to dine with him that day. When Subhadra (Arjuna's wife) and others were engaged otherwise, Krishna called Arjuna to a private chamber. As soon as Arjuna was inside, Krishna bolted the door. He then took firm hold of Arjuna's feet. Arjuna immediately burst out: "Swami!" What unworthy act have I done? Why are you acting like this?" Krishna said: "With all your titles and

achievements, it is utterly unbecoming of you to entertain thoughts of suicide. You are foremost among the Pandavas. You acquired the Gandiva (from Shiva) after going through severe penances and ordeals. You should be the master of your senses and not their slave. Today you have been overcome by your mind and your senses. This is unworthy of you. Give me a pledge that in no circumstances in the future will you think of suicide. Your life is mine and my life is yours. The divine is the indweller in all beings. Hence I am present in all beings. If you contemplate suicide, you will be guilty of attempting on the life of your dear Krishna." Arjuna said, "Swami ! I was ignorant of the subtle truths you have revealed. Please forgive me. Henceforth, in all my life I will not think of any such act." In this manner, Krishna, in His love for the Pandavas, was prepared to go to any length and do even menial act to protect them. The Lord is Omnipresent. His eyes, feet and hands are everywhere. There is nothing low or high for Him. On one occasion He carried even the sandals of Draupadi when He advised her to seek Bhishma's blessings to save her husbands from destruction. For the sake of setting an example to the world, the Lord does many things in His human incarnation.

Arjuna disagrees with Krishna

On one occasion, Krishna was conversing with the Pandava brothers when Arjuna expressed disagreement with certain statements of Krishna. Krishna assumed an angry pose and left the place. Hardly had He gone a short distance when Dharmaja, Bhima and Nakula turned on Arjuna and berated him for insulting Krishna, who was their very life-breath. Unable to bear this rebuke, Arjuna prayed internally to Krishna. Meanwhile Krishna returned and told the brothers: "What Arjuna has done is true to human nature. Man is fickle-minded and prone to doubts. The more intellectual a person is, the more he is subject to these traits. Such persons have no firm belief in anything. Because of your intellect, you Arjuna behaved without understanding what has gone before or what is to come. Henceforth don't rely on your intellect. Carry out the will of the Divine." Then Arjuna said: "Karishye Vachanam Thava" (I shall abide by whatever you say). It was then that the Lord gave Arjuna the assurance: "Centre your thoughts on Me, be My

devotee, worship Me always and I assure you will reach Me."

Follow the ideals set for humanity by God

These days there are many who profess to be devotees but do not conduct themselves as true devotees. What is called for is adherence in action to what one says in speech. Only then are people fit to earn the grace of the Lord. There is no use merely offering worship to God as God. One should understand the ideals set for humanity by God in His human incarnation and live up to them. Human values have to be fostered. Without human qualities, the mere human form is worthless. Only by practising human values does man become truly human. Man derives his name from the possession of the mind. The mind is a bundle of good and bad thoughts. When man fills his mind with good and pure thoughts, he becomes pure and leads a pure life. Morality is based on good conduct. Sacred, pure and helpful activities constitute right conduct. It is such conduct that is conducive to the blossoming of human excellence. Men should first of all develop faith in God. On the basis of that faith, they should strive to live up to the ideals God in his human form has given, both by precept and example to mankind. Today, despite the enormous progress made in science and technology, men suffer from lack of peace and security. Real peace can be got only through spiritual means. It cannot be got by any other way.

Living in society, you have to understand the interaction between the individual and society. It is a continuous process of give and take. The individual contributes to society and derives benefits from the society. This interaction may be understood from an episode from the life of Einstein, the great scientist.

Einstein's example of humility

In the ward in which Einstein was living, there was a girl who was weak in mathematics and was repeatedly failing in that subject. A friend suggested to her that if she went to Einstein, the greatest living mathematician, he would help her to learn the subject well. The girl approached Einstein and he readily

agreed to give her tuition everyday. The girl was immensely grateful and gained confidence from Einstein's offer. The girl's mother, who had observed her daughter going to the great mathematician for tuition everyday, felt that the little girl was wasting Einstein's time by asking him to teach her elementary mathematics. She went one day to Einstein and apologised to him for her daughter's intrusion on his valuable time. Einstein told her: "Do not think I am just teaching mathematics to her. I am learning as many things from her as I am teaching her." Einstein was conscious that people who might excel in some subject might be lacking in general knowledge or common sense and knowledge of worldly matters. Even though he was a great scientist, he did not disdain to learn quite a few things from a young school girl. This readiness to learn from any person or source is the real mark of greatness. Einstein attached great importance to the kind of associates with whom one moved. He used to say: "Tell me what company you keep and I shall tell you what you are." If you associate with good people you become good; if you move with wicked persons you become bad. The human life is a great gift from God. It should be valued as such and used for sacred purposes.

The greatness of any individual depends upon the reform of his character. It does not depend upon his power, money or position. Thus, you must try to first increase the good qualities or the virtues in you.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

19. Redemption through Renunciation

Date: 05 September 1987 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Onam

The day when devotees hail the Lord with adoration; The day when people fraternise with the poor and the distressed; When servants of the Lord are treated to a pleasing feast; When the great ones come and relate the glories of the Lord; That day alone is a sacred and memorable day;

All others are days of mourning. THE mind is ever in quest of peace, without which there is no happiness. From time immemorial man has been engaged in striving for peace. But peace has eluded him because he has pursued wrong paths for achieving it. He has considered the satisfactions derived through the sense organs seeing, hearing, etc. - as the source of mental peace. He has taken the wrong road by surrendering to the demands of the senses. For the sake of enjoying sensuous pleasures man has been ready to adopt wrongful, unfair and unrighteous means. In seeking his individual happiness and pleasure, he has not hesitated to destroy the peace and pleasure of others. In this process both the individual and society have lost peace and happiness. As a result of the growth of the self-centered desires, selfishness and egoistic conceit have developed in society. Consequently, the basic human relationship that should exist between man and man has been totally undermined.

Without discipline man will ruin himself

The human heart is essentially like the milky ocean. The Puranas have declared that it is such an ocean that the Lord has His abode. The human heart that should be an ocean of milk has been turned today into an ocean of brine. The quality of milk is whiteness. White symbolises the Satwic nature (that is, purity). In the Satwic heart, qualities like love, compassion, forbearance and peace will be enshrined. In the salty water dangerous creatures like whales and crocodiles will roam freely. Likewise in a heart that is not pure qualities like selfishness and pride will be dominant.

In the heart of man today, selfishness and conceit have grown to inconceivable heights. Everything in the world should be governed by certain bounds. Nassreyo Niysmam Vina (There can be nothing great without restraint). Without discipline and restraint man will ruin himself. The sun and the moon, the stars and the planets, wind and weather are all subject to certain laws. Nature itself observes certain Divine laws in its functioning. All things in Nature obey their respective rules of conduct, including birds and beasts. They lack control over their sense organs. But man endowed with a sacred birth and having intelligence and reason, fails to observe restraint. Birds and animals have no prescribed rules of conduct (samskaras). But these rules are the guide-posts for man. What accompanies man in his final destiny is not Sarasota (worldly achievements), but Samskara (his good acts). Today man is giving the go-by to such samskaras.

Man can change his nature from bad to good

Animals live and die without change in their original nature. Man is different. By practice and discipline, man can change his nature - from bad to good or good to bad. All man's thoughts, feelings and actions are determined by habit and perseverance. Even a person who is cruel in early years can turn into a votary of peace and love. Ratnakara, who was a highwayman, became the sage Valmiki.

Through association with good people, through good conduct and good thoughts, one can cultivate virtue and goodness. Above everything, man needs today Satsangam (the company of good). For physical health, one needs to get rid of impurities inside the body and take in pure things. Likewise, for mental health, man needs to eliminate all impure thoughts and desires from the mind and acquire good thoughts and good feelings by association with good people. Everyone must send out a prayer: "Oh deities, come and dwell within me! Oh demons, flee from me!"

Prahlada and Bali were great devotees

Prahlada was a great devotee of God. Hiranyakasipu did not believe in God.

He asked his son, "Where is your Narayana?" Prahlada replied: "There is no place where He is not. You can find Him wherever you search for Him." Hiranyakasipu pointed to a pillar and asked Prahlada: "Is your God in this pillar?"-Prahlada replied unhesitatingly: "Yes. He is in it." Hiranyakasipu shattered the pillar with a club. Immediately Lord Narasimha emerged from it. What is the inner meaning of this episode? Our body is like a pillar. It is only when delusion pertaining to the body is destroyed that the Divine will manifest Himself. Today, everyone is promoting the body consciousness by fostering the desires prompted by the senses. Prahlada who was an ardent devotee of Hari, had a son, Virochana, who was an atheist. Virochana's son, the emperor Bali, was a great devotee of God. The Onam celebration is in commemoration of the greatness of Bali. Emperor Bali was a highly righteous ruler. A great devotee, he was dedicated to the welfare of his subjects. He identified the well-being of the people with his own good. This was the characteristic of rulers in ancient times. During Bali's rule the land was prosperous and the people lived happily and harmoniously. Bali was popular 'throughout the realm. When his fame and reputation were growing, Bali was affected by a tinge of ego. Egoism brings in its train the downfall of the individual.

King Bali was an ideal ruler

There is no real ground for any man to feel inflated about himself. When the Lord's feet, eyes, head and hands are everywhere and everything in the Cosmos is permeated by the Divine, how can any man feel proud about his possessions or achievements? He is only an instrument of the Divine. Man should strive to recognise the Unity that underlies the apparent diversity which he sees everywhere. Prahlada saw divinity in everything. 'He realised that the Divine pervades everything inside and outside. The Onam celebration is an occasion for the people to remind themselves of the all-pervasive nature of the Divine. Onam is celebrated by Keralites by wearing new clothes after a ceremonial bath and partaking the delicacies prepared for the festival. But the Onam celebration should not be confined to these activities alone. It should be remembered that emperor Bali was an ideal ruler whose sole concern was the welfare and happiness of his subjects. When Bali gave away

his entire kingdom to Vamana as a gift, the people felt intensely unhappy over the absence of such a beloved ruler. It was to make them happy that Bali got permission from Vamana to return to the world once every year to see the people and rejoice in their happiness. Onam is the day when Bali is believed to honor his pledge to the people and when people show their love and reverence to a great, benevolent and righteous ruler.

Growth of selfishness among rulers and public

In ancient days, there was immense mutual love and regard between the rulers and the people. Today such relations do not exist. The people are wasting their lives in selfish pursuits. The rulers, for their part, are also occupied with their own selfish ambitions and desires and are concerned only about achieving or retaining power and position. Selfishness has grown extensively both among rulers and the public. Unless this process is reversed, man cannot find peace or happiness. There should be control over desires. Peace will grow in proportion to the limitation on desires. All man's worries, difficulties and problems increase with the growth of desires.

Man is the architect of his own happiness or misery. Only good actions can produce good results. When the individual is good, the family is good. When families are good, the society is reformed. When society improves, the nation improves. When the nations improve, the world is transformed. Hence, the transformation must begin with the individual. How can this transformation be brought about? There are two impurities in man which have to be cast out: Selfishness and Conceit. But that is not enough. Pure qualities like love, forbearance and compassion have to be imbibed. Life has to be divinised. What is the kind of existence people lead today? They are engaged in talking ill of others. They indulge in carping criticism. They are filled with envy. They gloat over trivial achievements. They speak one thing and act in a contrary way. This type of behaviour dehumanises them. There should be unity in thought, word and deed. We are witnessing today the unchecked growth of selfishness all around. This evil has struck deep roots, growing from generation to generation. There must be total eradication of this selfishness. Real peace can be secured only by renunciation and sacrifice. There is

supreme joy in giving. In renunciation lies the elimination of fear. As long as desires remain, fear and insecurity will dog us. Enquire into the joy that is to be derived from sacrifice and the grief that is the ultimate outcome of sensuous pleasures.

Bali's example of the spirit of sacrifice

Whatever you enjoy through renunciation will become a kind of yoga. Self-conceit in the performance of actions and attachment to the fruits of one's actions have both to be given up. There should be no sense of egoism in doing one's work. "This is my work. I alone am entitled to its fruits" this attitude should be given up. If you plant a tree, what guarantee do you have that you will live to enjoy its fruits? Your progeny may enjoy the fruits. Your duty is to do your allotted work. Karthavyam yogam Uchyathe ("Doing one's duty is yoga"). Emperor Bali stands out as an example of purity and sacrifice. He rejected the advice of his preceptor, Sukracharya, when the latter opposed the grant of three feet of land to Vamana on the ground that Vamana was Lord Vishnu Himself and that offering the gift that He sought would result in the ruin of Bali. Bali declared: "When the Lord Himself has come seeking a gift from me, what greater good can happen to me than that of being the donor, with the Lord as the recipient?" Realising that Bali would not heed his advice, Sukracharya resorted to a device to block the gift Bali was about to make, by turning into an insect and filling the mouth of the vessel through which water was to be poured by Bali while making the gift. Vamana, who was aware of this stratagem, cleared the block by pricking the mouth of the vessel with a poker. As a result Sukracharya lost one of his eyes. One must be prepared to make any offering to God, including one's life itself. Such was the greatness of Emperor Bali. He was prepared to make any kind of sacrifice for God. He lacked nothing in the world - wealth, power, position. But all these he was ready to give up to honour his word. It is rare to find persons who have everything and still have the spirit of sacrifice. The affluent are seldom generous. Often they are mean and greedy.

Ideal relations between the ruler and people

Because Bali stood out as an ideal renunciant, he achieved undying fame. Prahlada and Bali belonged to the lineage of the Asuras. But both were great devotees of God. Their lives are an example to all mankind.

There is a story to illustrate the ideal relations between the ruler and the ruled. There was a king who was being anointed by the queen before he took an oil bath. While the queen was applying oil to the king's head, the king noticed in the mirror that the queen was in tears. He asked her the reason for her shedding tears. The queen said that while applying oil she had noticed some grey hairs on the king's head and she thought that the king was getting old had made her sad. That very moment the king also felt that he had enjoyed royal pleasures long enough and it was high time he repaired to a forest to devote himself to the matters of the Spirit. The king and queen summoned the ministers, entrusted the reins of the government to them and betook themselves to a forest to lead the life of ascetics. When the people heard about the decision of the royal couple, they felt that they could not live away from such noble rulers and decided to go to the forest en masse.

They approached the king and prayed to him: "Why have you given up the kingdom? Is it because of any lapses on our part?" The king told them: "I have ruled the kingdom long enough. Now that I am old, I wish to devote the rest of my life to the thoughts of God." On hearing these words, the entire people wailed in anguish. They decided to perform penance in the forest.

Queen's selfless concern for the people

Brahma appeared before them and asked them what they wanted. As they were utterly unselfish, they prayed to Brahma to give their king a long life. Brahma granted their prayer. The people went in joy to the king and said that Brahma had granted him a long life and therefore he should return to the kingdom to rule over it for many years. The king started to go back to the capital. But the queen declined to accompany him. She said she would continue to stay in the forest. The people mistook the reason for the queen's decision. They thought perhaps the queen was angry because they had prayed only for the long life of the king and not for the queen. The queen was

cast in a different mould. She was not concerned about herself. She performed a severe penance. Brahma appeared before her and asked what she wanted. She asked: "Is it true that you have granted the king a long life? Of what use is it, if the king alone has a long life, while the subjects are short-lived? I pray you should grant a long life to the people also." Brahma was so pleased with her selfless concern for the people that he granted long life to the people and the queen also.

Kerala's spiritual heritage

Kerala is a very sacred region. It is a land of great natural beauty. Its luscious vegetation endows it with a charm all its own. This beauty is a divine gift. God is beauty. Beauty is God. Keralites must revere their land as one sanctified by three avatars - Narasimha, Vamana and Parasurama. Kerala has been known for its unbroken tradition of devotion to God. While the vicissitudes of politics may have caused some changes, essentially Keralites have been adhering to the spiritual way of life. Even those who appear externally to be atheists are believers of the Divine deep in their being. Keralites should try to preserve their spiritual heritage whatever the challenges they may have to face. This is a great treasure which they have to guard and cherish. They must live up to their ancient ideals and promote faith in them by precept and practice.

20. Spiritual basis for value education

Date: 24 September 1987 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: National Symposium on Value Orientation

HUMAN life is a very sacred and precious thing. It has to be used worthily. The body, mind and Atma constitute together the human entity. Actions are done by the body and cognition by the mind. The Atma is that which abides. The Atma is the Divine spirit present in the human heart. Action, Awareness and Being are the threefold aspects of human life which have to be properly understood. Although they appear to be distinct, it is the unity in Action, Awareness and Being which makes for the fullness of human life. The mind, because it is engaged in various thoughts and motivates various desires and actions, is described as Antahkarana (the inner instrument). It is known as 'Manas (mind) when it is engaged in good and bad thoughts. It is called Buddhi when it exercises the discriminating power. When expressing the will, it is called Chitta. As a manifestation of the Divine in the individual, it is known as Aham (the I or Ego). Antahkarana is the collective name for the manas (mind), Buddhi (intelligence), Chitta (will) and Ahamkara (ego-sense).

Prajna is 'constant integrated awareness'

There is a fundamental principle which is at the base of all these. It is known as Prajna. Prajna has been described as Viveka (discrimination, intelligence, comprehension and the like). These are not quite correct. Prajna really refers to the Brahman in man. The Vedas have declared 'Prajnanam is Brahman. Prajna is the principle that is present equally in the body, the Antahkarana and the Atma. Hence it may be regarded as "constant integrated awareness." It is this constant integrated awareness that is the source of all values in man. This Prajna is permeated with love.

Truth is the echo that resounds from the love-filled Prajna. All actions that arise out of this lovefilled Prajna are reactions, constituting Dharma. Santhi (Peace) is a reflection of this Truth and Dharma. Thus Truth, Right Conduct and Peace emanate from the Prajna that is charged with Love, as Resound,

Reaction and Reflection. The proper understanding of the source and nature of Truth, Right Conduct, Peace and Love is Ahimsa (the attitude in which one cannot think of causing harm to anyone). Hence man should embark on any activity from Prajna. Sathya (Truth) does not mean mere statement of facts as one sees them or hears about them. Truth in its real sense transcends the limitations of time, space and circumstance. It is difficult to practise this transcendental truth in ordinary life. Vedanta (bottom line of Vedas) described it as Rtha (principle of integrity). It is the basis of human existence. It is on this basis that all the facts of the phenomenal world should be properly understood. One should not act on the impulse of the moment immediately a thought occurs. The rights and wrongs of an idea should be examined and only when the heart approves of a certain course should action follow. This is the process of cultivating values. What the mind (head) thinks, should be examined critically by the heart and the right decision should be carried out by the hand. This should be the primary product of the educational process.

Creativity and science

We are discussing education in Human Values. What seems to be necessary is not EHV but 3 - HV: Head-Heart-Hand (values). The hand should carry out what the heart has approved of the ideas emanating from the head. This triune process has been described in Vedanta as Thrikaranasuddhi - the purity and harmony of thought, speech and action. Activities arising from Thrikaranasuddhi find expression in two ways: one through artistic creativity and the other, through scientific exploration. Of the two, artistic creativity is supremely important. The aesthetic feeling is based on creative imagination. A sculptor who desires to carve an image out of a piece of rock has to have the figure he seeks to carve in his imagination. This bhava (imagination) finds ichcha sakti (creative expression) in the sculpture. If the creative imagination is absent, no sculpture can come out of the rock. Hence, imagination and the creative impulse have to be properly understood. Both of them are rooted in Prajna, the Divine source of all creative activity. As against this aesthetic creativity, we have the urge for scientific enquiry. This is primarily concerned with objects in the external world. Experimental research has its vision turned outward. But even that has its basis in the Antardrishti (Inward Vision). This

relates to the subject.

Integration must become a way of life

Science has been making remarkable progress in the recent decades. The world undoubtedly needs the discoveries of science. But if it forgets the base and is preoccupied only with the superstructure, it will be the source of much disorder and trouble. It may cause all kinds of diseases. Science has been divorced from spirituality and faith in the Divine. Many imagine that science can create a heaven on earth. But what is the kind of heaven that is envisaged? Is it the enjoyment of material and sensuous pleasures? This hedonistic attitude is undermining all human values.

Research is going on endlessly. Science is continually seeking answers to various questions. But how many of the answers are correct and satisfying? Progressively, the climate of peace is being destroyed by science. If peace is to be ensured, science has to be promoted on the right lines. This calls for unity among the people. Service to society must become the fundamental purpose. Everybody talks about the need for world unity. But real unity must begin with the individual and the family. From the home, it must spread to the village, nation and the world. National integration comes to the fore whenever there is an attack from outside by China or Pakistan. But when the external threat passes, integration is forgotten; integration should become an essential part of our being. It must become a way of life and cherished as an important value. It is vital to perceive the unity that underlies the apparent diversity. Bodies are many, but life is one. Beings are many, but Bliss is one. Religions are many, but Truth is one. This is the kind of oneness that has to be experienced in the depths of our heart. Prajnana (integral, higher wisdom) subsumes Vijnana (secular knowledge) and embraces also Sujnana (right knowledge). Prajnana, Vijnana and Sujnana together contribute to the fullness of man.

The ABC of life: Always Be Careful

Life is an exacting master. Hence the need to be always careful in everything

one does. This is the ABC of life' Always Be Careful. One should always remember the supreme sacredness of human life. Man can experience real bliss only when he recognises the Truth, Peace and Love that emanate from Prajna and moulds his life on the basis of that knowledge. Human Values cannot be practised by studying books or listening to lectures. They have to be cultivated by individual effort. Students! True education consists in sanctifying everything you utter and every thought and action of yours. Humility is the bed-rock. Cultivate humility as the first step, Bend the body. Mend the senses. End the mind. This is the key to immortality. Human values are essential not for students alone. Everyone has to practise human values as a mark of a true human being. When a human being declares that he is a man, it is only a half truth. He must also declare that he is not an animal. To give up animal qualities and practise human values will make a man fully human.

Education without transformation

The educational process will not be complete unless, together with specialisation in specific subjects, one acquires general knowledge and develops common sense. Many famous scholars who had significant scientific achievements to their credit have been lacking in general knowledge and the common sense required in daily life. Today we have made prodigious progress in various fields of knowledge - in mathematics, physics, chemistry, the bio-sciences. But no attempt is being made even to approach study of the spiritual. All our knowledge ends with study of matter, plants and living creatures. Education must go beyond these to an understanding of the Divine. Only that is true education. The task of education is to develop man into an ideal and exemplary person. Notable discoveries have been made over the years and great scientists have been produced. But how far have human values been promoted and what is the transformation that has taken place in mankind? There is no answer to these questions.

The promotion of human values must become an integral part of the educational process. It is because students today have not acquired human values that they are behaving often like demons.

Give value orientation to education

Leading Vice-chancellors and educationists have assembled here today for this national symposium. If they dedicate themselves to the task of giving value orientation to education, considerable progress can be made in this crucial sphere. To restore the supremacy of human values in all fields of national life, an association should be set up by leading scholars and educationists in the country. This association should have no links with the government. It is only if it is autonomous and completely independent that it can achieve its objectives. There are eminent educationists in the universities. They may have very good ideas but they have no freedom to implement them. They should be given the freedom to try out their ideas. Authority should be commensurate with obligations. Vice-chancellors will then be able to promote human values among teachers and students. If all educational institutions jointly strive to instill human values in students, Bharat can become an ideal nation and an example to the world. Today educational institutions are growing in numbers, but there is no growth of a broad outlook among the educated people. Education should serve to enlarge the vision and broaden the outlook of the people. Everyone should be made to feel that his or her welfare is bound up with the nation's well-being.

Science and spirituality should go together

Everyone should feel proud about Bharat's ancient culture and its spiritual heritage. Spiritual knowledge and scientific knowledge should go together. There should be no dichotomy between science and spirituality. True bliss can be experienced only when science and spirituality are combined. Development of science and technology alone will not help people to get rid of bad thoughts, bad desires and bad deeds, because science by itself is not competent to sublimate life. Only spirituality can promote ethical values, the spirit of tolerance and equal-mindedness. The science of spirit is essential for developing human values. Devotion to God is the first stage in the spiritual journey. Instead of developing devotion men are immersed in the "deep ocean" of worldly life. When the Ocean of Milk was churned, the first thing

that emerged was. the Halahala, fuming poison. Amrita (nectar) came later. When the ocean of worldly existence is churned, Vairagya (renunciation) will emerge first. The nectar of bliss will come later. Vairagya is renunciation of attachment to the physical and the material. Students should start with cultivating the spirit of mutual regard and harmony. This will lead to good behaviour. When students in one educational institution grow in this manner, they will serve as an example to the rest of the world. Students should shed narrow and parochial loyalties and prepare themselves to serve the society and the world. Whatever conclusions are arrived at by the educationists and Vice-chancellors who have gathered here for this symposium, you students should become the "Messengers" for spreading them to the world. Address at the National Symposium on Value Orientation, at Sri Sathya Sai Institute Auditorium

However high a bird may soar, sooner or later he has to perch on a tree top to enjoy the quiet. In the same manner a day will come when even the most wilful, the most unbelieving, the most haughty and even those who assert that there is no joy and peace in the contemplation of the highest Self will have to pray: "God! grant me peace and consolation, strength and joy."

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

21. Teaching values by example

Date: 26 September 1987 / Occasion: Valedictory discourse to the National Symposium Value Orientation

A SOCIETY without values will cease to be human. The more human values are cherished, the better will be the growth of society, the nation and the world. We cannot rest content with an educational system which is confined to academic achievement. It has to promote simultaneously human virtues. The main problem of our education is how to adapt the spiritual and cultural traditions we have inherited from the past to the needs of daily life today. The relationship between the individual and society has to be rightly understood. Why should the individual serve others? What claims has society on the individual? When we examine these issues we realise that the individual can find fulfillment only in society. Born in society, growing up in society, living in society, man ends his life in society. In the word Samajam (Society), Sam represents unity, a means going towards. Samajam (society) means going forward in unity. Society may be viewed as a many-petalled flower. Every individual is like a petal. All the petals together make for the beauty of the flower. Without the petals there will be no flower. Likewise, every individual is a petal making up the flower of society. Each one should manifest the glory of the divine.

Society may also be compared to a four-wheeled chariot. The four wheels are: Aikamathyam (Unity), Swadhenam (Control), Jnanam (Knowledge) and Sakhti (Power). These four help the society to go forward.

Truth does not change with time

How are human qualities to be promoted in society? Society is made up of individuals. No man can be an island to himself. Living amidst fellow human beings, man has to sow the seeds of love, rear the plants of harmony and offer the fruits of peace to society. Thereby his humanness is manifested. In the Ashtanga Yoga {the Eightfold Yoga}, this figures as the first among the different disciplines: Yama (outer sense control), Niyama (inner sense

control), Asana (seating posture), Pranayama (breath control), Pratyahara (sense withdrawal or detachment), Dharana (concentration), Dhyana (meditation) and Samadhi (inner communion). Yama calls for the observance of the following practices: Ahimsa (non-violence), Sathyam (truth), Astheyam (non-stealing), Brahmacharyam (celibacy) and Aparigraha (nonacquisitiveness). These are the five human values-to be cultivated in the language of Vedanta. Ahimsa does not mean, as is commonly understood, not causing harm to others. It really means that one should not cause harm to anyone in thought, word or deed. This is the most important human quality. Only when this has been developed, will one be qualified to practise and experience Truth.

Truth does not mean merely telling the facts as one sees or knows them. Truth is that which does not change with time. It must be spoken with complete purity of mind, speech and body. Astheyam means refraining from stealing what belongs to others. Even the thought of taking another's property should not arise in the mind. Nor should one tell others to commit theft. This is the third human value. The fourth is Brahmacharya. Observance of Brahmacharya means that whatever one thinks, says or does should be filled with thoughts of Brahman, Supreme Divinity. To be ever immersed in the consciousness of Brahman is Brahmacharya. All thoughts, words and deeds should be dedicated to the Divine. When the thoughts, which are prelude to action, are centered on God, they are unlikely to go astray. Aham (the Ego) arises from the Atma. Thoughts are produced by the ego and give rise to speech. Hence all actions are based on the Atma. When all these are sanctified by dedication to God, the consciousness of oneness with Brahman - Aham Brahmasmi (I am Brahman) ensues. That Brahman is Prajna (constant integrated awareness).

The acquisitive tendency has become a mania

The fifth practice is Aparigraha. This is usually interpreted as not accepting other's property as gift or gratuitously. This is not the correct meaning. It really means performing actions without expecting any reward, without any acquisitive motives and in a completely selfless spirit. Today because all

actions are done out of self-interest and desire for acquiring wealth, they lack true human quality. Even worship, religious ceremonies, pilgrimages and the like are done with some kind of expectations and not in a spirit of disinterested devotion. People today are totally immersed in self-interest. Multiplying desires without limit, they are becoming demonic beings. They are not content with having what they need for essential purposes. They wish to accumulate enormously for the future. They are filled with worries and discontent. Thereby they forfeit their happiness here and in the hereafter. Birds and beasts are content with what 'they can get. Man alone is afflicted with insatiable desires. Birds and animals have no desire to hoard or to exploit others. But man is a prey to these vices. He forgets his natural human qualities and behaves worse than animals. When these tendencies are given up, the inherent divinity in man will manifest itself. Human virtues cannot be acquired from others. They cannot be nourished from mere study of books. Nor can they be got ready made from teachers. They have to be cultivated by each person and the resulting joy has to be experienced by him. The world sorely needs today human values. Attempts are being made to promote these values in the educational field. But they cannot be promoted through materialistic, worldly or scientific means. Without developing devotion to God no human quality can grow. The first requisite is faith in God. Doubts are raised whether God exists or not. Those who affirm that God exists and those who deny are equally incompetent to say anything about God if they know nothing about the nature of God.

To assert the existence of that which does not exist is ignorance. To deny the existence of that which exists is folly. God is omnipresent. There is no need to search for Him anywhere. Everything that we see is a manifestation of God. Wherever we are there is God. There can be no greater folly than to deny the existence of God when the whole cosmos bears witness to His handiwork. Everything in creation must be viewed as a manifestation of God. Only with this basic faith can one develop one's human personality.

A righteous life leads to peace

Human values cannot be promoted merely by repeating the words Sathya,

Dharma, Santhi, Prema and Ahimsa. The Vedas declare- "Sathyam vada Dharmam chara" (Speak the truth; adhere to right conduct). In practising Dharma there should be no marina (secret desires). Actions performed with such secret motives result in bondage. Truth and right conduct should be adhered to with pure intentions. Both of them are rooted in the eternal. A righteous life leads to peace. Love is to be experienced in the depths of peace. Love should find expression in nonviolence. Where love prevails, there is no room for doing harm or violence to others. All these basic values have to be demonstrated in action and not limited to preaching.

Educationist's vision is turned outwards

Many educationists and Vice-chancellors are present here today. Their vision is turned outwards toward the external physical world. I am concerned with the Inner Vision. It is not possible to reconcile the physical and the internal spiritual vision. The heart cannot be transformed by lessons in a classroom. The world cannot be changed by mere preaching. Only through action and practical example can the impulse for change be intensified. When one leads a disciplined and regulated life, the lesson will be learnt without any teaching. The people will follow of their own accord. This applies to human values. Only when they are practised by teachers and elders, will students practise them.

Those who seek to impart the values of Sathya, Dharma, Santhi, Prema and Ahimsa to others, must first try to practise them themselves whole-heartedly. To imagine that values can be instilled by teaching is a mistake. Such learning will have no permanent effect. Educationists must take note of this fact. If transformation is to be effected in students, the process must start from a very early age.

To propagate human values, it is advisable to keep as far away as possible from the powers that be. It is not possible to promote sacred values through the help of governmental authorities. Some well-intentioned leaders may formulate commendable schemes. But there is a frequent change of men in the seats of power. What, then, happens to human values? It is essential to be self-reliant and stand on our own legs. Only when you are untrammelled

and independent can you propagate these sacred values freely and effectively. Educationists should try to set up an independent body for the formulation and implementation of educational policy, free from control or interference by the government. Only then will the promotion of human values succeed.

Unity is lacking in colleges and universities

If there is unity among educationists, any undertaking can be successful. Today unity is lacking in colleges and universities. Students and teachers are at loggerheads. How, then, is national integration to be promoted? When there is no unity or harmony at home, how can there be national unity?

Those in power operate under their own compulsions. They can take over properties and enterprises, but they cannot promote values. They may occupy temples and take over temple properties, but they can exercise no control over God. Governments may exercise control over men, but they have no hold over men's qualities. Educational institutions must promote the spiritual outlook among students. When students acquire spiritual values, human values will grow in them of their own accord. Human values are not things to be implanted from outside. They are within each individual. They have to be manifested from within.

Human values are in everyone. What we need are persons who will provide the stimulus and the encouragement to bring them out. If the feeling that the divinity that is present in everyone is one and the same, is promoted among all, human values will sprout naturally in every person. To have this sense of spiritual oneness is the prelude to experiencing the highest bliss.

Moulding of character must start with children

Educational institutions should teach students to adhere to truth and to discharge their duties as a sacred obligation. Students should not allow success or failure to raffle their minds unduly. Courage and self-confidence must be instilled in the students. Bend the twig and bend the tree, says the

proverb. The moulding of character must start with children at the earliest age. Begin developing human values from the primary school. Some are concerned about our living in a "secular state". Secularism really means equal respects for all faiths and beliefs. There should be no hatred towards any faith. Other creeds or beliefs should not be condemned or derided. Some time ago there was an absurd idea that Sathya Sai educational institutions were religious institutions. Sai educational institutions are based on equal respect for all religions. They are wedded to unity and harmony. Whatever studies you may pursue, do not give up your faith in God. To give up God is to give up life itself. Life is God. Truth is God. All that you do as an offering to God will be an expression of human values.

The educationists and Vice-chancellors who have assembled here have come to some decisions as a result of their high-minded deliberations. They are firmly convinced that human values have to be promoted. Whatever their limitations, they should strive to the extent possible to implement their decisions. The Divine is installed in their hearts. It is enough if they follow the promptings of the Divine. They are bound to achieve their objectives. If faith in God is strengthened, all values will develop in due course. Sublimate your lives by remembering, worshiping and adoring God.

The Lord has endowed man with a body and that is why every limb and every sense is worthy of reverent attention. Each must be used for his glory. The ear must exult when it gets a chance to hear the wonderful talks on God. The tongue must exult when it can praise him. Otherwise the tongue of the man is ineffective as the tongues of the frogs which croak day and night sitting on the marshy bank.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

22. The perennial quest

Date: 27 September 1987 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Dasara

THAT which eyes cannot see, but which enables the eyes to see - That is God. The divine cannot be grasped by the mind or described by speech. The Divine transcends all proof. It is One. "I am One, let Me become Many." The myriad forms in the Cosmos emerged from this Sankalpa (inner thought) of the One. To discover the one in many, the sages prescribed for mankind the Karma, Bhakti and Upasana paths and indicated in pronouncements like "Tat-Twam-Asi" (That Thou Art) that the process is one of Self-realisation. They declared that the individual should realise that the phenomenal world is in fact a reflected image of himself. But, man, forgetting his true Self, identifies himself with the sense organs and indulges in many wrong actions for the sake of pleasures and pains experienced by the senses. Every man seeks to achieve Ananda (unalloyed happiness) through some means or the other and engages himself in ceaseless efforts for this purpose. But pure happiness eludes him because he does not know its real nature and where to find it. Ananda (bliss) cannot be found in the phenomenal world or in material objects like houses, wealth and vehicles, or got from kith and kin. When the bliss that he is seeking is his own true nature, what is the use in seeking it elsewhere? True happiness consists in realising one's Reality.

Desires only lead to misery and frustration

Men today are keen to know all about everything except themselves. They are able to see everything except their own true selves. They are caught in the delusion that the world is different from the One that sustains it. Although what they are seeing is the manifestation of God, they declare that they cannot see God. This is the result of ignorance. All that is seen, the act of seeing and the seer are all Divine. When the unity of these three aspects of Divinity is understood, real bliss will be experienced. Man today is prey to endless desires. They do not confer happiness, because desires multiply even when they are satisfied. Far from bringing happiness, desires only lead to misery and frustration. Desires are born out of delusion. It is only when the

delusion is destroyed that the Self can be realised.

Even a sage like Narada, who had mastered all the sastras, was subject to delusions and went to Sanatkumara to find out how he could experience Brahmananda (supreme bliss). He said to Sanat-kumara: "Master! I wish to know all about Brahman and how I can have vision of the Brahman. Confer this benediction on me." When Sanatkumara asked Narada how he was qualified to receive this message, the sage recounted his mastery of the Vedas and the scriptures and proclaimed his ability to expound them. Sanatkumara smiled and asked if he knew anything else. Narada replied: "When I have mastered all the scriptures and recognised that the Divine is the basis for all of them, what else is there to be known? What is the unknown mystery about the Brahman?" Sanatkumara said: "Dear Child! If with all this knowledge, you have not been able to experience the Divine, you must enquire into the reason for your failure." Sanatkumara explained: "God cannot be realised by intellectual enquiries or study of the scriptures. Bhakti (devotion) alone is the means. Pray to God with deep devotion. You will have the vision of the Divine."

Develop the feeling of total surrender

Man today has achieved eminence in the intellectual sphere and in scientific and technical knowledge. But he cannot realise God through these accomplishments. 'The Divine is attained only by those who have pure, selfless devotion. The Lord responds only to such pure one-pointed love and total devotion. What is to be cultivated by seekers is such total devotion. Today people tend to remember God when they are in distress and forget Him when they are happy and comfortable. Indulging in such part-time devotion men aspire for the fruits of full-time devotion. How can they get those fruits? They have to develop the feeling of total surrender to the Divine and dedicate every action to the Divine. What is the inner significance of the yagas and yajnas we are performing now? The purpose of performing these ceremonies is to realise the omnipresent Divine through various activities, rituals and media. The devotional part of Bhakti has nine forms of worshipping the Lord. Sravanam (listening to the stories of God), Keerthanam

(singing His glories), Vishnusmaranam (remembering His names), Padasevanam (service to the Lord's feet), Vandanam (prostration), Archanam (offering worship to the Lord), Dasyam (Service), Sneham (cultivating friendship), Atmanivedanam (self-surrender). If any one of these forms of worship is done in full faith, the Divine can be experienced. The primary requisite for realising God is pure and intense love.

Ego is the bar to experience Divinity

What is happening today is excessive growth of Ahamkara (egoism) and Abhimana (attachment) among the people. As long as egoism exists, experience of divinity is impossible. Egoism and envy have to be totally uprooted. Those who cannot bear to see others happy have nothing good in store for them. It is in deriving joy from the happiness of others that pure devotion manifests itself. We have to preserve and promote what is beneficial in our hoary culture, while adapting the ancient traditions to contemporary conditions. This is one of the primary obligations of Sai Institutions.

In the 18th canto of the Bhagvad Gita the Lord has declared: "Eashwara dwells in the heart region of all living things." This means that one must see the Divine in every being. When you speak about anyone, or love anyone, you must consider you are speaking about God and loving God. Develop this sacred attitude. If, on the contrary, you regard Divinity as different from yourself and lead a life based on differences, you will be wasting your life. Pujas, Japas and Dhyana have their place in worship. But you should not confine yourself to them. You must go beyond them to the stage of God-realisation. You must progress from the rituals to upasana (meditation), and from upasana to Jnana (Self-knowledge). That is you have to proceed from Dwaita (dualism) to Visishtadvaita (qualified non-dualism) and to Advaita (non-dualism). Without having the Advaitic experience you cannot understand the true nature of the Atma.

Attempt to understand spiritual Life

You have been listening for years to discourses about the Atma and the

Brahman. But no attempt has been made to understand the spiritual life. Of what avail is it to immerse yourself in material pursuits and sensuous pleasures which are trivial and transient? You must strive gradually to bring the senses under control without which neither real peace nor enduring bliss can be got. Love of God is the sure means for achieving perennial, Divine bliss. The essence of the study of sastras, puranas and Vedas is to develop love of God. If that love is not there, all these studies are worth nothing. Spiritual exercises lacking in love of God are like fruit without juice. The Divine is totally free from Anugraham or Agraham (likes or dislikes). All that the Avatar (incarnate Divinity) thinks, speaks or does is entirely for the well-being of the world and for giving joy to mankind. The ways of the Divine have to be understood properly. Sometimes people may feel that Swami is angry and harsh. This is totally wrong. Swami appears to keep aloof from some persons when He feels they are pursuing wrong paths which may adversely affect their future. This is intended solely to correct the erring devotees. Not realising this, people subject themselves to various worries or doubts.

Every act should be done with pure mind

Only a clean mirror can reflect a correct image. If the mirror is not clean, the reflection will be likewise. Similarly, to experience the Divine, a pure heart is necessary. Purity of the heart results from purity in thought, word and deed. Whatever is done, whether it is a bhajan or any other act, should be done with a pure mind and with complete concentration. Today the terms Dana (charity), Dharma (righteousness) and Thyaga (sacrifice) are freely bandied about. But there is a grave misconception about what constitutes charity or sacrifice. When one parts with some money to someone who has come to him seeking assistance, the money that is given should not be regarded as charity or sacrifice, but as discharging of a preexisting obligation. No one will come seeking help unless he has a claim derived from the past. The person offering "help" is really discharging an old debt. If help is denied, it amounts to backing out of an undischarged obligation. Likewise, the wealth of Jnana which we have got is a gift of the Divine. It has to be offered to Him in the form of service. A great devotee once prayed: "Oh Lord, I am offering to You the heart which You have given to me. I cannot run to your shrine to offer

worship. Please accept my prayerful offerings from where I am. All that I have has come from you. There is nothing I can call my own."

Strive ceaselessly to reduce desires

Students! Young people today are taking to wrong paths and corrupting the sacred and precious life that has been given to them. Of the 84 lakhs of species of living beings, no species is afflicted with the disease of insatiable desires as much as man. There is a limit even to the wants of birds and beasts. But man, who is regarded as the highest being in creation, behaves worse than demons. Man, who ought to enjoy the greatest bliss and peace, is the victim of sorrow and worry, because of limitless desires. Everyone must ceaselessly strive to reduce desires. Vairagya (renunciation) does not mean merely giving up attachment to house and other forms of wealth. Real renunciation consists in giving up all bad thoughts. It amounts to Yoga. There is no need to leave hearth and home and betake oneself to the forest, to get rid of bad thoughts. Selfexamination and Self-punishment are as important as Self-realisation. If bad thoughts arise in the mind, you have to declare to yourself: "Alas, these thoughts have come because of the wrong kinds of food I have been consuming. Let me observe a fast so that I may get rid of these bad thoughts." This is the best way to punish the mind. This is the process of self-correction one must adopt to bring the mind under control.

Dharmaja punished for violating Dharma

Here is a story to illustrate how no one can avoid punishment for violating Dharma, for whatever reason. Dharmaja, the eldest of the Pandavas, was the very embodiment of Dharma. But, on the suggestion of Krishna, while making the statement, "Aswathama hathah kunjarah," (Aswathama is killed the elephant), he lowered his voice while uttering the word "kunjarah". It was a piece of trickery. (The intention was to make Drona, the father of Aswathama, give up the fight on hearing the words "Aswathama hathah" from the mouth of Dharmaja, while the addition of the word "kunjarah" was intended to make Dharmaja's statement appear truthful, viz., an elephant named Aswathama had been killed in the battle. The word coming after announcing the death of

"Aswathama" would not be audible to Drona as it was said in a low voice). For this offense on his part, Dharmaja had to spend a brief spell in Naraka (hell). This shows that Adharma should not be mixed even to the slightest extent with Dharma. Otherwise there is no escape from the consequential punishment. Merely by praising Rama as the embodiment of Dharma one does not become righteous. Righteousness should be shown in action. One should rejoice in following Dharma and should not feel weighed down by it. Today many who call themselves devotees do not manifest any of the marks of true devotion. They profess that they are offering everything to the Swami. If that is the case, where is the place for ill-will among devotees? You retain all your bad feelings and offer to me your sweet words. Offer to me all your bad thoughts and take from me my good thoughts. When those bad thoughts are surrendered to me, they will not lead you to wrong actions. When they are with you, they will harass you. In a circus, the lion will do no harm when it is with the Ring Master. But it will be dangerous to others when they are near it. Everyone should understand how he should conduct himself in daily life, what he should do and what he should avoid and try to live accordingly. One should not cause any displeasure to others or hurt their feelings. As far as possible, you must practise self-restraint and feel satisfied with what you have. You must try to give satisfaction to others and make them feel happy. It is wrong to indulge in gossip or comment about other person's actions or affairs.

Try to know the truth about yourself

Once a devotee approached me with a question regarding Adi Sankara's statement: "Brahma Sathyam Jaganmithya" (Brahman alone is true; the world is a deception). The devotee wanted to know how the world that was so real to him and in which he had all his experiences could be called Mithya (delusion). He asked me: "Swami! There is the pronouncement 'Brahma Sathyam Jaganmithya I want to know what is real and what is unreal?" I told him: "Leave Brahman to Brahman and the world of delusion to itself. First of all try to find the truth about yourself. Why bother about Brahman and jagat when you do not know what you are. Find out whether you are real or not.

You are real unto the moment of death. You need not go as far as that. Just

consider what happens when you are fast asleep. In that state, are you real or unreal? You are not aware of your existence in sleep. In that state, are you real or unreal? You are not aware whether you are alive or dead. It is neither real nor unreal. Mithya applies to this state of Sat-Asat (Real-Unreal). When you know yourself and recognise the Mithya that you are, you will view the Jagat as Mithya (a myth)." Another devotee came with him, who said to me: "Rather than lead the kind of life I am leading, I would prefer to commit Atma-hatya (end myself). He said he was being oppressed by many doubts. I told him: "What is it that suffers from doubts? It is the mind. You want to commit Atma-hatya, put an end to your life, for the faults of the mind. This means you are punishing the body for the offences of the mind. You will be committing a grievous wrong if you punish the innocent body for the crimes of the errant mind." The devotee felt sorry and prayed to be forgiven.

These are the kinds of mistaken attitudes prevalent today. The true spirit of enquiry is absent.' The intellect is being developed, but not good qualities. Realising one's inherent divinity, one should strive to nourish divine virtues. For this, the start must be made by getting rid of bad qualities. Then there will be room in the heart for good thoughts. God will not reside in a heart filled with fraud and falsehood. These must be expelled from the heart. Purifying the heart is the highest form of worship. Only then can the Divine be experienced and the bliss of that experience can be shared with others.

23. Foster the Vedas

Date: 28 September 1987 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

WHEN Sri Krishna declared in the Gita that the Lord descends as Avatar to punish the wicked and protect the good, it does not mean that the Avatars purpose is to destroy evil-doers. Evil refers to bad thoughts. These thoughts are in everyone. It is these that have to be destroyed. Dharma is Divinity Itself. The Vedas seek to promote good thoughts; eliminate ideas of evil, and help mankind to lead the good life. Hence they have to be cherished and fostered. If the injunctions given in the Vedas and Sastras are followed by mankind, they will be freed from affliction. Most of our troubles have arisen because we have forgotten the Vedas. The earth has always had the power of attraction. But the scientist Newton carried out experiments and discovered the earth's gravitational pull. The earth had the power of attraction before Newton's discovery. Likewise, the Vedic sages had carried out spiritual explorations on the basis of the Vedas. Because their findings were made known in Bharat, it cannot be said that the Vedas are not to be found anywhere else. The Vedas encompass the whole world and are immanent everywhere. Bharatiyas cannot deny the truth about gravitation merely because a foreigner like Newton discovered it. Similarly others outside India cannot deny the validity of the Vedas because the Bharatiyas discovered their truth.

Decline of respect for Vedas in India

As a matter of fact, many in other countries revere the Vedas. Max Mueller made a thorough study of the origin and content of the Vedas and wrote tomes about them. He studied the Vedas diligently to understand the meanings of the hymns. He devoted a lifetime to these studies. From "Max Mueller" he became known as "Mokshamula." The tragedy of the present situation in India is that Bharatiyas do not esteem the Vedas as highly as the foreigners. Destitution in India has grown with the decline of respect for the Vedas, which had been the fountain-source of its prosperity. The Brahmanas as a class must be held responsible for the decline of the Vedas. If they had

cared to protect the Vedas in the proper way, the nation would not have fallen on evil days. At least now, they should open their eyes and try to promote the study of the Vedas on proper lines. In the Sai Educational Institutions students from the primary classes to the Ph.D. level are studying Vedas. Students are being given the encouragement they deserve. It is because students in most of the other educational institutions are allowed to go astray that the nation is plunged in confusion and chaos. People tend to speak in one way and act differently. It is this dichotomy that has resulted in the public disregard for the Vedas. If those in responsible positions do not live up to their words, how can the people have faith in them?

Be fearless in propagating Vedas

Embodiments of Divine Love! Every individual should take a pledge to nourish the Vedas on right lines. The welfare of the nation and the prosperity of the world are dependent on the Vedas. Within another ten or twenty years, even the few who possess the Vedic knowledge may not remain. Hence there is urgent need to take concerted measures to provide the resources and the encouragement for the propagation of the Vedic studies. The Vedas are not to be used as a means of earning a livelihood. The Vedas are a means of establishing a link with the Divine. They are not to be used for entertaining the public. Those who have studied the Vedas must dedicate their lives to promote the Vedas. Only then would they be serving the cause of restoring the glory of Bharat's ancient heritage.

Today all the ceremonies prescribed by the Vedas are being given up. Most people are engaged in meaningless superstitions. How many are adhering to the injunctions of the Vedas? People must be prepared to adhere to them even at the cost of their lives. The Vedas must be considered as their life itself. Only those who have this determination and conviction are competent to propagate the Vedas. Be fearless in propagating the Vedas among the people. When you are proclaiming the Truth, why have any fear? Only those who preach falsehood have to be afraid. Is your life in danger? What if life goes? There is nothing nobler than giving up one's life in defense of the Vedas. It is in such a spirit of dauntless determination that you should

undertake revival of Vedic knowledge. You must practise what you profess and then impart the knowledge to others.

Vedas pervade everything

Every human being must revere the Vedas. It is the very foundation of life. Every act of daily life has its roots in the Vedas. Whether everyone knows this or not, the Vedas pervade, everything. In the yajna, Sri Narayana himself appears as the embodiment of Veda. Yajna is the manifestation of Narayana. Yajna means Thyaga (sacrifice). Sacrifice really means giving up all bad thoughts, egoism, evil qualities, impure desires and wrong actions. Only then will the vision of the Divine be experienced. In an empty mind, you can put anything. But how do you empty a brain that is filled with all kinds of rubbish? And without emptying it, how can you find place for pure thoughts? Your hearts are filled with all kinds of feelings. How can you fill them with the nectar of the Vedas? Everyone must regard it as his foremost duty to work for the revival of the Vedas and live the Vedic way of life.

24. Pranavopaasana

Date: 01 October 1987 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Dasara, Vijayadasami

Hearken to the Pranava that emanates from the heart of the Cosmos! Fill your ears earnestly with Its reverberations

Know that It is the wish-fulfilling Tree that fulfills all desires Forget not these wise words of good counsel. Vedanam Sama Vedosmi ("Among the Vedas, I am the Sama Veda -) proclaimed the Gitacharya Sri Krishna. Samna Udgitho Rasah ("The essence of the Sama hymns is Udgitha") declares the Chandogya Upanishad. Udgitha means the Pranava. The essence of the Sama Veda is the Pranava (Om). Pranava is the very life-breath. Omkaram Sarva Vedanam - the scriptures have also declared that Omkara (the sacred syllable Om) is the supreme mantra in the Vedas. From this it will be realised how supremely important the Omkara is in the eyes of the seers and what great significance is attached to It. The single syllable "Om" is pre-eminent among the letters of the alphabet. It symbolises the Paramatma (Supreme Omni-Self). The Sama Veda is the embodiment of Pranava.

Music in Sama Veda

The sage Vyasa first taught the Sama Veda to Maharishi Jaimini. From Jaimini, it was taught to a succession of disciples and in the process 'it developed many sakhas (branches). Out of the one thousand branches which stemmed from the Veda, today only three have survived among its practioners. The others have been lost by the ravages of time. These three branches are: Kouthuma, which is followed by Nagar Brahmanas in Gujarat; Ranayani, with its adherents in Maharashtra; Jaimini, followed by a section in Karnataka. There are no big differences between the Kouthuma and Ranayani sakhas. "Ha", "Hoo.", "Ra", "Ni" are important syllables for the Kouthuma and Ranayani sakhas. For the Ranayani sakha, the main syllables are "A A", "Oo-Oo", "Ra" and "Nee", the sounds being lengthened during recitation. The Jaimini sakha is a short one, but is more important than others. It is broad based and has a wider appeal because of its accent on the musical form.

There are two versions of it: Aranyi (forest hymns) and Ganam (musical hymns). There are four kinds of songs in these hymns' Grameena ganamu (village songs); Aranyaka ganamu; Oohaganamu and Oohyaganamu. Grameena or village songs are songs which used to be sung by villagers in their daily activities or during festivals in group dances. They enjoyed themselves in singing such songs. Aranyaka songs were sung while taking cattle to the forests for grazing. The songs were sung with fullthroated voices in an uninhibited way. Singing the praise of the Lord, sitting under a tree, they derived spontaneous delight from these songs. Oohaganam resembles the cinema music of our days. Here the singer expresses in the rendering the mood of the song - either grief or joy - by artificial modulations of the voice to produce the impression of grief or joy as conceived by the singer. It lacks genuine feeling. Oohyagana is the type of singing in which the singer gives free vent to his emotions and enjoys the singing as much as he seeks to communicate his joy to others. The Sama Veda has given to the world these four kinds of music.

Pranava is present in every living being

The pranava mantra ranks, higher than all this music. It is all-pervasive and ever-present. There cannot be a single moment when we are not listening to .this pranava. Nor can we dispense with it even for a second. The Pranava is present in every living being. The Pranava is the primordial sound on which all sounds are based. The Pranava has been equated with the Brahman (the Cosmic Self). The Gita has declared Om as the monosyllable representing Brahman. Even as Om is all-pervasive, the Brahman is also all-pervasive. The Vedic dictum, Ayam Atma Brahma (This' Atma is Brahman) points out that Atma and Brahman are one and the same. Hence Om, Brahman and Atma signify the same entity.

The effulgence and the effulgent in dream state

Every human being experiences four states of consciousness in daily life; Jagrata (the waking state), Swapna (dream state), Sushupti (deep sleep) and Turiya (the highest state of consciousness). The waking state is the state in

which one sees and experiences the phenomenal world through the five life-breaths, the senses, the mind, the intellect and the ego. There are also the five sheaths for the body. All these together account for the experience of the phenomenal world in the waking state. Without the Atma, the waking state or experience of the phenomenal world cannot exist. Hence the Atma in this state is known as Viswa. It is also called Vaiswanara or Viratpurusha. Krishna is stated to have revealed to Arjuna His Viswaroopa (cosmic form). This really means that Krishna showed to Arjuna that the Divine is present everywhere in all things at all times. The entire cosmos is a projection of the Divine. The Atma that appears in the waking state as the phenomenal cosmos in its gross form, appears in the dream state in its sookshma (subtle) form. The objects and forms that are experienced in the dream state have a reality only in that state. They have no existence in other states. All the joys and sorrows experienced in the dream state are unique self-created experiences of the Atma. If ten persons are sleeping in one room, their dream experiences are unique to each person and have nothing in common. This means that each person creates his own dream state and experiences his dreams.

There is a light that shines in a dream state. This is known as Tejas. The Atma as the experiencer in this state is known as Taijasa (the effulgent). Apart from dreams, the presence of Taijasa can be demonstrated by a simple example. When we close our eyes, we say it is dark and we cannot see anything. Who is it that is able to experience this darkness? There is some entity that experiences darkness when the eyes are closed and describes it as dark and black. That entity is described as Taijasa because it is present as an inner light during the dream state.

Prajna is the state of permanent bliss

In the third state of Sushupti, the experience of the waking and the dream states are absent. It is the state of deep sleep. All the senses are merged in the mind and nothing can be seen or imagined. In this state Prajna {integrated awareness} alone exists. It is because of Prajna that one is aware of this state. All the sense organs are totally inactive. Only the breathing process remains. It is because of Prajna that one is aware of continuity of

Being in deep sleep state and experiences a feeling of bliss. With all the senses stilled, the Self alone is conscious in the form of Prajna manifested in respiration. Hence the Vedas have declared: "Prajnanam Brahma" (Prajna - Constant Integrated Awareness - is Brahman). Prajna is the state of unchanging and permanent bliss described by the Upanishads. Prajna is the permanent entity that exists equally in the waking state as the body, in the senses as the Antahkarana (the Inner Motivator) and in the deep sleep state as Atma. It is for this reason that it is characterised as Constant Integrated Awareness. It is not different from Brahman or Atma. A doubt may arise that neither Brahman nor Atma is visible. But by understanding the Pranava, the identity of the Brahman and Atma can be experienced.

How do we cognise the Pranava and hear it? it is not perceivable. It is like something to be absorbed. All that is seen in the visible universe, all that is heard in the realm of sound, all the multifarious experiences of the heart - all of them are subsumed by the Pranava. Even in the state of deep sleep, the process of breathing in and breathing out goes on ceaselessly. That which sustains the breathing process is Omkara, which thus proclaims Its identity with the Brahman and the Atma.

The fourth state is Turiya. This is a state of complete ineffable Bliss in which the Universal Consciousness alone is experienced. It is beyond description.

Omkara is viewed as the four-faced Brahma

Like the four states of consciousness, the Omkara has also four constituents. These are: Akara, Ukara, Ma-kara and Adhiratha (the humming sound - mm...). A-kara is the first and foremost sound of Omkara. It is the first letter of the alphabet. In the waking state, it is regarded as a manifestation of the Viratpuruṣa and is personified as Viswa, the ruling power and sustainer of the phenomenal world. U is the syllable representing the dream state. It is the second sound of Omkara. It has the form of Tejas or effulgence. It illumines everything and dispels every kind of darkness. The third sound is Ma. It represents the state of Prajna (Integrated Consciousness). It reveals the inner meaning of everything. It is also known as the unifying entity, Antaryami (the

Inner Controller), the Suthratmaka (the Atmic coordinator). These different names indicate that the Atma is the Indweller in all beings. It has no form. Ma thus signifies this profound truth. After the "A", "U" and "Ma" are combined, the fourth sound emerges. That is the sound that is heard in Turiya state. It is the vibration "mm ", known as Adhiratha. Because Omkara has four sounds, it is viewed as the four-faced Brahma. It is also described as Sabda-Brahmam, the Brahman in the form of cosmic sound. The Sabda-Brahmam contains Gana-Brahmam (the Brahman as music). The Sabda-Brahmam pervades everywhere. The allpervasive character of Sabda-Brahmam is first among eight cosmic powers attributed to the Divine.

Understand the inner meaning of Sama Veda

It is only when the unique spiritual significance of "Omkara" is understood and experienced and when it is realised that all that one sees or hears emanates from the Pranava, will one be able to understand the inner meaning of the Sama veda. The cosmic power of the sound can be known when the Sama Veda and Pranava are properly understood. This knowledge cannot be got by external exploration. It has to be got from within. When the source of all light and sound - -the Pranavaswarupa - -is within one, of what avail is it to search for them outside? The first requisite is to acquire the faith that the Lord, who is manifest in Cosmic Sound, is present within as Pranavakara (the form of Pranava). For nourishing this faith, it is necessary to abjure impurity in speech. No room should be given for speaking bad words or listening to bad talk. Excessive speech has to be eschewed. Idle talk, slanderous gossip and back-biting should be totally given up. There is great energy in the power of speech. It should not be wasted in any way. This is the supreme discipline that has to be cultivated in daily life.

Human life itself is one long mantra

This is the great message of the Sama Veda. It proclaims the divinity and delight that are inherent in words and sounds that are sacred and pure. Nothing that we say should cause pain to anyone. Whoever indulges in such speech is less than human. In uttering mantras (sacred sounds), their

meaning should be understood. Otherwise the japa (repetition of Divine Name) becomes mechanical ritual. Human life itself is one long mantra It is also tantra (a spiritual technique). It is also a yantra (a symbolic spiritualised geometric device). Such a sacred gift should be utilised worthily. Only one or two Vedas are prevalent today. We must resort to restore them in all their fullness and glory by realising the nectarine value of their message. We must recover faith in the Divine and make devotion to God the sheet-anchor of our lives. Without devotion all our education is valueless.

Devotion and Sacrifice

Embodiments of Divine Love! Man needs primarily two qualities' Devotion to God and the spirit of sacrifice. Without sacrifice there can be no devotion. Sacrifice is the key to immortality. Man is caught up in the coils of selfishness and self-centredness. How long will these attachments last? Why sacrifice the lasting bliss of a divinely oriented life for the petty tinsel of worldly possessions? Devote yourselves to the service of mankind in a spirit of dedication and sublimate your lives.

Your job is no doubt important for earning a living. But you must be prepared even to sacrifice it for serving the nation and upholding Truth, with faith in God. All possessions and relationships are transient. Only two things are permanent: Dharma (righteousness) and Keerthi (a good name). A good name is got only through one's good actions and not as a gift from others. Avoid everything evil and cultivate the company of the good, and be good in thought, word and deed. Realise the omnipresence of the Divine in the form of Omkara, as proclaimed in the Sama Veda. Practise Omkara Upasana (meditation of the primal sound principle) with the consciousness that the Divine is omnipresent and achieve mergence in the Divine as the goal of human birth.

25. Transformation is what I want

Date: 02 October 1987 / Location: Prashanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Dasara, Vijayadasami

TODAY marks the completion of the Veda Purusha Yajna with the performance of Purnahuti (final offering in the ritual fire). The offering which you have to make in the Yajna is that of your bad thoughts, bad desires and actions. This is more important than anything else. People are not doing this now. You have listened to hundreds of discourses for the past forty years or so. But your mind remains where it was. There is little change in your attitudes or actions. The heads are filled with spiritual lore and book knowledge, but no attempt is made to fill the heart with love. Many have been residing in this ashram(hermitage) for years and have been attending various festivals and functions here. But there is no change in their lives. They have not inscribed Swami's message in their hearts. If there is no spiritual transformation in your way of life over the years, you would be guilty of having wasted all your energies, time and opportunities. You have been coming to Prashanthi Nilayam for the past many years and have been listening to the Swami's discourses. But your desires seem to be ever on the increase, while the spirit of thyaga (renunciation) has not developed to the slightest extent. Should you not try to curb your desires to some extent? Living in the ashram, your thoughts are about samsaram (the family). This is not true sadhana. Sometime or other you will have to give up your material possessions. Only he is a hero who gives up his possessions before they go from him.

Transformation is the mark of true devotion

The Saptaha yajna (seven-day sacrificial rituals) reaches samaptam (concludes) today. The true meaning of Sama-aptam is realisation of the Brahman. To recognise the Omni-Self that is in every being is Self-realisation. Today people boast about the tremendous progress of science and technology, but if this claim is true, why does ajnana (ignorance) persist on such a large scale? The fact is much of the progress in science today is confined to satisfying man's selfish desires and not for promoting the general well-being of the world. Is it a sign of true progress if a country arms itself to

the teeth to destroy another? Is this an index of scientific advance? It is really a sign of ignorance.

Good thoughts, good words and good actions are absent today. How, then, do you expect the Divine to fulfill your desires? Men are behaving in a manner worse than that of animals. How can they be called human at all? Perpetually they are concerned about wealth, family and children. They hardly think of God. There are fleeting moments of devotion, but these are more demonstrative than genuine expressions of faith in God. Such artificial expressions of devotion serve only to confirm the atheists in their disbelief. Unless faith in God expresses itself in a Godly life, it is sheer hypocrisy. I do not want to know that you have listened to my discourses well. I want to know that you have thoroughly transformed yourselves. It is such transformation that is the mark of true devotion. If the ground is not wet, what is the use in saying there has been a downpour? Those who claim to be devotees should show in their actions some evidence of their faith. They must truly live up to their profession. "Sai Ram" in words any dishonesty in thoughts is brazen deception. "Sai Ram" must emanate from the depth of one's being. Whether in the Sai organisation or elsewhere, there must be sincerity and unity of thought, word and deed. Develop fraternal feelings towards all. Differences of opinion can be resolved by compromise. If egoistic pride is given up, all difficulties can be overcome. From today make a bonfire of your ignorance and egoism and develop love in your hearts. Live up to Swami's teachings as far as possible and thereby redeem your lives.

26. Born to Serve

Date: 19 November 1987 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Inaugural discourse at the All India Sai Active Workers' conference

Rendering Service selflessly with a compassionate heart
Is alone true Service.
One is bound to attain peace
If he serves in a friendly spirit.
This is the truth. This is the truth.

EMBODIMENTS of the Divine Atma!

You have to recognise that life is meant for selfless service and not to be lived for selfish purposes. Only through such service can the oneness of mankind be experienced. Unselfish service is the sheet-anchor of *Karma Yoga* (Divine dedication through Action). The basis of Yoga is disciplining the mind and the body through disinterested service. Society honours only such persons who serve society. Such persons earn the grace of God. Every individual has to realise the paramount importance of selfless service. The spirit of service should be coupled with readiness for sacrifice. Only then it can be called selfless service free from any taint of self-interest. Such service lends savour to life. Universal love sustains life by its nourishment. Love is the life-breath of man. Magnanimity of spirit lends fragrance to life. However eminent a person may be, he has to realise that the main purpose of life is to render dedicated service to one's fellow men. The relationship between mother and child, preceptor and disciple, God and devotee, is based on mutual dependence. There cannot be a child without a mother, a disciple without a teacher, a devotee without God. Each is associated with the other in an inextricable bond.

Service should be rendered to the helpless

One should be prepared to serve others than choose to be served by them. Moreover, there is nothing meritorious in serving those who are high above us. For one thing, they can command the services of attendants. Rendering service to those who are in the same position as ourselves is not also commendable. Service should be rendered to those who are worse off than ourselves and who are neglected by the world. There are three levels of people in the world. At the highest level are those who may be placed in the category of Lakshmi-Narayana. Those who are in the same stage as ourselves are in the category of Aswatha-Narayana. Those who are poorer than ourselves may be described as Daridra-Narayana. There is no need to render service to one who is Lakshmi-Narayana, as there will be servants to take care of him. Aswatha-Narayana is the type of person who is filled with endless desires and is never contended, whatever his accomplishments or earnings. Service to such a person is unnecessary. It is the weak, the destitute and the helpless who need to be served. Even in rendering service to such persons, there should be no feeling that we are serving 'others'. We should feel that we are serving the Lord Narayana who dwells in them. When service is rendered in a total spirit of dedication, with concentration of thought, word and deed, the heart gets sanctified. Without purity of the heart there can be no spiritual progress.

Active Workers should not be arrogant

"Active workers" in the Sai movement should have no feeling of arrogance or ostentation in carrying on their activities. They must be broad-minded, completely free from selfish concerns, and must develop love towards all. Active workers are the spinal cord of the Sai organisation. They should understand what are human qualities and practise them in their life. Without having the right attitude, service done demonstratively in a spirit of self-conceit is a travesty of service. They should rid themselves of the sense of "mine" and "thine." Pre-occupation with one's own welfare and happiness is the bane of the dualistic mentality. It breeds discontent and sorrow. Feelings of attachment and aversion sully the mind and through service can such a mind be purified. External observances like bathing several times a day and smearing Vibhuti all over and mouthing mantras mechanically will not serve

to cleanse the mind of impurities. These are only outward show, with nothing spiritual about them. Transcendental knowledge that can be got through diligent enquiry and steadfast faith which will help to raise man from the animal level is being ignored today. No effort is made to acquire this knowledge. Perceiving untruth as truth and treating truth as untruth men are immersed in accumulating ephemeral objects, considering them as permanent. Men must get out of this narrow groove. They must outgrow their selfish tendencies and learn to regard the whole of mankind as one family. That is true service. Few have such a large-hearted approach today.

Do not go after name or fame

The first requisite, therefore, is to get rid of all the bad thoughts, the selfishness, pride and other undesirable qualities from the heart so that the spirit of love can find its rightful place in it. Only a heart filled with love is pure and holy. Hence you should take up service activities in a loving spirit. You should not be concerned about name or fame. Fame is not a commercial product or a commodity that can be got from someone. It flows spontaneously like a river, which starts in a small way, but gathers volume as it goes along. Do not go after name or distinction. Concentrate your mind upon achieving your objectives. Fill your heart with love and engage yourselves in service. The man who cannot do service to others is not a man at all.

Render service according to your capacity

We must consider that we have taken birth only to render service to society as a sacred duty. Whatever small service we may do, if we do it in the right spirit, serving with no thought of self, we shall be doing something commendable and worthwhile. An act of service by itself may be a small thing. But it must be done wholeheartedly. Just as a cow transforms whatever it may consume into sweet, wholesome milk, any kind of service rendered with a pure heart will result in great good. You should not have any returns in view in rendering service. "This is my duty. I am born to serve" - it is with such an attitude that you should take up service. All beings in creation are

living by rendering mutual service and no one can be considered superior to another. Every person should render service according to his capacity and the sphere of his activities. There are various limbs in the human body. But the hands cannot do what the legs are capable of, nor can the eyes perform the duties of the ears. What the ears can enjoy, the eyes cannot. Likewise, among human beings there are differences. Their capacities and aptitudes may vary. But each should take part in service activity according to his ability, equipment and field of work.

Any individual may offer worship and engage in spiritual activities according to his preferences. But, in my view, the merit to be gained through service is greater than what can be got through these religious observances.

Na thapamsi Na theerthanam Na sasthanam
Najapanapi Samsara Sagaroththaram Sajjanasevanam Vina.

Neither by penances nor baths in sacred waters, the study of scriptures nor through meditation can the ocean of samsara be crossed without rendering service to the good.

Develop a large-hearted approach

Whatever pilgrimages we may undertake, our hearts hanker only after worldly objects and hence no cleansing of the heart occurs. The individual's quest for *Mukti* (liberation) is self centered. This is not right. One should strive to help others also to achieve liberation. That is true service. Few have such large -hearted approach today. How can those who have been immersed ceaselessly in selfish pursuits earn the grace of god? Therefore, to begin with, there must be realisation of the divinity that is inherent in all human beings and which pervades the entire Cosmos The unity that subsumes the diversity has to be understood to grasp the nature of divinity. So long as there is no understanding of divinity, there can be no understanding of even human

nature.

Eliminate selfishness, which is the cause of dualism and its brood of opposites, joy and sorrow, likes and dislikes, etc. The egoist cannot understand his own true nature, much less that of others. Hence, the first step is understanding one's own self. Everyone refers to "I" but where is it located? And wherefrom does it arise? The ancient scriptures described the seat of *Ahamkaram* (ego) as *Hridayam* (the heart). This may suggest that the "I" is somewhere in the body. But this is not correct. Hridayam is all-pervasive. It is otherwise known as Atma. Some consider that the Atma dwells in the heart. This is also wrong. Hridayam and Atma are one and to view them as different entities is wrong. If this is the case, it may be asked why are people plunged in the darkness of ignorance? It is because their vision does not extend beyond the Atma. It does not go beyond the mind. One who is unable to go beyond the mind cannot escape from the shroud of ignorance. The way out of this condition is to realize that like the moon and the sun, the mind derives its light from the Atma and when the vision is turned towards the Atma the mind fades away or ceases to shine.

Few render service with love

It is necessary to realise that the Atma is all-pervasive and cultivate a feeling of love for all. The *Viswam* (Cosmos) is a projection of the *Vishnuswarupam* (the Divine). There is no need to search in any particular place for the Divine who is omnipresent. Formal religious observances or spiritual scholarship will not lead to God-realisation. It is not intellectual eminence that is required for the spiritual sadhana. It is better to have a single person with a good and kind heart than a hundred vainglorious intellectuals. We should train ourselves to become good men, who are fit to undertake worthy tasks. If your minds are filled with hatred, envy and likes and dislikes, you are not qualified to embark on service activities. "Offer services and receive love." This is the recipe for experiencing Divinity. But today service is not offered wholeheartedly. Few render service with love and hence few receive God's grace. Even their love is self-centered and is not all-embracing. Our love should not be confined to our kith and kin. It must extend beyond the family to society as a whole, then to

the nation at large, and finally embrace the whole world.

Service in the right spirit is Dharma

This is the implication of Buddha's call:

"Sangham Saranam gachchami."

Starting from the *Buddhi* (the intellect) one should go beyond it to *Sangham* (society). This way, the oneness of the society is realised. But mere recognition of membership of society is not enough. One has to recognise and discharge through service one's obligation to society. That is the implication of the prayer:

"Dharmam Saranam Gachchami."

Doing service in the right spirit is Dharma. Service is also path to God-realisation. God is embodiment of Love, Truth and Peace. Therefore, to realise God, one has to develop Love, adhere to Truth and experience Peace within oneself.

The human body is like a chariot and the Atma is the charioteer. The bodies may have different forms and names. But the Atma is one and the same. It is essential to recognise the unity that underlies the apparent diversity. For instance, hunger is common to all, though the kind of food through which it is appeased may vary from an emperor to a beggar. Likewise, joy and grief, birth and death are common to all. The Atma is common to everyone. Recognising this oneness, they should engage themselves in service to all. Unfortunately, there is no feeling of unity today in the world. All the problems bedevilling mankind are due to the absence of unity.

Exemplify the quality of Samathva in service

The foremost duty of the Sai organisations is to promote unity on the basis that all are sparks of the divine and constitute one family. Without realising this basic truth, there is no use in rendering any kind of service. There can be no sacredness in service, if good thoughts and good feelings are absent. Service as an act of *Dharma* (righteousness) can be offered only by one who is pure in heart, selfless and equal-minded towards everyone (*Samathva*). Great devotees in the past exemplified this quality of "Samathva" (equal concern for everyone).

There is the example of Saint Tukaram. He maintained his household by cultivating a small piece of land. He was, however, indifferent to his own needs and spent all his time in contemplation of God. One year he grew sugar cane on his land. When the crop was ready for harvesting, passersby came to him and asked for a stalk of cane. Generous and self-sacrificing by nature, Tukaram allowed them to help themselves to as much cane as they liked. At this rate, only a fourth of the crop was left. Tukaram cut it and was bringing it in his cart. On the way many children asked for cane and Tukaram gave it freely. By the time he reached home, only a single piece of cane was left. Seeing the empty cart, his wife flew into a rage and berated him. "Don't you have any thought for your wife and children? What do you mean by recklessly giving away all the cane?" Tukaram kept smiling as his wife was showering him with questions. Ultimately he told her: "Here is one piece of cane I have brought for you." Unable to restrain her anger, she seized the piece of cane from Tukaram and hit his legs with it. The cane broke into two leaving one half in her hand. Tukaram laughed heartily and said, "I was wondering on the way home how to divide the cane between you and the children. I now have the answer. The cane left in your hand is your share. The children can share the other half." He felt happy at the way his wife had distributed the cane equally to all. This is the way devotees express their sense of equality to all.

No place for envy in Sai Organisation

Sai Sevaks should cultivate a similar spirit of tolerance and serenity to be able to render social service effectively. **It is unbecoming of Sai Organisations for anyone in them to bear ill-will towards others. All should behave as children of one mother.** Consider that everyone is an embodiment of the Divine Atma. Only then you can render service with zeal and vigour. Whatever may be one's wealth or position, in the sphere of service he should regard himself as equal with everyone else. All should bear in mind that wealth and position are not permanent. What is it that can be achieved through these? You can get what is destined for you and lose what you are fated to lose. Neither of these can be prevented by any subterfuges. Only the grace of the Divine will remain forever.

Today we are having a conference of "active workers." There are many who claim to be rendering social service. But selfish motives are present even in the field of service. Such selfishness should not have any place in Sai Organisations. The individual and the society are one. Whatever one does for society is also good for him. When service is done in that spirit, the individual as well as the society derive benefits from it. It may not be easy to cultivate such a sense of identity. But through persistent effort one can get over the sense of "mine" and "thine" and identify oneself with society at large. Once the will is there, anything can be accomplished. The power of a person's *sankalpa* (resolution) will outlast him.

Treat all service as offering to God

All service should be regarded as an offering to God and every opportunity to serve should be welcomed as a gift from God. When service is done in this spirit, it will lead in due course to self-realisation.

It is this kind of selfless, spiritually oriented service that is needed today. To a world riddled with conflict and chaos, this will provide a climate of serene peace. Regard yourselves as brothers in a family. But do not stop there. Go beyond kinship to the Atmic unity. You have to march from the *Annamaya* (the physical) to *Vijnanamaya* (the Higher Wisdom) and on to the state of *Anandamaya* (Divine Bliss). Shed completely all selfishness and self-interest

and enter upon service activities as the highest purpose of life. Service must become your life-breath. You must become ideal sevaks and set an example to the world.

Always have the meaning and the purpose of life in you. And, experience that purpose and that meaning. You are That, that is the truth. You and the universe are one; you and the absolute are one; you and the Eternal are one. You are not the individual, the particular, the temporary. Feel this. Know this. Act in conformity with this.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

27. Love God, fear Sin, serve Society

Date: 21 November 1987 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

THE body is the vesture which the mind has assumed for its functioning and growth. The thoughts and experiences of various previous lives are imprinted on the mind. When the mind is filled with good thoughts, there is nothing beyond its reach. Thoughts give rise to actions. Actions produce habits. Habits mould one's character. And character decides one's destiny - for good or ill. Hence thoughts are the basis for one's misfortunes or enjoyments. There is no greater blessing than having good thoughts. Association with good persons promotes good thoughts. Thoughts help to strengthen one's will power, which is the basis for acquiring other qualities like discrimination, intelligence, determination, eloquence and enquiry. However, this will power which is in everyone, gets weakened by the limitless growth in desires. With a weak will man cannot enjoy peace or bliss. It is evident from every one's experience that persons who are addicted to smoking or drink, develop their will power when they reduce their consumption of cigarettes, etc.

The three maxims for Active Workers

It is a great pity that people are sacrificing the most precious things in life for the sake of trivial and transient pleasures. In the pursuit of the trivial, men involve themselves in sinful activities. They forget the Divine. There is no escape from the consequences of sinful deeds. Hence everyone should have fear of sin. Equally, there should be love of God. When these two are present, one will become a truly moral person in society. All "active workers" should therefore bear in mind these three things: Daiva preethi (Love of God), Papa bheethi (fear of sin) and Sangha neethi (social morality). When one observes these three, he will be practising all other human values. Fear of sin will result in non-violence and peace. Love of God will promote adherence to truth and expression of love for all beings. Social morality will be Dharma (Righteousness) itself.

There is no meaning in repeating parrot-like words Sathya, Dharma, Santhi,

Prema and Ahimsa. One must strive to experience divinity. All the chaos and conflict prevailing in the world today are due to the absence of fear of sin and love of God. Human values are disappearing from society. Evil thoughts and bad intentions are mining the lives of people. These should be totally eschewed. Sai workers should not indulge in slanderous gossip or talk ill about others. They should see the Divine in every one and feel that when they speak ill of others, they are demeaning themselves.

Highest values to be cherished by all

Active workers engaged in service should realise that there is nothing greater than service and seek to promote love of God, fear of sin, and Righteousness in society as the highest values to be cherished by all. Indeed, if there is love of God, automatically there will be fear of sin, and when these two are there, morality follows as a natural sequence. Sangha Neethi (social morality) is like a beacon for mankind. Everyone should develop love of God and take up service. Prema and Seva (Love and service) are like two eyes for a human being or the two wings for a bird. One who has no love for his fellowmen is like a blind man. There should be no pretence in manifesting love. It should be based on the condition that the Divine is present in everyone. When love is sincere, one will experience real peace and joy. Regard Me as an illustration of this truth. I have love for all, even for those who are bad. I have greater love for those who deride Me I draw them nearer to Me. I derive great joy from this. Hence My life is My message. With Me, it is always Thyaga (sacrifice and giving), not Bhoga (enjoyment). Sacrifice itself is enjoyment for Me. All active workers should excel in. sacrifice and dedication.

Those who wish to serve society in the true spirit. and experience the joy therefrom should go into society with dedication. They must undertake service activities according to their capacity and competence and should not over-stretch themselves. They should not get involved in fundraising. Money is the cause for many differences and conflicts. Concentrate on service. There will be no lack of funds for any good cause. There are enough persons in the Sai organisations with resources. There is none poorer than the person who will not use his money for good purposes. Such men are a pitiable lot.

All are sevaks in Sai Organisation

Sai organisations are growing from day to day. There would be no room for factions and differences within the organisations if all members developed devotion, dedication, tolerance and spirit of sacrifice and considered themselves only as sevaks. There is no place in the Sai organisation for bossism. Whether they are office-bearers or others, all are equally sevaks engaged in service. This organisation is intended for those who are wedded to dedicated and selfless service. Those who are not active in service should be kept out. It is better to have ten genuine active sevaks than large number of office-bearers who take the credit for what others have done.

You should not be concerned about the wealth, position, name or distinction of anyone. Sincere service is the only criterion. Those who are not active or who merely indulge in idle talk or criticism of others should have no place in the organisation. And those who are puffed up with self-conceit should be eliminated. Only those who have humility to regard themselves as "servants of servants" can become true servants of God.

Unostentatious work of "active workers"

There are some who are connected with several organisations, either as office-bearers or members, and cannot serve fully any one of them. Those who wish to have connections with other organisations may keep out of Sai Organisation. It is a bad trade to be associated with any organisation merely for the sake of name or prestige. It is better to be connected with only one and render effective service through it. All that has so far been achieved by Sai Organisations is due to the unostentatious work of the "active workers." I am well aware of your dedication and sacrifice in rendering service. I am quite content with such workers. There should be no differences among Sai workers on grounds of creed, caste, community or nation. All religions are the same for them. The Divine is Omnipresent. It cannot be confined to picture or idol in a small shrine. You must dedicate yourselves to service with love, looking upon the Divine as the embodiment of love.

28. Spiritualise Education

Date: 22 November 1987 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Convocation - 6

Faith in God has declined
Reverence is at a discount
Atheism is rampant
Esteem for the Guru is gone
Devotion has no place
The age-old culture is ignored
Respect for the good has vanished
This is our education today

NAHI jnanena sadrusam pavitramiha vidhyate
(In the world there is nothing as sacred as jnana, the highest knowledge).

There is nothing more precious in the world than true education. It reveals the divinity that sustains the universe and promotes the welfare of mankind materially, mentally and socially. Only through education do we understand creation and the truth about humanity. Those who realise the nature of the Divine can know the relationship between Nature, society and the infinite potential of man. Instead of being subject to Nature, man can acquire, through education, the knowledge to utilise the forces of Nature. Thereby *Sat-Chit-Ananda* (Supreme Being - Total Awareness - Divine Bliss) can be experienced.

From Spirit to Nature

In the educational system today, the spiritual element has no place. This cannot be true education. Education must proceed primarily from the Spirit to Nature. It must show that mankind constitutes one Divine family. The divinity that is present, in society can be experienced only through individuals. Education today, however, ends with the acquisition of degrees. Real

education should enable one to utilise the knowledge one has acquired to meet the challenges of life and to make all human beings happy as far as possible. Born in society, one has the duty to work for the welfare and progress of society. The knowledge gained from education is being misused today solely to obtain and enjoy creature comforts and sensuous pleasures. This education has served to develop some kind of intellectual abilities and technical skills, but has totally failed to develop good qualities. Society today is steeped in materialism because of the preoccupation with mundane pleasures. Only in the institute here can be witnessed the emphasis on the divinity inherent in man. In olden days, when the pupils completed their educational tenure in the ashram of the guru and were about to enter the life of a grihastha (householder), the preceptor gave them a parting message to serve them as guidelines for their worldly and spiritual good. That ceremony is observed today as a Convocation.

Qualities which reveal true education

Education does not mean imparting of verbal knowledge. The knowledge that is gathered in schools and colleges should be capable of being used for service to society and helping to improve the conditions of one's fellow men. The place where true teachers and students are gathered should be filled with serene peace and orderliness. On the contrary, we find today that where students gather fear and insecurity prevail. Peace and order are not to be seen. This does not redound to the credit of education. Students, whose hearts should be soft and compassionate, have become hard-hearted and violent. Humility, reverence, compassion, forbearance, sacrifice and self-control are the qualities which reveal the outcome of true education. Science and technology have made astonishing progress, but humanity is going on the downward path. There are undoubtedly many brilliant scholars and scientists in the world today. But science alone is not enough. There must be discrimination for utilising the discoveries of science for right purposes. Science without discrimination, human existence without discipline, friendship without gratitude, music without melody, a society without morality and justice cannot be of benefit to the people.

Scientists and technologists are doing wonders today in the field of synthetics, electronics, atomic energy and exploration of outer space. On the one side, we have this astounding progress in science. On the other side, we are witnessing political and economic chaos, national, racial and religious conflicts, provincialism and student unrest indicating the free play of divisive forces. How are we to account for this contradiction - scientific advancement on the one hand and deterioration in human behaviour on the other? The reason is that along side the growth in knowledge, ignorance is also growing pari passu. What is the reason for this decline in human character and the growth of violence and hatred?

People are losing the zest for living

There is a marked increase in bad qualities, evil actions and cruel traits among human beings compared to the past. If the reasons for this growth are examined, it will be found that it is due to the continued predominance of animal instincts in man. How else can we explain the fact that in 5500 years of recorded human history, there have been as many as 15000 wars? Even now, men are not free from the fear of war. It is these wars that have progressively dehumanised mankind and eroded all regard for human values. The constant fear that at any moment one may lose his life in some conflict or the other has an oppressive effect on the mind. This is mainly responsible for men losing the zest for living. It is not external wars alone that is responsible for this. The general climate of conditions in which men live also contributes to fear and uncertainty. Men are becoming increasingly selfish and self-centered. How can such egocentric persons derive happiness from society or contribute to the happiness of the society? There is a scramble even for buying tickets for a film show or getting into a bus. Immersed entirely in selfish concerns, men have no regard for the interests of the others. Every step is governed by selfinterest. In whatever he sees, says or does, self-interest alone is dominant. This kind of selfishness must be totally eliminated among students. Increasing numbers of persons are seeking education, not for learning but for acquiring the means to gratify their desires. Education today has nothing sacred about it. The students have no steadiness of mind even for a moment. With this instability, how can they pursue studies with

earnestness? The authorities also do not offer proper help or encouragement.

Reasons for failure of education system

At the time when the country became free, there were 30 crores of illiterates. By 1983 this figure has gone upto 44 crores. Illiteracy is increasing everyday. By A.D. 2000 this figure may go upto 50 crores!

It is true that schools are in the increase and student enrolment has been going up considerably. But illiteracy is also increasing. Part of the reason for this is that large numbers of those who go to primary schools drop out after 2 or 3 years and lapse into illiteracy. There is no genuine urge for learning. Moreover, the financial provision for education, which was 7% of the Plan Outlay in the First Plan, had come down to 3.5% by the Sixth Plan. Many schools are not able to find money even for blackboards and chalk pieces. Even in the universities, the position of Vicechancellors is becoming difficult owing to non-receipt of grants. As a result, teachers are getting frustrated and discontented.

Problems such as these are continually growing in the educational field. The reason for this is the dependence of educational institutions on the government. Once they are divorced from the government, the problems will be solved. In the past *Saraswati* (the Goddess of Learning) had no association with the powers that be. Today even Saraswati has been chained to the government. Consequently institutions have lost their freedom.

Government and education

When a boy at school is asked today what he is doing, he answers: "I am buying education" ("Chaduvu kontunnu", in Telugu) instead of saying "I am learning" ("Chaduvu kuntunnu"). Thousands of rupees have to be paid for getting admission even to the primary classes. What is the benefit that can accrue to the world as a result of education received in this way? The students have no capacity to understand any of the problems of the contemporary world - economic, political, social, moral or other problems. The

teachers in old times exhorted their pupils to follow

Sathyam Vada (speak the truth).

In today's parlance, the exhortation is Sathyam Vadha (Destroy Truth)! Education today does not impart to the students the capacity or grit to face the challenges of daily life. The educational field has become the playing ground of ignorance.

In this state of things, the students cannot be blamed. Students must be enabled to prepare themselves to serve society with pure minds. Today they do not have even a sense of gratitude towards their parents for all the sacrifices they make to educate their children. The students acquire degrees and they go about begging for jobs. They should acquire rather the capacity to stand on their own legs and be self-reliant. They should, above all, develop good character. They should be able to take up any work and acquit themselves well. They should place love of the Motherland above everything else.

Rights and duties are both important

Men today are concerned solely about their rights and have no regard for their duties, obligations and responsibilities. Universities today have become factories for turning out degree holders and not real centres for knowledge. Education should serve to develop powers of discrimination and foster the sense of patriotism so that the educated may engage themselves in service to society. Lacking in love for the Motherland, many today are hankering after foreign things. We should not have aversion to anything. But esteem for things national is essential. Appreciation and regard for one's own country and its achievements is a sacred duty (*Dharma*). It is not the mark of good education if one forgets one's own country and goes after the exotic.

Students! It is not enough if you acquire degrees. Along with them you should acquire general knowledge and common sense. There is a wide gap between your learning and our culture, Scholarship without culture is valueless. Both have to go together. The Taithiriya Upanishad exhorts the student to look upon one's father, mother, teacher and guest as God. Students today have little respect for parents or God. They lack even confidence in themselves. How can those who have no self-confidence get self-satisfaction?

Degrees alone not enough

Education should not be merely for earning a living. It should enable one to lead an exemplary life. The right teacher is one who is an embodiment of love and teaches the student to love all, to cultivate the right relationships and to develop human qualities. Teachers who will promote qualities of mutual love and regard in their students are sorely needed today. We do not need today a new faith or creed, nor a new system of education. Nor do we need to create a new society. All we need are men and women who have pure and loving-hearts. Their hearts must be filled with sacred feelings. The transformation has to be effected in the minds of the people. The mind should be brought under the control of the buddhi (intelligence) and not allowed to go after its whims and fancies. You must become ideal citizens. Revere elders and show respect to everyone. Lead exemplary lives. Eschew selfishness and self-interest. Identify yourselves with the well-being of the society and dedicate yourselves to social service. Students must develop such noble ideas. They must show their gratitude to those who have helped them. You must realise also that ignorance is preferable to knowledge that is not put to right use. As the proverb says: "A docile donkey on which you can ride safely is preferable to a wild, uncontrollable horse."

Transform yourselves into men of virtue

All degrees, scholarships and punditry have no value if one does not have good qualities. Cultivate virtues. Today good qualities (gunamulu in Telugu) are forgotten and only good dress (guddalu in Telugu) is being flaunted. When

one wears white clothes, the heart must also be pure white. The Upanishad declares: "Narayana pervades everything inside and outside." You wear spotless clothes, but the heart inside is filled with bad qualities. You have to transform yourselves into men of virtue. You have to do right actions for cultivating good qualities. People talk about Neethi (morality). Morality simply means right conduct. Without good behaviour there can be no morality. Your moral life in society must express itself in service to the suffering and the helpless. The devotion and understanding that are implicit in selfless service cannot be found in any other thing. You may not get a job, but engage yourself in social service. Bear in mind the inspiring example of Abou Ben Adhem, who loved to serve his fellowmen and thereby earned the grace and love of God. You are well aware of the deplorable state of the nation. In this situation, remembrance of the name of the lord should be your main support. Have firm faith in God. An animal which had full faith in God became Nandi (the Bull), the vehicle of Lord Shiva. A monkey by the constant repetition of Sri Rama's name became the adorable Hanuman. Prahlada, the scion of the *Asura* (demonic) clan, became divine by his unconquerable faith in God. If such transformation can take place, why should not men become truly human? The fault lies in the perverted thinking of human beings and not in the divinity that is inherent in them.

Make every act holy and purposeful

Sanctify your lives by making every act of daily living holy and purposeful. Students should dedicate themselves to the revival of Bharat's hallowed culture and to the service of the Motherland. You must uphold the good name of the Institute wherever you are. Revere your parents and make them happy.

My dear students!

You are flowers in God's garden.

You are stars in God's sky.

You are wonderful beings in God's world.

You must possess head of Sankaracharya.

You must possess heart of Buddha.

You must possess hands of Janaka Maharaja.

Then you are perfect men.

29. Ways of the Divine

Date: 23 November 1987 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Birthday - 62

EMBODIMENTS of Divine Love!

Bharatiyas have been able to win independence, but have not succeeded in achieving unity. Freedom without unity is like an electric wire without current. *Sanathana Dharma* (Eternal vedic religion) is the great heritage of the children of Bharat (India). It is a culture that is sublime, sacred and ennobling. It has testified to the advent of many Avatars (incarnations of the Divine). Bharat is the birth-place of numerous sages, savants, men of God, warriors and great women who have upheld chastity. Like the clouds that occasionally obscure the sun, the effulgent face of Indian culture may have been covered by some dismal developments and modern trends, but it is bound to shine always. Even today great souls are incarnating in this land. In fact, there has been no epoch in India's great history when such figures have not appeared. Today people from foreign countries are looking at India with a myriad eyes. Foreigners are coming to India not only for studying its philosophy but primarily for getting spiritual insight. But Indians themselves are seeking to give up their cultural inheritance. This is the paradox of the present situation.

Indians must stand out as an ideal to the world

It is unfortunate that despite the unique greatness of Bharatiya culture, Indians, in a craze for worldly comforts and pleasures, are giving up their glorious divine cultural heritage. Doubtless there is need for having material comforts, but, along with these, only if we preserve our spiritual and cultural treasures will we be able to stand out as an ideal to the world. Unfortunately, even the government is ignoring the nation's cultural inheritance. Whatever their brave words and high sounding professions about India's greatness, their vision is turned towards western culture. Indians by and large are enamoured of occidental accomplishments and civilisation and are seeking to imitate the ways of the West. This is a supreme misfortune. When you have the golden Meru mountain, why search for silver and gold? When you have

the wish-fulfilling Kalpataru, why go after other fruits? When you have the bounteous Kamadhenu, why go elsewhere to buy a cow? There is an old adage that Bharat is a land which contains all that is good and precious not to be found anywhere else. It is a tragedy that a country which is full of so many things good and great should be looked upon with disdain by Indians themselves and be the subject of flippant criticism and comment.

The inner vision

The greatness of India's spiritual and cultural heritage is indescribable. But to enjoy and experience it, one should be duly qualified. One may have scholarship, may be well educated or eminent in other ways, but if he has no spiritual urge, all these are of no avail. Only those who have turned their vision inwards and experienced the bliss of the Divine are entitled fully to appreciate and understand the greatness of Indian culture. All Indians are children of one mother and are members of one family, even though they may speak different languages and wear different costumes and vary in their manners and customs. The Bharatiyas should look upon mankind as one family, of which the Supreme Lord is only one. Without earning the grace of that Lord, all other acquisitions are of no value. Love alone can bind one to God, because Love is His being. One who is the very embodiment of Love can be realised only through love and not by any other means. Human beings are also endowed with love. Through that love man should secure God's love, fill himself with love and lead a life filled with love.

Men earn wealth by engaging themselves in business or a vocation. This is not permanent. They should endeavour to acquire spiritual wealth which is enduring and everlasting. This wealth has to be got by loving God and earning His grace and love.

God responds only to Parama Prema

Love is like the mariner's compass, which points always to the north. The thoughts of a devotee filled with love are always directed towards God, whatever he may be doing or saying. Such love has been described as

Parama Prema - Supreme Love. God responds only to such love. It is not easy for everyone to understand the nature of this love. Love in man, if it is based on ego, assumes undesirable forms. If it is directed towards the Atma it redeems man and sublimates him. Hence everyone should strive for Atmic realisation. Many imagine that they are engaged in the quest for the Spirit. The very idea of a search for the Atma is misconceived. The Spirit is Omnipresent and is the active principle in everything everywhere. There is nothing in the world without the Spirit. But when the spiritual vision is absent, the Anatma (the non-spiritual or phenomenal) appears to exist. Therefore, the quest for the Spirit calls for a change in the vision. Vision does not mean the physical sight. It is the inner vision which seeks to see the One who enables the eyes to see. The spiritual quest is thus an attempt to know the Seer behind the power of sight. Today all spiritual sadhana is being done through the mind. As long as the mind dominates spiritual exercises, the goal of Self-Realisation cannot be attained. The mind is like a thief, who will not allow himself to be caught. There is no use in relying on the mind to realise the Self. When the vision is centered on the Self, the mind fades away. In the yearning for Self-realisation aspirants seek to obtain Upadesa (spiritual messages). But can mere words like Namō Narayanaya or Namah-Shivaya become spiritual messages? The root meaning of Upadesa is leading one to Swasthana (the abode of the Real .or God). By merely reciting names, the divine destination cannot be reached. We repeat the names of Rama, Krishna, Govinda, Narayana. All these names have been conferred by someone and have not emerged suigeneris. Such acquired names cannot be eternal. Anterior to all names is the word Aham ("I"). Even the Pranava ("Om") came after Aham. Everyone has to find out who is this "I". When one utters the Mahavakya, Aham Brahmasmi ("I am the Brah man") even there Aham is present. Therefore, one has to enquire into and ascertain who this "I" is. When the truth about "I" is known, the Brahman will be self-evident.

The Mahavakyas

Today we are wasting our time on physical and mental exercises for spiritual realisation. The truth is there is 'only one Divine Spirit that is immanent in everything. There is no dichotomy between the worldly and the spiritual. The

phenomenal universe is a projection of the Spirit. All that exists in the Cosmos are like sparks from a Divine flame. All living beings have emanated from the Divine and they have all the qualities of the Divine. Take the other great Pronouncement: Tat-Twam-Asi ('What thou art'). What art thou? Unless you know what "That" is, you cannot understand the real meaning of this Upanishad declaration. From a seed, a plant has come, which grows into a tree, with branches, leaves, flowers and fruits. All the leaves, flowers and branches proclaim that they have come from the seed that became the plant. The seed is the basis for everything in the tree. As long as the seed remained a seed, it could not become a tree. It is when a seed gives up its form to become a plant that it can put forth the branches, leaves, flowers, etc. Man should also realise his essential nature and not be deluded by identifying his true being with the body-consciousness. For all the sorrows and sufferings man experiences, it is the bodyconsciousness that is responsible. As long as this bodily delusion remains the fruit of Ananda (bliss) cannot be got. The seed of bodily attachment has to be given up for the tree of life to grow and yield the flower of Jnana (wisdom) and the fruit of Ananda (bliss). The Upanishads have declared that Immortality can be achieved only through Thyaga (sacrifice) and not through rituals, progeny or wealth.

The One is the basis for the Many

To boast about one's knowledge, scholarship or mastery of the sastras is really a sign of ignorance. The wise man is one who knows his true nature. As long as one is filled with ego, he cannot experience the Divine. The actions undertaken to destroy the ego become Akarmas (unattached acts). Love-filled devotion is the easiest path to the Divine. You must love all. The great quality of love is that it is the royal road to unity. All the diversity and manifoldness that we see in the world have come from the One. The One is the basis for the Many. Once we realise the Unity that underlies the diversity, the problems arising out of differences can be resolved.

Develop the sense of human unity

The greatest task facing Indians today is the achievement of unity. Without

unity, even the smallest task cannot be accomplished. Proper human relations are not to be found in this nation of 78 crores of people. Every individual is wrapped up in his own selfish concerns. Is this the real worth of a human being? Selfishness and self-interest and differences based on caste and creed should be totally eliminated. Everyone should deem himself a member of the human family. All caste distinctions are based on physical differences, similar to distinctions relating to age or sex. All bodies are made up of the five basic elements (ether, air, fire, water and earth) which do not have any distinctions of caste. All the elements are common to all beings. It is from a recognition of these basic common elements that we should develop the sense of human unity. To promote the feeling of unity, we have to participate in service activities. We must utilise the body for cultivating good qualities, pure thoughts, doing good actions, and experiencing sacred feelings. Only through sacred acts can our life be sanctified and made worthy. Embodiments of Divine Love! Do not indulge in speculative debates while proceeding on the spiritual path. The spiritual legacy of Bharat is not a product of blind faith. It is the ripe fruit of the spiritual investigations and experiences of sages and saints, which was enjoyed by them and handed down to humanity for its enjoyment and emancipation. This heritage is the butter got. by the churning of the Vedas, sastras and the puranas. Bharat should not be regarded as a lump of earth and a mass of flesh. It is nectar itself. It is a treasure-house of bliss. It contains the cream of all the sastras. Without understanding these truths, it is ridiculous to engage in all sorts of idle talk.

The ways of the Divine

It is not easy to understand the nature of the Divine. Because the Divine is omnipresent, He can undertake any kind of activity. No one is competent to ask whether God can do this or that, whether He can work through one agency or another. There is nothing that is beyond His power. He can make one weep, He can avert one's tears. He can turn a hedonist into a yogi and a yogi into hedonist. He can drive away madness or cause madness. He can create, He can protect, He can punish, He can destroy. Only the Divine knows what to do, when, how and in what circumstances, with regard to any

particular individual. No one has the authority to tell the Divine how He should act. In the case of Hiranyakasipu and Prahlada for instance, God punished the former and protected the latter. God deals with a person according to his past activities and according to the requirements of the prevailing situation. The Cosmos is the embodiment of the Divine. Differences arise when anyone acts out of selfish motives. But the Divine has no self-interest at all. Hence whatever he does is only for the good of the others. Every act of His is holy. It is Dharma (righteous action). It is Truth. When the Divine is the very embodiment of Dharma and Sathya, no one is competent to question the actions of the Divine. Even the great sages, after all their enquiries and explorations, could only say about the Divine: "Not this," "Not this." They could not define what It is. It is possible to say what It is not, but who has the capacity to declare what It is? He is the cosmic stage director, playwright and-actor. He is acting even in your form. He is the critic and the criticised. He is the one who weeps and one who causes weeping. Such being the nature of Divinity, what can anyone declare about the Divine?

Power of attraction through Love

There is one thing, however, that is the unique attribute of the Divine. It is the power of attraction through Love. This magnetic power cannot be found in all. The ocean is vast and deep beyond measure. A tumbler of water taken from the ocean cannot have its vastness. It may have the same taste as sea-water but it cannot have any of the ocean's other attributes. Individual human beings may have some Divine qualities according to their past record, their spiritual and other attainments and what they deserve, but these are strictly limited. You are witnessing today the presence here of thousands and thousands of persons. What is it that has drawn them here? Were any invitations sent to them? Was there any publicity in the media to bring them here? The only reason for their coming is the attraction of the Divine love. It was this which impelled Thyagaraja to sing, Is it not because you had The bliss-conferring Chintamani, Oh Rama, that all of them Gathered round you,

With their hearts in unison To experience perennial joy From the Source of all Prosperity, From the Ocean of Compassion And the embodiment of

Intelligence That you are, with no equal? (Swami sang the Telugu song "Lekhana ninnu juttukunnaru" in His own mellifluous voice, filling the entire gathering with ecstasy).

Heart-to-Heart Love

It is because that wish-fulfilling Jewel (Chintamani) of Love is manifest here that these thousands of people from all parts of the world have come here. Whatever one may say, can anyone point to any person who can attract so many thousands? Elsewhere, even when people are brought in lorries, they choose to run away. Here, even when we try to dissuade people from coming for lack of proper accommodation, devotees will not desist from coming and staying under the trees or in the open. This is the love that flows from heart-to-heart. There is no compulsion on anyone to come here. It is the cord of love that binds them. That is the power of the Divine.

Some may say that Swami is making a Pradarsanam (demonstration) of this power or that. It may appear to you as "demonstration." For me, it is simple Nidarsanam (manifestation). This is natural for Me. I am doing what is innate for Me. It is the manifestation of Divine love. This is not something all can do. Not all the sastras and sutras can enable one to act this way. Only those who have experienced the power of Love can understand this phenomenon. Love is not something that can be bought. It is inherent in you. When you try to experience it naturally, you will realise it.

Chant Rama's name

Ramadas sang ecstatically, Oh devotees! Here is the wonderful sweet That has been prepared from the Vedas and the Puranas:

The sweet name of Rama. Come, all ye, and partake of it! This Rama lollipop is in many colours And is the cure for all ills. It costs you nothing. Come and take it, oh devotees! To partake of Swami's love, you have to spend nothing except the cost of travel. But even that expense is a sacred offering. Regard the expenses of your Puttaparthi trip not as expenses but a Prapti (blessing).

Without that expenditure, you cannot get this grace. We have no right to get anything without giving something. Likewise, unless you make some small sacrifice you cannot have the blissful experience you get here. The Lord's love for the devotee is mutual giving and receiving love.

Develop henceforth the firm faith that whatever the Divine thinks, says or does is for the welfare of the world and not for Himself. There is not the slightest trace of self-interest in it. Whether you believe it or not, all are the same to me. But what each is entitled to receive varies according to his Prapta-anusaram (what he has earned to deserve reward or punishment). The ocean is full of water. But what anyone can take from it depends on the capacity of the vessel he carries. Likewise the extent of one's adrishtam (luck or fortune) depends on his past record and what he deserves now.

Strengthen your faith in God

Today what you have to do is to promote good thoughts. Action proceeds from thoughts. Sadhana is based on action. Character is the outcome of the sadhana. Character determines your Prapti (what you are destined to get). Hence what you regard as your good fortune or misfortune is based, in the final analysis, on your thoughts. As are your thoughts, so are the fruits. You cannot avoid doing your duty whatever it may be. You have to go on with it. But, even while engaged in the performance of your duties, there can be nothing more rewarding than remembering and meditating on God. If, however, while entertaining bad thoughts and bad intentions inside, you behave outwardly as if you had good thoughts, you will be guilty of deceiving God. There is no room for playing blind man's buff with wealth. You have to cultivate good qualities, not flaunt your wealth. Strengthen your faith in God. Your life must be based on the principle of surrender to the Divine. There are some who ask: "I have surrendered everything to God. Why then, am I subjected to so many trials and tribulations?" One who has truly surrendered to God will not raise such questions. To say that "after I have surrendered I am put to suffering" itself shows that the surrender is not real, because where is the place for "I" after surrendering everything? To the person who has completely surrendered, everything that he experiences {good or bad} is a

gift from God.

Oh man! Can you get away from the consequences of your Karma? Whether you take your vessel to a well Or to the boundless ocean You can fill it only to its capacity. You cannot get more than what your Karma entitles you to.

Remember this, Oh man!

Wherever you may go,

Whatever you may study, Whatever penances you may do, You cannot get away from the decrees of Karma!

Power of Divine Grace

However there is one way of getting over the results of Karma. If you earn the grace of the Divine, even mountains of sin can be reduced to dust. Only the Divine has the power to confer such grace. A spark of fire can bum down a mountain of cotton. How is the spark to be got into the "mountain" of human predicament? Only through love. Develop love. Serve all with love, ever remembering the Lord's name. Without the name of the Lord on your lips, the mind will be running hither and thither. The mind is the birth-place of unsteadiness. Hence engage yourselves in action, concentrating your thoughts on God. Embodiments of Divine Love! From this day when you are celebrating the birth anniversary, there are three things that you have to remember and practise: (1) Eschew criticism of others. Cavilling at others is a grievous sin. To cavil at the Divine is an even more heinous sin. Do not discuss other people's faults or lapses. (2) Greet everyone with love. Embark on your duties with dedication. (3) Take up service in the villages wholeheartedly. I have often declared: "Grama seva is Rama seva" (service to villages is service to Rama). Ramarajya is the reign of love. Keep aloof from the Government.

The three things to be borne in mind

One more thing will have to be borne in mind by everyone connected with Sai Organisations. Whatever activities they may undertake, our organisation should have no connection with the Government. Let the Government do its job. Our activities should be confined to what we can do, to the limits of our capacity, without depending on the Government. There is no need to attempt something big. Even a small bit of service done well is enough. Bear these three things in mind: First, our service organisations should keep aloof from the Government. Second, plunging into the society, render service. Third, avoid finding fault or talking ill of others. This is the real sadhana. Do not hesitate to reprove those who indulge in back-biting. They should be corrected on the spot, so that they may not persist in that vicious habit. They must be told that it is unbecoming of one born as a human being to talk ill of other fellow-beings. One who indulges in such talk will himself get it back tenfold, When you start developing love, all these evil traits will drop away. Henceforth, engage yourselves in social service, remembering and worshipping God and recognising your inherent Divinity. This is the way to sanctify your lives. Be aware of the divinity in you. There is no need to search for God anywhere outside you. The bodily vesture you are wearing should not produce the delusion that you are the body. Shed that delusion and you will realise the Brahman that you really are. Do bhajans and have the name of the Lord always on your lips. Do not waste even a single moment. By chanting the name of Rama, Hanuman the monkey, became all-powerful, the embodiment of peace and the exemplar of all noble qualities. Sita was full of praise for him. It is such qualities that you should all try to cultivate.

The divine will not consider your status or position, your pomp and show. The Lord is bound only by the devotees' devotion.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

30. Peace through Seva

Date: 24 November 1987 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Sathya Sai Active Workers Conference

I AM in the light. The light is in me.
The light is me. I am the light.
The man who has realised this truth
becomes one with the Brahman.

Man is perpetually engaged in the search for peace. The seeker of peace must search for it not in *matham* (religion) but in *manam* (the mind). The search for peace in the external is the cause of all the unrest in the world. Peace has to be established first within one's self. Then it has to be extended to the family. From the family, it has to spread to the village, the province, the state and the nation. What is happening today is the reverse of this process. Conflict and disorder are spreading from the individual to the family and right upto the nation.

You must become messengers of peace. You have to begin with yourselves. You can get peace only through service. An idle mind is the devil's workshop. When one is busy at work, there will be no room for thoughts in the mind. Then there is peace of mind. A peaceful mind is the abode of love. Love is inherent in man, but like a seed that has to be nourished by manure and water, love in man has to be fostered by *sraddha* and *prema* (dedicated service and love). Love is a sacred quality. It is like nectar. A man who has tasted the immortal sweetness of Divine love will not desire anything else in the world. Life must become a constant manifestation of love. Today love is manifested in a constricted, selfish manner. It needs to be expressed in service to society. It has to be offered to others and shared with them. Thereby love becomes a reciprocal, everwidening experience.

Exercise discrimination before taking action

Every individual has four constituents: The body, the mind, the intelligence and the Atma. The body is the instrument for discharging one's duties (*Dharma-sadhanam*). The body can act only through the promptings of the mind. But it is the mind that enjoys the results of these actions. The mind, however, derives only momentary pleasure from the actions of the senses. For instance, when one is hungry, the mind is satisfied if the hunger is appeased for the moment by eating something. Beyond the mind is the *Buddhi*, the intelligence. The Buddhi has the power of discrimination. It points out what is wholesome and what is undesirable or bad for the body. When the mind is guided by the Buddhi, it experiences genuine joy. Every action that is done should be preceded by an enquiry as to whether it will lead to good or bad results. When discrimination is not exercised, the mind becomes blind as it were. It is the Atma that animates the body, and illumines the intelligence. The one who identifies himself with the body loses himself in carnal pleasures. The one who identifies himself with the mind experiences sensuous enjoyment. One who bases his life on the intelligence achieves intellectual fulfillment. Only the person who bases his life on the Atma can experience *Ananda* (pure bliss).

Strive to acquire Atmic experience

Those who aspire for pure bliss should strive to acquire the Atmic experience. When one has the Atmic vision, he recognises the One that pervades everything. This awareness cannot come through the study of scriptures. **The Sai Organisations should function on the basis that the indwelling Spirit in everyone is the same Atma.** Names and forms may vary. Everyone should develop this sense of oneness (nonduality) and render service to society in a spirit of humility. There should be no spirit of condescension.

The ancient sages started with regarding themselves as God's servants and reached the Divine through service. If you want to eliminate your ego, you have to consider yourself a *dasanudasa* (a servant of servants). This aspiration was expressed by Ramdas (Gopanna) in the song, "Dasanu-

dasudanu Kavalenura" ("I must become a servant of your servants and do service to your servants, Oh Rama! Not I alone, but my wife and children should also render services at all times").

The Path of Bhakti

This is the path of devotion. Sankaracharya, who was the authentic exponent of *Advaita* (nondualism), composed the Bhaja Govindam to emphasise the greatness of *Bhakti marga* (the path of devotion) which is based on dualism. The unique merit of Bhakti has been expounded by Narada in his Bhakti Sutras. It is the path of love. Through love, we must develop the spirit of *Thyaga* (sacrifice) and proceed to *Yoga* (mergence in the Divine). When you give up what has to be given up, when you know what ought to be known, and reach what should be your destination, you will experience the bliss of Brahman. Attachment to worldly things has to be given up. The basic truths of life are to be known. The goal is unity with the Divine. In that lies the bliss of immortality.

Every Sai sadhak and sevak has to make the Atma the basis of all activity. He should regard himself as the embodiment of the Divine and realise that the Atma is present in everyone. One should have the feeling that whatever joy or sorrow others experience is equally his. Only then can one render service, conferring joy on others. Today very few are fulfilling their functions properly. There is too much talk and too little of action. Everyone should cultivate the feeling that primarily he is a servant, and a "worker." There is no demand on anyone to exert himself beyond his capacity. Nor should anyone in the organization think of leaving it because the rules of the organisation are too strict. You should realise that there is no greater and more sacred path to the Divine than service. It is a golden opportunity for you in this birth. Here is the means to sanctify your life by service in the Sai Organisation. There is no use in sitting alone in meditation with closed eyes, or in going on pilgrimages. You must realise the Omnipresent Divine through service.

Sai Krishna and Arjunas

Krishna revealed His universal form to Arjuna. But all of you are Arjunas. One of the names of Arjuna is Partha, the son of Prithu (earth). All of you are children of the earth. As Parthas you should not flee from battlefield. Krishna called upon Arjuna to do his duty, remembering always the name of the Lord.

Mam Anusmara Yudhyacha.

Likewise all of you while carrying your respective duties, should keep in mind the name of Lord. Only then you will justify the appellation "Arjuna", meaning purity. Engage yourselves in service with a pure heart. Krishna used Arjuna as an instrument to stage His cosmic play. Today this Sai Krishna is directing His play with so many thousands of Arjunas.

Nimitha Mathram Bhava Savyasachin!
Be only my instrument, Oh Arjuna

You are only instruments. Do not arrogate to yourselves any authority or power and claim credit for any achievement. All your name and fame are due to your association with Sai organisations and the use of the Sai label. Without the Sai imprimatur where will you be? It is the Sai name that has conferred on you distinction and recognition. Therefore, bear in mind the name of Sai and carry on your work. Since the 60th birthday celebrations I have been emphasising spiritual sadhana and the Advaitic approach. We have passed the stage of *Karma-kanda* (Realm of Action) and *Upasana* (worship) and must now enter on the stage of *Jnana*. Henceforth you should concentrate on the Advaitic approach.

The Sai phenomenon

At this conference, certain changes have been discussed. They are not

related to any individual or to any lapses on your part. They are related to the situation prevailing in the world today. The world is looking at the Sai movement with a myriad eyes. They are asking: "What is this Sai? Wherever we go, whether to a bazar or a jungle, we see Sai photos and the Sai name being invoked." Many are astonished at this phenomenon and are trying to examine it either out of curiosity or out of envy. In a situation like this, there should be no room for any one to point the finger of criticism or derision at our organisation. Every one according to his status or position, should get on with his work.

In future instead of some persons functioning as officers and others as the rank and file, all can be treated as equals, as "brothers" or fellow workers. Mutual love has to be promoted. We have to demonstrate to the world the unity that underlies the diversity. All should work together in harmony, act together, move together, grow together and share the common knowledge and experience with all. There should be no place for cynics, defeatists and doubting Thomases in the Sai Organisation. We want people who will completely identify themselves with the organisation.

Role of Women

For much that has been achieved by the Sai organisations, the credit goes to the women workers. They have done good service. There should be all the three wings in the women's section also - spiritual, educational and service. I desire that they should engage themselves in all three activities. In the women's organisations, instead of competition for office, there should be concentration on duties. There should be no room for bossism. All are sevaks in the Sai fold. Why should there be distinction amongst them? There is one other matter. Hitherto we have had a world council. It served its purpose, but now Sai centres have grown on large scale in overseas countries. The world council will cease from today. It will be appropriate if in each overseas country there is a committee looking after the workings of Sai centres according to the conditions and requirements of those countries. The overseas office should supply information to our office in Prasanthi Nilayam about their activities.

The purpose of introducing these and the other changes is only to provide encouragement and guidance to Sai Organisations which are growing by leaps and bounds. You know the ground that you have traversed. You must now look ahead towards the future. I desire that you should all conduct yourselves as brothers and sisters in the Sai Organisation and set an example to the world.

The direct individual relationship between each of you and myself will remain always. If our relationships can be strengthened through the organisations, I shall feel happier. Hoping that the proposed changes will in no way diminish your enthusiasm and that you will go on with your activities with redoubled vigour and enthusiasm, in an exemplary manner, I bless you all.

The human body has been given to you for a grand purpose: realising the Lord within. If you have a fully equipped car in good running condition, what is the use of keeping it in the garage? The car is primarily meant for going on a journey. Get into it and go! Then only it is worthwhile to own it. So it is with your body; proceed, go ahead, reach your destination.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

31. Divinity through Love

Date: 25 December 1987 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Christmas

Men and women of many faiths From the four comers of the world Have gathered here with love and humility Unmindful of comfort or discomfort, Enduring numerous travails, All for the sake of Baba's grace! Dispelling rampant atheism And instilling faith in God Sai's all-embracing love Is transforming mankind And leading them to the Divine. EMBODIMENTS of Divine Love! Although physically there are no basic differences among human beings, many differences can be seen in their practices, their thoughts and feelings. Every nation is an aggregation of human beings. Differences in the life-styles of human communities in the various nations are quite significant, though the natural environment over the globe as a whole is not so varied. This is a significant characteristic of the human predicament. Truth is one. It is beyond mind and speech. It transcends the categories of time and space. Innumerable seekers have pursued different paths to recognise this Truth. There are notable differences among the seekers of Truth. These differences do not affect the nature of the universe. On the contrary, these differences must be viewed as different stages in the understanding of the Cosmic process. It is the existence of these differences that has prompted the continuous search for a unifying principle.

The ultimate Truth is one

The six schools of Indian Metaphysics (the Shat-darsanas) have been offered to us by the great seekers of the past. Little attention is being paid today to these sacred teachings. Although the spiritual paths indicated by these different Darsanas appear to be different, their goal is common and the ultimate truth proclaimed by them is one and the same. Because of the differences among the various sects and communities in the country and growth of materialism among the people, the tenets of the six Darsanas are not being seriously pursued. The materialist doctrine has gripped the world so much that the greatness of Indian metaphysics is not being appreciated. Even the climate for a proper consideration of this philosophy does not seem to

exist. The materialist doctrine proceeds on the assumption that Chaitanya (Consciousness) is a product of sensory experiences and that the evolution of Consciousness is dependent on and is based on the evolution of matter. Inanimate matter is the basis for the materialist doctrine. Matter is finite. The Vedic doctrine repudiates the view that consciousness can arise out of physical senses which are limited by their origin in matter which is finite and limited. In total opposition to this materialistic doctrine, the Adhyatmic (spiritual) view was projected to demonstrate the falsity of the concept of the primacy of matter over consciousness.

Man and Nature

For the spiritual view, the basis is the Atma (Spirit). The Atma is infinite. The Vedantic doctrine proclaimed the infinite nature of the Self and pointed out that matter is both inert and finite. The Sruti declares: "Tripadhasya-amrutam divi." Consciousness constitutes three-fourths and one-fourth is inert matter. Thus, it is consciousness that animates matter and not matter that gives rise to consciousness. This is the essence of the spiritual concept. "Oordhva moolam Adhah-sakha" says the Gita. (The roots are high up, the branches of the Cosmic tree are below). This is further confirmation of the view that the material universe has emanated from the Universal Consciousness.

It is Chaitanya (Consciousness) that activates Jada (matter) and not matter that gives rise to consciousness. Modern technology has produced fantastic devices, harnessed new sources of energy and turned out spacecraft for exploring the moon and other planets in outer space. But can all these instruments operate by themselves? No. Behind them lies human ingenuity and intelligence. Greater than all the machines is man. Man is consciousness incarnate. It is this consciousness that makes the machines move and it is indisputably clear that inert matter cannot create consciousness. Man is the highest object in creation. Man should not be a creature of instincts like the animals, which are subject to Nature, but should become a master of Nature. He should progress from the Nara (human) to the Narayana (Divine). An intelligent human being should not regard himself as bound by Samsara (worldly attachments). It is not the world that binds man. It has neither eyes

to see nor hands to grasp. Man is a prisoner of his own thoughts and desires. In his attachment to the ephemeral and the perishable, man forgets his inherent divinity and does not realise that everything in the universe has come from the Divine and cannot exist without the power of the Divine.

Divinity in the Cosmos

The Cosmos is a projection of the Eternal, Infinite Reality (Brahman) and is not separate from the Brahman. "Sarvam Vishnumayam Jagath" (The universe is permeated by the Divine). When this truth is recognised, it will be obvious that all that one perceives or experiences is a manifestation of the Divine. Every tree is a Kalpavriksha (wish-fulfilling tree). Every place of work is the shrine of the Divine. Many imagine that they are engaged in spiritual exercises to realise this sense of oneness with the Divine. Various spiritual exercises or different forms of worship may give some feeling of personal satisfaction, but will not result in God-realisation. God needs nothing from anyone. God does not seek offerings, nor is pleased by them. The Divine is not different from you. It is your likes and dislikes that separate you from God. When you get rid of desires and aversions, you will realise your inherent divinity. All the spiritual exercises one does or rituals one observes in offering worship can serve only to purify the mind and eliminate the ego. Mankind should strive for the ideal of human unity by recognising the divinity that is present in every human being.

Sins and repentance

There is an age-old practice among Christians to pray to God for forgiving their sins. In the churches, it is the practice for devotees to confess their sins, make cash offerings and obtain absolution from the pontiff or the priest. The belief in redemption through repentance and offerings to the Divine is prevalent in India also. These practices are based on misconceptions about the Divine. There should be an earnest enquiry into the nature of the Divine and people should try to get rid of superstitious beliefs which have no basis in Truth. It should be noted that the spirit of enquiry was prevalent among the ancient Greeks centuries before Christ. Socrates was a great teacher who

promoted the spirit of enquiry among the youth of Athens. Socrates was so much wedded to the pursuit of truth that he preferred death in his home city to making good his escape with the help of his disciples. He set no value on life, property or possessions.

Jesus and the rich man

Jesus also set no value on wealth or position. Once a rich man came to Jesus when he was in the house of Martha and Mary. The rich man told Jesus that despite all his wealth and possessions he was not having peace of mind. He was harassed by many worries and appealed to Jesus to show him a way out. Jesus told him: "There is a simple way but will you follow it? You have been accumulating riches and your worries have grown with them. What are you going to do with all this wealth, which some day you will have to leave behind? Distribute it among the poor and the needy and all your worries will go. Accumulate instead the wealth of God's grace through love of your fellowmen." This is the message that has to be understood today. What people should seek is the earning of God's love. All other forms of wealth, including the wealth of scholarship, are valueless. By chastising the rich and ministering to the poor and the diseased, Jesus taught his disciples a new way of life based on faith in God. Starting his ministry as a Messenger of God, Jesus finally declared: "My Father and I are one." St. Paul, who was in the beginning an inveterate critic of Jesus, became the first propagator of the Christian faith after having a vision of Christ in a dream in which Jesus told him: "Every man is a spark of the Divine. When you hate me, you are hating yourself and hating God." Paul had to face many ordeals in propagating Christ's message. The early Christians were subject to persecution by the Roman rulers. In course of time the Christian faith established itself in Rome, which became the seat of the Catholic church.

"Kingdom of Heaven is within you"

Christ declared that God can be realised only through love. Once a high priest in Jerusalem called Jesus and asked him: "Are you King of the Jews?" Jesus replied: "I do not say so." The priest told Jesus: "You are leading the people

astray by your wrong teachings. You are telling them that everyone can enter Heaven only through you." Jesus said that he had been telling the people to seek the Kingdom of Heaven. The priest asked: "Where is that Kingdom?" Jesus replied: "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you, within everybody. When this is my teaching, how can I be accused of claiming that the Kingdom of Heaven can be attained only through me?" How did Jesus get the courage to speak in this fashion? It was because he was proclaiming the truth. Truth is born of love, which comes from faith in God. Where there is confidence, there is Love. Where there is Love, there is Peace. Where there is Peace, there is Truth. Where there is Truth, there is Bliss. Where there is Bliss, there is God. In Bharat there is a belief that Divinity exists in the three forms of Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara. No one has seen these deities in their different forms. These forms have been conceived to develop faith in certain ways. The Trinity are symbolically present in everyone. The heart has been equated with Easwara. This means that the heart symbolises the Atmic principle in man. This refers not to physical heart but to the spiritual heart. The heart represents divinity as well as the Love principle. The Atma is unbounded and hence Love also has no limit. Men in their narrow-mindedness may set limits to their love, but love as a Divine quality is infinite.

"You are the Divine"

The mind has emanated from the heart. It is all-pervading. Manomoolam idam jagath. ("The mind is the basis of the Cosmos"). The mind symbolises Vishnu. The word Vishnu means that which pervades everything in the universe. As the mind has emanated from the heart, the Vishnu principle has come from the Easwara principle. Brahma is said to have emerged from Vishnu. In man the Aham (ego) has arisen from the mind and Brahma is symbolic of Aham. This is the esoteric interpretation of the Trinity. It means that the Trinity are present in everyone. The heart is Easwara, the mind is Vishnu and the "I" is Brahma. When you regard the self as Brahma, your thoughts and actions will not go astray. The mind will be a means of liberation, when it is rid of the impurities residing in it. All spiritual exercises are designed only to cleanse the mind. When the mind becomes pure, the divine is experienced spontaneously. The Divine is not separate from you. You are the Divine. This

conviction must grow in you. In the beginning you regard yourself as a mere human being. Then, you reach the stage when you realise your potential divinity. Finally you reach the stage when you realise your divinity. These three stages could be noticed in the career of Jesus. At the outset, he declared: "I am a Messenger of God." Then, he said: "I am the Son of God." Finally he affirmed: "I and my Father are One." Through this process, Christ achieved oneness with the Divine. You must embark on the journey to unity with the Divine from now itself. Time waits for no one. Concentrate all your efforts on the realisation of God. The primary requisite is the elimination of the ego. Without getting rid of the ego, the bliss of divinity cannot be experienced. Ostentatious worship is of no use. Wealth, power and position are of no avail in the spiritual quest. They cannot confer peace or remove the fear that haunts man all the time. Only the man of faith is completely free from fear. Hence, develop faith in God and lead a God-directed life. You may pursue your studies or avocations without giving up your faith in God. What is happening now is that men are forgetting God in the pursuit of wealth. They are seeking annam (food) instead of Atma. When the Atma is realised all other things will be got without any great effort.

Bear in mind the three maxims

The man who has realised the Self has redeemed his life. That man is blest who is conscious of his faults. The one who sees the good in others is equally blest. Show love towards all. People from many countries have gathered here today. Wherefore have they come here? They are not wanting in wealth. They do not lack comforts. They enjoy many things in their countries. But they do not experience real bliss, which can come only from spiritual realisation. And it is for this they have come. You have to turn your minds towards the Atma. The Atma is infinite. You have to get rid of the ideas of "mine" and "thine." Regard yourselves as the children of one God, who is the universal protector. Bear in mind three things: Love of God, fear of sin, observance of social morality. One who has no love of God, easily commits sin and loses all moral values. Love of God promotes the fear of sin and makes one lead a moral life. These triune principles are like the Divine Trinity. They will promote Thrikarana suddhi (purity in thought, word and deed). Whatever is done with

such purity will be conducive to God-realisation. Above all, cultivate love. it is love that has brought you all here. Strengthen that love. Love is God. Live in Love. You may choose any form of worship or pursue any spiritual path you like. Whatever delights your heart will please God. Follow the dictates of your conscience, fill your hearts with love and immerse yourselves in the bliss of the Divine. Christmas message presented to an unprecedented gathering of Overseas and Indian devotees in the