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1. Ask the right question

Date: **11 January 1968** / Location: **Prasanthi Nilayam** / Occasion: **Vaikunta Ekadasi**

THIS is a twice-blessed day, for it is a Thursday; otherwise called Guruvar (the day of the preceptor, the guide to spiritual Liberation); it is also the day on which, centuries ago, the Geetha was taught to Arjuna by Krishna, the day when man got from God the key for his progress from falsehood and delusion into the light of his own inner reality. Arjuna was directed to engage in battle, win back his share of the Kingdom, and ensure for the people righteous administration and atmosphere wherein they can strive successfully to attain salvation. This he had to do in a spirit of dedication and surrender to the will of God, irrespective of his own likes and dislikes and the consequences that might flow from his unselfish activities. Therefore the Geetha advises that service to the sangha (society) is the highest seva (service), as well as the most beneficial sadhana (spiritual discipline). You cannot run away from this obligation; you have to use the community of men wherein you are born for sublimating your egoism and saving yourself. Seva taken up as sadhana teaches sahana (fortitude). Even Avathars (divine advents) demonstrate, in their lives, the supreme importance of seva. When Dharmaraja performed the great Rajasuuya sacrifice, on the advice of the sage Naradha, in order to propitiate his deceased father, Lord Krishna attended the sacrifice and asked to be allotted some service; He preferred the service of removing the leaves on which food was served for the thousands who were fed every day! Since service was so dear to Him, He was revered as the King-maker of the Age, the Law-giver for all.

Turn your sight upwards to avoid lower desires

Today being Vaikuntha Ekadhashi, many of you are yearning to get Amrith (nectar) from Me. But, of what benefit is it merely to swallow a few drops of nectar created by Me? It is when the sathwik (good) quality wins and subdues the rajasik and the thamasik (passionate and ignorant) qualities in the battles between them that go on in every heart, that amrith arises therein! The amrith that confers immortality is the amrith which one wins through one's

own sadhana. One word that is used in dhyana (meditation) is uurdhwa-dhrishti (upward vision) to indicate an exercise in which the two eyes are directed together upwards, to a point between the eyebrows. Uurdhwa means upward and dhrishti means look; so, the word means, not a physical exercise, but a general wholtime effort of the mind to avoid lower desires, and to uplift itself to higher values. Such an effort will win Amrith; it will flow from the spring of the heart! Amrith means immortal; it does not follow that he who takes in amrith will live eternally; even Avathars (Divine incarnations) cast off the body when their task is accomplished. It means fixing the mind on the Reality, becoming aware of the imperishable entity that one is and merging the consciousness in it. Look at the Rakshasas (demons)! Ravana and Kumbhakarna went through extreme austerities for thousands of years. God manifested Himself before them and granted them the boons they prayed for. But, since the austerity did not win for them purity and cleanliness, virtue and humility, they continued as ever, monsters of violence and wickedness. They had no trace of the Sathwik (poised state) in their make-up. They had the Grace of God in such a large measure; God appeared, inquired and granted. But, they behaved even worse than before! They denied by their lives the Grace they won.

Eschew evil and be fixed in Faith

So too, if amrith is given, one has to live up to that status, the status of having acquired the Grace of God. Vashishta commissioned Raghu, the Emperor, to tend his cow, the celestial Kamadhenu. Since it was an order that emanated from his spiritual preceptor, Raghu himself took up that task and led the cow into the pastures. One day, when a lion threatened to pounce upon Kamadhenu, and insisted that she must be given to him for his lunch, as he was hungry, Raghu offered his own body instead. That is how one has to live up to the status assigned to him. When you are raised to the status of amrith receivers, you must eschew evil and be fixed in faith. I have no intention to create and give amrith on this Vaikuntha Ekadhashi day. For no one walks on the path I have chalked out, no one feels bound by the advice I give. Your enthusiasm is short lived; your resolution to follow My instructions evaporate quickly. As boiling milk rises, overflows and becomes still, devotion

develops and dies soon. It does not stay unshaken. Today, in certain Vishnu temples, a special door called the Vaikuntha-dhwara is opened, and people can pass through it into the presence. Vaikuntha-dhwara is the Gate to Heaven, that is to say, the gateway to self-realisation. The gateway to that heaven is not to be found only there; it will open, right in front of you, wherever you are. Knock and it will open.

Fill your heart with sympathy for the distressed

Vishnu means, sarva vyapi (He who is everywhere). So, his residence Vaikuntha (heaven) must be every where. You can gain entry, by knocking with the correct password on your lips. Your heart can become Vaikuntha, if you but cleanse it and purify it and allow God to manifest in it. Vaikuntha means "the place where there is no shadow of grief." When God manifests in your heart, all is full and free.

The cow transforms grass and gruel into sweet strength-giving milk and gives it away in plenty to its master. Develop that quality, that power to transform the food you consume into sweet thoughts, words and deeds of sympathy for all. The child Krishna wept for permission to go along with the cows to the fields of pasture. Yasodha said, "Dear child! your tiny silken soles cannot walk along those thorny, pebble-filled tracks. I shall get nice little sandals for you. You can go, after the sandals are ready." But Krishna prattled back. "The cows whom we serve are not shod. Why should we, who are their servants, avoid the thorns and stones which they cannot avoid?" No wonder the cows and calves of Gokul were immobilised and wept, when Krishna left for Mathura!

When you have filled your heart with sympathy for the distressed, the Lord will shower His Grace. Dhroupadhi had earned the Grace, through her devotion and virtues. Seetha, too, stuck to the highest ideal of life, inspite of the severe sufferings she underwent. Hanuman who discovered her in the grove where she was kept as a prisoner by her abductor, offered to recross the ocean, with her on his shoulders, and take her safe to her Lord, Rama; But, she replied that she would not allow herself to be abducted back from

the custody of Ravana, since that would deprive Rama of the chance to punish him for his crime and retrieve her through his own heroism! Splendid words, these! Quite in consonance with the dictates of Dharma! No wonder, the Lord's Grace saved her in good time! If you have no steadfastness and no depth of faith, you can have no Grace.

Serve all as brothers and sisters

This warning itself is the Amritham for you today; for, harsh words provoke bitterness. Endeavour to earn Grace by observing the discipline that I am keen you should follow. Give up the old worldly ways of earning and spending, saving and accumulating, with greed, lust, malice and pride. So rearrange your lives that I will be pleased with you. Do not waste time in idle gossip; talk softly; talk as little as possible: talk sweet; serve all as brothers and sisters, with adoration to the Sai in them; engage in sadhana; move forward step by step as befits persons striving to realise their own liberation. Ask Me about steps in spiritual discipline, not petty, trivial, binding desires. The time is fast coming when the whole world will gather here, and you will have to struggle from miles afar to get even my dharshan.

2. The Super-emperor

Date: 12 January 1968 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

SHUKA was unattached to the world around him :he was aware of the Immanent Brahman from the very moment of his birth, and he was steadily fixed in that awareness throughout life. He can be said to be the greatest jnani (spiritualist) in history. Yet, he declared that the story of the Leelas (Divine sport) of Krishna, the Saguna (endowed with divine qualities) incarnation of the divine principle, gave him inexhaustible joy. He said that the Krishna-principle was beyond the ken of his analysis; it could only be experienced and tasted. No words can spell it out to another. Rasa (sweet essence) - that is the true characteristic of the Divine. He tastes inexplicably sweet, everything related to Him, concerned with Him. That is the reason why Shri Ramakrishna declared that he did not desire to merge in the Divine; he was content to taste the sweetness of the Divine.

This is the path of Bhakthi (devotion). Through listening to the glories of the Lord, you become avid to praise Him; serve Him and His devotees, worship Him as if He is present before you, and be in His company all your life, with no other thought than that Joy. For such dedicated seekers all else will seem bitter and unattractive.

God gives dharshan to a sincere devotee

There was a Sulthan once who ruled over the region of Mathura, Brindavan and other places on the river Yamuna. During his reign the Emperor of Vijayanagar came on pilgrimage and stayed at Brindavan for some days. He paid homage to Krishna in the temple. The Sulthan argued that he must have come so far only to pay respects to some one greater than himself. He was determined to see that One, come what may. So he went late one night and called out before the closed doors of the temple. "Who is inside?" He heard a voice which gave the reply, "Govind Maharaj and Radha Rani." The Sulthan was now sure that there were two living persons inside, a Super-Emperor and His Super-Empress. He was filled with an agonising yearning to see the

distinguished occupants of the Temple. He waited outside the door, without moving, without food or drink, for three full days. He was overcome with hunger and thirst; but he did not stir, for he was afraid the Imperial Couple may emerge any moment and he might miss the dharshan (sight).

That night, when the town was asleep, just before midnight Govindha Maharaj and Radha Rani emerged from the temple. They signed to him to follow them. They were magnificently dressed and had elaborately bejewelled headgear, necklaces, wristlets and ornaments for the hands and feet. They moved on until they reached the banks of the Yamuna, where thousands of gopas (cowherd boys) and gopees (cowherd girls) were gathered to welcome them. There was music and dance in the bright moonlight. Heavenly joy shone on every face. At 4 a.m. they returned to the temple and before they passed through the closed door, they gave into his hands the kankanas (bracelets) they wore on their wrists, for safe keeping! Before he could say anything they had gone.

Implicit faith in God gives unlimited Bliss

A party of priests came along at that time, and seeing him, asked him, why he was standing there, and what he had in his hands. They had come to open the locks of the outer and inner doors and inaugurate the ceremonials of the day, with Suprabhatham (awakening hymn) and Nagarasankeerthan (moving choirs). The Sulthan said, "Govindha Maharaj and Radha Rani have just gone in; I was with them at the Yamuna bank from midnight till a few minutes ago. They gave me these kankanas for safe keeping. I don't know why." They surmised he was a thief caught in the act and therefore, spinning a yarn; they bound him and beat him. But they found the locks unbroken; everything was intact. Only the idol of Krishna had no gold kankanas! They were convinced that the man outside was a great bhaktha (devotee), who had the unique vision of the lord. They honoured him and craved his pardon for the wrong perpetrated in ignorance. Such is the reward for sincere yearning; unlimited anandha (bliss) can be earned through implicit faith in God.

3. Hopping on one leg

Date: 13 January 1968 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Sankranthi

Sankranthi Day is extolled by poets as conferring on mankind a subdued Sun, a cool breeze, with a nip in it; the birds welcome the day with joyous song; Goddess earth wears a saree of green, dotted with red and yellow flowers. Man and beast are happy that their exertions have been rewarded with harvest; they can look forward to a few weeks of sport and pastime, recouping and ruminating. It is a day of anandha (bliss) for man and animal, anandha, both inner and outer. It is green, both in the outer world and in the inner. In the inner, because, this day marks a new phase in the march of the Sun, who is the inspirer and invigorator of the intelligence. Bheeshma waited for this so that he may travel beyond death, with an illumined intellect, aware of his identity with the Supreme. This is called Uttharayana, because the Sun swings towards the North from today. For the next six months the Sun moves northward by degrees. So it is called, Utthara (Northward) ayana (journey). The northern direction is associated in Indian scriptures with the Gods, and so, these six months are considered specially suitable for sadhana (spiritual discipline) and for ceremonial rituals. But, I must tell you that you must be concerned more with the Sun in your inner firmament than in the depths of outer space. You are concerned with the inner illumination, more than external light and energy. What is the sadhana that will send the inner Sun Godward? God is hidden and obstructed by the clouds of egoism. Getting rid of egoism is the sadhana to be practised.

Service is the best cure for egoism

Learn a lesson from the tree. When it is heavy with fruits it does not raise its head aloft in pride; it bends low, stoops, as if it does not take any credit for its accomplishment and as if it helps you to pluck the fruit. Learn a lesson from the birds. They feed those who cannot fly far; the bird relieves the itch of the buffalo by scratching it with its beak; they help and serve each other, with no thought of reward. How much more alert must man be, then, with his superior skills and faculties? Service is the best cure for egoism; so, engage in it to

relieve pain and grief to the extent that you can.

In the Ramayana, apes brought huge rocks and threw them into the sea to build a passage across for Rama and His army; the tiny squirrel too helped, as far as it could: it rolled on the sands on the seashore, ran towards the heap piled as part of the passage, whisked the sand from its fur by a vigorous shake, adding only a pinch of material to the quantity heaped by the giant apes. Rama saw the squirrel; He appreciated its devotion; He took it fondly in His palm; He stroked its back tenderly, and with a blessing. That was ample reward. The squirrel race has since acquired three lines on its back; to indicate that sign of gratification and Grace. Try to assuage, as far as you can, the distress of others; it is the best sadhana for the aspirant. Man walks with two legs: iha and para (this world and the other), dharma and Brahma, righteousness and God! If he is totally engrossed in this world, he is choosing to travel all his life with a handicap; hopping on one leg. That is fraught with trouble; he may fall any moment and break his shin. And he does! Goodness in this world, Godliness for the life after death - equal attention to both, vigilance while taking a step, with either foot, these are essential for a happy journey through life.

Master the tendency to yield to the senses

You have to put the right foot, the Brahman step, when you enter the region of realisation. The senses have to be conquered by then. 'Go' means 'senses' and 'Go-pee' means a person who has subdued the senses, as a result of surrender to Go-pala, the master of the Go (senses). Krishna once told Arjuna that he can enter Vrajamandala (the region where the Gopas and Gopees lived), only after mastering his emotions and impulses and his tendency to yield to the senses. One day Naradha happened to land on the sands of the Yamuna river-bed in the Vrajamandala. He was surprised at the deep silence that pervaded the place. The water flowed without a murmur; not a wave splashed; not a single twig, leaf or petal moved, lest it should disturb the calm. Even the insect seemed to be aware of the need to respect the silence and remained still: its wings were at rest. There was no hum, hiss or hoot, caw, coo or call, flop, flick or flutter. The groves on the banks were as pictures

on canvas. Naradha saw a woman, shining as a star, lost in meditation; he was amazed at the halo of splendour around her crown. Naradha wondered whether he could reach that depth of experience any time in his career. His presence awakened her and when accosted, she revealed her identity. She was Brahma-Vidhya-dhevatha (the Goddess of the Science of the awareness of Reality), the truth that jnana reveals! Naradha's amazement was doubled by this revelation. "What need have you to meditate? Why this intense dhyana (meditation), that has silenced all Nature around you? What are you meditating on?" he asked. She declared, "I crave the supreme joy of contemplating on the Lotus Feet of Krishna; I meditate on them, making myself a gopee, who has surrendered to Him." Such is the sweetness derivable through that contemplation, that bhakthi (devotion).

Man can grasp Divinity only in human form

The bhaktha (devotee) is content with the vision of a part; he tastes the sugar, grain by grain. He finds no joy in becoming sugar, or merging in the mountain of sugar himself. No one can see that entire region of the sky. For, there is no sky at all, when you examine it. His sky is limited by his horizon. From each point of observation there is a different horizon, but no one can see beyond it. Limit the sky and enjoy its vastness and beauty. That is what the bhaktha (devotee) does. So long as you are embodied, you can picture only an embodied Divine. Uma's father, the Monarch of the Himalayas, is said to have prayed to Shiva, "Vouchsafe to me the vision of a fraction of your Universal Self! How can I cognise through my senses and limited intelligence, the limitless?" Man can picture God only as having Human Form. Krishna says in the Geetha, "I am the eagle among the birds, the lion among the beasts, the banyan among the trees." That is to say, the birds picture as God a bird that can fly highest, whose eyes are sharpest, whose wings can hold out longest. "Dhaivam manusha ruupena" - "God in human form" - that is the only way in which divinity can be grasped by man. Here and now, it is only as He, that God can be felt and experienced. God is not to be spoken of as Coming down or going up, since He is everywhere, available for your becoming aware of Him, through beauty, truth, goodness, strength, love or any one of the divine attributes.

Pray to Sun God for bright intelligence

On this holy day, resolve to spend each hour in the contemplation of the Glory of God; do so, at least as a duty; for, the exaltation which that contemplation brings will unconsciously encourage you to continue it with greater zest. The Sun is turning Godward, as the mythological story says. He is the postman, who will carry your letters, if correctly addressed and stamped (with the stamp of sincerity) to God and bring back His Grace. Put your yearning in the envelope of resolution. And, hand it over every day to the Sun. Do not write asking for a house or a son or gold. Ask for bright intelligence, in order to realise the majesty of God. Ask for steadfastness in His service, in His adoration.

3. Illumine Your Intellect To Realise God (Alternative Translation)

Date: 13 January 1968 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Sankranthi

Sankranthi is extolled by poets as conferring on people a subdued sun and a cool breeze, with a nip in it. Birds welcome it with joyous song; goddess earth wears a sari of green, dotted with red and yellow flowers.

Both human and animal are happy that their exertions have been rewarded with a harvest; they can look forward to a few weeks of sport and pastime, recouping, and ruminating. It is a time of bliss (ananda) for people, bliss both inner and outer. It is green, both in the outer world and in the inner.

Inner illumination is more important

This day marks a new phase in the march of the sun. This is called the northward journey (uttarayana) because the sun swings toward the north from this day. For the next six months, the sun moves northward by degrees. So, it is called, northward (uttara) journey (ayana). The sun is the inspirer and invigorator of intelligence. Bhishma waited for this so that he might travel beyond death with an illumined intellect, aware of his identity with the Supreme. The northern direction is associated in Indian scriptures with auspiciousness, so these six months are considered especially suitable for spiritual practice (sadhana) and for ceremonial rituals. But I must tell you that you should be concerned more with the sun in your inner firmament than in outer space. More than external light and energy, you should be concerned with inner illumination. What is spiritual practice that will direct the inner sun Godward? God is hidden and obstructed by the clouds of egoism. Getting rid of egoism is the spiritual discipline to be practised.

Practise the spiritual discipline of relieving distress of others

Learn a lesson from the tree. When it is heavy with fruit, it does not raise its head aloft in pride; it bends low, stoops, as if it does not want to take any

credit for its accomplishment and as if it wants to help you to pluck its fruit. Learn a lesson from birds. They feed those who cannot fly far. They help and serve each other with no thought of reward.

How much more alert must humans be, then, with their superior skills and faculties? Service is the best cure for egoism, so engage in it to relieve pain and grief of others to the extent that you can. In the Ramayana, apes brought huge rocks and threw them into the sea to build a passage across for Rama and His army. A tiny squirrel also helped, as far as it could; it rolled on the sands on the seashore, ran toward the heap piled as part of the passage, and whisked the sand from its fur by a vigorous shake, adding only a pinch of material to the quantity heaped by the giant apes. Rama saw the squirrel and appreciated its devotion. He took it fondly on His palm, stroked its back tenderly and blessed it. That was ample reward for it. The squirrel race has since acquired three lines on its back, indicating that sign of gratification and grace.

Try to assuage, as far as you can, the distress of others. This is the best spiritual practice for an aspirant. Humanity walks on the two legs of righteousness (dharma) and God (Brahma), in this world and the other (iha and para). People totally engrossed in this world are choosing to walk all their life with a handicap, hopping only on one leg. That is fraught with trouble, for they may fall any moment and break their shin. And they do! Equal attention to both - to goodness in this world and to godliness for the life after death - are essential for a happy journey through life. One should exercise vigilance while taking a step with either foot.

Control the tendency to yield to the senses

You have to put the right foot forward, the Brahman step, when you enter the region of realisation. The senses have to be conquered by then. 'Go' means 'senses' and 'go-pi' means a person who has subdued the senses as a result of surrender to Go-pala, the master of the 'go' (senses). Krishna once told Arjuna that he could enter the region where the cowherd boys and maidens (gopas and gopis) lived (the vrajamandala) only after mastering his emotions

and impulses and controlling his tendency to yield to the senses. One day, Narada happened to land on the sands of the Yamuna river bed in the vrajamandala. He was surprised at the deep silence that pervaded the place. The water flowed without a murmur; not a wave splashed - not a single twig, leaf, or petal moved, lest it should disturb the calm. Even the insects seemed to be aware of the need to respect the silence and remained still with their wings at rest. There was no hum, hiss, hoot, caw, coo, flop, flick or flutter. The groves on the banks were as pictures on canvas.

There, Narada saw a woman, shining as a star, lost in meditation. He was amazed at the halo of splendour around her crown. He wondered whether he could reach that depth of experience any time in his life.

His presence awakened her, and when addressed, she revealed her identity. She said, she was the goddess of the Science of Awareness of Reality (Brahma-Vidya), the truth that spiritual wisdom (jnana) reveals!

Narada's amazement was doubled by this revelation. "What need do you have to meditate? Why this intense meditation, which has silenced all nature around you? What are you meditating on?" he asked.

She declared, "I crave the supreme joy of contemplating on the Lotus Feet of Krishna; I meditate on them, making myself a cowherd maid (gopi) who has surrendered to Him." Such is the sweetness that is derivable through that contemplation, that devotion.

Only a human can grasp Divinity

The devotee is content with the vision of a part. He tastes the sugar, grain by grain; he finds no joy in becoming sugar or merging in the mountain of sugar himself.

No one can see the entire region of the sky, for there is no sky at all when you examine it. The devotee's sky is limited by the devotee's horizon. From each point of observation, there is a different horizon, but no one can see beyond

it. Limit the sky and enjoy its vastness and beauty. That is what the devotee does.

As long as you are embodied, you can picture only an embodied Divine. Uma's father, the monarch of the Himalayas, is said to have prayed to Siva, "Vouchsafe to me the vision of a fraction of your Universal Self! How can I cognise through my senses and limited intelligence the limitless?" One can picture God only as having human form. Krishna says in the Gita, "I am the eagle among the birds, the lion among the beasts, the banyan among the trees." That is to say, the birds picture God as a bird that can fly highest, whose eyes are sharpest, whose wings can hold out longest. God in human form (Daivam manusha rupena) - that is the only way in which a human can grasp Divinity. Here and now, it is only as human that God can be felt and experienced. God is not to be spoken of as coming down or going up, since He is everywhere. He is available for your becoming aware of Him through beauty, truth, goodness, strength, love, or any one of the divine attributes.

Pray to sun for bright intelligence

On this holy day, resolve to spend each hour in contemplation of the glory of God. Do so at least as a duty, for the exaltation that that contemplation brings will unconsciously encourage you to continue it with greater zest. The sun is turning Godward, as the mythological story says. The sun is the postman; it will carry your letters, if correctly addressed and stamped (with the stamp of sincerity), to God and bring back His grace.

Put your yearning in the envelope of resolution, and hand it over every day to the sun. Do not write asking for a house or a son or gold. Ask for bright intelligence in order to realise the majesty of God. Ask for steadfastness in His service, in His adoration.

4. The bandage removed from the eye

Date: 14 February 1968 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

DR. MODI has been engaged during the last ten days, at the Prasanthi Nilayam, in the service of the people who were in great distress, since they could not see; service that is really commendable and sacred. The eye is the mainspring of the body so far as contact with outer nature is concerned. The nethra is the suuthra (the eye is the medium) as the saying goes. By this act of service, done selflessly, efficiently and gladly for years, Modi has become a Yogi (sage), much greater than many who claim that title. This is real thapas (austerity), the sacrifice and asceticism that wins God's Grace. He is happy as a result of this ceaseless toil and he makes all those who come to him for relief, happy. He is clear evidence that service is twice blessed - making the giver and the receiver happy. Service tends to destroy egoism; it confers enormous joy. His life is an inspiration for doctors and others, to use their skill for the service of the really deserving. By devoting skill to this end, it is rendered pure; by devoting the hand to the service of the sick, you are purifying it, you are justifying it. Direct the senses towards these ends; they become beneficial instruments. The gathering of these patients, with their bandages removed, and with bright and curious faces, wearing new clothes and new looks is indeed a charming sight. For, it is Anandha (bliss) that lends charm to the personality. Now that you have recovered eye sight, after the operation, use it for good purposes. You can move about now without the help of another; so, that person is released for useful work, in the home or fields. You can see and appreciate flowers, children, stars, the moon and many other things that will remind you of the Beauty of the Lord. You may see others happy, prosperous, joyful, content; do not develop envy at their happiness! If you kill your peace by that envy, why be glad that you got your eyes? Look upon all with friendly eyes, joyful eyes. Do not try to discover faults in others and disturb their contentment and joy and lose your own.

Help others to repay the service that you received

This garland of flowers is so beautiful, because various hues and types of

petals and greens have gone into its making. So, too, this Eye Operation Camp became the great success it is due to the medical assistants, nurses and compounders on one side, and the men and women volunteers, the kinsmen and the cooks on the other, with Dr. Modi, blessed by Me, in the centre. Every one carried out his or her allotted task with great enthusiasm. The volunteers realised that this was a unique chance, to be of help to really deserving patients at a very critical period of their lives. This is Narayana seva, that is to say, service of God, not service of Man. You too must help others, so that you may repay the service that you received. Do not look on, when you find some one in pain or grief. As far as possible, relieve the pain, console the grief-stricken. A man who works for wages, calculates the reward at so much per hour, receives his wages and quits. But, when one works as part of his worship, glad that he is given the chance to serve as long and as gladly as he can, he derives maximum Anandha. Dr. Modi also was happiest here, as he declared just now, for Prasanthi Nilayam has the atmosphere of work done as worship, to win the Grace of the Lord. The four hundred and fifty patients who attended the camp were full of joy, because their every want was fulfilled with sincere enthusiasm and forethought by the residents and the volunteers, inspired by My love.

Learn to have single-pointed concentration

It is considered auspicious when a new born baby casts its first glance on its mother's face. How lucky you all are that you were able to look upon Me as soon as the bandage was removed from your eyes by Dr. Modi. and his assistants! Suurdhas sang, "Why should I bewail my lot? Have all those who have eyes seen you? They are wasting their visual faculty on flippant fouling sights. But, though blind, I have succeeded in getting and retaining the vision of the Lord." I advise you, when you go home, to have the picture (now given to you) on the wall of your residence and bow before it, at least once in the morning and once in the evening; it will remind you of the ten days you spent here, the bhajan (devotional songs) you heard while you were in bed recovering from the operation, the tender hands that plaited your hair, washed your faces and fed you; I feel as if you are all leaving your parental home, to the places where your avocations call you. You are children of

Prasanthi Nilayam, belonging to this place, even before you came and even after you leave.

You must have observed how Dr. Modi was conducting so many operations so quickly and so successfully; it is the result of concentration, of single-pointed attention on the work on hand. Learn to have ekagratha (single-pointedness). Through that concentration, it is possible to open the inner eye also, clear and complete, so that man may visualise God. By taking to repeating the Name of God and picturing in the mind the glory of God who has that Name, as well as a thousand others, slowly the cataract of the inner eye will disappear and, man can see the God who is in his innermost heart, installed in the altar therein. Resolve now to enter upon this sadhana (spiritual practise) from this moment onwards.

Gain internal peace, internal joy; that can be done only when you act without an eye on the gain. The act must be its own reward; or rather, the act must be according to the prompting of the God within, so that its consequence is left to Him. Practise this attitude consistently and you will find great Peace welling within you and around you.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

5. Eyelids and the pupil

Date: 22 February 1968 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

I AM pleased prizes were awarded today to the students who manifested enthusiasm in social service, in reverential humility in the observance of disciplinary rules, and in scholastic attainments. Ability to win such prizes is a good foundation for a useful and efficient career later on. Education is not the acquisition of burdensome information regarding objects and men. It is the awareness of the immortal spirit within, which is the spring of joy, peace and courage. Here, you study the Vedas, the Shasthras and Puranas: in consonance with the teachings contained in them, you are also given instructions in yoga (control over senses) and dhyana (meditation). Growing in this atmosphere in Prasanthi Nilayam, learning those basic subjects that train you for a good and simple life - is a great piece of good fortune for you. Really, your parents too are fortunate. There are about five or six children in each family in this country. Among those millions of children, these few alone have secured this gift of Grace. That is something on which you can be congratulated.

Life has to be spent in accumulating virtue and safeguarding virtue, not riches. Listen and ruminate over the stories of the great moral heroes of the past, so that their ideals may be imprinted on your hearts. Virtue is becoming rare, nowadays, in the individual and in the family, society and community, in all fields of life, economic, political and even 'spiritual.' So also, there is a decline in discipline, which is the soil on which virtue grows.

Becoming rich is but a vulgar achievement

Unless each one is respected, whatever his status, his economic condition, his spiritual development, there can be no peace and no happiness in life. This respect can be aroused only by the conviction that the same Atma (Self Reality) that is in you is playing the role of the other person. See that Atma in others; feel that they too have hunger, thirst, yearning and desires as you have; develop sympathy and the anxiety to serve and be useful. Into this

Prasanthi Nilayam, persons come from all parts of the world, of all stages of development, with all types of problems, afflicted with all forms of pain or grief, inspired with all varieties of promptings. As students of the pathashala (educational institution), you must be shining examples of humility and reverence before them. You must by your behaviour bring good name to the parents, who pray that their children must live without distress or dishonour. Becoming rich is but a vulgar achievement; black marketeers and housebreakers also achieve it. Living without suffering or making others suffer - that is grander and nobler. You must make your kayam (body), kalam (time) and kanksha (wishes) instruments for uplift, not downfall. You have in the coming days, to go forth into comers of this land and awaken spiritual hunger among the people and provide the wherewithal by which it can be appeased. The atmosphere in which you are prosecuting your studies is very congenial for the training necessary for this role. You have as preceptors, Pandiths (scholars) who have renounced hearth and home and who are happy with the service they are privileged to render. You have teachers from America and North India, imbued with faith and devotion. They look upon you as their own children, as entrusted to their care by Me - and so they nurture you, as the eyelids nurture the pupil! Be grateful to them; you owe a great debt to them, the debt of children to the mother.

Be a light, radiating virtue and self-control

You have the valuable opportunity to listen to My discourses and directions. They have been printed upon your hearts; your talk is about them; your conversation is centered on Me, My words. My leelas (divine acts), My mahimas (glories). When you go to your villages, you share the sweetness of this experience with the young companions you have left there. My advice is: Apply this adoration in life. Show your companions here and in your villages how disciplined you are, how sincerely you obey your parents, how deeply you revere your teachers. Be a light, a lamp, radiating virtue and self-control in the village. Do not slide back into indiscipline, bad manners, irresponsibility and evil habits. Behave in your village, or wherever you are, as commendably as here. Rise from bed, there too, in the Bhrahma-muhurtham (the auspicious period, dedicated to Brahman meditation, (from 4.30 to 5.15 a.m.), recite the

Pranava (Aum), even if you have no group around you, repeat the Suprabhatham (awakening hymn), sit for some time immersed in dhyana (meditation), go through the yoga exercises, the Suuryanamskars (obeisance to Sun God); sing bhajans (devotional songs) when the hour reminds you that bhajan has started at Prasanthi Nilayam. Then, you will be carrying the sacred atmosphere of the Prasanthi Nilayam with you; your parents will be elated; the elders will learn from you the discipline which confers concord and courage. Do not complain against food; whatever the parents give, eat with pleasure. Do not protest against any errand that they may assign you. Run gladly, to fulfil it. When they want you to nurse them, nurse happily, intelligently, glad that you got the chance. So live here and everywhere, now and always, that I who see you and know all thoughts, words and deeds, can pour My Grace on you, more and more.

Make your home the seat of virtue, of morality, of love. Control anger and greed. That is the sign of the genuine bhaktha, not unrestricted speech and movements. You may claim to be a devotee and declare yourself as such, when you speak; but unless your egoism has gone and you love all equally, the Lord will not acknowledge your devotion!

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

6. Death: a welcome voyage

Date: 23 February 1968 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

This Conference of Office-bearers of Sathya Sai Organisations in Andhra Pradesh is meeting not in the capital city of the State, while similar Conferences of other States were held in the capitals of those States, like Bombay and Madras. You have the privilege of meeting in the Prasanthi Nilayam itself. This must remind you that the task you have taken upon yourselves is to transform your own villages into Prasanthi Nilayams, after transforming your own hearts into Prasanthi Nilayams.

This is the message of Sanathana Dharma (Eternal Religion), the goal to which all spiritual endeavour leads. The sages of India gave up the paths of superficial pomp and temporary security; they sought to gain inner peace and lasting joy. They discovered that these can be gained only by drawing the sap of life through the roots of one's own inner reality called Atma (soul). Though this lesson, that was revealed to them by God, is repeated, elaborated and propagated all these centuries by countless scholars, poets and speakers, very few accept it as the basis of life.

Millions all over the land recite the Name of God, but few have steady faith; few seek the Anandha (bliss) that contemplation on the Glory of God within the Atma can confer. They do so out of habit or for social conformity or to gain reputation for religiousness. Therefore the japam (recitation) does not cure pain, grief or greed.

Man is not conscious of Death, his companion

The Pandiths, who have learnt the ancient texts containing Atma-vidhya (Science of the Self), do not put into practice what they repeat orally; they have no faith in the assertions made in the Vedas. The canker of doubt has undermined their reverential attitude to the Vedas; they do not ensure the continuance of Vedhic studies, by initiating their sons into the Vedas. They devalue the Vedas into rupee-earning devices, and when they do not get

money through them, they are disappointed; they envy those who follow secular avocations. But, if they only develop faith, the Veda itself will foster them and ensure for them a happy contented life. The insect on the wing is snapped up by the frog's leaping tongue; the frog is caught unawares by the jaws of the snake; the snake is killed by the peacock; the peacock is killed by the hunter. One living thing is food for another; death lies in wait at every turn of day and night. Man is stalked ceaselessly by death; it may pounce any moment on its prey. He is not conscious of this companion; he has not learned how to meet him and rob him of the fruits of his exploit. The Atma does not die; only the body dies. When man knows this, death loses his sting, death is not feared, death is but welcome voyage into the known harbour. Dasaratha was so enamoured of his young queen, Kaikeyi, that he promised to grant her two boons, whatever they may be, whenever she desired! This was foolish; who can say what she will ask for, and when? It placed the Emperor Dasaratha fully at the mercy of her whim. And what a monstrous whim she had! The very moment Rama was to be installed on the throne as Prince Regent, she put forth her two demands: "Rama must be banished into the forest for as long as fourteen years! Her son, Bharatha, should be crowned Prince Regent, instead." He had to agree. The pang of separation from his dearly beloved son killed him when Rama left.

Service should not seek any reward

Pre-occupation with happiness derived from external objects and from others - this caused Dasaratha's death. All men are Dasarathas. They are enamoured of happiness derived from outside themselves, they are immersed in sensual, objective pursuits, and they reap the reward of grief and death.

The Organisations named after Me are not to be used for publicising My Name, or creating a new cult around My worship. They must try to spread interest in japam (recitation of God's Name), dhyanam (meditation) and other sadhanas (spiritual practices), which lead man Godward; they must demonstrate the joy derivable from bhajan (devotional group singing) and Namasmarana (remembering God's Name), the Shanthi (peace) that one can draw from Sathsang (good company). They must render seva (service) to the

helpless, the sick, the distressed, the illiterate and the needy. Their seva (selfless service) should not be exhibitionistic; it must seek no reward, not even gratitude or thanks from the recipients. Seva is sadhana, not a pastime of the rich and well placed. Each one must realise his own truth. That is the purpose of all the teaching, all the curing, all the counseling, all the organising, all the advising that I do. The blood in the body is the same in all the limbs. But the eye has function, which it alone can execute. The ear has another. Salt, which the tongue will welcome, hurt when it is put in the eye. This is the basis of the Varna-ashrama organisation, the specific allotment of duties and obligations as befits inherited skills and aptitudes, as well as the prescription of duties and obligations (Varna), in accordance with the progress in age and spiritual accomplishment (ashrama). In order to regulate conduct and limit emotions and passions, and ensure contentment and peace, such institutions are necessary; but, they must be permeated with love and mutual respect. Develop Love, scatter Love, reap Love. There is no religion higher than that. That is the noblest seva.

Be true, be polite, be strong in your convictions

Do not start a Sathya Sai Organisation to please some one, or under the compulsion of others. Since only office-bearers are invited to attend the World Conference at Bombay in May next, let not any one start any unit now, making himself an office-bearer, so that he can attend that conference. Units must be started only when there is a felt need, a yearning among the people. Do not become the target of ridicule, organising a bhajana mandali, and yourself not participating in the bhajan. If you genuinely feel that bhajan is of all activities the most beneficial, start a mandali (cell of devotees); otherwise, leave things alone. You and I have now come together; with the devotees from your villages, make a garland of sadhana for Me. I have no special attachment to any one; nor, any special aversion. I am like the electric fan that you see here: switch it on, you get the breeze; switch it off, you get no breeze. The fan has no attachment or aversion. Do not say one thing before others and another thing behind them; that is bad for an organiser. Be fair, be true, be polite, be strong in your convictions. Then you have My Blessings in all that you undertake.

You know that first you have to plough the land, feed it with water; then, sow the seed, pluck out the weeds, guard the crop by a fence, from cattle and goats, and wait patiently for harvest time. So also, the heart has to be ploughed by means of virtues fed with the water of Divine love, before the seeds of Divine Name are sown, later, the field has to be watched and weeds have to be destroyed; it is best to prevent the cattle of unsteadiness and doubt, by putting up the fence of Discipline; then, the Name of the Lord will flower into Meditation and the rich harvest of Knowledge can be reaped.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

7. The inner I

Date: 26 February 1968 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Shivarathri

MAN is no mere biped, an animal that struts about on two legs, instead of four. He has the unique destiny of realising and appreciating beauty truth, goodness, harmony, melody and conferring on himself and others love, compassion and sympathy. He can delve, not only into the secrets of nature, but into his own mystery and discover God, who is behind both Nature and himself. The clouds of conceit and ignorance hide from him this destiny. He can install in his heart the Shivam - the motivator of all creation, all existence and all dissolution. Shivam is Sathyam and Sundharam; that is to say, Goodness is Truth and Beauty. On this auspicious occasion of the Festival of Shiva, resolve to adore Him as the very breath of your life. Many of you have come to witness this day the amazing evidence of Divine Power. But you must not waste time in idle confabulations about the nature of that power and the process of its manifestation. Experience it, and be thrilled by it, fill yourself with its amazing Mystery which is divinity.

The ringing of the bells, the pealing notes of pipes, the beat of drums - all these are reminders of the pipes, drums, bells and conches that announce this auspicious day in Kailash (the Divine residence of Shiva). The stream of sacred ash that falls, during the bhajan by thousands, is another reminder. The emergence of the Linga from this body is the consummation, the announcement that you are in Kailash itself. That comes in the evening. And you celebrate it by vigil and fast, by japam (recitation of Lord's Name) and adoration.

The senses are one's deadly foes

The bee hovers around the lotus, it sits upon it, it drinks the nectar; while drinking the sweet intoxicating honey, it is silent, steadfast, concentrated, forgetful of all else. Man too behaves like that when he is in the presence of God. The hum of the bee ceases and it is silent when once the drinking of the nectar begins. Man too, sings, extols, argues, asserts, only until he discovers

the rasa (sweet essence). That rasa is prema-rasa (the sweetness of love). Where there is love, there can be no fear, no anxiety, no doubt, no ashanthi (absence of peace). When you are afflicted with ashanthi you can be sure that your love is restricted, your love has some ego mixed in it. The experiencer of the prema (love) is the inner I, which is the reflection of the real I, the Atma (soul). When the senses are out of action, that I will shine in its full glory. The senses are one's deadly foes; for, they drag your attention away from the source of joy inside you, to objects outside you. When you are convinced that they are at the bottom of this conspiracy to mislead you, you will certainly stop catering to them. The angler uses rod and line; that line has a float from which hangs inside the water a sharp hook with a worm. The fish is drawn by the worm to the hook, the float shakes, the angler feels the pull of the fish on the line, and he draws it on the land, where it is helpless, unable to breathe. The body is the rod, the yearning, the eager longing, is the line, intelligence, is the float, discrimination is the hook; knowledge is the worm; Atma, the fish, is caught thus by the clever angler. When you get (spiritual wisdom), Kaivalyam (divine status) draws towards you.

Travel beyond the realms of lust, anger and hate

Kaivalyam is the state in which the Divine is experienced as all-comprehensive, as Will, as Activity, as Bliss, as Intelligence, as Existence. You must suppress your thamas (ignorance), sublimate your rajas (passions) and cultivate sathwa (purity) in order to be established in Kaivalyam. You have come through thamas and rajas and you are now in the region of sathwa, as symbolised by the two gates through which you have come. Now, you must take the lesson of the symbol of the Flag of Prasanthi (supreme peace) to heart. It instructs you to travel beyond the realms of lust, anger and hate, reach the broad green region of love. Be seated therein in concentrated meditative prayer, and open the petals of your heart through yoga, so that the Supreme illumination may be gained. Fix your mind on that illuminated Lotus and Prasanthi will reign in your hearts. That is the best preparation for understanding the mystery of Lingodhbhava (materialisation of Lingam).

8. Atom of majesty

Date: 26 February 1968 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Shivarathri

MAN's mind is too full of the world; his stomach is demanding too much of his time and energy. His desires and wants are multiplying too fast for his capacity to satisfy them; his dreams are far too real for him; they lead him into false victories and absurd adventures. Engrossed in the analysis of the material world, he has lost all sense of spirit, sweetness and sublimity; under this new dispensation, truth has become just a word in the dictionary. Compassion is reduced to a meaningless travesty. Humility, patience, reverence - these are as invalid as a flameless lamp in the far distance.

The only hold that man has in this dreadful darkness is the name of God. That is the raft which will take him across this stormy sea, darkened by hate and fear, churned by anxiety and terror. People admire the phenomenal advance of science. But the advance has been from fear to greater fear, from destruction to more destruction. In prehistoric times, men killed each other using bows and arrows; now they kill entire populations with the help of atom bombs; this is praised as remarkable advance! The scientist cannot stop the rise of greed and hate in the human heart; he can only forge the weapons they require and improve upon their lethal efficiency. Mankind lives in daily dread of extinction as a result of the discoveries of science; for, any moment, the storm of hate may rain the bombs on their homes! Science has deprived man of self-confidence. He is not sure of even himself. He is afraid of himself for at the slightest provocation, he is transformed into a wild and vicious beast.

Ideals of Sanathana Dharma are unchangeable

You must be thankful that here at least you can calmly consider your own inner nature and resolve upon ways and means by which you can mould your destiny along the lines of Love and Contentment. The ideals laid down by Sanathana Dharma (Eternal Religion) for ensuring a happy peaceful life for man, individually and for society are valid even today; the disciplines marked

out therein are as beneficial today as when they were first ordained in the Shasthras. Their value is unchallengeable, unchangeable. Do not imagine yourselves as Hindhus for the reason that you are born in Hindhusthan. You are too entangled in the rules of caste, the ceremonial of rituals, and the coils of astrology to grasp your own inner reality. You do not realise the spark of divinity in you and try to raise it into a flaming fire of Divine Splendour, reducing your pretty 'I' into ashes. Sanathana Dharma tells you about that spark and teaches you how to foster it and develop it. When you ignore this Dharma and allow science to entice you, you are bringing disrespect to your culture, and disowning your country. Seekers from overseas are trekking towards this country attracted by its ancient lessons, teaching the way to acquire inner calm and inner light. They are apprehensive of the calamity towards which their countries are heading. They have confirmed the validity of many practices which you have been led to discard as superstitions. They have opened your eyes to values which you had neglected, with an air of superiority born of little acquaintance with science. They have found that manthras (sacred formulas) have potency to transform nature, that Vedhic recital can infuse harmony, that wrong pronunciation of manthras has deleterious effects.

God is the closest, the most reliable companion

The Name of God, with all its halo of glory and majesty, can cleanse the mind of passion and emotion and make it placid and pure. When the Name is repeated without concentration and without reverence, it cannot cleanse the mind. The vice and wickedness will remain. The Rakshasa (demonic) heroes, Ravana, Kumbhakarna and others, performed thapas (penance) and drew the Lord to their presence; but, though they got the desired boons from Him, they persisted in their vicious ways. We value cows for the yield of milk. We value men for their character, their friendly sympathetic attitude, their readiness and ability to serve, safeguard and save.

The Truth that there is perfect identity between the individual and universal is proclaimed at every breath by the silent announcement your breath makes' Soham (I am He). God is the closest, the fondest, the most reliable

companion. But Man, in his blindness, ignores Him and seeks the company of others. God is present everywhere, at all times. He is the richest and the most powerful guardian. Yet you ignore Him. The Lord is here, near, loving, accessible and affectionate. But, many do not open their eyes to the great opportunity. The Name will bring Him nearer to you. Now, the Name is on the tongue, the world is in the mind and the owner of the Name is in the heart. The world and its attractions are distracting you, obliterating the answer the Lord gives to the call of the Name.

God resides in everyone in the subtle Form

Reason is a bad guide in spiritual matters, unless it is rinsed of all traces of ego. Else, it discovers arguments to support the point of view that is pleasant to the person. A merchant had a fierce dog in his garden, to guard his house against trespassers. One day, when a traveller was passing along the road, the dog flew at him with bared teeth; so he hit it on the head with the thick stick he was carrying. The dog gave a howl of pain and slunk into the house. The master was enraged at this; he was not satisfied with the explanation of the traveller. He dragged him to the magistrate where he charged him with cruelty to his pet. "Why should he hit him on the head? He could have hit him on the tail," he argued. The traveller replied, "He jumped towards me with intent to bite me head foremost; if he had threatened to bite me with his tail, I would have certainly hit the tail." The magistrate let him off.

Do not attempt to justify your own prejudices and preferences by specious arguments; that will lead to self-deception not self-knowledge. That will heighten egoism, not lower it. God resides in every one as Lingam, in the subtle Form. In the anga (body), there is sangam (contact with the outer and inner world); in the sangam, resides the jangam (the moving, traversing, changing place) and as the basis of the jangam, there is the Lingam. Linga is a word of two syllables; Lin and ga, Lin means "that into which everything merges (li-yathe)," ga means "that into which everything goes (gam-yathe)." The Linga is a symbol of the universal into which all particulars merge, from which all particulars emerge. The Linga is the Swa-swaruupa (the real Form of the Reality). The Lingodhbhava (materialisation of Linga) is an announcement

of the advent of the Avathar (Divine Incarnation), as the Guide and the Leader.

Man is a treasure chest with the Divine Spark in it

The way in which the Avathar has to be used for one's liberation and uplift is: watch His every step, observe His actions and activities, follow the guiding principle of which His life is an elaboration. Mark His love, His Compassion, His Wisdom, try to bring them into your own life. Man has become artificial, crooked, twisted out of his normal shape. He has left behind the simple natural ways and made his mind a lumber-room for ideas, worries, anxieties and terrors. He can live on very much less, with much greater joy for himself and others. If only he remembers that he is a treasure chest with Divine spark in it he will be more loving and more useful.

God incarnates for the revival of Dharma (righteousness) which includes morality, truth, virtue, love and a host of other qualities that uphold the communities of man as well as the individual. The other purposes usually given, such as serving the devoted, destroying the wicked, reestablishing the sacred tradition - these are all secondary. For, he who is righteous will be guarded from harm by righteousness itself; he who is unrighteous will fall into disaster through the evil that he perpetrates. The one task includes all else. I shall fulfil that task, whatever the comments that others may make. Comment is a natural corollary. I do not pay any attention to it; nor should you. The higher the hill, the deeper the valley. Praise or blame will not affect Me in the least. The unshakable foundation on which My work is proceeding is Anandha (Bliss). I cannot be moved away from it by any one, at any time. The Pandavas knew best. That is why the Avathar, Krishna, was the heart of the Five Brothers. Dharmaraja was the head, Arjuna was the shoulders, Bheema was the stomach, Nakula and Sahadheva were the legs. That was the one living body that fought and won the battle of good versus evil, at Kurukshethra (battle field of Mahabharatha war).

Do not yield to cunning and lose faith

Dedicate your heart to God; God will be one with you, the heart of your heart. Do not exaggerate the creation and the manifestation of the Linga; it is only the manifestation of an atom of My majesty. In Me, who can create worlds, and fill the Universe, there are things more worthy of adoration; universal love, the teaching of dharma (virtue), the revival of the Vedas, the fostering of the good, the benediction on sadhakas (spiritual aspirants). Do not yield to cleverness, causistry and cunning and lose faith. A boy told his father, who asked him how many oranges there were, after he had given one to him and was holding one in his own hand. "There are three." Asked to explain, the boy impertinently said, touching the oranges with his finger, "One, two...one plus two is three." Well, said the father, "you eat the third orange; I will have these two." That put an end to the conceit of the young fellow. Be straight; follow the straight path; you will reach the goal.

9. The true tablet

Date: 05 March 1968 / Location: Hyderabad / Occasion: Prasanthi Vidhwanmahaasabha

WHAT a great fortune to be born in Bharath, which is redolent with the fragrance of God, echoing through ages the voices calling humanity to proceed along the path of God. The saints and sages from this land have been teaching the people of East and West manifold ways to lift the veil of ignorance, that hides God from Man. One such "means" is the worship of 'idols,' symbolising God. This method has been grossly misinterpreted by many fanatics with one-track minds. The significance of the idol is simple and can be easily understood. When you desire to drink something, say, milk, you need a cup! The milk then fills the cup and takes the form of the cup. When you have the Linga as the idol, you feel it is filled with Divine effulgence, glory and grace. When you worship the Krishna idol, you have a more ornate cup wherein you fill the same Divine essence, so that you may quaff it and slake your thirst. The seeker elevates the stone image into a replica of God, he does not reduce God into a stone. The idol is just a container, prompter, a base, a reminder, a residence which God is invited to occupy. The Supreme is not squeezed into the small; the small is recognised as symbolic of the Supreme. Through the seen to the unseen, from the drop to the sea, from the patent to the latent - that is how idol-worship helps the aspirant. In fact, no one can conceive of the Almighty without picturing It as Power, Light, Mercy, Wisdom, Energy, Intelligence, Purity. And, these qualities can enter the consciousness only through some concrete experience, as the Sun, the Lotus, the Sky, the Ocean and the Wave etc. The name is a vocal image, the image is a visual base. The seed contains the tree; the Linga contains the manifestable and the manifested Universe, including the Creator whose Will it is.

Aspire now, adore now, achieve now

When the name is pronounced by the tongue, and the image is adored by the mind, these should not degenerate into mechanical routine; the meaning of the Name and the content of the Form must, at the same time, inspire and

illumine the consciousness. Escape the routine; involve yourselves in the attitude of worship deeply and sincerely. That is the way to earn peace and content, for which all human activity ought to be dedicated and directed. Planting the sapling of the cotton-tree, how can you hope for the mango? Do it now! That is the urgency of this problem of all problems, of winning peace and contentment. If you feel hungry now, you cannot have your meals tomorrow; you do not eat your meals now, fearing that you will be hungry tomorrow. Eat when you are hungry - not before or after. Aspire now, adore now, achieve now. A king once ordered a contractor to build a palace for him; he wanted him to use wood that will be smooth and without knots, the whole length. The contractor searched all over the region and could not get wood that was straight, smooth and knot-less. At last, he saw a few banana trees and found that their trunks were of the description the king had given. He cut the trees and carried them to the king. The king said, "Of course, the thing is smooth and nice, but, they have not got the requisite strength. You cannot use them for the building!" It is not the outer quality that matters; it is the inner strength that imparts value and significance. The heart has to be pure. Constant recollection of the glory and majesty of God, who is the Indweller, through the instrumentality of the Name, helps to purify the heart. That is the B12 vitamin that promotes spiritual health. There is no need for any other tablet.

Man thirsts for God and cannot live without Him

Life is a pilgrimage, where man drags his feet along the rough and thorny road. With the Name of God on his lips, he will have no thirst; with the Form of God in his heart, he will feel no exhaustion. The company of the holy will inspire him to travel in hope and faith. The assurance that God is within call, that He is ever near, will lend strength to his limbs and courage to his eye.

Remember that with every step, you are nearing God; and God too, takes ten steps towards you when you take one step towards Him. There is no stopping place in this pilgrimage; it is one continuous journey, through day and night; through valley and desert; through tears and smiles; through death and birth, through tomb and womb. When the road ends, and the Goal is gained, the

pilgrim finds that he has travelled only from himself to himself, that the way was long and lonesome, but the God that led him unto it was all the while in him, around him, with him, and beside him! He himself was always Divine. His yearning to merge in God was but the sea calling to the Ocean! Man loves, because He is Love! He craves for melody and harmony, because He is melody and harmony. He seeks Joy, for He is Joy. He thirsts for God, for he is composed of God, and he cannot exist without Him.

This is God's world and all beings are His

God is to be recognised in all that exists, all that is charming, or suffering, blooming or drooping. He is Intelligence in the insect, Faithfulness in the dog, Latent Energy in the rock! Vivekanandha announced at Chicago that Hinduism uncovered the upadhi (body encasement) and sought the inner core of the Divine in all things, animate and inanimate. A gentleman may wear morning dress, evening dress, dinner coat or luncheon slacks; he is the same inside all these dresses, isn't he? If you know the road and the goal, then you can discover whether you are progressing or not; otherwise how can you? The goal is to enlarge your vision, your sympathy, your love to the extent that God has spread His Love, His Compassion and His Grace. So, be ever watchful to see that you strive to take in more and more of God into you. Blood has to circulate from head to foot; Love has to circulate from high to low; then only can health and happiness be ensured, for the individual and for the community. This is God's world; all beings are His. He loves them all, as the Moon sheds coolness on all. Do not get attached to wordly things and pursuits. Be in the world but, do not let the world be in you. Work disinterestedly, content to do your duty as best as you can. Have no desires to place before God, for, whatever He does with you, however He treats you, is the gift He likes best to give you!

Practise the Upanishaths that you study. They are the discoveries of practical men and women, who set upon the task of conquering the alternating calamity of joy and grief, and of attaining perfect equanimity and balance. Practice alone makes man perfect. Each life is like a day's march in the pilgrimage; make the fullest use of your talents and march forward to pitch

the tent nearer the goal when darkness falls. Do not waste a single moment, in idling or loose living. Live in the Presence, in fear and humility, in love and service.

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

Then, you have the secret of shanthi and contentment.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

10. The sour and the sweet

Date: 11 March 1968 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

AN officer of the Insurance Organisation and another from the Iron and Steel Organisation spoke to you now, from this platform. Their speeches provide good bases for my discourse. You insure life, because you are not quite sure of it, isn't it? To assure yourselves of a comfortable life, you are persuaded to insure and pay premia. But you can derive happiness by controlling and conquering the mind and the senses. God alone can guard you against the terror of Death. Iron and Steel are produced in blast furnaces, where ore is melted and other components are added. The molten iron is carried in pails by cranes and poured by ladles, which though they handle heat are themselves immune to heat. The crane holds other materials, but does not hold itself! The mind is like that. It holds, it manipulates, it handles, all other things; it cannot carry itself, it cannot manipulate and transmute itself! The mind cannot hold the holder, that is to say, the Inner Motivator, God. So, in order to save yourselves from the waywardness of the mind and its minions, you have to hold on to the 'holder.'

Profess only as much as you can practise

There is iron; there is, also, a magnet. The magnet will draw the iron to itself; that is the destiny of both. But, if the iron is covered with the rust, the grace of the magnet may not operate strong enough to draw the iron near. Greed for sensual pleasure will certainly act as rust! It acts as dust, which induces rust; the rust will ultimately burst the iron itself and change its innate nature. So, it has to be tested constantly and dusted. Then, when it contacts the magnet, it too earns the magnetic quality and it gets rest from its quest. That achievement is the best, for both magnet and iron.

The dust of sensual greed can be prevented by keeping good company, and putting into practice the axioms of good conduct that one can imbibe from it. Hypocrisy is rampant now in the spiritual field more than in any other. For, here, the claims are tall; the promise is prodigious; but, the performance is

pygmean! There is the stow of a lost fowl, in a village. The ryot (farmer) complained aloud: "Only one stranger came into this village yesterday! And, he was a Brahmin! But, my cockerel has been stolen and eaten!" Thus, the Brahmin's vow of vegeterianism was revealed as a hoax. Profess only as much as you can practise; do not blabber more than you are prepared to fulfil. Be sincere and honest to your own conscience. The universe, including the house within which you dwell, namely, the body, is composed of the five elements: earth, water, fire, wind and ether - elements that act upon the senses as smell, taste, colour, touch and sound. Since the elements are 'divine emanations,' each of them has to be treated with reverence and circumspection. For example: the earth. If you scatter seeds on the soil, they may not sprout; if you plant them too deep in the soil, they may not throw up their shoots, They may give up the struggle to rise up into the light! So too, each element has to be used, under some limitations, not as and how you like.

Treat the elements as vesture of the Almighty

Pouring water down the throat can well become torture, if the limit is crossed. So too, there is a limit to the heat you can bear or the sound you can hear, with safety. You cannot breathe comfortably in a typhoon, nor can your ear-drums stand the pressure of an explosion within earshot! Any use of the elements, over and above legitimate bounds, is a sacrilege. Bend and place the bed-roll silently on the floor; if you stand erect and throw the bed with a flop, on the floor, the avoidable noise you cause is a sacrilege on the God who gave you the medium through which sound travels.

Water is the emanator of the rasa principle, the taste factor. There must be a balanced equilibrium in the stomach of man of the various tastes - sweet, bitter, salt, acid, sour, acrid, hot, etc. If the balance is upset, by the predominance of any one taste, health suffers a downfall! If the emanations from any one of the five elemental components in your body are more than tolerable, health will be damaged and sadhana (spiritual practise) will be affected adversely! Treat the elements as if they are the vesture of the Almighty. He is the current that activates everything everywhere.

Sharpen the intellect, then the Unity in nature will become evident. The most revered and the most popular mantra (prayer clothed in ritual formula) in the Vedas is the Gayathri; it seeks the grace of the Source of all Light, to foster one's intelligence, and for nothing more! Thenali Ramakrishna, the famous Andhra poet, humorist and philosopher, once happened to lose his way while traversing an area of thick jungle. You know that he lived in the reign of the famous Emperor Krishnadeva Raya, of the Vijayanagar dynasty, about 1500 A.D. He was attached to the Court and was honoured as a wise and quick-witted minister.

Ramakrishna's encounter with Goddess Kali

While Ramakrishna was wandering desperately in the jungle, he saw an old sage. Ramakrishna ran forward and fell at his feet, in reverential homage. He asked the sage how he got caught in that wild forest. The sage said, "The same mysterious force that dragged you here has dragged me too to this spot. The moment when I have to cast away the body I occupied so long, has arrived! I shall initiate you, now, into the mantra which I have recited all these years, as my talisman and treasure." It was the mantra of Mother Kali, and he whispered it into the ear of Ramakrishna.

Ramakrishna was overjoyed at the great gift; he retired into a temple of the Mother, deep in the recesses of the jungle and was intent on the meditation of the Mother, propitiated by the mantra. At mid-night one day, the aboriginal Koyas of the forest came into the temple, with a goat which they sought to offer as sacrifice to please Her and propitiate Her. Ramakrishna hid behind the idol and when the knife was about to fall on the neck of the victim, he exclaimed, "I am the Mother of all living Beings, including you. If you kill my child, I will curse you, I cannot bless you!" Believing that it was Kali that spoke, the Koyas desisted and went away. Now, Kali manifested before Ramakrishna; She asked him what he liked to receive from Her! She was pleased with his sadhana. "Which do you want?" she queried, holding a plate of curdsrice in one hand and a plate of milk-rice in another. He wanted to know the consequences of eating either plate before deciding which plate to ask for. She explained, "The curds-rice will endow you with riches and

economic prosperity; the milk-rice will make you a wise scholar. Now, make your choice."

God loves those who have self-confidence

Ramakrishna thought within himself, "This not good being a fool in possession of vast riches; nor will scholarship fill the stomach, three times a day." He was a clever person! So, he asked a further question: "I see two plates before me. Before I make the choice, tell me how each will taste?" She laughed and said, "How can I describe the taste and make you understand the difference? You will have to taste them yourself" and gave him both the plates for the purpose. The clever Ramakrishna hastily put them both in his mouth and managed to swallow the curds and the milk and the entire quantity of rice from both plates! Kali was mortified and exclaimed that his impertinence called for dire punishment. Ramakrishna accepted his mistake and invited the punishment she proposed to inflict. But, can the Mother's punishment destroy the child, however reprehensible the conduct of the child may be? "My sentence will certainly save you, do not tremble," said Kali. Then she pronounced the sentence thus: "Become a Vikatakavi." That is to say, "Be a clever clown, having great influence at Court, accumulating much wealth and guiding all those who approach you with good advice." As Bhat said, "Everyone has the fight to earn Grace," but, those, like Ramakrishna, who have faith in themselves, will earn it soon and plentifully. God loves those who have the selfconfidence and the courage of conviction and who seize every opportunity to improve their spiritual status.

I do not accept from you flowers that fade, fruits that rot, coins that have no value beyond the national boundary. Give Me the lotus that blooms in your Manasa sarovara - the clear pellucid waters of the lake - of your inner consciousness; give Me the fruits of holiness and steady discipline.

I am above all this worldly etiquette, which enjoins you to seeelders with some fruit or flower in your hand. My world is the world of the spirit; there, values are different. If you are happy, with faith in God and fear of sin, that

is enough "service," enough kinkaryam for Me. It pleases Me so.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

11. Chiththa shuddhi yoga

Date: 01 March 1968 / Location: Hyderabad / Occasion: Vijayanagar Colony

MAN is Sathyam, Shivam and Sundharam (Truth, Goodness and Beauty). That is why he is drawn by the true, the beautiful and the good. He hates being labelled a liar or an ugly person or a bad character! Man has to go out of his way, take special pains, to tread the path of falsehood; it is more difficult for him to sustain a lie than support the truth. So, man is turning back on his destiny when he revels in falsehood, ugliness and wickedness. Rama and Lakshmana, though born of different mothers, were drawn to each other by mysterious ties of fraternal reverence. When quite a boy, Lakshman used to weep inconsolably while with his mother! sage Vashishta, the Court Preceptor, suggested that the child may be placed in the same cradle as Rama, born a few days earlier, and, when this was done, he slept sound and sweet. The two were bound by the same destiny. Man too is bound to God (Rama), by the same destiny. He can get sound and sweet sleep only in the lap of God. Separated from Him, he can only wail.

Have the Name of God on your tongue, in your breath, ever. That will evoke His Form, as the inner core of every thing, thought or turn of events. That will provide you with His company, contact with His unfailing energy and bliss. That is the Sathsanga (good association) that gives you maximum benefit. Converse with God who is in you; derive courage and consolation from Him. He is the Guru most interested in your progress. Do not seek the Guru outside you, in hermitages or holy places. The God in you is father, mother, preceptor, friend.

Man cannot have peace without reliance on God

You know how the Pandavas felt about Lord Krishna. As soon as he learnt that Krishna had promised to be on the side of the Pandava cousins in the war that was to begin soon, Dhritarashtra, the head of the Kaurava clan, asked Krishna, "O Krishna! We too are your kinsmen; yet why do you throw your weight on the other scale, the side of those Pandava brothers?" Krishna

replied, "Kinsmen! But, what a difference! You are fire and they are water! Water that quenches the thirst of wanderers in the desert!" Dhritrashtra said that the attachment He had for his cousins was something inexplicable. Krishna declared, "I shall explain. Dharmaraja, the eldest brother, is as My head; Bheema, the second, is as My shoulders; Arjuna, the third among the brothers, is as My arms; and Nakula and Sahadheva (the twins) who are the fourth and the fifth among them are as My feet!" Notice how intimate they had all become to God! And, tiffs, in spite of all the long trail of loss, infamy, calamity, exile, and poverty that they suffered, while in His keeping - as non-believers may say! They bore all, boldly and in undiminished Bliss. Without firm reliance on this ever-present God, man cannot have peace. In western countries now God is denied, and man is relying on himself; he exaggerates his own intelligence and sense of adventure and prides himself on the advance he has made through science and technology. But intelligence without equanimity is filling mental hospitals. Peace is fleeing from the hearts of men and women; social harmony is becoming a distant dream; international concord is a mirage, pursued by a few. Man travels to the moon, but does not explore his own inner levels of consciousness, and understanding them, cleanse them and control them.

Way to prepare the heart to live in Love

The instrument through which he is able to master nature is itself not really understood by man. When once that is understood, all that is understood through it, will become plain. This is what the sages of India did; they sought to know that which if known, all else can be known. The Upanishaths lay down the process of this discovery. The expression of that discovery, in practical life, is Love; for, it is Love that creates, sustains and engulfs all. Without Love, no one can claim to have succeeded in deciphering God and His handiwork, the Universe. God is Love; live in Love - that is the direction indicated by the sages. Love can grow only in a well-ploughed heart, free from brambles. So, the heart has to be prepared by means of Namasmarana (constant recital of the Name); it can well be called a yoga, like bhakthi or jnana or karma (devotion, wisdom, action). It can be called "Chiththashuddhi yoga," - "The path of Consciousness-cleansing." Charge every second of time with the

Divine current that emanates from the Name.

12. Offering poison

Date: 09 March 1968 / Location: Hyderabad / Occasion: Vijayanagar Community Hall

The only ray of hope in the enveloping gloom of fear, violence, and cruelty of enforced conformity, of hatred and persecution, is the Peace that one can win through self-control and sadhana. That Peace will pervade and purify the inner consciousness as well as the outer atmosphere. Sadhana is the life-breath of man; struggle for power, self and pelf is but the breath of poison. Poor silly man craves for the air that will destroy him, the food that will torment him and the drink that will defile him! He revels in ruining his nature and denying his excellence! That is the tragedy of civilisation. He denies the innate excellence of the world around him too. He refuses to see in it the handiwork of God, evident in beauty, harmony, melody, truth, goodness, love, sympathy, law and learning, in everything that strikes the eye and fills the mind. He prides himself in his blindness and raises it into a philosophy called atheism! He dismisses the grapes as sour, before even leaping to reach the bunch; he declares the sea as shallow, before wading into it! Searching for the truth, which is God, is too hard a task for his feeble wings. No wonder that man is overwhelmed by fear and frailty! He cannot escape them so long as he creeps in the slush and does not soar into the light.

Poison is man's daily food to-day

People say that all this is the subtle effect of time. Well, what exactly is time? Time is but the deepening of the root, the ripening of the fruit, the mellowing of a habit into a tradition. Without these, time is but a turn of the wheel. Time has endowed India with a precious heritage: sahana (tolerance of diversity); sathyam (adherence to truth); mathrubhavam (reverence towards the Mother, as the real educator and as gratitude for the gift of birth); dharma (the fundamental prop of stable society, like integrity, service, compassion, etc). But this heritage is locked up in books, and spread out on platform; it is not utilised in daily life. Poison is man's daily food today. His eye delights in poison; his mouth spouts poison; his ears wag when poison is proclaimed; his feet carry him to dens of poison; his mind cogitates plans to poison other's

mind! God alone can swallow the poison and rid the world from the holocaust, as Shiva did when the Halahala (the dreadful poison that emanated from churning the Primal Ocean) threatened to destroy the world. Meditate on Shiva, the God whose throat is blue as a result of the poison he drank; poison will then be powerless to harm you. I call upon you to bring and offer to Me all the poison in you; take from Me health, happiness, Heaven itself. The Kalpavriksha (Wish-fulfilling tree of Heaven) in the human heart is being suffocated by wild greenery and bushy briars. Remove this stifling undergrowth and the tree will grow and yield fruit.

Every minute must mark a forward step

See God in every one you meet; see God in everything you handle. His Mystery is immanent in all that is material and non-material; as a matter of fact, it has been discovered that there is no matter or material. It is all God, an expression of His Mystery! Derive joy from the springs of joy within you and without you; advance, do not stand still or recede. Every minute must mark a forward step. Rejoice that it is given to you to recognise God in all and welcome all chances to sing His Glory, to hear His chronicle, to share His presence with others. God has His hands in all handiworks; His feet on all attitudes, His eyes beyond all horizons, His face before every face. That is what the Bhagavathgeetha declares; you who read the Geetha can vouch for the accuracy of that statement, if only you have faith in it and live in its light. I shall now light the lamp, which will burn while you offer bhajan, continuously for twelve hours. Venkatavadhani said that the lamp will burn clear and bright when you pour any one of the three oils - bhakthi (devotion), jnana (spiritual wisdom) or vairagyam (detachment). No. You must have all three; they are all components of one lamp only. They are like the plate, the oil, and the wick. Devotion is the plate, detachment the oil, and spiritual wisdom, the wick, which can be lit by striking the match, shraddha (steady faith).

13. The upward and downward pulls

Date: 26 March 1968 / Location: Venkatagiri

THE Jyothirlinga (effulgent subtle form of Shiva) is represented as hanging in mid-air, between the pull and counter-pulls of a magnet from above and a magnet from below; evidently, it is of ferrous metal. Man too is like a ferrous linga, drawn upwards by the craving for liberation and for merging in the Super-Soul and drawn downwards by the craving for satisfying the senses and earning and possessing things from the nature around him. Now, the upward pull is becoming weaker. Respect for spiritual institutions, temples, holy places, elders and sacred books is fast declining. Pride in material wealth and competition in acquiring it, are fast increasing. This is the tragedy of the times.

Man imagines that he has achieved much as a result of his search for material pleasures. He has discovered electricity, and is using it for giving light. But what poor glory is this! When the Sun rises, even the brightest bulb pales into insignificance. Man has invented the fan and by means of electricity, he is able to induce breeze. But, when a storm arises in nature, the toughest tree is uprooted and man's handiwork of brick and mortar is laid in ruins, with the roofs flying in the air! On what basis can he erect his pride?

Man must be aware of the Divine Spark within

The Sun is but a star among billions in space. The earth is but a speck, rotating around the Sun. The nation to which he belongs is but a fraction of that spark; his village is a microscopic dot in that fraction and he is but one among the thousands or lakhs of people residing therein. He struts about for a few winks of the eye of time, and prides himself most stupidly, as if he is the lord and master.

But his real title to joy is not this. It is that he is the child and inheritor of immortality; he is the repository of Divinity, he can by various paths attain the state of Divinity itself! A machine without the power to activate it is of no

use; so too, a human body without the Divine Spark is of no avail. Without that spark, man is a tree that bears no fruit, a cow that yields no milk; he must become aware of the spark, he must know how to illumine oneself with it and cover oneself with its splendour.

You are living now in the dark, in ignorance. The knowledge that you are the Divine Spark, encased in the sheaths of bliss, intelligence, feelings, sensations and organic substances - this knowledge is the light. You must light your own lamp. You cannot walk in the light of another's lamp. You cannot exist on the money in the purse of another. Have your own money; then alone are you free. Earn the knowledge yourself. Even knowing it is not enough; you must experience it. The well has water; but that is not enough. It must be brought up in the bucket and used to wash and to quench, the thirst. The mind moves only towards the right and the pure, of its own accord; but the senses and the outer world drag it towards the wrong and the impure. The white cloth gets dirty, and when the dirt is removed, it regains its whiteness. The Prasanthi Vidhwan-mahasabha is commissioned to tell the people the basic principles of this process, which is way of life, a steady upward journey.

Pull out the fangs of six cobras in your mind

Individual effort and Grace, both are essential. Shankara says, "Ishwara anugrahath evapumsam adhwaitha vasana" - "through the Grace of the Lord alone can man develop a desire for the non-duality of the Universe," for the One without a second. Seeing only the One is jnana (spiritual wisdom); and jnana alone confers kaivalyam (liberation). Note down all the things for which you have cried so far. You will find that you have craved only for paltry things, for momentary distinctions, for fleeting fame; you should cry only for God, for your own cleansing and consummation. You should weep, wailing for the six cobras that have sheltered themselves in your mind, poisoning it with their venom: Lust, anger, greed, attachment, pride and malice. Quieten them as the snake charmer does with his swaying flute. The music that can tame them is the singing aloud of the Name of God. And when they are too intoxicated to move and harm, catch them by the neck and pull out their fangs as the

charmer does. Thereafter, they can be your playthings; you can handle them as you please. When these are laid low, you will gain equanimity. You will be unaffected by honour or dishonour, profit or loss, joy or grief. Rama was not elated when his father proposed to enthrone him; nor was he depressed when, even as he was being led to the throne, his father proposed that he spend fourteen years as an exile in the forest! He was as cool when Parashurama challenged him to battle, for having bent and broken the bow of Shiva, as when he broke it and won the hand of Seetha.

Dharma lays down limits for man's passions

Dhroupadhi yearned to share the calamities of her husbands; Seetha refused to stay back in capital, when Rama moved into the forest. She said, "My parents have taught me the right path for the wife; I know that the path lies along the footsteps of the husband. You are the Moon, Rama-chandhra; I am the Light of the Moon. We are inseparable. We have to be together." Urmila, the wife of his brother Lakshmana (who accompanied Him into exile, of his own accord) said, "I shall remain in the capital, for, if I come you will not be able to serve the Lord Rama with undivided attention." That was how she revealed her greatness. Kaushalya, the mother of Rama, was overcome with joy when her son entered the inner apartments as she thought he had come to receive her blessings, before the coronation ceremony. But she was shocked when Rama asked her blessings for a happy life in the forest! "Promise me that you will be full of joy, the fourteen years I spend in exile," he pleaded. She said, "I shall come with you. I am queen only in name. My life has been a stream of tears. Vishwamithra took you away from us; I spent anxious days when you were with him, countering the demons; then when Parashurama appeared before you, challenging you for a fight, I was really overpowered by grief. I can never be happy, away from you." But Rama was able to convince her that her place was with the grieving father, King Dhasahratha, her master and Lord. Kaushalya blessed Him, "May the Dharma that you revere and represent guard you ever." Dharma is the maryadha (the boundary), the limit that the intelligence lays down for the passion, emotions, impulses of man. To explain their importance and application to daily life is the task I have entrusted to the Pandiths who are members of the Prasanthi

Vidhwanmahasabha. Manava (man) means one who observes maim (measure or limit.)' He does not run wild and untrimmed; he submits willingly to control, regulation and discipline.

This conquest of the ego is a very hard task; years of persistent effort are needed to get success in this endeavour.

For getting a Degree you struggle in the University for a number of years, poring over books night and day; how much more difficult is this examination, success in which guarantees lasting happiness, and escape from the weary round of birth and death?

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

14. One-fourth and three-fourths

Date: 27 March 1968 / Location: Venkatagiri

MAN yearns to spend his days in the Divine Presence, in service to God, in the contemplation of Divine Glory for that is the atmosphere which is the breath of his life. Without it, he is but an animal, one among so many. From birth, his activities have to be directed to moral purification and spiritual attainment. These alone lead one to lasting happiness. The most direct method of spiritual success is Nishkama karma (desireless action), action without any attention or attachment to the fruit therefrom, action as duty, action as dedication, action as worship. But, action and the fruit thereof are not two separate entities, the fruit is the action itself, in its final stage, the climax, the conclusion. The flower is the fruit; the fruit is the flower; one is the beginning, the other is the legitimate end. The flower becomes the fruit. The action becomes the consequence. One's duty is to act; act well, act in fear of God; act within the bounds of morality; act in love; continue acting; the consequences will naturally follow as the fruit follows the flower. One need not worry or exult. Act enthusiastically, with faith - success is yours. Arjuna acted so.

Stick to the good whatever the obstacle

Arjuna never lost heart, once the Geetha was taught to him. He revived the drooping spirits of others. He engaged in battle, as dedicated in a yajna (sacrificial rite). But, Karna his great rival, had as charioteer a person called Shalya. While the charioteer of Arjuna filled him with the highest wisdom and the deepest peace, Shalya filled Karna with despondency and doubt. Shalya means "dart, arrow." His charioteer Shalya became a thorn on his side, a weapon of death for Karna. Have the Lord as your charioteer; you can win through. Never select a Shalya as your guide and preceptor.

Discriminate; discover which is good, which is beneficial, which is harmful, then stick to the good, whatever the obstacle. Look at Dasaratha. He is the symbol for the individual, having the ten chariots (senses - five for action, five

for knowledge). He listened to the charming voice of delusion, and engineered his own destruction. Kaikeyi, his youngest queen, enticed him into the path of grief. Pravrtthi (worldly activity) must result from nivrtthi (spiritual detachment); activity must result from the awareness of detachment. That is the secret of a happy life! The controversy about the adequacy of one or other of the four Yogas - Bhakthi, Jnana, Karmaand Raja - is needless waste of breath, for, all four are needed, and all four contribute to the ultimate victory. Karma yoga is the earthen lamp; Bhakthi yoga is the oil in it; Raja yoga is the wick; Jnana yoga is the light! Good karma will lead to the attitude of devotion and dedication, seeing God in all beings, witnessing the hand of God in all happenings, and this leads to worship; as a result of worship, breathing of the vital airs, the process of concentration - all set themselves right; and, as the climax of all this sadhana (spiritual practice), the Reality is revealed in its full splendour.

Strong faith is enough to bring -God to the devotee

Egotism is the mightiest enemy that has to be overpowered and destroyed. When Rama was proceeding from one hermitage to another in the forest, the rishis (sages) who were expecting Him to visit them made elaborate preparations to receive Him; they prepared lists of grievances to be presented to Him, and hoped to win His Grace by competitive pomp and adulation, by exhibition of superior asceticism! The old woman, Shabari, who was the attendant of the sage Mathanga, was told by her dying master that Rama will be passing that way and so, she longed in sincere anguish that she must be spared until she could wash the Lotus Feet of Rama with her tears. The sages sneered at her audacity and laughed at her foolish hope. Rama visited the hermitage of the egotistic ascetics on his way; they read out the verses of welcome they had composed; they presented a petition in which they had listed the atrocities committed by the Rakshasas (demons); they complained that the river water which was their only source of supply was contaminated and had become undrinkable. Rama told them in His reply that the water will be rendered pure and potable as soon as they stop reviling Sabari and start appreciating her simple, sincere yearning for God. Shabari had strong and steady faith; that was enough to bring Rama to her lowly hut.

Austerity, scholarship, power, authority, experience, riches - these are handicaps that obstruct the acquisition of that simple, sincere Faith that God will accept.

The discontented man is as bad as lost

Resist the temptation to satisfy the senses, to acquire what the world can give, to accumulate material gains. Set limits to your wants. There was a pupil once, in the kingdom of Raghu, who asked his preceptor at the conclusion of his studies what Dakshina (thanksgiving offering) he will accept from him. Dakshina means offerings made in gratitude for service rendered. The Guru told him that he needed no other dakshina than his gratitude; it was enough if he lived according to his teachings and brought honour to his preceptor thereby. But the pupil insisted that he must indicate his need and tell him some sum of money or gifts that he would accept. So, just to ward him off and get rid of him, the Guru named an impossible sum of money; "You learnt sixteen Vidhyas (branches of knowledge) from me; well, bring me sixteen lakhs of gold nishkas (coins)." At this, the pupil went off, to collect the sum. The disciple went to Emperor Raghu, and got from him the promise that he will fulfil his every desire; then he placed his petition for sixteen lakhs of gold nishkas before him. Raghu was rendered desperate by the vast sum needed; though Emperor, he was too deep in austerity to have the sum on hand. Still, in order to keep his plighted word, he invaded the realm of Kubera (the God of wealth), and brought back as loot enormous stocks of gold. "Take all this and give your preceptor what he has asked for; keep the balance for yourself" the king said. The pupil refused to take a coin more than what he had to offer as Dakshina to his Guru. "I have brought them for you; it is all yours, take them," insisted Raghu. But the young man resisted the temptation and stood his ground. That is real heroism. Asanthushtah dhwijo nashtah - "the discontented man is as bad as lost." Rely on the Lord and accept whatever is your lot. He is in you, with you. He knows best what to give and when. He is full of Prema (Love).

The place one needs most is his natural habitat

That is My uniqueness: Prema. Prema is the special gift I bring, the special medium through which My Grace operates. That is the basis of all My acts. God is said to reside in every being. Yes; He resides as Prema. Devoid of Prema, the world becomes a cauldron of misery. It is as water to the fish. Keep a fish in a golden bowl, set with gems; it will struggle in mortal agony to leap back into water.

Lakshmana as a child raised such a long and loud wailing, one night, that Sumithra feared that an evil spirit had possessed him. She hurried to Sage Vasishtha and asked him to apply some vibhoothi (sacred ash) to the forehead of the child so that the spirit might leave. Vasishtha knew why Lakshmana was weeping so pathetically. He said, "Take the child and put him next to Rama; he will stop wailing." Lakshmana could not bear even as a child a moment's separation from Rama. For each one, the place he needs most is the natural habitat. That is the reason why Lakshmana accompanied Rama, when Vishwamithra led him into his hermitage. Sadhana is only one-fourth of the process; vichara (enquiry) is the other three-fourth. Insulin injections are but a fourth for the diabetic; the other three-fourths are: dietary restrictions, physical exercises and other such disciplines. So too, in the sadhana of Namasmara (continuous remembrance of Lord's name), which I prescribe, two other complementary processes are included: along with the recollection of the Name, the fixation of the mind on the Name, there must also be acquired bhava shuddhi (purity of feeling) and artha vicharana (dwelling on the meaning of the Name). That combination will ensure success.

To get the attitude of surrender, of dedication, you must have Faith in God. This world is His play; it is not an empty dream; it has purpose and use. It is the means by which one can discover God; see Him in the beauty, the grandeur, the order, the majesty of Nature. These are but shadows of His Glory and His Splendour.

Upasana (adoration of God), leads to the knowledge that He is all; when you experience that there is no Second, that is Jnana (Spiritual Wisdom)!

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

15. Horn and tusk

Date: 28 March 1968 / Location: Venkatagiri

THE mica which is available in this Gudur region has to be dug out of the ground after separating it from surrounding rocks, with a great deal of effort. The exertion adds to the joy of achievement. If it could be collected from the surface, perhaps, it would not provide so much of joy. Through effort, Anandha (bliss) is won; through a long period of suffering, of insult and calumny man sees the reality and derives supreme joy. When Janaka welcomed the sages who came to his palace for the Swayamvara (selection of the groom by the bride) of his daughter Seetha, Sounaka the leader replied, "We have come because the Lord is here, as the son of Dasaratha; we have long prayed for a chance to feast our eyes upon the Lord and He has condescended to appear in human form. We are wedded to Him. This is the Swayamvara which we have done already" Only those who have decided that He is their Lord and Master can have that inexhaustible joy.

The 'second hand' in the watch moves fast, round and round; when it completes one full round, the 'minute hand' moves just a little. Its movement is not so perceptible. When the 'minute hand' has completed one round in its own slow manner, you find that the 'hour hand' has moved towards the next number! The 'second hand' is the symbol of karma (action); through karma done by the gross body, the various good works it engages itself in, the subtle body or inner consciousness progresses a little and moves forward.

Through sacrifice immortality is attained

As a result of increasing purity of the chiththa (inner consciousness), the karana shareera (the causal body) is led towards realisation. It is enough if the 'second hand' moves; the rest follows, in proper order. Thyaga (sacrifice) is the key, which propels that hand. Through thyaga is immortality attained. Be Thyagarajas, not Bhogarajas - monarchs of the realm of renunciation, not monarchs of the realm of pleasure. Explaining the significance of the yaga (ceremonial sacrifice) that is being celebrated here, the Pandith said that

through the rituals the 'terrific' nature of Rudhra is calmed and He becomes Shiva, the beneficent and compassionate. God is above all gunas (qualities); He has no Agraaha (anger). He is ever the embodiment of Love. He is in gunas, but gunas are not in Him. There is clay in pots, but there is no pot in clay. One should not fear God; One must love Him so much that all acts He disapproves are discarded. Fear to do wrong; fear to hate another; fear to lose Grace. Yajnas (ritual sacrifices) are valid so long as you feel that you are the body (Ahamdhehasmi). When you know that you are Brahman, yajnas lose value. Or, when you perform the yajna as a sacred act of thyaga (renunciation) dedicated to God, regardless of the fruit thereof, with no calculation of the gains therefrom, then the yajna is worth while. Ramakrishna Paramahansa was once asked by some one, "Why do you starve the body and suffer all this misery? Is not all this detachment from material comfort a sign of insanity?" Ramakrishna answered, "Those who find fault with me do not, alas, know their own faults. Is it not insane to suffer all this misery for the upkeep of this bundle of bones and flesh, this bag of dirt and foulness?"

Be in the world, but not of it

The only valid use to which this body can be put is to discover the source of lasting joy that lies at its very core. Ramakrishna rolled on the bare floor of the Dakshineswar temple and shed tears of anguish, for days were passing one after another without his having realised the source of bliss. That sadhana has immortalised him, while the silly questioner has faded out of the pages of history.

"Shanthakaram bhujaga shayanam," is one of the ways in which the Divine is described. Bhujaga is the cobra, the poisonous snake. Its visha (poison) is the symbol of the evil influence of vishaya (worldly desires). The Lord is said to repose on the bhujaga, the evil-filled multiplicity of the world. Yet, the description says, he is Shanthakaram (in absolute peace, unruffled in the least). The Lord is unaffected, though He is immanent in the universe. Man too must be in the world, but not of it. Holding the fan by the hand will not help; you must move it to and fro vigorously, in order to feel the cool breeze that blows on your face. There is no breeze in the fan; it is all around you,

everywhere, as air. Direct it towards yourself by sadhana (spiritual practice). So too, direct the Grace of God that is everywhere, towards you and make yourself happy by sadhana. That is the advice you need and I give.

You have heard these scholars for three days. And you are now establishing a Sathya Sai Seva Samithi in this town. You will have to make your Samithi different from other associations and societies. Build it on the basis of Love, fed on the faith in Vasudhevaḥ sarvaṃ idam - "all this is Vasudheva (God);" that all are God, and all must be revered. Believe this, experience this and act according to this - and no trace of envy or pride, malice or greed or hate will tarnish your Samithi. Faith in God will give you faith in man; for man is but a moving temple of God. It will also destroy the feelings of I and mine, for all are He and everything is His.

Faith in God makes man more efficient and wise

From the very beginning, take enough precautions to ensure that the seed you sow is good and free from defects. Do not start any work with evil motives of pomp, selfish aggrandizement, competition or challenge. Do not ascribe to God the failures due to your own faults and errors. Pray before, during and after, that the canker of egotism may not spoil the effort. The buffalo has horns; the elephant has tusks. But what a difference! The tusks are much more valuable. The man with faith and the man without it are both human; but what a difference! With faith, he is so much more efficient, courageous, and wise. The Raja of Venkatagiri told you now that the Name of God has tremendous might. Let the mind dwell on that Name, whatever work your hands are engaged in. You will find that the thought of God will make work sweet and light. The snow-peak of karmaconsequence (result of action) accumulated by you will be reduced by the avalanches and glaciers caused by the warming effect of Namasmaraṇa (remembrance of God's Name). The sun melts the snow-cap on the peak; but during the hours of night, the snowfall restores the cap and makes up the loss of height. So too, Namasmaraṇa melts the snow, but unless virtue holds back and overcomes sin, the snow falls again in the darkness of vice and ignorance. Repentance and prayer will certainly prevent further snowfall; the Sun of God's Glory,

shining through the smarana, will level the snow-peak to the ground.

Be assured that you are free from faults

A patient afflicted with malaria cannot relish laddus; though laddus are sweet to the healthy tongue, the malarial tongue pronounces them bitter! Afflicted with worldly ambitions, pleasureseeking megalomania and other forms of spiritual myopia, man cannot relish the sweetness of God and Goodness. Members of Seva Samithi (Service Organisation) have to cure themselves and inspire others to cure themselves. Before pointing to the faults of others, examine yourselves and assure yourselves that you are free from faults. That alone gives you the right; but the wonder is' you discover faults in others only when you have faults in you. Once you rid yourselves of faults, all are pure and good. Whatever you touch becomes gold; that is the Divine alchemy of Love, Divine Love, Universal Love, Love for Love's own sake.

16. The lost key

Date: 29 March 1968 / Location: Venkatagiri / Occasion: Ugadi

YOU have gathered here in thousands, eager to partake of this festival banquet of spiritual discourses. That is the best and most profitable way of celebrating the coming New Year. The tiger lies in wait in a bush by the jungle track; it pounces on its prey and drags it to its lair. So too, death lies in wait for man. It trails behind him with silent paws and when the hour strikes, it leaps and snaps the thread of life. Flowers fade, fruits rot, and trees wither. Life is but the interval between birth and death, a procession towards the grave that starts at the very moment of birth.

Have God as your lamp, you can pass through life in safety. Have the Name of God on your tongue; He is bound to the Name, as Form! Resolve this day to adopt this sadhana of Namasmarana, remembrance of the Name, Rama, for Rama means Â· He who is Bliss, He who confers Bliss - "Ramathe Ramayathe ithi Rama." Read the Adhyatma Ramayana, the Ramayana which emphasises the spiritual significance of the epic. The entire epic hinges on two women and two passions: Manthara representing krodha (anger, resentment, vengeance), and Shuurpanakha representing kama (lustful passion). Manthara plotted to send Rama into exile and Shuurpanakha caused the abduction of Seetha and the destruction of the Rakshasas (demons) as a consequence. The two women are insignificant characters in the story, but the roles they play are key roles, for they sparked off, by means of the passions they represented, long chapters of pain and grief. Krodha (anger) and kama (desire) are more destructive than atom bombs; but when Rama is installed in the heart, they just fizzle out!

Pray for Grace and do some sadhana to acquire it

Welcome these epics as you welcome efficacious drugs; they can cure deep-rooted illnesses of the mind. Accept manthras (mystic formulas) as medicines, to cure the phobias of the mind, the disabilities of the inner senses, the defects of the inner consciousness. They clarify your vision and make you

strong and steady, on the path towards God. God's Grace is as the shower of rain, as the sunlight. You have to do some sadhana (spiritual practice) to acquire it, the sadhana of keeping a pot upright to receive the rain, the sadhana of opening the door of your heart, so that the Sun may illumine it. Like the music that is broadcast over the radio, it is all round you; but you must switch on your receiver and tune the identical wave-length so that you can hear it and enjoy it. Pray for Grace; but do at least this little sadhana. Grace will set everything right. Its main consequence is Atmasakshatkara (Self-realisation); but there are other incidental benefits too, like a happy contented life here below, and a cool courageous temper, established in unruffled shanthi (peace). The main benefit from a jewel is personal joy; but when one has come to the last coin in the purse, one can sell it and start life gain! That is an incidental advantage. The plantain tree has the bunch of fruits as its main gift! But the leaves, the soft core of the trunk, the flower bud, these are subsidiary items that can also be put to profitable use. This is the nature of Grace. It fulfils a variety of wants.

Vedhic injunctions are ignored in every home

When you have no faith in God, you cannot gauge the efficacy of Grace. If you discard Rama and Krishna, they cannot stand by you in your hour of need. You do not attach yourself to Sai Baba and so you do not receive His Grace. If you start with cynicism and doubt and try to criticise and discover faults, the result is deeper ignorance and confusion. Unholy thoughts fog the mind with foul fumes. How can clarity come to the vision then? A shepherd boy picked up a big diamond from the ground; he thought it was a piece of glass; he tied it round the neck of a sheep! It does not belong there. Man has ignored his own preciousness, his own Divinity. He is reducing himself to the position of a piece of glass, and is hanging on to the neck of a sheep? He sticks to the place where he does not belong. The country too is sharing this devaluation. Bharath, which was long looked upon as the preceptor of humanity, the teacher of all nations who seek to earn lasting joy, is today forgetting its genuine role and standing at the doors of those nations, with downcast head and extended hand, begging for alms. The Vedhic injunction, "Revere the Mother as God" is ignored in every home; as a result, the "Mother Country" is

not blessing her children with plenty and peace. Revere the parents, revere the teachers - that is the injunction of Sanathana Dharma (Eternal Religion). Brothers must be treated with the affection due to brothers. The fate of those who hate the brothers will be total destruction; that is the lesson taught in the ancient epic, the Mahabharatha, revered by millions as the fifth Veda.

Saturate your thought, word, deed with Divinity

There was a Guru (spiritual preceptor) once, who gave back to his pupils the fruits offered by them, with the direction, "Take, each one, what he likes most." One pupil did not take any fruit but sat unconcerned, in a corner. The Guru asked him, "What do you like most?" He answered, "Myself." That is the proper attitude; if you like yourself most, make the most of your self know your self clearly and truly, revere your self deeply, be your best, make fullest use of your talents and skills, and lead yourself into lasting peace and joy. Rely on the Shiva (God) in you, not on the shava (corpse) that the body is, without Him. With every breath, draw His Glory in; with every breath, exhale all that reduces His Glory. Saturate your thought, word and deed with Divinity. Then, you can conquer death, and become immortal. Recite the Name of Shiva and save yourself. You are truly the embodiment of truth, goodness and beauty. But you have misplaced the key which helps you to tap the springs. That key is in the realm of your inner consciousness; but, like the old woman who lost a needle in her dark hut, and searched for it under the street lamp (because, as she said, there was a patch of light underneath it), man is searching for it in the region of material objects in the outer world. It is to persuade you to engage yourself in Namasmarana (remembering of Lord's Name) that I am Myself concluding My discourses with a few Namavalis (string of divine names) which I sing. An Officer of the Indian Civil Service has to write on the slate, A, B, C, and D and pronounce those letters, in order to teach his children the alphabet. When you find him doing so, you do not infer that he is himself learning the alphabet, do you? Therefore, do not be surprised if I sing bhajan songs; I am but initiating you into this most efficacious sadhana. Strengthen yourself purify yourself educate yourself by this Nama- sankeerthan (devotional singing). Do it loudly and in company. Let those who join you listen and also imbibe the nectar of the Name. That is the

New Year message I give you.

Realise the Lord through Love, Service, Adoration

I bless you that the New Year may endow you with devotion and sweet spiritual experiences. Today, the year Plavanga is taking leave and the year Keelaka is entering in. How often in the history of man has this happened! The cycle of Time has seen such events in countless numbers so far. Do not let this chance too go by; Keelaka means lynch-pin, main support, pillar or column. Today's task for you is to discover the one column that supports all spiritual success. I shall tell you what that is: Love, adore, serve the Sarveshwara (Almighty Lord) who is resident in all mankind; through that Love, adoration and service, realise Him. That is the highest sadhana. Serve man as God. Give food to the hungry, food that is the gift of Goddess Nature (Anna- poorna); give it with love and humility. Give it, sweetened with the name of the Lord. Celestial spheres are revolving and disintegrating; time is fleeting; age follows age; era succeeds era; bodies that have taken birth, grow and end; but, the urge to sanctify life with good works and good thoughts is nowhere evident; the fragrance of sincere sadhana (spiritual practice) is not traceable anywhere. Through the process of 'giving up,' great things can be achieved. Cultivate detachment, and the Lord will attach Himself to you. The past is beyond recovery; those days are gone. But, tomorrow is coming towards you. Resolve to sanctify it with Love and Service and sadhana.

The mansion called life must be built on strong foundations; the pursuit of artha and kama - of wealth and welfare, of all desirable objects - must be regulated by the standard of Dharma. Dharma fosters those who foster it.

The strongest foundation is ever-present Faith in the Almighty. Some may ask, "If He is Almighty, why then is he not patent?" Well, He reveals Himself only to the person who yearns for the answer, not the one who puts questions out of impudence or ignorance.

He will be patent only in the transparent heart, the heart that is not clouded

by egoism or objective attachment.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

17. Unity in unity

Date: **12 May 1968** / Location: **Mumbai** / Occasion: **Bhaaratheeya Vidhya Bhavan Campus**

THE basic teachings of Indian sages about spiritual value have been neglected so disastrously that selfish greed and cruel competition have robbed all happiness and peace from the heart of this land. Life has been rendered artificial and anaemic, riddled with anxiety and fear. At this juncture, you in Bombay have built in your city this Dharmakshethra (the abode of righteousness)! In this age of atom bombs, you have erected an altar for Athmic bliss! This is indeed a sign of your faith and devotion, faith in the ideals of this land and devotion to the highest traditions nourished by the sages. Seeds of the search for bliss are dormant in the hearts of men. Some nurture them; some tend them, until they blossom. Many have not recognised their existence; they cultivate thorns and thistles, trees yielding bitterness and ugly hate. Man is not merely a creature thrown up by nature in the process of an evolutionary gamble. He has a special meaning, a special mission, a unique role. He is Divinity, encased in the human frame! Lord Krishna affirms in the Geetha (Chapter XV verse 7): mamaivamsho jeeva loke, jeeva bhuuthah (a portion of Mine in the world of life is transformed into the individual). It is He who moves and motivates man. So, man is a unit of that unity, he is a child of immortality, set in the background of this mortal world, in this mortal flame. His mission is to merge in the God from whom he has emerged. Heaven is not a supra-terrestrial region of perpetual Spring; it is an inner experience, a state of supreme bliss.

The two codes of discipline laid down for practice

When asked where you have come from, you quickly reply, "From Delhi" or "From Calcutta" or "From Thiruvananthapuram;" but those are the places from where your bodies have come to Bombay. Within the body, as its source, sustenance and support, there is the dhehi (the embodied one) distinguishable from the dheha (the body) where has it come from. That is beyond your ken. Investigate into that; discover the answer; that is the task

of man. You will be released from this role only when you have overcome this colossal ignorance and realised the source, the sustenance and the support of, not only your seeming individuality, but of all the manifold million-faced sparks of that one Divine Force. Do not delay any further; the minutes are fleeing past; be inspired by the yearning to drink the nectar of the realisation of your true worth. Knowledge is said to be acquired when you pursue the analytical method and divide things, feelings, experiences into categories, pleasant and unpleasant, harmful and beneficial, lasting and temporary. The higher knowledge however unifies, it makes one aware of the one which appears as many, it reveals the truth, on which falsehood is superimposed. To discover this truth, the classic texts have laid down two codes of discipline, one external and the other internal - the outer and the inner. The outer is Nishkama-karma (desireless activity) - activity that is engaged in as dedication and worship; or, activity that is gladly carried out, from a sense of duty, regardless of the benefit that may accrue, with no attachment to the fruits thereof. The inner is dhyana (meditation on the splendour of which one is but a spark). Karma (activity) has to be regulated by dharma (righteousness) then it will lead one on to Brahman (the basic truth of the Universe, including oneself).

Let the mind ever dwell on God

Of course, we have among us many who can expound these disciplines and talk very enthusiastically from platforms about them. They swell with pride that the sages of this land have explored and explained the path to peace and joy. But, exposition without experience is bound to be unconvincing; words that come from the depth of experience have the ring of sincerity which convinces. The experience of the Truth alone can foster Love; for, Truth is so all-embracing and integrating, that it sees no distinction. Truth is the current and Love is the bulb, it has to illumine. Through Truth, you can experience love; through love, you can visualise truth. Love God and you see God in every creature. Or you can start with the individual, and widen the circle of love, till it envelops all creation. Let the mind dwell ever on God; let it see all as God. That is what is described as onepointedness. If it is so fixed, it will give up its tendency to search for faults and foibles in others; it will not

run after the foul and the frivolous; it will not accumulate the trivial and the transient. The body is as the container of the torch, the senses are the bulb and the mind is the cell, but have intelligence as the switch. Then, it will not be turned towards the undesirable. It will be used only to help man's progress towards the Divine destiny. The campus on which the building Sathyadeep (lamp of truth) has been inaugurated today is named Dharmakshethra; it is a very appropriate name, for a place from which the message of sathya, dharma, shanthi and prema (truth, righteousness, peace and love) will reach the lands parched with thirst for these pure, pellucid waters.

Victory is always for righteousness, not for greed

The word Dharmkshethra is the first word in the Geetha. In the very first verse of that Song Celestial, the Kurukshethra (field of action), on which Mamakah (my people as the blind Dhritrashtra designated them, through fond attachment and egoistic delusion) - that is to say, people motivated by greed and passion, and Pandavah (the other people, the good and righteous, the sons of the fair one, the progeny of the pure) is spoken of as already transmuted into Dharmakshethra (field of righteousness)! For, victory is always for righteousness and not for greed and passion, which blind man. For the Lord is on their side; He is the charioteer, chosen as such and willing to serve as such. The word Dharmakshethra is a reminder, a warning, a lesson, an inspiration, a light. You must accept that name in your hearts - for, there too the forces of righteousness and covetousness are locked in combat and the forces of righteousness are helped by the Lord to succeed. The Himalayas are the head of Bharath; Kanyakumari (Cape Comorin) is the feet; Bombay is the stomach; Prasanthi Nilayam is the heart. The stomach receives food and distributes strength and stamina to all parts of the body. Your responsibility is great; if you neglect it, the entire land and all that it stands for will suffer. You have undertaken the responsibility of the World Conference of Sathya Sai Organisations to be held here next week, and it is a great chance for the expression of love and brotherliness. The Seva Dhal (Service Organisation) of young men and women which you have trained and organised will be an inspiration and an example to all the states in India. If properly guided, the youth of India can be saved from imitative adventures, reckless wanderings

into realms of fantasy; they can be led into constructive activities saturated with love and sympathy, where their enthusiasm and skill can be best utilised.

Keep all personal animosity away from your conduct. Feel that you are kith and kin of each other belonging to the same family bound together by love and co-operation.

Live amicably, live joyfully, undisturbed by faction and hatred; for, some day or other, you have to give up all that you hope to gain through these factions and these hatreds.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

18. Name, the never-failing fountain

Date: **16 May 1968** / Location: **Mumbai** / Occasion: **World Conference, Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations, Bhaaratheeya Vidhya Bhavan Campus**

"ASCETIC practices, years of constant recitation of the Name, pilgrimages to holy places and shrines, study of sacred books - these will not help the aspirant to spiritual victory as much as communion with the Godly and the good." "Bharath is a rare treasure-house of spiritual jewels; it can confer all boons on sincere seekers; this conference of seekers is indeed a great opportunity, and for the people of Bombay, this is a great piece of good fortune. Having thus spoken a few words as befits this glorious occasion in Sanskrit, the parent and core of all languages, I shall continue any discourses in Thelugu, and it will be translated into English by Kasthuuri" (These sentences were spoken by Baba in Samskrith). Bharath is the birthplace of the Vedas and of the Shasthras, epics and Puranas that have elaborated the principles enunciated therein for the education of the common man. It is the nursery of music and other fine arts, inspired by the noble passion of consecrating human skills for adoring the Divine and communicating the supersensuous. It is the staff and sustenance of the mystic and the ascetic, the intellectual and the dynamic adorer of God; it is the field where the science of Yoga was cultivated and systematised. No wonder, therefore, that this land, India, has survived through the ages as the Land of Yoga (Self-control) and thyaga (detachment).

One Divine principle circulates through all lands

Though these traits of Indian culture may be eclipsed for some time by the forces of secular cultures, civilisations catering to material comfort, storms of doubt and disbelief that sweep through the corridor of time, they cannot be totally uprooted from the hearts of men. The duty of Indians is to foster these traits and sow among human communities the seeds of love, so that they may grow and fill the world with the fragrant blooms of tolerance and reverence. No man can live away, apart from the rest of his kind. No country can play its role alone and unrelated to the others on the world stage. Other

nations influence the destiny of India; India too has its impact on others. One bloodstream circulates through all the limbs; one Divine principle circulates through all the lands and peoples. The universe is the body of God; He knows and feels every twitch, every pang, be it from a black man or white, from land or sea or air or space. Morarji Desai uttered the word, Dharma, often during his speech now. If the leaders of India have Dharma installed in their hearts, they can elevate all their activities, in accordance with the high claims Dharma makes on conduct and condition. Dharma will compel integration of thought, word and deed. It will cleanse the mind and rid it of greed and hate. This is a gathering of representatives of all faiths, and so here you can testify that every faith is but an endeavour to cleanse the impulse and emotions, as part of the process of discovering the truth of the world, seen and unseen. No one who has trodden that path and engaged himself in that process has escaped calumny and cruelty.

Tracks leading to one Summit are many

Mohammad, who sought to establish the primacy of the One Formless Absolute had a large share of persecution, defamation, and privation. Jesus who attempted to rebuild mankind on the basis of Love was crucified by little men who feared that their tiny towers of hate and greed will be toppled by his teaching. Harischandhra who had resolved never to waver from truth was subjected to ordeal after ordeal, each more terrifying than the previous one. Those who seek to know God must steel themselves to bear insult, injury and torture, with a smile. The search is for the same treasure; the summit is One, the tracks leading to it are many; the guides are also many; they clamour and compete among themselves. Seven blind men examined the elephant and imagined that it was what each one was able to touch; each one interpreted his touch - they could not get a complete and correct picture of the animal. Hinduism is the stomach of the elephant, supplying strength and stamina to all other faiths; but one has to admit that the stomach is not all! The limbs are the other faiths. Even those who assert that they did not find any trace of God in outer space, or who aver that God is dead, or that even if He is alive, He is no longer necessary for man, that He is a handicap and nuisance - all these have to admit that there is something inexplicable, something inscrutable,

beyond the reach of reason and science, some unknown which pervades the world and affects the course of things!

Basis of the ancient Science of Astrology

The intuitive vision of the highly sensitive inner eye of the Indian Yogis was able to discover many secrets of the Universe and to peep into the past or the future, as far as they desired. It is now more than twenty years after the British left India to itself. This was predicted five thousand and forty-three years ago by an Indian yogi, who declared that India will free itself from the rule of a strange race from the far west, in the year Nandha! India achieved Independence from Western rule in the year Nandha! How could this be discovered and declared five thousand and forty-three years ago? The Bihar earthquake was accurately foretold two years previously, by the astrologers of Varanasi. On what basis does the ancient Shashtra (science) of Astrology rest? Its basis is not as scientific as the modern scientist demands. It is based on intuitive spiritual experience.

Leadbeater has declared that the correct recital of the Gayathri Manthra with the orthodox Udhattha, Anudhattha and Swaritha, (modulation of the voice and the higher, lower and even accents) can produce experienceable and authentic illumination, whereas incorrect pronunciation and wrong accent result in thickening the darkness! Therefore, instead of scoffing at the disciplines of recitals, meditations, prayers, formulary worship and manthra-utterances, their values have to be accepted and their results tested and confirmed by practice and exercise. The greatest formula that can liberate, cleanse and elevate the mind is Ramanama (the Name of Rama). Rama is not to be identified with the hero of the Ramayana, the Divine offspring of Emperor Dasaratha. He was named Rama by the Court Preceptor because it was a Name which was already current. Vashishtha, the preceptor, said that he had chosen that Name since it meant, "He who pleases." While every one else pleases the self nothing pleases the caged individualised self more than the free universal Self. The Self is therefore referred to as Atma-Rama, the Self that confers unending joy.

Rama, the priceless key to salvation

There is a story in the classics to illustrate the worth of the name of Rama. Sage Prachetas once composed a text with verses numbering hundred crores! The three worlds competed among themselves to take the entire text; the struggle assumed calamitous proportions and so God brought them together and persuaded them to accept a third each, that is to say, each world (Heaven, earth and the underworld) received thirty-three crores, thirty-three lakhs, thirty-three thousand, three hundred and thirty-three verses each. One verse remained undivided. It has thirty-two syllables in all; so, when it too was allotted among the three co-sharers, at the rate of ten syllables each, two syllables were left over! How could two be divided among three? So, God decided that they be adored and revered by all three worlds equally - the syllables were 'Ra' and 'Ma,' making up the priceless key to salvation - Rama! Rama is the bee that sucks the honey of devotion from the lotus of the heart. The bee loosens the petals of the flower it sits upon; but Rama adds to its beauty and fragrance. He is like the Sun, which draws the water to itself by its rays and accumulating it as cloud, sends it back as rain to quench the thirst of earth. Rama, the mystic potent sound, is born in the navel and it rises up to the tongue and dances gladly thereon. The Vedhic declaration, Thath-thwam-asi (That-thou-art) is enshrined in the word Rama, which consists of three sounds: 'Ra,' 'a,' and ma. Of these, Ra is the symbol of Thath (That; Brahman, God) Ma is the symbol of Thwam (Thou; jeevi, individual) and a that connects the two is the symbol of the identity of the two.

No particular Name is higher than the rest

The word Rama has also a numerological significance: Ra counts as two, a counts as zero, and ma counts as five - so that, Rama adds up to seven, which is an auspicious number. We have the seven swaras of music, the seven heavenly sages, and reciting Rama for seven days continuously is considered specially fruitful. However, since this conference will discuss this great spiritual exercise of Namasmarana, let Me tell you that no particular Names can be raised to a status higher than the rest, for all Names are His and He answers to all. I propose to dilate on this point tomorrow, at the

Sessions of the Conference, for it is a beneficent discipline, not only for this country but for all the countries of the world. I shall conclude with the expression of My satisfaction that the Conference is being held in the campus of the Bharatheeya Vidhya Bhavan; surely, no better place can be found in Bombay than this for a Conference that attempts to carry the message of Bharatheeya Vidhya to all mankind.

19. The Revelation

Date: **17 May 1968** / Location: **Mumbai** / Occasion: **World Conference Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organizations**

YOU are engaged in discovering solutions to problems, arguments to overcome doubts, means to prevent new problems and fresh doubts from arising; such exercises which all conferences relish, cannot help successful navigation across the sea of spiritual endeavour. These are but frail contrivances, these discussions, resolutions, speeches and regulations. The world is much too stormy and agitated to be quietened by these. This is the time for cool calm contemplation, not quick passionate speculation and hasty decision. You need to contemplate once again on the eternal lessons laid down by the sages of India's past, lessons that have been neglected and cynically forgotten in recent years. The suggestions and solutions that come out of the discussions today are all good, so far as they go; but, how can a person who cannot himself swim, teach others the art? How can one whose granary is empty pour out in charity? Acquire the wealth of devotion, fortitude and peace before venturing to advise others how to acquire them. Bharath (India) has suffered slights and disregard as a result of a spate of teachers who have not cared to practise what they teach. I know you have the enthusiasm to carry My message among the people of this country and other countries. Let Me remind you that the best and the only successful way in which you can do it is to translate the message into your own lives. Your thoughts, words and deeds must be saturated with the message. Then, they will spread effortlessly and efficiently, and the face of the world will be transformed.

Namasmarana, the only hope for man in this Age

The Presidents, Vice-Presidents and Secretaries of Sathya Sai Organisations from all over the world are here. You are Officers of the Sai Army. How can you lead soldiers into the fray when you are not aware of the intricacies of warfare, when you are yourselves inefficient instruments? You can attempt to lead others only after practising the disciplines to perfection. This is true of all

fields of human activity. Anandha (bliss) and Prasanthi (supreme peace) have to be acquired first by you and then can be communicated to others. Teachers in schools have themselves to be examples of what they require the pupils to be. Men in authority who exhort others to follow the paths of love and co-operation have themselves to practise those virtues, The people are now not willing to be led; the leaders have no capacity to lead. Progress is the result of mutual trust between the leaders and the led. The unrest that is rampant now in all sections of the people everywhere is due to the irresponsibility of parents, teachers, administrators and leaders, as well as of those who hunger to benefit from them. Namasmarana is one of the basic disciplines, to which this Conference is paying great attention. The scriptures say that in this age of materialism, it is the one hope for man. Thukaram sang of the Namarathna (the precious gem - the Name). So you should not brush aside the Name as a piece of glass, or as a pebble.

Man is using a gem to play marbles on the road

There was once a boy who picked up a precious gem, bright and round, and used it for playing marbles on the road, with his comrades. A merchant dealing in precious stones chanced to pass along that road, and his discerning eye fell on the gem. He approached the boy, took him aside and offered to pay him fifty rupees in exchange. If the boy could know the value of fifty rupees he would have known the value of the gem! He went to his mother and told her that a stranger had tempted him with fifty rupees in return for the marble he played with. She was surprised that it was so costly and she said, "Do not go out of the compound with it; play in the garden with your friend." When the value was revealed, limits were set. The merchant had no sleep that night; he was planning to secure the gem from those simple folk so that he could sell it at huge profit to some millionaire or Maharaja. He discovered the house of the boy and moved up and down that road hoping to see the boy. When he saw the boy play with it as if it was as cheap as a marble, his heart was wrung in agony. The boy threw it on the floor; his mother emerged just at the moment from the inner apartments and it struck her foot and fell under a bush. He spoke to the boy asking for the gem in exchange for a hundred rupees, and again, for five hundred rupees! The son

ran into the house in tears, complaining about the stranger who will not let him alone. The mother came out into the garden and begged the merchant to go away.

The merchant grasped the chance; he told the mother that he was ready to give a thousand rupees on the spot, if the marble was placed in his hand! On hearing this, she forbade the child to play with it outside the house; he could play only within the rooms. The merchant could not be shooed off like that; he appeared the next day in front of the house; he held out ten thousand rupees as his offer for the marble; the mother refused to part with it but kept it now in an iron safe, under lock and key! When the merchant came the next day with fifty thousand rupees she took it to a bank and deposited it in their safety vaults.

You are unaware of the value of Name of God

You are also playing marbles with the Name of God, unaware of its value. Once you realise its worth, you will keep it in your heart of hearts as the most precious treasure. Know that the Divine Name is the key to success in your search for consolation, confidence, courage, illumination and liberation.

Another illustration can be given from the ancient texts. On one occasion, a competition was arranged among the gods for selecting the leader of the ganas (troops of demi-gods who are the attendants of Shiva). Participants had to go round the world quick and come back to the Feet of Lord Shiva.

The gods started off on their own vehicles; the younger son of Shiva also enthusiastically entered the competition. He had an elephantine head; his vehicle was a mouse! Therefore, his progress was severely handicapped; He had not proceeded far, when Naradha appeared before him and asked him, "Whither are you bound?" The son was very much annoyed; he fell into a rage. For, what happened was a bad omen, doubly unpropitious for those going on a journey: It is inauspicious if the first person you come across when you are on a journey is a lone Brahmin. Though the foremost among the Brahmins (he was the son of Brahma Himself), Naradha was a bad omen!

Again it is a bad omen if some one asks you, "Whither are you bound?" when you are going somewhere. Naradha put him that very question! Nevertheless, Naradha was able to assuage his anger.

The Name from which the Universe has emanated

Naradha drew forth from Shiva's son the sadness of his predicament and his desire to win. Naradha consoled him, exhorted him not to yield to despair, and advised him thus: "Rama - the Name - is the seed from which the gigantic tree called the universe has emanated. So, write the Name on the ground, go round it once, and hurry back to Shiva, claiming the prize." He did so and returned to his Father. When asked how he returned so soon, he related the story of Naradha and his advice. Shiva appreciated the validity of Naradha's counsel; the prize was awarded to the son, who was acclaimed as Ganapathi (Master of the ganas) and Vinayaka (Leader of All).

The Name undoubtedly brings in the Grace of God. Meerabai, the Queen of Rajasthan, gave up status and riches, fortune and family and dedicated herself to the adoration of the Lord, Giridhara Gopala. Her husband brought a chalice of poison and she was ordered to drink it. She uttered the Name of Krishna while she drank it; it was transformed into nectar, by the Grace the Divine Name evoked!

Keerthan is the word used for the recital or singing of the Name and Glory of the God. Samkeerthan means, reciting or singing well or aloud and with joy or in ecstasy. We can distinguish four different forms of Nama-sankeerthan. Bhava (mood-filled) Namasamkeerthan, Guna (divine quality-oriented) Namasamkeerthan, Leela (divine miracle related) Namasamkeerthan and sheer Namasamkeerthan: Bhava Namasamkeerthan is the name given to recitals where the Name is sung with one or other bhava (emotion or mental attitude) towards the Lord.

Different attitudes one can show towards God

It can be Madhurabhava (sweet emotion) as Radha was over-powered with.

She saw, heard, tasted, sought and gained only that sweetness at all times and all places. Raso vai sah (divine sweetness is He). She made no distinction between Nature and Nature's God; it was all God, all Krishna. She felt, experienced, and knew that Krishna was ever present, in the waking, dreaming and deep sleep stages. She realised the truth of the Geetha declaration of Krishna that His hands and feet, His eyes, face and head were everywhere. Her adoration of God is the supreme example of Madhura Bhava Namasamkeerthan. Then we have the Vathsalya-bhava (parental feeling) Nama-samkeerthan. Yashodha, the foster mother of Krishna can be taken as the ideal for this type of bhava. Though she had a series of experiences of Krishna being Divine, she preferred to serve him as mother and to adore Him as her son.

Anuraga-bhava (lover-beloved feeling) Nama-samkeerthan is exemplified best and in the purest form in the Gopees. They installed the Lord in their hearts, rid themselves of all earthly attachments and lived only in His contemplation, all thoughts, deeds and words being dedicated to Him.

Then, there is the Sakhya-bhava (comrade-feeling) Namasamkeerthan - as found in Arjuna, who believed in Krishna as his most intimate friend and brother-in-law (for he married Krishna's sister), and confided in Him as a comrade. This too is an attitude that will attach you to Divinity and sublimate the lower impulses. Dhasya-bhava (servant-master attitude) Namasamkeerthan is another type. Serve the Lord, as His faithful unquestioning servant - this is the path of Hanuman in the Ramayana. He had no will or wish of his own. His prayer was to be fit instrument for the purposes of the Master.

The Name has the capacity to redeem, cure and save

The last attitude is Shantha-bhava (attitude of unruffled equanimity) Namasamkeerthan - praising, the Lord, whatever may happen undeviated by ups and downs, bearing all the vagaries of fortune as His play. In the Mahabharatha you will find Bheeshma saturated with this attitude; He adored Krishna, even when Krishna was advancing towards him to kill him. Another

method of Nama-samkeerthan is to remind oneself of the various exploits and sports, the various acts of Grace and Compassion, which the Lord has manifested in the world, while reciting His Name. This is called Leda (divine miracle-oriented) Namasamkeerthan. Chaithanya and Thyagaraja realised the Lord through his path. Others recollect more of the majesty, the glory, the might, the mystery, the magnificence, the munificence, the love with which God has clothed Himself, while reciting- His Name. This attitude is spoken of as Guna (attributes, characteristics) Namasamkeerthan. Most of the saints gratefully honoured in many lands are of this category. Another category is denoted by seekers who attach value to the syllables and sound of the Name as such, irrespective of the meaning thereof. When the Name is pronounced, they say, it draws towards the aspirant God and His Grace - whatever may be the bhava, and whether the Leda or guna is associated with the samkeerthan or not. The Name has a strength, a power, a capacity to redeem, cure and save, alone and unaided, they aver.

Rama-principle is the Atma, source of all joy

The Name, Rama, was once indicated by Rama Himself (the son of Dasaratha, hero of the Ramayana, the incarnation of the Lord in the Thretha yuga) as a potent liberator. When Rama was passing through the forests, with Seetha and Lakshmana, the hermits who recognised Him as Divine gathered around Him with a prayer that they be initiated by Him and given some manthra (sacred formula) which they could repeat for spiritual uplift and victory. Rama replied that He was a prince in exile, wandering in the forests, and so He could not presume any authority to initiate hermits into spiritual path. He moved on along the jungle tracks. Watching Him walking fast, with Seetha immediately behind Him and Lakshmana following in the rear, an aged hermit exclaimed, "Friends! See! Rama is initiating us! He is awarding us the manthra! God is leading. Nature (His constant companion, His shadow) is following; the jeevi (individual), part of the Lord, the wave of the ocean, is in the rear; he can see the Lord only if the deluding Nature is propitiated or by-passed. This is indeed a silent lesson in sadhana (spiritual discipline). Ra is God; ma is the individual, who has fallen behind. A is Prakrithi (Nature); Rama Rama is the manthra He is vouchsafing so graciously. Take it and save

yourselves. For me, there is no other course," he said. I am emphasising Rama-Nama (the name Rama) because the Rama principle is the Atma. Rama means that which is pleasant and which pleases. Now, the Atma is the source of all joy; its nature is bliss. Moreover, as Thyagaraja discovered, Rama is the Name which worshippers of both Narayana (Vishnu) and Shiva can adopt. The syllable Ra is the key syllable of the Narayana manthra (Om Namō Narayanaya) and the syllable ma is the key syllable of the Shiva manthra (Om Namasshivaya).

God is the harmony of all the Names and Forms

The prejudices and factions among the worshippers of Narayana form of God and Shiva form are meaningless, because both represent the One ultimate Universal. They are distinguishable, it may be said, by the different Divine equipments. They are shankha (conch) and chakra (discus) in the case of Narayana and damaru (small drum) and thrishuula (three-pronged spear-trident) in the case of Shiva. But the conch and the drum both symbolise God's accessibility through audible praise and song; discus and trident symbolise God being the maker and master of time - discus, representing the wheel of time, and the three prongs of the trident, the past, the present, and the future. Narayana is referred to as Hari and Shiva as Hara; both these Names are derived from the same root, Har, to destroy, to remove, to captivate, to attract and to harmonise - functions which God has clothed Himself with. Man's duty is to sanctify his days and nights with the unbroken smarana (recollection) of the Name. Recollect with joy, with yearning. If you do so. God is bound to appear before you in the form and with the name you have allotted Him, as most beautiful and most appropriate! God is all Names and all forms, the integration of all these in harmonious charm! Gods designated in different faiths, adored by different human communities, are all limbs of the One God that really is. Just as the body is the harmonious blending of the senses and the limbs, God is the harmony of all the forms and names that man gives Him!

Do not make distinction between different Names

Only those who are ignorant of the Glory of God will insist on one Name and one Form for his adoration and what is worse, condemn the use by others of other names and forms! Since you are all associated with Sathya Sai Organisations, I must warn you against such silly obduracy. Do not go about proclaiming that you are a sect distinct and separate from those who adore God in other forms and names. Thereby you are limiting the very God whom you are extolling. Do not proclaim in your enthusiasm, "We want only Sai; we are not concerned with the rest." You must convince yourselves that all forms are Sai's; all names are Sai's. There is no 'rest'; all are He. You must have noticed that I do not speak about Sai in My discourses, nor do I sing of Sai during the bhajan with which I usually conclude My discourses. And you must have wondered why. Let me tell you the reason. I do not want the impression to gain ground that I desire this Name and this Form to be publicised. I have not come to set afoot a new cult, I do not want people to be misled on this point. I affirm that this Sai form is the form of all the various names that man uses for the adoration of the Divine. So, I am teaching that no distinction should be made between the names Rama, Krishna, Ishwara, Sai - for they are all My names. When I know that I am the current that illumines all the various bulbs, I am indifferent to the bulbs, which you consider so important. When you pay attention to the bulbs, factions arise, sects are born. Sathya Sai Seva Samithis should not encourage discord and distinctions; they must adore the One, appearing as many, the basic Divine, which illumines all the bulbs.

Be conscious of God's Presence as the Motivator

I have not got the slightest intention to utilise the Seva Samithis (Service Organisations) for propagating My Name or canvas homage for My Name. No! I am content only when spiritual endeavours and disciplines to elevate and purify man are progressing everywhere. It is only through these that My universal reality will be revealed. So, do not limit Me to the boundaries of any one name and form. Your aim should be to see the self-same God in all the Forms that are worshipped, to picture Him in all the Names, nay, to be conscious of His presence as the inner motivator of every living being, in every particle of matter. Do not fall into the error of considering some to be

men worthy of reverence and some unworthy. Sai is in every one; so, all deserve your reverence and service. Propagate this truth; that is the function I assign to the SevaSamithis.

You can observe Me and My activities; note how I adhere to righteousness, moral order, truth and universal compassion. That is what I desire you to learn from Me. Many of you plead for a 'Message' from Me, to take to the Samithi of which you are members. Well. My life is My message. You will be adhering to My message if you so live that your lives are evidence of the dispassionate quiet, the courage, the confidence, the eagerness to serve those who are in distress, that My life inspires you with. God is immanent in the world. So, treat the world lovingly, as you will treat your Master. Krishna served the Pandavas; He drove the Chariot of Arjuna. So, though He was not a King, He became much more, a King-Maker! Serve, whatever the obstacle, whatever the cynical ridicule you may attract. Such reactions are inevitable when one is engaged in doing good. Take My example. Praise and calumny have accompanied Me throughout the Ages. Opposition and obstacles only tend to highlight the good and strengthen resolve.

Do not exaggerate the significance of miracles

The torture that his father inflicted to turn his mind away from God helped to bring out the unflinching devotion of Prahladha. The wickedness of Ravana served to reveal the might of Rama's bow. Traducers like Sishupala, Dhanthavakthra, Ravana, Kamsa are inevitable accessories of every incarnation. This Sai Rama, too, has that age old accompaniment. Now too, their brood is evident. On one side adoration and homage are piling high into a peak; on the other, abjuration and slander are also peak high. Standing between them, I bless them both, with lifted hands, for I am not elated by one or depressed by the other. For, the traducers will be rewarded with the crown they deserve; I will be crowned with My own glory. Of what avail is it if you simply worship My Name and form, without attempting to cultivate the samathwa (equal love for all) that I have, My shanthi (unruffled equanimity) My prema (love), My sahana (patience and fortitude), My anandha (ever-blissful nature)? You elaborate in your lectures the unique powers of Sai, the

incidents that are described as 'miracles' in books written on Me by some persons. But I request you not to attach importance to these. Do not exaggerate their significance; the most significant and important power is, let Me tell you, My prema (love). I may turn the sky into earth, or earth into sky; but that is not the sign of Divine might. It is the prema, the sahana, effective universal, ever-present, that is the unique sign.

A unique World Conference held for the first time

When you attempt to cultivate and propagate this love and this fortitude, trouble and travail will dog your steps. You must welcome them, for without them, the best in you cannot be drawn out. If gold was as plentiful as dust or diamonds as easily available as pebbles, no one would care for them. They are won after enormous exertion and expense; therefore they are eagerly sought after. Since at this place, those who have devotion are gathered and people of all nations have come, I cannot but tell you one fact. World Conferences dedicated to religion or spiritual problems have, no doubt, been held before; also, conferences of followers of particular faiths. But these have been held only after the demise of the founders and Divine inspirers. This is the very first time that a World Conference is held of persons devoted, while the incarnation is present before every one, with the body assumed for the purpose, bearing the Name that is chosen for it by Itself. I must tell you this fact, because ninety-nine persons out of hundred among you do not know My Reality. You have come here drawn by diverse needs, a taste for spiritual matters, eagerness to develop the institutions to which you are attached, admiration or affection, love or reverence or a spurt of enthusiasm to join others and share with others your own exultation.

Don't allow doubt to distract you from My Divinity

In truth, you cannot understand the nature of My Reality either today, or even after a thousand years of steady austerity or ardent inquiry even if all mankind joins in that effort. But, in a short time, you will become cognisant of the bliss showered by the Divine Principle, which has taken upon itself this sacred body and this sacred name. Your good fortune which will provide you

this chance is greater than what was available for anchorites, monks, sages, saints and even personalities embodying facet of Divine Glory! Since I move about with you, eat like you, and talk with you, you are deluded into the belief that this is but an instance of common humanity. Be warned against this mistake. I am also deluding you by My singing with you, talking with you, and engaging Myself in activities with you. But, any moment, My Divinity may be revealed to you; you have to be ready, prepared for the moment. Since Divinity is enveloped by human-ness you must endeavour to overcome the maya (delusion) that hides it from your eyes. "This is a human form in which every Divine entity, every Divine Principle, that is to say, all the Names and Forms ascribed by man to God, are manifest" - "Sarvadhavathwa sarwaroopalanudharin-china manavakaram akaram." Do not allow doubt to distract you; if you only install, in the altar of your heart, steady faith in My Divinity, you can win a Vision of My Reality. Instead, if you swing like the pendulum of a dock, one moment, devotion, another moment, disbelief, you can never succeed in comprehending the Truth and win that Bliss. You are very fortunate that you have a chance to experience the bliss of the vision of the sarvadhavathwa swaruupam (the form, which is all forms of all Gods) now, in this life itself. Let Me draw your attention to another fact. On previous occasions when God incarnated on earth, the bliss of recognising Him in the incarnation was vouchsafed only after the physical embodiment had left the world, in spite of plenty of patent evidences of His Grace. And the loyalty and devotion they commanded from men arose through fear and awe, at their superhuman powers and skills, or at their imperial and penal authority. But, ponder a moment on this Sathya Sai Manifestation; in this age of rampant materialism, aggressive disbelief and irreverence, what is it that brings to It the adoration of millions from all over the world? You will be convinced that the basic reason for this is the fact that this is the Supra-worldly Divinity in Human form.

Revival of Vedhic Dharma is Sai Sankalpa

Again, how fortunate you are that you can witness all the countries of the world paying homage to Bharatha; you can hear adoration to Sathya Sai's Name reverberating throughout the world, even while this body is existing -

not at some future date, but when it is with you, before you. And again, you can witness very soon the restoration of Sanathana Dharma to its genuine and natural status, the Dharma laid down in the Vedas for the good of all the peoples of the world. The revival of Vedhic Dharma is the Sai Sankalpa (the resolve that Sai has) not only drawing people towards Me, attracting them by the manifestation of My shakthi (power) and samarthya (capability). This is not a bhrama thathwam (phenomenon of delusion). This thathwam (phenomenon) will sustain truth, it will uproot untruth, and in that victory make all of you exult in ecstasy. This is the Sai Sankalpam.

Vedhic Truths are not merchandise to be sold

Some persons, even those who have reached a certain stage of leadership and authority, have started exchanging the Vedhic formulae and the principles of Bharatheeya culture for lucre, selling them, in fact; and Westerners too are inclined to purchase them! These truths and discoveries are not merchandise to be sold and bought. Therefore, I am going to Western countries soon, in order to apprise them of their real worth and put a stop to this bargaining. Already, the authorities of Universities in the United States of America and the leaders of the students of those Universities have written that they are eager to welcome Me and they have drawn up programmes for Me. It was only yesterday that passports for My visit to Africa have been brought, praying that I may visit those countries soon; I am proceeding to Africa before the month of June.

So utilise the chance of association with Me as much as possible, and endeavour as quickly and as best as you can, to follow the directions that I have been giving. Obeying My instructions is enough; it will benefit you more than the most rigorous asceticism. Practise Sathya (truth), Dharma (righteousness), Shanthi (peace) and Prema (love), which are dear to Me; resolve to keep those ideals before you ever, in all your thoughts: words and deeds. That can confer on you the summum bonum of mergence in the Supreme Substance of Divinity.

20. A modernised Mahaabhaaratha

Date: **18 May 1968** / Location: **Mumbai** / Occasion: **World Conference Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organizations**

THE Sanathana Dharma (Eternal Religion) propounded in Hindhuism is, as the Himalayas, supreme, sovereign, rich, comforting, calm and protective; why then should people crave for volcanoes spitting fire and smoke, raking up the evil passions in man? It is as cleansing as the waters of the Ganga in which no poisonous bacteria can live; why then seek the waters of the sea which cannot quench human thirst, but can only make it more acute? Alien cultures cannot suit the people of this land, for they have grown in this atmosphere for centuries; tiffs culture is the best, for people of all climes and stages of life. It is universal; it is for all time. Regional differences of climate, crops, terrain and history may emphasise some virtues more than others; they may lead to the prescription of some restrictions more than others. But, the common aim of the sages and saints of all lands is to lead man towards God and prevent him from sliding down into the level of the beast. Man must earn equanimity; he must be firmly established in truth and love. That will make his heart reflect the Lord within. When the road laid down for man's uplift is overgrown with thorny bush and becomes unrecognisable, the Lord Himself takes human form and marks it out again.

Mind can be controlled by intense meditation

Dharma-sthapanam, as the restoration of righteousness is called, consists of two operations: the removal of wrong and the establishment of right. At the present time, the one means by which both these can be attained is - Namasmarama (recital of God's Name). Dharma is capable of conferring all that man wishes for, here and hereafter. It is the Kamadhenu (the celestial cow) that grants all boons. With the nama (Name of God) as a rope, you can tie her to the post - the tongue; then, you can get from that Kamadhenu all the good that you crave for. She will rest in your heart-stall. In the beginning, this Namasmarama is best done in company. For, when you do it alone, distracting thoughts will overpower the earnestness. A single fibre of grass

has little strength; but twist a large number into a rope, you can bind with it a rogue elephant to a tree! The wild mind can be bound by faith that is confirmed in godly company. Arjuna complained to Krishna against the wildness of the mind; he said, it was chanchala (always changing its objectives), pramadhi (full of dangerous possibilities since it makes man a slave of the senses), balavath (uncontrollable) and dhrudham (difficult to destroy). But, the mind can be controlled and even eliminated by means of intense dhyana (meditation) on the Immanent God. When that stage is reached, anger, anxiety and envy will cease bothering you; the bonds of 'I' and 'Mine' will break; and you will have shanthi (undisturbed peace). Your efforts must be in proportion to the grandeur of the gain you envisage, isn't it? You crave for bliss, but cling to smaller pleasures and refuse to stake as much as is needed to win it.

Be prepared for all the travail to gain an end

There was a Sulthan once, who heard of the Mahabharatha, which the Hindhus revere as the fifth Veda; he commissioned a Hindhu Poet of his kingdom to write a Mahabharatha, with him as the hero who wins the empire back. He threatened the poet with dire punishment if he did not complete it within a stipulated time. The poet had to agree; but he pretended he was at it, and told the Sulthan that he himself is being portrayed as the eldest of the Pandava brothers and the other 'four brothers' were his viziers. He said, that in the Mahabharatha he was writing, the enemies of the Sulthan were the Kauravas. This made the Sulthan very happy and he became restless, to read the epic as soon as it was finished. The poet, however, delayed long. One day when asked the reason, the Poet told the Sulthan, "Your Majesty! I am awaiting clarification of one simple matter from you; it is giving me a lot of trouble, this problem. The queen is, in my epic, the counterpart of the queen of the eldest of the Pandavas; this is as it should be, since you are eldest of the five heroic brothers. But, in the original Mahabharatha, she is the wife of all the brothers. In my poem, your viziers are those brothers; they are allotted those roles in this new version. Now, shall I depict the queen as the wife of the viziers also, or..." The Sulthan did not wait to hear the rest; he threw the entire project overboard...and sent the poet way.

When you are eager to gain an end, you must be prepared for all the travail, all the obstacles or else, you should not entertain the wish. The five brothers are the five Pranas (vital airs) in the human body and all of them constitute one entity, and Dhroupadhi, born of Fire, is the energy that activates the body. When this is ignored and the epic is taken as a story of kings and queens and dynastic wars, the meaning is missed.

All men do not have equal rights or obligations

Every member of the Sathya Sai Organisation has to be a sadhaka (spiritual aspirant), one who is practising the discipline of conquering his egoism and greed, mamakaram and abhimanam (the sense of 'I' and 'mine'). The President, Vice-President and Secretary must be keener than the members in this endeavour, and must be examples for the rest. These offices should not be regarded as positions of authority or 'prizes' for devotion. They must be accepted with humility and exercised with love towards the members and the public. Love all; respect all; serve all. But do not believe all have equal fights, obligations and duties. You cannot say that all cows are equal and purchase them, by the dozen. Some may be dry, some may require more feed, some may give less milk, some may be young, some decrepit - so, you have to distinguish and decide. Not all cars are equal. Nor are all men. The Dharma (Code of Conduct) for each has to be different for it is decided by changing factors like age, profession, status, authority, scholarship and also by considering whether a person is a male or female, teacher or pupil, master or servant, child or youth, father or son, dependent or free. But the basic principles of Dharma are Sathya, Prema, Sahana and Ahimsa - Truth, Love, Fortitude and Non-violence. The various codes, written or unwritten, are only elaborations of these basic principles.

Study of Samskrith must be taken up first

There is much criticism nowadays about the Varna ashrama dharma (codes of conduct laid down in the past, for the four castes and the four periods of life); but, there is no constructive approach, because those who try to tamper with it have no knowledge of the Shasthras (scriptures) where it is propounded,

nor have they experience of those codes in their daily life. Samskrith is the language of the Shasthras and the sacred texts of Sanathana Dharma (eternal universal religion). So, Sathya Sai Organisation must provide facilities for the study of Samskrith, by elders and by the children. This is one of the first things that they must take up. The tragedy is that the very Pandiths, who are the repositories of Samskrith learning, do not teach the language to their children, though they clamour for greater recognition of their own scholarship. Samskrith learning is fast disappearing as a result of this suicidal neglect. The fact is the atmosphere is fouled by hypocrisy and insincerity. No one stands up boldly and proclaims his conviction, and acts according to it. Pandiths praise that ancient scriptures, but do not take even elementary steps to ensure that they are preserved and studied. Leaders of the people who decry the English language on platforms send their children to schools where English is the sole medium of instruction! No member of the Sai Organisations should practise this deceit. They must be sincere practitioners of what they profess. That is the Dharma.

We can distinguish four types among men: The highest type are those who are so good themselves that they are utterly disinclined to note the faults of others, those who, therefore, see everybody as only righteous and virtuous. The middling type are those who see the good as good, and the bad as bad. The lower type are those who accept only the bad and ignore the good. Finally, the lowest, the worst are those who judge the bad alone as good and enforce its acceptance.

Strive to rise up to the highest type of men

You have to avoid the last type and the third one and strive to rise up to the second and the first. All the rules and disciplines that have been prescribed by this Conference for your activities are for helping you in this spiritual effort. They are intended for your benefit, not for heightening My authority. So far as I am concerned, there is only one rule that binds you to Me; the Rule of Love. That love will inspire you, instruct you, quieten and comfort you.

Anger and hatred can be used to ward off the evil that stalks the spiritual aspirant; be angry at things that hamper you; hate the habits that brutalise you. Cultivate Jnana (Supreme Knowledge) and visualise the Lord in things and activities. That makes this human birth worth while.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

21. Sing the sweet name

Date: **18 May 1968** / Location: **Mumbai** / Occasion: **World Conference Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organizations**

THE mariner uses his compass to guide him aright amidst the dark storm clouds and raging waves. When Man is overwhelmed by the dark clouds of despair and the raging confusion of irrepressible desires, he, too, has a compass which will point to him the direction he has to take. That compass is a society that is dedicated to the propagation of spiritual discipline. So long as man is attracted by outer Nature, he cannot escape the blows of joy and grief, of profit and loss, of happiness and misery. But, if he is attracted by the glory of God within him as well as within Nature, he can be above and beyond these dualities and in perfect peace. The body is the car, where God is installed for the festival of adoration. Its four wheels are dharma (righteousness), artha (wealth), kama (desire) and moksha (liberation) - the four goals of man, Dharma modifying artha and moksha controlling kama. The car can move only when the fuel of vijnana (higher knowledge) is poured; the tyres are to be inflated with faith. The goal is liberation, immortality merger with the Divine, getting immersed in the inner and outer glory. Knowing this is the real aim of man; he who is unaware of this is ignorant. However profound his scholarship may be, he does not know the answer to the only question that is worth asking: "Who am I"? He may travel to the Moon, but, he has failed to explore his own inner Moon, the Mind. When he knows the mind, its composition and behaviour, he can know all about the Universe too, for the Universe is only a creation of the mind.

Science cannot confer calmness, peace and bliss

Men of science must be humble that their discoveries are not so important as the discoveries of sages about the inner reality. Be thankful to the scientist for the inventions, the manipulations of material forces and objects. But, do not give him more reverence than he deserves. Science can confer ease and comfort, alleviate disease, analyse objects. It cannot confer calmness, equanimity, peace and bliss. It can improve the cart, make it firmer, more

mobile; but, it cannot improve or inspire the horse. These three days, you were engaged in various discussions on spiritual matters and out of them has emerged certain conclusions, which I shall sum up for your benefit.

Measures for the elimination of egoism: The chief among these is the bhajan. Have bhajans (group singing of devotional songs) on as many days as you can, in your village or area. Have them in places where all can come and join, and not in the homes of some people, for in homes not all may be welcome. Have them as simple as you can, without competitive pomp or show; reduce expenses to a minimum, for God cares for the inner yearning and not the outer trappings. Even this small unavoidable expenditure must be silently shared spontaneously by a few members of the Committee, and not collected by means of a plate or hundi pot, or a subscription or donation list. The participants must be bound by love, affection and loyalty to one Name and Form. Bhajans are best held on Thursday evenings and Sunday evenings - but, that is no unbreakable rule, for it is not the day of the week that counts. It is the heart that must be ready and eager to imbibe the joy and share it. As a matter of fact, bhajan is a constant exercise, it has to be as essential as breathing.

Sai Organisation members should not be fanatics

Group bhajans must be arranged to suit the convenience of the locality and the people. Some people affirm that the bhajans used at the Prasanthi Nilayam alone should be sung; but God is omnipresent, He is the indweller in every heart; all Names are His. So, you can call on Him by any name that gives joy. Members of Sathya Sai Organisations must not cavil at other Names and Forms of God; they should not become fanatics, blind to the Glory of other Names and Forms. They should join the Groups that honour those other manifestations and demonstrate that all Names and Forms are Mine. They should contribute to the joy and happiness of all without giving up their faith.

Then there arise the issue of meditation. Apart from the dhyana that you do individually, it is good for you to sit for ten or fifteen minutes, at the place where you did bhajan, and after Omkar, collect your thoughts and meditate

on the God whom you adored so long. Or you can meditate on the flame of the lamp in front of you and cause it to illuminate your inner consciousness and overflow into entire creation. Dhyana sanctifies all activities and controls the mind. You can picture the God whom you adored in bhajan, in the splendour of that overflowing light. This group dhyana after bhajan will prepare the ground for individual dhyana in your own homes; the taste will grow, the duration will become longer, the peace that fills you will become deeper. I insist on dhyana as an indispensable item of sadhana (spiritual discipline) for every member of this Organisation.

Reading is not completion of the journey

Then about the study circles. I am not for indiscriminate reading of books, however valuable they may be. Much reading confuses the mind; it fosters argumentation and intellectual pride. What I insist upon is putting the things read into practice - at least, a thing or two. Moreover, you must always remember that the book is only a pointer, a guide, a signpost. Reading is not completion of the journey. It is only the first step. Read for the sake of practising; not for reading's sake. Too many books in the room indicate a person suffering from intellectual illness, just as too many tins, capsules and bottles in the cupboard indicate a person with physical illness. The reading of books or passages from books is best done at some other time, and not as a continuation of bhajan or as preliminary to it. Then, we have this programme of Nagarasankeerthan (moving choirs). It is nothing new, for Jayadhev, Gouranga, Thukaram and Kabir used this type of Namasmarana (remembering of God's Name) as a means of self-improvement and mass spiritual awakening. Gather in the early hours before dawn, say, about 4-30 a.m. or 5 a.m., and proceed slowly along the streets, singing; bhajan songs glorifying God. Carry the name of God to every door; wake the sleeping with it, purify the atmosphere of the streets, rendered unclean by angry shouts of hate or greed, faction or fight. Let the day dawn for you and others with the thought of the Almighty, the Compassionate, the omnipresent, All-knowing God. What greater service can you do to yourself and others? This will give you health and happiness. Your egoism will be shattered when you sing in the streets in full view of your neighbours. You will forget in your enthusiasm all

pride and self-esteem. Thus, this Nagarasankeerthan is a great sadhana a great piece of social service.

The most precious prasadh is vibhuuthi

Another point too was raised yesterday - a small one - about prasadh (the edible that is usually offered to the Lord after bhajan and distributed as consecrated food to the participants). Well. The edible offering is to be avoided; the Name itself is the best consecrated offering to be shared. You can give vibhuuthi (holy ash) as prasadh; that is enough. That is the most precious and effective prasadh. It is now your duty to carry on the activities of your unit of the Sathya Sai Organisations in the most effective manner, becoming yourselves fine models of behaviour and attitude. These three days you have spent here, with fellow-pilgrims from other parts of the country and other nations throughout the world, must have given you both information and inspiration. The Sathya Sai Seva Samithi of Bombay as well as the Prasanthi Vidhwanmahasabha (Maharashtra Branch) have made fine arrangements for your boarding and lodging and for the Conference. They have planned and executed the programmes of the Conference on a grand scale, in order to highlight the spiritual purpose of the Conference and to give you all the chance of My dharshana, sparshana and sambhashana (observing, touching and conversing). You must be grateful to them for this. They have set an example which will serve other Samithis in other cities. I bless you that you may, by your efforts in your places, promote the spiritual progress of yourselves and the people of the world.

Some people have their minds and senses like cotton balls and a spark of jnana will set them ablaze and they achieve victory!

Some others have them like dried faggots; they take longer time, but, victory is certain.

Most have minds and senses like green fuel and even the raging fire of jnana may be put out by the onslaught of the moisture contained in them.

Make your mind and senses like clean finely ginned cotton.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

22. The message I bring

Date: 04 July 1968 / Location: Nairobi (Kenya, East Africa)

YOUR reality is the Atma, a wave of the Paramatma (Supreme Self). The one object of this human existence is to visualise that reality; that atma, that relationship between the wave and the sea. All other activities are trivial; you share them with birds and beasts; but, this is the unique privilege of Man. He has clambered through all the levels of animality, all the steps in the ladder of evolution, in order to inherit this high destiny. If all the years between birth and death are frittered away in seeking food and shelter, comfort and pleasure, as animals do, man is condemning, himself to a further life-sentence. Man is endowed with two special gifts; Viveka (the faculty of reasoning) and vijnana (the faculty of analysis and synthesis). Use these gifts for discovering the truth of yourself, which is the truth of every one else, of everything else. All countries are borne and sustained by this earth; all are warmed by the same Sun; all 'bodies' are inspired by the same Divine Principle; all are urged by the same inner motivator. The Vedas are the earliest testaments to the victory of man over himself his discovery of the underlying Unity in all creation and his pulsating contact with the truth that unifies. They declare, God is Sarvabhuutha antharatma (God is the inner Reality of all beings), Ishavasyamidham sarvam (All this is enveloped by God), Vasudhevah sarvamidham (All this is God, Vasudheva).

Man should have desire only for liberation

The Divine principle that is in every one is like the electric current that illuminates the bulbs before Me here, of different colours and different candle powers. The same God shines in and through everyone, whatever be the creed, colour, tribe or territory. The current animates and activates all bulbs; the Divine animates and activates all. Those who see difference are deluded; they are befogged by prejudice, egoism, hatred or malice. Love sees all as one Divine family. How does this Atma-principle express itself in Man? As Prema (love)! Love is the basic nature that sustains him and strengthens his resolve to march ahead. Without love man is blind; the world, for him, will be

a dark and fearsome jungle. Love is the light that guides the feet of man in the wilderness. The Vedas laid down four goals before man, two pairs of goals, rather, dharmartha (morality-wealth); the earning of the wherewithal for living through moral means and kama-moksha (desire-liberation); the attainment of liberation from the twin experience of pain and pleasure and the desire for that liberation and for nothing less than that supreme treasure.

All these goals are attainable through the practice of Love, Love regulated by sathya (truth), dharma (righteousness) and shanthi (equanimity). The Vedas teach that man must earn wealth through the path of Dharma, that is not taken to heart; wealth is accumulated anyhow! The Vedas teach that man should have only one kama (desire), namely, for moksha (liberation); this too is not respected; man is drowning himself in: the maelstrom of desire, the fulfilment of that desire can never quench his deeper thirsts. How can a prisoner have any other desire than liberation? The widespread anxiety, fear and unrest evident all over the world are the consequences of this mistaken course.

Pursue nobler ends, have grander ideals

The human body, so filled with skills, so capable of great adventures, is a gift from God to each of you. It has to be used as a raft, on which you can cross this never-calm sea of samsara (change) that lies between birth and death, bondage and liberation. Awaken to this primal duty even when your physical and mental faculties are keen; awake even while your power of discrimination is sharp. Do not postpone the launching of the raft, for it may become unserviceable soon. It may be burdened with illness, so that all your attention will have to be spent on its upkeep. Think of the incomparable joy that will surge within you, when you approach the shore of liberation! Ride safe on the raging waters of samsara (worldly life); be a witness, do not crave for the fruit of action, leave the consequences of all acts to God's Will. He is the doer; you are but the instrument. Pursue nobler ends; have grander ideals; sensory pleasures are trinkets, trivialities. The sages have discovered the disciplines that will keep you unaffected by defeat or victory, loss or gain. Learn them, practise them; establish yourself in unruffled peace. In homes and schools,

training of the minds of the young on these lines has to be taken up earnestly by teachers and parents; of course, they must equip themselves for this work by steady practice in meditation and namasmarana (recital of the name of God). In every home, a certain length of time must be fixed every day in the morning as well as evening for readings from spiritual books and namasmarana.

Sharing Prema is the best of all communions

Parents and children must join in singing the glory of God. In fact, all one's time must be dedicated to God: as a first step, a few minutes may be devoted to the adoration of his glory or the gauging of the depth of that Glory. Gradually, when the sweetness of the habit heartens you, you will devote more and more time and feel more and more content. The purpose of 'living' is to achieve "living in God." Every one is entitled to that consecration and consummation. You are the Truth; do not lose faith; do not belittle yourselves. You are Divine, however often you slide from humanity to animality or even lower. Cultivate Love; share that love with all. How can you give one person less and another more, when they are both the same as you? If you forget the basic Divinity, hatred sprouts: envy raises its hood. See the Atma in all Love sprouts, peace descends like dew. You are prema-swaruupa (embodiments of love). You have been sitting here since hours, in the open, putting up with great discomfort, awaiting Me, eager to hear Me and see Me. I am speaking to you from this dais, only to satisfy that ardour. When I sense your prema; I feel I must share it and allow you to share My prema: that is the best of all communications and communions. The mediation of words is then unnecessary.

I have come to light the lamp of love in your hearts, to see that it shines day by day with added lustre. I have not come to speak on behalf of any particular dharma (righteousness), like the Hindhu Dharma. I have not come on any mission of publicity for any sect or creed or cause; nor have I come to collect followers for any doctrine. I have no plan to attract disciples or devotees into My fold or any fold. I have come to tell you of this Universal unitary faith, this Athmic principle, this path of love, this dharma of prema, this duty of love,

this obligation to love.

All faiths glorify the One and only God

All religions teach one basic discipline; the removal from the mind of the blemish of egoism, of running after little joy. Every religion teaches man to fill his being with the Glory of God, and evict the pettiness of conceit. It trains him in methods of detachment and discrimination, so that he may aim high and attain liberation. Believe that all hearts are motivated by the One and Only God; that all faiths glorify the One and Only God; that all names in all languages and all forms man can conceive, denote the One and Only God; His adoration is best done by means of love. Cultivate that Eka-bhava (attitude of Oneness), between men of all creeds, all countries and all continents. That is the message of love, I bring. That is the message I wish you to take to heart. Foster love, live in love, spread love - that is the spiritual exercise which will yield the maximum benefit. When you recite the Name of God, remembering the while His majesty, His compassion, His glory, His splendour, His presence - Love will grow within you, its roots will go deeper and deeper, its branches will spread wider and wider giving cool shelter to friend and foe, to fellow national and foreigner. God has a million names. Sages and saints have seen Him in a million forms; they have seen Him with eyes closed and eyes open. They have extolled Him in all the languages and dialects of man; but yet, His glory is not exhausted.

Carry on the quest of your own Reality

Select any Name of His, any Name that appeals to you, select any Form of His; every day when you awaken to the call of the brightening East, recite the Name, meditate on the form; have the name and the form as your companion, guide and guardian throughout the toils of the waking hours; when you retire for the night offer grateful homage to God in that Form with that Name, for being with you, by you, beside you, before you, behind you, all day long. If you stick to this discipline, you cannot falter or fail. I must give you one more advice. Endeavour always to promote the joy and happiness of your fellow country men in this continent; be sharers in their joy and

happiness. Bharath is so called because the people of that country have rathi (great attachment) to Bha (Bhagavan, that is God). They are devoted to God and so to all the children of God. They are afraid of sin; they are eager to acquire jnana (spiritual knowledge). Resolve to carry on the quest of your own reality. Resolve to live in the inspiration of the constant remembrance of God. Cultivate love and share love. I bless that you achieve success in this endeavour and derive great joy therefrom.

23. The way of the wise

Date: 07 July 1968 / Location: Kampala (Uganda: East Africa)

GOD is the source of all Love; Love God, Love the world as the vesture of God, no more, no less. Through Love, you can merge in the Ocean of Love. Love cures pettiness, hate and grief. Love loosens bonds; it saves man from the torment of birth and death. Love binds all hearts in a soft silken symphony. Seen through the eyes of Love, all beings are beautiful, all deeds are dedicated, all thoughts are innocent. The world is one vast kin. Man is born in society; he is bred in society; he is shaped well or ill by the subtle influence of society. He, in his turn, as a member of society influences the people who contact him. His life is turned or twisted by the standards, modes and behaviour patterns of the society into which he is born through the effects of his accumulated karma. The dheha and the dhesa (body and the country) are inextricably intertwined. The body is one encasement, the country is another, for the spirit of man. Use society for your uplift; try to shape society so that it will help the uplift of individuals and not turn them away from God.

Learn the skill of achieving inner peace

Everyone craves for security, peace, joy and happiness. But most believe that these can be extracted from Nature around. The result is, he wastes his years in eating and drinking, playing and resting, earning and spending. Man moves from cradle to grave, and again from cradle to grave, ad nauseam, drifting along, knowing neither the place from where he started his journey, nor the place to which his steps are leading him through the ages. Man has won unique qualities of head and heart through a series of effort-filled lives as members of inferior species; that victory is now reduced to ashes, by this supine sloth. You must have the skill to swim across the waves of joy and grief, of pain and profit. You must be a master of the art of being fully at ease, perfectly calm and unaffected, whatever may happen to the body or senses or mind; they are all inert when they are not urged by the inner I, which is Intelligence, Awareness. Learn the skill of achieving and maintaining inner peace, the art of being ever aware of the atma, as the inner Reality, and then

you can safely gyrate in the world, as fast as you care.

Man is ill; but, he is resorting to remedies that cannot cure. Diagnose yourself; discover the root cause; apply the proper remedy: that is the way of the wise. Do not run after quacks or pseudopanaceas. Sow the seeds of Prema, after preparing the soil of your heart, removing the weeds. Let them grow, watered by Faith, and yield the blossoms, of sahana (fortitude); later, you are assured of the fruit: Shanthi. This is the task; this is the duty; this has to be the vow. Forms of worship, of the phraseology of adoration or the style of address may vary; but, all religions are directed towards the same consummation. The same bloodstream circulates in all the limbs of the body. The same divine stream activates the entire Universe. Visualise that supreme Architect, that incomprehensible Designer, that unseen Lifegiver. This is spoken of as the realisation of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man. Do not get entangled in the business of living; do not forget in your struggle for survival and success, the God that made life possible.

Life is worth only a casual perusal

Life is a newspaper; read it in a casual manner, headlines, a few columns that catch your fancy and throw it aside. Do not make it more important than that. Tomorrow, it is 'waste paper.' So too, life is worth only a casual perusal; do not lay it aside for a second perusal. One birth is enough; let the death coming to you be the last. If you pay attention to the individual, differences thrust themselves on you. Fix your attention on the Samahsthi (the Collective); then points of identity will be more apparent, concentrate on the outer labels - Hindhu, Christian, Muslim, Parsi, Buddhist - then, you will develop pride or contempt or hatred! But if you concentrate on the struggle that man undergoes to raise himself from the flesh to reach the level of Divinity - then, you find all labels insignificant. Then, it is all love, co-operation, mutual encouragement and appreciation. Go into the inner meanings, the deeper significances of religious symbols, rites and ceremonies. The outer forms and formalities are in accordance with the needs of place, time and person. Some among you relish one sweet dish more than another, others do not agree that your favourite is the tastiest. But, whatever

the dish, they are all sweetened by the same substance, sugar; similarly, all things and beings are sweetened by the same principle, God.

Let Supreme Joy be your lasting possession

Those who carp and criticise, and ask questions like, "If there is God, where is He?" "How does He look?" have not proceeded beyond the first letters of the alphabet of spiritual enquiry. It is only when the entire alphabet is mastered that you can read words; then, you can proceed to sentences, paragraphs and books. Unless you know the I, how can you know the I of all I's - the I that makes every I experience its I-ness? The smog of ignorance hides from you this I behind the I's. It is called Maya in Hindhu philosophy. It is compared to an enchantress, a danseuse, a wily woman who entices away your intelligence by her dance, a Narthaki. This Narthaki can be immobilised by Keerthan (Singing the glory of God, with full Faith in His Grace). Note that keerthan is but Narthaki transposed; Wisdom is ignorance overcome. Keerthan will keep the vision dear and direct it on the sublime and the Supreme. You are all caskets of divine Love; share it, spread it. Express that Love in acts of service, words of sympathy, thoughts of compassion. Just as when you awake from sleep, you know that the dream which you had was a matter of minutes, though the chain of events dreamed spanned many years, this life will appear a transient affair when you awake into jnana after this brief 'dream of life.' Be always full of joy so that when death calls, you can quit with a light laugh, and not whimper in grief. I bless that you may so shape your lives and activities that this supreme joy will be your lasting possession.

24. Light the lamps of love

Date: 08 July 1968 / Location: Kampala (Uganda: East Africa)

LIFE on earth is, as on the ocean, ever restless, with the waves of joy and grief, of loss and gain, the swirling currents of desire, the whirlpools of passion, and the simooms of greed and hate. To cross the ocean, the only reliable raft is a heart filled with the Love of God and Man. Man is born for a high destiny as the inheritor of a rich heritage. He should not fritter his days in low pursuits and vulgar vanities. His destiny is to know the Truth, live in it and for it. The Truth alone can make man free, happy and bold. If he is not prompted by this high purpose, life is a waste, a mere tossing on the waves, for the sea of life is never calm. Man seeks to earn contentment and joy by subjugating the forces of Nature to his fragile will. But all efforts to establish mastery over Prakrithi (Nature) or command it, or employ it for personal aggrandizement are bound to fail, are certain to recoil on man with deadly impact. In India, the story of the Ramayana is well known. In that story, Ravana coveted Seetha, daughter of Earth (that is to say, Nature). He did not evince any attachment to the Lord of Nature, that is to say, Rama (God). He sought to gain nature, not the master of Nature (Rama, the husband of Seetha). The penalty he paid was terrible; he perished in the flames of his own foolish passion. The vast empire he built up so laboriously lay in ruins. He fell amidst the corpses of the heroes who had rendered him unswerving loyalty. Ravana was a great scholar: he had climbed the highest pinnacle of asceticism and won many supernatural powers. But, since he did not bend before the master of Prakrithi (Nature), he suffered irreparable damnation.

Walk Sunward to escape from shadow of Maya

When his steps are directed towards God, man has no reason to fear; but when they are turned away from Him, fear haunts him at every turn. God is the source of the highest joy. People yearn for joy, but they accept as genuine the counterfeit joy given by the senses. No one knows that Nature is but the vesture of God. There is nothing real except He. When the morning Sun is above the horizon and you walk away from it towards the west, your shadow

lengthens and struts before you. That shadow is Maya - the primal illusion, the basic ignorance; it deludes and hides truth and clothes it in the costume of falsehood. To discard Maya and escape from its shadow, you have to walk sun-wards. Then the shadow will fall behind you. When the Sun (the source of reason and Intelligence) climbs higher and higher, the shadow becomes shorter and smaller. Until at last, when he is right on top, the shadow (Maya) crouches at your feet, surrendering to you; you can trample on it. So too, when your Intelligence is supreme, Maya cannot cast her evil spell on you. The Gayathri Hymn of the Vedas, recited thrice a day by millions, asks for the awakening of the intelligence so that when it brightens like the Sun at its zenith, the smog of delusion is destroyed. Then the waves of indecision and decision that confound, contradict and confuse are stilled. This is the process of yoga or the arrest of the wandering mind, as Pathanjali defined it centuries ago.

Bhakthi is a continuous condition of the mind

Bhakthi is also a yoga, a process of eliminating the mind or transforming the mind into an instrument for realising God. Bhakthi, however, has been watered down into a routine ritual - like turning the beads of a rosary, squatting a specified number of hours before an image, offering of incense, waving of lights, ringing of bells, dipping in holy waters, or climbing hills to reach shrines. These are acts that quieten some urges and quicken others, which may or may not be congenial.

Bhakthi is not a penitential uniform that can be put on or off, as occasion demands. The constables on duty here wear uniforms, complete with ribbons and medals; but, when they reach home after their hours of duty, they take it off and wear other dresses. Devotion cannot come upon you during stated hours and fall off when you relapse into normalcy. It is a continuous, constant condition of the mind, a confirmed attitude, a way chosen and adhered to with avid attention.

Today, man dabbles in yoga (devotional practices) in the morning hours, revels in bhoga (festivity and luxury, catering to the senses) during the day,

and tosses about in toga (disease) during the night! Bhakthi is not to be 'performed' during certain periods every day and superceded by other fashionable attractions. Bhakthi is a constant, continuous bent of mind, a habit of thought, a way of life. It must be loyally adhered to whatever may happen - dishonour, distress, despair, deprivation, pleasure, prosperity, power and pomp.

God has no trace of anger or worry

The true devotee is deeply aware of the transitoriness of earthly triumphs. He knows that death is the final arbiter, that God is the only dispenser, and so, he is firm and calm, whether it is foul or fair. He will not slide or climb whatever happens. He knows that the God whom he adores is the indweller in the blade of grass and in the most distant star. God gives ear to the prayers that rise in all languages and even from the silence of the dumb. He has no trace of anger or worry. You too have no reason to develop anger and anxiety. When the teeth bite your tongue do you get angry at them for hurting? Do you break the teeth that hurt it so? No. For, teeth and tongue are both yours, both you. Similarly, he who hurts you and you, are both limbs of the same Body, God. Feel that one-ness and avoid hate. God is on the look-out for his inner vision; He blesses those whose hearts are so vast that they can take in all His children. How can He be pleased when you are so selfish and narrow-minded that you send away His children from the door-step of your heart? You must first have a clear understanding of the nature of the Goal - God or Goodness or the Universal Absolute - whatever the name, its grandeur, its beneficence, its magnificence. Then, that understanding itself will prompt and urge you towards it. The Universal of which you are a unit is pure, true, egoless, unlimited and everlasting. Contemplate on It and your innate egolessness, truth, purity, and eternity will manifest itself, more and more every day.

With God on your side, the world is in your hold

You may have accumulated riches, acquired deep scholarship and achieved health and strength. But, unless you have gained, in addition, a vision of the

Supreme Sovereign, and an aspiration to be ever in the ecstasy of that vision, all that has been garnered by you is mere lumber. India has a great epic, the Mahabharatha, which describes a war between the Kauravas and Pandavas. The Kauravas had superior financial and military resources. They approached Krishna, the Incarnation of the Lord, for help; but, they were content to receive from Him a large army and a huge quantity of hardware.

The Pandavas sought from Him only His Grace! The Lord agreed; He came over to their side, alone and unarmed! He held just a whip and drove the homes of Arjuna's chariot! That was all; but, that was all that was needed for victory. The Kauravas were defeated to the uttermost; the Pandavas won the empire and eternal fame. If God is on your side, you have the world in your hold. This is the lesson driven home by the Hindhu scriptures. "Give up all bonds of fight and duty, surrender unreservedly to Me; I shall guard you from sin and liberate you from that sad cycle of 'entrances' and 'exits' on the stage of life. You can remain ever in your own Reality of Eternal Calm," the Lord has assured. Freedom and Light are what man needs more than anything else. He needs them even more than breath. That is why he is miserable when bound and in the dark. Man struggles like a fish in a dry bowl, frantically, to return to God, which is his home, and Anandha (divine bliss), which is his element. He seeks God or Anandha, which is but another Name of God, up in space, down in the bowels of the earth, alone or in crowded congregations, in silence or in noise. But all the time the spring of anandha lies in his own heart. He can tap it if only he knows how to delve into the poise of deep meditation.

Man can purify himself into divinity by meditation

Many postpone sadhana (spiritual discipline) to old age. This is wrong. Earn the precious reward while you are young and fresh. It is never too soon to begin. The tongue, the eye, the ear, the hand and mind should all be trained from boyhood upwards to avoid evil. If these are kept clean and holy, the Grace of God is won. When the flesh urges you to fall into falsehood, do not yield, stand firm. When the individual is strong and steady, the family prospers: when the family prospers, the village is happy; when the village is happy, the country is secure and strong; when countries are strong and

secure, the world is full of humility and reverence, charity and peace. Sing aloud the glory of God and charge the atmosphere with Divine adoration; the clouds will pour the sanctity through rain on the fields; the crops will feed on it and sanctify, fortify the food; the food will induce Divine urges in man. This is the chain of progress. This is the reason why I insist on group singing of the Names of the Lord. Man is Divine: he can purify himself into perfect Divinity by the process of dhyana (meditation), taken up with eagerness and followed with faith, by virtuous individuals. As regards the technique of dhyana, different teachers and guides have different methods. I shall give you now .the most universal and the most effective.

The most effective method of meditation

Set aside a few minutes, every day, in the beginning for this; later, you are sure to extend the period, when you experience the thrill of peace. Let it be the hours before dawn. This is preferable because the body: is refreshed by sleep and the peregrinations of day-time have yet to impinge on the senses and distract physical and mental energy. Have a lamp, with a bright little flame, steady and straight, or a candle, before you. The flame does not diminish in lustre, however many lamps may be lit therefrom. So, the flame is the most appropriate symbol of the eternal Absolute.

Sit in the padmasana (lotus posture) or any comfortable asana, in front of the flame. Look on the flame steadily and closing your eyes, try to feel it inside you, between your eyebrows. From there, let it descend down into the lotus of your heart, illumining the path. When it enters the heart, in the centre of the chest, imagine that the petals of the lotus bud open out, one by one, bathing every thought, feeling, emotion and impulse in the Light and removing darkness. There is no space now for darkness to take refuge; it has to flee before the flame. Imagine that the Light becomes wider, bigger, brighter. It pervades the limbs; they can no more busy themselves in dark, wicked, suspicious activities. They have become, you are conscious of it, instruments of Light, that is to say, of Love. The Light reaches the tongue. Falsehood, slander, bragging, spite vanish from it. It reaches the eyes and the ears. All dark desires that infest and infect them are destroyed by the brilliant Light of

Wisdom and Virtue. No more puerility, no more poisoning of the ear. Let your head be charged with Light; all wicked, vicious thoughts disappear, for, these are denizens of darkness. Imagine that Light in you more and more intensely - and it will be so. Let it shine all around you, enveloping you in the brilliance of Love; let it spread from you, in ever widening circles, taking into its fold your kith and kin, the loved ones, friends, companions - nay, strangers, foes, rivals, enemies - all men all over the world, all living beings - all Creation.

When light meets light, it is all Light

Do this every day, without break; for as long as you enjoy it; do this deeply and systematically; a time will certainly come when you can no more relish dark and evil thoughts, no more yearn for dark and sinister books, no more crave for toxic food and drinks, no more handle ugly demeaning things, no more suffer infliction of infamy or injury, no more formulate evil designs. You are then in the realm of the Divine, of Peace beyond words. Stay on in that thrill, witnessing Light, being Light, everywhere, for all. If you are used to adoring God in any form, visualise that Form in that Light. For, Light is God; God is light. When light meets light, it is all Light. There is no boundary between your light and His Light. They merge, they fulfil.

In this a-shanthi (peacelessness), that is confounding the world, you must seek Prasanthi (the higher spiritual peace); in that Prasanthi, you can visualise prakanthi (Supreme Splendour) and in that prakanthi, the all-embracing Paramjyothi (immanent and transcendent splendour, boundless, benign) is experienced; in that Paramjyothi, the Universal Eternal Absolute, the Paramatma is experienced. When the individual meets the Universal it becomes Universal. I and I become we; we and he become only we. Practise this meditation, regularly everyday. At other times, repeat the Name of God (any Name that arouses in you the spirit of adoration and devotion), always taking care to be intensely conscious of His Might, Mercy and Munificence.

Sharing Anandha heightens it for both

I want that in Kampala people who are interested in spiritual progress must

gather in groups for Bhajan, and adore God and sing His Glory. It is not enough if you gather in thousands on occasions when a mahatma (sage) comes to town; you must do it as a duty to yourself. Meet once a week or oftener; do Bhajan, read some spiritual book that will inspire you to further sadhana, meditate for some time and depart, refreshed and strengthened. Feed the little lamp of yours with the oil of enthusiasm provided by godly company. Wherever possible, you can also move along the streets, singing in chorus the Name of God. This is called Nagarasankeerthan in India; it awakens in all who hear and participate, the consciousness of living in the lap of God; it is done before dawn, when the east is suffused with the glow of Sunrise. The day starts with the paeon of praise for the Giver of Gifts, the sustainer of life, the strength and solace. Embodiments of Love! Cultivate Love, pure, unsullied by selfish desires. Share that Love with all your brothers and sisters of all creeds, colours, climes. When your neighbour prays to God, do you not feel kinship with him? Is he not asking in anguish for the same gifts, from the same Giver? He may be asking in another language; in another style; in the formalities of another creed. But, his hunger and thirst are the same as yours. His Anandha and grief are the same as yours. Share that Anandha; sharing heightens it for both. Share that grief; sharing lowers it and robs it of its bite. Let your Love flow into the hearts of others. Stagnant water becomes foul; flowing waters are cool and limpid, Love is Anandha; Love is Power; Love is Light; Love is God.

I shall come among you again, next year, I shall then stay longer, to accept your Love. I shall be happy when each one of you becomes a Lamp of Love, shedding virtue and purity all around you.

The tongue is the armour of the heart; it guards one's life. Loud talk, long talk, talk full of anger and hate - all these affect the health of man. They breed anger and hate in others; they wound, they excite, they enrage, they estrange.

Why is silence said to be golden?

The silent man has no enemies, though he may not have friends. He has the

leisure and the chance to dive within himself and examine his own faults and failings. He has no more inclination to seek them in others.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

25. Emergence of enthusiasm

Date: 14 July 1968 / Location: Mumbai

BHARATHEEYA Samskrithi (Indian Culture) is being revered as an ideal constructive contribution to human welfare but its legitimate inheritors are neglecting it and losing the peace and joy that it can confer. This Samskrithi is a huge tree, whose branches have spread over the entire world, giving comforting shade to all the peoples. The basic discoveries of this culture that teach the methods of acquiring that peace and that Joy cannot be challenged and negated by science, for, science can only manipulate material things and study their interactions, behaviour, composition and structure. Moreover, in science the hypothesis that is found valid today may be negated by a new set of facts that come to light tomorrow. The spiritual laws that the sages of India have discovered and laid down will never be over-ruled; they stand valid for ever. Further research in spiritual laws can only strengthen and confirm their authenticity as further facets only render the diamond more brilliant. Bharath has contributed to the world the priceless gem of Truth: "Eesvarah sarvabhuthanam hridhese, Arjuna, thishthathi" - "God is the resident motivator of all beings". Until this fact is realised by the individual, he will be tainted by traces of anger, pride and hate, for he sees others as distinct and different.

All men in all countries are on the same pilgrimage

Karna, the eldest born of the Pandavas, did not know that he was the brother of the other five. Nor did the five brothers know this fact. As a consequence of this ignorance, Karna was saturated with hatred towards the five; he longed to destroy them; he prepared himself for battle against them with unabated vigour. The five younger brothers too, planned to destroy him and behaved towards him as if he were their deadly enemy. When Dharmaraja, the eldest of the five, came to know - after the death of Karna, which they effected successfully - that Karna was his brother, his agony knew no bounds; he was struck disconsolate and was torn by despair. If only Dharmaraja had known the truth, all that grief could have been avoided, isn't it? So too, until you

know that all are altars where the same God is installed, all are moved and motivated by the grace of the self-same God, you are afflicted by hate and pride; once you know it and experience it, you are full of love and reverence to all. The barbarous remedy of war will be given up when this basic brotherhood is felt in the deepest core of man. All men in all countries are pilgrims proceeding along the path to God. The progress of each is decided by the discipline adopted, the character formed, the ideal kept in view, the leadership chosen and the faith implanted. Just as trees and plants, birds and beasts differ from one region to another, the rituals, practices, disciplines and ideals may differ from community to community; each is good for that region and that stage of development. You cannot transplant one, from one human community to another. The atmosphere in which you have grown up is the most congenial for you.

For God, Universe is the mansion

It was this principle of Love, based on the recognition of Oneness in God, that was planted by Me in East Africa. The Atma-thathwa (which is the wave-God of the Ocean-God that is in the hearts of all men) was declared by Me, at Nairobi and Kampala, in My discourses. The emergence of enthusiasm that day at Nairobi when I landed is something indescribable. People were filled with Supreme Anandha (bliss divine)' wherever I went, though in special planes and without intimation, people gathered in large numbers, their eyes shining in joy and love. Your material eyes see countries as different; in reality, all countries are limbs of one organism; all bodies are activated by the same Principle. For God, the universe is the mansion. Each nation is a room, a hall, in that mansion. So, when I move from one room to another and come back, why do you indulge in all this commotion and celebration? I do not feel that I had been to another mansion; it was all so familiar to Me. You should not also emphasise the apparent distinction; for the Divine, all are the same. At first, in Kampala, most Africans were gathering on one side and the Indians on another; but, the very next day, as a result of My counsel, they came together and sat in friendly company, singing the Bhajan (group singing) songs in unison. And when I left, the Africans, along with their Indian friends and companions were shedding tears at the thought of separation. Even the

constables on duty sobbed and called out, "My Lord," unable to bear the grief!

Without bounds, devotion easily falls into hysteria

Dr. Munshi now described Bombay as the City Of Lost Faith; people here value dhanam (riches) more than dharma (right). But, I know that the citizens of Bombay are imbued with a great craving for the right, the moral and the spiritually uplifting dharma. I know that they yearn for it and would like to acquire it. Only they have no knowledge or experience of the discipline that can confer it, the mode of life that will ensure it. The young volunteers who regulated and served the gathering at Kampala and Nairobi were students of colleges and schools; they had no experience of such vast numbers; each one was eager to approach Me and do obeisance to Me. Yet, they served remarkably well. They had scant knowledge of Indian ceremonial as regards reception and welcome; but they attended to every detail with remarkable anticipation. You in Bombay have heard Me often and you are aware of the rules of discipline I like to be observed. But, I found Africans were much better. However far I moved among the huge gatherings, people never ventured to rise and fall at My Feet; they did not as much as lean forward to touch them, unless I indicated that they could. They paid homage in their hearts only. Devotion, when it knows no bounds, easily falls into hysteria. The nations of the West are yearning now for the opportunity to listen to the Message from Me and learn the lesson of Love - for they have lost the secret of peace within. Every one from the Ministers, the Commander-in-chief and the Mayor to the ordinary peasant and labourer declared that they had never experienced such Anandha before as the visit gave them. The Mayor of Kampala said when I was leaving, 'We cannot give you a send-off, for you are always welcome.' Henceforth, you will see Dharma, illumining With its splendour country after country. In every country, what is most essential is the practice of the principles they profess, the bringing into the details of daily life the attitudes of brotherliness that devotion to God instills. In India too, children of Bharath have to be inspiring examples of what spiritual sadhana can achieve, how much of prema and shanthi it can bestow. Be good Hindhus, that is to say, act according to the meaning of the word, Hindhu. Hindhu means, he who is 'duura' (far from) 'hin' (himsa cruelty, violence). Be

immersed in Prema; you will ever be away from violence. You can then be in shanthi and others will derive shanthi through you.

You do not wait with folded hands for the cup of coffee to cool down to the required warmth; you ask for an extra cup and you start pouring the coffee from one cup to the other, is it not? The same anxiety, the same sadhana has to be shown in spiritual matters also, to take in the beverage of Divine Grace.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

26. The five mothers

Date: **22 July 1968** / Location: **Anantapur** / Occasion: **Inauguration of Shri Sathya Sai Arts and Science College for Women**

THIS is a day full of significance, not only for Ananthapur or this District or this State, but, for all other States also. On the occasion of the School Day of the High School for Girls in this town, as early as 1964, I had announced that what this town needed most was a College exclusively for Women. That sankalpa (resolve) has today realised itself. Very soon, this will become a fullfledged completely equipped educational institution, with a status peculiar to itself. The prompting behind this college is not the search for reputation, or the desire to propagate a cult, or the hope of monetary profit. I know that fame is a fickle figment, that reputation is something that rots, that profit is defiled when it is measured in terms of cash. **I have allowed this college to rise, because it will instill in the minds of the students the ancient ideals of Sathya, Dharma, Shanthi and Prema, ideals that are delineated in the Vedas, described in Shasthras, illustrated in the epics, practised by countless generations of the men and women of this land and confirmed as best suited for individual and social progress by its saints and sages, law-givers and leaders, for centuries.**

All are eager to learn the secret of peace

Every student born and bred in this land is the inheritor of this precious heritage and has a right to know it and benefit by it.

Agriculture is for living; mind-culture is for life.

Skills are for shaping material things so that they cater more for the comfort of man;

Studies are for shaping attitudes, feelings, desires, emotions and impulses of man,

so that they may confer more peace, more joy, more fortitude on man.

Prahladha told his father that "the father who leads the son to God is the only father who deserves the reverence due to that status." Fathers who lead their sons into the vortex of sense pleasure, the volcanoes of physical passion, the boggy marsh of pride and pomp - are unaware of their duties and responsibilities. So too, an educational system that keeps children away from God - the only refuge, the only kinsman, the only guide and guard - is really a system where the blind are engaged in blinding those who depend on them. India has forgotten its real source of strength; it is seeking strength in the debilitating hunt for cankerous comfort. This college will feed the roots of that genuine culture of Bharath, which alone can revitalise the people of India, and through them, of the whole world. My visit to East Africa has shown that people there are eager to know about the culture and philosophy of India so that they may learn the secret of peace and joy. Women, who were all these centuries, the bulwarks of Indian culture, the guardians of Indian spiritual wealth, are fast succumbing to the flimsy attractions of foppish culture, as is evident from the modes of living and the social behaviour of many educated women. This is the result of the artificial and empty system of education, as well as the subtle pulls of cheap literature and shoddy films. Women are the mothers of the coming generation; they are the teachers of that generation, during the first five years of life.

The mother's responsibility is most crucial

1. The mother is the first of the five Mathas (Mothers), that the Indian child encounters: Deha-matha (the mother that gave birth to this body);
2. Go-matha (the cow that gives sustaining milk);
3. Bhoo-matha (the land that grows the crops which feed the body);
4. Dhesa-matha (the Native country that gives protection, care, love, rights and chances to serve and elevate oneself to one's full height), and

5. Veda-matha (the heritage of spiritual treasure that reveals the aim and purpose of human life and takes one step by step, towards the Goal of Self-realisation).

The Dhehamatha must reveal to the child the glories of all the other four; so her responsibility is the greatest and most crucial. That is the reason why it has been resolved to start a women's college, in every State, in order to promote the Dharma, which I have come to establish.

This is part of the general task. Every act of Mine, every word, will have only that goal in view. Atma-vidhya (science of the Self) alone can fix the mind in Dharma. The students here will be given a glimpse of that Atma-vidhya; they will develop a keen desire to know about it - knowledge and desire that will stand them in good stead, when they encounter the problems of life.

The war of Kurukshethra, for which the Mahabharatha is the background and the stage, lasted for eighteen days; other wars have lasted longer, seven years, thirty years, and even a hundred years! But, however long, they ended! They had a finish, some time! But the battle between Jeevi and Maya, the individual and the fascinating, deluding wiles of the really unreal Nature with its enticing multi-fariousness - this battle is continuous; the earliest man got entangled in it; the last man on earth will have to fight it. It can bring victory to the Jeevi (individual) only when, like Arjuna, he chooses the Lord as his charioteer and surrenders his judgement, his desires, to Him. Maya can be conquered only by allying yourselves with the Master of Maya, Madhava. This is the lesson that Atma vidhya teaches, this is the lesson that children in India have a right to imbibe; children from all over the world can benefit immensely from it.

If your foot slips, you earn a fracture; if your tongue slips, you fracture some

one's faith or joy. That fracture can never be set right; that wound will fester forever. Therefore, use the tongue with great care. The softer you talk, the less you talk, the sweeter you talk, the better for you and the world.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

27. The footprints of God

Date: 16 August 1968 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

This is the Day when the world celebrates the advent of Lord Krishna, who came down to earth in order to transmute it into heaven and make Gods of men. Hundreds and thousands of times has this Day been celebrated, but, does man shine today with the jewels Krishna poured into his lap? Has His Message been implanted in the heart and blossomed into higher life and aspiration? No. The reason lies in hypocrisy that parades as devotion! Words emanating from the tongue, belying the activities of the mind and senses. Man forgets that with each sunrise and sunset, a day is clipped off the allotted span of years; he leads life in a wobbling line from the cradle to the grave. He denies himself the Light of the Spirit when struggling through the trackless jungle of matter. That light will reveal the Spirit that resides in every thing and being; it will deify and therefore, unify. The Krishna whose advent you should celebrate is not the cowherd boy who charmed the village folk with His flute, but the Krishna, the indefinable, inscrutable, Divine Principle, that is born in the navel of the body (Mathura) as the product of the Divine Energy (Devaki), that is then transported to the mouth (Gokulam) and fostered by the tongue (Yashodha) as its source of sweetness. Krishna is the visualisation of the Atma, that the repetition of the Name grants; the Vision that was gained by Yasodha. You must foster that Krishna on your tongue; when He dances on it, the poison of the tongue will be ejected completely, without harming any one, as happened when as a child He danced on the hoods of the serpent Kalinga.

God is Bliss, Ecstasy and Sweetness

Yashodha traces Krishna to the place He hides in, by the foot- prints He leaves, when He has broken the curds-pot, which she was churning. This is the symbolic story to illustrate how the Lord breaks our identification with the body and leads us on to Himself, by signs and signals that He provides all round us. These signs are ever present in the Nature around each one of us, in the beauty of the rising Sun, the ecstasy of the rainbow, the melody of the

birds, the lotus-spangled surfaces of lakes, the silence of snowcrowned peaks - in fact, since God is Rasa (sweetness, ecstasy), all Nature which is but Himself in action is sweet and ecstatic. With or without Form, It is Anandha. Welcome It into the heart, as Rama - He who is joy and grants joy - or as Krishna - He who draws you by means of the joy. He imparts - and live all your moments with It, offering It your dhyana, your puuja, your japam. That will open the doors of jnana (wisdom) and of Liberation. This is the mark of the wise, while those who are otherwise, wander in the wilderness, filling their moments with meaningless trifles, toys and geegaws.

"What am I to bewail?" asked Harischandhra to himself that night when a corpse was being cremated in the ghat where he was a watchman and fee-collector. He was once the sovereign of a vast empire; he held truth as the highest ideal; a saint asked from him vast treasure and he promised to give them to him, whenever he needed it; the saint brought down vast ruin on his empire, drought, famine, floods, fire, quakes, foreign hordes. And, when his treasury was empty, he demanded the promised treasure.

The fundamental fault of man

Harischandra sold his belongings, sold his wife and son into slavery, and himself served as a watchman in order to scrape together the amount for the saint. "Am I to bewail loss of the empire or the fate of wife and child or my own heinous occupation? No. I shall weep, I shall shed tears only because I have not yet realised Him, visualised Him," he cried. "I for you, You for me" - that is all one needs, one need pray for. This is what the sages have discovered after years of agony and travail; this is what they have taught mankind. Man must repay the debt he owes to them by treading the path they have cleared, and observing the limits laid down by them in order to ensure a safe and victorious journey.

Krishna told Uddhava that the supreme stupidity is "Dhehatma buddhi" (the belief that the body is the self). That is the fundamental fault. When that is removed, liberation follows. India has the secret of this process of liberation. Nevertheless, Indians are enamoured of the glitter and glamour of the West,

with its insatiable greed for sensation and for competitive triumph of every kind. They do not realise that the Western nations are weltering in anxiety, fear and frustration. There is a story that Lakshmi asked Vishnu one day whether mankind will ever turn towards God, since He had provided them with the skills and materials necessary for comfortable living. Vishnu replied, "I have endowed them with two qualities, which will draw them towards Me: Greed and Discontent." When man turns towards God, detaching himself from the bondage to the world, he will no more suffer from greed and discontent.

See yourself and others as Divine

For, sarva dheva namaskaram (obeisance to all the Gods) which is declared as sufficient to attain God, is only half the process; the other half the reverse, is the sarva jeeva thiraskaram (detachment from all beings). Between these two embankments, attachment to the Divine and detachment from the mundane, the stream of life can flow unimpaired in speed and direction, towards the Ocean of Divine Grace. See yourself as Divine; see others as Divine. Turn away from all else in you and in others. That is the essence of sadhana. Naradha asked Vishnu once: "The Rishis (sages) who had attained the purest Wisdom relating to the Universal Atma could not win your Grace; but, the illiterate milkmaids of Gokul who were charmed by Your beauty, Your sport, Your music, Your prattle, Your sweetness, Your inscrutable mystery - they won Your Grace. How did this happen?" Naradha himself came to know later that the Gopees had Krishna (the Lord) as the very breath of their lives, as the very sight of their eyes, the very sound of their ears, the very taste of their tongues, the very touch of their skin. While tending the cows and calves, attending to their husbands and children, doing the thousand and one chores of worldly life, they lived in Krishna, with Krishna and by means of Krishna only. Sarvatha sarva kaleshu sarvathra Harichinthanam - "Under all conditions, at all times, in all places, their minds dwelt on Hari (Krishna; the Lord)." How then can God deny them Grace?

Supremacy of devotion of the gopees

When Naradha went to Gokul and called the Gopees to gather around him so

that they can listen to his teachings about the attainment of jnana, the Gopees gave no heed; they said they did not like to waste precious minutes. "The hours of day and night are not enough for us to dwell on the Name of the Lord. We do not require your verbal acrobatics to convince us that God is Sath-chith-ananda-swaruupa; we know, we feel, we experience the Bliss every moment." It was after this revelation of the supremacy of Bhakthi that Naradha composed the BhakthiSuuthras, which have become the guiding lamps for the aspirants. The Vedas save by the power of Nadha (sound) with its mystic echoes in the cavity of the cleansed heart. The music of the flute, which represented the cleansed soul, which Krishna played, to draw the Gopees, is but the Veda-nadha (sound of Vedas) in another form. Rama drew the heart through the thrill of joy He gave. Krishna attracted the heart and got Himself installed therein through the Divine delight He conferred. They are but different expressions of the same compassion. From the inexhaustible reservoir of Grace, you draw joy through one outlet, Rama, another derives the same delight and the same strength from another outlet, Krishna. That is only a distinction with no difference. My emphasis on Namasankeerthana and Nagarasan-keerthana is prompted by this reason; mere dialectical skill is being paraded now as spiritual instruction and scriptural interpretation for the common man. And this is mostly done by people who have no faith in the doctrines they uphold, in the value of the disciplines they recommend. They are like Harischandras on the stage propagating by theft histrionics the supremacy of Truth but off stage they live lives full of stratagems and subterfuges.

Move every moment nearer to God

Unless you practise what you profess, you stand condemned as "Drama Bhakthas" (Stage-play Devotees). India would not have fallen so low if only her sons and daughters had put into practice a fraction of what each one declares to be his or her duties and obligations towards others and towards God. As the river flows silently and steadily towards the sea, however long and arduous the journey, man too must keep the Lord in view and move every moment nearer and nearer to Him, until the ultimate merger. The Lord is most pleased with Dharma. For, in order to save Dharma and restore

Dharma to its ancient purity and clarity, He condescends to assume human form and walk among mankind as if He was one of themselves! Therefore, if you yearn for the Grace of God, let Dharma be the inspiration behind every thought, word and deed of yours. Let the knowledge that all are repositories of the Divine inspire you with love, tolerance, sympathy and reverence. Through work filled with Dharma you progress towards worship that is filled with the consciousness of Divinity in all and through that worship you attain wisdom when you experience the Divinity that fills all this. Work, Worship, Wisdom - fruitling, mature fruit, juice-filled fruit; this is the order of spiritual progress of each individual. When the fruit is saturated with sweetness, it drops. That is the consummation. Naradha once asked Krishna the secret of the attraction that His flute-play had on the cowherds of Brindavan. "Do they run to you, or do you run to them?" he queried. "Among us, there is neither I nor they; how can a picture be separated from the cloth on which it is painted? I am imprinted on their hearts so inseparably, so inextricably", Krishna replied. Have God imprinted on your hearts; be ever so inextricably established in Him - that is My message to you this day.

You can be free from fear only when you are confident of the strength of the foundation. You do not see your breath or weigh it; but, breath is the very sustenance of life. The unseen is the basis of the seen. If you are caught up in the meshes of the seen, you cannot know the importance of the unseen.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

28. Acquire Me as Charioteer

Date: 18 August 1968 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

THE world is becoming more and more deeply immersed in irreverence and cruelty. Codes of decent behaviour are being ignored and laughed at. The material is receiving greater attention than the moral and spiritual. Faith in the victory of truth, justice and goodness is fast disappearing; the distinction between good and bad is seldom recognised. The child Rama, when he was brought into the hall where Dhasaratha, Koushalya and Vashishtha were together, touched the feet of Koushalya first, of Dhasaratha next and of Vashishtha last - thereby demonstrating that it was aware of the ancient discipline: "Revere the mother as God, revere the father as God; revere the preceptor as God." Gratitude for these three is absent only among animals which soon ignore the parents, once they are weaned. Keeping them as well as the preceptor in grateful memory is the sign of the human kind. The world is a gigantic play designed and directed by the Lord to instil in man the sense of awe, reverence and wonder, so that, drawn by its beauty, charm, and mystery he is enabled to visualise the source of all this beauty, all this exhilaration and all this enticing mystery. Meera asked her mother, as a tiny girl, "Mother! We are playing a game. The other girls have all given out the names of the man each will wed; who is to be my husband - tell me, I must tell them his name"? When she worried her for some little time, the mother blurted out, "This Giridhar, installed in this shrine, He is your husband. Go".

The Lord is all Compassion, all Grace

Meera dedicated herself to the Lord Giridhar (Krishna) from that moment and saw everywhere, at all times, only His complexion and His compassion. The body is the bridegroom for the Life principle which is the bride; this is the wedlock in every life. As the body enfolds, guards and fosters life, the Lord maintains the vital principle enshrined in man, so that it may realise Him. The Lord is all Compassion, all Grace. Bheeshma the grandfather of both the clans that were battling for supremacy in the field of Kurukshethra, had led the Kaurava hosts for eight days, but victory was not in sight. So the eldest of the

Kauravas, Dhuryodhana, approached him and prayed for a more terrific onslaught on the enemy, to be guided and directed by him. Bheesma replied that it would be either death or victory for him, the next day. Knowing this, Krishna persuaded the Pandava Queen, Dhroupadhi, who was imbued with the deepest devotion to Him, to accompany Him to the camp of Bheeshma at dead of night. Prayer was the source of strength for Dhroupadhi, that tormented Queen; her prayers could not but move the Lord. She entered the tent of Bheeshma, with her face hidden behind a veil. Krishna had asked her to leave her sandals behind, lest their pit-a-pat should disturb the silence and alert the guards. He wrapped them in a silken kerchief and carried the bundle under His arm! Dhroupadhi moved into the tent and fell at the feet of Bheeshma, who blessed her, spontaneously as was his wont, "May you have many years of happy married life!"

Have faith in God, He will never give you up

Dhroupadhi revealed herself as soon as she was blessed thus; she prayed that the Pandava Brothers, her husbands, may be saved from his arrows. Bheeshma guessed that Krishna must be the author of this strategem; Bheeshma knew that he was doomed to die. "We are but puppets in His hands," he said and when he found Krishna at the entrance to the tent, he inquired what the bundle contained. Imagine his dismay when he was told that the Lord had condescended to carry under His arms the sandals worn by His devotee! Have faith in Him; He will never give you up; He will guard and guide you until victory is won. Sincere devotion, unshaken faith - they can never fail to earn Grace.

Dhroupadhi had the faith to surrender unreservedly; she led a dedicated life. The five Pandava Brothers who were her husbands are the five vital airs (the Pancha-pranas) which activate and vitalise the body. She is the Energy that sustains the Pranas, by constant vigilant care. To have that faith you must dive deep into the inner mystery of the Avatharas, like Rama or Krishna, and not lose your way in the tangle of the outer events and emotional conflicts, the external adventures and activities. Do not take Rama as a brother, son, husband, entangled in the personal calamity of having his wife kidnapped and

heroically rescuing her. You can be moved into adoration only by diving into the cool depths of the inner mystery. This process was specially discovered by the sages of India, and so, India rose to the status of the Guru of the whole world. Natural humility, instinctive reverence, continuous contemplation on God and His glory - these shall be your deeksha (path of dedication) for acquiring raksha (security).

Grief and distress are God's ways of shaping us

The role of India has been to remind mankind of this deeksha and to help it to attain this raksha. But this role is being neglected in recent times because the aim now is to acquire quick though transitory pleasure and not lasting happiness. The Manusmriti (Code of Manu) which regulates daily life for the individual and sanctifies and salvages every moment is today cast away as an obsolete guide; its social and moral codes are condemned as outdated. Life, for the modern man, has to be an uninterrupted round of joy. So, man flits from one disappointment to another, and is ever in search of a joy that material gains cannot yield. Joy is a deceptive trap; grief is the real preceptor, teaching caution, circumspection, discrimination, detachment, awareness and vigilance. Death is not the merciless foe he is made out to be, he is the friend and companion, the teacher, the kindly kinsman who takes you into his fold and clothes you with the halo of remembrance. The heart of man has to be toughened, not hardened; it has to be made soft, not slithery; this can be achieved only by the blows of loss, grief and distress. It is God's way of shaping us, in the Divine mould. But, man is blind to His Mercy; he revolts at the first blow of the sculptor's hammer! He leaves off one Divine Form and transfers his loyalty to another Form, which he believes to be more propitious. You bring a picture of Sai Baba and install it in your domestic altar, and start offering flowers. If, a few days later, your cow yields less milk than usual, you decide that it is due to the evil worked by the new God who has come into the home or by the anger of the old God who has been superseded, and you cast away the picture!

Man can master disease and death

Do not offer flowers or worship any form of God for the sake of these low gains. Do not lose the great chance of association with the Divine, by identifying God with your trivial likes and dislikes, your tawdry aims and ambitions. "Anithyam asukham lokam imam prapya, bhajaswamam" - that is the command. "Having come into this uneternal, unhappiness-filled world, adore Me, in order to save yourself." How can the body escape disease and death? How can the mind escape agitation and anxiety? Of course, you can master disease and death, avoid agitation and anxiety, by taking the prescribed remedies and observing the prescribed regimen. Sing the Glory of God when you are afflicted by grief or distress; for, it is at such times that you need Him most. It is when fever is on, that the tablets have to be taken at shorter intervals or in larger numbers. The Pandavas knew this secret of success; they called on the Lord whenever circumstances conspired against them. Ordinary mortals start lamenting, "O, all my puuja has been in vain; all the worship I offered so sincerely and with such heartfelt yearning, has been a waste." Others too laugh cynically at the misfortunes of the devotees and draw them away in the dreary desert of unbelief. Do not give ear to these evil men. Be firmly rooted in faith; feed the roots with repentance and prayers.

Only those who are engaged in puuja (worship) in order to impress others, will give them up when fortune takes an adverse turn. The rest will accept whatever comes with the supreme indifference of the saint; fortune, good or bad, is for them only the observe and reverse of the coin of Divine Grace. The true sign of a Sai Bhaktha is this steadiness. He cannot swerve from this chosen path by cynicism or the call of luxurious pomp. He puts spiritual teachings into practice and knows the immeasurable gain it gives.

Saturate your mind with faith in Krishna's teachings

This Day is celebrated as the birthday of Krishna. You have the faith that this day is a great festival; but, have you the faith that induces you to follow-the teachings of Krishna? Do not derive comfort by filling the stomach with savoury and sweet dishes. Derive it by filling the brain with the teachings, by saturating the mind with faith in them, by shaping thoughts, feelings, emotions, impulses, attitudes, activities - all in accordance with them. The

usual activity of a person who calls himself a bhaktha (devotee) of Rama or Krishna or Sai Baba is, as you must have noticed, planning to build a temple! A new temple rises up and an old one crumbles. Why should these people run about with appeals and donation lists, clamouring for contributions? Each one is induced by ego to build a temple, not for God, but for himself. "I shall build a house where my God, who has now no roof over His head, can stay." That is the vain and vulgar motive which is at the back of all this mania for raising mandhirs (places of worship). The persons who are approached feel superior, the person who appeals for help displays his want of faith in the God whom he adores; people imagine that the Mandhir is for a new God, a God who competes with older Names and Forms of Divinity for their patronage and support! Altogether not a desirable activity for a bhaktha, isn't it? Do not hope to come nearer to Me by such means. I have no sense of distinction between bhakthas who worship this Form or that. All can come near, all who crave for heat and light. The heat of this splendour will destroy the chill of sensual pleasure; the light will scatter the darkness of ages. Cultivate Prema (Love) towards all; that is the way to gain nearness. I do not measure distance in terms of meters or miles. The range of Love decides distance for Me.

Transform your hearts into Prasanthi Nilayams

Another point: You desire that I should come to your houses; you pray to Me to do so, you grieve when I do not come, you start reviling yourself that you are poorer than others, that you are less spiritually developed perhaps, and so on. Now, all this is irrelevant. I have no place in My heart for such distinctions and differences. You may believe this or disbelieve. But I must reveal the real response of My Heart. I have no enthusiasm to visit the houses of people; nor have I any disinclination to do the same. I do not care for the brick and mortar structures in which you live; I care to visit and reside in your hearts. This Prasanthi Nilayam is not my residence; when your hearts are transformed into Prasanthi Nilayams, they are My residence. When you pray that I should visit your village, I think of the facilities it has - not for Me, I need only standing space - for the thousands, the tens of thousands, the hundreds of thousands that gather to have My Dharshan (sight). How can I tolerate the slightest inconvenience to them, the women, the children, the sick, the aged,

the blind, the decrepit, that come for counsel, consolation, courage and cure?

Justice shall be meted out to all

Let Me tell your another point also. Do not delay any more; take hold of this unique chance, even while you can. Ask Me about the sadhana you should adopt for your liberation; begin practising from this day. Later, it may be difficult to approach Me and ask Me. For, people are coming towards Me in full unending streams, and you may have to take Dharshan of Me from miles away! This is bound to grow into a Vishwa-vriksha (a World-tree), that sheds shade and shelter on all. This has come down in this Form with that very propose. It knows no halting, no hesitation. My name is Sathya (Truth). My teaching is Truth; My path is Truth; I am Truth. In each Yuga, the Divine has incorporated itself as an Avathar for some particular task. This Incarnation is different in that It has to deal with the crisis which is world-wide and worldshaking. Intellectual conceit has grown so wild that men have become foolish enough to ask, "What and where is God?" Immorality has put on the garb of morality and is enticing man into the morass of sin. Truth is condemned as a trap; justice is jeered at; saints are harassed as social enemies. Hence this Incarnation has come to uphold the True and suppress the False. I behave like you, moving, singing, laughing, journeying, but watch out for the blow I inflict of a sudden, to chastise and to warn. I shall scorch the wrong-doer for his wrong and soothe the virtuous for his righteousness. Justice shall be meted out to all.

Earn the unfailing Grace by sincere sadhana

Discard through sadhana the attachment to individuality, to sense pleasures; welcome through sadhana, the aspiration to expand the heart into the Universal. Do not cloud your minds with cheap desires, transitory hungers and thirsts, that need but morsels or mouthfuls. Yearn for the enthronement of your soul as the unquestioned Monarch of the Universe, when you merge in the Universal; celebrate your triumph over the foes within that hamper your march to victory. Acquire Me as your Charioteer; I shall lead you to that consummation. Earn that unfailing Grace, by your sincerity, simplicity and

sadhana. Monks are instructed to shave their heads, so that they can move about unrecognised by former friends and companions; but, now we find that they desire recognition and even appreciation, adulation and adoration - things that cater to the ego, things they are asked to flee from! A monk should, strictly speaking, eat like a dog and sleep like a fox - that is the popular saying. Eat whatever one gets and appease the hunger; sleep wherever one finds shelter; do not store food for another day or build a house wherein to pass one's days. Escape the entangling coils of the senses and of the ego that prompts them. Engage yourselves in puuja, dhyana or japam with single-pointed attention, so that when you rise, your face must be lit with the illumination of Awareness. The door is fitted in the house to facilitate the entrance of those whom you desire to come in. Watch the door so that dogs and donkeys, dust and dry leaves, do not rush in through that door. The senses and the mind are doors through which malefic influences can infiltrate into your consciousness and find a home therein.

Consider all your acts as Worship. Duty is God; Work in Worship. Whatever happens, accept it gladly as His handiwork, a sign of His compassion. Thukaram was always in that mood. When he did not get something to eat, he thanked God for the chance to fast granted by Him. When he got some food, he thanked God for coming to him in that Form, and sustaining him so that he may sing His Glory. His glory, His compassion, His Grace - these are inscrutable; they shape themselves in manifold forms, as He wills.

"Turn your feelings towards Me"

Who are you to pass judgement on their validity or value? I do not like bhajan (group singing) that promotes rivalry, or envy or egoism or that emanates from intolerance. I appreciate and reward humility, fortitude, sympathy, service, brotherliness, and constant remembrance of God or goodness. When you yearn to have My picture on your heart, you must turn the lens of the camera towards Me, shouldn't you? Turn your intellect, your emotions, your feelings, your activities towards Me, then certainly, My picture will be imprinted on your heart. If your lens is facing the world and worldly things, how can it be imprinted upon your heart? Of what benefit is this discourse of

Mine if you do not receive it into your hearts and act according to it? I find that all the efforts all these years to awaken you to your duty to yourselves are not fructifying in you. You are like the rocks on the seashore that unflinchingly face the beating of the waves. The rock does not move; the wave will not stop. This predicament should end.

Awake and avail yourselves of this unique chance.

29. The two mothers

Date: **13 May 1968** / Location: **Mumbai** / Occasion: **Address to Prasanthi Nilayam Youth Camp, Dharmakshethra**

YOU are the greatest treasure that this country has; on you, its future rests. This is the land where the sacred Vedas were first uttered, Vedhic discipline realised the Divinity that they were, the land where generation after generation of pious people lived simple and contented lives full of love towards all beings. It is a great pity that you are growing up, utter strangers to this glorious heritage.

The truth, that the Vedas reach man is: "Soham: That is I; the Principle that is Immanent in the Universe is the same Principle that is immanent in Me, too." Meditation on this grand thought gradually leads man to know that there is no distinction between That and I, that both are One, that there is no separate Sah and Aham and so there is only Om. The Vedas also teach three other basic beliefs: (1) Karmaphala - Every act has an inevitable consequence.

Every cause has an effect. If you act with an eye on the consequence, you have to suffer the consequence. Attachment results in bondage; detachment leads to liberation. It is the ego, the I consciousness which tells you that you are the body, with its pack of senses that drives you into attachment. Be vigilant that it does not lead you into desires that are harmful. You are now free, you can go where you like, hiking on your two legs; when you marry, you become a quadruped and when you get a child, you develop two legs more. Thus you grow into a centipede and start crawling. Attachment makes you burdened and bound. The mind is the source of all desire; so, try to acquire, not diamond, but, 'die-mind.' Let all desires for sense-objects die, or, concentrate all desires on God. Surrender all desires to Him. Surrender all instincts, impulses, attachments to Him. In the Geetha, Krishna has assured: "When you surrender everything to Me, your welfare and happiness become My responsibility."

Start with faith, then only knowledge can grow

The other two doctrines are: (2) Punar-janma: Rebirth, according to karmaphala (result of action) and (3) the unique birth of the Lord as Avathar to save humanity from the fall. You must start with Faith; then only can knowledge grow. Have faith in the book and start studying it; then only do you get knowledge out of it. Without getting into water, you cannot learn the art of swimming. You will get the proof you need, only when you approach with humility and faith. Be always cheerful sprightly. Ups and downs there will always be. on the road of life. Pleasant or unpleasant, take all vicissitudes alike, with fortitude. In the sky of your heart, dark thick clouds of desire and doubt hide out the brilliance of the Sun of Buddhi (intellect). They are only clouds; they will pass away. Develop a strong character; reason will blow the wind which will drive off the clouds. Meditate on God and pray that they pass away; the Lord will come to your help. Develop unshakeable faith in yourself, your capacity to live well and long, to be of service to your parents and the country. That is Atma-vishwasa (confidence in the Self). That is the root of the tree of life. The sweetness in the fruit the tree yields is the sweetness of character. Pursue your studies, not for the sake of a job alone, but, for living a good and happy life. That is to say, you must, even from now, cultivate faith in God, keep virtuous company, nourish discipline and cherish ideals of service. Control the senses; avoid seeing evil, hearing evil and relishing evil sights, words and news. Bad thoughts breed bad character and drag you down into the beast. Those whom we now adore for their exemplary lives have been boys and young men like you; they did not neglect during their youth the development of their moral fibre and qualities of sympathy and service. You too should not neglect these.

Students should earn the trust of people

Vidhyarthi (student) means, a person engaged in study, one who aspires to acquire vidhya, but Vidhyarthi have now become Vishayarthi (those who aspire to acquire sense pleasures and sense objects)! Vidhya (study) is becoming shuunya (zero) since students are kept busy with other things than study. Not all are bad; but, the entire student community has to bear the blame, when a few among them are drawn into wrong ways. Nowadays,

students do not enjoy the confidence and trust of the people. In the olden days, when ladies or old people or sick persons had to travel in train without any escort or help, when they found even a single student in the compartment, they felt happy and relieved; for, they said, "O, we have a student travelling with us: he will take good care of us; he will tell us where to get down; he will get for us what we need." But, today the presence of a student is not welcomed! What a fall, this is! How sad and unfortunate! Bad guidance from parents and teachers and the so-called leaders of the land, bad company at school and college, reading bad books, the craving to see films, all are responsible for the damage done to the pure-hearted, blemishless youth of this great country. Students have a natural reverence for the parent, the teacher and the leader; but, when these do not set a good example, when the teacher stoops to borrow a cigarette from the student, how can reverence persist?

Curb the craving to be fashionable

Do not worry at the faults of others. Try to look into your own and correct them. For the disease from which you suffer, the drug must be taken by you only. If you are not at fault, never bother about what others may say. But, first, examine your behaviour and see that it is above criticism. Grow straight; do not grow crooked. Do not read trash and attend bad films, they warp character and extol violence and wickedness. Spend the money you have on good food instead. Develop good habits: doing Bhajan (group singing), practising Asanas (yogic postures), meditation, silence - these will give you peace and joy, a clear brain and concentration. They will discipline the wayward mind.

Curb your craving for being 'fashionable.' You do not know how much your parents have to sacrifice to cater to your tastes. They often borrow money, so that you can adopt the latest in dress or equipment. And, later, they are harassed by the money-lenders. Be continent; learn contentment. There is no wealth, like contentment. Use your time, as if it is something very precious. It is really the most precious Gift of God. It is fast running out; every moment lost is lost for ever. Try to serve the sick, the suffering; learn how to serve

them efficiently and quickly. Move about always with a smile on your face; do not make the smile, a cynical grin or a laugh of merriment. 'No one should feel hurt by that smile; everyone should feel happy, should catch the infection of joy.

Equanimity is the real state of samadhi

Try to have restraint and moderation in everything: food, recreation, talk etc. Have neither too much freedom, nor too much restraint or regimentation. Revere your parents; they have gifted this body to you. They are your immediate and visible Gods. Be grateful to your mother who nourished you with her own blood and bore pangs for your sake, and poured out her heart in love on you. Serving and worshipping the parents is really service and worship of God. For Shri Rama, the command of the father was as potent as Divine Command. At 7 o'clock in the morning, Rama was to be crowned Emperor; he walked towards the throne, to receive the crown and the homage. At 6.55, he was asked to walk into the forest, an exile for 14 years! He walked away as joyfully as he walked towards the throne; he had the same equanimity, whether it was this or that. His reward was the joy that he had followed the command of his father. That equanimity is the real state of Samadhi; sama-dhi, equal awareness, undisturbed reaction to both pain and pleasure.

You are growing older every moment: you will not be young always. The friendships and contacts you develop now at school or college are temporary. After your term is over, each goes in his own path, away from the rest. These attachments will then break off and new ones will fill their place. So, choose good companies and do not develop too strong an attachment to any one. Be friendly with all, but, do not allow that friendship to grow into excess.

Impure thoughts lead to the path of ruin

Try to get into the company of devoted and God-fearing persons. When dust joins the company of air, it rises up into the sky; when it joins the company of water, it sinks into the depths of the earth. Your future is shaped by the

company you fall into now. So, be very careful; I always like youngsters and I yearn to shower upon them My Grace. Look upon all girls as your sisters. If you look at them with evil thoughts, impure thoughts, you will be sliding down the path of ruin. If any one looks upon your sister with impure motives, how much will you be pained, how hurt will you be! Remember that and avoid hurting the others too. Try to develop brotherly and sisterly attitudes towards all you meet. Do not take delight in taunting or decrying girl students. Respect them and pay heed to their sense of self-respect. That is the means of winning My Grace. Remember that you have two mothers: the Dheshamatha (the Mother-country) and Dhehamatha (the mother who gave the body). If you do not have a sterling character, the Mothercountry is thrown into grief. If you do not have love and gratitude, the Mother is thrown into grief. When both are happy through you, I am pleased and I will shower Grace on you. Your life is then indeed blessed.

30. Become the Lord's flute

Date: 19 August 1968 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

THE incarnation of Krishna was in order to propagate the sacred Dharma, which will lead man to the holiness he has to attain, and to teach the manner and content of the efforts he has to put forth. Krishna the Divine Principle is born in the navel of every one and has to be transported to the tongue and fostered there, as was done by Yasodha, with maternal care and love. That is the secret of salvation by Namasmarana. In order to save man, the Lord appeared in a most charming Form, so, that He could draw his heart in love - 'Raso vai sah' (He is sweetness itself). So, Krishna easily steals into the hearts of even the most hard-hearted individuals. He is the 'bada chitha chor' (the greatest thief of hearts). The heart yearns for His voice, His Form, His flute. His smile, His sport and His pranks. That is the thapas (penance) which is rewarded by His grace. The yearning is so deep that all bodyconsciousness is lost, the senses are ineffective, and the mind is inactive, the intelligence is at a standstill, ideas of duality disappear. The individual sees before him only step after step of Anandha leading him to the highest bliss of merging in Him. The culture of Bharath has marked out the guidelines for achieving this Bliss. It is the consummation of all sweetness, all the joy, and fulfilment of all the highest desires. But, yet, man is struggling to achieve petty things, paltry joys and low desires. When you seek God, you must not be misled into by-paths and mirages. The seeker after gold must cast away brass and other yellow metals, that may distract him and destroy him. Like the river which leaps over precipices, creeps through bush and briar, flows round hills, seeps through sand but keeps the goal (the sea) always in view, man too must march untiringly towards God.

To secure anything, you have to pay the price

Relief from discomfort can be got only when the un-welcome item of food that has gone in is got rid off. So too, one can achieve relief from grief only when the unwelcome emotions of hate and malice are ejected from the mind. Until then one cannot have peace. Of course, Krishna has declared that He will

bear the burdens of those who have no other thought except His. Many of you lose heart because you have been repeating 'Krishna Krishna' for years, but your burdens have not lightened. But to secure anything, you have to pay the price. Krishna came down in order to establish Dharma. So, the thing he likes most is Dharma. Walk in the path of Dharma; that is the price he will accept. The Flute is His favourite. So become a flute, hollow (devoid of desires), straight (with no crookedness), and He will accept you. Think of the sublimely sweet Love that Krishna was evoking in the hearts of those who had the good fortune to be his contemporaries! Every one of them, from the unlettered cowherd to the most profound scholar and sage, was drawn to Him as by a magnet and held by Him in unshakeable devotion. Whatever the hardships and troubles that came upon them, they did not give up His Lotus Feet, to which they clung ever fast and firmly.. As you walk along the road, your shadow follows you, through dirt and dust, bush and bramble, mound and midden, brook and boulder. But, note how the shadow has constant contact with the Feet. So long as the shadow (man) has fast and firm contact with the Feet of the Substance (the Lord), no hardship can affect him. Hold on to the Lord; that is the way to peace and joy.

The essence of Man is Divine

Krishna is slandered by ignorant, prejudiced critics as 'jara' and 'chora' and extolled by seekers and sages with the same appellations, jara and chora! He stole the hearts and the owners were glad of it; he shed light, awakened people and made those whose hearts he stole, richer and happier. He destroyed all craving for sensual pleasure and sensual knowledge and filled the entire being with thoughts of the Divine; how then can He be referred to as 'jara and 'chora?' when the blind lead the blind in this, both have to fall into the pit! The Lord takes the Form that the seekers crave for; He is above all Name and Form. Children go to the sweet shop and select sweets representing the animals they love; some ask for the dog, some the peacock, some the horse, some choose the elephant. But, what they desire is the sweetness therein. To say that one Form alone can be sweet is to deny the compassion of God. He is eager to satisfy the yearning of the genuine seeker. Vishnu (whose incarnation is Krishna) is said to ride on a bird called Garuda.

In fact, it is the heart of man that is spoken of as a bird; the heart yearns, it carries the thought of God; it moves swiftly to where He is. If your son is in U.S.A., it goes to where he stays. Man turns to God, at all times and in all places. For the essence of man is Divine.

Start the day with Nagarasankeerthana

Some one asked me during the interview he had, "Swami! May I ask you a question?" I told him I always welcomed questions, for, it was not wrong at all to use Me for solving one's doubts. Then he asked Me, "Swami, can I know from you who you are?" I answered, "But, first, you must know who you are; learn first what you mean when you say I,I,I". That I is this I. The I in that, is the same as This. The difference is due to the degree of manifestation of illumination, to the difference in the power of the bulbs. The Lord is closest to you, He is the mother, father, teacher, friend, guide and guardian. Call on Him, and He responds immediately. From dawn to dusk, spend every minute in His company. That is the reason why I have directed that every Sathya Sai Organisation must arrange for Nagarasankeerthanam in the pre- dawn Brahma-muhurtham. It is a mission of Love and all will welcome it. It is a great act of social service to waken people with the Name of God. It is a purificatory pilgrimage, casting off the foul fumes of anger and hate that infest the atmosphere. Moving slowly along the quiet streets, in the cool refreshing morning hours, singing aloud the Name of God, with ecstatic thrill, filling the ears of your fellowmen with the same - this is good sadhana, the best with which you can start the new day. This direction of Mine is being enthusiastically followed in Bombay, Kerala, Madras and other states, and even in the States of East Africa, which I visited last year. On this sacred Day, resolve to spend the days with God, to fill the days with God.

Like the ass that carries sandalwood, without knowing anything more than its weight, man too carries the burden of wordly worries, without being aware of the fragrance which he can really get from the very burden on his back.

The senses will drag him away from the higher purpose, so they must be kept under strict control by rigorous training. Without this mastery over the senses, all the elaborate puuja (ritual worship), all the long hours of dhyana (meditation), all the vows you observe, are mere mummery.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

31. Love and be loved

Date: 05 September 1968 / Location: Anantapur / Occasion: Teacher's Day

I AM glad you have met here as an association of teachers, and you have deemed it fit to honour a few teachers, who have won the love and gratitude of generations of students. This cooperation and mutual respect must become part of one's daily conduct, one's mental make-up, one's nature. This is what the Rishis of ancient India have consistently emphasised. 'Live together, revere each other; let not the seeds of envy and hate grow and choke the clear stream of Love,' is the prayer that they have taught the children of this land. Their teaching has been Unity Divinity Charity - in thought, word and deed, from the first breath to the last. When teachers transmit this heritage, unspoilt and undiminished, to the children, the future of the land is assured to be glorious.

Teachers should not trot out excuses, based on material considerations, to shirk or by-pass their essentially spiritual task of 'education.' They must bear trials and tribulations, with calm content, and do their work even more efficiently, so that God will reward them, and society will learn to revere them all the more. The world honours the man who suffers gladly, far more than the one who enjoys shamefacedly!

Fundamentally, the years of life are but a short span, a rest in a wayside caravanserai, a drama played on a rickety stage, a bubble upon the waters. During this fleeting hour, it has been given to few to share this golden chance of imparting instruction, inspiring devotion, instilling courage, into the growing children, so that the generation to follow will be ever grateful. Do your job well as a puuja, an offering at the Lotus Feet, and you will be amply rewarded with joy, peace, restfulness and rapture. These teachers whom you honour today have the same message for all of you. Do not call them poor, for they are rich spiritually, doing their duty which is wellunderstood, well-undertaken, and well-done joyously.

Teachers must turn the children to the path of peace

Teachers are not nowadays aware of the nobility of their profession; society has turned ungrateful. Boys and young men have the stars of the silver screen as their gods and guides; they learn deeply and dangerously from films, from horror comics, from crime books. They have no sense of values implanted in them early in life. They are carried away by the torrent of triviality. The teacher is a helpless witness of this tragedy; for, he has no strength and sustenance to impart, no ideal to implant, no enthusiasm to transmit. If only the teacher is imbued with the lessons of the Upanishaths and the Geetha, he can by precept and example turn the children along the path of peace and joy. Of course, the home and society must supplement his efforts and foster the impressions he is able to confer. The teacher must work in an atmosphere of Love and Truth, not Hate and Falsehood. He must move among the children, happy and content, not angry and sullen. Then only can he radiate Love. No amount of advice and exhortation can make the teacher rise to the full stature of his profession. He has to improve himself; he cannot be improved by external pressure or persuasion. You might have taken up this profession for various reasons, but they are not relevant now. Once you have joined this grand association of teachers, you must endeavour to justify the trust placed in you, and serve the best interests of the children given unto your care, by parents who expect great things from you.

Character is the best tool for teaching profession

You only need to tread the footsteps of the great teachers of the past, who transmitted their spiritual wealth to succeeding generations. Of course, you were students some years ago, and naturally, as teachers, you try to shape your methods and manners on lines employed by your teachers. Perhaps, they do or do not approximate to the ideals I now spoke about. But, your duty is to delve into the Inner Reality and discover the spring of joy therein, so that the exacting task of moulding the children, into "children of Bharath" will be a re-creating job for you, highly refreshing and rewarding. Your character is the best tool for the profession you have entered upon; your learning is of course valuable, but, one can excuse a little less of it; character on the other hand, must be cent per cent, perfect. Live, not artificially, but quite in conformity

with the message of the rishis : "Sathyam vadha, Dharmam chara" (utter the truth, tread the path of righteousness).

32. Straighten and brighten

Date: 05 September 1968 / Location: Anantapur

The culture of India is the oldest and yet the most active even today. It is ever fresh, for, it is based on beginningless and eternal truths concerning human nature and the external world which impinges on human consciousness. This culture has emphasised that human activity is best done as dedication to God, the Sath-Chith-Anandha (Existence-Awareness-Bliss Absolute), that pervades and envelopes the Universe. It has taught man to work with reverence and humility; then it draws out the full potentialities of the faculties, with which God has endowed man. The name Bharathi means, Bha (God) rathi (love), Love towards God, which enthuses man to consecrate every little effort of his for His Glory. That love (rathi) will awaken the compassion of man towards all God's children, human or animal; it will make him blind to the failings and faults of all others, and aware of his own; it will render him responsive to the pain and the joy of every one around him. It will fill him with wonder and amazement at the handiwork of God and he is able to see Divinity everywhere and in everything. You must be told, during these years at College, the grandeur and glory of this unique heritage, for, it is your right, the duty the elders owe you. But, most of the students pass through the portals of schools and colleges without securing the priceless treasure left by the sages of the past. I am glad the members of the staff of this College have planned a course of lessons on Indian Culture, to supplement the curriculum, and to give you the sustenance the sages have laid in store for you.

Indian culture removes the dross of animality

They call the course, 'Bharatheeya Samskrithi'. Samskrithi means culture which cleanses the metal, shapes in the mould, melts in the crucible to purify, brightens and straightens. Indian culture removes the dross of animality thereby enabling man to devote all his time towards the pilgrimage to God within him. It is a double process - this Samskrithi; the plucking out of weeds and the sowing of seeds. And, it starts in India, right from the cradle. It has to be continued through kindergarten, school and college. This College has to

set an example, by providing opportunities for the rising generations to practise the disciplines in order to purify and promote these ideals. That is the reason which prompted its establishment. You have been influenced in this direction already by the homes in which you have spent the formative years, and by the society in which you have learnt your attitudes, habits and prejudices. Here too, you influence each other by your conversation and behaviour. All this will help you in understanding and benefitting from the culture of India. The mother-country is not a map or an extent of soil, or a collection of names; it is the mother, which feeds the body as well as the mind; that sings lullabies and presents pictures for the eye and the spirit; it teaches the art of moving towards the goal of life, namely self-realisation. It gives every child knowledge of its potentialities and its limitations. It is thus both Lakshmi and Saraswathi.

A child should not be denied the mother's love

A Women's College has an added responsibility to practise and preserve the essential values of Bharatheeya Samskrithi. Motherhood is the most precious gift of God. Mothers are the makers of a nation's fortune or misfortune. They should teach two lessons, fear of sin and fondness for virtue. Both these are based on faith in God, being the inner motivator of all. If you want to know how advanced a nation is, study the mothers; are they free from fear and anxiety, are they full of Love towards all, are they trained in fortitude and virtue? If you like to imbibe the glory of a culture, watch the mothers, rocking the cradles, feeding, fostering, teaching and fondling the babies.

Mothers must assume this responsibility and not throw it on ayahs or governesses. Of course, ayahs and governesses are industrious and sincere. I have nothing to say against them. But, the child that is brought up by the ayah loses an essential fertiliser for growth, Love. The child is denied the most health-giving vitamin, Love. The home where the fragrance of this love has to be inhaled has now lost its sacred atmosphere. Harmony amongst the inmates of a household is fast receding.

There is no shrine for God in most houses; even if there is, it is in a corner of

the kitchen, where no one can sit and spend some time in meditation; or, the worship of God in that shrine is performed by a paid priest, as an empty and enforced ritual. The great temples of this land, built by devoted hands through the toil of decades of dedication, are neglected and allowed to fall in ruins. The inspiration of group singing and group worship is forgotten and even ridiculed!

The art of living should help to attain liberation

You must in this College emphasise cultivating physical health and mental equanimity, as well as scholarship and proficiency. A healthy mind is prerequisite for a healthy body. There is an example of Indhra Dhevi of Mexico, who learnt yoga in India, with a view to derive physical and spiritual benefits. See how active, energetic, and happy she appears to be in spite of her age! Atmavidhya (science of the Self) is the only Vidhya that can save and sustain, when man is tossed about on the sea of life. The art of living should help to attain liberation. This Vidhya is a special feature of Bharath, and that is why Bharath has been considered as a teacher of Humanity. She has to take up that ancient role, in spite of the apathy of the people and the shortsighted attitude of the rulers. The God who dwells in the dewdrop and the star, in the scientist as well as the atom he studies, can be visualised only by a purified inner consciousness. The tongue alone can taste sweetness, and that too, when it is healthy. So too, only a pure consciousness can recognise the grandeur and glory of God. Purify this through the constant repetition of the idea of Soham, (He is I, I am He), so that He and I will merge and only He remains. Dwell on these Divine thoughts, engage yourselves in activity for the sake of His adoration, then, you will earn 'marks' in plenty; I appreciate your efforts to secure such 'marks', not the 'remarks' from the Principal and Professors.

Problems and worry are really to be welcomed as they teach you the lessons of humility and reverence. But, not all continue the attachment they are able to establish; they lose the fortune that has fallen into their hands.

Many hesitate to believe that things will improve, that life for all will be happy and full of joy, that the Golden Age will ever recur.

Let Me assure you that this Dharmaswaruupa (righteousness personified) has not come in vain. It will succeed in averting the crisis that has come upon Humanity.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

33. The creeper and the tree

Date: 22 September 1968 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

MINISTER Savant and Mukundha Prabhu described to you the functions of a volunteer. But, while ruminating over them each one of you must find the answer to four questions. Why have I been selected as a volunteer? What have I to do? For what immediate purpose? What is the ultimate goal? These have to be well thought over. The word for volunteer used here is "Swayam Sevak" (Servant of Myself) meaning that you have chosen yourself to be the servant. Servant for whom? Swayam...that is to say, of yourself, you serve your own best interests by serving others. You do not serve others; you serve yourself. Harm another; you but harm yourself For, there is no another. He and you are but two waves of the same Ocean. The same God that is in you is in him too. You have an avidity to know who this or that person is. And, you satisfy your curiosity by noting down their names and addresses, their status, their condition. But, you have not come to discover this; you have no need to know all that. You need know the answers to two questions only; Who is Baba? Who am I? And the answer is, I am the reflected image of Baba; Baba is the original of which I am the reflection. That is the relationship; that is the bond, whether you know it or not, whether the image is distorted or correct. You do dhyana, morning and evening; you do japam; you engage yourself in shravanam,keerthanam, smaranam, padhasevanam, vandhanam, dhasyam, archanam, sakhyam and atma nivedanam (hearing, singing, remembering, touching the feet, paying obeisance, serving, worshipping, being friendly and offering the Self) - all for realising that you are but an image, to become a clean, clear image of the Lord, so clean and clear that you merge in Him.

A devotee need have only one vow of total surrender

Seva is the adoration of the Lord, as Vishwa-Virat swaruupa - as having the multifaced Form and Immanence in the entire Universe. The Vedas describe Him as 'thousand-headed, thousandeyed, thousand-footed.' The thousands of hands and eyes and feet that have come here for the Festival are all His, the Lord's. Worship Him; that is the purpose of your seva. And He is none else

than your own self. Do not count an individual as just an individual; he has God in him, as his Reality. Be aware of that. I have been offering you advice and directions about Seva for some years but I am not satisfied with the extent to which you have been putting them into practice. Your aim should be to please Me, to satisfy Me, to follow My directions. I have come with certain tasks as My Mission. I too have certain vows to fulfill. They have been mentioned in the Bhagavath Geetha also. I have to establish the supremacy of Dharma, I have to bear the yoga-kshema (burden of welfare) of those who are immersed in thoughts of Me alone. So, the best way to please Me is to see Me in all beings and serve them just as you would like to serve Me. That is the best form of worship, which will reach Me.

The Lord may have two or two hundred vows; that is his will. But, the Bhaktha need have only one vow, to save himself - the vow of total surrender - of Sharanagathi. If you have full faith in the Divinity of every being, the attitude of surrender will automatically be fixed in you. Do not treat them, as nara (human); treat them as Narayana, the Lord Himself. You are not alleviating the distress of that other person; you are offering worship to the Lord, in that Form, in that body.

Command must be instantly and willingly obeyed

Those who see you here tomorrow may ask; since directions are not strictly followed and since service is not sublimated into worship by these people, why is the badge given to them, year after year? Well, when you continue repeating the lines and trying to sing them, some day, you may succeed in singing them well. Expecting that you will get to know things better and become more and more perfect as the days pass, I am encouraging you to learn, by practice. I do not give you up. This is a sign of My Grace. Ajna (command) is all-important; when I ask you to do a thing, it must be instantly and willingly obeyed. You can give the go-bye to dhyanam or japam (meditation or reciting God's names or sacred formulae); it does not matter. The fruit of obedience is more valuable than those disciplines. Take this instance' you are in dhyanam; some one near you is groaning in pain, you hear it and automatically anger rises in your mind, since he is disturbing your

concentration. Do not develop anger or disgust - rise and rescue him, take him to a place where he can get medical attention. Then, you secure by that act all the benefit you could earn by the dhyanam and japam you missed, and even more.

"Come to Me only if you seek to earn Grace"

Padmapadha, the favourite disciple of Shankaracharya, Confessed that Guruseva (service of the preceptor) is enough scholarship for him. Prahladha declared that the name Narayana is enough for progress and liberation from grief. University degrees without mental equanimity and the control of the senses are but handicaps, extra burdens that one has to jettison, before becoming free and happy. If you seek to fulfil low desires, why come here? Come here only if you seek to earn Grace. Go to a hospital only when you are resolved to take the drug the physician prescribes and go through the regimen he lays down. So, obey the directions that I give, whatever others may say or however difficult they may appear to be. You have not come to Prasanthi Nilayam to please those others; you have come to please Me. I am not pleased by formal compliance, by external marks of devotion. I insist on real faith, inner compliance, heart-felt devotion. I insist on your observance of all the rules and regulations which you ask others to observe. If you do not talk sweetly, how can you expect others to be sweet towards you? The reaction depends on the action. With the badge on, if you start Smoking, you are disgracing yourself and the badge. It is an act of self-deceit, which lowers you in your own estimation.

Have faith in the discipline you enforce; have the grit to put it into action. 'Shraddhavanlabhathe jnanam' - "he who has faith can win liberation through jnana." The tender creeper called bhakthi (devotion) clings to the tree shraddha (steady Faith).

Your behaviour must be exemplary

Do not spread out your beds and boxes in such a manner that others who come later have no space to keep theirs. No one comes here seeking comfort.

Share whatever space you have with others; all are equally your kith and kin. You have come here to learn and practise detachment. Get wet in the rain, while engaged in serving others; it does not matter. If death comes while serving do not pause; if you are so determined, God will not allow it to approach you! You complain, "Swami has not softened towards me." Well; melt His heart. Yearn! Show Him the warmth of a repentant heart of a sympathetic heart anxious to alleviate distress. Through deep detachment, the craving for sensual pleasure must disappear; that will cleanse the chiththa (consciousness). God will then be reflected clear and the Reality can be recognised; this results in peace, equanimity, which is the highest bliss. Prasanthi Nilayam is the spiritually uplifting centre for the whole world; devotees from all over the world are here, so, the slightest mistake or wrong committed by you will be the talk of the world. Your behaviour must be exemplary; every country must learn lessons from you. The foundation must not give way; you must be strong and steady, sincere and straight. Nor should you suffer from conceit, that you have been chosen to exercise authority over others. People of all ages, of all states of health and wealth, of various levels of learning and intelligence come to Prasanthi Nilayam. This Prasanthi Nilayam is also the refuge for all who have no other place to go to. Do not treat any one as an alien. Remember all have Me as their guardian and support. Have no anger, malice, envy or pride against or before any one. Be full of humility; have faith in human goodness.

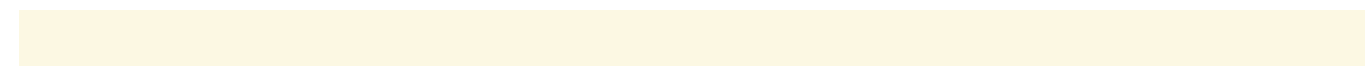
Be earnest to observe the rules of discipline

This is a nice good school for you; achieve success here before you leave. This school has only one teacher and that is Myself. I have no Manager, Secretary, President or Chairman. I am the example, the leader, the guide. I have none to compel me, nor do I profit. Still, I work in order to guide and teach. If I remain inactive how can the wheels of the world revolve? I attend even to the minutest detail, of every arrangement here - the stage, the dais, tarpaulins, sheds, water tanks, pumps, everything. I do everything even for Myself. So I do not need your seva. If you do seva to those who gather here, that gives Me Anandha. I need no other food than that Anandha.

I am Anandhaswaruupa (embodiment of supreme bliss); My nature is Anandha; Anandha is My sign. The ajna, the rules of discipline and sadhana laid down in Bhagavatha, the Ramayana, the Bhagavath Geetha, the Mahabharatha are not heeled, though they are read and learnt by heart, since centuries. Now that the Nirakara (the Formless, attributeless principle) has come in human form, be earnest to observe the orders given for your own Liberation. Do not cast away the nectar of Grace when it is offered. Hanuman was ordered to discover the whereabouts of Seetha and he obeyed implicitly, without question, and succeeded. He did not calculate the dangers of the journey and hesitate; he did not feel proud that he was chosen for the high adventure and enthuse. He listened, he understood, he obeyed, he won. The name Ramadhuutha (Messenger, servant of Rama) that he earned thereby has made him immortal. You must earn the name, Sai Rama Dhuutha. Have fortitude and selfcontrol, use good and sweet words; examine each act of yours on the touch-stone of My Preference. "Will Swami approve of it?" you should ask yourselves; that is the thapas (penance) in which you are being initiated. It is a life-long thapas, not for these ten days of Dhasara alone. When you return home, to your own villages, you must continue the discipline and be bright lamps to light the path for others. I appreciate two things most in you: (1) Silence. It is only in the depth of that silence that the voice of God can be heard. Speak as low as possible; as little as possible, as sweet as possible. Do not whisper to each other, for, that is done only when some one is being traduced behind his back. Do not talk loud, away from My hearing; for there is no such 'away'. (2) Namasmarana. Engage yourselves in repeating the name of the Lord whatever other business you may be doing. Let the Name be the permanent background for all your activities.

Don't despair; don't hesitate. Grace can wipe off the past; Sathprayathna, Sath-sanga and Sath-achara (good self-effort, good company, good practices) can ensure happiness in future.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba



34. Die into a new day

Date: 23 September 1968 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

THIS is a conventional celebration, the twelfth Annual Day of the Sathya Sai Hospital, with the Principal of the Medical College, Goa, as president and this vast gathering of devotees from all parts of India as participants. The Medical Officer presents the report for the year and gives details of the in-patients and out-patients treated, as well as of other signs of progress. But the Report naturally is not concerned with the basic question: For what purpose should health be maintained? What is the best use to which the body has to be put? For, the body with all its equipment of senses, intellect, feeling and memory, is an instrument, an implement, a chariot which one uses for movement towards a goal. The owner of the chariot is any day more important than the chariot itself; it is for his sake that it has to be kept trim and efficient and in good repair.

The duration of life is under the control of Him who gave life, the Creator. It does not depend on the calories of food consumed or the quantity of drugs that are injected, or the qualifications of the physician who prescribes the medicines. The chief causes of ill-health and death are fear and loss of faith. If one concentrates on the atma, which has no change or characteristics, no subtraction or senility, no decline or damage, man can conquer death. Therefore, the most effective prescription is the injection of atma-vidhya (knowledge of the Soul as one's real Self).

Engage yourself only in Sathwik recreations

Death stalks its prey everywhere, at all times with relentless determination. It pursues its victims into hospitals, hill-stations, theaters, aeroplanes, submarines, in fact, no one can escape it or take refuge from its grasp. God alone is the giver of life, the guardian of life and the goal of life. Do not contemplate on Death; it is just an incident in life; contemplate on God, who is the master of all life - God who is the Indweller in this physical frame. Be aware of Him all through life and offer all your activity - breathing, talking,

walking, earning and spending - to Him, for it was by Him and through Him that you were able to do all these things. To fall ill and to call in a doctor - -this is something unnatural, debasing. Once you have offered yourself to God, it must be well with you. There can be nothing ill. Regulate food habits; restrain the greed of the tongue. Eat only Sathwik (conducive to equanimity) or pure food; engage yourselves only in Sathwik recreations. Then you can be free from physical and mental ill-health. Bear calumny, loss, disappointment, defeat, boldly and with equanimity; then, no mental depression can overwhelm you. I must tell you that I am happy when some one among you is subjected to suffering, for that is a chance given to you to demonstrate your intelligence and sense of values. Harischandhra (the Emperor who stuck to Truth in spite of agonising travail, which he could have avoided by the utterance of a single lie), had a series of terrible disasters - poverty, exile, persecution by his creditor, the sale into slavery of his queen, his son, and his own self and the demeaning job that was allotted to him by his master in charge of the cremation ghat in Benares- - the toll collector. He never bent or broke but stuck to his determination not to yield to the call of unrighteousness.

Think of Namasmarana as a spiritual discipline

The Name of God is the most effective tonic; it will keep off all illness. Do not indulge in Namasmarana as a pastime or a fashion or a passing phase, or as the unpleasant part of an imposed time-table, or as a bitter quota to be fulfilled each day. Think of it as a sadhana, to be seriously taken up for the purpose of reducing your attachments to fleeting objects, purifying and strengthening you, and liberating you from the cycle of birth and death. Hold fast to it as the means of rescuing yourself in every way, from the bonds of time and change. It looks a frail cure for such a fearful malady; but, it is a penance, nevertheless. The common excuse for escaping from this urgent duty to oneself is that one has no time for Namasmarana in the hectic schedule of activity that has become the lot of man at the present time! If the burden of a hundred odd jobs can be borne because they are unavoidable, can the extra job of Namasmarana be such an undesirable addition? He who carries a hundred, can surely carry one more. Moreover, this is a continuing

basic activity, not part of a schedule of events. It has to become as much a must as breathing; as welcome to the tongue as sugar; as essential for happy living as sleep or food or water. This one ever-present job will alleviate the burden of all the hundred jobs, make them all lighter and more worth-while. Rise every day with the thought of God' spend every day with the Name of God; go back to bed! with the thought of His Glory as enshrined in His Name.

Know that life is one long ordeal

You go to bed on a certain date and day; you awake to find that the date and the day have changed! You have grown a day older; death has come a step nearer. Much water has flowed under the bridge. Similarly, when you go into sleep (death), great changes happen; you awake to a new date and a new day, with old tendencies and traits still affecting the new embodiment. Life is one long ordeal; know this even when things seem to be quite exhilarating. Any moment the road may turn into a morass, the sky may darken, fortune may turn away. Earn the sword of jnana to cut as under the veil of Maya. Discriminate between the real and the un-real early enough, during the journey towards the Goal. If the eye is not helping you to derive the unending joy of visualising God in everything it brings before your mind, then it is far better to be blind; if your ear drags you into the realm of filthy cacophony, it is far better to be deaf. The senses must not plunge you into the sensual; they must serve your real interests and sublimate your desires and appetites. That is the only way to ensure health and happiness.

35. Transmute every minute

Date: 24 September 1968 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

THE path of spiritual discipline which is most beneficial to man is laid down in a simple and sweet manner in the great scriptures of ancient India. They explain through example and precept the Divine Principle inherent in the Universe, and inspire mankind to gaze with awe and reverence at the handiwork of God and His inscrutable, leda (divine miracles). They prompt man to march along the pilgrim road of sacrifice, in the happy company of sages so that, before the body falls, the Vision of the Eternal can be gained and enshrined in the heart for ever. The narratives and descriptions which these books contain purify the ichcha shakthi (the urge to desire) latent in man, and sanctify the kriya shakthi (the urge to act), and finally invigorate and clarify the jnana shakthi (the urge to know). By this process, man attains chiththa suddhi (the purification of the consciousness). It is only in the consciousness that is so transformed that the Atma can be reflected and understood. So, every religion has, as its technique, this transformation, this cleansing process. Every religious classic has this as its aim.

Uttering dharma without practising it is hypocrisy

The Mahabharatha, for example, is basically the story of the five vital airs of man (the Panchapranas) overcoming the hundred obstacles in the path of upward progress; the eldest of the five Pandava brothers is Dharmaraja (Morality, Righteousness); he is ably supported by Bheema (physical strength devoted to divine service and charged with devotion), Arjuna (steady pure faith in God) and Nakula and Sahadheva, who represent steadfastness and equanimity. When these Five are exiled, the Hasthinapuram (body) is inundated with Adharma (unrighteousness). In the Mahabharatha, the need for practising Dharma is illustrated with the help of a series of critical situations and dilemmas, which, in one form or other, harass man. The Upanishaths exhort man: "Sathyam vadha; Dharmam chara" (Utter Truth; pursue Dharma). But man is content with uttering Dharma, and the vadha (killing) of Truth! Mere utterance without the intention or effort to practise

what is uttered is hypocrisy, which ruins the character and degrades the personality. The deer in a forest met in a conference and passed a resolution defying hounds and calling upon all deer to stand firm and beat back their attacks. But, even when they were acclaiming the resolution, the hounds bayed and they fled, mover, seconder, supporters - all. No one stayed at the place where the conference was held! The sheep bleat, "May, May, May" - a sound which in Samskrith means, "Mine, Mine, Mine." So, they suffer the consequences of this attachment to I and Mine! This is the result of the fundamental illusion, which hides the fact of temporariness and imposes an artificial sense of permanence on all objects and objective pleasures. There was a monk near Haridhwar who had given up for years both hearth and home and was living on alms; he used to heap all the food he collected on a flat rock that jutted out of the Ganga and used it as a plate from which he took his meal.

Intellectual feats do not win mental peace

One day, the monk came to his rock and found another monk sitting there, taking food! He got enraged at this trespass on his 'property'. Then the newcomer said, "Alas! you have renounced all sense of 'I and mine'; you have shaved your head so that you may not be recognised by erstwhile companions; you yearn to be free from all bonds; but, you have tied yourself up this rock! How can you swim across this Sea of Samsara (worldly life of repeated cycles of birth and death) with this rock round your neck? You are leading a life of hypocrisy." That opened his eyes to the error.

Gopichand's mother encouraged him to tread the path of renunciation and fortitude as a preliminary to self-realisation; she tested his accomplishment, after he had been for some years with the sage Bhartruhari: one night, she put on a male dress and laid herself in the place where her son used to sleep. Gopichand grumbled and asked the stranger to find some other place, as that bit of space was 'his.' When she tried to test Bhartruhari in the same manner, the response of that sage was only to remove himself to a distance. He uttered no word. So, she knew that her son had a long, long way to go. The wise will not give place in their hearts to covetousness and possessiveness.

They know that there is a kshethrajna who is the motivator of this kshethra - a knower-of-the-field who is the master of this 'field.' Vyasa, who collated the Vedas, composed the aphorisms that demarcate the Divine Principle (the Brahmasuuthras) and wrote the Mahabharatha reputed to be the fifth Veda, could still not win mental peace. Those were but intellectual feats, flights of poetry and philosophy, but not floweres that blossomed from authentic experience. At last through the prompting of Naradha, who taught and practised Bhakthi-marga (the Path of Devotion) he immersed himself in the contemplation and description of the grandeur and glory of Godhead. The Bhagavatha was the result of this yearning of Vyasa.

Analyse your habits on the touchstone of morality

The Bhagavatha has given rise to many who call themselves as Bhagavathars, since they expound the text, but the Divine thrill that Naradha and Vyasa felt is not shared by them in the slightest degree, because they do not expound from experience. They proclaim that God is the indweller and motivator in all the beings, while all the while planning and scheming for profit! Stop a while and examine your habits and activities; analyse them, evaluate them on the touchstone of morality, truth, love and fortitude. Give up all that drags you down into evil, strengthen all that lifts you and takes you nearer to Me. Do not be disheartened that you have to suffer the consequences of what you have done. Last night, you saw Dhruva being blessed by the Lord, in the drama enacted by the little boys of the Vedashasthra Pathashala (school where the scriptural texts and classics are taught). The harsh words uttered by his step-mother were the immediate provocation for the boy retiring into the forest for austerities, in order to win from the Lord the favour of his father's love! But, when the Lord did actually manifest Himself before him, the boy had no resentment or desire left in him; so, instead of asking from Him the geegaws that he had once coveted, the boy asked for the Bliss of Merger with the Lord Himself)The Rajasik (influenced by passions) and Kshathriya spirit (the warrior eager for martial victory) of vengeance and competition with his step-brother had left his mind, during the austerities! But the Lord reminded him of his original intention and bade him go to his kingdom and please his mother, before he rested as the

Pole Star in the sky! (Dhruva, though quite a lad, won the favour of the Lord, who raised him to the position of Pole Star). Dhruva engaged himself, though a boy, in sadhana that drew the Lord near him.

One has to go through the crucible of joy and grief

Ideals must become higher and grander. Desires must become more and more selfless and sublime. Attachment must be transmuted into nobler and subtler emotions. The story will be gripping only when there is steady development towards the denouement. That is why one passes through the crucible of joy and grief and emerges all the purer and stronger for the experience. When a child's growth is stunted, it causes grief, when he starts to grow normally it causes joy; when the growth is abnormal, it causes grief again. The swing of the pendulum makes life interesting; it is a gymnasium, a school. One has to retire behind the curtain, sooner or later; so, while on the stage, win the esteem of the Director, by playing your role to His satisfaction, trying not to spoil His play, by your lispings or slipping words. Be like the tortoise, which can live in water or land. That is to say, cultivate the inner calm that helps you to be with the thought of God, whether you are amidst men or alone. Ekantha (solitude) is when you are not aware of the crowd around you. It is what you create out of the solitude of your own mind. Here, for example, where you are undisturbed by others, each of you has perfect Ekantha!

Nagarasankeerthana is Bhagawatha in practice

This is the practice I want to teach you. And, then there is another. That is the practice of Nagarasankeerthana (going round the streets in the early hours, singing devotional songs) in your villages. The benefits that accrue from this are too many to be recounted now, within the time available. In short, it is Bhagavatha in practice. When the senses of man are yet dormant after the night's sleep experience, you move out along the quiet streets, sharpening the intellects of the listeners and sanctifying the atmosphere by the recitation of the glories of God. It is an invaluable restorative to both body and mind, for yourselves and others. Every song is a sword that cuts the knots of laziness. It

is a fine piece of social service to remind all of their duty to the Almighty who watches over them and who gave them the gift of a new day. Laziness is the bane of modern civilization; people want rest, they complain of overwork, they talk of being tired. I am showing you by My example how you must fill every moment with useful beneficial activity. You talk among yourselves, "O, Swami is having his rest-hour; Swami is sleeping." But I have never craved for a minute's rest or sleep or relief. Shall I tell you at what time I feel restful, relieved, content? When I know that you are all earning supreme bliss through detachment and spiritual discipline, not until then. I am ever engaged in some activity or other for your benefit. Things that I could get one, I do not entrust to others; I do them myself, so that they may learn self-reliance and get experience thereby. I have always your progress, your comfort, your happiness in mind. You can note it in the slightest act of mine. I do all work pertaining to me. I open all letters addressed to Me and they are legion.

Those who lead must themselves follow

You see Me getting up from this chair and moving back-stage, now and then. Let me reveal to you that this is not due to any desire to avoid listening to the speeches of the distinguished persons who address you or to my getting tired or the need to have a sip of water. It is only to give you a chance to change your postures, to relax your limbs and adjust them for another hour or so of intent listening. If I am before you, I know you do not feel like doing these and I know how many of you are putting up with long hours of sitting taut in the same position, in this closely packed gathering.

There is none to question Me if I do not act; there is nothing I would lose if I do not engage in activity. Nor have I any great urge to be acting. But, yet, you see Me very active. The reason is I must be doing something all the time, for your sake, as an example, as an inspiration, as a piece of training. Those who are leading must themselves follow; those who command must themselves carry out what they expect others to do. I am engaged in activity so that you may learn to transmute every minute into a golden chance to ennoble yourselves into Godhead.

36. The philosopher's stone

Date: 27 September 1968 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

MAN is endowed with many skills; he is offered many lives; he is shown many paths. The purpose of all these gifts is to develop in him the spirit of devotion and dedication and release him from the dual dribble of joy and grief. When man visualises the Universe as God, its capacity to colder the dual experience disappears; he knows the truth and is calm. God is One and Only: 'Ekam eva adhwaithiyam Brahma' (One only; without a second - Brahman), which is the transcendent and immanent principle. So one must endeavour to know God, who is Truth. A soldier is honoured and welcomed home only when he has won the battle; not when he has fled in fear, or has had no contact with the enemy, or when he has meekly surrendered, or gladly gone over! It is not the uniform or the medals that are honoured; it is the brave heart pounding within. It is the glint in the eye that bespeaks the hero bathed in victory. Every human being is engaged in battle, with insidious internal foes. How can anyone move about, with raised head and proud mien, when his enemies are celebrating their victory inside him? It is a matter of stark humiliation, isn't it? The forces of lust, greed, anger, hate, pride, malice, envy and avarice are celebrating triumphant victory-dances in the heart while the humbled victim, the prisoner in their hands, expects to be honoured and lionised.

Consequence of irreverence shown to the Vedas

The internal foes can be destroyed by the light of jnana (the illumination that accompanies the realisation of the Reality). To acquire that illumination, one has to cultivate the spirit of impartial, steady, un-fluctuating inquiry, based on the revelations made in the Vedas about the nature of man and God, and the relation between the two. The Vedas have to be studied reverentially, for, they give us the key to this jnana. The Veda is the philosopher's stone that turns all metals into gold, all students into sadhakas and all sadhakas into sages. Unaware of their worth, Pandiths who have learned the Vedas by rote use it as a means of livelihood, as a fertile field for futile argumentation and dialectics. Their disputations and competitive commentaries have only spread

disbelief among the masses, for, they are not impressed by the scholasticism, and sophistry.

When Shri Rama decided to end His Avathar career and walked into the flooded Sarayu river, a dog too followed the concourse. When asked why it had attached itself to the entourage, it said, "I desire to enter Heaven with you all. I was, in my previous life, a full-fledged yogi; but I slipped and fell from the straight path of self-control, I became the slave of conceit; I expounded the Vedas as my fancy dictated, in strange but attractive ways; so, I have now become this animal that takes delight in barking, biting and baying. The persons who encouraged me then by praise, are now the fleas and flies that crowd on my skin and pester me. Help me, Lord, the escape from this disgrace; I have worked out my karma; I have lived out my sentence." That is the consequence of irreverence shown to the Vedas; study them reverentially and with a view to practice what they teach. Desisting from practice, is itself irreverence.

Benefit from the curative properties of the Vedas

Whoever speaks, whatever is spoken about the vedas and Vedantha (the concluding metaphysical part of Vedas), if spoken with reverence and sincere yearning, is worth listening intently. I notice one great defect in you. When I am discoursing, you listen to every word, with marked avidity and enthusiasm. But, when Pandiths and others are speaking to you, on subjects that are valuable to you, out of their own deep study and sadhana, though you sit silently and dutifully, I do not find the same avidity and enthusiasm. This is wrong. Rain water is rain water whether it falls from a spout, or the caves, or through a canal or sluice. What they speak is also authentic and beneficial. What you should care for and treasure in your memory is the "curative property of the drug," not the label on the bottle or the name and status of the manufacturer or dealer. Benefit from the drug; cure yourself; become illumined; realise your Reality.

37. Meaning of mendicancy

Date: 29 September 1968 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

IN the background of mountains that bear sun and rain with equal unconcern, of the sea and sky that are unaffected by storms and clouds, it looks ridiculous that man alone is subject to anxiety and fear; in the company of birds and beasts that do not store food for another day, but are content to leave it to Providence to provide for them, it looks absurd that man alone should spend all his days, calculating and accumulating. No bird casts seed on land to grow food for itself; nor do beasts plough and enclose fields, claiming 'this is mine, this is for my children and children's children.' Nishkama-karma (selfless action) is the natural face of activity for the children of God, the progeny of Immortality. They sing and swim, they dance and dive, they talk and walk, they pray and pine, because they must; it is their nature too. They do not know what will happen; as a consequence, they do not care; they do not anticipate any result. They are just themselves, when they do these things. It is sahaja-lak-shana (their innate nature) their inborn characteristic. You have not taken birth in order to feel the gnawing of hunger and to perform activities which will alleviate the gnawing, for a few hours every time. In fact, hunger has been allotted to you so that you may grow and develop intelligence, to discover your ultimate goal. Education is for life, not for a living! And, life is just a chance to see for yourselves your beginning and your end. Every clock has some one who has made it and who is winding it, so that it may work' You too have One, who has the key and who winds. Discover Him. The clock shows the time for all who need. It looks for no reward, it does not care why you are anxious to know the time; it ticks unceasingly, night or day, fair weather or foul. Be like the clock.

Cultivate God's friendship and kinship

You are only actors on the stage, before the footlights. The Director who knows the play, who assigns the roles, who gives the cues, who calls you in and puts you on - He is behind the curtain. You are a puppet; He holds the strings. If He must be seen, you have to be His sakha (friend) or bandhu

(kinsman). Merely being an onlooker will not entitle you to approach Him and be in His holy company. Cultivate His friendship or kinship, by the attitude of Love and Dedicated Service. If you serve a king, for the sake of your wife and children, you are devoted to them and not to the king, however arduous and complete your service may be. So also, if you do ceremonial worship or observe vows, for the sake of material prosperity so that you can keep your family in comfort, you are devoted and dedicated to them and not to your own best interest. Complete surrender, unsullied dedication - that is the acid test He imposes and accepts. A man, let us say, has three wives; when he dies, all the three become widows and have to wear widow's weeds, remove jewellery, and put on the outer symbols of mourning. That is the convention. But, if one wife is pregnant, this convention does not apply; it is only after the child is delivered, that she can be declared as a widow! She knows until then that she is a widow, but the world will think, on seeing her that her husband is alive! This is the position of the jnani too. He knows that the world is transient, that God is all, that dedicated activity alone can save him from consequences that bind - but the world thinks, on seeing him, that he is one like themselves! He is like a lotus blossom on water, wherein it grew, above the mud, where its roots lie, unaffected and untouched by either. The agony to know God is the jewel to be proud of This jnana is not an attribute of the Universal Absolute (Param-atma); it is Paramatma itself. The Upanishaths declare; Sathyam, jnanam, anantham Brahma (Truth, Wisdom, infinity is Brahman). Jnana is the fulfilment, it is the goal, the consummation. Man is as ugly as a noseless face, if he has no wisdom, whatever other attainments he may decorate himself with! The yearning, the agony, the endeavour, to know Him and His Might and Mystery is the jewel to be proud of. The consciousness that God is the Indweller, who prompts and executes all that we feel, think and do, that gives the inspiration to surrender the strength to dedicate, the urge to be but an instrument in His Hands for His purposes, is jnana. There was a King who led his mighty army across the snowy peaks that bounded his kingdom, into his neighbour's realm. On a lofty pass thick with snow, he saw a mendicant or ascetic sitting on a bare rock, with his head between his knees evidently to protect it from the chill wind that blew through the gap in the peak. He had no clothes on his body. The King was overcome with pity; he took off his own shawl and coat and offered them to the yogi (ascetic, one

who has mastered the senses and the mind). The yogi refused to accept them, for, he said, "God has given enough clothing to guard me against heat and cold. He gives me all that I need. Please give these to some one who is poor." The King was surprised at these words. He asked him where that clothing was. The yogi replied, "God has Himself woven it for me; I am wearing it since birth and will wear it until the grave. Here it is, my skin! Give this coat and shawl to some mendicant beggar, some poor man."

Contentment is the most precious treasure

The King smiled for who could be poorer than he, he thought. He asked him, "But, where can I find a poor man?" The yogi asked him, where he was going and why. He said, "I am going into the realm of my enemy so that I can add his kingdom to my own." The yogi it was who smiled now. He said, "If you are not satisfied with the kingdom you have and if you are prepared to sacrifice your life and the lives of these thousands to get a few more square miles of land, certainly you are much poorer than I. So, offer the clothes to yourself. You need them more than I do." At this the King was greatly ashamed; he realised the futility of fame and fortune; he returned to his own capital, thanking the yogi for opening his eyes to his innate poverty. Contentment is the most precious treasure, he realised. Great men spread the light of their wisdom through every word and deed of theirs. Of course, one must use his own discretion and higher reasoning in order to discriminate the real from the unreal. There was an old merchant who used to attend all religious discourses in the town, especially when they were musical as well. For thirty years, he never missed a single one and people wondered at his steadiness and faith. One day, he took with him his son also, a boy of sixteen. That day, the Pandith spoke of the sacred cow and of her being the Fourth Mother of man after the Scripture Mother, Earth Mother and one's own Mother. He exhorted the listeners to revere the cow and refrain from the slightest ill-treatment, in spite of the strongest provocation.

Constant practice alone is rewarded by Grace

The next day, the merchant had to go to another village on some urgent work

and so, he posted his son in the shop and left. By noon, a cow entered the shop and started eating large mouthfuls of grain, jaggery and other articles, delicious to her taste, from the open containers ranged round the stool where the boy sat. He did not stir a finger, because it was the Sacred Cow. By evening, the father came back and beholding the damage, he reprimanded his son severely. "You should not take those discourses to heart; when you come away from the place, while shaking off the dust from the carpet on which you sat, you must shake off from your brain any idea that might have stuck therein from the discourse of the Pandith. If I had not done so every day during these thirty years, you and I and all of us would have died of starvation." Detachment is a plant of slow growth; if you pluck the tender plant to look for the pods, you will be disappointed. So, too, long and constant practise alone is rewarded by the peace that Grace offers. Grace is acquired by surrender, as Krishna has declared in the Geetha. When the Geetha directs you to give up all dharma (set codes of morality), it does not ask you also to give up all karma (activity), that is to say, you have to do karma, and, when you do it for God, through God and by God, the dharma of it does not matter; it has to be acceptable and it is bound to benefit you. The statement is not an invitation to licentiousness, or complete inactivity; it is a call for dedication and surrender to the highest in Man, viz., God.

God is pleased only by genuine endeavour

There was once a wicked commentator who said that this direction removes the need to discriminate between right and wrong! He must have been the same person who said, "The Lord says in the Geetha that He will be pleased even if a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or a little water is offered to Him; well, this hookah contains all four' the tobacco leaf, the red flower denoted by the cinders; the shell of the coconut fruit and water through which the smoke bubble bubbles!" Impertinence and irrelevance cannot hide irreverence from the eyes of God. The Lord will not be moved by strict scholarly commentary. He is pleased only by actual practice; by genuine endeavour; by honest sincere effort; by the tireless striving to cleanse the mind. The striving must be alert and active, until the goal is reached. Some one asked Ramana Maharishi, "How long am I to engage myself in dhyana?" The Maharishi

replied, "Until you lose all awareness of the experience of dhyana." In the play 'Dhruva' which these boys enacted, the boy who was Dhruva sat straight and tense, giving us the impression that he was lost in dhyana; but, such histrionics cannot claim consideration. In real dhyana, you soon get over the consciousness that 'you are doing dhyana. It fact every moment in life must be a moment utilised for dhyana. That is the best way to live. When you sweep your rooms clean, tell yourselves that your hearts too have to be swept likewise; when you cut vegetables feel that lust and greed too have to be cut into pieces; when you press chapathis wider and wider, desire in addition that your love may take in wider and wider circles, and expand even into the regions of strangers and foes. This is the means by which you can make your home a hermitage, and the routine of living into a route to Liberation.

Some people raise the question, "How can we make a living if we adhere to Truth?" Well, you cannot escape death, whatever way you spend your days. It is far better to die, adhering to Truth, than die, sliding into falsehood. Do this duty to yourself first; then, consider the rights of others.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

38. The third force

Date: 29 September 1968 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

THE teachings of the sages and seers of this land all centred on the way of life, the discipline in daily practice, the modes of family and social behaviour, the attitudes, and impulses, the obligations of community life, the bonds of service and sympathy. They emphasise practical aspects of Vedantha; in fact, there is no other Vedantha. Its purpose is to cleanse the mind, to sharpen the intellect, to purify the emotions, to concentrate the thinking faculty so that the reality could be experienced in its full clarity. Liberation from the blows of joy and grief can come only through the realisation of that reality, which is One and Indivisible. The removal of the moss that floats thick on the surface of the lake reveals the water beneath; the removal of the dust that lies thick upon the mirror enables you to see yourself. When the person sees himself as an image, it is only partial truth; when he knows he is the person, not an image, it is the truth. The bimba (object) must know itself as the bimba; the I must become aware of the I; that is self-realisation. The eye can see the star that is billions of light years away; but, it cannot see itself! The eye must see the eye, so that it can claim to have self-realisation, a vision of itself as it truly is.

"Earn the qualification to know Me"

Unless you know yourself you cannot know Me. When you see a plane above, you know that it must have a pilot; but, if you want to see him, you have to get into it and be in the plane, after purchasing the requisite ticket. Earn the qualification; win the visualisation. Vivekanandha once said that no A-viveki (a person devoid of discrimination and sharp intelligence) can understand him and his mission. The students in the medical colleges dissect cadavers trying to learn about the living body! The knowledge gained of God by an analysis and study of the world will be more or less of the same category. When the doctor handles a patient and treats him, and the patient submits himself to the treatment, both do not know that between them, there is a third force, more capable and more decisive. When you reach the bank of a river in a

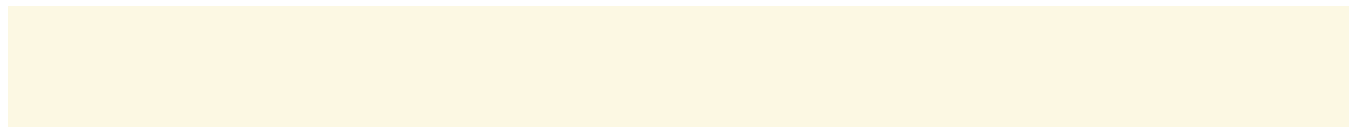
strange land, you do not take advice from a lame person or a blind person, where you can best wade across. You follow a person who has waded often, and who is neither lame nor blind. The man who can see is the scholar; the man who can walk is the person with experience. The man with both capacities is a good guide, not those who prattle things learnt from the books or dole out set formulae, irrespective of the stage the recipient has reached, or roam about in search of people whom they can squeeze for money.

Develop the renunciatory spirit like Arjuna

Any Guru who stultifies your buddhi (intellect), your innate power of discrimination instead of encouraging you to seek, examine, experience and believe, is a danger to mankind. For, buddhi is the only instrument for realisation. Jnana (spiritual knowledge) alone can grant the vision of the ultimate Truth. That is why the Gayathri: (a Vedhic prayer to the light that fills the Universe to illuminate the intelligence) is a prayer for prompting the spirit of inquiry and illuminate the path by the inner light of the spirit. That is why Krishna says in the Geetha, "I am of living beings, the Intelligence." Arjuna (Pure, unsullied) was a Gudakesa (a person who had overcome sloth and sleep); his name itself indicates he was of sterling virtues; he was a great warrior. So, he was taught the Geetha way of life by the Lord Himself. Be like him; develop the renunciatory spirit he exhibited. Listen to the Lord as attentively and as intelligently as he did; you too can get the Geetha from God, taught from the chariot of which, through your own prayer, He is the Charioteer.

Speak softly, kindly; that is Dharma (righteousness). Give generously, wisely; wipe the tear and assuage the sigh and the groan; that is Dharma. Do not simply throw money at the needy; give with respect and reverence; give with grace. Give also with humility. Try to live with others harmoniously.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba



39. Pouring ink on paper

Date: 30 September 1968 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

WHEN asked, "Who are you?" each one of you gives out the name some one gave you years ago, or which you gave yourself. You do not give the name that has been with you life after life, that has survived many deaths and births, the Atma that you really are. That name you have forgotten; it has been enveloped by three thick veils - mala, vikshepa and avarana. Mala is the dirt of vice, wickedness and passion. Vikshepa is the veil of ignorance, which hides truth and makes falsehood attractive and desirable. Avarana is superimposition on the eternal Of the transitor³ on the Universal, of the boundaries of individuality. Now, how is man to wash off or remove these three layers of dirt? By soap and water, certainly. The soap of penitence and the water of cognition will remove all taint of mala. The wavering mind that causes the frantic search for happiness from sense objects and external appurtenances will be transformed by Upasana (steady application in worship) and adoration of the source and sustenance of all. The Avarana veil can be tom off by the acquisition of jnana which reveals the Athmic essence of man, the Athmic Unity of all creation. Mala is therefore removable by karma, vikshepa by bhakthi (devotion) and avarana by jnana. That is why Indian sages have laid down these three paths for aspirants.

Godly pursuit is like poison first, nectar at the end

There is no short-cut to any laudable achievement. Steady struggle alone can ensure victory. Things that are gained with little or no effort are not worth exulting over. The process of yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, prathyahara, dhyana and dharana (control of the inner and outer senses, regulation of posture and breath, withdrawal into one's inner consciousness, meditation and concentration) is hard; but, the final stage is Nirvikalpa Samadhi, the condition of perfect undisturbed equanimity. Whereas the pursuit of material pleasures will be "agre amruthopamam, pariname visham" (like nectar at first but like poison at the end), the pursuit of equanimity will be "agre visham pariname amrutho-pamam" (like poison at first but like nectar at the end).

There was a seeker once who prayed to his elder brother to initiate him into spiritual life, with the imparting of a saving manthra; but the brother said, "It is always a hard job to teach one's kinsman, and to teach a brother is harder still. You should go to Dakshinamuorthy, who is Shiva Himself come as teacher." The brother inquired how to discover that preceptor. Then the brother said, "He who considers all men and all things equal - he is the preceptor I have indicated." So, the young man started his search. He went among the hermitages, with a gold ring on his finger; he interrogated the hermits, what the metal was. Some declared it was gold, some brass, some copper, others said it was tin or some alloy. So, he moved on. Then, he came upon a young ascetic, with shining eyes. He asked him whether it was gold; he said 'Yes.' He said, 'Is it not brass?' He replied, 'Yes it is brass.' He said yes, to whatever he said it was. He could not recognise any distinction. So he concluded that the ascetic before him was Dakshinamuorthy. Equanimity comes as a result of the awareness of unity, not otherwise.

Embrace the Shivam in the core of your heart

Sanathkumar was engaged in extreme austerity when God appeared before him. He asked him to place before Him his needs. But Sanathkumar said, "You are my guest now. You have come to this place, where I am residing for some time; so you may ask anything you need; I am bound to honour the guest, granting him what he needs." Having known Brahman, he had become Brahman Himself. So he could talk as an equal to God. "I am you," that was the stage reached by Sanathkumar. No wonder he spoke like that. He is ever present; I is born only after the Individual separates himself from the He. So, with the birth of the jeevi (individual soul), the idea of Dheva (God) must also be born in the mind. That is the sign of safety and success. Embrace the Shivam (God) in the core of your heart; you become immortal. Embrace the shavam (corpse) which the body is without Him; you are mortal. The spiritual preceptor has to emphasise that fundamental lesson. He should be like the Drill Instructor, among the teachers in the school. The others step into the class and instruct and leave. The history master holds forth on his subject and leaves. The science master does the same. The drill instructor has himself to stand before the pupils and swing his hands right and left, so that they may

do the same. He has to bend and rise, as often and as fast as he wants his pupils to. The Guru has to be Brahman so that he may lead others to a knowledge about Him. He must be aware of the Named One, and not merely the Name.

Wealth cannot give happiness that lasts

The desire to raise the standard of living is a thirst that can never be quenched. It leads to endless pursuit of sensory pleasures, multiplication of wants, and deeper and deeper involvement in worry. Riches are a deadly temptation. No whip can suppress the itch to gain money. Once Lakshmi (the Goddess of wealth) and Narayana (Her Lord) had a quarrel over who was supreme in the hearts of mankind. They decided to settle it by means of an experiment. Lakshmi came down among mankind as a spiritual teacher; when people washed her feet and worshipped her, the plate and vessels used by the devotees turned into gold! So, she was welcomed everywhere and there was a terrible rash of devotees and a huge pile of brass, copper and aluminium vessels and plates in evidence everywhere! Meanwhile, Narayana too was upon the earth as an exponent of the sacred scriptures, expounding to huge gatherings the paths to happiness and joy marked out by the sages. When people heard of Lakshmi converting metals into gold, they preferred her visits to those of Narayana and cared little for what he taught. He was actually sent out of cities and villages, when Lakshmi entered them, for his discourses distracted them from the profitable sessions of Lakshmi's puuja.

Do not listen to the tempting discourses of people who have no faith in God; they hold before you the prospect of sudden wealth through devious means, but they do not tell you that wealth cannot give happiness, real happiness, that lasts and satisfies. Their arguments are specious and clever and they ridicule the traditional and the real.

Each rite has a significance and meaning

There was in Venkatagiri an orthodox Brahmin, who performed his Sandhya (rites laid down for performance during dawn, midday and dusk) regularly.

During these rites, he has to take in small spoonfuls of consecrated water, thrice, one spoon after another, a number of times. The son who was watching him laughed and said, "Why have you to sip it so often? Swallow the water all in a gulp. That will make things easy and quick," he said. The father remained silent; but, later, when the son was sweating over his homework, and dipping his pen in ink once every few minutes, he laughed and said, 'Why don't you pour the bottle of ink on the paper and be done with it? Why take all this bother of dipping and distributing it in droplets, line by line, thin, and emaciated?' Each rite has a significance and meaning, which it is best to leave to the person who believes and acts accordingly.

There are only three ways of saving oneself-Pravritthi, Nivritthi and Prapatthi. Pravritthi (action, external activity) is a method of sublimating the instincts and impulses. Nivritthi (detachment, internal quiet), is a method of subduing the thirst of the senses and of the ego. Prapatthi (surrender) is a method of utilising the senses, the instincts and impulses, the intelligence, the emotions, for the glorification of the all-knowing, all-directing Divine. Do and dedicate; work and worship; plan and protect; but do not worry about the fruit. That is the secret of spiritual success.

40. Inspiration, not imitation

Date: 01 October 1968 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Dasara, Vijayadasami

I HAVE come for the re-establishment of Dharma (virtue) and so, I always insist on people observing Dharma in all walks of life. Dharma is the inner voice of God. It is the conscience that has shaped itself as a result of centuries of and generations of asceticism and austerity; it is experience the voice of history, warning you against the breach of its command. I have called you all together to tell you something that concerns the Andhra area especially with regard to the organisation of Samithis there. For, before you set about the task of establishing and running them, you must be aware of the why and wherefore, more than the how and the when! There are thousands of institutions scattered over the land, designed to uplift, educate and train members in various fields of life. They are born, they live well or ill, for some time; and they decline and disappear. Infant mortality is highest among such institutions, for, there is enthusiasm only to start them and not to sustain them. The sole object of Sathya Sai Seva Samithis, the very breath on which they thrive, is the consciousness of unity, of all as One. But the politics of proliferation attacks the Samithis too and ten men develop into eleven institutions. As in politics, here too, faction, competition, clamour for power and authority, greed for office raise their heads. People are not able to resist the infection of the atmosphere of elections and parties. Such tactics and tendencies will not fit in With associations of aspirants towards the goal of spiritual unity.

Pray for guidance and you will be instructed

Sathya Sai Seva Samithis are built on love. They thrive on love; they spread love. No other emotion or attitude has any place therein. Divinity is the magnet; humanity is the iron. Love is the force that brings them together. Nara is the iron, Narayana is the magnet. Bhakthi or Love is the force that draws the two together. The a-shanthi (peacelessness) from which man suffers should disappear; man should attain pra-shanth' (inner, deep-rooted peace); that is the aim of the institutions initiated by Me. Serve Me, serve

yourself by being true, loving and active and being examples of truth, love and service to others. Some people complain that units of this Organisation are coming up too slowly. For a child to grow into manhood it takes many years; for a flower to evolve into a fruit full of sweet juice, it takes much time. Have patience and steady faith.

Do not start with show and shouting and fall off, fouled by factions and feebleness. Do not also imitate other institutions or men and try to achieve what they have done in their places. The inspiration and the channels through which that inspiration can be used, have to arise from your own hearts. Trying to become a Meera by imitation is an impossible task. In Madras they inaugurated the Nagarasankeerthan (moving devotional choir) by taking out a mile-long procession of omnibuses packed with devotees singing in chorus, which went through the streets for thirty-five miles! How can such a thing be done in your place? I may inspire you to inaugurate it in some other way in your place; pray for guidance and you will be instructed. I may advise you to start it silently and sweetly!

Nagarasankeerthana purifies the atmosphere

I seek the quality of the spiritual effort, not the quantity. I penetrate into the heart and examine the motive which prompted, the emotion which urged, the feeling that shaped the effort. A family may sing the glory of God and go round a few houses in the same street; that is laudable indeed. I appreciate sincerity and steadfastness, more than paraphernalia and pomp. I have not given you the task of Nagarasankeerthan as an inescapable obligation. Judge the conditions of your place and carry it on if you possibly can. The programme will give health and joy; you can purify yourselves as well as others and the atmosphere which all breathe. It can move hearts and make them forget themselves in the thrill of inner exhilaration. First, serve the self; then, help others. This is the highest form of selfhelp, for it leads you to God and you will be a good example to others.

If your circumstances do not allow you to partake in this Sankeerthana, stay at home and sing the songs alone, in the silent cave of your heart. Do not do

so, according to fixed measure, so many times or so many songs at a sitting. The heart does not calculate in numbers; it confers content, which is immeasurable. That content can arise only through faith. When the mind wavers, loyalty sits light; love disappears; faction begins. This disease affects units, not only in Andhra Pradesh, but in all states.

People worshipping the same God, the same Name and the same Form must be happy in each other's company, cooperate in each other's programme. There should be no idea of superior or inferior. People break away and start rival units and compete for custom and clientele and ignore the appeals for love and devotion. They forget that all their efforts are for acquiring Grace and achieving the replacement of the ego with God. The distinction that I do not see between one devotee and another, why do you see and quarrel over? It is a confession of your petty perversity. I find that such un-spiritual activities have affected the units only in places where 'big' persons, have entered the Samithis. The 'small' men are carrying on, quietly and in humility.

Elaborate and complicated ritual is not needed

In some places, puuja (ritual worship) is done by persons who are paid for the job. This is done in some houses also. Now, how can a person have devotion merely because you pay him a few chips? I do not ask for elaborate manthras (complicated ritual). It is enough if you worship God in your heart, or call upon Him once, with all your heart. It is the ritual, the elaborateness, that needs money and drags your Samithis into the realm of greed, malice and hate. The pig is condemned because of its greed, the dog is decried for its anger. So, do not slide into those evils. Manu has said that sharing your food with the hungry guest is a great yajna (vedhic sacrifice). You may be engaged in worshipping Me with flower-offerings for the picture, a hundred thousand flower offerings announced as Laksharchana; but if, when you are partaking of the food-offerings that day, you drive away a hungry man, your worship is barren! The lotus petals with which you worshipped turn into brickbats if your hearts are immune to the agony of the hungry.

God will appear in the Form you pine for

There was a sadhaka (spiritual aspirant) once who called Krishna by various names, each describing some facet of His magnificence. He prayed, "Come away from the herd of cows that you are tending; come to me for just a moment and quench my thirst." He was pining under a tree, shedding tears of anguish, when an old fakir came to him; the sadhaka poured out his heart to him and prayed for his blessings to realise his fondest desire. But the fakir told him, "God is beyond all forms; He cannot be limited by form. He is all this and more. How can He appear before you in the form you pine for?" This heightened the anguish of the seeker, and he craved even more earnestly for the vision he had fixed in his mind. Who can speak of God as only this and not that? No one can limit His freedom. Is He bound by what the fakir thinks of Him? He assumed the form wanted and gave him the ecstasy he deserved. Bear this in mind when you get the urge to decry others for their faith in other forms and names. There was a Pandith who offered to teach a student the four great principles of Sathya, Dharma, Shanthi and Prema (Truth, Virtue, Peace and Love). On the first day, he expounded sathya (truth) and said, "I shall teach you what dharma is, tomorrow!" The next day, the pupil did not put in his appearance! The teacher went in search of him and catching him, reprimanded him. He replied, "I am practising sathyam (truth); I shall learn the second lesson only after I have mastered the first." He is indeed the genuine devotee. Dive into the depths; you secure the pearls. The person who does not dive secures the foam; the person who dives, gets the truth. Dive, know and experience; then, you have the authority to lead and guide, not otherwise.

41. Full of fangs

Date: 02 October 1968 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

YOU have been receiving these ten days highly nutritious spiritual food which has filled you with strength and vigour. I shall therefore talk to you about the ways in which this strength and vigour have to be utilised for the highest purposes of life. When you know the way; endeavour will become more effective. Wandering will be given up. Life becomes worthwhile. When the Queen Kaikeyi persuaded her husband to agree to her two requests - enthroning her son Bharatha as the Crown Prince and sending the legitimate Rama into exile for fourteen years - Lakshmana, another brother of Rama and Bharatha, did not acquiesce tamely. He argued that man must meet every little crisis with courage and self-reliance, and that he should not yield craven-like, to the machinations of intrigue. He boasted that his arrow can avert any crisis! But the arrow is an inferior weapon, even a negligible weapon, when compared with the efficacy of Love. Rama heard him coolly and advised him to desist from that hasty karma (action); "Dharma (virtue) must guide Karma," He said. Then alone can it be praiseworthy and successful. Kausalya, the mother of Rama, reconciled herself to the sudden turn of events; she blessed her son when He left as a hermit for the jungle, "May the Dharma which you represent guard you." That Dharma is expressed as Love, Love towards man, sub-man, super-man, animal, bird and beast.

Conducting yajna is the most precious activity

The coconut tree thrives best on the sea coast; the tree of Brahma-thathwa grows best on the soil of prema (love). The region of the heart has to be transformed into a region of compassion. Man's native characteristic is prema; his nature is prema, his breath is prema. The fog of desire clouds prema and distorts it. Like the dog which took its image in the canal as another dog and started to bark it off, man too barks at his own image (fellow- men) who are as much images of Brahman as he himself is. To separate the image from oneself is the basis of conscience. Fix your attention on the identity, not the difference. That is the road to peace. Investigate the

Truth as far as your intellect leads you; you will come up against the principle of love. Yajnavalkya was questioned by Janaka about the basis for all activity; he replied, "It is Light." When the Sun sets, the Moon sheds light; when there is no Sun or Moon, the ear is the guide; behind the ear is the mind, behind the mind is the Atma (Supreme Soul), which is a spark of the Supreme. The final offering in the sacrificial fire which you saw is called Poornahuthi (the full offer). It is when the flames rise high that darkness is fully destroyed. Surrender all that you have - all that you have so far believed to be valuable - in the sacred fire. See them being reduced to ashes before your very eyes; look on it without a quiver, as Janaka saw, when Mithila was aflame. It is a call to dedicate all that you now assess as valuable and desirable to the Divine purpose. The yajna (sacrificial fire) is a symbolic sacrifice, of both earthly riches and heavenly aspirations. This is the most precious activity - this dedication and surrender. People see only the outer ritual, not the inner meaning; so, they concentrate on the external pomp and exaggerate the exhibitionistic aspect by means of competitive pageantry!

Good thoughts feed the roots of virtue and love

The yajna is an occasion for the fixation of the mind on manthra, that is to say, on the formula or sound symbol that saves (thra) when it is meditated upon (manana). The poet is called manthradhrashta (he who sees manthras, through his mystic insight, the discoverer of the secret key to inner peace). The effect of the utterance and glorification of these sound-symbols of the Eternal Absolute is felt all over the world. So it produces loka-kalyana (peace and prosperity all over the world). Good thoughts have a way of purifying and cleansing, of feeding the roots of virtue and love. To judge things dedicated to God, God alone is competent. I like yajnas; I direct that yajna be done. You have no authority to judge because you have no knowledge. You have no mastery of the science of yajnas and of manthras. All is Brahman; the yajna manthras delineate Him in various ways; they declare that all creation is Brahman; it is not something different and distinct. You should revere Nature as Brahman; Sarvam Brahma-mayam (all this Nature imbued with Brahman, is Brahman, is immanent Brahman). It is to cure the vision that perverts Nature as 'not- Brahman' that yajna is ordained. You have to pour into the fire the

limited vision and earn in exchange the larger vision. The yajna is sadhana (spiritual exercise) in sacrifice and surrender.

Overcome the tendency of inflicting poison

Transmuting humanity into divinity is the task allotted to man; his thought, word and deed are instruments for this unavoidable destiny. By unremitting practise, this has to be achieved. The priest in the temple has to ring the bell with the left hand and wave the camphor-flame with the right hand - an exercise in manual co-ordination which comes only as a result of practice. A new priest will wave both hands or shake the camphor plate! Vemana has said that while the serpent has poison in its fangs and the scorpion in its tail, man is capable of inflicting poison through his tongue, eye, hand and mind. He has to overcome this acquired tendency and remind himself that he is Amrithasya puthra (the child of immortality) conferring sweet nectar, not death dealing poison.

By means of sadhana, this consummation can be achieved. Believe that you are the imperishable pure Atma. Then, no gain or loss can affect you; no sense of humiliation or despair can torment you. Only men with weak foundations can dread these. The strong man casts them away without any regret. When the senses are dominant, equanimity is a dream. Be their master; you can be yourself undisturbed and free.

42. That plus and this minus

Date: 24 October 1968 / Location: Belgaum

Today is indeed a day of good fortune for you; for, the years of intense yearning which you spent in order to witness this day have at last borne fruit. Even today you waited here long, in order to earn the good fortune of the Dharshan (sight) of your heart's ideal. You have put yourselves to great hardship to reach here and to get this dharshan. And so, I desire you should listen to the advice I give and try to derive the maximum anandha through putting it into daily practice. You must treasure the gems of counsel and guidance in the vaults of your hearts, realising their innate value. Having joined this uplifting gathering of thousands of aspiring seekers, this assembly of men and women, young and old, all eager to cleanse themselves and become worthy of the divine destiny of man, you must determine to discover the divine within yourself and fill your moments with its contemplation. The experience of this one life must be enough to show you that there is no joy unmixed with grief, that both grief and joy are short lived and they both depend on the mind and its control. You do not require the experience of a series of lives to grasp this patent fact. This world is keeping you in bondage; it is a prison from which you must get released; you should not plan to return to it again and again.

The means of this permanent release are' sadhana (spiritual effort), sathkarma (good deeds), bhakthi (devotion), upasana (worship). All these help you by reducing your wants, by curtailing your wishes, by teaching you detachment from sensory pleasures. These are the shackles which bind you to the body and the senses, to the limiting emotions of greed and hate, to the blinding passions of anger and lust. Escape from them and you will have lasting peace.

True renunciation promotes spiritual progress

The eye which is scarce two inches long can see millions of miles into space, but is incapable of seeing itself! Man too is as shrewd and as weak as the eye.

He can analyse others' motives, count others' faults, map out others' skills and capacities but he is powerless to analyse himself his feelings and emotions; he is unwilling to discover his own faults; he cannot assess his innate skill and realise his inner reality! But the power can be acquired if you keep company with sadhakas (aspirants for spiritual progress), not otherwise. By anga (limbs), you cultivate sanga (company). By means of the proper use of the body with its limbs and senses, you are enabled to be in the midst of devoted and dedicated persons. Through sanga, you become jangam (detached). This association removes attachment to worldly things and you become a wandering mendicant type of person, a jangam not rooted to any spot or status or standard of life or any family or group of kinsmen. Through jangam you discover the lingam (the subtle form of God). This life of true renunciation promotes spiritual progress to such an extent that you realise the formless, attributeless, absolute, symbolised by the linga. You seek God in temples and light lamps there, to see Him more clearly; learn to see Him in your own heart, in the hearts of all beings. He is now not visible, due to the thick dust-cloud of ignorance and egoism. The cow ignores the health-giving milk it has in its own udder; it craves for the water in which rice is washed!

Envy and malice force man to take the wrong road

The boulder on the hill from which a portion has been blasted away, to carve an idol for the temple, tells the idol, Thath thwam asi (You and I are the same); that and this are one substance. Yes; of one substance - but, what a difference? The hammer and chisel have made one a thing of beauty and a joy for ever, an inspiration to make life beautiful and holy. You too must subject yourself to the hammer of discipline and the chisel of pain-pleasure, so that you become Divine. The greatest single cause for darkness in the world today is envy. When one is happy and contented, others envy him and strive to ruin his peace of mind. When any one is acclaimed as great, malice moves others to invent calumny, in order to tarnish his reputation. This is the way of the world. This is the tragedy of ignorance and selfishness - they force man to take the wrong road and suffer calamity. Take the right road; be happy and make others happy. Then, your name will last even after the body disintegrates. Even when the bulb is taken off, the holder will give you a

shock, if you contact the connection. So too, even when the body is gone, if the good reputation is there, it will remain in history and provide inspiration. Students must study well and earn good marks, by their own sincere efforts; there is no use threatening the teachers and forcing them to give you grace marks and promote you. You should not stretch your hands, a-begging, before any one. It is a shame to do so.

Try to cleanse your minds through repentance

One more point I wish to emphasise here. I have been touting through Karnataka for the past five or six days. Thousands of people are attending the meetings, and standing on the wayside roads. In the heart of every one of these, bhakthi (devotion) and sincere adoration of God are welling up. But, bhakthi to be effective must be regulated through self-discipline; it should not be allowed to grow wild and untended. You rush forward to touch My feet or to prostrate before Me, ignoring the children, the aged and the sick, upon whom you fall when you press forward towards me. Do not forget the Sai in those people when you rush forward towards this Sai! The merit of all the hardship you underwent to see and hear this Sai is as good as cancelled when you inflict pain on the Sai who resides in them. That plus and this minus add up to zero! In your frenzy to offer homage, you should not forget others who have been waiting long for the chance. You must provide facilities for their dharshan, instead of leaping forward to be at vantage positions from which you can fall at the feet. The urge to revere and adore is natural; what should be checked is this disregard for the yearning of others. Cultivate love, tolerance, respect for the rights of others. I am alone on this dais; you are thousands in front of Me. What has brought you all, in this vast number, from your homes and villages to this place? It is the love you have for Me, and the love I have for you. The reason for your presence is not any force or authority or temptation to earn material profit or gain. Ponder over the things I have told you out of My Love and try to cleanse your minds through repentance for wrongs done Or contemplated and through a firm resolve to shape your lives anew, according to the Divine Plan, by which each can stand revealed as fully Divine.

Do not condemn the clouds which shower sheets of pure water, because after it falls to the ground some water gets dirty. To condemn all is unjust, untrue and unkind.

Take My own instance. I never exult when I am extolled, nor shrink when I am reviled. Few have realised My purpose and significance; but I am not worried.

When things that are not in Me are attributed to Me, why should I worry?
When things that are in Me are mentioned why should I exult?

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

43. Share the common treasure

Date: 21 November 1968 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

It is a source of joy that the office-bearers of the Andhra Pradesh Sathya Sai Organisations have again met here this year, which is aptly named Keelaka. (The name of the year in the Hindhu cycle of sixty years). It is a sign that you have a great future, so far as this service is concerned. Keelakam means the pin of an axle, a pillar, a column. The work that you do will be made stronger and more stable on account of the resolutions you make during these days, it is also the month of Marga-shira. The shira (head) or buddhi (reason, intelligence) is the marga (path) - that is the lesson. To reach Shiva, the shira (head) is the marga. To reach the Lord, intelligence, discrimination between the false and the true, the transitory and the eternal, the unreal and the real is very essential. That is why the Gayathri is taught to the boys while still in their tender age, for, it appeals to the intelligence that fills the Universe, to illumine the lamp of the little child and to enable him to use that intelligence more and more usefully for his liberation from the bonds of the senses. Today is also the first day of the bright fortnight - when after a night of utter darkness, the first rays of the Moon are falling upon the earth.

All works are aimed at purifying your heart

In order to focus your attention on some major problems and to conserve time, I am placing before you four items for discussion at this Conference. I want that, immediately after the close of this session, you should meet District-wise and forge a common report on these points and submit them to Me, before noon. The first is: The duties and responsibilities of the Presidents or Chairmen of the Organisations. The second: the duties and responsibilities of the District President. The third: The problem of raising funds. The fourth: The Venues for the next session of the World Conference of Sathya Sai Organisations and of the next All-India Conference. I feel that the Organisations will work well, once the President of each unit who supplies the leadership and the District President who provides you guidance and inspiration are aware of their duties and responsibilities and when the crucial

hurdle of funds is overcome. I must say plainly that ninety out of a hundred among you have not clearly visualised the purpose for which I have allowed you to form these Organisations. It is not to give some people places of authority or power, or for ensuring fame and publicity for Me. It is to build upon the earth the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of men on strong foundations. This must be clearly grasped by all of you. You are not engaged in social service through these organisations; you are engaged in your own service. All the items of work are aimed at expanding your heart and purifying it. That is the call of the sages of this land and all the scriptures and texts.

Even God is known and adored by his words

A river has to be trained to flow between strong bends, or else it will erode and undermine the cities on its banks. A car requires a trained driver to put its speed to beneficial purposes. This is the reason why we have rules and regulations to curb wantonness and pride to give exercises in self-control and humility. When you choose the office-bearers, consider deeply their fitness for the task; when once they have been installed, do not carp and criticise. Do not work at crosspurposes. Co-operate with them whole-heartedly and encourage them to give all their talents and enthusiasm to the organisations. The bane of all organisations in this land is the tendency to distrust and dethrone the very people whom you have raised to places of responsibility. Power and authority gather unto a person through the work, not through words and professions. Even God is known and adored by His works. Remember each person has three sources of power in him' as an individual, as a child or limb of God and as a shrine where Atma is installed. You must have read that Hanuman once told Rama, "When I feel I am this body You are my Lord; when I feel I am distinct jeeva (soul), I know I am the reflection and You, the Original; when I know I am the Atma, I know I am You and You are I." Be ever in the consciousness that you are but the shadow of God, His image. Then, no harm can hamper you. God walks along the royal road of truth; the shadow, holding on to Him by the feet, falls on hollow and hill, fire and water, dirt and dust. So, if you hold on the feet, you can be as unaffected as the shadow by the ups and downs of life. The commingles of fellow sadhakas (spiritual aspirants) in one organisation is to promote this attitude of

renunciation and dedication, not to create more chances for faction-mongering. You must come through these organisations to share Me, who is the treasure for all, and to derive to the maximum the peace and joy which I have come to shower.

The three cardinal principles of the Hindhu faith are:

Belief in a series of births;

belief in Avatharas (incarnations) of the Lord for the reestablishment of Dharma (righteousness) and the transformation of those who have strayed from it; and,

belief in Karma, the fact of every activity having its inevitable consequence and of human destiny being shaped by cumulative effect of all these consequences.

Karma is the cause of births, the jeevi (soul) being compelled to undergo another ordeal of for clearing its accounts and becoming free of both credit and debit.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

44. The heart of the organisation

Date: 21 November 1968 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

I FIND from the reports and recommendations presented to Me by the District Presidents, as a result of the deliberations of the representatives from each district, that you have recorded therein your own hopes and aspirations and such ideas as will make you happy. The main aim of all the activities in which you are now engaged and which you will take up in the future is, let Me tell you, cleansing the mind. You may note the various items of clothing that you hand over to the dhobi, such as pants, bush-coats, towel, dhoti; but, the purpose for which you pass them on to him and the operation for which he is engaged is just cleansing. So too, whether it is meditation that you are encouraging, or discourse that you are arranging, or bhajan that you are organising, or clothes that you are offering to the poor, or worship that you are conducting, the object is just cleansing the mind of the taint of egoism, greed, hatred, malice, lust and envy. The one quality that you must acquire as a result of all this is 'mutual love.' That is the sign of the Sai devotee, of devotees of all the forms of God Men are born, they die; in the interval, they grow and fade. The sign of growth is this mutual love, expressed through seva (service). The rich and the high-placed have many to serve them. You must serve those who have no one to serve them. Serve those who manage to live by serving others. There are thousands of organisations already working with such aims, but what is the special need for an organisation bearing My Name? You must realise Me in all, and serve all in a spirit of worshipful dedication.

Spirit of surrender must animate every act

On a dry leaf, floating on the waves of the sea, an ant desperately struggled to cling; a dove noticed it, flew over and clasping the leaf in its beak, it transferred it to dry ground. The ant too is Divinity encased in that infinitesimal sheath. It is as important in God's eyes as many a monstrous denizen of the jungle or the sea; God weighs the love that prompts you to save, the compassion that urges you to alleviate pain. Sathya Sai

Organisations must take up seva (service) as sadhana (spiritual discipline), must see Me as sarvantharyami (inner motor of all), and do seva as puuja. The District President and the President of each Unit must practise sadhana. They must have complete faith in God, and that faith must be evident in each word, thought and deed of theirs. The spirit of surrender must be animating every act of theirs. The Presidents must initiate such items of work as will enthuse the members. If the organisation must succeed, they should have firm faith in this name and form. Once, when Garuda was sent by Krishna to bring Hanuman to Dhwarka, a regular fight ensued because Hanuman would obey the behest of no one except Rama; Krishna had to mollify him by sending Garuda again, with a request to come and meet 'Rama' (and not Krishna)!

Do not seek to exercise authority over others; seek rather to discover chances to be useful to them. When one neglects his duties, the positions of authority start causing headaches. Be a servant; a servant of God - then, all strength and joy will be added unto you. Try to be a master; then, you will arouse envy, hatred, anger and greed in every one around you. Feel that you are an instrument in His Hand; let Him shape you and use you as He knows best.

Upeksha alone can save man from entanglement

I find that after these Units have started working, the cordiality that prevailed previously has disappeared! Differences of opinion are being exaggerated, tempers are getting frayed, and misunderstandings and factions are raising their heads. Men who were together are drifting apart; Thath and Thwam (that and this), are the same; but, you are forgetting it and becoming distant from This. When you approach the senses, the spirit is far; when you approach the spirit, the senses will be afar. Attach yourselves to the sensory and the worldly - that is to say, develop Apeksha - and you bind yourselves with the chain of likes and dislikes. Detach yourselves from the craving for fame and comfort - that is to say, develop Upeksha - and you are free! Upeksha alone can save you from entanglement and reveal the ultimate truth. Man must not shape himself into an animal or an ogre. He must turn into God. Like a boulder carved by a visionary into a charming idol of Krishna

with the flute, man too must use every blow of fate as the stroke of an artist's chisel. I was perusing the reports you gave Me on the points I had placed for your consideration. I must say that your suggestions regarding the raising of funds were uniformly bad. On this point, all of you are of one mind and that is not satisfactory to Me. Money is fundamentally rajoguna (quality of passion), fraught with danger and harm. Like the bees which collect and store honey for a future day, man too stores and collects money; but, alas, the bees are smoked out and the honey is stolen. I do not agree with any of your ideas to collect and store money. I do not like your going about collecting funds, or raising donations.

Costly paraphernalia are superfluous impediments

I assure you that funds will come, provided you sincerely pray, for every worthy cause. Have that faith; and watch the funds flow in. The sages of ancient times celebrated many yajnas, with no resources other than faith and sincerity. Now you are moved more by pride, by anxiety, by want of confidence; so you are not giving My suggestion of the box-with-the-slit to be filled secretly by members only, one after the other, any trial! Moreover, I must tell you that not much money is needed for many of the items of work. Yearning in the heart, Name on the tongue - these are enough for Bhajan and Nagarasankeerthan. The Gopees (milk-maids of Bridhavan) sang the Name of God when they churned the pots for butter, in the early morning hours. The bangles on their wrists jingled the time, the whire of the rods in the pots provided the background tune, and the fragrant morning breeze carried the song into every neighbouring ear. You need not collect an impressive crowd; you need no costly paraphernalia; they are superfluous impediments.

Do not spend much on lecturers and speakers. If any crave for monetary rewards or showy receptions, keep such at arm's length. A chair and a table will be quite ample; loudspeakers are a luxury for most of your meetings. They have become more status symbols than necessities. Set yourselves out as examples to organisations round about you, in the careful husbanding of resources and in avoiding wasteful expenditure. Have only as many gatherings as you can afford; do not call them together, because you must!

People must look forward to them, and not feel they are too many.

Give least importance to money for Samithi work

The fifteen or twenty who constitute a Samithi or Sangha must be able to put together without any fuss or fanfare, the money needed for all these activities. You should not draw in any one as member of the Samithi for the sake of the money that he may have; gunas are more valuable than annas (money). You need not have any special function in the village, except when I visit it. You criticise others who collect by devious means vast sums of money for mammoth gatherings and waste the funds so collected in shady channels. You should therefore avoid such mistakes yourselves.

Uphold by means of your self-esteem the unique distinction that you now have; you have a Master who does not ask any one or take from any one, who only gives, gives in plenty to all who ask. I go into strange lands, among strange peoples, with the gift of love. Upeksha is my strength; I know no distinction between man and man, on any score. So, all love me equally. Money is the root cause of all misunderstandings and factions. Keep it in the background; give it the least importance. Have Love, humility, detachment and service as your funds. There is an underlying channel of love which connects the eye and the foot. When the eye sees a thorn on the path, the foot moves away, the welfare of the body is safeguarded thus. So too, the District President and the Unit President must act as the eyes, look out for thorns and take the feet from harm.

As regards the World Conference, I feel it is to be held only once in three years. The All-India Conference is best held in the Heart of the Organisation, the Prasanthi Nilayam itself.

True devotion must not get dispirited; nor elated or satisfied with lesser gains. It must fight against failure, loss, calumny, calamity, ridicule and against egoism and pride, impatience and cowardice. Read the lives of

Jayadheva, Thukaram, Ramdas and Sakkubai; go through the stories of how the Gopees calumniated Radha; then, you will realise the immensity of the hardships they underwent, when they travelled on the road to God.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

45. Give the giver the gift

Date: 23 November 1968 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Birthday - 43

This is a pot; this a thatch; this a house; this a wall; this jungle; this a hill; this the ground; this the lake; this the fire; this the wind; this the sky; this the maker of the day; this the light of night; these the stars; these the planets; these the inert, these the vital; this is he, that is his person; these are all distinct from Me; this material world is different from Me - thus as a witness, I cognise all this and fill each with the principle of existence without the help of any disciplinary process, for I 'am above and beyond all this. This is an auspicious moment in the history of India, when you have a great chance to understand the truths embodied in the scriptures of this land and the ideals that are embedded in the ways of living that are prescribed by the codes propounded therein. In order that you may attain the only goal of human life, namely, realising the Divine and becoming Divine, the Eternal has limited itself and come in this human form. It will reveal the ideals again, and re-establish it among all men. Of course, it is difficult for those who are unacquainted with the scriptures to grasp the mystery of this advent.

I may tell you, nevertheless, that all the five elements (ether, air, fire, water and earth) have been created by the Will of the Supreme. They have each to be used by you with reverential care and vigilant discrimination. Reckless use of any of them will only rebound on you with tremendous harm. External nature has to be handled with caution and awe.

Control the tongue with double care

So too, your inner 'nature,' your internal instruments! Of these, two are capable of vast harm; the tongue and sex. Since sex is aroused and inflamed by the food consumed and the drink taken in, the tongue needs greater attention. While the eye, the ear and the nose serve as instruments of knowledge about one particular characteristic of Nature, the tongue makes itself available for two purposes: to judge taste and to utter word-symbols of communication. You must control the tongue with double care, since it can

harm you in two ways. Without the control of the senses, sadhana is ineffective; it is like keeping water in leaky pot, when the senses are given full sway. Pathanjali (the celebrated sage author of the Yogasutras) has said that when tongue is conquered, victory is yours. When the tongue craves for some delicacy, assert that you will not cater to its whims. The monks and monastic dignitaries in this land have fallen prey to the tongue and are unable to curb its vagaries; they wear the robes of renunciation but clamour for tasty delicacies and thus bring the institution of monkhood into disrepute. If you persist in giving yourself simple food that is not savoury or hot, but amply sustaining, the tongue may squirm for a few days, but it will soon welcome it. That is the way to subdue it and overcome the evil consequences of its being your master.

Control your taste; control your talk

Since the tongue is equally insistent on scandal and lascivious talk, you have to curb that tendency also. Talk little; talk sweetly; talk only when there is pressing need; talk only to those to whom you must; do not shout or raise the voice, in anger or excitement. Such control will improve health and mental peace. It will lead to better public relations and less involvement in contacts and conflicts with others. You may be laughed at as a kill-joy but there are compensations enough for you. It will conserve your time and energy; you can put your inner energy to better use. You may take My special Birthday Message for you' Control your taste. Control your talk.

This is but a part of the larger programme of controlling the senses. Your devotion to God is best expressed by achieving the control of the senses. For, the senses rush towards the temporary and the tawdry; thus, they foul the heart. I require from each of you no other gift, no more valuable offering than the heart I have endowed you with. Give Me that heart, as pure as when I gave it to you, full of the nectar of love I filled it with. Do not be jubilant because this is the day when this body became manifest, through birth, fortythree years ago. Birth and death are inevitable incidents in the careers of physical sheaths. Worth is judged by what happens in the interval. That is what one has to be jubilant over. Utilise that period for the progress of the

spirit. There are three lines along which endeavour has to be directed: (i) Spiritual exercise and discipline; (ii) cultivation of detachment, and (iii) Development of confidence in one's Self. Without these three, life is wearisome and wasteful journey through the sands. Give up, renounce - that is the virtue you need for spiritual progress. It is not the value of the thing given up that counts; it is the loftiness of the impulse behind the act.

Feel that each moment is a step towards God

So long as one is dominated by sense pleasure, it cannot be said that his spiritual life has begun. Now, many clamour for the experience of spiritual bliss, but, few earn it, because they find themselves too weak to reject the clamour of the senses! A little enquiry will reveal that the senses are bad masters and very inefficient sources of knowledge; the joy they bring is transitory and fraught with grief. Mere knowledge will not endow you with the well-spring of joy in the heart; only the contemplation of the might and majesty of God, as seen in the Universe, can be a never-failing source of joy. No two can agree on any matter, be they brothers or sisters, lifemates or father and son. It is only as pilgrims on the Godward path that two can heartily agree and lovingly co-operate.

You can be a pilgrim even while attending to your daily duties. Only, you have to feel that each moment is a step towards Him. Do everything as dedicated to Him, as directed by Him, as work for His adoration or for serving His children. Test all your actions, words, thoughts on this touchstone: "Will this be approved by God? Will this rebound to His renown?" In the epic of Ramayana, you find the father (Emperor Dhasaratha) is infatuated with his dear wife and he sends his son Rama to the forest in exile for fourteen years; the son, however, is such a true follower of righteousness that he exiles his dear wife to the forest, in obedience to the whisperings of a section of his people. The father was the slave of his senses; the son was master. God will approve the latter and disapprove the former. So also, those who have no conception of the Lord who is above and beyond all human conventions may cavil at some of the actions of Krishna, but, those who are aware of His Divinity will understand their true significance.

All men are cowherds, all animals are cows

When you dedicate yourselves to the glorification of the Lord, you will revere the body, the senses, the intelligence, the Will and all the instruments of knowledge, action and feeling as essential for His work. While others will get intoxicated with pride, the bhaktha (devotee) will be intoxicated with prema (selfless love). You have heard that when the Divine Cowherd boy played on the flute, the men, women and children and even the cattle of Brindavan hurried to him, as if drawn by the irresistible magic of His music, Divine Melody, that stills all the turbid waves which we name as joy and grief. They left off the work they were engaged in; they had no other thought than the attainment of the Divine presence; the cattle stopped grazing, the calves stopped guzzling milk. The story of Krishna and the Gopees (cowherd-girls) has a deep inner meaning. Brindavan is not a specific place on the map; it is the Universe Itself. All men are cowherds; all animals are cows. Every heart is filled with the longing for the Lord; the flute is the call of the Lord; the sport called Rasakreeda (the sportive dance; the dance of Krishna in His boyhood with the cowherdesses), where Lord Krishna is described as dancing with the milk-maids in the moonlight - every maid has a boy-Krishna holding her hand in the dance - is the symbol of the yearning and the travail borne by those who aim at reaching His presence. The Lord manifests such Grace that each one of you has the Lord all for yourself; you need not be sad that you won't have Him, when others get Him; nor need you be proud that you have Him and no one else can have him at the same time! The Lord is installed in the altar of your heart.

Be pure and humble as pilgrims ought to be

Offer your entire self your entire life, to Him; then your adoration will transform and transmute you so fast and completely that you and He can be merged into One. He thinks, feels and acts as you do; you think, feel and acts as He does. You will be transformed as a rock is transformed by the sculptor, into an idol, deserving the worship of generations of sincere men. In the process you will have to bear many a hammer stroke, many a chisel-wound,

for He is the sculptor. He is but releasing you from petrification! Offer your heart to the Lord, let the rest of you suffer transformation at His hands. Do not defile time, or the physical sheath, or this life's chance, using them for paltry ends.

Your pilgrimage to this place on this occasion is but a part of the long pilgrimage upon which you entered when you were born, which may not end even when you die. Do not forget that fact. Be pure, alert and humble as pilgrims ought to be. Treasure the good things you see and the basic truths you hear. Use them as props and promptings for further stages of the journey. It serves no purpose if you merely acknowledge that the Lord has come but do not yearn to benefit by the Advent. In the previous ages, in what are called Kritha, Thretha and DwaparaYugas (each Yuga or Age being a long cycle or time period in Hindhu mythology) the Incarnations of the Lord were not accepted as such by many. Even their parents, kinsmen, and comrades hesitated to adore them. Only a few sages, who had cultivated the inner vision through study and sadhana, knew their reality.

Keep relationship with this Incarnation unbroken

But, today in this Kali yuga, while the currents of contradiction and controversy are undermining faith and adoration, the good fortune that has brought you face to face with Me is something for which you must thank your merit won through many lives. This is no ordinary good fortune. This incarnation is moving with you, your joy and grief in order to console, encourage and cure. This relationship is something unique; it has to be kept unbroken, until the goal is reached. Devotees who are attached to Me have a special responsibility. Vice-Chancellor Dr. Gokak referred in his speech to My direction that no one shall collect funds for any endeavour connected with My name. I want that you must replace Dhana-yearning with Dharma-yearning. Yearn for Dharma, not riches. Do not extend your hand before man, but ask of the Lord, and he will fill it with priceless treasure. Have that faith and carry on. I may make mention now of a letter written to Me by Dr. K. M. Munshi. (A great follower of Gandhi, one of the architects of free India; a famous Gujarathi writer, founder of the Bharatheeya Vidhya Bhavan, dedicated to the

revival of the permanent values of Indian Culture). He has written that he came, he saw and he was conquered. Of course, what really happened was that his love merged in Mine; his Anandha (Bliss) merged in Mine, and he is happy beyond expression. He has suggested in that letter that, just as there are some days which are celebrated all over the world as holy days, My Birthday must be an all-world holy day; he has asked Me to bless this plan of making this day, a day of Sathyanarayana puuja, the world over. I appreciate his attachment and devotion, but I do not encourage this adoration of just one name and one form, and that too, My present name and My present form.

Unfurl the Prasanthi flag on your own hearts

I have no wish to draw people towards Me, away from the worship of My other names and forms. You may infer from what you call My miracles, that I am causing them to attract and to attach you to Me, and Me alone. They are not intended to demonstrate or publicise; they are merely spontaneous and concomitant proofs of Divine Majesty. I am yours; you are mine, for ever and ever. What need is there for attracting and impressing, for demonstrating your Love or My compassion? I am in you; you are in Me. There is no distance or distinction. I am now hoisting the Prasanthi Flag on this Prasanthi Nilayam. The flag is a sign that is significant for each one of you. It is a reminder of your duty to yourself, and so, when I hoist it on this building, you must unfurl it on your own hearts. It reminds you to overcome the urge of low desires, of anger and hate when your desires are thwarted; it exhorts you to expand your heart so that you embrace all humanity and all life and all creation in its compass; it directs you to quieten your impulses and calmly meditate on your own inner reality. It assures you that, when you do so, the lotus of your heart will bloom, and from its centre will arise the flame of divine vision, which guarantees Prasanthi (infinite peace). I must also tell you of certain preliminary disciplines' Practise when you are here the three disciplines of silence, cleanliness and forbearance. In silence can be heard the voice of God, not in the revelry of noise. Through cleanliness you earn purity. By forbearance, you cultivate love. You have come today to your own home. This is your home, not Mine. My home is your heart. So, do not try to have your lunch elsewhere but in your home, where you get this day food consecrated

by Me, the prasadh.

For each person, there is a code of conduct laid down in the ancient scriptures, according to age and status, the profession adopted, the stage of spiritual attainment reached, the goal of life accepted, etc.

Do not carp at the behaviour of others, or at the efforts they make, to get consolation and courage amidst the turmoils of life, for the path that one has chosen, the Name and the Form of God he prefers! Also do not give up your code of duties and take up that recommended for some one else.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba