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1. Supreme Power

Date: 14 February 1961 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

Our Venkateshwarlu just now spoke of the Lord as the Director of a Drama of Delusion. But the delusion is in you, not in the Lord, who is possessed of only Supreme Power (Mahasakthi). Unable to grasp that Supreme Power and to understand its manifestations, people envelop themselves in doubt and delusion, that is all. He also said that I am by birth an Andhra, etc., but, the whole world is my birth place. I am not to be identified with this or that province or state. Dakshinamurthi does not belong only to Dakshinapatha. Again, Venkateshwarlu mentioned the various points spoken about Me by those who have neither seen nor experienced Me. These are all unnecessary and useless diversions, which distract. The sculptor should see before him only the form of his personal deity (Ishtadevatha) and should strive to quickly remove with a chisel the stone that envelopes that form. So too, all discussion whether this Sai is that Sai or that Sai is this Sai is irrelevant. The same sugar is poured into different moulds to prepare several types of sweets. So also, Rama, Sai, Sathya Sai all are the same sugar. That is enough for the aspirant, who will realise the truth in good time. Do not worry your mind with such problems; do not mix with people who talk loosely of holy subjects. One thing I may tell you now: "There is no one in this world who does not belong to Me; all are Mine. They may not call out My Name or any Name, but still they are Mine." You are seeing for yourself how thirsty souls are gathering in numbers every day at Puttaparthi. I have told you often that in a matter of a year or two the multitude will be so large that you may not get much chance to approach Me with your spiritual problems and difficulties. So, hurry to Me with them, even now. While in other places, I speak generally on the need for devotion, etc.; here at Puttaparthi I emphasise the practical discipline of everyday life, because this is the HQ of an army under training. So, cultivate Truth and Love and make yourselves examples for all who might contact you.

Make Soham (I am God) the continuous soft prayer (japam) of the mind and you will be saved. "I" will merge into the Universal. Continuously recite

Soham, Soham, Soham with every breath, inhaling and exhaling.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

2. Sai As Inner Resident

Date: **26 February 1961** / Location: **Coimbatore** / Occasion: **Naga Sai Mandir**

The Chair of your temple (mandir) committee said just now that I have come a great distance, after an arduous journey, and he thanked Me for what he called My kindness. Let Me tell you that it is your penance (tapas) that has brought Me here today. I have come and stayed in this town four or five times before, but this is the first occasion on which I am directly conferring bliss (anandam) on so many thousands of people. This is the consequence of the years of devotional singing (bhajan) done at this place by sincere devotees, the months of toil and exertion undergone by Chari and others to construct this temple, get this idol ready, and make all arrangements for this function. He also said that the reign of Sai had been established and that this unprecedentedly vast audience of persons from this city and the surrounding areas is proof of that fact. Well, you are seeing signs of widespread Godliness, no doubt. More and more lectures, more and more books, more and more spiritual groups are evident; more people go on pilgrimage; more and more temples are being renovated; all types of sacrificial rites (yagnas) are arranged and carried out; thousands gather and disperse. In all countries and in all languages, men are praying more and more, turning toward the Lord for the blessing of courage and equanimity. These are days of doubt, anxiety, fear, division, and distress, so people need consolation and support. Even scientists who were all along proud that they could explain the universe and put it into a formula are getting humble on seeing the vaster and vaster vistas spreading before them at every step.

Lesson that all thinking men are learning

Dr. Bhagavantam was telling Me how scientists are baffled; they open one door after another with tremendous effort, only to enter a corridor that has a dozen closed doors challenging them to further effort! It is a never-ending process, this pursuit of the objective world (prakriti), this attempt to unravel the mysteries of illusion (maya). If you yearn for joy and peace, turn rather to the Lord, who lays down the Law; that is the lesson that all thinking people

are learning now. But attending such meetings, sitting quietly like this and listening to Me, is not enough. A person who claims to have gone to the shore of the sea and played with the waves must produce as evidence at least a pair of wet feet, is it not? So too, when you come to this sea of company of the pious (sathsanga) and share the waves of bliss, the proof is in the eye becoming wet with weeping; in the heart that exults when another is happy. Even when you listen, gather the honey as the bee does when it visits the flowers. The Chair said the world is becoming full of Sai (Saimayam), that the name of Sai (Sainamam) is on everyone's lips. I want it to go deeper. And I do not insist that it should be the Name "Sai". The world must become full of the Supreme Soul (Paramatma-mayam); that is all, however many Names and Forms that the Supreme Soul may have on the lips of people and before their mental eyes. It is the same substance poured into different moulds. Like sugar dolls that children seek, cats and dogs, cows and horses, they are all of the self-same sweetness; this child prefers this shape and this name; the other one weeps for another doll. The same divine substance appears in different times and places, assuming different Names. When the forces of evil and hatred overwhelm them, the Good accept the Lord as their Charioteer, and He enables them to overpower foes.

"Establishment of righteousness is My Task"

This day deserves to be recorded in letters of gold because of this reason. Moreover, this day is unique because it is rare that an Avatar installs the idol of another. I Myself find it rather amusing. Of course, Rama installed the Sivalinga at Rameswaram before He started out for Lanka for the extermination of the evil-doers. Now, there is no question of extermination. My task is the establishment of righteousness (dharma samsthapanam). And now that I am entering on this task of this Incarnation, I am also installing this idol prior to that task. It is now over 18 years since the Manifestation of Sai as hooded snake (naga) took place on this spot, but it has taken you all these years to complete the erection of the temple and the installation of the Image. Well, the years accumulated to 18 not without reason. It is all in the Plan. Eighteen is a mystic number, having a profound meaning. I find 18 persons in the podium here; they represent the 18 officiators of the ritual-

sacrifice (yajna): 6 for the world (jagath); 6 for time (kala); 3 for the mind, thought, and intellect (manas , chitha , and buddhi); the pair that perform the ritual-sacrifice as the initiated couple; and lastly, Atma , the Witness. I am installing the Nagasayi (statue of Shirdi Sai with hooded snake) in the temple, but that is just a symbolic act. I require that at that very moment, chosen because it is very auspicious, you should instal Him in your heart; make Him your inner resident (hridaya-sthayi , heart level)!

Have a correct scale of values

What exactly is the meaning of "Sai Baba"? Sai means Sahasrapadhma (thousand lotuses), sakshatkara (realisation, direct experience of the Lord), etc., Ayi means mother, and baba means father. Thus, "Sai Baba" means He who is both Father and Mother and the Goal of all yogic endeavour - the ever-merciful Mother, the All-wise Father, and the Goal of spiritual efforts. When you are groping in a dark room, you must seize the chance when someone brings a lamp into the room. Hurriedly collect your belongings scattered there, or discover where they are located, or do whatever else you need. Similarly, make the best of this chance when the Lord has come in human form to your very door and get ready to save yourself from disaster. The undue importance now attached to the satisfaction of sensual desires must diminish as the result of your association with sacred books and saintly personages. You know that the dream world is a fantastic world of nonsense, where fifty years are compressed into five minutes and where weird incidents and things are taken as actually present and experienced. But let Me tell you that from the stage of Realisation, even the waking stage, when you analyse the dreams and declare them as invalid, is equally without validity. Therefore, have a sense of values, a scale of values rather; give everything, everyone, its worth or their worth, not a whit more. Five sheaths encase the Atma and hide its splendour from revealing itself. Make all these pure and shining. The physical sheath (annamaya kosa) must be purified by good, clean, pure food; the vital sheath (pranamaya kosa) by calm, steady breathing and an equanimous temper; the mental sheath (manomaya kosa) by holy thoughts and emotions, untouched by attachment to senses or unaffected by joy or grief; the wisdom sheath (vijnanamaya kosa) by contemplation of the reality;

and the bliss sheath (anandamaya kosa) by getting immersed in the ecstasy of God-realisation.

Do not run after all and sundry

Stick to your faith; do not change your loyalty as soon as something happens or someone whispers. Do not pull down Sai Baba's picture from the wall and hang some other picture there at the first disappointment. Leave all to Him; let His Will be carried out - that should be your attitude. Unless you go through the rough and the smooth, how can you be hardened? Welcome the light and the shade, the sun and the rain. Do not think that only those who worship a picture or image with pompous paraphernalia are devotees. Whoever walks straight along the moral path, whoever acts as they speak and speaks as they have seen, whoever melts at another's woe and exults at another's joy - they are devotees, perhaps greater devotees. Baba is beyond the keenest intellect, the sharpest brain. Why, even the seven sages (rishis) failed to grasp the Sublimity of Godhead. Mahlaspathi, Das Ganu, Mudholkar, Kaka Saheb saw but the fringe; Dadha had just a glimpse. So do not try to delve into Me; develop faith and derive bliss (ananda) through love (prema). That is the utmost you can do; do that and benefit. Do not run after all and sundry who blabber textbook stuff and wear the cloak of fakir-hood (mendicancy). Examine, judge, and admire. Examine the daily conduct, the motive, the outlook, the trend of the advice, the coordination between what is said and what is done. When you join the congregational music of divine Names, as you did some time ago, you had to sing in tune with the rest, is it not? Otherwise, your voice becomes harsh to the ear; it grates. So too, a life that is not in tune with the plan that the Lord has laid down spoils the melody, grates, and is felt to be a disturbance. Hence, follow the Divine Plan. That is to say, have one hand on the path of Supreme Reality (Brahma-marga) and the other on the path of righteousness (dharma-marga). These two will take you across and over the sea of birth and death.

Devotion, sacred knowledge (jnana) and detachment are the three stages of

spiritual progress. Devotion is the primary school stage; it leads one on to sacred knowledge, the high school stage; by means of sacred knowledge, everything is cognised as Supreme Reality (Brahmam) and the attitude of detachment is established. That is the college stage of the education of the Self.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

3. Believe In Yourself

Date: 27 February 1961 / Location: Udumalpet

I HAVE been seeing your devotion and enthusiasm ever since I entered your town this morning. During the procession through the streets, I could see the ardour of your devotion. Even now, I feel that I could give you joy by merely sitting here and giving darshan (audience), for I can listen to your silent prayers and you can sense My Love (Prema). That is enough. That gives Bliss (Anandam). You are born, you grow, you live, and you merge, all in Bliss; that is the Truth, though very few know it. That is why I reminded you of it by addressing you as Embodiments of Bliss (Ananda-swarupulara). Your natural state is bliss, however much you might have ignored it. Bharath (India) has proclaimed this for ages; the Vedas declare it; the spiritual texts (sastras) elaborate it; the Gita and other sacred texts describe how to experience this truth. Develop faith in the Atma and in the spiritual texts - they are the two eyes that will help you to gain the Vision. Do not let this chance go to waste by clamouring for sitting space, causing confusion, and disturbing those who are engaged in listening. This is tragic: when good things are spoken, you find it difficult to pay attention, but when demeaning, distracting things are spoken, the ears are on the alert. Well, listen quietly now and maintain this calm.

Plant the seedling of devotion in the mind

Be the master of your behaviour; do not be led away by the impulse of the moment; be conscious always of what is good for you. Carry on your daily tasks so that you do not make others suffer or suffer yourself. That is the sign of intelligent living. Do not give way to fits of anger or grief or elation or despair. The confusion you exhibited now was the result of dark and dull (thamasic) and emotional (rajasic) qualities. Be calm and unruffled and collected (sathwic). The more you develop charity for all beings, contrition at your own faults, fear of wrong, and fear of God - the more firmly established you are in peace. The very name Bharath is derived from the two words Bhagavan and rathi - attachment to God. That is why India has the role of the

"Teacher of the World". She is also known as the "heart" of humanity and revered as such by seekers. But how can those who are starving feed others? It is your duty to sow and grow and store and feed the world this great spiritual sustenance laid down in the Vedas and the spiritual texts (sastras). In this spiritual sphere of mental peace and inner joy, the responsibility for success or failure is entirely one's own. You have no right to shift it on to others. The fire will go out if the fuel is over, so stop feeding it with fuel. Do not add fuel to the fire of the senses. Detach the mind from the temporary and attach it to the eternal. The negative and positive powers (sakthis) both together will give the Light. Plant the seedling of devotion, namely, the preliminary exercise of remembering the Lord's name (namasmarana), in the mind. That will grow into a tree with the branches of virtue, service, sacrifice, love, equanimity, fortitude, and courage. You swallow food, but you are not aware how that food is transformed into energy, intelligence, emotion, and health. In the same way, just swallow this food for the spirit, this remembrance of the Lord's name, and watch how it gets transmuted into virtue and the rest without your being aware of it.

The real test of theism

Ravana discovered that Rama and kama (desire) cannot coexist in the mind. Develop steadiness in the recitation of the Name of God and in the worth of that Name. Then, even if the whole world says, "Do evil," you will refuse to obey; your system itself will revolt against it. And even if the whole world asks you to desist, you will insist on doing right. You have to cultivate four types of strength: of body, intellect, wisdom, and conduct. Then you become unshakable, and you are on the path of spiritual victory. Once a person came to Me and argued that there was no God and he was not prepared to believe in one. Well. I replied, "Have you faith at least in yourself? Which is your self? Your self is God. You have faith in your judgement, your intelligence, and your ability because God within you tells you not to falter or fear. That assurance wells from within, from your basic truth, which is otherwise called God. It does not matter if you do not call it God; it is enough if you believe in Yourself; that is the real test of theism." I say the same thing to you also. The body is the temple of God; God is installed in every body, whether the owner of the body

recognises it or not. It is God that inspires you to good acts, that warns you against the bad. Listen to that Voice. Obey that Voice and you will not come to any harm. A lady wept that her necklace was lost or stolen; she searched everywhere and became inconsolably sad. Then, when she passed a mirror, she found the lost necklace around her neck. It was there all the time. Similarly, God is there, as the Inner Dweller, whether you know it or not.

Two ways of remembering the Lord's Name

Love is of three kinds: self-centred, which, like a bulb, illumines just a small room; mutual, which, like the moonlight, spreads wider but is not clearer; and other-centred, which, like the sunlight, is all pervasive and clear. Cultivate the third type of love; that will save you. All the service that you do to others through that love is in fact service done to yourself. It is not others that you help, it is yourself that is helped, remember. You might have heard Me speak about repetition of the Lord's Name and its fruits, how it slowly changes character and modifies conduct and mellows you and takes you nearer the Goal. Well, there are two ways of doing this: either with rosary beads (japamala), turning the beads automatically around, just as mechanically and as punctually and as carefully as any other routine act of daily life, or, as it ought to be done, repeating the Name, irrespective of the target number, dwelling deep on the Form it represents and on the divine attributes connoted by it, tasting It, reveling in It, enjoying the contexts and associations of the Name, relishing Its sweetness, lost in Its Music. Of course, you will hanker after the taste of the Name only when you are gnawed by the pangs of hunger. When you suffer from constipation as a consequence of over-indulgence in worldly affairs, you cannot relish the Name or the Form. The mind is the mischief-maker. It jumps from doubt to doubt; it puts obstacles in the way. It weaves a net and gets entangled in it. It is ever discontented. It runs after a hundred things and away from another hundred. It is like a driver who drives the car with the master in it, wherever his fancy takes him. So take up the task of training it into an obedient servant; it is educable, if only you know how to do it. Place before it more tasty things and it will hanker only for those. Once it realises the value of repetition of the Lord's Name, it will adhere to that method of getting peace and joy. So start it now. That is

My Command to you today.

A bar of iron sinks in water, but beat it into a hollow vessel and it will easily float and even carry some weight of things. So too, the mind, as it is, sinks easily in the sea of life, but beat it hollow, hammering it with the Name of the Lord, and it floats, unaffected by worry and sorrow; it can even help some others to see Light!

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

4. The Real Almanac

Date: 17 March 1961 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Ugadi

Kasturi has just now read from the astrological almanac for the New Year the predictions of the astrologers about rainfall, the condition of the crops, the prices of articles in the markets, the rise and fall in the rates of gold and silver, the prospects of internal and external peace, the occurrence of natural calamities like floods, droughts, earthquakes, etc. But reading all this just increases your worries, your restlessness. Take things as and when they come. Do not try to peep too far into the future with the help of astrologers. They are mostly wrong, and the data you supply them are mostly unreliable. Take care of the five-limbed almanacs within you - that is more vital. They are the five senses. Educate the mind to hold them in check - then you can have peace of mind whatever the rise in the market rates or the quantity of rain. Do not get panicky over what the almanac says about the combination of many planets. They exaggerate the consequences. Nothing much will happen. The destruction of the universe is more in the frightened mind than in external nature. If you earn the blessing (anugraha) of the Lord, no planet (graha) or combination of planets can harm you. If you learn how to secure that blessing, you need not worry about the Almanac. Today, you are celebrating the arrival of a New Year with a new name, a name that you will use for the twelve coming months. But remember, it is not the year alone that is new once in 365 days. Every day is new, every hour and minute, every second is new. Do not celebrate only the New Year Day in joy; celebrate every second in joy.

Every step toward Godhead is to be cherished

Start from today, not that today is a New Year - so many New Years are celebrated by one or the other community that every day is a new year to some set of people - but because it is today and the matter brooks no delay. Start from today a new chapter in your life, the chapter of Recitation of the holy name and meditation, recitation-oriented meditation, or meditation-oriented recitation. In the Thretha Yuga (era), the Name was SitaRama; in the

Dwapara Yuga , it was Radheshyama (Krishna); in this Kali Yuga , it is Sarvanama , that is to say, all Names of the Lord: select any one that appeals to you. Life is like a flight of steps toward the Godhead. You have your foot on the first step when you are born; each day is a step that must be climbed. So be steady, watchful and earnest. Do not count the steps ahead or exult over the steps behind. One step at a time and that well climbed - that is enough success to be satisfied with and to give you encouragement for the next one. Do not slide from the step you have reached. Every step is a victory to be cherished; every day wasted is a defeat to be ashamed of. Slow and steady - let that be your maxim! Adhere to a regular routine, a time-routine. Just as the doctor prescribes a certain fixed measure or weight of the drug and warns you that anything less is ineffective and anything more is harmful, so too, have some limit for your spiritual exercises. Do not overdo them or do them casually and without care. The doctors tell you also about the hour of the day and the number of times the drug has to be repeated, for the action of the quantity taken must be reinforced before it becomes weak. So also, you have to repeat the repetition of the Name and meditation at regular intervals.

Do not move very fast with the world

Millionaires who always go about in cars and aeroplanes and people of sedentary habits are advised by doctors to take a long walk every morning. The walk is called a "constitutional" because it helps to build up the constitution. Similarly, to get over the mental ills consequent on too-long brooding over worldly affairs, the guru will advise you to have a long spell of meditation and repetition of God's Name. Do not move so fast with the world. The cure for moving fast is to sit quietly. Do not get entangled in the vain hubbub of the world - the treatment for those who suffer from the after-effects of that is silence and meditation. You will have observed that when your train is stationary, another train moving along another line gives you the feeling that your train is moving. If you watch your coach, fix your attention on your train, you know the truth. Similarly, as long as your attention is turned on "the other", "the outer", your knowledge is based on illusion. Once you divert attention to yourself, you can discover the truth, viz., though the world moves, you are still. In the Almanac, as Kasturi quoted now, it is also

predicted that in the year that is born today, the number of people who deride God and who laugh at Him and hate Him will increase. Let Me ask how can that happen, for that number has reached the maximum already! The cynical spirit of derision and ridicule is the bane of this age, but there is no reason for the godly to be downhearted. At least the coming conjunction of eight planets will put some fear into people's minds, and they will call on God to save them and will do various acts to propitiate the divine Beneficence in order to overcome the maleficence of the planets. Therefore, the prediction might prove incorrect, after all. Be assured that the Lord has come to save the world from calamity. Your duty is to keep calm, to pray for the happiness and prosperity of all. Do not pray for your own exclusive happiness and say, "Let the rest of the world go to pieces." You cannot be happy when the rest of mankind is unhappy. You are an organic part of the human community. Share your prosperity with others; strive to alleviate the sufferings of others. That is your duty. The New Year is called, Plava or Boat . Make it a boat to cross the Sea of Worldly Life (Samsara). That is My Blessing to you this day.

The ocean drops rose as vapour, joined the congregation called cloud, fell on the earth, flowed along the ravines, and at last reached the ocean. Likewise, reach the ocean you have lost. Start on that journey and travel quick and light.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

5. Experience

Date: 06 April 1961 / Location: Tirupati

In spiritual matters, experience alone is the deciding factor. Reason is rendered dumb before the testimony of actual experience. All the arguments of logic, all the tricks of dialectics are powerless to nullify the direct effect of that inner evidence. For example, take the question of image worship. Many people laugh at those who practise it and condemn it as superstition. But those who do worship idols have the faith that the Omnipresent Almighty is present in the symbol before them. For them, it is not a mere external adjunct or apparatus or object. It is a part of the inner mechanism of devotion and faith. Of course, all the "worship" carried out with the idea that the idol is lifeless wood or stone or bronze is so much waste of time. But if it is done in the full confidence that the image or idol is alive, saturated with consciousness and power, then image worship can bestow Realisation of Godhead itself.

The spiritual aspirant should see the power inherent in the idol

A spiritual seeker once approached a guru for guidance. The guru gave him an idol of Vishnu and also necessary instructions for daily worship. But the seeker found that, even after some months of meticulous worship, he did not get any spiritual reward or elation. So he reported his dissatisfaction, and the guru gave him another idol, this time of Siva, and asked him to have another try. The disciple came after another six months demanding another idol, because even Siva had failed him. This time, he got a Durga idol, which he duly installed in his domestic shrine. The two previous idols were standing, dust-ridden and neglected, on the window sill. One day, while ritual worship of the Goddess Durga was going on, the disciple found that the perfumed smoke from the incense stick was being wafted by the breeze toward the idol of Siva on the window sill. He got wild that the ungrateful stone-hearted God who was deaf to his powerful entreaties should get the perfume intended for his latest idol! So he took a piece of cloth and tied it round the face of Siva, closing up the nostrils that were inhaling the perfume. Just at that moment, to

his immense surprise Siva appeared in His Splendour and Glory before the seeker! The man was dumb-founded. He did not know how the ill-treatment had induced Siva to give him darshan . But what had really happened? The seeker for the first time believed that the Siva idol was alive, conscious, full of life (chaithanya -full), and it was that belief which forced him to tie the bandage to the nose. The moment he realised that the idol was full of consciousness (chit), he got the Realisation he was struggling for. Therefore, the spiritual aspirant should see not the stone, which is the material stuff of the idol, but the Power that is inherent in it, that is symbolised by it, the same Power that is inherent in his own heart and that pervades and transcends all creation.

When Dharmaraja, the eldest of the Pandavas, had to make the difficult choice of whom to save when the Yaksha said he could select one among his four brothers, who lay dead on the ground, Dharmaraja struck to the highest principle, righteousness (dharma). He did not select Bhima or Arjuna, though war was imminent and they were indispensable. He selected Nakula because he was the son of his step mother and he did not want her to feel that she had no son left. That is the way in which people in the past upheld dharma .

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

6. Steps In Spiritual Practice

Date: 23 April 1961 / Location: Chennai / Occasion: Perambur

The Governor of Uttar Pradesh said just now that he does not see signs of moral revival, though much is being talked about achievements in the field of economic revival. Let Me assure him that the moral revival is already there and is gaining volume every moment. Indeed, the reconstruction of humanity on moral foundations is today a world problem, not merely an Indian problem. In all countries the emphasis is on the standard of life, not on the way of living. Once you turn toward the path of worldly happiness, you will be led on and on to greater and greater discontent, competition, pride, and jealousy. Just stop for a moment and examine your own experience; whether you are happier when you grow richer and whether you get more peace as and when your wants are satisfied. Then you will bear witness to the truth that an improved standard, of living is no guarantee of happiness. Nor is education or the mastery of information and the acquisition of skills any guarantee of mental equanimity. As a matter of fact, you find the educated man everywhere more discontented and more competitive than the uneducated. So the reestablishment of righteousness (dharma), which is the task of the Avatar, is as urgent in other parts of the world as, according to the Governor, it is in this country. The motive force for that revival has to come from this country itself, for India has been proclaiming the Truth fearlessly and without intermission. It is on account of that breath that this land is still alive, in spite of typhoons and earthquakes in the cultural sphere. Indians have a greater responsibility than people of other countries to live in such a way that others may get inspiration for spiritual practices from them.

Duties have to be done as worship

Yours is a splendid chance to become the guides of mankind. You who belong to the Sathya Sai Society have this responsibility in an even greater measure, since you must lead model lives of sincere striving. Having taken the Name, you are bound to act according to My command and to shed the light of devotion on all who come near you. I am really moved by love (prema),

seeing such a vast gathering and hearing the Governor praising your orderliness and discipline. The root of all trouble is the uncontrolled ill-directed mind. Like the river Godavari in floods, the mind rolls along, causing slips and slides and devastating vast areas on both banks. Discrimination and non-attachment are the two dikes that tame the mad energy of the flood and lead the raging waters into the sea, which is, after all, the destination they seek. "After this the discussion on the nature of Brahman ... (Athatho Brahma Jijnasa ...)," - says the Brahmasutra (Aphorisms on the Supreme Reality). After what? After the cultivation of discrimination and non-attachment, naturally. How can they be implanted? By the first three primary goals of life: righteousness, wealth, and desire-fulfillment (dharma, artha, and kama). The practice of dharma is the Art of Living. That is why, in the Gita, Krishna taught Arjuna about giving up the fruits of action, not about giving up the body. No attempt need be made to run away from the duties of one's station and status. Remember, those duties have to be done as worship, as offerings of one's intelligence and skill, qualities, and thoughts and feelings to the Feet of the Lord in a spirit of thankfulness for the chance given, without a trace of egoism or a sense of attachment to the fruits of the actions. Obligatory actions have to be carried out, wherever you are, with care and sincerity. They award the needed discrimination and non-attachment.

Only steady effort will bring success

Sankaracharya got that discrimination and non-attachment without passing through the experience of the world. Others do not get it even after going through endless travail. That is the difference. You see death snatching away persons from all around you, but you do not train yourself to meet it calmly, bravely, and gladly when it comes to you. Sankaracharya said that an alligator had grasped his legs, meaning that the world (samsara) had caught him in its coils; he told his mother that the alligator would release its hold only if she agreed to his becoming a monk! Strange alligator, that! It only meant: that if he renounced all bonds, he would be free to proceed to the Truth. To take the vow of renunciation (sanyasa), the consent of the mother has to be obtained. So, by this symbolic incident, Sankara persuaded her to say, "Take, take the vow of renunciation. You have my permission, it is

enough for me that you live unharmed." Of course, the majority of people get glimpses of discrimination and detachment off and on, but they soon forget the call and ignore it and cover it up by excess or excuses. One step forward and one step back - the journey does not take them far. Even if some do take up spiritual practices, steadiness is absent. Like a ball of thread that slips out of the hand on to the floor, it all comes off because the grasp is not firm. Only steady effort will bring success here, as in every other case. How can you expect quick success in the control of the mind? It is very difficult to overcome its vagaries, for it is many-faced and very adamant.

The first step in the spiritual effort

You are unable to understand nature (prakriti), which is a reflection of, a shadow of God. How then can you understand God himself?. No. Steady perseverance alone will tame your mind, and it is only through a tamed mind that you can experience God. In this case, you must become your own tutor. Train yourself by using the spark of wisdom that has been implanted in you. Once you try with all your might, the Lord's Grace will be there to help you forward. The first step in the spiritual discipline is the cleansing of the speech. Talk sweet without anger. Do not boast of your scholarship or attainments. Be humble, eager to serve. Conserve your speech. Practise silence. That will save you from squabbles, idle thoughts, and factions. Again, practise the attitude of joy when others are joyful and of grief when others around you are grieved. Let your heart move in sympathy. But the joy and grief have to be translated into service; they should not be mere emotions. It is not by your wearing the "bush coat" that all others wear that you should demonstrate the principle of equality - that is very easy, that is external uniformity. How are all equal? Because they all have the same divine Consciousness (Chaithanya) within them. When the sun rises, not all lotuses in the lake bloom; only the grown buds open their petals. The others await their time. It is the same with people. Differences do exist because of unripeness, though all fruits have to ripen and fall some day. Every being has to reach the Goal, however slowly they walk or circuitous their road.

Elders are not providing good examples

To reach the Goal quickly, without passing through the ordeals of the long journey and stopping at one caravanserai after another, passing from birth to birth, learn spiritual practices - especially the easiest and quickest: repetition of God's Name (namasmarana). This microphone can work and bring My voice even to people sitting far in the distance only when the connection is correctly made. So, attach yourself to Me, and the current will flow through you and get things done for your good. The light you get from the current that flows always along the copper wire depends on the power of the bulb you use; increase the candle power and you get stronger light. It rests with you how you make use of Me. The rain falls of its own accord uniformly on the land; the lands bring forth the fruit according to the quality of soil and seed. Why blame the boys and girls that they do not respect the elders or obey their parents or believe in God or adhere to high principles of character? The elders are not providing them examples to show that those traits of character are useful or valuable or essential. They themselves do not know the secret of happiness; they offer to guide the children in the darkness, but their torches have no cells! Teachers, gurus, leaders of youth - all are in the same predicament. Very few have solid faith in the Scriptures or in God; very few have the steadiness to stick to righteousness (dharma) and brave the temptation to stray from the straight path. Love (prema), too, is a very difficult virtue to cultivate, though it is a very valuable asset. Peace (santhi) is the one thing that makes life worth while. Therefore, I bless the Sathya Sai Society of Perambur, that it may grow in these virtues more and more with every passing day. You will have your building ready next year. I shall come every year to you and shower on you the Bliss (Ananda) that is my property, the Love that is my gift.

You need not escape into a forest to gain silence and the chance of uninterrupted spiritual practice. You can make the place where you are a citadel of silence; shut off the senses, and let them not run after objects. Your home becomes a hermitage; your spiritual practices will then move on, without any obstacle.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

7. Ramayana In Your Heart

Date: 25 April 1961 / Location: Chennai / Occasion: Rama Navami

The vehicle of human life is drawn on two wheels by the senses, which are driven by the intellect, with discrimination and detachment as the reins, the two wheels being time and action (*kala* and *karma*). The spokes of the wheel are the rules of righteousness (*dharma*), bound by the rim of love (*prema*). The Self is the rider, and it will not come to harm if the axle is truth (*sathya*) and the goal is (*shanthi*).

Rama, whose birthday, Ramanavami, you are celebrating today was the exponent of the means of saving the Self in this perilous journey from birth to birthlessness. Rama is the embodiment of dharma; that is why he was able to re-establish dharma. Today is sacred because you get the chance to recapitulate the Glory of God and His relationship with Humanity. As a matter of fact, if you go deeper into the Ramayana, you will find that Rama is the universal Atma, the Atma in every being. He did not come down to kill the demon ruler Ravana; he is not the son of Dasaratha or of Kausalya; nor is He the husband of Sita, weeping for her loss and gladdened by reunion.

On the day when Rama was crowned Emperor at Ayodhya, every personage got some present or other before leaving the city. Hanuman alone refused any material gift. He asked Rama to explain to him the mystery of His Life, which he had failed to understand in spite of the length and loyalty of his service. Rama then asked Sita to slake the thirst of Hanuman and reveal to him the secret of their careers. Sita announced that she was primal nature (*mula prakriti*), the Energy that agitates in all matter (the *maya sakthi*), that transforms and transmutes it into all this variety that binds and blinds. The Ramayana, she said, was nothing but the play she designed.

Sweetness of Ramayana cannot be described

Rama is the eternal, unchanging Spirit (*Purusha*). The Atma in every being is Rama; hence the name Atma-Rama. Rama is eternal, so the Rama mantra is

said to have been taken by Siva Himself. Rama means that which showers Bliss (*Ananda*), that is all.

Now, what can give greater Bliss than the Atma? Rama is Bliss, and He is Atma-Rama, the Bliss in your Inner Consciousness. You can understand the Ramayana only if you keep this aspect in view. Orange has a form and a name; when you squeeze it and take the juice, the form is gone and the name, orange, is also gone. Only the taste remains. The sweetness, the flavour, the essence - only these are experienced. It cannot be exactly described. It is beyond any vocabulary.

Hanuman understood from Sita the formless, nameless, sweetness of Rama. Rama, the Spirit (Purusha), accepts nature (*prakriti*), Sita, and enacts the play, Ramayana. Sita is Consciousness, for nature or illusion (*maya*) activates the Pure Existence of Brahman. Now see what happens! Knowledge of Supreme Reality is lost, and Rama wanders about in the jungle, wailing for Her. Of course, Lakshmana or mind is always with Him, for the mind is the instrument with which liberation has to be achieved. Vali (a monkey king) is the spirit of despair, and he has to be overcome with the help of discriminatory wisdom, viz., Sugriva, who is Vali's brother.

Ramayana is gone through in everyone's life

You see, it is discrimination that sends emissaries to the various corners to discover where Knowledge of Supreme Reality is available. Hanuman is Courage. Courage won through unflinching faith - that alone can penetrate the darkness and bring the good news of the dawn. Then Rama crosses the sea of illusion; He destroys the demon of the emotional equality (*rajoguna*), namely Ravana, and the demon of inertia (*thamoguna*), namely Kumbhakarna (Ravana's brother), and installs goodness (*sathwaguna*), Vibhishana (Ravana's brother), on the throne.

After this, Rama meets and receives Sita, who has now become Knowledge derived from experience (*Anubhavajnana*), not merely Knowledge of Supreme Reality (*Brahmajnana*). That is represented by the coronation. The Ramayana

is therefore not a story that had an end.

In each person's life, a Ramayana is being gone through: in the three qualities (*gunas*), the senses, the search, and the spiritual practices. Rama is the son of Dasaratha - he of the ten chariots. What do you think are these ten chariots? They are the senses: the five sense organs of action and the five organs of perception. Truth (*sathya*), righteousness (*dharma*), peace (*shanthi*), and love (*prema*) are the four sons - Rama is truth, Bharatha is righteousness, Lakshmana is love, and Satrughna is peace.

Take as your ideals these great characters depicted in the Ramayana. You will see how your life is filled with peace and joy if only you dwell with these ideals. The Ramayana in the heart is to be experienced, not investigated as a mental phenomenon. As you go on reading and ruminating, the inner meaning will flash on you when the mind is cleansed by the elevating ideas therein. Do not exaggerate the importance of things that have but material utility; they fade even while you grasp them by the hand. Search for being (*sat*) - that which suffers no change. Search for the state of consciousness (*chit*), which is unaffected by gusts of passion, which is pure, which is free from egoism or the desire to possess. Only then can you experience the light and illumine the path for others. Search for bliss (*ananda*), the bliss that emanates from love with no blemish of attachment. Be like bees hovering on the flower of the glory of the Lord, sucking the sweet nectar of grace, silently and joyfully.

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 practice has to be shown in spiritual matters also, to take in the beverage of divine grace.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba



8. Start Good Associations

Date: 30 April 1961 / Location: Lucknow / Occasion: Triloknath Hall

This gathering makes Me very happy, since people from Andhra, Mysore, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala have joined together to arrange this meeting. It is rather hard for all of you to join in one place for one function. But remember that you have in all five vital breaths (panchapranas), and here you represent only four. The fifth "vital breath" is Uttar Pradesh, and unless the Association representing it joins you, you are not complete, fully alive! All of you are here to serve this land and its people, so you should not feel separate from them. What have the Andhra Association, the Tamil Association, the Kerala Association, and the Mysore Association been doing all these years? Each group has some festival that it celebrates once a year and probably honours any distinguished person from the region to which it belongs, when he comes to Lucknow. Perhaps, you thought I was an Andhra or a South Indian! The whole world is My Mansion; it has many rooms, each State being just one room in that Mansion of Mine. I came here to tell you this truth about Me.

The language that really matters

And also to tell you that you should not attach so much importance to the language you speak. It is the meaning that is important, the feelings you express, the behaviour you adopt. The language of the heart is expressed through sympathy, kindness, service, love, brotherliness. That is the language that really matters; that language can be understood by everyone. The language of anger, hatred, love, trust - it is patent and clear, though the speaker is dumb and the listener deaf! That language of the heart (Atmabhasha) comes only from the relationship of the hearts (Atmasambandha). The duty of Associations like yours is not to lay stress on the distinction between one language and another and start quarrelling over or boasting about the superior excellence of your language but to overcome the handicap of many languages by learning and using the common, easily spoken, easily understood language of the heart. Religions are many but the road is the same; flowers are many but worship is the same; professions are

many but living is the same. Therefore, you must all live in concord and brotherliness, helping each other and loving each other. The basic needs of people are those mentioned in the prayer of the ancients: "Lead me from the unreal to the real, from darkness to light, from death to immortality (Asatho ma sath gamaya, Thamaso ma jyothir gamaya, mrithyor ma amritham gamaya)." People want the Truth; they get disgusted with falsehood. They want Light; they get defeated by darkness. They want no death; they get torn by birth and death. This prayer rises from every person, whether an Andhra or a Malayali or a Mysorean. This yearning has no connection with the land of your birth or the language spoken or the form of Divinity revered. It is the cry of humanity everywhere, at all times.

Make the best use of the time you have

These three - Truth, Light, no Death - can be obtained only by spiritual practices, by following the path of love and truth. Discovering that path and describing it has been the distinct contribution of the Indian Nation (Bharathavarsha), and it is a disgrace if you, who are all children of Bharathavarsha, whatever the name of the state from which you come, do not adhere to that path and show by your way of life that the Indian way is the way to real joy. Hence, I want to ask you this: Why can't you meet every day or on several days a week for meditation on the Lord, for listening to the description of His Glory, for studying the techniques of repetition of the name and meditation from the scriptures? Consider that the allotted span of life is being spent away every moment. In fact, life is an oblation poured in the Fire of Time. The sun, when it rises and sets, is stealing fractions of your life day by day, relentlessly, steadily, uninterruptedly. So make the best use of the time you have. The Lord is the Embodiment of Time (Kalaswarupa), remember. Even the minutest fraction of time wasted or misused is treason to God. Make every moment holy, do pious deeds, think good thoughts, and keep the Lord's Name and Form ever in your mind. All of you join a good association - an association of people all of whom are sincere, simple, and pious. Meet every day at about 5 p.m. and listen to or sing the Lord's names, meditate, or repeat the Lord's names until about eight. That will give you so much peace (santhi) and promote mutual love and brotherliness. Let the

various streams of Telugu, Malayalam, Kanada, Tamil, and Hindi merge in the ocean of bliss (ananda). That is the real bliss. Today, you taste the first glimpse of that joy; make this a frequent feature.

Cultivate the broadest love toward all

Every country is a limb in the Body of God. He is conscious of the slightest pain or sensation in the most distant part of creation, for that too is His Body. He is Lord of the Universe. He is the secret spring within all activity. Have faith in this and cultivate the broadest Love toward all. See that you do not give up Love or deviate from virtue (dharma). Earn prosperity (artha) while adhering to dharma and have always only one wish: to get liberated; that is the way to realise the four goals of life. Let dharma dominate prosperity and liberation (moksha) dominate carnal desire (kama); then your life will be a success. I have said this so often, but just as one has to take food every day, this too has to be spoken again and again. You wash your face again and again, is it not? So too, this advice has to be given again and again. The Vedas also repeat the essential teachings often so that they may sink into the minds of people. By means of eating (bhukthi), the body is maintained in a good condition; this helps cultivate skill (yukthi) for sharpening the intellect (buddhi) into an instrument for wisdom and discrimination; then, eating (bhukthi) develops in wholesome things and attitudes. This type of attachment to edifying things and feelings gradually induces the spirit of renunciation. The next step is devotion, the overpowering desire to see the Lord and serve Him; Devotion brings about the spiritual wisdom (jnana) that there is nothing besides the Lord and that one is oneself Brahman. Thus, one is liberated, i.e. gets mukthi . Every step in this chain is important, so I will not ask you to give up even eating. I always speak of the path of Divine Reality and the path of Righteousness; they are the two wheels of the bicycle that you have to ride. Living was not so hard in the past ages, but now, since it is riding a two-wheeled vehicle, skill and vigilance are needed to keep one's balance and avoid falling.

Knowing how to get inner peace is good fortune

The Governor, in his introductory speech, spoke of India's poverty and deplored this plight. But why deplore the plight of a land where the Lord Himself is moving as an Avatar ? In what way are you deficient? This land is fully equipped with all the resources needed for a happy life. People can get all the light they want by just switching 'on'! But they do not know how to do it or where the switch is, that is all. Nature is bountiful; the Lord is showering His Grace. What more is necessary? I feel hurt when anyone calls this land deficient or poor. It may be that some do not know the methods of getting rich or may not care to adopt them. But they all know the means of getting inner peace. This is great good fortune, indeed. India has the treasure that will make her the Guru of all Humanity. People born here are indeed luckier than the rest, but their responsibility is also greater. They should not be downcast and depressed at their poverty or 'low' standard of living. They should demonstrate by their lives that spiritual discipline makes one happier and more courageous to fight the battle of life. The world is suffering today from too much knowledge; virtue has not increased in proportion to the advance of knowledge. That is the root cause of the misery in human society. Of the two tyres of the vehicle that humanity is riding, the tyre of the Brahman wheel is flat, and it has to be filled by pumping the Lord's Name into it. You cannot go far on a flat tyre. Therefore, start a holy association, cultivate good activities, and derive joy therefrom. That is My suggestion to you today.

When you go for a bath in any holy river, the priest asks you to take three dips. Do not think that the three dips are simply conventional.

They are for cleansing the gross, subtle, and causal bodies. They are for cleansing the outer, inner, and innermost (bahya, bhava, and chittha). They are for consecrating action, contemplation, and sacred knowledge (karma, upasana, and jnana).

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

9. The Name Of Narayana

Date: 17 June 1961 / Location: Badrinath Temple

You are all lucky indeed to be the residents, at least for some months every year, in this Holy Place, which is known from very ancient times as Badharikashram. Many great sages have performed concentrated spiritual exercises (tapas) here and realised the Goal of human life. These snowy peaks teach man to be as pure and unblemished as their whiteness. The silence of these valleys is very inspiring; when the heart is free from agitation, the tongue is dumb, and the ear has rest. That is why in olden times, and even today, spiritual aspirants came to these solitary places and did penance. But it is no use searching for silence with a noisy storm raging inside you. You are where your mind is, not where your body rests. This morning, I took out from its resting place the Nethralinga (egg-shaped stone, representation of Siva, with the eye of wisdom in it) which Sankaracharya had installed as the chief source of spiritual sustenance in this shrine, and after abhisheka (consecrating by sprinkling holy water and ritual worship), it was sent back to the original place from where it will continue to scatter even more grace on the pilgrims who come here. Sankaracharya, when he first came here - he must have known this place and journeyed up by means of yogic powers - had with him five lingas, which he brought from Kailas; the other four he installed, in strict conformity with the Sastras (scriptures), at Sringeri, Dwaraka, Puri, and Chidambaram. Just as the mountains Nara Parvatha and Narayana Parvatha, which form the background of this temple, have the mountain Neelakanteshwara Parvatha shining on the horizon between them both, this Narayana Shrine has a Linga from Kailas as the core of its spiritual halo. The river Ganga is born from the Foot of Vishnu, and it is sanctified by contact with the head of Siva. Such stories are formed to teach that there is no difference between one aspect of God and another.

The four limbs of the Cosmic Purusha

There is no room for higher and lower among the aspects of Godhead; there is no room for inferior or superior in status among the various sections of

mankind. The Purusha Sukta speaks of the priestly caste (brahmin) being the face, the protector caste (kshatriya) the hands, the business caste (vaisya) the thighs, and the labourer caste (sudra), the feet of the Cosmic Purusha (Primeval Supreme Person, God). Apart from the figurative meaning that the passage obviously carries, when God is one uniform sweetness and wisdom and grace, any part is as sweet, as effulgent, as graceful as every other. A sugar doll is sweet all through; the limbs are as much sugar as the head. The trouble comes and the quarrel starts only as a result of the want of love (prema) toward sugar. Once you are established in love, you will not notice these differences any more; they will appear silly, stupid, and meaningless. When there is no love, egoism has the upper hand; quarrels about your being superior and others being inferior raise up their heads. You are in the holy presence of Divine Love Personified (Premaswarupa) Himself, Badri Narayana; so you too must be full of love. Do not entertain any hatred or anger in your hearts. Most of you have come here on pilgrimage, fulfilling the dream of a life-time. I know how much sacrifice you have made to put together the money needed for this arduous pilgrimage. I know the long time you spent in planning for this; I know the joy with which you started on this pilgrimage and the courage that has brought you here. You have braved illness, accident, poverty, and hunger during the long trek from your villages, wherever they may be, in Assam or Kerala or Rajasthan or Kashmir.

Proceed toward the goal gladly over rock and boulder

Carry back with you the silence of these hills, the cool comfort of the Alakananda river, the warm affection of the hot springs that gurgle from the earth here, the spirit of sacrifice that brought sages and saints to this spot. Become better spiritual aspirants on your return, carry on that other pilgrimage toward the goal more resolutely hereafter. Like the river Ganga rushing toward the sea from where its waters are derived, the individual soul (jivi) must hurry toward Brahman (Supreme Spirit), from which it has separated. The Ganga does not allow any obstacle to stop its course. You too should proceed as this Alakananda proceeds - laughing, roiling, tripping gladly over rock and boulder toward the goal. I would ask the residents of this place, who are mostly merchants, shopkeepers, and priests, to take from the stream

of pilgrims that comes here every day a part of their faith in Badri Narayana. Just try for a moment to understand what brings these people, poor, old, decrepit, from far-off places through this tortuous mountain road, to this Temple. There is a faith that heartens them to the last step across the threshold of this temple. Plant that faith in your heart too; you will then find that your whole life changes for the better. Take the Name of Narayana (God) on your tongue and become aware of its sweetness; you will find a new meaning in every act of yours. This temple will then become for you the House of God and not a source of livelihood. Anyone can eke out a livelihood anywhere, by any one of a thousand means. But to be in this place, a place considered holy by millions for thousands of years, a place at the very mention of whose name millions stand up and bow their heads in reverence, is indeed a great privilege, a great opportunity. Use that opportunity. Use that opportunity well.

Do not exploit the ignorance of pilgrims

I must tell you one thing more. I would ask you to appreciate the ordeals, trials, and tribulations of the pilgrims who come here. Treat them kindly. Do not speak harsh words and add to their troubles. When after weeks of blistering walk and hungry vigil they reach this heaven, treat them gently. Do not exploit their ignorance and try to get maximum advantage out of it for yourself. There is a code of morality (dharma) even for business; do not overstep that limit. Then Badri Narayana will bless you - not that He will give you up if you act otherwise, it will just take longer! For, every living being has some day or other to tread the right path and get merged in the Grace of God.

10. The Ideal Disciple

Date: 24 June 1961 / Location: Nainital / Occasion: Gita Sathsang

Swami Vidyananda, in the Hindi Address that he read just now, welcomed Me to this Naini Tal, describing its beautiful scenery and praising its climate. Well, that is taking Me to be an outsider, who has to be formally invited and welcomed. I am in your Association (Sathsang), for wherever the Gita is studied, I am and will be present. I do not care for the external beauty of nature as much as the beauty of "character and conduct", which you are seeking to acquire by the constant study of the Gita . I came to the Gita Sathsang to see all of you, because I bless all efforts by man to raise himself by study and spiritual practice. " Wherever My devotees sing of Me, there I install Myself (Madhbhaktah yathra gayanthe, thathra thishtami Narada)," is the declaration. Why, the Lord is always there and everywhere, whether you sing of Him or not. The singing only makes Him manifest, like the radio receiver, which catches the tune from the ether when it is switched to the correct wave length. The current is flowing ever; when you fix the bulb, you will get the light. The Bhagavad Gita is a textbook for all mankind, giving the secrets of spiritual science in clear and simple terms. But it will be useful only when the reader has as much detachment as Arjuna had when Krishna started the discourse. If you have as much despair as Arjuna had, you have the competence to get the teaching that removed the grief. Only a patient ailing from a disease is entitled to the specific that will cure it. What business have others with it? What profit can they draw from it? The Gita will act on the mental system only when the symptoms of grief are strong.

Spiritual surrender will get God's response

Arjuna, the greatest Bowman of those days, anxious for years to destroy the wicked Kauravas, who had angered him by merciless and systematic vendetta, suddenly gets disinterested in everything that he thought precious until that moment! "Of what avail is victory in the field of battle?" asks this hero of a thousand encounters! "Nor do I see any good from killing kinsmen in battle," says the warrior who had vowed to wipe out the Kuru clan! "I do not

wish to kill them, though they may wish to kill me; I shall lay down my arms; I shall die unresisting" wails this foremost warrior; "I would rather beg from door to door and live on alms," says this scion of an imperial line. In short, his mind had become ripe for the illumination. He has the Lord Himself as Guru by his side, and he knows it. He asks Him, "I am struggling in ignorance; I am confused; I do not know which is dharma and which is not." He seeks discipleship and lays himself at the Feet of Krishna in self-surrender! Anyone anywhere who reaches that stage of spiritual surrender will get the response from Krishna, and Krishna will teach the Gita from the chariot that is driven by Him, that is, his own heart.

End delusion and gain recognition of the Self

The purpose of the Gita is to remove the delusion (moha) that overwhelmed Arjuna and made him feel that he was the doer, whereas the truth is that he was but an instrument. So Krishna asks him at the very end of the discourse, "Has the delusion born out of ignorance been fully destroyed in you?" For, like a good teacher, Krishna is evidently quite willing to resort to some other means or to discourse a little longer in order to make the pupil understand the teaching. But Arjuna is a good student; he declares, "Destroyed is the delusion. I have gained recognition." Now what is the recognition he has gained? The recognition of the Self or Atma . He has seen himself as basically Atma, and he has seen the world and all objects as superimpositions on the Atma, due to ignorance or illusion (maya). An emperor, while sleeping, dreams that he is a beggar; he wears tattered clothes and cries piteously before other people's doors for a morsel of food; no one listens to his clamour; he can no longer contain his sorrow. He weeps aloud and wakes up his mother. She comes and wakes him up from that dream. Now, the mother need not tell him, "Listen to me, you are the emperor. You are not a beggar." He knows it as soon as he awakes. The recognition of the Self happens as soon as the delusion goes, the delusion that this dream world is real! A prince who falls into the hands of a forest tribe while yet a child and behaves like one of them does not thereby lose his prince-hood. Rescue him and he knows he is a prince. So too, Arjuna says, "I got back my memory, I have gained recognition. I know Myself; I am Thyself!"

Gita is the greatest harmoniser of all yogas

The study of the Gita must end in this result; your Association must have this consummation as your goal. Do not be enamoured of the skill exhibited by some pandit who can recite the Gita in record time, or write the whole of it on a post card, or repeat it upside down, or reel off commentaries. A man walked on the beach played with the waves and had a dip in the water. His feet are wet! No, there is no miracle in this. This is what happens to many a scholar who wades in the sea of the Gita . In the Court Hall, when the Maharana is arriving to seat himself on the throne, the couriers call out his polysyllabic titles, but in daily conversation his short name is used; his principality is but a tiny state. Similarly, the pandit may have great pomp before others, but to himself, in the secrecy of his own conscience, he is a small man indeed. Greatness depends upon the spiritual discipline and the success achieved in it, in the practice of religious austerities and firm adherence to them. "Awake, arise and stop not till the goal is reached," it is said - "Uththishtatha, Jagratha, Prapyavaran nibodhatha ." But one need not march toward the goal. It is not some place where you have to go. It is just the opening of the eye, the removal of the veil, the waking from the dream, the lighting of spiritual wisdom. To get the fruit of this discourse on the Gita, one-pointed concentration is essential. Krishna asks Arjuna, "Has this been heard by you with an attentive mind? Have you heard it without distraction?" For the battlefield where they were had plenty of distractions to disturb the concentration of Arjuna's mind from the invaluable lesson he was receiving from Krishna. It is really admirable that Arjuna, seated in the chariot between the two armies, manages to master his mind and rid it of all the passions with which it was filled when he rode in for the fray! Truly, he is an ideal disciple. You should thank him for eliciting the Bhagavad Gita for humanity. Some people argue that the Gita teaches this yoga more than any other. That shows only their partisan nature. Once you begin to practise the Gita, such ideas as trying to exhibit your superior scholarship, by propounding a new theory or meaning, will vanish. The Gita is the greatest harmoniser of all yogas . As a matter of fact, once the Gita is made the guiding star of your life, the way you act will be the yoga of action (karma yoga), the way you feel will

be the yoga of devotion (bhakthi yoga), and the way you reason will be the yoga of wisdom (jnana yoga). It will become automatically so. What you do must be in line with righteousness (dharma); what you feel must foster love (prema); what you think must reveal truth (sathyam). Then this association (sathsang) will be blessed with peace (santhi), with even the Supreme Peace (prasanthi).

Success comes when your effort and His Grace both complement each other. How can Grace enter when you do not seek it? Open the door of endeavour; the Merciful Lord will then come in, with the Crown of Success.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

11. With The Concrete To The Abstract

Date: 04 July 1961 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

You are all waiting to hear from Me about the journey to Badri and what happened there. These people went to Badri and returned safely! That is the story in a nutshell. For danger lurked all the time from fire, water, wind, sky, and earth - all five elements in fact. Every moment these people felt the Lord's Grace - for about 150 persons, mostly old and in indifferent health, to accomplish this pilgrimage without a single moment of even headache was due to Swami. Swami also went to Badri because the Nethralingam (egg-shaped stone, representation of Siva, with the eye of wisdom in it), which is the central source of holiness there, had to be revived with spiritual efficacy. Sankaracharya brought five lingams from Kailas and installed one each at Dwaraka, Sringeri, Badri, and Puri, and the fifth he placed at Chidambaram. Of these, the one at Badri has the Narayana orientation, and that had to be consecrated afresh. That was My task, and these people who came with Me saw Me doing it.

Atheism is not rampant in this land

I had to accomplish it this year, for this is the 35th year after this Avatar took birth and also the year when the 35th successor to the Sankaracharya Peetha (a Peetha is a spiritual center) is at Shringeri. This year is therefore important for charging this battery of spiritual wealth, known as Badarikashrama (the ashram in Badri). The Nethralingam that was laid by Sankaracharya underneath the idol there, was "taken" out by Me, and consecration by pouring holy water (abhisheka) was done with Gangothri water, which I fetched by a wave of the hand. It was worshipped with golden Bilva leaves and Thumme flowers, both created by Me on the spot, and sent back to its original place. The Lingam was placed on a Golden Lotus, with three layers of petals, each having two smaller layers of 16 smaller petals - the entire lotus representing the heart where the Lingam has to be installed for worship. When you see the enthusiasm of the pilgrims who trudged along the Badri Road in thousands, you will be silenced with wonder; you will no more lament

that atheism has become rampant in this land. With faith as their only support, people from all parts of India, men, women, and children, old and young, stalwarts and decrepits, rich and poor, move on toward Badri. You can learn many things from their steady march toward the goal; that is the advantage in going on pilgrimage. You can develop your devotion, your faith, and your spiritual discipline when you are surrounded by kindred aspirants. That is the greatness of that Narayana idol at Badri. Yes, the spiritual change must come about. That is the reason for the belief, "A mere sight of the pilgrim who has returned from Badri gives much merit." Of course, for undergoing that change, you need not go so far; you have Badri Narayana here itself! Badri is the place where the nara-Narayan a (human-God) bond is established and commemorated. That you can establish here itself. If you get rid of delusion, you become Narayana (God); if you are sunk in delusion, you continue to be nara (human); that is all. There is no place to which I have not gone; there is no place without Me therein. So, the devotees who came with Me were journeying with the Concrete to the Abstract, with the Pratyaksha to the Paroksha ! That was their good fortune.

Pilgrims, should maintain silence during a pilgrimage

Those of you who were here and could not join need not feel sorry, for all these days you were thinking of Swami and Swami alone, so your spiritual discipline was greater. After all, a pilgrimage is for softening the heart, widening the outlook, expanding the circle of sympathy, and not for collecting curios or pictures or prasadhams packets or idols and images. It is more a matter for the eye (nethra) than for the vessel (pathra). Pilgrimages should be as silent as the eyelids dropping on the eye. Why should people wag their tongues and shout and wrangle when they are Godward bound? Truly, all places of pilgrimage and all pilgrimages are in yourself. You are ever on a pilgrimage, though you might not have taken a step forward toward Badri or Kasi (Benaras). Do not feel sad that you did not get the holy water from Gangothri that was used for consecrating the idol, for the Nethralingam . I can see that all of you are desirous of getting it ever since you heard from others about the event at Badri. I shall get you the holy water from Gangothri here itself and give you, do not worry. People may say that pilgrimages are a

waste of time and money, but let Me tell you that it is the best way to spend time and money, provided one has real devotion. Devotion is no sign of weakness; it is a sign of courage, of wisdom, of discrimination; it alone can give happiness and peace. Everyone has one day or other to fall in line with you, for everyone is terribly anxious to get these two. They try various other remedies, in their ignorance or excitement, but this remedy alone can cure them.

Your consciousness is a lamp. Pour into it the oil of Grace; trim the wick of self-control. Keep in position the chimney of repetition of God's name, so that the gusts of joy and grief may not put out the flame. Light the lamp with a Vedic dictum like "I am the Absolute Reality (Aham Brahmasmi)." Then you will see Light and you will shed Light.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

12. Light The Inner Consciousness

Date: 18 July 1961 / Location: Bukkapatnam / Occasion: Lakshmi-Narasimha Temple

When I see this gathering. I am reminded of a similar gathering at this place as well as the surrounding villages, twelve years ago when the high school was started. Then too it was in this temple that you all met, but, since then, I have been passing through this village or coming to gatherings on the outskirts of the village, that is all. It is only today that I am here again, at the old place. I am happy at this; more so because the reason for this event is connected with this temple itself. Twelve years ago it was the temple of learning; this temple of Lakshminarasimha. Please do not be under the delusion that God needs light, that he requires illumination. He is Divine Light personified, with the splendour of a thousand suns. He is the force that makes light shine, and He is above and beyond the lustre that nature can supply. It is not so much this stone structure that needs illumination, when you come to think of it. It is the temple that you are carrying about with you, the body, that must be fitted with lights. The body is said to be the temple ("Deho devalayah prokthah "), and in that temple is installed the indweller ("jeevo devah Sanathanah "), who is the "timeless" God. The inner motive force is God, and when He is dwelling in the heart of man, He is called the individual soul (jivi). The soul is not recognised as God because of the darkness of delusion. You mistake a stump for a person in the darkness; in the same way, the individual soul is mistaken to be a separate, changing individual. The principle of the individual is given more importance, and the divine principle or principle of infinite consciousness is ignored on account of the darkness. So the lights have to be switched on in the person's inner consciousness (anthahkarana), rather than in the house where the image of the Lord is installed and worshipped.

A temple is the centre of culture for the town

At the present time, there is a great deal of anxiety and agitation due to great advances in material comforts and conveniences without corresponding advances in character, virtue, and sense of justice. The 'material world' is the

stick that helps man to walk, but of what use is it to the person who cannot walk? If the legs do not function properly, the stick is but an extra burden. The stick is like material comfort; the primary need is the strength of limbs, the power to walk, namely, character, virtue. For the development of that strength of limb, spiritual discipline is essential - any form of discipline suited to the taste and capacity of the individual. People struggle for the evanescent and the unreal, but they shy away from any effort to attain the eternal and the real; that is the tragedy. In the report that was read, the Young Men's Association thanked a very large number of persons who had given money for the lights! I feel that instead of making the boys go from door to door for small sums, any one donor could have undertaken the entire work, for the temple is really the centre of culture for the town. In the old days, when a man arrived at a village, the first question he would ask was, "Do you have a temple here?" He would sleep in the village only if there was one. The idea evidently was that the temple would have educated the people into soft-hearted hosts and well-behaved citizens and also that the God installed in the temple would watch over the inhabitants and prevent disease and disaster. (Now, perhaps, the question of the newcomer would be, "Is there a hotel here?" or, "Is there a cinema theatre here?") So remember, any improvement done to the temple is an investment in the progress of the entire town.

Himalayas are very near to spiritual aspirants

Do not give up the treasure that has come down to you from the generations that went before. Last month, I was in Uttar Pradesh near the snow-capped Himalayas and had gone as far as Badarikshetram. Though they are so far, the Himalayas are very near to spiritual aspirants. If you see only the splendour of the light and do not feel the warming effect, it proves only that you are far. This is true of your relation with Me also. All these years, you who are so near have been seeing only the light; you did not benefit by the warmth; that only shows that you are yet far, though so near. Well, we went to the Himalayan regions and saw thousands of old decrepit men and women, besides others who were stronger and more prosperous - men, women, and children braving the rigours of the climate, the dangers of the road, the cold and hunger, the cost and the distance, and trudging along to get a glimpse of

Narayana (God) installed there. I am often asked where righteousness (dharma) can take refuge in this iron age. Well, dharma is still flourishing in the hearts of those thousands, I can say. When in Ayodhya, I could see and sense the constant recitation of Rama's name (Ramanam) by almost all the people there. In a bag of rice there may be a handful of stones, but do not condemn the entire bag for that defect. The pilgrims were repeating the name of Badri Narayana, and that gave them an extra dose of strength and inspiration to trudge forward. Yes, you will find by experience if you practise it. It gives you joy and peace. The divine power is there in you; it need not come from somewhere outside you. Only, you have to prepare the ground, so that it may manifest itself.

You must be sincere in the spiritual field

Remove the roots of the weed of egoism from the field of your heart; that is enough. But this is very difficult; the lightest shower will induce the weeds to sprout again. Similarly, when circumstances turn favourable, egoism throws up its shoots and grows as thick as in the past. You will have to remove the roots too; this can be done by insisting "Not I, but the Lord." In the spiritual field, you must be sincere. Do not pretend and deceive yourself and others. A mendicant once sought a place where he could get a meal, since he was very hungry. A pious old lady called him into her house and asked him to take his bath and partake of the noon meal. He said, "Oh, why should I take a bath? 'Govindethi sadha snanam .' - I just repeated the name of Govinda, and that is as good as a bath." Hearing this, the lady said, "In that case, 'Rama namamritham, sadha bhojanam .' - the Name of Rama is food forever, I shall also feed you with a quotation. Get out of here pretty quick." Do not use the study of the scriptures for increasing your egoism; let it make you humble, though, at the same time, more resistant to temptation. Your nature is divine; what has happened is that delusion has covered it with dirt. The washerman does not make your clothes white; they are white already; what he does is to manifest the whiteness by removing the dirt that has hidden the genuine native colour, white. The washerman must have two good things to bring out the basic whiteness; soap and water. Both have to be good; you cannot manage with only one of the two. In the case of the mind and removal of the

dirt therein, the soap is ethics and the water is its practice.

Heritage of the past is lost through neglect

It is the ignorant person who argues loudly and angrily and talks cynically. The wise man will pause before judging; he will see all sides of the problem, relate it to his own experience, and hesitate to accept it or condemn it. He will hear less and taste more. The plight of Indians is like a person who with butter in hand is running about for ghee. Here, you have the technique of attaining peace developed as nowhere else; yet you are running after all kinds of amateurs! Of course, even the spiritual leaders are taking to competition, conflict, and the acquisition of wealth and fame, so the heritage of the past is lost through neglect. Though the soap is good, the water of practice is dirty, so the clothes do not get their genuine whiteness. Even for a householder, Lakshya (Objective) and Lakshmi (Goddess of Wealth) are both equally important. He too has an objective, which he forgets at his peril. Wealth should not hamper that goal or hide it from the eyes. For an ascetic, wealth is taboo; only the objective is to be pursued. Well, now that the lights have been switched on, those who come to this temple will see the shrine more clearly. I bless them that they may also see their own selves more clearly. Light is the source of joy and knowledge. Do not insult the light by misusing it, playing cards or talking about or planning actions of hate or greed. Utilise it for increasing your devotion, for developing your knowledge of the Glory of God, and for serving others in a spirit of true brotherliness.

Do you like to measure the vastness of the Grace of the Lord? Then look at the crops in the fields thirsting for rain. Poor things, they cannot reach up to the clouds bearing the delicious water; they can only pine and pray plaintively. But the clouds pour the rain they have brought from the far distant sea and make the crops green and gay. The Lord answers the prayers and refreshes all drooping lives.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba



13. The Inner Temple

Date: 18 July 1961 / Location: Bukkapatnam

Twelve years ago, I remember, we had a gathering of the people of Bukkapatnam here in this temple, in connection with the starting of a high school for this town. The school was started and, thereafter I came often, but every time, since the school is outside the town, I have been coming only to the outskirts! I am glad I have again come into the town today, to this very temple, in order to light another lamp for the benefit of this place. The group of young men who collected the funds needed for the illumination of this ancient Temple of Lakshminarayan struggled hard indeed, as their report indicates. After all, a single devoted donor could have finished the job. The temple is the repository of Sanathana Dharma (Eternal Universal Religion); it is the heart and soul of a village. In former days, a newcomer would ask, "Do you have a temple in this village?" and, if the answer is "No," he would move on to some other village that had one. Today, however, the question has become, "Do you have a cinema hall in this village?" The conservation and promotion of all the traditional institutions and customs and habits have become imperative, and I am glad that in this place, the young men have taken the lead and are proving good examples to the elders.

Knowledge is growing, but wisdom lags

I shall switch on the electric lights in a few moments, but remember, it is not the Lord within the Temple that need illumination, it is the worshipper. This material temple of stone and mortar might be lit up by means of a few bulbs, but really speaking, everyone is a moving temple with the Lord installed in the shrine of the heart. That shrine has to shine bright and clear. Now, it is plunged in the darkness of falsehood, injustice, cruelty, and pride; it is infested by poisonous nocturnal birds of prey. The lighting up of this structure is but the symbol of the illumination of the heart, the destruction of the darkness of egoism and ignorance, so that the Lord might be revealed in all His Glory. Lately, there has been everywhere progress in the material field - schemes and plans to increase prosperity and comforts. Schools, hospitals,

and factories are multiplying everywhere. But there is no peace in the hearts of people or of society. This is because there has been no corresponding increase in moral conduct. A stick will help a man walk up an incline, but of what use is it to a person whose legs have become defunct? Material prosperity is the stick, and virtue the strength of the feet. The trouble is that knowledge is growing but wisdom lags. There is an infection of envy, cynicism, and conceit everywhere. People have become the slave of passion and pride. They let their minds drag them wherever it will, though the word Man means "He who has control over the mind (manas)." Control of the mind can be achieved through spiritual discipline and training. To remove dirt from a white cloth, the washerman soaks it in water, puts in soap flakes, warms the water, and beats it on a stone. He does not make it white; it is white. He only removes the non-whiteness by a certain process. So too, the individual soul is pure, but it has been soiled. It has to be soaked in good conduct and pure character, soaped with meditation on the Godhead, warmed in discriminatory wisdom helped by reason, and beaten on the slab of renunciation. Use the temple and the worship of the Lord done here as per traditional rites for this end. Light is holy, sacred. Do not misuse it for lower ends, but give it its proper value and engage yourselves in holy pursuits.

Take cheerfully all that comes to you

I was away in Uttar Pradesh from the 5th to the 28th of last month, and I found people there full of devotion and faith. Thousands go every day on pilgrimage to the shrine of Badri Narayana, in spite of the expense and the dangers and difficulties, animated by devotion, which gives them strength and courage. When you see them, you feel that the country is still green, that the path of God and righteousness (dharma) is not given up, and that India is alive and strong. Moreover, the people there, though they are far away from Puttparthi, do feel the warmth, showing thereby that they are really near, while you here see only the light and are unaware of the warmth. Devotion and faith are the result of culture and not mere physical contiguity. But I must tell you one thing. The names Puttparthi and Bukkapatnam, surrounded by these little hills, are resounding even in the Himalayas, and it is up to you to justify that fame and that respect. A life lived in love and humility will gain the

respect of all and will also be full of peace. Do not ask of life only joy and happiness, but take cheerfully all that comes to you. You cannot insist that the doctor gives you only sweet medicines. Have the hardihood to bear sorrow as resignedly as you bear joy. Remember that death is inescapable, that life is but an interlude, that the world is but a caravansarai, and you will get the strength to pass through the pilgrimage of this birth.

Consider first things first. Only then can the true culture of India be restored to its old vitality. Bharath (India) has known how to exploit the mine of divine Bliss, which lies in the heart of each person. The seers had said that if the mother-land sacred cow, the real mother, and the Vedas are revered and used as best as one can, then one would have happiness here and liberation from the cycle of birth and death. It is because the people of the country followed this path that India has remained India.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

14. Be Grateful To The Doctors

Date: 27 July 1961 / Location: Mysore / Occasion: Guru Purnima

Though I have been coming to this city for over twenty years now, this is the first time I am speaking to a gathering of the people living here. The time, the need, and the deed have to coincide, and today they have. Guru Purnima has provided all three and collected together in this sea of humanity the waters of many areas through many channels and tributaries. Mysore City has earned fame by its devotion to music, sculpture, and other fine arts, but there is an all finer than all these: the Art of Living. Many a person skilled in other fields is a failure in so far as this art is concerned. He lives miserably, without a trace of joy or contentment or peace. He knows only pain and he gives others only pain. Mysore is also famous for the fragrance of its sandalwood. So far so good. But I would like the fragrance to emanate from your feelings and thoughts and deeds, not so much from the trees that grow in the forests. Then only is the fame fully deserved. If the sense of beauty and the sense of harmony are not translated into the daily life of men and women and children, then that life is a waste, a burden, a hoax. People have to lift themselves from the animal level through their own spiritual practices. There are three types of people: the animal type, the human type, and the divine type. Humanity has evolved from the stone through plant and tree, worm and insect, bird and mammal, but some are still groveling in the early stages though they have achieved the human form.

Everyone has some illness or other

Chief Minister Jatti said that you are all like boulders, rough and hard, and that devotion has the power to make you soft and smooth. Now, what does a sculptor do when he sees a good boulder? He pictures in his mind the lovely idol of God that is sleeping inside it. He becomes possessed with idea of liberating the idol from the hard clasp of the stone. He takes up his chisel and removes the extra stone that lies around the beautiful figure, and, at last, he liberates the image. The boulder has to suffer all that hard chiseling in order to become the image of God. So too, you should cast off all the impediments,

all the encumbrances that drag you down and make you a boulder instead of a devotee, an ascetic of the highest order (Paramahansa), or even the Supreme Being (Paramatma). The world is a huge hospital, and humanity is bedridden. Some are writhing in the pain of envy, some are bloated with pride, some are losing sleep through hate, some have become blind through miserliness, some are struck down by selfishness. Everyone has some illness or other. On this Guru Purnima Day, you have to render gratitude to the doctors who diagnose your diseases and prescribe remedies and to the nurses who tend you back to health. Resolve today to follow the treatment recommended and the regimen ordered; it is not enough to learn the prescription by heart, read the label on the bottle three times a day, or visit the hospital every day. Praising the doctor or worshipping him might induce him to take pity on you, but your illness can be cured only by your taking the drug and obeying the restrictions on food and drink and on your habit. While talking of doctors, I must also say that doctors who fight for the patient's purse or who try to grab a patient before a rival appropriates him are a danger to society. The doctor who despises other doctors, or sticks to his own patent cures irrespective of the experience of failure, or is guided more by whims, fancies, and prejudices, or considers the patient's caste rather than his disease as more important - such doctors are also dangerous. Today, we find doctors and gurus who have deteriorated to the level of wrangling for patients and their purses, and for the sake of their own or other people's patent remedies.

Vyasa is the greatest of spiritual doctors

This day is a day when mankind pays homage to the greatest of spiritual doctors, Sage Vyasa. Vyasa is the greatest of spiritual doctors, for he put together the Vedas, composed the Puranas and the Mahabharatha, and gave humanity the Bhagavatha . He is the primal guru for all who walk in the Path of God. He planted the seed of theism and nurtured it through sruthi (orally transmitted sacred revelations), smrithi (codes of law), sastra (holy scripture), and the Mahabharatha . He gave the world the Gita and the Brahma Sutra, the idea of the immanent Atma, the story of the divine Play (Leela), and the secret of this changeful Creation. Vyasa lived in about 3800 B.C. He was the

great grandson of the sage Vasishta, the son of Parasara, and the father of that celebrated gem among sages, Suka. His life story is a series of miracles, a divine saga. He came from Vasudeva (a name for Krishna), announced the Leela of Vasudeva to all, and, finally, got merged in Vasudeva. He established the era of repeating and discoursing on Lord's Name and made all aware of the sweetness of the Name of the Lord, which evokes His Form and His Grace. Vyasa first revealed to humanity the secret of making the mind as clear and as full of cool rays as the moon on a full moon night; that is why this Guru Purnami is associated with him and with all gurus.

The prayers to be offered daily

Today, every believer in God must refuse to be content with a feast and a lecture. The believer should try to plant today the seed of Lord's Name in a well-prepared heart, devoid of the thorns of egoism, and water it with love, fence the sprout with faith, feed it with the fertiliser of remembrance of the Name, and, from the grown-up tree of the mantra (holy letters), pluck the fruit of bliss and relish the sweetness. People may boast of the vast treasures in the vaults of their bank, but they will get credit only for that which they have actually earned and deposited therein. Do not fritter away the time allotted to you; offer it to Kesava (Krishna), who is Time personified (Kalaswarupa). Know that waking from sleep is but birth and going into sleep is death. On waking, pray every morning of your life, "Oh Lord, I am born now from the womb of sleep. I am determined to carry out all tasks this day as offerings to Thee, with Thee ever present before my mind's eye. Make my words, thoughts, and deeds sacred and pure. Let me not inflict pain on anyone; let no one inflict pain on me. Direct me, guide me, this day." And when you enter the portals of sleep at night, pray, "Oh Lord! the tasks of this day, whose burden I placed on you this morning, are over. It was You who made me walk and talk and think and act. I therefore place at Thy Feet all my words, thoughts, and deeds. My task is done. Receive me, I am coming back to you." Adopt these as your daily prayers. The best thing is to have your own Self as the source of Light, as the guru. The Inner Intelligence, the Inner Guru will reveal the Truth. This prayerful attitude will so educate your impulses that the Inner Intelligence will be fully revealed.

Do everything with a spirit of dedication

Begin with the cultivation of Love (Prema). I have found that the people of Karnataka have great faith and devotion. They are simple in their habits and thoughts. Do not allow these to decline; cultivate them with care. The Chief Minister said that all are children of the Lord. It is better to say that all are actors in the drama designed by Him - dolls dancing and acting as He pulls the strings. The role you have might be that of an officer, a soldier, a farmer, a beggar or a clerk. Act well your part so that the drama might be a success. Do everything in a spirit of dedication, as if in each moment you act, speak, and even feel in response to a command received. To get that mood of dedication, the Bhakthi Sutras (aphorisms on devotion) prescribe nine paths, but the easiest and the most practicable is a life lived in the constant remembrance of the Lord. A bar of iron sinks in water, but beat it into a hollow vessel and it will float merrily and even carry some weight. So too, man's mind sinks easily in the sea of sense; beat it hollow, hammering it with the Name of the Lord. It will float safely on a sea of troubles. Do not be like gramophone records singing someone else's song, ignorant of the genuine thrill of music. Sing from your own experience of the Glory and Grace of the Lord. If you win the Grace of the Lord, even the decrees of destiny can be overcome. Certain drugs come in bottles on which the manufacturer has given an ultimate date beyond which the drug loses its efficacy. Of course, the drug will be in the bottle but would no longer be effective. Similarly, the Lord's Grace can make decrees of destiny inoperative. The guru is one who shows you the path for getting that Grace, and to such a guru this day is dedicated.

Prayer is a very forceful weapon - much more effective than any bomb. The word is an effective instrument: it can move mountains. In these critical times, every one of you should pray deeply and sincerely for the peace and prosperity of Mother India (Bharatha Matha).

- *Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

15. Limits And Progress

Date: 10 October 1961 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Sathya Sai Hospital

Jonnalagadda SathyaNarayanamurthy thrilled you so much, since he spoke softly and sweetly in his charming style. He has returned from Russia where there is too much rush, to this quiet place, this Abode of Supreme Peace (Nilayam of Prasanthi). This function is connected with physical ills and their cure and prevention, so I must also confine My remarks to them. Humanity has two varieties of troubles: the physical, due to imbalance between the three humours wind, bile, and phlegm, and the spiritual, due to imbalance of the three qualities (gunas) of purity, passion, and inertia (sathwa, rajas, and thamas). SathyaNarayanamurthy gave some pathetic instances of the sufferings caused by resorting to an indifferent and ignorant doctor. I also agree that it is wise to adjust one's living so intelligently that there is no need to approach any doctor. Illness is due to the neglect of some simple rules of healthy eating and drinking and to the damage caused to the system by evil habits and stupid cravings. People ruin themselves by greed and lust, worry and fear; they fall easy prey to their insatiable thirst for a happy life. They do not know the source and spring of happiness, which lies within themselves; they believe they can get happiness in plenty and in quick time by running after the mirage of fashion or fancy, excitement or entertainment. They think that floating on the roaring, raging torrent of the world will help, but that only gives them unbearable tossing and nausea. Joy is a subjective feeling; it is not inherent in the objective world. You are the witness, separate from the scene; you are the seer not the seen (the drashta, not the dhrik or the drisyā).

Purified inner vision gives unfailing health

The screen is the truth (sathya) and the images that flit across it are false (mithya). When you see the film, you do not see the screen as screen; you forget its existence and think that there is just the picture and nothing else as its base. But the screen is there all the time, and it is only the screen that makes you experience the picture. Narayana (God) is the screen and the objective world (prakriti) is the film. When the play is on, the screen is the

base and the objective world becomes God all-prevading. The screen is Truth; the story is worldly life (samsaram), for it has only some essence (saram). Surdas, the blind singer, had Krishna Himself as his ardent listener when he sang sitting in front of Him as a cowherd boy humming in appreciation; Surdas took Him to be a cowherd from the surrounding villages, though he sang that all beings are His Forms. One day, Krishna revealed to him that He was the Hero of his heart. Krishna touched his eyes with His divine fingers, and Surdas could see Him! Surdas could hear the self-same strains of the flute coming from Krishna's lips that he was hearing all along whenever he started meditating on the Lord. As a matter of fact, he was only trying all along to put that music into verse. He then declared that he did not care to see other things with the sight vouchsafed to him; he said the inner eyes were enough. The purified inner vision gives lasting joy and, therefore, unflinching health. Vedas and scriptures (sastras) prescribe the proper processes for purifying the four instruments of mind, intellect, memory, and ego. Some people dismiss the Vedas and Sastras as so many shackles on thought and action, but they are "bunds" which regulate the flow of feelings, emotions and instincts along safe channels.

The spiritual aspirant should be careful about food

Coming to the more direct topic of physical ills, I must tell you that you must practise moderation in food, drink, sleep, and exercise. Good food taken in moderate quantities, at regular intervals - that is the prescription. Pure, wholesome (sathwic) food promotes self-control and intelligence more than passion-producing (rajasic) and impure (thamasic) food. So for spiritual aspirants, pure, wholesome food is very necessary. In one of the jails of this state, there was once a very pure soul devoted to spiritual ideals, carefully practising spiritual discipline. He had advanced very far in meditation and concentration. One day, however, when he sat for meditation, he felt very savage emotions surging up in him and was shocked to find that he could not, in spite of tremendous struggle, suppress the hateful and murderous thoughts that took hold of him. He was rocked in agony, and his guru was also upset at the turn of events. The guru probed into the history of the disciple rather deeply but could not find any valid reason for the tragedy. At last, he found

that a certain fanatic murderer had acted as the cook in the jail kitchen the day previous to the calamity, and his hateful homicidal thoughts had pervaded the food he cooked, which the disciple had consumed. Subtle invisible thought-forms can pass from one person to another by such means. Here, one has to be very careful about food, especially where one is proceeding Godward, through the steep path of yoga . Sleep too should be regulated and moderate; it is as important as work and food. Remember also that dress is primarily for protection against heat and cold, not for vain display even at the cost of health. Virtuous conduct also ensures mental peace, and that in turn saves you from many a physical and mental illness. If you overstep the bounds (mithi), you miss your progress (gathi).

The habit that rehabilitates the fallen

Above all, do every act as an offering to the Lord, without being elated by success or dejected by defeat; this gives the poise and equanimity needed for sailing through the waters of the ocean of life. It is the mind that builds up the body, strong and shiny, or wastes it to skin and bone. For the human (manushya) to be strong, the mind (manas) has to be strong. Live always as the servant of the Lord within you, then you will not be tempted into sin or fall into evil. Get into the habit of living in the light of God. It is the habit that rehabilitates the fallen. Have the attitude of absolute self-surrender (saranagathi), or else your destiny will be shara-gathi (movement of an arrow). That is why Krishna said, "Let your mind be absorbed in Me (Manmanabhava)!" You may ride in a smart car of your own, but you are entrusting daily, without a second thought, the car and yourself and your family to the skill and presence of your chauffeur's mind. However, when advised to entrust your affairs to the Lord, the power of world-illusion (mayasakthi) hesitates and declines! It refuses to surrender to the divine Power (Mahasakthi). What are we to say about such absurd conceit! If you have absolute self-surrender, you will be ever content and ever so happy and healthy. Then this hospital can be closed for want of patients; it can well be used for accommodating devotees and giving them lodging!

You are all certain to win

All that you eat, all that you see, all that you hear, and all that you take in through the senses make a dent on your health. There are three types of reactions you usually have from the outer world and three types of people in whom one or the other predominates: the cotton, which gets soaked in whatever it gets immersed; the stone, which escapes from getting affected; and the butter, which is changed by whatever it comes across, even a little warmth. The "butter" men are moved by instant sympathy, either at another's joy or grief. Do not, like some mental patients, be always worrying about some little ailment or another. Have courage, that is the best tonic. Do not give up before you have to. It is not long life that counts; if you live on and on, a time may come when you have to pray to the Lord to take you away, to release you from travail. You may even start blaming Him for ignoring you and blessing other luckier people with death! By all means, be concerned about success or failure in achieving the real purpose of life. Then you will get as many years as are needed to fulfill that desire. Yearn, yearn, yearn hard, and success is yours. Remember, you are all certain to win; that is why you have been called and have responded to the call to come to Me. What other task have I than the showering of Grace? By darshana, seeing, touching and conversing with Me, you share in that Grace. When that melts and this melts, the two can merge. Treat Me not as one afar but as very close to you. Insist, demand, claim Grace from Me; do not praise, extol, and cringe. Bring your hearts to Me and win My Heart. Not one of you is a stranger to Me. Bring your promises to me and I shall give you My Promise. But first see that your promise is genuine, sincere; see that your heart is pure; that is enough.

You say, "I have a fever " But where did you get it from ? Kali? Gaya? It came from within you, not from anywhere outside you. When you have developed jaundice, everything appears yellow. Egoism too is a jaundice, which warps your vision and makes you see things wrong. It is due to inner impurity, inner defects. Get rid of that egoism and all will be Love, Peace, Unity, One.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba



16. The Will Of Siva

Date: 17 October 1961 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

Jonnalagadda SathyaNarayanamurthy spoke on fine topics in a fine language, but however nicely a person may talk and however great his skill in the use of language, he who can clarify the truth of God has never yet been born; nor will he be ever born. One can only relate what one has felt or experienced through His Grace. He who has touched the very base will not come again to this base world. Of course, they show the Lord in books, illustrations, films, and pictures, as well as on the stage. But who among the writers or painters or actors has seen Him? The epics and Puranas relate only an infinitesimal fraction of His Glory; they set limits to the limitless, for words have a limit. Only one endowed with a vision of sacred knowledge, of union with God, or of selfless devotion for God can have a glimpse of that Effulgence. The rest only mislead by their claims of authenticity. Those who know will not speak; those who speak do not know, cannot know. You all recite the verse in the Gita that says that the Lord will create a Form for Himself and come into human affairs whenever righteousness (dharma) is in grave peril. You have repeated it so often that it has become meaningless jargon. It has been quoted so often and by so many that it has lost all significance. Only those that are proficient in the scriptures can recognise an Avatar and test the credentials; only they can taste the joy showered by the Incarnation. The Puranas and ancient legends and history describe the Lord in manifold ways according to the devoted individual (vyakthi) and the power (sakthi) that is described. But the Vedas and Scriptures (Sastras) do not indulge in such changing moods; they deal with fundamentals. Sometimes, in the confusion of interpretation and retelling, people miss the road. When the blind lead the blind, both are likely to fall into the well. Then the wise intervene and demarcate the road along safe lines.

God is beyond understanding

SathyaNarayanamurthy referred to Dr. Bhagavantam and the soaring claims of science. But religion begins where science ends. In science, when one door

is opened and a passage is revealed, ten doors are discovered in that very passage, and each one of them has to be opened in turn. Science transforms things, rearranges them, studies their composition, regroups their plans, and releases the energy that lies latent in them. But I create the things themselves - and they are as lasting as any that is found in Nature! That is this, but this is not that. Nature is Brahman mistaken to be nature, on account of the delusion of Name and Form. But Brahman is not nature; it is only the rope that was mistaken to be the snake. When wisdom dawns, when light illumines, the snake disappears and the rope alone remains. The Lord is sweetness, you are sugar; He is fire, you are fuel; He has no heart; every heart where He is installed is His. Narada, who moves always by and with the Lord, feels that God is beyond his understanding; Balarama, who came as Krishna's own brother, could not fathom His personality. How then can you grasp My Mystery? How can those who strut about in well-ironed bush coats fathom Truth? Yet, I know some here who sold away their faith to hollow men and started talking about My dress and My hair! If you dare seek My Truth, come, surrender unto Me. Do not teach treason to your friends and to other seekers. Dress and manners have become polished now, but the inner man has deteriorated in virtue and faith!

Only yearning of the heart pleases the Lord

Ravana and Hiranyaksha were experts in the Vedic ritual of sacrifice with pious repetition of sacred mantras, but they never surrendered their ego to God. They did not pluck the weeds of sensory impulses from the fields of their hearts, so they harvested a crop of thorns. It is the yearning of the heart that pleases the Lord - not the grandeur of the ceremonial sacrifice, not the pomp of ritual worship, not the sum of all the miles you covered in pilgrimage, not the cost of all the articles you have given in charity. You need not even pray aloud, unless of course you picture Him as living far away in Dwaraka or Kailas. If you have installed Him in your heart, He will Himself emerge when you yearn for Him. Prahlada felt so, and since no fire could burn Him or no fall could break His bones, Prahlada also suffered no harm! Ambarisha performed a sacrifice, but at the crucial moment the animal intended for the sacrifice escaped! The priests ordained that to make amends for this sinful neglect, a

human being had to be offered as substitute to the Gods! The king promised 1000 cows in exchange for a son, but which father will send a son to death, even when 1000 cows are given in exchange? There were also other conditions: the king's messengers should not ask anyone for the son; they should not commit the sin of equating 1000 cows as equal to human being. The father also should not break the sad offer to the son; the offer to immolate himself must come unasked from the son, without any prompting or persuasion. Only such a son that would be accepted by the Gods.

An end that even saints would envy

Sunashepa heard the news by himself and, approaching his father, said he would go, and gladly. For what greater good fortune could a mortal expect than to ascend to heaven through the sacrificial flame? (I am reminded of a strange answer that a little girl, aged nine, gave Me when I asked her, "Well, what do you want from Me?" She said, "Baba, let me merge in You." In a few weeks, she passed away and her wish was fulfilled. The child breathed her last asking that her face be turned to the wall so that she might look on Baba's picture when she died. She had a wonderful end, an end that could be envied by saints.) God likes such pure souls who come gladly to merge in Him. Some people say, "Oh, it is the Dasara Festival and lakhs and lakhs of people throng there. And they pour lakhs (100,000) and lakhs of rupees there." Well, what they give is disregard (alakshyam), not lakhs (laksham)! My hand stretches out to receive only when a pure heart full of love (prema) is offered; on all other occasions, it gives, never takes. People with poison in their hearts, barren of love and service - let them feel shame and resolve to cleanse themselves from now on.

The Lord will never disown a devotee

Sunashepa persuaded his father that his wish to proceed to the sacrifice and offer himself was legitimate and approvable, and he left for the capital. On the way, he went to his maternal uncle, Viswamitra, who tried to keep the boy away from the sacrifice. 'This is all just foolish superstition; can anyone substitute a man for a cow?' Viswamitra asked. Sunashepa replied that all

men are cattle, for until discrimination and detachment dawn, they are but animals. So, in spite of his uncle's arguments, arguments like the ones used by some to dissuade persons from coming to Puttaparthi, Sunashepa managed to reach the the place of sacrifice. In the same way as the lights before us are lit when a switch is moved up at Penukonda, when the Lord decides on something, it has to happen so. Well, the Lord is not a rock or a stone; His Heart melted at the plight of the boy. Indra appeared in the sacrificial fire and departed, showering blessings on his head. It was Indra who had carried away the original cow and elaborated all this plot, to bring Sunashepa and his greatness to light and to bless him. The Lord is Divine Love personified (Premaswarupam), believe Me. The earthly father or mother will show love only as long as you obey them; start going against their wishes and they will go to the extent of even disowning you! The Lord will never disown, for He is your very core, your very basic Reality. You derive from Him the fruits of your labour, of your meditation, repetition of the Lord's Name, and worship; faith will grow into sacrifice; you will feel that you are instruments with no individuality save as prompted by Him. The one respectful obeisance (namaskaram) you do, do it with devotion. That is enough. You do not do even that; you do it so callously, so indifferently, so automatically. When you fold both your hands and bring them together, feel that you are offering at the Feet all the actions of the five organs of action and the five organs of perception as indicated by' the ten fingers. Again, the purpose of namaskaram is to touch the Feet of the Lord. The negative pole, the power of illusion (mayasakthi), and the positive pole, supreme divine power (Mahasakthi) have to meet in order to produce a spiritual current that will flow through you.

Do not allow your faith to falter

Come, I am the repairer of broken hearts and damaged four-fold instruments of mind, intellect, memory, and ego. I am like the smith, who welds, mends, and sets right. Ten years ago, a devotee prayed to Me in song, "My heart has gone dry, my lamp has gone out, my path is dark, my brain is confused. Lord, make me fit again for life's arduous journey." The Lord will be waiting outside the door of the worship room of the devotee, anxious to fulfil their wish!

Verily, one who has the Lord as His Servant - that one is the real Lord! Only do not allow your faith to falter. Do not become a slave to others; no, not even to God. Test. Test, examine, experience. When you find God, demand as of right. But before you get that right, you should appear for the examination and pass, is it not? I set tests not as a punishment or because I enjoy putting you into trouble but just to give you the joy of passing! Bhadhram here was asked by his guru, Deekshithadas, to go along the streets for some years and beg for food. He had enough to eat, but he had to do it as the customary and legitimate duty of a servant. And Bhadhram did it quite gladly. It is a training in the control and conquest of the ego; you have to take it as such and not give up the fruit, afraid of the exertion that the cultivation of the plant requires. Also, do not yield to despair or become dejected. It is My resolve (sankalpa) that you progress in spiritual development. I have collected all of you and I shall lay the concrete foundation and build the walls and erect the roof and complete the mansion. My resolve never proves ineffective.

The story of a Divine Plan

I shall tell you a story of Will of the Supreme Lord (Iswara Sankalpa) and how nothing could stop its realisation. Siva was every day discoursing on Kailas to sages and saints and celestial beings in the evening hours. One day, Parvathi suggested that a Hall be constructed for accommodating them all, so that they could all listen without being affected by the constant fog and mist and cold winds. Siva did not have the will to put it up, but Parvathi insisted that her idea must be implemented. The astrologer who was consulted before the foundations were dug said that "The stars forecast that the Hall will be consumed by fire, since Saturn is not propitious from the very beginning." Nevertheless, the Hall was completed. Now, that set a problem for the Couple. Siva proposed to ask Saturn for the favour of saving the Hall from his anger, though He doubted whether the planet, reputed for his inevitable ire, would ever agree. Parvathi felt deeply hurt, and she resolved not to give the tiny tyrant, Saturn, the credit for destroying the Hall that She had got built. She swore that instead of giving him the chance to declare arrogantly that he had set fire to the Hall, she would herself set fire to it. But Siva asked her to first await the outcome of His appeal to Saturn, for He was Himself

proceeding to his headquarters! He told Her, "If Saturn agrees to exempt the Hall from his anger, I shall come back and report the good news to you; but if he is adamant, I shall raise My Hand and twirl this drum. On hearing that signal, you may set fire to the Hall and rob Saturn of the credit for doing so."

The role of a tool in the Divine Plan

Parvathi was ready with a burning torch in anticipation of the signal, so that there would not be a moment's chance for the wicked planet to execute his nefarious plan of revenge. Saturn, however, agreed to Siva's request; he said that he would not bum down the Hall in Kailas, and Siva was happy at his reply. So, when Saturn prayed for one small boon, Siva agreed and asked him what it was. It seems Saturn had never before seen the famous Dance of Siva, which all the stellar divinities were extolling, and Saturn craved that Siva may show him a step or two. Siva readily assented and started the Thandava (frantic dance of Siva), raising His hand and sounding the drum! Listening to the signal, Parvathi applied the torch and the Hall was, as per the Will of Siva, burnt to ashes! Divine Will must be fulfilled! Saturn was just a tool in the Divine Plan. About the conjunction of eight planets that is scaring you all now, if you have divine blessings (anugraha), what can the planets (grahas) do? If you have gold, that is enough; you can get made all varieties of jewels. Ask for and secure gold - that is all that you need. The astronomical junction of planets between February 2 and 5 next year is being made much of by the astrologers and calendar-minded brahmins, and they are reaping a rich harvest by creating panic and suggesting various counter measures. Of course, it is good to give things in charity, to pray to the Gods, and to perform sacrifices; but do those things for their own sake, not with a view to escape the eight planets! Do them as you should, at all times, not because of this temporary fear. Do not give way to panic. Nothing will happen between February 2 and 5. You will all be coming happily and full of joy for Sivarathri to Puttaparthi, let Me assure you. All talk of annihilation is just a scare; do not lose courage.

Righteousness (dharma) is the root of the world, says the sacred text; so, as Krishna said, when dharma declines, the Lord incarnates as Man. Well, the Veda is the root of dharma, says sacred text. Dharma is the fruit of Veda, which is the Tree. Now, Veda itself is getting dried up! So, fostering Veda is one of the tasks of the Avatar .

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

17. Experience Oneness

Date: 20 October 1961 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Avatar Day

Embodiments of Divine Love!

Yesterday and the day before, I spoke about the disciplinary life. that you should lead. I was a harsh task master then. But today, I shall be soft, and My words will be like the Himalayan breeze, cool and invigorating. That harshness had a reason, for there can be no effect without a cause. This coolness and that warmth are both parts of the same Person, and you cannot accept the one and reject the other. Good and bad, right and wrong are two sides of the same coin. As for Me, My nature is distinct; I do not identify with anything. Those who have neither authority nor adeptness have to hear, study, analyse, and judge. Authority is the right of the Atma alone. It is the Atma that can command. For Me, the purity of your feeling is important, not the depth of your scholarship. That is why I was harsh yesterday and the day before to compel you to examine your feelings and remove the blemishes. Today, I assure you, I shall not be so harsh. In fact, you may have noticed, I called you Embodiments of Divine Love (Premaswarupulara) in the beginning, when I began to speak! Usually, in human calculations, value is attached only to sharpness of intellect; but that is incomplete. Emotional clarity is also important. You purchase an article from a shop not merely because it serves a useful purpose but also because it is beautiful and attractive; that is to say, it appeals to the intellect and the emotions. Innate disposition gives beauty or, as they say in Telugu, andham . That is why I often say, andham is anandam (beauty is bliss); you cannot have one without the other.

Earn the experience of unity the hard way

Andham and anandam, beauty and truth, harmony and ecstasy are found in Oneness (Ekathwam), the discovery and experience of Unity. Unity must be as symbolised by the experience of unity of mud and gold; the sight, the seen, and the seer, that is, the search and the success. Ramakrishna prompted this yearning, promoted this agony in Vivekananda and others who

came to him. Try with all your strength, test with all your doubt, earn it the hard way, and enjoy the fruit of your exertions - that was the teaching he gave. The music of all the transmitters of the world is everywhere. If you care to listen, get a radio receiver, learn the wave length of the station you want to hear, and switch on and tune in. The key to liberation has to be cast and forged and filed and fitted by each aspirant. It cannot be obtained in one moment by one word. Ramakrishna himself sought for it through years of inexplicable anguish - how, then, can we short-circuit the process for another? No one can just pass it on, saying, "Take!" The flower has to yield the fruit, and the fruit has to grow, ripen, and fall. Jealousy and anger are the twins born of Mother Ahamkara (self-conceit). Destroy the twins, and take away the karam (meaning, in Telugu, "the hot taste") of the Ahamkaram and keep it simply as Aham (I), so that you can get the thrill of "Aham Brahmasmi (I am Brahman)" with that instrument. That is the stage to be reached, the height to be scaled. The karam in the Ahamkara (I in the self-conceit) is like the single seed that, if allowed to sprout, multiplies a thousand fold and produces many bags of seed. It has to be crushed in the very first instance. Then the analysis of the Aham starts and ends in the conclusion, "this Aham is the Atma, which is Brahma (Ayam Atma-Brahma)". The two - That and This, Thath and Thwam - are identified, and This is found to be only That when "Thou art That (Thath thwam asi) is realised. Well. What is the thing called That (Thath)? What is Brahmam in other words? The fourth great aphorism (mahavakya) declares it to be: the Highest Wisdom (Prajnanam), Unity, One.

Truths revealed by the four great aphorisms

All these sacred, great aphorisms (mahavakyas) relate to the Glory of the One, which is a veritable Ocean of Grace: The vapour rising from It is, "Supreme Consciousness is Brahman (Prajnanam Brahma)", The cloud is, "This Atma is Brahman (Ayam Atma Brahma)", The shower of rain is, "Thou art That (Thath thwam asi)", The river is, "I Am Brahman (Aham Brahmasmi)". Prajnanam Brahma is symbolised by the Andapinda Lingam - the vision of the one entity in all the manifold entities, the expansion of the individual into the universal, and the enlargement of the I into the vastness of the "He and We". 'When you knock at another's door and a voice from inside accosts you with

the question, "Who is it?" you automatically answer, "It is I." That does not satisfy the questioner, so another question eliciting further information follows. Only then will the door open. The door of liberation can also open only to those who can explain who the "I" truly is. This reveals "I am in the Light" to the individual soul (jivi). The second aphorism, "This Atma is Brahman", tells the individual soul that, "The Light is in Me." Slowly the truth dawns on the mind! The Light that I imagined as enveloping me, the Supreme Consciousness, which I identified as the basis of all this appearance, is in me, too. My innermost truth is also that Supreme Consciousness, that Light. This is represented by the vision of the Eternal Siva (SadhaSiva Lingam). In their spiritual exercises, spiritual aspirants see the Light that dispels the darkness of ages. They are told that they are Light and nothing else, "Thou art that (Thath thwam asi)." They then become immune to spasms of ignorance, which make them forget their nature. Just as a beginner learning the violin lapses easily into grinding out distressing sounds from the strings, aspirants grind out discordant notes of discontent and grief. When pain becomes unbearable, a person faints and loses consciousness; that is a consolation. Beyond a certain limit, you are not to suffer pain. Similarly, when this identity feeling is established, no more activity is possible. One becomes "unconscious" of the world, or, rather, one passes beyond the realms of consciousness - un-consciousness, sub-consciousness, and even super-consciousness; the river has reached the sea. "Thou art that (Thath thwam asi)" is symbolised by the vision of enlightenment (the Jnana Lingam). "I Am Brahman (Aham Brahmasmi)", the last of the four aphorisms, is associated with the Atma Lingam . The fourteen higher worlds and the fourteen lower worlds cannot be shown and demonstrated in models; they are symbolic of the levels of consciousness in the geography of the spirit and in the journey of the mind toward the Goal. No books can teach you the topography; the journey is the best teacher, each step making the next one easier. Radha, Meera, Sakku, Surdas, Ramakrishna - all followed the guidance of their own inner call. The body (angam) is the meeting point (sangam) where spirit and matter meet; the moving (jangam) phantasmagoria where spirit and matter meet is the meeting point (sangam). From this meeting point, one has to evoke the Lingam (Divinity in its aforesaid four forms, one after the other). The Lingam is just a sign: a sign of endeavour, a sign of success. For example,

the Andapinda Lingam signifies the egg-shaped universe, which is how it is even according to experts in science. The outer cover is the anda, and the inner matter is the pinda . They are dependent on each other. You are all basically the universe (andapinda), with the outer shell of materialism and the inner core of Divinity. The body is a vessel to contain the Consciousness or Effulgence of Divinity (Chaithanya).

Vision of the form of the Self is the ultimate phase

The sentiment, "I Am Brahman (Aham Brahmasmi)" explicit in the aphorism gives a sense of kinship, as when this Linga confronted by that Linga proceeds to alingana (embracing). That sense of belonging has great psychological value: when you hear a child cry and find on enquiry that it is your child, you get far more anxious than when you are told it is another's child. The attachment will lead to merging (for the Andapinda Lingam is this body, this nature, which we see) and imbibing and building into our consciousness. Even God, when He comes with human body or as materialised form, is Andapindam, whether it is Vishnu, Siva, Rama, Krishna, or Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Jnanalingam symbolises the divine wisdom (jnana) that you are the totality of all beings and that that totality is in you. Divine wisdom itself is Brahman. Divine wisdom is not a quality of Brahman, it is Brahman itself, for Brahman has no quality. The liberated person, though in the world, has Inner Vision, which makes the person fall away, just as the dried leaf, which has no more need of attachment, falls from the twig. Atmalingam (the vision of form of the Self), the ultimate phase, is the stage of gold, when the names and forms of gold jewels have been subsumed. Water freezes into ice; Atma freezes into the individual. The Atmalingam is just the pot that contains sea water, immersed in the self-same sea. Both are identical, only the name and the form are different.

"I shall cure you slowly and patiently"

You can realise your truth by following the path that will lead to that knowledge. Only, you must be prepared for the discipline and the travail. When I give you a drug, you must take it in the prescribed dosage and adhere

strictly to the regimen of food, sleep, and exercise I recommend. Of course, the anxiety to get cured quickly is commendable; but there is a timetable for all this. Moderation is productive of better results than excess. Women know that when they add water to a cooked dish in order to reduce the taste of excess salt, they have to also add necessary quantities of other ingredients in order to make it tasty. In the same way, I have to reduce the excessive attachment you have for the things of the world, and when I do that, I have to correct by various other methods. I shall cure you, slowly and patiently; the more slowly I do it, the more lasting it will be. I shall reveal to you the Atmalingam without fail. Yes, great days are coming; let not your sloth stand across and deprive you of the chance. When you listen to My story, you forget the story of the world and live only in My story, until there is no separate story for you to relate or live. Well, to make you story-less is the scheme of My story. SadhaSivalingam indicates the person who is ever of the form of Siva. Here and everywhere, night and day, in joy and grief, the person is sivam - happy, auspicious, graceful. Bliss (anandam) is their breath, their motive force, their demeanour, their inner and outer expression; Sadha - always and for ever. Sivam - auspicious. There is no room here for controversy or intellectual rivalry and competition, like the ones indulged in by pandits and scholars, misusing the valuable paper manufactured by the mills of this country. Install SadhaSivalingam in the consciousness and all things will be revealed to you, step by step, by the Grace of the divine Indweller.

Do you know the real significance of the story of Anasuya, the story of how she humbled the Gods Brahma, Siva, and Vishnu? An-asuya means, "Envy-less". It is that if you have no end, you get such unshakable peace, that no power can overwhelm you.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

18. Hands And Feet Everywhere

Date: 21 October 1961 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

Bhadhram pleased you all with his musical discourse on mythological stories. He was worried that he was in indifferent health, but enthusiasm overcame physical weakness. Devotion gave the required energy. His emotions were riding the clouds of exultation. His voice, however, was creeping along the marshland of convalescence. You also went through the ordeal of squatting on the floor for over two hours. That is the true spirit - not to attach undue importance to the temporary complaints of the body. The long and short of the story that Bhadhram recited and commented upon is this: the Lord is "He who pulls the strings in the play of puppetry (Natanasutradhari)". It looks as if the dolls dance of their own accord and play out a plot of their own, that there is no one behind the drama to direct it, that the dolls are alive and full of activity. The strings are invisible to you. It is the mind that deceives you thus. (Baba here sang a song: "One man's mind prefers Krishna, another's likes Siva, another's prefers the formless Allah.") My Voice, you have noted, gets lost exactly here because in the song the next line is about some preferring the name of Sai. I never call upon people to worship Me, giving up the Forms they already revere. I have come to establish righteousness (dharma), so I do not and will not demand or require your homage. Give it to your Lord or guru, whoever He is; I am the Witness, come to set right the vision.

Cleanse your mind by moral conduct

In the story, Bhadhram referred to Krishna and His deeds - how He killed His maternal uncle, etc. But all that was in His plan, part of the divine task. When the truth demands fulfilment, no flimsy physical bond can stand in the way. The Lord cares only for those whose heart is mortgaged to Him. He cares for devotion, not devotees. He will not be partial to His kinsmen or be swayed by such cheap affiliations. These reciters and exponents have lowered the divine plays (leelas) of the Lord, trying to please the common folk. They make Narada a crook of low intrigue, Viswamitra a fool, Hanuman a monkey, and Rama a mere man. They create the impression that God is jealous, greedy,

vengeful, and subject to gusts of passion. They seldom unravel the meanings and symbolisms of the stories and incidents and names and forms of the Puranic personalities. They should interpret the incidents with reference to the contexts of spiritual progress. They should judge actions with reference to the standards of the age in which they happened, not by placing them against the background of modern times. People should be transformed by the recitals, and the effect should be like the thrill of a bath in the holy Ganga river. The reciter himself must strive for that spiritual experience, by sincere spiritual exercises. That alone can give genuine satisfaction to the listeners and joy to the reciter. Of course, until the mind is cleared of doubt, you have to cleanse it by moral conduct and spiritual discipline. Then the Truth will be reflected in it, clearer and clearer as the process is continued. The appetite for worldly goods must be blunted; it must fade and fall, as the petals of a flower grown old. They should not be plucked and cast aside. The noise of the market place should give place to the silence of the altar; only then can the secret whisper of the conscience be heard, the warning signal of the scriptures be recognised.

Nothing can happen without the Lord's Will

The power of the soul (Atmasakthi) can function only when prompted by the power of illusion (mayasakthi). That is why illusion (maya) was born just previous to Krishna. If Illusion is absent, how can the drama be put on? As a matter of fact, Illusion has to announce the arrival and the identity. Lack of peace of some kind or other brings you to this place naturally, but having come, do not concentrate only on objective gifts. Gather also the valuable advice given for inner development. You should pray, "From the unreal lead me to the Real (Asatho ma sad gamaya)." Is there any end to the list of worldly goods that you crave? When you secure one, another starts tantalising you. If you do not get that, very often, your hold on the Lord also loosens. If something is lost or stolen from you, you lose faith in Me. I have not come to guard your jewels and your 'valuables'. I have come to guard your virtue and holiness and guide you to the Goal. If your goodness is in danger, come to Me. I shall tell you how to cultivate it and reap the fruit. If someone is snatched away by death while on pilgrimage to Kasi or Badrinath,

you console yourself that it was an enviable way of quitting. But if you get even a mild attack of headache at Puttaparthi, you start blaming Me. According to you, those who have entered this compound once should not die. If they do, your faith wavers and dwindles. Well, not even an eyelid can open without the Lord's Will. So try to get the Lord's Grace and leave all questions to be answered by Him according to His fancy.

"My feet are within your reach at all times"

When the sun rises, all the buds of the lotus in the lake will not open out in full bloom. Only those that are full grown can blossom; the rest have to bide their time and grow. His Grace is the right of all, but it can be won only by spiritual disciplines. I have no hate or anger in My composition; My Life blood is love, I am the repository of compassion. Understand Me and My nature right. The shadow of the moon in the depth of the lake seems to quiver and shake because of the waves, but look up and you see the moon, steady as ever. I am always steady, My Grace is ever there. To the outward eye, My action is magic, miracle; to the inner eye, it is all a divine play (leela). Well, the Hand that creates is the Hand that gives - there is no keeping back. It is always for you and you alone. That is My truth; know it and be happy. I have started the work for which I have come down. I have collected the metal, the steel, the stones, the bricks. I have dug the foundation trenches, and the superstructure will rise soon. There can be no interruption. You will see thousands pressing along this road, hundreds on every rock on these hills. The devotees who are at Prasanthi Nilayam are sad that they have had no chance of even a respectful obeisance (namaskaram) for three months. They feel that those who come from afar and leave in a few days are luckier. To them I say this: You are deluded by a false sense of values. Why worry so much at not being able to touch these Feet? My Feet are within your reach at all times, wherever you are. "Hands and feet everywhere (Sarvathah pani padhah)." If you wail in agony, "Don't you hear me?", My ears are there to listen. If you pray from the depths of your heart, "Don't you see my plight?", My eyes are there shedding grace on you. Get out of illusion and become Love; then you get only love from Me.

Puttaparthi will become the birth place of Krishna

Rama and Krishna and Sai Baba appear different because of the dress each has donned, but it is the self-same entity, believe Me. Do not be misled into error and loss. The time will soon come when this huge building or even vaster ones will be too small for the gatherings of those who are called to this place. The sky itself will have to be the roof of the auditorium of the future; I will have to forego the car and even the plane when I move from place to place, for the crowds pressing around them will be too huge; I will have to move across the sky; yes, that too will happen, believe Me. You will witness that Puttaparthi becoming birth place of Krishna (Madhura Nagara). No one can stop or delay this development. I will not give you up, nor can any one of you give Me up. Even if you lose faith, you will repent and come to this refuge very soon, clamouring for admission. I shall be in this body for 58 years more; I have assured you of this already. Your lives are intertwined with My earthly career. Act always in accordance with that great privilege.

19. Vision Of God

Date: 22 October 1961 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

You are, I know, rather bored by these evening gatherings taking place every day, without break, for it is difficult to listen to the discussion of spiritual subjects and the detailing of disciplinary rules. Some of you are saying that you came to Prasanthi Nilayam for peace and quiet, but you are being subjected to the ordeal of speeches and long sittings. Let me tell you that discourses by these great scholars are very valuable. The speakers here are blessed, and the listeners are also blessed. Why, the listeners are even more blessed, for they can very often follow the lessons that these speakers teach, while the teachers themselves might not be able to carry them out. There was a pandit who led a disciplined life, sticking to a pre-arranged timetable. He woke up from sleep in the early hours of the morning, recited OM (the Pranava), and later, after ablutions, drank his cup of milk at 7 a.m. exactly. Some days the milkmaid arrived late, for she lived on the other river bank and had to catch a ferry to cross over with the milk. The ferry either started a little too soon or, at times, reached her bank too late, when she brought the milk late, greatly to the annoyance of the pandit. One day, he lost patience and chided her for upsetting his timetable. "Why do you depend on that horrid boat to take you across? Do you not know that, if you just repeat the name of Rama, you can walk across without coming to harm? Rama will see that you do not get drowned." Next day, the maid repeated Rama's name and just walked across. Yes, her faith gave her the strength. She did not tarry for the ferry. The pandit was flabbergasted, for he did not believe that it could ever be possible for repetition of Rama's name to work this miracle. Devotees must ignore their identity and separateness and merge with the ideal; what individually has the servant got? He has nothing; no, not even a trace. The Master is All.

Dealing with both Being and Awareness is divine Bliss

If you stare at the sun for a second and then turn your eye to other things around, you will find that there is a dark patch over them, and you cannot

recognise them. Similarly, once you get a vision of God, who is more effulgent than a thousand suns, you can no longer recognise the multiplicity called nature (prakriti). The world is black, it is blocked; indeed, you can no longer recognise or deal with variety once you have had a vision of the basic Unity. Take the screen in the cinema theatre. When the film is on, you do not see the screen, you see only the play. When the show is over, you see just a screen, a screen that has no message - neither voice nor name nor form nor colour nor creed. That is Brahman. The entire rope gives the appearance of a snake in the dark; here, the entire screen was lost in this picture. Brahman is Truth (Sathyam); the Universe is Brahman. That is Being (Sat); this is Awareness (Chit). Knowing this and dealing with both is Bliss (Anandam). I was asked once how anyone can accept the two seemingly opposite statements: "Brahman is yuth, the world is false (Brahma sathyam jaganmithya)" and "The world is full of Vishnu (Sarvam Vishnumayam jagath)." This was My reply: The powers of people are limited by their experience and knowledge. A person is just a part (pinda), while the Lord is Whole (Anda), the Force pervading the entire Universe. The Anda-Pinda Lingam symbolises this body-limb relationship, the whole-part aspect of God (Madhava) and humanity. The Sadha-Sivalingam represents the ever-auspicious Atma, which is beyond all dual aspects and concepts, immanent in all beings and everywhere. It is not negated by time; it is sadha (always) and sivam (beneficial and auspicious).

A real guru must be full of bliss

The Jnanalingam is the sign of the attainment of spiritual wisdom (jnana), when the last vestige of the delusion of "I" is wiped off. Even the feeling "I know" is gone. Then you are the Atma, pure and whole, entire and enduring, and your condition is best represented by the symbol of the Atmalinga . You have, each one of you, the tremendous power (sakthi) of the Infinite Consciousness (Atma) in you. Some are able to draw upon it; others just know it is there; others are unaware of the methods of tapping it or even of its existence. It all comes in time, through steady spiritual practice. The child, in time, grows into the father; the father becomes the grandfather, who in turn ages into a great grandfather. The spiritual aspirant rises step by step toward

the highest bliss by adhering to the instructions of the guru. You should tell the guru, "If you can help me, do so. If you cannot, do not give false hopes and mislead me. Confess your immaturity. I can then seek some other guide. Do not pretend to be a teacher when you are not even a good student." Ply the guru with questions, examine the guru's daily conduct, clear your doubts; then cultivate faith in the guru you have won. Many gurus are guided by their students and followers and warned by their disciples not to state certain views in public. These gurus act according to the dictates of people in power or people with money. A real guru must be like Sadha-SivaLingam, full of Bliss welling up from the consciousness of Divinity.

Do not harm your inner nature

As long as you are in ignorance, as long as you are untrained and lacking in knowledge, you cannot taste the Bliss; you cannot attain it. You are still bound by the three-corded rope: the black cord of inertia (thamas), the red cord of passion (rajas), and the white cord of equanimity (sathwa). Deny that you are bound, and the rope falls away. Hence, regulate your life in such a way that you do not harm your inner nature. That is to say, live in constant contemplation of your kinship with others and with the universe. Do good to others, treat all nature kindly, speak softly and sweetly, and become a child devoid of envy, hate, and greed. When your ego crosses the threshold of your family or group and takes kindly to those beyond, you have taken the first step to cross the threshold of illusion. Whoever has tasted that joy will thenceforward crave that only. How can the individual soul stoop to something less? How can the Truth be grasped when you are steeped in falsehood? How can a fish experience the sky? How can nectar and poison, day and night, God and the devil be together? Uddhava, when he came among the cowherd maids (gopis), discovered that Krishna was roaming in "their hearts" without a moment's respite. They were seen scanning the dust on the roads to discover a footprint of Krishna, so that they could fall down and worship it! Radha was the greatest devotee of all; she saw all footprints as Krishna's own, including even hers! Really, is there anyone who is not He? Any form that is not His? Any name that does not connote Him? Uddhava exclaimed, "I have no need of Narayana; I am content with this vision of the

glory of the devotee." For the sorrow and fear of today, the same prescription also holds: See Him of the Form of Siva in all; then all will yield joy and peace. That is the truth. The rest is false. Yama (God of Death) comes with delusion. Siva is seen; then Light dawns.

Love will destroy the roots of ego

Egotism is delusion (maya). How can you get rid of it? The field looks a dry waste, with no sign of green, and you feel proud that you have pulled up all the grass by the roots. When the showers come down, they sprout again. Love (prema) will destroy the roots of the ego. Plant love, protect it, foster it, and enjoy its fruits. Remove envy, hate, and greed from your heart, for they will smother the seedlings of love. Have faith; faith will grant you all that you need. How can you build your faith on a mound of sand? The deeper you dig the sandy soil, the greater the risk of the sides slipping down and burying your faith in doubt and denial. Listen to the call from within; believe that it is the call from Mathura (Krishna's birthplace). The Lord too condescends to grant you the chance to develop faith. Why did Krishna raise the Govardhana Hill and keep it aloft? It was to announce His truth and His nature, to instill faith and to implant courage. It is just a sign, as is each one of My acts. There is no task that I cannot accomplish, remember, no weight that I cannot lift. You have faith in Rama and Krishna because of the books that describe a part of their achievements and the experience of the spiritual aspirants who attempted to delve into their mystery. You have not demanded direct proofs of Divinity from either Rama or Krishna, have you? Have faith first, and then you will get proof enough. Take up the discipline of the recital of the Name. Why drag out your existence as a mere consumer of food, as a moving burden encumbering the earth? Eat, but transform food into good deeds, good thoughts, and sweet speech; move, but do not cause pain to others or add to their misery. Do not condemn yourselves as weak, sinful, conceited, wicked, outlawed, mean, etc. When you so condemn yourself, remember you are actually condemning Me, who is your Inner Self. Live so that with every breath and step you come nearer and nearer to Me.

Fasting (upavasa) means that all your thoughts and deeds and words on those holy days must be about God, that you should spend the day "near" Him, "in" Him, "for" Him. It means that eating, sleeping, and other bodily avocations have to take a secondary role, and meditation and repetition of God's Name have to take the main role.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

20. Soul Calling Supreme Soul

Date: 23 October 1961 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

There is no paucity of books promising to help people to discover themselves; there is no dearth of discourses to guide their steps to the goal. Bhadhram is only one among a thousand whom you will have heard already. You have read much and listened to many more discourses. The body grows and even starts declining, but the mind gets more complex and difficult to control; it waxes in restlessness. In spite of this, spiritual practices are either not taken up or, even when started, remain stationary and fitful. Suffering can be overcome only by yearning for the Lord. You must yearn to be free, to be rid of the chains that are binding you now - the iron chain of poverty or the golden chain of riches. Yearn as helplessly as a baby crying for its mother, as desperately as a calf mooing for the cow, as pitifully as a starving beggar prays for a morsel of food. Let the cry come from the depth of the heart, a heart that cannot bear the chain of attachments any longer. The Lord will not be drawn by noisy pomp or empty show. He will yield only to the claim of kinship, the call of the individual soul to the Supreme Soul (Atma to Paramatma).

Seek a guru who will see that you do not sink

In South India, in the Tamil country, there was a certain servant of God in a village, Thangalur by name. He had heard of the spiritual grandeur of Saint Appar and developed great admiration for him. So he built rest houses in his name and named his children after him so that they might grow up in the halo of his glory. He donated lands and houses all in the name of the saint he had not seen. See how faith preceded experience here. There are others who require experience before they fix their faith. The first path is more thrilling and lasting. Have faith in the doctor and the drug, then the medicine will cure. Do not wait till the medicine cures the illness to develop faith in the drug and the doctor. If you wait until you learn to swim to get into water - how else can you get the thrill of a hearty swim? Plunge boldly and start beating around with the arms and legs, or have a dry gourd or inflated tyre to buoy

you up. That is to say, seek a guru who will see that you do not sink. Well, one day by chance Appar himself walked into Thangalur, for he had missed his way and had to deviate. He noticed everywhere in the town Appar Rest-houses and Appar Charities and wondered how his name had preceded him. Then Adigal ran forward to his guru and took him home and prepared a grand feast for him. When his eldest son went to his garden to cut a few plantain leaves for dinner, a snake bit him and he died on the spot. Adigal, however, was not affected in the least; he covered up the corpse, heaping dry leaves upon it, and proceeded with the formalities of hospitality for the long-sought guru. However, the guru insisted on all the children of Adigal sitting around him during the meal, and he ordered the father to, "Go call everyone here." Adigal did as he was commanded. He called and the dead son rose. He too came and sat for dinner with the rest. When he knew what had happened, Appar said, "Your faith is greater than my power (sakthi)." When a house is to be certified as habitable, the engineer tests the foundations. The Lord too tests the foundations to see whether faith is true and deep. Shiruthondar, a devotee of Siva, was similarly tested by Siva, who came to him as an ascetic. When Shiruthondar showed that he had no attachment to the world, Siva revealed Himself and said, "Worship Me as your own Self." Shiruthondar demanded, "Reveal to me your Immanence in all creation and then I shall worship Me, for then I can know that I am really You." Siva blessed him, and he saw all as Light. The vision was the finale of his career in illusion. He merged as light merges in Light, without noise and without announcement. Even his body became a streak of light, which rose up into the depths of space.

The limited cannot know the depth of the Unlimited

You clamour for further experience of My divine nature and ask that your faith might be strengthened thereby. To know the taste of seawater, a drop on the tongue should be enough; there is no need to drink the whole lot. It is your waywardness, your egoism, your pride that make you doubt and deny what you have once tasted. Isn't one experience enough? Well, let Me ask, how can the limited know the depth of the Unlimited? How can the ant delve into the mountain? It is beyond you to know how or why I create things in My Hand. Or

consider this: you have no patience even to put up with the problems of a single family, though the responsibility is obviously yours. Imagine then what My patience must be, to listen to, tackle, and solve the problems of tens of thousands of families, with a love that is rare even among parents. No. You are incapable of gauging Me. You can never grasp the strength of this super-worldly bond that ties you to Me. The experience of that bond will come to you unawares. Your duty is to await the moment. Believe and be blessed. You are now worshiping Siva or Narayana or Rama or Krishna, right? Tell Me how you got started. Before you began, what experience did you have of Rama's compassion or inner peace or love? Or of Krishna's compassion or love?

"Your faith is not steady yet"

When this Great Divine Energy (Mahasakthi) decided to leave the previous body in 1918, Kaka Saheb Dikshit was told that in 8 years time It would take birth again. Abdul Baba was also informed that in 7 years This would appear in Madras State. Three months after the burial, appearing before a house at Kirkee, the declaration was made in answer to a query that the body had passed away, "The body has gone but will appear again." It was said 6 months after the burial, when there was an appearance at Dwarakamayi with familiar tin can. Word was sent to Das Ganu and Mahlaspathi. The statement made to Kaka Saheb was that the Manifestation would take place after 8 years, not "as an eight-year-old-body". It was recorded so, because Kaka Saheb relied on his memory and wrote it down only much later. The figure 7 came true; for this body incarnated in 1926 after spending ten months in the womb. So, even the statement of 8 years made to Kaka Saheb is true. Your faith in what you have seen and are seeing is not steady yet; you allow your ears to listen to all and sundry, and they tempt you to deny the evidence of your eyes. What a pitiable state this is! While painting a picture of a thing you have not seen, you have every freedom to draw it as the whim directs you. But try to draw a picture of a peacock, a bird you have seen, and you will realise that it is a very hard job. So too, it is difficult to get a true idea of Me, whom you see, although you are adepts at imagining Rama and Krishna to be of this form or that. There are hundreds of images and idols and pictures of the precious body that are abhorrent caricatures, for you have no correct

picture in your minds. Even while faith has sprouted as a tender sapling, someone whispers a story, and doubt attacks the plant like a deadly pest, for the mean and the small see everything as mean and small. They relish only the small and the mean! Search for the good, the noble, the elevating, and you will see only those things around you. Do not seek like the crow for carrion and offal. If you have faith, the Lord, who is the core of your being, will manifest Himself; He is within your grasp, provided you extend your hand. Do not try to cover up your faults or hide your vices under a cloak of religiosity. Be sincere yourself. Be aware of Him, who is the eternal Witness. He sees and knows all.

Examine each act of yours and see that you execute it with minimum noise. Transact all dealing with minimum speech. Do not shout to a person standing afar; go near them or beckon to them to approach you. Loud noise is sacrilege on the sky, just as there are sacriligious uses of earth and water.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

21. The Base And The Burden

Date: 24 October 1961 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

OF course, you all like this daily programme of speeches and discourses, for you feel that it is this and not the wearing of new clothes or the eating of extra dishes that really makes a festival; this is a spiritual banquet that you are relishing. But you must listen carefully, and, later, you should dwell upon what you have heard in the silence of your own heart and try sincerely to act upon at least a few of the precepts that you have gathered. That is the wise person's way of benefitting by pilgrimage to a holy place - their way of making themselves holier. Bhadhram, in his speech, quoted some verses where some types of men were laughed at as "asses and dogs". I do not like such verses, for they are cruel and wrong. It is wrong to talk about the children of immortality, the embodiments of Divinity, with such degrading terms. Do not develop this kind of habit; do not descend to such sacrilege. A person may have obstinacy or humility or patience, but that does not make him an ass. He may have a sweet voice, but that does not give him wings. Poetic fancies make things more confused; they make everything glitter and cause doubt; sometimes, they even spread a curtain of fog!

Impressions of many past lives warp the mind

People can reach the height of Madhava (Krishna, God) only by trampling down the mind and making it ineffective. The nature of mind is pure; the sensory impressions colour it and soil it with likes and dislikes. The mind of the animal is unaffected by the many attachments and attractions, the aversions and dislikes that hamper and haunt the human mind. These latent impressions (vasanas) warp the mind, already bent by blows and buffetings suffered in birth after birth. It is no use laying all the blame on the mind. It is like a watchman. Impress upon the watchman that the Lord is the paymaster, and he will obey not only the Lord who is his master but even the Lord's friends and companions. Join the group divine and see whether the mind continues to be intransigent. It will not disobey you then. It is all a question of proper training; if the watchman comes to know that you are unrelated to the

Lord, he will disobey you and take to his own misadventures! If the Lord is on your side, the watchman is also your man. Then you can tell the Lord that His servant is exceeding his limits and draw upon His Grace to bend him to your side. Bhadhram tried to give the meaning of the name Narayana in a very round about manner, saying Na meant this and Ra meant that and so on. It all sounded very learned and is really very clever; but one can go on endlessly in this way, saying Na means either this or that according to the fancy of the moment or the taste of the other. Naram means "water" and nayanam means "eye," and the implication is that only tears can win God for you. That is the inner purpose and meaning of the Narayana mantra. Other mantras also have their own latent meaning, like this one. Just as G and O and D add up not to the sound Gee O Dee but to God, so also A, U, and M, meaning the physical, mental, and spiritual worlds, the three planes of existence and consciousness (bhur, bhuvah, and suvah), add up to OM (the Pranava). So too, Narayana is the Lord of the naram in the nayana (water in the eye), who is won by tears of repentance and who rewards you with tears of joy. Win Him and He becomes as visible as all this - in fact, He is all this, only you do not see it so.

Only tears can win God for you

He is the base (adhara). You are generally carried away by the burden (adheya), not the bearer. Samartha Ramdas says that when Sri Rama returned to Ayodhya, everyone acclaimed with unbearable joy the sight of the flag on the horizon, for that was the signal for the arrival of the Lord back to His city. But Ramdas says that, in their exultation, the populace forgot how thankful they had to be for the flagstaff; for if Rama was the flag, certainly Lakshmana was the staff that held it aloft against the fiercest storm. You cannot have a flag without a staff, a burden without an base; a thing contained without a container. Grief is the container; what is the thing contained? It is joy, remember. A smile is the rose that grows on the thorn of a sigh. Shed tears, but only for joy, joy that you are released from the chain of desire. Durvasa was a formidable ascetic, no doubt, but he was afflicted with pride and envy. He tried to pull Ambarisha down from the pedestal of glory only to have his anger recoil on himself with serious results. Desire leads you to doom.

External insignia are not essential for aspirants

Of what avail is shaving the scalp while leaving inside it a multitude of desires clamouring for satisfaction? This kind of renunciation or asceticism is a fraud on the person doing it and on society. No Avatar, you will note, has granted monkhood to any aspirant. These external insignia are not essential or even necessary. Non-attachment born out of wisdom and fostered by the Grace of the Lord - that is the precious capital for spiritual advance. Some gurus take pride in the number of monks they have launched on society, as if that is an achievement to be congratulated upon! If monkhood is heaped upon a head that has not received the qualification of non-attachment, it is a burden on the recipient and a blot on the giver. The guru and the disciple are both prisoners of their incompetence. When both are prisoners of their desires, who is to release whom? Only he who put them in can grant reprieve or pardon. The monk (sanyasi) has to declare his death and perform obsequies for himself and bury his past. He destroys all that binds him to the rest and to his past: his name, history, and fame. He avoids any reminder of his erstwhile adventures in pursuit of sensory joy. He flees from his friends and foes, his habits and habiliments, his hobbies and prejudices. But we find people who have taken the vow of monkhood still clinging to their long-established practices and habits. Instead, they must completely break with the past. That is why, in the Gita, renunciation of action and not other types of renunciation is prescribed. Renunciation of action leads to mental renunciation. To teach people, then as now, the assurance is, "I shall look after the well being of all who renounce the ego and take refuge in Me (Yogakshemam vahaamyaham)." Remember this is not a partnership, it is either you or I. If the dancer trips, he blames the drummer, as the saying goes. That is not right in the spiritual field. You have to climb the peak alone. The I comes up at the first provocation; "I am blamed," "I am neglected." The ego is up in arms against the world. To put it down, you must see Krishna in everyone, everyone who is blaming, praising, neglecting, or honouring you. Some of you quote the Telugu stanza of the Sumathi Shathakam, which advises you to give up "relatives who do not come to your help, horses that do not gallop as soon as you are in the saddle, and Gods who do not shower blessings when

you fall at their Feet." But remember the person to whom the poem is addressed! Who is to do as advised? Sumathi, right? Sumathi means "a person whose intelligence is mellowed by wisdom." Such a person will certainly be helped by relatives and will certainly be blessed by the Gods. So, the advice is unnecessary for Sumathi. The contingencies contemplated will never arise for a sumathi.

The 'furnitures' that are left in charge of man

Wait for that grace, in readiness. That is to say, do not cling too fast to things that please the senses or get caught in the coils of the attractive and the pleasant. Bhadhram spoke of the headmaster of a school. Yes. He is a good example of the attitude you should develop. He knows all the time that the chairs, tables, and benches are not his but, nevertheless, he knows that it is his duty to see that no item of furniture or equipment is lost or damaged, that everything is handed over intact when he leaves. Therefore, he keeps vigilant watch, though unattached. The senses, the intelligence, the heart, the mind - these are the furnitures put in your charge. Look after them with care. If any is damaged by oversight, make the appropriate entry in the list, explain the circumstances, and crave grace. Reference was made by Bhadhram to women having devotion, spiritual wisdom, and detachment equal to men. Still, I know that many are worried when they hear women reciting the Pranava (OM) during the auspicious time before sunrise (brahma-muhurtham) every day at the Nilayam. They forget that sound itself is fundamentally Pranava, that all breath has Pranava immanent in it. Can women avoid or keep away from OM, which is ever-present in the ether (akasa) and which their breath is reciting every moment? As a matter of fact, the feminine principle (nature, prakriti) comes first and the Masculine Principle (God, Purusha) is second. You say Sita-Rama, Lakshmi-Narayana and Gauri-Sankara, not putting nature in the second place. Women have equal chances and equal rights to attain Godhead.

Make your life a mountain of auspiciousness

Just as every breath reminds you of OM, every little act is an act of worship,

remember. Every tiny thought, every faint whisper has to be so directed that it may curb the vagaries of the mind and help in guiding it Godward. A hundred little naye paise add up to a round rupee. Distill Divinity into every moment. Like the uninterrupted line of river Ganga water that flows on the Sivalinga when consecrating the Sivalinga with repetition of Rudra (Rudra japam; Rudra is a name for Siva) during Rudra-abhisheka, let every moment be hallowed by the thought of Siva. Perform that Vedic hymn in praise of Siva (that Rudram) and make your life safe (bhadram); why, let it become an unshakeable Mountain of Safety. I find you reading and appreciating the love (prema) of the sages, milk-maids (gopis) of Dwaraka, and monkeys (vanaras) of past ages; but you ignore your present responsibility. For example, examine, each one of you, how far you have put into practice what you have heard from Me. How far have you profited by coming to Puttaparthi now or so often in previous years? How far have you shown love to others, the love that you find to be My all. Remembering the Lord's name, I have told you often, is the best exercise to acquire love toward God and all that is great. But have you tried that recipe? Has it become as essential for you as the very breath? That is the test of your sincerity and of the success of your pilgrimage to Puttaparthi this Dasara.

To find out what is righteous (dharma) and what is unrighteous, apply this one test: If it goes counter to Truth and Love, it is unrighteous. If it promotes Truth and Love or is full of both, it is righteous.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

22. Sweet Abode Of The Lord

Date: **November 1961** / Location: **Prasanthi Nilayam** / Occasion: **Dasara**

Every day is a festival day here. At Prasanthi Nilayam, it is year-round Dasara. And yet, to show that it is desirable to value tradition and observe ancient and well-established rites, this festival is celebrated at this place. When the fruit grows, it is filled with sweetness. Even the margosa fruit loses its bitterness and turns sweet when it ripens. So, too, the ultimate destiny of each person, however hard or bitter they may be now, is to ripen and turn sweet. Everyone will shed bitterness and turn sweet; there is no doubt. The sweet (madhura) taste will then win for them the Lord of Madhura (Mathura, or Madhura, is a name of Krishna's kingdom). I am not very happy when I hoist this Prasanthi Flag on this building. I will be happy only when each one of you hoists it and keep it flying on the mansion of your heart. Only then can you enjoy peace, contentment, and purity. Grow the twin wings of love and faith; then you can soar freely in the sky of the Lord's grace. You can see the Lord only through His wonders. His laws are unique and mysterious; there is no use arguing about them, for experience is the only proof of their reality. You taste them, and therefore they are real. Do not spend your intelligence in devising crooked queries. The mystery of the Avatar is beyond the reach of intelligence. It can be grasped only by means of genuine faith. It cannot be reached by logic; the sense organs of action and perception are useless instruments, for the body, mind, and intelligence all are of the category "seen" but not of the category "Seer". To see the Seer, inner vision has to be cultivated. As long as you feel you are separate, you cannot see the whole. The individual (vyakthi) can never see the Supreme Power (Sakthi).

Attachment to any body is not desirable

Even when the Lord appears in person, doubt assails. It is of the very nature of things! I utter no meaningless word. I do no purposeless deed. I plan no significanceless action. I never engage in unholy activities. I have nothing that I need. My joy consists in fulfilling your aims, in making you reach the goal. The one thing that I ask for is a love-filled heart. Believe and hold fast,

without entangling yourselves in a mesh of empty explanations and imaginary arguments - that is the way to profit. Do not develop attachment to this body. Why, attachment to any body is not desirable. This hand gives you things, but My hand is that which creates all this. That is My body. My course is unique, different from all that you know. I do not identify Myself with anything. Ice is water, water is ice. The Form (saguna) is without form (nirguna), without form is this form. You may fall into the quagmire of doubt: "Rama came, Krishna came, Sai Baba came, this Puttaparthi Sai Baba comes and challengingly declares that He is all these! How can this be?" You can never understand this phenomenon. That is the understanding you need. I am incomprehensible. You will see the world coming here in about a year or two. Remember that in no previous era (yuga) did the people get so many clear intimations of the nature of Avatar as now; you are indeed fortunate. The Lord's Form can be perceived only by means of the eye of love (prema) or the eye of wisdom (jnana) or the eye of yoga, not the eye of sensual activity.

The Lord is interested in your keeping the heart pure

The Kali yuga (the age we are now in) is, in reality, very holy; you too are very fortunate. You have the chance to see, touch, and converse with the Avatar of the Lord. The Avatars are not ten; there are very many. You must distinguish between those who are born as parts of Divinity, as imbued with the divine essence, as messengers of divine mission, as instruments of divine will and purpose, and Avatars . Parasurama is not an Avatar in the real sense. The Avatars that have come and gone have all cut down trees because they were white-ant infested, but this Avatar is different and unique. Now, the white ants are removed, the tree is saved, protected, fostered, and encouraged to grow. I am not inclined to punish; I am the goldsmith who repairs and reshapes broken ornaments. Rama came as the embodiment of truth, virtue, and peace (sathya, dharma, and santhi); Krishna came as the personification of love (prema); now, the embodiment of all four is needed, because, at the present time, knowledge has increased beyond the capacity of character. You cannot realise how much the Lord feels for your sake. His concern is over your wantonness and wilful disregard of His words, for He is interested in your keeping your hearts pure and unblemished. I am very anxious to make you all

reach the goal. My task is to purify your hearts. If you engage yourself in constant meditation of the Name of the Lord, with devotion, humility, and faith, the Lord will stand at the door of your worship room, awaiting your wish. Only, do not allow your mind to waver. Genuine yearning will make your heart pure. What is important for you is your own experience. What is your basis for understanding the Divine? It is your own bliss (ananda), felt and tasted by you. You say, He saved one Droupadi from ignominy, one Ahalya from petrification, one Prahlada from torture, one Gajendra from death, but do you know how many more such have been blessed similarly, through grace? The stream of grace is ever flowing fast and full. That grace has no limit, but you see it only as limited.

The three activities of the Lord

I have come now with the limitations that you need. The Lord's activities are three: Creation, Preservation, and Dissolution. They are the characteristic attributes of the Lord. His aims are all pious and pure (sathwic) for the protection of the world, the welfare of the world. My exultation is Mine, My prompting is Mine. I will never abide by another's likes or dislikes. I do not pay heed to such. I am the Witness of everyone and everything. All are in My control. So who can tell Me what to do? In a few years, years that can be counted on one's fingers, all of you will realise that I am the embodiment of all powers. The wise, the inquiring, and the suffering will gather here from all parts of the world. Have the fixity of hold; say, "Whether I succeed or not in getting from you the external fruit, I shall never give up." Do not get dejected when suffering comes and estrange yourself from the Lord, blaming Him for it. The loss will be yours and the repentance will be agonising. You have no hunger. If you have genuine hunger I will not keep you suffering from it. Churn the mind and collect the butter and melt it in the yearning of the heart. When the butter has not melted, the reason is: the warmth of the yearning is insufficient. I do not appreciate your extolling Me, describing My glory. State the facts. That produces joy. It is sacrilege to state more or less. Demand from Me the removal of your sufferings, as a right. Give me your heart and ask for My Heart. If you give Me only your word, you will get only a word in return. I give you just what you ask for, remember!

Sweetness cannot arise without suffering.

When sufferings come, why do you estrange yourselves from the Lord? He gives you suffering for your good, for the advancement of your devotion. If suffering is granted, you seek peace; you search for the knowledge of the mystery; you go to ten persons and they each tell you some aspect of the truth. Without suffering, sweetness cannot arise! When you suffer, if you feel, "The Lord is no longer mine," and stray away, the Lord too will declare, "He is no longer Mine!" Beware. Wherever you are, when you wholeheartedly seek to do obeisance (namaskaram) to Me - My Feet are there, before you! "Hands and feet everywhere (Sarvathah pani padhah)," it has been announced. If you feel poignantly, "Lord, do you not hear My prayer?" My ears are there! If you cry out, "Don't you see, O Lord?" My eyes are there that instant. Rama, Krishna, Shirdi Sai, This Sri Sathya Sai Baba; that form is so, this form is thus - why all such misgivings and doubts? The body is the same, only the dress worn is different. Do not be led away into the morass by others. The Lord will never deviate from the word. It may be that you take Me to mean something else. It is My will (sankalpa) that happens always; it is My will that is being worked out at all times. Sankalpas are of three different types: the decision is arrived at after long deliberation, the decision is taken after the desire to do arises, and the wish and the fulfilment are like the sound of the shot and the hitting the target, both happening at the same instant.

Remembrance of God's name should become automatic as breathing

Do not slander or abuse others or your own selves as weak, sinful, wicked, or low. When you do so, you are slandering or abusing Me, who resides in them and you. All are of the divine nature of the Atma ; all are pure and holy. Some might have erred in using the intelligence and discrimination given by the Lord and so might have been guilty of "mistakes", but they are not therefore "sinful". To condemn oneself as "I am a sinner born of sin (Papoham papasambhavah)," is itself the direst sin! Use your intelligence and march on, putting one milestone after another behind you! Practise remembrance of the Lord's name (namasmarana) steadily so that it becomes as automatic and as

necessary as breathing. Of what benefit is it to be in the same stage of spiritual practice forever? Take the Form you like, the Name you love, do repetition of the Name and meditation, and no evil thought will arise. Wicked thoughts will flee. When they have fled, what remains is the Embodiment of Atma (Atmaswarupa). You must lead your lives according to My words, without the slightest modification. First have faith, then experience is granted. Even in the case of the previous Avatars, that is the order of events, is it not? You worship with faith and you experience Grace. Faith results in Grace without your being aware of it. You must take in the medicine I give and also follow the diet I prescribe and avoid the things I prohibit. I always act, calmly. I never hurry. I do say, "Let it be so," to every request of yours. You have come into this world to reach the Lord. Ignorant of that purpose, you have hoisted on your head the weight of illusion and are struggling to unload it, suffering under its weight. What is the use of running after external pleasures and temporary joy? As long as you are caught in this ignorance, you can never taste the bliss of realisation; you cannot even recognise it much less attain it. But if you are patient and calm, I shall grant you joy without fail. Do not yield to despair. Even the infant lotus buds will bloom in their own good time. By the cumulative effect of the good done in many previous births, you have secured this fortune; you do not know how much you have gone through, but I know! And, whether you know or not, I shall certainly give you your need.

Do not treat the body with contempt

You get the 'body' through the karma of the past; you get the 'type of character' according to the tendencies (vasanas) cultivated in the past. The body is the result of karma to be exhausted in the present life; the quality (guna) is the product of karma stored to be experienced in future lives. Do not delude yourself that you are the body or be fascinated into an attachment for it. But it is your task to guard it from harm and keep it in good trim. For, isn't it with your body that you are imbibing the exhilaration of the bliss of the Lord, the Majesty of the Lord? Therefore, do not deride the body or treat it with contempt. That equipment is intended for your journey toward the Lord; it is the chariot of the Lord; do not neglect or keep it in disrepair. "Oh, this is

my fate, my own past punishing me, I must go through it and suffer it, I cannot escape it." Thus people get disheartened. If it is so inescapable, what is the use of prayer, of remembrance of the name, of meditation, or of the ritual of worship? Win the grace of the Lord, and all the accumulated burden will be burnt into ashes in a moment! Why blame the Lord for the "writing on your forehead?" It is you who wrote there, and it is you who must wipe out the script. The evil you do writes; the good you do wipes! Let your mind dwell on the Lord, and the mist of the past births will melt before the rays of that sunrise; if you do not project those rays, the mist will thicken into darkness.

Never deprive yourself of the joy in store

While in the previous body, I had said, "I will come again after eight years." Dikshith wrote it down as if I said I would appear as an eight-year-old! That is a mistake. Having cast off that body on the Vijayadasami Day, 1918, I granted actual concrete darshan off and on to various devotees for about six years. Once, I appeared before Abdul Baba and told him, "The body has been disposed off, but who can dispose of Me?" I had revealed to Abdul Baba the news of My coming advent. But do not waste your time in arguments about the identity, whether this is he or he could be this! Believe only as much as you have known; never deny the joy you have derived or deprive yourselves of the joy in store. Worship, offerings, incense, waving of lights - these are all preliminary steps, the first few rungs in the ladder. If you are ever on the alphabet, when are you to learn to spell and read words and sentences? Does the Lord need the things you offer? Does He require articles of comfort or luxury? No, it is you who need them! Does He live upon the food you place before Him? Remember, the person who goes beyond the externals wins the victory. The Lord is not pleased with externals; He searches for the feelings, the internal urges. I do not want the flowers and fruits and miscellaneous packets that you bring in your hands when you come to Me. Come with your hands empty, saying "What can I give You that has not come from You Yourself? When You gave me this heart, it was clean and pure; now, after preparing in that vessel the food for life so far lived, I am offering it to You, as clean and as pure as when You gave it to me, after removing all traces of the impressions or smells of the things cooked in it." Say that, and offer that

heart.

Cultivate kinship of the heart through devotion

How long are you to stagnate in the same primary class of leaf, flower, fruit, and water (pathram, pushpam, phalam, and thoyam)? Keep in the leaf of the body the fruit (viz. the heart) and the flower (viz. the mind) and the water welling from the eyes; then, grace will descend on you without fail. Let the hands be empty but the heart be full. Cultivate the kinship of the heart through devotion and faith. Reduce these external attachments and demonstrations. What I seek is your joy, your happiness, your mental peace, and your unflinching courage and resolution. You are indeed more fortunate than the sages, the monkeys (vanaras), and the cowherd maidens (gopis) Your chances are greater; you get the seeing, touching and conversing, all three. Therefore, do not ask for the fulfilment of paltry desires; ask, "Make me eternal, absolute." I have started the work for which I have come. Till now, I was engaged in collecting materials - iron, cement, brick, lime, and the rein. Now the foundation has been firmly concreted and the building has to rise. That structure of Mine will cover the entire Universe. No longer can this prayer hall or the auditorium now being erected hold the people who will gather. The sky alone can be the big enough shed. Hereafter, there are no stops! Within a short period, you will witness many miraculous events. Even while you are wondering, this Puttaparthi will be transformed into Madhura.

Life is a game football; you can kick the ball of the objective world (samsara) with as much gusto as you can command provided you remember that if it crosses the lines of the path of Brahma and the path of righteousness (dharma), you are out and the ball has to be brought in again. They set the limits within which you can play the game, remember!

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

23. Primers Of Spiritual Education

Date: 26 October 1961 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

These discourses have now become a daily event, so perhaps you may be developing a headache. A feast should come only rarely; it should not be frequent. If it is a daily affair, it loses its charm, its savour. If I speak to you every evening, at the end of the speeches by others, even though you may all like it, still I am afraid it may add up to a big burden. Moderation (mitha) is desirable in food and drinks and in exercise, both physical and spiritual; that is the best cure (hitha); then only can you advance in position (gathi). However, as regards God, there is no question of overdose or underdose; any dose should be welcomed. But I do not recommend such mixtures as Thirumalacharya administered to you now! His speech was full of the family affairs of Gods, their family quarrels and family problems. When even the devotee should get over the likes and dislikes of kith and kin in order to deserve the grace of God, how can anyone talk of the Gods themselves being entangled in these low knots? These only drag Divinity down to the dirt of your sensory minds. The only kith and kin the Lord has are the devotees who have dedicated themselves to Him, those who have attuned their heart-strings to His melody. To ascribe the material relationships of the human family to Godhead is sheer nonsense. The Lord, who is beyond time and space prior to the Beginning and subsequent to the End, can never be described in terms of the mushroom memories of humanity, the temporary phenomena of human family and human society. Such descriptions cannot make any sense to those who have experienced the glory that is God. Do not make God modern to suit your fancy. He is neither ancient nor modern; His countenance never changes, nor His glory. Present Him, if you must, in a modern manner, in a modern style, so that He might be understood today. If a child is reluctant to swallow a pill, insert it in a plantain and offer him the fruit; he will swallow both fruit and pill. But do not change the pill itself to suit the whims and fancies of the child's taste, because then the illness cannot be cured!

Come with empty hands to carry away my Love

Take the Lord to be your father or mother, but only as a first step to your overstepping that relationship and merging in the absolute. Do not stop on the steps; enter the mansion to which they lead. The connection with the soul (Atmasambandha) is the everlasting unchanging association (sambandha). As a first step, you use the flower, the lamp, the incense, etc. to worship the attributeful form. Soon, your devotion moves on to newer forms of dedication, newer offerings, purer and more valuable and worthier of your Lord. No one sticks to the slate for long; you feel that you should place before the Lord something more lasting than mere flowers and something more yours than incense. You feel like purifying yourselves and making your entire life one fragrant flame. That is real worship, real devotion. Do not come to Me with your hands full of trash, for how can I fill them with Grace when they are already full? Come with empty hands and carry away My treasure, My love (prema).

Human impulses and emotions have to be guided

Those who get their feet worshipped by their devotees and those who think that it is a great boon so to worship them are both lacking in sense. Ritual worship of the guru's feet has an atmosphere of publicity, both for the guru and the pupil. Besides, why worship the body, which is decaying every moment? It is also very wrong to offer cash or gold or other articles, whether they are from surplus wealth or from hard-earned property. For, after all, even these trinkets have no intrinsic value. Obey the guru, follow his instructions, progress along the spiritual road - these are the best means of worshiping the guru's feet. When you achieve some success in these, the craving for worshiping the guru's feet itself will disappear, must disappear. Nowadays, the worship is done by people who feel it is a cheap substitute for sincere devotion that the guru too welcomes and prefers! Offer the heart, clean and pure, broadened by spiritual practices to include all living beings in its grasp. Offer this to the guru, and seek only gurus who do not indulge in declamations about themselves or in derisive attacks on their rivals. Worship is just a means of educating the emotions. Human impulses and emotions have to be guided and controlled. Just as the raging waters of the Godavari

river have to be curbed by dikes, halted by dams, tamed by canals, and led quietly to the ocean, which can swallow all floods without a trace, so too the age-long instincts of man have to be trained and transmuted by contact with higher ideals and powers. When the fruit is ripe, it will fall off the branch of its own accord. Similarly, when renunciation saturates your heart, you lose contact with the world and slip into the lap of the Lord.

Three types of approaches toward the Lord

There are three types of approaches toward the Lord: the eagle type, which swoops down on the target with a greedy swiftness and suddenness that, by its very impact, fails to secure the object coveted. The monkey type, which flits hither and thither, from one fruit to another, unable to decide which is tasty. And the ant type, which moves steadily but slowly toward the desirable object. The ant does not hit the fruit hard and make it fall away; it does not pluck all the fruits it sees; it appropriates just as much as it can assimilate and no more. Do not fritter away the time allotted to you for sojourning on each in foolish foppery and fanciful foible, which always keep you outdoors. When are you to walk indoors into the warmth and quiet of your own interior? Retire into solitude and silence now and then; experience the joy derivable only from them. Since you can't swim across the flooded stream, you board a raft. So also, since you can't master the Formless, you resort to the Form with attributes and struggle to swim across to the Formless through worship and contemplation. But it is not advisable to remain ever on the raft, amidst the currents and whirlpools, is it? You must discard this conventional worship some day and reach higher. The leaf, flower, fruit, water (pathram, pushpam, phalam, thoyam) are all primers for the initial stages when children join schools. Clean the mind of all the animal and primitive impulses that have shaped it from birth to birth. Otherwise, just as milk poured into a pot used for keeping buttermilk curdles quickly, all the finer experiences of truth, beauty, and goodness will get tarnished beyond recognition. Do not postpone this duty to yourself, especially now, when you have the chance to contact Me. I do not find you offering Me the thing I look for; you bring things that are unworthy and impure. I feel very much when I find you so agitated and troubled with the cure so near at hand. Reduce your wants; minimise your

desires. All these material knickknacks are short-lived. When death deprives you of resistance, your kith and kin take off the nose-stud, and, in their haste, they may even cut the nose to retrieve it! If you go on heaping desire upon desire, it will be impossible to depart gladly when the call comes. Rather, become rich in virtue, in the spirit of service, in devotion to the Higher Power. That is what pleases Me and saves you.

Pleasure is the head; pain is the foot. You cannot welcome pleasure without at the same time inviting pain. They are both always together, inseparable. Understanding this live always in peace.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

24. Thirty-six Gems For You

Date: 21 November 1961 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

Speaking at Prasanthi Nilayam on 21 October 1961, announcement was made by Baba to the world that He has entered upon the divine mission He has come down for, as man, in this era (yuga), to revive righteousness (dharma), establish peace, and fill the whole world with love so that all may now reach the goal anxiously striven for by them in the aeons that have gone by! The following were offered by Baba as the Thirty-sixth Birthday Message:

1. Rectitude is the royal road to the seat of God.
2. One who conquers the world is a hero, but the hero of heroes is one who conquers oneself. One is mighty; one has prowess beyond compare.
3. Faith is the first step to the grace of God.
4. Truth will lead you to the Deity; untruth will lead you to the devil.
5. The aspirant must bear all circumstances with patience; that is the most beneficial path.
6. Fill every deed with the vision of the Spirit, the outlook of the Super-self.
7. To grasp the significance of the omnipresence of the Lord, believe that there is no name that is not His, no body or thing that is not His.
8. He who is steady in wisdom stands closest in the company of the Lord.
9. The real liberation is the release from bondage to inborn impulses.
10. When a person has renounced the fruit, whatever activity they engage in, that is the last stage of yoga itself (samadhi).

11. When you try something above your capacity, that is conceit.
12. When you do something less than your capacity, that is theft.
13. Full happiness consists of auspicious conversation, auspicious thoughts, auspicious deeds.
14. Recognise and accept your own faults and errors; do not attempt to unveil the faults and errors of others; this discipline helps the aspirant a great deal.
15. Cool, comforting conversation that is most congenial to the aspirant is the habit that will take the aspirant to the goal.
16. Whose property did the crow steal? Whom did the cuckoo crown? Understand this: if your tongue is sweet, your name gets honoured.
17. Achieve mastery over your tongue and achieve thereby mastery over the world.
18. He who obeys the dictates of the Lord is indeed at ease, he is a yogi; he who disobeys the dictates of the Lord is the diseased (the rogi),
19. When heart is bound to heart, heat of argument finds no place.
20. Impure food makes the mind also impure; the sun of the inner glory of righteousness (dharma) can never dawn within the impure mind.
21. If you give up contemplation of the Lord, who is the treasure of undiminishing bliss, and spend yourselves in contemplation of the means of achieving the victory of the promptings of your heart, you can never get released.
22. If you drop the weight of argument and unfold the twin wings of faith and action, you can float and fly happily in the deep blue sky of the Almighty Presence.

23. The craving for fruit will render all spiritual discipline fruitless.
24. Let the mind die, let the intellect be destroyed, let the body disintegrate. Remember, nothing can harm you, the indestructible Atma.
25. Use a little common sense and you will know that the body is not your own Self; it is liable to decline and death. That is the first step for man (nara) to become God (Narayana). The 'I' to which reference is made is not the body, it is the Supreme Self (Paramatma). Trying to realise this is penance (tapas).
26. Where singing the name of the Lord fills the air with its splendour and fragrance, that place indeed is Vaikunta (the abode of Vishnu).
27. While the skin of cattle is useful for making footwear, the human skin is not worth a speck of dust. Yet, those very humans can ascend to the height of dignity if only they carry out their holy tasks.
28. The world must be made the abode of love. First, cultivate love for yourself; then, fill the village where you are with love; later, spread love to the district; and thus let it cover the entire world.
29. Whatever you feel is good if done by others to you, however you feel they should honour you, do unto those others also and honour them likewise yourselves.
30. When you do not know, confess that you do not know. Pretending to know and covering up ignorance is very dangerous, especially to the spiritual aspirant.
31. The idea of Brahman is beyond the capacity of those who have no control over the agitations of the mind. The natural afflictions of the causative world will cease only when the idea of Brahman is well established in the mind. The delusion of the causative world must disappear if one must get the joy, Atmic Bliss.

32. However great a hero you might be, whatever your prowess and intellect, devoid of the grace of God you degenerate into a slave.

33. Whoever loves and serves all is loved and honoured by the Lord.

34. The birds taking shelter for the night awake and fly away to the four quarters at sunrise; so too, the wife and children, fortune and wealth - all fly away without as much as even a farewell notice. Establish yourselves firmly in this fact and make immediate efforts to achieve the eternal, the permanent, the unchanging.

35. Of what use is all the poring over tomes throughout the day and night, of what use is all the fame achieved by means of scholarship? What you have put into practice, that is the measure of your learning, your education. Without that, you are but a learned titled fool.

36. Strive for the happiness, the joy of all others as earnestly as you strive for your own; strive for the peace of the world as diligently as you strive for your own. That is true divinity, that is true humanity.

If there are two or more kings or states, there is bound to be greed, envy, jealousy, hatred, and anger on one side and fear, ambition, and vengeance on the other. No one can then know the joy of perfect peace. Similarly, as long as you feel the reality of the "many", as long as you take them to be outside you, separate from you, you have fear, hatred, greed, and all the rest of the pests. When you know that the "many" is a figment superimposed on the One by your own ignorance, you become Master, and sole Monarch, and all fear vanishes. That stage is mukthi: Liberation from the thralldom of worldly life.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

25. Birthday Sparks

Date: 23 November 1961 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Birthday - 36

This day, 23 November 1961, is significant in more senses than one. It is not only the day that marks the date of birth of this Avatar . The previous Sai Avatar was also inaugurated on a Thursday, and on the day after the full-moon day of the month of Karthika. Today is also the day after the full-moon day of Karthika and a Thursday! You are all lucky that you could come to Prasanthi Nilayam from great distances and have this audience (darshan) on this auspicious day. But the joy you get today is only a reminder of the eternal full joy that is in store for you, in fact, for all humanity. That joy is your birthright; this momentary bliss is but a drop of that ocean; to get that, you must dedicate yourself to spiritual practice, continuous and conscious spiritual practice. The symbol on the Prasanthi Flag, the symbol that is put up in concrete form in front of the Nilayam, has therefore to be clearly understood by every one of you. Conquer lust, anger, and hatred, roam in the expanse of equal and impartial love for all created things, and then, you are fit for inner communion with Divinity (yoga), which will open the petals of your heart. Then, from the fragrance and beauty of that lotus will emerge the flame of spiritual wisdom, illumining world illusion (maya) into destruction until you and the flame become One. It is when you approach near that it appears in all its majesty, in all its overwhelming size. Suppose you see it small, what does that indicate? Not that it is small but that you are far away! Remember. The sun and moon appear huge, huger by far than the stars, for they are near and the stars are far. Approach the Lord and realise Him as Big; do not stand afar and prate that He is small!

You are all entitled to joy that is eternal

Incarnation is for the sake of fostering righteousness (dharma), for demarcating and directing it, and to show mankind the true path of desireless activity. That is the one task I am engaged in, through various channels. Instead of reforming you without your knowledge, it is better to reform you with your own cooperation and knowledge. So, I reveal to you my Glory, off

and on, to a little extent, through what you call miracles. I do not engage in them for name and fame; I am miraculous by My very Nature! Every moment of Mine is a Miracle! The miracles are beyond your understanding, your art and skill and intelligence. I must save every one of you. Even if you say nay and move away, I shall do it. Those who have strayed away from Me have to return to the fold sooner or later, for I will not allow them to be distant for long. I shall drag them toward Me. That is My basic nature, love, and mercy. Today, at this meeting, as members of this gathering, you are all overwhelmed with joy. I can see that. But this is momentary, this will not last. You are all entitled to broader realms of joy, deeper springs of joy, and joy that is eternal. Your real dharma, the purpose for which you have taken human birth, is to earn and enjoy that bliss, which no external contact can change or diminish. To earn it is quite easy. It can be done by everyone who just sits calmly and examines themselves and their mind, unaffected by likes and dislikes. One then discovers that life is a dream and that one has a calm refuge of peace inside one's own heart. One learns to dive into its cool depths, forgetting and ignoring the buffets of luck, both good and ill.

If time is used well, an ignorant can become an ascetic of the highest order

The doctor first diagnoses the disease. Then he prescribes the course of treatment. So too, you must submit yourself to the diagnosis of your illness, viz. misery, travail, and pain. Investigate fearlessly and with care, and you will find that while your basic nature is bliss (ananda), you have falsely identified yourself with the temporary, the frivolous, and the paltry and that attachment brings about all the sorrow. You have to realise that both joy and sorrow are passing phases, like white or dark clouds across the blue sky, and you have to learn to treat both prosperity and adversity with equanimity. If only time is well used, the ignorant (pamara) can become an ascetic of the highest order (a Paramahansa) and that ascetic can also be transfused into the Universal Substance and Substratum (Paramatma). Just as a fish can live only when it is immersed in water, when it feels the element all around it, so too the human is an animal that can live only when immersed in bliss (ananda). One must have bliss not only at home, in society, and in the world but, more than all, in

the heart. As a matter of fact, bliss in the heart produces bliss everywhere. The heart is the spring of joy. That spring has to be touched by constant meditation, recitation of God's name, and the intermittent dwelling on the glory, the grace, and the inexhaustible manifestations of the Lord. Hold fast to the goal; the devotee should never turn back. Never give way to doubt or despair.

Pray, as the performance of a duty

A person driving a car concentrates on the road, for they are anxious to save themselves and others from accident. Fear is what induces single-mindedness in this case. Love is a greater force for giving concentration. If you have steady and resolute love, concentration becomes intense and unshakeable. Faith develops into love, and love results in concentration. Prayer is possible and begins to yield fruit under such conditions. Pray, using the Name as a symbol of the Lord. Pray, keeping all the waves of the mind stilled. Pray, as the performance of a duty for your very real existence, as the only justification for your coming into the world as a human. "Mine" and "yours" - these attitudes are only for identification. They are not real; they are temporary. "His" - that is the truth, the eternal. It is like the headmaster of a school being in temporary charge of the furniture of the school. He has to hand over the items when he is transferred or retired. Treat all things with which you are endowed just as the headmaster treats the furniture. Be always aware that the final checking-up is imminent. Wait for that moment with joy. Be ready for that event. Have your accounts up to date and the balance already calculated to be handed over. Treat all things entrusted to you with care and diligence. Narayana is the Lord of the Water; (naram means water). But what is the water of which He is the Lord? He resides in the heart, and His presence when recognised melts even the stoniest heart, and the water emanates from the eye as tears of joy, gratitude, and fullness! His Presence is said to have been recognised by the person when the person is suffused by sympathy, making them sad while another is sad and joyful when another is filled with joy. Narayana is He who brings tears of joy to the eyes! The function of your tear glands is to express internal joy, not to weep like a fool or a coward.

The person devoted to God knows no failure. The Name of the Lord, if taken sincerely, overcomes all obstacles. It is saturated with sweetness; it has no iota of the bitterness of defeat in it. When the Saviour is by your side, why doubt whether you will be saved?

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

26. Destiny Is No Iron Cage

Date: 24 November 1961 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

Velury Sivarama Shasthry is not only a great scholar, he is a spiritual aspirant, too. Today, he gave you the gist of his scholarship and experience in the speech on the secret of incarnation (Avatara rahasya). In spite of all this, let Me tell you, the mystery of Avatars is beyond your understanding, beyond anyone's understanding. How can those in illusion (maya) grasp something that is beyond it? The body, intellect, thought, mind, heart - all are in illusion and operate only through illusion. But the disappearance of illusion is a fact, not a delusion. In algebra, the symbol x is used for the unknown quantity. When its identity is discovered, as it eventually is, the symbol x disappears from the equation. In the same way, God is x , the entity you have to discover. To say that God is the prime cause of everything is true to a certain extent, but you are not thrust by Him into an iron cage of destiny from which there is no escape. He has endowed you with discrimination and detachment and, with a sense of awe and wonder, you have to use these for attaining Him. Though bound, you are not entirely incapacitated. A cow that is tethered to a post by means of a rope can walk around it and graze on all the area that the rope can traverse; when all the grass therein has been eaten, perhaps the master might loosen the knot and tether it to another post a little farther off. Graze freely as far as the rope allows, but do not stray far from the post and pull at the rope and inflict pain on your neck.

Do not blame fate for your condition

On the land that belongs to you, you can grow the food you need or you can sit idle and allow it to lie fallow. You are the cause of your ruin or uplift. The tools are in your hands; you can learn the skills; you can break the shackles and escape. But if you grovel in slavery and bondage, who can save you? Do not blame fate or writing on the head for your condition. The writing has been done by you yourself. You fail or pass and you are detained or promoted on the basis of your performance in the previous class, is it not? So also, the status in the present life is decided on the basis of the activities in previous

lives. When the headmaster gives a character certificate on the basis of which you apply for a job, he frames the sentences with reference to your conduct in previous years when you were in previous classes. You are responsible for the nature of the certificate. If your conduct was good, you get a good certificate and a good job; if it was bad, you get a bad one and a poor job. It is you who write, you who wipe the writing on the head, or "destiny". There was a great saint in Kerala some 500 years ago, Bilvamangala by name. He would call on Krishna, and Krishna would appear. Such was his devotion and spiritual practice. One man who suffered from chronic stomach-ache heard about this, and he pestered Bilvamangala to find out from Krishna whether it would end or not. Bilvamangala agreed and when Krishna appeared next, he asked him the question. Krishna replied, "When the rolling stops, it will cease." The unfortunate man interpreted it to mean "when he stopped rolling in pain," and he got desperate, because he had perforce to roll in the agony of that ache. So he left Kerala and wanted to go to some holy place to meet some holier person who would procure for him a more satisfying answer. Bilvamangala told him that he had to suffer this trouble due to the result of his activities in previous births. He took rolling to mean, "rolling from birth to birth".

Results of past action will melt when remembrance of the Name is done

On the road to Kasi that the man took, he came to a free feeding place run by a pious lady, Kururamma by name. When she saw his agony, she spoke to him kindly. He told her that he had decided to drown himself in the Ganga, for he was told there was no escaping the consequence of past sins. Kururamma called him a fool. She gave him the holy mantra, "Gopijana Vallabhaya namah," and asked him to repeat it. She said the Name would cure him completely. The poor man uttered it when the attack occurred next, and he was surprised to find that the pain had gone! Yes, gone; even though he pounded his stomach, it did not return. He finished his pilgrimage to Kasi, returned to Kerala, and fell at the feet of Bilvamangala, who asked about his ache; the ache with which he had to live because it was earned in past lives. When he was told that it had disappeared, he called on Krishna and asked

what he had meant by "rolling". Bilvamangala thought it meant rolling from one birth to another and acquiring good and evil; the sick man took it to mean 'rolling in pain' when the ache came on. But Krishna had meant rolling in this objective world (prakriti) and its changing phenomena. When the man lived in the name of God and had no other thought, the rolling had ceased; the Name and the chain of destiny cannot exist together. The result of past bad action will melt away like fog before the sun when remembrance of the Name is done. This was a revelation even for Bilvamangala.

You become that which you feel

Just reflect on this for a minute: How did man forget his Divinity? How did he fall into this delusion of littleness? Then you will know that it must be the result of the mind running after momentary pleasures. What then is the remedy? The answer is just one word: Worship. Do everything as worship. "You become that which you feel (Yath bhavam thath bhavathi)." You can get the feeling for the Divine only if you have a taste of the love of the Divine. The Avatar has come to give you a taste of that love, so that the yearning for the Lord will be planted in your heart. Mastery over mountains of information has been attained by man now; but wisdom has lagged behind. Hence, man's capacity to probe and progress into the realm of the Universal and the Absolute has to be developed. Vivekananda went once to a town during his wanderings. Lots of important persons, painters, scholars, philosophers, poets, and artists gathered around him and plied him with an endless array of questions. Vivekananda was engaged the whole day in answering them. A Harijan who was standing in a corner at last got the chance to fall at his feet, and Vivekananda asked him why he had come. He asked, "Swami, you must be very hungry; shall I bring you some milk? Or, if I get some flour, you can prepare chapathis (leavened bread) yourself if you will not eat those prepared by me; no one seems to have thought of your food." That man had love (prema), which is a divine gift. That is more fruitful than all the knowledge packed in a library of ancient texts. There are three types of men: (1) the non-believers, who consider worldly objects as real in themselves; (2) those who believe in a will behind all that they see and experience and bow to that will and try to explore that will so that they may adhere to it and not run counter

to it; and (3) those who have realised that the objective world has only relative value, not an absolute value. The latter two will not blame anyone, even the Lord, for their ills. As long as the son is a minor, he will not be entitled to the share of parental property. Similarly, as long as you are a minor in spiritual practice, not fully grown up and able to look after your own destiny, you will have to be suffering and struggling. Again, if you say, "I, I, I", you are left alone, and you stumble and fall. But if you say, "Not I, but You," then all things will be added unto you.

Object of performing miracles

What exactly has been won by people who have struggled for a hundred years? They have hungered and eaten, slept and awakened, laughed and wept - but what is the result of it all on the personality or on the world? Nil. When humanity flows purposelessly and meaninglessly into the sands, the Avatar comes to warn and show the way. The one task has to be fulfilled in various ways; that is the mission of the Avatar . The principle of incarnation (Avatara Thathwam), as mentioned in the scriptures, was explained by Velury Sivarama Shasthry now. Let me tell you, only those who know the scriptures can understand Me. I am determined to correct you only after informing you of my credentials. That is why I am now and then announcing My nature by means of miracles - that is, acts that are beyond human capacity and human understanding. Not that I am anxious to show off My powers. The object is to draw you closer to Me, to cement your hearts to Me. Getting to know Me is also a part of your destiny. The other day, on Vaikunta Ekadasi, when nectar (amritha) was being given by Me, a few who had come weeks ago, who had witnessed the creation of nectar on the river-bed and who had taken their seats in the long line of devotees, had to leave just as I was approaching their line, and they missed the chance of perhaps a lifetime. It is all earned opportunity. As a matter of fact, each one of you has to be saved: you have to escape from this net when the opportunity comes. I shall not give you up, even if you forsake Me; for it is not in Me to forsake those who deny Me. I have come for all. Those who stray away will come again to Me, do not doubt this. I shall beckon them back to Me. I bless you that you earn the vision of the Divine in this life itself, with this body itself.

When Rama enters the mind, desire (kama) has no place therein. Desire ceases, when God seizes the mind. In fact, since desire is the very stuff of which the mind is made, it becomes non-existent and you are free. This stage is called the death of the mind, the merging of the mind, or the killing of the mind.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

27. Spiritual Academy Of Man

Date: 02 December 1961 / Location: Repalle / Occasion: Installation of Sri Sai Baba idol in the Mandir

The study of sacred books and listening to religious discourses are meant to develop self-control and peace. But, from the confusion here, which you seem to enjoy, I find that your study and listening have all been a waste, You cannot put forward as excuse the hugeness of the gathering, because if each one of you stops talking or clamouring or complaining, silence can be established that very second. Again, you cannot say that you have been waiting since early morning and therefore you have become restless. Well, what is to be said of the earnestness that melts away just when the event for which you were waiting so long has started? If each one keeps silent, though there are lakhs of people here, it would appear as if there is none. Try to keep silent. Remember why you have come and why you have waited, whom you have come to listen to. Now it is better. That is good. That is why I always say that one's real nature is peace, equanimity (santham); that, if one only tries, one can rediscover one's nature in a moment. One has only to pull oneself up, to recollect the origins from Brahman, one's identity with the changeless Atma . People may err in an uproar or be right in quiet-calm, as you are now. Your own enthusiasm has caused this delay; for the road to the temple is, as the organisers say, completely packed and even there, in the temple, there is not a square inch of vacant space! So it was suggested that the idol could be brought to this bungalow for consecration, and it could be taken later and placed in position at the temple.

Do not dishonour the heritage of India

Remember, Sai does not live in structures of stone or brick and mortar! He lives in soft hearts, warm with sympathy and fragrant with universal Love. Temples and image-worship have some value in stimulating one's higher impulses, of diverting instincts along more socially useful channels. That is why in India no chance was lost to lead people Godward. All arts were utilised to that end. Even a drunkard sways to the tune of a faintly remembered

music composition that proclaims the Glory of God or the joy of self-realisation. Everyone, whatever the stage of spiritual advance they may have attained, is prompted, gently nudged, to move forward. This has made India the spiritual academy of humanity. You are privileged to live out this life in the lap of India; that is, in the lap of Vedanta . Remember this heritage, and live in such a way that you do not dishonour it. Do not envy countries that are attempting to reach the moon and Mars and to explore the reaches of outer space. Of what avail is it to master those regions while remaining slaves of every gust of malice or fear? Of what avail is it to travel at ten thousand miles per hour with a mind weighed down by dark impulses of the savage past? Inquire into the causes of the lack of peace that prevails even in the most advanced communities of the West and you will find the reason to be the wild growth of pride and greed, vice and sin. There is no fear of God or respect for age or dread of sin. They attach meaning and value only to the external symbols of riches or power, the container, not the thing contained. For example, this marble image is only a container. The thing contained is the essential nature (Sai Thathwa). Just as a cup is the base support and the milk in it is the supported, you pour Sai Thathwa in this Form and you call it Sai Baba; you pour it in another vessel of a different form and call it Srinivasa or Siva or Krishna or Rama.

Idol worship is just the beginning of spiritual practice

For those in the kindergarten of spiritual practice, an idol is necessary, like pictures in a spelling book. Until you are able to recall instantly the image of a horse as soon as you see the letters h, o, r, s, and e, one after another, the drawing of a picture must be held before you with those letters underneath it. So also, you must have a form like the idol, called Sai, prominently before you in order to give shape to your loose and indefinite conception of the True State (divine Thathwa). Once you can conceive the True State independently, without any form, or as all forms and names, the idol is superfluous and can be dispensed with. Installing this marble image in the temple yonder does not mean the end of all effort for you. In fact, it is just the beginning. A large number of temples all over this country are in various stages of ruin. Not only here but in other countries also, the same thing holds true. Why make all this

noise and build another temple to be added to the list? New temples rise and old temples fade from memory and fall into decay. This is because you do not realise that the substance is the same, though it is presented in different forms and under different names. One chapter of your penance (tapas) is over; you have this idol and you have this function, but the next chapter is to pour your devotion into this idol and make it ever alive, to shape your own lives so that you are fit to stand before Sai with folded hands. Only the pure and the holy can offer themselves fully to God.

Do your best first and seek God's help

I do not like people wasting the precious moments of their limited years of life in idle talk of vain pursuits. Nor do I like cowardly hesitation. Act, act with all your might and with all your mind; make full use of the skill, capacity, courage, and confidence with which you are endowed. Then God will bless you. You must have heard of the devotee of Rama who sat on the roadside by his upturned cart, wailing his bad luck and calling on Rama to lift the cart into position. Rama did not appear to raise the cart and fix the wheel. He therefore began chiding his faith itself and to doubt the experience of the sages who described Rama as the Ocean of Mercy. Rama came into his presence then, but only to tell him, "You fool, I entrusted you with some intelligence and strength. Use them. Put your shoulder to the task now before you. When you have done your best and that best is found not enough, then call on Me; I am ever ready to reinforce your exertions with My grace." The devotees of Rama, with His name on their lips and His Form before their eyes, lifted mountains and bridged the sea. You who call yourselves devotees of Atma are too weak even to carry about your bodies, not to speak of the burden of your kith and kin. Having installed Sai in your village, you must grow in love (prema), for Sai is love personified (Prema-swarupam). Sa means Sarvasakthi (All-powerful) and Sarvasakshi (the Witness in All); Ayi means mother; Baba means father. The Love (Prema) of Sai is the love characteristic of the Father and the Mother - not the earthly father and mother but the Father and Mother who are the Witness of every thought, word, and deed in every being. Respect the father and mother who are concrete, and then transfer that type of respect to the Abstract Father or Mother or Guardian -

God. Learn to install the unseen Lord in your heart by installing the see-able image in the temple. Proceed from the gross to the subtle.

Discover Truth by exercising discrimination

Just as patients require a doctor, devotees require some name and form to which they can run for consolation and courage and advice. So it is for your sake, as a great step in your spiritual practices, in your progress toward internal peace and harmony, that this installation is made by Me now. "Wherever My name is sung, there I install Myself," it has been said. You ignore the Divinity you have as the core of your being; at the same time, you seek it in others. That is the tragedy. You insult yourself by feeling helpless, weak, and inferior. Cowardice and self-condemnation - these do not become a spark of the divine Flame. You can discover your Truth (Sathya) by a little exercise of discrimination. Born in delusion, breathing in delusion, groveling in delusion, people are unaware of their heritage and feel incapable of attaining it. People are desperate, seeing no means of escape; every effort to achieve peace entangles them further and tighter in the coils of delusion and of restlessness. Like flowers of variegated hue, each redolent with fragrance, people are all basically of the same genus of Brahman. The fragrance arises from the divine Essence, which is the real reason for existence, for everyone has to realise that Essence and thus end the series of births and deaths. Like a student leaving college once the degree is awarded, once the Truth is realised, one has liberation. One can leave the college and study and all that bother.

You have to rely on your own resources

But you must get the degree. Why are you averse to making the effort needed to pass? Instead of that, you run after this teacher or that. You extol him to the sky and call yourselves his followers. Of what avail is his victory to you? He has achieved - well what about you? His achievement is entered in his account at the bank as his deposit and he can draw cheques upon it. But can you draw from it? Even today there are great sages in the Himalayas, I know, who are witnesses of everything and whose love embraces the whole

of humanity, but that does not help you. You have to trek the path alone and rely on your own resources. They can provide only guide maps and encouragement. You have come to Repalle today from a hundred distant villages, and you know that you have to go back to the places from where you came. So too, it is inevitable that you have to return to the place from where this journey through birth and death started, namely, Brahman. There is only one sun, but it is reflected in a million tanks and wells and pots. God is One, and His reflections are the individuals (jivis), each with the sole (Atma) apparent therein. There are lakhs of people here now, and in each one of you now, Swami is shining in your heart. That is the real Soul full bliss (Atmanandam). Keep it fresh forever and foster it carefully. That is the secret of peace.

28. The Search For Quiet

Date: 23 December 1961

The name "Sanathana" that you have adopted for your Workers Cooperative Industrial Institute is strange, even for the department over which the minister who is here presides. But it is that name which has brought Me here. You are all sanathana (eternal), though you appear nuthana (new) on account of this new dress you are wearing. This you can discover only through learning that instils discrimination and emphasises basic values. Your Chief Minister said this morning, when this Society was formally inaugurated in Shriramapuram, that all our troubles arise out of ignorance and that the spread of education will automatically remove them. I had to correct him and say that all our troubles are due to the fact that the educated are not educated at all in the subjects that really matter. They have neither discrimination nor humility nor trust. They do not honour or render gratitude to parents. They laugh at those who turn toward God and those who give the world a minor place in the scheme of things. They do not appreciate the simple pleasures of meditation, of the recital of the name of the Lord, of silence and service. Still, they are burdened with heavy degrees and titles that proclaim that they are "educated". That is the tragedy. The educated have no iota of the peace that the uneducated have! The educated live in greater discontent and misery and are tossed about without a rudder in a sea of troubles. They do not know anything about the source of peace and bliss that they carry about within themselves; they allow the inner consciousness to go dry by neglect; they are not aware of the means to irrigate it with the waters of love and to grow therein the fruits of Tranquillity (Prasanthi).

Without faith in God, man is blind

They read books but do not correct their modes of thinking and living. The shelves of the dispensary are full of drugs; but how can your illness be cured if you simply learn the catalogue by heart, or even the pharmacopoeia? You have to select the drug you need, drink it, imbibe it, assimilate it, and counteract the cause of illness. For example, I have now been moving around

this Bangalore and other places for more than 22 years, but though lakhs of people have seen Me, those who have understood My Nature are very few. This is because the simple exercises of listening, reflection, and concentration are not practised; people do not know how to recognise Divinity in themselves or others. They simply prod and exhort each other to serve all as God's own forms. This has become mere conventional talk devoid of inspiration or meaning. In India, from very ancient times, the glory, the Divinity, the sanctity of humanity has been proclaimed and the way of recognising it has been taught. Only those who have learnt them deserve to be the sons and daughters of this land. Others are like the kokil birds, the cuckoos that are born in the nests of crows; their place of birth is India, no doubt, but they are basically aliens, of a different species altogether. Guru Nanak said that without faith in God, man is blind; without it, you are moving corpses. Your life might be as grand, as beautiful, as rich as the Taj Mahal - but remember, the Taj is but a tomb! Whatever the method of worship, whichever the name or form, it is faith that matters; it is faith that gives life and energy for higher things.

Do ritual worship for the sake of humanity

There is this panicky talk about the calamities that the conjunction of 8 planets will rain upon mankind. Like the tail of Hanuman with the flame at its tip, which lengthened on and on, setting all Lanka on fire, this panic is increasing every moment and setting everyone on edge. Believe Me, nothing will happen; no, there is no danger at all. Of course, in this terror, people are everywhere doing sacrifices and worshipping, which are by themselves good. They give you some courage and peace of mind. So far, so good. Even among these, I like worship that is done not for the sake of the individual but for the sake of humanity. By all means, do worship in order to promote the happiness and peace of living beings. Develop that love for men everywhere. That is My mission too, My resolution, My Will, My Vow - the planting of love in every human heart. The Lord is love (prema); love is the highest Atma (Paramatma). If you fill your heart with love, hatred, envy, greed, and egoism cannot enter it. There will be no devastation for a loved-filled earth. The only chaos that may happen in February next is the chaos of failure for many

candidates in the General Elections! No one else need worry over the conjunction. Chaos or no chaos, your duty is to pray for the welfare of the world and to work for it as far as lies in your power. Pray for supreme peace for all; do your bit for it by not adding to the disturbance that exists. Everyone is basically God, that is to say, basically, you. He is the Inner Motive in all. Every Indian knows this in the depths of their heart; they have imbibed it with the mother's milk; that knowledge, and action according to that knowledge, are the hallmarks of the Indian. That should make the genuine Indian fearless; for the Atma, which every Indian really is, cannot be affected by pain or death or joy or accident or calamity. What is the use of searching for quiet, available only in the silence of the Inner Awareness, in the jungle of the world (prakriti)? It is like searching for something you have lost in your room under the street lamp. Your "self" you have lost; search for it in you - that is the path of wisdom.

Your mind too is like the genie; it will destroy you if left idle. So, order it to move up and down the pillar of Soham - "He-I," "I am He," "I am That."

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

29. An Attitude, Not A Solstice Direction

Date: 14 January 1962 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Sankranthi

Shastry spoke in detail of the importance of the Uttarayana Day (when the sun starts northward). The day has an outer and an inner significance, the inner having greater value for aspirants for spiritual progress. I do not attach much value to the outer meaning: the sun taking a northward direction from today - the six months from now on being holier than the six that ended today and therefore, as Shastry said, the Uttarayana being better suited for spiritual practices. One's life must be a perpetual spiritual practice, and any day is a good day for starting spiritual practices, whether it falls in the southward or northward movements of sun. One need not wait for the sun to turn north. The months and sun's passage toward the north or south are all related to the subjective world (prakriti), so they have only relative value. Uttarayana is a quality of the nayana (the eye); it is matter of attitude, a point of view. It is not an ayana (solstice point). When your sight is on Brahman, it is Uttarayana (northward); when it is on the objective world, it is Dakshinayana (southward). When you have developed excellent quality, every day is Uttarayana whatever the almanac may say. When you have a fever, the tongue will be bitter; when you are healthy, you know all tastes. The bitter tongue is the Dakshinayana, the sweet tongue is the Uttarayana. To associate this with the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn is just a convention.

Avatar comes for the protection of all with good virtues

The astronomical Uttarayana comes to you whether you strive for it or not; it is part of the law of nature. But for the real Uttarayana, you must make efforts, tremendous efforts. Know that there are only two entities: the substance and the shadow, (or, rather, only One and its appearance, produced by ignorance), the Atma and the An-Atma, the seer and the seen, the rope and the snake. When this knowledge becomes part of the mental make-up, it liberates you from delusion, and you see Kailas (Siva's mountain abode) at the end of the northward journey. Like Kailas, that stage is all light, all white. The path is straight and hard but the goal is glorious; it is nothing

less than Illumination. It is when people forget this goal that the Avatar comes to save them. The Avatar comes when there is yet a remnant of good men, yet a trace of righteousness (dharma), for what is the use of a doctor when the patient has collapsed? When a large number of good men are afflicted with the fear for the survival of goodness, the Lord incarnates to feed their drooping spirits and revive faith and courage. "Parithranaya Sadhoonam " in the Gita does not mean the "protection of wise aspirants or ascetics;" it means the "protection of all who have good (sadhu) virtues;" Good virtues might be found even in animals and insects and worms. The Lord will guard and guide even such. He comes to promote dharma, and virtue is the foundation of dharma . The worldly outlook will deceive you and land you in grief. You do not know which articles will satisfy your inner cravings, and you try to possess whatever attracts your eye. When you crave the thought of the Lord and the company of the Godly, then you are in Uttarayana . Bhishma was in that mood. He prayed, "From this transient world of decay, lead me to the everlasting world of bliss (Asatho ma sath gamaya)"; "Give me the effulgence of Thy grace and illumine my soul with truth (Thamaso ma jyothir gamaya)"; "Save me from the torture of birth and death, destroy the cravings of the mind, which produce the seeds of birth, and lead me to immortality (Mruthyor ma amritham gamaya)" That prayer and that yearning of Bhishma gave him the vision of Krishna when he passed away. That was the real Uttarayana for him.

Use the body well for the purpose given

The individual (jiva) and the Divine (Deva) are the two rails along which the engine mind (manas) is dragging along the coaches of attachment to sense objects. Each coach contains the items of luggage you have, viz. mind, intellect, memory, ego, etc. Atma is the driver of the engine. If the coupling with the engine is not well connected, the coaches will be left loose on the line. Faith and trust are the couplings; see that they are fixed tight. They do not fix themselves, remember. You have to use the strength and the intellect awarded to you. Grace will be granted only then. Spend the energy (sakthi) with which you are endowed; then pray for divine energy (RamaSakthi). Rama (the Lord) will then bless you - if you ask for one, He will grant you a hundred.

This is the working body given to you; use it well for the purpose given. I see many people here who have come in special buses that take them round to many holy places. I shall tell them some words. When you reach a holy place, entertain only holy thought. On seeing a doctor, you remember your illness; when you see a lawyer, you wish to consult him on some problem of property or personal spite; when you see a temple, you are reminded of the Force that animates the universe. Your travel should be not for amusement but for using discrimination (not vinodha-prayana but viveka-prayana). Do not use such pilgrim buses for going on picnics; do not seek to purchase vessels and clothes and rarities in the shops of the towns you visit; pay attention more to the need for filling your minds with holy experiences over which you can ruminate after returning to the quiet of your home. When you are in a holy place (kshetra), think of the divine dweller of the place (Kshetrajna).

Move in the midst of the sacred and sanctifying

Load your bus with thoughts of the Glory of God, not with tinsel and tin cans. Again, do not get involved with the bad traits that may be found in the places to which you go. Seek the company of the good, move in the midst of the sacred and the sanctifying. That is what you came so far for. The shelves of the hospital are full of all types of medicines - pills, poisons, powders, emulsions, lotions, mixtures, etc. Ask not for the sweetest or the most attractively packed drug but for the drug that you need for the illness from which you suffer. So too, though the holy place has a thousand other attractions; do not run after them. Concentrate on the thing you have come for. The enjoyer (bhogi) and the sickly (rogi) should be transformed into the contemplative saint (yogi); take the drug from the dispensary that will make you that. Become also fit for the vision of God that you seek in the temples. Go humbly, with love in your heart for all creation; take the heart-flower full of the fragrance of love, the mind-fruit uncontaminated by the pests of greed and egoism; become sweet in word, deed, and thought so that you can dedicate yourself to the service of God's plan. A person with faith in God will not be moved by panic, as some people are, at the approaching conjunction of eight planets. I assure you there will be no extra danger to the world as a result of that conjunction. No additional calamity will happen. Why, the unrest

that now exists will even become a little less! When the Avatar has come, why fear like this? Why dread imaginary dangers? One more thing: you will have seen the announcement that you should not bring to Me fruits, flowers, etc. Some of you, I know, are sad that I have announced so. But let Me tell you: Come to Me with empty hands; I shall fill your hands with gifts and grace. If your hands are full, what am I to fill them with?

Any balance of karma -consequence will involve some years of imprisonment in the body. The scriptures (sastras) advise man to wipe off the balances by four steps: by scotching all sparks from the fire; by getting rid of all signs, symptoms, and causes of fever; by paying off all balance of debt; and by suffering off all consequences of karma .

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

30. Immanent In You

Date: 04 March 1962 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Shivarathri

You have heard four people speaking now on the magazine Sanathana Sarathi and the value derived from it by readers. I know that you have been squatting for an hour or so, and you will come again for longer sessions later in the day, which will continue the whole night. Let Me tell you that far from sympathising with you, I commend your endurance, for such hardships make your lives worthwhile. To call it a hardship is a sign of delusion and ignorance of values. Just now, the entire country is under the shadow of a fear, the fear of the conjoint effect of eight planets that converge in one line for some short time. In order to ward off the evil, persons who have so far never spent a paisa on charity are spending lavishly for holy rituals, worship rites, and the propitiation of planetary powers. So far, so good; let some money flow from one pocket to another that is more needy. Let money circulate. Let the spirit of charity grow, even out of panic.

But calamity, danger, and death cannot be avoided for all time; they are inevitable factors of life, and you have to learn to live bravely with them. This can be accomplished only by uninterrupted prayer, and not by spurts of worship actuated by sudden fear. Purify your hearts and your thoughts, feelings, emotions, and speech; strengthen your nobler impulses. Then, no panic can unnerve you; nothing can shake your stability, your inner peace (*prasanthi*).

Lord's play to reveal the nature of devotion

Your prayers will be heard and answered; the Lord has no distinction of big or small, of high or low. There was in Bengal a devotee named Madhavadasa, who realised when his wife died that he had lost his home, for his wife had passed away; so he gave all his riches to the poor, donned a yellow robe, and wandered alone as a pilgrim to the Jagannatha Shrine. There, he did such deep penance that the concrete image soon became the abstract reality and the abstract reality became a perpetual vision. He lost all sense of time and

space, of awareness and ignorance Then the Lord, with Subhadra, His Sakthi-aspect, moved toward him and placed before him the gold plate used by the priests to keep food in front of Jagannatha in the sanctum sanctorum. When Madhavadasa awoke to his gross surroundings, he saw the gold plate with the pile of delicious food upon it; ate his fill, and returned to his inner paradise, which he had left for a while. Meanwhile, the plate was reported lost, assumed to be stolen, and discovered by the seashore near Madhavadasa, who was promptly arrested and led to the lock-up by some very efficient policemen. He was beaten mercilessly but did not seem to mind it a bit. That night, the chief priest had a dream in which Jagannatha asked him not to bring food for the Lord again into the shrine, for, "You bring Me food, and when I eat it, you start beating Me!" Then he realised that it was all the Lord's play (*leela*) to demonstrate the devotion of Madhavadasa and teach others the real nature of devotion.

The Lord will not allow a devotee to be harmed

Some scholars and pandits of Puri did not feel happy at this sudden rise to fame of a stranger from Bengal; so they called Madhavadasa into their midst and challenged him to an intellectual duel. Madhavadasa was not a pandit of that type: he had learnt the scriptures only as a staff to help him walk, as a guide to action, not as a stick to beat others with. So he accepted defeat even before the bout began and signed a statement to that effect, which the leading pandit was only too glad to accept, because Madhavadasa had a reputation for scholarship that was really frightening. The pandit hurried to Kasi with that token of victory. He waved it before a gathering of scholars and demanded that they all pay him homage as superior even to Madhavadasa. But the Lord will not allow His devotee to be humiliated. When the signed statement was opened and read, they were all amazed to find that it was a statement declaring that it was Madhavadasa who had achieved victory and it was the pandit who had signed underneath acknowledging his own defeat!

The Lord will not be silent when the devotee is insulted or harmed. But, remember, the word is devotee. Well, who is a devotee, and how can you claim the privileges of that position? Unless you have unshakable faith, you

do not deserve that name. If you are rooted in that faith, success is yours, without a doubt. But do not think that I am angry or displeased with you on that account. This evening, the emergence of the egg-shaped stone of Siva (*Lingodhbhava*) is My duty, My responsibility, rather My nature, which must reveal itself on this holy day. I gave Kasturi and Thirumalacharya shawls and blessed them at the beginning of this meeting, since they wrote My Life in English and Telugu - the book called Sathyam Sivam Sundaram. Some of you might have wondered why I liked the publication of this book on My life. Well, I like the production of all kinds of things, so why should I not like this? I responded to the prayers of devotees and allowed them to write it.

Ramayathi ithi Rama
"He who pleases is Rama"

The joy of the devotee satisfies the Lord; the joy of the Lord is the reward of the devotee.

Truth is the basic reality of you all

The title, Sathyam Sivam Sundaram is full of meaning. It speaks of Me as immanent in every one of you, remember. *Sathyam* (Truth) is the basic reality of you all; that is why you resent being called a liar. The real "you" is innocent; the real "you" will not accept an imputation that is false. The real "you" is *Sivam* (joy, happiness, auspiciousness) - but not *shavam* (corpse). It is beautiful (*subham*), permanent (*nithyam*), bliss (*anandam*). How then can you bear being called otherwise? The real "you" is beauty (*Sundaram*) so you resent being called ugly.

The Atma has got entangled in the body, which it does not like; it is weighed down by shame when you identify it with the body and attribute to it the weaknesses and deficiencies of that physical vehicle. The magazine Sanathana Sarathi is the result of My resolve, My venture, My bliss. Nothing

can stand in the way once I have decided on any step. When the principle of Supreme Soul assumes human form and appears - not with the Supreme Power and Form but with the power and form of illusion - it is difficult to comprehend it, especially when you are in an uncertain vacillating mood. Once you understand the purpose and the procedure, all doubts will cease.

Love (prema) is the characteristic of the Lord; the love that you bear to yourself is itself the love that is the nature of the Atma, which is the Lord. That is why I place all emphasis on Love in its various forms of affection, filial piety, brotherhood, fraternalism, philanthropy, etc. My Message, My Mission is Love, Love, Love; nothing else. That is the substance, remember, of the Vedas and of righteousness (dharma). When that fills the heart, all fear and all vice will vanish.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

31. Spend Your Days With Siva

Date: 04 March 1962 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Shivarathri

Looking at this vast sea of faces, I do not feel like speaking to you; I wish to derive bliss (ananda) by just looking at you from here; looking at your devotion and your faith. Your looking at Me, Me looking at you - what else is needed for bliss to well up? You yearn to hear my words and listen to My voice also. That is the measure of your love. You are so accustomed to hearing people speak that if you do not hear, your ears ache! If they do not speak, their tongues become restless and even restive. They are both so used to activity that it has now become difficult for you to sit quietly for a few minutes, communing with the silence within you! Man is called so because people have the capacity to enjoy manana (inward contemplation of the meaning and significance of what one has heard) - not only this capacity but also the urge to the inner life. But you have not yet emerged out of the stage of listening, and the teachers have not progressed beyond the stage of talking, so you crave My discourse today. Rama Sharma recited some fine stanzas composed by him on Siva and on the means of winning His grace, evidently because the day is Sivarathri. The poems are so full of sweetness that you should not discard even the rind. He described the Lord as the indwelling spirit of every living thing and called upon you to practise the unremitting chanting of the Name of the Lord.

Judge your own spiritual practices unaided

However, some of you might question why. Some have come to Me and asked this very question: "We have been engaged in this spiritual practice for years now; we have written the name of God lakhs of times, we have repeated it ceaselessly for many years, but we have not succeeded! Why have we not reached the goal?" I want each one of you to search within yourself for the answer. Examine your own effort and achievement and judge your own spiritual practices, unaided by Me. Have you yearned, have you pined, have you wept for the Lord as Thyagaraja did, for example? Have you shed tears of contrition tears of exultation while repeating His name, so full of sweetness

and beauty, while visualising His form, so full of loveliness and charm? You might have wept, but who knows for what, who knows the impulse that swept you into that sadness? Were they tears shed out of fear or greed or pride - or because the Lord was not near? A little child sits with a book of the Upanishads on its lap and turns over the pages, intent on the printed lines and watching the curious types, deliberately, slowly and with great care. A monk does the same. Can you equate the two and say they are both engaged in the same act? The child is unaware of the treasure it holds in its hand; the monk gets into immediate contact with the spiritual power the lines convey. Find out for yourself whether your spiritual practices have also been purposeful and sincere, wakeful, and worthwhile. In his poem, Rama Sharma sang of Sayisa, the Sayi as Isa or Iswara, or Siva Sayi, as he is fond of addressing Me. He spoke of the great, well-nigh immeasurable, indescribable joy of merging with Siva-Sayi and of the devotion and love necessary for that consummation. When he was describing it all, I could see that you were thrilled. The exhilaration out of which that song was born and the joy he himself experienced while reading it before us is a sure means of attaining that goal, let Me assure you. Whoever has the enthusiasm, the steadfastness, the determination to reach the goal will certainly succeed. Cultivate that faith in ultimate success; never despair or cavil or doubt. That is My advice to one and all. Success is your birthright, and you must get it sooner rather than later.

Be concerned about your goal and your ideal

Above all, do not give room for the cancer of doubt. Why argue over Me, over this point or that concerning Me? Who exactly is the Baba who you discuss and debate! What does it matter to you who I happen to be? You are concerned about your goal, your ideal, your experience, your effort, is it not? Why then worry about My origin, My nature, My mystery, My miracle? The basic thing is the hand, and the cup it holds is secondary. The supported is less in importance than the support, the Basic Reality, the Pure Existence. When you cannot reach down to your own Basic Reality, why waste time in exploring the essence of Godhead? As a matter of fact, you can understand Me only when you have understood yourself, your own Basic Truth. The gross

can grasp only the gross; its categories of knowledge can proceed only as far as that. Fish die when they have to breathe the air above the water. Children can learn the alphabet only with the help of boards, slates, pencils, and pieces of chalk. Spiritual aspirants, going through the primers of spirituality, need symbols, images, and rituals. You cannot discard Name and Form until you transmute yourself into the Nameless and Formless - just as the fish needed water and could not come up into the atmosphere as long as they did not transmute themselves into land animals, giving up their aquatic nature. That is the why the Nameless and Formless has often to assume Name and Form and come before humanity with limitations imposed by its own Will, so that it may be loved, respected, worshipped, listened to, and followed, so that the purpose of humanity may be fulfilled.

"I give only one thing: bliss through love"

A wooden elephant, however artistically perfect and lifelike, is but a toy; it cannot create the awareness of the genuine elephant. A library stacked with books is incapable of impaling the authentic touch of the living guru. You may trek to ten temples and then, at last, arrive here, believing this to be the eleventh. That is as fruitless as wandering from the tenth library to an eleventh. You must see, hear, study, observe, experience, and reflect; then only can you understand Me. You will learn then that I am love (prema) itself; that I give only one thing, bliss (ananda), through the love. My task is to distribute solace, courage, and peace. That is to say, My characteristics are the ancient authentic ones; only the Manifested Form is new. My desire - if I can put it in so many words - is this: More and more should yearn for Me. The desire could be realised only if I assume this Form and come among you. Those among you who have been following the unfolding of My story will have discovered this by now, though even to the best of you only a fraction of the mystery is revealed. You are like a Telugu audience sitting through a Tamil picture, or vice versa. The nuances, the subtler significances, the deeper meanings are all beyond the grasp. My language, My role, My career, My purpose can be understood in a general way only by sitting through the entire film, watching earnestly and vigilantly and trying to get at the meaning of every word and act with patient attention.

Attaining good character is very important

As a matter of fact, language is an impediment in dealing with Me. All languages have a place in the con course of men, bringing out their feelings, hiding their weaknesses, shaping their thoughts, etc. But I speak and listen to the language of the soul. The words uttered by the tongues of men confuse and confound; they breed factions and sects; they erect walls. But the words that emanate from the soul radiate love and concord. Spiritual practices have to be done after attaining a good character; that is very important. In the midst of impurity, wickedness, and evil, spiritual effort will be fruitless. It is as the jewel in the head of the cobra, in the centre of poison and cruelty. Some come here and earn peace and joy, but after years of sharing and serving, they fall prey to waywardness and fall back into the old morass, declining to such an extent that they deny their very experience and play false to their own conscience! Not that I am anxious that they should worship Me or adhere to Me; far from it. I ask only that truth be proclaimed, regardless of the company you have fallen into; there must be courage of conviction, which will help you to overcome the temptation to deny your cherished joys.

The Lord is like the diamond

Some others are swept off their feet by hysterical demonstrations by certain weak minded individuals who are described as My speaking through them or acting through them! Take it from Me, I am not given to such absurdities! I do not use others as My media; I have no need to. I do not swing from side to side and prattle! Why, even those who torture their bodies and suffer the pains of asceticism for years until ant hills overwhelm them and they become as stiff as tree-stumps find it difficult to realise the Lord. How then can these idlers, who eat their fill and wander about as slaves of their senses, earn that status so cheaply? Their gestures, words, and actions are hollow and vain; those who bum incense before them and revere them are turning away from Me and running after falsehood. How can the Full ever dally with the paltry and wear the habiliment of the trifling? When God has come assuming form, take it from Me, it will not fill inferior vessels or embellish tawdry stuff or

enter impure bodies. So do not extol these falsities and ruin those unfortunates. Deal with them severely, and they will be cured. Those who have seen the brilliance of the diamond will not be misled by glass trinkets. The Lord is like the diamond, call it by any name. But a trinket cannot be turned into a diamond, however loud the praise and however adamant the claim.

The Lord is anxious to assuage your pain

The Lord is as anxious to assuage your pain as you are anxious to secure His grace to get rid of it. You may not know this but I know, for I feel it. Uddalaka, a contemporary of Chaithanya, chose to worship the Lord as the manifested, as nature (prakriti). He chose to worship the Creator through His creation; he adored the container for the thing contained. In short, he adored Radha, or Dhara (mother earth), in reverse, the prakriti aspect, the feminine principle of Krishna, the Supreme Person (Purusha), the inseparable other! His yearning was so moving, his penance (tapas) was so compelling, that the following happened. One day, a bangle seller trudging along the bank of the Saraswathi River by the side of the village found a damsel washing clothes in the bathing ghat. The damsel called the bangle seller near and, selecting many pairs of bangles, wore them all. When he asked for the cash, she said, "Oh, I forgot all about the money that is due to you; please go to Uddalaka's house in the village; anyone will point it out to you. Tell him that his daughter purchased them, and he will surely pay. Or, wait, tell him that he will find the cash behind the picture of Radha in his shrine room." The man took her at her word and hurried to the village and the house. Uddalaka was amazed at the tale, for he had no children. In fact, he had not even married. But the bangle-seller insisted on his looking behind Radha's picture because, he said, the girl was incapable of deceit. Uddalaka denied having ever placed any cash there. How could he use that space, of all places, to keep cash! But just to satisfy the bangle-seller, he peeped there and, lo! He found a knotted piece of cloth containing just the cash needed to pay for the bangles. Then, in a flash, he realised that it must be Radha herself who had sent the man, and he fell at the feet of the pedlar and ran with him to the bathing place, overcome with joy and thankfulness. For an instant, he saw a glorious vision above the

waters: the right arm of Radha, with the bangles scintillating in the morning sun. He knew the arm was raised to bless him; he felt it was calling him; and he flew out of the mortal coil into Her lap. You can worship even nature. There is no harm, provided you realise that the Lord is immanent in it, giving it name and form and value; that the cloth is just yarn, the pot is just mud, the jewel is just gold. Why, you can worship your parents and realise the Lord through that spiritual practice. They are your creators and guides and teachers and protectors, and by idealising them, you can grasp the Truth of the Lord, the Primeval Parent.

God is all Love at all times

Even if you are not able to conceive the idea of a Lord or a God, you must be able to know what love is by experience, is it not? You have experienced the love of your parents, of a friend, of a partner, of a brother or sister, or toward your own children. That love is itself a spark of God, who is all love, who is all the love in all the worlds at all times. Call upon your mother and the love she bears toward you and, even if your physical mother cannot come to your rescue, some mother or the Supreme Mother herself will certainly hurry toward you. There is a fine story to illustrate this: One dark night, when Siva and Parvathi were journeying through the sky, they saw a man perched on the branch of a tree, about to fall on the ground through sheer exhaustion of limbs. Parvathi pleaded on his behalf and wanted Siva to save him, but Siva preferred that She should save him instead! Meanwhile, the fall became imminent, so they decided that if while falling the man shouted "amma (mother)," Parvathi would hasten to arrest his fall, but if he shouted, "appa (father)," Siva would help and see that no bones were broken. The man fell, but he shouted neither amma nor appa but ayyo (sigh of misery)! So he had to be left severely alone!

"Do not be false to yourself or to Me"

Of course, it is all a question of deep-rooted taints or traits or attitudes. You draw from the bank only according to what you have put in; you have to study your pass-book before you write out a cheque or calculate your assets.

Go on, pile up your assets; do not feverishly exhaust them by recklessness. Unfortunately, people take greater pleasure in liquidating their assets than in building them up. It is the bane of the times that they revel in destruction and recoil from construction. When a committee is engaged in some constructive work, members find the work uninteresting and stay away. If the task set is to pull down someone or another institution, more members are eager to join the fray. So keep your wisdom intact and discriminate between destructive and constructive impulses. Do not listen to destructive criticisms and cynicisms, which are the poisons eating into the vitals of spiritual life today. Bear witness to the truth of your own experience; do not be false to yourself or to Me. My name is Sathya Sai; it means, "He Who reclines on Truth." I am reminded now of past events, events in my previous body. Even then, I had sathya or truth as my Support. A wrestler challenged Me then for a fight, and he was defeated before a large gathering of villagers. Pained by the insult, he invited Baba for a second tussle the next day, so that he might win back his lost reputation. The man swore that if defeated again, he would wear a long rough kafni (a knee-length one-piece robe) and move about with his head covered in cloth. He dared Baba to swear likewise. Baba was in no mood to enter the arena again, and he was quite prepared to concede the fellow the victory he craved. So he accepted defeat and himself donned the kafni and the kerchief. The wrestler felt great remorse, and his insolence melted away. He appealed to Baba to resume his usual style of dress and released him from the obligation. But Baba stuck to his word. He was Sathya Itself, then, as He is now. He wore the new attire.

Truth is the very nature of Sai

I am reminded of another instance. Some friends of Justice Rege came one day, a mother and her little son. After an hour or so at the Dwarakamayi, they went to a Puranic recital in the village where the pandit, much to the exasperation of the child, described Baba as an impostor and a fraud. The child insisted on the mother coming away from the place; it ran toward Baba and told him the whole story, when Baba asked them why they came back in such a hurry from the recital. Baba laughed and said, "Yes, I am an ordinary man, not the Divine Power that you take me to be." But the child could not be

put off. It declared that Baba was God. Baba replied, "I am not God, little chap. See, my clothes are torn; I have only two hands; God should have four, isn't it?" But the boy was in no mood to agree. He declared that He was God, in spite of the two hands that He then seemed to lack. Even while they were arguing thus, some others arrived, exulting over a miracle they witnessed. A child had slipped from the top floor of a house and escaped unhurt. Baba told them, "Yes, I held it in my four arms." The boy jumped at the words and said, "Now you yourself agree that you have four hands and so you are God." Baba clasped the child to His bosom, and, taking it inside, gave him a vision of the Lord with four hands. Such was adherence to truth even in the previous body. It is not adherence, it is the very nature of Sai.

Spiritual endeavour is an inescapable task for all

You must learn the significance not only of My name but even of yours. You are all given names redolent with divine fragrance, and you should draw inspiration and strength from them. Swami Abhedananda said this evening at the meeting that he would prefer to be called Sathya Sai "Charanananda" and that he had written to Me about that desire a fortnight ago. But his name teaches that he should not posit any distinction between him and Me. It must be an abhedha (non-distinct) relationship. He has to practise unity, non-distinction. This is what I wrote to him; "Learn the lesson your present name teaches, that is enough." So too, accept your names not as labels or means of identification or distinction but as guides for conduct, as focuses for spiritual endeavour. Endeavour. That is the main thing, that is the inescapable task for all mortals. Even those who deny God to day will have one day to tread the pilgrim road, melting their hearts out in tears of travail. If you make the slightest effort to progress along the path of liberation, the Lord will help you a hundred-fold. Sivarathri conveys that hope to you. The moon, which is the presiding deity of the mind, wanes, until on the fourteenth day after full moon, it is just a tiny curve of glimmering glow. The mind too must be starved into that condition, so that the person becomes free. Spend all the days with Siva and the conquest of the mind is easy. Spend the fourteenth day of the waning moon with Siva, reaching the climax of spiritual effort on that final day, and success is yours. That is why all the Chaturdasis (fourteenth days of

the dark half of every month) are called Sivarathris (Siva's nights); that is why the Chaturdasi of the Magha month is called Mahasivarathri . This is a day of special dedication to Siva, and since so many of you here and elsewhere pray to Siva, the Linga is emanating from Me for you all to receive the grace and the bliss of the great moment of Lingodbhava (Emergence of the Linga).

Discover for yourself your stage of spiritual development, to which class in the school you would fit in. Then determine to proceed from that class to the next higher one. Strive your best and you will win the grace of God. Do not bargain or despair. One step at a time is enough, provided it is toward the goal, not away from it. Beware of the prides of wealth, scholarship, and status, which drag you into egoism. Do not seek the faults of others; seek your own. Be happy when you see others prosper; share your joy with others.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

32. Welcome The Tests

Date: 06 March 1962 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

While Bairagi Shastry and Narasaraju were speaking, I observed many of you were clearing your throats aloud. Your attention should have been devoted to clearing the ears and removing the cobwebs from the heart. What has the throat to do with imbibing the lessons their speeches conveyed? Just as this mike should be right in front of me, near me but not too near the mouth, to transmit the voice, so too, the heart should be held right, straight, and open to receive the teachings transmitted. If the heart is turned in some other direction, the teaching will not be recorded clearly and distinctly; it gets warped. Narasaraju reminds Me of Shyamakavi from Bangalore, who died some years ago. He had deep scholarship, vast spiritual experience, poetic talent, and steady devotion. Whatever he touched ended in failure, but never for an instant did he throw the blame on the Lord. On the other hand, he became more intimately attached to Him. The blows of fate did not shake his faith; he stood like a rock amidst the angry waves. The mind was trained by him to pass through joy and grief unscathed.

The real nature of man is equanimity

The discovery of Truth - that is the unique mission of humanity. Humanity is a mixture of maya (illusion) and Madhava (God); the illusion throws a mist, which hides God. But, through the action of the healthy impulses inherited from acts performed while in previous bodies, through the cleansing by austerities in this body, or through the grace of the Lord Himself, illusion melts away; for it is just a mist, which flees before the sun. Then nara (human) is transformed into Narayana (God) and this world is elevated into a place of tranquility - a Prasanthi Nilayam . The illumination of discrimination will remove the darkness that hides the divine essence of humanity. Today, one hopes to dispel darkness by the sword, the gun, and the bomb, while what is wanted is just a lamp. How can darkness be swept away by darkness, hatred by hatred, ignorance by deeper and vaster ignorance? The very lust for victory promotes darkness. Leave all thoughts of conquest aside. Strive to

know the Truth, and when that is known, false notions fondly held by you will fall off of their own accord. See clearly the lovely image that is hidden in the rock. Release it from that stony prison, remove all the extra stone that is encrusting the idol - that is the task for you. Do not worry about illusion (maya); concentrate on God (Madhava), and you are certain to succeed. A tree on the Godavari Canal dike will not go dry; it will have a crown of green, for its roots are fed by the underground water. Similarly, be a tree with the roots in perpetual contact with the flowing waters of the grace of the Lord, and you need not worry about drought. The dull-wired man runs about madly in pursuit of "peace of mind", trying this prescription for some time and preferring another afterward. He is on the wrong path, the path of catering to the senses, the path beset by form, name, and quality, the path of the temporary and the apparent. But the seeker of liberation (moksha) gets that peace quite easily. In fact, the real nature of a person is equanimity (prasanthi) - steadiness, unshakable resolution, peace. Nature is a great store, where all things that help you to grasp the truth are found. That truth is first cognised as, "All this is imbued with Brahman, directed by Brahman, composed of Brahman (Samam Brahma Mayam)!" Then the seeker rises to a greater awareness, the awareness of "All this is Brahman (Sarvam Brahman)," only it appears as something else for a time to the unopened eyes! The final state is one where there is not even an "All this (Sarvam)" to be posited as Brahman; there is just Brahman: the one and only.

Obey nature's commands and listen to the warnings

The lesson is learnt by people when they study nature, analysing it and trying to understand it. It is at the mother's lap that the child learns the art of living; so also it is nature (prakriti) that teaches one how to succeed in the hard struggle and win the supreme peace (prasanthi). Break the laws of nature, and she boxes you in the ear; obey her commands and listen to Her warnings, and she will pass on to you your heritage of immortality. That is to say, have the Lord as your guide and guardian, and adhere to the rules of righteousness (dharma). Let the dull-witted man hug his delusion that happiness and peace can be secured through slavery to the senses. Those who know that the world is a mixture of truth and falsehood, and therefore a big conundrum or false,

will leave off the outer attractions and concentrate on the inner joy of attachment to God. If you are declared "passed", you have peace; if you are declared "failed", that too solves the problem for some little time and puts a stop to worry. However, if your results are not announced but withheld (for it is not quite certain whether you have passed or failed), you suffer the maximum restlessness, is it not? So also, this world, which is neither truth (sathya) nor unreal (asathya) but false, breeds profuse restlessness in the mind.

Suffering entitles you more to the Lord's Grace

Only non-attachment can grant supreme peace. The company of the pious and visits to holy places and holy people promote that attitude and habit. Kuchela was prompted to visit Dwaraka by his wife, who had deep devotion; so too, unless your merit of action is good and your inclinations are elevated, and elevating, you will not get the idea of coming to Puttaparthi. I called Narasaraju and his wife here for this Sivarathri, and they have come. I know him for thirty years, him and his plans and yearnings and trials and troubles. The Lord responds not merely to the sweet voiced cuckoo and its song; He gives ear to the warbles of other birds, too. He gives ear to the wailings of every being. In fact, suffering entitles you more to the grace of the Lord. When suffering comes in waves, one behind the other, be glad that the shore is near: bear them bravely; do not, like cowards, throw the blame on some outside power or develop dislike for the Lord. Remembrance (smarana) of the Self (Atma) is the spring of joy; remembrance of the non-self is the source of sorrow. Welcome the test because thereafter you are awarded the certificate. It is to measure your progress that tests are imposed. So do not flinch in the face of grief. The Lord bestows a favour when He decides to test you, for He is impressed by your achievement and wants to put upon it the seal of His approval. Rise up to the demands of the test - that is the way to please the Lord.

The ways of the Lord are inscrutable

A great devotee once failed the test and therefore could not get the

certificate. Every day at noon, he used to look out for a needy guest whom he could feed lavishly. Thus, he spent years. But one day, a frail old figure toddled into the house and sat for dinner. He had crossed the century mark in years. The host had the steadiness of the vow, but he did not have the discrimination to derive the fruit of that vow. Like water poured on a dry sandbed, it did not add to its fertility. His heart still remained a dry sandbed, though the waters of charity were poured on it every noon. The discrimination-less heart drank up the charity, and he was the same strict ritualist. The decrepit guest was overwhelmed by hunger, so, as soon as the first dish was served, he swallowed a big morsel without reciting the Name of God. Annoyed at this atheism, the host cursed the old man and pushed him outside to starve or beg in the hot sun. That night, he had a dream in which the Lord chastised him for the cruelty of his behaviour. The Lord said, "For more than a hundred years, I nourished that man lovingly as the apple of My eye, though he never once took a single one of My many Names. My dear man, could you not have suffered him for a few minutes?" Thiruththondar in Tamilnadu showed how to stand up to this kind of test when the Lord comes as a hungry guest to the house of the devotee. The feeling of surrender is the best for success in all such instances. Let His will be done. He is every One. Seeking refuge for protection (saranagathi) is like grass on the ground, unaffected by storms; egoism is the palmyra tree that sways in the wind but breaks when it blows suddenly in a gust. The ways of the Lord are inscrutable; your duty is to submit to them faithfully, thankfully, and joyfully.

The human body has been given to you for a grand purpose: realising the Lord within. If you have a fully equipped car in good running condition, would you keep it in the garage? The car is primarily for going on a journey, so get into it and go. Only then is it worthwhile to own it. So, too, with the body. Proceed, go forward to the goal. Learn how to use the faculties of the body, the senses, the intellect, the mind, for achieving the goal and march on.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba



33. Near And Far

Date: 07 March 1962 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

I must address you now as embodiments of patience (santha-swarupulara), for you have sat very patiently through the two-hour speech given by the pandit . There are many types of food - for the body, for the mind, for the intellect, and for the spirit. But whatever the food, taking it in moderate doses at regular intervals is the best rule. Hunger is the best appetiser; without it, you develop indigestion and all its dire consequences. Of course, what the pandit served is food of the highest quality, but I see you are all still hungry! You wish to hear Me also, though it is the same food that I give. The rain from the clouds falls on the roof and might flow through a pipe or gargoyle, but it is the same water, whatever the shape of the exit. Your love toward Me has made you hungry for My speech, though I have but to repeat the pandit's words, perhaps in a simpler style. He himself strove to make it as simple as he could, and I know he had to make a great effort, unusual effort, to communicate those difficult ideas to you. What the pandit was trying to tell you by means of all those Sanskrit verses is just this: Be attached under all conditions to the source, substance, and sum of all power: the Lord. Then you can draw from that source all the power that you need. This attachment is called devotion.

The Name of the Lord has vast potentiality

For the bird in mid-ocean flying over the dark deep blue waters, the only resting place is the mast of a ship that sails across. In the same way, the Lord is the only refuge for man who is swept by storms over a restless sea. However far the bird may fly, it knows where it can rest; that knowledge gives it confidence. It has the picture of that mast steady in its mind; its form is fixed in the eye. The name of the Lord is the mast for you; remember it ever. Associate it with the form, and have that form fixed in the mind's eye. It is a lamp shedding light in the recesses of your heart. Have the Name on the tongue, and it will drive away the inner as well as the outer darkness. Peace within, brotherliness without - that is the sign of a person engaged in

repeating the name of the Lord. The name of the Lord has vast potentiality. Let me tell you an incident about this. Once Jnanadhev and Namdhev together walked across a forest tract, and both were afflicted with unbearable thirst. They discovered a well, but they found no rope or vessel with which they could draw the precious liquid within reach. It was a deep well, with no steps, and the water was far far beneath. Jnanadhev, who had attained knowledge of the Supreme Being (Brahmajnana), identified himself with a bird that flew down the well and drank its fill. His thirst was quenched that way. Namdhev called upon the Lord by name; the Lord answered, the water in the well rose - yes, rose - until he could reach it with his hands and slake his thirst. You consider the world as very near, as around you and behind you, but when you have to point out the Lord, you show Him far away from you, up and above, or at a vast distance. This is a mistake. The Lord is near; the world is far. You are believing that it is the other way because you are afraid of the truth and you like to deceive yourself. An army captain once went with the minister and the king in a small ferry-boat across a flooded river. He was very frightened to be in the boat and began to shake nervously. So the minister just threw him into the flooded river. At once, he cried out for a place in the boat! He knew then the comfort of the boat, the value of the boat, the value of the basis (adhara), in fact.

Do not pay attention to mind's vagaries

The Lord is the the basis, the support (adhara); the world is the supported, the superimposed (adheya). The basis is in oneself, the nearest entity, the closest companion, the very breath and life of the individual. How then can you point to the distance when you are asked about the Lord? His name, the name that appeals to you, is shaped by the intimateness of feeling and its depth, so far as you are concerned. Atheism is when the sun of sacred knowledge (jnana) has set; theism is when it rises. Inertia (thamas) is ignorance (a-jnana); religious austerity (tapas) is spiritual wisdom (jnana). If the mind is neglected and allowed to run wild, dullness and delusion (thamas) will hold sway. Some persons advise you to watch each step of the mind and note down all the false steps and evil intentions it encounters. No, that is a dangerous practice. Do not pay attention to its vagaries; strive for what you

need and not for what you have to avoid. Count the false steps, and you will be led to commit them again. Resolve to walk right, and your steps will not falter or fail.

The Lord is won by sincere agony

The fact is that you should have a guru who has the highest spiritual experience. Otherwise, you will be misled by amateurs who prescribe patent remedies, irrespective of your personal history and needs. Above all, you must yourself be engaged in listening to holy names (sravanam), recapitulation on what you heard (mananam), and singing of Lord's name and glory (bhajanam) - the Yamuna, Saraswathi, and Ganga of the three-fold river of Life. Sravanam is the path of devotion, mananam is the path of spiritual wisdom, and bhajanam is the path of action. All paths of seeking union with God (yogas) lead to one goal: the surrender of the self in the All-Self (the Paramatma, the Parabrahman), the merging of the river in the sea. Give Me the reins; trust in Me, and be directed by Me. I shall take full responsibility. Only, you must accept without demur whatever comes as prasadam or grace! Grief is the feet and joy the head; both are part of the same entity. You cannot welcome joy and reject grief at the same time. You cannot have the obverse without the reverse; you must take and accept the other side of the sheet of paper, along with this side. It is inevitable. The diamond is first just a dull piece of stone, a hard pebble. Only when it is cut by a skilful artisan does it become a multi-faceted flame of fire! Allow yourselves to be so treated, so that all your dullness disappears and you emerge as a resplendent diamond. You must have that yearning, the yearning of the stone to become a diamond. You must hold the hand of the Mother and walk safely by Her side. You must hold fast and not give up.. Be like the infant-monkey, who clings to the mother and is thus guarded and guided by her superior strength and wisdom. The Lord is won by sincere agony, steady yearning. There are some places where Sai Baba, the previous body, is worshipped but where this 'yearning' is not considered important! The person who goes to that place is asked by the man in charge to come for seven Thursdays or eleven Thursdays or forty-one-days and worship Sai Baba in order to get His full Grace, as if it is just a matter of arithmetic. No. That is but a stratagem to gather a sizeable

crowd, so that the shrine may be taken to be famous! Devotion does not lend itself to such treatment.

"Become parts of My History"

True devotion will overcome all obstacles and, like a swollen river, leap over dikes and banks and overwhelm all by the strength. Difficulties are created to increase the 'yearning' and to sift the sincere devotee from the rest. By the alchemy of constant remembrance of God, even a rock is turned into clay. It cannot become soft by merely carrying it on a specified number of journeys into a shrine. Another point. Have you ever before or anywhere else sat so long, listening or waiting to listen to a speech; sat with such patience, such single-minded ardour? Why have you borne all this? In order to hear My words, is it not? Now, do not let all that ardour go to waste once the listening is over. Take earnestly to the path of Absolute Reality (Brahma-marga) as well as the path of Righteousness (Dharma-marga). After your life has been transmuted into a never-ending prayer by the silent effect of the path of Righteousness, forget all in the ecstasy of the path of Absolute Reality. Do not allow the illusion (maya) that lies in wait for you on the other bank of the Chitravathi to pounce upon you or entice you to the wordly life you led so far. Be like the tongue in the midst of the teeth - carefully, confidently, courageously going about its task, without getting bitten. Study well the disciplinary rules laid down for all who wish to be in Prasanthi Nilayam. These rules are for your own good. Wherever you are, you can make the place a Prasanthi Nilayam (Abode of Supreme Peace). Become parts of My history. Do not get far from Me. You have acquired nearness through the accumulated good fortune of many births. If you cut this contact and get away, a time will come when you will weep outside the gates clamouring for entry. Be free from silly delusions and doubts, be free from tawdry desires - and I shall take you into Me.

The mind flutters about and squats on all and sundry objects in the universe. It refuses to stay on only one idea, God. Like the fly that sits on fair and foul

but denies itself the pleasure of sitting on a hot cinder, the mind too flees from all thought of God. The fly will be destroyed if it sits on fire; the mind is also destroyed when it dwells on God, for the mind is but a pattern of desire woven with the warp and woof of the same material.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

34. The Broken Bow

Date: 10 March 1962 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Shivarathri

Veerabhadram read and explained the traditional legend connected with Mahasivarathri; the legend is but a vehicle to teach you the path of righteousness (dharma). The deer beseech the hunter not to kill them, promising to return later when they could be killed and telling him that if they break their word they know they would incur the penalty for many a heinous sin - the story is only to propagate the principles of dharma . Every story illustrates a moral, and this story of the greatness of Sivarathri is no exception. When it comes to describing the merits of dharma, even animals become eloquent - their speech is veritably the voice of God. They are not deer, they are the tongues of the Lord. The deer, one after another, declare that they will come back to be killed; each one has to go because it has some dear one to tend or feed or obey. They then say that truth is their vow, and they dare not break it, for it is indeed a heinous sin to play 'false'. They say that the sin is equal to a number of other sins they list. The hunter lets them go on their plighted word. He has himself committed the sins they list, and he knows by experience during many births that they are heinous and that they bring about dire tragedy in a remorseless manner. An iron law of cause and effect is operating in this field.

Every experience is a lesson, every loss a gain

The saddest part of the story is that people, though they see and hear, suffer and fall, do not get quite convinced that sin is a dangerous experiment; that it unmistakably brings on its harvest of tears. The quality of ignorance and delusion draws a veil over the truth and hides the mouth of the pit into which the unwary sinner falls again. Of course, when grief overtakes you and pain has you in its grip, the Lord does not always announce the exact sin for which that particular experience is the punishment. You are left to deduce in a general way that every experience is a lesson and every loss is a gain. You have to learn that you bind yourself and you liberate yourself. You entangle yourself in the three qualities (gunas) and, by your struggles, you only pull

the world and tighten it round yourself. You are endowed with discrimination, even the most illiterate among you. You have a conscience, whispering dharma into your ear; so you yourselves must choose and select. A great painter once came to a king and was asked to execute a huge fresco on the wall of the court hall, a scene from the Mahabharatha battle. A painter, till then unrecognised, rose up and asked for permission to execute a fresco on the opposite wall. He said that, within the same period, he would prepare on his wall an equally grand fresco; in fact, an exact replica of the other, in spite of a thick curtain between the two walls! When at last the king came and, drawing the curtain to the very end, looked on the opposite wall, he was amazed to find an exact copy, down to the minutest detail of line, curve, tint and tilt, the same Mahabharatha scene! For the local artist had, throughout the intervening period of time when the painting was being done by the other man, only been polishing the wall assigned to him. He had used no brush or paint; he had just polished the wall into a mirror. Polish your mind, and the Lord and His sublime grandeur will be reflected in your heart.

Set apart a daily "feeding time" for the spirit

Just as you feed the body and care for its upkeep and repair, the mind, thought, and intellect have also to be fed with good nourishing food. When the morning cup of coffee is missed, you get a headache; what do you get when the morning dose of repetition of God's name is missed? Or perhaps you have not made it into a habit. At noon, your hunger drags you from the shades of these trees to where food is waiting; nothing so powerful drags you to your shrine room. Perhaps, you have no shrine room at all. When you enter a house, even if it has been unoccupied for months, you can declare, "This is the kitchen," from the sooty walls and the smell of condiments. Similarly, you say, "This is the worship room," from the aroma of incense sticks and flowers that still hovers in the air. Have a separate worship room, or, at least, set apart a small corner for meditation, repetition of Lord's name, and ritual worship. Retire there at least twice a day for some short time; that will be "feeding time" for the spirit. Allowing the mind to rest on the tree of the glory of God will give the tired bird some rest to fly again, beating its wings in search of food and happiness. The company of the good also acts like a tonic.

Try the prescription for some time. It will be rather unpleasant at first. Due to weakness, the mind, like the body, cannot behave steadily and remain firm. That is why I addressed you today not as usual as Embodiments of Love or Embodiments of Self but, as you will have noticed with some dismay, as "Santha swarupulara! Chanchala swabhavulara," that is to say, though your nature is steadiness, your behaviour is ever unsteady.

Remove all blemishes that tarnish you

I did not say that to discourage you but just to reveal the absurdity to you. Do not keep the mind, intellect, and thought hungry or underfed, for then they will run after all kinds of foul food. Give them proper nourishment and they will perform their functions well. Their function is to illumine the Atma within and to help you to discover that the Atma is all. Until the auspicious moment, everything will be in disarray, but do not worry. Go to a house where a marriage is to take place; it will be in a huge mess - noise, confusion, dust, and din. But when the moment of marriage arrives, it is all spick and span, clean and charming. The grace of the Lord will overwhelm all obstacles and the fruit of spiritual practices will be vouchsafed. Once you secure the grace, you can fulfil all your wishes with it. If you have the cloth, you can have any type of clothes - bush-coat, coat, or pants. It is grace that gives value to life, authenticity to the scriptures (sastras), authority to the recipient. A piece of white paper has no value at all, but send it to the Security Press and let them convert it into a hundred-rupee note; you then value it, although it is printed all over and there is no blank space for writing anything. Become impressed with the stamp of God; carry His signature, which invests you with value and authority. But first you should become white, tough, and strong. Remove all the blemishes that tarnish you. The deer referred to the "cow that is honoured during the spiritual offering". Now, why is the cow so selected? Because it feeds on sathwic (pure, vegetarian) food, has a quiet disposition, and yields milk without any desire for recompense or seeking even gratitude.

There is no shortcut to earn God's grace

A man once sold an old cow to the butcher, and when he went to his fields

after the transaction, he was confronted by a snake. He shouted, "Oh kill the poisonous reptile." The snake said, "I am no reptile, you deserve the name better." When he protested, the snake said, "Go and ask the calf." The calf gave a pathetic story of his greed and cruelty: how he dragged it away from the mother, tied it at the end of a rope, starved it of its mother's milk, and beat it and twisted its tail to force it to draw heavy loads. The calf said that that man was an ungrateful beast. He derides other men as cows, when he is himself far worse. As a matter of fact, do not cast a bad word on person or beast; for He is in all Beings and your harsh abuse strikes the Dweller within. Follow the rules of righteousness (dharma), which these deer describe. They are not deer, they are the representatives of the Vedas ; yes, there are four in all. The Scriptures (Sastras) are the authority for the dharma, and the activities (karma) based on dharma . Only when you are blessed with the grace of the Lord, which is earned by dharma, can you have peace (santhi). A fish can have peace only when it has water above and below and on all sides; so too, you must have God's grace all around you. There is no shortcut to this grace, and remembrance of the Lord's name (namasmarana) is the safest route. Do not believe others who prescribe shorter routes; they may talk of breath control (pranayama) and yogic exercise (hatha yoga). Be warned; they are fraught with danger. Do not lend ear to such, or read and believe the books on physical yoga and start practising the exercises. I know of many cases of madness and other dislocations happening by practice from the printed page. Follow the scriptural (sastraic) injunctions and you will not go wrong. They lay down a set of rules for all stages and all professions. See how the panic spread by astrologers regarding the conjunction of eight planets in space has driven men to seek refuge in the scriptures (sastras). Yes, specifics have to be taken just when the disease catches you. You must pray more intensely when danger threatens. There is nothing wrong in that. It is better than doing some stupid thing or other.

Desire can never be destroyed by fulfillment

Remembrance of the Lord's name is the best means. However, you do not really believe that it can cure you or save you, that is the tragedy. People believe in the efficacy of only costly, brightly packed, widely published drugs;

the simple easily available remedy, which is in everybody's backyard, is ignored as useless. Really, if only you have this faith in the Name, you need not struggle to secure the chance to detail to Me your desires and wants. I will fulfill them even without your telling Me. Why? Did Ramadas take his seat in the verandah like you and await his chance for an interview? The Lord carried to his very door the things that would fulfil his innermost wish! Desire can never be destroyed by fulfilment; the desire multiplies like a weed; one seed sprouts and produces a tree, which in turn scatters a thousand seeds, which grow into a forest of trees with millions of seeds growing again into a thicker jungle.

Place yourself fully at the Lord's disposal

The only hai ('comfort' in Telugu) is in Sai. The name of the Lord is the Narasimha (Man-Lion) incarnation to the demons (rakshasas) of the Kali Age (the age we are in). Have the Name bright and clear on your tongue, in your mind, and have the Form symbolised by it before your eye and mental vision. Then, nothing can harm you. Train children from their infancy to repeat and rely on the Name. Let them imbibe it with the mother's milk. Train them yourselves, practising it and demonstrating before them the peace that you win by it. Do not step back; move forward. Do not hesitate or doubt. Do not deny joy that you have derived, the courage that you have felt. If you so doubt, your only gain will be suffering. Every letter is a seed-letter of a sacred word (beeja akshara), so I do not whisper secretly any mantra in your ear. I am giving it in every word I speak. Listen to Me. When you wake up, feel that you are entering the stage to play the role assigned to you by the Lord; pray that you may act it well and earn His approbation. At night, when you retire to sleep, feel that you are entering the green room after the scene, but with the dress of your role on; for perhaps the role is not yet over and you have not yet been permitted to take the dress off. Perhaps you have to make another entrance the next morning. Do not worry about that. Place yourself fully at His disposal; He knows. He has written the Play, and He knows how it will go on it and how it will end. Yours is but to act and retire.

SECOND DAY

The deer that stray into the forest where the hunter is waiting for game and that promise to come later and be his prey on pain of incurring the penalty for various heinous sins are teaching a Dharma Gita ; and if you practise those virtues and avoid those sins you can attain the bliss-form (ananda-swarupa) that you really are. The deer speak of sin, but remember that there is no sin as such, there are only errors due to ignorance or greed or envy or hatred. The principles of righteousness (dharma) enunciated in this story have to be adhered to; it is not the hunter alone who nods approval, every listener of the Purana must have approval. Even the slightest error has to be avoided by those who possess a developed conscience. It is unpardonable for a wise man to fall into error. But the error of an ignoramus, however dire the consequences, has to be passed over. Some people dismiss the Dharma Sastras as the fabrications of brahmins and refuse to attach value to the rules and restrictions prescribed by them. But that is a false argument. The Sastras have the authority of Madhava (the Lord) Himself. It is not Manava-Dharma Sastra but Madhava-Dharma Sastra - not man-made but God-made.

Light meal is the surest guarantee of health

The dharmic way of life is dependent on the quality (guna) of the individual. In Chapter 18 of the Gita, the qualities and their characteristics are mentioned, as also the relationship between the type of food taken in and the character that emanates. The food decides the quality, the quality seeks the food congenial to it; thus the vicious cycle moves on. In the Upanishads, there is a story in which a man and a cow approach the Lord and pray that they may be allotted their daily duties. The cow was told to serve the master, who feeds and fosters her. The man was asked to practise righteousness (dharma). He shuddered at the responsibility and wanted more freedom than such a life would impose. The Lord told him in answer that he is free to choose the path through which he could attain Him. He gave the cow as food the things that grow on the ground, and to people He assigned a morsel of food in the early hours of the day and another at the end of the day. He prescribed moderation in eating. Both came down to earth, and the cow now eats, and eats the eaten thing again, but man finds that a light meal is the

surest guarantee of health.

Face the Truth and proceed toward Truth

Arjuna was affected by the quality of inertia and doubt (thamoguna), which made him fall into the delusion of "mine" and "my family". Faith in the Lord one moment, doubt about the consequence another moment - that was his condition. Well, you are also in the same predicament. One day you say, "I must follow Baba's commands;" the next day, you start doubting, "Is it possible?" That is why I am adjusting the conditions of your lives, so that you can pull yourselves up according to My orders. That is why I am granting you courage to develop faith, unshakable faith. But I find many of you do not yet walk along the path laid down in spite of the confidence I impart and the favourable environment I provide and the favours I bestow. This is, of course, deplorable. God has given people a hundred years of life and plenty of work to fill the years with, but you fritter the time away in playful games and in founding and fostering a family, and you awake to the fact of preparing for death only when death knocks at the door. Then, you feverishly pray for a little more extension of the span of life in order to fulfil the task for which you have been sent. You have no time to recite the name of the Lord or meditate on His form, which is within you! Alas! You have time for the club, for a game of cards, for the film show, for wayside chats, for all kinds of trivialities, but no time for a little quiet, for a simple item like worship. It is a false excuse, this, the want of time. No. Face the truth and proceed toward the truth. When you tread the path of dharma, imperceptibly you will be drawn toward the truth, gently and steadily.

The Gita is for granting liberation to all

See how the wicked hunter was transformed into a sympathetic listener by the appeals to conscience made by the first two deer. He is eager to hear what the third deer has to say about the disciplines laid down by scriptures (sastras) and the penalties imposed for the breach. He is also being slowly changed by the sound of the distant bells of the Siva temple where the Mahasivarathri worship is being done. As a matter of fact, both deer and deer-

slayer are fiction; they represent the instruments for the teaching. It is all in the Lord's plan. Consider, for example, how, long before the Gita was spoken, the Lord had got ready a Sanjaya, who could see and hear whatever was done or spoken at a distance; his mission was to preserve the Gita for humanity. Arjuna was just an excuse to bring the Gita forth. The Gita is for saving all and for granting all liberation. Gita, in Telugu, means "a line"; it draws a line across and cancels the series of births and deaths; it teaches you to stand erect, unafraid, along the straight path of dharma, along the line laid down. You should gradually get rid of attachments that lead you astray. Only then can you stand erect, without bending under the load. But, nowadays, instead of eliminating mental agitations, every effort is made to multiply them. It is like giving a monkey a drink of toddy; it will behave even more monkeyishly, that is all. I refer to the grant of spiritual titles to spiritual aspirants, extolling their attainments! They are intoxicated by these titles, conferred by over-enthusiastic or pompous gurus; they become lights or stars or sages or paramapurushas (highest persons). They are thereby rendered more liable to spiritual disaster, through bloated egoism. Doctors who are expected to administer drugs to patients afflicted with poison are now administering poison to persons in perfect health! The giver of the title and the recipient are both blameworthy. One aggravates the egoism they pretend to cure; the other revels in tawdry jewellery.

Do not decry ancient scriptures

The caste-stage (varna-ashrama) discipline is also intended for the gradual fixation of the mind on ultimate merger with the Infinite. At each stage of life and for each social group, patterns of behaviour have been laid down, modes of livelihood recommended, social rights and obligations prescribed - all with a view to the sublimation of the instincts and the elevation of endeavour. The caste-stage discipline is a deep-rooted tree, the shade of which affords shelter to all the various communities of humanity. Do not decry that discipline or the ancient scriptures. They are your authority to confirm My truth; it is through the study of those scriptures that you can picture the grandeur of Divinity. Do not decry Vishnu or Siva for the reason that your devotion is toward some other name and form you seek to honour. Why, even

if you dishonour a person, be warned you are dishonouring Me, for I am in them. Honour the Atma of which they are an encasement; honour the imperishable Atma that you are, and do not commit any act that will insult that Basic Reality. The deer in this story only show the hunter that the path to self-realisation consists of four stages: scriptures, virtue, devotion, and truth (sastras, dharma, bhakthi, and sathya).

"I shall fulfil your wishes at your own place"

One more word: Perhaps many of you are worried that I have not yet started calling you individually and granting you interviews in which you could tell Me your troubles and where I could bless you personally and send you home. But you are so many in number. I would like to see first the old and the sick and those who will find it difficult to come again. Surely the others will approve of that. Besides, it is enough if you call Me from wherever you are. In My case, there is no need for you to travel long distances and spend hard-earned money. I shall fulfil your wishes at your own place. I shall, from tomorrow, grant you this privilege of a personal talk in the room, and I shall come down four times a day for the purpose, spending almost the whole day with devotees. Let Me tell you one thing: Of course, I can bear anything for your sake; I have come to save you and guide you. But, somehow, I cannot tolerate the smell of tobacco, of beedis and cigarettes. Can you not postpone the disgusting practice for an hour and come to me without that insufferable smell? Besides, I have laid down certain disciplines and codes of conduct for you here. I would ask you to study the list and practise them not only within this compound but in your own places, wherever you happen to live.

THIRD DAY

Veerabhadram read the last part of the Sivarathri story now; the deer return and insist that they be killed. Their hunter, chastened by their truthfulness, their teachings, and by the holy vigil that he unknowingly went through on the auspicious night, refuses to kill them. He breaks his bow and, with tears of repentance, he is overwhelmed by the animals' adherence to the promise made. The deer try to persuade him to kill them, but the hunter wriggles out.

He argues that he had to kill them under the tree where he had spent the night, waiting for prey, and not near his cottage to which the deer had come in the morning!

Virtuous action is the best discipline

The wicked heart was transformed by the hearing of good words and of the temple rites and bells. That is the subtle alchemy of the surroundings and the company. Some places have a tremendous impact on the mind. The atmosphere is surcharged with the name of God on account of the generations of devotees who assemble there. That is why I say virtuous action (dharma-karma) is the best discipline. That means action surcharged with devotion. That will itself lead to spiritual wisdom (jnana), where the world is found to be a dream and the only reality is the All-pervading Grace or Power. The atheist (nasthika) is blind, ignorant, and afflicted with a fever that spoils the sense of taste; the atheist finds everything bitter. The believer in God (asthika), on the other hand, is able to feel the true taste of everything: bitter as bitter, sour as sour, sweet as sweet. But the person of realisation (yasthika) tastes all things and all experiences as sweet, filled with the sweetness of God. Prahlada was a man of realisation; he was beaten, trampled upon, and cast into fire and water, but he tasted only sweetness at all times. He overcame every calamity with the reinforcement derived from the name Narayana in the heart. There is a secret spring in the heart that will well up when the name is uttered and that will slake your thirst.

Speak without malice, speak to transmit joy

The ordeals that Prahlada had to endure only demonstrated his attainment. Once, the Lord entered the house of a liberated person as a thief, and when the master of the house caught Him and argued, "You are a thief; I have caught you," the Lord said in reply, "As long as the ideas you and I inhere, there can be no wisdom," and disappeared. It is easy to mug up verses and texts and quote them profusely, but it is useless unless you act in accordance with what you say. Practice of austerities (anushtanam) brings about God's grace (anugraham). Act and earn His grace. By the belch, you can judge the

food; as the flour so the bread. Vivekananda was able to declare at Chicago the worth of Sanathana Dharma (Eternal Universal Religion) in an unmistakably leonine tone because he had the strength of the practice of austerities behind him. The driver of a car should be alert while driving along a rough road infested with potholes, not merely along smooth concrete highways. So too, you must know how to avoid the temptations of falsehood and how to sail along the smooth road of truth. You may say that very often you are caught in a dilemma by the conflicting demands of truth and falsehood. Remember the Gita -saying: "Speak without malice or hatred or envy; speak the truth; speak to comfort, to consol, to transmit joy (Anudhvega karam vakyam, sathyam, preethikaram)." When in difficulty, pray for guidance before jumping in any direction. People will give you advice only as far as their cleverness can reach, but the Lord, who transforms dullness into intelligence, will reveal to you the way out of the dilemma. Ask the Lord and He will answer. The Lord revealed the proper course to the hunter. Finally, he broke the bow and arrows and other deadly weapons as a result of that inspiration. The arrows are the symbols of vice and wickedness. He realised his Self that way. Those who come to Puttaparthi come by many ways - from Bombay via Guntakal, from Bangalore via Chikballapur, from Nellore via Pakala, from Madras via Jolarpet - but all have but one goal and one joy on arrival. Whether it is four four-anna coins or two half-rupee coins or a one rupee coin, the value is the same. Realisation attained by any one of the means is of the same truth, of the same grandeur; it means the same spiritual victory.

Shed tears of thankfulness at the Lord's feet

The Lord will manifest where and when you yearn for Him. If you yearn that He should come before you in flesh and blood, He will respond. He is ever ready to respond, but you are not ready to invite or welcome or receive Him into your heart. You have not purified the heart and removed therefrom the thorns of lust and greed, of envy and hatred. The baby that has been fed on milk may start crying; do not be worried, for it is very helpful for digestion. Cry, so that you can digest the joy of knowing God; cry and shed tears of joy. The tear glands have been allotted to you not for weeping helplessly before

others with hands extended for alms but to shed tears of joy, of thankfulness, at the feet of the Lord. Do not get dejected. Really, you are all lucky, eminently fortunate that you are here now in the Presence, listening to these words. Take your fill of this Essence of Bliss (Anandarasa) and, having digested it, come again with a sharpened appetite.

- Mahasivarathri Katha, Prasanthi Nilayam, 8, 9, 10 March, 1962.

35. Inner Progress

Date: 05 April 1962 / Location: Tirupati / Occasion: Ugadi

The New Year, which you have called in today with the exit of the old year, has an auspicious name, Subhakrith . Your arranging this festival in honour of Saint Thyagaraja on this day is indeed an auspicious way of welcoming the auspiciously named New Year. I congratulate you. I am coming often to inaugurate the festival, for I feel it is part of the task for which I have come. I may tell you that I am coming today straight from the very region where Thyagaraja lived out his life. I find that you in this holy town of Tirupathi are not all imbued with devotion to the deity who has made it His home, Srinivasa. Most of the people here live on the Lord's bounty or 'property' or 'charity'. The income from the shrine of the Lord is utilised in running colleges and hospitals and in various other ways. That is to say, it is making the lives of many thousands happy and contented. I do not blame them for living upon the income of the Lord, for what does He want it for, if not for the needy and the hungry? But let Me add a warning. If it is eaten in excess, calamity will intervene. Eat as much as you deserve for the toil you have put in, for the hunger you have acquired by your exertions in a good cause. What is the toil that entitles you to consume the property of this shrine? What is the exertion that the Lord approves? Only spiritual toil and spiritual exertion can entitle you to the sacred share; only meditation and remembrance of God's name, steeped in the thrill of devotion!

Idol worship is not a sign of barbarism

The true culture of India is a structure that is built on four pillars: truth, virtue, peace, and love (sathya, dharma, santhi, and prema). Every one of you must be aware of this fact. If you are, then you will not be attracted by cultures that are built on less durable foundations. The culture that has to be protected by the bomb cannot claim love as one of the pillars on which it is erected. Bharath (India) is a land where since millennia people have been praying for and toiling for the peace and happiness of entire humanity. They never prayed for success in the wicked race for wholesale slaughter. Do not

swallow without discrimination the criticisms hurled against you that you are uncultured barbarians, worshipping sticks and stones. Idol worship is not a sign of barbarism. No, it is as significant and meaningful a rite as the kumkum dot on the forehead of the bride. The idol is revered as the living form of the Lord, He who pervades everything, everywhere, is invoked and visualised in the idol and approached reverentially by the cleansed mind, anxious to efface itself in the Eternal and the Universal. This attitude is called surrender for fulfillment (prapatthi).

Install Truth in the shrine of your heart

Without this attitude of surrender, worship becomes empty and vain. It is no use deciding just now, when you are listening to Me, that you will cultivate faith and fortitude and then not put that resolution into action after you leave this place. Devotion is not measured by the outward signs of tears and exhilaration. It is an inner revolution, a transformation of all values and outlook. You may have heard the story of the woman who was shedding profuse tears, apparently of exultation, during a Puranic recital. The recitalist was overjoyed that day, for he had succeeded by his touching exposition in evoking response from at least one contrite soul. At the close of the day's session, he congratulated the old lady on her devotion and offered her the coveted first spoonful of consecrated water (holy theertha) as a tribute for her faith and spiritual effort. But the lady denied all claims to devotion and said, "I do not know what that thing called devotion is, nor the other things named faith and spiritual effort. I shall tell you why tears fell from my eyes. That thick black string with which you have tied that palm-leaf book put me in mind of the string round the waist of my departed husband; he wore a black string long long ago." Mere external signs mislead the observer, but they cannot mislead the Lord who is the ever-present, ever-vigilant Witness. Devotion will foster love, because it is born of love itself. At present, this land is full of factions and rival groups; all do not pull together and to the best of their ability and capacity. That is why it has become necessary to ask the help of other countries and peoples and borrow funds and burden ourselves with interest payments, etc. There is no cooperation and willingness to sacrifice self-interest for the sake of the community or country or humanity. Every

village is riven by partisan groups. I shall tell you what happened in a village of this type. One section had specialised in acting the drama, Burning of Lanka, but the other section decided to enact the story of King Harischandra instead. For the role of Chandramathi, the queen, they had to select a person from the Burning-of-Lanka group because they had no substitute actor at all. The scenes followed one after the other. All went well until the scene in which the prince died of a snake bite - and the queen refused to weep! The "son" belonged to the opposite group. So, vengeance was taken on Chandramathi by Harischandra. He rained blows on her being so callous, and the drama sped along in another course, the course of hatred and faction. Thereupon, the Anjaneya of the Burning-of-Lanka group brought things to a climax by jumping on the stage in his role with a tail burning at one end, and he set the theatre on fire to the delight of his henchmen and the consternation of his rival! You must put on one play, either Harischandra or Burning of Lanka ; if you play both together on the same stage, it will end in a holocaust. Rather, prefer Harischandra and reject playing with fire. Install truth in the shrine of your hearts, for that will engender the wholesome habit of brotherliness among all men.

Yearn for illumination of your inner world

Well, the electric lights have started burning again, and I see you are all satisfied that the line was set right so soon. I know how greatly you yearned for the illumination of this stage to be restored soon, and you felt sorry and dejected when you had to sit under dull improvised, kerosene light. I want you to yearn also for the illumination of your inner world, the restoration of the current to shed light on the dark recesses of your minds. That is what is called devotion, the yearning for light, for illumination. People blame the Lord for all ills caused by their own extravagance or ignorance. They are themselves to blame for the sufferings they undergo. Suffering is due only to ignorance. Take the case of even physical ills and physical suffering. Most illnesses are due to overeating or faulty eating habits. "Moderate food gives immense comfort (Mitha thindi, athi hayi)." The food must be clean and pure and derived through pure means, and the strength derived from it must be directed toward holy ends. Then, living is worthwhile.

Food is the basis of man's character

Remember that Thyagaraja kept such rules rigorously in mind. He never dined outside his home or ate unconsecrated food. Many thought that he was a conceited fool who was needlessly strict. But subtle influences pass into food from the persons who prepare it and handle it and are absorbed by those who eat it. Food is the basis of character. The state of the mind is conditioned by that of the body. I shall tell you now of an incident that happened eighty years ago. There was a great yogi, Hamsaraj by name, at Badrinath. He was always immersed in singing the glory of the Lord. He had a disciple who was equally earnest and sincere. That young man was pestered for a few days by a dream, which gave him no peace. He saw a fair young girl of sixteen weeping in great agony and calling out pathetically, "Can no one save me?" The disciple was amazed at this strange dream; he could not shake off that doleful figure and that desperate cry from his mind. He recited his woes to the master. Hamsaraj, I can assure you, was a true hamsa (the bird of paradise). That bird can eschew water from milk. Hamsaraj, using his discrimination, analysed the situation and discovered the cause of that horrid experience. He prodded the young man with such questions as: "What did you do the first day?" "Where did you go?" "What did you eat?" etc. It was revealed that he had gone with a friend to a feast and had eaten some puris and chapatis. It was discovered that a poor brahmin had prepared the feast. Well, Hamsaraj sent the disciple to find out why and with what resources that brahmin arranged the feast for the recluses of Badrinath.

Examine the source of the food offered

The young man cursed the day when the dream started haunting him, for he was now being sent by his master on purposeless errands to investigate irrelevant issues. He wondered how his spiritual practices could be helped by all this. Nevertheless, he pursued the inquiry about the feast and its origins and the wherewithal out of which it was prepared. It came to light that the funds were supplied by a sixty-year old money lender to whom a brahmin had given his daughter in marriage and received in return a sum of ten thousand

rupees. She was now appealing to the holy men for a bit of human kindness toward a forsaken child. Hamsaraj thus demonstrated to his disciple that one should examine the source of the food, the motives for the gift, and the passions that surge and sway the giver before accepting such an intimate gift as food. You may say that only spiritual aspirants have to bear such rules in mind, but tell Me who is not a spiritual aspirant. All are pilgrims on the road - some going fast, some going slow, that is all. The goal is the same for you all, though the roads may be many. You are all cultured and civilised according to current notions. Of course, there is a vast difference between the methods of living now and in the past. Man has traveled far from the days when he wore the barks of trees or leaf garments. Today is the day of nylons and georgettes and bush coats. Well, admitting that all this is a sign of higher civilisation, should there not be a corresponding rise in the level of thinking and feeling and action, in the arts of living together and earning mental peace and poise? Spiritual life must also become more cultured and civilised, is it not? There must be gratitude for the chance of life, for the blessings of the beauty and bounty of nature, and a realisation of the more durable values of life. Attachment to sensory pleasure has to be discarded in preference to the more lasting joy of inner contemplation.

Prayer can bring about the impossible

Thyagaraja had discovered that joy of inner contemplation. He gave expression to that joy in moving musical notes, in simple sincere words in songs that bring tears to the eye and thrills to the heart. The Raja of Rarnnad, who is the president of this Festival, comes from Tamil Nadu, and the Telugu language in which Thyagaraja sang is strange to him. Yet, he is profoundly affected by the music; he loves the songs very much. Knowing the meaning of the songs and the context that begot them so spontaneously and so sweetly from the sublime devotion of Thyagaraja will make you imbibe the spirit better; the language in which he sang is the language of the seeker, the spiritual aspirant, the straggling aspirant, and, very rarely, the satisfied sage. You can easily learn that language, the language of the spiritual aspirant. Do not keep away from it because it is not the language to which you are accustomed. There is no place for hatred in this field, nor between state and

state. The Committee has entered on a sacred task. They may sometimes feel the burden to be too heavy; they may even reel under the weight of disappointments and difficulties. But I assure them they have no reason to lose heart. Lord Srinivasa opens His eyes, and your task is accomplished. And He will open His eyes. Have patience and wait prayerfully. Prayer can bring about the impossible. Recite the glory of the Lord and repeat His name in the cavern of your heart. That will bring success.

The body is but a boat, an instrument for crossing the sea of change, that you have received through the merit of many generations. When you have crossed the sea, you realize the dweller in the dwelling. That is the purpose of the body. So, even when the body is strong and skilled, even while the intellect is sharp and the mind alert, effort must be made to seek the dweller, in the body.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

36. Proceed Beyond The Lover, Loved, and Love

Date: 28 April 1962 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

I had no plan till now to speak to you. But Kasturi mentioned that those of you who are here for many years have not had the chance of even reverential salutations (*namaskaram*) for three months, that is, from before Sivarathri, when streams of devotees started coming in. He stated that you are all hungry for darshan. Since I am spending hours and hours talking with the devotees who are anxious to leave this place, I put in My appearance at the devotional singing (*bhajan*) sessions; twice a day, just for a minute or so, to receive *arathi* (worshipful waving of lights) and leave. I find you are all sad at what you misinterpret as neglect. So I shall administer some tonic to your drooping hearts. Well, you have the chance to see, experience, and be sanctified by the incarnation of the Lord; you got this chance as a result of the accumulation of merit in many previous lives. That merit has brought you here, when I have come down. For this chance, sages and demi-gods have prayed for long in the past. Having won this chance, strive to taste the sweetness and achieve the bliss of merging, without wasting even a single moment.

The rays that emanate from Me are of three grades: the physical, gross (*sthula*), filling this Prasanthi Nilayam; the subtle (*sukshma*), pervading the earth; and the causal (*karana*) covering the entire universe. The people who have the privilege of living in this Abode (*Nilayam*) are indeed lucky, for they are nearest to the rays. The physical rays make one a spiritual aspirant; the subtle rays make one a great soul (*mahatma*), and the causal rays convert one into an ascetic of the highest order (*paramahansa*).

Do not therefore waste your days entertaining wordly desires and ambitions and planning to achieve them. Success in this line or failure should not elate or depress you. When a banquet is in store for you, why run after the droppings from others' tables? Such plans and desires have no finality or fixity. They have no genuine worth.

Command the mind, regulate your conduct

Keep undimmed before you the main goal, the task for which you have come into this school; do not deviate from it, whatever the attraction that tempts you to stray. Command the mind and regulate your conduct, so that the goal is won. Don't let the care of the body or the fostering of the family or the demands of pride and pomp overwhelm the call of the spirit for self-expression. The Supreme Reality (*Siva*), individual (*jiva*), and subjective world (*prakriti*) are the three principles that confront you; the world has to be utilised by the individual to attain Siva, which is the fundamental fact in both. Until you get Atmic Bliss (*Atmanandam*), by realising Siva, the world will press on you with its weight and well nigh suffocate you. After that, the world will fall off of itself. Winning the grace of the Lord is as easy as melting butter; that is why the heart of the Lord is compared to butter. It is as soft as butter, they say. A little warmth is enough to melt it; a little warm affection shown to a suffering companion, a little warmth while pronouncing His name, turning it over on the tongue, so to say. The Name is the spring of all the essence of the Supreme Spirit (the *Chaithanya*) that you get by remembrance of the Name; it is the life-giving nectar; it is the fountain of primal energy. Recite the Name and the Named will be before you; picture the Named and the Name will leap to your lips. They are the reverse and the obverse of the same coin, the Name and the Form.

Be steady and fixed in your resolve and conduct

Some vow to write *Ramanama* (Rama's name) or some other name a million times, but very often it is just a matter of the fingers and the pen. The mind of the writer is the spoon, which does not taste the honey that it doles out. The mind should not wander from the name. It should dwell on the sweetness that the name connotes; it should ruminate on the beauty of the form that it recalls, the perfume that it spreads. The conduct and behaviour of the writer should be such as befits a servant of God - others should be inspired by them, and their faith should get freshened by their experience of the writer. **To earn the goodwill of the Master, there is one recipe: obey His orders without murmur.** I tell you My truth not in self-praise but so that you can

understand Me. If I do not tell you about Myself, who can? Grace is showered on all who obey instructions and follow orders, but the number of such is very small. Even though instructions are light and easy, they are designed to make you go beyond the three-fold distinction (*thriputi*) of the pilgrim, path, and goal; of *bhagavatha* (the good), *bhaktha* (devotion), and *Bhagavan* (Divinity); of lover, loved, and love.

Become masters of your own kingdoms

You are in the principle of devotion one moment and the principle of anger the next. This is wrong. You should be steady and fixed in your resolve and in your conduct. That is why, outside the Prasanthi Nilayam, I serve in my discourses what you call a feast (*vindu*), but here, to you, I always administer drugs (*mandu*). This is the centre, the headquarters of the God-revering army, which is to establish world prosperity. Of course, I insist everywhere on piety and a high moral life, but here I lay down stricter and more rigorous rules. Well, I shall tell you some hard words. You very often condemn the mind as a monkey, but take it from Me, it is far worse. The monkey leaps from one branch to another, but the mind leaps from the heights of the Himalayas to the depths of the sea, from today to tens of years ago. Tame it by the process of remembrance of the Name. Make it, as Ramadas did, into a stable steady mountain (Bhadhraachala).

That is the task I assign to you. Make your heart an Ayodhya by means of repeating the name of Rama (Ramanama); Ayodhya means a city that can never be captured by force. That is your real nature - Ayodhya and Bhadhraachala. Forget this and you are lost. Install Rama in your heart, and no outer force can harm you. Realise that, like the waves of the sea, happiness and grief rise and fall; they are like the inhalation and exhalation of the breath. If you attain that calm, the ground whereon you stand becomes Kasi, every handwork of yours gets transmuted into the highest form of Siva worship. Roam about in the region of your own mind and understand its moods and mysteries; do not dream of wandering in foreign lands before you become masters of your own kingdoms. Self first; help next. Know yourself; that lesson once learnt, you can know others much sooner and much more

truly. Dedicate this life to the service of others, for the others are only visible representatives of the Lord, who resides in you. I have come in order to repair the ancient highway leading man to God. Become sincere, skilful overseers, engineers, and workmen and join Me. The *Vedas*, the *Upanishads* and the Scriptures (*Sastras*) are the road I refer to. I have come to reveal them and revive them.

Take each day as a gift of God

The rules I have prescribed for those who come to the Nilayam may appear strict and even severe, but it is all for your good. Inner Purity first and outer purity later - that is the natural order. You feel full satisfaction when you take a bath first and then wear washed clothes. I have to be strict, because if I excuse one error, the tendency is to commit another. A plant will grow well only when the ground all around the stem is raked up and exposed to the sun and rain. I want you to drop old deep-rooted habits of purposeless talk, vanity, envy, and scandal-mongering. You are not to live like earnest spiritual aspirants just to please Me; it is a duty you owe to yourselves. So you must adhere to those rules wherever you are, not merely within the confines of the Nilayam. Of course, the Prasanthi Nilayam, you will have noticed, has no wall or fence around it; for it is not limited by any boundaries, it spreads and spreads until it envelops the universe. Generally, I speak sweetly, but on this matter of discipline, I will not grant any concessions. I do not care whether you come or, having come, go. I will insist on strict obedience. I shall not reduce the rigour to suit your level, for that will only ruin you; I pay attention to your ultimate good. Live peacefully, happily, contentedly, taking each day as a gift from the Lord. Do not rush and scramble, fret and fume. Be vigilant, and do not allow greed or anger to creep in. Attend all the sessions in the Hall: the recitation of OM (Pranava japa), the singing, the discourses. Do not take shelter behind excuses. If you are ill, devotional singing will help the cure, or, let Me tell you, it is far better to die during devotional singing with the Lord's name on the lips. Aspirants are led along wrong paths, and the respect due to pious people is dwindling because they are not kept rigorously on the hard path. Concessions have spoiled them. Hereafter, I will not excuse the slightest deviation. You have been here for years, so I have to treat you

as grown-ups, not as children. It is on account of the love that I have toward you that I rebuke you when you take a false step. My rays of grace will make the lotus of your heart blossom.

Drug and regimen are both supplementary

In a hospital, the doctors care for the disease, not for the size of the bank deposits of the patients. Disease is the important thing. So too, in the case of everyone suffering from the disease of birth and death and the dual buffets of good and bad has a right to the care and consideration of the doctor. The doctor prescribes the drug and the regimen; both are supplementary. When you get a relapse of doubt and distress, take the drug a greater number of times and in larger doses. Join the company of the godly; just as tame elephants surround the wild tusker and rope him and bind him hand and foot and immobilise him preliminary to taming him, the spiritually minded will bring the doubter round. The current flows always along the wire. You have only to make a connection and switch on. If the connection is loose, then the flow of grace will be disturbed and might even stop. It is you that connects and disconnects. You switch on and off, and you get day and night. Study the Gita; you know that the Gita draws a line that you should not cross. I do not ask for your vows - why should I force you to make them and cause you to break them? If you do so, your life becomes a torn cloth, stitched loose; it may tear again at the slightest pull. Let me tell you one thing in the end: However you are, you are Mine. I will not give you up. Wherever you are, you are near Me. You cannot go beyond My reach.

Hindu culture is the pillar and support of the nation; it is the backbone of the spiritually adventurous; it grants both this world and the next to all beings. It is really world culture, the culture that the world needs. Other cultures assume various forms in various climes. But the culture of Bharath (India) has asserted eternal values, values for all times and all climes - like compassion, virtue, and self-control. It has not bent before the pressure of patronage or persecution.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

37. Precious Treasure

Date: 19 May 1962 / Location: Brindavan

Children have unselfish love. They are innocent onlookers; they observe the action of the elders and they learn their lessons from home much earlier than from school. So, parents have to be very careful in their behaviour with the children and between themselves. There was a judge who used to come to Shirdi. He asked his wife and child to stay with Baba and left for home for a few days. He said to the boy when he left, "This is God Himself" After some time they fell in with a (person from) Kathak, who was reciting musically some Puranic story. Within a few minutes, they heard him revile Sai Baba as a mad man and a cheat. The child could not stand it. He tugged at his mother's sari and forced her to return to Baba. Next morning, they approached Baba for his blessings, and He asked them why they had returned. The incident of the Kathak was duly reported. The boy heard everyone addressing Baba as the Lord. Remembering the harsh words of the Kathak, the boy wept, but Baba pacified Him humorously, "I am only a man. What the Kathak said is true. I am mad, and I am cheating people of what they consider very valuable but what I feel is useless." Then, even as they were talking, one Mr. Patel came there and related how Baba had saved his child from a serious accident. Baba told him, "Yes, I held him when he fell, with My four hands. "Patel shed tears of thankfulness; but the boy cried out "Ah I told you, You are God; You have four hands, like Vishnu." Baba laughed; He took the boy inside and gave him a vision of Himself, as having four hands. That boy stayed on in Shirdi for 26 years after this and left it only after Baba "left". He then became a renunciant and became a great sage.

Children should grow with love of the mother

Children should have the love of their parents. The child should grow with the mother for the first five years of life. Many children do not know what mother's love is like. The mother should not hand over her responsibility during those years to someone else and be called simply "mummy", as if she was some doll with which the child liked to play. Nowadays, the children of

rich and "educated" parents are severely handicapped. They are deprived of the care and love of parents. They are handed over to the care of servants and nurses, and they grow up in their company and learn their vocabulary and habits and styles of thought. This is very undesirable. When a boy is five years old, the father has to take up the task of bringing him up. Then, he must be entrusted to a guru, who must teach him a standard of value with which to deal with the family, the village, the country, and mankind. Teachers must be aware of their good fortune as well as their duties. Some teachers shirk their duties and play false to the expectations society has in them. They come into the class, write on the blackboard, say, "Silence", and go off to sleep in the chair! So the children dislike school. Teachers in the old days used to go round the village with two stalwart students and peep into house after house for shirkers, and when they discovered any, the malingerer was forcibly carried weeping and struggling to school, there to be beaten severely for the crime. Children are like fresh cloth; they can be given any colour you like. Just dip them in that colour, that is enough. Adults are like old clothes that will not imbibe colour so easily and well. Hearts that are green and soft will learn habits and disciplines quicker. For learning good habits and manners, age is no bar; training will make even children learn them.

Become as straightforward as a child

Adults develop a sense of shame and of pride, which is mostly artificial, false, and skin deep. So they invent excuses to justify their actions and also manufacture justifications for their errors. Children have no such inhibitions. They believe everybody, and everybody can believe them. Their hearts are like gramophone records; they get impressed by whatever tune you sing to them. They play back the correct tune, without any distortion, provided the needle is sharp. The needle is love, and it must be one-pointed and direct. Only then can the music be drawn out. In the case of elders, the needles would have been blunted, but children have the gift of one-pointed attention. They are fearless; it is the elders who plant their fears in them. The children are truthful, but the elders teach them the art of lying. They set children to watch and report, so they become interested in the faults and errors of others. When elders speak, it is difficult to discover whether it is truth or

untruth. But children are plain spoken. They have not discovered that success in the wordly sense is dependent on cleverness in the short run, though in the long run, it is honesty and plain speaking that bring maximum profit. That is why it is said that, to win the grace of God, you must become either as simple and straightforward as a child or as wise and discriminating as a deeply learned scholar. The gramophone records that do not have any grooves, because they have not been used, can be played over and over again, with the needle of one-pointed attention not being blunted at all, for the grooves blunt the point, not the plate. Prahlada is a fine example of this. He had no egoism; he was in perfect, unaffected calm. So, whatever happened to his physical cloak, he never felt it. The needle simply rolled round and round; there was no music; there was just silence.

The richest inheritance you can give children

Poison and nectar cannot merge; Being (Sath) can merge only with Being; nature is full of Supreme Reality (Prakriti is Brahmamayam); Supreme Reality is full of nature (Brahman is prakritimayam)! Cloth is yarn-illusion and yarn is cloth-illusion. One is meaningless without the other. The childhood stage is the pure Being stage, and if you can manage to live on with that innocence, as Sage Suka did, you can achieve merger quite naturally. The sun's rays wait outside your closed door, silently and patiently. Open it to the width of a chink, and it gladly rushes in through that chink. Open it wider, and it bathes you in light and warmth. Children's minds are always open; they have no closed doors, which bring in the darkness. That is why their smile is like sunlight in a grief-stricken home. Druva and Markandeya achieved the vision of the Lord and liberation for themselves not by means of a trick or stratagem but by transmuting their minds by spiritual practices into the divine instrument for salvation. Of course, what do you seek in life? Joy, mutual harmony, unison, and love - between the officer and clerk, the master and servant, the husband and wife, the father and son. In fact, these four are essential between any two who are bound by rights and duties. Sow the seeds of these harmonious qualities even while your children are young - that is the richest inheritance you can give them, the most useful insurance against the attack of despair, despondency, and discontent.

He who does not work but eats is a cheat

There is a story of a dog that came to Rama, bleeding from blows. Lakshmana was sent to inquire why it was in such pain. He discovered that a brahmin had beaten it with a stick. When asked, the brahmin could give as sufficient cause only that the dog come across his path. Rama asked the dog, "How do you want me punish this brahmin ?" The dog promptly gave the reply, "Make him the manager of a temple." "What?" said Rama. "That would be a reward, not a punishment." The dog said, "No, I was a manager, and since it is next to impossible not to mishandle or misuse or appropriate some fraction of Gods's money, when he is the manager, he too will get this canine birth and perhaps get beaten too." Remember, not only that dog and that brahmin, but every one of you is living off the property of God, for does not all this belong to Him? And what do you do in return for all the benefits you derive from the property of the Lord? You cannot eat it and sit quiet. You must at least give some physical labour in return. He who does not work but eats is indeed a cheat. Not that the Lord wants anything from you, but it will give self-respect and it will purify your heart. So, teach children not to receive something for nothing. Let them earn the things they seek by hard work. Again, when boys play cricket or football or tennis, if they become eager to defeat the opponent, they start committing faults or fouls. Then, even if they score a goal, it will be declared not a goal; it may well be offside or out. But if they stick to the game and play it well, unaffected by the atmosphere of rivalry and lust for victory at all costs, they are bound to win. In a race, it is better to let the horse go along gathering its own speed; do not compare and compete, for that will cause a fall or a slip. This lesson has also to be taught to children: competition has to be healthy, subordinated to the proper rules of the game and free from hatred and malice. Above all, realise that children are precious treasures. Yours is the great task of rearing them up to become devoted servants of God and sincere seekers on the spiritual path.

The chief purpose of religion is to make people aware of their relationship

with God. Every person has full rights to worship God and win His grace. But, whatever the road, whichever the path, the goal is the same. Vedic religion will not permit you to quarrel with any other religion, or hate it, or decry it. It insists on tolerance and respect.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

38. The Prison Walls

Date: 24 May 1962 / Location: Maddhur

Even enthusiasm must be under control, and devotion must be regulated. There is no meaning in simply running behind and before My car. See what happened on account of your over-enthusiastic welcome! This meeting, which Raghavan and others had fixed for six in the evening, is starting now at nine! Of course, I was prepared to stay until midnight or even later if that would help, but I have to return to Whitefield tonight itself. So what happens? Your restlessness has deprived you of My darshan (sight of a holy person) for a longer time. I am also making My talk very short. What a pity! Had you been quiet and disciplined from the very beginning, I could have spent more time with you. This is how people lose the chance that they get. Each one of you felt just a little inconvenience and discomfort, and you argued about it and lost your patience over it. Well, I felt the discomfort and the discontent of all of you. Still, I am ever ready to give you bliss, but you must be ever ready to receive it from Me. The Niranjana Bhajana Center (Mandali) is regularly doing bhajana (devotional music by group singing) here, I know. Do not think I am coming here for the first time. I am here whenever you sing the Glory. That is why I have come physically to this place to tell you to carry on this remembrance of the name (namasmarana). Just as the times have changed and conditions of living have changed, the rigours of spiritual practice have also to be modified. Doing severe penance (tapas) was a great and rare achievement in those days; now, repeating the Name of the Lord is becoming as difficult a penance. Hence, it is said that remembrance (smarana) is enough; remembrance that can be done along with all other activities of living. It is the inner purity that matters, not the outer movement of the lips. Remembrance being an inner activity helps that inner transformation.

Evoke the Divine in you by remembering the name of God

This meeting has something to do with the Divine Life Society also. Well, human life is divine life. That is the reason, the justification, the goal of human life. Reading books in the Society library is no good. Scholarship reeks

with pride; it is eager to win scholastic victory; it jumps at any chance to outwit an opponent; it strains after recognition and honour. Ravana was a famous scholar who had mastered the Vedas . But that did not endow him with character; he fell into the abyss. Nevertheless, it is certainly a wasteful way of spending precious time in mere study without any attempt to translate it into action. You need not give your word to Me now, but try to put into practice at least a few of the good things that appeal to you and that are helpful in giving you peace and contentment. To evoke the Divine in you, there is no better method than remembrance of the name. Your Bhajana Mandali is called Niranjana (meaning Supreme Being) after the Formless Personification (Nirakaraswarupa) of the Principle of Supreme Reality (Brahma Thathwa). Now, there can be no bhajana of the Supreme Being - the unmanifested, pure, absolute principle. You can limit that Principle of Supreme Being by name and form and make it with form and attributes for the sake of visualising it. Then, by slow stages, you will find that particular Form enclosing all beings and therefore assuming a universal nature. It will gradually drop its boundaries of time and space and, like the blueness of Krishna, pervade the sky and sea and become a symbol for the depth of Eternity.

The only sane person in this mad world

Without surrender, there can be no liberation. As long as you cling to the narrow "I", the four prison walls will close in on you. Cross out the "I" and you are free. How to kill the "I?" Place it at the feet of the Lord and say, "You, not I," and you are free of the burden that is crushing you. Associate always with the Niranjana - the vast, the unlimited, the Divine. Dream and plan to merge with the Absolute. Fill your ears with the call from the beyond and the boundless. Transcend the walls, the bars and bolts, the locks and chains. You can do so easily by fixing your mind on your own infinity. Do not condemn the mind as a monkey, etc. It is a fine instrument with which you can win either liberation or bondage. It all depends on how you manipulate it. It will carry out your orders to the minutest detail. It will lead you, if you so desire, along the royal road right up to the door of realisation. Or it will make you wander about in the blind alleys, where every step lands you in dirt. You should hang

your heads in shame when you find from the papers that human beings like you are today inventing and testing weapons that can wipe out millions and injure even coming generations. But you feel proud of man's intelligence and cleverness! Some people even admire such inventors! By all means feel proud of persons who invent something that will help people to live happy lives, but use the proper words when you have to describe those who manufacture such killers of entire populations. In the mental hospital, you will find all kinds of madness affecting people - some spit on others, some bite, some scratch, some throw stones, some hurl abuses. These mad men are engaged in hurling bombs; that is their madness. The world is full of people who suffer from insanity but who are still outside the asylums! Suddenly, when hatred envelops a country, even ordinarily sane people go mad and behave like savages. But in the mental hospital, you will find sometimes one type of "mad man". He sits in a corner, resting without a break, watching the pranks and the wildness of the other inmates. The doctors will be thankful to him, for he needs no care, he causes no trouble. His madness may be melancholia, or he may be a realised soul (jnani). The God-bound person is like that. He is the only sane person in this mad world. Whatever happens to you, take it as a lesson to harden your character and toughen your nerves and heighten your non-attachment. That will give peace and joy.

Serve the worm as you would serve the Master; be humble, be eager, be efficient in that service. If you dare treat the worm as your servant, you will be dragged down into disaster.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

39. The Inner Prompting

Date: 17 July 1962 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

THE day is Vyasa Purnami, and it is also celebrated throughout India as Guru Purnima. The importance of the day has been explained now by the lawyer from Repalle in Telugu, by Vineetha Ramachandra Rao in Kannada, and by the Editor of Sanathana Sarathi in English. Well, I shall also speak now. Whatever My language, I speak not to inform but more to heal. I administer medicine for your minds, not food for your brains - or, rather, it is both. Like honey, it is both food and drug. There is nothing specially related to Sage Vyasa that makes this day attached to his name. He was not born on this day, nor did he 'leave' on this day; it is just dedicated to his memory and to the worship of all gurus. For Vyasa is the the first and the source of all spiritual teachers. He recognised and declared the Truth in a variety of ways and helped to open the inner eye of humanity. He described in beautiful, simple, clear terms the glory of the Lord and of the means of attaining Him. He saw that unless the mind is negated or destroyed, the Lord will not be manifest. He prescribed the paths by which this could be done. So he is the world teacher (lokaguru), the greatest teacher (paramaguru). He collected the hymns, collated them, and put them into the four Vedas ; he assembled the later Vedic literature and composed the Brahma Sutras (Aphorisms on Supreme Reality) to expound the philosophy that was inherent in it. He wrote the Mahabharatha, which includes the universal specific, the Bhagavad Gita . Then, when he was sunk in sadness, in spite of all this knowledge and scholarship and teaching, Narada advised him to sing the glory of the personalised aspect of Godhead, to waken the emotions and guide them Godward through devotion. That gave him and the world great joy and peace, for Vyasa then wrote the Bhagavatha .

Discover that happiness is an inner gift

Now, whether it is Vyasa or the guru whom you honour today, the more important thing is the full moon (purnami) that happens today - that is the one thing certain about it; the rest of the story is conjecture. The guru is

needed when you have the *guri* ('goal' or 'aim' in Telugu). If you do not have that urge, what can the teacher do? Strewing seeds on sand or rock is a sheer waste of precious stuff. Inner prompting to see the light must send the aspirant to the teacher or must draw the teacher to wherever the aspirant is. You must inquire and discriminate: Do objects grant happiness? Is anyone happy? How can one be happy through the multiplication of desire and the frantic effort to feed the raging fire? At last, you will, by your own experience, discover that happiness is an inner gift, a spiritual treasure that can be won by equanimity. The moon is the presiding deity of the mind; it must shine cool and comforting, eternally, in fullness, in the inner firmament of the heart (*hridayakasa*). The external material moon waxes and wanes, but the mind should be trained to stand up against modifications and moods. The internal moon has no marks on it; it is ever full, it is always full moon for the victorious spiritual aspirant.

People are possessed by the ghost of ignorance

The mind spins a cocoon for the individual soul to be imprisoned in. Karma, which is the activity of ignorance (*maya*), encloses the individual in its grip. It is the husk that makes the paddy seed grow and yield more paddy plants and more grains of paddy. Remove the husk, and there is no more sprouting. The husk, karma, makes the individual soul sprout and undergo the pleasure and pain produced by the impressions unconsciously left on the mind by past good or bad actions (*vasanas*) and perform purificatory rites and sacred ceremonies. You reward and punish yourself as the result of your own activities; you are here because you wished to come here; you gravitate to the level to which your deeds drag or lift you. You make your own future by your thoughts and desires and deeds. Ignorance (*maya*) is like the ghost of a tribal woman, which once possessed a great pandit in a Himalayan hermitage. The unfortunate pandit sang and danced like any tribal damsel; he swore and cursed in the *Paisachi* (ghost) dialect, and everyone in the hermitage became ashamed of his company. At last, when the ghost was exorcised and the pandit was freed, he became his original self. He remembered nothing of his pranks and blabberings. Humanity is similarly possessed by the ghost of ignorance (*maya*). The ghost has to be driven out. The mode of exorcism of

this ghost is taught by the guru or the Gita . Do not despair; it can be driven out. Confidence adds the required courage and strength. Do not doubt or give vent to despair. It must happen whether you welcome it or not, whether you strive for it or not - that is your reason for taking birth, the goal you have to reach. You have not come to be a tool in the hands of a ghost. The ant moves steadily and slowly toward its goal, climbing over everything that comes in its way. Let yours be the same path of the ant. Follow the path of remembrance of the name, steadily, climbing over all obstacles like sloth, pride, haste, doubt, etc. The guru can help you only to a certain extent, but be grateful to him for that little. He is like a skilled gardener, who tends the plants and waters them intelligently; cutting the tree into proper shape, applying the correct manure to supplement the soil and keep it free from drought and pests. Give the guru the gratitude for all this service, but reserve seeking refuge for protection for the Lord. Do not offer the guru more than his due. Do not also change your allegiance.

Do spiritual practices in an unbroken, disciplined way

You cannot sell your house to someone, later mortgage it to another, and rent it out to a third party after some further interval. Sri Ramakrishna had to cut asunder even the form of Kali when it came across his path toward the realisation of the formless aspect of God. Do not do spiritual practice off and on; do it in an unbroken, disciplined way. Otherwise, it will be like watering a plant for some time and leaving it to go dry before you start again. The centre point between the eyebrows on which you are asked to concentrate is not the point where your eyebrows meet in the centre of your forehead; it is a point in your inner awareness, the heart (hridaya). Like the celestial damsels that were sent by Indra to break the penance of sages, you will be getting nine varieties of music during meditation, but you should not be elated by that and suspend your meditation. Guru Purnami here is distinct from the festival in other places. Between you and Me, it is not the relationship between teacher and disciple that prevails, or that of the guide and the pilgrim. The external guru should not be equated with the innermost soul in all the hearts (sarvantharyami). Even Garuda cannot reach the goal if it does not spread its wings and leap into the sky. So, make a move, put a step forward. That is the

immediate task. Your resolve on this day should be to start with a sincere desire to succeed. Light will be shed by the grace of the Lord. The Lord has come to help you.

Practise the attitude of offering every act at the feet of God as a flower is offered in worship. Make every breath an offering to Him. Do not be upset by calamities; take them as acts of grace. If a man loses his hand in an accident, he must believe that it was the Lord's grace that saved his life. When you know that nothing happens without His resolve, everything that happens has a value added to it.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

40. Unfurl It On Your Consciousness

Date: 29 September 1962 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

At Prasanthi Nilayam, every day is a festival day; every day is a holy day. As the saying goes, it is "perpetual joy, perpetually green (nithya kalyanam, pachha thoranam)." Following the customary habits of people, feeling that the external signs of auspiciousness have their own value in educating and sublimating the inner emotions, the Festival of Nine Holy Nights (Navarathri) is celebrated here also. For that reason, you need not wait for Navarathri here or at home to instal Durga or Saraswathi in your heart. The day you feel the urge, that day is the auspicious day. Do not delay or postpone. I have been saying more or less the same things every time the flag is hoisted on this Nilayam. But, just as you have to eat the same items of food every day, just as you have to wash your face every now and then, the washed face being washed again, so the spoken message has to be spoken again and again. This is needed for those who have heard it from Me already; it is even more needed by those who have come for the first time. This Nilayam (abode) is Prasanthi Nilayam (Abode of Tranquility). It is the abode of the highest form of peace (santhi), absolute peace (prasanthi). In fact, you are, each one of you, the Abode of Tranquility. That is why I very often address you as "Embodiments of Peace (Santhi Swarupulara)"! My object is to remind you that your real nature is santhi - equanimity, peace, unruffledness, non-attachment. You cannot draw out from within you that which is not there, is it not? Therefore, santhi must be there, deep down, as the very core of your being. It is the ripeness of the fruit, the sweetness filling the ripened fruit.

Peace is an ennobling, elevating experience

Peace is not just an external polish, which can be put on or brushed off. It is not the same as fortitude, like that which young Yudhistira had when he bore without a tear or a gasp the hundred blows with a cane administered to test his stamina. It is not the resignation that comes of frustrated ambition or satisfied desire. It is an ennobling, elevating experience, which comes when one attains merger with the very source of one's being. It is the stilling of the

waves, the calming of mental activities and agitations. Everyone who has attained it has hoisted the Prasanthi Flag; in fact, each one of you should strive to unfurl it on your own hearts. You must all become an army of virtuous (dharmic) workers, equipped with the weapons of truth, righteousness, peace, and love (sathya, dharma, santhi, and prema) to revive humanity and rid it of all the ills with which it is now stricken.

Concrete representation of the symbol on flag

I have told you often that this flag hoisting is not a mere formality; it is a meaningful rite in the inauguration and training of that army. I never do any act devoid of significance or speak a word devoid of purpose. The symbol on the flag is also full of significance. This Prasanthi Nilayam has no compound wall, as you have noticed. It is as it should be; people can come to the Lord from any direction, without let or hindrance. But we have gates! The people who walk along that road, which takes a turn when it approaches the Nilayam are, like all else, burdened with inherited impulses and earned dents and bents in their personality make-up. They are moved on by desire and urged by the six-thonged whip of passion. They enter the gate only when they are no longer overwhelmed by quality of inertia and indolence (thamoguna) - that is, when they have the curtain of delusion drawn aside a little. From there, they move on toward the Nilayam and pass through that second gate, where they are attracted by the imposing building, the portico, the statue in front - all appealing to the comparatively superior quality of passionate activity (rajoguna). Even this falls off when they enter the hall, where quality of serenity and poise (sathwaguna) overpowers the mind, what with the pictures, images, the bhajans, the chanting of Lord's Name, etc. This circle in front of the Nilayam is a concrete representation of the symbol on the Flag; you should all be told about this, and you should in turn educate others about it. The first circle within the brick outline is, as you can see, strewn with sand. That is desire (kama), mere waste land, where nothing can grow, from which no sustenance can be procured. The next one is the circle of anger (krodha), enemy number two of man. It is represented here as a hardy tuber plant with many leaves, which, though cut often beyond recognition, sprouts at the next fall of rain. Anger is like that; you feel you have uprooted it, but you let your

pride be injured or your wish opposed, and it sprouts again. Its roots are tentacles difficult to escape from. Every Nine-day Festival (Navarathri), the thousands of devotees who walk about here trample the plants and leave no trace. But when the Birthday Festival comes a month or two later, the sprouts come again and grow into a sizeable height. That is the way anger grips a man. It grows into hatred and vengeance - the two red steps that you see as the next two concentric circles. When someone stands across your path, you hate him; when someone refuses to be your accomplice, you hate him. Acts of commission as well as omission cause hatred. That is why we have two steps here.

Make the symbol alive in your consciousness

Crossing the sands of greed and lust, the wilds of anger, climbing the heights of hatred and vengefulness, the spiritual aspirant comes to the green meadow of love (prema). You can see that circle of broad green grass, attractively embellished with good thoughts and virtues, which refresh and satisfy. Beyond that, we have the broad expanse of quiet (santhi), where all agitations cease and the mind is at rest in its own silence. Now is the chance: establish yourself in yoga - the practice of spiritual union with the Universal Power, the Absolute Wisdom, the Eternal Verity. The consciousness ascends through the six centres, marked on the yogic staff (yogadanda) in the centre of the circle, and then, watch what happens. The lotus of the heart blooms, the petals unfold, the fragrance permeates the universe, the rays of the sun are inhaled, and, as you see represented here, the splendour of the Atma, the unsullied effulgence (Atmajyothi), illumines you and everything else in one all-embracing flame. Contemplate on this symbol; make it alive in your consciousness. That is what I mean when I tell you to hoist the flag on your mind. You will find it highly beneficial. When this flag waves happily with the wind on the Nilayam, it must also wave happily on your consciousness, calling you to further effort and further spiritual effort. It is not mere intense devotion that I want, I want action motivated by devotion. Throw off all your present responsibilities and take up this new responsibility of saving yourself; then you will have discharged your duty smoothly and to your satisfaction.

Know that the basic reality is God, Omnipotent, Omniscient, Omnipresent. Become aware of it and stay in that awareness always. Whatever the stress and the storm, do not waver from that faith. Or, you can earn that awareness by reminding yourselves of it with every breath of yours. How can you so remind yourselves, you may ask.

By means of any one of His Names, any Name that is fragrant with divine perfume, any Name that is reminiscent of His beauty, His grace, and His power.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

41. The Root Of Dharma

Date: **01 October 1962** / Location: **Prasanthi Nilayam** / Occasion: **Vedapurusha sapthaha Yajna**

Today, long before the sun rose, I could see Bliss (Ananda) rising in your hearts, for you woke up long before dawn and got ready to come here for the inauguration of this ritual of sacrifice (yajna)! I had suggested 9:30 as the time for this event, but others suggested an earlier auspicious hour due to the showers that came this morning. My resolve prevailed, and we are meeting here to inaugurate the ritual at 9:30 itself! Bliss is ultimately based on food, food is derived from rain, rain is the gift of God in exchange for sacrificial offerings. Sacrifice is a rite done as per the Karma Kanda, a part of the Vedas that deals with action. So, the Vedic God-head (Veda Purusha) is the spring out of which Bliss wells. That is why this ritual of sacrifice is called Veda Purusha Yajna . Sacrifice (yajna) is the destiny of every living being. Life is sustained by the sacrifice of the living. Every being, from the tiniest amoeba to the most profound scholar, is perpetually engaged in sacrifice. The mother sacrifices for the child, the father for the progeny, the friend for the friend, the individual for the group, the present for the sake of the future, the rich for the poor, the weak for the strong - it is all yajna, sacrifice, offering. However, most of it is not conscious, most of it is not voluntary, most of it is not righteous. It is done out of fear or greed or with a view to the fruits thereof, or by mere instinct or primeval urge. It must be consciously done, it must be for spiritually elevating purposes, especially in humans. Then, when life becomes sacrifice-filled, egoism will disappear and the river will merge in the sea.

Bring out the priceless pearls of India's past

The stream of sacrifice is the river Saraswathi of the Vedic Triveni (the three rivers Saraswathi, Ganga or Ganges, and Yamuna). The meaning and significance of every single hymn and rite of the Vedas is sacrifice. Every single syllabus of the Vedas is a name of God - it has about thirteen lakhs of such syllables. When the river Saraswathi underneath the twin rivers Ganga and Yamuna dries up, it will be a terrible tragedy; so also when the stream of

sacrifice dries up, it will be a great loss of spiritual wealth. Because when that happens, India cannot continue to be India. The culture of India (Bharathavarsha) is called the land of Vedas (Karmabhumi), since sacrifice (yajna) is the action (karma) that is the most worthwhile. It is Vedabhumi (land of Vedas), not the Vedanabhumi (land of anguish) it is fast becoming. Vedana (suffering) can never come if the Vedas are learnt and practised again. Do not be satisfied with simply collecting a few gaudy shells from the shore of this ancient culture. Dive deep into its past and bring out the priceless pearls. "The Vedas are the root of all virtue (Vedhokhilo dharma muulam)." If the roots are injured, the tree will die. If the roots are alive, the tree can grow again. It can survive the lopping of the branches, the denudation of the leaves, but once the roots decay, there is no hope. The Vedas and the sastras (scriptures) are the two eyes of India. But by blind imitation of Western cultures and by blind carping on the native culture, these two eyes have become dim. Those who have no vision have to be led by others. Indians too are thrown into this plight, when they allowed the Vedas and the sastras to be neglected. They are reduced to dependence on others, who showed them the way to their own culture.

People have bandaged their eyes with egoism

Do not cry out for help to the rulers or governments if you desire to revive the Vedas . No, the Veda belongs to those who crave it, who know its value, who are afflicted with an insatiable thirst for it, who desire to practise it, and who are eager to derive the joy and calm that it can impact. No one else has the right to patronise it and talk highly about it; such talk will be insincere and, therefore, valueless and even false. People who do not know how to distinguish between the fleeting and the fixed, the right and the wrong, the true and the false, sit in judgement on the Vedas and strut about pompously in their narrow conceited circles; but others keep aloof from such critics. To say, as some of these do, that the Vedas are contraptions put together by a few brahmins for their aggrandizement is the height of folly; it is the case of the mentally weak judging a thing beyond their ken. A fish, even if it is put into a golden bowl, struggles desperately to return to the sea from which it was pulled up. It is in mortal agony until it reaches its primal home. It wants

water all round it to be happy and alive. Mankind also is of the nature of divine bliss (ananda); one cannot survive without bliss. A person is Immortality embodied (Amritha swarupa), so it is difficult for a person to imagine that their body will fall off and have to die one day. People have bandaged their eyes with egoism, and they say the darkness is very congenial; they take as true the curious shapes of things they sees darkly.

Vedic scholars must save the Vedas

There are some disciplines and some righteousness (dharma) to follow if you desire to take off the bandage and see the Light and all things in the new Light. This worldly disease can be cured by the Vedic drug and the regimen of restrictions and regulations, the various do's and don'ts that these brahmins are following. Do not dismiss these restrictions and regulations as mere superstitions. No one practises them for the fun of it all; they are very hard limitations on conduct and on the details of daily life. It requires great faith, courage, and hardihood to hold them as true and put them into practice. Honour those who have that faith and that courage. I know the sincerity with which they have been leading this regulated life, for I have been with every one of them since years. By long neglect, the road laid down by the Vedic seers is overgrown with thorns; it is now well-nigh unrecognisable, what with potholes, scoutings, hollows, and brush. Just as some travelers spoil the very rest-houses where they are given shelter, the Vedas have been covered with calumny by the very people whom they have blessed and elevated. When a country is in danger of invasion, the army, that is, a part of the population selected carefully and trained systematically for the specific purpose of war, rushes to ward off the invader. Similarly, when the Vedas are in danger, this well-trained, selected band of dedicated Vedic scholars must take up the task. These pandits and scholars were struggling in agony because they felt forsaken and alone. Now look at them, sitting gaily dressed, as brides in the marriage pavilion; with joy in their faces and hope in their hearts. They had no one hitherto even to listen with patience to their scrupulously correct recitals of the Vedic mantras (holy letters, words). Henceforth, they have no reason to fear. My task comprises protection of Vedas (Veda sam rakshana), fostering Vedic scholars (vidhwath poshana), and establishment of

righteousness (dharmasthapana). All three are interdependent. Fostering Vedic scholars helps both the Vedas and dharma, so I assure them that their scholarship and sincerity will not go unrewarded. The era of neglect has ended.

When Rama enters the mind, kama (desire) has no place therein. Desire ceases when God seizes the mind. In fact, since desire is the very stuff of which the mind is made, it becomes non-existent, and you are free. This stage is called the death of the mind, the merging of the mind, or the killing of the mind.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

42. Delusion and Brahman

Date: 02 October 1962 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

When you listen to these speeches by distinguished scholars, these wise men, who have become like ripe fruits, full of the sweet essence of Vedas, you forget (I can realise your feelings) the discomfort, the rain, the heat, the sleeplessness, and the hunger that might be pestering you. That shows that the Vedas are a reservoir of joy. And for you, the joy is greater because you are all the time listening with Me in your minds, comparing My words and deeds with what you hear these people describe as the words and deeds of the Vedic God, and discovering that both are the same. They are not the cause of your inner joy, nor is it, believe Me, even I. It is you yourself. The proofs and arguments they quoted for the purity of the rites and establishment of a happy social order, which is the product of the rites - they are in you already, they are for you. You have those messages whispering their words of warning and encouragement in your inner ear; it is up to you to be silent for a while, so that you may hear it and benefit by it. You have been born for one purpose: to die. That is to say, to kill the "I". If bhrama (delusion) dies, you become Brahman (the Supreme Spirit), or rather, you know that you are Brahman. All this literature, all this effort, all this ritual sacrifice, all this teaching is just to hold a mirror before you, so that you may see Yourself.

Karma is like the clouds that pass

Now, seeing your Self can be done by action, worship, or sacred knowledge (karma, upasana, or jnana). The Vedas are the basic teaching for all humanity. On these three subjects; it has the Karma Kanda (chapter on fate and action), the Upasana Kanda (chapter on worship), and the Jnana Kanda (chapter on wisdom). Of course, devotion or worship (through the action that it sublimates and sanctifies) will lead you on to the highest knowledge. It is enough if you take a ticket and sit in the "through" carriage of the train; it will take you through many junctions to the distant destination. The action of purchasing a ticket and getting into the carriage and the devotion or intense desire to reach the terminus (without any urge to alight at intermediate

stations) will take you through a series of junctions and stations, right to the very place where you want to go. In the firmament of the heart, the mind and the intellect must shine as the moon and sun. Fate (karma) is like the clouds that pass; do not worry about them. Some clouds are inevitable; they will shift soon and fade away. So also fate. They will not disappear if you simply shout at them. Discipline alone can drive away those clouds; that is to say, action (karma) has to be done to free the mind from the consequences of action (karma). The Vedas are endless; Veda is the sky, which envelops all, which has no limit in any direction. The scriptures (sastras) are like buildings built under the sky, each with its own roof; some big, some small, but all constructed to give shelter and comfort; the same nectar is found in both, but the Veda is the reservoir from which they draw and fill their own tanks. Take a stone image - the face, the nose, the feet, the ankle, the knee, the hair, the crown, the precious stones set in the crown are all stone. The cloth that the image wears is stone, the smile is stone. So too, the entire world is Brahman, one substance, one energy, one mind. Vidwans Kolluri, Somasekhara Shasthry, Sannidhanam Lakshminarayana Shasthry, and Uppuluuri Ganapathi Shasthry all went through their speeches at express speed, for they felt that you were longing to hear Me also. But that was wronging you, for rarely do you hear men of such talent and experience. Still, I shall close now, for you have sat too long without any interval.

Give the body the attention it deserves, but not more. Some people advise that you should cultivate disgust toward it, but that is not beneficial. Tend it as an instrument, use it as a boat, as a raft. Disgust is not a desirable attitude toward anything in creation. Everything is God's handiwork, an example of His Glory, His Majesty.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

43. Ghee And Sandalwood

Date: 04 October 1962 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

Daily you are getting the "Essence of Divinity" from these scholars, who have come to this little village hidden behind the hills and forests. They are giving you medicine to reduce your fever and restore you to health. This stream of nectar of immortality (amritha) is coming to you because of your fortune, earned by goodness and good deeds. Of course, it is interesting to hear speeches from these pandits on subjects contained in the books that they have studied, but it is much more interesting and useful to hear what they themselves have experienced and practised on the basis of what they have studied. I tell you only what they have already said, but you like it nevertheless, probably because I try to make it simpler to suit your measure of understanding, which I happen to know more than they. They do not know you as well as I do or as long as I do. There are, I know, many even in this gathering who whisper among their own group that this offering oblations to gods into the consecrated fire (homa) with fine cow's ghee (clarified butter) and costly sandalwood chips is a big waste. But if you always dwell in the realm of accounts, of plus and minus, how can you ever get the joy of realising a wish that is unsatisfiable by mere money? These people struggle for ghee and for sandalwood fuel, not for the more precious joy of the performance of an ancient rite. The questioners themselves have eaten bags of rice and drunk pots and pots of ghee since birth. Let me ask them whether they have had a single day of happiness or whether they have given joy at least to their kith and kin. This ritual of sacrifice (yajna) gives great joy to so many; I have not gone to anyone for funds for this; I and My people are very delighted by this celebration! What have others to do in this matter? They are concentrating on material utility. I want you to concentrate on spiritual significance. They struggle for a little ghee; they crave for a little fuel. You get incalculable joy.

Ritual sacrifice is correlated with human aspirations

The ritual sacrifice (yajna) has a deeper meaning, the meaning that symbols

have, the meaning that is really valuable for human progress. Every rite is a symbolic act. Yajna is correlated at every step with human aspirations and spiritual practices. It is kept in touch with human life and aspirations in its minutest detail. Butter is the product of the churning of the emotions, impulses, impressions, and instincts of people; the purest and the most authentic essence of the divine in people. That butter, when it is still more clarified, becomes ghee, and that is what is offered to the Gods. You may ask how it reaches the Gods. Well, the Veda itself is the authority for that belief. You cannot demand any other; for it will be as foolish as asking the eye to prove by some authority unconnected with the eye the validity of what it has seen. How can the ear give some other authority to prove the genuineness of the sound that it alone can hear? The eye is its own authority, the ear is its own testimony. The Veda that has probed into the science of propitiating the Gods says that the sacrificial fire conveys the subtler aspects of the offerings. And the Veda is its own testimony.

Strive to secure Grace, not any lesser fruit

Indra (Lord of celestial gods) is the presiding deity of the hand, and the Indra Yajna confers the communion of human labour, the collective cooperation of human industry for the progress of the individual and of society. Also, Brihaspathi (the spiritual teacher of celestial gods) is the deity of the intellect, and the yajna associated with his name establishes cordiality and coordination. The Sacrifice for Moon (Chandra Yajna) similarly tends to develop the harmony of hearts and the Sacrifice for Sun (Adhithya Yajna) the promotion of sameness of vision among all, for the sun is the deity that presides over the eye. Every yajna has a great unseen influence on human affairs, for these sacred formulas are potent sounds, charged with subtle mysteries. Always concentrate on the lasting fruit; the universal, the spiritual. Do not pursue mean objectives; utilise the mind to follow the plan of the Lord to re-establish righteousness (dharma) in the world. What can you plan with your paltry intelligence? A man once laughed at God for giving the majestic banyan tree a tiny molecular seed and conferred on the ash gourd a gigantic uncouth fruit. "No sense of proportion," he said. However, he had to sleep once under the shade of a banyan tree and when he woke up after an hour or

so, he saw a large quantity of seeds that had fallen on his body. If only the banyan tree had seeds in proportion to its size, a single seed falling from that height would have killed the critic in no time! He thanked God for his poor sense of logic and moved away perfectly safe. Take everything as it comes, and cultivate contentment. Do not multiply your wants and foster greed and despair. You take off your warm clothing when you start feeling warm yourself. The coat of desire has to be taken off when the warmth of devotion increases. Strive to secure grace, do not strive to secure any lesser fruit.

Faith can compel the Lord to manifest Himself

A thief once listened quite accidentally to the recital of the charms of Krishna during childhood. He stopped for a moment and could not pull himself away. He heard the description of the ornaments Krishna wore and got a great desire to steal those precious treasures, so he asked the pandit exactly where Krishna would be tending the cows alone or with just his elder brother or with handful of comrades. The pandit told him rather curtly, "In Brindavan, on the Yamuna bank." Planning to catch Krishna alone and deprive him of the ornaments, he hurried off to Brindavan. Sure enough, he met the Boy alone next morning at the head of his herd of cows, but how could he take the ornaments off that Loveliness? He was afraid that the removal of even one ornament would reduce the lustre, and his heart did not allow him to do that. He looked on for hour, lost in ecstasy, till Krishna himself asked him, but he was too ashamed to mention it. Krishna knew it, however. He gave him all the jewels he wore. The thief was overcome with shame and joy; he fell at the boy's Feet, but when he rose, Krishna was not to be seen. He came to his village and consulted the pandit . "Are these the jewels of Krishna that you extolled the other day? I went to Brindavan and He gave them to me." Needless to say, the pandit fell at robber's feet. Faith can work wonders. It can compel the Lord to manifest Himself and give you what you believe he will give. The priests and pandits pressed Me with the request to agree to their proposal to have some programme, which they called the Conquest of Three Worlds (Thribhuvana Vijayam). That is a sign of their enthusiasm and faith. They wish Me to give them audience as Vishnu lying on the serpent with one thousand heads forming the couch (as Seshasayee), using the serpent-

like couch (sesha paryanka) that was brought by a devotee from Bombay. It seems they, like the priests mentioned in the Bhagavatha, will represent to Me then the sad condition of the scriptures (sastras) they study and practise, including the mother of all scriptures, the Veda . When this idea was first placed before Me, someone objected on the ground that I was asked to give audience (darshan) "like" Maha Vishnu. He did not like the idea of "like". I also have an objection against "acting" in a "drama". But I was so moved by the earnestness of their request that I agreed. Really speaking, this Avatar is itself acting a part. It is "putting on" a function and "assuming" a role, by the Function-less and the Role-less. As far as the yajna is concerned, I shall give you darshan of the Veda personified (Veda swarupa) before you disperse. Be assured of that.

44. What Is Dharma, What Is Not?

Date: 05 October 1962 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

Varanasi Subrahmanya Shasthry spoke so well about righteousness-virtue (dharma), especially the problem of right and wrong as brought out in the episodes of the Mahabharatha . Of course, as he said, right and wrong have to be decided in each case by the analysis of the particular context, with reference to some fundamental principles. Those principles have been visualised by sages and laid down in the Vedas . That is why the Veda is declared to be the root of dharma . Ganapathi Shasthry brought out this primacy of the Veda in his talk. Both of them have already served you a fine banquet of wisdom. The time is 6.25 p.m. and Ghantasala, who is to give a musical recital, has already occupied the attention of most of you. Ghantasala tells me that he needs about half an hour to begin, so, it seems that I have to keep you engaged until he is ready, whether you like it or not! Naturally, I always speak of dharma, for I have come to reestablish it. I have no other work here. I give sweet drinks to the ignorant and nectar (amritha) to the illumined. You cannot infer that dharma is declining only in India just because all the Avatars you know took place here; the Avatar has to take shape in the place where dharma originated and where it is still studied and valued. The rest of the world is but the branches of this tree. For Me, there is no native land or foreign land. All humanity has to be brought back to the path of dharma . The Veda is "Not ascribable to human skill or authorship;" the Soul of Veda (Veda Purusha) is not ascribable to any one country. Veda emanates from wherever you yearn for it. All religions and dharmas are but proliferations of Vedic truths.

Intentions of actions should be pure

Human nature has to be chastened, controlled, and guided along certain channels; otherwise, like the flooded Ganga, it will bring disaster to millions who rest in security, believing it to be harmless. The haste to secure an immediate advantage has to be cured, the later advantage may be more lasting and more healthy. Benefits to the individual have to be given up in

favour of benefits to the group, the village, the community, the country. or the whole of mankind. Ideas, principles, laws, customs, codes, habits, actions - all are to be judged on the twin points of intention and consequence. Is the intention pure, is it born out of love (prema), is it based on truth (sathya)? Does it result in peace (santhi)? If yes, dharma is enshrined in that action or law, custom, or conduct. Intention and consequence are the two bunds that guide the flood waters of the Godavari safely into the sea, which can swallow any amount of river water. In fact, it is the rule and the restriction that gives charm to the game of life. In the game of football, if any player can do anything with the ball and there is neither foul nor out, neither offside nor goal, neither throw nor penalty, then it will be a meaningless game incapable of giving bliss.

Principles on which dharma is based

Now, how are you to decide in any particular case what is dharma and what is not? I shall tell you some principles that you can use on such occasions. That which does not inflict pain on you and on others - that is right, that is dharma . So act in such a way that you get joy and others also get joy. Or, take another standard for your actions: Make thought, word, and deed agree in harmony. That is to say, act as you speak, and speak as you feel. Do not play false to your own conscience; do not cover your thoughts in a cloak of falsehood; do not suppress your conscience by forcibly enslaving it and embarking on actions not approved by it. That is the dharmic way of life. Frequently doing right makes it easier and easier. Habit grows into conscience. If you are once established in right conduct, you will automatically follow the right. What you do depends on what you are; what you are depends on what you do. The two are interdependent to a great degree. Or, there is another principle. Dharma trains you to be calm, level-headed, secure in equanimity. You know the transitory nature of success or failure, riches or poverty, joy or grief, appointment or disappointment. You are not elated or deflated. You are serene, unmoved. Anything that helps you to maintain this unruffled stability is dharma . To cut it short: sensual life is a-dharma (against dharma); spiritual life is dharma . Dharma is that which sustains, saves, and sanctifies. Man is born and is given a lease of life so that

he may earn the knowledge of His identity with the Infinite. There are differences between the limbs of the body, but they all belong to the body; it is foolish for them to imagine that they are unconnected with the body. The sun sends out a million rays, but they all belong to the sun. The sun is reflected in a million pots of water, but though they all are tiny images of the sun, the sun is the truth and the reflections are all relatively unreal.

Do not have a double standard

One common definition of dharma is that it is the adherence to the rule, "Do unto others what you wish them to do unto you; do not do unto others what you do not wish them to do unto you." Do not have a double standard. Treat all as your own self. That is to say, you must have faith in yourself, and only then can you have faith in others. You must respect yourself and respect others. Egoism is the measure of altruism. Mankind is one community; harm yourself, and you harm all. Make a person stand erect, and that act makes you stand erect. The treatment you wish others to render to you is itself the measure of your duty to them. The Vedas and the Upanishads, which form the jnana (spiritual wisdom) and the upasana (worship) sections of the Eternal Religion (Sanathana Dharma), are the best guides to the path of dharma for mankind, for all classes - the family, society, the professional group, and the individual. Just as Delhi is the capital of India, India is the spiritual capital for all mankind. It is the responsibility of Indians to demonstrate in their lives that dharma confers on them peace and happiness, so that the rest of mankind may get the inspiration to follow the same path.

45. The Brahmin

Date: 06 October 1962 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

You may not remember it now, but this meeting started at 4:15, and perhaps most of you were here by 3:30 at least, and now the time is 7:40. You have heard the lucid exposition of Uppuluri Ganapathi Shasthry, who knows the different shades of meaning of every individual syllable of the entire Veda . That is his penance (tapas). And his love (prema) toward you is so great that he puts all that vast learning into such simple and sweet Telugu that even a child can understand. What is more, you become enthusiastic to know more. He has been helping you to understand the whys and wherefores of the various rites and rituals and mantras that are used in this sacrificial rite (yajna), for this is a sacrificial rite of spiritual wisdom (jnana yajna), and everyone must know the significance of everything done here. He explained why earth from the royal stables, the royal elephant stables, and the palace gates is considered sacred for the sacrifice (yajna); why the earth from the ant hill is also used in preference to that from other places. I took special care to bring these materials in their genuineness and to give these people everything they needed. I told them not to be satisfied with substitutes and second-bests, for I know they too wish to seize this opportunity to perform a scrupulously correct sacrifice. I want to show you and them that a vedic sacrifice celebrated strictly according to vedic formulae will certainly grant the fruits promised by the Supreme Being (Veda Purusha).

Veda is a deep sea containing precious pearls

Remilla Suuryaprakasha Shastry spoke on Kumarilabhatta, who preceded Sankaracharya and revived vedic learning and overwhelmed the opponents of vedic ritual in those days. They are now arranging here the serpent-like couch (seshaparyanka). The programme called the Conquest of Three Worlds (Thribhuvana Vijayam), for which Kalluri Veerabhadra Shastry and others have been planning, will start soon. I had no idea of speaking today but since you will all be disappointed if I do not, I shall fill up the interval. The two Shastrys spoke very well, because their authority for all their statements is

the Veda, nothing less. Their purpose was also praiseworthy: to elevate man through the spread of the vedic teaching. When the mind is so pure and the brain so full, the words will certainly be sweet and nourishing. It is a very difficult task to dive into the deep sea, the beginningless and the endless Veda, and bring up such precious pearls - not because the pearls are few but because the sea is so deep. The Veda teaches man lessons that take him beyond the ken of the three qualities (gunas): the dull, the active, and the calm; the black, the red, and the white. The Veda also speaks the language of symbols, and one has to be well versed in vedic vocabulary and the technique to be able to interpret it, as Ganapathi Shastry and Remilla do. For example, in explaining a mantra, they said that all men are children of Surya (the Sun God). The meaning of that is: All those who have eyes to see are specially blessed by the sun, for the sun is the presiding deity of the inner and the outer vision. The mantra does not mean that all men belong to the Sun dynasty! There are seven suns and seven types of rays, and that is why you are advised to have half-closed eyes when you meditate on the form of the Lord. Then the first three rays will try to penetrate the upper eyelid and the last three the lower eyelid, but the eye will receive only the fourth ray, the fourth colour. Such subtle secrets are also hidden in the hymns to the various Gods. It is not correct to say that each vedic God represents a force of nature that is patent to man: the rain god, the thunder god, the sun god, the dawn goddess, etc. The glory and the majesty of the One God is visualised in various contexts and praised; that is all. The mantras have far deeper meanings.

This humanity is a motley crowd of pilgrims

It is often said that the brahmin caste, out of hatred and contempt, has denied to the other castes the chance to study the Vedas . If you go out to catch fish, you must equip yourself with the rod, the hook, and the bait to attract the fish. If you desire to master the Vedas, you must have the rod of dharmic living, the hook of vedic Sanskrit, and the bait, viz., the brahmin who is revered by the Vedas and who revered the Vedas in turn. The brahmin has been prepared by a series of purificatory rituals. This enables and entitles the brahmin to pronounce the mantras and to expound them. Everyone has not

won the same sublime impulses and impressions. All of you listen to Me, but do all of you understand what I say to the same extent? Or, do all of you practise what I suggest to the same extent? No. Each understands or practises according to the tendencies, the roots that those tendencies have laid in the mind. People are not so uniform. One person is not equipped like another. It is a motley crowd of pilgrims, this humanity.

The correct pronunciation of Vedas is essential

When born, the brahmin is a labourer (sudra); birth does not entitle him to take up the study of this Mystery, even if the boy happens to be the son of a great vedic scholar! It is only when he has been formally initiated by a special ceremony that he can start the study of the sacred scriptures. The ceremony makes him a brahmin ; he is then born again into a sacred world of study and responsibility. Many brahmins have fallen from this responsibility of maintaining a certain ascetic simplicity of life and a certain level of scholarship. When the pure metal has been turned into an alloy, it has to be put into the crucible again. Again, whenever we find genuine vedic vessels like these pandits, we have to protect and preserve them. If people sit quietly when stones are thrown on these vessels by little folk swayed by foolish hatred, the vessels will be broken and Veda will also become inaccessible. If brahmins are driven into the forest, the Vedas will enter the forest with them, for they are the repositories of Veda . They study the correct pronunciation of each syllable and have, by a remarkable technique of keeping it in memory, preserved it through the ages, through all the calamities India had to endure. A boy was reading his English lessons aloud at home, but he did them so wrongly that the parents were one day put into a great fright. MILK was what the boy was reading. He spelt it out first and then read the entire word. He shouted, emmayelkay milk, emmayelkay milk, emmayelkay milk so fast and so nervously that the parents felt he was shouting in fear, "Amma, yeluka " - yeluka meaning rat in Telugu. Correct pronunciation is essential. Encourage the brahmins to dedicate their lives to the proper study of the scriptures; you too will benefit by that study, as you are benefitting these days here.

The Lord cares for single-minded yearning

Caste and conduct are based on each other, and there is no caste without its corresponding conduct, or controlling restrictions. That is done for purposes of systematic training and for elevating the individual, not for suppressing or cheating him. If a boy is admitted into the primary school or nursery school instead of a college, you cannot say that he is cheated or treated with contempt. It is the first step toward college and a degree. But remember, the Lord makes no difference between caste and caste. What He cares for is virtue and single-minded yearning. When the elephant Gajendra raised its trunk and surrendered to the Lord and prayed to Him for succour, it was no longer a beast; its beasthood had dropped off. A piece of paper, however soiled or directed, is valued and kept in the strong box as a precious possession once it has imprinted on it the insignia of the Reserve Bank and is called a hundred-rupee note. Devotion makes the lowest into the rarest of men. There was a devotee called Sena in Delhi at the time of Akbar's reign. He was the royal masseur at the court of the emperor. Every morning at seven, the emperor expected him at his side and had ordered that he should massage his body for half an hour. One day, Sena entered his worship room as usual and, in the ecstasy of that Vision of Beauty, lost all sense of time! His wife ran about in panic outside the closed door, for she had no mind to disturb her husband's concentration. Meanwhile, Akbar was being massaged by Sena at the Palace, and the emperor was praising him, "Sena, I have never felt so happy all these days; your fingers are indeed divine." When the session was about to close, Akbar saw in the cup of oil on the teapot in front of him the reflection of the masseur's face, and he was surprised to find that the face was of Krishna! He turned to examine the face of his attendant, but he was no longer there! The Lord does not weigh the status or caste of the individual before bestowing His grace. He is all-merciful, and His grace, like rain or moonlight, falls on all. The Vedas themselves declare this. So, have faith in this and proceed to deserve it and to acquire it.

Each person carries their destiny in their own hands. You will not be bound because others are not freed. Strive for your salvation, at your own pace,

from where you started when you born into this chance.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

46. Valedictory Offering In The Sacred Fire

Date: 07 October 1962 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

The Bhagavatha was the subject of the discourse by Kalluri Veerabhadra Shastry today, but do not think that it has no relevancy to the seven-day vedic ritual of Sacrifice of Spiritual Wisdom for the Supreme Being of Veda (Vedapurusha Sapthaha Jnana Yajna); for the Bhagavatha contains the essence of Veda itself. In hymn after hymn, the Veda speaks of the glory of God, known by various names as Indra, Varuna, Mithra, etc. It is all worship filled with devotion to God, whom the Veda itself declares as One, "though endowed with a variety of names". The Bhagavatha is the essence of Veda, made available for easy assimilation by all. It is just a limb of the vedic literature, and as limb it is an inseparable part of the vedic tradition. The same blood flows in this limb too; it makes the veda beautiful and charming. Just as juveniles are shown pictures and made to learn names of the objects that they represent, the Bhagavatha teaches the Imperishable through the perishable. You cannot attain the subtle without experiencing the gross, without the instrumentality of the gross. After rising to the heights of awareness (chit) with a dull-witted instrument, you have to also make the instrument so suffused by Supreme Consciousness (Chaithanya) that the difference does not persist! In meditation, the picture first felt has to be transformed into the picture of the purified imagination, and that again has to be rarified into the subtle abstract principle only. Then only can the Form being meditated on be transcended and the highest vision of universal beauty, wisdom, and strength obtained. The Bhagavatha helps in this spiritual education, taking the student through all the lessons from the primary to post-graduate levels.

Look for the real meaning of Vedas

Most of you always bypass the real meaning of the legends, tales, and descriptions given in the ancient scriptures. For example, Brahma's lotus is not a stalk that grows in mud and rises above the waters to catch the rays of the sun and blossom but the many petalled lotus of the heart, each petal

being the direction in which a particular tendency attracts the individual. The bull on which Siva is said to ride is not the animal called by that name but the symbol of righteousness (dharma), which has the four legs truth, righteousness, peace, and love. Gopala (Krishna) did not graze cattle but protected and fed living beings, known also as "Go ". In the study of the Veda, look for the meaning that satisfies the heart, and do not rest content if the meaning satisfies the head! A sentence may be quite right grammatically but may still be sheer nonsense! Ganapathy Shasthry, for example, while describing the reason the earth from ant-hills is recommended for the sacrificial mound, said that white ants are deemed to have powerful latent skill, which is put at the service of the Gods, for they once ate up the cord of Vishnu's bow! When Vishnu's bow was thus released from tension, its end hit Him under the chin, and the impact removed His head and carried it aloft into the sky! Now, if you take that story as applying to Lord Vishnu, who is also known as Narayana, then it is something that belittles the glory of God. But take it as applicable to the all-powerful, all-embracing Narayana aspect of the Godhead. How can we accept the explanation given for the white ants eating up the cord? The reason given is that the Gods wanted to prick the bubble of Vishnu's pride. Now, how can Narayana be accused of pride? How can the Gods conspire to depute white ants to manoeuvre in such a sly way to take off His head? No. The story obviously refers to a minor god, a devatha, one among the many in the Vedic heaven who bear the name Vishnu; that is all. There is no need to besmirch the grandeur of Narayana by identifying the minor God Vishnu with the Chief of the Gods. Prefer the meaning that elevates and you will always be right.

Be proud of your ancestry

You have to trace your ancestry and be proud of it. From the Supreme Soul, i.e. the Source, nature descended with the emergence of illusion; and from the stuff of that illusion, space; from space, wind; from wind, fire; from fire, water; from water, earth. By a combination of the five elements, this tabernacle of the Divine (Paramatma), that is, you, was produced. The entire ladder has now to be climbed up in order to reach the Divine, the origin of all. There is a regular syllabus for the promotion of the spiritual aspirant, which is

given in that form in the Veda and in an elaborate story form in Bhagavatha . I will not accept it if you say that you are an atheist with no faith in the Lord. For what is the root of that faith in yourself? Who are you that you should believe yourself? No. You believe yourself because your Self is God, and you have an unshakable faith in God, deep down in you. Faith in yourself and faith in God are identical; you tap the strength of the God within when you stand at attention against an enemy without. That is why there is a persistent whisper, within to use that strength in the path of mercy, charity, helpfulness.

Offer your bad qualities into sacrificial fire

Everyone has to go from here when the provisions they have brought or secured have been spent. But by that time, attain the purpose of all this bother of arriving, traveling, accumulating, and spending: the realisation of supreme happiness by ending this circle of birth and death. From this very moment, change your habits and conduct for the better. That is the measure of your sincerity. Have faith and steadfastness. I cannot be deceived by mere play acting. Folding arms and shedding tears will not make Me take you as a devotee. If you try devious paths pretending to be what you genuinely are not, the punishment will be greater in order to cure you of that trait also. Tomorrow, between eight and nine in the morning the valedictory offering in the sacred fire (poornahuthi) will take place. That is a precious moment in every sacrificial rite (yajna); the full and final offering is considered the fulfilment of the ritual. But here, you must keep one fact in mind. I am not getting this yajna done; I am He who receives the offerings of the yajna . I observe many of you are getting active to procure from Bangalore or Anantapur, in time for the Poornahuthi, articles like sandalwood, gold, precious stones, etc. to be put into the sacrificial fire when the final invocation is made. I am not permitting anybody to do that. It is easy to throw away a few rupees and purchase a few material objects from some shop and bring them here and throw them into the fire and go about saying that you have done a great big act of sacrifice. I am going to set you a more difficult task; you cannot escape by doing the easy thing. I want that you should all, when the valedictory offering is offered into the fire, stand up and reverentially offer into the same fire every one of the bad qualities that you

have - the faults, the failings, the temptations, the transgressions. Search for these today, unearth them from their hidden places, bring them with you here tomorrow, nicely packed, and with one final heave of mental exertion, throw them in when the flames of Poornahuthi rise aloft. That is the share you have to secure in this sacrifice (yajna). That, nothing more and nothing less. These pandits have done you a great service. You must be grateful to them for it. They have given you a clear picture of the glory and splendour of Vedic Mother. which is the real form of motherland. I shall tell them just one thing: when they have given Me bliss (anandam), they have given you bliss also, for I am in every one of you.

47. On To Victory

Date: 21 November 1962 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

Today, you heard discourses on the excellence of the divine name, on the indispensability of devotion, and on the omnipotence of divine grace. In so far as these three are concerned, whatever a person may say or expound, it is one's own experience that matters, not scholarship or skill. The divine name, when uttered by a dedicated soul like Prahlada, brought out the Lord from wherever he sought Him! The divine name saves and liberates! It is armour against the onslaughts of pride and self-pity. When pious repetition of a holy name or sacred formula is started by you in a systematic manner, fixing your inner eye on the form that illustrates the name, you will meet with many obstacles, disquieting thoughts, and enticements. They should be ignored, bypassed, treated lightly. Strengthen your habits, stick to your discipline, improve your inner administration. Mix more in the company of the good and the godly. The unruly bull has to be roped and tamed, its nose bored and ringed; it has to be yoked and trained to drag heavy loads and become the docile servant of its master. Some people condemn the six passions as dire enemies and advise you to eject them outright. But I would advise you to keep them with you as docile servants, useful for your purposes. Hate those who slight the name of the Lord and tell you that it is a hollow meaningless sound; hate them so much that you avoid them for ever! Attachment can be used to fix your heart on the Lord and be fascinated by the overwhelming beauty of His form reflected in all the loveliness of nature.

Scriptures are binding on every living being

Desire (kama) is not a vice - in fact, it is given the status of one of the goals of human endeavour. Develop desire, but not for the material, the momentary. Desire for the deathless, the indestructible. Desire for the steady development of faith in the holy scriptures (sastras) as a means to this. The holy scriptures (sastras) are binding on all people, said Ganapathi Shasthry. I will go a step further and say that the scriptures are binding on every living being that has sacred knowledge or even discrimination. Or else, how can we

explain the killing of Vali by Rama except on this basis? Vali argues about the right and wrong of Rama's action; he pleads for the protection of the principles of dharma ; he charges Rama with a number of unrighteous deeds - but himself, when accused, claims exemption from the scriptures on the score that he is a monkey while the scriptures bind only people. You cannot have it both ways. When you discriminate between right and wrong and pompously argue on the basis of the principles of dharma, you are bound by the scriptures, which lay down the discipline. If you adhere strictly to the path of virtue and stick to the yearning, you can become an ascetic of the highest order, a realised sage, though you may now be a novice or even a non-believer! Sometimes, by just seizing a chance, you can elevate yourselves steadily. Someone comes to Me to get his stomach-ache cured; then he likes this place and its atmosphere and its chanting of Om (Omkara) and devotional singing (bhajana) and its peace (prasanthi); he sees Me and observes My movements and words and actions. He takes home a picture or a song book, and before long, he forgets the ache that brought him hither and cultivates a new ache - for Supreme Peace (Prasanthi), for an audience, contact, and conversation; for remembrance of the Name, meditation, realisation. Of course, I never deviate from Truth. Since I recline on Truth, I am called Sathya Sai; Sai (as in Seshashayi) means reclining. The name is very appropriate, let me assure you. It is only those who fail to follow my instructions and who deviate from the path I have laid down that fail to get what I hold out before them. Follow My instructions and become soldiers in My army; I will lead you on to victory. When someone asks you, in great earnestness, where the Lord is to be found, do not try to dodge the question. Give them the answer that rises up to your tongue from your heart. Direct them. He is here in the Prasanthi Nilayam.

48. Open Your Eyes

Date: 23 November 1962 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Birthday - 37

Uppuluuri Ganapathi Shasthry has a title that very few scholars have. He is called the Master Expounder of the Meaning of the Vedas (Amnayartha Vachaspathi). I permitted him to speak for as long as he liked; indeed, I encouraged him to make a long speech, for just after this he is opening the Vedic School (Veda Sastra Pathashala) - an institution that is dear to his heart when established anywhere but dearer to him because it is established here, in the Prasanthi Nilayam. In fact, he sees in it an important step in My plan of vedic revival. But he was so over-powered by bliss that he could not proceed with his speech even for a few minutes. As he said, he spoke even those few words just to express his debt to the Vedas. It is not only his debt but the debt of all humanity.

The Vedas have shaped India and India shaped, is shaping, and will shape, the rest of the world. The Vedas are without beginning or end; they are eternal messages caught by developed consciousnesses in the silence of meditation. Loyalty to the Vedas has faded often in the past also, so the present "decline", which Ganapathi Shasthry deplored, is just a passing phase.

Durvasa was a reputed vedic scholar; he had the music of the Sama Veda on his tongue and the cinders of anger in his eye; a strange combination, indeed. Seeing this absurdity, Saraswathi, the Goddess of Learning and Liberation, laughed in derision. The sage was stung to the quick; he threw a curse on Her, and she was born on earth as the daughter of Atreya. There was a brother too, a feeble-minded chap who was incapable, in spite of the efforts of the skilled teachers, of even pronouncing the Veda aright. He was beaten with a rod, but that only made him weep helplessly. Saraswathi was moved with great pity. She intervened and saved him from physical torture. She taught him the four Vedas and the six Scriptures (Sastras), and he became a great master.

Vedas are in need of revival again

Meanwhile, the Veda had faded from human memory and, as a result, famine stalked the land. Sages were reduced to skeletons. They yearned for the Veda, for that was the sustenance on which they lived. Saraswatha, the brother of Saraswathi, prayed to Chandra (the Moon). Chandra made the earth sprout forth edible plants, on which the sages decided to live. Saraswatha taught them the sixty different sections of the Vedas, but so thick was the fog that had descended on the Vedas that the sages who learnt the Vedas from him were confounded by cynical critics. Narada had to assure them that what they had learnt was the genuine Veda itself, but even he could not remove the main of doubt. They jointly approached Brahma. He said, "You were all able to get this vision of Me as a result of your vedic study; you can have yourself become Brahma when you practise what you have studied." That was how Saraswatha Maharshi revived the Vedas once in the past.

Reasons for the present sorrow and suffering

Now again, the Vedas are in need of revival, of promotion. Someone has to prevent the axe from reaching its roots, the goats from eating the sprouts. Do not be too conceited, feeling that the Avatar has come for you particularly. I have come for the sake of dharma. And how is the Avatar to guard dharma? Well,

"The Vedas are the root of dharma (Vedhokhilo dharma moolam)."

When the Vedas remain unharmed, that is to say, when the vedic scholars are unharmed, the Veda will remain ever-green in the heart of people. That is the real establishment of dharma. You may ask, "Well. The Lord has incarnated. Then why should the world be torn by strife and stricken with sorrow?" Why, even when Lord Krishna was here, there was war and wickedness, strife, and

sorrow. The husk will have to be pulled out, the pure saved always from the impure. The present suffering is due mainly to the lapses in discipline among the professed followers of the vedic path, their disregard for the morality laid down in the scriptures, and their absence of faith in the ancient scriptures. What use can a blind man make of a lamp, however bright it may be? You may ask why pandits and vedic scholars are passing through hard times now. They are mostly hungry, ill-clad, and homeless; that being the reason no one comes forward to join vedic schools. Vedic schools (Patasalas) are becoming defunct. But I want to tell you that the pandits and learned men have come to this pass because they have themselves lost faith in the Vedas. They are like the proverbial cat that is loyal to two homes and is denied food and comfort in both. The pandits have one eye on secular matters and secular studies and another on the spiritual. Let them be fixed in that faith, faith in the Vedas. Then the Veda will keep them happy. Because if the Veda cannot make a person happy, what else can? Like the hotel keeper who goes to a druggist for a pill when he gets a headache, while that same druggist goes to the same hotel for a cup of coffee when he gets a headache, the West comes to the East for mental peace and the East is enamoured of the West for what it considers necessary for mental peace!

Story of unshakable faith of a devotee

Let me tell you an incident that happened while in the previous body at Shirdi. There was a lady from Pahalgaon, a simple illiterate devotee. She stored water in her kitchen in three clean, brightly polished brass pots from three separate wells, and she had named the pots Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswathi (after the three rivers). She always referred to them by those names. Whenever any thirsty wayfarer called at her door, she mixed water from all three and offered it to the person as water from three rivers (thriveni theertha). Neighbours used to laugh at her faith, but her belief that the three wells were connected underground with the three rivers that joined at Prayag was unshakable. Her husband started on a pilgrimage to Kasi (Benares). His mother, while blessing him on his departure, put on his finger her own gold ring and directed him to take good care of it, for it would be a talisman for him. When he was taking the ceremonial bath at the Manikarnika Ghat, the

ring slipped into the waters and could not be retrieved. When he returned and related this story, he said, "Ganga wanted it; she took it," just to console his mother. When the wife heard this, she said, "No, no! Mother Ganga will not hanker after the property of a poor old lady. She will accept only what is offered out of love. She will give us back the ring, I am sure. I shall ask Ganga; she is in our kitchen." So saying, she went in and with folded hands, she prayed before the particular pot named by her as Ganga. Putting her hand in she searched the bottom and, sure enough, she got the ring back! She had come to Dwarakamayi with her husband and mother-in-law. It is faith that matters; the form and the name on which it is fixed do not matter. For all names are His; all forms are His.

The four-fold Mission of Sai

Faith can grow only on the soil of dharma, with the fertile subsoil of Veda. That is why the Vedic School (Patasala) is started here today. I announced this in October, and it is being started in November. With Me, the resolution and the realisation coincide in time; there is no time lag. You may say that only twenty boys have joined now. When a huge country is administered by a cabinet of twelve, this band of students is enough for the work I have in view.

My task is to open your eyes to the glory of the Vedas and to convince you that the vedic injunctions, when put into practice, will yield the results promised. My task is to make you aware of your errors and the loss you are incurring; not only you who are here just now but all the people of India and even the world. This Vedic School will grow into a university, establishing branches wherever there are other types of universities now. It will afford cool green shade for all. My love toward the Veda is equalled only by My love toward humanity.

My mission, remember, is just fourfold: the fostering of the Vedas and Vedic scholars and protection of virtue and devotees. Spreading My grace and My power along these four directions, I establish Myself in the centre. These boys will grow into strong straight pillars of the *Sanathana Dharma* - the Ancient Wisdom, the Eternal Path. They will be the

leaders and guides of this land in the days to come. Parents who have sent them to this Vedic school have every reason to be happy, for these boys will be gems spreading vedic splendour everywhere, disseminating scriptural learning everywhere. I shall care for them as the apple of My eye, more than any mother. They will always have My blessings.

Fear is the biggest cause of illness. When you have a slight temperature, you start imagining that it is the beginning of some serious fever. You say to yourself someone whom you knew had also a slight increase of temperature, which later became serious and led to complications, so you become more prone to illness than formerly. Think rather of the instances where fever was prevented or overcome; think of the grace of the Lord, which restores and saves.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

49. Planning The Curriculum

Date: 23 November 1962 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Birthday - 37

Minister Chenna Reddy "opened" the Puttaparthi school building an hour ago, but the meeting in connection with that happy event is being held here now because the village has no place to accommodate even a tenth of this vast gathering of persons from all over India. The minister had seen Me, and I had been to his house eight years ago, but his yearning to come to this village and to this Prasanthi Nilayam has materialised only today. Even today, the opening of the school building is just an excuse that he has utilised to come to Me. He has hastened straight from the East Godavari District to fulfil this programme and satisfy the yearning of years. In villages, no two people have the same viewpoint, no two agree; this causes and promotes ill feeling, misunderstanding, pride, envy, and hatred between individuals, but I am telling this not only to the people of this village but the people who have come here from a thousand villages, remember. When it is a question that interests the entire village, do not thrust forward your little prejudices, your particular hatreds, but think only of the common good, the common welfare. Then, all your personal likes and dislikes should be forgotten. I am also known as Puttaparthi Baba; therefore, you in this village have every right to come to Me, all of you, whenever you desire to do any good to the village. This day, when the village elementary school is moving into the new spacious, well-ventilated, terraced building of its own, is indeed a great day in the annals of this village. This day starts a new era, when education will grow and will result in virtue, humility, and peace.

India has dharma on its side

I know that your hearts are filled with other thoughts - thoughts of pushing back the Chinese from the land they have invaded and occupied, of sympathy to the families of the soldiers who have been killed and wounded. Minister Chenna Reddy also referred to them feelingly. They fought for their country to keep the enemy away. It is your first duty to pray for the dead and to pray for the happy and victorious return from the battlefield of the gallant fighters. It

is your duty also to search for your own faults and failings and to correct them soon. You have also to discover and develop all your talents and become strong, self-reliant, full-grown Indians, in order to save your country and its culture. Above all, you must get firmly entrenched in faith; faith in the ultimate victory of truth and love, of justice and fortitude. You have not tried it, so you are unaware of the potentialities of faith. During the Mahabharatha War also, people had the faith that "Where Krishna is, there victory is certain," for Krishna will always be on the side of truth and truth cannot bring defeat. India has virtue (dharma) on its side; that is to say, Krishna on its side, so the paeans of victory will sound soon - if they have not already sounded! The Chinese can do India no harm, for we are not wanting in the strength of virtues, truth, justice, love, and forbearance. These are the real arms, the real ammunition, the armaments. When Aswathama slyly entered the Pandava camp and, blinded by hate, slaughtered the sleeping children of Droupadi, she scorned to wreak vengeance on the maddened culprit, for he was the son of the guru of the Pandavas and as worthy of reverence as the guru himself. That is the nobility that stirred the hearts of mothers in this country. That is no weakness; it toughens the fibre; it demoralises the enemy, who is rendered a coward by the fear that haunts him and the hesitation and doubt about victory that dog his steps.

Learning is of no use if not put into practice

So be brave and confident. My birthday festival will not be marred by any dispiriting news; it will be made happier for you by quite positive cheerful news, I am sure. I must now speak about the school that has this function today. Minister Chenna Reddy is also Minister for Planning, and he also spoke about the plan for education. No amount of planning or even carrying out the plan will help if the things learnt in schools are not put into practice. For example, there are lessons on health and hygiene in the textbooks of even the primary classes. They are all learnt by rote and repeated, but examine how far they are practised. Look at the village roads, the village well, the village home, the village children and tell Me whether fifty or sixty years of teaching the rules of health and hygiene has had any effect! If even these matters involving life and well-being are neglected, I need not tell you that

other subjects that are laboriously taught in schools produce even less effect. What profit is it for the children to know the length of the Mississippi River or the height of Vesuvius? Why load them with information they may never require? On the other hand, give them the tonic to strengthen that spirit - the tonic of the repetition of the name of the Lord, the tonic of meditating on the glory of God in the silence of the heart. Formerly, children were learning repetition of Rama's name (Ramanama) and of the garland of letters (the aksharamala) together; they used to read and write "Suddha Brahma Parathpara Rama ." Now, they sing, "Ding dong bell; puss is in the well." This type of silly meaningless jargon is spreading everywhere like a poisonous infection destroying the seeds of peace and joy. The doctor does not give any medicine that comes to his hand. He diagnoses the illness, studies the patient, their background, ancestry, habits, food, likes, and dislikes. Then he prescribes the appropriate remedy. For the illness of greed, hurry, hatred, and discontent that affects this country now, along with the rest of the world, the planners of education must discover the correct remedy. Then they will find that the first few steps in spiritual discipline must be taught even in childhood. People have the springs of joy and peace in their hearts even as children. Cultivate them, give them the fullest freedom to gush forth and fertilise all fields of activity - that is the real purpose of education.

50. Tiny Trace Of Ego

Date: 24 November 1962 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

Embodiments of peace (Santha-swarupalara)! I am addressing you thus today; perhaps I should have said, "Athi Santha-swarupalara !" for you have shown not only peace (santhi) but extreme calmness (athi santhi), not mere ordinary forbearance. You have been squatting on the floor for nearly three hours. Perhaps you yourselves have not realised it because Bulusu Appanna Shasthry's learned discourse on the Gita and Kalluri Veerabhadra Shasthry's interesting discourse on the Bhagavatha entranced you greatly. I realise that you also want Me to speak. These florists from Bangalore, devotees for many years - why, for twenty years, I should say - are preparing a floral swing, insisting that I sit on it and give audience to all. I have given them My word that I shall not disappoint them. So I shall be very brief. You will have known by now that the Chinese, of their own accord, prompted by the mysterious working of a Higher Power, withdrew from the advance lines they held on the night of the 22nd and, as I said, My birthday was celebrated in an atmosphere of joy. Some unseen force caught them by the neck and hurled them back. People are impelled forward in aggressive warfare by the demoniac power or greed and lust, but they are compelled to retrace their steps by God, by the divine power. Appanna Shasthry is the doyen among the scholars of the Gita . The Gita has as many commentaries written on it as there are hairs on My head! Yellappa's commentary attempts to distort the Gita into a Yellappa Gita while Mallappa, by his commentary, proves that it is a Mallappa Gita and nothing else. Everyone forgets it is "Bhagavad " Gita, the Gita that Krishna taught and Arjuna learnt. What was Arjuna's condition, and how did Krishna cure it? That question has been tackled only by the commentary of Sankaracharya.

Role of Brahmana in society

Appanna Shasthry said that the Avatar comes to establish righteousness and that is achieved by fostering and safeguarding the brahmins . A Brahmana is one who is installed in the essential nature of Supreme Being (Brahma

Thathwa), who has realised that Brahman is the Truth (Brahma Sathyam) and no other - or at least one who is keenly following the discipline prescribed for attaining that knowledge. The brahmin is the instrument by which society has to excavate the treasure of sacred knowledge of the Absolute Reality (Brahma-jnana). Some individual instruments have become blunt and unfit. Why? Many have lent themselves to other purposes and so rendered themselves inadequate for the task. But there is no doubt that the instrument can be fashioned again out of the same metal; the brahmin can, even now, restore faith and morality by devoting himself to the original function for which they were designed by the founders of the Sanathana Dharma (Eternal Religion). As long as that possibility is there, do not ridicule or condemn the brahmin . Ridiculing the brahmin is but ridiculing God and the Vedas, for which the brahmin is the accredited signpost.

Correct your vision, remove your delusion

All this creation and all this history is His divine play (leela) or rather, Himself, Brahma Sathyam, also Jagath Sathyam . However, the world (jagath) is "relatively real" until the distinction between Brahman and the world disappears - and then even the world is seen to be Brahman, felt as Brahman, known as Brahmam. Then you know "All is full of Supreme Being (Sarvam Brahma Mayam)." To be more correct, there is no separate "all (sarvam)" to be recognised as full of illusion (mayam). Brahman alone is, one without a second, non-dual, single, eternal, pure, and immovable. Who created all this variety from that One (Ekam)? The answer is: There is no variety at all; so the question makes no sense. No person or force or urge or concatenation of circumstances or accident produced this multiplicity. There is no multiplicity! The One remains as One. You mistake it as many; the fault is in you. Correct your vision, remove your delusion. The Supreme Reality (Brahman) did not change into the relative world. The rope does not change into a snake; only you mistook it to be a snake. Brahman is Brahman forever and ever; your ignorance of this fact makes you see it as the world. The world stands on one leg, delusion. Cut down that leg and it falls. You experience the disappearance of this variety, this multiplicity, this prakriti, this world based on delusion every day but you do not hold on to that experience. That is the

tragedy! When you are asleep, what happens to your world? In what are all your manifoldnesses subsumed? What is the source of the feeling of joy that sound sleep brings? Sleep keeps a tiny trace of the ego as a memento of the world, so, when you are awake, you are the same deluded individual, pestered by creatures of your own fantasies! That is why I very often tell you not to identify even Me with this particular physical build-up. But you do not understand. You call Me by one name only and believe I have One Form only. Remember, there is no name I do not bear, there is no form that is not Mine.

If your thoughts centre round the body, you will have worries about pains and illnesses, real or imaginary; if they are centred on riches, you will be worried about profit and loss, tax and exemption, investment and insolvency; if they roam round fame, then you are bound to suffer from the ups and downs of scandal, calumny, and jealousy. So, let them centre round the seat of power and love, which deserves willing submission, and let your whole being surrender to it. Then, you will be happy for ever.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

51. Sprouts Of Faith

Date: 25 November 1962 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

Veerabhadhra Shasthry described very realistically the childhood pranks of Krishna and explained their significance. That refreshed you, as I can see, for you felt them and experienced them. Rama is the embodiment of truth and virtue (dharma), so there is a sternness about Him. But Krishna is love (prema), and His story confers bliss (ananda) quickly and spontaneously to one and all. The love in the human heart responds to the call of that divine Love; it surges up and overflows. Krishna came with yogic power (YogaSakthi) as his brother Balarama and the power of illusion (MayaSakthi) as His Sister. That is how Supreme Power (Mahasakthi) gets born. Devaki, the mother, could not take in the splendour of the divine form, with all its inseparable glory, so the child had to be transferred at His own request to Yasoda, who had prayed that she should be favoured with the privilege of being the foster-mother of the Lord! Contact with the Divine is said to confer the boon of liberation from the bonds of karma. So, when the infant Krishna was taken by Vasudeva's hands, the chain that bound them fell off; the bolts flew from the prison door, the locks opened of themselves. When he moved on toward the river Yamuna, the floods parted in front of him.

Love of the milk maids is beyond physical awareness

In the divine story, you will observe one special fact: no incident is unconnected with the rest, no happening is without significance. For example, Parasurama exterminated the Kshatriya rulers of his time by systematic campaigns directed against each. How then, why then, did Dasaratha and Janaka survive? The truth of the matter is: Parasurama made two exceptions under which his victims could save themselves and survive. This secret was known only to these two survivors. He had resolved within himself that he would not kill a bridegroom or a person engaged in a ceremonial sacrifice. So, whenever Parasurama reached the frontiers of their kingdoms and was on the point of crossing them, Janaka got himself initiated in preparation for a ceremonial sacrifice and Dasaratha fitted himself out as a bridegroom about

to wed another princess. Of course, this was according to the divine plan, for Dasaratha had to live to get Dasarathi and Janaka had to discover Janaki. The love of the milk maids (gopis) of Dwaraka, about which so much philosophical speculation and analysis was made before you, is, let Me tell you, the genuine love that is beyond physical awareness (sahaja prema), that is unaffected by praise or blame. It is not like the thin filament of oil floating on water, which comes off on the finger when it is touched. It is like the lotus stalk, which penetrates deep down through all the layers of water into the soil underneath - while the leaf floats above, unaffected by the water, which gives it the essential environment. People should struggle similarly to rise above the sensory world, which is their inevitable environment. The sensory world tempts you to strive for this triviality and that, but, like the milk maids, you should discard the hankering and fix your eye on the vitally precious fountain of joy. The milk maids had no other goal, no other ideal, no other wish. It was a surrender of the self - completely unquestioned, unwavering.

Sai will not tolerate hatred among devotees

Let me tell you of a devotee, a woman in a small Maharashtra village, who lived in the last century. She went through even the little details of life in this spirit of dedication. Walking was to her a pilgrimage; talking was repetition of God's name. Even when she threw off a ball of cow dung after applying it over the floor used by her husband to keep his dining plate while eating, she said and felt, "May this be an offering to Krishna! (Krishnarpanam)." Her penance (tapas) was so sincere that the cow dung reached Krishna and stuck to Krishna's idol in the village temple every day! The priest saw the mysterious defilement. He was amazed, he was lost in terror. He cursed himself that he had lived to see that ignominy daily, about noon, the idol being defiled by the same size of cow dung. He hung his head in shame. As he walked along, keeping the disturbing phenomenon all to himself, one day, he heard that particular lady exclaim, "Krishnarpanam" as she, like many other housewives, threw the tell-tale cow dung ball. He suspected; he noted the timings, the quantity, the material, etc. until he was convinced that she was the culprit for the disfiguration of Krishna, the defilement of that liveliness. Then he beat her so severely that her arm that threw the dung was fractured. When he

returned triumphantly to the temple expecting to be profusely blessed by the Lord for punishing the wicked woman, he was shocked to find Krishna's right arm fractured and bleeding, exactly like the saint's arm! The poor fellow wept in his agony and said, "I beat her only through love of you; she spoilt your charm, Oh Lord." Krishna replied, "You must love all whom I love, remember." Here too, I want you to behave like that, or at least love yourself, that is to say, love your own better self and "best interests". I will not tolerate envy or malice or hatred among devotees; nor will I allow you to hate yourselves or think of yourselves as mean or weak.

Disturbing the faith of others is treason

A word to the men who are gathered here: you must live up to the glory of your inner purity and strength. You come from distant places at great expense, but you bring with you all your habits and prejudices, your proclivities and preferences, without making any effort to purify them, to suit the holy place that you have sought. Here too you seek and secure the company to which you are accustomed; namely, the company of the factious, the envious, and the wordly. Come to Me with mean desires, and you will be disappointed! I will not worry if you do not come again. If you destroy or disturb the faith of others or the devotion of others, it is ingratitude, treason; it is like pouring glowing cinders on a heap of flowers. If the child gives up its mother, how can it grow? Keep attached to God, so that you may grow. Do not clip off the sprouts of faith in your heart or in the hearts of others. It is that faith that gives poignancy to the yearning for God and that wins ready response. Ramamurthy, who is here, called out "Swami," in that poignant sincerity when his wife's sari was in flames; she was too frightened to call Me. That call took Me to Aukiripalli and, though only a quarter of the sari was left unburnt, she was saved.

Cheats who trade on the faith of devotees

Talking of faith, I must issue a warning. Many people are collecting money in various places using My Name for various purposes like arranging receptions, building temples, worshiping, etc. That is unauthorised and against My wish

and command. Do not yield to such requests and encourage this practice, which I condemn. Then there is another set of people who trade on your faith. They advertise that I have "possessed" them; that I am "talking" through a medium or a stove (!) or some other thing. Treat all such people and their agents or brokers as you treat cheats; if you do not treat them so, then you are also accomplices in the cheating process. Others gather groups of followers and admirers and collect money exhibiting some idol or image that has been "given" by Me or advertising some other sign of My Grace. Some of them even declare, "Baba sent me to you to take from you some money," or "Baba has given me this," or "Baba blessed me specially thus and thus," and then ask for your help or your praise or your purse! I ask you to chastise all three types of men and turn them away - whoever they are.

52. Grief And God

Date: 26 November 1962 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

Many things have happened here since 3:30pm, when you all gathered. The programme began with the folk tale on marriage by the girl students of the Sadhuvamma High School. and it ended with the wedding of Krishna, described by Veerabhadra Shasthry. In the middle, Ganapathi Shasthry told you of the origin and meaning of the ancient social order, as laid down in the Vedas and the holy scriptures (sastras). Out of the many plausible interpretations of the scriptures, you are prone to attach yourselves to the one that pleases your own prejudices, so it is essential to hear such pandits who know the authentic meaning and who will not deviate from it in order to make the exposition popular. Listening to such talks should not end with listening only; follow it up with rumination, digestion. So also, with the talk on the Bhagavatha, cogitate over it within the four walls of your worship room, sitting before the shrine and offering ritual worship. Do not treat the Bhagavatha as a chapter of ancient history; you can experience the thrill now, today, for ever. The Bhagavatha is for all time, for the elevation of human emotions in all climes and places. The Vedas, with their meaningful rites and their deeply significant philosophy, are valuable for all time. Once, someone decided to worship the greatest. He fixed upon the earth, but the sea erodes the earth. The sea is also not so great because Sage Agastya drank it up. Agastya is now a tiny star in the broad sky, but the sky was just enough for one foot of the Three-Steps form of the Lord (Vamana). And the Lord is enshrined in the heart of the devotee. So he concluded that the devotee was the greatest of them all!

Castes have no superiority or inferiority

Devotion knows no caste; it saves all, ennobles all. Castes have no superiority or inferiority, according to the Vedas. A sugar doll is all sugar. The hymn of Purusha Suktha speaks of the four castes having come from four parts of His Body. The meaning is that all are equally high born and equally important. The mouth cannot walk, nor can the feet talk. It is the voice that is obeyed

and the arm that protects. Well, all those who felt (and follow the feeling) that fighting is their righteous duty are protectors (kshatriyas), and all those who feel it their duty to study the Vedas and the Sastras are brahmins - not those who feel it as their right! Yesterday, I spoke a few words specially to the men. Today I shall speak to the women. Many of you become so desperate and dejected that you bemoan your birth and welcome death. This is very wrong. You cannot flee from your responsibility in the middle of your allotted task. It is a sign of weakness and cowardice. After all, just think for a moment whether the rich are happy, the strong are happy, the highly educated are happy, or the clever are happy. No one is happy, you will find. To be happy, one of two things must happen: All your desires must be fulfilled or you should not have any desire. Of these, the reduction of desire is the easier path.

Become more steady in spiritual discipline

Take the troubles that come to you as tests and opportunities to learn non-attachment. The hot summer sends you to air-conditioning. Grief sends you to God. When a child dies, ask yourself the question, "Is it for my sake that the child was born?" The child had their own destiny to fulfil, their own history to work out. Gauthama Buddha's father was so overcome with grief when he saw his son with a begging bowl in the street that he told him thus: "Every one of my ancestors was a king: what misfortune is this that a beggar was born in this line?" Buddha replied, "Every one of my ancestors had a beggar's bowl; I know of no king in my line." The father and the son walked different paths, traveled along divergent routes. The blood of the son when transfused may prove fatal to the father. Another point: you should all become more steady and regular in your spiritual effort. You must curb the propensity to indulge in inane jabber and idle curiosity. Follow the discipline laid down for the Prasanthi Nilayam and become examples for the newcomers! This applies to the men also. You will have noticed that I do not address you as "dear devotees" at any time. For, to get that name, devotee, you must have dedication, unwavering faith, and steady discipline. When the Attributeless and Formless is available here and now as "with Attributes and Form", you must use every moment to earn His grace. You do not realise your unique

good fortune. In the years to come, people will revere you, for you had a chance that millions could not get; they will worship your pictures in their shrines! Live and love in such a way that you may deserve that honour.

For remembrance of the Name, no expense is involved, no materials are needed, no special place or time is to be provided. No qualification of scholarship or caste or sex has to be proved. When a bit of iron is rubbed to and fro on a slab of stone, heat is generated, but the rubbing has to be vigorous and continuous. When you do so at intervals and with poor pressure, the iron will not get hot. So, too, in order to get sufficient heat to melt the soft heart of the Lord, rub the name Ram Ram Ram Ram vigorously and unintermittently. Then, the Lord will shower His grace. If you devote but two minutes and a half in the morning and another two minutes and a half in the evening, the little heart will cool off twice a day and His heart will not melt.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba