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1. Culture - Agriculture

Date: 05 January 1975 / Location: Mumbai

INDIA is a sacred land, whose glory has spread over all the continents, whose sons and daughters have won by their material and spiritual excellences eternal fame amidst all mankind. They have freed their motherland from the shackles of foreign rule; they have added to human happiness by their attainments in music and the fine arts. Even today, India has a name that is revered and held in high esteem. You have a great responsibility, for, you have to maintain and develop the splendour that was India.

We have met here today in a spirit of prayer and *sadhana* (spiritual discipline), to dedicate ourselves for a new step in education. The objectives of true education are two and only two. The first and the most basic of the two is education for the provision of food, clothing and shelter, for the promotion of health and harmony in society, for avoiding pollution and promoting honesty. In the olden times, when the student underwent the basic training under the teacher, he learnt, before he was 15 years of age, to spin, weave and procure clothes for his own use; to produce the food he required; and to look after his needs for basic comfort. He was contented and happy, with simple habits which gave him ample leisure for *sadhana*, and contemplation of Nature. Everyone must endeavour to be self-reliant and self-sufficient, so far as food and clothing are concerned.

Education should develop the culture of the mind

The rulers of this land are scared of the growth in population and they are excitedly advocating wrong and dangerous means to curb the increase. But, they forget, that with every extra mouth that has to be fed, we are getting also two extra hands, and a pair of legs, besides a brain that has vast potential for development into a national asset. We have no scheme to use the two extra hands and the precious little brain for national uplift and national prosperity. We encourage laziness, by making it the sign of affluence; we do not condemn it, wherever found. We have no strategy to

maximise production and minimise waste, even in food. If only everyone in this land will consume just the quantity of food that he needs and nothing more, there will be no scarcity at all. This country has never lacked in the wherewithal to feed her children. This is the land of Goddess *Annapoorna* (Food plenty).

The second objective of education is the culture of the mind and the spirit. This too is very much like agriculture, which provides food and clothing for man. We want *dhanya* (grains) to sustain the body; we require *dhyana* (meditation) to sustain the spirit. In agriculture, you prepare the soil, plant seeds, feed the plants with fertilisers, and reap the harvest. In heart-culture, we have to plough the *hrudhaya-kshethra* (the field of the heart), remove the weeds and wild growth, and plant the seeds. The weeds are pernicious tendencies, attitudes and habits; the fertilisers are devotion and dedication. Water to help the plant grow is the quality of love. The seeds are the Names of God, which are deposited within the purified heart. The harvest which is the reward of all this spiritual discipline is Wisdom.

Plant seeds of Love; reap the harvest of Wisdom

Heart-culture has been the goal and aim of *Sanathana Dharma* (Eternal Universal Religion), the ancient religion of India. It is essential for a happy contented peaceful life. This Dharma exhorts us to plant the seeds of Love and reap the harvest of Wisdom, for the sake of social harmony and national prosperity and the uplift of all humanity. Sanathana Dharma makes you realise the Unity that underlies all the diversity that is apparent. The unity is the basis and the justification for loving all, with no desire for any benefit therefrom.

But, Indians have developed so much cynicism and scorn about their heritage that they ascribe the discovery of the Vedas (sacred-revealed ancient scriptures) and their compilation to the crooked designs of some Brahmins! Muslims revere the, Quoran as the Word of God; Christians revere the Bible as the word of God; but, Indians treat **the** Vedic scriptural texts as negligible teachings of interested persons! And, they stray away from the right path into

distress and discontent. Max Mueller said that what is not found in Indian culture is not found in other countries. But, as soon as Indians learn English or any other foreign language, they develop so much of ego that they start decrying their own ancient culture and adopting the manners and mannerisms of the alien civilisation.

Everyone is at cross-purposes with the rest

Gandhi said, "My India is the India of villages." The freedom that has been won and the prosperity that is looked forward to, can be ensured only when the villagers are free and prosperous. And, this depends in its turn on the freedom and prosperity of each family in the village. Now, there is no unity, no mutual co-operation, no love between the four or five brothers in the family; everyone is at cross purposes with the rest. How then can the village enjoy freedom and peace and prosperity? And, what to speak of the country, when the condition of its villages is so bad?

Every person seeks positions of authority, without trying to deserve the authority by means of the qualification necessary to use it in the right way. Of course, if a person who has good intentions and full capabilities and the vision of the Divine, he can well seek authority and discharge it well. But, we seldom see any one thinking of one's duty; everywhere, people are after the acquisition of positions of authority.

As a result, several malpractices have entered the field of education. Money is paid to gain admission into schools and colleges, money is paid to acquire marks and degrees. The teacher does not transmit taste, style, attitude or outlook; it is all a matter of books and more books. The student is left to gather these from outside the educational institutions. Moreover, more value is attached to information and its collection; no attempt is made to gain transformation and to the correction of habits and characteristics.

How did the great artists who drew the frescoes of Ajantha and carved the temples of Ellora learn their trade? They did not attend any school; they learnt from the teachers, the master craftsmen, the inspired artistes. Books

cannot give the guidance and the inspiration for real good work. Also the worldly aspects must be harmonised with the spiritual aspects In order to live a full life. Then only can man have self-confidence and avoid the imitative path. Mental peace cannot be secured by blaming others and avoiding one's own responsibility.

Fill your heart with love and light

Today, we are establishing this Agricultural Polytechnic, so that those who study here may not depend upon others to give them a job but, so that they can earn a livelihood for themselves by their own skills and effort. This will be a spiritual discipline also and it will give them ample chances to develop their spiritual attainments too. Students here will be encouraged to practise working with others in mutual and productive co-operation. The five fingers of the hand have to come together so that a thing can be grasped firmly.

Nowadays, you know they appoint what are called Committees for all kinds of works, a Committee for Water Supply, a committee for the supply of electricity, etc. But, they do not work smoothly; there are bickerings and factions. They come for tea and do not deliberate and determine anything. Mutual respect can be built on the faith that all are children of God and all are Divine. Then on that basis, there can be co-operation, and enthusiasm for work. Each will then do his best, knowing his duty and his responsibility.

The future of the country depends on the skill and the sincerity of the youth. Therefore, the necessary enthusiasm and encouragement must be generated among the youth. All my hopes are based on the students, the youth. They are very dear to Me. They are faultless; It is the parent and the school that are at fault for all the waywardness and violence. They lead them into wrong directions. Instead of filling your heads with facts and figures, fill your heart with love and light. Have confidence in the vast powers of the Atma (soul), which is your reality. Have faith in the Grace of God, which you can secure by prayer.

Do your work with devotion as an act of worship

While praying and using manthras, sacred formulae or such expressions, one must know the real meaning and significance of the words and their deep implications.

One individual for example did not know the full implication of the word Shiva; he meant by that word, the Form of God who is supposed to live in Kailash with his consort and family. He told me that Shivoham meant, 'I am Shiva' and was shocked when asked, "Then, what is Parvathi to you?"

Many people do *japa* (repetition of holy names) and join *bhajans* (group singing of devotional songs), but, they are not aware of the meaning and value of the words they utter mechanically. Elders who propagate mantras and pose as spiritual teachers do not themselves know the inner meanings of what they recommend to others or hand on to their disciples. Shivoham means that you are Divine.

In education spiritual values should be emphasised

Man must be engaged in work; he must do it with faith and devotion, as an act of worship; In this way, he will derive wisdom. But, the education imparted today does not direct him along these lines. It is sterile instruction, as it is. I hope that in this Polytechnic, whose foundation stone I am laying now, will pay attention to these points also. Moral and spiritual principles have to be emphasised all along, even while merely material subjects are taught and learnt. I want the Committee in charge of this Institution to propagate the ideals of service, love and sadhana, which Sanathana Dharma embodies.

Even a small number of such Institutions will be enough in our country to serve as examples and guides to others. A college in every city is not necessary. We do not have several commanders-in-chief: we have only one, though soldiers are million or so. This one college in the city of Bombay, if it is run in an ideal manner, can spread the ideals of the Unity of Man and the Value of Love throughout its vast population and even outside its limits. Students who undergo training here, in this college, when they go to the

other states will spread the ideals they have imbibed here. The role of the teachers is also important, for, if a student deteriorates, only he will suffer. We must try to raise in this college good teachers for similar colleges in future. The citizens of Bombay should endeavour to promote educational institutions of this type and also institutions fostering the health of people, so that the land may have peace and prosperity.

Now man is devalued into a machine

Today, there is a great deal of talk that this country is lacking in peace. But, this is not right; for, the lack of peace of mind is an intensely individual complaint and phenomenon. The country has not deteriorated at all! It is the individual that has to be cured; It is their thoughts and feelings that have to be corrected and cleansed. It is not possible for any one individual to change his ideas, his habits, his attitudes and impulses.

For example, we find that the price of every article is soaring sky high. The rulers of the nation and are devising various plans to bring down the price. But, this can succeed only through one means: raise the value of man, and the value of everything else will come down. Now, man, is devalued into a machine. Man too has forgotten his worth. He is demeaning himself into a beast and not realising that there is Divinity in him.

Today, commodities are valued as essential, but, man is not so valued. If man is valued at his true worth, and treated as a Divine spark enclosed in the body, then, he will rise into new heights of achievement and produce all the necessities of life in profusion. He will not grab or cheat: he will be a good worker, a pure person and a sincere *sadhak* (spiritual aspirant). He will cultivate the inner vision and realise that he is not the body or senses or mind or even intellect. He will be full of *prema* (love) and self-confidence.

It is not good for man to be constantly engaged in exciting things - exciting food, talk, books, films and games. They are *rajasik* (passionate) things that disturb and agitate the mind. Nor is it good for man to be engaged in cruelty - cruel thoughts or actions. Today, the foundation has been laid for this

Agricultural College. I hope a beautiful building will come up here before long. I hope there will not be any misuse of money in wasteful expenditure. I hope students who are trained in this college will become efficient farmers, self-reliant young men, who depend on their own skill, character and stamina for earning their livelihood. I bless you all.

By good thoughts and by good ideas, you will become a sadhu. Sadhu does not mean one who merely wears an orange robe, shaves the head and wears Rudrakshas (holy beads). He who has good thoughts and good ideas is a sadhu. A sadhu is one who is a Sathya Sankalpa Swaruupa (embodiment of truthful thoughts).

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

2. Not twice, but thrice!

Date: 06 January 1975 / Location: Mumbai

You are all sharing the joy of serving others, doing good to others, according to your capacity and skill. **The main objective of the Sathya Sai Organisation, which you must always keep before you is to help man to recognise the Divinity that is inherent in him.** But, this Divinity is latent; it is veiled; it is not always apparent to oneself or others. There is nothing wholly bad or wholly good in Creation. There are few who do not commit mistakes; there are few who do not perform good deeds. Both good and bad, beneficent and maleficent, constructive and destructive, are ever present everywhere. You, as members of the Managing Committees of the units of the Samithi (Organisation), and as Members of the Seva Dhal (Voluntary Service Corps), and of the Mahila Vibhag (Women's section) are unique, because, you have dedicated your talents and time to the service of others, and, ultimately, to the promotion of your own best interests. First of all, I want that you should give up the blind imitation of other cultures, other social systems and other ideals. This tendency has now conquered 99 out of 100 people, in our country. Your conduct and behaviour, your dress and food habits, your sports and games, your methods of agriculture and industry, your art and architecture - all are borrowed from other societies. Even your intelligence follows the processes of other cultural groups. You are leading lives which have no roots in the past; it is guided and controlled by these other civilisations.

Do not give importance to differences of religion

To escape the pull of these alien attractions and material pleasures, faith In God as your Inner Reality and the source of immense power is essential. **The Sathya Sai Organisation must recognise and reestablish this Truth - that the Atma (Divine Self) is the Reality of everyone, however, distinct they may appear in physical form and mental equipment.** When one lamp lights many lamps, all shine with equal brilliance. The Paramjyothi (the One Supreme Effulgence) is the origin and source of all the

jeevan -jyothis (particularised effulgences).

Ekam eva adhwithiyam
There is only one without a second

The same wind is referred to as breeze, whirlwind, storm, typhoon, hurricane etc. The same God is referred to by different Names. This is the very foundation of our culture.

So, your duty is to emphasise the One, to experience the One, in all that you do and speak. Do not give any importance to differences of religion or sect or status or colour. Have the feeling of one-ness permeating every act of yours. Only those who do so have a place in this Organisation; the rest can best withdraw.

The Ever present God notes all that you do

You have to re-establish the moral outlook and the righteous behaviour in this great Country. That is the tradition appropriate and native to India. However, do not look down upon the cultures of other countries; do not try to discover faults on other cultures and decry them. The Bhagavath-geetha advises that you should be

"adhweshta sarva bhuuthanam,"
not condemning or hating any being.

You have been in this Organisation since 7 or 8 years. It is time for you to ask yourselves, whether you are in it out of compulsion or of your own free will; whether You are giving It the best you can, in efficiency and enthusiasm. Has the work been exhibition-oriented or has it been genuine? Is your faith in the

rightness of Service patent in every act of yours? Let me tell you that if you serve with your whole heart, the result will be Ananda (Divine Bliss) for you; half-hearted work will give only superficial joy or fame. Remember that the God you worship by this work is resident in your own heart. Others may or may not see; but, the ever present God sees and notes all that you do or feel. He meets out to you the consequence, in full, of whatever you do or feel.

There was a rich man once who owned a rice mill. He heard a Pandit (scholar) expound that the service that God appreciates most is the gift of food to the hungry. So, he decided to serve food to the poor in his village. But he had no mind to use good varieties of rice for the purpose. He felt that any rice is good enough for them. So, he got the rice that was rotting in his godown - he did not care even to remove the worms that infested it; he cooked it and served it to the hungry poor, who ate it and suffered many illness as a consequence. His wife expostulated with him and told him that good food given to 10 persons would be more meritorious than bad food given to hundreds! But, he was in no mood to listen to sound advice.

Everyone has to suffer for the injury he causes

The wife therefore hit upon a plan to help him. She placed on his plate every day food that was rotten and full of worms. When he grew angry and castigated her, she replied, 'The Pandit said that everyone has to suffer for the injury he causes others. You have to eat, in the other world, rotten food, full of worms. I am giving that type of food to you, even now, so that you may get used to it. It will help you to eat the consequence of your evil deed.' At this, the husband realised his iniquity; he repented for his wrongs and learnt better ways of service to the poor.

When you visit the patients in a hospital serve the patients with a full heart, sincerely and to the utmost extent possible. I must say that the service programmes you have undertaken in Bombay City are being carried on very well. They can be the ideals for other centers to follow. But, do not put a full stop; have only a comma. Move on with greater and greater enthusiasm, and achieve more progress in all directions. Service is a life-time programme, it

knows no rest or respite. This body has been given to you so that you may devote its strength and skills to the service of brother-man.

Serve man, until you see God in all men; then, what you do will be elevated as Worship.

God is love and can be reached and realised through love. God is truth and can be reached and realised through truth. But, are you concentrating on the development of love and truth?

The tender age is the best for religious instruction

I must say that the Mahila Vibhag is evincing greater enthusiasm and love in their work - the Bal Vikas (children's section) classes, for example - than the men, in the Samithis. This is, I know, because the men have not got as much leisure to devote to Samithi activities; but, they can use the available time in sacred ways and to greater benefit. The kind of Seva (service) which the women are doing in the Bal Vikas is very useful, for it ensures a good future for our country, The children are trained in a very fine manner. These children will bear the burden of the country, better and more intelligently, with more attachment to the culture and traditions of Bharath.

Tell the children what they cannot learn by themselves, by observation, namely, the stories of Ramayana, the Bhagavatha, and the Mahabharatha. Tell them also stories from the Bible, the Buddhist texts, the Zend-Avesta and the Quoran. That a horse has four legs is a fact which one need not teach the child; it can discover it in a moment. What is not known to the children are the stories and verses that embody our culture.

Do not be deterred by people who say that the information and inspiration you give will be too much of a burden on the tender minds. It its only grown-ups that would find learning new facts burdensome; the tender age is the

best for this kind of instruction. Tell them the Importance of OM and its significance, as the basic sound of all creation. It is meaningful symbolic sound; it is quite unlike the useless jargon which children learn today, in the very first lesson at school; Ba Ba, Black Sheep! Ding Dong Bell; the Pussy is in the well!

Aim at the promotion of Faith in God

The Seva Dhal members must spend their leisure time in sath-sang (good company) and not waste even a moment in frivolous play. Take some good books and read them out to illiterate brothers and sisters, spread the Message of our culture among all those who have no chance to know about it. Do this service to the slum-dwellers, the people who live in hutments, and the villages. The city dwellers are used to silly story books and novels that drain their brains and plant evil thoughts in their minds. But the poor in the villages and in the huts will welcome you and listen to the stories and lives of saints and Divine Incarnations. Transmit to these people the sacred texts of all religions and the lives of the Saints of all faiths. **Do not imagine that your task is to propagate Sai and speak of Sathya Sai and His Message. This is not right. But, through the nine of Sathya Sai, emphasis on the message, aim at the promotion of Godliness and of Faith in God. Create the spiritual attitude; promote spiritual discipline.**

It does not matter what Name you use, or what Form they concentrate upon. Through some Name and some Form, lead them into the path of Faith and sadhana (spiritual discipline). Just now, some among you felt that the Sun is scorching the spot where I am and you wanted to do something to avoid it, But, this is happening to many people here, and you should not be content with measures to prevent the Sun from hurting one individual. Seva Dhal must care for the comfort of all. There is the Atma in everyone. This body is for you and all these other bodies are also Mine.

Your Prema , your shraddha , your bhakthi (love, steady faith and devotion) have persuaded Me to come over to Bombay, twice a year! If you promote these virtues even more, in a still larger measure, I will come to Bombay not

twice, but thrice a year, and give you Ananda (divine bliss). I give you blessing for all the Seva that you have undertaken and all the love you are sharing with others.

The real sadhu is he whose deeds are in accordance with the words of advice he utters.

Devotion cannot tolerate in the devotee the slightest trace of envy or jealousy.

Make your daily life holy and pure.

Render your life worth-while through service to man and service to society.

That is the most important aspect of surrendering the self.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

3. Parents beware!

Date: 06 January 1975 / Location: Mumbai

SEEING this Rally and listening to the Marching Song, and witnessing the other items you presented, I can now say that what happened this morning is not the rise of the Sun, but, it was in fact the Rise of Anandha (divine bliss). People, are talking about the glory of India's past- they go on praising endlessly about the reign of Rama, or in recent times of Ashoka, or Krishna Dheva Raya. They try in vain to assess the present in terms of the past; they close their eyes to the dismal present and dream about the past. If children are put into the right path, and guided along the path that you are now treading, Rama Rajya can again be established in this land. Every child of this land has four debts to discharge - reverence to mother, respect to the father, obedience to the teacher, and adoration to God. Besides these, every child must learn to live in peace and love with other children and other families. The idea that one can live for oneself and that one need not worry about the wants and weaknesses of others has to be removed quite early in life, by the Bala Vikas Gums. Encourage the child to cultivate the pleasure of 'togetherness.' They will enjoy it; and, you will be sowing the seeds of social peace. The seeds will grow into Universal Peace and Universal Bliss.

Share with others the good things you are given

Life is like a train journey. You, young children have a long way to go; but, the elders have to alight from the train pretty soon. You must learn to make your journey comfortable and happy. Do not carry heavy unwanted luggage, with you. That will make the journey miserable. Do not indulge in faultfinding and in picking quarrels with others. Don't desire to have the best things for yourselves only. Share with others around you the good things you are given. Anger, hatred, envy, jealousy, these are the heavy luggage I asked you to avoid taking with you in the journey. I must give the elders, the parents who are here in large numbers some advice. Do not set bad examples for these children to follow. If you are truthful, just, be calm under provocation and full of love in all your dealings with others, these children too will grow up in

sathya (truth.), dharma (righteousness), shanthi (peace) and prema (love). If you tell your son, when you are actually at home, to speak through the telephone, when some one is calling, to reply that father is not at home, you are sowing a poisonous seed, which will become a huge tree.

Parents should be good examples to children

Let me tell you a story to illustrate the danger of such small beginnings. A mother carried her son on her shoulder, when she went to the market. A woman with a basket of fruits passed by her the child lifted a banana from that basket and started eating it. The mother noticed it, and when she was told that he had cleverly lifted it from the basket of a passing fruit seller, she complimented the son on its smartness. This made the child indulge in petty thieving and picking pockets, as it grew into a boy and in actual house breaking and dacoity, Once during a dacoity, he committed even murder, and when he was caught and jailed, he expressed a wish to see his mother before being hanged. The wailing weeping desperate mother was brought before him. She was sobbing at her son's fate. The son asked her to come closer to him; suddenly he tried to strangle her, and the guards separated them. The son said, "she deserves the punishment; for, it was she who brought me to this doom. Had she reprimanded me when I stole a banana when I was a child of two years instead of complimenting me, I would not have fallen into this evil way." Parents set bad examples uttering falsehood, scandalising others, gambling, drinking, behaving violently, inflicting injury, becoming addicted to night-clubs, pictures and drinking parties, quarrelling at home after arriving home past mid-night. How can children used to such low sights and sounds learn to become bright fresh fragrant flowers of the Sanathana Garden of India? Many such parents do not allow their children to join the Bala Vikas Classes, or to attend bhajans and Sathsangs. If the children clamour at home that they may be permitted, they shout at them, and call them mad. They say that religion and God are only for idlers or old senile people, and that the path will lead them on to Sanyas (mendicancy), which is a calamity to be avoided! They reverse the very values of life. Parents must correct themselves before they try to correct their children.

Children! Learn the best teaching of all faiths, put them into practice. Chant the Name of God with your whole being. Imbibe the noble qualities that those Names represent. Purify yourselves and purify the world. That is My blessing.

The Gayathri mantra has in it the validity of the Vedas. It contains the essence of Vedhic teachings. Each of the four Vedas has a core axiom (Maha Vakya) enclosed in it: Thath thwam asi (That thou art), Prajnanam Brahma (Consciousness is Brahma), Ayam Atma Brahma (This Self is Brahma) and Aham Brahmasmi, (I am Brahmam). When all these are synthesised, the Gayathri emerges.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

4. Naaraayana seva

Date: 28 January 1975 / Location: Sore-Hunise Village

THE gift of food is the noblest of all gifts. You have today arranged the feeding of a large number of people and thus justified the name of this village. The years of life allotted to man is very short; the world in which he lives is very wide; time extends far behind and far beyond. What little man has to do here has to be done quickly, at the place that is assigned to him within the time that is allotted to him. And, man has such a formidable task before him; it is to fulfil it that he has come as man, exchanging for this human habitat, all the merit he has acquired during many past lives. The task is no less than the manifestation of the Divinity latent in man. The easiest and the most pleasant means by which this can be accomplished is seva - the service of man, done in a spirit of dedication and devotion. And, in villages like this, Seva (service) is a potent and profitable discipline. And, the best type of seva is feeding the hungry. The first step in this discipline is the establishment of mutual help and co-operation in all seva activities among the residents. This will ensure peace, security and prosperity for the village.

Pollution of character is spreading in cities

A single homestead cannot make a village; many have to cluster together and live as one family in order to constitute a village. And, for such seva as you are doing, each homestead and every member thereof has to lend a helping hand and achieve success in the common venture. The physical strength, the monetary resources, the intelligence of all have to be pooled in order to make the project succeed. This garland has not happened out of a single flower; many flowers of different hues and fragrances have strung themselves around the string in order to achieve the common aim of decorating the picture of person. No one in the village can stand apart and say, "This work is not mine; it is the responsibility of that man or this group." For, today, the Cities have taken a turn towards confusion and conflict; they have no peace, no security, no calmness. It is all agitation, anxiety, fear, faction and suspicion. It is only in villages like yours that a modicum of quietness, fellow-

feeling, tolerance, and truth can be found. The pollution of character that is spreading in cities is fast invading the villages also. The villages should not yield to the temptation of imitation and invite catastrophe on themselves. They must appreciate the ancient Indian ideals of simplicity and sincerity, service and spirituality-oriented living. You must curb greed and anger, envy and pride, and live in amity and the spirit of brotherhood. Then India will be happy and prosperous. Each one must carry out the duties of his role in a worshipful attitude.

Deserve the Grace of God by helping the weak

I see that only a few young persons and elders are running about and carrying on the various tasks this function entails. This is the case in most villages. If all do not share in the cost, the village cannot benefit. Life has been bestowed not for just eating and digesting, roaming and reclining, but, for a far greater purpose - the realisation of the Divinity in us, in all that exist around us and even beyond all things that strike our senses, To waste such a life in vain pursuits, and in mere sense-pleasures is not the sign of an intelligent person. Deserve the Grace of God by helping the weak and poor, the diseased and the disabled, the distressed and the downtrodden. Do not laugh at others or take delight in insulting them or in carrying tales demeaning them. There is no more heinous sin than hurting the feelings of others. Man must develop two qualities: Fear of sin and devotion to God. To cultivate devotion to God, always endeavour to mix with good persons, engage yourselves in Namasmara (in the early hours of the day, join the choir groups that sing the names of God and move along the streets thrilled with the joy that wells up when you do so). You have a few temples in the village, make them active, and alive. Gather there for an hour each day and sing bhajans (group singing of devotional songs on Lord's Names and glory}. Why waste time or even pollute time, by talking ill of others? The eye, the hand, the nose, the head, the stomach, each looks different; each does one special task; each has different name and function. But they subserve the Interests of the one body to which they all belong, they do not work at crosspurposes, do they? So too, each of you is a limb in the body called the village. Do your work without a murmur; work in full co-operation with all. The

village can be healthy and happy only then. Love, love alone can bind you to others and to God, who is the very embodiment of love. You are referring to the gift of food as Anna-dhana (the charity of food). But, no one has the authority to give In charity what has been given by God or be proud of it or even to feel that he has given something In charity. God gave the rains, God fostered the sapling and God ripened the grain; what right have you to call it yours and give it in charity? It is not dhana (charity) that you do; you are only offering gratitude to God; you are sanctifying the grain you have harvested by offering the food prepared out of it to these Narayanas (Gods in human form). Call it Narayana Seva! That will be more correct. Anyway, since you are doing it with love and humility, in spirit of Divine worship, I have come to your village to bless you. Do not cast all responsibility on a committee, or a group of enthusiasts; join them wholeheartedly and offer to share the burden. I want everyone to join in this Narayana Seva and that it should be done, not once a month as now, but even at more frequent Intervals.

5. Youth Guides for youth

Date: 23 March 1975 / Location: Brindavan

WELL-WISHERS of Youth! Instructors of Youth! Young men of the College! When you look deep into the theory and practice of modern educational institutions and compare them with what we know of the theory and practice in ancient Indian-educational institutions, you will be shocked at the vast difference in the two systems. The ancient schools aimed at self-knowledge first and knowledge of the objective world as a corollary. Truly, that is the sign of the educated man - his awareness of his own reality. How can a person be termed educated, when he does not distinguish between the really real and the relatively real in himself as well as in the outer world? Among the educated, we do not find signs of self-knowledge; nor do we see another quality that we expect every human being to have, namely, the quality of mercy, of sympathy or compassion. The 'un-educated' have this quality, more than the 'educated!' 'Education' seems to harden hearts and squeeze out the feelings of pity and piety. Many species of animals are soft, and tender in their habits and nature. The deer, the elephant, the cow, the horse - these live on Sathwik (pure)food and behave in a Sathwik manner; so, they are adored and even worshiped by man. Tigers, bears, hyaenas and other wild animals are feared by man and driven by him into the dark recesses of forests. The wonder is that the wildness, the cruelty and the terror-inflicting attributes of these beasts are developed, and exhibited by man himself! Man prides himself as the crown of creation; he declares that he has in him the spark of the Divine. But, he ignores it or suppresses it and revels in displaying the qualities of the ferocious beasts of the jungle.

Man has become the lair of cruel habits

Imagine the fate of the cows, when a tiger enters the manger. Can they survive the invasion? So too, the 'cows' of Truth, Justice, Peace and Love cannot survive in the human heart when the 'tigers,' namely, greed, anger and pride enter and play havoc. Today, the human heart, (especially the hearts of those who are 'educated') has become the lair of wild desires and

cruel habits, Rajoguna (restless) has overwhelmed the sathwik (pure) traits. A blind person cannot see the travails of others; nor can a deaf person be moved by the groans of a man in pain. The sight of suffering softens the heart; stories of distress urge one to rush to the rescue. But, education, as imparted now renders men indifferent to the sufferings of others, blind and deaf, in fact. Things are even worse, for educated persons under-going education in colleges and schools now inflict harm and pain, cause loss and injury, and revel in violence; and apparently enjoy doing so! Observing this downfall in standards, one is tempted to doubt whether these are men, or, beasts in human skin!

Students of today are the teachers of tomorrow

Embodiments of the Divine Atma (Divine Self)-Yours is the responsibility to cherish and develop the ancient culture of this land. Bharath is the land of Love, of yoga (divine communion), of spiritual search, and of joyful sacrifice, of the lower self to promote the interest of the higher self. But, this day, Bharath is afflicted with the poverty of all these precious qualities. Greed, anger, hatred and other evil traits have displaced the traits of love, brotherhood and compassion. In the educational field, too, the evil has grown. Educational institutions are the nursery for tradition, loyalty to culture, and ideals of service to society. They train youth to benefit by the experience of the previous generations and to march on towards victory in the campaign to master this world and the next. Therefore, I desire that the youth of the land must make the fullest use of these precious years, when they are at College, to learn and practise the culture of this great land, they should not fritter away this crucial period In their lives, indulging in wasteful and wild adventures causing loss and pain to others. The students today are the teachers of tomorrow's colleges; they have to shape the destiny of this land, through their precepts and example. You cannot be young for long. Every day you are moving nearer and nearer to the 'age' when you have to take up the burden of running a home, and running the country. If you relish the infliction of loss and damage, of suffering and pain, today, surely you cannot complain when later, you have to encounter those very evils at the hands of the youth of those days.

Wisdom grows where only humility prevails

Wisdom flashes like lightning amidst the clouds of the inner sky; one has to foster the flash, and preserve the light. That is the true sign of the 'educated' person. Do not believe that mastery of many tomes make you wise. Wisdom can grow only where humility prevails. It thrives when man is afraid of vice and sin, and is attached to the Divine, in himself and in all else. The crisis of character which is at the root of all the troubles everywhere has come about, as a result of the neglect of this aspect in education. I shall illustrate this by one little example. The Universities lay down the rule that a student is entitled to a degree, when he gets thirty marks out of a total hundred prescribed for a question paper. This means that you can get the distinction of being an 'educated person, even if you commit seventy mistakes! When such a degree holder gets a job on the basis of having committed seventy mistakes(!), he easily slides down, by force of circumstance, into a hundred mistakes out of every hundred tasks that he has to do. Naturally, the country suffers and people bemoan the educational system. Education today has to move haltingly and half-heartedly through a series of strikes, gheroas (lock-ins), and other interruptions and so, students are seldom able to carry out their primary duty of study. Later on too, when they become responsible officers, they easily tend to neglect the duty that is primary to them at that stage. While you are students, you must feel that study is your first and only duty. Be witness of what is happening outside the classroom; do not rush out and get distracted. Try to identify the One in the many; become strong, physically, mentally and spiritually; imbibe as much as possible the wisdom that has been gathered in the past; cultivate the skills by which you can serve society. The heart soaked in compassion is verily the Altar of God. If you forget these ideals and allow greed, conceit and hate to take root in your hearts, you are only lowering yourselves to the level of the beast. As a first step in educational progress you must revere your parents and have gratitude and love towards them. It is through them that you have this wonderful chance of life on earth. They are the custodians of culture, the earliest teachers who instilled virtue into you. In this College, the ancient ideals of Truth, Righteousness, Equanimity and Love are held before you, all the time. I

am sure you have imbibed them, and I bless you that you by your example, propagate them wherever you are. Have compassion in your hearts for the unfortunate brothers and sisters, who are unlearned, ill or suffering. Try your best to open their eyes, to cure their ills and to alleviate their distress. That is the message I wish to give you this day.

6. Advice to seekers

Date: 28 March 1975 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Good Friday

IF somebody says Sai Baba's powers have been given to him, then we run to him. Sai Baba's powers are such that they are not given to anybody else. Nobody has the ability to take powers from Sai Baba, nor the ability to give them to someone else. Sai Baba's powers are not given like that, and you should not be led away by such statements. Each one's power is within him; it is not possible to give such power to another person. In this manner, by allowing a weak mind to get control over us, if we begin running from place to place, when are we going to get strength of mind, and control our own mind? We must be able to follow one thought, one path. One does not have to search for spiritual power, going around the world and spending a lot of money. Be in your own house, develop it in yourself, such spiritual power is in YOU! You don't have to run for it here and there. God is not external; God is not outside you; God is inside you. You are not a man, you are God yourself. You are not one person, but three, the one you think you are (physical); the one others think you are (mental); and the one you really are spiritual is God. Don't be under the delusion that God is somewhere and you have to search for Him. God is in you, and when you are able to realise that, and when you are able to develop the spiritual power from within you, then you will see God. You are going in the path of worldly consciousness. When you take the path of superconsciousness, you will get realisation, and you will be able to see the Truth.

Give up the continual wandering of the physical body

The first thing you have to do is to develop self-confidence. It is such people who have no confidence in their own self who begin to wander about and to waver, and take to various different paths. When you take your body to different places, and when you go about moving aimlessly, the mind also goes to different places. The first thing is to steady your physical body. If the body is moving all the time, then the mind is also moving. If you have a container filled with water, if the container is continually moving, then the

contents will continually be moving. So in this context, we should not keep moving our body and our limbs in an aimless manner; this is very essential part of our practice of meditation. We should sit quiet and the body should be steady.

Why do we ask people to sit straight and to sit quiet in meditation? Because when the body is straight and quiet, the mind inside is also straight and quiet. If you cannot control your body, how can you control your mind? The FIRST thing is to control your body by having all the limbs and body organs in a steady manner. The basis for the mind wandering is that your physical body is also continually wandering. So the first thing you have to do is to give up this continual wandering of the physical body.

Difference between concentration & meditation

Many people think that concentration is the same thing as meditation, but there is no such connection between concentration and meditation. Concentration is something which is below your senses, whereas meditation is something which is above your senses. But many are under the false impression that concentration is identical with meditation, and they take to a wrong path. Concentration is something which we use involuntarily in our daily, normal, routine life. Just look at this, I am now reading the newspaper. My eyes are looking at the letters. My hand is holding the paper. My Intelligence is thinking now. Mind is also thinking. Thus when the eyes are doing their work, the hand is doing its work, when the Intelligence is doing its work, and the mind is also doing its work, then I am able to get the contents of the newspaper. It means, if I want to get at the matter that is contained in the newspaper, all these enumerated senses are concentrated and they are all coordinated and are working on the newspaper. Not only this, if one wants to drive a car, unless one has concentration, **one cannot** drive a car **on** the road. All the normal routines, like walking, talking, reading, writing, eating, all these things we do only as result of concentration. If concentration like this is part and parcel of your daily life, then what is that we practise to get concentration? What we have to practice is something which is beyond these normal senses. We must rise from being below the senses (that is the state of

concentration) to the senses (that is, the middle position, called contemplation); and from there we must rise above the senses, that is called meditation. Between concentration and meditation there is border area which covers both and that is the area of contemplation. To be in that area of contemplation is to free yourself of worldly attachments. If you break away all the worldly attachments - all the routine attachments in the world - then you will enter the region of contemplation. When you have completely broken away ALL your attachments, you break through this area of contemplation and you get into the area of meditation.

First develop confidence in your own self

These steps can also be described as starting from self-confidence, and then getting self-satisfaction and then self-sacrifice, and the last step is self-realisation. The ultimate step of self-realisation depends upon the base of self-confidence. You must therefore develop as a first step confidence in your own self. Without having and developing confidence in your own self, if all the time you are talking of some power being with someone and some other power being with someone else, if in this way you travel all the time and depend upon power which is with someone else, when are you going to acquire any power and confidence in your own self. Peace and bliss are within you they are not something which is external to you. You may think of going to the Himalayas for getting peace. Yes, your body may go to the Himalayas for getting peace; but your mind may be left behind in the city. How are you going to get peace? You have brought your body to India; but still, if you have the same habits which you are used to in America, what is the use of bringing the body to India? Body is not the essential thing. The transformation should come in your mind, the change should come in your mind. Many people collect a lot of information, they take a lot of information, but they do not use it to bring about a transformation of their own self. Information is useless, but the transformation in you is important. You can go on mentioning the names of many eatables. Are you going to relieve your hunger on this way?. But even if you actually eat one thing only in practice, you are going to relieve your hunger. Therefore, instead of saying so many things in your talk or in your speech (all that is simply book knowledge), if you are able to put into

practice one of the things you say, that is going to be useful.

If you have the inclination to do good work, God will give you the time to do good things.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

7. Give them their due

Date: 31 March 1975 / Location: New Delhi

IT is the bounden duty of every son and daughter of this land of Bharath to implant in the hearts of every child of this land the basic lessons held precious by the founders of Bharatheeya Culture. This should be the very first vow to be carried out by every parent, every teacher and every person who dedicates himself to the service of human welfare. For, Bharatheeya Culture is the precious heritage of the whole world, and of every human community therein. The lesson that the Atma (Divine Principle), resident In everyone is the real core of the Universe and that It is the supreme sovereign of the Cosmos will certainly bring together all mankind and ensure Peace and Harmony among the nations. Of what avail is life when the Truth is not known? Why deprive children of this great treasure and look on, when they lead dry fallow lives? Every person has to try to know his own Truth and lead his child into that awareness. What is happening today is quite the opposite! Parents, teachers and leaders are inflaming the passions of young minds and encouraging them to Indulge in violent deeds. The very people who preach the message of Peace, who talk of the basic principle of child education, who harp on love, harmony and mutual love, and who elaborate on the principles of social progress and national uplift are themselves undermining these hopes by their example.

Elders must lead exemplary lives of simplicity

Bharatheeya Culture emphasising humility, sincerity and unity is the best cure for such emotional errors. More than the pursuit of luxurious life or competitive comfort, the acquisition of wealth or power, which are all liable to quick decline, the ideal of simple living and high thinking laid down by the sages of India will lead to happy lives and greater social peace. You must have experienced the thrill of witnessing the plays enacted now by the children of the Sathya Sai Bala Vikas children. The plays were inspiring and instructive; the acting was appealing and attractive; the meaning, has gone deep into the hearts of the children, as well as the elders who witnessed the

plays. But, let me tell you, this is not enough. Along with the Bala Vikas, the elders too must experience Vikas (flowering or development), and lead exemplary lives Of simplicity and sincerity, of spiritual discipline and steady discipline. Children are wayward and vile, today, since they have no other examples to follow. Learn the lessons of duty, devotion and discipline from the lips of these children; let each child be a ray of sunshine in the home, shedding light and love. Let the child's desire to serve other children and the defectives around be an inspiration to you. Children do not say one thing and do the opposite. They are very straight forward and innocent. Imbibe this nature now from them, for elders have strayed far from that ideal.

The signs are favourable. The fame of this country will not diminish; it will only grow, with the coming days; very soon, India will be free from fear, and will soon regain her old position as the preceptor for mankind.

Instead of saying a hundred things, it is better to do one thing properly. Sanctify your life by doing selfless work. For the person who talks a lot, there is no time for work. For the person who is engaged in work, there is no time for talk.

Instead of wasting time in your words, use your time in service to mankind which is service to God, all the while repeating the name of the Lord.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

8. The middle path

Date: 01 April 1975 / Location: New Delhi

THROUGH sadhana (spiritual discipline), continuous and consistent, man can control the vagaries of the mind, which by their variety and vanity cause disappointment and distress. "Sadhana can achieve what appears impossible," says a Telugu proverb. What is required is the awareness of the vicious game that the mind plays. It presents before the attention, one source after another of temporary pleasure; it does not allow any interval for you to weigh the pros and cons. When hunger for food is appeased, it holds before the eye the attraction of the film, it reminds the ear of the charm of music, and it makes the tongue water for the pleasant taste of something that it craves for. The wish becomes very soon the urge for action, the urge soon gathers strength and the yearning becomes uncontrollable. The burden of desires gradually becomes too heavy and man gets dispirited and sad. Train the mind to turn towards the intelligence for inspiration and guidance, not towards the senses for adventures and achievements. That will make it an instrument for reducing your vagaries and saving time and energy for more vital matters.

You are all 'living cells' in the Body of God

Desires when fulfilled breed further desires; when unfulfilled, they lead to further instalments of life on earth, in order to calm the urge. The only method by which the delusion of desire can be destroyed is to dedicate all activities to God and engage in them in a spirit of worship; leaving the consequences to Him and ceasing to attach yourselves to them, Look upon everyone as the embodiment of the Divine and worship each, as such, by offering love, understanding, and service. Only the blind will be indifferent to the dismal condition of others; only the deaf will be unaffected by the sobs of others. In fact, there are no 'others!' You are all, 'living cells' in the body of God, each performing its individual function to promote His Will. The joy one gets while promoting another's joy is incomparable. Your heart must melt in compassion when the eye sees another person suffering. That is the sign of

the Sathwik (pure or noble) individual; the Thamasik (Ignorant) individual will be Indifferent, he is too dull, too bovine, to be affected. The Rajasik (passionate) man will rush to punish the person who caused the suffering and might even forget to relieve the misery of the person affected! Callousness is the root cause of all the cruelty that defaces the Divine Nature of Man, in all the lands on the earth.

There are thousands of Bhajana Mandalis (groups for devotional singing), under the auspices of the Sathya Sai Seva Samithis active all over the world. They hold Bhajana Sessions for about an hour, once or twice a week, and disperse thereafter. They sing the glory of God, under various Names and in various forms, and are elated by that experience.

Avoid excess in all places

The purpose of this type of loud, congregational prayers is different from the silent individual prayers. It is a joint, concerted and mutually helpful effort of Sadhana to overcome the six internal foes of man-Lust, Anger, Greed, Attachment, Conceit and Hatred. These nocturnal birds infest the tree of life and foul the heart where they build their nests. When we sing aloud the Glory of God, the heart is illumined and they cannot bear the light. Besides, the voice that rises from many throats frightens them and they fly away. It is advisable to all to allow the Middle Path. "Athi Sarvathra Varjayeth" is an ancient axiom; it means, "Avoid excess, in all places." You must respect the limits set by the experience of ages in the sacred texts. They act like embankments that curb the flood waters; they direct the raging passions towards harmless channels and save you from ruin. Of course, man has elementary needs- Physical, Mental and Intellectual, these have to be fulfilled in some measure. But, there is no need to encumber oneself with unwanted food, superfluous furniture and multi-roomed mansions. Luxury enervates and enslaves. Leaders of people have to set an example in this respect, for men usually try to imitate and emulate. Example is more effective than precept. An ounce of practice is worth more than a ton of preaching. That is why I declare "My life is My message." You must transform your lives into examples of the ideal you preach. Parents must set good examples for children;

teachers must set good examples for students; leaders must set good examples for those whom they expect to follow them. Preaching austerity and practicing luxury will only reveal one's hollowness.

Choose God as your leader and guide

Parents talk of honesty but they utter lies in the presence of children and even encourage them to speak falsehood. The father, while at home, asks the child to tell the unwelcome visitor that he is not at home! The child is thus taught his first lesson in prevarication, by the father himself. There is no use blaming him if he grows into a social menace. Really speaking, the best way to gain happiness is to choose God as the leader and guide. Then, He will guide and guard, from the heart itself. Emperor Shivaji once sent some persons from the Court to Samartha Ramdhas, his preceptor, with a large quantity of provisions - grains, clothes, sweets and vessels. He asked them, "For whom have you brought these and why?" They replied, "For you. You have no one who can provide for you, and so, Shivaji Maharaj has sent all this." Ramdhas laughed and said, "I have Providence itself to provide for me; God alone has no one to provide for Him. Ask Shivaji to send these things to God!" Now, there is a wave of anxiety spreading over the world as a result of rising prices, and attempts are being made frantically to bring down the level. The fundamental cause for the rise in prices is the decline in the price of man. Man must realise his pricelessness; he should not regard himself as a cheap nut or bolt, that has no higher purpose in life. He should know that he is the imperishable unconquerable, Atma (Soul) and the body is only a vehicle for the Atma.

Love based on the innate Divinity is absent

Everyone should respect all others as one's own kin, having the same Divine spark, and the same Divine Nature. Then, there will be effective production, economic consumption and equitable distribution, resulting in peace and promotion of love. Now, love based on the Innate Divinity is absent and so, there is exploitation, deceit, greed and cruelty. If man becomes aware of all men being 'cells' in the Divine body, then, there will be no more 'devaluation'

of man. Man is a diamond; but, he is now treated by other men and by himself as a piece of glass! Man can realise his mission on the earth only when he knows himself as Divine and when he reveres all others as Divine. And, man has to worship God in the form of Man. God appears before him as blind beggar, an idiot, a leper, a child, a decrepit old man, a criminal or a madman. You must see even behind those veils, the divine embodiment of love, power and wisdom, the Sai, and worship Him through seva (selfless service). God cannot be identified with one Name and one Form. He is all Names and all Forms. All Names are His; all forms are His. Your Names too are His, you are His Forms. You appear as separate individual bodies because the eye that sees them seeks only bodies, the outer encasement. When you clarify and sanctify your vision and look at them through the Athmic eye, the eye that penetrates behind the physical (with all its attributes and appurtenances), then, you will see others as waves on the ocean of the Absolute, as the "thousand heads, the thousand eyes, thousand feet" of the Virat Purusha (Supreme Sovereign Person) sung in the Rigveda. Strive to win that Vision and to saturate yourself with that Bliss.

You come to Puttaparthi, secure a picture, and taking it home, begin worshipping it every day or every Thursday; but, all that is simply sathkarma - good activity. They won't take you far. You must also develop sath-guna - virtues, good habits, good attitudes, good characteristics, a good character. Otherwise your life is a chain of pluses and minuses, one cancelling the other out, totalling up to a mere zero.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

9. Himaachal

Date: 04 April 1975 / Location: Simla

PEOPLE of Himachal Pradesh! Lord Shiva resides on the Himalayas, as the Puranas (mythological legends) declare. The inner meaning of this declaration is- Lord Shiva lives in hearts that are as pure, as white and as cool as the snow (Hima) and also as steady and unmoved (achal) as these mountains. Your surroundings, therefore, are teaching you a lesson whenever you turn towards them. They exhort you to be pure, unblemished, comforting to the distressed and unmoved by either luck or misfortune. You must have won nativity in this region, as a result of the merit earned in many previous lives. Man has to become aware of his genuine nature and be established in that. Or else, he ceases to be entitled to that name. When fire does not burn or when water does not flow, can they lay claim to those names? Genuineness consists in being true to the deepest core. Man has Truth as his nature. That is to say, you can rely on man's behaviour being always true; he will speak out only what he feels to be sincere; he will act according to his words; his thought, word and action will be consistent and complementary. If in any one case, this concordance is absent, then, the person is a man only in outer form. He is worse than a beast, for, beasts are free from the burdens of thought and speech.

The intelligence has to be kept sharp and clear

All things in Creation are subject to the law of change and man too is subject to his law. But, man should use the law for progress, and not for sliding lower in the scale. Dharma (righteousness) is the norm, which he must adhere to, so that he changes from good to better and from better to the best. Dharma is that which is 'worn;' man must wear the apparel of Dharma so that he is saved from the cold winds of ego. Man has been endowed with buddhi (Intellect), so that he might at every turn decide what is beneficent for observance and what is detrimental. Gandhi while going through hate-ridden regions, prayed, "Sabko san-mathi dhe Bhagavan!" (O Lord! Give everyone good mind!). The Intellect has to be kept sharp, clear and straight. There are

four directions in which the intellect guides man: (1) Swartha-sukha-buddhi. This indicates the fully egoistic nature, where the Individual does not care for even his wife and children, but, is eager to fulfill his own needs first and foremost. Then, we have (2), the Swartha-parartha-sukha-buddhi, this allows some consideration for the happiness of others also. Birds feed their young and undergo great exertion to bring them up. The next variety is (3) Parartha-buddhi. Those who have this, seek for others as much happiness as they seek for themselves. They are prepared to undergo any trouble to secure for others too what they feel will grant them happiness. The next is (4) Adhyathmic-buddhi (spiritual intellect). This leads man ever on the path of renunciation and service, for, they alone lead to Spiritual advancement.

Develop the vision to see the One behind the many

India was for long centuries the guide and Guru (preceptor) of mankind, because people' cultivated this type of spiritual intelligence. Today it .has yielded place to falsehood, hypocrisy, injustice, and greed. The Adhyathmic intellect recognises the Unity of creation and so, what the other person feels is felt by the individual too, to the same degree. This vast gathering of people will appear to the Adhyathmic Intellect as a garland of multi-coloured flowers strung on the one single thread, God. Develop this vision; see the One behind the many; see the Brahmasuuthra - the string that runs through each flower. When you win the Love of God, His compassion will flow unto you. Love gives and forgives. Ego gets and forgets. When your son steals some money from the house, you do not hand him over to the police; but, when your servant steals a spoon, you have no such qualms. For, you have no love for the servant.

Live without hating others, condemning others, and seeking faults in others. Vyasa, who wrote eighteen voluminous Puranas summarised all the Puranas in one single line of a small couplet: "Doing good to others is the only meritorious act; doing evil is the most heinous sin." When you feel you cannot do good, at least desist from doing evil. That itself is meritorious service! Do not try to discover differences; discover unity. Creeds, castes, country of origin may differ but the inner hunger is the same for all men. Understand

that the purpose of life is to know the Embodiment of love, namely, God, through love, and demonstrate through your own Love that you have known Him.

The limbs of the body have to work In unison for the common purpose of sustaining the body and keeping it fit for its prime mission. If one limb quarrels with another or refuses to cooperate or help, the entire body, Including the refractory limb, will suffer. When you see a thorn on the road the feet move away; the eyes saw and immediately, sympathetic vibrations warned the feet. The love and cooperation between eye and feet come from the Atma (divine spirit) within and the love which is its very nature, just as your body is kept safe and secure by love, may the country also be kept safe and secure; for, It has a great mission to fulfill, as the guide and Gum of mankind.

If it is good and will harm no one, go ahead. If it is not good, put it aside. If not sure, do nothing until sure.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

10. Thirty-five and sixty-five

Date: 10 April 1975 / Location: Jaipur

THE future of India lies in your hands. You are fully aware of the characteristics of this Kali Yuga (age of conflict) we are passing through. You find around you injustice, irregularities, immorality and untruth with all their devilish attributes and atrocities. But we have to march ahead in spite of all these with a quiet, tolerant and benign attitude towards life. Almost all the fields and walks of life are polluted with these poisonous feelings, but the field of education being the most prominent organ, needs our special attention. We should first enquire and try to find out why the parent or pupils or their teachers are taking active part in these anti-academic activities. The main reason for this disorder is that the human mind is haunted and dominated by two devilish blemishes, viz., selfishness and ambition. These forces are standing in the way of human beings in realising the human values which go to make up humanity. It is not becoming of a man to exchange his valuable life - as precious as gem - for worldly desires and ambitions which are as worthless as a coalstone. Man becomes Immortal neither by deeds, nor by progeny nor by wealth. What makes him eternal is the spirit of sacrifice. So we should try to make our lives meaningful by sacrificing personal comfort for the sake of our fellow beings.

The student today is a seeker of worldly pleasures

Today when we find our educational trends going astray and causing anxiety to parents and society, we need to reiterate our old values, according to which an education based on our cultural heritage can alone lead one to real education - Atma Vidhya - the state of selfrealisation. Every Indian will have to recognise the culture based on Vedhic philosophy. You will know how restless and agitated the youth of India is today trying to rob every thing with all pride and no achievement and thus getting involved in meaningless pursuits. The student of today is not able to realise what he should primarily be concerned with. It is only in name that he is a Vidhyarthi - a seeker of knowledge. In practice, he is only a vishayarthi - a seeker of worldly

pleasures. It is the duty of every human being to understand and respect his parents. Similarly, in a nation it is the duty of every national to assimilate and appreciate the historical and cultural background of his nation and consider these two factors as his father and mother. In fact, one who is ignorant of the historical and cultural heritage of his country is like a stupid person who has no knowledge of his parents. We have therefore to make manifold progress in the Field of education today to keep pace with the general advancement that is taking place. But we are ignorant of our great classics and scriptures like Ramayana, Mahabharatha and Bhagavath Geetha.

The end of education is character

Once a District Educational Officer was inspecting a school. He asked the teacher to find out from one of his pupils as to who wrote Ramayana. The pupil innocently replied, "Sir, I never wrote it; perhaps you might have written it." Then the teacher found himself in a miserable plight and turned to the Inspecting Officer to assure that he has not done so and tried to enquire if the officer had by any chance written the work. The District Educational Officer referred the matter, to be safe, to the Vice-Chancellor, who finally observed that some Brahmin must have done it and advised the officer concerned to close the issue. This means that the state of affairs in our educational field today is so pitiable that our students, teachers, inspecting officers and Vice-Chancellors are all sailing in the same boat. Nobody knows about the author of a work-like Ramayana. In these circumstances we are not justified in calling ourselves educated. We are wasting our precious time on imitation. The end of education is character and the end of knowledge is love.

Education does not mean mere knowledge of books and acquaintance with them. If we concentrate on book knowledge at the cost of practical application, we will be spoiling the name of education itself. In olden times, only those who secured hundred per cent marks were allowed to pass a test, but now, thirty-five out of hundred will enable a person to get through an examination. That means, a student is allowed to commit 65 mistakes out of hundred. If a student is allowed to make 65 per cent mistakes when he has full time and energy at his disposal there is no reason why a grown up not be

given the margin of committing 100 per cent mistakes. It is therefore the duty of each and every student to attain hundred per cent perfection in his knowledge. If he cannot do this as a student in spite of his advantages of age and energy, he will not be able to do Justice to his work when he takes up a job and assumes false notions of prestige and dignity.

Charity makes man happy in both the worlds

Moreover, education should lead one to humility, which in turn equips him with all the eligibility. Eligibility provides him with necessary material wealth, which again enables him to do some charitable deeds. Charity makes him happy both in this world and the other one higher than this.

Today we think of our rights and responsibilities. On one side we have the Individual freedom and fundamental rights, and on the other we have our responsibilities and duties to be performed. We are no doubt anxious about our individual freedom in the same proportion. We should do full Justice to our social obligations and establish the reputation of our country and Its culture. The colleges today are not paying adequate attention to this cultural aspect. It therefore became necessary for us to establish Sathya Sai Colleges with special objectives pointing to this end even though there are thousands and millions of colleges all over the world. A Sathya Sai College is not Intended to prepare graduates who carry their degrees like begging bowls going from door to door begging for a job. These colleges are being established to promote a sense of self-reliance and a spirit of service to society and humanity at large. Man cannot live In isolation like a drop of oil on water surface. He is a product of society. He has to live In it, grow with it and work for it. Human birth is supposed to be a rare one, not easily granted to the animal world.

Everyone should have the feeling of 'one nation'

We who are crossing the ocean of Samsara (the chain of birth and death) need to cultivate the art of swimming through Bhagavath chinthana (contemplation on God). However, learned we may be, if we do not have this

training and cultivation, we are bound to sink. Life is a boat which enables us to cross the ocean of Samsara with the aid of meditation on God. A country needs an ideal as a human body requires recouplement. Body is an assembly of various organs. No single organ can constitute a body. When the various organs get separated, the human body gets weakened and even loses its existence. Similarly, if a nation is split up into different parts, It gets disintegrated. There may be different states in a nation but there should be feeling of 'one nation' throughout the country. We should develop a habit of visualising unity in diversity and not diversity in the unity that is divine. God is everywhere and in everyone. The whole universe is inhabited by Him. One should find God in every object. These are the Ideals we find In our scriptures.

There are bulbs of different colours and their voltage also differs. But whatever the colour and whatever the voltage, current that flows is the same. This kind of thinking is highly essential today. In our culture, we respect our father and mother as God. It is only when we respect our parents, that we can expect our children, in turn, to respect us. There is reaction, resound and reflection, for everything in the world.

We assign a special place to women in India

The young girls who study in this College today will become mothers tomorrow. It is therefore necessary that they should equip themselves with all the culture, learning and wisdom that they need in their future lives. In India, we assign a special place to women. It is therefore all the more important that the girls who are studying here should train themselves in such a way that they can live up to the Ideals and aspirations of an Indian woman. We consider women as Grihalakshmi, Dharmapathni, and so on. A woman has to maintain her house. She is not only the house wife, but on her depends the glory or otherwise of the whole country. That is why we say this is our motherland. It is in this spirit that we refer to our country as Bharathamatha (Motherland). We also find that women are given the first position when they are associated with their counterparts as Seetha-Rama, Lakshmi-Narayana, Radha- Krishna and Parvathi-Parameshwara. It is only to establish this prominence given to women in our country and to train our young girls on

these lines that we took up the task of opening such colleges.

I expect the young girls studying in this college to cultivate such good qualities which will bring name and fame to the native homes and also to those where they proceed after marriage. The bad habits and vulgar behaviour that we find in most of the young girls today should not find a place in the girls of this College. The girls of a Sathya Sai College should maintain the ideals of the institutions and keep the prestige of their homes, their society and their culture. It is only then that the purpose of establishing this college can be served.

Rig Veda teaches the lesson of serenity. Peace is like rose water scent; when it is sprinkled on you, smell it but don't drink it - that is to say, accept it and thrive on it.

Blame is like a medicine. Examine yourselves whether you have the illness and if you have, accept the blame and benefit by it.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

11. Raamaayana for everyman

Date: 20 April 1975 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Rama Navami

THE Ramayana is a guide book, a sacred text, an inspiring scripture, for everyman in all lands, at all times, whatever his creed or condition might be. For, it imparts poise, balance, equanimity, inner strength and peace. Peace is the best treasure, without which power, authority, fame, fortune are all dry and burdensome. Thyagaraja has sung that there can be no happiness, without inner peace.

To earn this peace and to be unshakably established in it, man must develop Abhyasa (steady practice) and Vairagyam (full detachment). From birth to death, man is the slave of habits and practices. One must examine these and rely more and more on those that lead him towards subjective joy rather than objective pleasure. Subjective joy can be acquired by harmony in the home, mutual co-operation among the members of the family and community, acts of service to others and concern for the welfare and prosperity of the society in which one is living. The Ramayana holds up the ideals to be pursued by the father, the son, the mother, the brother, the friend, the servant, the master, the teacher, the pupil, etc. The happy home is the basic cell of the national organism. It ensures a happy world, for mankind is one family, and if any one unit is sad or struggling in distress, how can, the rest be safe or satisfied?

There is no object without fault or failing

Vairagyam (detachment) does not imply renunciation of family ties and fleeing into the loneliness of the jungle. It means our giving up the feeling that things are permanent, and capable of yielding supreme joy. The mind plays tricks with man and believes that some things are good and some bad, some eternal and some transitory. You might have a plateful of nice eatables before you and they might appear to be delicious and fine; but, if the cook announces that a lizard had fallen into cooker when it was on fire and has been boiled alive, all the fascination for the' food disappears in a trice! There is no object without fault .or failing; there is no joy that is unmixed with pain;

there is no act that is not tainted with egotism. So be warned and develop the detachment which will save you from grief. The Ramayana instils this wise, valid, valuable detachment, or thyaga (sacrifice). Rama gladly journeys into the forest as an exile, the moment he knows that his father's wish was that he should do so; and, remember, he was to be crowned Emperor just that moment by the very same person who ordered him to go into exile. When those who have full powers and claims, renounce positions of authority in the Ramayana, we see today persons with no powers or claims, clamouring to occupy position of authority!

The lesson Ramayana teaches about Duty

Duty is God, that is the lesson the Ramayana teaches. The word duty is today used to indicate the methods by which one exercises his authority. No. Duty is the responsibility you have to respect and revere others and to serve them to the best of your ability. You claim to have the freedom to walk, waving your walking stick around you; but, the man coming behind has as much freedom to use the road as you have. To exercise your freedom so that you do not limit or harm the freedom of others - that is the Duty, which becomes Worship. When Rama, Seetha and Lakshmana reached the banks of the Ganga, Sumanthra, the aged Minister of the Court who had taken them so far in the Royal Chariot, could not follow them; he had in duty bound to return to the Capital. So, he turned back with tearful eyes; Guha rowed them across the river, they entered the forest and started walking in single file through the thick jungle - Rama, Seetha in the middle and Lakshmana following behind. They reached the hermitage of Valmeeki soon; when the Sage came forward to welcome them, Rama asked him to indicate a place where he can reside. Valmeeki said, "We sages reside in You; you reside in us. Where else can I request you to reside? Though you have assumed this human form, "You give yourself away by the Beauty that shines in You."

Man is doomed when evanescent overcomes him

The Beauty of Rama was the Beauty of Inner Peace, the Splendour that fills one when he is conscious of living in Dharma (righteousness). Ramayana

teaches also the need to give up the false identification with the body. When Rama saw Thara wailing over the corpse of Vali, he gives her lessons on the evanescence of the body and the foolishness of identifying a person with that vehicle he uses for the purpose of his journey to Divinity. When desire for the evanescent overcomes man, he is doomed; he becomes distant from the goal. Consider Seetha. She renounced everything that she thought would give her comfort in the palaces of her father and father-in-law and preferred to follow Rama into the forest. So, she secured the Proximity and Presence of the Lord. But, alas, when she saw the false form of the Golden Deer, she yearned for it, and sent both Rama and Lakshmana after it, so that she might fondle it and feed it and have it as a pet. What was the result of this fatal desire? She was forced to live far away from the Lord and to pine for Him in great anguish. When Rama is installed in the heart, everything will be added unto you - fame, fortune, freedom, fullness. Hanuman was a mere monkey leader until he met Rama; he was a minister in the court of his master; but, when Rama gave him the commission to seek Seetha and sent him, that is to say, when Rama was installed in his heart as guide and guardian, Hanuman became immortal, as the Ideal Devotee. The Ramayana has a deep undercurrent of significant meaning. Dhasharatha means, he who rides in a chariot of ten, that is to say MAN. He is tied up with three Gunas (qualities), or three wives, as in the Ramayana. He has four sons, the Purusharthas - Dharma (Rama) Artha (Lakshmana), Kama (Bharatha), and moksha (Sathrughna). These four aims of man have to be systematically realised, always with the last one, Moksha, clearly before the eye. Lakshmana represents the Buddhi (Intellect) and Seetha is Truth. Hanuman is the Mind, and it is the repository, if controlled and trained, of courage. Sugreeva, the master of Hanuman is Discrimination. With these to help him Rama seeks Truth and succeeds. That is the lesson of the Epic to everyman.

Ideals underlying the ancient culture of India

The culture of this land is based on the high ideals of Righteousness enshrined in the Ramayana and the Mahabharatha, in both of which God has led mankind in the garb of man. There is a story of Alexander the Great, which illustrates the glory of Indian Culture. It seems Alexander used to go

incognito to the villages around his camp, in India, in order to learn the habits and manners of the strange new land into which fate had brought him. One day, he found a man pleading with another to accept a pot of gold, which the other was refusing even to look at! He came to know that the pot of gold was discovered under the soil of the field purchased by the man from the man who refused to accept it. The buyer argued that he had bought only the land and was therefore not entitled to own the pot of gold; the seller said, he had no more right for anything found on or in the plot, that he had sold. Alexander watched this contest for some time; both did not yield. At last, the village elders were called in to decide the issue. And, even as Alexander watched, the elders found a happy way out the buyer's son shall marry the seller's daughter and the pot of the gold shall be given to the bride as dowry! Alexander felt elated at the heights to which human virtue could rise; he was also ashamed at his own adventurous ambition to conquer another's property by force of arms. The ideals underlying the ancient culture of India have to be studied and practised by every Indian at least, so that the world might have the benefit of the great examples this can provide.

Turn your sight inside, to purify and clarify

This day, when you are celebrating the birth of Rama, you have to dedicate your activities to these ideals propounded in the life of Rama. The fact that you are alive this day is a blessing, for, you can know of these ideals and also the means by which you can realise them in actual daily life. There are many who spend much time in mechanically reciting the name Rama or systematically reading the entire Ramayana according to a fixed time-table, or who worship the images of Rama, Seetha, Lakshmana, and Hanuman, as a daily ritual, with pomp and pedantry; but, like the person who puts a foot forward only to draw it back again these persons do not progress at all, though years might elapse. Without gaining purity of thoughts and intentions, compassion and the urge to serve, these outward expressions and exhibitions are but ways of cheating the society which applauds you as a great devotee. Your sight must become insight; it must be turned within and used to purify and clarify. People talk glibly of Sakshatkara (Vision of the Divine), the vision that liberates. The Seer and the Seen have to merge and become One and

experienced as One only, without a second. That is the Sakshathkara that is worthwhile. You may have a fruit. You may earn the fruit of thapas (penance) in your hand. But, unless you eat it, digest it, and make it part of your own nature and derive strength therefrom, you are not saved at all. Merge into the Divine which you really are; that is the consummation. In order to reach this goal, you have to proceed far. First examine your present equipment; find out its defects, for example, whether it is damaged by egotism, greed, insincerity, waywardness and sloth. For, with these faults, it is difficult to concentrate on thoughts of God, either within or without. You must also cultivate the positive quality of Prema (Love) for the Embodiment of Prema can be realised only through Prema. That is the message the Ramayana gives all those who study it with sincere desire to learn. That is the message I wish to give you today.

12. Why I love villages most

Date: 28 April 1975 / Location: Panathur Village

THE Sun is not the only gift that has dawned on this village this day; Anandha (divine bliss) too has dawned. For, I have come to make you aware of the Anandha you are. Anandha is the home from which you have strayed away! It is your place of Nativity. You seek your home elsewhere and so, you are afflicted by distress and disappointment. Know that Anandha is your Nature, your sustenance, and your goal. Villages are the places where this knowledge comes easier to man, and takes deeper roots. That is the reason I love villages most. For, the virtues of detachment, uprightness, honesty, and sincerity which are essential prerequisites for acquiring this awareness are surviving, in however attenuated a form, only in villages this day. They have disappeared from towns long ago. Of course, you have your troubles and handicaps; but, certainly, you have less obstacles to overcome, when you decide to lead the good life and attain the awareness of your Divinity.

Man's body is essentially the receptacle of God

Why is man-afflicted today with fear and anxiety? Are we to search for the reasons outside us or do they lie with us? The reason lies in the false emphasis we have laid on things of the material world, ignoring things of the spirit. The body that man bears is essentially the receptacle of God. It is a temple, where God is installed and where God is the Master. It does not deserve all the attention you now pay to fulfil its urges, needs and whims. It is equipped with very valuable instruments which can help you in the journey; but you seldom use them! The senses bring you impressions from the outside world, but, you do not evaluate these impressions by the touchstone of a clear reason or a balanced mind. You do not proceed from one step to another in the march towards the elimination of the ego and the emergence in to the One. City-dwellers are buffeted by storms of passion and emotion, and they are hunted or haunted by phantom desires and wild imaginings. They have neither the inclination nor the insight to dedicate their time, their skills and their activity to Divine ends. The Divine is the core, the essence of

your being. God is everywhere; when He is recognised and adored as the Indweller of your body, it becomes a Temple, and it is no more a burden. God is shining, announcing Himself through you; He is expressing Himself through every thought, word and deed that emanates from you.

Go deeper within, where the treasure is stored

In the temple that is built and put together, we have an idol that is sculpted and moulded by man. But, in this temple that is gifted by God, God shines in His own Light, and manifests in His own Glory as Love, Power and Wisdom. He shines and manifests thus not only in a single body, but, in all bodies. He is the Indweller in each; so, when you insult, injure or inflict infamy on another, remember you are inviting the pain to visit your own self, for, the other is none other than your own self.

Seek the gem of Divine Knowledge within you, just as precious stones have to be sought in the bowels of the earth. Now, what you seek is trivial trash. Go deeper, where the treasure is stored. I know you have, in this village, as in most villages, a big chariot festival, when the replica of the 'Installed Idol' the processional Form, is taken round the entire village with great pomp and paraphernalia. The wheeled chariot or the palanquin is decorated with reverent attention; bands of musicians and dancers are engaged to precede the chariot; many come to the festival to admire the decoration of the chariot; more are interested in the songs and dances, the songsters and the dancers; only a handful are drawn by the idol which is the central figure of all the gaiety and adoration.

The human body too is a temple chariot; the Atma (divinity) is installed therein; and it is dragged by emotions, impulses, passions and urges along the streets of desire. Success and failure, joy and grief, gain and loss, are the dancers who accompany this procession of Life. Here, too, many pour their attention only on the chariot, its height, its decoration and its progress. Many others are concerned with the dance of dualities, the pain-pleasure duet, that is part of the procession. Few pay attention to the Atma, the Crown and Consummation of human existence.

Develop the habit of listening to the Inner Voice

But, sages and saints have known that the most noteworthy achievement of the senses of man is the glorification of the God within. "They are not eyes, they are but globules of glass, that do not earn a vision of God," says one. "They are not ears, they are but muscular protrusions that do not relish the praise of God," says another. Suurdhas condemns the hand that does not worship God and calls such hands, sucks of wood. The world and its attractions may appeal to your instincts and impulse but, God draws out your Love, as no worldly thing can. Develop the inner Vision, the habit of listening to the inner Voice, and you are assured of unshakeable peace and infinite joy.

In the village, you are ever in contact with God, His Grace, His tenderness and His Love. In the cities, life is more superficial. You may not have the benefit of the radio or the electric current; but, you can hear the birds sing at Sunrise and you can bask in the bright Sun underneath the pure blue sky. When you get the twin gifts of medical care and schooling facilities, you need nothing more for marching onwards to happiness and peace. But, I find that in several villages, the behaviour of some one person or some one family disrupts life and breeds fear, faction and fighting. This can be cured only by the potent drug called Love. The forces of brotherhood, mutual help and sympathetic understanding have to overpower the sinister influence of these individuals and promote unity and strength.

Heart and spirit of man have to be fed and fostered

Many leaders of this country are promising to provide a quantity of food, some kind of dwelling, and a few yards of clothing to everyone so that people may be happy. They also promise to each sufficient schooling so that they may write and read letters, and grasp the news from the papers. But, these cannot ensure peace, for, man is not merely a bundle of bones and muscles; he is equipped with a heart and a spirit and these have also to be fed and fostered. Men may have superabundance of food, clothing and houses; but, their hearts may be dry and their spirits gloomy. Sense-control, self-

confidence, contentment, absence of hatred and greed - these are far more precious as possessions than land, money, or houses. The Seva Samithi that has been started in your village, with its subsidiary units of Mahila Vibhag, and Bala Vikas (all Sai Organisations) will sow the seeds of these disciplines and promote peace and happiness. Above all, cultivate unity and brotherhood. A single fibre of hemp cannot bind even an ant; thousands rolled into a rope can tame a wild elephant into quiet submission. In unity lies strength and prosperity. Unity in the villages can usher in a new era of joy and prosperity in the entire nation.

Make the temple of Vinayaka inaugurated today the hub of this new movement. The temple is to the village, as the heart is to the body. You have all joined to build it and bring it into being; continue to reap its benefits together and to share its light together. With the Grace of God, what seems impossible can be achieved quite easily. All are children of God; do not injure anyone, for, that injury will react on you quite soon. You reap as you sow; you cannot grow a fruit-tree when the seed you have planted is that of a weed.

Time spent on thoughts of God is rewarded

There are some ignorant persons who laugh at bhajans and other acts of worship and characterise them as waste of valuable time! These persons might laugh at your pouring bags of paddy seeds on slushy fields and condemn that act too as waste of valuable food material! But, you know that for every bag of seed, Mother Earth will give back, in a few weeks, grain tenfold or even twentyfold. Time spent in thoughts of God or adoration of the Divine is indeed well-spent, for, it rewards you with a rich harvest of mental peace and courage. When thieves attack the neighbour, you become alert and keep vigil; you feel that it may be your turn next. So you must see that thieves do not enter the village. For, then, all can be safe and secure. Your neighbour's loss is as much your own. Do not inflame your anger and blow it into a conflagration which may destroy the entire village. Be cool, calm yourself. Take a glass of cold water and lie down quiet for a while, till the fury loses its heat. Do not fly into a passion and throw vulgar abuse at the person you dislike, And be careful; do not indulge in behaviours and start imitating

them before your children; for, they will learn these behaviours and start imitating. You cannot easily correct them later.

Make all efforts to remove evil from your heart

Goodness is Godliness. Never talk ill of others; spend your time in showering love and in mutual help. Wake up early and sing the glory of God in group bhajan moving along the roads and cleansing the atmosphere, polluted by anger and hatred. Let the air you breathe be free from evil vibrations. When you mention the sky you point your finger upwards, to indicate that it is there. But the sky is here also. It is one of the five elements, the Panchabhuthas. Its sign and symbol is sound; wherever sound is, there, we can infer, is the sky. There is an inner sky also, the Akasha in the Heart. Just as the Sun and Moon in the outer sky are hidden by thick masses of cloud, the Sun (Intellect) and Moon (Mind) in the inner sky are also hidden and suppressed by thick clouds of vice and evil. So, make all efforts to remove these clouds, by the strong gale of Devotion to God.

When you cook any item of food, in a copper vessel, however fresh and fine the vegetables are, however clean the dhal (lentils) and salt, however free from grit and dirt the tamarind fruits, if the vessel has no lining of tin, the food made therein will turn into poisonous stuff. You all know this truth. The heart too is a copper vessel where you prepare various types of food for yourself and others. See that it has a good lining of Love; or else, it too will cause harm and pain, to you and the rest.

Conquer anger by means of fortitude

Love...Love...Love...First...Love, as long as Life lasts. For Myself, I can say, I shower more blessings on those who decry or defame Me than those who worship and adore Me! For, those who spread falsehoods about Me derive joy therefrom; I am happy that I am the cause for their exultation and joy. You too must accept this line of argument and be very happy when someone derives joy by defaming you. Do not respond by defaming that person; then, the chain of hatred will bind both and drag both down. Life will become a

tragedy. Conquer anger by means of fortitude; conquer hatred by love. Do not feed anger with retaliation; do not feed hatred with fury.

Forget and forgive all that has happened amongst you until this very moment; start a new chapter of Love and Brotherhood from now on. The Professors and the students of the Sri Sathya Sai College are ready and eager to come to your help, whenever you need it. Some young men from this village are students of this College; when they come home, you must remind them of the ideals of service and reverence that we are Instilling into them. The College is trying to help them not only to earn a University degree but also to become skilled and enthusiastic servants of the weak and the disabled, and efficient citizens of the nation. They should not behave like the half-educated haughty youth, who wander the streets with a transistor **on** their shoulders, pursuing the vanities of the world and running into debt and dissoluteness. They should preserve and develop their ancestral patrimony; (not only land and riches; also, heritage and culture); they should be assets to their parents, the society and the nation. They should not exploit the innocence and ignorance of the very parents who have sacrificed their everything in order to send in them to college and maintain them hostels. Send your sons to the College; there they can learn to escape these temptations and to be useful and efficient for the task of preserving Indian culture and spirituality. Encourage your sons to realise the meaning of My Mission and to become fit instruments for spreading, by the example of their lives, the Message which I have come to give mankind.

Illness is caused more by malnutrition of the mind than of the body. Doctors speak of vitamin deficiency; I will call it the deficiency of Vitamin G, and I will recommend the repetition of the Name of God, with accompanying contemplation of the glory and grace of God. That is the Vitamin G. That is the medicine. Regulated life and habits are two-thirds of the treatment, while the medicine is just one-third only.

- *Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

13. The basic error

Date: 11 May 1975 / Location: Mumbai

You may have cows of different breeds and bands, colours and continents, but the milk they give is everywhere the same in composition! You may get gold from different places and engage different goldsmiths to make for you different types of ornaments but the basic substance does not undergo any diminution in value. It remains gold for all time. Living beings belong to widely different species but, the Spark of Life, the Jeeva (individual being) in each is the same. God is the goal of every prayer, in whatever language or dialect it is spoken. You may see people kneeling or prostrating, with folded palms or arms extended, in church or mosque or temple but they are all asking for help, succour, strength, wisdom, security or happiness from the inexhaustible reservoir of happiness, wisdom and power, God. But, people in their pettiness, do not recognise this basic truth, they pride themselves on their holiness and disparage the others, as having gone astray! They do not have mental peace themselves, nor do they allow others to live in peace. Such is the stupidity of the fanatics.

It is good and helpful to have an enemy

Ignoring the unity of all mankind in the Atma (divine soul), man relishes in quarrels and factions. He classifies some among his contemporaries as his friends and some as his foes. He manufactures duality where basically there is only unity. It is his own likes and dislikes, prejudices and passions that is reflected back, that creates all this reaction of love and hatred, all this resounding echo of factiousness and friction. Friendship and enmity arise from your heart; they are labels fixed by you, not marks which other people are born with. The same person is the thickest friend of one man and the mortal enemy of another - both because of his one act or one word!

Of course, it is best that you do not develop too much attachment with others and get entangled either through the silken bonds of friendship or the iron chain of hatred. But, if you ask Me, it is more beneficial to cultivate enemies.

Kabeer has stated many times that it is good and very helpful to have an enemy that is ever eager to criticise you for your faults than a friend who will cast a blind eye on them. The enemy takes delight in abusing you and it is said in the Puranas (mythological legends) that, as a consequence, he goes on diminishing and wiping off from your account the demerits you have to live out in misery. The faster and fouler his abuse, the sooner and better are your future prospects brightened. The enemy absorbs your sins and their effects. Moreover, since you are always aware of the enemy and his tactics, you are alert not to give him any chance to point his finger of scorn at you. He is your censor, corrector and conscience. Be thankful to him who talks ill of you, for surely, he is doing you very great service by examining your every act on the touchstone of morality, truth and righteousness.

Most people live superficial lives

But, the best path for Sadhak (spiritual aspirant) is to transcend all dualities and recognise the oneness of the Atma behind and beyond the diversities of Nature. Mistaking the One to be the Many is the basic error that has led man into pain and misery. He sees multiplicity, he engages himself in manifold activities, he is pulled in many directions, he is distracted and distressed. He has no time to meditate on the One Basic Truth. He is confused by the kaleidoscopic transformations. He is tossed between hate and love, attachment and repulsion. Only recently when I was touring the Delhi area I asked some persons who came to Me with the complaint that, since they did not attend 60% of the bhajans, the Committee meetings, etc., their names are threatened to be removed from membership. "Why could you not attend even that number of meetings?" You will be surprised at the reply they gave Me. "Swamiji! We have no time even to die!" That is the plight to which this fundamental ignorance of the One (that appears as Many) has driven people.

Man does not delve deep into the significance of all that happens around him. Siddhartha, who became the Buddha, had that urge to know and inquire. Most people live superficial lives. They are like logs of wood tossed up and down by the waves of the sea, insensitive, dull, Thamasik. Haste lands them in waste; waste increases worry. They have no time to sit and meditate on the reality of

their own existence, their own knowledge and their own joy. If that is done, they can contact the source of all existence, all knowledge and all bliss. They don't take even the first step towards their self-inquiry. How then can they derive self-satisfaction, at their vastness, indestructibility, infinite power and wisdom?

Duty must be done with skill, sincerity and love

You have it in your power to make your days on earth a path of flowers, instead of a path of thorns. Recognise the Sai resident in every heart and all will be smoothness, softness and sweetness for you. Sai will be the fountain of Love in your heart and in the hearts of all with whom you come in contact. Know that Sai is Omnipresent and so, He is present in every living thing and you. Adore everyone as you adore Sai. Allow the other man as 'much freedom as you like to enjoy; do unto him just as you would like to be done to you. Don't do unto him anything you don't like to be done unto you. That is the sum and substance of Sadhana (spiritual effort). One individual goes along the road swinging his walking stick merrily. He is quite happy with himself and his conditions. He has every right to do so. But, he has to remember that others are also walking along the road and have every right to do so. So, his stick should be so swung that no harm or injury is inflicted on other rightful users of the road. Your freedom is restricted by the freedoms you have to grant to other members of the Society in which you live and thrive. As a matter of fact, if there was no other person, you have no duties at all. Duty arises when you have another person to deal with. You have a duty so far as the other person is concerned and he has the responsibility to see that he deserves that duty which you feel bound to fulfil towards him. Duty must be deserved by the other; it must be done with skill and sincerity and love. This is easy if you feel that your duty is part of your worship, that you are offering it to the Sai in the other person. Your duty is to your own self, the Sai that is your real core.

Be aware of both your duties and responsibilities

You will be false to Sai if you delay doing it, or do it clumsily or half-heartedly.

Your station in life, your position of authority, your account, your kinship with others, your status as father or son, husband or wife, master or servant, teacher or pupil, each has its own Swadharma (individual morality and duty) - both of duties and responsibilities. Abide by them; be aware of them always. Bharatheeya Culture has emphasised this in every scripture and every epic. Begin your Sadhana by offering the joy of the Jeeva (individual being) to the Dheva (divine being)! Of course, Dheva does not need the offering of joy made by the Jeeva. The waters of the lake do not need fish swimming in it; its joy is not lessened by their absence. But the fish need the waters. Do not be led to believe that God will be feeling a void, if there are no devotees or worshippers! The person with devotion in the heart, with the thirst for Truth in his brain, with the yearning for surrender in his mind, will certainly feel lost if there is no God whom he can approach and adore.

Be eager to do your duty as best as you can

Faith in God is to be translated into action. It is an imperative act of worship to discharge faithfully all one's duties and responsibilities. It will be dangerous if the right work is not done by the right person at the right time. You must be eager to do your duty as best as you can. Maintain your own self-respect, by this attitude and by this sense of obligation. You must also be vigilant about the honour and reputation of your family and fore-fathers. There was a washerman in a village, who belonged to the family that washed the clothes of its residents, since generations. It was his hereditary profession. Every one, high and low, rich and poor, gave their clothes to him for cleaning and ironing. He had two donkeys to bring the soiled clothes from the house to the river and to carry the burden of the washed clothes from the river to the streets and the houses of his customers. He had also a dog to watch over the washed clothes hung for drying in the open spaces by the side of the river. One day, the washerman had to wash a big lot of silken sarees and dhotis because of a marriage in the house of the richest man of the village and he had kept them all nicely washed and ironed, in one of the rooms in the hut. It was night. The dog and the donkeys were in the backyard, of the house, dozing off. The washerman had, in his anxiety to get all the clothes washed, had forgotten to feed the dog that evening and the poor animal was both

hungry and angry. So, when a thief stole past him in the darkness and began breaking into the hut to steal the silken clothes, he kept mum.

The donkeys noted this and were upset because their master was being robbed right before their eyes. So, they raised a hue and cry, braying their loudest. The washerman was awakened by the noise; he came out of the house, red in the face, because the donkeys had disturbed his sleep. He took up a cudgel and beat up the donkeys mercilessly! They suffered because they took upon themselves a duty that did not rightfully belong to them. It was not their Swadharma. Humility, Forbearance, Sincerity - these are the primary virtues of a genuine son or daughter of Bharath. Your duty is to cultivate these and make the City of Bombay, which is the stomach of Bharath, healthy and clean. Then only can Bharath be happy. That is why the Dharma kshethra (Mansion of Morality) and the Dharma Stupa (Monument of Morality) have both been erected first in your City.

More than listening to a hundred lectures or delivering them to others, offering one act as genuine service attracts the Grace of God.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

14. Four F's

Date: 06 July 1975 / Location: Brindavan

THE process of education must render the individual a happier and more useful person; it must also make him a better citizen,; able and willing to further the progress of the nation to which he belongs. It must give up its present emphasis on the grant of degrees which are serving only as bowls, with which the graduates roam about the country asking for jobs to be deposited in them. Today, we hear a great deal about 'duty' and the responsibility to perform the duties concerning each group. This is all to the good. But, the connotation of the words is not properly understood. The student thinks that his 'duty' is only to be punctual when he attends college or school, and to be attentive during the lectures and other academic exercises. The teachers too consider their duty done, when they attend during prescribed hours and perform the assignments allotted to them.

This misconception has to be given up. Education has to be welcomed as a Sadhana (spiritual discipline) for the establishment of Shanthi (peace) in the individual heart as well as in Society, including the Human Commonwealth. Education is a spiritual endeavour, over which Goddess Saraswathi presides. Saraswathi is the Shakthi of Brahma, the First Member of the Trinity, who is the source and sustenance of all creative activity. Gayathri - the vital Vedhic mantra, which prays to the Source of Light, to illumine the Intellect of the aspirant - is also a facet of that Shakthi.

People have now ignored Saraswathi & Gayathri

The Gayathri mantra (Vedhic prayer to illuminate the intelligence) is a universal eternal call from the heart of man to the embodiment of Love and Light. It is the very basis of the educational effort in all lands and at all times. But, people have now ignored Saraswathi and Gayathri; they have installed, Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth, in the altar of Education. The emphasis is on soft furniture, soft curricula, soft tests, and soft treatment for the idle and even the mischievous. The aim is to draw as much as possible from the

common pool, not to contribute one's best and most of it. The teachers and the students try to do the minimum so far as teaching and learning are concerned.

This College is run on far contrary principles. Here, the emphasis is on giving and forgiving, not, on getting and forgetting those who gave what you got. We also encourage service, especially among the illiterate and the needy, in the villages around. We try to highlight the responsibilities of youth, rather than rights. The right is earned only by the proper discharge of the responsibilities. When duty is shirked, you have no right to ask for your rights.

In the observance of Swadharma lies progress

Remember that the years that you spend in this College are the most precious in your lives; if they are wasted in indifference or positive idleness, you will have to rue for it, all the rest of your lives. And, being in this College is the highest piece of good fortune and, if you do not rise up to our expectations through negligence or waywardness, the loss is Irreparable. You will learn here the valuable lessons of detachment, loving service, fraternity, humility, sincerity, fortitude and fearlessness. Treasure them, for, they will serve as reliable props when you enter the world of action. In College, you will be marching from smaller truths to bigger truths, until you are taught the know how to reach the Ultimate Truth. There is no false doctrine, as such. What is so called is only the result of ignorance. No falsehood is deliberate; it is only truth clothed in fog or fumble. You discard the foggy, vision and attain clear vision; and that reveals Truth. You give up fumbling knowledge and attain free, full, clear understanding. That is the purpose of all this teaching, all this curriculum. You are now at the initial stage of a long journey. You have to equip yourselves better for it. You must know where it leads. Beware of the distractions on the way that might tempt you to alight from the railway train and lose your goal. Be steady in the faith which will smoothen the journey for you. Have confidence in the teachers who will guide you, and in God who decides your destiny and confers strength and sustenance. Do not disturb your journey and delay it, by resorting to wild. upheavals of anger or discontent. Your Dharma (prescribed duty) as students is to study. It is the

Dharma of teachers to teach. In that Swadharma (performing one's duty that accords with one's nature) lies security, progress and peace. Every moment spent in these fallow pursuits is a moment lost, or a moment that inflicts even damage.

Today's students are the makers of tomorrow

Remember you are the makers, the leaders and the guides of the India of tomorrow. Your shoulders have to be stronger than those of the present generation of leaders, for, as the years roll by, the burden is becoming heavier. Your hearts must become more expansive, your intelligence must become sharper and clearer, for, you have great things to do, for your own selves and for humanity.

You must prove to be fine examples of the educational system that India has to adopt for her progress and for the progress of mankind. Therefore, imbibe the ideals of Duty, Devotion and Discipline during the years you spend here. Devotion must be tested in the crucible of Discipline. It must be directed along the lines of Duty. Dharmaraja, the eldest of the Pandavas, was the very embodiment of Devotion to the Lord Krishna. But, he had on both sides of him, Duty in the form of Arjuna and Discipline in the form of Bheema. So, he was able to defeat his enemies and crown himself Emperor.

Do not stuff your heads with the trivialities that fill the columns of periodicals, or absurd details of the personal lives of stars in any field. Don't get excited with external events; or, depressed with events that appear like failures. Keep your head high over the flood waters; do not be carried away like stalks of straw.

Every student must cultivate Devotion and Faith

I appreciate the student who is not merely academically efficient, but, is also, full of Bhakthi (devotion) and Prema (selfless love) towards all. The student who secured the First Rank in the University Examination is, I am glad to say, named Prema-nandha! When the results were announced and it became

known that he had secured this unique distinction, the students gathered around him and pressed to give them 'sweets.' I too asked him for sweets! Do you know what his reply was? He held my hands, and said, with a flash of joy in his eyes, "Baba! You are sweetness itself; how can I give you sweets?" Devotion and faith such as this must be cultivated by every student. Be as devoted and disciplined as Arjuna. Be as intelligent and strong as Bheema. Be steadfast and sincere, like Dharma-rajā. Then, no harm can come to you; you will achieve victory in all your efforts. There are four F's that you will have to fix before your attention. (1) Follow the Master, (2) Face the Devil, (3) Fight to the End and (4) Finish at the Goal. Follow the Master means, observe Dharma. Face the Devil means, overcome the temptations that beset you when you try to earn artha (wealth or the wherewithal to live in comfort). Fight to the End means, struggle ceaselessly; wage war against the six enemies that are led by kama (lust). And, finally, Finish at the Goal means, do not stop until the goal of Moksha (Liberation from ignorance and delusion) is reached. The F's are fundamental for the pursuit of the four Purusharthas - Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha.

I shall be ever with you, wherever you are, guarding you and guiding you. March on; have no fear.

You must become an Artha, torn by intense suffering to sense the Lord. Suffer the pangs of distress. You must realise that mere suffering is fruitless, without the knowledge of the path to attain the Lord. That is to say, you have to be transformed into a jijnasu, a spiritual Seeker.

Analyse the four Purusharthas (four goals of life) and realise that Moksha (Liberation) is the goal, the culmination. Start craving for that, as an Artharthi, the lover of the truest Gain. Seek that which, when secured, all else is secured.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba



15. The company you seek

Date: 07 July 1975 / Location: Brindavan

KAMAL Sahani, of the Second B.Com. Class of the College spoke now, using fine simple appropriate words, on the human body and the purpose for which it has been given to you. He said that the world is a stage and that the body is a costume that one has to wear in order to act the role that God has allotted to you in the play produced and directed by Him. This is a correct interpretation. But, when you are allotted a part, your duty is to do it well and earn the appreciation of the Director. The stage on which you play your role is an infinitesimal dot when compared with the vast unlimited Cosmic Space. The time when you strut about the stage in this costume or any other is also infinitesimal. Deepak of this College acted as Shankaracharya on the stage at the Shanmukh-anandha Hall, Bombay. But, his Deepakness was not lost thereby; even while he was Shankaracharya, he was Deepak. His Shankaracharya-hood was but a temporary phase. So too, the Atma (divine soul) is the eternal truth; the body which it dons is temporary and the role it induces is also short. Or, to illustrate this in another way - the time spent in dreams is infinitesimal, when compared with the time spent awake. The 'waking' stage is the representative of the stage of wisdom and illumination, of the Atma; the dream stage is the representative of the 'Ignorance-wisdom' hazy stage of human life.

God by very nature, attracts man near to Him

The question may legitimately be asked, why or how did this eternal Universal Athmic principle take up residence in this temporary, particularised Body box? Well. You do not keep diamonds in a diamond casket, do you? If you do, the robber would be doubly benefitted. You keep it in an iron box only. Of course, the iron box or safe will be artistic and charming, for, the container is chosen to suit the value or sanctity of the thing contained. To drink milk or some such beverage, you select a clean attractive tumbler or cup. But, for a spittoon, inferior metals or mud is felt ample.

The Body is a chalice, wherein you collect the nectar of Divine Grace. That is the prime purpose for which it has been gifted to you. For, without a cup or chalice, a casket or jug, how can the nectar be taken? Raso vai sah, say the Vedas: "He is sweet-nectar, no less." And When His Grace is showered, the body is thrilled. The body has to be kept ever clean and pure, unaffected by dirt, disease, distress, or defeatism. Nara and Narayana (man and God), are like iron and magnet. God by His very nature attracts man near, for in man, there is the Divine. When the magnet fails to attract the Iron piece, the Iron foolishly concludes that the magnet has lost its power! The real fact is the piece of iron is too thickly covered by rust and dust. It does not realise its own defects; it rushes to blame God (the magnet) or even to deny Him!

The company you join must be purer than you

The easiest and the most fruitful method of keeping yourself free from dust and rust, is the Sathsang (holy company). The company of the good and the godly will slowly and surely chasten and cleanse the persons prone to stray away from the straight path towards Self- Realisation. Care has to be taken to see that you select and stick to the proper company. A cup of water has no cash value; but, if it is poured into ten cups of milk, it acquires the value that people attach to milk! If on the other hand, one cup of milk is poured into ten cups of water, it loses the value it had and is condemned as useless. So, the Sathsang you join must be purer, more venerable, and sticking to higher ideals of virtue and truth than you yourselves. When a smoker joins a group of non-smokers, there is every likelihood of his giving up that bad habit; but, when a non-smoker falls into a den of smokers, he is certain to become a victim soon! Such is the subtle influence of the company one keeps. The company you join must be qualitatively and quantitatively greater and higher than the one in which you are now caught. There are precious gems of wisdom within your hearts, which require excavation, in order to be of any benefit to you. Intelligence is the Instrument you have to use, in order to gain them. At the very start, you will encounter a boulder barring your way - that is the body consciousness, the Ego. Desires are the loose rocks that have also to be dug out and kept aside. Then, you come to a bed of sand - good thoughts, good words, good deeds; when this stratum is reached, you are nearing

success. If you keep on in Sathsang, everyday, your hearts will maintain their purity unimpaired; but, if you seek one, only off and on, it will be difficult to win Grace or particles of it, for, the vessel will be tarnished and untidy. In your own households, you must have noticed that a vessel in dally use is bright and clean; but, vessels stored and used only now and then will have to be scrubbed with great vigour to become bright. You must take all the trouble and welcome all the patience needed, to seek Sathsang and remain therein. For, It is not being born a man that is the sign of the glory; It is living as a man that confers the dignity.

The secret of perfect health lies in keeping the mind always cheerful - never worried, never hurried, never borne down by any fear, thought or anxiety.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

16. Full minus full

Date: 23 July 1975 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

That is Full; This is Full; When Full is taken from the Full, Full remains - this is the Upanishathic axiom! The Divine is Full; Creation is Full; even when Creation happened and the Cosmos appeared to be produced from the Divine, there was no diminution In the Fullness of the Full. Fullness is the attribute, the nature of the Supreme. It cannot' be diminished by the process of creation of the Cosmos. Why is creation also called the Full? Because, it came from the Full.

You go to the bazar to purchase a kilogramme of jaggery. The keeper of the shop brings from his store a big lump, and he slices off a portion, weighing about a kg; he then weighs It and gives us, in return for the price amount, one kg. of Jaggery. We sample a piece from the big lump and we expect the portion to behave as sweetly as the original lump. We go home and take a little to prepare the sweet drink called panakam. The panakam is sweet; the kg of jaggery and the mother lump - all are equally sweet. Fullness is the quality of the Divine; it is found in part or portion or in half or whole. Quantity is not the criterion; quality is In the visible world that has been taken from the substance of the Divine, this quality is found equally full. We shall not consider the world as anything less than God.

God is in the world, in and through everything

Of course, there are scholars who proclaim that the world is a hollow zero, that it has no latent or potent strength, being but a dream and a delusion. This is a sign of the blindness of Ignorance. God is very much in the world, in and through every thing in it, with no exception. In the Geetha the Lord announces, "I am human among living beings, the cow among animals, the lion among beasts, the cobra among snakes, the eagle among birds, Prahladha among Rakshasas. No item is discarded as not worthy of God. There is no body that He does not activate, no Form that He does not reside in. He is fragrance, brilliance, sweetness and taste, intelligence, valour,

austerity, fame, contentment - an desirable and even undesirable things and qualities. One can acquire unalloyed bliss only by knowing this universal all inclusive glory of the Lord. There are four stages in securing the Grace of the Lord, by this means: (1) Attaching the mind to God: (2) Loving the Form of God to which the mind has been attached: (3) Installing that Form in the heart and (4) Dedicating all that one has and does to the Form so installed. You have a great example of one who successfully travelled through these stages and realised the Goal of Life, in the Mahabharatha, namely Ekalavya. Though Dhronacharya refused to accept him as his pupil, Ekalavya attached himself mentally to him as Guru (preceptor); he installed him in his heart; and finally, he offered at his feet all the skills and fame that he had won through the grace of Dhronacharya!

The three grades of intelligence

It has become a routine affair - this observance of the Festival of Guru Purnima. This day, the Guru is adored, and Gods are worshiped, praised and propitiated by song and feasting. But, are these enough, let Me ask. The observance can yield fruit, only when the deeper significance of the Day is grasped and meditated upon. Gurm is the person who destroys the darkness of Ignorance by his own illumination. Most Gums have only feeble, borrowed light; the removal of darkness has to be complete, with no trace of lurking shadow. Like the Full Moon that happens every year on this Day, the mind of man has to be charmingly fair, cool and full. This gift of Light can come only from God, for, he is self-illuminated; He is the source of Light for all planets and stars, as well as for all beings. In Vedantic vocabulary, Chith and A-chith are two terms set against each other, comprehending between themselves, the Created Universe. Chith means 'Intelligent' and A-chith means 'non-Intelligent.' There are no two opposites like this. There are grades, slowly passing from one to the other, from the less intelligent to the fully intelligent. In fact, there are three grades, not two!

The first is: Shuddha thathwa, the second is: Mishra thathwa and the third is: Vasana thathwa. (1) The Shuddha thathwa is what Christ referred to as the Kingdom of God. It is far beyond the reach of Mind, it is the realm of pure

equanimity. (2) Mishra thathwa is this earthly kingdom, alternating between repose and activity, sloth and adventure, Thamas and Rajas. While the first is spoken of as the Nithya vibhuuthi (the ever-lasting Glory of the Divine), this the second is spoken of as Leela vibhuuthi (the scene of the ever-changing ever-fresh sport of God). (3) This is the region of inactivity, ignorance and inertia, the Thamoguna.

The Vedanthic point of view

The Universe is the Field where God sports. Be aware of this fact, every moment of consciousness, and there is nothing more you need for a happy existence. For, you will then contact God in every thing through every thought at every place and at every moment. His Leela is evident in the smallest flower and the most distant star. The joy that you can derive from the contemplation of these proofs of providence is indescribable. Krishna has said in the Geetha that He is ever by the side of the joyous being. Be joyful yourself and make others too share in that joy. To limit oneself and be happy while self-centred, is bad. The third stage is called Vasana thathwa. This is where your narrow selfish will takes charge of you, and enslaves you. Vasana is the ingrained force of aeons of enslavement to the senses. You have to overpower its subtle impact and liberate your will from its hold. Cultivate the attitude of un-attachment, of indifference, of bypassing the urges, through prayer and systematic practice. This will lead you to Dharma (Righteous behaviour) and Truth; you are then entitled to the Dharma sthambha, or Sathya sthambha (the Pillar of Righteousness or Truth). This is also referred to as the Vedantha point of view. Vedantha does not mean, running away from home and the company of men and escaping into the solitude of the jungle. (Home is certain to haunt you, wherever you may take refuge). It implies recognition of all this (the idham) as Divinely Poornam (full). and dedication of all thoughts, words and deeds to the Divine. When you have the Vedanthic Vision, the place where you are will thereby be Kailas for you.

When Leela entices God, it takes eight forms

The Sun cannot illumine God; God is the source of the illumination of the Sun.

The waves can say they belong to the Sea; but, they cannot claim the Sea belongs to them. The individual can say, "I am Yours" to God; he cannot say, "You are mine" to God. God is the support; you are the supported. The Nithya-vibhuuthi is the support of the Leela vibhuuthi; the Sea is the base on which waves happen. When Leela entices God, it takes eight forms: Shuddha Brahmamayi (the absolutely Pure), Chara-charamayi (the moving and the non-Moving), Jyothirmayi (the Luminous), Vangmayi (the Vocal), Nithyanandamayi (the ever-blissfull, Parathpa-ramayi (transcending this world and the next) mayamayi (enrapturing by its delusive charm) and Shrimayi (resplendent with wealth). The attributeless God assumes the Mind, the Intelligence and the Ego, and the magnificent Leela is inaugurated! The experiences of the waking stage are laid aside when dreams start; dream experiences disappear when sleep supervenes. Being too is lost in becoming. Christ said, "Life is lost in dreams." But, whatever is experienced in any of these three stages, they happen on the basic Truth, that is, God - just as, all the fear and anxiety, the activity to beat and kill the serpent, is based on the rope that was ignorantly mistaken for a snake.

Let your Love enfold all things and all beings

So, man must endeavour to escape from this delusion and reach the state of fully illumined wisdom. The best spiritual discipline that can help him to do so is Love. Foster the tiny seed of Love that clings to 'me' and 'mine,' let it sprout into Love for the group around you, and grow into Love for all mankind, and spread out its branches over animals, birds and those that creep and crawl, and let the Love enfold all things and beings in all the worlds. Proceed from less Love to more Love, narrow Love to expanded Love. The statement, "From untruth to Truth" is not correct. The progress is always from the lesser Truth to Truth which is God. This is a story about the Gods. It deals with the greed of men. It was a fine day in Heaven; Sriman Narayana and His Consort Lakshmi were talking away the hours, when Naradha, the wandering minstrel, entered and attracted their attention. Narayana asked Naradha whether the denizens of the Earth were happy. Naradha replied that since they worshipped Him and won His Grace, men everywhere were quite happy and prosperous. At this, Lakshmi (who was the Goddess of Wealth) was

afflicted with Jealousy and anger for, Her share in conferring happiness on man was not acknowledged. She challenged Naradha to prove that Narayana was more adored than Herself down on earth.

Goddess Lakshmi accepts a challenge

Narayana accepted the challenge. Donning ochre robes, He transformed Himself into a monk and went down amongst the villages and towns, preaching the Path. Thousands flocked at these meetings and listened to the enchanting oratory. They followed Him from place to place and adored Him with effusive enthusiasm. He was being carried along on a huge wave of devotion and adulation.

Lakshmi saw this and could not contain herself: She was overwhelmed by envy. So, she too donned the Sanyasi (ascetic person)robe and came down to the very region which Narayana had conquered for Himself. The people were drawn towards Her by the effulgence of Her presence, many came away from the meetings addressed by Narayana to bask in Her Presence. A few invited Her to their homes for dinner. She agreed but, declared that it was a vow she had Undertaken, not to eat out of plates other than her own. She said, she would bring Her own plate, cup, drinking vessel etc. The host was only too glad to comply with Her request, for, that helped him to overcome one bother among many! Lakshmi took with Her when She went to the houses of Her hosts, a plate of gold, a cup and a water-vessel, all three of gold! The host admired and adored Her the more for this display of pomp and wealth. But, he was astounded and delighted, when, after dinner, Lakshmi said that she was leaving the plate etc., at the host's home, since that too was part of her vow! When the news spread that it was highly profitable to Invite Lakshmi to Dinner and to adore Her, there was a huge clamour for Her Grace and millions deserted Narayana's Discourses and hovered around the Giver of Gold. People prayed to Narayana to go back to whence He came, for, they had no time to receive' Him or listen to Him. Lakshmi was monopolising their attention!

So, Lakshmi came back to Heaven, to meet Narayana who was already there.

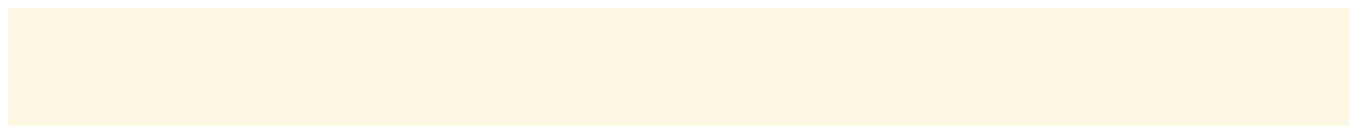
She asked Naradha, "Who is being worshiped more, Narayana or Lakshmi?"

Righteous activity is prompted by Truth

Naradha replied with another question: "Whom are You worshiping, please?" Lakshmi answered, "Why? I worship Narayana." Then, said Naradha, "Know that it is Narayana's Grace that is helping you to bestow those gifts of gold, which make men worship you." Lakshmi's pride was humbled; but, man's foolishness continues. He worships Vasudheva (mere earthy riches), not Vasudeva (indwelling divinity), Lakshmi, not Narayana! Righteous activity is prompted by Truth. Truth is the basic teaching of all Faiths. Also, Morality and Love. These three have come to establish. This day is Guru Poornima. The morning I laid the Foundation for the Pillar of Truth, which supports and sustains the twin virtues of Love and Morality. In the Vedhic Rite of sanctifying the spot where the Pillar will be erected, you must have noticed that nine different grains that grow on the earth and nine precious gems that are got from under the earth were used. These represent the Nine forms of Bhakthi (devotion), the Nine stages in man's journey to God, the Navavidha-bhakthi. Of these, the most vital is Seva (selfless service) to fellow-beings. I exhort you to dedicate yourselves fully to this task and live in the full cognisance of this primary duty to your own self-service.

It is always preferable to approach God for the fulfilment of wants, rather than cringe before men, who themselves are but tools in the hands of God. In His own silent way, God will transform, the mind and turn it towards sadhana and successful spiritual pilgrimage. He cannot allow his children to lose their way and suffer in the jungle. When you approach God and seek his help and guidance, you have taken the first step to save yourself. You are then led to accept His Will as your own. Thus, you achieve shanthi (Absolute Peace).

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba



17. My wish, My vow

Date: 25 July 1975 / Location: Anantapur

THIS day is a meeting between the past and the present, as all days are; for, we, In this College, are wishing well for those who have passed out and welcoming those who have just joined the classes. All moments are moments of crisis, when crucial decisions are urgently needed. Life is a struggle between the forces of good and evil, of joy and grief, of success and failure. The doubt may arise whether, in the face of this perpetual fight, man can ever escape from the bonds of duality. Is it after all a vain hope, or a tantalising prospect or is it the sport of God? It is really the inescapable destiny of man, and it is to prepare you for this destiny that this College has been established.

The student who spoke a few minutes ago said that the perusal of a load of books cannot be education. Yes; it has to tend the body, mind and spirit, in addition to the intelligence. It cannot be confined to the four walls of a building. The Universe is a University for those who care to watch and learn. Awareness is life; so, the farmer, the carpenter, the smith, the sculptor, the merchant, all have the need to be aware of their duties and responsibilities, their skills and standards, which education must foster and fix.

Spiritual education is part of all types of education

Education is no book-worm affair; the process must include the study and appreciation of all trades, professions and guilds. It must encourage the acceptance of the good and the rejection of the bad. Spiritual education is not a distinct and separate discipline; it is part and parcel of all types and levels of education, In fact, it is the very foundation on which a lasting edifice can be built. Secular and spiritual education are like the two halves in the seeds of pulses; the germ that sprouts is in between; It is fed by both. The feminine is the foundation on which a peaceful and happy world is to be raised. When women are true and brave, kind and compassionate, virtuous and pious, the world can have an era of peace and joy. Youth has the capacity to grow into

strong straight Sadhakas (spiritual aspirants), who can scale the heights of spiritual adventure; but, it has no proper guidance. On the other hand, youth has evil temptation; evil example and evil advice are spread around on all sides, most attractively.

There are two evil sirens that entice them into futility and frivolity, diverting them along the paths of ruin. One of them is called, Dame Cinema and the other is named, Dame Novel. The film contaminates and corrupts; it pollutes young and innocent minds; it teaches crime, violence and greed; it destroys the basic human-ness and degrades it into bestiality. Even ochre-robed monks are steadily dragged down to sin by Its Insidious influence.

To-day's education has no life-line

Dame Novel too corrupts equally, with salacious pictures of bestiality. They both lead the young away into the wilderness of vice. They do not know, nor do they care to know, how to shape the young into self-reliant, self-confident, self-knowing citizens. The vital need is ignored. There was a student once who held out his palm before a palmist for scrutiny. He examined the lines with care and announced that he would advance very much In education. The student was very happy. He predicted that he would amass large sum of money; the student's Joy knew no bounds. He declared that the lines indicated fame along with fortune. This filled the cup of Joy to the brim; it could hold no more. Then, the palmist announced that the 'life-line' was short and it ended abruptly, quite quick! The student fell in a faint. Education too has no life-line, now; it does not ensure the skills and attitudes essential to live a life of peace and contentment. It is not 'full,' nor does it function in a comprehensive manner, taking all the needs and goals into Its orbit. It is satisfied now with cramming books, reproducing from memory, research into trivialities and awarding degrees which mean nothing special: And, its products parade their purposelessness, shouting that God Is dead and that virtue is a superstition. How can man exist without God, or God apart from man? There can be no garland without the string that runs through the flowers; there can be no men without the Inner kinship that God ensures for each. He is the Brahmasuuthra - the Brahman String, invisible, but inevitable.

Millions of rupees have been spent on this College, not with a desire to add one more to the hundreds of colleges scattered all over the country, but, to train a generation of women who know how to live the ideals treasured in Bharatheeya Culture and who will uphold the dignity and destiny of womanhood.

Expansion is the keynote of education

The reason which prompted the establishment of this college is the need for women who as mothers will foster the expansion of love to include fellow beings everywhere. The first step for this expansion is the home, where you must revere and please the parents who gave you this chance to live and learn. If you ill-treat them or inflict grief on their minds, how can you ever gladden others by service and understanding? Expansion is the keynote of education. You know that when a balloon is blown, it bursts and the air inside it merges with the vast limitless expanse outside. Your love too must fill your home and your society, and finally, burst even those bonds and become world-wide. A drop of water held in the palm is soon evaporated; it is too much alone. But, drop it into the sea; it survives as a part of the sea. It assumes the name and the taste, the majesty and might of the sea! Cultivate Love; sow the seeds of love in all hearts. Shower Love on the desert sands, let the green shoots, the lovely flowers, the luscious fruits, the sweet harvest of nectar be earned by mankind. That is My Wish, My Mission, My Vow. When you earn a degree and go out of this College, do not ask, "What is the country giving me?" ask rather, "Now, what can I give to my country?"

"Reverence offered at the feet of parents reaches Me"

Students, when they find distress or despair anywhere, do not now set about to reduce it. They pour oil on the flames and relish the damage they cause! My aim in starting and running this College is to train here the Ideal mother, the Ideal sister and the ideal wife, the Ideal woman, in fact. The curriculum which is followed in order to prepare you for the University Examination is just a bait to draw you into this higher curriculum of character formation and development of Universal Love. The acquisition of a few bits of information

without the transformation that is necessary is, for you, a matter of pride, though there is very little Justification for the same. The earth is but a speck in the vast Cosmos; India is a minute portion of that dot; Ananthapur is microscopic particle therein and you are one of the many lakhs of human beings living here. What reason have you to thrust your pride on the attention of others and feel superior? Women students and teachers have to be ever vigilant that they do not attract the eyes and tongues of young men by their dress, movements, laughter or behaviour. Be a little behind the times, it does not matter; it is better than adopting fashions that outrage the traditions and conventions of this country and Its culture. Do not bring dishonour to your parents or disappoint them by acting contrary to their dearest plans. The reverence that you offer at the feet of your parents is, let Me assure you, reverence that reaches Me. There are some special lessons and items laid down in this College to instil into you faith and spiritual discipline. Teachers and students much show special interest in them, for they are the unique features of this College, designed for your good and the good of the country. Teachers too must be examples of sincerity, simplicity and mutual co-operation and love; they too must evince interest in prayers, and other Items of spiritual importance.

Attachment, affection, interest - these will create prejudice, partiality, illusion, they hide the Truth; they dull the intelligence. Raga is roga (attachment is a disease), so far as the enquirer is concerned. One does not become a Yogi to have Raga (affection); he must be free from favourites, fancies and fondness. Once you attach yourself to some person or habit or mannerism, it will be difficult for you to shake them off.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

18. No bumps, no jumps

Date: 15 November 1975 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Seva Dal Conference

IT seems a person once saw a man struggling for life in the deep waters of a lake. The fellow could not swim and was really helplessly floundering. But without the least compunction of sympathy and without making the least effort to save him, the onlooker had the audacity to ask him, "Tell me, how deep is the lake?" Such is the behaviour of most people now-a-days. These persons are sunk In thamas - they are too wooden and dull, too hard and impervious. It is only when man gets rid of thamas {sloth and inaction) that he can rise Into rajas - the sphere of activity, emotion, devotion, compassion and service. When he rises higher into the sathwik stage (poised state of contemplation), the activity gets elevated into sadhana (spiritual discipline) and the effect is more spiritual. I find here thousands of young men and women, members of the Seva Dhal, gathered from all the states of India. This is the third All India Conference of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Dhal. It is time that we decide to assess what has been the achievement so far, whether the basic purpose for which the Dhal was planned is being realised. We have had reports from various State Conveners of Seva Dhal of many types of work that is being carried out by the units of the Dhal. Let Me tell you that mere execution of some duties enjoined on the Dhal by the rules cannot be recognised as bhakthi (devotion or dedication).

Duty without love is deplorable; duty with love is desirable; Love without duty is Divine.

But acts of love that emanate from a person because it is his nature and not because it is enjoined on him as a duty he has to fulfill, is really Divine.

"Your seva brings you nearer to Me"

Let Me impress on you another point. Every convener repeated the report of every other; there was more imitation than originality in ideas and programmes. Doing something because it is being done elsewhere is a sign of ignorance. The programmes must satisfy a local need, solve a local difficulty. They must arise out of felt needs and should be adapted to local conditions. It must be taken into consideration whether the place concerned is urban or rural, industrial or agricultural, a pilgrim centre or civic extension, a developing area or a sinking economy, a tribal settlement or a hill station.

The person who borrows some idea from another region and executes it might feel satisfied that he has achieved some concrete programme. But do the people whom he tried to benefit feel better and happier? That is the test. Do not think of the fame or praise you win; think of the good that people derive. Do not crave for publicity; crave for the joy that shines in the faces of the people whom you help. Seva (selfless service) brings you nearer to Me. The flower that is your heart gets fragrance by means of the seva you do, and so it becomes more acceptable to Me. Love is the essence of that fragrance.

In seva there can be no high or low

Through seva you realise that all beings are waves of the Ocean of Divinity. No other sadhana can bring you into the incessant contemplation of the Oneness of all living beings. You feel another's pain as your own; you share another's success as your own. To see every one else as yourself and yourself in every one, that is the core of the sadhana of seva. Again, seva makes the ego languish for want of food. It makes you humble before the suffering of others, and when you rush to render help, you do not calculate how high or low his social or economic status is. The hardest heart is slowly softened into the softness of butter by the opportunities that the Seva Dhal offers.

Seva is prescribed as one among the nine steps towards Realisation. You must therefore be earnest about it and welcome all chances to serve the old, the sick, the disabled, the diseased and the distressed. Holding a fruit in the hand is just a preliminary step; eating and digesting must follow, so that you may be healthy and happy. So, too, wearing a scarf and badge round the

neck is but an indication of the joy that is within reach when you actually serve. Your Seva will be Judged with reference to the mental attitude accompanying it. So, whatever work is allotted, do it with fervour, understanding and reverence. In seva there can be no high or low, for Sai is in all. Sai receives your seva, to whomsoever you may offer it. Do not be sad that you have been posted on some duty that keeps you far from Me. Know that I am nearest to him who calls on Me and sees Me in all beings.

Love is the solvent for the hardest of hearts

The world today is torn into factions and groups that hate and hack each other. No method is considered too cruel if the aim is to destroy one's enemy. No one is aware of the innate Unity, the ever-present current of Divinity that animates every single living being on earth. You have the role now of demonstrating that all is not lost, that there are still people who believe in Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Love, that acts of loving service rendered in a spirit of humility and reverence are still making people happy, and that the day when the brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God will shine bright and beautiful is drawing and dawning near. All efforts are now being concentrated on the production of more food, the building of more houses and the manufacture of more cloth. But what is most needed today is a total effort to make man manifest more tolerance, more humility, more brotherliness, more compassion and deeper awareness of the springs of joy and peace that lie within the heart of each one. This country, Bharath, must be in the fore-front of this spiritual adventure. Love is the solvent for the hardest of hearts. Without love, free, full and selfless, no spiritual sadhana can succeed. Without it, bhajan (group singing of devotional songs on Lord's Names and Glory) is waste of breath, sathsang (holy company) a waste of time and meditation a selfdeception. Bhajan, sathsang and meditation done with a mind soaked in love, can confer peace, joy and wisdom. When the rain drop falls into the sea, it gets the name, form and nature of the sea. So, too, when the individual merges in the vast concourse of humanity and feels one with all, he is endowed with the name, form and nature of Divinity. Whatever you do as service, to whomsoever you offer the act, believe that it reaches the God in that person: Ishwarassarva bhoothanam. So it is Ishwarar-panam

(dedicated to God).

Destiny of nations hangs on the youth

You have Joined the Seva Dhal at the most important period of your lives, for youth is a stage of life when self-control, self-examination and self-effort are most needed and least exercised. What a mighty potential for progress is wasted by the empty vagaries of the youth today. If only the courage, the optimism, the strength and the imagination of youth is channelised into constructive channels, how soon the human community can attain peace and prosperity. The youth are drawn easily into wild adventures, acts of bravado and exhibition of group fanaticism. They are given to sudden changes of passion or emotion. All over the world they are being swayed on the waves of anger and adventure. The destiny of nations hangs on the direction the youth will take In these turbulent times. They should not be led into the paths of hypocrisy, deceit or greed. They must act the way they speak and speak the way they think. They should think good thoughts, speak good words and do good deeds. That will give inner Joy and contentment. That will make them worthy sons and daughters of this ancient land.

Be eager and alert to render service

Within the next few days you, members of the Seva Dhal and of the Volunteer Force gathered here from all the states of India and even from beyond the seas, have a number of service assignments facing you. You have to shoulder heavy responsibilities and execute various duties in the spirit of sadhana, which enjoins you to revere duty as God and to engage in work not as dreary drudgery, but as worship of the Lord Himself. You have dedicated yourselves to seva, which has to be saturated In selfless love. The service that you render must reward you, not only with your satisfaction, but with the satisfaction and relief of those whom you serve. When those whom you serve are not relieved or made happy thereby, of what avail is your elation or exultation at the help you have been allowed to offer? You should have the joy of the recipient as your objective. Do not sit back and talk of your having done what is expected of you, but try to discover whether your act of service

has really been worth-while, whether it has been intelligently rendered with full appreciation of the peculiar circumstances of the individual who needed it. Do not feel that this is an obligation imposed on you by the rules of the Organisation or by the person nominated as your leader. Do not feel that the scarf and badge that you wear are impediments to freedom. They are reminders of the high mission to which you have been initiated, the keys to your Realisation of reality through the sadhana of seva. Even when you do not wear the scarf or parade the badge, you must be eager and alert to render seva to fellow-beings who need it.

Soft speech adds sweetness to living

Man is endowed with the equipment of senses, reason, feelings, passions and detachment, so that he may keep away from the enticement of pleasures and spend his life in helping, serving, sustaining and saving his fellow men. He has to live in seva, not bhoga (enjoyment). The badge on the chest helps to keep off the ego thumping inside, to broaden the heart and to focus all attention on the Lord resident therein. It is like the wheeled stand which helps the child to walk. It has to be revered until you transcend it and feel that all mankind is your kin. The badge should not be impurified by your indulging in deleterious habits such as impulsive anger, selfishness, flippant conversation, smoking, drinking, gambling or loitering in un-sanctified places. Do not wag or argue just for the sake of argument. Let your words be few, fair and felicitous. Soft speech adds sweetness to living. Even when you are engaged in discussion amongst yourselves, be short of speech and polite in behaviour. Some amongst you have been selected as leaders and guides; carry out their Instructions without demur or diminution. If you feel any doubt, regarding the propriety or advisability of those Instructions, talk them over with the leaders alone, in a spirit of friendliness. But do not disregard to modify those Instructions at any cost. The leader has to pay attention to the overall situation which may not be so clear to you. People from more than 45 countries from all parts of the globe are coming for the World Conference. So any failing or fault in your faith or in the fulfilment of the duties assigned to you, will reflect on this great nation.

Service is the best school for training in leadership

Bharath is the land where the triple sadhana of Discipline, Devotion and Duty was first laid down, and where it has had the largest number of votaries through the ages. So you have to demonstrate to the visitors that the lesson is still very much honoured and observed in this land. Not only this, you have to maintain the fair name of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation. On the one hand you have the call of the motherland and on the other, the command of Sai, who is no less than the Mother Herself.

Ganesha is reputed to have two Mothers - Gowri and Ganga. Gowri is one daughter of the Himalayas, who is merged in the left half of the body of Shiva. Ganga is another daughter of the Himalayas who has her place in the matted hair which forms the crown of Shiva. You, too, have two Mothers - Bharath Matha and Sai Matha. You must emulate Ganesha not in the quantity of food eaten, but in His aspect as Vinayaka, for to become a Vinayaka, a special type of leader, you have to be for long an earnest and enthusiastic servant engaged in selfless, loving service. Service is the best school for training in leadership. You should eliminate in that school all traces of disgust, anger and impatience. Pride and personal prejudices will try to put spokes in the wheel as you go to serve the distressed and the diseased. But you should never give up faith In the right path you have chosen. Remind yourself that you are a sadhaka (spiritual aspirant) and that seva is the spiritual path that you have ventured upon as the easiest and the best. When you mix with volunteers and others who have no deep faith or sweet experience of the value of seva, you may get caught up in conversation that might shake your conviction. Do not allow their superficial Judgement to undermine your steadfastness. Keep away from such persons; let them test their doubts on the touchstone of their own experiences of seva. Take their disbelief indifferently, and allow them time to realise and overcome their doubts by their own will.

Be inspired as humans, not fitful as beasts

Discipline entails the strict observance of rules and regulations and directions.

The sense of duty can yield results only when discipline is observed, and devotion to Sai and the Message of Sai is the basis for the sense of duty which keeps you ever bound to discipline. Do not be part-time devotees, leading one kind of life when you wear the scarf and badge and another kind of life when you have removed them. Be ever sadhakas and sevakas (servitors). Do not forget, do not modify. In the path of service that you have chosen, there should be no bumps of doubt or Jumps of deviation. Move on steadily and bravely, with your eyes fixed on the Goal, the Grace of the Lord. Be Intent on the development of the man-mind. Not the monkey-mind. Do not hop about from decision to Indecision, from acceptance to denial. Be alert and inspired as humans, not dull and fitful as beasts. Above all, cultivate love, express love, move among other Seva Dhal members with love. Let love be your very breath. Let the sum of love help the lotus of your heart to blossom. May you be victorious in all your undertakings of service. That is My blessing for each one of you.

Bhaktha (devotee) is like the needle which is always drawn towards the magnet. But the needle has to be near enough; it has also to be clean enough. You stay far away and complain that Grace has not come. You do not scrape off, by the process of repentance, the mud and rust that prevent attachment.

You come near for some time and stray away into the distance. I don't mean physical distance at all. You may be physically far, but mentally by My side. I do not measure distance in miles or metres; I am with you, in you, beside you, ever; only you have to be aware of Me and make use of My Presence.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

19. The message of love

Date: 23 November 1975 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Birthday - 50

A PERSON who has mastered-Vedas (ancient spiritual revelations) and Vedantha (metaphysics of the Supreme Reality) might be honoured as a Pandith (learned scholar). Another might be praised for his brilliant writings in both prose and verse. But if such scholars have neither purity of consciousness nor elevating Ideals, their capacities will result in more harm than good. They will promote neither happiness of the people nor peace in society. They will pass through life without the awareness of Its sanctity or sublimity. The Lord blessed the boy Dhruva, appreciating his Innocence and his steadfast faith in Him. The Lord saved Prahladha from direct disasters planned by his own father, for the boy had surrendered to Him and placed unshakeable trust in His Mercy. The Lord showered Grace on Kuchela who suffered from agonising poverty because he never once faltered in his devotion to Him. The Lord is the refuge of all who seek refuge, the saviour of all who have to be saved. He is the Embodiment of Sath-Chith-Anandha (Being- Awareness-Bliss Absolute). He is now at Puttaparthi as the Effulgent Emperor over the region of Truth, Goodness and Beauty.

Today man's behaviour is really artificial

Life sustained by food is short; life sustained by the Atman (Divine Spirit) is eternal. Do not lay claim to long life, but to Divine life. Do not pine for more years on earth, but for more virtues in the heart. The Buddha knew and made known to the world the truths: Everything is grief. Everything is empty. Everything is brief. Everything is polluted. So the wise man has to do the duties cast upon him with discrimination, diligence and detachment. Play the role, but keep your identity unaffected. Have your head in the forest ashram (retreat), unaffected by the aimlessly rushing world. But it is your duty, a duty you cannot escape, to fully engage yourself in your work, unconcerned with loss or gain, failure or success, slander or praise. The Geetha instils this very lesson In you: "Whoever does upasana with no thought other than Me, him I shall have with Me; I shall bear his burden now and forever." The Geetha

says, "Keeping Me ever in memory, engage yourself in the battle of Life." This 'Me' to which Krishna refers is not something outside you or extraneous to you. It is your own Divine Reality which you can cognise in the silence of your own dhyana (meditation), when you shut out of your awareness the distraction of the senses, the mind and the ego. You can take refuge in the calm coolness of your heart where He has installed Himself as the Charioteer. You must only engage yourself in work that is purifying, with an attitude that sanctifies. Most people do not know how to set about on this most rewarding adventure. They waste their lives in sorrow, wading through disappointment and despair, for they cling to something as theirs and treat something else as belonging to others. They grab and grieve, and labour to acquire and lose. Desire multiplies desire, and man sinks deeper into discontent and distress. The behaviour is really artificial; It does not conform to man's real nature, the prompting of his Atman, which is Divine. In the universal, eternal sea of change, the Atman alone is above change.

All differences are apparent, not real

In creation, in the objective world, no one article is like any other. No two human beings are similar in every respect; there is some twist or turn which distinguishes one from the rest. Each has his own peculiar experiences. Immense diversity prevails. Nor is an individual the same for any length of time. The infant changes into a child, then into a boy, an adolescent, an adult, and soon becomes middle-aged, old, decrepit and, finally, senile. In one single day the Individual is changed into a wakeful person, a dreamer and a sleeping log! So man must seek refuge in the changeless, the Paramatman (Supreme Reality), from which all variety emerges, and into which it merges. Then only can be secure peace and contentment. The past is past; do not lose time looking back on the road you have traversed. Look forward, deciding to march on with confidence and courage. Take the first step NOW. Tomorrow may be too late.

Repeat to yourself the truth that the world is as much God as heaven is. There are no two distinct entities or categories called material and spiritual. All distinctions are apparent, not real. Sai has drawn the old and the young to

Himself and every one of them has Sai in his heart. The scriptures of different creeds - the Bible, the Quoran, the Upanishaths (philosophy of the vedhas, the Zendavestha - appear different, but their aim is the same: to establish the Brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God as the basis for the peace of mankind. No creed need put on airs of superiority as each is shaped by the compulsions of time and space, of language and levels of experience. You are all members of the Sai Family, bound by the religion of Love. Though ostensibly you profess to belong to different faiths, faith in Sai has removed the barriers in your minds. Love is God. Live in Love.

Love must express itself as service

Your Atman, which you mistake to be your body, your senses, your mind, your intellect, etc., can have no sorrow or Joy. It has no death, no birth. It is eternal and unchanging. What you judge as joy or sorrow is only like a passing cloud which cannot affect the splendour of the Sun or Moon. Know that such emotions follow one another when the wheel of life turns round from moment to moment. The sea has water that cannot quench thirst, but it has also pearl and coral. You have to get toughened by the hammer strokes of Joy and sorrow until you are unaffected by the vicissitudes of fortune.

This year you have named My birthday the 'Golden Jubilee' of the Avathar (divine Incarnation), and gathered in vast numbers from all parts of the world. I am sure you have benefitted by the Sathsang (holy company). I do not accost one particular date in the calendar as My birthday, for I consider the day when Divinity blossoms in your heart as My birth-day in you. Therefore each of you should individually celebrate such a day as My birthday. The day when you resolve to practise My advice, to follow My directives, to translate My message into acts of service, and to engage in sadhana - that day is My birthday for you. The 23rd day of November which you now honour as the day on which I was born, is only like any other day if you celebrate it in a routine, ritual fashion. Adore man; the adoration reaches Me. Neglect man; you neglect Me. Of what avail is it to worship the Lord and to suppress man, His counterpart? Love for God must be manifested as Love for man, and Love must express itself as service. Through Love alone - Love acquired through

sadhana, and shared with all as sadhana - can peace be attained, by the individual as well as by the nation. My Life is My Message and My Message is Love. That explains why you have gathered hither in hundreds of thousands.

20. Why organise?

Date: 29 March 1976 / Location: Hyderabad

THE task before mankind is to plant the seeds of Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Love in the heart made ready for their reception, to foster the saplings and watch over them with love and care until they grow into trees yielding a rich harvest of sweet fruits, and to enable all to share in that sustaining repast. Sages who had succeeded in this beneficial culture have laid down the means and methods, the steps and slips, the helps and hindrances, that men have to consider while engaged in this task, and millions have benefited by their counsel. But never before has this become an organised movement in which the entire humanity was involved. Unless it becomes so, there can be no liberation from fear, anxiety and injustice. The sages of India knew that man was fundamentally Divine. They sought to make man aware of his inner Reality and expand that spark of Divinity into Light that can illumine the individual and society in the splendour of love.

Renunciation alone leads to Immortality

As a first step they advised the discarding of violence which has egotism and greed as its roots. The Vedas (ancient sacred scriptures), the Shasthras (spiritual sciences), the Epics and the Puranas (mythological legends) that they collated or composed, carry this message. Man is afflicted by misery since he is caught in the coils of never-ending desire and all consuming greed, Casting off these trammels, man has to march on towards the goal of realising God which is his Innermost Truth. The swimmer has to push the water behind him so that he might proceed forward. So, too, while attempting to march forward, man has to push back from him the evil thoughts, habits, deeds and Impulses that crowd into him. The Sathya Sai Seva Organisation has to teach this lesson, not by precepts elaborately described in elegant language, but by example that spreads conviction, Instils faith and assures success. Members of this Organisation must be examples also of the joy that can be derived from 'giving up' rather than from 'accumulating.' The Upanishaths proclaim that "Renunciation alone leads to Immortality".

Thyagenaike Amrithathwam anasuh. In spite of this man looks for ease, yet reeks with 'dis-ease.' He pursues bhoga (enjoyment) and is rewarded with roga (disease). Saint Thyagaraja the great mystic singer, had realised that Sannidhi (Treasure house of the Divine) is far more preferable to nidhi (treasures of men). The most desirable treasure is Truth- Righteousness- Peace-Love.

Truth about oneself is to be learnt first. When man does not know his own Truth, how can he judge others or deal with others? When man knows that he is the Indestructible, Eternal Atman, he is free from fear. Truth can shine forth only from a purified mind and a clarified intellect. The units of the Sathya Sai Seva Organisations must be ever active in following and observing the disciplines laid down for these two processes. Man has to overcome the animal in him. The pashu (beast) has to be laid low and the Pashu Pathi (Master of living beings, God) installed in the heart. This aim has to be constantly borne, in mind by the organisation and its members; the journey towards it has to be steady and fervent.

Sai devotees must free themselves of all prejudices

Patience, tolerance, fortitude, equanimity, fraternity - these, will prove invaluable equipment for the pilgrim. Do not distinguish between one fellow-pilgrim and another on the basis of caste, creed or colour, and do not divide them into friends or foes. Recognise only the common traits, the uniting efforts, the basic Divinity. Rich and poor, scholar and illiterate - these are distinctions that do not hold good for long, for they are but outer frills. A flower radiates fragrance and charm, whether held in the right hand or the left. It does not limit that gift to some and deny it to others. Everyone who comes near, is blessed. The members of the units of this organisation must be ever engaged in the twin processes of purifying the mind and clarifying the intellect. They have to free themselves from all prejudices and misunderstandings. They have to speak softly and sweetly, and give every one the respect and attention due to them sincerely. Humility and tolerance must characterise the behaviour of a Sai devotee. When the wind agitates the serene waters of a lake, wavelets dance all over its face, and a thousand Suns

sparkle. When calm descends, and the waters are still, the shadow of the Sun Within the lake is one full image.

Seva should not be tarnished by pride

When one fixes one's entire attention on the sun instead of on the images and the water that caused them, there is only the one sun that is real. The sparkling little images in the agitated lake represent the symbol of dhwaitha (duality); the complete image in the depths of the serene lake is the symbol of visishtadhwaitha (qualified dualism); the one Sun which is reflected as one or many is the Adhwaithic (non-dualistic) Truth. This fact is clearly, revealed in the three, statements made one after the other by Jesus: "I am the Messenger of God," "I. am the Son of God," and "I and my Father are One." The three statements are revelations of the dhwaithic, visishtadhwaithic and adhwaithic points of view. The Organisation must help people to realise the Unity behind all this apparent multiplicity which is only a super-imposition by the human mind on the One that is all this. The Vedas proclaim that God is One, that the Goal is the same and that Truth stands Self-revealed when the Goal is the same and that Truth stands Self-revealed when the veil of the world is cast away or torn off.

One simple way to realise this Unity is through seva (selfless service), seva that is not tarnished by a superiority complex, or by pride or even by a sense of duty towards the organisation with which you are bound. Revere the dweller within, not the house where He resides. The dweller is the same in every house, whether it is a palace or a hovel. Therefore devotion to the dweller must persuade you to worship every individual through acts of service intelligently executed with sincere enthusiasm.

Regulation is the very essence of creation

Do not fret against the rules and regulations which the Organisation imposes on you; they are laid down for your own good. Regulation is the very essence of creation. The oceans observe their limits. Wind and fire respect their limits and bounds. The human body has to maintain Its warmth at 98.4Â°F in order

to be healthy and the heart has to beat a definite number of times a minute. How, then, can this Organisation escape the prescription of certain rules and regulations? Devotion has to be guided and controlled by discipline and duty. What exactly is duty In this context? By duty I do not mean the Items of work entrusted to you by your superiors or society. Duty means the responsibility you have not to hinder or harm any one by your movements, speech, behaviour, or activities. When one walks on the street waving one's stick, one has to be conscious of the man coming from behind; if you have the freedom to wave, he, too, has the same freedom, and both should behave as if they have a duty towards each other. The units of this Organisation, too, have to respect other units, and help them in doing their duty. Rules are necessary until the members realise the spiritual Unity of all. When they become Incapable of inflicting harm or transgressing the moral code, rules become superfluous. Protect the plant from goats for a few years; then when the tree spreads its branches far and wide, those very goats can lie down under its shade and rest.

All Sai Units are parts of one Sai Organisation

We have five principal units in the Organisation, and in every village or town where we have these, there should be exemplary unity and cooperation between them. They are like the five fingers of a hand. The little finger is the Bhajan Mandali, the group devoted to singing the Glory of God. But they should not be proud that they are the pioneers and primary workers. The ring finger is the Bala Vikas (Children's educational wing). On the precious gold plate of juvenile hearts, the Guru (preceptor) affixes the gems of goodness and Godliness. That is the ring which this finger wears. But that should neither make the Bala Vikas proud nor make the Guru feel that the work done by it is the most important and so it has to be honoured most. The sense of unity and co-operation must prevail. The middle finger is the Seva Dhal (Service Corps), helping the two units on one side and the two on the other. But it should not hold its head high and claim to be superior to all the rest. The index finger is the Mahila Vibhag (Women's division), the unit which is composed of women who point to the good, the great, the useful, the right, etc. They, too, should not be filled with overweening conceit. The thumb,

naturally, is the Seva Samithi (Sai Organisation), the over-all executive, the guide and guardian, the promoter and provider. Thus each finger must feel that strength lies in working with the rest, that all are but parts of one hand which they cannot ignore. In a world torn by factions based on the flimsy grounds of caste, creed and colour, you have to prove that it is possible to have faith in Sai being the motivator for every living being, and get Inspiration for genuine service from that faith. Service to the Sai in the other person must be your daily act of worship. Of all sadhanas, this is the most effective. Seek out the slum dwellers, the poor, neglected dwellers in hamlets, and take love and light to them in plenty. "God is the refuge of those who have no place to rest," says a proverb. Go to places where you can find such, and carry the message of hope and strength into their hearts. Be grateful to them when they welcome you and provide you chances to serve them. Your happiness depends on their happiness; your health depends on their health. You keep your houses clean; their houses, too, are yours, for the same Sai that resides in you resides in them. Until all houses and their surroundings are bright and clean, how can you feel clean and bright? The Organisation must promote this high sense of unity and responsibility. It must constantly enthuse and educate members to engage themselves in the sadhana of service.

21. Expand the heart

Date: 01 August 1976 / Location: Bengaluru

WITHOUT Sathya, Dharma, Shanthi and Prema (Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Love) the accumulation of scholarship is a barren achievement. Without them, all charities and services rendered to others are ineffective. Without them, positions of authority to which one is raised, become positions of persecution. Without them, no good act or meritorious achievement can yield fruit. There are four chief types of people. Those who see only good in everything and everyone; those who see the good as good and the evil as evil; those who see the good as evil and the evil as good; and, lastly, those who do not see the good at all, because even the good they see they transmute into evil. Of these one can tolerate the first three, perhaps, but the fourth type is definitely demoniac.

Education is now caught up in confusion; instead of leading the country on along prosperity and fraternity, it struggles to take it along alien and degrading paths. It does not build on the strong, sustaining foundations of Indian culture, but is still based on the plans of Macaulay. Among most of the products of modern education we do not find even traces of moral virtue, honesty, integrity, eagerness to serve and readiness to renounce.

One who lives for the sake of eating is a sinner

The education that was practised in ancient India was far superior and far more fruitful, for it equipped the student with a healthy spirit of self-reliance. It endowed him with mental peace and equipoise. It never allowed him to be enslaved by the glittering fancies and fascinations of other cultures. It taught him to discriminate between the flippant and the stable, the upgrading and the down pulling. It enthused the student to offer his life at the feet of his Motherland with a glow on his face and a sparkle in his eye. It armed him against all obstacles on the path of self-culture and self-realisation. It exhorted him to oppose, without rest or relief, untruth, injustice and violence. But instead of cultivating these high ideals and incorporating them in our

educational system, we are now borrowing educational Ideals from other peoples with different heritages. We have no faith In the system that has been extolled by our ancestors for millennia. Education is to be valued not as a means of earning one's livelihood, but as the essential requisite for a happy, peaceful and progressive life leading man from the animal stage of existence to the presence of the Divine, where love and light reign undisturbed. He who lives for the sake of eating is indeed a great sinner; he who lives for the sake of reaching the full awareness of his Innate Reality is blessed. The first one is a papi (sinner), the second a gopi (blessed one).

Readiness to renounce is a prime virtue of character

Intelligence being the special mark of humans, every effort must be made to amplify and sharpen it so that it may be a fit Instrument for understanding the inner and the outer worlds. Along with intelligence, character, too, has to be cultivated in equal measure, for then alone can that Intelligence be used to serve society. The readiness to renounce one's pleasure in order to relieve the burden of another is a prime virtue of character. Moksha means liberation; renunciation, too, involves giving up, or liberation. The secret of both is the same. What exactly has to be renounced? Desire is the worst enemy and it has to be canalised and reduced with determination until it ceases to bother you. Besides desire, anger and greed also have to be discarded, for they are present wherever there is desire. When you say bowman, it is implied that arrows, too, are there with the bow. Thus desire is ever associated with anger and greed. Desire is bad even if it is for fame and authority. It is the avarice for power and pelf that ruins many a human life.

Life is a journey. The students here have to journey long. So, it is necessary to give them the skill, the enthusiasm and the security that can take them happily along. Their hearts are pure, steady and inclusive. Elders should so behave that they do not tarnish their hearts or make them narrow and vengeful. They must be encouraged to enlarge them and soften them through Intensive social service.

Wealth cannot yield joyous contentment

Our educational institutions have failed to maintain the high standards of yore. In the past, in the ashrams (hermitages) of the rishis (sages), one was declared fit only if one secured a hundred per cent marks in one's subject of study. Now, however, thirty marks out of a hundred are enough for the university to grant one a certificate of having passed. That means that one can commit seventy mistakes with impunity and be none the worse. When such is the ease with which degrees can be secured, and when degrees are the basis for being appointed to positions of authority, the person so appointed will tend to commit a hundred mistakes for every hundred assignments and be safe in his post. How can these people be the saviours and pillars of the India of tomorrow?

Therefore I always tell the students of my colleges to attach more importance to avoidance of 'remarks' than acquisition of 'marks.' Wealth cannot yield joyous contentment. Divinity alone can confer that. Yearn for God, and joy and peace will be added unto you. Embodiments of the Divine Atman! When you pursue these elevating ideals, you will come up against many obstacles which others place in your path. So you must be ever alert and vigilant not to be taken in by their specious pleas.

Awareness is life; be aware of your Inner strength and glory. Express that glory through loving service to society. In northern India yogis (spiritually advanced person), sages and monks are addressed as 'Maharaj,' which means 'Emperor,' for an emperor is he who has a rich treasury of the gems of detachment and service, not one who has his vaults full of precious metals. The wealth that you hoard is not yours; the wealth that you have shared is yours. For wealth that belongs to you needs not to be hidden.

Defamation and criticism also do some good

The wealth that you have given away is really yours. That is the reason why the Vedas (ancient sacred scriptures) have declared, "Not through actions, nor through progeny, nor through wealth can Immortality be won; it can be won only through renunciation." The youth must acquire and Invest in

themselves all the skills and virtues which can help India prosper and shine forth as the benefactor and preceptor of mankind. They must develop self-confidence, the base for the mansion of their life; they must then erect the walls of self-satisfaction and put on them the roof of self-sacrifice. Then they can live in that house and achieve Self-Realisation. Thus they must progress along these steps and become exemplars of Indian culture in its glory. Some people, afflicted with envy at the reconstruction of Sanathana Dharma (Eternal Universal Religion) for the revival of the glory of India, are attempting to undermine its basic beliefs and create confusion in the minds of the youth. The kokil's song is harsh to the ear of the crow, but the crow's criticism will not silence the lark. The hamsa (swan) is defamed as ugly by the duck, but that does not worry the swan in the least, nor can the duck decrease the glory of the celestial swan. Defamation, criticism and slighting are all to be set aside, unrecognised; they shall not be valued at all. They are all in the order of things. In fact they also do some good in their own way, for they help to emphasise the excellence and bring it more to light. It is a foil to make the thing shine brighter. Besides, when one person says 'no' and another says 'yes,' it is an individual problem.

Youth should never yield to the call of fanaticism

The attempt to darken the splendour of Sai can never succeed, except by one means: Suppose Sai-splendour is indicated by a line of a certain length. Efforts to shorten it by wiping or erasing it will not make it shorter. But if you draw by its side a longer line, then, automatically, it will become shorter! So do the things that Sai is doing, on a grander and more impressive scale, then the fame of Sai will certainly diminish. That is the more effective way, rather than the fabrication of baseless stories. Of course one must have the qualification and the authority to enter on that attempt. How can an ant measure the depth of the ocean? Still, many venture into this field for they have nothing better to do. They succeed only in causing a stir in the calm atmosphere of the land.

Jesus was crowned with a crown of thorns. A thorny fence around a tree is clear proof that the tree has edible fruits in plenty. Precious time should not

be wasted in such games: it is best spent in realising one's Divinity and serving society. The acts of Sai are all selfless, sacred and beneficial. Sai has never caused harm. He is establishing the path of Truth, the Path of Morality, the Holy path to God-Realisation. So Sai's work will march triumphantly on. The person who can make Sai give up His task in fear has neither yet been born, nor will ever be born hereafter. For Truth is Impregnable. Truth must triumph. A dog barks at his own reflection Imagining it to be a rival. Other dogs, not knowing the reason, take cue, and the whole area is drowned with barking. Some bay at stars, but the stars are unmoved. You should not be perturbed by this empty noise; carry on your mission of service as now, with your usual enthusiasm. Youth should never, yield to the call of fanaticism or revolution. Try to control your emotions, even from this tender age. In one way the agitation is useful, because you can practise self control in these exacting conditions.

Your master is your heart, where God resides

I desire to tell the units of the Seva Organisation that very soon they will witness the realisation of all their ideals. But as and when success is achieved, as a reaction, carping and denigration will also increase. When the well grows deeper, the mound beside it will grow higher. That is but natural. Some people pay attention to the depth of the well; others watch the height of the mound.

I have been telling you one truth always: your master is your heart, where God resides. You. yourself are three persons, not one: the one you think you are, the one others think you are and the one you reply are. The one you really are, is God. God is in you, with you, above you, around you, behind you. All of you are Divine in reality; differences in name and form are but temporary and external. Carry on your highest duty to yourselves - following the four F's- follow the master, face the devil, fight to the end and finish the game. Then you will win My Love in full measure. Love is my highest Miracle. Love can make you gather the affection of all mankind. Love will not tolerate any selfish aim or approach. Love is God; live in Love. Then all is right, all can be well. Expand your heart so that it can encompass all. Do not narrow it

down into an instrument of restricted love.

It is said that I try to attract people by miracles; the miracles are not 'performed' in order to exhibit power; they just happen, and serve as evidence of the power. As a matter of fact, whenever any one misuses his powers - physical, mental, economic or spiritual-Sai always condemns them strongly. Therefore, the Sai Power cannot be a subject for a university examinations; it is a subject for universal examination. Sai is limited only by His Own Will. But when a near and dear relationship is established, one can delve a little deeper into the Sai Mystery. That is the highest achievement possible. Embodiments of the Divine Atman! Develop peace and equilibrium of mind and spend your lives in sacred pursuits like service to the distressed, the diseased and the deprived. That is My advice, and that will ensure you My Blessings.

22. Hospitals and health

Date: **28 August 1976** / Location: **Brindavan** / Occasion: **Ganesh Chaturthi, Inauguration of the Sri Sathya Sai Hospital for Women and Children - Whitefield**

HEALTH is an essential requisite of man. The man afflicted with ill-health is powerless to execute even the least burdensome assignment. The scriptures proclaim that health is the very root of all endeavour in the four fields of human achievement - Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha (righteousness, wealth, desire and liberation). Without health man cannot brave temptations, earn a decent living, fulfil his basic needs or succeed in spiritual sadhana. Man can engage himself in obligatory and optional functions only if he is healthy. Food and recreational habits are the two main causes for ill-health. Great care has to be bestowed to ensure that injurious tendencies do not affect these two. At present, though drugs have multiplied and hospitals have been established in every nook and corner, ill-health is also widespread. This situation is attributable to the spread of deleterious food habits and pastimes.

Physical and mental activities are closely interrelated

It is also necessary to keep the environment of the place where one works and lives, unpolluted by smoke, dust or dirt. The clothes that one wears as well as the body that one is encased in, both have to be purged and kept clean, Health endows a person with joy and brightness. The fruits of the tree of human life are sweet, but they are encased in the bitter skin of egoism and ignorance and have hard inedible seeds of desire, anger, pride, etc. One has to exercise one's intelligence to peel off the outer skin of ignorance, throw off the seeds of vice and wickedness and partake of the sweet kernel of life.

To remove the evil of egoism, service is the most efficient instrument. Service will also impress on the person doing service, the Unity of all mankind. He who dedicates his time, skill and strength to service, can never meet defeat, distress or disappointment, for service is its own reward. His word will be ever sweet and soft, his gestures ever revered and humble. He will have no foe, no fatigue, no fear.

The units of the Sathya Sai Seva Organisation are engaged in enthusiastic service in the two areas of Health and Education. To improve and maintain the health of the people, continuous education on the principles and practice of hygiene and environmental cleanliness is essential. Education is the most effective safeguard against physical and mental ill-health. So these two activities are closely inter-related. The body is a temporary habitation; it is subject to all kinds of disease and injury. Yet the body is the boat on which alone we can cross the ocean of samsara (birth and death cycle). The boat has to be kept trim and serviceable. It should not distract our attention more than the minimum necessary for its upkeep. It has to be used for reducing the burden of others, and should not itself become a burden on us. It should serve others, not demand service from them. That is the reason why this hospital is being established here to remedy disease and help people to keep their bodies in good condition.

Most hospitals indulge in profiteering

People of this village and villages that are in the surrounding area, will resort to this hospital for medical relief and advice. Unfortunately hospitals that treat patients with love and care, with dedication and devotion, are a rarity. There are hospitals with costly equipments and expert doctors, huge buildings and spick-and-span interiors, but they indulge more in profiteering than affording relief. Their services are for those who can pay large sums of money. Villagers are not welcome there, who in turn do not feel at ease to approach them. Therefore this hospital is being started amidst the villages so that expert advice and treatment can be rendered, to them in a loving atmosphere of reverence and devotion. No charge will be levied here for any service. The villages and others can come here, regain their health, and return hale and hearty in order to carry out their tasks and fulfil their responsibilities. The doctors and volunteers who help in this hospitals must feel it a part of their duty to advise the villagers about environmental hygiene and preventive measures. The members of the Sathya Sai Seva Dhal have a special duty for this type of service. They have to visit the villages, and after winning the confidence and love of the people, advise them on good food habits and other means of maintaining health. They must also exhort them to

resort to this hospital as soon as the first symptoms of ill-health are evident. Early treatment will save the villagers from spending many days in bed away from the fields.

Educate the villagers on the value of nutrient foods

The villager now lives on food that is deficient in vitamins and proteins, though he is growing vegetables and food that provide these ingredients in plenty and selling them to city-dwellers. He has to be told of the value of fruits and vegetables as a source of nutrients that will promote and preserve his health, for healthy parents mean healthy children, and sick parents pass on their illhealth to the coming generations. Members of the units of the Sathya Sai Seva Organisation can also join the Seva Dhal in this campaign of educating the villagers. This activity is as meritorious as worship itself.

Today is the Vighneshwara festival, the day on which the entire country is worshipping the elephant-headed God who helps man overcome all obstacles. Worshipping Vinayaka or Vighneshwara or Ganapathi, as he is also called, endows man with the courage and confidence needed to enter upon and carry through-any undertaking in the world. The elephant is the largest animal of the forest. It is very Intelligent and has a powerful memory. When it marches through the thick jungle, it clears a path for all other animals to pass. The elephant-headed God confers intelligence and memory and the power to subdue evil and vice. Thus he is also a path- maker. So it is only appropriate that every rite, ceremony or project should be started with the worship of this God. Today we are Inaugurating this hospital so that it will provide good and lasting service to the people of this region.

Doctors sweet words are more effective than drugs

I must also point out to the doctors serving here that perhaps even more than the drugs they prescribe, the sweet, soft words they speak and the love and sympathy they evince can cure better and quicker the illness of their patients. Look upon them as your own kith and kin, as your special guests and as your closest friends; and attend to them lovingly and with unflinching care. I call

upon you to maintain this attitude in every situation. Remember that the patient has to cooperate with you in order that you may effect the cure, and when cured, the patient confers on you satisfaction, joy and a sense of elation. Be grateful to the patient for all this. We have in this hospital as doctor, a lady devotee who is highly qualified and who has done signal service for the backward regions in Nigeria and Ethiopia in Africa. We have also others, equally able and enthusiastic. Experts in special branches of medicine and surgery will also be visiting this hospital off and on, and diagnosing, advising and helping patients who need their attention. It is now for you to make the best use of these facilities offered free and with fullness of heart.

I am glad that the members of the Panchayath of this place as well as of nearby villages are here today and have been with us ever since this project was started. If only they help the patients from the villages to be happy and healthy they will have no more need to beg for votes from door to door when the elections come round. The voters would themselves come in large numbers to get them elected in order to avail of their services in greater measure. India was long famous for the sense of compassion that animated her peoples. She is now dishonoured by some as a 'poor' country. No! She was for centuries the preceptor of the world, and she is assuming that status again today. India is the land where the Ideals of service, renunciation and spiritual endeavour were born and have flourished. It is only recently, after India fell under the impact of alien cultures which highlighted material comfort, physical luxury, sensual liberty and exterior display, that Indians have trodden the wrong path of exploitation and violence, idleness and pompousness. With the spread of alien cultures and alien ways of thought and life, diseases too have multiplied and mental imbalances have increased. But when simplicity, humility and the idea of social service (having root in the worship of the God in man) are restored, the nation will again be happy and healthy, full of peace, prosperity and joy.

23. The Sai Religion

Date: 01 October 1976 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

WHOM the Muslims adore as Allah, the Christians as Jehovah, the Vaishnavas as Phullabjaksha and the Shaivites as Shambhu, who grants, in answer to their several prayers, health, prosperity and happiness to all, wherever they may be, He, the One God, is the God of all mankind.

India has been teaching since ages the message of the spirit and the means to gain and ensure equanimity and joy. She has stood forth as the preceptor of the world for centuries. The prayer that she has taught her people is: Lokah samasthah sukhino bhavanthu (May all people everywhere be happy). This is the consummation of Vedhic thought since time Immemorial. Such wholesome ideals were propagated and fostered by the rulers of this land, the seers and yogis (God-centred persons) who guided the populace, and the chaste mothers who reared generations in the atmosphere of spiritual effort. But due to vicissitudes in the country's history, when the people were subjected to pressures and counter-pressures, these ideals suffered a setback. The abstractions of faith received concrete form and got crystallised into specific identifiable names and forms. Each new attitude or aptitude, each new concretisation, became a special sect and every theory enveloped itself in its own shell.

Growth of new sects and sets of belief in India

Thus the one Vedhic religion became the parent of a number of sects and sets of belief, like Ganapathya (centering around the concept of Ganapathi), Shaktheya (centering around the concept of Cosmic Energy as the expression of the Divine), Soura (centering around the Sun as the source, sustenance and goal of spiritual achievement), Charvaka (centering around the concept of pleasure and material prosperity) and Veerasaiva (centering around Shiva as the inner motivator of all beings). Every one of these sects, and many more besides, elaborated their own rituals and modes of worship, their own priorities in spiritual attainment and their own body of doctrines about the

individual, the objective world and God. The purpose of these codes and modes was, in all cases, to purify the mind and Insist on the practice of high moral virtues. But this was soon ignored and importance came to be attached to superficial conformity and outer purity. The craving for personal aggrandizement and power made every sect, faith and religion, rigid and dry. There is a great need today to discover the Inner spring of all faiths, the spring that fertilises the outer rites and ceremonies. A little quiet study will reveal that there is an undercurrent of moral enthusiasm and spiritual adventure.

There is only one caste, the caste of Humanity

The word generally used for religion is matha; the word to indicate the mind is mathi. Putting the two together it can be said that matha is primarily engaged or ought to be engaged in straightening and strengthening the mathi. The goal, the purpose, the key, the essence of all creeds, faiths and religions is just this. the sublimation of the mind of man to guarantee liberation for the individual concerned and happiness for the society of which he is a unit. Principles and practices have grouped around this prime need, and various creeds are the result. Religions attempt to implant holy ideals in the heart of man but man does not allow them to sprout and grow. His egoistic craving for power and competitive success has, in most cases, persuaded him to use religion as an instrument of torture and persecution. Instead of uniting mankind in a common endeavour, it has become a system of walled enclosures, guarded by hate and fanaticism. So each religion is an armed camp sunk in self-aggrandizement, trying to wean others into itself and preventing defections from itself. Religion, therefore, is being condemned as the root of chaos and conflict. In spite of great progress in many other areas of life, religious animosity is aflame even today in many parts of the world. It has to be emphasised that religion is not the root cause of this state of affairs. The factional fights and fanatic hatred are due to the unruly ego that is given free play. Religion strives to destroy just this vicious tendency. So it has to be supported, not condemned. What has to be condemned is the narrow, perverted attitude of hating those who do not agree with you or who hold different opinions of the mysterious force that animates the universe.

Religious wars and conflicts breed in the slime of ignorance and avarice. When people are blind to the truth that the human family is one indivisible Unity, they grope in the dark and are afraid of strange touch. The cultivation of love, alone, can convince man of this truth that there is only one caste - the caste of Humanity, and only one religion - the religion of Love. Since no religion upholds violence or despises love, it is wrong to ascribe the chaos to religion.

The diversity we experience is not a true picture

It is also not advisable to engage in campaigns of vilification or exaggerated propagation of any religion with a view to draw votaries. If only each one lives up to the ideals propounded by the founders of one's religion, unaffected by greed or hate, the world will be a happier and more peaceful habitation for man.

The religion of the Hindhus stressed the Unity of all creation and declared that the diversity we experience is not a true picture. But since faith in the One come into awareness only to a mind clarified to the utmost, the religion had soon to posit duality, and even multiplicity, with deities for every facet of the whole. The most widespread of these qualities is the Shaivite and Vaishnavite faiths, centered around the Shiva and Vishnu aspects of the One. This process of splitting into diverse viewpoints has taken place in all the major religions. Islam has the Shia and Sunni sects; Christianity has Catholics and Protestants. But however deep the cleavage, no sect denies God and no sect extols violence and falsehood. Names may be different, the facets emphasised may be different, but the Almighty Providence is denoted as Absolute and Eternal. The terminology may be different but the concept is not different. God may be referred to as Allah, prayer may be called namaz, Priests may be known as khajees, scholars may be hailed as mullahs, the Bible may be in the form of the Holy Quran. But the undercurrent of energising power in all cases is love, love of all beings towards all beings. The founders had always in view the Unity of all life and the progressive march of man from mere humanness to the heights of Divinity.

Shankaracharya's adhwaitha philosophy

The first among the interpreters of the Vedas (most ancient revealed scriptures) to found a school of philosophy and lay down the path of spiritual discipline to benefit from that school, is Shankaracharya, born in the State of Kerala. During his very short life, he established on secure foundations of logic and intuition, the truth that there is only One God and that all else is an appearance of the One Reality. This is the 'no-two' or adhwaitha philosophy or faith, that explains the individual nature and God in perfect harmony. The Vedhic axioms - Ekoham Bahushyam (I am One, let Me become many), Ishwaras sarva bhoothanam (God is immanent in all), Ishavasyamidham sarvam (All this enveloped and penetrated by God) - are thus illumined by the intellect of Shankaracharya into patent truths.

Merging in the Source is the ultimate destiny

Monism, as propounded by Shankaracharya on the basis of Vedhic texts, seemed to the majority of individuals too simple a solution to satisfy their inner urges. They had in them the yearning to worship, to dedicate themselves to a higher power. They could not grasp the truth of their inner Reality being the one and only. Their emotions and activities had to be sublimated by disciplines of devotion. Therefore, Ramanujacharya commented upon the Vedhic texts and religious scriptures from a new point of view. This made the adhwaitha take on a special outlook. So it was called visishta (special) adhwaitha (non-dualism). The path of devotion was laid down to enable man to merge with God. The goal is mergence, as the rivers know and strive for. The waters of the sea are raised by the Sun as clouds into the sky and the clouds pour them as rain back onto the earth, to flow back into the sea through many a ravine, as a stream or tributary-fed river. Merging in the Source from which one took form, is the ultimate destiny. The river has the passion of overwhelming love which leads it down the slopes until it reaches the loved one, where the lover, loved and love, all three merge in one illuminating ecstasy. Prema (highest love) is the attachment to God that does not allow anything to interfere or diminish its quality or depth. God is loved by the bhaktha (devotee) for His sake and not for any incidental

benefit or blessing. It is spontaneous, sustaining and sublime, like a child before the mirror enjoying the reflections of its own pranks and gestures. Complete surrender to the extent of the annihilation of one's own individuality is also beyond most aspirants. Sugar cannot be tasted and enjoyed by sugar; you have to be an ant so that you can revel in the sweetness of the stuff. This craving of man was sought to be satisfied by Madhvacharya, who declared that the jeeva (individual soul) will remain ever separate from the Universal, and there can be no merging. In adhwaitha, a flash of intellectual illumination reveals that the Atman (Divinity) alone exists, and that all else is deluding appearance. The visishtadhwaitha posits that the river is an integral part of the sea. Dhwaitha points out that the joy derived from adoration and worship is enough to draw the fulfilling Grace of God.

All paths laid down by all seers lead to the same goal

There were other seers, too, who laid down paths towards the same goal. They announced that the universe belongs to God and that man should not desire to accumulate or appropriate any portion of the Divine Treasure. They advised that the sapling of devotion must be protected from the pests of sloth, doubt and fanaticism by the cultivation of valour and vigilance. Of the major religions I may mention one, namely Buddhism. Buddha was so agonised by the suffering that haunts the life of man that he investigated the behaviour of the mind and intellect of man and discovered remedial disciplines; he analysed the vagaries of the mind which lead man into the whirlpools of desires; he analysed the ways of reason, too and spotted the areas where prejudice takes root; above all, he preached surrender to dharma (righteousness), to compassion and to Buddha (the Enlightened One). Jainism, the religion that was rendered an all- India movement by Mahaveera, extols jina (the heroic conqueror of the senses), the emotions and the stratagems of the intellect. He called upon all to carry out the duties commensurate to their status and professions, with steady faith and enthusiasm. He declared that all things and beings are holy in their own right and are but pilgrims on the road to Realisation. Any Injury inflicted on any of them is an intervention in that sacred journey and so has to be scrupulously avoided.

The 'Sai religion' is the essence of all faiths

Zorastrianism, the Parsi religion, was founded by Zoraster, who wanted that man should ever have the Fire of Wisdom blazing in his consciousness so that evil thoughts and tendencies might be reduced to ashes. It has to infuse all thoughts, words and deeds with the illumination of virtue and vigour, it must destroy all worldly desire and render man pure for entry into the heaven of freedom. Adoration, meditation and acts of selfless service are essential for the dawn of enlightenment.

The Sai religion, if the name of religion in its literal sense of binding man to God is accepted, is the essence of all faiths and religions, including those like Islam, Christianity and Judaism. The motive behind the formation and propagation of all these different faiths is the same. The founders and propagators were all persons filled with love and wisdom. Their goal and purpose were the same. None had the design to divide, disturb, or destroy. They attempted to do good, see good and be good. They sought to train the passions and the emotions, to educate the Impulses and Instincts and direct the faculty of reason to paths beneficial to the individual and society. They knew that the mind, which is the breeding ground of desire and attachment, ambition and aspiration, has to be cleansed and properly oriented.

Let the family become a centre of harmonious living

Sai considers that practice of these disciplines is much more essential than blind faith in a bunch of philosophical theories. No one has the right to advise others unless he is already practising what he preaches. First establish the reign of love between the various members in your own home. Let the family become a centre of harmonious living, sympathetic understanding and mutual faith.

The holy duty of man is to be ever aware of the Atman (Divine spirit) that is installed in every living being. This will make him conscious of the kinship he has with all. This is the basis of the brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of

God. Cast away the vice of egoism, the evil of greed and the poison of envy. When you seek joy from something outside you, remember that a far greater joy lies in wait within your own inner consciousness. When you are afraid of someone or something outside you, remind yourself that the fear is born, fed and fertilised in your own mind and that you can overcome it by denying it. How can fear counter the path of a spiritual aspirant? It can hide in no shadow, it can pester no sadhaka (spiritual aspirant) who has God in his heart. Faith in the Almighty God is the impregnable armour that the sadhaka can wear; and peoples of all lands are sadhakas, whether they know it or not. Be steady, do not waver, keep straight on, hold fast to the ideal without despair. Pray until God relents; do not turn away sadly if God does not shower Grace when you expect it. When a religion wants to extend its influence it has to resort to vilification of other religions and exaggeration of its own excellence. Pomp and publicity become more important than practice and faith. But Sai wants that the votaries of each religion must cultivate faith in its own excellence and realise their validity by their own intense practice. That is the Sai religion, the religion that feeds and fosters all religions and emphasises their common Greatness. Take up this religion, boldly and joyfully.

The Lord is devoid of attachment or hatred. He comes on a Mission and is bent only on that task. It is His nature to support the right and admonish the wrong. His task is to restore vision to man, to turn his footsteps along the path of morality and selfcontrol, so that he may achieve Self-knowledge.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

24. Global bhajan

Date: 14 November 1976 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Akhanda Bhajan

Shravanam (hearing the Glory of the Lord),
Keerthanam (singing the name and Glow of God),
Vishnu Smaranam (allowing the mind to dwell on that Glow),
Padhasevanam (adoring the Feet of the Lord),
Vandhanam (experiencing gratitude and joy at His Grace),
Dasyam (feeling oneself as His instrument),
Sakhyam (awareness of his being one's constant and closest companion),
and
Atma Nivedanam (dedicating one's full being to Him) - these are the nine steps In the path of Devotion.

"Listen, O people! Revel in this iron Kaliyuga, for there is none so propitious for liberation such that mere remembrance of the Name of the Lord and adoring Him thus are enough to win His Grace and set you free."

"This is bad, this is good - can such judgements ever be made about anything in God's creation when all are manifestations of His Will."

Sankeerthan is manifestation of inner ecstasy

Embodiments of the Pure Atman ! Last November, on the 23rd, people from all parts of the world had assembled here to celebrate the Golden Jubilee and office-bearers of the centres were here for the Second World Conference and other functions that took place. Later they expressed their desire that they be allotted a date before the close of the jubilee Year, when they in their own places could celebrate the happy occasion. In order to overcome their disappointment it was decided that in all centres all over the world, bhajan and nama-sankeerthan (congregational singing and spirituals) be held for full

twenty four hours, beginning at 6-30 p.m. on Saturday (yesterday) and ending at 6-30 p.m. today. Therefore in 42 countries around the globe more than 7,000 centres have enthusiastically taken up this pleasant assignment. This has been named an akhanda-bhajan, that is to say, bhajan done without a break.

But, was it really an akhanda-bhajan? It is begun at 6-30 on the evening of one day, and is closed at 6-30 on the evening of the next day. Can we call it 'unbroken' bhajan? What is a period of 24 hours when we consider the vastness of the Universe and the eternity of time? it is just a wink, a minute part of the life of man on earth. By engaging yourselves in the recitation of the Name of God for one single day, you claim to have done bhajan "without a break!" **Akhanda-bhajan must be as continuous as breathing itself if it is to deserve its name.** You must probe into the real significance of the sankeerthan that you are engaged in. Keerthan is "singing aloud the Glory of God." Sankeerthan is the process of singing that originates in the heart, not from the lips or tongue. It is the expression of the joyous thrill that wells up from the heart when the Glory of God is remembered. It is the spontaneous manifestation of inner ecstasy, No attention is paid to the blame or praise that others may give. It does not seek the admiration or the appreciation of the listeners. It is sung for one's own joy, one's own satisfaction, one's own delight. Keerthan of this supreme type, alone, deserves the name sankeerthan.

Nama Sankeerthan can cleanse the atmosphere

Singing this intense yearning for God and enjoying the experience of adoring Him, helps to purify the atmosphere. Man is today forced to breathe the air polluted by sounds that denote violence, hatred, cruelty and wickedness. Therefore he is fast losing the high attainments that are in store for him. The vibrations of the nama sankeerthan (heart-felt recitation and Lord's name) can cleanse the atmosphere and render it pure, calm and ennobling. It is with this high purpose in view that this programme of global sankeerthan was designed. No man can escape the influence of the pollution of the air he breathes. The sounds that we produce, with good intent or bad, spread

throughout the air around us. This is our daily experience. The sounds produced at radio stations pass through the atmosphere and reach our homes when we tune in. The vibrations travel vast distances and affect the nature of those who inhale them. The atmosphere affects also the food man consumes. The pollution in the atmosphere is imbibed by the plants, the plants supply the grain, the grain is the basis of the meal and the meal shapes the character and behaviour of the person who consumes it. When the environment is clean and free from evil vibrations, the food too, is pure, and the person develops a tendency to be loving and simple. It is to ensure such an atmosphere that this sadhana (spiritual effort) initiated the world over.

Prayer should come shrieking through the heart

When a man falls into a well, of what use is it if he controls his voice and his emotions and whispers quietly, "I have fallen into this well, I have fallen into this well. I am in great danger. Please save me?" No one will be able to hear or save him. He must shout full-throated, with all the anguish he is experiencing and with the extreme desire to be saved, "I HAVE FALLEN INTO THE WELL! SAVE ME! SAVE ME SOME ONE!" Then can he hope to get succour. Similarly, when you are caught in the coils of this world, when you have fallen into this deep well of worldly misery, shout with all your might, with all your heart, that you may be saved by God. There is no use muttering faintly and half-heartedly, "Save me, save me; I am floundering in this samsar (worldly life)." When the prayer comes shrieking through the heart, help is assured.

Sankeerthan or bhajan is of four types.

Guna-sankeerthan,

Leela-sankeerthan,

Bhava-sankeerthan,

and Nama-sankeerthan.

guna means 'attributes' (of God). So guna-sankeerthan is the adoration, in song, of the manifold Attributes of God - Omnipresence, Omniscience, Compassion, Majesty, etc.

Leela means 'divine sport.' Therefore leela-sankeerthan is the adoration, in song, of the various expressions of these attributes as evidenced by the accounts of sages and seers of all faiths.

Bhava means 'attitude' (of the mind). So bhava-sankeerthan means the adoration, in song, of God pictured and contacted under various relationships.

Path of devotion is the most effective sadhana

Some may prefer to adore Him as the Giver of equanimity (shantham), others as a Friend, Guide and Guardian (sakhya), still others as the child one loves and tends (vathsalya) and yet others as the lover whom one loves with sovereign love (madhura).

Nama means the Name of God, and so nama-sankeerthan means the adoration of God, calling upon Him by various Names, each describing His glory, His achievements, His relationship with the individual. The Names are many, or even countless; it is so in all languages. We have many groups of 'thousand and eight Names' which can be used, for God, as the Vedas (ancient revealed sacred scriptures) declare, has a 'thousand heads, a thousand eyes and a thousand feet.' Devotees can adore Him and derive bliss through that adoration, filling each Name with the meaning and significance it carries.

By whatever means God is adored, the path of devotion is the easiest and the most effective for it is a sadhana of the heart, and results in love and service to all as fellow pilgrims to the same Divine Goal.

Some people do question the propriety of calling God by means of such a multiplicity of names. But each Name is indicative only of one aspect of Divinity. It denotes a single part of the Supreme Personality. The eye, the

nose, the mouth, the hand or the finger may be denoted by distinct words, but they all belong to the same individual. So, too, one must remember that every Name is but a facet, a part, a ray, of the Supreme. The sadhana consists in recognising and becoming aware of the One that supports and sustains the many. That is the precious gem of wisdom that one must secure and treasure.

Let Liberation be your only desire

There is, however, a thief that lurks in the inner consciousness of man, planning to rob him of this gem. He is kama (desire). When we have gained what we desire, lobha (greed), the accomplice of the thief, steps out and prods us to desire a few more objects. When what is desired is not gained, another accomplice, krodha (anger), steps out and prods us to hate and harm those whom we suspect stood in the way of the gain. Of course you cannot instantly eliminate all desire from the mind. So you should nourish the one desire prescribed by the Vedas.

The Vedas lay down four goals before man: dharma (righteousness), artha (wealth), kama (desire) and moksha (liberation). Since the first and the last are difficult to attain without detachment and deprivation of sensual pleasures, man has given them up as impracticable and is struggling in all lands and climes with the middle two - wealth and desire. All the fear and misery of life can be traced to this dire mistake. What has to be done is to take the four as two inseparable pairs, Dharma-artha and kama-moksha. **That is to say, earn wealth through righteousness and use wealth for the promotion of righteousness. And let liberation be your only desire.**

Words have a profound effect on the mind

Liberation means getting rid of bondage. Many people give up hearth and home, wife and children, property and possessions, and escaping into forest retreats pride themselves on their 'renunciation.' But this act of fleeing cannot be honoured by that name, for such an act by itself cannot confer

release, when the mind still remains bound. The fundamental bond which has to be got rid of is the bond of ajnana (primal ignorance). Death is sweeter than the bondage that Ignorance can impose on man. Cast away ignorance - you are free, liberated from all bonds that very moment. All spiritual disciplines have this liberation as their goal.

Nama-sankeerthan (Heart-felt singing of divine names) too, helps you get rid of this basic ignorance. Those who rely on reason alone or on the limited laws of science, argue that the repetition of the Name which is, after all, sound, cannot cleanse or correct the mind of man. But the Name is not just 'sound.' You are sitting quietly there, listening, but if some one merely says, 'scorpion,' you get frightened. Or when some one says, the juice of a lemon, your mouth starts watering. You may be sitting before a plateful of delicacies, but if some one speaks of something dirty or disgusting, you are apt to refuse the food.

The mere sound creates so much of reaction: A certain officer was inspecting the work of a teacher in a school. He had a hearty contempt for mere talk, so he asked the teacher, "How can you ever transform the nature of these children by the words you utter? Show them by deeds; act, don't speak."

The teacher protested and argued that words have a profound effect on the mind. The argument continued for some time. At last the teacher resolved upon a plan to convince the officer of his point of view.

He told a student of his class, "Here! Catch this officer by the neck and push him out of the room." Hearing those words, the officer flew into a great rage and started pouring abuse on the teacher. The teacher said, "Sir, I only said a few words. No one pushed you or hit you or touched you. It was all mere sound. But see how it has enraged you. Words, sir, do help in modifying character and shaping nature. They have vast power," he said.

Do not seek to discover the evil in others

When words referring to worldly situations have such a transforming effect on

the mind of man, words conveying spiritual and elevated meaning will certainly help in cleansing and correcting the mind of man. When we fill the air with harshness, we become harsh in nature. When we fill the atmosphere with hatred we, too, have perforce to breathe the air, and are hated in turn. When we saturate the air with sounds full of reverence, humility, love, courage, self-confidence and tolerance, we benefit from those qualities ourselves. The heart is the film and the mind is the lens; turn the lens towards the world and worldly pictures will fall on the heart. Turn it towards God, and it will transmit pictures of the Divine. Therefore always do good, see good, remember good and be good. Do not seek to discover or discuss the evil in others for the attempt will tarnish your own mind. When you are engaged in searching for the faults and failings of others, you are paving the way for developing those faults and failings in yourself. Dwell on the good in others, and in time it will prove an asset to you. The goodness latent in you shall then be urged to sprout and blossom.

Every thought leaves an impression on the mind

When you pray. "Swami, appear in my dream tonight," there is a chance that you may be lucky to visualise Swami in your dream. But if you pray, turning your attention to bad things, "Swami, let not a pig or an ass appear in my dream this night," in all likelihood, the pig and the ass will present themselves to you in your dream. Why pay undue attention to things you do not need and do not benefit from? Every thought leaves an impression on the mind, so be ever alert that contact with evil is avoided. Ideas which are opposed to spiritual tendencies, that narrow the limits of love, that provoke anger or greed, that cause disgust - these have to be shut out. For the sadhaka this is a very essential discipline. He must sublimate such thoughts before they cause an impact on the mind, and should concentrate on the very source of the thinking process. This can be achieved by the practice of equanimity, unaffectedness or balance. This attitude is the mark of the jnani (liberated person) and is called jnana-shakthi (the power of wisdom). Of course it is not easily acquired. The path of devotion and dedication - the bhakthi-marga - is easiest for most. It is attainable by love, for love leads you quickly to the Goal.

God responds to prayer that emanates from the heart

Once upon a time, Namadheva (noted for his mastery of the bhakthi-marga through constant recital of the Name) and Jnanadheva (noted for his mastery of the path of wisdom), were together crossing a thick jungle. They were both afflicted with severe thirst but could not find water anywhere in spite of a tiresome search. At last they came upon a ruined well with a little water far down its depths, but they had no means of going down the steep sides. So Jnanadheva used his power and transformed himself into a bird. The bird flew down and drank its fill, only to change itself into Jnanadheva again! Namadheva relied upon the power of the Name. He sat on the edge of the well and called, 'Narayana,' in great anguish. God responded to his prayer. The water rose up to where he sat and he could gather it in his palms and quench his thirst. He had no need to embody himself anew and disembody himself again for the satisfaction of a physical thirst.

When God is invoked by prayer that emanates from the heart, let it be but once, He responds immediately. But now the call emanates only from the lips, it has not the ring of sincerity and faith. From the lips, it must roll back on the tongue: from the tongue, it must go deep into the throat; from the throat, it must reach down into the heart. Continuous sadhana alone can grant success in this endeavour. You must become like an Infant with no inhibitions or stratagems. The mother may be attending to her daily chores on the first floor of the house, leaving the infant in the cradle on the ground floor. But when the child sends up a loud wail, either through fear or hunger, she rushes down to lift the child, fondle it, feed it and comfort it on her lap. She will not stay away because of the wall not being musical or melodious.

Man's life has become pathetically artificial

Similarly, the Mother of the Universe. will not weigh the quantity of yoga (divine communion) that you have practised, or calculate the number of Japams (repetition of sacred formulae) you have rolled on the rosary, or the time taken by you for sadhanas of various kinds. She can be moved and Her

Grace can be won by a genuine appeal emanating from the heart. Man is finding it increasingly difficult to call upon the Supreme Source of power and grace with such genuineness. His life has become pathetically artificial.

Kamadhenu (the wish-fulfilling heavenly cow, can be drawn and tied to a post by means of a rope. God, too, can be drawn towards you by the rope (the Name), and tied to the post (the tongue). Then His Name will be dancing upon the tongue forever, conferring the sweetness of His Majesty. The Name has to be sung for your own delight, to quench your own thirst, to appease your own hunger. No one eats to appease another's hunger, nor takes drugs to alleviate another's illness. So do not care for what others feel about your dhyana (meditation) or bhajan. Do not seek the approval, appreciation or admiration of others, or refrain from dhyana or bhajan because others dislike it or ridicule it. Be self-reliant, self-confident. See through your own eyes; hear through your own ears. Most people today believe their ears and deny their eyes; or they use the eyes, ears and even the brains of others and thus fall into error and fear.

You are shaped by the company you keep

Consider this : Here you do bhajans twice a day, but bhojans (meals) are taken four times a day! Physical exercises are resorted to in order to make the body strong and fit. Dhanya (grain, cereal) is grown and stored and used to strengthen the body; dhyana (meditation) is equally necessary for strengthening the mind so that in its weak state it may not yield to the viruses of lust, greed, anger, hatred, pride, etc. If the body is well-developed and the head is weak, it is a case fit for the lunatic asylum. Food should be for both body and head, and both these should be dedicated to the Realisation of God, the Truth behind and beyond all truths.

Seeking good company and spending all available time in that comradeship called satsang (holy company), will help the aspirant a great deal. You are shaped by the company you keep; a piece of iron turns into rust if it seeks the company of the soil. It glows, it softens and takes on useful shapes if it enjoys the company of fire. Dust can fly if it chooses the wind as its friend; it has to

end as slime in a pit if it prefers water. It has neither wing nor foot, yet it can either fly or walk, rise or fall, according to the friend it selects. Knowing this truth, Kabir, the great mystic-poet, sang, "Here are my prostrations to the bad. Here are my prostrations to the good." When asked why he offered prostrations to the bad along with the good, he replied, "I prostrate before the bad so that they might leave me alone; I do the same before the good, so that they might remain near me always."

By the power of sadhana, man becomes Divine

Here is a burning coal; here, at some distance, is a cold piece of coal. When they contact each other, the heat spreads to the cold piece of coal, and the part that is in contact with the burning coal is rendered hot and red. If you vigorously sway a fan over the contact area, soon the entire coal becomes a burning ember. 'Near,' alone, is not enough for realisation; one has to make it 'dear' by the fan of sadhana. This is the power of sadhana, by which the human becomes Divine. The Vedas say that he who knows Brahman, becomes Brahman. The coal knew fire and became fire.

Sadhana is the cultivation of prema (love). Be full of love, taste the exhilaration that love can confer. Man is love embodied: he thirsts for love and he finds real joy in loving and receiving selfless love. You have forgotten your real nature, which is love, and so you exude misery, hate and jealousy. Never be morose or melancholic. Let all see you exuberant with love and light and joy. Do not entertain passion or prejudice, anger or anxiety. Take the sadhana of the Name, the nama-sankeerthan, and the path will be smooth.

This programme of bhajan continuously done for 24 hours all round the world in all lands, has therefore and spread the message of love through the Names of Embodiment of Universal love. It has saturated the atmosphere with thoughts of God and of the peace and joy that He showers. The bhajan that you have done here has affected not only this particular area and its environment, but it will transmute the entire atmosphere. Continue this attitude of devotion and humility, of service and tolerance, and the atmosphere will not be polluted by hatred. Do not contaminate the air by

voices of acrimony, scandal, insult or slander. Keep silent when you feel like expressing such ideas; that itself is a service to you and to others.

Life is a song, sing it. That is what Krishna taught through His life. Arjuna heard that song on the battlefield, where tensions were at their highest and when the fate of millions was to be decided by the sword. Krishna sang the Geetha for Arjuna to listen. Geetha means 'song,' and He sang because He was Ananda (Divine Bliss), wherever he might be - in Gokulam, on the banks of the Yamuna or at Kurukshethra between the warring armies. You too must pass your days in song. Let your whole life be a bhajan. Believe that God is everywhere at all times, and derive strength, comfort and joy by singing His Glory in His Presence. Let melody and harmony surge up from your hearts and let all take delight in the Love that you express through that song.

25. Signs and wonders

Date: 23 November 1976 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Birthday - 51

THE conflict between persons who accept God and deny Him, those who declare that God is to be found in this or that place and those who affirm that He can be found nowhere, is never ending; it has continued throughout the ages. While considering this situation, one has to remember that while it is unnecessary to awaken a person already awake and easy to awaken a person who is asleep, we cannot awaken, however much we try, a person not wanting to awaken! Those who do not know, can be taught by means of simple illustrations what they do not know. But those afflicted with half-knowledge and proud of that acquisition are beyond any further education.

The two eyes give a picture of a vast expanse of space, but they cannot see the face to which they belong! They are Important instruments of the body, but they cannot see the entire body. When you wish to see your face and back, you have to keep one mirror in front and another one behind you, so that in the front mirror you can see the reflection of your back also. So, too, when you desire to know your reality (face) and your future (back), you have to adjust the mirror of 'Selfconfidence' (confidence that you are the Self) in front and the mirror of Divine Grace behind you Without these two, to affirm that you are aware of your Truth or of your destiny, is sheer fantasy.

Divine Avathars attract by their inexplicable acts

The Divine is now denoted by various words that are common currency in limited human vocabularies. They name phenomena revealing the Divine, 'miracles', 'magic', 'wonders', etc.. Of course, man cannot contain in his mind more than he can hold. He cannot express in words the in-expressible. Only those who have dived deep and contacted the underlying principle of Love, can picture Divinity with some clarity. The Divinity that is Me has not been acquired or earned, nor has it been added or evinced after the lapse of some years in the middle of this life.

The Divine has to reveal Itself through these manifestations, largely shaped and modified by the nature of the times, the region and the cultural environment. The signs and wonders that I manifest are given names that do not connote the purpose or effect. They can be called chamathkara, that lead on to samskara (purification acts), which in turn urge one on towards paropakara (helping others) and finally result in sakshatkara (divine vision). Chamathkara is any act which attracts on account of its inexplicability. This aspect of attraction is Inherent in the Avathar (divine incarnation). The very name, Rama, means 'He who pleases or causes delight. Krishna means 'He who attracts, draws towards Himself (Karshathithi- Krishna). This attribute of attractions is a characteristic of Divinity.

Attraction is the very nature of the Divine

Why does the Divine attract? Is it to deceive or mislead? No. It is to transform, reconstruct, reform - a process called samskara. What is the purpose of the reconstruction? To make the person useful and serviceable for society, to efface his ego, and to affirm in him the unity of all beings In God. The person who has undergone samskara becomes a humble servant of those who need help. This is the stage of paropakara. Service of this kind done with reverence and selflessness, prepares man to realise the One that pervades the many. The last stage is sakshatkara. The Vedas (ancient scriptures of Divine Knowledge) proclaim that Immortality (the stage when one is merged in the Birthless, Deathless, Universal Entity), is feasible through renunciation and detachment only, and not through rituals, progeny or wealth. When man renounces selfish desires, his love expands unto the farthest regions of the Universe until he becomes aware of the cosmic love that feeds all the four processes mentioned above. It is important that you know this underlying urge in all as I do. Let us consider the chamathkara, acts that attract and cause wonder. You see a flower. You long to hold it in your hand only when its colour or fragrance is attractive. You enter the market and see heaps of fruits. If the fruits are not attractive, you have no urge to eat them and benefit by them. Attraction is the very nature of the Divine.

Reason cannot measure the Divine

Once the person is drawn near, the process of samskara starts. Without this, man remains fallow and feeble. He has no dignity or personality. A worthless steel lump is transformed by skilful manipulation and reconstruction into a watch that is worth several hundred rupees; this is the result of samskara, which turned it into a useful tool for indicating time. Thus man can also be transformed into a noble, efficient, happy and disciplined member of society by the implanting of good thoughts, good feelings, good deeds and good emotions. Such transformed persons will spontaneously engage themselves in the task of promoting human welfare. They will be promoters of the ideals of the brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God. Nowadays persons who have no experience or knowledge of spiritual science and no conception of the Divine, make pronouncements on such subjects into which they stray. The eye can but see, the tongue can but talk and the ear can but hear. Each has to accept its limitations and be content. The Divine can be grasped only through love, faith and sadhana (spiritual discipline), surcharged with Universal Love. Reason is too feeble an instrument to measure it. Denial of the Divine cannot negate it. Logic cannot reveal it. All the tirades now being made on the Divine are from atheists who are opportunists. So your duty is to preserve your equanimity. Be true to yourselves and do not waver. I am unaffected by praise or blame. My love and compassion envelop all; My Grace can be shared by all. I am declaring this so that you may face all this with fortitude. The more you dig, the deeper the derision; the higher the mound, the taller the praise. People with a disease in the nose cannot appreciate the fragrance of a flower. Those who cannot appreciate or recognise the Divine are suffering from an illness which handicaps them to do so.

There are two statements in the Geetha, both complementary: Sraddhavan labhathe jnanam (the man with steady faith wins wisdom) and samsayatma vinashyathi (he who doubts perishes). The doubt that overpowered Arjuna was removed by the teaching of Krishna and the necessary shraddha was inculcated. As a matter of fact, the Geetha is a conversation between the Jeeva and Brahman, the limited,

or rather the idea of the limited, with the unlimited. The dehavasthra is worn by the dehi: the body is but a vesture of God, who is eternal and permanent.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

26. Unbroken bliss

Date: 04 December 1976 / Location: Seegehalli

THIS day you have resolved to imbibe Divine Bliss by reciting the Glow of God in chorus and with music, continuously for twenty-four hours. You call it akhanda bhajan, even though it will end after that period. Still, the idea is good and the programme will yield good results. For in this busy age of fear and anxiety, the remembrance of God and the repetition of His name is the one means of liberation that is accessible to all. People toil for years for maintaining their families and bringing up their children, and though they do not succeed as much as they hope or wish, they continue their efforts unabated. But in the effort to gain the Grace of God, they do not evince even half the interest. They get dispirited when they do not see signs of Grace after short spurts of sadhana (spiritual effort). Bhajan (group singing of devotional songs on Lord's Names and Glory) is more important than bhajan (meals). Prayer is more desirable than pining for meals. Birds, beasts, insects and worms, all feed and keep fit. Man is the crown of creation, the monarch and master of all beings in creation. And if he, too, seeks only food and shelter as inferior species do, it is deplorable. Indeed. From the moment of waking until the moment when he lays himself down again to sleep, man is engaged in endless errands, unceasing turmoil, never-ending tangles and boundless anxiety. And what does he gain therefrom? More confusion, more mental agitation.

Bhajan is a good disciplinary process

Is this the be-all and end-all of human existence? No. It cannot be. He has the nobler-goal of selfillumination, of lighting the lamp of love inside him, and sharing the light of that lamp with all around him. Kama (desire) and krodha (anger) are the two enemies that will not allow him to keep that flame burning bright. Bhajan such as this, is a good disciplinary process by which these two can be kept away. Kama is the lust for physical pleasure, for power, for fame, for wealth and for scholarship. Krodha is anger, which is the result of foiled lust. If you long for peace of mind, you must take up the sadhana

that will confer peace on you. If, Instead, you still engage in old habits, how can peace be yours? You stand at the square yonder, and wishing to come to Whitefield, board a bus that moves in the opposite direction and takes you to Hoskote. Is that the sign of an Intelligent man? You choose the wrong path and then complain that you are lost. Salt and camphor look alike, but you have to exercise your intelligence to discriminate between them. Brass make more noise than gold, but you should not be deceived by that and choose brass instead of gold.

Through genuine prayer, evil can be destroyed

If men make more noise and mislead people into believing that they are wise, they are like brass. Do not mistake them for gold. Ascribe value to pure hearts and dedicated deeds, never indulging in talk that hurts others. When you intend to harm another, the evil recoils on you. The grief which you suffer is only an echo of the grief you inflict in another's heart. So when you have injured another, pray for pardon; repent and resolve never to do it again. Through genuine prayer, mountains of evil can be pulverised and destroyed. From now on decide that your words shall be soft and sweet, your acts beneficial to others and your thoughts always about how to serve others who are weaker and less prosperous. In this and in other villages, there are many persons who are either too old or too weak or with some physical defect - the lame, the deaf, the blind, the polio affected, the paralytic - who are finding it difficult to earn even a subsistence wage. Some of them also have families to look after. What they are able to scrape together is very inadequate in these days when prices are soaring sky-high. I am proposing to help such people in the villages around Brindavan with finance and facilities, to start some employment opportunities through tailoring, carpentry, painting, spinning, weaving and other such village industries. They can recite the Names of God, sing bhajans and practise namasmarana (Remembering God's Name) even while engaged in these crafts, so that they can earn both peace for the mind and food for the body. As Vemana sang, they will have the "art of earning money to be happy here, and the art of earning Grace to be happy there."

Bhajan has been part of our ancient culture

The others, too, villagers who toil hard In the fields during the day, can gather after their night meals in this Venugopaldaswami Temple hall and fill themselves with the joy and peace that bhajan can confer. Those who sing bhajans get what can be called 'double promotion,' for they derive Joy and distribute joy! Life today is filled with sorrow, it is beset with fear and despair. The only time you can forget these thoughts and strengthen yourself to meet the hard times is when you contact the Source of all strength, God. You cannot get that peace and joy while you bend under the burden of daily life. You are carrying a huge load of worry all day; keeps that aside for an hour every evening and spend that time with God who can make your shoulders strong and your burden light. You will relish the bhajan as you make it a daily function, like eating and sleeping. You eat twice a day for the upkeep of the body; should you not do bhajan as least once for the upkeep of the mind? Bhajan has been part of our culture, part of the Sanathana Dharma (Eternal Universal Religion) tradition. But it has survived, In however attenuated a form, in the villages only. It has disappeared from the towns, where people have more 'exciting' ways of spending time and recuperating their spirits. But this programme of congregational bhajan by all must be fostered, developed and transplanted in the towns later. I am glad to note that the young men of this village and of the adjacent villages, especially those who are attending the Sri Sathya Sai College, are evincing keen interest in these bhajans. That is indeed a promising sign fraught with great potential for the future of this country and its culture. They are cleansing their own minds and helping to cleanse the atmosphere of these villages. The air even over these villages is polluted by vulgar film songs, by demeaning and disgusting conversation. The 24-hour long bhajan will purify it by Divine vibrations, and those who breathe the pure air will be healthier and more upright in behaviour. The student who made a speech welcoming Me, ended by requesting Me to come once again to this place for some function which he referred to. I am ready to come to your village as often as you wish, for I find the humanness of man thriving only in the villages. In the towns people have lost it. You know Sri Krishna was born in a village where he later tended cattle. His brother always had a yoke on his shoulder, was proud of it. Dharmasthapanam (the restoration of righteousness), has to start from the village where it is still found, however

feebly or faintly. Therefore you have to live in the path of Dharma and treat it as the very goal of all your activities. Be united in that adventure and encourage one another while proceeding along the path. Then success is assured.

27. Jesus

Date: 05 December 1976 / Location: Brindavan

MAN is as a seed. The seed sprouts, becomes a sapling, grows into a tree and fulfils its destiny, offering flowers and fruits to the world. 'So, too, man rises from childhood through adolescence into youth and middle age, and when fully grown up he has to justify himself by offering to the world the flowers and fruits of good thoughts and deeds, himself acquiring the fullness of wisdom. A bird has need of two wings; a cart must have two wheels. Without these, they are mortally handicapped. Man, too, must have two types of knowledge - to live on and to live for. The one helps him to eke out his livelihood and the other rewards him for having lived at all. The one is called *jeevanopadhi* (the means of living), and the other, *jeevanaparamavadhi* (the goal of living). The one enables us to garner the material riches which make our lives comfortable and safe; the other answers the questions that haunt us and pressurise us while we live - where have we come, to where are we proceeding, how did the Universe originate, etc. No religion concerns itself with the first type of knowledge, they all are interested in stressing the second type only. Each of you have to pay attention to this second type even more than to the first, for it has beneficial impact on the first also.

Dharma provides peace, contentment and joy

Man has set down, in all lands and communities, certain rules and regulations in order to secure orderly and smooth running of his daily schedule of activities directed to the actual process of living. Since they have become part of the code of conduct, they are also described as 'discipline.' They are also subsumed under the basic principles of *dharma* (righteousness). Dharma promotes peace and happiness, contentment and joy. In every community, there have appeared, off and on, great personalities who shaped and burnished the codes and adapted the details to the needs of the times.

What we must strive for today is not a new religion or a new society or a new code of morality; they are there already, in each race and country. We also

have the basic plans for spiritual training already laid down in most religions. But we need persons who have attained purity in all levels of consciousness. Man can reach perfect Bliss only when his heart becomes free from envy, egoism, greed and other evil traits. We need persons who can recognise and relish the recognition of the kinship and the identity between man and man, as well as between one society and another. They have to move beyond the bounds of the limited 'I,' to break loose from the entanglements of the senses. They have to jump over the battlements of the fort called 'body,' and enter enthusiastically the wide world beyond.

Turn inwards to acquire awareness of the Divine

From the narrow vision of 'individual need' man must voyage out into the broad vision of the 'Universal.' When a drop of water falls into the ocean, it loses its narrow individualities, its name and form, and assumes the form, name and taste of the ocean itself. If it seeks to live separately as a 'drop,' it will soon evaporate and be reduced to non-existence. Each one must become aware that he is part of the one Truth that encompasses everything in the Universe. It is reprehensible to stick for one's whole life-time to the low narrow paths of selfishness, envy, and greed. Make the heart big and the mind pure. Then only can peace and prosperity be established on the earth. This day is a holy day, the day on which Jesus was born. He announced himself as the Messenger of God. In fact, all humans are born as Messengers of God. The sole purpose of this human career is to propagate the Omnipresence of God, His Might and Glory. No one has incarnated for merely consuming quantities of food and catering to one's senses. Human life is much more precious than that. That is why the capacity to appreciate beauty, truth and goodness has been endowed only on man.

To acquire awareness of the Divine, one need not journey to any special region or place. It is enough if the eye is turned inwards. In the Bhagavathgeetha, the inner reality, the *Atman*, is described as 'resplendent like a billion suns.' But man has not become aware of the Light and Power within; he still flounders in the darkness of ignorance. The scriptures proclaim that man is *amrithasya puthrah* (the child of Immortality). But man is

unaware of this glorious heritage. He feels he is mortal, his end is imminent and his existence is temporary.

Man reduces himself to the level of beasts

The scriptures also say that the Atman, the Real Core of the individual, is *Anand a Swaru pa* (the very embodiment of bliss). But man being blind to this truth, invites sorrow and anxiety to hold mastery over him and discards the joy that awaits him. Every man is a messenger to fellowmen, entrusted with the task of spreading knowledge of the joy that is being missed. If he misuses this mission and fritters away his years in gratifying his senses, he only loses the chance and reduces himself to the level of beasts. He who announced Himself as the Messenger of God, developed, through the blossoming of Divinity and the expansion of compassion and service in Him, to a stage when he declared Himself as the Son of God. And then, finally, He rose to the status of 'I and my Father are One.' When Jesus declares that He is the Son of God, He becomes entitled to the paternal Majesty and Power. These He can claim only when He grows in the qualities that His Father has. As a result he attains sayujya (mergence), which leads Him to assert, 'I and my Father are one.' The scriptures say, Brahmavith Brahmaiva Bhavathi: He who knows Brahman, becomes Brahman.

Jesus inspired all mankind through His example

These three stages are referred to as *dhwaitha*, *visishtadhwaitha* and *adhwaitha* in Vedic thought. Messenger and master, the two are basically separate, and so this stage is one of dhwaitha (dualism). The son and father, though two separate entities, are bound by affection and kindred feelings and attitudes. They are like the whole and the part, the body and the limb. This stage is called visishtadhwaitha (qualified nondualism). And when the Son and the Father are One, the stage is of adhwaitha (non-dualism). Even a child would be eager to pass from one class to the next higher one; he would hate being in the same class, vegetating for years. Then what can we say of persons with intelligence and discrimination, satisfied with the attainment of the lower steps? Jesus passed through the entire process and inspired all

mankind by His example and teachings, to be generous and kind, detached and discriminating, and to bring Light and Love to all. He attracted people by His miracles and transformed them into apostles and exemplary servants of man. You must realise that the Divine current that flows and functions in every living being is the One Universal Entity. When you desire to enter the Mansion of God, you are confronted by two closed doors - the desire to praise yourself and the desire to defame others. The doors are bolted by envy, and there is also the huge lock of egoism preventing entry. So if you are earnest, you have to resort to the key of prema (love) and open the lock; then remove the bolt and throw the doors wide open. The education must train you in the difficult operation.

Give up the two evils of self-praise and scandal

You undergo training in various subjects of study, but the crown and cries of all subjects of study is *Adhyathmic vidhya* (spiritual wisdom). People desirous of bathing in sacred rivers are advised by Thyagaraja, the famous mystic, poet and singer, to bathe, in the Ocean, for all rivers pour their waters into it. Therefore a bath in the Ocean means bathing in the waters of all the rivers at the same time. So, too, the Atmavidhya if mastered, is the key to all knowledge. It teaches us *Thath*, which if known, all else is known. It reveals to us that the One is in the many and that the many are really One.

Ishavashyam idham sarvam
All this is enveloped by God,

as the shruthi (sacred text) declares. Sadhana is the name for the mental discipline and intellectual effort to realise this Unity. Jesus sacrificed his life and poured out his blood to instil Love and Compassion in the heart of man, so that he may be happy when others are happy and sad when others are sad. It is not by festivity and fun that you should celebrate Christmas. Celebrate it, rather, by resolving and putting into practice at least one of the

ideals He enunciated, or endeavouring to reach at least one of the goals that He placed before man. Let Me call upon you to give up, in memory of this holy day, two evils from your mind: selfpraise and talking scandal. Adopt one habit: the habit of loving service to the distressed. If you spend all your time and energy in worldly comfort and sensual delight, you are disgracing this human existence. Life is not to be spent In just eating; eating is only a necessity for living. You consider this habitation on of yours as your body; no, It is the temple of God. God resides therein. Keep it clean, fresh and fragrant through developing Compassion and Love. Use the temple of God only for holy thoughts, words and deeds. Do not demean it by using it for low, trivial and unholy tasks. Wherever you are, whatever you do have this resolution steady and strong.

Seeing one's own reality is the opening of the doors of liberation; for this, this mirror of the heart has to be prepared, by coating the back of the heart with sathya and dharma. Otherwise, the image will not appear. In every act of yours, if you observe truth and justice, then you can see your own reality revealed.

You may say that the burden of past acts and their inevitable consequences have to be borne; but the Grace of the Lord can burn that burden in a flash; the revelation of reality will, in a flash, save you from that burden.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

28. Hanumaan

Date: 01 February 1977 / Location: Brindavan

HANUMAAN succeeded in co-ordinating his thought, word and act. Therefore he had the unique distinction of being great in physical strength, mental stability and virtuous character. He shines as an invaluable gem among the personalities of the Ramayana. He was also a great scholar who had mastered, of all things, the nine schools of grammar! He knew the four Vedas {sacred scriptures of the Hindhus) and the six Shasthras (spiritual sciences). The Geetha says that a scholar is "one who sees the same Divine force motivating everyone" - Pandithah Samadharsinaha.

Hanuman was a good example of this outlook. He did not pride himself that he knew so much. He was the very picture of humility, born out of genuine sincerity and wisdom. He realised that the Rama-principle, Atmarama, was illumining every being, and he adored it above all else. During their wanderings in the forest in search of clues about Seetha, Rama and Lakshmana arrived at the Rishyamuka Mountain, where they rested awhile in a shady glen. They were sad in mind and weak in physique.

The King of Vanaras, Sugreeva, and his confidante, Hanuman, saw them from the top of a neighbouring hill. At first Sugreeva feared that they might be the emissaries of his brother, Vali, who had sworn eternal vengeance upon him. Or, he thought, they may be his spies moving about incognito. So Hanuman offered to approach them and return with correct information about their identify and Intentions. He advised that Jumping to conclusions without sufficient information is fraught with danger.

The three classes of messengers

He spoke to the brothers in sweet, pleasing words. Rama was struck by the grammatical accuracy of his sentences. They readily answered all his queries and Hanuman was satisfied with their bonafides. He offered to take them to his master and monarch. The darshan (sight) of Rama and Lakshmana had

removed all his sins, their sparshan (touch) burnt away all the consequences of his deeds in previous lives and their sambhashan (conversation) filled his mind with Joy. That is the experience of all who welcome the impact of Divinity. As a result, Rama and Sugreeva, who had common anxieties and problems, entered into a friendly compact, and both were assured that their problems would be successfully solved through mutual help. Hanuman became the messenger of Rama. There are three classes of messengers—those who do not understand the orders of the master or do not care to understand, and who operate to the detriment of the work assigned them; those who do only just as much as the order literally communicates; and those who grasp the purpose and significance of the orders and carry them out unflinchingly till the purpose is achieved. Hanuman belonged to the last category. He never flinched in his efforts, whatever the obstacle, and reported back only after he was satisfied with the result of his assignment. He could delve into the commands of Rama and know what his order meant.

Rama's words made Hanuman very efficient

As soon as Hanuman received the order, he felt a thrust of power inside him and a new confidence that since he had been so ordered, the strength and intelligence, the courage and the adventurous spirit needed, would be granted by Rama himself. So he never had any qualms about his capacity or capability. His body and spirit were vitalised by the very fact that Rama asked him to do something. As electric cable has a copper wire inside its plastic coating; for good operation, both must be of high quality. So, too, the body and the spirit within, have both to be in good trim, and Rama's words made them both efficient and active. The dharshan (sight) of Rama conferred on Hanuman an enormous reinforcement of power, even physical power. How else could he have jumped across a hundred miles of sea, a task that even Jambavan, Angadha and other vanara heroes would, not dare venture upon, which he accomplished by the mere recitation of the Name of Rama.

An important feature of Hanuman's life

The youth of India must pay special attention to the feature of Hanuman's

life. He never calculated the pros and cons - can I succeed? Why am I, of all people, chosen for this mission? When Rama asked him to discover the whereabouts of Seetha. "Why should I weigh the chances of success or failure?" he said to himself. "The Rama who chose me will bear the responsibility." He decided to pray and do his best. While on his flight, a hill rose up from the sea and offered him rest and hospitality, but he refused the invitation. A demoness, rose from the sea and invited him to fight with her before he proceeded further, but he brushed her aside and flew on. He sped through the sky like one of Rama's own arrows. Self-confidence was the basis of his courage; over it he erected the walls of self-satisfaction; on them he constructed the roof of self-sacrifice, and he dwelt in that mansion enjoying the Bliss of self-Realisation. Here is a fine illustration of the devotion of Hanuman to Rama. On the completion of the bridge and on the night before the march across to Lanka, Rama was reclining on the sands of the sea-shore in the cool bright moonlight with Sugreeva, Hanuman, Vibheeshana, Jambavan, Angadha, Nala, Neela and others around him. He was lying with his head on the lap of Lakshmana. Suddenly he threw the question why the Moon had a mark on it and what that patch indicated. Each one ventured on an answer. Some said it was the shadow of the earth, some that it indicated a big hollow or crack on the surface of the Moon, and some said it must be a huge heap of soil. Rama asked Hanuman, who had been silent for long, what he thought about it. Hanuman said that it was the reflection on the Moon of the face of Rama which he adored! He had the unique fortune of visualising Rama in everything that he cast his eyes upon.

The quality of rajas is to be watched carefully

Hanuman is pictured as a monkey, and monkeys are by nature, wayward and frolicsome. 'Monkeyish' has become a synonym of fickleness. But Hanuman did not have any trace of this fickleness. He was of Divine descent and distinguished with the Divine qualities mentioned in the Geetha. He derived Bliss in the contemplation of Rama. He had full mastery over physical and sensual cravings. He was shining in Athmic splendour. He had established his life on the foundations of sathya (Truth) and dharma (righteousness) and led his companions also on the same path, exercising the force of his example on

them. Of the three gunas (qualities), sathwa (the balanced), rajas (the passionate) and thamas (the dull), rajas is the quality to be watched carefully, for its first progeny is kama (lust). Lust destroyed Ravana, who was a great scholar, warrior, emperor and a mighty hero. It can overwhelm and neutralise every good quality in man and reduce him to the level of a beast. Anger is the second among the progeny of this quality. Anger can seize the treasure chest of wisdom from your grasp and break it to smithereens. It is usually compared with fire (anala), which literally means, not enough. It always-relishes more and more fuel to feed its limitless hunger.

Hanuman considered every woman as his mother

Hanuman had no lust. His anger was not of the 'not enough' variety. In order to search for her, Hanuman had to enter the women's apartments in the palace of Ravana to look into the faces of the sleeping women to compare their features with Rama's description of Seetha. He felt very guilty going through this ordeal and even contemplated suicide, because he would be too ashamed to show his face to Rama after this experience. But consoling himself that it was after all the order of Rama that he was obeying, he returned to continue the search. He considered every woman as his own mother, and thus searched where his mother was, not where Seetha was. This is a good lesson for the youth of today. On the occasion of the Coronation of Sri Rama at Ayodhya, presents were given to the ministers and distinguished visitors, collaborators and companions of Rama - Vibheeshana, Sugreeva, Jambavan, Nala, Neela etc. Hanuman was not given any. Observing this, Seetha, who had benefited most by his selflessness and heroism, devotion and dedication, felt pained. She communicated her feelings to Rama who was beside her on the throne. Rama told her that she could give him any present she wished. So she took off her own pearl necklace and placed it in the hands of Hanuman. Immediately Hanuman took the pearls apart, and putting them one by one between his teeth, he bit each pearl and spat it out in disgust! Seetha became flushed with anger. She whispered to Rama that Hanuman could be nothing but a monkey. When asked, Hanuman said, "I was only examining whether these pearls had Rama in them; I could not find any one which had, so I eat them away. If a thing has no Rama in it, it is to me as

worthless as stone."

An example of Hanuman's devotion to his Master

At this, Agasthya, one of the renowned sages who was assembled in the hall, rose up and challenged Hanuman with the question, "Hanuman! You say that you will not wear or bear, eat or carry anything that does not sound of Rama. Well, you carry about this body, don't you? Does it sound of Rama to you?" Hanuman accepted the challenge. He pulled a single hair from his wrist and held it to the ear of the sage. Lo! It was reciting 'Rama, Rama,' without interruption. So deep and sincere was Hanuman's loyalty and devotion to all that belonged to his Master. That is the reason why he achieved success, whatever the assignment. After the Coronation celebrations, Seetha, Rama and his brothers sat together, reminiscing over past events, and some of them expressed a desire to have a larger share of serving Rama. Bharatha and Sathrugna were the most eager. So a list was drawn up of all items of service that could be offered to Rama and the items were allotted to those present. Hanuman was not present at the time, and when he came in, the others announced, with certain amount of glee, that he had no more chance to serve Rama as everything was now to be done by others. Rama also joined in the fun.

Hanuman was terribly dejected and pleaded with them- "Pray, go over the list again. Give me any bit of service, however small, that might have been overlooked." They were sure that nothing had been overlooked and so the list was handed over to Hanuman himself. Luckily he discovered one item that had not been allotted. When one yawns, there is a rite of snapping one's fingers in front of one's mouth. Of course the person who yawns usually does it himself, but in the case of Rama, Emperor of Ayodhya, it would surely be infra dig if he did it himself. Hanuman pleaded that he might be given the duty of snapping his fingers whenever Rama yawned. The others agreed, for they thought that the chances of Rama yawning would be very rare indeed. For Hanuman, however, it was a Godsend. Now he was ever watching the face of Rama, his fingers ready, waiting for the chance of performing the rite that was his duty! This, too, was the Grace of Rama, for what can happen without His knowledge

and His plan? Who can keep the devotee away from the presence of God? Rama demonstrated by this Incident that no one can obstruct His wish and stand between His devotee and Himself.

29. Quenching the thirst

Date: 06 March 1977 / Location: Brindavan

THE responsibilities of the Seva Dhal are of a high order. It has to lead the members, and through them all mankind, along the path of ,sadhana (spiritual effort), which takes the individual from the position 'I' to the position 'We.' This has given the Seva Dhal the importance it deserves. One can realise it only when one delves deep into its significance. You have to sublimate all work as worship and try to fill every moment of your lives with that outlook. Only then can you justify your membership in this Organisation. Through activity man attains purity of consciousness. In fact man has to welcome activity with this end in view. And why strive for a pure consciousness? Imagine a well with polluted and muddy water so that the bottom of the well cannot be seen. Similarly within man's heart, deep down in his consciousness, we have the Atman (Divine Spirit). But it can be cognised only when the consciousness is clarified. Your imaginings, your Inferences, your judgements and prejudices, your passions, emotions and egoistic desires, muddy the con- sciousness and make it opaque. How, then, can you become aware of the Atman that is at the very base? Through seva (service) rendered without any desire to placate one's ego and with only the well being of others in view is it possible to cleanse the consciousness and have the Atman revealed.

By doing seva, you serve your own best interest

So, for whose sake are you performing seva? You are doing seva for your own sake. You are engaged in seva in order that you may become aware of the Atman in you, in order that you may discard the allurements of your ego, in order to know yourself and to get the answer to the question that torments you, namely, "Who am I." You do not serve others, you serve yourselves; you do not serve the world, you serve your own best interest. You may ask: how is it possible to transcend the ego through seva? By saturating with love, work can be transformed into worship. When the work is offered to God, it gets sanctified into puuja (sacramental worship). This makes it free from ego. It is

also freed from the earthly desire for success and the earthly fear of failure. You feel that when you have done the work as best as you can, your puuja is accomplished. It is then for Him who has accepted the puuja to confer on you what He considers best. This attitude will make the work nish-kama (un-attached). Regular practice of this discipline will render the consciousness clear and pure. It will promote chitthashuddhi (pure consciousness). Without this primary equipment how can man ever hope to scale spiritual heights? Almost all the great sages of the past spent the early years of their lives in sadhana that would ensure a pure consciousness. However prospective your career might be, however much you might accumulate the wherewithal of a comfortable life, to whatever heights of authority you might have climbed through the exercise of your intelligence, your gains shall be nil unless your every activity is suffused with the Divine purity inherent in the consciousness.

You get blessed or punished due to your own acts

I shall illustrate this point. Take an ordinary postal envelope. Upon it, in golden ink, write the address of a person in very artistic calligraphy. Insert a beautifully worded letter full of amazing sentiments, and then drop it into a post-box. What happens to it? It will not move even a yard away from that box.

Now take a mere post card, the cheap unimpressive thing. Write the address with no special care. Scribble the news you like to convey. Affix a stamp and drop it into the same box. Watch what happens! The artistically ornamental envelope is inert, while this inartistic, cheap, document travels a thousand miles towards the person indicated. Therefore, whatever may be the uniqueness or importance, the furore or attractiveness, the seva that you do can yield no fruit if it is done without a pure chiththa (thought). Your yearning to do seva and your enthusiasm while doing seva, are rescuing you from harm. God is the witness. God has no desire to bless, nor anger to induce Him to punish. You get blessed and punished as a result of your own feelings and acts. Yath bhavam thath bhavathi. As you think and behave so it becomes. Bad deeds never yield good, Good deeds never breed bad. Neem seeds never yield mangoes, Mango seeds never breed neems. Hence a person might be

an expert in many fields of 'knowledge or a master of many material skills and accomplishments, but without inner cleanliness, his brain is a desert waste or a massive stone with no trace of love, mercy or expansive virtue.

Rituals seldom purify man's consciousness

Of the nine steps in spiritual sadhana, as laid down in the Bhakthi Suuthras (aphorisms on devotion), leading to the realisation of the self, dhasyam, or the attitude of a servant to do seva, is quite near the final goal; it is the eighth step. The study of texts, the renouncing of wealth in charity, the repetition of the name or the chanting of psalms and hymns may be good exercises to sanctify the mind and to avoid falling into evil ways and ruinous pastimes, but they seldom purify the consciousness of man. Instead they serve mostly to bloat the ego and instil pride and promote a competitive craving for superiority. You may be sitting in the bhajan hall and loudly singing in chorus, but your mind may get involved in anxiety about the pair of chappals (sandals) you have left outside the hall. Always at the back of the mind there is fear of the loss of the chappals; this vitiates the bhajan and makes it a barren show.

Seva done to a suffering being reaches the Lord

The sadhana of seva is quite distinct. In seva you devote all your energy and attention to the task at hand, for it is a dedicated task. You forget the body and ignore its demands. You set aside your individuality and its prestige and perquisites. You pluck your ego by its roots and cast it away. You give up your status, conceit, your name and form and keep all chiththa (thought) pure. Whatever the task you are performing, renounce your personal individuality and share its travails and troubles, its fruits and benefits, with God. You need not bring in God from somewhere outside you; He is in you, all the while. This truth must be your own discovery, your own treasure, your own strength. This is the grand purpose of the Seva Dhal. That is the reason why the Seva Dhal is assigned a high place in the Sathya Sai Organisation. A very pious person was once proceeding from Kashi to Rameshwaram, at the other end of this vast country. He was carrying with him some holy Ganga (Ganges) water to

be mixed with the sea at Rameshwaram. That would be the consummation of his long and arduous pilgrimage through many a holy place and many a sacred river. While half-way through, he saw by the side of the road a donkey in the last throes of life, since it was too Incapacitated to move towards some source of water to quench its thirst. Its dry tongue and rolling eyes indicated the agony of extreme thirst. The pilgrim was so moved by the tragic sight that he poured the precious Ganges water he had with him down the throat of the distraught animal. Moments later, the donkey recovered and could gain enough strength to pull itself out of the grip of death. Seeing this, the companion of the pilgrim asked him, "Master! The sacred water you brought from Kashi had to be offered to the ocean at Rameshwaram. Why did you commit this sacrilege by pouring it into the mouth of this despicable animal?" The pilgrim replied, "But I have poured the holy water in the ocean itself, don't you see?" Any seva (service) done to a suffering jeeva (individual being) reaches the Lord Himself. and can never be a sacrilege, for seva to the jeeva is seva to the dheva (divinity). Always be firm in that belief.

The Play enacted by Shiva and Parvathi

Millions come to Kashi as pilgrims. It is said that those who see Kashi will not be born again. One day at Kailasha, Parvathi asked Shiva, "Lord, I have heard it said that all those who visit Kashi, where there is a celebrated shrine for your worship, will attain Kailasha and stay on there in your presence. Millions are coming to Kashi, but is this place big enough to accommodate all of them?" Shiva replied, "All the millions cannot come to Kailasha. I shall design a play and make clear to you who among the millions can come here. You, too, have a role to act. Do as I direct you to." Parvathi became an old hag of 80 and Shiva a rickety old man of 90. The old woman had the old man on her lap, right at the main entrance of the famous Shiva shrine of Vishweshwara, and she implored in piteous tones the pilgrims who passed by on their way to the temple, "My husband is terribly thirsty. He is about to die of thirst. I cannot leave him and go to the river Ganga to bring him water. Will any of you pour a little water down his throat and save his life?"

There is no prayer more fruitful than Seva

The pilgrims were coming up from the ghats after their ceremonial bath in the holy river, their clothes still wet and clinging to their bodies. Some of them lamented that their peace was disturbed by the sight of this pathetic couple. "We have come to take dharshan (audience) of the Lord, and look what meets our eye." There were some who flatly ignored her cries and lifted their noses in the air. Some said, "Wait. Let us finish the worship inside the temple and then we shall bring the Ganga water for you." No. one offered to bring' the needed help to the aged patient.

Just then a robber who was hurrying into the temple to pick a few pockets, heard the plaintive voice of old woman and halted near them. He asked her, "Mother, what is the matter?" She replied, "Son, we came to this place to have dharshan of Lord Vishweshwara of Kashi, but my husband has fainted out of sheer exhaustion. He might survive if some one will bring a little Ganga water and pour it down his throat. I cannot leave him here and go for water. Please help me and earn the merit." The robber was moved into compassion. He had a little Ganga water in the hollow gourd he had with him. He knelt down near the dying person on the lap of the old woman, but the woman stopped him saying, "The moment the Ganga water wets his throat, my husband may die; he is in the last stage of living. Therefore speak a word of truth and pour the water. The robber could not understand what she meant, so she explained, "Speak within his hearing, some good deed that you have done in your life, and then pour the water In his mouth." That created a problem for the robber. He was at his wits end. He could not quite comply. He said, "Mother I have, in truth, not done any good deed so far. This present act, the offering of water to this thirsty man, is the very first good deed I am responsible for." And saying this, he placed the gourd at the lips of the old man and gave him mouthful.

Just at the moment, the couple disappeared and in their placed stood Shiva and Parvathi, blessing the robber. Shiva said, "Son, life is to be dedicated for the service of others and not devoted to the exclusive interests of oneself. Howsoever many wicked deeds you might have done so far, for your selfless offering of Ganga water with truth on your tongue, We bless you with this

Vision. Remember there is no morality higher than truth; there is no prayer more fruitful than seva (selfless loving service.)"

Three stages of enquiry into Brahman

On the royal road to spiritual realisation, there are three stages as mentioned in the scriptures: Karmajijnasa, Dharmajijnasa and Brahmaji-jnasa. Jijnasa means deep Inquiry. A person becomes fit to inquire into Brahman and succeed in that inquiry only when his consciousness has been trained and shaped by Inquiry into the modes of activity and mores of conduct - the karma (action) and the dharma (righteousness) - which clarify and purify. He who discriminates well before engaging in any activity will naturally be righteous in conduct and behaviour. Good Karma will automatically lead to good dharma. Take the example of home-made coconut chutney. It is tasted only after it is ground and got ready, and when it is eaten you find out whether salt has been added or not. Then if you discover that the salt is not enough or that it has not been added, you have to add the needed quantity to make it tasty; but you will not add salt before eating a small amount. Hence the three stages are (i) Grinding and getting the chutney ready (ii) eating it, and (iii) adding the needed salt. The preparation is the karma, the eating is the dharma and the adding of salt to make it tasty and sustaining, is the Brahman. Act, dedicate and adore - that is the way to acquire a pure consciousness. An act dedicated as an offering to the God resident in all becomes as sacred as the highest seva. Devote yourselves to this seva. Avatars (divine incarnations) of God are engaged in seva; that is why Avatars happen. Hence, when you offer seva to mankind, the Avatar will naturally be pleased and you can win Grace. This is a great chance you have as members of the Sathya Sai Seva Dhal. I hope you will make the best use of this chance. I bless you that you may.

30. The victory of victories

Date: 16 February 1977 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Shivarathri

THE spiritual path is the path of detachment, of sense control, of rigorous mind training. Parvathi sought to win Shiva first by the glamour of physical charm; she had the stratagems of the God of Love Manmatha to support allurements. But Shiva reduced the God of Love to ashes and rejected her advances. Thereafter she entered into an arduous period of ascetic austerities, and through them was able to win Shiva's Grace to such an extent that she became the left half of His sacred body. "Man must first decide, after vigorous self-examination and continuous discrimination, the path that he wishes to traverse. Moksha (Liberation), means the removal of the bonds of Ignorance that cloud the Truth and create a mirage of untruth. In fact, living is only another name for the process of achieving alternate misery and happiness, hunger and contentment, illness and health, desire and fulfilment. Man reaches out to a new desire the moment one is realised. He is ever struggling and ever unhappy, for he does not seek the eternal, the lasting, the source and the substance. He is content with the transient, the trivial and the temporary.

Derive joy from making others happy

Use the body as a chariot for reaching Liberation through truth. It is your duty to see that on the four wheels of Sathya, Dharma, Shanthi and Prema (truth, righteousness, peace and love) the chariot moves along the road to the goal. It will move on that road only if it has less luggage, viz., less desires, less worries and less fears. Desires, worries and fears are multiplied when man thinks he is the body with all its appurtenances and not the owner of the body. Karma, Bhakthi, Jnana (Work, Worship, Wisdom) - these are the three paths to God. But through Kama (desire), Karma is warped; through lobha (greed), bhakthi (devotion) is vitiated; through krodha (anger), jnana (spiritual wisdom) is befogged. But through prema (love) one can easily conquer desire, greed and anger.

Learn a lesson from the insignificant ant. When an ant spots a lump of sugar, it does not hide the fact and seek to consume it all alone. Instead it moves round to collect its friends and kinsmen, for it loves to share with others the feast it has come upon. The crow, a bird that is despised and often out-cast, when it discovers a little heap of food, caws repeatedly until its kith and kin gather at the place. What is shared is more tasty; what is held back is bitter stuff. Life is short and full of misery, so do all you can to derive joy from making others happy. If others are miserable, how can you be really happy? "The greatness of man lies in the fact that by conscious effort it is possible to remove the evil in him. But in the case of other animals, however much they may be subjected to training and education, their base instincts will only lie low, ready to spring up at the slightest provocation. Shivarathri declares that by means of spending one full day in fast and one full night in vigil - as symbolic of conquering the senses by sleeplessly watching their antics and preventing them from inflicting harm - darkness can be turned into light, shavam (corpse) can be sublimated into Shivam (God)."

There is a purpose behind all activities of the Divine

Why should this creature, man, endowed with extra sensitiveness to share sorrow and joy with others, be born in this changing world of time and space? Nothing that is born can escape death; nothing that is built can withstand disintegration. Why, then, has man been sent onto this stage of fleeting experiences? There is a purpose behind all the activities of the Divine. Man has to manifest the Divine in him and lead and guide all living beings in that adventure. He has to liberate himself by his efforts and liberate all life by his example. He must become free and secure in his own Source. This is what is called Moksha (Liberation). He is liberated from littleness into vastness, from bondage to boundless Bliss. The ego-alloy enters man only when he is misled by the apparent diversity, to posit multiplicity in creation. The Reality which is misconstrued in the dull dusk of ajnana (primeval ignorance), is God. To see through the fog that projects many where there is only the One, is the purpose of all spiritual sadhana. If even after years of sadhana, by which ever religion it be prescribed, the sadhaka (spiritual aspirant) continues to see differences, distinctions and diversities, we can conclude that he has a long

way to go before he can fulfill the aim of this human existence. Awareness of the One ensures unshaken tranquillity. When the One is realised, there can be no fear. For how can the One fear itself?. There can also be no desire, for when there is no second, how can the desire to possess arise? Neither can there be envy, hatred, greed, pride or any of the evil passions that torment man and allow him no peace. The awareness of the One ensures unshaken tranquillity, Prashanthi . The One (call it God, Paramatma, Brahman or the Universal Absolute), is all Love, all Knowledge, all Wisdom, all Sweetness. Raso vai sah , says the Upanishath (He is Sweetness). How then can there be any bitterness in Him or in man's real nature, for man is manifested by Him, from Him and for Him? A goat cannot be born of a tigress. What emanates from God must be perforce Divine. Hence the appellation, amrithasya puthraha (child of immortality) for man in the Upanishath . Hence the Atman in him, which has come from the Param-atman , is also Immortal. Sparks emanating from the flames of fire have the same incendiary quality as the fire. The body is a Temple of God and has been organised for the sake of the God who decided to instal Himself therein. Until man realises the God within, and thus comes to understand that He is the 'mystery' that was evading him while he wandered about in the wilderness of the world, he has to attend assiduously to the up-keep of the body.

Strive, yearn and struggle to merge with the Source

He can earn that awareness only by leashing the wayward mind and directing it inwards. Shivarathri is a reminder to all mankind of the goal of mind-control. The Moon is the presiding deity of the mind, according to the sages, and even modern science has discovered a subtle relationship between the vagaries of the mind and the phases of the Moon. In the dark half of the month the Moon is seen less and less as the days move forward, and symbolically it may be inferred that the mind, too, is undergoing a process of decline. This day is the 14th night and there is very little left of the Moon to influence the earth or the mind of man. A spurt of spiritual effort by way of vigil, bhajan (congregational chant) and fasting done on this rathri (night) or period of Ignorance, will result in the extinction of the mind and therewith the conquest of all the tendencies and attitudes which it has entangled man in.

Thus this rathri can be sublimated into the heavenly splendour of Shiva. Strive - that is your duty. Yearn - that is your task. Struggle - that is your assignment. If only you do these, sincerely and steadily, God cannot keep back for long the reward of Realisation. The river strives, yearns and struggles to merge with the sea from which it came. It has that consummation ever alert in its consciousness. It attempts to make itself pure and pellucid so that it may be welcome by its source. It overcomes every obstacle of terrain in order to journey successfully towards its goal. Man too must utilise all the physical, mental, moral and material endowments intellectual, that God has granted him so that he may journey to the goal of Realisation.

Love can never entertain the idea of revenge

Do not be misled by the belief of the existence of two entitles: this world and the next, here and hereafter. Realise the hereafter here; this world is interwoven with the next. There is no truth in the disparity between the secular and the spiritual, the godly and the materialistic, the heavenly and the earthly. In all the worlds, it is His command that runs. Not even a blade of grass can quiver without His Will guiding the wind and agitating its position. The bulb of life is illumined by the current coming from the eternal, universal powerhouse, kaivalya, working according to His Laws and drawn through the cable of Love. When that prema (love) is tainted by selfishness, it cannot illumine at all. Self is lovelessness; Love is selflessness. Self gets and forgets; Love gives and forgives. Love can never entertain the idea of revenge, for it sees all others as One-self. When the tongue is hurt by the teeth, do you seek vengeance against the teeth? No, for they both belong to you and are integral parts of your body.

So, too, when some other person insults you or inflicts pain, allow wisdom to have mastery over you. Discover the truth and do not rush to conclusions, always keeping love as your guide. Of course, it is a difficult task, but not beyond the capacity of man. A task that can be finished without struggle and sustained effort is not something to be proud of. It is the difficult task that provides the challenge and brings forth the best and highest in man. Embark upon this task with ardour and faith; that will be sweeter. Once victory is

achieved, the rest will be added unto you.

The Gopees knew the secret of spiritual surrender. Their worship was not tainted by any bargaining spirit. For those who bargain and crave for profit, reverence is equated with returns; they sell homage at so much per unit of satisfactory response. They are like paid servants, clamouring for wages, overtime allowance, bonus, etc. They calculate how much they are able to extract for the service rendered.

Be, on the other hand, a member of the family, a kinsman, a friend. Feel that you are the Lord's own. Then, the work will not tire; it will be done much better; it will yield more satisfaction; and, the wages? The master will maintain you in bliss. What more can any one aspire for?

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

31. The Raama Era

Date: 20 March 1977 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Ugadi

Sarva Jeeva dharma shantham Sarva nama dharma Shivam Satchidhanandha ruupam adhvaitham Sathyam Shivam Sundharam The support of all beings, the Supreme Peace; Known by all Names, the Supreme Good; The One without a second; the Being-Awareness-Bliss Truth, Prosperity, Beauty. RICHES melt away only when you spend them, but the span of years you can live on earth is shortened every moment whether you like it or not, whether you are conscious of it or not. Therefore, you must feel an urgency in the great tasks of life. Buddhi (intellect) is a special gift that has been offered to man. This has been given him so that he might know himself but unfortunately it is now used by him to know others. When man has been given a mirror to look at his own face and set right its blemishes, he is foolishly holding it before other people's faces!

The three debts to be discharged during one's life

There are certain fundamental duties that man has to accomplish through his intelligence. Three of these are referred to in the scriptures as ma (debt). Man has to discharge three debts as a consequence of his human birth and earthly career. The first one is Dheva-ma, the debt to be repaid to the Gods. Every organ of the human body, every function in fact, is dominated and controlled and motivated by a Divine Power, or God. Therefore as a grateful repayment for the debt man owes to Him he has to use his organs, limbs, functions and skills for the benefit of other men and for the welfare of the community. The second debt is called rishi-ma, the debt owned by man to the sages, seers and ancient lawgivers. Long before the birth of this generation, a beneficent code of morals and a precious collection of guidelines for the realm of the spirit had been preserved and handed down as heritage through the efforts of selfless seers and sages. Each generation draws inspiration and knowledge from the previous ones, especially from the pathfinders, the pioneers and bridgebuilders in the regions of ethics, law, mysticism, sociology and religion. These persons promote concord and progress and remove social

conflict; their footprints mark out the lines of individual and social development. So an enormous debt of gratitude has to be repaid to them. The sages and seers have handed down a precious quantity of knowledge about nature, about consciousness and also about the means and methods of testing and enlarging that knowledge. But today man is neglecting this heritage and even discarding it as invalid and superfluous. This is suicidal. Man has to preserve this knowledge and foster it, revere it and use it. That is the way to repay the debt to the rishis (sages).

The best repayment one can make to the rishis

The festivals in the religious calendar like this Yugadhi (The Lunar New Year), are instances in point. The rishis have laid down these days as holy days and it is your duty to become aware of the meaning and significance of the festivals and as to why they have been so designated. You can infer, from what is generally done in every home when this festival starts, the real purpose intended by the rishis. On this day people take ceremonial baths, wear new clothes, tie new fresh green-leaf festoons across their door sills, have their houses whitewashed and painted anew, draw novel designs on the floors and make their homes charming to behold. All these are reminders of the prime purpose, namely, that of entertaining fresh ideas and giving up the old faded ones, installing anandha (divine bliss) in the mind, recouping courage and confidence and strengthening hope and faith. Yugadhis come and go; Nala gives way to Pingala. Plenty of milestones are soon crossed, but the Journey does not progress. You are still immersed on outdated beliefs and fancies. Observe the right codes laid down by the rishis with an awareness of the deeper plans they had in view. Follow the Shastras (spiritual sciences) and perform the daily and seasonal rites, rituals, fasts, vows and vigils recommended by them, always laying emphasis on the inner meaning and significance and the spiritual aspect of the celebration. That is the best repayment you can make.

Debt to be repaid to ancestors is Universal

The third debt is the pithru-rna (the debt repayable to the ancestors),

especially to the parents. This debt is also Universal, that is to say, men in all lands and all climes have to acknowledge it; for we are all born of parents to whom gratitude is due for endowing us with a body. Adore the parents, make them happy, give them contentment and joy by paying loving attention and bestowing affectionate care. Another duty is to propagate the line through children of pure character, high virtue and noble endeavour. Dhasharatha, the emperor of Ayodhya, desirous of paying back his debt to his ancestors, had to perform the Puthra-kamesthi Yaga, the Vedhic sacrifice that can bless the aspirant with sons. This is the Vasantha Kala (spring time). This season comprises two months - Madhu- Madhava and Mesha-Rishabha. Mesha is the most glory-filled month in the entire year. It was in the Vasantha season that Dhasharatha released the sacrificial horse so that it may wander freely over the continent along an unhinderable course, and it was in the same month that it returned unopposed to Ayodhya. The Puthrakameshti Yaga also commenced in Vasantha, and the four sons - Rama, Bharatha, Lakshmana and Sathrughna - were born in Vasantha. This is the reason why the Yugadhi is acclaimed as the Inaugural day of the Vasantha Navarathri (the first nine nights of the spring season) culminating with the Rama-Navami (the day on which Rama was born).

Man is destined for some higher goal

Yuga means in era. This day is called not Samvathsaradhi, the New Year day, but Yugadhi, the first day of a New Era. The era indicated is the Dharma-yuga or the Rama-yuga, for Rama is identified as the very embodiment of Dharma (righteousness). Ramo vigrahavan Dharmah. The prime duty, of every one who participates in this celebration, therefore, is to adhere to Dharma, to support Dharma and to foster Dharma. It is mostly a question of the final goal that man sets before himself in life. The goal has to be realisation of the unity of the self with the Paramatman (Supreme Self). Why else should the self take this human form? If mere 'living' or even 'happy living' was the goal, the self could have been encased in the form of birds or beasts. The very fact that man is equipped with memory, mind, intelligence discrimination ability to anticipate the future, desire to detach himself from the senses, etc., is an indication that he is destined for some higher goal. In spite of this if man

craves for a lesser consummation, he is a papi (sinner). But he who persists, in spite of temptations and obstacles, on the path that leads to self-fulfilment and self-realisation, is a gopee, for the gopees (cowherd girls) of Brindavan were the most inspiring examples of such souls. The most effective discipline that man can adopt to attain this lofty goal, is the control and conquest of the five senses, avoid the errors and evils that the eye, the ear, the tongue, the mind and the hand are prone to commit. These are called the panchadoshas (five vices). The eye ever seeks the vile and the vulgar. Notwithstanding the danger to his own life and body, the motorist will stare at obscene posters advertising a movie film. The eye must be held in check so that it may not ruin the mind as well as the body of man. The ear craves for scandal and salacious stuff. It does not persuade you to attend discourses that can really help in your spiritual development. Even if you chance to attend any, the ear dissuades you by giving you a headache. But when some one pours abuse on another, the two ears attain maximum concentration.

Start the day and end the day with Love

The tongue is doubly dangerous unless held in check, for it speaks scandal and creates craving for taste. It is well nigh Impossible to lead the tongue towards the path of japa and dhyana (spiritual recitations and meditation), however sweet be the Name of the Lord. Suurdhas pleads with the tongue to call out the Names - Govindha, Dhamodhara, Madhava. When the eye, ear and tongue are under control and capable of being used for self-improvement, the mind and the hand can also easily be held in check. Thus when man realises himself, there is no need to inquire where God dwells. He dwells in the pure heart of man, clearly shining in His innate splendour of Wisdom, Power and Love. Give joy to all. Prema (Selfless Love) is the means to achieve this ideal. When Love can bring even God nearer to you, how can it fall where man is involved? Krishna could not be bound by any other means. That is the reason why Sai has declared Start the day with Love; spend the day with Love; fill the day with Love; end the day with Love. That is the way to God.

Through a desire to judge or estimate or evaluate, you cannot discover the mystery of God; through devotion and faith, you have to win His Grace, which will reveal Him to your understanding and experience. Steady faith alone can earn victory. You cannot be changing your allegiance as and when you please. Hold fast until the realisation is awarded.

When a man is suffering from the effects of cobra-bite, they give him chillies to chew; the idea is they will not taste "hot" if the poison is still in his system. So too, when the poison of worldly sensualism is there, puuja, japam, dhyanam all will taste drab and dismal.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

32. The brother among brothers

Date: 26 May 1977 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 1977

THE ideal of brotherhood as depicted in the Ramayana is without parallel in any other epic anywhere in world literature. When, during the battle with the rakshasa (demon) hordes in Lanka, Lakshmana fell unconscious and could not be revived, Rama lamented the calamity, saying, "Alas! Lakshmana is the source of my breath; there is no brother like him on the whole earth." Lakshmana's life and relationship with his brother Rama are shining examples for mankind.

It can be said that Lakshmana is the A in the sacred syllable AUM; Bharatha, the second brother, is the U; Sathrugna, the third, is the M and Rama, the eldest, is the full AUM. Rama is the concretisation of the Brahman (Universal Absolute) that first emanated as the Primeval Sound, AUM. When Rama and Lakshmana were wading through the Jungle after the loss of Seetha, the sages who saw them described them as the 'Sun and Moon,' so majestic and magnificent was their mein. They shone with the splendour of courage and determination. When strength of body and steadfastness of mind reinforce each other, one's mein becomes attractive. Youth today has neither physical strength nor mental steadfastness, so young people appear old very early in life. When the body is weak, the mind, too, gets weak. You must try to develop physical well-being and health, for a gem has to be treasured in a safe, strong box. The gem of Divinity that is your reality also has to be kept in a strong box, namely, the body.

Lesson for today's youth from the life of Rama

Even during their boyhood Rama and Lakshmana were careful about how they dressed. During the period of their early spiritual apprenticeship, they discarded princely robes, even though Dhasahratha tempted them to wear costly jewels and clothes. When in the forest as exiles, they wore deerskin and had their hair knotted on top. They argued that a dress must be worn for one's own satisfaction and not in order to imitate someone else. They were

never slaves to fashion or convention. They laid down the norms for others and never Imitated others Just to earn their favour.

Heroism was the hall-mark of the brothers. They met every obstacle squarely and exhibited the necessary enterprise and ability to meet and overcome opposition. The youth of today have to 'learn this lesson. They quaff before the tiniest obstacle and lose heart at the first difficulty they encounter. Like the heroes of the Ramayana they should march forward bravely, whatever the handicap, in either the secular, the moral or the spiritual fields of activity. When the truth of One Reality in all, the Reality of God, is revealed, then there will be no more room for anger or hatred. They will seek and see only the good in every one. At present the passion In their eyes colours their version.

Lakshmana could not tolerate separation from Rama

Thulsi Dhas, while composing his epic poem, Ramacharithamanas, wrote that the flowers in the gardens of Lanka were white. Hanuman, who was present unseen, manifested himself, his face full of dissent, for he said that they were red and not white, as he had himself seem them: Thulsi Dhas refused to amend the adjective, but Hanuman insisted that the error be corrected. The argument almost turned into a scuffle and Rama Himself had to intervene. He told Hanuman that since anger against rakshasas (demons) had reddened his eyes, the white flowers appeared red to him.

Lakshmana had a pure heart from his very birth. As he grew up he was able to overcome the urges of his senses and establish himself as their master. His character was above reproach. He eagerly welcomed any order from Rama and enjoyed fulfilling it to the best of his ability. Lakshmana spent the first two days of his life wailing aloud in the lap of Sumithra, his mother. She tried all remedies, magical and ritual, to console him, but the baby would not be consoled or persuaded to eat or to sleep. She consulted Vashishta, the Royal Preceptor, who advised that Lakshmana be laid beside Rama in the palace of Kausalya. She did as directed, and in the company of Rama Sumithra's child slept soundly and played most happily. He could not tolerate separation from

Rama. His greatest desire was-to be in Rama's presence. He followed Rama like his shadow, never residing in a place where Rama was not present. Rama was all that he wanted, all that he cared for.

Steadfast loyalty of Lakshmana to Rama

When Rama started out into exile in the forest wearing garments of bark, Lakshmana, too, did the same. For fourteen years he watched over his brother and his wife, guarding them day and night without any regard for his own comfort or even for sleep or food. Thulasi Dhas pays great tribute to Lakshmana for this devoted service. According to him, when Rama returned to Ayodhya after his period of exile, the citizens in lakhs cheered at the distant sight of the flag on top of the chariot which was bringing him. But they did not know, he says, that the pole which carried the flag of Rama's triumph was Lakshmana, the devoted brother. How could the flag fly so splendidly without the dedicated service, the undaunted courage and the steadfast loyalty of the brother who gladly shared the travails of exile with Rama? In the course of Narayana's enactment as a nara (man) named Rama on earth, He had a crucial role to play. Lakshmana laid down his life for the purpose of realising the Mission of the Avathar (divine incarnation). He never transgressed by as much as a step, the boundary laid down by Rama. When Rama ordered him to raise a fire into which Seetha was advised to step as part of the fire-ordeal to prove her chastity to the world, Lakshmana obeyed with a bleeding heart. When Rama ordered him to take Seetha out into the forest and leave her alone and unguarded there, Lakshmana obeyed, though his heart was wrung with pain.

Lakshmana gave up everything to serve Rama

There were two occasions when Lakshmana had unfortunately to go against the specific orders of Rama. When Mareecha, after enticing Rama a long distance away by assuming the form of a golden deer, was finally killed by him, he imitated Rama's voice and cried out before dying, "O Seetha! O Lakshmana! Help me, Help Me!" Lakshmana, knowing this to be a trick of the rakshasa (demon) Mareecha, and In accordance with Rama's instructions, did

not leave Seetha's side. However on Seetha's firm Insistence to trace Rama's cry for help and on being accused by her of ulterior motives, he finally left her alone at the hut and went in search of Rama.

The second instance occurred towards the end of the Avathar period. The Gods sent Yama himself to Rama, to remind him that his life as an Avathar could be ended and all the Divine participants could return to their Heavenly abode. When Yama came into the audience hall, Rama directed Lakshmana to be at the entrance and not allow any one to enter and Interrupt the conversation. He told him to be vigilant, on pain of death. While Lakshmana was keeping watch, the short-tempered sage, Dhuurvasa, approached him and demanded entry. He was furious on being stopped and threatened to lay a terrible curse of destruction on Ayodhya, its inhabitants and. on the entire Raghu clan. Lakshmana weighed the pros and cons and concluded that his death would indeed be a lesser calamity than the destruction of the entire population of Ayodhya. So he admitted Dhuurvasa and gladly received the punishment. Lakshmana decided every act of his on the touch-stone of either Rama's wish or the general good. He gave up everything - his wife Urmila, his mother Sumithra and the princely life at Ayodhya - for the chance of serving Rama and furthering His mission. When he killed Indhrajith in battle, Rama embraced him with unbounded joy, and exclaimed, "Ah, dear brother! What a great victory you have achieved today. Now I feel as if I have already got Seetha back."

Humility, heroism and noble character of Lakshmana

Between Rama and Lakshmana there was never any trace of envy or suspicion. Lakshmana was supremely indifferent to what was happening around him If it did not affect Rama. His greatness is immeasurable. He served Seetha every day for fourteen years, but never once raised his eyes to her face. His conduct was the height of righteousness. When the bundle of jewels that Seetha had thrown along the way while being abducted by Ravana was retrieved by the vanaras at Rishyamuka Hill, they handed it over to Sugreeva. Sugreeva brought it before Rama and Lakshmana for identification. When Rama asked Lakshmana whether he could identify any of the jewels as

belonging to Seetha, Lakshmana said that he could vouchsafe for the genuineness of only one jewel - that which Seetha wore on her ankles. He saw it every day when he fell at the feet of Seetha and so could recognise it as unmistakably hers. Such was the noble character of Rama's brother. When Lakshmana fainted during the battle with Indhrajith, the latter wanted to lift his unconscious body and carry him into Lanka as a hostage. But since Lakshmana was the incarnation of the cosmic serpent, Sesha, he was tremendously heavy and could not be moved. So Indhrajith gave up the idea and went away. Meanwhile Hanuman arrived there, and on his uttering the name of Rama, Lakshmana's weight was reduced to that of a feather, so responsive was he to Ramanama even in his unconsciousness. This is a measure of the humility and the heroism of this great-brother of Rama.

Give the body the attention it deserves, but not more. Some people advise that you should cultivate disgust towards 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 towards anything in creation. Everything is God's handiwork, an example of His Glory, His Majesty.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

33. Yoga maarga

Date: 16 June 1977 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 1977

CAN thirst be quenched by water droplets or hunger appeased by grains of rice? The realisation of the Truth of Creation and the Creator involves hard discipline and steady faith in the paths prescribed by the sages. These paths lead man to the goal through inquiry, devotion, dedicated work, meditation, worship and other such disciplines. There is also the process of Yoga (divine communion) which is widely advocated now-a-days as a means for self-realisation available to practitioners. It is being taught and propagated as a sure and simple means of Liberation. Novices and common folk are misled by the high promises, and they have to be warned in time of the limits and possibilities of Yoga as now taught and propounded.

The very first axiom of Yoga as a spiritual discipline is to 'conquer the agitations of the mind.' However, this is more easily said than done, for the mind has to be dead, not dormant. Of course there are persons who have achieved this victory, but none of them will be available to you for guidance in mind-control or mind-conquest. They would be so sunk in anandha (divine bliss) that the demands of the body, the time, the causal chain, etc. can never reach them.

Yoga is mergence of the individual into the Universal

What can be expected from a teacher of Yoga is only a diluted, limited, pseudo type of Yogadharshan (Yogic Vision or realisation), for only those who have stopped half-way in the path of Yoga will come forward as instructors and guides. When one has gone the entire length of the road, one has perforce to leave the world and its needs behind. Yoga means union or yoking, and the jeevatma (The Individual Soul) has to be yoked with the Paramatman (Supreme Soul); one has to find its fulfilment in the Whole, of which it is a part. As the rivers carry the waters of the sea back into the sea itself happy to lose the limitations of their names, their size etc In that consummation, so the individual merges into the Universal. That is Yoga. It is

Yoga that happens to the salt doll that is dropped into the depths of the sea to calculate the depth of the water. The salt too comes from the sea and becomes one with the sea. Man has five koshas (sheaths) covering his individuality - the annamaya (material), pranamaya (vital), manomaya (mental), vijnanamaya (intellectual) and the anandhamaya (blissful). When man turns from the objective world to the subjective world within him, he can unsheath his Individuality and reach his Bliss Nature. But most men revel in the very first sheath - the material sheath - and remain engrossed and entangled in material pursuits and pleasures. Man does not realise that he sees only what he wants to see; he cannot see beyond his need. Therefore unless his desires are purified and clarified, he cannot penetrate it into the inner realms of delight.

The various chakras in the body

If you ask any one where the words he utters come from, he will reply that they do so from the vocal chords. No. The vocal chords can produce sound, but not words. The spinal column, from the muuladhara chakra to the ajna chakra (the energy centre at lowest point of the column to the energy centre at mid-brow spot) is like the veena, the strings of which when drawn and played upon, produce resonance. The vital and the mental sheaths are involved in these regions. When the playing fingers halt and press on frets fixed on the veena at irregular intervals, different notes are created and delight ensues. When the mind decides upon an idea that is to be communicated, the prana (life force) plays upon the strings and words emanate. The muuladhara, the lowest of the chakras (energy centres) at the lower end of the spinal passage, is the embodiment of the Prakrithi (Nature) principle. Therefore it is related to the annamaya kosha, the material facet of man. It is the prithvi thathwa (the earth-principle.) The swadhistana chakra at the point of the navel, is the guardian of the pranamaya kosha, the vital facet of the person. It is the agni principle, the spring and source of warmth in the body, that maintains the processes of digestion and protection from environmental change. The manlpuuraka chakra is the next highest on the spinal scale. It is the jala thathwa (waterprinciple), that helps the circulation of blood both into the heart and out of it, from all parts of the body.

The anahata chakra is in the region of the heart. It embodies the vayu (wind) principle which is in charge of the breathing process, inhalation and exhalation, so vital for life and activity. It also vitalises the spinal force, and passes over the frets of the inner veena. The visuddha chakra is in the pit of the throat, near the pituitary gland. It represents the akasha (space or ether) principle and promotes sabdha (sound). The ajna chakra on the mid-brow spot is the embodiment of vijnana - the Splendour of Awareness - for when this chakra is reached, man glimpses the Truth, gets transformed and becomes translucent. It is only a step away from the final realisation, when the Sahasrara chakra (the thousand petalled energy centre) on the crown of the head is attained. That is the consummation of all sadhana (spiritual effort), of all search. The stage of desire operates in the first two chakras, the stage of endeavour (kriya shakthi) in the next two and the stage of awareness (Jnana shakthi), is most evident in the last two. The awareness is there, latent in every one, ready to surface when the veils of ignorance are removed. The individual life-force or jeevathathwam, resides like a lightning flash in the womb of a blue cloud between the ninth and the twelfth rings of the spinal column. It will be alert and awake only when sadhana of any type is done after the cleansing of character and habits.

Essential qualifications for the aspirant of Yoga

If, however, the Yoga path is undertaken when the senses are still potent and overbearing, the effects on one's emotions and passions will be disastrous. One will become insane and talk and write absurd and ribald things about oneself and others. I have known many cases of such sadhakas (spiritual aspirants) who have gone astray. That is why shama (control of the outer senses), dhama (control of the inner passions and emotions), uparathi (withdrawal of the mind from external pursuits), thithiksha (acquisition of the power to bear heat and cold, grief and joy, profit and loss etc., with equanimity), shradhdha (faith in the scriptures and in the experience of sages) and samadhana (equal-mindedness and fortitude), have been emphasised as qualifications for the aspirant. Yoga as taught and learned at present is, at best, only a system of physical exercises, a means to acquire health and a sense of physical well-being. It cannot be spiritual discipline

leading to selfrealisation. The body which is composed of the five elements, can be affected by these Yoga practices. The mind has no illumining power of its own and, like the Moon, it can only reflect the light of the Sun or the Atman (Divinity) within. The Atman can be known only through Love; all claims to the contrary are spurious and missing the mark. Through the kundalini shathi (Serpent Power) and its ascent through the chakras, it is well-nigh impossible to realise the Universal Atman. Even when realised, the experience is not communicable through lessons. The vision attained must be of the One without a second; only then can it be genuine. The core of every being must be recognised as One. There was once a Guru (preceptor) who initiated his pupil in the Narayana manthra: Om namo Narayana. When the pupil left his presence, he called him back and gave an additional direction saying, "Have the form of Narayana (Lord Vishnu) before your mental eye when you repeat the manthra (sacred formula)." The pupil left, but the Guru called him back again and told him, "But be careful that you do not think of a monkey when you are reciting the Name and contemplating the Form." The pupil agreed, but whenever he Sat down to meditate, the monkey could not be pushed aside. He kept telling himself that he should not think of the monkey but the monkey insisted on peeping into his consciousness. So he complained to the Guru and asked for his advice.

The Guru said that Narayana is Omnipresent and immanent in every being and so he can meditate on Narayana as the reality of every being that appears in his vision. How can you separate some things as not God and others as God? They are all limbs, organs and cells of His body. If you separate all such limbs, organs and cells, what is left of the body? Therefore do not be led into the yoga marga. It is fraught with danger since there can be no efficient teachers. But yogasanas can always be practised for better health under proper guidance.

34. The Universal Prayer

Date: 20 June 1977 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Upanayanam Day

Om Bhoor Bhuvaha Swaha
Thath Savithur Varenyam
Bhargo Devasya Dheemahi
Dhiyo Yonaha Prachodhayath

THE Gayathri (Vedhic prayer to illuminate the intellect) is the Universal prayer enshrined in the Vedas (Divine Knowledge), the most ancient scriptures of man. It is addressed to the Immanent and Transcendent Divine which has been given the name 'Savitha ,' meaning 'that from which all this is born.' The Gayathri may be considered as having three parts - (i) Praise, (ii) Meditation, (iii) Prayer. First the Divine is praised, then It is meditated upon in reverence and finally an appeal is made to the Divine to awaken and strengthen the intellect, the discriminating faculty of man.

The Gayathri is considered as Vedasara - "the essence of the Vedas." Veda means knowledge, and this prayer fosters and sharpens the knowledge-yielding faculty. As a matter of fact the four Mahavakyas or 'core-declarations' enshrined in the four Vedas are implied in this Gayathri manthra.

Every human being has four birthdays

The Gayathri is usually repeated at dawn, midnoon and dusk. But God being beyond time, it is a result of our limitations that we talk of dawn and dusk. When we move away from the Sun it is dusk; when we move into the light of the Sun it is dawn. So you need not be bound by the three points of time to recite the prayer. It can be repeated always and everywhere, only one has to ensure that the mind is pure. I would advise you young people to recite it when you take your bath. Do not sing cheap and defiling film songs. Recite

the Gayathri when you bathe, the body is being cleansed; let your mind and intellect also be cleansed. Make it a point to repeat it when you bathe as well as before every meal, when you wake from sleep and when you go to bed. And also repeat 'Shanthi' thrice at the end, for that repetition will give Shanthi or peace to three entities in you - body, mind and soul.

Every human being has four birthdays.

The first is when he emerges from his mother's womb and, being neither holy nor unholy, craves only for food and shelter;

the second is when he begins his spiritual study to lead him from darkness to light;

the third is when he has gained wisdom, having mastered the disciplines propounded by the rishis for achieving self-realisation;

the fourth and last is when he realises his true identity and merges with Brahman.

Never give up the Gayathri mantra

The yajnopaveetham (sacred thread) is a symbol of purity which is necessary if you wish to participate in the yajna of Living. Life is a continuous series of sacrifices of the lower for the sake of the higher, of the tiny in favour of the vast. Upanayana, the word which has been given to this ceremony of Initiation, means the conferment of another eye. Your two eyes cannot reveal to you the magnificence and the majesty of the realm of the spirit. They are focussed towards the objective world and its transient attractions. So the Gayathri mantra has been given to you as a third eye to reveal to you that inner vision by which you may realise Brahman. Gayathri is a treasure you must guard throughout your lives. If you have not caught the sounds of the mantra correctly now, learn it from your parents or from your family priest. Perhaps the others may not know the Gayathri themselves or they might have forgotten it through culpable neglect. Then I would ask them to learn it

from you. **Never give up the Gayathri; you may give up or ignore any other mantra but you should recite the Gayathri at least a few times a day. It will protect you from harm wherever you are - travelling, working or at home.** Westerners have investigated the vibrations produced by this mantra and have found that when it is recited with the correct accent as laid down in the Vedas, the atmosphere around becomes visibly illumined. So Brahmaprakasha , the effulgence of divine will descend on you and illumine your intellect and light your path when this mantra is chanted. Gayathri is Annapoorna, the Mother, the sustaining Force that animates all life. So do not neglect it. Elders and priests, mantra, have given it the custodians of this the go-by. But you, as inheritors and guardians of the great culture of this country, have a great responsibility in preserving it and demonstrating its efficacy and worth.

It is as absurd as putting the cart before the horse. The physical is subordinate to the spiritual. The body is the cart and the spirit, the horse. Of course, the cart should be kept in good condition; vice ruins the body and makes it unfit for the journey of life. The mind is the horse and that is neglected and not groomed for the journey. It is starved.

In this land where Meera, Jayadeva, Valmeeki, Thyagaraja, Ramadhas, and Tukaram, by their intense yearning and fortitude, showed the path of achieving lasting joy, precious years of life are thrown away in silly adventures.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

35. One-pointedness

Date: 30 July 1977 / Location: Brindavan

EDUCATION must impart those qualities in the individual that will ensure his peace, and thereby, universal peace. It should cleanse the mind of all traces of narrowness and help in fostering unity and love. This is the message of Bharath from time immemorial. The Vedas (revealed scriptures of Supreme Knowledge) proclaim these as the goals of education. This is the Vedabhoomi, the land that reveres the Vedas, which the sages learnt through Divine Revelation. The seeds of this Message grew up as saplings and blossomed in the garden of the Upanishaths. These saplings then grew and into ancient Shasthras (spiritual sciences), and the winds carried the fragrance of their anandha (divine bliss) to the four corners of the world to vitalise and awaken the people of all the continents. In those days the sages lived with their pupils in hermitages, in quiet sylvan surroundings on the banks of rivers. Each hermitage was a university with the sage as the Kulapathi (Chancellor). They were proficient in all the branches of knowledge and eager to give the knowledge over to whoever could receive it and make the best use of it. They succeeded in their mission as a result of their own efficiency, the enthusiasm of their pupils and the sublimity of the environment. It was all so simple and sincere, so fresh and free.

Teacher-pupil relationship in the olden days

The environment which surrounds educational institutions today is quite the opposite of this ancient picture. Then the pupils lived with their preceptor in his residence and imbibed not only information but also inspiration, not only manners but also morals. They rose with the dawn, bathed in cold water and went through the rigorous schedule of prayer, study, meditation and household chores. They ate the food that the preceptor gave them. There was no distinction made in any of these disciplines between the prince and the peasant, the son of a Pandith (scholar) or of an illiterate. There was no opportunity to waste time in idle pursuits or trivial gossip, or in satisfying vain whims and fancies. Every pupil was acquainted with the basic values of Indian

culture, their origins and developments and their essential validity for the progress of their country. Today the number of pupils has vastly increased but the quality of both teaching and learning, has suffered much. Serving the teacher was itself part of education in those days; it was easy to please the teacher and get the best out of him by the process of loving service. How can salaries and fees ever satisfy the teacher? They only increase the greed for more. Then the world's prosperity and peace were built on foundations of dharma (righteousness); now they depend on dhana (riches).

Man is the crown of the animal kingdom

The creation of the Universe must have happened when even time was unknown. Countless living beings have dwelt on this planet since, and the existing species are also innumerable. Man is considered to be the crown of the animal kingdom; his is the summit of living beings. Of janthus (living beings), it is said, he is the highest. Why? Because he is the only animal that can investigate his own self and realise and reveal the Divinity which is his reality. Other animals have no thirst for the basic inquiry and no hunger for this satisfying wisdom. This thirst has led many to posit that there is God and others to deny the existence of God. God is described in the Geetha as "more minute than the minutest and larger than the largest." Let us consider this paradox a little.

We cannot see the air that surrounds us though we inhale and exhale it every moment of our lives. How, then, can we see the minute atom and the particles of energy that it is comprised of? Similarly with a clouded, and therefore limited, vision, how can we visualise Brahman, the basic Divine Force that manipulates even the subtle energy within the invisible atom? Of course when the vision is purified into its most subtle aspect, (suukshma-buddhi) and when we are equipped with the wisdom-eye (Jnana chakshu) as Arjuna was, then we can identify the Divinity that lies behind the minutest form or particle.

Stages of change of the created Universe

As for being larger than the largest, consider the Sun. It is about 93 million miles away from the earth. Hence if we travel towards the Sun at the rate of 500 miles per hour and 24 hours a day, it would take over 20 years to reach it. The Sun is so big that the terrestrial globe can be dumped into any one of the thousands of pools or 'pits' which astronomers have discovered in its surface. The stars that appear to be so tiny and so multifarious are each far bigger than the Sun, and the distances between them are far greater than even the distance between the Sun and the earth! How can the petty mind of man ever conceive this vastness of the entire cosmos? But here too the sages by their sharpened Intellect and ecstasy-filled minds, have been able to visualise God, Immanent as much in this macrocosm as in the microcosm and even transcending its boundaries of space and time. Their experience has led them to express their adoration through names such as God, Allah, Jehovah and Bhagavan. These are embodiments of the Glory and the Grace they tasted, the Love they felt as being at the core of the cosmos. The created universe is called Prakrithi (Nature); prior to the Manifestation, there was darkness; after the Manifestation, there was light. The darkness was the thamasik (quality of inaction) state, when there was no activity. The light was the rajasik (quality of agitative) state, when with movement and agitation, uplift and downfall alternated. The 'five elements' were then formed, and in time attained comparative quiet. That was the sathwik (quality of serenity) state, when Divinity shone through them. These five elements are perceptible by the five senses; in fact they are the responses to the needs of the senses. The sathwik state is the Divine state, when light is shed on the Truth. This Truth was there even before the creation and the cosmos.

Meaning of 'one-pointedness' of mind

Truth is more fundamental than the atom. Every atom and every star manifests the Truth to those who have the eye of wisdom. Each aspect of science has a special feature when it applies to some one group of things or beings. What is the special feature of man? If he too lives and dies as any animal, how can his supremacy be justified? His supremacy lies in his capacity to become aware of his Truth. We use the phrase 'one-pointedness' when referring to sadhana. The meaning that we generally give to that

phrase is not correct. Each sense organ or faculty has 'a point' which makes it valid. Don't we say, 'There is no point in it,' when we condemn some thing in an argument? Seeing is the 'point' of the eye; hearing is the 'point' of the ear. If there is no point or agram, it is blind or deaf. The sense is then afflicted with some disease, It has some defect. Even if you catch a slight cold, the nose loses its 'point' for it cannot discover smells. Now what is the 'point' of the mind? When we say 'one-pointedness' it must mean that the mind should be pointed towards the One-the One that is denoted as being without a second, the One which has willed that It may become the many. Unless the mind lays aside all other pursuits and seeks to become aware of the One that has become the many, it can be said that the mind too is diseased and is suffering from some defect.

Elevate yourselves by speaking and doing good

The sages of ancient India had mastered this one-pointedness, and when they willed they could transmit this awareness to their pupils. Such persons are rare today. We have teachers in plenty but none of them has taken up with determination this task of discovering his own identity. With the disappearance of rishis (sages), the rishikuls (hermitages) of those days have become the schools (rishikul-shikul-shkul-school) of today. I have told you often that besides your parents, your teachers and your elders, you have to also revere your deeds. Deeds elevate us or drag us down; they chain us to both, birth and death, or they deliver us from that chain; they result in Joy or grief, prosperity or poverty, gain or loss, pleasure or pain. You must realise that your enthusiasm or despair, success or failure, are but the consequences of your actions. While engaged in action, you come up against certain laws of nature which you cannot overstep. If you loosen your hold on something you have in your hand, it will fall down; similarly, if you slip while ascending a ladder, you shall fall, irrespective of your caste, creed or status. The law does not differentiate. In every deed or act, God is present as the Invisible Motivator; in every minute thing that you handle or manipulate, God is present as the Inner Core. So always try to elevate yourselves by doing good, speaking good, seeking good, and having the good of others in mind.

Education must confer humility and selflessness

You do not lose much if a finger is so damaged that it needs to be cut off. The body can still function and be a fit instrument. Even if you lose a limb, you can function and benefit with the help of your faculties. But If you lose your character, then everything is lost! You can be worthy of the name 'student' only from the day on which you imprint this thought on your mind. Do not allow laziness, hatred or anger to contaminate your hearts. The world looks forward to your leadership in establishing and ensuring peace; how can this be realised if you cultivate hatred and anger? Practise calmness and the habit of deliberation. Don't get agitated and yield to mass frenzy, that is a sign of weakness and waywardness. If anyone blames, abuses or hurts you, do not return him with the same. Behave nobly and with patience. When a dog bites a man, the man does not bite the dog in return. Education must lead you from darkness to light. It is only those who wander in darkness that fall into pits; can a man walking in the light fall into a pit? If he does, it means that he is still in the dark, Vidya means light, and a vidhyarthi (student) must seek light and gain it. What is the use of an eye that does not reveal to you the pitfalls? Education must endow you with that type, of eye which will reveal in time the pits that yawn in your path. Vidhya must confer humility, selflessness and the ideals of service. If a man adores his stomach and his material wealth as his heaven, how can he be honoured as a scholar? The educated man must be ready and skilled to serve his parents, his villages, his state, his nation, his language and his culture. The air in a balloon is limited within the parameters and to the shape of the balloon; unless it bursts the balloon and overcomes its barriers, how can it merge with the Universe? Similarly, unless the self attains awareness and conquers the barriers of the ego, it cannot merge with the Omnipresent, Immanent Divinity. You are born in society; it has helped to guard, guide and foster, you, to educate you and to fill you with dreams and Ideals, Repay to society the debt you owe to it. Proclaim aloud that you are Indians. Decide with pride and enthusiasm to serve India. The story of India and the culture of India - these are to be adored as your parents.

Man thinks he is enjoying the pleasures; but really speaking, it is the pleasures that are enjoying man, for, they sap his energies, dry up his discrimination, eat up his allotted years, and worm into his mind, infesting it with egoism, envy, malice, hate, greed and lust.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

36. The I in you

Date: 17 August 1977 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Students Hostel

THE company one keeps determines one's character; a person tries to join the group where he can freely express his innate nature. So Sathsang (holy company) is a very important requisite for moral and spiritual advancement. Man, by nature, is prone to cater to the desires that arise within him or the urges that are prompted from without. Very often these are deleterious. So he ruins himself by giving them the chance to overpower his personality. Consider the happy influence that good association can exert. A length of string is a worthless thing - no one will wear it in the hair or place it reverentially on an idol of God. But when it associates itself with a few fragrant flowers, then women decorate their coiffure with the length of floral garland and devotees place the garland on the idol they adore. A block of stone in a public square is a much neglected and misused thing - street dogs often foul it. But let the stone receive the company of a sculptor or his pupils, it is shaped into a charming idol of God and installed in a temple to receive the homage of thousands. Again, take the example of the domestic mouse. In the houses where it dwells it is hunted and trapped, poisoned and killed; but when Lord Ganapathy adopts it as His vehicle, it comes to be adored as a holy animal.

Evil company demeans and debases man

The serpent is hated and beaten to death whenever it makes an appearance, for it is dreaded and avoided by man. But in association with Lord Shiva (who has it coiling round His wrists, ankles and neck), the serpent receives reverence from millions. The company of the Divine gives it a halo of consecration.

So, too, evil company demeans and debases man. Take the example of fire. Fire is held to be sacrosanct and holy and is religiously fed and fostered in every orthodox home where the Vedas (revealed scriptures of spiritual wisdom) provide the guidelines of life. But when the fire enters a ball or a rod

of iron, it has to suffer hammer blows in plenty while the rod or the ball is being shaped into some tool by man! Attachment to the iron brings about this calamity for the highly venerated fire.

The years of life allotted to man as a result of the enormous amount of merit earned and accumulated through many lives in the past, have to be utilised for the purpose of rising higher into Divinity. For this adventure, congenial and inspiring company is essential. Riches decline only when spent, but life is, in its own course, being clipped short every moment. Even when we sleep, unconcerned, every minute makes us older, takes us nearer the grave.

The real end of freedom is Wisdom

In order to direct time into useful channels, life has to be regulated and limited, habits have to be sublimated, harmful tendencies have to be corrected and constructive attitudes fostered. These imperatives are emphasised in the Sathya Sai Hostel, though some of you may not appreciate the restrictions and guidelines presented for your conduct. They might be irksome to you just now, for you have joined this hostel quite recently having grown up in totally different kinds of environment.

Perhaps you crave for what is called 'freedom of will and action.' But when you have not fixed an ideal before yourselves, this freedom can easily become licence to give yourselves up to deleterious habits. What is the end of freedom? The real end of freedom is not pleasure, but wisdom. Sweccha is the Sanskrit word for Self-Will. Self here means the higher Self, the Overself. Its Will is ever to merge with the Supreme and be immersed in Anandha (divine bliss).

dust consider the fate of students in most of the other colleges and hostels. Note the unhappy state of affairs prevailing there. The atmosphere is not congenial either for academic achievement-or for personality development. It is full of imitative excitement and factional politics. Has man evolved from the animal, only to descend to degradation worse than that of the animal? Is man to be motivated only by the needs of hunger and fear like a cow which comes

forward to eat a tuft of grass, but runs away at the sight of a suck? Man should be motivated differently. Again, can man be happy by merely attending film-shows or by roaming about in bazars and spending time aimlessly?

Accept the ideal of a disciplined life

In many cases the parents and elders are at fault because they are bad examples for their own children. They drink and gamble, hate and fight. Education has to save you from pursuing these wrong paths. I may tell you that students who lived in this hostel for some months, in accordance with its rules and regulations, have won the appreciation of authorities of its sister colleges in Bangalore for their punctuality, earnestness and disciplined behaviour. A disciplined life is the best offering you can make to the country or to the Divine In you. One single person who is averse to regulated living may, by his example, spoil the careers of many others with whom he comes in contact. So each of you must accept the ideal after analysing its implications and being convinced of its validity. Animal instincts and impulses have persisted in human nature as vestiges, and it is only when their upsurge is controlled and gradually eliminated, that the springs of Divinity can manifest, themselves. This hostel provides you just the opportunity, and the sathsang (good company) here helps, you to accomplish this. Nature can be modified by nurture; even dogs can cease to relish meat when they are trained to relish only vegetarian food. So open yourselves gladly to the influence of the sathsang available here. Of course, storks ridicule the swan and crows carp at the cuckoo's song, but in spite of all the cynicism the swan sails upon the water as grand as ever and the cuckoo has not developed any flaw in its song. Those who ridicule others eventually find themselves isolated and laughed at for their own idiosyncrasies.

Most intelligent schemes of men can become flops

Very often even the most intelligent schemes of men result in the opposite turn of events due to some fundamental flaw in their reasoning. It was in Bobbili, years ago, that an infectious disease resulting in bolls on the skin,

spread fast. It was discovered that the infection originated from domestic rats. Since the rats could not be totally destroyed by means of traps, the ruler decided to encourage people to keep cats as pets, and he gave each householder a liberal monthly allowance of rice for feeding the cats.

Five kilograms of rice was supplied to the householders every month. After a time complaints reached the ruler to the effect that the cats were not being properly fed, and that the householders were themselves consuming the rice intended for the cats. So the ruler ordered them to present themselves in the court with the cats they were rearing. When they appeared along with their pets, it was discovered that the rumours of misappropriation were false. Every cat was astonishingly well-fed and plump. One cat, however, the one reared by Ramakrishna, was lean and hungry. When the ruler charged him with misuse of the rice supplied to him by the state, he said, "Master! None of these other cats has ever caught a rat. Those cats are too well-fed for that. When they have no hunger, how can they seek out and kill rats? My cat catches at least dozen a day." The ruler had to agree that his plan was a big flop. It had produced just the opposite result! Remember, the rules laid down for you are for your own good. Whatever I do, speak, or order, is for your good, for rendering your future years happy and fruitful. This is the most valuable period of your lives and you must be thankful that you are spending it in this atmosphere, in the midst of this sathsang. All this is being done because I know that you are all Mine. Even if you deny that you are Mine, I shall persist in telling you that you are so until you understand. For I am the Divinity that is your Reality. The 'I' in you is disturbed and becomes distressed when you stray into unrighteousness and wander into waywardness. Therefore understand well the value of the schedule of work and worship prescribed for you here, and have your personalities moulded to the best shape so that you may shine forth as inspiring examples of service to man and God.

The pure heart is the best mirror for the reflection of Truth. So all these disciplines are for the purification of the heart. As soon as it is pure, all

truths flash upon it in a minute.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

37. The inner yajna

Date: 15 October 1977 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Inauguration day of Yajna

THE deeds of man elevate him or engender his fall. All deeds of his that are in consonance with the principles of righteousness deserve the dignity of the appellation, yajna (sacrificial rite). There are two types of yajna mentioned in the sacred texts; the external and the internal. The outer form is not so important or productive. It is mentioned only to be discarded and dismissed, for, of what use is a shell without the kernel? Adoring the Lord while meditating on His Name and Glory is also a form of inner yajna. The yajna in which animals were sacrificed at the altar (bali-peeth), is an external act, but it has an inner significance. The mind is the sacrificial post and the animal instincts still resident in the human character are to be slaughtered on the bali-peeth of the mind. The megalomania in man which urges him on to blind pursuit of power is the buffalo that has to be sacrificed. The foolishness that overwhelms man and renders him weak and docile is the sheep that has to be renounced. The slyness and stratagem-filled mind of man is the cat that has to be given up in the same manner. This is the inner yajna of which the outer yajna is but a reflection. When the external rites are being performed, their inner significance must be kept in view. It is a sin to go through with the outer formalities without any knowledge of their significance.

Man is many animals in one

Man has passed through many animal lives before he has come to earth in human form. Strains of animal nature such as cruelty, anger, greed and hatred still persist in him. Man is many animals in one. He has the jackal, the buffalo, the tiger, the elephant - all in him. He must cast off these traits from his composition. When he indulges in needless and useless controversy on matters beyond his understanding, he is announcing himself as a sheep; when he jumps from one idea to another, from one ideal to another, from one project to another, without fully involving himself in any, he is exhibiting the nature of the monkey. The nature of the Inner yajna can best be understood if

we examine the story of Emperor Bali. He was the grandson of Prahaladha, the celebrated devotee of the Lord. Prahaladha braved a succession of inhuman tortures inflicted on him by his father to force him to retract his faith. Bali placed at the Feet of the Lord, as an offering to Him, all the lands he ruled over, as well as Heaven Itself, which he could claim as a reward for his piety. Bali decided to perform the unique yajna named Vishwajith. One feature of this yajna is that it can be undertaken only by an emperor, signifying victory over his enemies and sovereign power over their peoples. The emperor announces by this yajna that he is the unquestioned master of the empire that he has enlarged, and immediately after this announcement he rids himself of the vast treasures he has earned and accumulated by force of arms, in lavish charity among all sections of his people. Bali was a ruler who placed the welfare and prosperity of his subjects foremost in his consideration. He was the symbol of discriminating talent, Prajna shakthi. And the Lord who came to him as Vamana, is the symbol of the Divinity latent in every one. ,When that Divinity manifests Its Omnipresence. It takes on the Thrivikrama (the trifold aspect), covering earth, sky and the heavens.

Reason for the Lord seeking charity from Bali

The Lord's Incarnation as Vamana and His Manifestation as Thrivikrama, happened at the place later called Siddhashrama, abode of achievement. This was the place also chosen by sage Vishwamithra for his austerities. Vishwamithra means "friend of the Universe." He was not merely a great sage, he was the embodiment of the Higher Will, the Iccha Shakthi (Power of desire).

Legend has it that the Lord sent Emperor Bali down to the nether regions. This only indicates the trampling of the ego into oblivion. The usual belief is that the performance of yajnas according to Vedhic regulations will confer worldly prosperity and heavenly joy. But Emperor Bali renounced material benefits and illusory joys. That is the reason why he could get Divine grace to such a large extent that the Lord Himself sought charity from him!

Yajna is an exercise in renunciation

Any act that is performed as a dedication to Godhead is a yajna. Manu, the ancient lawgiver, has declared that reverential prostration done before the mother, father and preceptor is indeed a yajna; when the egoistic pride or greed is absent and when the object is the good of all, certainly the deed is yajna.

Throughout the empire of Bali, there was none so poor that he was forced to beg for alms. Those who came into his realm from outside were also well provided for. The yajna is an exercise in renunciation; it should not emerge off and on, and then be submerged. The spirit of renunciation must be evident in every single act throughout one's life. Bali was an example of this type of consistent renunciation. Those who manage to go through life without caring for honest living are akin to the crow, and those who adopt devious ways to earn a livelihood are akin to the jackal.

Though Emperor Bali was born in a rakshasa clan (known for its demonic nature, but with the one exception of Prahladha), he had acquired a pure heart, free from hatred and pride. He had mastered the waywardness of his mind. The Lord then appeared before him as a mendicant, as a great tribute to his worthy nature. The Lord asked from him only three feet of ground. This was a symbolic request, for the three feet meant the bhū, bhuvā and svarū, representing the gross, subtle and causal bodies of man. The lokas (worlds) are not placed one over the other or one after the other. They are Immanent, each in the other. The visible loka is the bhūloka, the vital atmosphere around it is the bhūvarloka and the world of anandha which envelopes the vital is the svarloka. Man has five koshas (sheaths) which encase him. The material and the mental comprise the bhūloka, the vital and the intellectual comprise the bhūvarloka and the anandhamaya is the svarloka.

Man falls by attachment and rises by non attachment

The royal preceptor of Emperor Bali was Sukracharya. He had, by his austerities and scholarship, attained a place of high honour among the

monks, but he stood in the way of the renunciation which Ball had set before himself. Sukracharya could teach, but he did not himself follow what he taught others as desirable. He was a highly respected monk, but he had this one great flaw. It is such people, who call themselves 'theists' and 'believers,' that promote atheism and disbelief. They have no faith in the validity of what they profess; their actions are contrary to their declarations. Scholars run after possessions which they declare are 'trivial and temporary.' They preach devotion to God but are devoted to mammon. They accuse others for causing the decline of dharma (righteousness) but they are themselves the cause. When Bali came forward to offer to the Lord three feet of ground that He had asked for, Sukracharya, the all-knowing preceptor, protested and pointed out that the Lord had come only to ruin Bali and rob him of his possessions. But the pupil was greater than the preceptor. He replied, "Well, if He is the Lord Himself who is extending His Palm to receive the gift, I am certainly the most fortunate being on earth. The hand that creates and fosters the Universe is now held before me, and my hand held over It is dropping the gift into It. Do not prevent me. Be happy that It has become possible for me to do this. I shall renounce heaven, my empire and even my life for this one piece of good fortune." Man falls by apeksha (attachment) and rises by upeksha (non-attachment). Ball reached the acme of upeksha and his preceptor failed to bring him down. The Vishwajith-yajna was the external yajna (sacrificial rites), but the inner yajna was the great renunciatory surrender of Bali at the Lotus Feet of the Lord. In the consecrated fire of the heart he poured, as offering, his ego nature; he rose, humbler and wiser, and saluted the Divine within Himself, manifest as Vamana incarnate.

What is heard has to be pondered over. What is pondered over has to be put into practice. It is only when all three are accomplished that the realisation of Bliss can be attained.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba



38. Krishna Avathaar

Date: 06 September 1977 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Krishna Jayanthi

This day is being celebrated as the birthday of Krishna. Krishna was born in prison, a fact that teaches us that God has to incarnate or present himself in the dark and narrow prison-house of our hearts, so that we may derive light and earn freedom. Maya is the delusion that hides the truth of Being; it tends to identify one's truth as the physical body with its appurtenances, and prompts us to cater to the cravings of the body. Man thus forgets the Divine and instead listens to the call of the animal in him, consequently falling from his high ideal. But when Krishna is born in the cellar of his mind, man is saved. Man must therefore become aware of God within the cavity of his heart.

Yesterday while returning from Ooty we halted at Bandhipur Wild Life Sanctuary, and riding on a tame elephant, we moved into the forest to catch a glimpse of wild elephants. Imagine, sitting on an elephant, we were seeking elephants! When we caught a glimpse of a trunk in a bush, we were overcome with delight. Sitting on a tame, domesticated elephant, we were eagerly searching for an elephant in its natural surroundings, unaffected by artificial habits and skills. Man, too, is everywhere ignoring the Atman within himself in its natural environment and trying to seek the shadows that attract him.

Significance of Krishna being born as eighth child

Sri Krishna was born as the eighth child of Dhevaki. This is significant, for Samadhi is the eighth stage of spiritual effort, coming after yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, prathyahara, dharana and dhyana . These are known as ashtanga-yoga , the eight-fold discipline (abstention from evildoing, observance, control breath, posture, withdrawal of mind from sense objects, concentration, meditation and absorption in the Atma . The Lord can be visualised only after the seven steps are successfully negotiated and the mind purified in the process. The term, samadhi (superconsciousness state of bliss),

is generally identified with a temporary loss of consciousness, or even more, a temporary heightening of the consciousness. But we have to judge the state by the effect it has on the person and his attitude towards himself and others. Samadhi combines sama (equal) dhi (intelligence), that is to say, intelligence grasping the fundamental equality of every being. Not only will all feeling of difference and distinction disappear, but even notions such as heat and cold, grief and joy, good and bad, will become meaningless. When man reaches that state, the Lord is automatically born in his consciousness. The moment Krishna was born, the chains that bound his father fell off, the doors that had been bolted flew open and the prison guards were immersed in the ocean of bliss so that they could not recognise any event or thing in the material world. The fire of hatred that was burning in them was cooled and darkness gave place to the dawn of wisdom. The sky showered raindrops to soften the earth and lay low the dust. How can the elements operate against the Divine Will? Sound, touch, light, taste and smell - all became sublime to celebrate the new era of peace and plenty.

Depth of Vasudheva's devotion to the Lord

Vasudheva, as instructed by 'the voice,' placed the child in a basket and carried him on his head across the Yamuna river (which parted to give him the right of way), to Gokul, where at the same time Yasodha, consort of Nandha, had given birth to a female child. Just when he emerged from the prison, a donkey brayed to indicate the good women, but Vasudeva was afraid it would awaken the guards. So after placing the basket on the ground, he held the child's feet with both his hands and prayed to him that he keep the guards asleep. That was the depth of his devotion to the Lord.

When he went to Nandha's house and entered the lying-in-room, she had just delivered a baby girl. There was no one there, except Radha, Nandha's sister, who was nine years old. Vasudheva lifted her babe and placed the baby Krishna by her side. The female child symbolised maya shakthi (deluding

power), for she ushered the Avathar (divine incarnation) of the Lord. Yoga shakthi, too, has to be ever with the Avathar, and it came as Balarama, born to Rohini, another wife of Vasudheva. Maya shakthi played her ruse as soon as she was placed in the bed of Dhevaki. She cried aloud, awakening the guards, who reported the arrival of the child to Kamsa. He had expected that the eighth child would be a boy, but nevertheless, he took hold of the girl and smashed her upon a rock. Maya shakthi flew up into the air, declaring that the person who was to kill Kamsa was growing up safely in Gokul.

Krishna being Divine, no one could harm him

Though Kamsa slaughtered a number of babies from Gokul, Krishna escaped his eye. Krishna systematically overpowered and killed various emissaries sent by Kamsa to Gokul under various pretexts. Puuthana, a demoness, assuming a charming human form, came to Nandha's house offering to breast-feed the child. She said, "Mother! You have lost a number of new born babies. Perhaps my breast milk might save this one." Yashodha, believing that she was a woman of true compassion and that her milk might have the holy effect she claimed, handed the baby Krishna over to Puuthana. But Krishna knew her intentions, and drawing out her breath he left her dead. But let us pay more attention to the boy than to his exploits. All these exploits reveal that Krishna being Divine, no one could harm him or suppress him. According to the folk-belief, they pierced the ears and nose of Krishna in order to ward off death, which had carried away many children from the family, and put a golden wire on the nose. The nose-ring had a small-sized pearl. The pearl is won by diving into the depths of the sea, so it symbolises the viveka (discrimination) that is won after diving into the secrets of the objective world. Also since it marked the tip of the nose, it sought to emphasise the need to concentrate, to meditate on the tip of the nose, the eyes not being fully open (for that would distract the attention), nor being fully closed (for then sleep would intervene and put an end to the process of meditation). They should be half open, their sight being directed to the tip of the nose, where Krishna wore the pearl.

The three vows that Krishna took

Krishna's complexion was neither fair nor dark; it was three parts dark and one-part fair, an amalgam of both. Since they were of the Vaishnava caste, the parents placed a line of musk on the centre of his brow. He wore silver kankans (bangles) on His wrists, such as cow-herd boys wore in those days in that part of the country. But the kankans that Krishna wore were not mere kankans. They had profound implications. One rite that every Hindu has to perform before undertaking any enterprise of a sacred nature like performing a yajna (sacrificial rites) or undertaking a vow or taking on a new stage of life, is the tying of a kankan to the wrist, which is symbolic of his determination to fulfill that vow or carry out the duties of that stage of life. Krishna had taken three vows and the kankans were symbolic of his determination to fulfill them. They were, as mentioned by Him in the Geetha: (i) Dharma samsthapanarthaya sambhavami yuge yuge (I shall incarnate Myself in every age, to revive and resurrect dharma). (ii) Yogakshemam vahamyham (I shall bear the burden of ensuring peace and prosperity for all who rely on Me). (iii) Mokshayishyami ma sucha (I shall save all those who surrender wholeheartedly to Me, and I shall liberate, them from the cycle of birth and death).

Thus Krishna assured man that He would save him from penury and grief and from sin and its terrible consequences, provided he adheres to Him and adores Him. He also assured the world that He would come in human form and lead mankind onto the dharmic path, and thus liberate it from its grief and the succession of births and deaths.

Krishna was the embodiment of Divine Love

He says, when promising His Grace to all who adore Him with no other thought, that there is no restriction of caste, creed, colour or country or origin, and no one receives special favour as a result of erudition or age or caste. Krishna was the embodiment of Prema (love); His Prema had no bounds. How fortunate you are that you have today the same Krishna, the full Prema- Avathar, moving among you! I shall show you the very kausthubha that I was wearing at that time. (Here Baba waved his hand, and in a trice a brilliant flash of light revealed a unique Jewel in his palm - the kausthubha,

famed in the Bhagavatha and the Puranas (mythological stories). A large greenish-blue emerald of unexcelled brightness, rectangular in shape and bordered by resplendent diamonds, hung on a gold chain. Then Baba moved among the students, teachers and others, and graciously allowed every one of them to see the sacred jewel from close).

Reason for the Divine to incarnate in human form

Krishna moved among men as an ordinary person, and drew them to the observance of His prescriptions by means of His Divine Prema. He refrained from parading His Divine Insignia, comprising a Conch, a Wheel, a Mace and a Lotus. He did not wear even a crown. While a boy, he followed the cows into the pastures with just a towel bound round his head. (Here Baba called for a longish towel and wound it round his head to show how Krishna appeared at that time. He said that in those days, as now, there were peacocks in plenty in and around Brindavan and Gokul, so when he came across a fallen feather, he stuck it between the folds of the towel. It was a moment of rarest and finest delight when Baba stood revealed as the boy Gopala, before hundreds of awe-struck and adoring devotees). When the Pandavas celebrated the Aswamedha and the Rajasuya yajnas, Krishna asked for some assignment to be given him, so that he might be of service. Though he could destroy the entire Kaurava race, he tried his best to instill good sense into them in order to save them. Now, as well as then, the Teaching and the Message are the same: "Know thyself, that is the only way to know Me." Being associated ardently with all living beings winning their love through love, and through a process of correcting their vision and purifying their consciousness, leading them to the realisation of the God which is their core - this is the task before you. Unless the human form is assumed, no one will come near; if the appearance is super-human, people will keep away. So, as the Shasthras (spiritual sciences) say, Dheivam manusha rupena: "the Divine in human form" has to come to save mankind.

Believe "that which Krishna speaks" is truth

The 'five elements' are the products of the Lord's Will, so they obey the Will of

Krishna. Whatever Krishna said, came true. In fact the only correct definition of Truth is, that which Krishna speaks, Believe in that. Be firm in that belief. One day when Krishna went on a stroll with Arjuna, he pointed to a bird perching on the branch of a tree and asked Arjuna, "Do you see that peacock?" Arjuna answered, "Sure, I do." "Oh, Arjuna. It is not a peacock. It is an eagle," said Krishna, and Arjuna promptly agreed that it was an eagle. Then Krishna corrected himself and pointed to the same bird, said, "I am sorry. It is a dove." Arjuna, too, corrected himself and said, "Yes. I see now it is a dove, all right." Krishna laughed at Arjuna and said, "It is not a dove at all; it is a crow," and Arjuna agreed without demur, "Undoubtedly, It is a crow," Krishna then accused Arjuna of stupidity, because he was blindly agreeing with every observation he made - peacock, eagle, dove or crow. Arjuna replied, "What you say is the Truth for me. You can make a crow a dove, or a peacock an eagle. Why should I differ from that you declare? Your word is the Truth I go by." You, too, must develop that faith and not be turned away by your egoism or other's cynicism. Develop viveka (wisdom) and vairagya (detachment) and then your hearts will bloom into fragrant beauty. You have here a picture of Sai standing on a lotus. Sai Krishna will install Himself in the lotus of your heart. He will be ever with you, as guard and guide, and will shower Grace on you. He will be the Mother, Father, and Preceptor, the nearest kinsman; He will be your All.

Therefore I desire that you learn well the subjects taught to you as part of the curriculum. Discharge your duties as students to the best of your skill and intelligence. Follow the disciplines imposed for your betterment. Practise japa and dhyana and cultivate the attitude of seva. Become good sons and good citizens, and bring honour to the family, the society and the country.

The mind has to be brought under your grip; then, the servants will fawn at your feet. The manas (mind) is the monarch; the indhriyas (senses) are the soldiers; the soldiers are now ruling the king, because he lends his ears to them and not to buddhi (intellect), who is the Prime Minister. Let Buddhi take charge; in a moment, the senses will be forced back into camp and the

mind can save itself.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

39. Controlled pride

Date: 30 December 1977 / Location: Mumbai / Occasion: Andhra Educational Society Junior College

THE awareness of the Atman (the Divine In man) can neither be gifted to another nor be accepted from another. It is there all the time, hidden behind the veil of ignorance. When the false image disappears, the Truth shines in all its Glory. It is like the Sun behind the passing cloud. Your duty is to deny this veil and let the Sun of Awareness shine forth and illumine your thoughts, words and deeds.

As Andhras, it is desirable that you revere your native region and native language. But the reverence should not lead to Irreverence towards other regions and languages. Be proud of your language and culture - In that there is no harm. But let not that pride lead you to dislike other languages and cultures. The languages by which thoughts are expressed may be varied, but the thoughts, emotions and feelings are the same. The language of the heart is the same, but when it comes to the tongue, it may take various forms. When it is known and appreciated that the One manifested itself as the many, and that the One is known by many Names, there is really no scope for hatred or irreverence.

Sathsang helps to develop freedom from delusion

Attitudes of tolerance and reverence can be cultivated only along the spiritual path. That is the one path for attaining peace and harmony in this world of ceaseless striving and never-ending despair. The sathsang, the gathering of Godward-bound seekers, is a must for the sprouting of spiritual desire and its fulfillment. Even the tardy will soon develop a keen enthusiasm for the spirit through the influence of sathsang. A piece of string may be bright and white, but no one will wear it on the hair and round the neck. However, let it get entwined through some fragrant flowers and make of them a garland, and people will love to have it in their hair or round their necks. The sathsang of flowers gives it that high status. A boulder, lying neglected and in-treated

beside the road, will receive the adoration of millions if through association with a sculptor it becomes an Idol for a temple. The common rat, despised as a pest, becomes holy when worshippers of Ganesh find It associated with Him as His vehicle. On the other hand, fire, which Is worshipped as Agni dhevatha, becomes the target of the hammer when it enters a ball of iron. That is why Shankaracharya has sung in Bhaja Govindham, "Through sathsang you develop freedom from delusion, through freedom from delusion you develop faith in Truth and through faith in Truth, you attain Liberation Itself."

Egoism is the crown of all evils

We become what we feel and act. Karma (action) shapes the future as it has shaped the present. Karma is the supreme maker of one's destiny. So one must seek sathsang in order to purify one's Karma, which otherwise might act as a shackle. It is impossible to escape from the consequences of one's karma. The shruthi (revealed sacred text) requires you, therefore, to prostrate before every karma that you do, praying that it may not bring harm to any one or to yourself. As child of Immortality, man is entitled to live a noble life and realise his Reality. The lotus takes birth in slush, rises through water, and dies when thrown out of water. It cannot survive for long when deprived of water. Man, too, is born in the world, lives in it, and has to exist in it. You must have heard the dictum, "All honour rendered to man reaches God." Hear also another statement, "All dis-honour inflicted on man reaches God." It is the law, as inescapable as the law that makes this piece of cloth that I hold in my hand fall to the ground when I release the hold. Only when man is able to have the Grace of God and the reinforcement of dharma (righteousness) will he not be led into disaster. He will then be led along the path of spiritual progress, for dharma protects its protector. So long as man lives a life devoted to objective pleasures and objective victories, he cannot escape sorrow, fear and anxiety. Only the Inner Vision can grant him Anandha (divine bliss). For the Atman is the fountain head of Anandha just as egoism is the crown of all evils. Man must develop humility and a sense of proportion as regards his aims and ideals. You have fostered this educational Institution. You must lay emphasis on universal ideals in the field of education. You must encourage those who talk the language of the Atman, and not merely the

language of the Andhras. The latter provides food for the stomach; but joy for the eye and bliss for the heart - these are given by the former. Man is not merely body; he has a mind, a heart, many levels of consciousness and a thirst for the Reality. Many practise dhyana (meditation), but the evidence for progress in dhyana is to be sought in a more universal outlook, greater steadiness, peace, forbearance and more eagerness to serve fellow-beings. Dhyana must reveal the Divine in man and thereby Induce self- confidence, self- sacrifice and self- satisfaction.

So regulate your lives in such a manner that you do not dislike others nor have others dislike you. Love all as embodiments of the same Divine Principle. Demonstrate by your lives, these ideals among the Maharashtrians. Let them speak of Andhras as broad-minded and warmhearted. With the co-operation of the Maharashtrians you have built up this Institution, and I am happy to bless it and give all guidance and help. You are Mine; I am yours. When it is an educational Institution, I take special interest in it, and I am ever ready to visit It and bless the students.

40. To The Delegates

Date: **23 November 1977** / Location: **Prasanthi Nilayam** / Occasion: **Birthday - 52, Eighth All India Conference**

While this discourse has not been part of the Sri Sathya Sai Speaks Vol 13 (1975 - 77) book, it has been published in the 1978 Sanathana Sarathi edition.

The Bliss of Realisation is not an article that one can give another or which one can receive from another. Brahmananda is not transferable. This Truth has to be first accepted by every one. For, what has to be earned by one's own effort is nowadays sought for, from others. This is mere waste of time. The Atma or Self is holy; it is full; it is free. So, each one is holy, full and free. Know this and you are free. Feel it and you are full. Live it and you are holy. But, through sheer ignorance of this fact, man imposes on himself sacrilege, incompleteness and dependence and he laments his fate and destiny. This is indeed behaviour to be ashamed of! The human being is not simply this conglomeration of the five elements that form the material body we see. It contains the mind, prone to resolution and Irresolution crisscrossed by wishes, desires and wants; it contains also what are called the 'inner instruments' - the intellect, the ego, the levels of chitta or consciousness etc. These compose the Sookshma Sarira of the individual, the subtle body. Also there is another entity in man, beyond the dual regions of thought, beyond the ups and downs of birth, death, and growth, a 'body' referred to as the Kaarana Sarira, or the 'causal'. It is not an effect, but, a cause. That is the image of God in man, the Divine Spark.

When you sit before a picture of the Divine or stand before an idol, in reverent adoration, you usually close your eyes, in order to have Darshan of the Form! Imagine a person closing his eyes to get a clearer vision! This is the Darshan the Bharatiyas crave for the vision that can be won by insight, rather than by outer view. Many seekers, especially in the West, believe that God is in some Heaven or some Height in outer Space and point to those regions when they speak of God. But, Indians believed in the authenticity of the

experience of Rishis recorded in the Vedas and by later seers; they had the faith that their own Reality and the Reality of the universe are identical, that the Universe is the Body of God, who is Eternal, Pure, Intelligent, and Absolute. Many have visualised that this is the Truth.

Religious texts of all faiths have but one aim - to develop the Inner-vision and through cleansing the Consciousness. While other religions proclaim that their Scriptures have been composed according to the directions of God, the Vedas have declared themselves as the authentic Breath of God Himself. It is a pity that the children of India are neglecting this precious heritage, that has such profound and unique validity.

It is a hard task to cleanse the consciousness only by the discharge of one's duties. The Grace of God is also essential for this consummation. When Self-confidence is lost and the Grace of God is absent, all human efforts will lead him along the downward path; from that moment, fall is inevitable. One must also remember that unless society has peace, one cannot live in peace. Therefore, one must ensure social peace, so that one can have the blessings of peace, for oneself.

The fruit of all Sadhana is the achievement of the knowledge of the Atma as one's real core. In order to help the Sadhaka to attain this result, it is necessary to impose some hard rules and limitations. An illness cannot be conquered by mere drugs alone; a tight regimen of food, drink, and habits is also to be prescribed and followed. All are 'ill' with Bhavaroga, perpetual journey from birth to death and from death to birth. Repetition of, the Name is the drug; but, this must be accompanied by the regimen, Disciplinary Limits and Laws. 'Na sreya niyamam vinaa' - No spiritual progress without regulated disciplined lives. A song is pleasant to the ear only when there is a consistent tune and proper timing - a raga and a system of taal. So, even for your spiritual sadhana through these Seva units, some rules of discipline are essential and they have to be strictly observed. You should not deviate from them.

Man takes to the easier, smoother path and lands himself in disappointment

and despair. He does not identify the Madhava in his manava-hood, the Divine in his human-ness; he does not realise that society is the body of God; he does not respect the heritage that, has, come down for him from the sages of this land. He moves about as an animal, regardless of the Divinity in him and around him. Imitation has become the order of the day; it is an insidious infection. The imitator becomes the bondsman of the person he imitates. Surely, this is not the way of life for self-respecting people. Look at the tiny seed; it has much greater self-respect than these persons who borrow their thoughts, attitudes, likes and dislikes from others. The seed is hidden in soil; but, it does not become 'soil'. It is fed with water; but, it does not turn into water. It is given manure; but, it does not change into manure. It preserves its individuality, in spite of all the forces that operate around it. It sprout', grows into a sapling and a tree, according to its own, innate nature. Learn from the seed this great lesson and you can be saved from the evils of 'intimation'. Mix with people; but, do not give up your uniqueness. Benefit by Satsang and by association with the good and the great. But, be yourself, your own true Self.

The Sathya Sai Seva Organisation has been working all these years through its various Units. It is necessary to assess now what benefit it has conferred on the individual as well as on Society. Members and Office-bearers must endeavour ceaselessly to promote the Ananda of others, to improve the standard of life of others and to ensure peace and mutual good-will among others. They must utilise all their skill and resources for this purpose. Those of you who have taken up office must lead others in this effort; when you simply preach and admonish, others will have no enthusiasm to work. Let bygones be bygones. There is no use worrying over the past. From now on, Office-bearers who have assembled here as delegates must be ready to set examples, themselves, of earnest, intelligent, Sevaks and Sadhakas.

Of course, it is very easy to drive men on from behind; but, leading them on from the front-line is highly desirable, as a Sadhana. Office bearers must take the lead in Nagarsankirtan; then, the others too will follow and get inspired. For what reason is Nagarsankirtan prescribed as an item in the programme of the Units? Is it for-spreading a cult? No. It is for your own good, so that, you may start the day with Love, with Bhakti and Shraddha and Seva, so that you

may pay your debt for having been born in this sacred land of Tyaga and Yoga.

Of what avail is a life spent in selfish pursuits? When is man to yearn for and enjoy the bliss of the transcendent? Is it not obligatory for man to express gratefulness to Nature and Nature's- God for all the benefits and thrill he derives from them? He pays tax to the municipal authorities for the little house he occupies, for the electric current he uses, for the water that flows in the taps in his dwelling place etc. But, who provided him the energy, the space and the water? The gratitude that you have to show God is named 'balli' in the Vedas. It is usually taken to mean 'sacrifice of some animal', but, how can the killing of an animal make up for the absence of, gratitude? Bali means tax and this is the more appropriate meaning for the Vedic word, the correct one. How is this tax to be paid? By three modes of behaviour - fearing sin, loving God and serving brother man. Sathya Sai has nothing to do with money; he does not concern himself with your riches. He is concerned with your Gunas, your virtues and the quality of your lives. For carrying on the activities of a Bhajan Mandali, Satsang, Study Circle etc., why should funds be necessary? For Bal Vikas classes too there is no need for money; there are the Gurus and there are the children. Lessons can start in an atmosphere of Love and Seva. When money is on hand, pride envy, and greed will increase; when these, afflict man, vices multiply. Spiritual riches will decline. Virtue is the best treasure; good conduct is the best form of wealth; Sadhana is the highest of professions; Seva is the noblest of ideals. Though Lord Vishnu has Lakshmi the Goddess of Wealth as part of Him, it is said He is a mendicant with a begging bowl-clamouring for the alms of Love from every human heart. It is resolved, in this Conference that, members and office bearers of Units should on no account collect donations, but, the task of providing money for approved purposes will be the duty of the State Trusts. The Samiti is the thumb; the Mahila Vibhag is the Forefinger; the Seva Dal is the middle finger; the Bal Vikas is the ring-finger; the Bhajan Mandali is the little finger. All are fingers of one hand. So, there should not arise any ill feeling between these; they should all co-operate and help each other. If, any one of these develops egoism, it will harm itself and others. Egoists is the crown of all vices. Be always in the attitude of servants; that is the best training to become

masters. Every one must feel equally entitled to the Grace that can be won by Seva. Every one of you must ready to sacrifice everything, even your lives, for the welfare of those in distress.

The age of Seva Dal members was hitherto fixed as between 18 and 35. But, now, this has been revised. The age can be anywhere from 16 and above. Why should we deny the chance to any one or discard any one as too old? The skill and enthusiasm, the discipline and sense of duty of every one can be put to some good use. Seva Dal members have to observe many disciplinary rules, like the sexes keeping away from each other, in all activities of Seva. It is best that the Seva activities of our Organisation are kept free from contact or involvement with other Seva Organisations in the country. For, other Organisations do not have the same strict rules and regulations regarding many matters. The environment which marks their service programmes and the atmosphere created thereby may not be congenial to the Seva of this Organisation. The Seva Dal has to plan and perform Seva activities on its own, in this way, they can also avoid complications that may hamper work.

Units of the Organisation are taking up, more and more service activities in the villages. The villages have preserved, at least to some extent, the ideals of Devotion to God, Brotherhood of Man, Compassion to the Disabled etc. You have to direct them on the methods of sanitation and help them for literacy and means of self-reliant livelihood, supplementing their meagre incomes. You have to serve the villages during festivals and fairs; also during droughts, floods, fires and other calamities. The problems of people in cities and towns are much more difficult and urgent. They are fast losing hold of all things that distinguish man from animals. Morality, virtue, mercy, charity, brotherhood, Love - these are becoming rarer and rarer in individual and social life. Fear, suspicion, rivalry, greed - these are making city life a nightmare. So, there is greater need of Seva in the Cities. Villagers too are catching the infection from the city-dwellers and from the books, newspapers and films that the City people produce. So, by means of Satsang and the influence of your own lives, you have to modify the habits and behaviour, the ways of thinking, of City dwellers, so that they may have less fear and anxiety and more peace and contentment. You have to plan out a programme and dedicate yourself for

fulfilling it.

Another point: We are having now in our Bhajan Mandalis participants from all Religions. The Sathya Sai Religion is the Religion in all Religions; it accepts all religions as authentic, for each strives to cleanse the Consciousness, so that the Divine may be revealed therein. Encourage them to share in the joy of Bhajan by singing their own prayers. Older devotees must inspire the newer ones by their Love and their enthusiastic support. On account of the enormous development of activities and the multiplication of responsibilities, it has become necessary to give some new people a few responsibilities and some older people changed functions and positions.

But, whatever happens, you belong to Swami and Swami belongs to you. This fact shall not alter. Install this belief in your hearts. Watch attentively for the alterations and additions made in the rules during this Conference and observe them strictly in your dealings. Engage yourselves to the fullest extent possible, with sincere enthusiasm, in the duties cast upon you.