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1. Perseverance - The Key To Achievement

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Verily the light that illumines all the hearts is Divine, The love that emanates from each call is Divine Break not the Divine command in your intellectual conceit For pride surely goeth before a fall. All education that is devoid of spiritual purity is replete with hatred and envy, Like a dark dwelling infested with bats, Know this to be the truth. DEAR students, teachers and lovers of education. For the accomplishment of any aims in life man needs an unflinching mind, tireless endeavour and unshakable determination. Young boys and girls pursuing their studies have to cultivate these qualities if they wish to ensure for themselves a bright future and an honourable and worthy career. In facing different situations in life, students have to learn to practise equanimity and amiability. Equal-mindedness and a sense of oneness with all are the marks of a true human being. In this vast country, everyone has an important role to play Everyone as a citizen has a social responsibility. The world indeed. is one human family. The true student should be able to experience this oneness. Sports and games enable students to develop this feeling of oneness.

Maintain physical fitness and mental purity

Sports and games and physical exercise contribute directly to physical fitness and good health. But man is not merely the gross body alone. He has the subtle element in him, namely, the mind. It is only when man achieves purity of mind and develops unselfishness that he can acquire peace of mind and experience genuine happiness. Hence both physical fitness and mental purity is essential for man.

Students should realise that the determination and perseverance they show in seeking to win laurels in sports and games are also equally necessary in other spheres of life, especially in those of morality and spirituality.

The first quality that you have to cultivate is gratitude to the Divine. People

are thankful for even small acts of service done to them. Is it not necessary to be grateful to the Divine who has provided us with so many essential benefits through Nature and the five elements? The air you breathe, the water you drink, the earth on which you walk are all gifts of God. How grateful are you to the sun, who provides light, which cannot be equalled by all the electric bulbs in the world? Can all the pumpsets in the world provide as much water as is offered in a single downpour of rain? Can all the fans in the world, provide as much breeze as you get when the wind blows? Without being grateful for these Divine gifts, man goes after the trivial and wastes his life. The great sages of yore who adored God in various ways considered devotion as a means of expressing gratitude to Providence.

Virtues alone can elevate one in life

The puranas have described the lives of the great exemplars of nine forms of Bhakti (devotion). They are Parikshit for Sravanam (listening to the glories of God), Narada for Keerthanam (singing the praises of God), Prahlada for Vishnunama smaranam (remembering the Lord's name), Prithu for Archanam (offering worship), Akrura for Vandanam (prostration), Hanuman for Seva (service), Arjuna for Sakhyam (friendship), Lakshmi for Padasevanam (worshiping the feet of the Lord) and Bali for Atamnivedanam (total surrender). Students should bear in mind that from the point of view of individual or the community, they have to cultivate good qualities along with the pursuit of their studies. Virtues alone can help one to elevate himself in life. A man without virtues and gratitude is bound to fail in life. During the war in Lanka, Rama saw one day a powerful effulgent figure before Him. Vibhishana told Rama that it was none other than Rama's enemy, Ravana. Seeing him, Rama felt that but for his bad qualities, Ravana, who was so powerful and great, would not have come to such a pitiable end. Whatever may be one's scholarship or intelligence, without the strength of character they are likely to dehumanise man. You must fortify yourself with the strength of character, along with the acquisition of knowledge. There is nothing that cannot be achieved by a righteous person.

Self-confidence is the first requisite. You must cherish some ideals. To lead an

ideal exemplary life, education is not essential. One seeks education for earning a living. But one cultivates virtues for sublimating life. It is only when education is combined with good qualities that you can experience the bliss of fullness.

The example of Edison

Students need both faith in God and deeksha (determination). There is the example of a great American scientist, Thomas Alva Edison. He was born in a poor family on February 11, 1847, in the state of Ohio. Although he made no progress in his studies, he became a great inventor, thanks to his supreme self-confidence and his perseverance and determination in the pursuits of his experiments. His early experiments had untoward results, which provoked his parents to punish him and ultimately to send him out of the home. For a time he earned a living by selling sweets in trains.

Once, a guard slapped him for causing explosion in the closet of a train. His hearing was affected thereby. A benefactor came into his life after he had saved a child from being run over by a train. He got a job in a telegraph company and was free to carry on his experiments. From such beginnings, Edison became the greatest inventor of our times because of his tremendous perseverance and tireless experiments. The world owes to him the electric bulb, the gramophone, the telephone and many other inventions. If without any regular schooling, Edison could achieve all this, it was because of his confidence in himself, his firm determination and tireless energy. In addition to their academic studies, these are the qualities a student should acquire. They should associate with right-minded persons, whose company will improve their mind and character.

Swami expects you to be exemplary in life

The advancements in science and technology have enabled man to roam in the sky like birds and move in the water' like fish. But he has not mastered the art of living well on earth. If man has not learnt how to lead a worthy human life, what is the value of his existence? Make your life meaningful by

doing your duty to your parents and your Motherland. The man who is not proud of the land of his birth is worse than a corpse. Learn to love your country without any hatred for other countries.

Get rid of differences based on community, creed or caste. Regard all mankind as one family. Give up feelings of hatred and aversion. As alumni of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute, you have to stand out as exemplars to the world. Your conduct should be ideal and exemplary in every respect. That is what I expect from you, and this is what will give Me joy. Even in your sports and games, you must strictly adhere to the rules and be good sportsmen. You must raise the standard of sport and develop team spirit. It is a good habit to get up early in the morning between 4 and 5 a.m. and complete your morning ablutions. That is described as Rishisnanam (the bath of the sages). Your mind gets purified when you take part in the suprabhatham in the morning. This may seem a little hard at first, but after some practice you will discover how good it is for you physically and spiritually. The predawn vibrations in the atmosphere will help to improve your memory power. Sports and games are designed to promote physical fitness. They should not be commercialised and turned into a form of business. Our Institute students have to take part in games and athletics for the sake of the joy to be derived from them and to develop their abilities and skills. There should be no trace of self-interest in them. Develop equal regard for everyone and promote mutual respect and affection. The concept of Divine love must become your watchword and goal in life.

Teacher and student together help to promote the welfare of the nation. Both of them should realise that their welfare is bound up with the well-being of the society as a whole.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

2. Eschew envy : Uphold truth

Date: 19 January 1989 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

THE scriptures have declared that it is difficult to acquire a human body. Human life is the highest among all living beings in creation. With all these endowments if man lacks jnana (wisdom) he is no better than an animal. It is jnana that distinguishes man from other animals. In spite of possessing a human body, with its sacred capacities, man pursues wrong paths and indulges in misdeeds, thereby degrading his precious heritage. One who ought to dedicate himself to the pursuit of the Divine - Nivrithi marga (the Inward Path) - and experience bliss, makes himself a slave of his senses and wastes his life in the pursuit of the external - Pravriti marga. All his efforts are directed towards the cultivation of sensual pleasures instead of aiming at realisation of the power of the Spirit within him. Of what avail is the human form if one's actions and thoughts are not conducive to the realisation of his inherent divinity? By concerning himself only with the demands of the body, man today is forgetting his divine essence and is immersed in material pursuits. It is this preoccupation with the mundane that is at the root of all the insecurity and unhappiness experienced by man. He is perennially filled with discontent and dissatisfaction. Discontentment affects man in two ways: One is lack of peace of mind. The other is unhappiness resulting from lack of peace.

How to banish envy

What is the root cause of discontentment? It is envy. This has been the besetting vice of man from the beginning of time. Only when envy is eradicated from the human heart will man have self-satisfaction. The contented man enjoys peace. How does envy arise? When one compares himself with those who are better off, or who hold higher offices, or score higher marks, or are more handsome and suffers from a consciousness of his own inferiority, envy arises. Discontent over what he lacks gives birth to envy. To get rid of this evil quality one has to look at those who are worse off than himself. For instance, when you look at those who have got lower marks, you

can derive comfort from the fact that you have done better than others. Likewise, when one views the state of those holding lower jobs, he can feel satisfied with his own position. Thus, if envy has to be got rid of this sort of comparison with those who are worse off has to be undertaken. In due course one develops a sense of equal-mindedness both towards those who are better off and those who are worse. Such equal-mindedness is a Divine quality. There is nothing wrong in aspiring for higher positions. But one should not feel envious about those who are in such positions. It is a crime to entertain such feelings.

The need for triple purity

Students should bear in mind that for achieving anything worthwhile in life a healthy body and a healthy mind are necessary. To realise such a doubly healthy state, purity in thought, word and deed is essential. In Vedantic parlance this is described as "Trikarana suddhi" (purity of the three instruments of mind, speech and hands). The Vedas are divided into three Kandas (sections): the Karma Kanda, the Upasana Kanda and the Jnana Kanda. These are associated with three types of yoga: Karma yoga (the yoga of Action), Bhakti yoga (the yoga of Devotion) and Jnana yoga (the yoga of Knowledge or Wisdom).

First there is Karma yoga. For performing any action you need hands. All the actions you do with your hands should be sacred, pure, helpful to others and purposeful. The hands become sanctified with such actions. Hence, the first step is to make the hands pure and holy. By pure actions the mind also gets purified. But mere purity of mind is not enough. The mind has to develop concentration. For cultivating concentration, Bhakti (devotion) is of great value. Bhakti means getting rid of the separation from Bhagavan. There must be the realisation that the Divine is omnipresent and that you cannot separate yourself from God. To remember the omnipresent Divine, to chant His glories and adore Him, you need the tongue (the power of speech). Jayadeva hailed the tongue as the God-given instrument for glorifying the Lord. This sacred instrument should not be misused in any way for speaking ill of others or causing unhappiness to them. As enjoined in the Gita, you should

avoid unpleasant speech and use only words that are true, comforting and good. Harshness in speech should be avoided. Only when the tongue is used in this way can it become pure and sacred. When your speech is sanctified your life itself becomes sanctified.

Uphold promise at any cost

There is no Dharma higher than Truth. "Truth alone triumphs." The Emperor Bali asked: "Is there a greater sin than going back on your word?" Once you have given a promise, you should not go back on it in any circumstance. This was the truth demonstrated by Bali. When you take a pledge or give a promise, you uphold it even at the cost of your life. Once you give your word, you must make every effort to fulfil it. Nowadays there is little respect for the plighted word. Promises are made freely and broken freely. Pledges are made and buried from moment to moment. Such persons are no better than living corpses. Truth is the life-breath of speech An army is the life-breath of a fort Justice is the life-breath of society The signature is the life-breath of a pronote. You must remember that once you begin to treat your promises lightly, it will become a life-long habit. Harishchandra gave up his kingdom, his wife and son and even became a pitiable watchman in a cremation ground for the sake of upholding his plighted word. His supreme example as the votary of Truth shines like a beacon-light across the millennia of human history. If you wish to earn a name for truthfulness, you have to adhere to truth steadfastly. Among the attributes of God, Truth is foremost. God is hailed as Sathya-vakpalakaya Namah (the Protector of Truth), the Propagator of Truth, the Embodiment of Truth. "Truth is God" goes the saying. Purity in speech is the second purity that has to be ensured. Students! This is a crucial period in your lives. It is the stage in which your divinity can blossom forth. It is the right time for you to strive to sublimate your speech and learn to honour your word. Most people are content to use words to suit the needs of the moment. They attach no lasting value to what they say and therefore do not live up to their words.

Lord protects those who are devoted to Him

In the Bhagvad Gita, the Lord gave a promise that He would take care of the yogakshemam of all those who are devoted to Him exclusively and without any other thought. What is this yoga? You can see for yourself what a sacred privilege you are enjoying, what extraordinary opportunities you are getting here. Every day innumerable persons are coming here from many remote countries, spending thousands of rupees. They wait for long periods just to hear one word from Swami, which is enough to fill them with bliss. There are lakhs of such devotees. Here you are receiving the blessing of Swami's company without any expenditure on your part, with no effort at all and without spending any time. How indifferent are you to this great opportunity? You are taking it all for granted and are unmindful of its infinite value. You have got this blessing thanks to merit earned in some previous lives. This itself you should regard as yoga. It is not the fruit of this birth. This is yoga and when you try to protect it you have yogakshemam. Kshemam means protection of what you have. Bhakta Mira prayed: "Oh Lord! I dived into the depths of the ocean and found a pearl, will you let me lose hold of it?" Mira and Sakkubai secured God's grace through many ordeals and difficulties and they prayed to the Lord to see that grace was not taken away.

A golden opportunity to ensure your well-being

It is by the stroke of supreme good fortune that you have come to the Lord. You must not let slip this opportunity. This is your chance for you to ensure your physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing. Not realising this, you are wasting a golden opportunity. It is easy to lose a precious thing. You are not aware of what is ahead of you, what the future holds for you. What pains Swami is the thought of the difficulties you will have to face in the future, of which Swami alone is aware. You may imagine that you can make whatever promises you like while you are here and pursue whatever courses you choose after going out from the Institute. This is a grievous mistake. Sooner or later you will have to reap the fruits of your decisions. You must see that these consequences are not untoward. What you regard today as a laughing matter may prove tragic later.

Keep a strict watch over what you say. If the foot slips, you may suffer from a

fall and sustain a temporary injury. But a slip of the tongue may cause lasting harm. Never go about criticising others. When you point to the mote in another's eye, you are forgetting the beam in your own eye. With plenty of faults in yourself, you have no right to point out the faults in others. It is a grievous sin to indulge in fault-finding. He alone is wise who is conscious of his defects. The one who is looking out for faults in others will acquire those faults himself by a process of reflex action.

Churchill - the effective public speaker

You have to learn from the example of Churchill, who though he did not fare well at school, through sheer self-confidence and self-education, became the Prime Minister of England. He enlisted in the army at a young age. When he later entered politics, he trained himself to become an effective public speaker. Before going to a meeting, he would practise before a mirror how he would address the meeting and what kind of impression would he make on the audience by his gestures and movements. By correcting himself in this way, he developed great self-confidence and acquired an impressive public personality. He became a master in the art of repartee. At an election meeting he was railing out the opposition without mincing words. A woman in the audience who was greatly provoked by Churchill's attack, got up and shouted: "Shut up." She remarked: "If I had been your wife I would have administered poison to put an end to your life." Churchill coolly replied: "If I had been your husband I would thrust the poison down your throat." The woman was put to shame and remained silent thereafter. On another occasion, an opposition MP was replying to Churchill's speech. Seeing that Churchill was keeping his eyes closed during the speech and appeared not to be listening to him, the Opposition member complained that Churchill was asleep while he was replying to Churchill's speech. He said that this was unparliamentary. Churchill immediately got up and said: "I would have been immensely happy if I had gone to sleep. It was because I could not get sleep, I had to endure the member's speech." That reply plunged the House in laughter. You have to practise the art of silencing criticism by humorous replies. After the hands and the tongue, you have to learn how to purify the mind. The mind is said to be constantly wavering and getting out of control.

But when it is directed in the right way, it will be in the proper state. The rectification of the mind is Jnana Yoga. You have to aim at achieving the Trikarana suddhi (triple purity). This will enable you to get rid of all evil qualities and make you unselfish. Today you seem to be self-centered even with regard to simple matters like looking at a group photo or seeing the examination results. You are concerned only with locating your picture in the group or your number in the results. You must develop a broader outlook and derive joy from the successes of others instead of being concerned only with your result. Our Institute students must learn to transcend such narrow attitudes and develop a wider outlook.

3. Become ideal citizens

Date: 12 February 1989

IN ALL countries of the world there are good and bad men, scholars and illiterates, the affluent and the destitute. The one thing that is common to all of them is their inner essence - Sat-Chit- Ananda (Being-Awareness-Bliss). All the scriptures have described the Divine as Sat-Chit- Ananda. Every object, every being and every individual in the phenomenal world have these triune attributes. But, in the inert objects only the first two - Sat and Chit (Being and Awareness)- -can be recognised and not bliss. Only in animate beings can this quality be found manifest. This bliss however, is of a transient nature. There are two categories of bliss in the world' Sadhana-Janya Ananda (Acquired bliss) and Swatas-siddha Ananda (Self-generating bliss). Acquired bliss is associated with sensory objects. It arises and vanishes from time to time. It does not endure. For instance, when hunger is appeased, there is happiness for the moment. But it ceases after a time. This applies to all objects in the world. What is experienced when they are enjoyed is evanescent. This type of joy has been described as acquired or derived happiness. As it is got and lost by human effort, it is not true bliss.

Man, however, seeks lasting Ananda (bliss). He is in fact filled with bliss and is the embodiment of bliss. Bliss constitutes his very nature and being. It exists sui generis in him. Why, then, does he not experience it? This is because, even though he is the embodiment of bliss, unaware of his true nature he is obsessed with the external world and fails to experience the bliss within him. He imagines that the source of joy lies in Nature (the phenomenal world). This is wrong.

Experience the bliss within

The bliss that is all-pervasive in the cosmos is also within man. But, as in the case of butter that is present in every drop of milk but which can be seen only after the milk is curdled and the buttermilk is churned, this inner bliss can be experienced only after the right effort is made. The mind is filled with various

kinds of joy. It is only when the appropriate enquiry is made and one's true nature is ascertained that the Divine Sat-Chit-Ananda inherent in one will be manifest. Man today is conscious only of the Annamaya (physical) and Pranamaya (vital) principles relating to his existence. He has not developed even up to the stage of realising the significance of the mind. The body represents Annamaya. Activity and motion of the body are to the Pranamaya. The third element is Manomaya (the mental). The fourth is Vijnanamaya (Constant Integrated Awareness). Beyond this awareness is Ananda (the state of supreme bliss). In the great journey of life, man has passed, only two stations. He has not tried to go beyond them to the mental and other stages. It is only after passing the Vijnanamaya stage that man can experience Ananda (pure bliss). But because man goes after the impermanent pleasures of the phenomenal world, he is unable to experience the enduring bliss that is inherent in him.

Exercise discrimination objectively

The Upanishads have declared that immortality can be experienced only through Thyaga (renunciation or sacrifice). This renunciation does not mean giving up hearth and home, kith and kin. It means giving up the transient and impermanent things of the world. This calls for discrimination between what is permanent and what is perishable. This kind of discrimination is absent: among people today. Students, for instance, discriminate between what is convenient and what is unpleasant and choose the former. This element: of self-interest should go. Discrimination should be exercised objectively to determine what is permanent and what is transient, what is good and what is bad. Only then can man discover the Sat-Chit-Ananda (reality of the Bliss) that is within him. The failure to realise this arises from defective vision. The fault does not lie in the manifest universe. Students should recognise the value of good health. Mere age does not make a person young. The great Mahabharata warrior, Bhishma, fought on the battlefield when he was 116 years. Students should realise that good health alone confers lifelong happiness. Maintenance of physical fitness calls for mental discipline also. You have to control your desires. Even insects like ants-observe limits to their acquisitions. Only man exhibits unlimited greed. And because of this he

sacrifices real happiness. There is no harm in aspiring for a good job or a position of honour and fame. But many ordeals have to be overcome to achieve them. One should not succumb to difficulties. One must develop the fortitude to face all challenges by strengthening one's faith in God. Be fearless. God is with you. Proceed on life's journey with courage.

The royal road for every one

Before completing your education and entering the vast stage of life, you have to learn certain basic things. First among them is control of the mind. Only then will senses be under control. Cultivate the feeling that the Divine is present in everyone and therefore you should not harm anyone. Love ever: Hurt never. This is the royal road for everyone. Students! Fill your minds with noble thoughts. Develop the convictions that you are the embodiments of the Divine: Sat-Chit-Ananda. The air around you is neither visible nor can be grasped. And yet, can you deny its presence? Can you survive for a moment without it? Likewise, the one who denies the existence of God is denying his very own existence. The Divine is omnipresent. Because you do not acquire the capacity to experience it, you are caught up in various troubles. You have to discover the unity that subsumes the diversity in the cosmos. What is this unity? It is Sat-Chit-Ananda. Sat is Being, 'that which exists. Chit is Awareness, the quality that enables cognition. If a thing did not exist it cannot be cognised. If it cannot be cognised, it cannot: be experienced or enjoyed. It is only when a thing is cognised or enjoyed that bliss is experienced.

Relation between existence and experience

Here is the cosmos. How do you know about its existence? You can see the things in it, hear the sounds, have impressions in the mind about them and be moved in your hearts by them. How can you deny their existence?

You have to understand the relation between existence and experience. For instance, you feel hungry. You take food and the hunger is appeased. If food did not exist in the world, hunger would be out of place. If hunger did not exist food would be unnecessary. In this context it may be asked, which

comes first: hunger or food? We may consider that hunger comes first. This is not correct. Food came into existence first, then hunger was caused. Man is able to protect his body because of the existence of food and hunger. It is said: food is for the protection of the body. Hence, you should regard food as necessary for living and not live for the sake of food. Education should be for leading a good life and not merely for earning a living. Birds and beasts are able to live without any education. Man has a higher destiny than mere living. There is an episode in the great Indian epic Ramayana in which Sri Rama reveals the truth about Himself and His mission in answer to sage Vasishta. When Rama was staying in Chitrakoota, Bharata and Satrughna, with all the royal paraphernalia, went to see Him and appeal to Him to return to Ayodhya as He alone, as the eldest son and the pre-eminent amongst them, was competent to rule the kingdom. Bharata declared that Rama alone was fit to rule and not himself. In reply to Bharata's entreaties, Rama said: "Dear brother! The plighted word is most sacred. It is our very life. In the Ikshvaku race, there has not been a single scion, who has gone back on his pledged word. Born in this great dynasty and being the eldest son I cannot brook the infamy of proving false to my pledge. I will joyfully give up My life rather than go back on My word."

Rama's adherence to Truth

The sage Jabali who was present there, was eager to persuade Rama to return to the kingdom even by using specious arguments and appearing as an atheist. He told Rama: "Ramachandra! You appear to me to be stubborn and irrational. Is there any meaning in your trying to act up to the words of an old king who was the victim of the viles of Kaikeyi? How can you say Dasaratha was a good man? He parted with the son for the sake of the wife. This is highly improper. Dasaratha is gone. Why do you wish to adhere to words of one who is no more?" Rama replied to the sage: "The body is perishable and may go at any time. But the promised word remains. Truth has no form. It is eternal and omnipresent. It stands unchanged in the past, the present and the future. I cannot be a party to the destruction of that Truth," declared Rama. Jabali returned to the argument again. He said: "Is it foolish to let go of the bird in the hand in the hope of getting two in the bush? You are

concerned about the promises made by a dead man. Your concern must be to protect the truth of the living."

The preceptor comes after the parents

Realising the difficulty of carrying on the argument with Rama in this way, sage Vasishta intervened with the object of somehow inducing Rama to return to the kingdom. He said: "Ramachandra! There are three teachers for men - the mother, the father and the preceptor. You left for the forest on the words of your step-mother. I am your preceptor. Your preceptor is eminent because he practises what he teaches. You must: heed the words of the preceptor." To this Rama replied: "You have been the preceptor not only for my father, but for my ancestors and hence worthy of all honour and reverence. But the mother who bore me and nourished me and the father who reared me and made a man of me, take precedence over the preceptor, who comes later. If the mother had not given me my body and the father had not protected me, how could the preceptor figure in my life? Only after the mother and father have shaped the son can the preceptor illumine his mind with knowledge. Though the preceptor should be revered, the parents come first." At this stage Jabali came forward and uttered the mantras: "Mathru deco bhava! Pitru deco bhava! Acharya deco bhava!" (Regard the mother as God, the father as God and the preceptor as God). At that moment three deities appeared on the scene. Rama observed that the God who is present in all three is one and the same God and revealed His identity as the Divine in the human form. It was then that Vasishta declared: "Ramo Vighrahan Dharmah" (Rama is the very embodiment of Righteousness). "Oh Rama! You are Dharma itself that has taken human form. We have no words to argue with you." Jabali declared: "Pumsam mohanaropaya" (the most alluring among men are You, Oh Rama). "You are the supreme upholder of Righteousness."

Earn Divine grace by developing good character

During your studies you have to learn how to lead a life of righteousness. You pursue your studies with diligence and devote your nights and days to

acquire knowledge. But what efforts are you making to earn Divine love and grace? You feel sad about Swami not looking at you or talking to you but you do not try to find out why you are feeling this way. Are you enquiring into the purpose of education? Do you recognise the need for Self-realisation and control of the senses? Education should be for developing concentration of the mind and not collection of facts. Along with studies develop good character. Your conduct will determine your destiny. Have a wide-ranging mind. Narada was a master of 64 sciences. You have to make a distinction between knowledge and wisdom. When Valmiki was asked by Lava and Kusa why he described Ravana as murkha (a senseless man), although he was the master of all the Vedas and Sastras, while describing Rama as a high-souled person, he said: "Ravana was a well-versed scholar, but did not practise what he knew. Rama was a Jnani (a wise one) who lived up to what he had learnt. By controlling His senses, Rama led a life of truth and righteousness." Education that is used only for selfish ends is no education at all. Education should be used for promoting the welfare of others. Ravana sought only his own pleasure. Rama dedicated His life for the welfare of all.

"Students are My life-breath"

Dear students! You are doubtless on your best behaviour while you are here. Students are my lifebreath. You are My wealth. For your sake I am devoting all My time and energies so that you may sublimate your lives. Apart from setting you on the right path I have no other interest of my own. I want you to become ideal citizens of Bharat. You are not realising the magnitude of My love for you. There may be no connection between the studies you pursue here and the kinds of problems you may have to face in the outside world. The MBA students are taught "Communication." When you go out into the world communication acquires profound meaning. You have to deal with different kinds of people, workers, managers and the public. You have to know how to understand them and how to convey to them your ideas. Engage yourselves in your duties with faith in God. One of our MBA boys got a job in a Birla concern. Within two months he was able to earn a good name among the workers and the employees. This pleased Me immensely. It is enough for Me if you earn the approbation and regard of others. Students going out from

the Sathya Sai Institute should earn a good name for themselves and the Institute. Already many employers have come forward to absorb our MBA students. If you live up to Swami's teachings you will be able to lead exemplary lives. Having spent many years in Prashanthi Nilayam and imbibed the atmosphere and spirit of this sacred place, you must carry this atmosphere wherever your life may take you. Remember always that Swami is in you and you are in Swami wherever you may be. Discourse to the students of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute, in the Prashanthi Mandir on 12-2-

It is inescapable destiny of every one to fulfill himself. Every living being has to attain fullness in the end.

Each one is at present at a particular stage of this march, as a result of the activities engaged in during previous lives and the feelings he entertained in the past. The future is being built at present by the activities engaged in now and the feelings that urge and shape them. That is to say, what we do, feel or think about, at present - these are the basic reasons for the good fortune or bad fortune which is in store.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

4. Live in the Divine

Date: 17 February 1989 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

THERE are five requisites for developing true devotion. The first is Dedication (offering everything to God). Egoism is the bar to developing the spirit of dedication. It manifests itself in various forms of pride - pride of physical strength, intellectual pride, the arrogance of wealth and the like. But as all these are impermanent and may be lost at any time, it is unwise to make the body, the mind or property the basis for one's conceit. Hence egoism should be renounced as the first offering to God.

Next, devotion should be regarded as an expression of gratitude to all that one receives from Providence - the air that we breathe, the light and the heat that we get from the sun, the water we drink and the food we consume. All the essential necessities of life are got by the grace of God. The expression of gratitude through devotion is a primary obligation. All that is done by the way of bhajans, japa, meditation and prayer must be done in the spirit of gratitude. The third requisite is discipline. In almost every action in life, the recognised limits and regulations have to be observed. This applies equally to the spiritual field. You must observe discipline in matters relating to dress, your general behaviour outside the mandir or during bhajans in the mandir, the way you speak and the food you eat. All your actions should be filled with sanctity and purity.

Discrimination is the fourth requisite. Discrimination has to be used in every aspect of daily living - in what you see, what you listen to, what you speak and what you consume. Avoid eating all kinds of food in strange places. Last comes determination. Without firm determination no great thing can be achieved in life. It is all the more needed in the spiritual field so that you may face all difficulties and obstacles and overcome them. You must hold fast to what you consider as good, what you regard as sacred and what you recognise as the truth. That is real penance.

End of wisdom is true freedom

People in the West talk about freedom? Does it mean acting as you please, doing what you like? Not at all. True freedom consists in keeping the senses under control. A man wants to drink. But he gets tipsy after a drink. What happens to his freedom? He has lost the little sense he had. Freedom does not consist in indulgence. Real freedom comes from realisation of the Self. The end of wisdom is freedom.

Of the different kinds of knowledge, that which really matters is the knowledge that is put into practice. All other knowledge is either verbal or pompous scholarship. When people are asked: "Where is God?" some give the reply: "He is everywhere." But these are mere words. No doubt the statement is correct. But how real is the answer to the persons concerned? Does it arise from their experience? The consciousness of the omnipresence of God should be based on the feeling that everything and every being is in God. You must feel the presence of God wherever you go, whatever you may do, whether you are eating or speaking or working. When you cultivate such an attitude that is the highest form of devotion.

From confidence to Bliss

Look upon the body as a moving temple. Wherever you go, God is with you. Do not indulge in debates over what is God and where is God. God has to be experienced through faith and confidence. 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.

Bliss is everywhere. The bliss that is in you is limited by your body-consciousness. You must extend that bliss and make it all-embracing. When a child is born, he is a lone individual. As he grows, he has wife and children. When the children get married the kinships get wider. This widening of relationships occurs in a single family. You have to widen your outlook to cover the entire human family.

The Sai Family

Here in Prashanthi Nilayam there are people from many countries. You have Italians, Australians, Indonesians, Americans, Argentinians and people from scores of other countries. The countries from which they come are different. But they consider themselves as belonging to one family - the Sai family. This is an expression of unity in diversity Human beings may be diverse, but God is one. The concept of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man should inspire your daily life. You have all come from distant countries, at great expense and trouble. You do not seek any personal favours. You are not concerned even about your comforts. You are content if Swami talks to you or grants you an interview. Be steadfast in this attitude. Having come all the way, you must attend bhajans, whether you are able to follow their meaning or not. Avoid strolling outside the Nilayam. If the body wanders, mind also wanders. Consider what a great waste it would be to wander away from the sacred atmosphere of Prashanthi Nilayam even for a moment. I am speaking out of concern for your good and wellbeing. Remember always that you have come here to experience sacred thoughts and to sanctify your lives. You should observe the discipline of this place. You have to behave with decency and respect towards everyone. Self-realisation can be attained only through sacrifice. But some are not prepared to give up smoking or non-vegetarian food. If you cannot give up even small things which are undesirable, how are you going to develop the spirit of sacrifice? When you go back to your respective countries, your conduct must be such that your countrymen have high regard for you. They should recognise the transformation wrought in you by your visit to Prashanthi Nilayam and seek to follow your example. When you constantly remind yourselves, "I am God", you develop Godly behaviour. Listen to your Inner Voice - - the Voice of Conscience. Your conduct will then be spontaneously Godly.

Do not waste money, food, time and energy

It is because of your devotion and earnestness that you have come all the way here. You must make full use of your stay to realise your goal. Do not think only of the weeks and months you spend here. What matters is how you use your stay. Swami judges you not by quantity but by quality. To what

extent you have transformed yourselves and advanced spiritually is all that matters. How far have you given up your old ways and practices? It may be cheaper to live in Puttaparthi than in your own country. But that does not mean that you should spend money as you please. Misuse of money is evil. Don't waste money. Don't waste food. Food is God. Don't waste time, because time wasted is life wasted. Don't waste energy. Energy is wasted in idle talk and meaningless wanderings.

I know how deep is your devotion. Do not dissipate it by indulging in unbecoming activities. Conduct yourselves in such a way that it pleases Swami. When you are happy, I am happy. Remember your goal is nothing less than realising your inherent Divinity. It is difficult for any one to get; an opportunity like this. Among the billions of people in the world, how many can come here to experience the Divine? You are among the blessed and the fortunate few. Make the best use of this supreme good fortune and transform yourselves into godly persons and help to transform others. Be always happy. Share your joys with others. This is true spirituality. Remember, Love is God; live in Love. Truth is God; live in Truth. Bliss is God; live in Bliss. Be fearless. God is with you. When you go about with the conviction, "God is with me; I am in God," you will have no fear. I hope by acting in this way, you will spread peace and harmony in your respective countries.

So long as you are in Avidya, so long as you are untrained and ignorant, you cannot taste the Bliss; you cannot attain it. You are still bound by the three-corded rope - the black cord of Tamas, the red cord of Rajas and the white cord of Satwa. Hence regulate your life in such a way that you do not harm your inner nature.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

5. From love : to love

Date: 06 March 1989 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Shivarathri

How can anyone conceive of a form for that Formless Divine? For One who has no hands or feet, What ornaments can one fashion? It is fanciful to attribute this or that name and form to that One; To ascribe the effulgence of a billion suns in a flight of imagination. How can anyone attempt to reveal the form of the Formless Absolute? The Atma is the Eternal Formless Illumining the entire Cosmos. Brahman is Love incarnate Love can be realised only through Love; If one holds fast to Love Oneness with the Divine can be experienced. PAVITRAATMASWAROOPULAARA! (Embodiments of the sacred Atma!) You have to note how you have secured this appellation. Pavithra is a word derived from the Latin root, 'Vir' which means 'man.' Hence man is the embodiment of Pavithra (sacredness). The Atma is associated with Divinity. After the rise of Christianity in Rome, the Romans gave a distinctive name to Jesus in recognition of His divinity. He was called "Persona," meaning one who is Divine. The English word "Person" is derived from "Persona." The Indian term Vyakti is related to the term "Person." Vyakti means the one that makes manifest the Unmanifested. What is it that is unmanifest? That is the Atma (the Cosmic Spirit). Man is described as Pavitratmaswaroopa (the sacred embodiment of the Divine) because he manifests the divinity inherent in him.

God is the very embodiment of Prema (Love). Man is the spark of the Divine. You may find a man without anger, without truth or without peace, but you cannot find anyone in the world devoid of love. Love is present equally in all human beings as the one effulgent divine quality. This love may be expressed in different ways, but its nature is the same. Man is thus an aspect of the Cosmic Consciousness. Unfortunately, however, because man directs his love towards worldly objects, he is unable to recognise his divinity. His mind gets polluted because of association with the external world. As a result:, even his love gets tainted and his mind becomes incapable of cherishing the beautiful form of the Lord. Only when he directs his love towards God will man be able to experience the Divine within him.

The mind and Divinity

On the disturbed surface of the pond, the reflection of the moon is wavy. But on a clear surface, the moon's reflection is clear and steady. In a muddy pond, the moon's reflection is muddy. Likewise in the lake of a man's life, if it is confused and fickle, his love also gets distorted. When the mind is pure, unselfish and unwavering, the Divine appears in all His purity and fullness. But because of the pollution of the mind through obsession with multifarious external objects, man today is unable to experience the Divine that is omnipresent and is equally in him. Many persons declare that God is present within them. This is wrong. This statement belittles the Divine. When I hold a flower within my palm, the flower is obviously smaller than my palm. If you say that God is within you, you suggest that you are bigger than God. The truth is: You are in the Divine and not the Divine in you. It is only when you have such a wide vision that you can experience the Divine.

Firm faith is essential for realising the Self. Faith is the basis of self-confidence, without which nothing can be achieved. The word Manava (man) itself means one who has faith. When he acts upto his faith, he experiences peace and contentment. Love is the means through which faith is strengthened.

People offer prayers to God. Prayers should not mean petitioning to God for favours. The object of prayer should be to establish God firmly in one's heart. Aim at linking yourself to God and not at seeking favours. Aspire for earning the love of God. That is real penance. That is why it is said: Looking ahead is Tapas (penance); looking backward is Tamas (ignorance). Tapas does not mean giving up hearth and home and retiring to a forest. It means giving up all bad qualities and striving to live ceaselessly for God's grace.

True devotion is to feel closeness to God

Love is the primary factor in this process. There is nothing greater than love on earth. Anything can be accomplished through love. Therefore, make every

effort to promote love. True devotion consists in offering all your thoughts and actions to God and yearning for His grace. Bhakti has been described as the state of non-separation from God. Regardless of time, space or circumstance, one should feel closeness to God - that is true Bhakti. Nowadays devotion is confined to the brief spell spent in the puja room (shrine) or in a temple. During this period devotion appears to swell within you and you feel you are at peace. But once outside, the peace is lost and anger takes its place. This cannot be called devotion. True devotion transcends the limitations imposed by the daily routine and obligations of life. It should not be subject to changes in time, place and circumstance. Love for the Divine should be present in any situation. "Sathatham Yoginah" (Always remain as Yogis), it is said. You must strive to cultivate such love and experience the joy of sharing that love with others. Occasionally one's devotion cools off when one's desires are not fulfilled. This is not a sign of true devotion. Devotion should not be related to physical needs. It is concerned with the heart and should not be affected by vicissitudes relating to the body and the mind. Devotion transcends the concerns of the body. Such devotion has been described as Parama Bhakti (Supreme devotion). It may also be described as Ananya Bhakti (one-pointed devotion). Only such onepointed devotion can get rooted in the heart. Our love should not vary from time to time. Embodiments of Love! People tend to sacrifice their true nature for the sake of others' approbation. They should live up to the truth of their being. That is true devotion. A real devotee is eager to experience Divine love and does not seek pomp and show.

Four different paths of spiritual practice

People speak about Yoga, Jnana, Karma and Bhakti in relation to spiritual practice. These are inextricably inter-related. Among these, Bhakti deserves special mention. The first; among spiritual paths is Karma Marga (the Path of Action). The votary of this path performs many actions for the welfare of the world. He participates in yajnas and yagas (ritualistic sacrifices). He is engaged in service and charitable activities. All these forms of Karma are fraught with certain difficulties. To perform sacrifices one must be acquainted with the Vedic texts. This is not easy for laymen.

The Jnana Marga (the Path of Knowledge) calls for knowledge of the scriptures and several other kinds of knowledge, which together lead to Atmajnana (Knowledge of the Self). Jnana has been defined as Advaita Darsanam (the awareness of the One Cosmic Consciousness). It means recognising unity in diversity. It is not easy to experience this unity. The path of Yoga, which is concerned with control of the mind, is equally difficult. It calls for rigorous control of the senses. One has to overcome many difficulties, trials and tribulations. Very few have the mental and spiritual strength to face these difficulties and ordeals. The path of Yoga is thus beset with many hurdles.

Knowledge without practice is of no use

Bhakti (the Path of Devotion) is the easiest path for all. It does not call for mastery of the scriptures. It does not enjoin performance of rituals and sacrifices. The elusive quest for unity in diversity is avoided. By cultivating love for God, the senses come under natural self-discipline. Those who are well-versed in the sastras are good scholars but they hardly practise what they preach. What matters is practice and not scholarship. Knowledge without action is useless lumber. One must strive to put into practice at least one or two things learnt in the spiritual field. The most important goal for man is to put into practice the doctrine of divine love. The Principle of Love is the greatest unifying force which unites all spiritual practices, all creeds, all the goals of life and all the scriptures. The foremost path for the spiritual aspirant is the path of complete surrender to the Lord for earning His love and grace. The devotee offers everything he has and does to the Lord in the same manner in which a bride renounces all that she had before her marriage in going to the home of her husband. God's love cannot be got: without such renunciation by the devotee.

Appreciate the ways of the Divine

On various occasions, the Lord subjects the devotees to different kinds of tests and trials with a view to raising them spiritually to a higher level. The Lord, who is the source of all wisdom, will confer illumination only on those who approach Him. Those who feel that Bhagavan has not seen them or

spoken to them should ask themselves how close they are mentally to Bhagavan and how near they are to the Lord in their practices. Each one should engage himself in the process of self-enquiry. The Lord has neither agraha (anger) nor anugraha (benevolence). Even when He appears to be harsh, there is grace in that; harshness. When He appears to chastise, there is compassion in it. When He seems to be angry, there is love behind it. Only those who understand the nature of the Divinity can appreciate the ways of the Divine. The Divine resorts to certain kinds of punishments to make the devotee pursue the right path and enable him to lead an ideal life. Such punishments are for the devotee's good and well-being. Here is a story to illustrate the maxim, "No gains without pains." There was a gardener who used to water the plants in the garden carrying a pot on his head from dawn to dusk. One day while carrying the pot he got a headache and wanted to lay down the pot and go home. At that moment, the pot taught him a valuable lesson. The pot said: "Oh man! There can be no fruit without: labour, no pleasure without pain. Learn the lesson from my own story. I was just mere dust and mud, trodden upon by people. The potter gathered that mud, turned it into clay by pressing it under his feet, and made a pot from it by whirling the clay on his wheel. And finally I was placed in a kiln for firing. Whoever came to buy me, tapped on my sides with strength to test my hardness. It was because I went through all these ordeals that I earned the privilege of dancing on the heads of people. If I had not gone through all these trials, how could I have achieved this eminence? Likewise, only if you are prepared to go through trials and difficulties will you be able to raise yourself in life."

Egoism, the disease has no medicine

Hence, you should not succumb to difficulties and disappointments. You must strive to overcome them. For this purpose, you have to acquire the grace of God by developing faith. Every man is a prey to one evil quality, a kind of disease for which there is no medicine. That disease is Ahamkara (egoism). The egoism gets into a man's head and plays the devil with him. Egoism affects not human beings alone but even birds and beasts. For instance, a dog kept in a rich man's gate barks at every passerby to exhibit its authority. It is an example of egoism in an animal. The dog wants to show that it is the

guardian of the house and that no one dare enter it. The dog assumes that "this is my house, I have to protect it," but it does not know what that "I" is.

If today a man does not know what his "I" signifies, he is in the same position as the dog. Every moment a person talks about "My body, my mind, etc," but he does not ask: "Who am I?" He alone is a Jnani (a man of wisdom) who has discovered the truth about himself. One who goes on using the word "I," but does not know who he is, is an Ajnani (an ignorant person). People bandy the word Vedanta. When a scholar is asked, "What is Vedanta?" the answer is: "The Upanishads, which come at the end of the Vedas, constitute Vedanta." That is not the real Vedanta. The ending of the "I" (the ego) is Vedanta. If you wish to know Me, you have to first know who you really are. Look into yourselves. Without understanding who you really are, how you can seek to understand Me? When your vision is concentrated on the external, how can you understand the inner being?

Iswara's three forms

Iswara is said to have three forms. One' Virat-Swaroopa (the Cosmic form). Two' Hiranyagarbha (the subtle form). Third: Avyakruta (the Causal entity). Virat-Swaroopa is Viswa-roopa - the entire manifested Cosmos is His form. All the myriad forms and names in the universe are contained in His form. This is described as Jagrata-Swaroopudu (the Cosmic form as experienced in the waking state). The second one is the Divine as experienced in the dream state Hiranyagarbha. In the waking state we use our limbs, see with our eyes and hear with our ears. In the dream state, we perform many actions. What are the hands which we use, what are the legs which we walk? What is the mouth that speaks in dreams? When all the organs and senses of the body are not functioning in the dream state, how do these experiences occur? That is the subtle form of Hiranyagarbha. Avyakrutudu, the third form, is the Causal entity. It has no specific form and therefore is called Avyakruta. But Ananda (Bliss) is present. There is consciousness of experience. The physical, the subtle and the causal are the three forms respectively of Viswaroopa, Hiranyagarbha and Avyakruta. You are the same person experiencing the waking state, dreaming in the sleeping state and enjoying the bliss in the

sushupti (deep sleep) state. The one entity existing in all three states is the Atma - in the body in the waking state, in the mind in the dream state and in the Chitta (Higher Consciousness) in the deep sleep state. The Iswara principle unifies all the three entities.

Desire and hatred conceal the Divinity within

Today we celebrate Siva Rathri. It means Auspicious Night. Who is this Siva and where is He to be found? All kinds of answers are given. Kailasa or other places that are mentioned are only "care of" addresses. The true answer is: "Isavasyam idam sarvam" (All this is pervaded by Iswara). He is omnipresent. There is no place, object or being where God is not present. You have to correct your outlook and recognise the unity in the apparent diversity. When God is omnipresent, what need is there to go in search of God? The search is meaningless. If one gets rid of the attachment and the hatred in him, he will experience the Divinity inherent in him. This is the sadhana (spiritual exercise) one has to do today - to get rid of desire and hatred which conceal the Divinity within. Many people come to Swami and ask: "Swami! Show us the way." All that you have to do is to go back to the source from which you came. Where is the need for seeking the way? The Bhagavatha has declared that it is the natural destiny of every living being to go back to the place from which it came.

Seek to know the purpose of life

Embodiments of Divine Love! Consider for a moment, wherefrom the rain comes. It comes from clouds. The clouds have come from water vapour rising from the sea. The rain becomes a channel on the earth, then a rivulet and then a big river which joins the sea. A pot made out of clay, when it is broken, is cast on the ground, where, in course of time, it becomes clay again. Water from the sea joins the sea, clay from the earth goes back to the earth again, man alone forgets the source from which he came. Man must seek to know the purpose of life. With all his knowledge and intelligence, man should try to rise above the level of the animal to a realisation of his divinity. A great deal of time is being wasted on futile controversies. The educated boast about

their scholarship. They should be more concerned about discovering their true nature and living according to it. The word Manava (man) means one who lives free from ignorance. What: is this ignorance? It is to regard himself as that which he is not. He is not the body. He is not the mind. When he acts as if he is the body and the mind, he is living in ignorance like Dhritarashtra. The besetting evil in man is the sense of Mamakara (mine), the acquisitive and possessive feeling. This is the cause of all other evils. Man has to develop the consciousness that he is Divine. The breath which man inhales and exhales 21,600 times a day conveys the message of "So-ham" (I am He) - the truth about man's divine reality. We regard as Bhakti (devotion) a few minutes devoted for worship, or going to sacred shrines and the like. But true devotion is an expression of gratitude to God for **all** that He has given us - the human body with its various capacities, the intelligence we are endowed with and the many natural amenities made available to us such as air, water and sunlight. A person without gratitude is worse than a wild animal.

Develop love for God. There is nothing more powerful than Divine love.

Change your vision and the world will appear accordingly. Let the eye be charged with the Divine, it will see all as God. It is foolish to try to shape the world. Shape yourself as the embodiment of Peace, Love and Reverence. Then you will see all as Love, Compassion and Humility.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

6. Live up to your role

Date: **23 March 1989** / Location: **Chennai** / Occasion: **Discourse to a large gathering of active workers**

DIVINITY is present in everyone in an unmanifested form. All human beings are sparks of the Divine like the waves of the ocean. Every man is the embodiment of the Divine Sat -Chit -Ananda (Being-Awareness-Bliss). This has been described categorically in the Bhagavad Gita. As God is the embodiment of love, man is also an embodiment of love. But man today does not manifest it fully and properly because of his selfishness and self-centredness. Though humanity has advanced considerably in the material and scientific spheres, it has gone down grievously morally and spiritually. Selfishness is predominant in every action. Behind every thought, every word, self-interest is prominent. It is only when this selfishness is eradicated can Divinity reveal itself. In rendering Seva (service), there should be a recognition of the omnipresence of the Divine in all human beings. Men have not developed the spirit of Thyaga (sacrifice) or aversion to Bhoga (sensual pleasures). True service calls for a spirit of sacrifice. Sacrifice has been declared to be the only means to achieve immortality.

Man has become prey to discontentment

Men appear to be in quest of God. They do not realise that all that they see is permeated by God. All forms are Divine. But because man's vision is externalised, he is unable to have the inner vision of the Divine.

Man craves for peace. Though the source of peace and bliss is within himself, he seeks them in the external like one pursuing a mirage. Owing to restless activity, endless worry and limitless desires, man has lost peace of mind and has become prey to discontent and misery. At the outset, peace has to be cultivated within ourselves. And then that peace has to be extended to the family. From the home it should be spread to our village. Thus, peace should begin with the individual and spread to the whole society. In the Sai organisation, efforts are made to propagate the values of Truth,

Righteousness, Love, Peace and Non-violence. This is only propagation, but not practice (or demonstration). Mere preaching is of no avail. Truth must be practised. Truth and Righteousness are the highest values upheld by Bharatiya Culture. If people do not live up to Truth and Righteousness, their humanness is worth nothing.

Of all the virtues, love is the foremost. If love is fostered, all other qualities flow from it. In every form of sadhana love has the first place.

Love is the supreme mark of humanness.

Love is God. Live in Love.

Start the day with Love.

Fill the day with Love.

End the day with Love.

You have to engage yourselves in Seva, eschewing every trace of Ahamkara (conceit). Our degradation is the result of forgetting God. When we remember God, our life will be filled with peace and happiness.

Man has three kinds of Ichcha-sakthi (wishing abilities). One is: Swechcha (wishing freely). Two: Parechcha (carrying out the wishes of others). Three: Anichcha (without wishing). Swechcha does not mean freedom to act as you please, using your strength and possessions as you like, regardless of the rights of others.

True meaning of the three wishing abilities

True Swechcha (freedom to act as one wishes) consists in taking a decision with your own mind, carrying it out in action and accepting the consequences, for good or ill, wholeheartedly. This is true freedom of will. The freedom that you desire in doing what pleases you should imply that equally freely you accept the consequences flowing from its fulfilment. Parechcha refers to what

one does at the prompting or bidding of others and laments the consequences resulting from such actions, casting the blame on others for what one suffers. Anichcha refers to fortuitous happenings that occur without one's own willing or as a result of actions prompted by others and are accepted as providential.

Having got the precious human form, men must seek to live according to the true requirements of that form. It should be realised that man is not born to wallow in ignorance, poverty or sin. He is born for a higher destiny. He should live up to the role conferred on him.

The king, the sanyasi and the dancer

Once a sanyasi (renunciant) came to a Maharaja and expounded to him the sacred truths of the Vedanta. The king was pleased with his exposition and offered him a plate full of gold coins. The ascetic declined to accept it, saying it was not in keeping with the cowl he was wearing to accept any material gifts. "What need have I for these things when I have renounced every worldly thing?" he said. The king was pleased with the sanyasi's attitude. The next day the same person turned up in court in the guise of a danseuse. She danced superbly before the king. The king was pleased and offered to her a plate of gold coins. She declared that she was not willing to accept such a meagre guerdon and wanted more. The king realised at that moment that the person in the dancer's dress was the same person who had appeared as a sanyasi the previous day. The king told her: "Yesterday you declined to accept the gift at my hands and today you ask for more than I have offered. What is the inner meaning of this difference in attitude?" She pointed out that everyone has to act up to the role assumed by him. Wearing the sanyasi's robe it was the proper thing for the ascetic to reject any material gift. But in the dancer's role she was entitled to ask for as much as she thought fit. That day she was playing the role of the dancer.

When the king heard her reply, he felt that he had learnt a good lesson from her. "Here I am, a king. I should conduct myself as a king and not behave in any way unbecoming of a person wearing regal robes." He appreciated the

lesson which the woman had taught him.

Today someone may wear the ochre robe, but his heart is filled with foulness. He has desires from which even a householder is free. The Bharatiya culture has been undermined with such double life. When you consider the pandits, many of them are well-versed in the scriptures and can recite them by rote. They may flaunt their rudrakshamalas (necklace of the sacred beads used in japa). They may wear precious shawls. But their actions are not in accordance with their costumes and adornments.

"Pandithah samadarsinah," declares the Gita - the true scholar looks at: everything with an equal eye.

How can those who do not have this equal-minded vision be described as pandits? If one claiming to be a sanyasi has renounced all mundane things, but continues to entertain desires, how can he be regarded as a sanyasi? Today many who parade the knowledge of the scriptures are Bhogarajus (those who are revelling in luxury) or Rogarajus (glorying in disease) but are not becoming Thyagarajus (those who are masters of renunciation).

Role of Sai sevaks

You are the members of the Sathya Sai Seva Dal. As such you must strive to render service in keeping with your role. You are sevaks. Have the feeling that whomever you serve, you are serving God. Remember in what spirit Hanuman, the monkey, served Sri Rama. You should not imagine that because he was a monkey he lacked intelligence or other qualities. He has been described as "tranquil, virtuous and strong." Such a person, when he was on a tree in the Asokavana in Lanka, was questioned by the Rakshasas as to who he was and wherefrom he had come. Hanuman replied: "Dasoham Kausalendrasya" ("I am the servant of Sri Rama, the Lord of Kosala"). He did not boast about his valour or knowledge. He was content to describe himself

as the humble and devoted servant of Rama.

Bear in mind the maxim "Without being a kinkara (one who is ready to carry out the Lord's command), you cannot become a Sankara (the Divine)."

You have to transform your life through service. You should give no room for arrogance or selfinterest to the slightest extent in your service activities. Install in your heart the feeling that the service you render to anyone is service to God. Only then does service to man become service to Madhava (God).

Dedicate all your actions to God

Born in society, brought up in society, educated by society and deriving countless benefits from society, what are you doing for society? Social service should be regarded as an expression of gratitude to society for what it has done to us. Without society we cannot survive. The God-given body should be employed for practising Dharma. As Prahlada said: "Of what use is human birth if the various organs like hands, legs, mouth and ears are not engaged in the worship of the Lord? Such a man is a burden to the womb that bore him." Sankaracharya, exponent of the JnanaMarga, in the last reckoning commended the path of Bhakti in his "Bhaja Govindam." Women are given to excessive talking. They should treat even their daily chores as a form of concentrated work. If they are unable to attend a Satsang on account of household duties, they should not feel miserable on that account. Discharge of duties at home is as sacred as attending a satsang. Only if you do your duties at home properly will you be able to render proper service outside. In whatever work you do at home, whether sweeping the floor or making chapphthis, convert it into a form of spiritual exercise. Infuse every action with love of the Divine and dedicate it to God.

Discourse to a large gathering of active workers and other devotees at

"Abbotsbury", Madras.

Live in the constant contemplation of your kinship with others and with the Universe. Do good to others, treat all nature kindly, speak soft and sweet, become a child devoid of envy, hate and greed; When your ego crosses the threshold of your family or group and takes kindly to those beyond, you have taken the first step to cross the threshold of Maya.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

7. Let practice prevail

Date: 24 March 1989 / Location: Hyderabad

EMBODIMENTS of Divine love! Today the world is replete with great intellectuals, learned scholars who excel in logomachy, professional politicians and sanyasis who flaunt the ochre robe. But the divinity that is inherent in humanity is not to be seen at all. People have forgotten their Divine essence. Humanity has to discover its basic human qualities. **Whatever learning one may acquire, whatever positions one may occupy, however great a scientist one may be, if he lacks human values, he is no human being at all. What is humanness? Essentially it means unity in thought, word and deed.** When what one thinks differs from what he says and what he does, he ceases to be human. He becomes a demon. Today what men have to cultivate is unity and purity in thought, word and deed. True human qualities can grow only in a heart filled with spiritual aspirations, like a seed sown in a fertile soil and not on a piece of rock. Hence, to develop these qualities, men will have to develop compassion and equanimity amidst the vicissitudes of life.

Man today is caught up in meaningless worries, endless desires and unattainable ambitions and has no peace of mind. To one who is groping in the darkness of ignorance and peacelessness, it is spiritual illumination alone that can reveal the right path. Today cynicism and apathy are rampant. People are not interested in religious discourses. The reason is that these discourses are confined to the platform. There is no earnest enquiry into the value of these teachings, nor is there practice of the precepts. The foremost need today is to live the life of the Spirit.

The world needs good people

For the progress of the world, it is not some factory or industry that is needed. The world needs good students and good men and women. Only then the nation will progress. Men do not realise that as their desires increase, their happiness diminishes. There is no limit to desires. They multiply like ants in

an anthill. There is no sense of satisfaction, however much one may possess or enjoy. Animals and birds have contentment. They have neither the selfish propensity to hoard nor the sinful quality of exploiting others. Man alone is prone to acquisitive hoarding and exploitation.

To realise one's divinity, there is no need to embark on a long quest. Divinity is all-pervading and is present in and outside every being. Every man is an embodiment of the Divine. God is the embodiment of love. Man who has emerged from God, is also an embodiment of love. But, because he expresses his love towards external objects, he is forgetting the truth about his inner being. Instead of limiting his love within narrow confines, man should extend it to all and thereby make his life purposeful and worthy.

Same Divine is present in every one

Today love is disappearing even between mother and children, father and son, husband and wife and between friends. Narrow-minded attachments are divisive in their nature. These should give place to a broad feeling of love and regard for all on the basis that the same Divine is present in everyone.

There is an example from the Mahabharata to illustrate this situation. Because of Sri Krishna's grace, all the Pandava brothers survived the Kurukshetra war. All the hundred Kaurava brothers died in the war. Seeing the plight of Gandhari, not one of whose sons had survived the war, people blamed Krishna for such a calamity. Krishna went to Gandhari to console her. On seeing Krishna, she burst out in anger: "Krishna! Being Divine, should you exhibit such favouritism? Could you not have saved at least one of my sons?" Smilingly Krishna replied: "Mother! Did you set your eyes on even one of your sons? When you yourself did not choose to cast your eyes on your sons, how do you expect God to look at them?" (Gandhari had blindfolded herself from the time of her marriage to her blind husband, Dhritarashtra, and had never removed the bandage out of devotion to her husband). You have to earn the mother's love. There is nothing greater than one's mother and Motherland.

Man is beset today with many problems and difficulties. He alone is a true

human being who faces these difficulties with fortitude and overcomes them. For this, what is required is strength of the Spirit. Without spiritual strength, all other things are valueless. Karna had physical strength and material wealth. But he lacked Divine grace and hence he fell in the battle.

Embodiments of Divine Love! Remember always that God permeates everything in the cosmos. Everything you experience is Divine. What all you see is Divine. What you eat is Divine. The air you breathe is Divine. You cannot see the air, nor can you grasp it. Likewise you cannot grasp God. The eyes cannot see Him. He can only be experienced in the heart. He is beyond the mind.

Promote world unity through love

The human birth is precious. Sanctify it by leading righteous lives. Do not fritter it away. Whatever spiritual discipline you may practise or not, cultivate love for all. Offer that love as a divine offering to all. Only through love can world unity be promoted. It is because of the absence of love that all kinds of differences arise.

Love is God. Live in Love.

Make this the ruling principle of your life. Be considerate to everyone. Today speeches are made on Sathya, Dharma, Santhi and Prema (Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Love) and exhibitions are organised to propagate these values. But there is no attempt to exemplify these values by practical living. Of what avail are speeches and exhibitions if these values are not practised? The world will not be reformed by propaganda. It is only when there are living examples of these ideals that they become meaningful and inspiring. All the Chaos in the world is due to the fact that people lead double lives. They say one thing and act differently. There should be unity in thought, word and deed. True spirituality consists in promoting human unity through

harmonious living and sharing the joy with one and all. Bhajans and all forms of worship are only good actions, but are spiritually not important. Devotion consists in expressing love towards all. You cannot effect a change of heart by speeches. They often lead to confusion and conflict. Better than speeches is practice of love, with faith in the Divine. Follow the path of love and redeem your lives.

Do not use the study of sastras and scriptures for increasing your egoism; let it make you humble, though at the same time, more resistant to temptation. Your nature is divine; what has happened is that delusion has covered it with dirt. The washerman does not make your clothes white; it is white already; what he does is to manifest its whiteness by removing the dirt that has hidden the genuine native colour, white.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

8. Make every moment holy

Date: 07 April 1989 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Ugadi

ALL HOLY festivals in Bharat are invested with profound inner significance. Today is Yugadi day. It is commonly believed that this marks the beginning of a new year. No. It is really a beginning of a yuga (aeon). The Lord is the beginning and the end of every aeon. Hence, He is called Yugadikrit (the creator of yuga). God is not only the creator of each aeon, but He is also described as a sustainer of the yuga. In sustaining the yuga, the Lord is all-powerful. He is omniscient. Hence, He has the appellation "Yugadhara" (the supporter of yuga). He is also known as Yugandhara. Divinity is the power behind the creation, sustenance and dissolution of every aeon. Yugadi is also celebrated as Samvatsaradi (the festival of the new year). What is the meaning of Samvatsara? Samvatsara means God, the One who dwells in everything. For Samvatsara (the year), the underlying spirit is Atma. Another name for Samvatsara is Kala (Time). Because Time is subsumed by the Spirit, God is known as Kala Atma (the Time Spirit). Yugadi, therefore, represents the form of the Divine. The Cosmos itself is the form of the Divine (Vishnu). "Sarvam khalu idam Brahman," declares the Upanishad. The four yugas (aeons) - Krita, Treta, Dwapara and Kali - are permeated with Divinity. Hence, God has also the name Chaturatmaka (the Fourfold Spirit). This fourfold Spirit is manifested in four forms with distinctive attributes though their powers are one and the same. They are Vasudeva, Sankarshana, Aniruddha and Pradyumna. All the four are combined in the Avatara (the incarnation of the Divine in human form). God should not be regarded as some separate power or entity. Time is a manifestation of God. Hence, God is adored as Kala (Time), Kalakala (the Master of Time, the Controller of Time), Kalatheetha (One who transcends Time), etc. God is also known as Vatsara as the Divine indweller in all beings.

Vasudeva-the first form of fourfold Spirit

Of the four forms of the Lord regarded as Chaturatmaka, the first is Vasudeva. This name signifies that the Lord is immanent in everything in

creation and bears within Himself everything in the Cosmos. He is omnipotent. He is resplendent. He remains unmoved in any condition, in any circumstance, while being present in every limb and every cell. He is known also as Angirasa - the One who is present in every Anga (limb) in the form of the circulating blood and imparts vitality to it. As the rasa (vital essence), He is described as Raso vai Sah (the elan vital). Thus, everything is permeated by God and there is nothing outside Him.

Sankarshana, Aniruddha and Pradyumna

The second name is Sankarshana. Sankarshana is the One, who at the time of Pralaya (the Great Dissolution), absorbs within Himself the entire Cosmos. He is the One who ends all sorrow and confers all happiness. The Sankarshana principle is the one which removes misery and confers joy. Shankarshana should not be regarded merely as Balarama, the son of Revathi (the elder wife of Vasudeva). Sankarshana represents the Divine attribute of eliminating grief and giving happiness, removing mental agitation and conferring peace, destroying weakness of spirit and instilling fortitude. This is no ordinary attribute. It is a Divine quality which is present in every human being.

Aniruddha, the third, refers to one who has a unique quality. He confers this quality - Sampada (wealth) on whoever prays to Him. He is the Lord who confers both material and spiritual benefits on those who adore Him. In this aspect, He shines through His effulgence. This illumination is not derived from outside. He Himself is the source of His light and also the light that illumines everything. This principle of Aniruddha is essential for every human being. The fourth name is Pradyumna. He represents the invincible Divine power, which cannot be overcome by anyone. He has no equal. He is His own example. He is His own law. There is no one below Him or above Him because He is even in those below Him. The Pradyumna principle is all-pervading and omnipresent.

Union of all four principles is humanness

It is the combination of all these four principles which constitute humanness.

God is not different from man. Vasudeva is Paramatma (the Omni-Self). Sankarshana is Jivatma (the individual Soul). Pradyumna is the mind. Aniruddha is Aham (the ego). The union of these four is Manavatva (humanness).

If any one of these four constituents is absent, man cannot live in the world. If it is asked whether Ahamkara (egoism) is also essential, the answer is: Aham (the ego) should be present but not Aham-kara (the feeling of egoism, the sense of separate identity associated with the body consciousness). Aham means "I." The "I" should not be identified with the physical form. "Aham Brahmasmi" (I am the Brahman). "Aham na Dehasmi" (I am not the body). "Na Aham Jivasmi" (I am not the jiva - the individual soul). "Aham Aham" (I am I). This Aham is the essence of everything. In the Sanskrit alphabet, the first letter is "A" and the last letter is "Ha." When the two letters are combined, you have "Aha." All the sounds in the language are comprised within these two letters. Aham means the principle which is present in everything in the cosmos, from the atom to Brahman. This is the significance of the Vedic pronouncements: "Aham Brahmasmi," "Prajnanam Brahma" (Prajnana Constant Integrated Awareness - is Brahman), "Thath-thvam-Asi" (That thou art). Failing to recognise the truth of these pronouncements and regarding the body as real and permanent, man is becoming a prey to sorrow. Bhagavan is the unified form of these four principles. Most people do not seek to understand the meaning of the word Bhagavan. Bhag means Sambhartha. A second meaning is Bhartha (master). Sambhartha means the One who creates the Cosmos on the basis of Nature. Combining clay and water, the potter makes pots. Without either clay or water, it is not possible to make pots. So, for the pot, the basic materials are clay and water. Only when the two of the five basic elements (earth, water, fire, air and ether) are available can pots be made. Even these two elements are forms of the Divine. How wonderful is this creation! Air has the power to blow out a flame. A lamp is endowed with the power to spread illumination. But the same air is needed to keep the flame of the lamp burning. Thus air has the God-given power to both extinguish a flame or keep it burning. How does the same element have both these contradictory powers? This is the mystery of the powers of the Divine.

Bhagavan is the Creator and Protector

Bhaga (in the term Bhagavan) refers to the creative powers of God. Hence, He is called Sambhartha. Bhartha is the One who protects what exists. So, Bhagavan is the creator and the protector of the Cosmos. The term also means one who illumines everything in the universe. Without this all-pervading Divine light, we will not be able to live for a moment: This means that if the Cosmos, which is constituted by the five basic elements, and the human body, which is made up of the same five elements, are to be sustained well, they need the sustaining power of the Divine.

Yugadi should not be treated merely as a holy festive occasion. It must be regarded as a day dedicated to the Divine. All festivals observed by the Bharatiyas have a marvellous inner meaning. But men in general view them only in terms of external observances and celebrate them with feasts and frolic. These festivals were really intended to be used for the exclusive worship of the Divine, enjoy the bliss of that devotion and overcome pain and sorrow. These holy days were instituted for getting rid of the ignorance and cultivating right knowledge, the higher wisdom and cosmic consciousness. Man has been endowed with intelligence together with the human form. Along with these, man has also been given temporary existence. Man has, therefore, to use the life-span allotted to him for leading a purposeful existence by the use of his intelligence. Man unfortunately misuses his intelligence and gambles away his precious life.

Be grateful to the society

Man should strive to use every talent and skill given to him not only for his own benefit but also for the good of the world. Man owes everything to society and should be grateful to society for all that he receives from it. Expressing this gratitude is man's foremost duty. This gratitude has been described as Bhakti (devotion). Chanting the names of the Lord is one of the ways of expressing this gratitude. All the nine forms of worship are different ways in which this gratitude is expressed.

The Yugadi celebration is an annual reminder of man's obligation to express his gratitude to the Divine for all the benefits received from God.

Sanctify every minute

We hail the new year as Samvatsara because it signifies the omnipresence (in time and space) of the Divine. Samvatsara does not merely mean period (of the year) made up of minutes, hours, days and months. Every moment is Samvatsara, because without seconds, minutes, etc. there cannot be a year. If the year is to be sanctified, every moment is to be sanctified. Every second constitutes a year. It is not the new year that matters. Every new second is significant. Hence, you should fill every moment with sacred thoughts, with pure feelings and pure actions. Every moment you should try to get rid of bad thoughts and fill the mind with good thoughts. Embodiments of the Divine Atma! From ancient times Bharat has been holding forth to the world great ideals and the highest wisdom. It has been concerned not only with the physical and material welfare of man but has laid stress on Divinity that permeates the universe. Men should recognise this Divinity and respect every being as the embodiment of the Divine. Forms may vary but the Indwelling Spirit is one and the same in all. Hence, you should bear no ill-will towards any one. Control of speech is most important. Excessive talk should be avoided. Speech should be sweet and well intentioned. Vyasa summed up the essence of his eighteen puranas in two maxims: It is meritorious to help others, sinful to cause them harm. "Help ever: hurt never." The damage done by a bad word may cause more lasting injury than any harm done to the body. Bear in mind that India has been in the past an exemplar to the world. It has been the birthplace of great sages and scholars, valiant heroes, renowned artists and poets and many who have excelled in all the arts. Having been born in such a country, it is the duty of all devotees to uphold the sacred Dharma of Bharat. People ceaselessly talk about Bhakti (devotion). But what is this devotion? What are you doing for the land of your birth? Gratitude to your native land is the real index of devotion. Your Deha (body) and your Desa (nation) are one. Therefore, the welfare of the nation is your welfare. Remember this always.

After the fall of Ravana in Lanka, when all around him appealed to Rama to take over the lordship of Lanka and rule over it, Rama replied that the mother and the motherland are greater than Heaven itself and he would not give up his motherland, whatever might be the attractions of Lanka.

Develop intense love for the motherland

Today, whatever might be the plight of Bharat, we should not give it up, because it is our motherland. Young people should develop an intense love for the motherland. The sense of attachment to the nation, regarding it as "My Country, my people," is conspicuously absent today. Born in Bharat, breathing its sacred air, drinking the sacred water of the Ganga, inheriting the hoary culture of the country, people are still going after alien manners and customs. This is nothing less than treason to the nation. In no circumstance should you forget Bharat, whatever its defects.

You must love the country and strive ceaselessly to promote its progress. The one who cannot proclaim, "This is the land of my birth, its language is my mother tongue, its culture is my religion," is as good as dead. No other country can boast of such a long line of great men in every sphere as Bharat. India has been the beacon-light to the world in the spiritual field. It has held out to the world such ideal rulers as Harishchandra, Nala, Mandhata and Sri Rama. Their fame abides, though their empires have gone. Today's rulers should realise that their rule will be temporary and they should conduct themselves in such a way that their names are remembered for their integrity and devotion to righteousness.

Earn God's love

The only wealth one can carry with him after death is the love of the Lord. One should strive to earn that wealth during his life. This can be done only by selfless devotion and love. To earn God's love, one has to dedicate one's time, body and actions to the service of the Lord. This was the realisation that came to Arjuna after listening to the message of Sri Krishna. He declared: "Karishye vachanam thava" (I shall carry out whatever you say). Arjuna, who

was an exceptionally intelligent person, came to this conclusion only after every kind of argument with Krishna.

Today, men argue in various ways, forgetting that the source of the reasoning power is itself God. Men should depend not on their physical or intellectual strength, but on the power of God. Only the man who relies solely on the power of God can experience true peace and bliss. Such a person need not mind the criticisms of others. He can defy the opinions of a multitude of persons and stand up for what he 'holds to be true. Unmindful of praise or censure, you have to cultivate firm faith in God. Do not worry about the world; concentrate on God. This was the attitude of the Gopikas, who were unmindful of what others said regarding their total absorption in the contemplation of Krishna. They exemplified pure and unwavering devotion. One must hold fast to one's belief, whatever may happen. A true devotee will not give up his faith, whatever may befall him. The basis of that faith is not reason but instinctive conviction like the child's love for its mother. Students and young men who profess devotion to God, must be prepared to declare openly that they adore and love Bhagavan for no reason except that He is God. "My experience is the basis of my faith," should be their answer. For devotion to God, only two things are needed' faith and experience. Both these are rooted in love.

Embodiments of the Divine! Do not forget God, who is the embodiment of the Yuga. He is the Lord of Time. Kala means one who is the giver of all happiness. If you take refuge in the Lord of Time, no one can cause you any harm. Make the best use of time chanting the name of the Lord or engaging yourselves in sacred activities.

9. The name that redeems

Date: **14 April 1989** / Location: **Kodaikanal** / Occasion: **Rama Navami, Tamil New Year, Baisakhi, Vishu**

THERE is no Bharatiya who has not heard the story of Rama, nor is there a village in Bharat without a Rama temple. From time immemorial, every individual in Bharat has regarded Sri Rama's life as an ideal and has sought to sanctify every moment of his life by living up to it. Bharat has always considered the life of anyone devoid of spirituality as utterly valueless. Sri Ramachandra was born on a day when the planet Sukra (Venus) enters Meena (Pisces). The month of His advent marks the beginning of Vasantha ritu (Spring). It is the time when the sun enters Mesha Rasi (Aries). Sri Rama's incarnation as a human being was for the purpose of promoting peace and happiness in the world. "Ramo vigrahavan Dharmah" ("Rama is the very embodiment of Righteousness"). It was as if Righteousness itself had incarnated on earth. Dharma and Rama are inseparable. Rama's life falls in two parts: the earlier and the later. In the earlier part, Rama figures as the heroic warrior who vanquished powerful persons like Parasurama, Vali and Ravana. Rama excelled not only in physical strength but also in intelligence and character. It is impossible to describe all the virtues of Rama. Every Avatar has six types of powers: all-encompassing Prosperity, Righteousness, Fame, Wealth, Wisdom and Renunciation (or non-attachment). God is the possessor of these six attributes. Sri Rama had all these six attributes in equal measure. Every Avatar of God in every age and every place has these six attributes.

Importance of Truth and Righteousness

In the Ramayana Sathya (Truth) and Dharma (Righteousness) are the most important concepts. The Vedas, which are regarded as their very life-breath by Bharatiyas, have proclaimed: "Sathyam Vada; Dharmam Chara" ("Speak the Truth; Act Righteously"). In order to honour the plighted word of his father, Rama elected to go to the forest leaving Ayodhya. Truth is the foundation for all righteousness. There is no greater religion than truth. Rama

stood out as an upholder of Truth to fulfil the promise of his father, to maintain the traditions of his Ikshvaku dynasty, to protect his country and for the sake of the welfare of the world. Everyone who calls himself a human being should stand up for truth in the same manner. It is said of Mahatmas (high-souled men) that what they speak, what they think and what they do are in perfect accord. In the case of the wicked, their thoughts, words and deeds are at a variance with each other. By these definitions Rama was a Mahatma (a high-souled one) and Ravana was a Duratma (an evil-souled being).

Three women symbolising the three gunas

In the first twelve years of Rama's life, He encountered three types of women. When he went with the sage Vishwamitra to protect his sacrifice, he encountered the ogress Thataki. He put an end to her without any compunction or aversion. After Vishwamitra's sacrifice was completed, Rama went with the sage to Mithila. On the way, he came across Ahalya, who had been transformed into a stone. He gave her life, absolved her of sin through penitence and restored her to her husband. At Mithila, he encountered Sita. He accepted Sita without any hesitation. What is the inner meaning of these three incidents? They show that even from his boyhood Rama displayed extraordinary qualities and stood out as an example to the world. Thataki, the first woman he encountered symbolises the Tamas quality. He destroyed the Tamasic quality. Ahalya represents the Rajo guna. He taught the right lesson to Ahalya, purified her and sent her safely to her place. He took to himself Sita who represented the Satwic quality. Bhagavan approves of and accepts only that which is Satwic. He values the Satwic quality. He protects and fosters it. Today all the three gunas - -Tamas, Rajas and Satwa - are present in man in varying proportions. What does the presence of the Tamo guna signify? It is natural for the Tamasic person to regard untruth as truth, wrong as right, evil as good. Although the phenomenal world is impermanent and illusory, the Tamasic minded person regards it as permanent and real. The Rajasic person lacks the power of discrimination and yielding to likes and dislikes behaves without restraint. Impulsive action is characteristic of persons in whom the Rajo guna is predominant. Because of hasty and

impulsive action, they are subject to all kinds of difficulties. In the process, they waste their lives. People should try to avoid acting in haste. "Haste makes waste, waste makes worry. So do not be in a hurry." In the quest for the Divine, there should be no hurry. Purity and serenity are required for God-realisation. There can be no happiness for the man who lacks peace.

Saint Thyagaraja said in one of his songs: "Without peace, there is no happiness." Thyagaraja was a great devotee of Rama. As a devotee, he had numerous experiences which he conveyed for the world through his songs.

Triple power of the name Rama

What are the inner meanings of the name Rama? The three syllables 'R', 'A' and 'Ma' indicate the three causes for human birth, namely Papamu (the sins one has committed), Thapamu (the troubles one experiences) and Ajnanamu (one's ignorance). "Ra" represents the root letter for Agni. "A a" represents the letter for the moon. "Ma" represents the root letter for the sun. What does Agni signify? It destroys everything and reduces it to ashes. The letter "R" has the power to destroy all the sins committed by man. The letter "A" (symbolising the moon) has the powers of cooling the fevers man suffers from and conferring peace on him. "Ma" represents the sun who dispels the darkness of ignorance and confers illumination of wisdom. Hence, the word Rama has the right triple power of destroying sins, conferring peace and dispelling ignorance. When you utter the word "Ram", you first open the mouth with the sound "Ra." All your sins go out when your mouth is open. When you utter "M" by closing the mouth, the entry is barred against the sins that have gone out. Everyone should recognise the sweetness, the sacredness and the divinity enshrined in the name "Rama." It was for this reason that Thyagaraja sang: "Oh mind! Contemplate on the name of Rama with full awareness of its power." It is good to utter the name Rama with full understanding of all that it signifies. But even without that understanding the chanting of the name has the power to destroy all sins.

The glory of spring

We must learn to chant the sweet name of Rama with a pure, unsullied heart, in a spirit of selfless devotion. In the mind of man dwell the deities representing the moon and the sun. Intelligence is endowed by the sun. However two kinds of birds have got into the mind. One bird fosters the sense "I" and "Mine" and fills the mind with ego. This is a destructive force. The second bird fosters the feeling of freedom from attachment and hatred. It signifies the power of the sun in the mind. Rama who belongs to the solar race, adhered to the latter path. There is a significant connection between the Rama principle and the Vasantha Ritu (season of spring). In the spring, the trees put forth new leaves and flowers and fill the world with gladness. When the sun's rays fall on the fresh leaves, they acquire a golden hue. The whole world puts on a glorious new look in spring. The beginning of the new year is celebrated in various regions by preparation of special edibles from a mixture of flowers and fruits of the neem and mango trees. In consuming these edibles, people are reminded that life is a mixture of pleasure and pain, profit and loss and both are to be treated with equal-mindedness. In the Spring season, the air is redolent with the fragrance of the mango blossoms and the song of the kokila (cuckoo). There is joy in the air you breathe. The cuckoo calls are never so sweet as in the Vasantha (Spring). The kokila's song is sweet to the ears. If a crow sits on our roof, we wish to drive it away, but we welcome the kokila's song. Why this difference? The crow seeks nothing from us. The kokila has not given us a crown. The difference lies in their voice. The crow's cawing jars on the ears. The kokila's song is music to the ears. When the speech is sweet, the speaker becomes endearing.

God resides in the heart of all devotees

Hence men should learn to speak sweetly and pleasingly. Sweet speech confers peace. It is the means to Self-realisation. It is in the heart of the man who is sweet-spoken that Sri Rama loves to dwell.

Once the sage Narada appeared before Lord Vishnu and said: "Oh Lord! I move about in the three worlds and I know the past, the present and the future. If I want to convey to you any special information, to what address should I send it? I do not want your temporary address. What is your

permanent address?" Vishnu replied: "Narada! Take down my permanent address: Madbhaktah yathra gayanthi thathra thhishtami, Narada (Wherever my devotees sing my glories, I reside there)." People ascribe various abodes for the Lord: Vaikunta, Kailasa, Badrinath, Kedarnath and so on. All these are only "care of" addresses. The direct address is only the heart of the devotee. As the Gita says: "The Lord dwells in the heart region of all beings." As the Lord is omnipresent, He is equally in the heart of everyone. Hence the heart is described as "Atma-Rama" - one who delights the Atma (the heart) by His presence.

Offer your heart to the Divine

Whatever you do, do it not for pleasing others, but for pleasing the Indweller in your heart, for your inner satisfaction. This means acting according to the dictates of your conscience. Every such act will please the Divine. To derive self-satisfaction from your actions, you have to cultivate faith. When there is satisfaction, there is readiness for sacrifice. Through sacrifice, the Divine is realised. Your faith should be unwavering like that of the Pandavas in Sri Krishna. All spiritual aspirants and devotees like Thyagaraja have had to experience many trials and tribulations. Even Pothana, the author of the Telugu Bhagvatham, was subjected to many pressures and ordeals to compel him to dedicate his work to a local chieftain. Pothana stood firm because of his strong faith in Sri Rama. Rather than dedicate his works to a mere mortal, he was prepared to offer his heart and soul to Rama. Pothana totally surrendered to Sri Rama. He declared: "All that I have is yours. Whatever I receive or offer comes from you. I cannot claim anything that is mine own." Men go on pilgrimages to various holy places. When they are in Benares they offer the Ganga water to the Ganga uttering the names of the Lord. What is the special value of such an offering? You must offer the Lord the heart that He has given you. This is true surrender. Lakshmana is the supreme exemplar of the doctrine of saranagathi (surrender). "I offer my wealth, family and everything to you, Oh Rama! Protect me, who has taken refuge in you." It was this total surrender which impelled Rama to observe, when Lakshmana lay stricken in the battlefield in Lanka: "Wives and kinsmen can be got in any country. But where can one get a brother born from the same loins?" Rama

thus exemplified the depth of fraternal attachment. The mutual love between Rama and Lakshmana was of the highest order. After the fall of Ravana, Sugriva, Vibhishana and others approached Rama and appealed to him to rule over Lanka, which was a richly endowed land. Rama turned down the request saying that he could not give up his mother or his Motherland. Rama serves as an example to humanity.

Face troubles with faith in God

Today everybody utters "Ram," "Ram." But very few follow the example set by Rama. They are not true devotees of Rama. At best they may be described as "part-time devotees." True devotion means perpetual remembrance of the name of the Lord and constant meditation on that name, cherishing the figure of Rama in the heart. You should be prepared to face the vicissitudes of life with firm faith in God. It is during times of difficulties that God is remembered. To confront difficulties with faith is itself a spiritual discipline. Although Rama was the son of the Emperor Dasaratha and son-in-law of King Janaka, he had to face many ordeals in life for the sake of upholding Dharma. The Pandavas went through many difficulties for the sake of adhering to righteousness and hence their name and fame remain forever. You should pray to the Lord to give you the strength to bear all troubles and face all difficulties. If you have even an atom of Grace of the Lord, a mountain of troubles can be overcome. Chaitanya declared: "If a fraction of the time that is spent in worrying about wealth, provisions, wife, children, friends and business is devoted to contemplation on the feet of the Divine, one can face the messengers of death without fear and cross the Ocean of Samsara!" It is not necessary to devote many hours to prayer. It is enough if one thinks of God with all his heart and offers himself even for a few moments. A single match stick when it is struck can dispel the darkness in a room that has remained closed for years. Mountains of cotton can be burnt down by a single spark. Likewise, wholehearted chanting of the name of Rama even once can destroy mountains of sins. But the chanting should not be done mechanically like playing a gramophone record. It should emanate from the depths of the heart. Having been born in this sacred land of Bharat, having before you the ideal example of Rama avatar, you must seek to redeem your lives, by living

up to Rama's ideals and proclaiming them to the world. Remember the name of Rama with love. God can be realised only through love and by no other means.

10. Vidya and Samskara

Date: 15 June 1989 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Inaugural address of Sri Sathya Sai Institute

Anglicised education has gained prominence,
Spiritual studies have taken a back seat,
How, then, can purity of the mind,
The essence of education - be developed?

TEACHERS! Students and Lovers of education!

The entire visible universe is a cosmic university. In it, every human being has to learn how to eat, to walk, to speak and do many other things. So, Nature is the first teacher. At birth, man is like an animal. The parents teach the child how to develop its human faculties. If the parents did not undertake this task, the child would remain an animal. Thus, the second category of teachers for a man are his parents. The ancient sages felt that it was not enough to develop the human qualities in the child and therefore envisaged a system of .Samskaras (cultural training) for the spiritual development of the child. The Samskaras are intended not only to develop further the human qualities but also to eliminate all remnants of animal nature in man.

What is meant by *Samskara*? It is a system of practices by which the bad tendencies in man are got rid of and good tendencies are inculcated. They are intended to turn the *Pravritti* (outwardlooking) tendencies of man towards the cultivation of the *Nivritti* (internal).

Samskara is applicable to all objects

The process of Samskara (refinement) is not confined to specific things; it is applicable to every object in the universe. No object can be enjoyed by man without its going through a process of transformation. For example, take the

case of paddy. The paddy that is grown and harvested cannot be consumed as such. It has to be converted into rice. In the process of transformation, the original paddy has considerably increased in its value as rice. The transformation process thus makes an object more useful and valuable. Take another example, that of cotton. Cotton in its primary form has very little utility. But, when it is spun into thread and made into cloth, it becomes usable by man. There is a wide gap between the value of cotton and that of cloth into which it is converted. The same rule applies to gold. There is a big difference between the value of the ore that is extracted from a mine and the gold that is got from the ore after processing. It is clear from these examples that all objects in the world, unless they go through various processes of transformation, cannot acquire much value. If that is the case with regard to ordinary objects, how much more is it necessary for man, who is more important than all of them, to go through this transformation? Man is the most precious object in creation. Men are more valuable than all the things in the world. It is man who imparts value to all objects. Today we are failing to give proper value to man.

Man loses his powers due to lack of self-control

What is the reason? It is because man is attracted towards the visible objects of the world experienced by the senses and is unaware of the Atma (the Spirit) within him. The powers that man is endowed with are limited. By appropriate practices he can make good use of them. But by involving himself in sensuous pleasures, man is losing his powers. The main reason for the loss of the powers given to man is his lack of self-control. This accounts for the premature onset of old age among many people.

For accomplishing anything in the world, three things are essential:

one, mastery over the senses;

two, control over the mind;

three, maintaining perfect bodily health.

It is only when all these three requisites are present, that man can achieve his aims. If today man fails to achieve even petty objects, it is because he is deficient in all these. To acquire these three, man has to practise Dharma, as laid down by the sages. The Veda declares

"Yatho abhyudaya nissreyas siddhih sa Dharmah"

(that which is conducive to one's well-being here and the hereafter is Dharma).

This means that in this world that which gives happiness and relieves sorrow here and the hereafter is *Dharma*. This calls for unity in thought, word and deed. This is true righteousness. Where there is no accord between what one thinks, says and does, his life is meaningless. It is by the harmony of thought, speech and action, that the true worth of man is manifested.

The three H's which are needed most

The mere human form is of no use to the world. It is by his thoughts and actions that one's humanness is revealed. Hence, all the studies that are pursued should be related to the body, the mind and the Spirit. Today's education stops with the concern for the body and does not proceed upto the heart. People speak about Education in Human Values (EHV). In my view, what is needed is not EHV but 3HV - education which embraces Head, Heart and Hand.

Students should reflect on the human values. One who pursues knowledge in the world may be a student or a scholar. But he cannot become thereby a jnani (a man of wisdom). There is a big difference between the scholar and the jnani. Ravana has mastered 64 categories of knowledge while Sri Rama had studied only 34 categories. Although Ravana had studied more subjects than Sri Rama, Valmiki described Ravana as a *murkha* (an irrational person). Why was Ravana dubbed as murkha ? Because despite his mastery of all

skills and arts, he was a slave of his senses. The one who is a slave of his senses is a fool who has lost his reason. Rama was not dominated by his senses. He was their sovereign. The difference between Rama and Ravana can be seen in three aspects:

Sarva loka hithe Ratah (one who rejoices in the welfare of the whole world);
Jnana sampannah (endowed with all wisdom);
Sarve Samudita Gunaihi (one who is filled with all the virtues).

Rama promoted the welfare of the world by adhering to Truth and setting an example in righteous conduct. Hence, the supreme importance of upholding truth should be recognised. Everyone should try to keep his promise and live upto what he says. The simple motto: "Truth is vital to speech", contains a profound message. All of you tend to speak a great deal. How much truth is there in your speech? This is the first lesson students have to learn. Without truth, what you speak has no value. Moreover, truth has to be spoken for the welfare of the world.

Learn to lead a worthy life

The educated persons of today are concerned solely about the well-being of themselves and their families and have no interest in the welfare of the world. Education should aim at making a person take pleasure in promoting the well-being of all people. After birth, as a person grows, he develops associations with relations, friends, teachers and many others. It is through these numerous relationships that one's human qualities develop. Without these associations the lone individual would remain at the animal level. One's human nature is developed by society and contacts with kinsmen, friends and others. You have to show your gratitude to all of them by striving for their well-being. From this, you have to proceed to the acquisition of a wide range of knowledge. This is what is meant by the statement "Awareness is life." Confining your interests to a few subjects will result in narrow-mindedness. To

acquire a wide outlook and have comprehensive knowledge of men and things, you have to cultivate many good qualities. Teachers today confine their teaching to imparting knowledge and skills useful for earning a livelihood. But they do not teach anything about life itself, how it should be lived and the basic goals of life. Learning to earn an income is not a great thing. Learning how to live worthily as a human being is what is essential. Teachers also should concern themselves about the essential meaning of life and teach the students about the basic truths about life.

Students today are seeking education not for the sake of knowledge but as a means to earning money or wielding power. This is not true education. It is the discovery of one's spiritual essence that constitutes real education. All the evils that we witness in the world today stem from a perverted system of education. The so-called educated persons have no control over their senses.

Self-control is the only means to real bliss

The primary need is for the development of self-control among students. They must be able to remain firm in their minds and unwavering in their outlook in any circumstance. This can be achieved only through spiritual discipline, which is also the means to real bliss. The world is in sore need of spiritual discipline. Spirituality is essential even in the pursuit of science. If you look at the orderly movements of the stars and planets in their respective spheres, you can see that; only a divine power can ensure such order in the Cosmos. The gravitational pull of the earth is evident when an object falls, but the force of gravity is not visible. Likewise there are innumerable invisible divine forces operating in the universe. Because they cannot be seen, their existence cannot be denied. Another fact to be noted is the way in which balance is maintained in Nature. If this balance is upset, there will be many untoward consequences. During the last World War, millions of men died in battle. After the war, the babies that were born were nearly all males. The reason is that the balance in the sex ratio has to be maintained in the Divine scheme of things. The Divine operates in this manner to preserve the Cosmic order. When this order is disturbed the world is in peril. Forgetting the role of the Divine and losing himself in the worldly pursuits, man is forfeiting his

basic human estate.

Divinity underlies all creation

It should be realised that it is the power of the Divine that enables one to see, to speak, to move and to think. All the powers of the sense organs are derived from the Divine. Man in his conceit may imagine that he is the doer. This is the result of ignorance and folly. You have to ascertain what it is that underlies all creation, which is responsible for their existence. The answer is Divinity. Without faith in the Divine nothing can be achieved. There is no need to seek a reason for this faith. It has no reason or season. It is beyond reason, like the love of a child for its mother. The child loves the mother for the only reason that she is the mother. When one is asked why he has faith in God, his reply should be: "Because he is my God." You should develop such confidence. Only with such firm faith can you realise God. And that firm faith can considerably enhance your strength.

There are elements today who undermine whatever little confidence the students have. The students are innocent; their hearts and minds are unpolluted; they are selfless. But some interested persons infuse doubts in their minds. Some parents and some teachers are to be blamed. When teachers address the students, they must try to strengthen the faith of the students by their example. When a teacher's conduct is at variance with what he teaches, how can he serve as an example? When teachers call for discipline among the students, they themselves should adhere to discipline. If the teachers conduct themselves well, all will be well with the students.

Improve your mental balance as you grow

An ironic aspect of education today is that as a boy advances in education, his character goes on declining. Children in the primary school observe perfect discipline and are well behaved. As they progress towards the secondary school their purity and discipline suffer. By the time they reach the university, every thing becomes topsy-turvy. As they grow in years, they lose selfcontrol. What is the reason? As they grow in years, their mental balance is

upset and they lose steadiness of mind and self-control. The older boys have a harmful influence on the younger ones. Hence, it is most important that the senior students should correct themselves and set a good example to others.

Everyone should bear in mind that all the regulations and discipline that have been prescribed for the students are conceived solely in their own interest. Only those who are prepared to abide by these rules and regulations deserve to be here.

The role of teachers and parents

Then, there are the teachers. They become parents of children in due course. But that is not important in itself. They should become ideal parents. If teachers fail to bring up their own children in an exemplary manner, how are they going to mould the other children who come under their care? The children of teachers have been found to behave improperly. Many parents spoil the children when they come home for the holidays. Whatever discipline the students had cultivated at school or college is undermined at home. Many parents tend to pamper their children and spoil them as Dhritarashtra did. Parents may commend what is good in their children, but they should not hesitate to chastise them when they go astray. It is because of the excessive indulgence shown by parents that many students are spoiled. Nor is that all. When a boy comes home and keeps up his spiritual practices, the parents rebuke him for his devotion and tell him that there is time enough for him to observe such practices in his old age. Parents of this type who undermine the seeds of devotion in their children are modern versions of Hiranyakasipu (Prahlada's father).

Parents should see that the children are kept on the right path at all times. The students, for their part, should make it clear to their parents that they will not give up on any account the good things they have imbibed in their educational institution. When the children recite at home a prayer, before taking food, as they do in their hostel, they are sometimes ridiculed for observing such a practice. The boys should have the courage to tell their parents that the prayer is being said as an expression of gratitude to the

Divine who is the provider of all things. You should not give up the practice, if you cannot persuade your parents to do so. Students should develop into such exemplary persons. Be respectful towards your parents, but do not hesitate to tell them what you feel to be right in all humility and reverence. Mere book knowledge does not constitute education. Nor does it mean the ability to juggle with words. Education means broadening the heart. It implies development of control over the senses. It should make one seek to promote the good of the world. It should serve to instill all good qualities in the student. An education that is devoid of such qualities is worthless. Excessive talk is responsible for students losing self-control and failing to acquire good qualities. Even the power to discriminate between what is transient and what is permanent is lost thereby. One does not know how to behave towards elders and strangers.

Restraint in speech develops mental agility

The effect of excessive speech on the behaviour and mental faculties of people was the subject of research in the Columbia University. The experiment was conducted in a primary school for twenty five years. The students were grouped separately in batches of ten. Those students who spoke the least were offered prizes. Tests were conducted on students indulging in excessive talk and those observing silence or reticence. It was found over the years that the intellectual abilities of students observing restraint in speech were of a high order. There was purity in their speech. They had a broad outlook. They developed enquiring minds. They had a high degree of discrimination.

In the case of students indulging in excessive speech, it was found that their memory power was weak. They were narrow-minded. They lacked discriminating power. The result of the experiment testified to the wisdom of the ancient rishis who betook themselves to the forest for silent contemplation. Everyone of the practices of the ancient sages was designed to lead men to the highest stage. Remember that through restraint in speech you can develop mental agility.

Maintain uniformity in behaviour

Wherever you may be, whether in the college, or the hostel, or outside in your homes, you have to observe the same discipline and the same correct behaviour. That alone is genuine discipline. To behave in one way in the presence of Swami and in a different way when away from Swami is utterly unbecoming. Maintain uniformity in behaviour wherever you are. Study well, but see to it that you make good use of knowledge you have gained. Realise the distinction between the scholar and jnani (man of wisdom). When you practise what you have learnt, the joy you derive from it is much greater than what you got from the study. The man who practises what he has learnt is a jnani (a wise man). The man who merely shows off his book knowledge is a pedant. You must become wise men as well as scholars. Then you become fit for realising the bliss of the Spirit:

"Jnanath evatu kaivalyam"

Consider well why you have chosen to come to this Institute when there are so many other Universities. Here we have in addition to academic education the accent on Samskara (spiritual discipline). Elsewhere there is education but not refinement of the Spirit.

Refinement should follow education

Only the combination of education and spiritual refinement can bring out all the qualities in a human being. Samskara means getting rid of all the bad qualities, bad habits and bad thoughts and developing good qualities, good thoughts and good actions. You should aim at goodness and not greatness. You may show respect towards the great. But you must revere and love with all your heart the good. The good are adored and loved wherever they may go. The great may be shown deference. Don't be concerned about greatness. Cultivate love. Become the very embodiment of love. Then you can share that

love with one and all.

Students!

The Vice-Chancellor spoke about the importance of discipline. Whether you like it or not, you have to observe discipline. In due course it becomes a righteous habit. A child in the beginning does not like cooked food. But as feeding goes on, the child gets used to the food and even relishes it. Likewise, by regular practice, you get used to a life of discipline and even enjoy it. It is through regular practice that you achieve tranquillity. In the pursuit of your studies, do not confine yourselves to the prescribed subjects. In addition to these special subjects, you have to acquire general knowledge and common sense. Develop firm faith in God. All the ills afflicting the world today are due to the loss of faith in God. Why has man lost peace of mind? The reason is two-fold. One, indifference to what he has; two, craving for what he does not have. Man does not make proper use of what he has. Why should he hanker after what he lacks? One should be content with what he has got and should not worry about things he does not have. Then alone he can be happy. This is true education.

God has four qualities and it is only when you cultivate them that you can understand Him. They are: Love, Beauty, Sweetness and Splendour. The development of Love is enough to add unto you the other three. When you are full of Love for the Divine in all creation, that stage is Beauty; when you are immersed in the sea of Universal Love, you reach the acme of Sweetness; when your mind loses its identity and merges with the Universal Mind, then there is Splendour indescribable.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

11. God's response

Date: 18 June 1989 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

DEAR students!

The sandalwood tree without any feeling of bitterness, imparts its fragrance even to the axe that fells it. Divinity responds in the same manner. Some persons, blinded by their ignorance, arrogance and folly, may say all sorts of things about God. They may even imagine thereby that they have assailed God. But God remains totally unaffected. Even to such bad and evil-minded persons, He offers His blessings and benediction. Good and bad are obverse and reverse of every object. The citizens of Ayodhya had great love and devotion for Sri Rama. However, despite all their entreaties, appealing to him to stay in Ayodhya, Rama decided to leave for the forest. When Rama did not respond to their appeals, all their love and devotion turned into bitterness and resentment. "We used to think that Rama's heart was sweet as nectar. We felt that this heart was soft as butter. We could never bring ourselves to think that he would be so hard-hearted." Such were the bitter feelings of the citizens of Ayodhya. This was the reverse of what they had felt about Rama earlier.

Good and bad exist in every object

Every object carries with it good and bad, gain and loss, the praiseworthy and unworthy and similar pairs of opposites. Separation and association are both causes of sorrow for the devout. Separation from good persons causes sorrow. Association with bad people is distressing to them. The most important sadhana for man is to seek the company of the good and eschew association with the evil-minded.

Men today seek the fruits of good deeds without engaging themselves in good actions. They wish to avoid the consequences of sinful actions while indulging in such actions. If you want to avoid the results of bad deeds, you should avoid such actions. If you desire the fruits of meritorious deeds, you must do

meritorious acts. Man should develop the qualities of love and forbearance. Love grows by giving and forgiving. Selfishness grows by getting and forgetting.

Students!

You should realise even at this tender age the infinite preciousness of life. There are innumerable things which you have to learn in life. You must make good use of every minute of your time. See that your hearts remain pure and unsullied.

Lord Dakshinamurthy conveyed His message through silence. He seldom resorted to speech. By mere sight He could impart the profoundest truths about the universe and the Divine. On one occasion, in the course of his travels, He reached the shore of the ocean. He was delighted to listen to the Omkara vibrations coming from the ocean. The ocean represents the *Sabda Brahman* (primal divine sound). It symbolises the grandeur and majesty of the Divine.

Dakshinamurthy drew a lesson from the endless waves reaching the shore from the ocean. He noticed that as soon as some rubbish fell on the ocean, it threw it out on the shore by a series of waves without retaining it even for a brief moment. Dakshinamurthy questioned the ocean: "How selfish you are! You are boundless and fathomless. Can't you make some room for this poor stuff? It is highly selfish on your part not to tolerate this poor thing despite your vastness." The ocean gave a fitting answer: "Lord! There is nothing unknown to you. If today I allow this piece of dirt to remain with me, ere long I will be filled with flotsam and jetsam and my entire form will be changed. Hence from the very beginning I have to cast off anything that is dirty and polluting. Only then I can remain pure."

Stand up for truth

Likewise every person should keep out even the smallest bad thought the moment it seeks to enter the mind. To treat it as small and inconsiderable

would mean allowing such things to enter the mind and in due course fill it entirely. In the process, the entire nature of the person is changed. His human essence is undermined. Hence every effort must be made to keep out all bad thoughts and feelings and promote human qualities as much as possible. Through very small effort great things can be accomplished. A huge serpent can be destroyed by a large number of small ants. Do not consider yourself small. Seek to acquire the strength and determination to carry out your duties. In the world, difficulties crop up from time to time. Jealousy towards one's betters is quite common. Crows have animus against the cuckoo. Cranes jeer at swans. But neither the cuckoo nor the swan is worried. The world has many such envious beings. Do not allow yourself to be overwhelmed by such experiences. You have to confront them boldly and stand up for truth.

Young people do not realise the value of health and strength they enjoy during their years of youth. They should learn to lead purposeful, unselfish lives even while they have the benefits of youth and health, instead of dissipating all their energies and talents in the pursuit of sensuous objects and evil desires.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

12. Experiencing the Omnipresence

Date: 19 June 1989 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

THE SPRING that has gone, will come again. The waning moon will wax again. But one's youth and the flowing water in a river will not come back. It is essential for students in the precious period of their youth to cultivate pure thoughts and good habits. Among the gifts of God, time is the most important. Only when time is properly utilised in sacred acts will the body and the deeds get sanctified.

At present, half a life-time of man is spent in eating and sleeping. Much of the remainder is wasted in useless talk and simian pranks or in back-biting and slanderous gossip. Little time is devoted to thinking about how he can improve himself or serve others. No attempt is made to understand the purpose of life, despite the preciousness and sacredness of human birth. Man has to discover, as enjoined in the Bhagavatam, how he can get back to the source from which he came. This is the natural destiny of all beings. The secret of human existence is to know how to make the best use of time to realise one's Divine destiny. Modern man has no idea of sense-control. He has no conception of self restraint. He leads the life of a libertine. This kind of licentious living can only result in degradation and ruin. The aim of sense-control is to achieve one-pointed concentration. It helps also to steady the mind. Without mental steadiness man gets dehumanised. Three things are essential for every one recognition of the goal, understanding the truth (about human life) and realising the Eternal. Today, students should realise the importance of the goal they have to aim at. Ignoring the goal students are leading aimless lives without achieving peace or joy. In spite of being near to the Divine, they are forgetting the Divine and taking to wrong paths. However many years they may have studied here, there is no change in their thoughts and behaviour.

The Lord and Maya are twins

This is because they have not really understood spirituality, though they

profess to know all about it. It is because they are completely wrapped up in the body-consciousness, they cannot grasp the nature of divinity. The body consciousness is the product of Maya (illusion) or ignorance. It is not easy to get rid of this Maya. There is a story to illustrate the hold of Maya. Once, Bhagavan summoned Maya and told her! "Maya! I am acquiring a great deal of bad name on account of you. Every man blames God as Mayopadhi (wearing the disguise of Maya). I am getting into disrepute because you are always following me. Hence do not any longer remain with me. Get away from me." In all humility, Maya bowed to the Lord and said: "Oh Lord! I shall certainly carry out your command. But, please tell me any place where you are not present and I shall go there." The Lord had a hearty laugh and said: "There is no place where I am not present. You and I are twins. I put you this poser only to get your reply." Every individual today declares that God is omnipresent. But no one conducts himself as having realised the truth of this omnipresence. It is not clear whether they are using this word with any understanding of its meaning or experience of its truth or out of ignorance. Every student similarly speaks breezily about Swami's omnipresence and omniscience. It may be based on book-knowledge.

Omnipresence and self-control

God's omnipresence is certainly true. But one gets the right to speak about it only when he has experienced it at least to a small extent. Even if a few drops of nectar are swallowed, a modicum of purity may be achieved. Of what use are potfuls of nectar which remain untouched? Hence, one should strive, in however small measure, to experience the omnipresence of God. Merely talking about it would amount to practising a deception on God. It is a grievous sin. Some high-souled beings have striven to experience the omnipresence of the Divine. But the prevailing educational system cannot enable any student to get this experience. This is because they have lost the capacity to control the senses, which is the prerequisite for experiencing the Divine. The first step is control of desires. There must be unity in word and deed. You have also to enquire by what means you can experience the omnipresence of the Divine. Take the example of a tree. One fruit cannot nourish another. All fruits are nourished by the tree. The tree is sustained by

its roots. It is only when you look after the roots, you will have the tree and its fruits. When you nourish the roots by supplying manure and water, the tree comes up well. Likewise, it is only when you realise that the entire cosmos is sustained by the Divine that you can experience the omnipresence of the Divine.

The three spiritual giants

In the Andhra country, there were three "Rajus" - Potharaju, Thyagaraju and Goparaju. All the three were spiritual giants. Potharaju is Pothana, the great author of the Telugu Bhagavatam. Seeing the extreme poverty of Pothana, his brother-in-law, Srinadha, appealed to him to dedicate his Bhagavatam to some ruler who will reward him with material riches. Srinadha said that by dedicating his work to Sri Rama, Pothana was getting no visible benefit and was steeped in poverty. Pothana felt that rather than seek material rewards from petty earthly rulers, it was far better to dedicate his work to God even if it meant living a life of penury. He declared that he would not choose to live on the largesse of proud and unrighteous rulers. He preferred to lead a godly life as a farmer living on the fruits of his toil. Because Pothana chose to dedicate his work to the Lord, his Bhagavatam has earned undying fame. From the moment he started composing the Bhagavatam, Pothana recognised that it was entirely the work of Sri Rama and should be dedicated to Him as a pious offering. He regarded Rama as the inspirer, the writer and enjoyer of the poem. Pothana told Srinadha that God was the Lord of everything in creation - the creator, the protector and destroyer. "Instead of offering the work to the Supreme Lord, it is not fitting to dedicate it to worldly men clothed in pomp and pride," he said. Coming to Thyagaraja: Seeing the plight of the saint-composer, the Raja of Tanjore sent him many valuables in a palanquin. Looking at these presents, Thyagaraja smiled and prayed to his mind to declare truly whether these treasures would bring him real happiness or the constant vision of Sri Rama. He felt that proximity to Rama was his greatest wealth and turned back the presents sent by the Raja. Thyagaraja lived upto his name by renouncing all worldly things. He declared that God alone was all that he needed and he sought nothing from anybody.

God is the supreme protector of all

The third devotee is Goparaju, who worshipped Sri Rama installed in the Bhadrachalam temple. He offered all his earnings and possessions to Sri Rama. He devoted even the dues collected by him as a revenue official to constructing the temple for Rama and making ornaments for the deities in the temple. When the Thanisha harassed him he declared that he had offered everything to Rama and nourished no desires of his own. "I have surrendered to Rama totally," he declared. These three saints had recognised the omnipresence of God. They firmly believed that God is the supreme protector of all. They are verily Bhagavathas - devotees of God. Many who claim to be devotees today are not real devotees at all. 'The so-called devotees are only seeking external security - security from the authorities, from marauders, and similar external dangers. These are mercenary devotees and not genuine devotees. The Bhagavathas of the old days lived a care-free life, placing their full trust in God as the supreme protector. Because of this faith, they were fully competent to declare that God is omnipresent. Those who use that epithet today are simply mouthing what seems expedient for the occasion. You can find God everywhere today, but you can find few true devotees of God. Today's devotees are not devotees who have totally surrendered to God.

A sinner's corpse

Once a traveller going on his journey approached an ashram near which there was a cemetery. He sought shelter in the ashram from the heat of the day. The Guru of the ashram was giving a talk to his disciples. The traveller welcomed the opportunity to listen to a sacred discourse. At sunset the Guru and the disciples came out of the ashram. They saw a strange spectacle and the disciples asked the Guru what was happening. The Guru smilingly said that what they were seeing was a corpse which jackals and dogs were trying to carry off. They had dug up the body that was buried in the morning and were trying to make a meal of it. Just then a big jackal came there and conveyed some message to the other jackals. Immediately all the jackals abandoned the body and retired into the jungle. The disciples asked the Guru why the jackals abandoned the body that had come their way. The Guru

meditated for a time and then explained to the disciples the reason for the strange phenomenon. The Guru said: "The life-story of this corpse is a remarkable one. This man during his entire lifetime had not listened to the words of elders or the name of God. Even if he heard something, he never cared to follow them. He never did any good deed in his life. His eyes never turned towards anything holy. His hands were never used for anything sacred. He was greedy after other people's wealth, but never once fed a hungry man in his life. His feet never went to a temple or any holy shrine. The elder jackal which came to the cemetery told the other animals that the dead body of such a person was unfit for consumption even by animals. The sins of the dead man would infect them also if they touched the body of such a sinner. The jackals abandoned the body on getting this warning." The moral of this story is that we should not think that it does not matter what happens to the body after death. Even the body should be sanctified and for that purpose good deeds should be done during one's lifetime. Every limb of the body should be devoted to sacred purposes. A body that has not been sanctified in this way will be despised even by jackals. Remember the preciousness of the human body that has been given to you. Use it for rendering service to others. See that every organ in the body is utilised for doing sacred acts.

Duty of senior students

There is an appropriate time for doing anything. Krishna chose Kurukshetra battlefield for imparting the message of the Gita to Arjuna, though they had been moving together closely for many decades. Remember that Swami knows all that is happening though He may appear as if he knew nothing. Recognise the difference between the Divine and the human. Divinity, although all-knowing and all-powerful, acts as if, It does not know anything. The human being, though he is totally ignorant and incompetent, pretends to be all-knowing and all-powerful. Students should realise that Swami knows all about their misbehaviour. Because individual warnings in the past have had no effect, Swami has chosen to reprove them in public. Most of the students are well-behaved. It is the few undisciplined spoiled ones who are setting a bad example to the rest. If they do not reform themselves, they have no place in

this Institute. We are not concerned about numbers. We are content, even if we have a few good students.

Aim of Sai Institute

This Institute has been established for rejuvenating the nation and promoting the Dharmic way of life in the country through a generation of righteously educated students. It has no commercial aims. You must see that the good name of the Institute is preserved. Each one should examine himself. The senior students should be exemplary in their behaviour. If all of you behaved well, what a change would there be in the world! I am devoting 75 percent of my time to the students and giving only 25 percent to the devotees from all parts of the world. Realise how much love I am lavishing on you. If you waste this sacred opportunity, you will not get it again. Conduct yourselves as the children of one mother. The elder students should be an inspiration to the younger ones. Be more concerned about acquiring good character than getting degrees. When parents and teachers are indifferent to their responsibilities, Swami cannot evade His obligation to highlight your lapses and to correct you. The good students will be helped in every way. But the bad ones will be given no quarter. Always bear in mind that the Sathya Sai Institute is a sacred institution. It has been set up for promoting the welfare of the world. Only good students can serve to improve the nation. We will be content even if we have a handful of them.

delivered to the students of the Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning. No one who is filled with pride and conceit is fit to wield power. It is only the person who is imbued with humility and appears to be not very knowledgeable that is fittest to wield authority. Hanuman is an example of such a person. Although he was endowed with enormous prowess, he appeared as a simple person. This humility enabled him to leap over the ocean. Socrates, who was hailed as the wisest man among the Greeks, always professed that he knew nothing.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

13. The four qualities

Date: 20 June 1989 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

IN BHARATIYA culture, the four goals of human existence - Purusharthas - have been declared to be: Dharma (Righteousness), Artha (earning of wealth), Kama (fulfilment of desires) and Moksha (Liberation). It: may not be possible for all human beings to achieve these four goals.

There are four qualities which man has to develop if he is to pursue properly the four Purusharthas. These are very necessary for students today. It is the failure to understand these four requisites properly that has been the cause of many grave consequences. These four are: Maitri, Karuna, Muditha and Upeksha. These are four important qualities required by everyone. The characteristics of each of these qualities have not been rightly understood or explained. For instance, Maitri (friendship) is regarded as mere friendliness. What is friendship? Whom should you befriend? How is one to be friendly? These aspects have to be understood. One should not cultivate friendship with all and sundry. Friendship should be cultivated only towards those who are one's equals in age, status, culture, etc. Friendship with those above or below one should be avoided. This is the true meaning of friendship. When you try to befriend those above you in status etc., they may try to patronise you. When you do not like to be lorded over, the friendship will break. When you develop friendship with those below you, you may attempt to boss over them. When they do not acquiesce in this, the friendship will break up. Therefore friendship will be enduring only when it is as between equals in age, wealth, status, etc.

Karuna, Muditha and Upeksha

Karuna (kindness or compassion) Kindness should be shown towards those who are in a lower position than ourselves in respect; of age, wealth, health, status, education, and the like. Only then compassion becomes meaningful and valuable. Kindness justifies itself in such cases. Muditha (appreciation)' This quality relates 'to the attitude to be shown towards those who are better

off than you. You should feel happy when you see such persons. They may look wealthier than you or better placed than you in position and possessions. You should feel happy on seeing them. You should rejoice at the sight of persons holding higher positions or scoring higher marks. Muditha means freedom from envy and feeling happy over the better fortunes of others. Upeksha: There are two terms Apeksha (liking) and Upeksha (dislike or disinterestedness). We should have no liking for those who indulge in bad deeds or entertain bad thoughts. They should be kept at arm's length. Keep away from all those who are filled with bad thoughts, indulge in bad talk and bad actions. This is Upeksha. If you cultivate these four qualities, you do not need any other goals in life. Friendship with equals, compassion towards the lowly, rejoicing in the good fortune of those who are better off and keeping away from the wicked - these are the true objectives to be pursued in life. It is because of the failure to observe these directives that the quality of life has deteriorated.

Maintain two-fold purity

Everyone has to observe purity in body, dress and manners. This is external purity. This is not enough. The mind also has to be kept pure. The thoughts should be clean. It is necessary to maintain both external and internal cleanliness. How is internal purity to be achieved? It is easy to maintain external cleanliness by washing and removing the dirt. How is one to recognise internal impurity and try to remove it? There is only one way. That is to recognise that in all beings, from the smallest insect to the highest, there is God. This awareness will make the mind pure. You must have the conviction that the Divine permeates everything and is present everywhere. The infinite, universal Spirit is omnipresent. No one can determine what is good and what is bad in this all-pervading Cosmic spirit, because it is one without a second. Only a person with body consciousness can make such distinctions out of ignorance. For Divinity there are no such distinctions and no one can attribute such qualities to the Divine.

The containers and the contained

Here is an example: There are a number of pots made of clay, wood, copper, brass, silver and gold. They are filled with water. The reflections of the sun can be seen in the water in all the pots. Is it possible to say that the reflection of the sun in one pot is good and that in another is bad? The value of the pots may vary. But can any value be given to the sun's reflection in each of them? The pots are products of nature. The sun is transcendental. The pots can vary in quality. But the sun is incomparably pure. He symbolises the Infinite Spirit. Every living being is an image of the Supreme. Without a vessel, water cannot be contained. Without water the sun's image cannot be seen.

In a human being, the mind represents water. The body is the container (Vessel). The Atma (Spirit:) that dwells in the body corresponds to the reflection of the sun. The Atma that is present in all beings is one and the same. The differences between them relate to the bodies (the containers). Enquiring in this way, it will be found that defects in quality relate to the bodies and the mind and not to the Spirit. The water in one vessel may be muddy, in another it may be turbulent and in yet another it may be pure and still. The reflection in the water in the first may be regarded as Tamasic, that in the second as Rajasic and the one in the third as Satwic. What, then, is it that has to be kept pure? It is the mind, which has to be purified by the removal of Tamasic and Rajasic qualities. How is this to be done? By getting rid of two bad tendencies. One, trying to cover up one's faults; two, searching for the faults in others. The mind can become pure only if these two traits are got rid of. Only those who are conscious of their own defects and who seek to recognise the good in others can make their mind pure and steady. Students should realise that the relations between Swami and the students will depend on the intensity and sincerity of the students devotion. Here is an example. As you go along a road, you find on one side a tree rich in foliage and in full bloom. Across the road, on the other side, you notice a paddy field in which the crop is withering. What is the reason for this difference? In the case of the tree, the roots have gone deep in the ground and they can supply water to sustain the tree. In the case of the paddy crop, the field has not been watered for two days and the crop has withered because the roots have not gone deep and have not received any water. The one who is filled with deep devotion for God will experience great bliss. The one whose devotion is surface-deep will

have no contentment. Each of you should examine how deep and sincere is your devotion to Swami.

14. The One and the Many

Date: 21 June 1989 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

MUSIC, which is invisible, is one, but the ragas (melodies) are many. Each raga has a unique form of its own. Likewise, rasa (taste) is one, but has a variety of forms. In Indian musicology, 64 different ragas are listed. They are called Chatusshashti (64). However great a musician may be, even if he be Narada or Tumburu, the celestial singers, if he were to sing a single tune for long, his music will pall on the audience. Hence a variety of ragas are required. God, who is the embodiment of sweetness, manifests Himself in many forms. The Upanishads have declared: "Raso vai Sah" (He is sweetness itself). He invests that sweetness with infinite variety. Prakriti (Nature), which is made up of the three gunas (qualities) - Satwa, Rajas and Tamas - is one only. All the myriad colours, sounds, smells and tastes that we witness have emanated from Nature alone. How can God, whose manifestations are infinite, be described? The Vedas have declared: "From which speech and mind turn back unable to grasp It (the Supreme)." To realise the Divine, the only (easy) method is chanting the Name. There are, of course, many great ones who chant the name of the Lord incessantly. There are many others who recite the Name for days, months and years, but this effects no change in them. What is the reason for this? All their sense organs function with the feeling: "I am the body." Those who utter the name of the Lord while being immersed in the body consciousness cannot realise the Divine, however long their penance may last.

One actor: many roles

People belonging to different faiths and cultures pursue various spiritual practices according to their different backgrounds. When they find that these practices have not produced the results they expected, out of frustration or disappointment they go after a different form of worship or a different faith. Spiritual change cannot come merely by chanting a different name or even adopting a different creed. Divine grace is not secured by a change of faith. It is the mathi (mind) that has to undergo a change, not one's matham

(religion). By merely changing the garments you wear, you cannot acquire divine qualities. Virtues have to be cultivated. Only the person who transforms his character can sublimate himself. Here is a simple example' In a play one actor appears in the first scene as a beggar in tattered clothes. In another scene he appears in the robes of a king. Later he appears as a minister. The people in the audience may think that the beggar was a different person from the one in the role of the king and that of the minister. What is the reason? They go by the costumes worn by the actors. A person is judged by his dress and his actions. But see how a dog behaves in relation to its master. The dog recognises its master irrespective of the dress he wears. It acts on the basis of the voice of the master. It would seem that a dog has a better sense of recognition than human beings who judge men by external appearances.

Names and forms are artificial

Men today act on the basis of names and forms. These names and forms are artificial. Sound has the quality of permanence. If the name of the Lord is chanted with due regard to the sound, the name acquires spiritual power. The Chinmaya (higher consciousness) can be experienced in the utterance of the Divine Name.

Man is the embodiment of divine consciousness. Only when he is pure, he can experience that consciousness. Through attachment to worldly pleasures man gets bound to the physical and becomes oblivious to his essential divinity. Man knows that God is the very embodiment of love. Only through the cord of love can God be bound. But it is only when love is for love's sake that this cord can bind God to man. If love is motivated by desire for worldly objects, God will be beyond our reach. You must become embodiments of love. If you are merely loving, your love will be confined to a few. Only when you become the embodiment of love can your love comprehend all. Only then will you realise that it is the same God who is the Indweller in all beings.

Krishna defines the role of a leader

During Krishna's boyhood days he wanted to go to the forest with other cowherd boys to lead the cows and calves for grazing. His mother said that he needed sandals for going to the forest when he would have to walk over thorns and stones. Krishna said that the cattle had no shoes and he as their protector should wear no shoes. He pointed out that the cows were selfless in giving their milk to others and love of the cows and calves towards him was not equalled even by Yasoda's love for him. Krishna set an example as to how a leader should behave in relation to those under his charge.

Krishna considered himself as the leader and protector of the cows. You may be a class leader, a room leader, a party leader or a social leader, but a leader of any sort should set an example to his followers and serve as an ideal to them. In fact, every individual should aim at being an ideal person. Only then would his life be purposeful and self-satisfying. Take the example of a farmer. Before growing a crop on his land, he has to prepare the field, plough it, manure it, sow the seeds. When the seeds sprout, he has to remove the weeds and protect the crop from birds and other depredators, only then can he reap the harvest.

A similar exercise has to be done in the cultivation of the heart by everyone. The heart is like a field. It has to be cultivated properly. It should be filled with the water of love- It should be tilled by the process of vichara (enquiry). Then the seed of the Divine Name has to be planted in it. You must erect the fence of vigilance to guard it. You must protect the crop of devotion by weeding out egoism. Only then you will reap the fruit of love for the Divine. In the tree of every human life, there is the fruit of love. To enjoy this fruit, you have to remove the outer rind so that you can get at the juice within. Take, for instance, an orange. To enjoy the fruit, you have to remove the outer skin first. Then you have also to take out the seeds in the fruit and the fibrous parts. You should consume only the juice. You should realise that life has been given to you by the Divine so that you may enjoy this fruit of love. Get rid of ostentation and pride. Remove the seeds of bad thoughts and bad feelings. Throw out the mamakara (acquisitive impulse). Then you will taste the juice of love.

Realise your true potential

This is the type of sadhana which everyone should undertake. Each is a kind of cultivator. Every heart is a field. This divine gift should not go to waste. What use is there in possessing land if you do not cultivate it properly? This is a sacred land. But if it is allowed to lie fallow, it becomes barren and nothing can be grown on it. Here is a boundless field, but you are failing to grow the kind of crop that should be raised on it. Your foremost duty today is to cultivate properly the precious and boundless land that has been given to you. You do have the abilities required for this purpose. Some students pray to Swami to give them the strength to live up to Swami's ideals. When they pray like this, they imagine that they do not have the strength at present. There is no need to give them this strength. It is already there. You are failing to make good use of it, because you are not concentrating your attention on it. If you realise your potential, you will know how to make the right use of it.

The Grace of God cannot be won through the gymnastics of reason, the contortions of Yoga or the denials of asceticism. Love alone can win it, Love that needs no requital, Love that knows no bargaining, Love that is paid gladly, as tribute to the All Loving, Love that is unwavering. Love alone can overcome obstacles however many and mighty. There is no strength more effective than Purity, no bliss more satisfying than Love, no joy more restoring than Bhakti, no triumph more praiseworthy than Surrender.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

15. Power of the Lord's name

Date: 22 June 1989 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

ALL RELIGIONS have laid stress on purity of heart. They have also declared that without a pure heart all spiritual exercises are valueless. How can purity of heart be realised if the mind is filled with egoism? The body can be cleaned by water. But the heart can be cleaned only by chanting the Lord's name.

Prahlada, who was the son of an Asura, Jatayu, a bird, and an animal like Gajendra, the Lord of the Elephants, redeemed themselves by relying on the Lord's name. As long as one is filled with ego and relies on his own strength, the benefit of the Lord's grace will not come to him. It is only when Gajendra declared that he knew no one other than God who could save him here or in the hereafter that the Lord rushed to his rescue. When Draupadi was being humiliated by the Kauravas, who went to her rescue? All the prowess of her husbands could not protect her. She prayed to Krishna as her sole protector, as no relations or others could come to her aid. Men may help to relieve ordinary difficulties in life. But in times of grave crisis only Madhava (God) can save man. Believing in this, Draupadi prayed to Krishna for succour. The faith in the Lord's name saved her. Tulsidas hailed Rama as the protector of the universe and declared that the very name Ra-a-ma represented the three powerful deities, Agni, Surya and Chandra (the Fire-God, the Sun-God and the Moon-God).

Valmiki, who was a hunter in his early life, became a sage and the author of the immortal Ramayana by meditating on the name Rama, taught to him by the Seven Sages. Association with the saintly persons and the chanting of Rama's name made him the Adikavi (the first poet). The Lord's name is like a boat for a man crossing the ocean of life. It is supremely important in the Kali Age. It has been declared that there is nothing greater than the name of Hari in the Kali Age. By no other spiritual or religious practices can peace be attained in this age. The Divine name can turn poison into nectar. It can revive a lifeless thing. It is surcharged with infinite power.

Mira was so deeply immersed in chanting the name of Krishna that she was totally unmindful of where she was going and what others thought about her. Those who have firm faith in God should not bother about what others thought or said about them. They should adhere to their practices regardless of what others felt. This applies to students when they go to their homes for the holidays, when some persons might comment about their uttering prayers before they took their meals. They should have the courage to practise what they knew to be right. They must be afraid to commit sin, but have no fear at all in chanting the name of God. The Lord's name will protect them upto the end of their lives even when all others desert them. You must practise chanting God's name from now on because no one can **say** when the end will come.

The deepest yearning of man is to experience the One, the Basis, the Being that has Become. From east and west, from south and north, you have come in thousands and are now One in this Poorna Chandra Auditorium, feeling a blissful spiritual Unity. Be aware of the One which manifests as the many. That is Divine Life. Aspire for such a life, not simply for long life. Aspire for the Bliss that the awareness of the Atma can confer, not for the pleasure the objects of the world can give.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

16. A rare opportunity

Date: 24 June 1989 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

MAN'S life is like a garland, with birth at one end and death at the other. Between the two ends are strung together flowers of all kinds - troubles, worries, joys, sorrows and dreams. Few men are aware of the string that runs through all the flowers. Without the string there can be no garland. Only the person who recognises the string can become a real man. This string is called Sutra or Brahma-Sutra (The Divine String). The Divine Atma principle is the string which is found in all human beings and which is the source of all the potencies in them. Bharat, which was the home of spirituality and a treasure-house of supreme wisdom, is today in the grip of demonic forces revelling in falsehood, chicanery, violence and wickedness. Out of the conviction that, in this crisis, only students can help to bring about peace, integrity and goodwill, we established educational institutions. Students! You must realise 'that those whom you regard as eiders, leaders, persons holding positions and people worthy of respect, were once students like yourselves. Today's students will be tomorrow's citizens, administrators and respected leaders. Having regard to your future role, you must use the present opportunity after assessing the merits and defects of the older generation.

Spirituality and morality are like two eyes

You make intense efforts to acquire your degrees. You should make much greater efforts to develop your character and integrity. Human life will be meaningless without morality and goodness. You students should remember that Sai-Matha (Bhagavan) feels a thousand times more distressed when you fall back in spirituality and morality than what: your parents feel when you do not fare well in your academic and scientific studies. Look upon spirituality and morality as the two eyes of human existence. Despite the striking progress in the fields of science and technology, there has been deterioration in morals and social behaviour because of the growth of selfishness. Self-interest is predominant in every action. If one's entire life is governed by selfishness, what happens to society? Every individual has a responsibility to

society, from which he derives so many benefits. Society is based on the principle of mutual give and take. Your primary duty is to show your gratitude to your parents, your kith and kin, your friends, teachers and others who have helped you in various ways to make you what you are. You must also realise that the source of true joy is within yourself and not in the objects of the external world. When Sita was a prisoner in Ravana's Asoka Vana, none of the beautiful things in the garden could give her any joy. But the sight of Hanuman, as a messenger from her Lord Rama, gave her great joy because all her thoughts were centered on Rama and Hanuman sang the glories of Rama and described how he came to adore Rama. This shows that man cannot derive joy merely from things that are beautiful or from individuals who are beautiful. Man derives joy from the objects he loves and not from other things. It is the love that lends beauty to the object. Hence joy is equated with beauty and the sweetness of honey. Anyone who seeks joy should not go after things of beauty. The fountain-source of joy is within himself. To bring forth that joy man should cultivate the inward vision.

Manifest the divine power within

Students! There is a divine power that is inherent in every human being. You must strive to manifest it. Recognise that: all the knowledge you have been able to acquire is because of this divine power within you. You must cherish and foster that power. Most people make use of this power for selfish purposes to promote the well-being of themselves and their families. It should really be utilised for the good of the whole world. You should live upto the Gita ideal: "Saravaloaka hithe ratah" ("Rejoicing in the well-being of all"). Recognise the divinity in you and share that experience with all. Use the divine power in you to cultivate virtues, which constitute the essence of education. Lead a life which will earn for you the love of the people more than their respect.

Reduce the luggage you carry about, when on the journey of life. Remember, all that is not 'you' is luggage! You are not the body. So, the

body is an item of luggage. The mind, the senses, the intelligence, the imagination, the desires, the plans, the prejudices, the discontent, the distress all, all are items of luggage. Jettison them, soon, to make your travel lighter, safer and more comfortable. Learn this lesson watching the great, who are humble and simple. They are the elders whom you should admire and follow. They are the people who bring forth your tears when they pass away; there are others who bring forth your tears, when they pass your way! They are to be avoided.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

17. The One in the many

Date: 25 June 1989 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

WHATEVER man seeks to achieve, he has to rely on Nature. Nature is not anyone's private property. It belongs to God. Without the grace of the Lord no one can enjoy the benefits of Nature. Not realising this truth, some people embark on the exploitation of Nature, out of arrogance and self-conceit. This is highly misconceived. Without the sanction of the Lord, man cannot achieve anything in the world. The Divine is the basis for everything. Man, however, is filled with the conceit that he is the one who is doing everything. This pride is the cause of his ruin. It is the cause of his frustration and disappointment. Man today is basing his life on reliance on Nature, forgetting God. This is a grievous mistake. You must place your faith in God, who is the prime supporter of Nature, and enjoy what Nature provides. Faith in God is the primary requisite for man. But how should devotion to God express itself?. Not in ostentatious external forms like smearing vibhuti, wearing a special dress or flaunting a japamala. Devotees make a distinction between personal duties and service to the Divine. They look upon worship, meditation and the like as Divine service and what they do for their families and friends as personal duties. This kind of division amounts to practising a deception on God. God is omnipresent and subsumes all things. Hence there is no meaning in making a distinction between one kind of work and another.

Consider all acts as an offering to God

A policeman on duty wears his uniform and when he is off duty he is in his own plain clothes. He makes a distinction between his official dress and his "own" clothes. This is all right from the worldly point of view. But devotees should not make such a distinction. Whatever work they do, whether in their office or elsewhere, they should consider it as an offering to God. In any business in which you engage yourself, treat it also as God's work. This is known as Bhava- Advaita (Advaitic attitude or attitude of oneness). Next, you have the instance of people in different bodies, with different forms and names. But, irrespective of these differences, they are basically made up of

the same five elements - earth, water, fire, air and ether. These elements are aspects of the Paramatma (the OverSoul). Why, then, should any distinctions be made in our activities between different persons constituted by the same common elements? Hence, together with Bhava-Advaita, you should have Kriya- Advaita (the unitary attitude to work). This means that whatever work you do should be dedicated to God. All such actions become thereby sanctified and divinised, they acquire the unifying quality of holiness.

The next one is Padartha-Advaita (non-dualism relating to objects). When you begin to enquire into the fundamental basis of all objects, you find that it is only one. For instance, a cloth is made up of threads, which are made from cotton. The common factor is cotton. Distinctions are made when the underlying basic unitary substance is forgotten. When Bhava-Advaita, Kriya-Advaita and Padartha-Advaita are properly understood, we can have a vision of the basic Reality. Then the omnipresence of the Divine can be experienced.

Yearn for the love of the Lord

Look at the modern attempts to understand God by concentrating on exploring the secrets of Nature. This is a wrong approach. The effort should be to realise that Nature has come from God. Only then God can be experienced. You have to turn your mind from the mundane to the Divine, from Nature to Nature's God. By getting immersed in evanescent and impermanent worldly concerns, people are polluting their lives. Admittedly the phenomenal world presented by Nature is true. The Spirit is also truth. Man's journey is not from untruth to Truth but from a lesser truth to a higher Truth. Truth is only one. That truth is God. God can be realised only through love. Your devotion must be such that God seeks you. Like a child crying ceaselessly till the mother rushes to pacify it, like a calf calling for its mother-cow, like a forlorn wife praying for the return of her husband, the devotee should feel the yearning for His coming. Udhadhava declared that only such yearning was true devotion. Students! Bhajans and japas do not constitute Bhakti (devotion). You must yearn for the love of the Lord. Along with your studies, cultivate devotion and spiritual discipline. Spirituality is the summum bonum of education.

God is omnipresent. So do not act differently when you are away from my presence. Be always and everywhere conscious of the Presence. Be vigilant, even while engaged in little tasks. Maintain silence, in the recesses of the heart, as well as outside. The Gita says, God's hands and feet are everywhere. You can hear His footfall only when no other sound hinders. Develop the awareness of God, see Him and serve Him in every living being.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

18. Man and the cosmos

Date: 26 June 1989 / Location: Prashanthi Nilayam

BHARTRUHARI was a great devotee, a very wise person, a poet and an ideal example to all spiritual aspirants. Once he embarked on an enquiry into his failings. He observed: "When I was a man of little wisdom, I behaved like one who felt there was no one equal to me and acted recklessly. But thanks to association with sages and listening to their wise teachings, I was able to realise the truth about myself." Just as a specific medicine serves to cure a particular malady, the teachings of wise sages enable one to bring under control the vagaries of the mind. Why should anyone feel conceited? What are you in this vast universe? In the boundless firmament, the sun is a small star. The earth is a small planet, of which Asia is a small part. In it, Bharat is a small country and Anantapur is a district in it. You are in a small room in Prashanthi Nilayam. In relation to the cosmos, is there any reason for anyone to feel proud about himself?. Such pride can only be the result of delusion born of ignorance. If you explore in depth the true nature of the human condition, you will recognise the various aspects of its impermanence and mutability. In the vast universe with its millions of stars, what is the reason for divinity manifesting itself in the human form? Very few care to recognise the truth behind this. The highest wisdom is required for securing this understanding.

Three kinds of knowledge

In the world today, knowledge about the universe falls into three categories. (1) In terms of daily life, there is factual knowledge based on perception. To treat facts as truth and fiction as untruth is practical knowledge. (2) In the second category are those who regard the phenomenal world as real and treat all that cannot be seen or heard as unreal or non-existent. They regard Nature as real and God as non-existent. (3) The third category consists of those who make no distinction between one thing and another and hold the view that the whole universe is a projection of the Divine and is permeated by the Divine. This is spiritual knowledge. Doubtless, knowledge of the

phenomenal world is necessary. But one should go beyond it to know the Eternal and Unchanging Reality. Once Nehru asked Gandhiji why he was looking so worried and depressed. Gandhiji answered that he was finding that the education the young people were receiving was making them hard-hearted. "What good can such hard-hearted persons do to the world? This is what worries me," said Gandhiji. Modern education makes a man pursue what appeals to his mind and not what is good for his mind and soul. Even the heart which is soft and sweet by nature is turned into a hard and unfeeling organ. The sharpest intellect gets blunted. Parents of children are anxious to see their children become scholars rather than men of character. Only those parents are worthy of esteem who desire that their children develop good qualities even more than academic distinctions. Education is not the be-all and end-all of life. It is only a part of life. Virtues are the backbone of life. The spiritual path is the only means of cultivating virtues.

The real meaning of freedom

In pursuing the spiritual path, one should not get disinterested or indifferent at any stage. Devotion does not admit of rest or revulsion. Steadfastness is the sign of true devotion. Students should cultivate such devotion because they do not have sufficient control over their senses. Students are inclined to regard freedom to act as they like as their primary goal. But this is not real freedom. Unrestrained freedom is enjoyed by the animals. But how should a man, an educated being, conduct himself?. Swachcha (freedom of will) consists of the two words Swa and Ichcha. Swa refers to the Atma and Swachcha means acting according to the dictates of the Spirit and not of the body. One must use one's discriminating power to decide whether a thing is right or wrong and act according to the dictates of one's conscience. That is true freedom of will. Only then can one have self-confidence.

Gratitude is a cardinal virtue

Students must strive to acquire good qualities even more than academic knowledge. To understand the nature of divinity, devotion is essential. Once there is firm faith in God one can face with ease all the vicissitudes of life.

Every devotee has to have as his aides firm faith in God on one side and purity of character on the other. Students! Gratitude is a cardinal virtue. You must be grateful to all those who have helped you in your lives. You may earn money by your efforts. There is nothing wrong. But it must be spent in righteous ways. Today one sees everywhere the worshippers of Siri (wealth) but few worshippers of Hari. This is the irony of devotion today. Spiritual wealth alone is true wealth. It is not dependent on anyone's favour. Fire cannot burn it. Thieves cannot steal it. It will protect you like your life-breath. It leads you on the right path, Strive to acquire this spiritual wealth. Then Bharat will become the moral leader of the world.

Welcome disappointments for they toughen you and test your fortitude.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

19. Prema and Bhakti

Date: 27 June 1989 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

DEAR STUDENTS! God is the embodiment of Love. The Cosmos is permeated by the Divine. Hence, the Cosmos is enveloped in love. Men in their narrow-mindedness are unable to recognise the nature of this infinite, all-embracing Love principle. Man views love from three stand-points and experiences it in three ways. (1) Love relating to the body; (2) Love in relation to the mind; (3) Spiritual love. Love assumes three forms according to the three qualities, Tamas, Rajas and Satwa. All the attachments and differences arising in the world, and the processes of birth, growth and dissolution, are based on love. When you examine the nature of love, while coming together or experiencing separation, or in happiness and sorrow, the need for cultivating equal-mindedness in the different situation becomes apparent.

Love based on physical relation is considered by the sastras as Tamasic and as the lowest of the three types of love. It manifests itself as attachment to one's own kith and kin or possessions and is confined to a narrow circle. The second category of love combines self-centered love with love for others for the purpose of gaining one's ends. These persons pretend to have love for their superiors or people in power and thereby seek to achieve their aims. They adore men of affluence or power and by their obsequious service to them they try to win favours from them. This is Rajoguna prema (love that is prompted by self-centred urges.)

People with Satwic love are fearless

The third category is pure Satwic love. In contemporary conditions, this type of love is rare. People filled with satwic love recognise that the same Divine is present in all beings, and consider that without love towards all beings life is meaningless. By their universal love, they proclaim the truth about the omnipresence of the Divine. Their vision is spiritual, as they see the Divine in all beings. Such persons are fearless like lions, which roam about without any apprehensions of danger from any source. The person with bodily vision

behaves like sheep, steeped in fear. The one who has acquired the spiritual vision has all his senses, mind and intellect under the control of the Atma. There is no harm in pursuing one's worldly duties while having Self-realisation as the goal of life. Young people must cultivate this spiritual attitude from their student days.

In the pursuit of the spiritual, one should not have any rewards in view. One who has mercenary motives becomes a wage-earner. He cannot be a master. One who works for wages will not have a deep interest in the work and what he does will not be pure or perfect. He will only be a clockwatcher. He considers himself an outsider in relation to his job. On the other hand, in his own house see how his wife and children work. They receive no wages. Their work is filled with love, purity and earnestness. They are masters of themselves and work in freedom. One who prays to God for something in return is like a wage-labourer. The devotee who regards God as his own kinsman and serves the Lord is like a master of the household. Conduct yourselves as masters and not as mercenary employees.

Three paths of discipline

To develop this kind of devotion, three kinds of disciplines have been indicated. They are' (1) The Matsya (fish) path. (2)The Mriga (animal) path. (3)The Kurma (tortoise) path. The fish can live only in water. It cannot survive on land. The animal can live only on land and cannot survive in water. The tortoise is an amphibian and can survive both in water and on land. The devotee following the fish path practises his sadhana with concentration for the sake of himself and his family. The devotee adhering to the animal path can practise his sadhana in solitude and not in a crowd. One individual, for instance, who had a large family, sat down for meditation in his home. As one child or another was disturbing him, he locked himself in a room and started meditation. But he was disturbed by frequent knocks on the door by some one or other. He betook himself to a forest and began meditating under a tree. But his meditation was disturbed by the dropping from the birds on the tree. Disgusted with the disturbances at home and in the forest he felt: that: the best thing was to end his existence. He was unable to realise that God

was present in everything and cultivate forbearance. He exemplifies the devotee with the Rajoguna predominant.

To be able to concentrate wherever one may be is the mark of the devotee with satwic quality. Whether in the midst: of a crowd or alone, he is able to practise concentration. If anyone disturbs his meditation, he looks upon the disturbance as coming from God and accepts it. It is necessary to understand the deeper meanings of Vedantic injunctions. Today people tend to go by the letter of the scriptures. The words of the scriptures should be interpreted and understood in the context of the prevailing time and circumstances. Then their real meaning will be clear.

Precept and practice should go together

For instance, persons who take a pledge to observe certain disciplines in all circumstances, fail to do so when the circumstances are not congenial. There is a story to illustrate this. Once all the deer in a forest held a conference. They argued as follows: "Do the dogs have as much strength as we have? If we use our antlers against the dogs, they can be disembowelled. If we kick them with our legs, they will collapse. We are more fleetfooted than the dogs. While running we can jump over ditches and obstacles, which they cannot. We are in every way superior to the dogs. Why, then, should we be afraid of them? Henceforth we should not be afraid of dogs. We should face them courageously." All the deer came to this decision.

Hardly had they come to this resolution when the distant bark of a dog was heard. Immediately, not one of the deer stayed on the spot. All of them took to their heels and fled. What was their resolution at their conference and what was their action later? The behaviour of those who preach Vedanta these days is very much on a par with that of the deer in the story. No one adheres to what he says or preaches. More than listening to spiritual discourses, one must try to practise at least a part of what one learns. Vedanta is being expounded at many places, not to speak of the discourses on the Gita. But how many understand the real spirit of the Gita and act up to its message?

Maintain unity in thought, word and deed

There was a pandit who was expounding the Gita to a king. When the pandit was explaining the sloka in the Gita in which Sri Krishna says that He will look after the welfare, both here and in the hereafter, of those who worship Him with one-pointed devotion, the king found that the pandit did not behave as if he believed in the assurance given by Krishna. He was expounding the Gita to the king to secure a reward from him and not out of conviction in the teachings of the Gita. When the pandit realised this he stopped going to the king. Many scholars wax eloquent about what is said in the Gita, but how many of them practise the teachings of the Gita seriously? It is because of this dichotomy between preaching and practice that spiritual teachings have got into bad odour and are being treated with little regard. Only when the feelings emanating from the heart, the words coming out of the mouth and the actions one performs are all in perfect harmony will one's life be based on truth.

Cultivate lasting bliss of Divine love

Students! You need not make much effort to grow grass. But to grow a useful crop you have to labour hard. Likewise, it is no great achievement to experience the trivial and transient pleasures of mundane existence. It is like growing grass. You must strive to cultivate the nectarine, lasting bliss of Divine love. Those who aspire for such love are not easy to find. All appear as devotees. But one who has experienced the Divine Principle will not go after sensuous pleasures. Devotion these days appears more as a way of spending one's time rather than as the royal road to the eternal mansion of the divine. Education is no doubt necessary for living in the world. But you should be concerned about the basic purpose of life. Education is not for earning a living alone but to acquire a way of life. Whatever you may learn, you should try to put into practice at least some part of what you have learnt. Treating life as righteous journey, you should devote at least a few minutes every day to thoughts on the true aims of life. Many hours in a day are wasted on selfish pursuits, but not even a few minutes are devoted to contemplation of God. Alas! What misfortune is this! In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna called upon

Arjuna to regard himself as an instrument of the Divine. Every human being is indeed an instrument. As such, he should carry out his duties, leaving the results to God. Men have to do their duties; success or failure is determined by the Divine. Do not esteem yourself as the doer. Develop the conviction that the Indwelling Spirit in you is directing you and enabling you to act.

Bhakti is Prema, unsullied by any tinge of desire for the benefit that flows from it or the fruit or consequence of that love. It is love that knows no particular reason for its manifestation.

It is of the nature of the love of the soul for the Oversoul; the river for the Sea; the creeper for the tree, the star for the sky, the spring for the cliff down which it flows.

It is sweet, in bad times as well as good. It is not like pepper or salt with which you savour your dishes; it is the very bread and butter, the essential substance itself. It is not the pickle, which only lends a twang to the tongue and helps you to consume a little more of the food.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

20. Brahmamayam Jagath

Date: 28 June 1989 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

SARVAM Brahmamayam Jagath (The Cosmos is saturated with Brahmam). There is nothing in the universe unconnected with Brahmam (the Omni-Self). While the Divine is thus all-pervasive, the ability to recognise this truth is not present in all. The fact is well known that fire is latent in wood. But on that basis, if one attempts to cook rice in a vessel, placing it on a lorry load of wood, can the rice be cooked? Fire has two states' the inner and the outer. The fire that is invisible and latent is inner fire. This fire, though it is present, cannot burn anything. The external fire manifests its true form and can burn anything and reduce it to ashes. Likewise, the power to experience the omnipresent Divine and envision it internally is possessed by each one, while only some have the capacity to demonstrate it externally. The Cosmos is rooted in Consciousness. Every object in the universe has emanated from the Divine. From a blade of grass to a mountain, from a drop of water to a mighty river, from the atom to the Parabrahmam (Supreme Spirit), all are permeated by the One Divine principle. It is not easy for all to realise the oneness of this all-pervading Divinity. It is only when the rays of Divine love unite with the devotion of the individual that the Vision of Divinity is experienced.

The theist and the atheist

The fire of spirituality burns equally in the theist, who declares constantly that God exists, and in the atheist, who repeatedly denies the existence of God. The feelings of love' are present in the heart of the atheist, no less than in the heart of the believer. But, the feelings of love of the theist are directed towards God. The atheist's love is turned towards Prakriti (Nature). Because of his love for the objects of the world the latter gets bound. When he directs that love towards God, he will become the instrument of his own liberation. Love is the impelling force for both bondage and liberation. That love is a manifestation of the divine. Love can be experienced only by love and by no other means. The Bhagavatam expounds the union of love with love. In this context, some doubts may arise. It may be asked how in the Bhagavatam not

only theists, who are lovers of God, figure in the work, but also avowed enemies of God. When you have accounts of wicked men like Hiranyakasipu, Hiranyaksha, Kamsa, Sisupala, Dantavakra and others in the Bhagavatam, can the Bhagavatam be regarded as a work which deals only with the intimate relationship between God and devotees? The answer to this query may be made clear by a simple illustration. If, supposing, someone comes to your house asking for water to quench his thirst you have to offer him some water, buttermilk or some drink. To offer this drink, you need a container. This may be made of silver, brass or other material. The material of the container is not important. What is important is the drink. Likewise, Hiranyakasipu and others are a kind of containers for serving the drink of devotion. What is significant is the transformation of the contents of the vessel into the Divine substance.

Demons teach devotees the Divine power

In your eyes, Hiranyakasipu and others may appear to be demons. But in the view of the Divine they may appear as persons who help the devotees to affirm their faith in God. The Lord makes an example of the demons to teach the devotees the truth of the Spirit. The good is wedged in between two bad things. Pleasure is an interval between two pains. Indeed, if there had been no Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakasipu, there would have been no occasion for the advent of the Narasimha Avatar to bless Prahlada. Without hatred on the one side, the power of faith on the other cannot be demonstrated. Although Prahlada's father, Hiranyakasipu, subjected his son, a great devotee of God, to numerous ordeals, Prahlada emerged from them as an ideal lover of God, who acquired undying glory. Hiranyakasipu was the instrument for revealing the greatness of Prahlada. The Lord creates hostile forces to demonstrate the power of faith in the Divine and to confer peace and plenty on the believers. When two sticks are rubbed against each other fire emerges. The fire that is latent in the wood becomes manifest thereby. But this happens only when the sticks are rubbed continuously and not in leisurely stages. Likewise, when the Lord's name is chanted without intermission the fire of Divine wisdom manifests itself in the devotee. To bring peace and joy to devotees, there must be some wicked elements present in the world. Just as a mother

provides toys and sweets to a child for its pleasure, though they are of no use to her, God creates certain things for the sake of the devotee, to bring out the depth of his devotion.

Confront the hostile elements

Take another example. The sugar cane's fibre is essential for preserving its juice. What we have to consume is the juice. But the juice is contained in the fibre, which is useless for us. It is only by squeezing the fibre that the juice can be got. Likewise, only by confronting the hostile elements can the benevolence of the Divine be experienced. Even in small matters, we find that their true nature is discovered by experiencing the elements opposed to them. For instance, if one wants to develop physical strength, he has to subject the body to severe gymnastic exercises. Can jaggery be got by seeking favour from sugar cane? Can it be got without crushing the cane and boiling the juice? Even a diamond requires to be cut and polished to enhance its brilliance and value.

Likewise, although Divinity resides in everyone, only in some persons it manifests itself externally. The reason for this external manifestation is the combining of the devotional feelings of the individual with the grace of God. Who is responsible for the appearance of Lord Narasimha before Prahlada? Is it Prahlada or Hiranyakasipu? Both are responsible. Hiranyakasipu's doubts and Prahlada's faith came together. Hiranyakasipu asked: "Where is God?" Prahlada replied: "There is no need to entertain doubts as to whether He is in one place and not in another. He is everywhere." Hiranyakasipu then asked: "Is He in this pillar?" Prahlada replied: "Yes." Hiranyakasipu hit the pillar. Then Narasimha emerged from it. It is the combination of the opposing elements in Hiranyakasipu and Prahlada which accounts for the emergence of Narasimha Avatar. God is present in one form in Hiranyakasipu and in another form in Prahlada. God is the doubter and God is the believer. He is the one who adores and also the one who derides. He is the giver and the recipient. When this Omnipresent oneness of the Divine is comprehended, then the significance of the statement, "Sarvam Vishnumayam Jagath" (the Cosmos is permeated by the Divine) will be understood.

Same entity is present in all the three states

The same entity is present in all the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep. In the waking state, you are listening to the discourse in this hall. In the dream state, you experience certain incidents. You feel there is no relation between the body and the dream state experiences. In the Sushupti (deep sleep) state you experience a sense of bliss. In that state you think that neither the body nor the mind exists. Who, then, is the experiencer? It is the same entity that has experienced the bliss in sushupti, the dreams in the dream state and the sensations in the waking state. In the waking state, it is through the senses that the experience is had. In the dream state it is through the mind in the sukshma sareera (subtle body). The experience in the deep sleep state is by the divine power which transcends the body and the mind. The states are different, but the experiencer is one. It is difficult to understand the workings of the Divine. But one who seeks to understand them with devotion and persistence, will find it easy.

How the Divine functions

From time to time this Divine power assumes numerous forms. In devotees it shines as the Jnana-Agni (fire of wisdom). In non-devotees it burns as Krodha-Agni (the fire of hatred) or the Kama-Agni (fire of desire). Fire is a dreadful power. Even when it is at a distance, it evokes a sense of fear and danger. But man today has this fire (of hatred, etc) in his heart and has become a victim of fear and delusions. The fires of lust, anger, hatred and jealousy can do a lot of havoc to man. All other types of fire subside in due course. But these fires (of hatred, etc.) never completely cease. They may flare up at any moment. How, then, are these fires to be extinguished once for all? What do you need for putting them out? Vairagya (detachment) and Prema (love) are the two requisites to extinguish these fires. It is only through prema (love) that man can acquire peace. Although man today has a surfeit of comforts and amenities, he is steeped in fear and worry. Despite all his attempts to ensure security, the fear remains. All the amenities he enjoys do not confer peace of mind on him. Why is he haunted by this fear and lack of peace? It is

because he entertains in his heart the fires of hatred, jealousy and the like. Only pure thoughts can confer peace. An innocent and pure person is always at peace. It is the guilty man who lacks peace. It is only when a man rids himself of evil that he can be free from fear. How is one to get rid of evil? Men imagine that they lack the capacity to distinguish between right and wrong, good and bad. Of all beings in this world, man alone has the highest capacity to determine what is right and what is wrong. Despite being aware of this capacity, he indulges in wrong deeds. Knowing what is wrong, he commits wrongs. Consequently he becomes a victim of fear and anxiety. He would not suffer from these, if he did anything wrong out of ignorance. There are insane persons who are not conscious of right and wrong, because they have no discriminating power. They act without any sense of fear because they are not conscious of the character of their actions. It is the person who indulges in wrong actions deliberately who is haunted by fear and worry.

One fire, different uses

The discriminating power has to be used in the right way. You should follow the dictates of your conscience and act according to the promptings of the Atma (the Indwelling Spirit). You are filled with fear when you do something against the injunctions of your conscience. To get rid of fear, you have to perform all actions in a spirit of dedication to the Divine. Remember that fire is present in your body even as it is latent in wood. Use this fire properly. Although fire is one, in its use it can be good or bad. The fire that is used for burning a body in the burning ghat is fire. But will any one use it for cooking purpose? No, because it is not: pure. Consider the fire burning in a Yajna Kundam, in which offerings are made to the deities with sacred mantras. That is also fire, but it is sacred fire, surcharged with divinity. It is worshipped as divine. Then, you have fire used for cooking, in the kitchen. That fire is confined to the purpose of cooking. Will anyone offer worship to the fire in a cigarette? But when a joss-stick is burnt, it acquires sanctity as an offering to the Divine. Thus fire may be one, but it can be used in different ways.

The aim of sadhana

Divinity is one, but manifests itself in many forms. Sat-Chit-Ananda (Being-Awareness-Bliss) is one, but its manifestations assume many names and forms. In every object, there are three attributes' Sat-Chit-Ananda. These three qualities are present in this table and this mike. You can recognise "Sat" and "Chit", but not "Ananda". "Sat" means, "It is there" (it exists); "Chit" means you can perceive it. Both these are true. But we cannot know whether it is experiencing "Ananda" (bliss). Such objects are described as Jada (inert). Now look at that person there. He is both "Sat" and "Chit" (He has both a form and a name). But we can also notice that he is experiencing "Ananda." He is deriving joy from Swami's discourse. It is only in man that "Ananda" (bliss) is recognisable. In all other objects "Sat" and "Chit" are cognisable. It is evident that in every padartha (thing) the Divine is present. The aim of sadhana is to convert Padartha (the physical object) into Parartha (Divinity). This Divinity should be regarded as embodying the Love Principle. Without Love, you cannot comprehend Divinity at all.

This love should not be chasing after ever-new objects. It should be concentrated on the One. Only then you can have the right relationship with God. For instance, when a stranger comes to your house, you treat him with special respect. But when an old friend comes, you welcome him freely with familiarity and love. That is the freedom you should have in relation to God. How is that freedom acquired? Through complete dedication. "Mine" and "Thine" should be totally, eschewed. The Vedanta has declared that the elimination of "I-ness" (the ego sense) is Selfrealisation. You must reach the state of "All-is-you" from the state of "I". You must see the Divine in everything in the universe. "You (the Divine) are everything - the seen and the unseen." This conviction must come to you.

Turn on the switch of Divine Love

When you switch off the current, the light does not burn. Because you cannot see the light, you cannot say there is no current. The light will appear when you turn on the switch. Hence the presence or absence of light (current) is related to your behaviour. It: does not affect God's omnipresence. In your ignorance, you do not put on the switch and complain that there is no light.

This is one reason for the absence of light. There may be another reason also. There is a main switch which governs all other switches. If the main switch is off, all the rooms will be in darkness and if the individual switches are put on, the bulbs will not burn. What is that main switch in man? It is Divine Love. When this switch of Divine love is turned on, love will manifest itself in every limb and part of the body. Your words will be filled with love. Your actions will be saturated with love. Your eyes will gleam with love. You will be listening to loving words with your ears. The light of love will shine in every limb. Without that love, if you are steeped in selfishness and self-centred actions, every limb will be plunged in darkness.

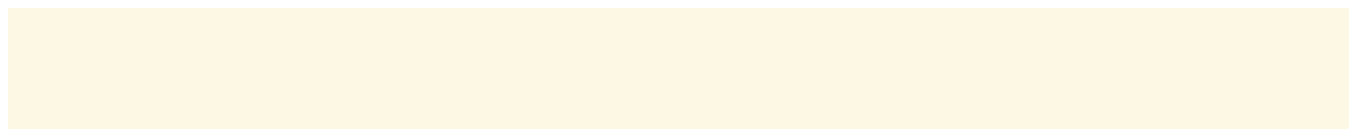
The gopikas prayer

Therefore, Love is Supreme. Develop love in your hearts. Let love flow through every part of your body. Make love the reigning principle of your life. Develop love through love. This was the prayer that went forth from the hearts of Gopikas: "Oh Krishna, play on your flute so that our parched hearts may be flooded with your nectarine love and we may be filled with love in all that we think and do. Plant the seeds of love in our arid hearts so that the saplings of love may sprout and grow." It is when one is filled with joy that music flows spontaneously from him. Krishna was filled with joy always. Hence, whether He was on a village green or on a battle-field, His words turned into song.

To experience this joy, you have to have firm faith in God and shed all fear. Cultivate Divine Love and experience this joy. Sanctify your lives by dedicating it to the Divine.

Prayer must emanate from the heart, where God resides and not from the head where doctrines and doubts clash.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba



21. Self-control and Self-realisation

Date: 29 June 1989 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

DEAR STUDENTS!

All things in the cosmos are the gifts of God. They are manifestations of His Will. Some of them, however, have to be used carefully. When they are used intelligently after due enquiry, they can serve as boon-companions and give us happiness. Indiscriminate and reckless use of these things may turn them into our worst enemies. For example, there are objects like fire, a knife and electric current. It is only when they are used in the right way that you can benefit from them. If fire is not handled properly, it can cause great harm. A knife is helpful only when it is used carefully. Electricity serves us in many ways - by lighting bulbs, running fans, etc. Because of its multifarious uses, if one tries to be friendly towards it by touching a live wire he will get a shock. In the same manner, man's sense organs have to be used extremely carefully. When the senses are used on right lines, they are of immense help. But if they are used in the wrong way, they can cause great harm.

Control of two functions of the tongue

Among the senses, the tongue is a very important organ. Each sense organ has a specific function to perform. But the tongue has two functions: speech and taste. Jayadeva praised the tongue as the author of all sweetness and declared that he would use it only to chant the names of the Lord: "Govinda, Damodara, Madhava," and not misuse it for any unholy purposes. "I will use the tongue only for speaking the truth and the good," he said. In the Gita also it has been laid down that whatever is spoken should be soft, truthful and well-meaning. The tongue is thus endowed with sacred qualities. You have to be ever vigilant in the use of the tongue. It can be the means of liberation or bondage. Hence it has been accorded pride of place among the sense organs. The ancient sages attached great importance to control of the senses and evolved various practices to achieve this. For instance, the tongue should not be allowed to have its way with regard to food. If it is pampered by being

given whatever it desires, ultimately it will swallow up the man himself.

To control the palate, the ancient sages prescribed various regulations. Chief among them is the "*Chaturmasya vrata*" (ritual observance for four months). The purpose of this vrata is to impose severe discipline on the tongue. This vrata is observed each year for four months commencing from the month of Ashada. There is another reason for this observance. As the next three months are a season of heavy rains, it will be difficult for sanyasins (renunciants) to move from place to place. Hence they are enjoined to stay in one place and devote themselves to meditation for four months. Living in a forest for these four months, they had to live on fruits and roots. Thereby the tongue was brought under control. At the present time, because of perversions of the Kali Age, this ancient four-month ritual of austerity has become an ostentatious observance. The sanyasins ask for tasty edibles. While staying in a village, they expect each devotee by turns to provide a feast. This is done in the name of "bhiksha" - pious offering by a devotee. With the change in the character of the religious observance, people's conduct also changes.

The real purpose of vrata

The sanyasins of today should realise that the real purpose of these observances is to achieve control over the palate. How can they expect to realise the Divine without achieving mastery of the senses? If your house is on fire, you may try to escape by running out of it. But if your sense organs are on fire, how can you hope to escape from it? Today what is happening in the case of spiritual aspirants is their sense organs are on fire. Today's sanyasins and sadhaks are allowing their sense organs to burn like a blazing fire. In a temple in Jerusalem, pigeons were being sold. Jesus entered the temple and objected to the traffic in birds in a sacred temple. The priests jointly questioned Jesus about his authority to raise such an objection. Jesus then related the following parable: A farmer had two sons. He ordered the elder son to go and keep watch over the crops in the field. He said he could not go. The younger son was asked to go and he agreed to go to keep watch at the field. The elder son, though he had at first declined to go, felt it was not

right to disobey his father and so went to the field. The second son, despite his promise, did not go to the field. Jesus asked the priests: "As between these two sons, who do you think obeyed the father's command?" They replied, "The elder son. He acted upto his father's command. The second son promised to go but did not go." "Priests and teachers are proclaiming that they are adhering to the injunctions of the scripture, but in actual practice are not following them. All of you are acting in the same manner," declared Jesus.

The priests got angry and levelled a number of charges against Jesus that he was preaching against the established creed and promoting disaffection against the authorities.

Truth is not always pleasant

There is an old saying,

"Truth creates enemies. Falsehood pleases many."

Truth is not always pleasant and hence provokes enmity. Lies and falsehood appear attractive and pleasing. Nevertheless, people must adhere to truth for its own sake. To say one thing and act differently is destructive of the Self. It is opposed to the scriptures. One should try to practise at least one or two of the precepts one professes. The ancient sages betook themselves to the forest for practising yoga. Can self-realisation be got through yoga? No. The rishis practised yoga for the sake of acquiring control over the senses. Patanjali declared:

"Yogah chittavritti nirodhah"
(Yoga is control of the movements of the mind).

It is believed that by controlling the senses life can be prolonged. Who should live longer? Good persons, righteous persons, kind-hearted persons, if they live long, the world will benefit. The world will only suffer more if the wicked and evil-minded live longer. For this reason, the ancients laid down that only selfless and dedicated persons should practise yoga for living long. Society benefits immensely from their longevity. They prescribed disciplines for this purpose. Students should take note of these disciplines.

Breathing and longevity are related

The physical body is subject to certain limitations. For instance, there is the continuous process of inhaling and exhaling air. It has been found that by slowing down the time taken for inhaling and exhaling, life can be prolonged. The faster the process of respiration, the shorter becomes the life span. There are examples of how this rule operates. Elephants and men inhale and exhale 12- 13 times a minute. By adhering to this time-scale man can expect to live for 100 years. Snakes and tortoises breathe at the rate of 7-8 times per minute. Consequently their average life-span extends to 200-300 years. Monkeys, dogs and cats breathe at the rate of 30-40 times per minute. Hence their average life does not last beyond 12-13 years. The rabbit breathes at the rate of 40- 50 times per minute. Its life-span is barely 5-6 years. The faster the rate of respiration, the shorter is the life-span and vice versa. How is breathing to be regulated? Breathing should be so slow that if soft powder is kept near the nostrils the powder will not be disturbed.

The practice of yoga helps to slow down the rate of breathing in this manner.

Dharana, dhyana, samadhi

How is meditation to be done?

The first step is Dharana. Twelve Dharanas amount to one Dhyana. Twelve Dhyanas equal one Samadhi. Dharana is steady concentrated viewing of any object for twelve seconds. You have to look at any object, a flame, a picture

or an idol for twelve seconds only with total concentration, without winking the eyelids. This is Dharana. Practising Dharana is a preparation for Dhyana. The duration of Dhyana is twelve Dharanas. This means Dhyana should last $12 \times 12 = 144$ seconds, that is, two minutes and twenty four seconds. Dhyana does not call for sitting in "meditation" for hours. Proper Dhyana need not last more than 2 minutes 24 seconds. It is only after Dharana has been practised well that one can do Dhyana (meditation) well. Twelve Dhyanas equal one Samadhi. This means 144×12 seconds, that is, 28 minutes and 48 seconds - very much less than an hour. If Samadhi is prolonged, it may prove fatal. These are the disciplines the yogis practised. These disciplines are not explained in any of the sastras. If you want to proceed correctly in the practice of these disciplines, you have to begin with Dharana. Start practising Dharana for 12 seconds a day from now on. This is very important for students. In the past, yogis like Aurobindo and Ramana Maharishi practised these disciplines. Ramana Maharishi used to go up to the terrace and concentrate on a particular star for twelve seconds. In that state, the mind also was still and steady. By continuing this practice of Dharana, you develop the capacity to perform Dhyana for 2 min. 24 seconds. Continuing the practice of Dhyana in this way, you develop the capacity to be in a state of Samadhi for 28 minutes and 48 seconds.

Equanimity is the real fruit of meditation

What is the inner meaning of Samadhi ? It is not a state of unconsciousness or some other kind of consciousness. It is nothing of the kind. The correct meaning of Samadhi is "Sama-Dhi" - the state in which the intellect has achieved equanimity. Whether in pleasure or pain, in praise or blame, in gain or loss, in heat or cold, to be able to maintain an equal mind is Samadhi. That is the real fruit of "meditation." This is a sacred day on which you can begin this yogic practice. This will enable you to sharpen your minds and develop the keenness of your intellect. I have not revealed all this to anyone hitherto.

Likewise, Dhyana is an extremely easy process. Samadhi is even more easy. But because of improper understanding of the methods, aspirants get involved in difficulties. Many imagine that all that Dhyana (meditation) calls

for is sitting in the padmasana (lotus pose). But one does not know where his mind is wandering at the time. The concentration is disturbed by a mosquito sitting on the nose. When the mosquito repeats its attacks, the man loses his patience and the entire purpose of the meditation is defeated. To maintain one's calmness and concentration during meditation, unaffected by any disturbing elements, Dharana has to be practised. Through Dharana, control of the senses is also achieved. Purity of mind is also secured. Through mental purity, the Divine is experienced.

Students!

Practise Dharana and Dhyana and experience the results. Your joy, your purity and your brightness will be enhanced beyond measure. Now, you look sickly because of all sorts of impurities in you. There is no shine on your faces. It is purity that imparts effulgence to the face. When there is purity in you, your face shines brightly. I am now 64 years. (The clock in the Mandir chimed the hours and Swami remarked, "It is saying yes, yes, yes.") Look at Me and look at yourselves, who are in your teens. You look worn out. You lose your brightness because of impure thoughts. The more you develop your purity, the more youthful you will be. No illness will affect you. This is what you should aim at. And it should be achieved through love.

Dhyana means absorption in thought

Meditation in these days is often confined to the puja room. As soon as one emerges from the shrine, one is filled with all sorts of mental agitations. Hence, it has been declared:

"Sathatham yoginah"
(Be established in yoga all the time).

This does not mean giving up all worldly affairs. Pursue your studies. Fulfill

your duties. But in all these activities, use your Dharana power (the power of concentration). In the process, you develop your powers of Dhyana (meditation). Dhyana means single-pointed contemplation. Even in daily life, when one is in a reflective mood, he is asked: "What is the Dhyana you are doing?" Dhyana means absorption in thought. It should be centred on only one specific subject. This is described in Vedantic parlance as *Salokyam*. This means concentrating your thought on what you desire, whatever is the object or the subject. If it is a person, your thought is centred on the person. "Sa" comprehends every aspect of Divinity. Salokya means absorption in the thoughts of Divinity. Through Dhyana you have to achieve the sense of oneness with the Divine. The various types of meditation practised today are concerned with the trivial. Through these methods the Divine cannot be realized. The very first requisite is control of the vagaries of the mind. Only then meditation can be effective.

Creeds may vary, but spiritual process is one

Students must first practise Dharana. They may choose any object for the purpose of concentrating on it - a picture or a physical object. There is also an internal method of practising Dharana. When you close your eyes, a small dark spot appears before the inner eye. You may concentrate on this spot for 12 seconds without letting it move. By this practice, the power of meditation can be developed.

The practice of meditation leads to *Sameepyam* (proximity to the Lord). This leads to the next stage - *Saroopyam* (experience of the Vision of the Lord). This may be compared to the arrival of a river to merge in the ocean. At first the ocean repels the advance of the river. After repeated attempts of the river to merge in the ocean, the latter allows the river to pass under its waves. Spiritually, this process of merger of the jivatma with the Paramatma is described as *Sayujyam* (mergence in the Divine).

The first stage in the process is Salokyam - continuous contemplation of the Divine. Think about the Lord in whatever action you do. Then you achieve Sameepyam - nearness to the Lord. Coming nearer, develop closer relations

with the Divine. In due course, the state of Saroopyam is attained. The realisation that "you and I are one" dawns. Then Sayujyam is experienced - complete oneness with the Divine. This fourfold approach to the Divine is to be found in any philosophy or religion. The creeds may vary, but the spiritual process is one.

Bhakti is not to be calculated on the basis of the institutions one has started or helped, the temples one has built or renovated, the donations one has given away, nor does it depend on the number of times one has written the Name of the Lord or on the time and energy one has spent in the worship of the Lord. These are not vital at all, no, not even secondary. Bhakti is Prema, unsullied by any tinge of desire for the benefit that flows from it or the fruit or consequence of that love.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

22. Power of the spirit

Date: 02 July 1989 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

ON THE vast ocean, countless waves are continually forming and disappearing. Each wave has its own form and shines in many colours. But none of them is separate from the ocean. Likewise, all the myriad beings in the world have their different names and forms but are all tiny droplets from the infinite ocean of Sat-Chit-Ananda (The Cosmic Being-Awareness-Bliss). All beings are manifestations of the Divine. "Atmavath Sarva Bhoothanam" (All beings are akin to the Atma) declare the Bharatiya scriptures. They have affirmed that the Atma principle is immanent in all beings as sparks of the Divine. They have shown that the Spirit is One in all beings. Our sense organs are not the Atma (Spirit). Through the senses, things can be seen or touched. But Atma is separate from the senses. The eyes can only see. The ear has only the power of hearing. The tongue has only the power of taste. Each sense has a distinctive power of its own. It cannot discharge any other function. The eyes cannot hear, nor the ears see. Only the divine Spirit possesses all the potencies of the senses.

The unity of Sathyam, Sivam, Sundaram

The Atma is infinite. It has been described as "Sathyam, Sivam, Sundaram" Truth, Goodness and Beauty. From a worldly point of view, these three qualities appear to be different from each other. But there can be no Sivam (Goodness) without Sathyam (Truth). Without Sathyam (Truth) there is no Sundaram (Beauty). Beauty imparts effulgence to an object. Truth reveals its real nature. Thereby its Sivam or usefulness is brought out. The unity of these three aspects reveals the Divinity of the Atma. Like cloth and thread, which have their basis in cotton, the Atma is the basis for all three. Truth dons the mantle of Sivam and appears as Sundaram. The three terms are descriptive but refer to the same object. There are four words: Prema (Love), Soundarya (Beauty), Madhurya (Sweetness) and Sobha (Brilliance). They are descriptive terms. When the heart melts, love flows from it. When love matures, it turns into beauty. When the taste of Beauty ripens, it is sweetness. In that

experience of sweetness everything appears brilliant and shining. The whole process may be likened to what happens when a flower ultimately becomes a ripe, sweet fruit. Ripeness is all. The Spirit is all sweetness.

Hence, the devotee sang: Your eyes are sweet

Your words are sweet All is sweet, Oh Lord of Mathura Sweetness, sweetness everywhere.

It is this Divine sweetness that illumines the world. This Beauty, Sweetness and Bliss are all within you. When you turn your mind to God, the whole universe will wear a new aspect. Without this internal change, all changes in the external physical world are of no avail. Only when the individual changes, the world will change.

Sages gave right advice to the rulers

It is because of the spiritual life led by sages in the past that in olden times the country was blessed with timely rains and all people enjoyed peace and prosperity. The people led righteous lives and were happy and contented. It is because people have strayed from the path of righteousness that today they are beset with discontent, disorder and misery. The kings in ancient times had for their counsellors great sages, men of virtue and wisdom, who gave the right advice to the rulers. These sages were totally selfless and had only the public well-being in view. The sages were adepts in the practice of mantras and yantras. Pursuing Brahma-Vidya (the knowledge of the Spirit), they acquired great powers through mantras. They were endowed with these powers because they knew how to use them for righteous purposes. The yantras (weapons) which they wielded were surcharged with the potency of mantras and hence had tremendous power. These weapons were used only for the good of the world and not for selfish purposes. There were two kinds of education in those days. (1) Education for promoting the well-being of all people in the world. (2) Education for causing harm to others. The first type of knowledge was known as Brahma Vidya. The second type was known as Rakshasa Vidya (demonic knowledge).

In today's education, as long as selfishness and self-interest are dominant, education will be of no good to the people. Along with academic education, there should be tapas (spiritual discipline). The ancient sages held that knowledge and penance should go together. All actions done as dedication to the Divine become tapas (spiritual austerity). All selfish actions are Tamasic (evilminded).

The Universe is an echo of God

A student had stated that there were three kinds of love: Physical, mental and spiritual. In fact, there are no three types. Love is only one. But according to the object of one's love, it appears to be different. When this love is directed towards God bliss is experienced and it achieves fulfilment. When love is prompted by selfish feelings, joy and sorrow inevitably follow. Hence all actions should be done as an offering to God. Scholars have expressed different views regarding the sthoola, sukshma and karana sareeras (gross, the subtle and the causal bodies). In my view the gross and subtle bodies are like twins, resembling sound and its echo, an object and its image. In certain places, when you raise a cry you hear the echo. In other places it is present but not audible. The whole universe is an echo of God. It is like a mirror which reflects the image of God. Just as your own voice is reflected back by the echo, your actions return to you as reactions. Hence, you should learn not to abuse anyone or harm anyone. Good and bad are nothing but reflections of your own inner being. It is on the basis of this truth that I advise, people to be good, see good and do good as the way to God.

Right use of knowledge

Today great advances have been made in science and technology. But human character and morality have not made corresponding progress. Knowledge without discrimination is dangerous. Atomic power is being harnessed for destructive purposes. How much could be done for improving production and raising the condition of the people if all this energy could be used for peaceful and productive purposes. Knowledge should promote people's well-being and not cause harm to them.

Students should realise the differences between one nation and another. Each country has its own special features and its own problems. The same system or remedy will not suit all countries. Four persons may go to a doctor complaining of trouble in the stomach. Each case has to be diagnosed individually and the treatment should vary according to the needs of each person. It may be a pill for one person, an injection for another and an operation for a third. Likewise, each country's problems should be solved with reference to its conditions and needs. The same prescription should not be applied to all. You must remember that the acquisition of academic education does not make you great in anyway. Today there are many people all over the world steeped in poverty and squalor. You should not be content with satisfying your own wants. You must strive to relieve the poverty and misery of your fellowmen.

Through knowledge, you acquire humility. Through humility you become worthy of responsibility. Through responsible positions you get wealth. Through wealth you must practice righteousness. Righteousness ensures your well-being in this world and the one beyond it.

The world is now living apart, in compartments, on the basis of race, religion, colour, creed, caste, convictions, etc. Those who question the validity and value of these compartments are themselves in a compartment by themselves. Metal pieces heaped together are still pieces; they have not become one. The world has become united only in the form of heap; it has not been melted in the crucible of love and moulded in the image of God. The hearts of all men must be purged of hate. Speeches and writings cannot bring about the unity of man.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

23. Love all : Serve all

Date: 18 July 1989 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

EMBODIMENTS of Divine Love! The trees provide cool shade and sweet fruit equally to all, whether they have fostered them or harmed them. They teach man this lesson of equal mindedness. The mountains, by bearing heat and cold, wind and rain alike, teach man not to care too much for the body. The birds take no thought for the morrow and are content to live on what they can get. They teach man the lesson of contentment and indifference to the future. The departed convey the message of the impermanence of life and its pleasures. Nature thus teaches man in many ways to give up ideas of "I" and "mine" and look upon God as the supreme preceptor. Although Nature has been teaching these lessons from the beginning of time, man has not learnt to give up the ideas of "my people" and "others" and to develop the sense of oneness and equality of mankind and realise his divinity. Trees are foremost among teachers. By attachment to the body and developing self-conceit, man forgets the lessons of Nature and wallows in selfishness. The mountains, by their indifference to cold or heat, are teaching man that he should bear joy or grief with an equal mind and strive to realise God. Pleasure and pain relate only to the body. The Atma is unaffected. This is the lesson to be learnt from the mountains. We are seeing people being born and people dying. In spite of all that is seen, or heard or experienced, man is unable to get rid of the delusions relating to the body. Hence he is caught up in the coils of bodily attachments. He does not learn the lesson of the impermanence and fleeting nature of physical existence.

The Cosmos is a University

Prakriti (Nature), which is constantly teaching these lessons, is the true preceptor. The cosmos is a University. God is the Cause. The cosmos is the result. God pervades the entire Universe. Nothing can exist in the world without the power of the Divine. The Universe is a manifestation of the Divine.

In the invocation to the Guru, he is described as Brahma, Vishnu, Maheswara

and Parabrahma. Brahma who is hailed as the Guru, is the creator of the universe. The One who creates, sustains and dissolves the universe is the Parabrahma (the Omni-Will). The Vedas have described the Divine as the One enveloping the Cosmos and existing beyond it. Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara are aspects of the manifestation of Nature. Nature is made up of the three gunas - Satwa, Rajas, Tamas - in their myriad combinations.

The three forms of Advaita

What we must seek to experience today is Ekatvam (unity in diversity). Advaita (Oneness) is expressed in three forms: Bhava-Advaita (oneness in mental attitude); Kriya-Advaita (oneness expressed in action); Padartha-Advaita (oneness as seen in all objects). Only when oneness is experienced in all these forms can Divinity be understood. In Bhava-Advaita, the unity of the basic substance constituting the cosmos is perceived as the underlying Reality. In Kriya-Advaita, every action is regarded as an offering to the Divine and is thereby divinised. Padartha-Advaita implies recognising that every being or every object in the universe is composed of the same five elements (ether, air, fire, water and earth) which are divine in their origin. In every individual, Akasa (ether) exists as Sabda (Sound). Breathing is based on air. The heat in the body is derived from the fire element. Sweat, urine and other fluids in the body indicate the presence of water. The body itself is based on earthy matter. As every being is constituted by these five elements, all beings are essentially one, though having different forms and names. Human equality is based on the oneness of the Divine essence of all human beings. The ancient sages indicated in the Upanishads and the Brahma Sutras, how this Oneness of the Divine is to be realised. Unfortunately, these texts came to be interpreted in contradictory and confusing terms, with the result that their basic truth has been forgotten. Oneness must express itself in universal love. Those who speak about love do not practice it. It is the divorce between thought, word and deed which is at the root of all the troubles in the world today. It is also the cause of the rise of atheism in this sacred land of ours. Harmony in thought, word and deed is the highest human value. Sathya, Dharma, Santhi and Prema (Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Love) are not mere words. They are fundamental values to be practised in thought, word

and deed as far as possible. Only then can divinity be realised. It is not necessary to undertake all kinds of sadhanas (spiritual exercises) to recognise the Divine. If the happenings in daily life are properly enquired into, the Atma principle can be recognised easily. Hethu (cause) is one of the names of the Divine. This means He is the cause of creation. He is both the cause of and the means used in creation. Another name for God is Vikshara (Imperishable). All objects in creation are liable to decay and destruction. God alone is beyond change and decay.

Nature is like a clean mirror

God's love is unbounded. It knows no growth or diminution. Worldly love is momentary and fickle. Divine love is unchanging and eternal. God is the embodiment of love. His infinite love is offered to all in equal measure. Some may feel that they had experienced God's love for a time and had been deprived of it later. This reflects only their own feelings and not the attitude of the Lord.

Nature is like a clean mirror which reflects your feelings and attitudes. It is your own actions and thoughts, whether 'good or bad, which are reflected back to you. The Lord's love remains the same always.

Pleasure and sorrow are not inherent in the nature of man. They are products of the mind. Bliss is the true nature of man. But it can be realised only when the love of God is experienced. The sense of "my-ness" has to be totally eradicated. You must strive for the welfare of all. This is Bharat's message from times of yore. Fill your hearts with this sacred feeling. Banish from your minds all thoughts of hatred and envy.

Transform mind to attain the Lord

Once, to remove the doubts entertained by Dharmaja (eldest of the Pandavas), Krishna explained why He allowed the souls of the vile-minded Sisupala and Danthavakra to merge in Him after he had killed them. Krishna said: "Dharmaja! Your doubts are from your delusion. Praise or blame, good

or bad, relate to the body and not to the Atma. Because of identification with the body one experiences troubles. As the body-consciousness grows, the Atma-consciousness declines. Only the mind is responsible for hatred and attachment, for joy and grief. If the mind is transformed, anyone (regardless of his past) can attain me." It is the inevitable destiny of everything ultimately to go back to the source from which it came. The body, arising from matter, goes back to matter. The Atma (Spirit) issuing the Divine, goes back to the Divine. The Spirit is pure Consciousness. It ever remains as Consciousness. It is embodiment of Love and Light.

Embodiments of Love! Do not make any distinctions between one person and another on the basis of caste or colour. All are children of one God. Do the trees make any distinction between one or another seeking their shade? Man behaves worse than trees today. Everyone should realise that the Divine is equally present in all. The Sai name is proclaimed by trees when they wave their heads. The birds in their chirping call upon men to remember Sai's name. The flowers in spreading their fragrance declare the glory of Sai. The bees when they hum announce the bliss in Sai's name. "Sai!" is the sound that reverberates from the sky and earth. Sai can be experienced everywhere. "Sai" is not one's name. "Sai" is the Indweller reclining in the heart of everyone. Today is Vyasapurnima day. Vyasa was a great rishi. He is described as an incarnation of Lord Narayana. He set down in writing the Vedas which previously were known only in the form of sound. He was the great-grandson of Arundhati (the wife of Vasishta). He codified the Vedas. As he was born on the full moon day in the month of Ashada, this day is celebrated as Vyasapurnima. Vyasa glorified the Divinity that is equally present in all human beings and propagated this truth to the world. After writing the 18 puranas, he summed up their message in one line: "Paropakarah punyaya; papaya parapeedanam". (Helping others is meritorious; harming others is sinful). "Help ever; hurt never.

God is the Supreme Guru

Vyasa was the great teacher who gave many profound and sacred truths to man-kind. Hence his birthday is celebrated as Gurupurnima (the Full moon

day dedicated to the preceptor). Guru is one who dispels the darkness of ignorance. Those who teach mundane subjects can only be called teachers or scholars, but they cannot be called gurus. Even those who profess to impart Upadesa (spiritual messages) cannot be regarded as gurus. God is the Supreme Guru - the Guru of gurus.

To offer fruits, dakshina and other things to a teacher on Gurupurnima day is not the right way of worshipping the guru. Those who accept such gifts are worldly preceptors. Real gurus are to be worshipped by pradakshina, by revering them with heart and soul. The only true guru is God. He manifests Himself in Nature, which serves as the Cosmic teacher. Nature is the best teacher. Recognise the Divinity that is manifested in the cosmos. All things in Nature observe their laws with undeviating regularity. The sun, the moon, the seasons observe their respective laws. Man alone violates the laws of his being. Animals obey their instincts and have their seasons for regulating their lives. Man is the exception. He needs to be taught the rules of right living. He has to cultivate morality and integrity. There is only one way by which this can be done. It is by pursuing the spiritual path. Without: spirituality man cannot discover the Light within him.

It is sin to ignore one's duties

The most important thing to be noted today is that the body has been given to man for the performance of right action. Every person has to discharge his duties in life. It is a sin to ignore one's duties.

When everyone performs his duties, the nation will prosper. Perform your duties, without regard to what others say or do. Engage yourselves in service activity. Consider social service as service to God. To earn the love of God, this is the easiest way. The best way to love God is to love all and serve all. Your entire life will be sanctified thereby. A large number of people are coming to Prashanthi Nilayam regularly. No one should remain idle here. Each one should render whatever service he or she can. This is not a place for mere eating and sleeping. Those who are not active in service have no place here. From this Gurupurnima, you have to dedicate yourselves to service.

There is so much to be done by way of service to the people. It is through service life can be made meaningful. The nation is in the doldrums today because men who have not learnt how to serve are in the seats of power. Only through service can one qualify oneself for leadership.

The spirit of service eradicates egoism

One should not feel proud about the position one occupies. The strength derived from wealth or position is undependable. Morality and purity alone can confer real strength. To develop these qualities, one has to take up selfless service. The spirit of service eradicates egoism and selfishness. In the process, not only is your life sublimated, but the nation also gains through the example of a dedicated servant of the public. Remember that you must live up to whatever you say. You must practise what advice you give to others. This is what I am doing. Hence I have the right to advise others. I call upon devotees to show love towards all. I love all. I am always engaged in work from morning to night. You cannot know how blissful I am always. Happiness is My form. I am always happy. I do not worry about anything because I have no desires. That is the reason for My happiness. As your desires increase, your happiness diminishes. Embodiments of Divine Love! Realising that the Atma in everyone is the same, extend your love to all. It does not matter if you do not practise any sadhana. Your love to others will raise you to the highest level of spirituality. Bear no ill-will towards anyone. When you harm anyone, realise you are doing harm to God. When you develop this kind of universal love, it will be the basis for unity.

In whatever you do, remember the name of God. It is a panacea for all human ills. Do not waste time, because Time is Divine. With faith in God, consecrate your life.

Be simple and sincere. It is sheer waste of money to burden the pictures and idols in the shrines and altars of your homes with the weight of garlands and to parade costly utensils and vessels and offerings to show off your

devotion. This is deception; it demeans Divinity, imputing to it the desire for pomp and publicity. I ask only for purity of heart to shower Grace.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

24. Religions and morals

Date: 23 July 1989 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

DEAR STUDENTS! The truth proclaimed by all religions is one and the same. The ultimate goal of all religions is the same. The primary object of religion is to cure man of his follies and make him a real human being. Equally, religion aims at promoting righteous conduct by transforming the mental attitude of man. Religion is concerned with developing in man faith in the Spirit, besides his preoccupation with the needs of the body. For all religions the foundation is morality. If morality declines, humanness will decline together with the eclipse of religion. Morality is the basis of right conduct. Whether it is the State, the society or the individual, the basis for all of them is morality. When morality goes, all the three will be undermined. All prosperity and happiness are based on moral strength. It is to make man realise the value of the ethical life that religions came into being. Religion aims at: promoting the harmony of body, intellect and mind through righteous conduct. Right conduct in its totality represents morality. It is otherwise known as Dharma (Righteousness). Dharma also means that which is priyam (pleasing). It also refers to what is real value in life. When one leads a life governed by moral values, he achieves the most precious things including name, fame and prosperity. Material objects have their value, but Dharma is invaluable. No price can be set on it.

Dharma and human values

Dharma is otherwise known as neethi (morality). Morality is equated with selfless love. Religions were instituted to foster the well-being of society through the promotion of love. The ancient sages laid down certain rules and precepts in accordance with the times, the place and the circumstances of the country. These were intended to foster human values and were based on the scriptures and the Vedas. No one can determine the precise date, place or authorship of these regulations. The sages believed that these disciplines were conducive to the promotion of the highest human qualities and were divinely ordained to help mankind. With the efflux of time and because of the

predilections of different sages, these rules got divided into sakhas and upasakhas (branches and sub-branches), with the names of the respective sages attached to them. The names of sages like Vasishta, Gauthama, Parasara, Viswamitra are associated with these sakhas (branches). They were all designed to promote social well-being. No one can fix the date or the name of the founder of the religion of the Bharatiyas. The fountain source of all the sects is the Veda.

The origin of post-Vedic religions

Apart from the Vedic religion, some other religions came into existence 2000-2500 years ago. The founders of these religions took note of the prevailing social conditions and sought to promote unity among the various sections through their teachings. There was basically no conflict between these different faiths. Unfortunately, the differences among the individual followers of these faiths resulted in the growth of narrow loyalties and credal conflicts. In each religion there were some virus elements which promoted hatred of other faiths. In truth, there is no conflict between one religion and another. The religion of the Bharatiyas is the most ancient in origin. Having regard to its Vedic basis, it has been described as Hinduism. The essence of this faith is its universality as expressed in the saying: "Lokas samasthas sukhino bhavanthu" (May all the peoples everywhere be happy). The Bharatiya faith laid stress on the happiness of everyone.

The objective of Islam, the religion of the Muslims, is also the same. In Persian, "Islam" means "surrender" or "peace". The inner meaning of this term is that man should surrender to God and live in peace with his fellow men. The holy book of Islam, the Quran, contains many sacred precepts. "Salath" is one such precept. It enjoins one to worship God with steady faith. Another precept is "Zakath", which enjoins the believer to practise charity for relieving fellow-beings in need or in distress. In the scriptures of the Bharatiyas, a similar duty has been laid down in the saying: "Paropakarah punyaya papaya parapeedanam" (It is meritorious to help others and it is sinful to cause harm to others). It is by practising such precepts that people professing different faiths lived in harmony. Truth, peace, love, forbearance

and compassion were regarded as the five life-breaths of their religion by the Bharatiyas.

Religious differences should never arise

Even the Quran declared that in discussing matters of religion and the teachings of different religions, acrimony should not be imported into the debate and the differences should be considered without bitterness. This is affirmed by every religion. But the followers of each faith, forgetting this fundamental truth, raised barriers based on credal differences which were really verbal and not fundamental.

Today various kinds of differences are arising among religions. This is not a good thing. Everyone should base his life on the divinely ordained morals and verities and endeavour to foster them. Morality should serve as the beacon light for everyone. Without that light human life will be plunged in darkness. The ancient sages made known to the world that by their earnest quest for God, they had been able to experience the Divine. "We have seen that sacred effulgent Purusha (Lord) in our hearts." "We have seen Him beyond the tamas (darkness) of ignorance," they declared. But the purpose of human life is not merely to secure a vision of the Divine or to experience the bliss of that vision. Those who love sugar, must seek to become sugar itself. "Brahmavid Brahmaiva Bhavathi" (The knower of Brahman becomes Brahman Itself). Religion aims at bringing about such a transformation. Making him a man to begin with, it seeks to transform him to Madhava (Divinity itself). Religion, which has such a sublime purpose, is being degraded to serve petty ends.

Why Hinduism stands out as a religion

The Veda is dualistic. We have in India the followers of Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhvacharya, representing three schools of philosophy. These sects are the products of individuals, but Hindu religion itself is not the creation of any individual. The basic Hindu faith is not for Indians alone but is for all mankind. The word "Hindu" is composed of the two syllables "Him," meaning Himsa (violence) and "Du" meaning, "distant." Hinduism is the faith that makes

violence distant. That is the reason why Hinduism alone stands out as a religion that strives for the well-being of all peoples, in all countries, at all times. Hence the appellation, "Sanathana," meaning ancient or timeless. No one knows when it was revealed and who was its founder. Other religions have their chronology. The Hindu religion knows no growth or decline. It belongs to all countries. It is acceptable to all people.

Though people may call themselves Muslims, Christians, Hindus and the like, there should be no differences between them. Students should be completely free from sectarian differences. They should respect all religions because what you cherish in your religion is found in other religions also. If you adhere to your own religion, you need not worry yourself about other religions. In all religions, people have faith in certain beliefs. But they do not make any efforts, by enquiry or otherwise, to experience what they believe. Students!-Don't entertain religious differences. The God that is worshipped in all religions is one and the same. With that conviction, respect all religions. Realise that the essence of all religions is one. Don't enter into futile controversies or criticise other religions. It is fraught with danger. When you attack another religion, you are really guilty of assailing your own religion. Therefore, show your reverence to everyone. "Whatever deity you adore, the worship reaches the One Supreme Lord."

It is only by the cultivation of detachment, by denying the senses the thrills they thirst for, it is only by diving deeper into the depths of one's being, by believing that you have some depths that will reward exploration, that one can capture the exhilaration of that tranquillity. This is the highest morality, for when this is done, man is saturated with love and has no trace any more of malice or hate or greed or lust. The vision is purified by the ideal of the unity of all in One and the proliferation of One as all.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba



25. Krishna's Prema Tathwa

Date: 24 August 1989 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Krishna Jayanthi

EMBODIMENTS of Divine Love! Love is God. Everything is filled with love. This love can be experienced only through love. There is no other way than love to realise the One Who is the embodiment of love. This (Divine) Love is not something which grows in one moment and falls off in another.

This Love dwells in man as Atma (the Spirit). The body has been described as the temple of God. In this temple Love is enshrined as Atma. Such sacred and pure Love can dwell only in a pure heart.

Fear and anxiety get entrenched in a heart devoid of love. A heart filled with love of the Divine will enjoy peace and be totally free from fear. True love is not a momentary feeling. In the eternal Spirit of man love shines as pure and eternally effulgent flame. In this context, it would be more appropriate to describe God as Love itself rather than as an embodiment of love.

Pure, unsullied Atma and the fickle mind

Recognising the Divine as Love, spiritual aspirants have been worshipping it as the Supreme Spirit. Because love is Divine the body is considered a temple. It is also regarded as a mansion. "Nirdosho nirmalo nathah: sadosho chanchalo vadhuh" (The master or husband is immaculate and pure; the wife is fickle and prone to go astray). A husband who is pure and a wife who is fickle are residing in this body. When a pure husband and a fickle wife live together, how can there be peace in such a home? To ensure peace and happiness in such a home, either the husband has to follow the wife or the wife has to follow the husband. When these alternatives are examined it will be seen that it is not proper for a pure and immaculate husband to follow the dictates of a fickle and wayward wife. The natural course is for such a wife to follow the ways of the husband. In this instance, who is the husband and who is the wife? It is the Atma, pure, unsullied and steadfast, that is the husband. The mind is the fickle, wavering and wayward wife. The effort to make the

mind follow the pure, unsullied Atma is Bhakti (devotion.) Many names are attributed to this devotion. The Bhagavatha equates devotion with service to the Lord. "Bhaja Sevayam"(Adore Service as worship). "Hrishikesa sevanam Bhaktiruchyathe" (Service to Hrishikesa, the Lord of the senses, is termed Bhakti). In other words, devotion means directing the mind towards God. Leading a life with the vision of the Divine in view is Bhakti. Leading a life with the body-consciousness is moha (delusion). Hence, the lovers of Vishnu, the worshippers of the Lord, are devotees; the lovers and adorers of the world and worldly objects are mere humans.

How to experience God

The gopikas were worshippers of Krishna. They always yearned for Him and were devotees in the highest sense. Those who hanker after worldly things are ordinary jivis (beings). For jivis to get divinised they have to develop the spiritual vision. The gopikas sanctified and redeemed their lives by constant contemplation of Krishna. It may be asked in what form the Lord appears to man and how is man to experience God. God has the following six attributes or characteristics: Aiswarya (Divine sovereignty); Dharma (the source of all Righteousness); Yasas (fame); Sampada (wealth); Jnana (wisdom) and Vairagya (non-attachment). He has another name called Vishatkara (One who has six forms of wealth). He is also known as Vibhuh (One with matchless splendour). He is the Master of the past, the present and the future. For this reason He is called Bhavah. He is the One that abides in all the three aspects of Time. Another meaning for the word Bhavah is that of creator of the universe. He illumines all the stars, suns and planets in the universe and hence is called Bhavah. He is the prime cause of the process of creation, growth and dissolution. What is the proof for the existence of such an omnipresent God? A simple illustration will suffice. If you seek to know where God is, the answer is that He is present wherever you have air and water. Both air and water have come from the Atma. Air and water are essential for life. They represent the spiritual principle of the Atma. Thus, while there is clear evidence of the omnipresence of the Divine, man is not able to recognise this. God is subtler than the subtlest atom and rarer than the rarest. He dwells in the human body in the form of Atma. This Atma,

however, is present in every being. The Upanishad declares: "Pervading everything, everywhere, inside and outside, the Lord Narayana is omnipresent."

Understand the promptings of the heart

Man has two important organs: the head and the heart. The head is ever engaged in seeking external objects. It desires only transient and mundane objects and the things and beings of the phenomenal world. Its chief characteristic is Pravriti (preoccupation with the external). All thoughts arise out of contact with the external. Qualities like truth, love, kindness, forbearance and compassion, which are signs of inner vision, emanate from the heart. Man becomes pure only when he concentrates on the heart. Hence the Vedanta has enjoined cultivation of the Antardrishti (inner vision). The first is the Pravriti marga (path of the external), the second is the Nivriti marga (path of the internal). One who is absorbed in the Pravriti marga cannot understand the Nivriti marga. One who regards enjoyment of worldly objects and transient sensory pleasures as the summum bonum of life and continually strives for securing them cannot understand the promptings of the heart and cannot experience its ecstasies. Although the heart is inside the body, the body is unable to grasp the unique significance of the heart. Can the tree know the sweetness of the juice of the fruit which it bears? Can the creeper know the fragrance of the flowers that bloom on it? Can the sweetness of a poem be experienced by the book in which it is printed? Can a scholar preoccupied with knowledge of the external be aware of the joy arising from the experience of the internal?

Heart is like a fruit in the tree of body

The juice is in the fruit of the tree, but the tree cannot taste its sweetness. Our body is like a tree. In it the heart is like a fruit. The love flowing in the heart is the juice. The physical body can have no understanding of the sweetness of the love that fills the heart. Nor can it experience or share the joy of that love. It is because of this that man is a prey to sorrows, disappointments and despair.

As long as one is unable to understand the principle of love, one can never be free from fear and anxiety. The moment love awakens, fear flees. For instance, a railway passenger, who has a ticket, even while travelling by second class, is free from fear. But a ticketless traveller, even if he has got into a first class compartment, is haunted by fear of being caught and punished. Likewise, if a person has the ticket of divine love in his heart, he has no fear of anything in the world.

Life is one long journey. In this journey if you have the pure selfless love of God within you, you can go anywhere free from fear and worry of any kind. Today every man is harried by some kind of fear or other. Fear follows him in whatever he undertakes, because he lacks the love of God. If you have the love of God, you can accomplish anything. However great one may be as a scholar, whatever riches and comforts he may command, if he has no faith in the Self he will be haunted by fear. Self-confidence is the prime requisite. Without it you cannot succeed in any enterprise; you cannot enjoy anything. By filling the mind with all kinds of desires, you become subject to worry. Wherever you turn you see only worshippers of Mammon ("siri" or wealth) and not devotees of God (Hari). In whatever one says or does, self-interest is predominant. How can enduring bliss be derived from this?

Love of the Divine is the first requirement in the march towards the realisation of one's humanness. You must have one-pointedness and strength of mind. The mind must be unwavering and the heart must be pure and unpolluted. You must fill your life with unselfish deeds.

Uddhava and the gopikas

Once, Uddhava went to Gokulam with a message from Krishna to the gopikas. Uddhava told them: "I have brought for you a remedy for the pain you are suffering as a result of separation from Krishna. You must take this medicine. Through this yoga you will be relieved of the roga (the ailment) from which you are suffering." The gopikas replied: "Oh, Great One! We do not suffer from any malady. Hence we don't need any yoga. It is enough if we know the yoga by which we can back Krishna." Uddhava asked: "What is this yoga?" A

gopika replied: "The ordeal we enjoy on account; of thyaga (renunciation) is itself a kind of yoga." Uddhava observed: "How can there be anything common between renunciation and enjoyment? The renunciant does not seek enjoyment. The one who enjoys is not concerned about renunciation. As the two are irreconcilable, how can you regard the enjoyment of separation as form of yoga?" The gopika said: "You simpleton! Is this all you have learnt from your nearness to Krishna? When a person gives up egoism in his doings and attachment to the enjoyment of their fruits, then Thyaga (sacrifice), Yoga (spiritual austerity) and Bhoga (enjoyment) become one. First get rid of the conceit that I am the doer. Then free yourself from the desire to enjoy the fruits of your actions. When you have no attachment to the fruits of your actions and have no sense of ego in what you do, then there is no difference between Yoga and Bhoga."

Only firm faith in God secures His blessing

In the world, you have rains and rivers, which enable crops to grow. The sun and the moon illumine the sky. For whom does all this happen? All this is not for the sake of any single individual. It is for the benefit of all mankind. Everyone is entitled to benefit from these phenomena. All beings in the natural state are entitled to enjoy the benefits provided by Nature. But only a few can acquire the competence to experience the Divine. Only those who have firm faith in God can secure this blessing. Uddhava asked the gopikas, "If you are not prepared even to listen to Krishna's message, what sort of devotion do you have towards Krishna? What is the form of your devotion?" The gopikas gave the essence of yoga in the following words: "Uddhava! We have only one mind. That mind is no longer with us. It has gone to Mathura along with Krishna. As we have no mind of our own and have become totally mindless, how can we receive your message? If we had ten different minds like you, we could listen to your message, think about Krishna, attend to the commands of our mothers-in-law and husbands and do other things." The essence of all the sastras can be declared in one sentence: "We have to believe firmly that the same Divinity dwells in all beings." The mind is the cause of all worries. Even the yearning for God is through the mind. Man is pursued by worries from birth to death, all through his life. There is only one

means by which all worries can be banished and that is Prema (love).

God transcends Kala, Desa and Vasthu

In this love there is no room for any kind of difference. The Divine presence is recognisable in everything. Divinity is omnipresent. God transcends the categories of kala (time), desa (space) and vasthu (matter). No one can say God is present in one country and not in another. It is not possible to declare that He is present in one thing and not in another. This means that God cannot be assigned to any particular place, time or object. The term "Bhagavan" means One who pervades everything. That being so, can any particular place be assigned to Him? He is immanent everywhere. It can be firmly asserted that God is everywhere. Again with regard to time, it cannot be said that God was present at one time and did not exist: at another time. How can one, who has no beginning, middle or end and who is present in all the three categories of time, be limited by time? Because of His omnipresence and all-pervasiveness, God is described as "Sarvatmaka" (the Spirit present in all things). Every term that is used to describe God is pregnant with significance.

God is not a vyakti swaropa (specific definable entity). He is the Indwelling Spirit in all. The Atma Principle that permeates the universe is One only. That Atma principle assumes a form from time to time for the sake of redeeming the world and establishing righteousness. The gopikas experienced the presence of Krishna in everything. What joy can be had when God's omnipresence is experienced can be known only to those who have had the experience. Many have treated the gopikas as deluded simpletons carried away by their own fancies. This is a grievous mistake. Their hearts were pure and filled with selfless love. Mundane love believes only in receiving and not in giving. God's love revels in giving and not receiving. This is the difference between worldly love and Divine love. The gopikas were able to experience the Divine by pure selfless love. For them there was no difference between Krishna's words, Krishna's music and Krishna's form.

Body is a temple when filled with thoughts of God

The body has been described as a temple. But when does it become a temple? Only when it is filled with thoughts of God. When there is no thought of God, it becomes a mere bhavanam (dwelling place) and in due course becomes a vanam (jungle). There is no need to go elsewhere in quest of a temple. When the name of the Lord dances on your tongue, your body itself becomes a temple. Once you regard your body as a temple you will have to keep it pure and unpolluted to be worthy of God's residence. This is precisely how the gopikas considered themselves. They were totally indifferent to gold and other worldly goods. For them God was everything. They were totally immersed in Krishna Consciousness and were oblivious to everything else. They were aware that Krishna was the omnipresent Divine. But still they were devoted to the particular form of Krishna. This is true of other devotees of God. Mirabai adored the Lord as "Giridhara Gopala." Sakkubai worshipped the Lord as "Ranga! Panduranga!" and was devoted to that particular name and form. Other than "Gopala" Yasoda was not interested in any other appellation of Krishna. That name alone was sweet and dear to her.

The gopikas, though they knew that Krishna was the omnipresent Lord, adored Him only in the form of the flute-playing Krishna. The gopikas alone fully understood the Krishna Principle because of their intense and unqualified faith in His divinity.

Krishna Tathwa as understood by Gopikas

What sort of personality is Krishna? Although He moved amongst all kinds of persons, sported and played with all, He was not attached to anyone. He was ever content, ever blissful. He transcended all qualities. He was free from egoism. He was a sovereign without a crown. Though he conquered many kingdoms, He did not rule over any of them. He enjoyed witnessing others rule over the kingdoms. He was totally free from all desires. Whatever He sought was for the sake of others. In this way He revealed His divinity. Like the rays emanating from the sun and the trees growing out of the earth, love sprouts from the heart. The nature of Divinity can be properly understood only when the Love Principle arising from the heart is rightly understood.

Making selfless love as the basis and treating the phenomenal world as the superstructure, you have to lead a life of purity which unifies both love and the world. Love is the impelling cause and the world is the instrument. Love is related to the Divine. The world is associated with Nature.

Divine is eternal in the changing world

Take, for example, this silver tumbler. Silver is the basic material. The silversmith was instrumental in making the tumbler from the silver. The creator of the silver was none other than God. The person who made the tumbler is a human being. What is a tumbler now, can be remade into a cup or plate or something else. Whatever the change in the form, the silver remains as silver. That is the basic factor. From this it should be understood that the Divine is unchanging while the phenomenal world would be subject to change. In this changing world, there is the Divine that is eternal and unchanging. The universe is the combination of both. The need for an unchanging basis for a changing world will be clear from the example of a car going on a road. The road is firm and steady and because of that the car is able to move on it. It would be hazardous if the car had to travel on an unsteady and unstable road. This relationship between the changeless Divine and the ever-changing phenomenal world is not properly understood. Very few, in fact, care to seek the truth. If the true nature of Divinity is grasped, one will not be affected by all the vicissitudes in the phenomenal world. He will have no fear regarding the ups and downs of life. It has been well said that one who knows how to swim need have no fear of the depth of the water in which he is plunged. Likewise, if you have earned the love of God, you need have no fear regarding the difficulties you may have to face in the world. It was the privilege of the gopikas to have earned such love. You are celebrating the birthdays of Rama and Krishna as festive occasions. What is the use of celebrating such festivals? You should put into practice the teachings of those whom you worship as God. All the worship you offer is of no use if you do not practise the teachings of the Lord in daily life. At best, they can only be regarded as pious actions.

The different aspects of Krishna

Among: all the Avatars, the Avatar of Krishna is the most attractive incarnation. The very word "Krishna" means one who attracts - "Karshatiti Krishna" (Krishna is one who attracts). "Krishyatiti Krishna" (Krishna is one who cultivates) is another derivation for the name. In the case of the Avatar, this means that Krishna is the Lord who cultivates the heart of the devotee by removing the weeds, sowing the seed of good qualities and growing the crop of love. "Kushyatiti Krishna" (Krishna is one who gives delight). Krishna thus means the one who cultivates our hearts and raises in them the crop of bliss. The difference between the Kauravas and the Pandavas was this: the Kauravas had no faith in the Divine and turned away from Krishna. They believed only in worldly pleasures. The Pandavas had implicit and unwavering faith in Krishna and did not care for anything else. In the conflict between the Kauravas and the Pandavas, the Kauravas were utterly destroyed, while the Pandavas were victorious. The Mahabharata reveals the difference between the Kauravas and the Pandavas in their attitude to Krishna and what reliance on Krishna as the Divine means for believers.

The Pandavas placed God first, the world next, and "I" (themselves) last. The Kauravas placed "I" (self-interest) first, the world next and God last. Whoever places God first and foremost is bound to be successful in life. This was the lesson which Sanjaya gave to Dhritarashtra at the end of the Bhagavad Gita.

Prema Tathwa - message of life of Krishna

Faith in God is the guarantee of victory. Thyagaraja said: "Oh Rama, if I have the benefit of your anugraha (grace) all the navagrahas (the nine planets) will be subject to me." Hence, if we acquire God's love we can achieve anything in life. Love is the one all-pervading element. Everyone has to strive to make that love the basis of his life. The supreme message of the life of Krishna is the uniqueness of the Prema tathwa (Love Principle). This message is all that the world needs. Krishna is the embodiment of Love. This love can be understood only through love. This love is strong, brilliant and unbreakable like diamond. It is extremely precious. If you want to secure such divine love, your love (for God) must be equally strong. You can cut diamond only with

diamond. If there is any defect in your love, it should be removed only through love. Love begets love. Hatred can only beget hatred, not love. Jealousy begets jealousy. Anger breeds anger. Therefore, if you want to foster love, you have to get rid of hatred, jealousy and anger. To attain Krishna, the very embodiment of love, love is the only way.

The Gita says, you must be without hatred to all beings - "adweshta sarva bhoothanam"; but, that is not enough. A wall has no hatred towards any being! But is that the ideal? No, you must positively Love all beings, actively Love, actively engage yourself in acts of Love. That alone wins the Grace you crave for.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

26. Disciplines of the spirit

Date: 03 September 1989 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Ganesh Chaturthi

WHATEVER one's scholarship, position or affluence, all of them will be of no use if one has not acquired the capacity to face the vicissitudes of life with fortitude and equanimity. The perennial message of the hoary culture of Bharat should be adapted to the needs of the present as part of the educational process. Students tend to go astray because they have not properly imbibed human values during their academic career. The significance of human values can be grasped only if the concepts of Yama and Niyama are properly understood. Yama includes the following practices' Ahimsa (non-violence); Sathya (truth); Astheyam (nonstealing); Brahmacharya (continence and studentship) and Aparigraha (not receiving anything from others).

Ahimsa

This means avoiding causing harm to anyone by thought, word or deed. Out of selfishness and self-interest, men do not practise this estimable virtue. All evils arise from the sense of "I" and "mine." This trait can be eliminated only by developing purity in thought, word and deed.

Sathya

Truth relates not only to what is factually correct, but what is true for all time. Moreover, truthful speech must be both pleasing and beneficial to the person concerned. It should not excite passion or promote ill-will. You should not indulge in falsehood to please others.

Astheyam

In any circumstance and under any kind of compulsion one should not steal another's property.

Brahmacharya

In everyday life, this may not be easy to observe. Brahmacharya calls for the complete eschewing of all bad actions and living constantly in Brahman (the contemplation of the Absolute). In practical life, this means dedicating all thoughts, all speech and all actions to the Divine. Doing everything as an offering to Brahman is Brahmacharya. Study of the Vedas, Upanishads and other scriptures also constitutes Brahmacharya. Brahmacharya is the foundation for the other stages in life: Grihstha (householder), Vanaprastha (recluse) and Sanyasa (renunciant).

Aparigraha

The Upanishads have regarded Parigraha (acquiring things from others) as sinful. Whatever help we may render to others, we should do it with no expectation of any return. The scriptures declare that it is natural for human beings to reap the fruits of their actions. One is entitled to receive benefits from one's father, mother, teacher and God, but not from others. As God is the creator, sustainer and protector, you can claim anything from God. From your parents you can receive what they are in a position to give according to their capacity. But you should not seek more than that from them. From the preceptor you must receive only knowledge. From the preceptor, who teaches you what promotes your well-being, you have to seek ways of satisfying him and not any other benefits. Students today lack these qualities. The result is they become indebted to others in various ways. No one can tell what sort of births they will have to take to discharge these debts in future lives. Limits should be observed even in accepting the hospitality of friends. It is wrong to overstay even in the houses of friends, who themselves might be dependent on their parents. Hence, the cultivation of restraint in accepting offerings from others is essential. You should be ready to offer a fruit, flower, water or other simple thing to a guest, but you should be wary in accepting anything from others.

Disciplines covered by Niyama

The second set of disciplines is covered by the term Niyama. It consists of five practices: Soucham (purity); Tapas (austerity); Santhosham (contentment); Swadhyayam (study of scriptures); Easwara Pranidhanam (offering to the Lord).

Soucham

This is of two kinds-external and internal. External purity is achieved by the use of water and cleaning agents. But apart from bodily cleanliness, in daily life we have to ensure purity of the clothes we wear, the food we consume, the places where we live, the books we read, and the like. All organs of the body have to be kept completely pure. This is essential not only for maintaining perfect health, but also to enjoy a state of bliss. The environment around you should also be kept pure.

As regards internal purity, it should be noted that the mind is polluted by bad thoughts and bad desires, by attachments and aversions. You must strive to fill the mind with good and sacred thoughts. Qualities like love, kindness, compassion, forbearance and sympathy have to be developed to get rid of negative and bad thoughts.

Tapas

Tapas does not mean merely meditating in certain postures. Real penance consists in striving for the realisation of one's higher aims by maintaining purity in thought, word and deed and pursuing the aims with one-pointed concentration. "Sathatham yoginah" (Always be established in Yoga), it is said. You must yearn for the realisation of the Formless Absolute. That yearning turns into penance in due course. Merely going to a forest and living on roots and leaves does not constitute penance. To get rid of evil thoughts and passions and to fill the mind with sacred feelings is real penance.

Santhosham

Man can experience joy and happiness only when he has contentment. As

desires grow, discontent grows and worries multiply. You must learn to be content with your condition. He who has got much satisfaction is the richest man.

Swadhyayam

This does not mean merely study of the Vedas. All the basic triple scriptures - the Upanishads, the Brahma Sutras and the Bhagavad Gita-should also be studied. One must be acquainted with all sacred literature. Thereby one gets rid of impurities in the mind.

Easwara Pranidhanam

All actions that we do should be pleasing to the Lord. In whatever action we perform, the question must be asked, "Will this please the Lord or not?" God means in effect your conscience. You should not do anything which does not give you self-satisfaction. Whatever you do that pleases God will be holy. When Yama and Niyama are practised in this manner, you will be simultaneously pursuing the four Purusharthas (goals in life) Dharma (Righteousness), Artha (earning wealth, etc.) Kama (right desires) and Moksha (liberation) and observing the spiritual disciplines of sama and dama.

Sama

Sama means control of the senses, the mind and the intellect and ensuring that they do not go astray. It is only when the internal sense organs are controlled that the external organs like eyes, ears, etc., can be controlled with ease.

Dama

Dama refers to the control of the jnanendriyas (organs of perception) and the karmendriyas (organs of action). The spiritual transformation of man calls for the control of the sense organs.

Vighneswara

Vighneswara is the deity presiding over the intelligence and he endows devotees with purity of intellect and the power of discrimination between right and wrong and between the permanent and the transient. Mundane pleasures are momentary and fleeting. Your aim must be to seek that spiritual bliss which is enduring and unchanging and which transcends the pleasures of the earth and heaven. Keeping this ultimate aim in view, one should do one's duties in this world and lead a life of righteousness.

27. The Ganesha Principle

Date: 04 September 1989 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Students Hostel

THE world has many exemplary leaders, but none like Vinayaka. He is also called Vigneshwara, because he is regarded as the presiding deity for obstacles. Even as Yama is the presiding deity for births and deaths, the grace of Ganapathi removes all obstacles. Ganapathi means the Lord of Ganas. He is the Lord of Sound and has the form of Om (Pranava). What is the esoteric meaning of Ganesha's elephant head? The elephant is noted for its acute intelligence. Ganesha's elephant head symbolises sharpness of intellect and the highest power of discrimination.

Because of the purity of his intellect, Vinayaka is also called the giver of Buddhi (intellect). He responds to the prayers of devotees and hence he is known as Siddhi Vinayaka (the Vinayaka who grants what is sought).

Once Vyasa embarked upon writing the Mahabharata. Because of immensity of the task of writing down millions of verses, Vyasa sought the help of Brihaspati, the preceptor of the Devas, for a suitable scribe. Brihaspati told Vyasa that none but Vinayaka could carry out the work. Vyasa appealed to Vinayaka for aid. Vyasa stipulated that everything that was written should be understood by the scribe. Ganesha, in his turn, laid down a condition that Vyasa should not pause in dictating the verses so that the stylus with which he would be inscribing the verses on the palm leaves should have no rest. Vinayaka could write down the entire Mahabharata because he was the embodiment of all knowledge. Vyasa could accomplish his prodigious task with Ganesha's aid.

Significance of placing Vinayaka in forefront

The mouse is Ganesha's vehicle. The mouse is a clever and lively creature. As a symbol it means that we should be clever and diligent in our actions. There is special significance in placing Vigneshwara in the forefront before embarking on any undertaking. In a forest, when an elephant moves through

the jungle, it clears the way for others to follow. Likewise, by invoking Ganesha, the path is cleared for our undertakings. The elephant's foot is so large that when it moves it can stamp out the footprints of any other animal. Here, again, the symbolic meaning is that all obstacles in the way will be removed when Ganesha is accorded the place of honour. The journey of life is made smoother and happier by the grace of Ganesha.

On Vinayaka Chaturthi day, students place books in front of the Ganesha idol and offer worship. They pray to the deity to illumine their minds. Hence Ganesha is known as "Buddhi Pradayaka", one who grants intelligence. No one should regard Ganesha as uncouth because of his elephant head and his immense belly. Vinayaka is a deity who encompasses the universe within himself. He is a deity of infinite potency. Vigneshwara is described as one wearing a white cloth. His body is ash-grey. He is depicted as having four arms and a cheerful countenance. The white cloth signifies purity of mind and heart. By worshipping Him, you must endeavour to achieve similar purity. Vinayaka always appears serene and calm. By his grace, the devotee must seek to achieve similar equanimity, whatever may be the ups and downs in life.

Between the hill of individual life and the region of the Universal, there is the flooded river of Nature, with all its confusions and complexities. It is difficult to discover where it comes from, how it accumulates all that uproar and where it ultimately ends. But fortunately, we have in every human community, bridge-builders, who help people to cross.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

28. Experience oneness with the Divine

Date: 12 September 1989 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Onam

EMBODIMENTS of Divine Love! Devotion means seeking unity with the Divine through purity in thought, word and deed and concentrating on the oneness of the Godhead. Devotion aims at acquiring friendship with God through this triple purity. Devotion is of three kinds: Samanya Bhakti (Ordinary devotion); Ekantha Bhakthi (Devotion in Solitude) and Ananya Bhakti (Exclusive, one-pointed devotion). Samanya Bhakti has nine forms: Sravanam (listening to the glories of God); Kirthanam (Chanting the praise of God); Vishnu Smaranam (ever remembering the name of the Lord); Pada Sevanam (Worshipping the Lord's feet); Vandanam (Prostration); Archanam (Worshipping the figure of the Lord); Dasyam (Service); Sneham (friendship); Atmanivedanam (Self-surrender).

Of these nine forms of devotional worship Parikshit exemplifies the first one, Sravanam. Destined to live for only one week on account of a sage's curse, the emperor Parikshit attained salvation by listening to the glories of the Lord as related by Sage Suka.

The triple process that leads to God realisation

The devotee should not be content with merely listening. He should reflect on what he has heard and put into practice the teachings. These are called manana and nididhyasa. The triple process of listening, reflection and practising leads to God realisation. Narada is the supreme example to the world of one who realised the Divine by continuously singing the glories of God in all circumstances and at all times. Narada, who was born out of the mind of Brahma, demonstrated to the world the supreme spiritual efficacy of singing the Lord's glories.

Prahlada demonstrated the power of constant remembrance of the name of the Lord, whatever the ordeals one had to face. He chanted the names of Vishnu without fear or anguish when the demons thrust their javelins at him

at the bidding of Hiranyakasipu (Prahlada's father). Prahlada was an unflinching devotee of Vishnu, whom his father hated as an enemy. The Goddess Lakshmi is the supreme example of one who earned unique distinction by devoted service to the feet of the Lord. Though she was the Goddess of wealth and presided over all prosperity, she showed to the world that serving the Lord's feet was greater than all the treasures on earth. Today's devotees worship Siri (wealth) more than Hari (the Lord). They do not realise that by worshipping the Lord's feet, even wealth can be got. What foolishness is it to go after money, forgetting the lotus feet of the Lord, which are the fountain source of all prosperity! Worshipping the Lord by constant prostration was the form of devotion exemplified by Akrura, a devotee of Krishna. Namaskar (the act of worshipping the Lord with folded palms) signified the total offering of the body and the senses to the Divine as a mark of complete surrender to the Divine. It signifies the elimination of the ego and seeking merger in the Lord wholeheartedly.

Anga-Archanam for worshipping the Lord

Archanam was the method adopted by the emperor Prithu to worship the Lord. By offering sixteen kinds of service to the image of the Lord every day with deep devotion, he earned the grace of the Lord. In this form of worship, Prithu demonstrated the unique significance of Anga Archana, using every sense organ in worshipping the Lord. "Netra kamalam samarpayami" (I offer my lotus eyes to the Lord). "Srotra kamalam samarpayami" (I offer the lotus ears to the Lord). "Hridaya kamalam samarpayami" (I offer the lotus of my heart to the Lord). In this manner Prithu regarded every organ as the lotus to be offered to the Lord in worship. Today, unfortunately, when this type of worship is performed, there is no genuine feeling of dedication of the organs to the Lord. When the mantra "Netra kamalam samarpayami " is uttered, the real meaning is that the eyes are dedicated entirely to having visions of the Lord and nothing else. Likewise, when the devotee says, "Srotra pushpam samarpayami" he should realise that he is dedicating his ears solely to the Lord and will not listen to anything bad or evil. The ears should be used only for listening to stories about the Divine and spiritual teachings. This should be the feeling with which the offering is made. This was the spirit in which

emperor Prithu performed Anga Puja and attained God-realisation. He demonstrated thereby the efficacy of this form of worship.

Hanuman is the supreme example of a devotee who practised service as the form of worship to realise God. His great acts in the service of Rama show how he was completely free from ego and how deep was his devotion to Rama at all times. Arjuna exemplifies how devotion can be developed by cultivating the friendship of the Lord through complete faith and loyalty. Friendship implies also love. Arjuna's love was totally concentrated on Krishna. He acquired all powers by the grace of Krishna.

Emperor Bali's Atmanivedanam

Emperor Bali is the example of Atmanivedanam complete self-surrender in the devotion to the Lord. "I offer to you, Oh Lord! all my wealth and possessions, as well as my entire self. I take refuge in you, protect me, Oh Lord!" This was the sense of abnegation with which Bali offered himself to Lord Vamana. Bali welcomed Vamana with open arms and promised to him that he would offer the young Brahmin lad whatever he desired. He offered to wash the feet of Vamana and sanctify himself by sprinkling that water on his own head. Bali's preceptor, Sukracharya was an all-knowing counsellor. Aware that Vamana was an incarnation of Vishnu, he advised Bali to go back on his offer to Vamana. But Bali's magnanimity and greatness may be seen in the fact that he refused to accept his preceptor's advice. Bali said, "When the Lord Himself has come to me with out-stretched hands asking for a gift, what greater good fortune can I have than making the gift from my humble hands? I am prepared to give away everything regardless of what happens to me." The Vedas have declared that in observing Dharma and doing one's duty by the Divine, the opposing words of no one - father, mother, preceptor or anybody else should be heeded. Bharata, Prahlada, Meera and others are examples of those who went against the injunctions of mother, father, husband respectively in adhering to their devotion to the Lord. No one is entitled to be a barrier between the devotee and the Lord, whatever is his relationship with the devotee.

Kerala is the Land of three Avatars

Bali was a great devotee. He identified his well-being with the welfare of his subjects and was an exemplary ruler. He considered the people as limbs of his own body. The people also regarded him as the heart of the body of citizenry. In Bali's realm poverty and want were unknown. The country enjoyed prosperity through timely rains and good harvests. Even today Kerala is a land of luscious vegetation enjoying the bounties of nature. Because it was such a sacred region, it witnessed three Avatars of the Divine: the Varaha Avatar (in which Lord took the form of a boar to destroy Hiranyaksha), the Narasimha Avatar (for the protection of Prahlada) and the Vamana Avatar (for conferring immortal glory on Bali). It is significant that all the three avatars were concerned with redeeming members belonging to the same lineage: Hiranyaksha, Hiranyakasipu, Prahlada and Bali (Prahlada's grandson). Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakasipu were brothers who were originally the gatekeepers of Vishnu - Jaya and Vijaya. They were born as demons as a result of a curse by sages whom they had offended. They had been filled with pride because of their constant nearness to God and the service they were rendering. In their pride they slighted even the sages and consequently they had to take birth as demons. No room should be given to self-conceit which is an incurable disease. Because of their conceit even the great ones are made to be born as demons. This was the fate of ,Jaya and Vijaya, the guardians of the Lord's abode - Vaikunta.

The mystery of Lord's creation

Prahlada was the son of Hiranyakasipu. The father was the avowed enemy of Hari. The son was the steadfast devotee of Hari. Virochana was the son of Prahlada. To a great devotee like Prahlada, a wicked son like Virochana was born. Bali was the son of Virochana. Bali was a great devotee of the Lord. Such is the mystery of the Lord's creation, its inexplicable wonders. The stories of the Lord are filled with a myriad marvels, which are as indescribable as they are countless. A wicked man having a virtuous son and a virtuous person giving birth to a wicked son are phenomena which are not without reason, though the explanation may not be apparent. In the Divine plan

nothing happens without a proper reason. The universe cannot function for a moment without the impulse of the Divine. Sri Krishna declared in the Gita "Oh Arjuna! there is nothing in the world that I need. But nevertheless I am active." If the Lord is not active, the cosmos will perish. Not understanding this truth, the ignorant indulge in futile speculation and controversy.

Spiritual significance of Onam festival

The story of Bali is full of significance spiritually and otherwise. The mutual love and regard that prevailed between the ruler and the ruled made them a composite whole. Out of his love for the people Bali gave a promise to the people, after he had given away everything he had to Vamana, that: once a year he would appear amongst them to give them the joy of his presence. The Onam celebration marks the fulfilment of that promise. The people of Kerala believe that every year on Onam day, Bali appears in spirit and otherwise in their midst. It is not easy for people to understand the inner significance and sacredness of this celebration. It can be understood only by those who have full faith in the power of the omnipotent: Lord. Although the nine forms of devotion described above have been grouped under "Samanya Bhakti" (ordinary form of devotion), they are indeed not so. They embrace every aspect of devotion. They envisage all forms of the Divine. Every devotee who achieved God-realisation has pursued one or other of these forms of devotion. Ananya Bhakthi refers to that kind of devotion which is based on the conviction that there is nothing in the universe other than God and that everything in creation is a manifestation of God. God is immanent in the subtlest particle in the universe. The devotee sees God in everything, experiences God in every action. Nothing exists for him apart from the Divine. Wherever he goes, it is a pilgrimage. Every action is dedicated to the Divine. Such devotees have attained God-realisation by this type of one-pointed devotion. This form of devotion cannot be practised easily by all. It is easy to say that God is all-pervasive. But it: is not so easy to experience that truth. There are countless persons who profess to be devotees of Rama. But few can be found who have earned the love of Rama. The word "Rama" consists of the two letters "Ra" and "Ma." "Ra" means "Atma" and "Ma" means "jiva" (the individual soul). The Rama principle signifies the unity of the Atma and the

jiva (the Universal Spirit: and the individual spirit). The oneness of the Supreme Omni Self and the Jiva-Atma (individual Self) is indicated by the term "Rama." This inner truth is not understood by many. A true devotee is one who acts on the convictions he professes. This is what is implied in the concept of Trikarana suddhi (purity in thought, word and deed). The Ananya Bhaktha is one who continually acts on the basis of his belief that the Lord is omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent.

Seeing the Lord within is Ekantha Bhakti

Ekantha Bhakti is the form of devotion in which the devotee believes that the Lord, who pervades the external and the internal, is residing within him. He individualises the Divine that is immanent in everything. The distinction between the particular and the collective should be properly understood. One tree does not make a forest. There can be no forest without trees. This is the relationship between the vyakti (particular) and the samashti (collective). The same relationship may be seen between the vyakti (individual) and sama jam (society). The Divine in its universal cosmic form is Paramatma (the Omni-Self). The Ekantha Bhaktha individualises the Divine and worships him in a particular form. The Divine is present in myriad forms with myriad names.

There is nothing sweeter in the world than the Divine name. The Name and the Form go together. The inextricable connection between name and form has to be rightly understood. The name is a form of wealth. The form is an object to be purchased. Once you have money you can buy whatever you want. Likewise with wealth of the Lord's Name in your hands, you can obtain whatever you desire. Therefore every devotee has to acquire the wealth of the Name. This can be through bhajans and meditation on the Name of the Lord. In this context, devotees have to develop four types of spiritual discipline Maitri (friendliness), Karuna (compassion), Muditha (rejoicing) and Upeksha (freedom from attachment and aversion). These appear to be simple terms, but they embody all human values. Each quality has to be cultivated in a spirit of devotion and dedication to the Divine.

Onam at Prashanthi Nilayam

Today the Onam festival is celebrated in every part of Kerala. However, only the Onam that is celebrated in Prashanthi Nilayam is the true Onam festival. The reason is in Kerala the festival is celebrated and enjoyed in each home privately. You cannot witness there the coming together of all Keralites in such large numbers for the celebration. The kith and kin may come together to observe the festival. Here you have a prodigious gathering of Keralites for the celebration. This is uniquely fortunate occasion because so many have gathered to celebrate it: in one home and as one family as it were. This is the greatness of this occasion. This type of mass observance cannot be seen anywhere in Kerala. This is an occasion when the Divine Presence can be experienced and the sense of oneness with the Divine can be promoted. Cherish this celebration as a glorious event. Install in your hearts the Divine that is the Indweller in everyone. I bless you all with the assurance that you will make the Lord's name the means for sanctifying your lives and living righteously.

Sacrifice is the highest step. One who has the true spirit of sacrifice gives to others without any hesitation or reservation, smilingly and gladly, even his dearest and highest possession. Surrendering the fruit of action to the Lord is real sacrifice.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

29. Message of the Vedas

Date: 03 October 1989 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

EMBODIMENTS of Divine Love! The Vedas are the recordings of sages to whom the mantras were revealed. They proclaim the transcendental Truth which is not changed by time or place. They indicate the means to prosperity and security for the denizens of the three worlds. Veda is derived from the root "Vid", which means "to know". The Veda teaches how to achieve purity of heart, getting rid of impurities. The Vedas have been declared to be infinite and hence beyond the comprehension of common people. In the beginning there was only one Veda. To study it considerable time and effort were needed. Vyasa divided it into different parts to enable people to study as well as practise the teachings of the Veda. Out of the countless number of hymns, Vyasa gathered some Rks and compiled them in the Rg Veda, collected some yajus to form the Yajur Veda and some Samans to make up the Sama Veda.

The Rg Veda is mainly devoted to hymns in praise of various deities. The Yajur Veda consists of mantras for worshipping the deities. The mantras of the Yajur Veda are used in the performance of yagas and yajnas and in doing acts of charity. Each Veda has three sections' Brahmanas, Aranyakas and Upanishads.

The purpose of Vedic mantras

The Vedic mantras were utilised in yagas and yajnas (ritual sacrifices) for promoting the wellbeing of society and the world. They were intended to secure timely rains so that the crops may be good and there may be prosperity all round. The mantras which form part of the Karma Kanda (the path of rituals), were regarded as conducive to the promotion of general wellbeing and happiness.

The Yajur Veda is devoted entirely to the worship of the deities. It consists of two divisions - Krishna Yajur Veda and Sukla Yajur Veda - which are based on two traditional distinctions. Sukla Yajur Veda belongs to the Brahma

sampradaya (Brahmic tradition) and. the Krishna Yajur Veda to the Aditya sampradaya. Adherents of the Sukla Yajur Veda are largely confined to North India, while Krishna Yajur Veda has its adherents mainly in South India. The Vedas developed under nine heads: (1) Sruti; (2) Anuswara; (3) Trayee; (4) Amnayam; (5) Samamnayam; (6) Chandas; (7) Swadhyayam; (8) Gama; and (9) Agama. Sruti refers to the process of learning, the Vedas from a preceptor by practising the precise manner of chanting the mantras and thereby acquiring proficiency in the recitation of the Vedas. The sounds have to be reproduced exactly as taught by the preceptor by listening to him with intense earnestness. The Vedic mantras are thus learnt entirely by listening. Anuswara refers to the practice of repeating the mantras learnt from the preceptor, contemplating on them and preserving them in their purity by constant recitation. Trayee: Originally only three Vedas-Rg, Yajur and Sama Vedas - were considered Apourusheya, without a human origin (that is, emanating from the Divine). The Atharvana Veda comprises hymns taken from the Yajur Veda. Because of their Divine origin, the first three Vedas were called "Trayee" (the Triad). Amnaya refers to constant contemplation of the root syllable "Na." Acquiring knowledge of the Vedas by this practice has been described as Amnaya and Samamnaya . One meaning of Chandas is that it is knowledge which should be guarded in secret and propagated with care. The Vedas are also described as Chandas. The entire Sama Veda consists of Chandas.

Swadhyayam refers to the process by which the Vedas have come down from generation to generation, through father to son, in genealogical succession. Acquisition of Vedic knowledge was not through books. It was transmitted from preceptor to disciple over the years. It is because this knowledge was handed down directly from preceptor to pupil, it has been described as Swadhyaya.

Gama and Agama are the names given to the inhaling and exhaling of the Lord's breath which were the origin of the Vedas. All in all, the Vedas represent the emanations from the breath of the Lord.

The great sages who listened to these mantras as revelations from the Divine

found the key to them in eight basic letters. All the Vedic mantras with their musical rendering were remembered by reflecting on the eight letters: "A, Ka, Cha, Ta, Tha, Pa, Ya, Sa." The great seers fostered the Vedas by the use of these letters.

Neglect of Vedas is cause for spiritual decline

Each of the Vedas had several sakhas (branches) and upasakhas (sub-branches). Out of the 20 branches and 21 sub-branches of the Rg Veda, only three have survived today. Likewise out of 96 branches of Yajur Veda only two have survived the ravages of time. Sama Veda, which had 1000 branches, retains today only three branches. If so much of spiritual treasure is contained in the few branches of the Vedas that have survived, how much greater would have been the spiritual heritage of the Bharatiyas if the Vedas had survived in their entirety! It is because of the neglect of the Vedas that the spiritual and scientific knowledge of Bharatiyas experienced a steady decline. As a consequence they developed a narrow outlook. Broadness of vision suffered an eclipse. Today the numbers of those who have no love or respect for the Vedas are on the increase. Even among the Brahmins interest and concern for the Vedas have declined. Who are Brahmins? Brahman means the embodiment of mantra. Only those who constantly recited the mantras embodying the Brahman were called Brahmins. Today Brahmins have forgotten these mantras. Owing to the impact of modern education, the greed for money and the growth of narrow-minded interests, they have forgotten their inherent divinity. As a consequence, peace and security have become casualties. What is meant by Veda? One meaning is eruka (awareness). Another is thelivi (intelligence). A third meaning is viveka (discrimination). All those who wish to develop discrimination should be deeply interested in the Vedas. Today intelligence is being developed and used only for acquiring positions and possessions, for securing comforts and conveniences and not for developing good qualities and becoming good men engaged in Godly pursuits. All their intellectual abilities are being misused for trivial purposes.

The universal outlook of the Vedas

The Vedas have emphasised that man will be truly human only when he lives upto human values and practises the good life. Many who chant the Vedas these days have difficulty in understanding their purport. When they fully understand the meaning and chant the mantras, they will derive greater joy. Only then they will experience the full sacredness and potency of the Vedas.

The Vedas have a universal outlook, embracing all that is noble and sacred. They have taught the principle of samatwa (equality) in respect of everything. They have proclaimed the concept of oneness. They taught men to face joy and sorrow with equal serenity. Those who utter the mantras today do not grasp their inner meaning. Even if the full meaning of a single mantra is understood, it will be sufficient. Every day, the santhi mantra is recited: "Om Sahanavavathu; sahanau bhunaktu; sahaviryam karavavahai." What does this signify? "Let us move together in unison. Let us live in harmony in communion with each other." What a wide vision is present in this mantra! Even such broad-minded mantras have been interpreted in a narrow sense in later years. Hence you do not find today even a thousandth of the sense of equality and amity which prevailed in those times. It is because men's attitudes and feelings have declined below the human level that so many divisive forces have cropped up.

Significance of Yajnas

Thirty-three deities are mentioned in the Rg Veda. Of them, the Sun-God is the most: important deity. His power is felt all over the world. In this Yajna, the Sun is called Ritwik. His other names are: Hota and Brahma. It is the Sun God who carries to the deities concerned the offerings made in the yajna. Agni, the God of fire, is an image of the Sun. Agni has a form of his own. Agni has parents. This morning, before the yajna began, two priests churned two aranis (sticks) to produce fire for the yajna. The Fire-God is said to have consumed his parents immediately after his birth. The lower Arani is the mother and the stick on the top is father. The fire produced by churning them burns away the sticks. The flames arising from the fire are the tongues of the Fire- God. The rays coming from the fire are so many heads of the deity. The

Agni-Principle is immanent in every person. The inner significance of this is that every person is inherently divine. When the mantras are chanted and offerings are made in the fire to the Lord, the grace of the Lord is showered on the people in the form of peace and plenty. There is a saying: "As is the fire, so is the smoke." As is the smoke, so are the clouds. As are the clouds, so is the rain. As is the rain, so are the crops. As are the crops, so is the food. As is the food, so is the intellect. As the clouds these days are not formed by the smoke coming from yajnas, the food consumed by the people is not conducive to the growth of intelligence. When the smoke going up from the yajnakunda enters the clouds, you have sacred rain, which helps to purify the crops and sanctify the food that is consumed. As a result, the people are sanctified.

The Bliss derived from sacrifice

But today if people are filled with bad thoughts and evil intentions it is because these sacred yajnas and yagas are not performed. Many persons ask in a carping spirit "Of what use is the expending of so much ghee and other materials as offerings in the fire of the yajnas and yagas?" The purpose will be clear only to those in the know of the inner truth. A farmer tills his field and scatters over it a bag of paddy seeds. To the ignorant observer this may appear a waste of precious grain. But the farmer knows that in due course he will reap a harvest of hundred bags of paddy. Likewise the offering of ghee and other precious things in the yajna with mantras will result in countless benefits in good time. People may notice only what is being offered. But they have no idea of the benefits that will follow. It should be realised that only today's Thyaga (sacrifice) can lead to tomorrow's bhoga (enjoyment). When the sacrifice is made with a full heart, the returns will also be equally abundant.

Unfortunately, man today does not even dream of making any sacrifice. When a presence of sacrifice is made, it is only a concession to fashion. Very few have any idea of what real sacrifice is. As a consequence, the wealthy, in spite of their riches, have neither peace nor security. The affluent do not care even to give a little food to the destitute at their gate. But these misers drop

bagful of money in the hundi in a temple. These foolish persons fail to see the divinity in fellowhuman beings and make offerings to an inanimate object.

Do not bargain with the Lord

Does God, who is the source of all wealth, need your petty offerings? You must use your wealth for righteous purposes. Help the indigent and the needy. There is selfish motive even in making offerings to the deity. Something small is offered expectation of a big return from the deity. A man prays to the Lord: "Oh Lord! If I win ten lakhs of rupees in a lottery I shall offer ten thousand rupees to you." What kind of bargain is this? It is a pity that such silly ideas are rampant today.

The reason is the people have forgotten the secret of the Vedas. They offer a molehill and crave for a mountain. This is a complete caricature of devotion. It is such pseudo-devotees who are on the increase today. They are all the time seeking to enter into petty deals with the Divine. Every prayer, every sadhana is replete with selfishness and self-interest. Everyone seeks benefits, but is not prepared to make any sacrifice. What is the sacrifice that is to be made to God? First of all, your bad qualities. Acquire good qualities. Shed your narrow outlook. Cultivate a broad vision. Today the foremost need is to develop the spirit of sacrifice. You are not expected to give away all your wealth and possessions. What is required is a sense of compassion at the sight of a suffering being. When the heart melts, that itself becomes sacrifice. What we witness today is not the melting of hearts but their hardening. You will not carry your wealth with you when you leave the world. Even while life remains, render help to those who need as much as you can. The quintessence of the Vedas is the glorification of sacrifice as the supreme virtue. Of what avail is all your study or listening if there is no change in the way you live and you have not understood your true nature? The highest knowledge is understanding the value of sacrifice. It is a source of limitless joy. It leads to immortality.

The greatest means to realise the Divine

The lesson to be learnt from the performance of yajnas is that sacrifice is the

greatest means to realise the Divine. The essential meaning of the Veda is that to secure enduring bliss, the spirit of sacrifice has to be cultivated, the significance of yaga has to be understood and we must lead a Godly life.

The Vedas have been mainly concerned with the Pravritti Marga (the Path of Action). All the different branches of knowledge - physics, chemistry, botany, economics, music, etc. - are covered by the Vedas. These are concerned with the external world. Hence the Vedas have been considered dualistic. Only the Upanishads have taught the Nirvritti Marga (the Path of Knowledge) by going within oneself. This means that, of the four Purusharthas, the four main goals of man. Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha - the Vedas have been concerned with only the first three.

The Upanishads declared that the nature of the Supreme can be grasped only by the Path of Knowledge. Knowledge is of two kinds: Para Vidya and Apara Vidya (the Higher Knowledge and the Lower Knowledge). All that is learnt by the educational process today falls in the category of Apara Vidya (Lower Knowledge). Knowledge relating to Dharma, Artha and Kama also comes in this category. Only knowledge relating to Moksha (Liberation) constitutes Para Vidya (the Supreme Knowledge). We have to acquire that Para Vidya. That knowledge is found in Vedanta. The Upanishads come at the end of the Vedas. The essence of all the Vedas is to be found in them.

While Veda is dualistic, Vedanta is Advaita (non-dualistic). Non-dualism is the means to experience Ananda (Bliss). The ego ("I") principle is predominant in the Vedas. Vedanta has declared that the elimination of the ego ("I" and "Mine") alone can lead to Realisation. The "I" has to be rooted out. As long as you adhere to the "I", you are bound to the phenomenal world. You cannot attain the Higher Knowledge. You have, therefore, to understand the distinction between the Vedas and the Upanishads. It is only when you understand the essence of the Vedas as expounded in the Upanishads and put into practice the message of the Vedanta, you will realise the true meaning of Advaita (Nondualism).

30. Karma, Upasana and Jnana

Date: 04 October 1989 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

EMBODIMENTS of Divine Atma/Most people in the world do not understand the purpose of life. They do not even try to enquire why they are unable to understand the meaning of life. One in a million undertakes such an enquiry. This is the first step in the process of discovering the basic reality about life. The vast majority are content to regard eating, earning, acquiring property and rearing a family as the aims of life. This is not so. All this is merely the routine of ordinary living. Doubtless, this is necessary. But obsessed with the pursuit of external objects, men do not strive to explore the internal life of the Atma. Standing on the seashore, one can see only the waves on the surface and not the pearls lying deep below. Only the brave man who can dive deep into the ocean will be able to gather the pearls and not others. Likewise knowledge of the Atma - Atmajnana - can be got only by those who turn away from the exploration of the phenomenal world to probe internally for the truth of the Spirit. Spiritual knowledge is not easy to get.

Divine vibrations emanate from Mantras

Why is it that, in spite of the fact that over the years there were many who recited the Vedas and carried on Vedic practices, no commensurate results were achieved? It is because, though many were proficient in reciting the Vedic mantras, few of them understood their inner meaning properly, or their sacredness and potency. It may be that the sacredness of the Vedas is such that even mere uttering the mantras without understanding their full meaning or merely listening to them will have some sanctifying effect. The potency of the Divine vibrations emanating from the mantras is such that they confer unique blissful experience on the listeners. Among the eight Divine potencies attributed to Vedic mantras, sravanam (listening) is considered the foremost. Likewise, among the nine forms of devotion, sravanam (listening to the glories of God) has been accorded the first place. It is unfortunate that in Bharat there are many who do not choose even to listen to the Lord's glories. There are others who, even when they have opportunities to listen, run away

from them. Many others listen indifferently to the chanting of mantras and deny themselves the benefit of their sacred power. The human body is subject to afflictions from three sources: Vatha (the wind element in the body), Pitta (bile) and Sleshma (phlegm). Hundred and two types of ailments arise from vatha. Forty two kinds of diseases are caused by bile disorders. Phlegm disorders account for as many as 242 different kinds of ailments. Altogether the body is a sink for hundreds of ailments. In his attachment to the body and the fleeting pleasures derived from the senses, man is forgetting the lasting bliss that can be got from the Atma within him. Just as the body is subject to ills arising from vatha, pitta and sleshma, the mind also is liable to ailments from three sources: mala, vikshepa and avarana. It is because of these ailments that man is unable to develop his spiritual nature and acquire knowledge of the Atma. On account of ignorance of his spiritual nature, he regards his mundane existence as the only reality.

The three paths laid down by the Vedas

Mala is also known by the term Avidya, meaning ignorance. Ignorance can be removed by karmas (prescribed actions). Avarana can be removed by Upasana (worship). Vikshepa (delusion) is removed by developing the power of discrimination. Hence, to deal with the maladies of mala, avarana and vikshepa, you need karma, upasana and jnana. These three paths have been laid down by the Vedas. Through Karma (prescribed duties) purity of mind is achieved. Through Upasana (devotional worship) one-pointed concentration of mind is promoted. And through Jnana, moksha (liberation) is attained. The primary cause of sorrow for man is birth itself. Poorva Karma (past actions) is the cause of birth. Desire is the impelling cause for all actions. Desire is prompted by attachment, which proceeds from lack of understanding. Ego is the cause of this ignorance. When ignorance goes, the ego subsides. Absence of egoism leads to right understanding. The desires abate. With the decline of desires, actions get sanctified. Then life becomes meaningful. Thus ignorance is called avarana (that which covers or envelopes an object). Mala is a stage anterior to avarana. It is a state of the mind in which the body, made up of the five elements and the senses of perception and action, is regarded as the real self. Because of this mental condition, man has delusions regarding the

body which are false and unreal. What 'mala' means in Vedantic parlance can be understood from the use of the term in daily life. The passing of excreta and urine is described as 'malavisarjanam' (getting rid of filthy things from the body). 'Mala' means that which is impure. As a state of mind 'mala' refers to the condition in which one regards the impermanence, the false and the unsacred as permanent, true and holy.

Satkarmas purify the mind

The Vedas have shown the different means by which this mental state can be changed. They declare: "Perform Satkarmas" (good and righteous deeds). What are these righteous actions? They include Yagas and Yajnas and charitable undertakings. All actions done as an offering to God can be regarded as Satkarmas. Through such actions, the mind is purified. This means the elimination of the accumulated impurities in the mind resulting from impure thoughts and actions in the past. The purpose of the Karmakanda of the Vedas is to indicate the kind of actions and rituals that will serve to purify the mind. Avarana: Avarana means enveloping or covering something. The six vices - lust, anger, greed, pride, delusion and envy - have enveloped man. Attachment and aversion have gripped him. Because of this man has forgotten his real nature and filled himself with pride of all sorts. Losing his Vichakshana-jnana (power of discrimination) he indulges in all kinds of misbehaviour towards his betters. The Vedas prescribed Upasana (devotional worship) as a means of getting rid of these bad qualities. As a lighted joss stick removes by its fragrance the bad odour in a place, devotional repetition of the name of God drives away the impurities of the mind.

Essential qualities to develop devotion

Devotion means friendship with God. It means establishing close relations with God through love. Service to God is the essence of devotion. Hence sage Narada declared 'Hrishikesa Sevanam Bhakthiruchyathe' (Service to Hrishikesa is called devotion). When devotion is developed in this manner, Karuna (compassion) arises spontaneously. When compassion grows, man

experiences Divine bliss, free from ill-will or attachment towards anyone. The company of the good is essential for developing devotion. It serves to nourish the seed of love in the heart. Bhakti reaches its consummation in one-pointed concentration on the Divine. Satkarma (right action) results in purity of mind and devotion promotes concentration. The third stage is jnana (knowledge). There are different kinds of knowledge. One is worldly knowledge. Another is general knowledge. What is implied by the Vedic term Jnana is knowledge of Atma. It is not concerned with the physical, sensory or worldly knowledge. Atmajnana (knowledge of the Atma) can be got only by enquiring into the nature of the Atma and not by any other means. It cannot be taught by preceptors or learnt by studying texts. It cannot be received from any one or offered to any one. It has to emerge from the inner consciousness. Preceptors and texts can only help to some extent. But the aspirant who seeks Atma-Jnana has to embark on self-enquiry to experience this Self-awareness. He should explore and investigate the whole gamut of spiritual experience and arrive at the ultimate Reality. Just as a child learns to speak by watching the mother's words, the spiritual aspirant has to make the effort himself while listening to the preceptor or studying scriptural texts.

Who can be called a Jnani?

Jnana in Vedantic parlance has been defined as "Advaita Darsanam" (recognising the One without a second). That is to see the One in the many Unity in diversity. Here in this assembly are present many thousands of persons. Their names and forms are multifarious. But you have to recognise that the Atma Principle in all of them is one and the same. It is not enough to say this in words. You must make it a living experience. Only then can one experience enduring Ananda (bliss). Such a person alone can be called a Jnani (a Knower of the Supreme). To reach the stage of a Jnani the first steps are Karma and Upasana (righteous action and worship). Without following the paths of Karma and Upasana and succeeding in them one can never become a Jnani, just as a student cannot acquire a degree without passing the School Final and Intermediate examinations. To reach manhood one has to pass through childhood and boyhood. There can be no fruit unless there has been a bud and a green fruit. It is idle for any one to claim that he is a Jnani unless

he has gone through the prior disciplines. The mark of a Jnani is perennial joy. It is for this reason that the Veda has placed the Karma Kanda, the Upasana Kanda and Jnana Kanda in that order of succession. To realise the oneness of divinity these three paths of action, worship and knowledge have been laid down.

The first step to become a Jnani

The world today abounds in Vedantins who go about claiming that they are jnanis. Among myriad such claimants not one can be regarded as a real Jnani (a fully Self-realised person). To become a Jnani, the first step is to start with the Karma Marga (path of Action). The sacred duties laid down in this discipline have to be practised. All actions have to be performed as dedicatory offerings to God. Without doing the prescribed rites, merely declaring the actions one performs as offerings to God is futile. Set aside your likes and dislikes. Perform right actions with discrimination after due enquiry. If you are unable to ascertain what actions the Vedas prescribe, act according to the dictates of your conscience. Thereby your actions get sanctified. It is not necessary to study the scriptural texts. Any action done with a pure heart becomes holy. Mantra means that which is established in the manas (mind) by a process of trana (rumination). This applies only to what is godly. Man is the embodiment of Mantra, Tantra and Yantra. Man's form is the basis for these three. The body is a yantra (a machine or instrument). The process of So-ham (breathing in and out) is the mantra. The heart, which is the power house from which the body and the breathing process receive their energies, is the tantra. You may see from this what sacredness is embodied in man.

Attachments are fetters which bind man

Unfortunately on account of mala, avarana and vikshepa man is forgetting his inherent divinity. Supporting these three undesirable traits, there are three vasanas (predisposing tendencies). One is the Loka Vasana (tendencies associated with the world). The second one is Deha Vasana (tendencies associated with the body). Third is Sastra Vasana (tendencies arising out of scriptural scholarship).

Loka Vasana (attachment to the world) prompts one to achieve name and fame, seek power over others and aspire for honours and distinctions. As a result, one develops a narrow egoistic outlook and fails to realise the impermanence and transient nature of all worldly pleasures and possessions.

Deha Vasana (attachment to the body) impels one to seek physical strength and health and an attractive physique. All the efforts to make up one's face will not serve to alter the natural features of persons. Only that which has been given by the Lord will be enduring. You must be content with that. While taking as much care of the body as is essential, you should not have excessive attachment to that which is inherently perishable and temporary. The body must be taken care of only for realising the Divinity within. The time spent on costumes and make-up is a sheer waste. It is no doubt necessary to maintain good health as long as one lives, but obsessive concern for the body is misconceived. Sastra Vasana (attachment to book-lore and scriptural scholarship) can be a source of sorrow even to a great scholar. He feels miserable when he forgets something or when he encounters someone with greater scholarship. The real meaning of "Sastra" is acting according to what has been laid down. Hence without acting according to the injunctions of the texts, verbal knowledge of the books has no value.

By the combination of mala, avarana and vikshepa with the three vasanas man has degraded himself further. What is the use of attachment to worldly goods when man knows that he came with nothing into the world and will leave it empty-handed? What is the destination of man? Attachments are fetters which bind man. He must get rid of them to discover the Divine.

The message of Vedas and Vedantas

The Vedas have taught the means to make life in the world pure and meaningful. They have declared: "Na karmanana prajaya dhanena, thyagenaike amrutatwamanasush" (not through rituals, progeny or wealth, but only through sacrifice can immortality be achieved). Apart from emphasising the importance of Thyaga (sacrifice), the Vedas have not gone further. They have indicated the means for experiencing many temporary

pleasures. For instance, to appease hunger you are enjoined to take food. The satisfaction derived from consuming food lasts for barely two hours. The Veda lays down what kind of food should be taken and in what manner. The Vedanta has shown how by a process of elimination - Neti (Not this) you arrive at what remains, namely, the Atma. When you find out that what you call the "I" is different from what you describe as your body, your mind etc., what remains is the "I" which is the Self. You have to strive to recognise the Atma Principle in you. This is the message of Vedanta. To begin with, engage yourselves in as many Satkarmas (good deeds) as possible. Render as much service as you can to others. Involve yourselves in social service. And have God's name on your lips. Whatever you do, do it with love and not as a mechanical routine. Don't render service with a sense of compulsion from others. Service should be done with spontaneous feeling from the heart. Not force but the Source (the Divine) should inspire you.

A Thyagi does not hesitate even to give up his body, regarding it as worthless straw. Sacrifice means something more than giving up of wealth, gold and material objects. Evil qualities like hatred, jealousy, wrath and malice which have become ingrained in man over many life-times should be discarded.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

31. The quest for God

Date: 05 October 1989 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

IN HIS life-long quest for happiness man forgets that he can secure enduring bliss only by pursuing the spiritual path. Towards the end of his life, when all other sources have failed, he turns towards God. Man cannot secure real happiness by relying on worldly objects. Only by turning towards the Spirit can he secure bliss. In the quest for bliss, the Vedas have pronounced a caveat. God is incomparable. He cannot be comprehended by logical proofs. All kinds of proofs are of no avail for recognising God. He is beyond the reach of mind and speech. There are three types of proofs for arriving at the truth. One is Pratyaksha Pramanam (direct perception). Today every man relies on this kind of proof. For everything he seeks evidence of direct perception or experience. He is not prepared to accept anything which is not amenable to the proof of direct perception. This is really a sign of ignorance. Direct perception is associated with many afflictions. For instance, when the eye is free from any disease it recognises the different colours in their true forms. This is the basis for the authority of direct perception. What happens when the eye is affected by jaundice? Everything appears yellowish. No other colour can be perceived. How, then, can one trust the evidence of his eyes? All evidence based on the perceptions of the sense organs is vitiated by this defect. When the sense organs themselves are subject to change, how can they be regarded as infallible indicators of absolute truth? Senses which are liable to change cannot be the means of arriving at the unchanging Reality.

Veda is revealed Truth

The second of type proof is based on anumanam (inference). You infer the presence of fire on a hill when you see smoke going up from it. But you cannot be sure whether it is smoke from a fire or a cloud of water vapour. Without seeing the fire, to infer its existence from smoke is likely to be wrong. Conclusions based on inference cannot bear the stamp of certainty. The third type of proof is Sabda Pramana (the authority of the spoken word). This type of proof relates to what a person, who has had a direct experience of

something, says about it. The authority of the Veda is based on this concept. Veda is revealed Truth. It; has to be accepted as such. Sabda Pramana (or proof based on spoken word) is of two kinds: Vaidika Pramana and Loukika Pramana. Loukika Pramana (mundane testimony) is not concerned with spiritual truth. It cannot explain God. Only Vaidika Pramana (Vedic Testimony) seeks to describe God. The Brahma Sutra declares: "Sastra yonitvath" (the Divine can be known only on the authority of the scriptures). What is the meaning of Sastra (scripture)? Sastra is that which conveys to the ear what is not audible otherwise. It brings back to the memory what has been forgotten.

The different kinds of Dharma

Such scriptural authority is the basis for Dharma (the principles of right conduct). Dharma is of many kinds. Jathi Dharma (the code of conduct for a species or race), Desa Dharma (national code), Kula Dharma (code of conduct for one's caste), Gana Dharma (the code for a gana or sect) and Apad Dharma (the code of conduct during dangers). All these five kinds of codes of righteous conduct emphasise compassion towards all living beings. Kindness has been regarded as the highest virtue. To please every being is to please God. One who is lacking in love for fellow beings will not secure God's love. Without love for God, one will not have fear of sin. In the absence of both of these, a man will have no sangha neethi (social morality). Neethi means right conduct. It implies right behaviour in harmony with the conditions of the particular time, place and society. You have to subordinate yourself to the mores of the community. You should not violate the norms of society. Hence the Veda enjoined observance of social disciplines.

32. From the animal to the Divine

Date: 06 October 1989 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

WHAT is the reason for the prevalence of animal qualities in man even after reaching the human level? It should be noted that it is after passing through many lives in other species of beings that one gets a human birth. Because of this fact, animal qualities appear in human beings. One person may be found leading an unsteady life, with his mind wavering all the time. He may make many efforts to achieve steadiness. But his fickleness and unsteadiness continue to grow. When you enquire into the reason for this, the answer is provided by the Veda. The man concerned had been a monkey in a previous birth and has inherited some of the simian qualities of fickleness and hopping from one thing to another from his past life. Similarly, when you find in some persons qualities such as lying, stealing, cowardice, or stupidity, they should be considered as hangovers from their previous animal lives. The means to get rid of such tendencies is to offer all one's actions to the Divine. The tendency to steal is present in many persons. Stealing is natural quality of the cat. Mental instability is a characteristic trait of the monkey. Stupidity is a trait of sheep. Obstinacy is a quality of the buffalo. These traits of the different animals are reflected in the actions of humans who have emerged from the respective animal state.

The external and internal Yajnas

There are two kinds of yajnas (ritual sacrifices) one relates to external observances; the other is internal. For the external yajnas you need a sacrificial site, purohiths, materials for making offerings and the like.

Offerings are made to the sacrificial fire to the accompaniment of Swaha (mantras). This form of yajna is an image of the internal yajna. Few people care to enquire into the nature of the inner yajna. The inner meaning of yajna is to recognise one's inherent divinity and offer all one's bad qualities as a sacrificial offering at the sacred site of one's mind. Yajnas have been prescribed for the purpose of enabling people to make a sacrifice of all their

bad thoughts and actions. Fickleness, hatred, stealing and foolish stubbornness are not natural traits for man. The presence of these traits in man must be attributed to the legacy from previous births. The sacrifice which everyone has to make is the giving up of all bad qualities in him. The Veda laid the greatest emphasis on action. Hence the Karma kanda (the section of Veda devoted to the performance of prescribed rites) of the Veda is its most important part. Dasaratha should not be regarded as merely the emperor of Ayodhya. Allegorically, the name symbolises the human body, endowed with the five sense organs and the five organs of action. Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrughna represent the four Vedas. Rama, who is the embodiment of Dharma, represents Yajur Veda. Lakshmana, who revels in reciting the name of Rama, represents the Rg Veda. Bharata, who rejoices in singing the name of Rama at all times, represents Sama Veda. Subduing the internal and external enemies and carrying out the commands of his three elder brothers, Satrughna symbolises Atharvana Veda.

"All of you are embodiments of Rama"

Rama and his brothers are said to belong to the Surya Vamsa (solar race). The sun exists as an objective physical phenomenon. The moon and the earth are there. The earth has come from the sun. The moon has come from the earth. Both the earth and the moon have come from the sun. They are fragments of the sun. When you enquire deeply, you will realise that without the sun the world cannot exist; there can be no birth or death. Nothing can exist without the sun. This was the reason why the ancients worshipped the sun as Divine. Elements of the sun are present in every human being. Everyone has originated from the rays of the sun. The light within each one is derived from the sun. As his light is present within us, we are a fragment of the sun. Each human being, because he is a product of the sun, can claim to belong to the solar race. When Rama is said to belong to the solar race, it should be realised that the Principle of Atma Rama (the Indwelling Rama) present in every human being entitles him to claim lineage from the sun. Therefore, all of you are embodiments of Rama. Each one of you carries the imprint of the sun within you. Realising this truth and bearing in mind the fact that each of you belongs to the solar race like Rama, you should try to

destroy your bad qualities and develop your virtues even as Rama destroyed the wicked and protected the good. This is the yajna (sacrifice) which every man has to do every moment of his life. Yajna does not mean merely performing a ritual sacrifice with priests and offering oblations in the fire. The evil tendencies in man are the result of differences based on physical distinctions. Once these differences are ignored, the divinity that is present in everyone will be recognised.

The unchanging Spirit in the transient body

It is not realised that the eternal, unchanging Spirit dwells in the transient, perishable human body. The Kshetrajna (Knower of the Field) dwells in the Field (the Kshetra or body). Without the Knower, the Field has no value. Today people attach value to the body and not to the Spirit within. It is like placing the cart before the horse. Likewise, man is carrying on life's journey placing the body in the forefront and giving a backseat to the Spirit. The result is he is missing his destination.

Hence, through the Vedas men have to understand the sacredness of the human birth. Veda is the embodiment of knowledge. It is the essence of all that has to be known. The Veda enjoins harmony in thought, word and deed. It is this triune unity that has to be offered to God. When the Gita mentions that God is satisfied even with the offering of a leaf, a flower, a fruit or water, what do these four signify? Leaf symbolises the body. The flower represents the heart. The fruit refers to the mind. And the water represents the tears of joy. Man is enjoined to offer these four to the Divine. You have today in the world men of wealth, of strength, of scholarship and virtue. But there are few who have realised the Self. Ignoring the Self, of what avail are all other possessions, which are temporary and passing?

Make faith your life-breath

Embodiments of Divine Love! What you consider as real is unreal. What you think is unreal is the only Reality. God alone is the one eternal Reality. Do not forget this wholesome truth. What you regard as real in the waking state does

not exist in the dream state. What you experience in the dream state has no reality in the waking state. If there can be such differences in two-states of consciousness in a single day, it ill-befits man to hug the ever-changing impermanent phenomenal existence, ignoring the eternal Reality. Experiments are being conducted even in respect of small matters in the field of science. What is the gain from these experiments in the physical sciences? You may get some degrees or jobs. You may earn money and enjoy some comforts. But should you be content with these as the summum bonum of life? What is the inner purpose of life? Each one should put this question to himself. This sort of enquiry is not made. One is interested in gathering news about every country in the world, but is not anxious to find out what is happening within himself. Of what use is knowledge about the world, when you are not aware of yourself?. That is why Vedanta called upon each one to discover the truth about himself. Self-knowledge is the key to all knowledge. For this, you must approach the proper person to teach you the means to discover your true Self. If you are not prepared to undertake this self-enquiry, cultivate faith, if not in God, at least in your own Self. The man who has no faith in himself can have no faith in anybody. He cannot have faith in God. Make viswasa (faith) your life breath. The man without faith is a living corpse. Therefore, worship Govinda (Bhaja Govindam). Nothing else will save you when the last moment comes. Remember always the Divine name. It is your saviour; all else binds you.

Do not shape your conduct with an eye on the opinion of others. Instead, follow bravely, gladly and steadily, the sweet and pleasant promptings of your own Satwic Manas, your own Awakened Conscience, your own Inner Self. Associate yourself with those who are richly endowed with Truth.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

33. Knower of the Brahman

Date: 07 October 1989 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Dasara

IN the Tretha Yuga , the Emperor Janaka performed a great *Yajna* (sacrificial rite) to make known to the world the value of yajnas, yagas, japa, and tapas, and arouse in men the consciousness of their divinity. He invited many sages, seers, yogis and scholars to attend the yajna. The yajna was performed successfully.

On the last day, Janaka organised a grand assemblage of sages and savants. He invited whoever was a *Brahmavetha* (Knower of Brahman) to come forward. Among the sages and scholars present several doubts cropped up. Yajnavalkya alone came forward without any doubt or hesitation.

Janaka had arranged for a thousand richly caparisoned cows to be presented to the Knower of Brahman. Yajnavalkya directed his disciples to lead all the cows to his ashram. At that stage, the high priest of the sacrifice, Aswala, got up and said: "Yajnavalkya! It is only after demonstrating that you are Knower of the Brahman will you be entitled to take the cows to your ashram."

Responding to this challenge, Yajnavalkya started putting a volley of questions to the assembled sages and scholars. None of them could give proper answers to his questions.

There is no greater power than Agni

When the assembly was plunged in silence, Aswala got up and asked Yajnavalkya: "What is the way to conquer death?"

Yajnavalkya replied: "*Vak* (Speech). Vak is *Agni* (the fire God). With the help of this fire, death can be conquered." He also said that this is *mukti* (liberation), *Athimukti* (supreme liberation).

Aswala asked him to explain his answer.

Yajnavalkya replied: "When a person is born, his mother's womb is a *Agni-Kunda* (fire-place). All his limbs are formed within the womb. This is the *Garbha-Agni* (Womb of Fire). When he dies, his body is cremated in the *Chitha-Agni* (funeral pyre) and is reduced to ashes. Fire is the cause of the body and fire is the destroyer of the body. There is no greater power in the world than Agni."

Many others present in the assembly put questions to Yajnavalkya to justify his claim to be a Knower of Brahman.

Uddalaka got up and asked him whether he could give the number of the planets. Today we call the planets by the names Rahu, Kethu, etc. In those days these names did not exist.

Yajnavalkya said there were the following eight planets: *Prana* (life-breath), *Vak* (speech), *Jihva* (the tongue), the eye, the ear, the hands, the mind, the skin. Uddalaka resumed his seat.

Yajnavalkya's intelligent answers

Another sage got up and put a series of questions: "Yajnavalkya! Can you say how many deities are there?"

Unhesitatingly, the sage answered: 3306.

The next question was: "Can you reduce the number to 33?"

Yajnavalkya said there were 8 Vasus, 11 Rudras, 12 Adityas, Indra and Prajapathi, making up in all 33.

Yajnavalkya was asked further whether he could bring down the number to six. The sage said: "Agni (the fire God), Vayu (the wind-God), Aditya (the Sun-God), Adityamandala (the solar system) and the trilokas (three worlds)."

Not content with this answer, the questioner asked the sage further, "Can you

reduce this number further to three?"

Yajnavalkya replied, "The three worlds are embodiments of the Trinity."

The three worlds are: *Devaloka* (the realm of the gods), *Manavaloka* (the world of human beings) and *Daithyaloka* (the world of Asuras and Demons). For Devaloka the deity is *Dama* (self-control). For the world of men, it is *Dharma* (Righteousness) and for the world of demons, it is *Daya* (compassion). These are the respective deities for the three worlds, he said.

The sage went on to ask whether the number could be reduced to two.

Yajnavalkya replied, *Prana* (the Life-Principle) and *Annam* (food).

He then put an intriguing question. "Can you reduce this to one and a half?"

All the scholars and sages present: wondered at such a question.

However, Yajnavalkya replied: "It is *Vayu* " (the wind-god).

The sage asked how Vayu, who is a single deity, and be regarded as one-and-a-half God?

Yajnavalkya said: Vayu is present in all substances and has got the name *Adhyardham*, which also means one-and-a-half.

He then asked, "Can you reduce it to one?"

Yajnavalkya replied, "That is *Prana* (the Life-Principle)."

The sage was satisfied with Yajnavalkya's answers and declared that he was a knower of the Brahman and was entitled to be an honoured member of Emperor Janaka's assembly of sages.

Basis of love is primarily self-motivation

Thereafter, Yajnavalkya addressed the assembly thus to give them an insight into spiritual truths: The mother loves the child; the child loves the mother. The wife loves the husband and the husband loves the wife. Some love wealth, others love possessions and some others love knowledge. For whose sake do they love them? Whom are they loving? The husband loves the wife not for her sake. The mother loves the child not for its sake. Each loves the other for his or her own sake and not for the sake of the other. All these expressions of love are associated with *atmanuragam* (self-love) and not associated with the body. One loves an object. Is he loving it for its sake? He is loving it for his sake. Likewise, if people love various objects in the world, it is not for the sake of the objects that they love them but for their own sake. Thus the love is primarily self-motivated.

What is this self? The self is a composite of *Vak* (speech), *Manas* (mind) and *Prana* (the life-principle).

Wherefrom has prana emerged? Wherefrom has the mind come? Yajnavalkya explained that out of the food consumed by man, the gross part comes out as excreta and the subtle part becomes mind. Out of the water consumed by man, the gross element comes out as urine and the subtle part becomes *prana* (life-force). *Vak* represents the *Tejas* (splendrous element in man). Speech, mind and the life-force together constitute the *Atma* (Self).

On hearing this, Gargi, who was a profound scholar and supremely virtuous lady, asked the question how the Atma, which is one, could be made up of three constituents.

Yajnavalkya replied that three colours are inherent in Agni (fire): White, red and black. They are not different: Fire appears reddish, assumes the form of whiteness, and when it subsides, it appears black. Black is the sign of night. Red is the sign of day. The sun is the one common factor in all the three. Likewise, the Atma, which is one and the same, assumes at different times different forms. Yajnavalkya affirmed that no one can determine the specific characteristics of Atma.

The four types of people in the world

Not satisfied with this answer, Gargi asked the sage how many types of people there were in the world.

Yajnavalkya replied that there were four types:

One, man-Divine;

two, man-human;

three, man-demon;

four, man-animal.

The world contained these four types of human beings. The Brahmajnas or Knowers of the Brahman, are the human-divine type.

"Sathya Dharma rathomarthyah".

The human-man type is the one who is wedded to Sathya and Dharma.

"Surapano daithya samanah"

Those who are addicted to drink belong to the man-demon category. The people lacking in wisdom belong to the animal-man category.

The Brahmajna is one who is ever immersed in the contemplation of the Supreme, is totally free from selfishness and is conscious of the presence of

the Divine in everyone. The human-man is one who adheres to Truth and Righteousness, respects human values, leads a sacred life, performs his duties, indulges in charitable acts and lives in harmony with his fellowbeings, causing no harm to others and bearing love towards all. Addicted to alcoholic drinks, forgetting his true nature, having no self-control, talking ill of others and causing harm to them, and always immersed in selfish pursuits - such persons belong to the human-demon category (demons in human form). The human-animal is the type of human being who is concerned only with eating, drinking and sleeping, who takes no interest in the affairs of the world, lacks the power of discrimination and is immersed in sensuous pleasures. In this manner, Yajnavalkya expounded to that assemblage the inner truths about the human birth and its divine potential.

The spirit of sacrifice yields peace

In essence, the yagas and yajnas of ancient times were performed to lead man to divinity and not for any inferior purposes. Unfortunately, by the efflux of time, these sacrifices lost their sacredness. Self-interest became the dominant motive in every action. The spirit of sacrifice is not to be seen. Those who perform yajnas today are making them a sort of business. This practice should go. Any sacred act should be performed in a selfless spirit. The man who has no spirit of sacrifice can have no peace. Do not give room for any kind of ostentation or show. Render service in a spirit of sacrifice. That itself is a great yajna. It is Karma Yajna. What is done internally is Brahma Yajna. Karma Yajna is a reflection of Brahma Yajna.

The Vedas, which are the embodiment of Brahman, have become unfortunately mere vangmayam (verbal expressions) today. People are not practising the Vedic life. There should be complete accord between thought, word and deed. That is the mark of a truly great soul. Divergence between thought, speech and action signifies that one is worse than a demon. Consider every action as a divine injunction. The Divine is totally free from self-interest. Every action of the Divine is for promoting the welfare of the world. When you conduct yourself on the basis of this truth, your life will be sanctified. Even a small act done with a pure and unselfish

heart will develop into a great yajna. Whatever the number of discourses you may listen to, you should not be content with mere listening and forget their import after going away. You must make an enquiry as to how far you have been transformed by attending these discourses. You must try to put into practice at least one or two of the teachings, get rid of worldly attachments gradually and make your journey towards the Divine. In due course divinity will blossom in your hearts. If, on the contrary, you go on expanding your worldly concerns and multiplying your desires, you will go down to the animal level.

You must be content with what you have. Even a loss of something must be considered a form of sacrifice. Rejoice in what you have, make good use of that and develop faith in God. The yajnas performed by rulers like Janaka were intended to promote general welfare and direct the people's minds towards God.

34. Yearn for God alone

Date: 09 October 1989 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Dasara

THE man who is filled with love has great peace of mind, is pure at heart and is unruffled by any adverse circumstances, failures or losses. This fortitude is derived from love of the Lord, which endows him with self-confidence. Self-confidence generates an immense internal power. Everyone has to develop this power. Everyone has to develop this self-confidence so that the Atma-Ananda (bliss of the Self) may be experienced. Love should be free from feelings of expectation of any return or reward. Love which arises out of a desire for something in return is not true love. Utterly selfless and motiveless love should be developed., This is the bounden duty of man. You should not pray to God seeking this favour or that. The reason is no one can know what immensely precious, Divine and magnificent treasures lie in the treasure-house of Divine Grace. No one can know what God intends or desires to give to a devotee. In such a situation by asking for trivial and petty things, man is demeaning his Divine estate. No one can understand what; valuable, sacred and Divine favour-God chooses to confer on a deserving devotee. Hence man should not seek from God, nor desire, nor pray for some petty trifles. More precious and desirable than anything else is God's love. If you wish to ask for anything from God pray to Him thus' "Oh Lord! Let me have you alone." Once you have secured the Lord, you can get anything you want. That was why Mira sang: "Oh heart, drink the nectar of Divine love." When you can have Divine love, to crave for anything else is like asking for coffee powder from the Kalpataru! (Wish-fulfilling Tree).

Avoid excessive praise of God

What you have to seek from God is God Himself and not any small and worthless benefits. Even while praying to God for His grace, you should not indulge in extravagant praise and flattery to win His approbation and seek His favours. "Oh Lord! You are the Ocean of Compassion! Your mercy is boundless! You are the refuge of the distressed and the protector of the abandoned!" Addressing the Lord in this manner palls on Him. Such praise for

securing favours has a commercial tinge. Even the favours got through such praise are not proper at all. It is because the rishis and the yogis in the past resorted to such praise that they had to perform penance for hundreds of years to get a vision of the Lord.

Consider God as friend

God has a partiality for the human form. "Daivam manusha rupena," it is said. (God has to be experienced in the human form). It is only when God is regarded as friend and a companion that He is pleased most. By addressing Him as: "Oh, my dearest friend! My beloved one! The darling of my heart," you can give Him the greatest joy. Instead of that, if He is described as one who is beyond praise by Brahma and other gods, who is not accessible to mind and speech, whose glories are beyond description, who prevailed over the God of Death, who was born as the son of Devaki and Vasudeva, who went to the rescue of Draupadi, who protected the Pandavas, and so on, and then He is entreated to confer His grace on you, there is an element of the ludicrous in the comparisons made. Such praise even savours of envy. When you say, "Oh Lord! You have talked to them and given them so much! Why don't you come to my help?" the comparison seems to stem from jealousy.

It is only when God is approached as a loving friend who has the power to come to our aid that our desires will be fulfilled. We use words of praise towards an unfamiliar person to show him respect and regard as a stranger. But we welcome an old friend with easy familiarity and intimacy.

Thyagaraja performed sadhana over many years to obtain a vision of the Lord. By that sadhana he established intimate relationship with Sri Rama. Because of this, he could greet Rama with friendly familiarity and welcome Him to his house as a companion in the song: "Rara ma intidaka" (Rama, come to our house!). Because of his intimacy, Thyagaraja could address Rama in the second person singular. In the context of the Navarathri celebrations, on this Purnahuti day, we must learn to recognise the Divine in this intimate manner. Reduce your desires. Don't pray for trifles. Don't go to a shrine with the intention to seek fulfilment of some petty desires. It is an

unfortunate sign of the Kali age that everyone goes to a temple or pilgrim centre only to get some trivial benefits. If you can win over the Lord Himself, what is it that: is beyond your reach? Thyagaraja declared: "Rama! If only I have your anugraha (grace) all grahas (planets) will be in my palm."

Pandavas' unwavering faith on Krishna

It is essential to please God and win His grace by regarding Him as a friend and not indulging in excessive praise. For this, supreme Love is the primary means. This love should be firm and unchanging, unaffected by trials and tribulations and the vicissitudes of life. The Pandavas are the supreme examples of such unwavering love (for Krishna). When Draupadi was being humiliated in Duryodhana's assembly hall, when Abhimanyu was attacked and slain by the Kauravas, when Aswathama massacred the Upapandavas (the infant children of the Pandavas), or when they performed the glorious Rajasuya sacrifice at the height of their power, or when they were in exile in the forest, without succumbing to the difficulties and troubles they were subjected to, they adhered firmly to the name of Krishna, with unwavering faith in Him. They relied only on Krishna's love. Difficulties and troubles are passing clouds which come and go. Do we remember all the kith and kin with whom we were related in our previous lives? While all these relationships have changed, only the relationship with God remains unchanged. We should attach ourselves to this unchanging love and not cling to other ever-changing relationships.

Yajna is the quest for discovering the One

Yajnas are designed to lead you to the One who is unchanging and eternal. Ya+Jna is Yajna. Ya refers to the one who is the basis of the entire Cosmos. Jna refers to the quest for knowing that one. Yajna, therefore, is the quest for discovering the One who sustains the Cosmos. How is this search to be made? The Veda has declared: "Permeating everything inside and outside is the Lord Narayana." Where can you search for the Lord who is omnipresent? Why search at all? The sages performed severe penances to get the ultimate Reality. Finally they declared: "Vedham etham Purusham mahantham

Adityavarnam tamasahparastat" (We have known the Supreme Purusha, who is effulgent like the sun and is beyond the outer darkness). They declared that the Supreme Lord is beyond Tamas. This means that the Lord is beyond the Tamoguna and to experience the Lord we have to get rid of our Tamo-guna (the darkness of ignorance). The Lord is beyond the veil of Tamas. When the veil is removed, the Lord can be seen. When one is filled with Tamo-guna from head to foot, how can one experience God? One is not prepared to make any sacrifice. With a mountain of desires in his heart, a devotee offers a petty coconut to the Lord! This is not the way to pray to the Lord. This is not devotion. This is not Love. To seek a favour is not prayer at all. Only a selfless person can engage himself in service to society. Only such a person is entitled to serve God. The first pre-requisite is the spirit: of sacrifice. This can be developed only through love. The person filled with love is ready to make any sacrifice. The person without love will not be willing to make any sacrifice. God does not dwell in any particular place. You are God. When you get rid of the bodyconsciousness, you will realise your divinity.

The experiences of the Physical world

In the waking state, you have various kinds of experiences relating to the phenomenal world. All the experiences are through 19 agencies - the five Karmendriyas (organs of action), the five Jnanedriyas (senses of perception), the Panchapranas (five life breaths) and the mind, the Buddhi (intellect), the Chitta (Will) and the Ahamkara (Ego). It is only when all these 19 are present that you can enjoy the experiences of the physical world in the waking state. The Atma principle that is conscious in the waking state is called Virataswaroopa - the Cosmic Form. The Cosmos is the form of the Virata Purusha. In this form the Divine is called Viswa. As the universe has emerged from Viswa, it is called Viswam. Another name for Viswa is viraja Swaroopa - one who confers joy and stands out as an ideal to the world and is the embodiment of Sat-Chit-Ananda (Being-Awareness-Bliss). When you go on to the sleeping state, you have dreams. Even in the dream state the 19 agencies are present, but in a subtle form. Wherefrom have the dreams arisen? They are created by the dreamer himself and he is also the experiencer. The Divine Principle in the dream state is called Thajasa (the Effulgent). He is called

Hiranyagarbha (The Golden-wombed One). This appellation means that he is the one who contains all within himself and projects them from himself. The third state is Sushupti (deep sleep state). What is it that is experienced in deep sleep? Forgetting himself, in an unconscious condition, he experiences bliss. In that state only Prajna (Constant Integrated Awareness) exists. "Prajnanam Brahma" declares the Upanishad. This state of awareness is equated with Brahman. The Divine Principle that one is aware in this state is called Prajna.

Experience the Divine present in everyone

The Viswa present in the waking state, the Taijasa present in the dream state, and the Prajna present in the deep sleep state, all three are one only. When the states of consciousness are dispensed with, we have only one experiencer present in all of them. That is the unity of the Divine indicated by the dictum: "Tat-Twam-Asi" (That Thou Art). Every person has this Divine Principle in him. There is no need to search for the Divine elsewhere. He is everywhere, omnipresent. Forgetting one's inherent divinity, man is searching for the Divine in the external world. Even in this search the primary requisite is pure, selfless love.

Chant the name of the Lord with that love. God loves the human form. That is the reason why avatars come in human form. You can experience the vision of God by following the path of karma (prescribed actions). The Lord has declared in the Gita: "You are qualified only to perform actions." A scriptural text says, "Only through the body can you pursue Dharma." All living beings are bound by karma in this world. The Divine is being worshipped as a decorated idol or image, with an artificial form. The Lord should be experienced in His natural form, in a natural way. All the ornamentation the devotee resorts to does not please God. It may please the heart of the devotees, but God's heart is not moved thereby. Only through love can God's heart be moved and softened. The devotee has that power. Without resorting to extravagant adulation of God, not seeking petty favours from God, yearn for God alone and you will get everything. Endeavour to make God your intimate friend. Discourse in the Poornachandra Auditorium on the Poornahuti

day of Veda Purusha Jnana

There is no happiness greater than that obtained from sacrifice. Only those who sacrifice are the children of immortality because they live for ever.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

35. The Divine and the Demon

Date: 28 October 1989 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Diwali

What is the reason for all the Violence in the world?
With the decline of selfless service irrational desires have grown.
The pursuit of mundane desires without fear of sin
Has led to a waning of the Love for God
Men have lost their humanness - As a consequence peace in the world has
been shattered.
"I am in the light; I am the light. The light is in me. The light is me."
The Wise One who realises this truth Becomes one with the Supreme.

EMBODIMENTS of Love!

God is the One who manifests Himself in the cosmos with a myriad heads, a myriad eyes and a myriad feet. When this eternal Divinity is so near us (by His omnipresence) we are searching for Him all over the universe. This is as foolish as the person who goes abegging to his neighbour for milk while the wish-fulfilling Kamadhenu is in his backyard. It is sheer senselessness on the part of man to search for God outside him when the Divine is within him.

No one can comprehend or describe the glory and mystery of Prakriti (Nature). Nature is a reflection of the sport of the Divine. It is animated by the three gunas, which are manifestations of the trinity (Brahma, Vishnu and Siva). God is nourishing and promoting Nature by using the three gunas in multifarious combinations and forms. The purpose of life is to experience the sacredness of nature as a projection of the Divine.

Realise the value of Time

Time is supremely precious. It waits for no one. Everyone has to submit

himself to Time. It is not subject to any one. It is only when Time is utilised properly through right actions that the human can rise to the level of the Divine. Man's foremost duty is to make the right use of Time through the bodily vesture given to him. Man is bound by actions in this phenomenal world. While the Divine is all-pervasive, man is failing to recognise it. He is unable to see the light that is within him. The Reality which you are seeking everywhere in the outside world is within you. The Supreme Lord is present inside and outside, everywhere in the cosmos. Man today looks only at the outside world like any animal. To look inward is the mark of the true human being. Obsessed with the external and losing the internal vision, man has forfeited his power of discrimination.

Significance of Dipavali festival

When we enquire into the significance of the Dipavali festival which we are celebrating today, we find that traditionally it is a joyous festival to celebrate the destruction of the demon Narakasura by Sri Krishna. It is only when we first understand the meaning of the Krishna Principle will we be able to understand the significance of the Naraka principle. Krishna is the embodiment of the Five Elements - ether, air, fire, water and earth. He is also the embodiment of five life breaths - Prana, Apana, Samana, Udana and Vyana.

"Kleem-Krishnaya-Govindaya-Gopijanavallabhaya-Swah."

This mantra contains the essence of the Bhagavatha.

The five names represent the Five Pranas (vital airs). Kleem refers to the earth. Krishnaya refers to water. Govindaya refers to Agni (the Fire-God). Gopijanavallabhaya refers to Vayu (Air). Swah refers to ether. When we recognise that the Divine is immanent in the five elements, we will realise that there is no place in the cosmos where these five are not present. The human body is composed of the five elements. These elements, because they

constitute the body, can affect only the body but cannot affect the Atma in any way. In commenting on the Krishna story in the Bhagavatha, many writers have indulged in all kinds of misinterpretations. One such misinterpretation relates to Krishna's wives.

Misinterpretation of Bhagavatham

In the human body, there are what are called Shadchakras - six spiritual centres. Of these, the two most important are: the Hridayachakra (the Heart Centre) and the Sahasrara (the thousand petalled centre). The Hridayachakra is also known as the Hridayakamala (Lotus of the Heart) and the Sahasrara is called the Thousand-Petalled Lotus. The lotus of the heart has eight petals. These eight petals symbolise the eight worlds, the eight directions, the eight guardians of the world, the eight bhutas (spirits) and the eight parts of the earth. Because Krishna was the lord of these eight petals, He was described as the husband of eight queens. The master is called Pathi and those under him are described as wives. This is a symbolic relationship and not a husbandwife relationship in the worldly sense. It is because the esoteric significance of these relationships was not properly understood, the Bhagavatham came in for misinterpretation. It is also stated that Krishna was wedded to 16,000 gopikas. Who are these gopikas? They are not cowherdesses in physical form. In the human head there is a lotus with a thousand petals. The Lord is described as the embodiment of the 16 kalas. As the Lord of the Sahasrara (thousand-petalled lotus), He presides over the 16,000 kalas which are present in this lotus. The Kundalini Sakti, which starts at the bottom of the spinal column (Mooladhara), rises and merges with the 16,000 entities in the Sahasrara. This is the esoteric significance and the meaning of the role of the Divine within the body. Oblivious to this inner meaning, people indulge in misinterpretations and perverse expositions. Krishna's encounter with the demon Naraka has to be understood against this background. "Naraka" means one who is opposed to the Atma. Naraka does not mean a demon. It is the name of the satellite which revolved round the earth. When people were filled with apprehension about the threat to the earth from this satellite, when it seemed to be approaching the earth, Krishna removed their fear by destroying the satellite.

Dipavali commemorates Krishna's victory

Dangers from the planets are apprehended from time to time. For instance, some years ago, people expected great danger to the world from the combination of the "Ashtagraha" (eight planets). Five thousand years ago people dreaded the approach of a planet near to the earth. To allay their fears, Krishna came to their rescue and averted the impending danger. The celebration of Dipavali as the day of deliverance from Narakasura commemorates Krishna's victory. The day is observed as an occasion when the Divine leads mankind from darkness to light. The legendary version of the Narakasura episode describes the demon as master of Pragyothishapura. The symbolic meaning of Pragyothishapura is that it is a place which has forgotten the Atma. The inner meaning of this is that demonic forces dwell in any place where the Atma is forgotten. All the chaos and evil in the world today are due to the fact that men have forgotten the Atma (the Supreme Spirit). Every man is conscious of the body and of the individual soul, but is not conscious of the Paramatma (Divinity) within him.

From sheath of food to sheath of Bliss

Man is encased in five kosas (sheaths): Annamaya, Pranamaya, Manomaya, Vijnanamaya and Anandamaya kosas. The physical body is the Annamaya kosa (the sheath based on food). Man takes good care of the body. Man also takes care of the Pranamaya kosa as he cannot exist without the life-breath. Without the Manomaya kosa (the mental sheath), man cannot accomplish any of his desires. Man today has progressed upto the stage of caring for the first three sheaths. Upto this stage his vision is turned towards the external. The Vijnanamaya kosa calls for internal vision. It leads to the understanding of the Anandamaya kosa (the sheath of Supreme Bliss). Starting from the sheath of food man should progress towards the sheath of Bliss and not get stuck up midway in the mental sheath. This is the reason for man getting filled with demonic qualities, which can only lead him to Naraka (hell). The demonic qualities (symbolised by Narakasura) have to be destroyed to avoid being thrust into Naraka (hell). By taking refuge in Krishna, the destroyer of

Narakasura, man can get rid of the demonic qualities in him. On Dipavali day, we light numerous lamps with one candle. The light with which other lamps are lit is a symbol of the Divine. The other lamps are Jivana jyothis (individual lamps). They derive their light from the One Supreme Light. It is to teach this truth to men that the Festival of Lights is observed.

Thus every festival has an inner meaning and purpose. Forgetting this, the holy days are observed only as occasions for feasts and fun. Holy days in Bharat are all full of spiritual significance. Forgetting this, people are lost in meaningless observances. According to the legend, Krishna killed Narakasura with the help of Sathyabhama. What does this signify? Each of us has to fight and destroy the demonic forces within each by resorting to Sathya (Truth).

"Sathyameva Jayathe" declares the Upanishad (Truth alone triumphs).

"Speak the Truth" is a Vedic injunction. Once the Goddess of the Earth went to Vishnu and lamented that she can bear any kind of burden but not the burden of carrying those indulging in falsehood. One must be prepared to make any kind of sacrifice for upholding Truth. That is the lesson taught by Harischandra, who sacrificed his kingdom, wife and son, for the sake of the pledged word. He stands out as the supreme upholder of Truth. Everyone should endeavour to adhere to Truth. Truth is God. With faith in God and adherence to Truth, all demonic forces can be vanquished.

Your beliefs and actions must be expressions of Faith. They must have holiness as their core. They must be so full of Love and compassion that they attract on you the Grace of God.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba



36. Students, parents and the Nation

Date: 22 November 1989 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Convocation - 8

DEAR students, teachers and lovers of education! Bharatiyas were wedded to Truth and Righteousness. Justice was their sheet-anchor. Students should safeguard today not the nation but Truth and Righteousness. Only students who are broad-minded and have a wide outlook can uphold Truth and Righteousness. The world is based on Truth and Right Conduct. These two sustain the world. If they are protected, the world will be happy and prosperous. Victory will come in the wake of Truth and Righteousness. No other form of strength, including armed might, will ensure victory. Hence, students should consider themselves the guardians of Truth and Righteousness and equip themselves for this role.

Education is the formal expression of Truth, which is the basis of social harmony. The divine qualities of man can be seen in education as in a mirror. Today's educational system makes the student hard-hearted. He lacks the feelings of kindness and sympathy. Tolerance and compassion are totally absent. Those who should seek to serve the poor and the needy are wrapped up in their own selfish pursuits. Selfishness and self-centredness should be rooted out. Service to society should be regarded as the primary purpose of education.

Decline of moral values

Bharatiya culture is a sublime one. It is incomparably great. But the advance of modern technology has shaken the traditional institutions like a powerful cyclone. It is true that materially, scientifically and economically, great progress has been made. But morally, spiritually and socially man has fallen a great deal. Moral values have been shattered. In trying to make life more comfortable with the help of machines, men have become slaves of the machine. It is, therefore, incumbent on students to see that science and technology are used on right lines for the good of mankind. Unfortunately, even those who profess to be leaders of society and who claim to be

interested in promoting the well-being of the people, are not acting along right lines to set a good example to the students. Education when it gets linked with egoism, loses its wider perspective. It becomes supremely purposeful only when it is related to spirituality. Hence students should rid themselves of egoism and strive to promote the welfare of society, through the knowledge acquired by them, with faith and self-confidence.

Education is not mere verbal knowledge. It should enable one to manifest his inherent divinity. It should promote the practice of Truth and Right Conduct. Unfortunately educational institutions today have become merely workshops manufacturing degree-holders. The acquisition of degrees cannot constitute education. Education must promote ethical behaviour. It must: foster selfcontrol. This is the essential function of education.

Parents should possess exemplary character

If students are to conduct themselves properly, the parents have to set the right example. Unfortunately, even though many of the parents might be educated, wealthy and interested in Bharatiya culture, their practical conduct is not exemplary. This is the reason why most students go astray. All parents want their children to get a good education, good jobs and earn high incomes. But few of them want that they should grow into ideal citizens. In some instances, where the students have developed some spiritual interests, the parents try to discourage them. There are parents who behave like Hiranyakasipu and take their children to task for their interest in spiritual practices at such an early age. Nor is that all. Some of them even try to cover up the bad behaviour of their children by pretending that they are well behaved. They make no effort to correct the children and turn them towards the right: path. Because of this attitude of the parents, the students are taking to bad ways and are spoilt like Dhritarashtra's children (the Kauravas). The students are not to blame. It is the parents who are responsible for the students: misbehaviour, which is reflected in indiscipline in educational institutions. Students must be made to feel proud about their country, their people and their culture. They should realise that wealth and strength, are of no value without character. Of what avail was all his wealth to Dhritarashtra?

Because of the wickedness of his sons, he lost everything in the end. Education today develops knowledge and skills but not character. Right education should promote good qualities. There is no need to seek a new system of education or effect reforms in society. It is enough if we have young men and women of good character and integrity. They will make the country great and prosperous. Students! You have to realise the importance of mental transformation. All kinds of political and economic reforms are taking place. But little is being done to promote the sacred Bharatiya culture. What we need is spiritual transformation. It is the absence of spirituality that accounts for all the chaos, conflict and disorder in the world.

The two-maxims of Hindu tradition

The Hindu tradition laid stress on two maxims: Speak the Truth; Follow Righteousness. These two vital principles have been obliterated today. Mammon reigns supreme. Wealth is worshipped as God. Malpractices are the offerings made to this deity. Humanness has been sacrificed. There must be a return to human values. Education must aim at promoting these values. Planting the seed of love and fostering the tree of tolerance, students should seek to offer the fruit of peace to society. This should be their primary duty. Students! You do not become educated merely by getting degrees. You will be truly educated only when you render services to the people. Engage yourselves in service to the people. True education is that which equips one for service and not merely for earning wealth. Fill your hearts with compassion. A compassionate heart is the seat of the Divine.

Role of Sai Institutions in shaping students

It is asked: who is to blame for the present state of education - the students or the teachers? It must be remembered that today's teachers were themselves students once. Today's students will be tomorrow's teachers. Hence students should train themselves properly for their future roles. It was with this object in view that the Sathya Sai educational institutions were started. Today's students are the future nation-builders. Only when the students learn to conduct themselves with integrity and fairness will they be

able to restore the nation's ancient values and cultural heritage. The ancients achieved name and fame by their adherence to values. Students in those days were exemplars of tolerance and compassion. They were wedded to Truth and Righteousness. Consequently they lived long lives. Unfortunately such attitudes are not to be seen among students now. They have no trace of selflessness in them. They have installed conceit and ostentation at the altar of education. These traits are alien to true education and should be totally eradicated. Humility and obedience, which are the insignia of the educated man, should be promoted. Students today are failing to show reverence even to their parents, much less to elders. To flaunt one's degrees is not a sign of true education, but only an aberration. The truly educated person should cultivate the virtues of truth and righteous conduct and lead an ideal life in the service of society. Only such persons can contribute to the greatness and glory of Bharat.

Cultivate respect for Bharat's ancient culture

Bharat stood as a beacon-light to the world in ancient times because of its spiritual ideals. This sacred land is the land of Thyaga (sacrifice), of Yoga, and of Karma (Righteous action). Today's education tends to make it a bhogabhumi (land of indulgence). With the result that all kinds of roga (maladies) are present in educational institutions. You must cultivate respect for Bharat's ancient culture, follow its ideals and experience the joy to be derived therefrom. Society today suffers from lack of peace. Evil forces are rampant owing to the unchecked growth of selfishness and self-interest. These tendencies have to be rooted out. This can be done only by taking to the spiritual path. It is the duty of parents to sow the seeds of spirituality in the children from their early years. They should not think that parental responsibilities end with sending the children to school or college. They have a duty to see that the children grow into worthy citizens of the country. Great men like Sankaracharya, Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi became ideal men because of the example set by their parents in their daily lives. When the parents lead upright lives, the children will follow them. Hence, parents as well as teachers should serve as ideal examples to the students. From all the enquiries I have made, I have found it is the parents who are spoiling the

children. Their affection for the children is totally misconceived. They should realise that those good qualities which are instilled in the children when they are young, alone will stand them in good stead all their lives.

Dear embodiments of Love! Together with your studies, cultivate humility and reverence, and learn to conduct yourselves in an exemplary manner. Without morality, society will be ruined. Hence, by leading moral lives, foster the well-being of the nation. This is the sacrifice you have to perform. Do not lead a life of selfishness. Money comes and goes. Morality comes and grows. The path of righteousness may be strewn with obstacles. Do not bother about them. Act according to your conscience in all circumstances.

Dharmaja's adherence to Dharma

In the Mahabharata, there was an occasion during the time the Pandavas were living in exile, when Draupadi addressed Dharmaja as follows-"Dharmaja! There is no greater votary of Dharma than you. You adhered to Dharma as your life-breath even in the smallest action. In spite of this, you have had to go through inconceivable ordeals. How has your Dharma protected you?" Smilingly Dharmaja replied: "Draupadi! Despite all the trials and tribulations I have gone through, I have not given up adherence to Dharma. That is my greatness. We should not succumb to difficulties and give up Dharma. Dharma should be upheld even during difficulties. That is the mark of greatness." Students! This life is not for experiencing happiness or sorrow. Both have their good and bad results. They are transient and impermanent. You should rise above them to uphold righteousness in service to society and serve as an example to the nation. Address on the 8th Convocation of the Sathya Sai Institute of Higher learning at Poornachandra

It is essential to inquire into the credentials one has, before one formulates one's prayer. That inquiry will reveal whether one's thoughts and resolutions, hopes and desires arise from Faith or not. How to test and discover the truth? People take a piece of gold and draw with it a line on a

piece of stone; then they examine that streak and assess the quality. The test which will reveal the quality of your Faith is whether you are practising sincerely the injunctions laid down by God.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

37. The Cosmic Indweller

Date: 23 November 1989 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Birthday - 64

In the centre of the earth is a Place called Puttaparathi The embodiment of the Atma made its advent.

While mankind was seeking knowledge of science

A University came into existence here. People of all nations gathered here to experience peace and joy. Millions of virtuous aspirants and adepts have filled this place. The Sai Lord has come to teach the world love and the truth of all religions. Sathya Sai has incarnated as embodied Love to shower joy on all. EMBODIMENTS of Love! "Yatho imani bhoothani jayanthe" (That from which these beings are born). The entire creation comes from the Paramatma (the Supreme Godhead), is sustained by Him and ultimately merges in Him. Likewise, man takes birth on account of desires, lives on desires and dissolves in desires. As is the intention, so is the conduct. As is the conduct, so is the fruit. As is the fruit, so is the goal. Hence every man should have sublime desires, experience sublime fruits and ultimately attain a sublime end. The phenomenal jagat (world) is visible to the eye, is audible to the ear, is experienced by the body, cognised by the mind and enjoyed by the heart. This world of perception is known as Viswam. Viswa means that which pervades. The principle which accounts for pervasiveness is called Viswam. Vishnu is the One who pervades the cosmos. The cosmos is the effect, Vishnu is the cause. Cause and effect are expressions of a single divine principle. The Cosmic principle is also known by other names such as Virat, Vaiswanara and Vairagasutha. Vaiswanara is the Divine Principle that produces the consciousness of "I-ness" in every being. The cosmos is thus a manifestation of Vishnu, who pervades everything. Six qualities are attributed to the Divine. They are: Aiswarya (Wealth), Dharma (Righteousness), Yasas (Fame), Sampada (Prosperity), Jnana (Supreme Wisdom), and Variragya (nonattachment). Wealth has myriad forms - material wealth, physical wealth, the wealth of knowledge and so on. The Divine possesses every conceivable form of wealth.

Swadharma really refers to Atma-Dharma

Dharma (Righteousness) as an attribute of the Divine comprehends every kind of Dharma - worldly dharma, vaideeka dharma, national dharma, community dharma and so on. Of these, two are important. One is Para Dharma, the other is Swadharma. Swadharma is often treated as Dharma relating to one's caste or creed. Thus, separate codes of Dharma are ascribed to Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and others. This is not a correct interpretation. Swadharma really refers to Atma-Dharma (the Dharma relating to the Spirit:). Man's duty is to observe this spiritual code of conduct. Para Dharma relates to the body. It embraces the code of conduct that is observed in daily life for earning one's livelihood and leading his life in society. Para Dharma is fraught with fear and delusions. There is the fear of success or defeat or the fear of facing blame and censure. In observing this mundane code of conduct man is haunted by fears and doubts of various kinds. In adhering to Swadharma (the Spiritual code) there is no room for any such fears. Therefore, man should follow Atma Dharma. As the Divine attributes are found in man also, it is clear that the Divine dwells in all human beings. "Eko vasi sarva-bhootha-antaratma" (He is the One Indweller in the hearts of all beings). God cannot be seen in any one place or at any particular time. He is present in everything but is not attached to anything. How can One who permeates everything and is present everywhere be subject to any kind of proof or test? That is the reason why God has been described as Aprameya - the Transcendental One. As one who is the source of all knowledge and intelligence, God has been called Manu. As He is the supreme creator, He is also called Prajapathi. He is also called Atma or Brahman. Brahman is the Chaitanya (consciousness) that is present in all living beings. Atma and Brahman, are not different. The Divine has also been termed Aham (the "I"). This does not refer to the individual ego. It refers to the effulgence that illumines everything and dispels all darkness totally. Another meaning of Aham is Sakshi (Witness).

Sat-Chit-Ananda is present in all objects

The Paramatma (Supreme Atma) who is the witness to everything, is called

Aham. He is the Lord of all that has gone before, all that is and all that is yet to be born. He is the eternal, unchanging Being who is the master of the past, the present and the future. Hence he is described as "Bhootha-Bhavaya-Bhavath Prabhuh" (The Lord of the past, the present and the future). He is also described as Bhavah, the effulgent. He is omnipresent. Hence the appellation Mahanubhava is applicable only to God, though the term is loosely applied to describe some extraordinary persons. It refers to One who is present in the subtlest atom and the vastest object in the cosmos.

In every object in the universe, Sat (Being) Chit (Awareness) and Ananda (Bliss) are present in a subtle form. There are two other characteristics of every object: name and form. Sat, Chit and Ananda are derived from the Divine. Name and form, which are subject to constant change, are related to Nature. Even name and form are comprehended by Sat, Chit and Ananda. Man is the embodiment of these three. Forgetting these basic truths about: his permanent Reality, man is leading a life related to names and forms. Every human being is a manifestation of God. Every object manifests the divine. There is nothing in the world which is not a manifestation of God. Do not have any doubt: that the cosmos is permeated by Hari (God) and everything is contained in HIM. There is not an atom in the universe which is not permeated by the Divine. Prasad asked for an exposition of the nature of God. Some say "It is not" and some say "It is" and some others say, "It is and it is not". Those who say "It is" do not know what It is. Those who deny its existence also do not know what it is that they deny. Those who affirm and deny are ignorant of both the things.

Believers and non-believers of God

From early times those who believed in the existence of God were called Asthikas (theists), those who denied God's existence were called Nasthikas (atheists) and the third category were called Asthika-Nasthikas (theist-atheists). Theists and atheists are really one though they have contrary names. Atheists are like buds of flowers and theists are like the flowers that have blossomed. The flower that has blossomed offers its fragrance to many. The unopened bud retains its fragrance within itself. Some day the bud may

blossom or is likely to drop away before blossoming. Those who spread the bliss of divinity in the world were described as theists and those who did not do so were regarded as atheists. Those who say "God does not exist" must have some prior idea of God before they can deny His existence. In twilight, a rope may be mistaken for a snake, but the moment light is brought the rope is recognised for what it is. Likewise the Jnani (man of wisdom) recognises God when he is free from maya (delusion).

The mind and heart are like lock and key

All the myriad differences that one sees in the world are only variations in form of the one basic entity - the Brahman. A man who seeks to enjoy the fruit of a tree cannot be content with nourishing only the flowers. He has to nourish the roots, the trunk, the branches and the leaves and the flowers. Likewise the man who seeks the highest Jnana (wisdom) has to nourish the body, the senses, the feelings appropriately. For this purpose the nine forms of devotion have been prescribed for seekers.

The mind, it has been said, is the cause of bondage or liberation. The mind is like a lock and the heart is the key. When the key is turned towards God, there is detachment. When it is turned towards the world there is attachment. Thus the mind is the cause of either liberation or bondage. Therefore the mind has to be directed towards what is holy and pure. Then you will lead a free, joyous, blissful life. The man who has developed such an attitude will be in a permanent state of bliss. He will be the embodiment of bliss. When I came down to the Mandir this morning, the children greeted me with the words, "Happy Birthday!" I told them, "I am always happy, it is you who are unhappy, who should get happiness." It is only when each one realises his inherent divinity and leads a Godly life that all will be happy. Divinity is not confined to any specific place or form. Each one should realise that this all-pervading, all-powerful Divinity is within him. There must be realisation that the Principle that is Omnipresent in the subtlest form and in the grossest form is the Atma or Brahman. God is the eternal Reality, without birth, growth or death, without beginning, middle or end, and who is immutable. It is only the bodies that are subject to change. Making use of the body that is mutable,

the immutable Divine has to be experienced. Embodiments of love! In whatever manner you seek to understand the Divine, you have to remember that the Divine is the universal, all-pervading Chaithanyam (Consciousness). Only the unchanging Divine can confer on you permanent bliss. This does not mean giving up worldly concerns. What you have to do is to make worldly life the basis for the realisation of the Divine. Every action should be regarded as an offering to the Divine. You must strive to reach the state where, recognising that God is omnipresent, you realize your own Divinity To begin with you have to do good deeds, based on good thoughts. People today devote hardly five minutes to the thought of God. How can they hope to have joy and peace when the bulk of their time is devoted to selfish pursuits?

Dedicate yourself to the service of society Engage yourself in sacred actions. Always remember the Divine name. Chanting the name of the Lord, performing sacred actions, experience' bliss in your heart.

38. Where to find God

Date: 25 December 1989 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Christmas

EMBODIMENTS of Divine Love!

God is complete love incarnate. This love shines equally in every human being. The fragrance of a flower remains the same whether it is held in the right hand or the left. Likewise God has no distinctions such as the favoured and the excluded. Different persons, proceeding from their own likes and dislikes, attribute to the Divine the differences existing in their own minds.

God has no feelings of difference such as the good and the bad, the likable and the unwanted, the wicked and the virtuous. The sandalwood tree imparts its fragrance even to the axe that fells it. Likewise, God is ever prepared to love, foster and protect equally everyone without any distinction. But narrow-minded persons cannot easily grasp the Divine's equal-mindedness. Indeed, how can a fishmonger know the value of diamonds? Everyone apprehends God's powers and attributes according to his own limited conceptions and experiences.

The reason for man's narrow outlook

To get rid of such narrow ideas, the first requisite is the cultivation of love. How is love to be promoted? By "giving and forgiving" man develops love within himself. In relation to God, this implies that you should always have the attitude of offering your heart to God. Today, far from having such a sacred attitude what we witness is the habit of "getting and forgetting."

Today, man receives the love, the blessings, and the grace of God, but shows no gratitude and is immersed in his own selfish pursuits. This accounts for his narrow outlook. Sanjaya declared at the end of the Gita that where Krishna, the Lord of Yoga, and Partha, the valiant archer, stand together, there is victory. Man makes various efforts to achieve prosperity, success and bliss. But the means of achieving them is for man to take his stand by the side of

Bhagavan.

Partha means the son of the *Prithvi* (Earth). It applies to every man. Sanjaya's declaration means that victory is assured when either man is by the side of God or God is beside man. Neither of these happens today. Man leads a life remote from God. To start with, man has to recognise what is the goal of life. Seekers in all countries and followers of different religions have enquired into this question of the purpose life. As a result of these enquiries, different religions arose. Jesus is the founder of the Christian faith. For centuries before Christ, Judaism existed as the religion of the Jews. The Jews believed in the coming of the Messiah to protect the people of Israel.

When Jesus was born, three kings came from the east to bless the infant in Bethlehem. The first king, seeing the child, declared that he would be a great lover of God. The second one declared that God would immensely, love the child. The third one declared that Jesus is God and God is Jesus. What is the inner meaning of these statements? The first statement implies that all who love God are messengers of God. When God loves a person, he becomes a son of God. When a person gives up the sense of dualism and merges his consciousness in the Divine he becomes one with the Divine.

Jesus's life and mission

When Jesus was a child, during a visit to Jerusalem, he was lost in the crowd. After a frantic search Mary found him in a temple listening intently to the speech of a priest. When Mary told Jesus about the trouble they had gone through in searching for him, Jesus said: "Mother! When I am safe with my Father in His home, why should you worry about me? This is the temple of God. It is my Father's mansion. Nothing will be lacking here. In this eternal and sacred home I am perfectly safe as well protected."

This shows that even by his twelfth year, Jesus was full of Divine qualities and was imparting the Divine message to those around him. Christ declared to the world three important things: (1) God is one. (2) He is omnipotent. (3) Do not hurt anyone. God is the indweller in every being.

Christ embarked on his mission and went about calling upon people to earn the love of God by developing love towards God. People professing different faiths worship God under different names: Vishnu, Siva, Ganesa, Allah, Christ, and others. The truth is there is only one God. People today try to find God in religions. But God is to be found not in *mathamu* (religions) but in the *mathi* (mind). It is only when the mind is controlled and purified that God will be recognised.

The Lord dwells within man

People claim to make offerings to God without knowing where He is. There is a pretence of offering everything to Brahman, but they do not know where Brahman dwells. The Lord has declared: "I am residing within you in the form of Vaisvanara and am consuming all the offerings you are making. I am digesting everything and providing the sustenance for your body."

While the Lord is ever by the side of man, he is searching for God all over the world. By exploring the external, you can never purify the internal. It is essential to transform the consciousness. You have to rectify your conduct and actions, because everything depends on your actions. Adhering to the righteous path, with a pure heart, you have to divinise your life. All spiritual disciplines have been designed only for this purpose. All the prayers, japas and pujas that are offered are intended only to purify the heart. All those who have achieved greatness in any field - education, science, etc. - have been able to do so solely because of their conduct.

Neither physical strength nor wealth, nor even intellectual ability, can make one respected and honoured. It is the way one lives that: confers honour and dignity on him. Therefore, it is only through our actions that we should strive to realise the Divine. Without right conduct, all other spiritual practices are of no avail. Hence, all devotees should acquire good and sacred qualities in furtherance of their striving to realise God.

You all are in the Kingdom of Sai! You all are in Sai's Home! You all are in Sai's Light! You all are in Sai's Heart! I will bless you, I will bless you in This Holy

Night. This is your right.

If you entertain proper thoughts, you will realise that all of you are in God's home. The whole universe is the mansion of the Lord. Once you recognise this truth, how can any differences arise?

Understand the ways of the Divine

People imagine that God is angry, or indifferent. Such persons have no understanding of Divinity. If there is a tumour in the stomach, the surgeon uses a knife to remove it. Is the operation done out of ill-will towards the patient? Not at all. It is for his own good that the operation is done to make him well again. Likewise, when a person has developed some bad qualities, a surgical operation has to be done to rid him of his vices. When this is done by the Divine, God is said to be angry or displeased. This is the mark of a petty mind. Those who have understood the Divine's love principle will not make such a mistake. Today is the birthday of the founder of a great religion. Christians revere Jesus as a Messenger of God and the Son of God.

On this sacred day, the old students of the Sathya Sai College for Women at Anantapur, who have formed an association called Messengers of Sathya Sai, celebrate their annual day. "How shall we show our gratitude to the Institution which has educated us and done so much good to us?" was the question put by an old student, who is the President of the association. "How shall we show our gratitude to Bhagavan?" she asked.

Serve the society with dedication

Dear old students!

Wherever you may be, go into the society and render social service in all possible ways, with faith in God and in a selfless spirit. As she said, it is true that after getting married, the girls have to put up with various restraints imposed by their in-laws and husbands. Admittedly, the Bharatiya culture and tradition circumscribe the freedom of women. On the other hand,

boys enjoy greater freedom and liberty to act as they please. Whatever job they take up or business they may carry on, whatever country they may go to, they have considerable freedom. There will be none to restrain them. If they want to do social service, they can do a great deal. Unfortunately, they are not filled with such noble urges. Women who have those sacred impulses to serve society suffer from handicaps and restraints.

At least from today, I desire that young men and women, who have studied in the Sai educational institutions, will show their gratitude to their alma mater by engaging themselves in social service and stand forth as ideals for others by their dedicated lives. By merely acquiring degrees, you do not become educated persons.

Using education only for securing a mess of pottage is puerile. You must use your knowledge for bettering the lives of others. Of what use is a mountain of book knowledge, if you cannot secure real happiness as a human being? Will not God take care of man if he places his faith in the Divine? What is it that is achieved by ceaseless preoccupation with earning a living, for forgetting the all-pervading Lord?

Everybody clamours for peace, saying "I want peace." But can peace be found in the external world, which is only filled with pieces? Peace has to be found within oneself by getting rid of the "I" and desire. Peace is being destroyed by the ego and by insatiable desires. Restrain your desires. Man is haunted by endless worries of many kinds. Only by turning his mind towards God can he get rid of the worries. Men have to reduce desires and cultivate *vairagya* (detachment) so that they can have real peace of mind. What is it that students, who have spent ten or twelve years in Sai educational institutions, can show as evidence of their having benefited from their education? It should be evident to some extent from their conduct and practices. If this is not present, what is the use of their studies? If they have not learnt during this precious period in their lives to practise self-control and selfdiscipline, they will be guilty of having wasted their great opportunities. The essence of education consists in the cultivation of good qualities and the development of right values for meaningful living.

I bless you all students in the hope that you will dedicate yourselves to the service of the people and thereby earn the grace of the Lord.