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1. The Crowning Virtue

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The man that is bereft of Dharma, Of Compassion and Truth, And hath no virtues in him, But is replete with vices, Cannot find happiness here Or in the Hereafter.

Embodiments of Divine Love! The term Dharma is derived from the root Dhr. Dharani means that which binds the universe in unison through Dharma (righteousness). "Dharmo Viswasya Jagathah Pratishta" (It is righteousness which upholds the universe). "Dharme Sarvam Pratishtitham" (Everything abides in righteousness). The presence of this Dharma cannot be established by sense of perception or through inferential deduction. It transcends the canons of logic. Its existence has to be derived from the Vedas (the authority of revealed scriptural testimony).

What is Veda? "Vetthyana ity Vedah" (Veda is that which enlightens or expounds fully a subject or matter). For instance, Dhanur Veda expounds the science of archery. Natya Veda is the treatise on Dance. Sama Veda is the science of spiritual music. Ayur Veda is the science of life and medicine. The prefix figuring before the term Veda indicates the type of science that is dealt with in that particular Veda.

Actions to be performed in daily life

Dharma (Righteousness) and Moksha (Liberation) are transcendental - beyond the intellect and sense perceptions. How can the Vedas throw light on Dharma and Moksha, which are beyond the reach of the senses? They can do so only by indicating the yajnas and yagas (sacrificial rites and rituals) that constitute the spiritual exercises leading to Dharma and Moksha. Even the Vedas are not competent to provide direct access to Dharma and Moksha. That is why the Vedas have declared: "Na Karmana, Na Prajaya Dhanena Thyagenaike Amrutatvamanasuh" (Not by meritorious deeds, progeny or

wealth can immortality be attained. It can be experienced only through renunciation). But the Vedas show that through good deeds and practices, one can acquire the competence to realise Dharma and Moksha. The Emperor Manu coined a special term to describe the significance of the Vedas as the scriptures prescribing the spiritual and worldly actions to be performed by men. He gave the name Vidhana to all the actions to be performed in daily life to direct mankind in the path of truth. At the present day, in the Kali Yuga, the term Vidhana has been associated with legislative bodies. Vidhana means that which lays down the law. Because the proper significance of the term has not been understood, mankind has gone astray. Dharma is a term which is all embracing. The whole universe is bound by it. What is the need, it may be asked, for propagating Dharma when it encompasses everything. The reason is that, though Dharma is present everywhere, it is covered by ignorance and pride, like fire that is covered by ashes or water by moss. These coveting elements have to be removed so that the true nature of Dharma may be revealed to the world. Dharma Prachar (the propagation of Dharma) is needed only for this purpose.

Dharma Prachar and practice

Propagation of Dharma does not mean spreading knowledge about something that is not known. Its basic purpose is to promote the practice of Dharma. Only those who practice Dharma are qualified to propagate it. It is because Dharma and Sathya have not been propagated by persons practising them that they have been eclipsed, as it were, and are not perceivable. It is only when they are practised in daily life that their true nature and value will be realised. A man is judged by the nature of his actions. If his actions are good, he is described as a good man. If his actions are bad, he is described as a wicked person. One's qualities and actions are interdependent. Actions reveal qualities and qualities determine actions. Hence, everyone should strive to reform himself by developing good qualities. Swami Ramakrishnananda (who has spoken earlier) asked what good has been derived by persons who had been listening to spiritual discourses for years and who had been living in the ashram for a long time. Unless an effort is made to put into practice at least a few of the teachings, all these exercises are futile. Qualities like kshama

(forbearance), dhaya (compassion), truth, love and sympathy are not associated with any particular nation, faith or community. They are spiritual qualities and are essential for people anywhere, at all times.

Four types of purity

Among the qualities a man has to develop if he is to realise his divinity, the foremost is Kshama- - forbearance or forgiveness. It is essential for every human being. It is supreme among virtues. Kshama is Truth, Righteousness, Sympathy, Non-violence and all else. Kshama comprehends every quality.

How is Kshama to be acquired? It is acquired by practising four kinds of purity: 1. Dravya Soucham (purity of materials); 2. Manasika Soucham (purity of mind); 3. Vak Soucham (purity in speech); 4. Kriya Soucham (purity in action or purity of body).
Dravya Soucham (Purity of materials): This covers all things used by a person - from clothes, food and cooking utensils to houses - and all the varied things used by a person. Everything that is in daily use should be completely pure.
Manasika Soucham (Purity of the mind): This calls for total elimination of attachments and aversions from the mind. Hatred and envy should have no place. One should cultivate the largeheartedness to return good for evil and not to cause pain to anyone in any circumstance. This is a mark of a pure mind. Today people are filled with hatred and envy. They cannot bear to see others happy or prosperous. This is a sign of a polluted mind. Men with evil minds develop demoniac traits. To be truly human, one has to have a pure, unsullied mind. He has to recognise that the same divinity is present in everyone. He should realise that the pure spirit that dwells in him and the power that animates him are present equally in every human being. One who is conscious of this unity will have an untrammelled mind.

A vile tongue fouls the mind

Vak Soucham (Purity of speech): This means that one must speak the truth. He must be sweet and pleasant in speech and avoid using harsh words. Excessive talking should be avoided. Purity in speech implies avoidance of falsehood, garrulousness, abusive language, slanderous gossip and speech

which causes pain to others. Today there is very little purity of speech. Bad thoughts and bad words are the order of the day. A vile tongue fouls the mind and dehumanises man. Sareera Soucham (Purity of the body): The body has to be purified by performing Achamana with water (this ritual involves uttering the names of the Lord thrice and drinking three spoonfuls of water from the palm).

When these four kinds of purity are practised, the quality of Kshama develops to some extent.

Have no enemies

Once when the Pandavas were living in exile in the forest, Bhima and Draupadi approached Dharmaraja (the eldest of the Pandavas) and asked him what plans he had for dealing with the enemies, the Kauravas. Smilingly, Dharmaraja replied to them to pacify their feelings, "We have no enemies. Our own qualities are either our friends or foes. Our actions can be our enemies. We should try to conquer these enemies in the form of bad thoughts and bad deeds. Our bad feelings get themselves reflected in others and make them appear as evil-minded. Realise, Oh Bhima, we have no enemies. The Kauravas, whom you regard as our enemies, are not so. If we fill our hearts with good feelings, the Kauravas will be our friends and brothers." To give another illustration from the Mahabharata: Once Vidura went to Dhritarashtra, the father of the Kauravas, and said to him: "Dhritarashtra! You are not only physically blind, but you are lacking the eyes of wisdom. You accepted the five Pandava brothers as the children of Pandu on the authentic testimony of Maharishis (great sages). Many did not know that they were children of Pandu. Moreover, the great Bhishma, who has the gift of the divine sight, also testified to this fact. You accepted Pandu's children and kept them with you. But your sons did not favour the affection and consideration bestowed on them. Your evil-minded sons subjected the Pandavas to all kinds of ordeals and hardships. Out of your misplaced love for your sons, you have allowed these wrongs to be perpetrated. If an individual takes poison, he alone dies. If an arrow hits a person, he alone is injured. But when a ruler pursues an unrighteous policy, the entire state is ruined. The people as well

as their ruler perish. By succumbing to bad counsel and evil ways, you are leading your kingdom and your dynasty to disaster. This is not proper." Vidura warned the king to recognise the truth. He did not mince words in his accusation of Dhritharashtra. He said: "Those who are born blind or deaf and dumb, those who are insane and those of unsteady mind have no right to rule. When any such person is a ruler, he causes universal ruin. You are a great sinner and because you have been enthroned, you are destroying the kingdom with your own hands."

Sathya and Dharma are the bases of life

"Dharmaraja is endowed with the supreme virtue of Kshama (forbearance). You are mistaking his forbearance for cowardice. Forbearance is like a crown on his head. Very soon the Pandavas forbearance will bring about your complete ruin." It was this forbearance which brought ultimate victory to the Pandavas and conferred lasting glory and fame on them. This forbearance is based on the four kinds of soucham (purity). Purity has its roots in Righteousness, which in its turn, sustains Truth. Man should adhere to Truth and Righteousness as the bases of life in the world. Dharma is not the word to be bandied about. Repeating oft-quoted aphorisms like "Dharayatheethi Dharmah" (Dharma is that which sustains) and "Dharmo Rakshati Rakshitah" (Dharma protects its protector) are easy enough. But what is needed is practice of Dharma. Right conduct alone constitutes Dharma. The man who leads a righteous life is bound to find peace.

When you go into towns and villages for propagating Dharma, you have to tell the people: "Do not cause harm to anyone. Do not abuse anybody. Perform your duties with devotion. Make your heart pure." Realisation of the Divine is the goal. But most of our actions are related to worldly concerns. The only way to sanctify all actions is to do them as acts of worship, as an offering to the Divine. Thereby life itself becomes sacred. You must shed the feeling of "mine" and "thine." You have to realise the Truth that "the Divine dwells in every human being" (Eko vasi Sarva bhootha antharatma). You must develop this sense of oneness and share it with others.

Who are sadhus?

The distinction made between householders and sanyasis is not of real significance. The wearing of the ochre robe alone will not make a man a devotee of God. By the mere mouthing of mantras, one's sins will not be washed away. Carrying the Gita and shouting slogans will not make one meritorious. Only the man whose thoughts and deeds are in harmony can be called a Sadhu (a saintly person). Who are Sadhus? Not merely those who don the ochre robe. All are sadhus. All beings have sadhutva (goodness and purity) inherent in them. They have to foster and manifest these qualities and not the external vesture. It is the purity of one's thoughts which reveal his sadhutva.

There is no need to put on the orange robe to become a sadhu. The heart must be pure. Ravana put on a guise of an ascetic to kidnap Sita. His garb only concealed his evil intent. It is the evil qualities that have to be given up. Even if the process is begun in a small way, it will result in great good. The start must be made when one is young.

God helps if we pray with a pure heart

A mother and son were living in poor circumstances. The father died when the son was born. With great difficulty the mother put the son to school and made him reach the final year. Then he had to pay Rs.90 as examination fees. The mother was at a loss how to find so much money. She was shedding tears under a tree, when the son importuned her to reveal the cause of her sadness. When she said that the boy would have to give up further studies as she did not have the money for paying the examination fees, the son asked in his childish innocence, whether there was anybody who could help them. He would repay the amount later. The mother said: "God alone is the helper for the helpless. He is the source of all wealth and He is the universal provider." In his innocence, the boy asked his mother: "Where is that God? By some means or the other I shall get the money from Him." The mother said: "He is in Vaikunta." The boy implicitly believed in his mother's words. He ran to the post office, wrote a letter, bought an envelope, enclosed the letter in it and

addressed it to "Sriman Narayana, Vaikunta." He was trying to post the letter in a post box which was fixed a little too high for him. The postmaster, watching his plight, came to his help and asked him: "To whom are you sending this letter?" The boy replied "Sir, this is a very urgent letter. I need money by tomorrow to pay my fees. Please see that this letter is dispatched quick." The postmaster took the letter from the boy and found that it was addressed to "Sriman Narayana, Vaikunta." He asked the boy who had given him that address. He related his entire story and what his mother had told him about Sriman Narayana as the refuge of the poor and the forlorn. The postmaster was moved to tears by the boy's story. He wondered at the innocence and pure heartedness of the boy and told him: "Dear Child! I shall post the letter. You come here tomorrow morning. The money will be received by then and you can take it." The boy was happy beyond words and conveyed the news to his mother. The next morning he went to the postmaster and asked him whether the money had come. The postmaster went in, brought Rs. 90 and gave it to the boy. He ran with the money to his mother. The mother wondered how he had got the money, whether he had stolen it or got it from someone. She asked him how he had got the money. He related what had all happened. He swore that the money had been sent by Narayana Himself. The mother then asked him to take her to the postmaster. The postmaster told her: "As soon as I saw your son's letter, God induced me to come to your son's help. The money has come from Him. I am only an instrument in His hands."

Pray with childlike innocence

The moral of the story is that if we pray to God with a pure heart, God will make use of someone to respond to our prayer. It is silly to raise such questions as: Where is God? How will he help? By raising such questions only our faith is weakened. That is the reason why Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa said: "If you want to pray to God, be like an innocent child." Jesus also said the same thing when he told his disciples: "Suffer little children to come unto me, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." He also used to say: "Even if I am like a child for even a brief moment of the day, how pure can I become?" It is such innocence and purity that we have to possess in our hearts. Children

must listen to the words of their mothers. Mothers should avoid putting wrong ideas in the children. When there are such exemplary mothers and children, the world will be full of joy and festivities. When Bharath has such mothers and children, it will be an example to the world. There is no use in preaching to others, if your own thoughts and conduct have not changed. Engage yourselves in sadhanas to cleanse your heart and mind and to fill them with pure thoughts and feelings.

Sadhus on the move

The burden of spreading the Dharmic message has been shouldered by Swami Bhoomananda, who has been going round the villages despite his age. Though he is a sanyasi, he has dedicated himself to the propagation of Dharma and is constantly on the move carrying the message to the people. Other sadhus are also co-operating with him in this sacred mission. Swamis Sachidananda, Ramakrishnananda and others are carrying on this work with enthusiasm. They are all pure-hearted. I bless them all and want them to continue this work they have taken with redoubled vigour and redeem their lives. Whatever they do should be regarded as service to the Divine. They should consider themselves as Divine instruments. This alone is real service to society. Doing japa and dhyana for individual salvation is one form of selfishness. You must develop largeness of heart and strive to take others with you to the supreme goal of liberation. Giving up the narrow outlook, you should have love for all. It is high time the old attitudes of hatred and envy are given up. There are here people today from overseas countries who have travelled thousands of miles to obtain peace and serenity before they return. It is a pity that those who have been here for years have not tried to cultivate these qualities and are immersed in worries and confusion. They are like frogs in a lotus pond who are not aware of the nectarine honey in the lotus in search of which bees gather from long distances. This supineness should go. Those who are here should practice at least a few of the things that they learn here so that they may go forward towards their divine destiny.

The great movement for the propagation of Dharma launched by Dharma Prachar Parishad is bound to succeed. Swami will extend all necessary help

and strength to this movement.

Add two spoons of water to two seers of milk; the water too is appreciated as milk! So too, let your tiny drops of love for things material merge with the stream of love for God and be elevated. At present your sadhana can be described only as adding two seers of water to two spoons of milk.! Have the love of God filling and thrilling your hearts; then you cannot hate anyone, you cannot indulge in unhealthy rivalries, you will not find fault with anyone. Life becomes soft, sweet and smooth.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

2. Transcending The Gunas

Date: 08 January 1988 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

Seeking liberation, if man worships A myriad deities, he will not get Freedom from affliction. If he destroys the ego in him, He has no need to seek liberation. He will be Liberation itself! Embodiments of Divine Love! The phenomenal universe that we perceive is the product of the three gunas (Satwa, Rajas and Tamas). It is sustained by the three gunas. The gunas again account for its dissolution. The gunas are the life-breath of the Cosmos. They are responsible for all that happens in the Cosmos. Only through service to the Divine, cultivation of Bhakti (devotion) and Virakthi (detachment) can man transcend the three gunas: For this purpose, man has to acquire three qualities: Anasakthi (desirelessness), Virakthi (detachment) and Upeksha (equanimity). Anasakthi is the absence of all desires except the desire of God. All other acquisitions are to be given up and one should rely only on the Divine. Virakthi does not mean renunciation of hearth and home and betaking oneself to the forest for penance. Giving up of bad thoughts and feelings is true thyaga (renunciation) and leads to Yoga. You may enjoy worldly things, but there should be no sense of possessiveness (of "mine" and "thine"). Upeksha is the absence of concern for the future. It is the freedom from expectations and hopes.

God looks after the welfare of true devotees

The desire for worldly objects can plunge one in endless misery. Desires are like a green pumpkin which will sink in water. A desireless man will be like a dried pumpkin which will float in water. He will be able to overcome the pulls of the mundane world and even aspire for a Godly life. He may not be keen about Mukti (liberation) but he will not give up devotion. God looks after Yogakshemam (progress and welfare) of such a person here and in the hereafter; because being desireless and detached, his thoughts are centred on God. To secure the grace of the Divine in this way is itself a kind of yoga. To preserve that grace is to ensure one's kshemam (well-being). This is known in Vedantic parlance as "Apraptasya Prapanam" (securing what is not

easily attainable). It can be got only through grace-filled human effort. Some spiritual exercises are necessary for this purpose.

The three Gunas

As the universe is constituted by the three gunas (Tamas, Rajas and Satwa) and is permeated by them, the first stage in spiritual sadhana is to put to an end the Tamasic quality. The Tamo Guna is characterised by Murkhatvam (foolish obstinacy). A Tamasic person lacks intelligence and is inclined to indulge in meaningless questioning and argumentation. It is essential to get rid of such tendencies. Every issue should be deeply studied and the conclusions should be digested. Only then will the experience be rewarding. Endless verbal debates over every trivial matter should be avoided. Such controversies result only in provoking bitterness instead of harmony. They do not serve to reveal the truth. The Tamasic person is incapable of perceiving the truth and cannot realise the Divine. He will be caught in an endless cycle of birth and death. The person with Rajo Guna is one who is excessively happy when he gets what he desires. His ego gets inflated thereby. When his desires are not fulfilled, he develops hatred. Thus, for the Rajasic person, whether the desires are fulfilled or not, the effects are not good. He is consumed by anger and bitterness. Rajasic qualities make a person hot-blooded and hot-tempered. The third quality is Satwa. Even this results in a form of bondage. It becomes a redeeming quality when all pure and meritorious actions are done as an offering to the Divine. The three gunas are represented by different colours. Tamas is depicted in black. It symbolises darkness and ignorance. The Rajo Guna, which rouses anger and hatred in a person, excites his blood and turns his eyes red, is represented by the red colour. The Satwa Guna which is characterised by purity and dedication, is represented by the white colour. Everyone in the world is the creature of one or the other of these three gunas. One's actions are based on these gunas. The Varnas (categorisation of men under different types) in the Gita has been made on the basis of their Gunakarma vibhagashah (Respective qualities and actions). At birth every person is ignorant. When he dies he should die as a Jnani (a man who has perceived the truth). Likewise everyone is a Sudra at birth. This means he is an Ajnani (ignorant person). But when he dies he

should die as a Brahmana (ajnani, who has realised Brahman).

No high or low among the Varnas

It is on this basis that the four varnas (Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra) had come into existence. Those with predominantly Tamasic qualities comprise one group. Those who are prone to excitement and anger form another category. And those who are inclined to renounce everything and who are pure in thought, word and deed, form a third group. The ignorant and dull-witted were described as Sudras. The excitable, the courageous and the high spirited were described as the Kshatriyas. Those who were devoted to God and led a pure and sanctified life were described as Brahmanas. These categories were associated with qualities and actions. Straying from this basic truth, the social system took a wrong turn. The result is that today society is riven by innumerable divisions and conflicts. Actually among the Varnas (groups), one cannot be called high and another low. For instance, Sage Vyasa classified the single corpus of the Vedas into four different collections. Among the four, can one be ranked higher than another? All have equal status and authority, are equally sacred and preach the same path of righteousness. Likewise, when men are classified according to their qualities and vocations, one category cannot be regarded as superior to another. No one is competent to determine such ranking. It is through narrow-minded interpretations that such distinctions and divisions have been made to the detriment of social harmony and progress.

Birth alone is not the basis of caste

The right to interpret the Sastras is given to the Brahmanas. But Brahmanas have been defined as those who have made a thorough study of the Sastras, who have no self-interest and who live up to Sastraic injunctions. Anyone may acquire these qualifications. They are not confined to any caste on the basis of birth. Only qualities and actions are determining factors and not birth. A Kshatriya is one who is prepared to lay down his life for his country. The nation's safety should mean more to him than the protection of his body. This attitude of sacrifice may be displayed by anyone and he should be regarded

as a Kshatriya. All those engaged in agriculture have been described as Sudras. Everyone needs food. If food is not grown by the so called Sudras, the world will perish. The entire purpose of classifying people according to their qualifications and functions is to ensure that persons in each category carry on their duties with dedication. It is the failure to maintain the purity and sacredness of the system as envisaged by the Sastras that has resulted in indefensible divisions and social chaos.

Awareness of Oneness is highest knowledge

All are children of God. He is the sole Lord of mankind. People may seem to differ in their names and forms and in their beliefs and practices. But the parent is One alone. Recognition of this basic truth of oneness is Brahmajnana (Knowledge of the Absolute). This knowledge is not gained by studying the scriptures and holding metaphysical discussions. What has to be recognised is the truth that every being in the universe is an embodiment of the Supreme. Awareness of the unity that subsumes the diversity is the highest knowledge. Mere bookish lore is of no avail.

Practical living is what matters. Expounding a philosophy is easy. Living up to it is difficult. He alone is a true Siddhanti (preceptor) who practices what he professes. Time is wasted on metaphysical dialectics. We need today men who practice what they have learnt. Such persons should explain to the common people the truth about righteous living and transform them into good and honest men.

There is a statement in the Gita that it is best for a person to adhere to his Swadharma and that following Para Dharma is fraught with danger. What is Swadharma? Swa refers to the Atma. Swadharma means Atma Dharma (the Dharma of the Spirit). Adherence to the Law of the Spirit is beneficial. It will protect one from any kind of danger. It will ensure peace. What is Para Dharma? Para means that which is responsible for good and bad actions, namely, the body. Para Dharma means all actions based on the body-consciousness. All such actions have consequences which have to be gone through in successive lives. Men are caught up in this perpetual cycle of birth,

death and rebirth. They do not know what is in store for them at any moment or place. This is the perilous state of man.

The correct meaning of Swadharma

The Gita reference to Swadharma is ordinarily interpreted as meaning one's own dharma or duties attaching to the caste or community in which one is born. With regard to Arjuna, for instance, it is considered that he was a Kshatriya and should adhere to the Kshatriya dharma. This view is not correct. The Gita does not speak about the dharma of Kshatriyas, Vaisyas or Sudras.

It only affirms that these categories are based on Guna and Karma (qualities and actions). Therefore, if a person has the Tamo Guna and indulges in actions of a Tamasic nature, he must be regarded as a Sudra, even if he is a Brahmana by birth. One who devotes his entire time to the contemplation of God and does sacred acts is a Brahmana, regardless of the caste in which he may be born. Brahmana is the one who seeks God. Obsessed with distinctions of caste, creed and community and indulging in futile and meaningless controversies, people should not degrade humanity. All are brothers and sisters. It is the basic truth that must be propagated in our society today so that spiritual values may grow.

Bharathiya Dharma is eternal truth

Bharathiya culture is not the product of ephemeral efforts. Bharathiya Dharma is the embodiment of unchanging and eternal truth, unaffected by time, place or circumstance. Without realising this supreme truth, people are polluting their minds with conflicts of caste and creed. All religions have taught what is good and everyone should lead a righteous life based on this knowledge. If the minds are pure, how can any religion be bad? Let every Bharathiya take heed of this fact. Every effort should be made to purify the mind. All the religions are different paths, leading to one and the same destination. All devotees should experience this truth and live up to it in their daily lives, setting an example to the rest of the world. Their devotion should

not be artificial. They should adhere to the right path, lead righteous lives and thereby experience enduring bliss. Only then will their spiritual effort be fruitful.

What use is there in meditation in which one counts the beads of a rosary while his thoughts are centred on some petty thing? Listen to the words of the wise, purify your thoughts and concentrate your mind on God. God can be installed only in a pure heart. The aim of all sadhana should be to purify the heart. All the available time and opportunity should be utilised for this purpose. It should not be wasted in any way.

Means to transcend the gunas

You have listened to this discourse for two hours. Only if you put into practice at least one or two of the things you have heard will the time you have spent here be worthwhile. First of all, banish from your minds differences based on caste and religion. Deepen your faith in God. Nourish the spirit of Anasakthi (desirelessness). Cultivate Virakthi (detachment) and experience bliss. These are the means to transcend the three gunas. The Lord, who is an embodiment of love, can be experienced only through love. As He is an incarnation of Truth and Righteousness, He can be realised only through Sathya and Dharma (Truth and Righteousness). Always bearing in mind the supreme importance of Sathya, Dharma and Prema, you should sanctify your lives by rendering dedicated and disinterested service. The revered Sadhus present here have expounded to you profound truths in simple and intelligible language, with appropriate illustrations from real life. Their exposition and your listening would have served a useful purpose only if you try to practice at least some of the teachings. You have had a golden opportunity listening to them. You must make good use of it by directing your lives on the right path.

Do not jump to conclusions, abdicating your discrimination and do not deny the validity of your own experiences, stand on your strength. Be unmoved, either by adulation or denigration. Follow my lead, I am unaffected by either,

and march on alone, undeterred and of my own accord. I am my own Guide and Witness. Have full faith in this.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

3. Man's Divine Destiny

Date: 09 January 1988 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

The Divine is one without a second. "Ekoham bahusyam Prajayeyethi." (I am One. Let me become many for the sake of progeny). Willing in this way, the Divine assumed a myriad amazing variety of forms in the universe and taught in the Gita the threefold paths of Karma, Jnana and Bhakti to enable humanity to realise the magnificence of the Divine. Man has been engaged in exploring the infinite wonderful secrets of Nature in this marvellous creation in all possible ways. But because of the vagaries of his mind, intellect and ego, man has failed to understand the true eternal, spiritual basis underlying everything in the Universe and has lost himself in the pursuit of the external phenomenal world as if it were the only reality. In the process he has failed to realise his own true nature and has totally perverted his mind. The simple truth that everything is permeated by the One has been lost sight of.

Krishna reminds man of grievous error

It is to remind man of this grievous error that Sri Krishna declared in the 18th chapter of the Gita (in verse 61) "Easwarah-sarvabhoothanam hriddeseh Arjuna thishtathi" (The Lord resides, oh Arjuna, in the heart region of all beings) and went on to adjure in the 62nd sloka: "Thameva saranam gachcha sarvabhavena Bharata" (Take refuge in Him alone with all thy heart, oh Bharata). This means that if the Lord dwells in the heart of all beings, He must be residing in Arjuna's heart also! Hence the injunction, "Thameva saranam gachcha" means: "Seek refuge in yourself." It must be understood from this that whatever one may say or do, he is doing it only to himself and for himself.

The Bhagavad Gita begins with Dhritarashtra's reference to "Dharma kshetre Kurukshetre." Dharmakshetra is the seat of Atma. "Kurukshetra" is the body, which is the source of all actions. It is the combination of the Atma and the body the Kshetra-Kshetrajna relationship - which explains the human predicament. By forgetting the Atma and involving himself in "Deha Dharma"

(the claims of the body), man is subjecting himself to endless suffering. He grieves about things which are not worth lamenting and does not grieve for the things that ought to make him sad. This state of delusion is the result of his identifying himself with the body and forgetting his inherent divinity. If he realises that he is one with the Omni-self, he will have no cause for sorrow. He will be aware that Truth and Bliss are inherent in his spiritual reality. When man realises that the Divine is all-pervasive, there will be no room for acquisitive selfishness or divisiveness. When Dhritharashtra made a distinction between "his" sons (mama's children) and the Pandavas, he betrayed his spiritual blindness and the ignorance of the unity that subsumes the multiplicity in the world.

Everything testifies to the glories of God

Love for the Divine is devotion. Devotion is not something objective and concrete. It is an inner experience which springs from the heart. As you think, so you become. Hence, the heart must be filled with good feelings. The senses must be engaged in good actions. When the eyes are turned towards God, all creation appears Divine. When you wear the right kind of spectacles, you see everything clearly. But if the glasses are not correct, you get a distorted picture and your eyes are spoiled. Likewise, if your heart is filled with love of God, all your feelings are sanctified by that love. Other undesirable thoughts drop away. Devotees pray to the Lord to come and reside in their pure and tranquil hearts. Where the heart is impure there is no room for God. In the Bhagavad Gita, there is a canto devoted to the Vibhuti of the Lord. What are these Vibhuti - the glories of God? Everything in the Universe testifies to the glories of God. Everything is a gift from the Divine. To the one who has unqualified faith in God, there is nothing good or evil. He welcomes everything equally. When a child is well, the mother gives it all eatables. But when it is unwell, it is given bitter medicine by the doctor. Likewise, the man who is groping in the darkness of ignorance has to be enlightened by the discipline of wisdom. The enforcement of such discipline does not mean that the Divine is angry or displeased. There is grace even in the severity of the discipline. It is like a surgeon's knife which is used to perform a necessary operation. The devotee should look upon pain and pleasure alike as designed

for his good. He will not then be affected by troubles. He will regard them as stages in the evolution of his consciousness. Pain and pleasure are inseparable twins in life. One leads to the other even as the New Moon culminates in the Full Moon. These are the manifestations of the Wheel of Time, expressions of the Divine Will.

Ahamkara is the root of all troubles

Man should get rid of Ahamkara (the feeling that he is the doer). As long as the ego is dominant, the Atmic consciousness will not develop. The egoist cannot recognise the Atma. It is egoism that is at the root of all man's troubles. It is the kind of delusion that is based on the misconceived notion that the body is real and permanent. The truth is otherwise. From an early age one should recognise the evanescence of the body and the senses and control the desires prompted by the sense organs. Desires are insatiable. The pursuit of wealth, power and position can only end in misery. Instead, one should take refuge in God and dedicate all actions to the Divine.

Subdue desires to achieve inner peace

In spite of his precious birth as a human being, man leads a life worse than that of the animals. Animals are not consumed by envy. They do not take pride in their possessions. They have no bank balances and they have no monthly salaries. They live happily from moment to moment, content with whatever food and shelter they can get. As man's knowledge and skills have increased, his moral calibre has declined. Man has to discover the secret of good life. He has to realise that he has taken birth not for enjoyment of worldly pleasures but to realise his divine destiny by the cultivation of good qualities and by performing good actions. To indulge in demoniac actions while having the human form means degrading human nature. Of what use are wealth and position if one has no peace of mind? A quiet conscience is man's brightest jewel. To achieve inner peace, desires have to be subdued and all thoughts should be centred on God. Engage yourselves in service activities in a spirit of dedication. Do not hanker after leadership. True service consists in helping the poor and the forlorn in the society with humility and

dedication. This is mal service to the Divine. "Dhil me Ram, Hath me Kam."
(Rama in the heart and service with the hand). Prepare yourselves for serving
the people with God in your hearts and strength in your arms!

4. Earn God's Love

Date: 14 January 1988 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Sports Meet

From the Sath has emerged all there is, The Sath permeates the whole of creation, Nothing exists without the power of Sath, Behold the glory of this eternal Sath. Tossed about on the bitter ocean of mundane existence; Going hither and hither without a rudder or a compass, If only you steady your mind for a moment The Lord of Sri will send you, Oh man, His rescue boat. The love of God is the foremost reward to be attained in human life. It is more precious than all the wealth in the world. All wealth and position are obtained by the love and grace of the Divine. The value of Bhagavath-prema (the love of God) can be realised only if the meaning of the term Bhagavan is rightly understood. Brahman, Parabrahman, Sabda are among the terms used as appellations of Bhagavan. The term Bhagavan is the sweetest of them all.

The true meaning of Bhagavan

Bhagah means "the One who is repository of all Divine attributes and is uniquely worthy of adoration." Ga refers to "One who has all the excellences and who creates, sustains and reabsorbs everything." The letter Bha has two meanings: Sambhartha and Bhartha. Sambhartha means "One who is competent to make Nature the instrument of the creative process." Because He is also competent to sustain what is created, He is called Bhartha. Bha has other meanings as Shanthi (peace), light, effulgence, illumination. Ga means "all-pervasive." Van (or Vanthudu in Telugu) means "One who is capable." Hence the term Bhagavan means "the One who is capable of lighting the Divine effulgence, the illumination of wisdom, the Eternal Inner Light of the Soul." Can there be anything greater than earning the love of such an Omniscient, Omnipotent Lord? There is nothing on earth or beyond it which is equal to the Divine Love. To make all endeavours to earn that love is the whole purpose and meaning of the human existence. To lead a happy life, man needs peace of mind. The mind is like the turbulent Ganga. It has to be restrained by the use of brakes, as in a fast-moving vehicle. Dhyana (meditation) is the brake devised for the control of the mind. Dhyana means

one-pointed concentration. All the diseases which afflict man are the result of agitation in the mind. The enormous growth of disease in the world today is due to the loss of peace of mind. To get rid of illness and to lead a calm, healthy life, man has to cultivate mental peace. Man's mind has three kinds of capabilities. One is Anekagratha (a wandering mind). Another is Soonyatha (vacancy, emptiness). The third is Ekagratha (single-pointed concentration). What is Soonyatha? It is the state in which the mind goes to sleep when something edifying is being said. The mind is unresponsive to what is good and beneficial. Such a state of mind is called Tamasic. It is the blindness of ignorance. Anekagratha (the wandering mind) is an equally undesirable mental state. It also degrades man.

Everyone needs one-pointed concentration

Then there is one-pointed concentration of mind. This is what everyone needs most today. To develop powers of concentration, sports and games are very essential. They serve to promote physical fitness and mental health. Games and sports are to be practised mainly for keeping the body in good trim. Unfortunately, today the spirit of commercialism is rampant even in the fields of sports and entertainment. When the idea of making money is predominant, concern for health recedes to the background. Sports and the fine arts have become commercial arts and are not practised for the sake of health or enjoyment. "Art" has come from "heart," but today the heart has been divorced from the arts. The spiritual basis of the latter has been ignored. What the students need today are two things: The Spirit of Sacrifice; devotion to God; love of the Motherland. Because people are filled with pride, selfishness and self-interest, they are ceasing to be human. It is supremely important that the qualities of devotion to God, patriotism and self-sacrifice should be developed among the people. For this, the first requisite is the elimination of "my" and "mine." The readiness to sacrifice one's pleasure and comforts for the sake of the nation should be promoted among the students. When there are many high-minded, spiritually-oriented students, the nation will achieve peace and security.

Be prepared to make any sacrifice for God

Education should be for acquiring knowledge and for facing the challenges of life, not merely for getting a job. Students should not become servile seekers of posts in Government. They should have faith in God and bow their heads only to the Divine. They must be prepared always to make any sacrifice for God and country. Demonic forces have gained strength because the people have lost their faith in the power of God and Dharma (righteousness). Students should develop selfreliance and self-confidence.

They have to adhere to basic qualities such as truth, righteousness, forbearance and self-sacrifice, which are common to all people without regard to nationality, creed or language. They must cultivate a broad outlook, based on the fact that the Divine is present in everyone. There is nothing which they cannot accomplish if they have faith in God and earn God's grace.

Purity of mind alone can confer upon it tranquillity. The Upanishads have proclaimed in a full-throated voice that sacrifice alone leads to immortality. Sacrifice is the chief trait of the pure. Therefore every student must imbibe and display the spirit of sacrifice in his life.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

5. The Five D's

Date: 16 January 1988 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

The universe itself is a university in which every human being is a student. Every student pursues one subject and acquires a degree. Each one chooses a subject he likes. But whatever different subjects they may study, there is one thing common to all of them, one common pursuit and goal: to obtain the degree of Divine love. In the cosmic university, though there are scientific, political, economic and other studies, what is fundamental to all of them is the spiritual knowledge. Even in the spiritual field there are special subjects. There is one group which may be described as the five D's: Dedication, Devotion, Discipline, Discrimination and Determination. Those who have mastered the five D's are qualified to receive God's love.

Dedication should be free from ego and envy

Dedication means offering. As soon as Swami arrived, teachers and students made offerings of flowers and offered their salutations. The flower symbolises the heart. When you offer the flower of your heart to the Lord, it should be free from the pest of desire, hatred, envy, greed and the like. Only flowers are offered to the Lord or those whom you revere. The flower of the heart is subject to infestation by two evil creatures: One is ahamkara (self-conceit); the other is asooya (envy). Self-conceit is based on eight different factors' wealth, physical prowess, birth, scholarship, beauty, power and penance. Of these, the arrogance born of wealth is to be despised most. As long as this ahamkara (self-conceit) is predominant, it is impossible to recognise the Divine or one's spiritual reality. Self-conceit is a great barrier between the individual and God. It has to be utterly demolished.

Pride of wealth is another human failing, which causes the downfall of man. All forms of pride, based on birth, wealth, power or scholarship have to be given up totally. Only when egoistic pride is offered as a sacrifice at the altar of the Divine can man discover his true nature. This is the Dedication that is called for as the first step in the spiritual journey. Next comes Devotion. This

is the highest form of love. "Service to Hrishikesa is known as Bhakti," says the Sutra. Devotion means constant contemplation of God. The term Bhakti is derived from the root Bhaj (to worship). Devotion means loving contemplation of God, repetition of His name, worshipping Him and doing penance for Him. Service to the Lord is the highest expression of devotion. There is nothing which is not attainable through loving service to the Divine.

Devotion does not mean merely doing bhajans or performing puja. These forms of devotion at present are based on some kind of self-interest and self-seeking. True devotion should be free from selfishness of any kind. Devotion is not something to be proclaimed or demonstrated. Exhibitionistic devotion may result in disaster. True devotion should be an expression of love both internally and externally.

Discipline should be strictly followed in daily life

Next comes Discipline. This is most essential for students. From the moment you wake up, you have to carry out your morning ablutions, meditate on God and then do your prescribed duties in an orderly manner without deviating from the regular routine. Variations in the routine from day to day are undesirable. You should not wake up at one hour on one day and at a different time on another day. The day's activities should be regulated by the same schedule. Immediately after finishing the morning chores, one should devote, in the calm and serene atmosphere of the morning, at least for a few minutes to loving meditation on God. The human estate is based upon regulation and self-control. These have to be strictly adhered to in daily life. Then comes Discrimination. The world is a mixture of good and bad, of joy and sorrow, right and wrong, victory and defeat. In a world replete with such opposites, man has to make constantly the choice between what is right and proper and what is wrong and undesirable. Man should not let himself be guided by the mind. He should follow the directions of the Buddhi (Intelligence). As long as you follow the mind, you cannot obtain Madhava (Divinity).

Students must learn to use discrimination

Young people in their tender years tend to follow the inclinations of the mind. They do not rise to the level of their intelligence. Consequently, they are subject to various agitations and frustrations. They have, therefore, to learn to use their powers of discrimination. "I am a human being. In this condition how should I conduct myself so that I may win the respect and regard of others?" These are the questions which each student must ask himself. He should enquire on every occasion as to what is the right course and what is to be avoided. He should decide on what he should do and where he should go after due enquiry. Having acquired knowledge, he should not behave like an illiterate, uneducated person. His conduct should be in keeping with his learning. Humility is the index of true education. Without humility, scholarship will lack lustre. Discrimination is essential for every student and educated man. Determination is the fifth D. It is like the reins of a horse. When you want to achieve something, you must have the determination and persistence to secure it by all your efforts. No room should be given for doubts and hesitations. There is nothing on earth which cannot be achieved with firm determination.

Starting with Dedication, you end with Determination. There is no use relying solely on book knowledge or mere intellectual cleverness. There must be firm faith in God as the basis of everything.

There is one kind of pest which affects the leaves and branches of a tree. There is another which destroys the root of a tree. Likewise, a hypocrite is a human pest which can spoil a good man. The hypocrite is not merely an actor. He poses as a devotee externally, but is really evil-minded. He leads a double life. It is dangerous to associate with such persons. Many good men in the world have come to grief because of the association with such pretenders.

Worldly and Divine Love

Love is of two kinds: One related to the physical and the other related to the Divine. All the fears and delusions afflicting the world, all the chaos and violence prevalent today, are due primarily to physical attachments. These

are also responsible for the falsehood, corruption and other evils rampant in society. Divine love knows no differences among individuals and nations. Egoistic attachments and selfishness are at the root of all human troubles and conflicts. Physical love should be confined to strict limits. If the Divine consciousness were not present within, of what use would the body be? It would be as useless as a school without teachers, a farm without water, a temple without a deity.

You must develop Divine love. You must be resolute in striving to achieve what you aim at. Only then will your devotion and discipline bear fruit. There is no meaning in parading one's devotion. The external human form has no significance. You must be human in your actions and feelings. By reforming your conduct and purifying your thoughts and actions, sanctify your lives. That alone is true education, which will lead to Self-realisation.

Man is Divine, take it from Me; he is really here on a holy mission for a Divine purpose. To consider him as mean or weak or sinful is a great mistake. This is itself a great sin. Man must earn his birthright, namely Shanthi. Ashanthi is for him an unnatural state. His real nature is Shanthi. To recover his heritage of Shanthi, man tries various methods: Accumulation of riches, maintenance of health, mastery of knowledge and cultivation of the arts, though these are not fundamental. Three basic wants still remain after all these methods have been tried: the need for reality, for light and for immortality.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

6. Beyond Degrees: God's Love

Date: 21 January 1988 / Location: Anantapur

Students! Your real form is not made up of body, the sense organs, the mind and the intellect. Sath-chith-ananda - the Atma who is the Indwelling Witness in you - is your real form. Instead of realising this truth people are wasting their lives by identifying themselves with this body. The universe is a great university. By pursuing a variety of studies - literary, scientific, political, economic and other studies - knowledge is acquired, but not peace of mind. Succumbing to insatiable desires, people are losing peace and leading meaningless lives. It is essential to practice spiritual discipline along with academic studies. Specialisation in studies does not help the student to get an integral view of life and its problems. Education should serve to develop a broad outlook and an all-round view of life. It is not enough to acquire degrees. You must learn to acquire God's grace. The means of getting the Divine grace are: Bhakti (devotion), Prapathi (surrender), Niyama (ethical discipline), Vicharana (enquiry) and Deeksha (determination). When you succeed in these tests, you will experience the grace of the Divine.

Every offering to God is devotion

Devotion should manifest itself in every action. Everything done out of love for God and as an offering to God becomes devotion. The devotee is filled with love and shares the love with all the others. The nine different forms of worship are only means to cultivate devotion. But the goal of all of them is to experience oneness with the Divine. Prapathi means total surrender, offering everything to the Divine. The sense of ego separates the individual from the Divine. When the individual offers everything to God, this ego barrier is removed. Of all diseases to which man is prone, the disease arising from Ahamkara (ego) is the most deadly. The only panacea for this disease is surrender to the Will of the Divine. Education should be utilised for developing the power of discrimination between right and wrong, good and evil. Without discrimination, a human being is worse than an animal. You need determination to face the challenges of life, which is filled with ups and

downs, successes and failures, joys and sorrows. These challenges have to be faced with faith in God. The mind should not be allowed to waver and hop from one thing to the other. A steady mind is the mark of a truly educated person. Life should be governed by definite regulations. Self-control is essential for leading a righteous life.

Do not get disheartened by failure

Bharath's culture has always laid stress on the well-being of all. "Lokah Samasthah-sukhino bhavanthu." (Let all the worlds be happy). You should not be overwhelmed by difficulties that you may encounter in life. They are all transient and they come and go. The source of enduring bliss is within you. Do not give way to weakness of will. The Upanishad declares: "Na ayam Atma balaheenena labhyah" (The Spirit is not realised by a weakling). Most students are apt to get disheartened when they fail to obtain high marks in an examination. They should, on the contrary, regard it as a challenge to do better in future. Students must develop courage, selfconfidence and determination so that they can face any situation in life. This is the reason for combining spiritual discipline with academic studies. After you complete your studies, you must become ideal mothers. The mother is the most decisive factor in a child's life. A child's future is moulded by the mother. You have an obligation to please your parents, who are responsible for all that you are. Give joy and satisfaction to them. Thereby you will be ensuring joy and satisfaction for yourselves from your children in the years to come. Have high aims in life. Set before yourselves the examples of great men and women who have figured in the history of our country and the world. Take a lesson from their life of sacrifice and heroism. Wherever you go, whatever walk of life you may choose, bear in mind the honour and glory of the Sathya Sai Institute and prove yourselves in action to be worthy alumni of the Institute. Conduct yourselves befittingly before elders and relations and earn their regard and love. Bring credit to the family in which you are born and the family in which your married life may be spent.

7. Ascent To The Divine

Date: 16 February 1988 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Shivarathri

More effulgent than the Sun, Whiter and purer than snow Subtler than ether in space, The Paramatma dwells in all, Permeating the entire Cosmos, Shining in every atom.

You are in that Brahman That Brahman is in you. You are that Brahman

And that Brahman is you What greater truth

Can I convey to you ?

Man is not a mere combination of the physical, the mental and the intellectual. He is enveloped in five sheaths: the Annamaya Kosa (gross body), the Pranamaya Kosa (the vital sheath), the Manomaya Kosa (Mental sheath), Vijnanamaya Kosa (Intelligence) and Anandamaya Kosa (the sheath of Bliss). The Upanishads have pointed out the importance, the sacred and the divine characteristics of these Kosas (sheaths). The physical form that is sustained by the food that we consume is the gross body. Thereafter we have the Pranamaya, Manomaya and Vijnanamaya Kosas (subtle bodies) which together form the Lingaswarupa - the "Within Body" or the "Sense Body." The third form is the Anandamaya Kosa, the subtle body which has the "knowledge of the Real Self." There is an entity which keeps under control the three subtle bodies - -Pranamaya, Manomaya and Vijnanamaya Kosas. This is the Antharatma (the Indwelling Spirit). This Antharatma is also known as the Chaitanya Purusha. The seat of the Chaitanya Purusha is Hridaya Guhyam (a cave in the heart). The "heart" referred to here is not the physical heart in the human body but is the spiritual heart - which is all-pervasive, all-knowing and boundless.

Levels of consciousness

The Atma (Spirit) when it is associated with the physical body is called

Annamaya Purusha. This is the state of ordinary consciousness. When the spiritual consciousness is associated with Pranamaya Kosa (the Vital Consciousness), the Atma is known as Pranaswarupa (Life Consciousness). When the Atma is associated with the mental consciousness, it is known as Manopurusha. The fourth consciousness transcends the human senses. It is called Atheetha Manasatvam (Transcendental Consciousness). The Vedas and Upanishads have described this state as Brihat and Rita (Transcendental Consciousness). It transcends human limitations and comes close to Divinity. It is called Super Mind. The Atma in this state is called Vijnana Purusha. Above this state is the Anandamaya Purusha (the enjoyer of Bliss). It is a state of Super-consciousness which expands in due course to merge with the Universal Consciousness. This all-pervading Universal Consciousness has been called Chith-Tapas. It is the highest consciousness which encompasses all other levels of consciousness and is the basis for all of them. That is the Suddha Satwa (the all-effective Will), the Super Divine life. This is the Saitatwa (the Sai Principle).

The Suddha-Satwa, which constitutes the Sai Principle, is omnipotent. There is nothing that is beyond its power. It is the embodiment of all powers. It should be everyone's aim to strive to recognise this Supreme Principle.

Awareness of Divinity

There are some clearly defined methods for achieving this aim. Man's vision, which is now turned outward towards the phenomenal universe, should be turned inwards towards the Indwelling Spirit. One should manifest the Divine consciousness inherent in him. He should submit himself to that consciousness as a spiritual discipline. This is called "Conscious Realisation of the Inner Divine." The first task is to develop awareness of the Divinity within. The next stage is the realisation of the truth that the divinity that is within one's self is equally present in all others. One must recognise that the veil or barrier that appears to separate him from others is born of delusion and every effort should be made to remove it. Only then will it be possible to experience the oneness of all living things. "Aham eva idam Sarvam," says the Sruti (I am indeed all this). The realisation dawns: "All this is contained in me." And then

there is the consciousness, "I am Divine. The Divine is me. I am Brahman. Brahman is myself. There is no distinction between Brahman and me."

Six mental states

After attaining this stage there is a third stage, which has been characterised as the Arohana- Avarohana (the Ascent-and-the Descent) stage. Man has six different kinds of mind. They are: (1) The Ordinary Mind; (2) The Super-mind; (3) The Higher Mind; (4) The Illuminated Mind; (5) The Intuitive Mind; (6) The Over-mind or Beyond the Mind. The starting base for the six levels of minds is the ordinary mind. At the summit level is the Over-mind. In the mental processes what goes on is an ascent from the ordinary mind to the Over-mind as well as a descent from the Over-mind to the lowest level. It is when the ascending process and the descending process meet that there is fullness in the human being. There is no difference between one kind of consciousness and the other. All consciousness is alike because it is a manifestation of Brahman (the Absolute). It is Brahman that has manifested Itself as the Cosmos. The doctrine of evolution is being discussed widely and widely accepted. But one should try to understand how evolution takes place in Nature. Evolution in Nature is really the gradual unfoldment of the inherent powers of Nature.

The evolutionary process

For instance, life has evolved from matter and mind has evolved from life. What is meant by matter? Matter is that which is encased in life. Consider the example of paddy. As long as the rice grain is covered by husk it is called paddy. When the husk is removed it becomes rice. Paddy has the power to germinate as long as the husk remains. Likewise, the vital principle is contained in matter. It may thus be seen that life came from matter. Likewise, the mind evolved from life. Today men are prepared to recognise that mind evolved from life and life from matter. But they are not ready to go beyond this stage in human evolution. Human evolution cannot be complete unless it goes beyond the mind. The next step in the human evolution is the Super-mind. But man has to go forward even from supramental to the ultimate

stage of Sath-chith-ananda (Being-Awareness-Bliss) to realise his final destiny. The day when man is able to experience the Divine state of Sath-chith-ananda is really the holy day of Shivarathri. When a person is attached to the body and considers the physical alone as real, he is bound to remain ignorant. The gross body is sustained by food and is limited by its material basis. But there is a subtle body which transcends the physical. This is called Lingadeha. After understanding the nature of the subtle body, men should try to proceed further to know the nature of the Karana Deha (Causal body, which is subtler than the Lingadeha), which is the experience of Ananda (Divine Bliss). Everything has its origin in Bliss and is dependent on Bliss. Bliss is present in a subtle form in every object in creation.

Have the urge to change to a higher state

Of what avail is the study of the Upanishads and the Gita, if there is no transformation in our thoughts or way of life? There must be the urge to change and progress towards a higher state of consciousness. It is only when we reach the supramental stages that we can grasp, to some extent, the relationship between the phenomenal Universe and the Divine. In reality we are all embodiments of Sath-chith-ananda. Your real "I" exists in all the stages of waking, dream and deep sleep. But in the dream and deep sleep states you are not conscious of your body. The entity that exists in all three states undergoes no change. You must try to understand the nature of this "I." You must examine where all your sadhanas are leading you. You have to proceed from the purely mental stage to the highest stage of the Over-mind and experience oneness with the Universal Consciousness. You may regard this as extremely difficult. But if you have dedication and perseverance, it will be quite easy. There is nothing in the world easier than the spiritual path. But when there is no earnestness, it appears difficult. That is why the Gita has declared: "Sradhavan labhathe Jnanam " (The earnest aspirant acquires the Supreme Wisdom). If you are deeply interested in anything, you will accomplish it.

The Cosmic Consciousness

Hence you should constantly remind yourself: "I am the embodiment of the Divine consciousness. Sath-chith-ananda constitutes my form." Man today has forgotten his true nature and looks upon the world entirely through the senses, the mind and the intellect. But behind all these organs there is the Sath-chith-ananda which is fundamental. It is because of this Atmic Bliss principle in him, that man is ever seeking bliss. The whole cosmos has emanated from the Parabrahman (the Supreme Omni-Will). It appears as a material object. But from the material, we should proceed to the spiritual - the Universal Consciousness. There is the "Higher Mind" in man. It is present to enable man to transcend the physical and the mental and to reach the Divine. Ordinary life consists of Matter + Mind. But Matter + Being is beyond the mind. It leads to the Super-mind. The mind attracts many objects that it sees. It promotes a variety of qualities, attitudes and attachments. Above all, it encourages the inflation of the Ahamkara (ego). Puffed up by his ego, man loses all his powers of discrimination and forgets what is evanescent and what is permanent. He makes himself an object of derision. It is only when the ego is deflated and eliminated that man can gradually realise his spiritual essence. Spirituality cannot be understood as long as the ego is dominant. And of what use are spiritual studies and discourses to one who has no understanding?

Embodiments of Divine love! You are engaged in various spiritual exercises. Some call it worldly, illusory and ephemeral. It is described as Maya or Mithya. This is entirely wrong. I am Sathyam (Real). You are Real. The whole universe is Real. Consciousness is immanent in everything.

Everything is a manifestation of Brahman. When we recognise this unity which underlies everything we shall be able to know the nature of Divinity.

The world is Real

To go about describing the world as unreal, illusory, impermanent will amount to practising a deception on people and not proclaiming the truth. If the world is unreal, even the teaching that it is unreal, is equally unreal and has no meaning. No. That is not so. This Cosmos is Real. It is not a question of seeing

truth within the unreal or the unreal in the truth. It is Sathyamuloni Sathyamu (the recognition of the Truth in the Real). It is only when this basic truth is recognised that we shall be competent to grasp the nature of our inherent Reality. The Cosmos is Real. The forms in it may change. Bodies may change. Change is the characteristic of the evolutionary process. But what should be recognised is that at the core of all things is a fundamental Reality. This is the triple principle: Asthi, Bhati, Priyam (Existing, Shining or manifesting and Pleasing or loving) or Sath-chith-ananda or Sathyam, Shivam, Sundaram (Truth, Goodness and Beauty). When we recognise that the body, which is the basis of life, is subject to change, how can the phenomenal world be described as a delusion just because it is also subject to change? The universe has come from the Brahman, the Universal Consciousness. The multiplicity of forms are like the different kinds of figures made from sugar to attract children. The forms are different, but the basic consciousness is one. Just as a doll made from sugar is dissolved in the mouth, the external form of the body should dissolve in the experience of Atmic bliss. The source of life is Brahman. Change and evolution are natural to it. But the presence of the unchanging Divinity should be experienced within the changing body. In the evolutionary process, the Brahmic principle, existing in the matter, evolved to life. The mind evolved by a leap from consciousness in life. The mind should not stop there. It should evolve towards consciousness of the Divine and ultimately merge in the Universal Consciousness - the Sath-chith-

Sathyam-Jnanam-Anantham

Every human being should strive to progress towards the ultimate state of "Over-mind" consciousness - the state which has been described by the seers as Vijnanamaya Kosa (the Super-intellectual Mind). Vijnana (modern science) is concerned with analysing physical objects. But Vijnanamaya Kosa (the Super-intellectual Mind) is concerned with exploring the Supreme Reality-the Omnipresent Consciousness. This alone is true scientific enquiry. It is from the Vijnanamaya Kosa that one proceeds to the Anandamaya Kosa - the state of Super consciousness, of Total Bliss. It may appear difficult to attain this state. But without making the necessary effort, it should not be treated as beyond one's capacity. Listen to My words. I shall show you the way. If you merely

listen but do not practice what I say, you will not reach the goal.

Train your minds towards the Divine

It is a natural process. In a bud there is very little fragrance. When it grows and blossoms, it acquires fine fragrance. Likewise, when the human consciousness expands, it finds fullness in the state of Sath-chith-ananda. Starting with the ordinary mind the consciousness rises to the Super-mind level. Then it moves up to the state of the Higher Mind. The next higher stage is that of the Illuminated Mind. Through all these stages, the continuing entity remains the same, as in the bodily changes from infancy to old age. That is the Universal Consciousness which is present in everyone - the One in the Many. The Universal Consciousness is the Sathyam (Truth). It is Jnanam (the Supreme Wisdom). It is Anantham (Infinite).

Turn your minds towards the Divine. Repetition of the Name of the Lord has been prescribed as a spiritual discipline to turn your mind away from the things of the world. If you devote the whole of this night to thoughts about the Lord, your minds will be transformed, even if you are not able to reach the highest state of "Over-mind." Ever beating in mind the triple characteristics of the Divine - Sathyam, Jnanam, Anantham, Brahma - strive to achieve the supreme goal of Man.

If in this world you want to promote friendship, you can do so by using sweet words, by talking in a very sweet manner and by speaking about sacred things.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

8. Karma and Divine Grace

Date: **21 February 1988** / Location: **Prasanthi Nilayam** / Occasion: **Discourse to the students of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute, at the students hostel**

The edifice of man's life is erected on four walls: Janma, Karma, Dharma, Brahman (Birth, Actions, Duties and Supreme Reality). These four walls are interdependent and inextricably connected with each other. What for does birth take place? To perform actions. How are actions to be done? Actions should be filled with Dharma (Righteousness). Through righteous actions one should realise the Brahman. Man has forgotten this goal. Today actions are related to physical needs and Dharma is concerned with getting on in the world. There is no awareness of the Supreme. Without four bare walls, even a cottage cannot be erected. The mansion of life has to be supported by the four essential walls of Janma, Karma, Dharma and Brahman. Karma (Action) is the cause of birth. It is the life-sustaining force. The body is the instrument of this vital force. Karma sustains life in the body, through the body. Every action done by man is described as Karma. Man performs actions for the fruits thereof. He takes birth again to experience the results of his actions. That is why, it is declared in the Gita: "Karma anubandheeni manushyaloke" (Man's life in the world is bound by his actions). It is not possible to get away from action, but it is essential to perform actions properly.

Our condition in life is determined by our actions. Our habits are governed by our actions. Habits determine conduct. And conduct determines our future. Hence it is supremely important how we act. Good and evil in life are determined by the nature of our actions. To claim that "I am the doer, I am the experiencer and I am the enjoyer," is a sign of egoism. Good and evil result from actions, whether one is aware of their consequences or not.

Krishna and Dharmaraja

After the end of the Mahabharata war, Krishna approached Dharmaraja and told him: "Dharmaraja! The battle is over. You have been victorious. You must now be crowned as king." Dharmaraja did not accept Krishna's advice. He told

Krishna: "Did I kill so many of my kinsmen and friends only to assume the crown? For whose sake should I become the ruler? I killed many of my kinsmen and I was also responsible for the death of many others. Over whom should I rule? What joy can I derive from such rulership? I have no use for this paltry kingship. I do not wish to be crowned." Dharmaraja pleaded in this way with Krishna and would not agree for his coronation. Krishna realised that it was no use himself arguing with Dharmaraja. The ways of the Lord are mysterious. In everything He does, He sets an example to the world. No action of the Lord is without a purpose, though its meaning may not be obvious. When the Lord comes in human form, proximity to the Lord may conceal the full import of His words or actions.

Bhishma asks Dharmaraja to follow Krishna

Krishna thought that Dharmaraja would be more amenable to advice if it came from a venerable elder like Bhishma. So He took Dharmaraja to the grandsire of the Pandavas, who was lying on a bed of arrows. Krishna knew that Dharmaraja would heed Bhishma's sage counsel. If Bhishma advised and encouraged Dharmaraja to go through the coronation and accept the burden of kingship, Krishna felt that Dharmaraja would not refuse. So, after leaving Dharmaraja with Bhishma, Krishna retired.

Bhishma looked at Dharmaraja with tears streaming from his eyes and said: "Dharmaraja! Will you wholeheartedly respect my words?" Dharmaraja held the hands of his grandsire and reverently promised him that he had never gone against Bhishma's injunctions in the past and would never do so in the future. Bhishma then said: "Dharmaraja! Before the war you relied on Krishna. You regarded him as your mentor. He, whom you revered as your mentor before your ends had to be realised, is worthy of the same regard even after your purposes have been realised. It is unworthy of you to ignore Krishna's advice now. You are looking upon him only as a kinsman. Krishna is God incarnate. No doubt he is your kinsman and friend, but you have no conception of his powers. Looking at the world externally, you are wasting your time. Look within and see the Truth," advised Bhishma.

Dharmaraja replied: "Grandsire! I know full well with what love you brought us up when we were left fatherless. You fostered us with greater care than even a father could have bestowed. But we fought against you in the war and brought you down. We resorted to a deceitful stratagem to make our Guru Dronacharya, lay down his arms. We killed numerous dear kinsmen and friends in the war. After all this, what joy can I derive by ascending the throne? Please spare me from the ignominy of coronation." Dharmaraja piteously pleaded with Bhishma in these words.

The bonds of Karma and Time

Bhishma smiling at Dharmaraja said: "The world is bound by Karma. Dharmaraja! You are well versed in the scriptures. Nevertheless, you speak about killing so many people. Who are the killed? And who are the killers? You do not have the power to kill or to make others kill. Killing and getting killed are consequences of past karmas. Karma is responsible for everything that happens. Let me illustrate this by a story." Bhishma then related the following story: "A woman who had an only son lost her husband. Taking her son with her she was going through a forest to go to another village. On the way she rested under a tree with her son sleeping on her lap. Suddenly the boy woke up with a shriek and started crying. The mother woke up and noticed that a cobra had bitten her son and was wriggling back into an anthill. Within a few moments the boy died. While the mother was wailing helplessly over the death of her son, a highway robber, who was passing by that way, heard her cries and enquired about the cause of her grief. Learning about the death of her son from a snake bite, the robber decided to dig up the anthill and kill the cobra. At that stage, the woman took hold of the robber's hands and pleaded: "Dear man! Please do not kill the cobra. Will my son get back his life if you kill that cobra? I cannot escape my fate." The robber said: "That poisonous snake can cause the death of others who may come here. I have a duty to destroy poisonous creatures." Then the mother replied: "Son! It is by the dictates of Kala (Time or Fate) that this poisonous cobra bit my son. His death is the result of his own past karnum."

Karma is responsible for everything

"We are not aware of the consequences of our actions when we do them. We grieve over our calamities when they occur. Behind every good or bad event there is a cause, Dharmaraja! People talk about Yama, the God of Death. He comes in innumerable forms to take life at the appointed time. Yama is called Time or Destiny, Dharmaraja! Karma is responsible for everything. How is it that you could not see that a simple woman realised so clearly? You are well versed in all the Sastras and know what is wrong. Knowing that gambling is among the five great sins, you succumbed to play the dice and as a result had to endure innumerable difficulties including living in the forest as an exile with your family. Were not all your ordeals the consequences of your action? No one can escape from the consequence of one's deed. With God's grace the results can be overcome. But if one disobeys the command of the Lord, no one can save him. By going against Krishna's command, you will not save yourself from the consequences of your actions," concluded Bhishma.

Submit to the Divine Will

Finally Bhishma exhorted Dharmaraja in these words: The Divine Will is the basis of all action. The Divine can annul the consequences of these actions or provide the means of expiation for them. Hence, your duty is to carry out faithfully the Divine command. If you act to the contrary you will be ruining your life. Bow to Krishna's command and get yourself crowned." Dharmaraja, however, continued to be racked by doubts as to how the law of karma operated. Was the boy's death from the cobra bite a decree of Fate? Bhishma reassured Dharmaraja, the Lord grants the fruit of every action, according to each person's deserts, in any form, in any situation, through any agency. All results follow from the actions. The wicked Kauravas, although they knew the principles of morality and justice, subjected the noble Pandavas to such troubles and ordeals that ultimately their entire clan was destroyed. Because the Divine was on their side, the Pandavas were victorious. Bhishma, therefore advised the Pandavas not to ignore Krishna's advice in the hour of their success. It is not easy to explain in what form and in what manner Karma follows a person. A cow, which feels proud about its horns and its size, finds itself controlled by a rope through its nostrils on account of its karma.

Hence one must bear with whatever troubles that may come, treating them as the consequences of past actions. But the effects can be mitigated or removed by earning the grace of the Divine.

As you sow, so shall you reap

Men today do not view things in this manner. Considering some person as the author of his misfortunes, they tend to abuse him, without thinking about their own actions. They should realise the Truth of the saying: "As you sow, so shall you reap." Your present state is the result of your past actions. Therefore, by doing good acts in the present, you must ensure beneficial results in the future. Everyone should realise that for happiness or sorrow, profit or loss, his own actions are responsible.

Of all actions nothing is so reprehensible as the violation or ignoring of the Divine's injunctions. The Vedas have emphasised the important role of Karma and urged that due regard should be had for its operation.

Students should try to understand the inner meaning of all teachings. They should not concern themselves with the actions or words of individuals. They must concentrate on their respective duties. Intelligent persons may discuss matters of moment. The small-minded may discuss personalities. Both types of discussions are likely to be exercises in futility. What should be realised is that nothing happens without a cause and that every result is the outcome of a particular action. Once the cause is understood, one should act on that understanding, avoiding actions which are bound to have undesirable consequences and performing actions which will yield beneficial results. Do not be concerned whether someone is watching your actions or not. God is certainly watching your actions. Therefore you must take care to act righteously at all times and in all situations.

Today people claim to be working for world peace. How can those who have not achieved peace within themselves hope to achieve world peace? Those who have not learnt to look within themselves and cultivate a broad spiritual outlook are not competent to work for peace in the world.

Education is for acquiring wisdom

Students! Your actions are responsible for your good or ill, your fame or disgrace, your joy or grief. Do not get excited over petty demands and desires. Fix your minds on permanent ideals. The discipline you observe should not be confined to your tenure in the college. When Bhishma questioned Yudhistira whether his faith in Krishna endured only as long as the war lasted, Yudhistira was bitten to the quick. He realised his mistake and felt repentant deep in his heart. Today's students, however, seem to be immune to such appeals. Do you need Sai Baba only for obtaining a seat in the Institute? Don't you need the help of Sai after you have finished your studies? You will need Sai always. You must not forget how you completed your studies and what the Sathya Sai Institute has done for you. If you forget this, you are in for all sorts of troubles. You should not forget the pledge you have given to the Institute, whatever difficulties you may confront. Remember the example of Emperor Harischandra who went through every kind of ordeal to honour his plighted word. Treat your word as a sacred expression of the Divine. Do not speak ill of others. Do not give room for attachment and hatred in your hearts. Education is for acquiring wisdom, not for getting material wealth.

Bear in mind the message of the sages

Do not treat lightly your human birth. Show respect for words of elders, parents and teachers. The Yadava clan, in which Sri Krishna was born, was totally destroyed because of the disrespect shown to a sage. Bharath's history is full of the lives of great souls. Bear in mind their message, which will be of use to you sometime or other. Their teachings are wholesome medicine for the spirit.

Mundane existence is subject to a variety of diseases. For all of them, remembrance of the name of the Lord is the panacea. When you install the name of the Lord in your hearts, revere your parents and respect the Divine that is present in all beings, you will be able to lead ideal lives. Pursue your

studies for achieving consummation. Cultivate good habits. Thanks to your good karmas in previous lives, you are having the good fortune of studying here. Take full advantage of this precious opportunity.

Krishna operates "Cancer" in the body politic

Dharmaraja once asked Krishna: "Krishna! Why did you bring about this disastrous war for the sake of this contemptible rulership over a kingdom? Forty lakhs of warriors died in this battle. Only the Pandavas have survived. Is there any justice in sacrificing the lives of forty lakhs of men for the sake of the five Pandavas?" Krishna replied "Dharmaraja! You are looking at the numbers involved I am looking at the principles at issue. Can any crores of insects equal a lion? "Kurukshetra is comparable to the body. Kuru means work. The body is the instrument of action. Because it is the field in which action takes place, it is called Kshetra (field). Supposing in the back of the body, there is a gangrene. If it is allowed to grow, it will spread throughout the body. If the gangrene is on the arm or the leg, you can remove it by the amputation of the limb concerned. But when it is in the back, how do you deal with it? A major operation will be necessary. Likewise, the evil qualities in the Kauravas were like cancer in the body politic. If they had been ignored, the entire nation would have got infected. Hence, acting as a surgeon, I carried out the operation of the Mahabharata war, with Arjuna as my assistant. In the process, forty lakhs of "microbes" died. For the sake of saving these microbes should we let the patients die? To save the individual you have to eliminate the cancerous microbes. Likewise, persons with evil qualities are like cancer cells. I saved the nation by destroying these bacteria. There is no sin in this," declared Krishna.

How the Divine acts

If for doing a good deed, you have to cause a little harm, even that should be regarded as a help. But, in all such cases, there should be absolutely no element of self-interest. Whatever help is rendered, with a selfish motive behind it, is no help at all. Because the Divine is totally free from self-interest, whatever He does is utterly blameless and is solely for the welfare of the

world. It is foolish to question the propriety of God's actions. There is nothing beyond His powers. He is the creator, the protector and the destroyer. When He protects, no one asks why He protects. But when He does not protect, questions are asked about His inaction. When the Lord punishes, the question is asked: "Why does God inflict punishment? Is it not wrong on His part to do so?" Such questions are motivated by selfishness and self-interest. God is totally free from any taint of self-interest. To indulge in controversies over the Divine actions is supreme folly. There is a valid reason behind every action of the Divine. Therefore, your duty is to pray to God and secure His grace. Take, for instance, the case of Sakkubai. When Sakkubai wanted to join the pilgrims going to Pandharpur, Krishna could have openly arranged for her joining the party. But He did not do so. If she would have gone against her husband's will, she would have got a bad name. To maintain her good reputation and show her as an example to the world, Krishna assumed Sakkubai's form and subjected Himself to all kinds of harassments of the mother-in-law, while the real Sakkubai was sent to Pandharpur. Why did Krishna do this? The Lord is ready to assume any form and subject Himself to any hardship to uphold Dharma. On the one hand, public opinion has to be respected. On the other side, the devotee should not go astray. Only the Divine knows how to reconcile these opposites. Men in general can look at things only from their personal point of view. They cannot have an integral view of things. Students should note that on one side they have to set an example to the world by their behaviour. At the same time they have to conform to the Will of the Divine. They have to follow both these courses. They have to please their parents who have done so much for them. They have to bring credit to the Institute which has been their Alma Mater. Whether you are here or elsewhere, your conduct must be the same. It is unworthy of a human being to vary his behaviour according to place and time.

Sanctify every act

Recognising the supremacy of action, you must see that everything you do is pure and holy. Action is not limited to what you do with your hands. What you hear, what you see, what you speak and even what you think - all of them constitute action. This means that the things you see, the words you hear, the

thoughts you think and the speech you make should all be pure. All that you take in through your five senses should be wholesome and pure, and not merely your food alone. Only then can it be Satwic. Devotion is not confined to bhajans and exhibiting a yearning for Swami. Every one of your actions should be filled with devotion. Each one is the architect of his destiny. And as Bhishma pointed out to Dharmaraja, no one can avoid the consequences of his actions. What he can do is to pray to the Lord and show him how he can atone for his wrong doings. It is essential to suffuse all our actions with Dharma. That Dharma should be dedicated to the Divine. When this happens, life becomes sanctified. There may be no rebirth at all. Therefore, build your lives on the four pillars of Janma, Karma, Dharma and Brahman. This is my benediction for all of you.

Sacrifice is sweeter than enjoyment. Sacrifice should become the aim of life. Only through sacrifice can one attain peace. Sorrows do not flee from us as long as the mind is not at peace with itself. Agonies dwell forever within us. Without the tranquillity of the soul any amount of wealth cannot be of any use. Surrendering the fruits of action with a dispassionate mind is eligible to be termed sacrifice.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

9. From Annam To Ananda

Date: 13 March 1988 / Location: Brindavan

In the study of the scriptures we come across the terms Sama and Dama. Sama is generally regarded as meaning control of the inner senses and Dama as referring to control of the external senses. This is not correct. Sama means control of both the inner and outer sense organs. Among these sense organs, three are most important: the eyes, the ears and the tongue. Each of them tries to follow the other. When the eye sees something, the ear tries to listen to what is happening. Immediately thereafter the eye seeks to explore something new on the basis of what the ear has heard.

These sense organs, however, do not function by themselves. They are called Upakaranas, that is, subsidiary instruments. For all of them, the mind is the base. It is the mind that creates within itself its conception of the Universe. It gives form to the perceptions got from the senses. The mind is the basis for the actions of the eye, the ear and the tongue. In the waking state, the eye sees, the ear hears and the tongue speaks. In the dream state, the eyes, the ears and the tongue are inoperative. In the dream state, the mind alone sees, hears and does the talking. The mind does all the functions of the senses. It is the inner operator of all the sense organs. Without control of the mind, man cannot have peace even for a moment. One who wishes to lead a happy and peaceful life, must exercise control over his senses. Man today has lost peace of mind because he has no control over his senses.

The senses and the elements

There are five kinds of senses in man: Hearing, touch, sight, taste and smell. These five senses are based on the five elements: Akasa (ether), Vayu (air), Agni (fire), Apa (water), and Prithvi (earth).

The earth is the grossest of the elements; water is subtler and more pervasive than earth. Fire is subtler and more pervasive than water. Air is even more subtle than fire and is extremely pervasive. Ether is the subtlest and pervades

everything. In this ascending order of subtlety, each element exhibits a wider pervasiveness than the preceding element. With increasing subtlety, pervasiveness also expands. In the reverse process, when subtlety diminishes, the density increases and the pervasiveness contracts. Thus air is less subtle and grosser than ether. Fire is grosser and less pervasive than air. Earth is the grossest and least pervasive.

Akasa is the basis of all the other elements

It may be seen from this that ether is the basis of all the other elements. Akasa (ether or space) is the basis from which the other elements have emerged. Akasa may be compared to an infinite pot. All the other four elements are evolved from it. From the Gatha (movement) of ether, air came into existence. Out of air, fire emerged in course of time. Without air, there could be no fire. Out of the heat generated by fire, water was formed. For instance, in the human body, after a bout of fever, there is sweating. When we move in the hot sun, we perspire. This shows how water results from heat. From water all multifarious forms in Nature are evolved. The relationship between grossness and pervasiveness can be illustrated by an example. Suppose, for instance, a jasmine flower is placed on a table in a room. The flower, which is gross, is small in size. But its fragrance, which is subtle, pervades the whole room. Likewise, steam which is generated from water, occupies a much larger space than the volume of water from which it is produced.

The mind of man, because of its extreme subtlety, is capable of immense expansion. But because of the senses, the mind has attraction for a variety of objects and persons. When these objects fill the mind, its expansiveness gets reduced. It is only when the attraction from these objects is reduced that the mind can achieve expansion. If today man is filled with worries and has no peace of mind, it is because his mind is filled with innumerable desires. The world cannot be blamed for man's mental state. Nor can samsara (family life) be held responsible for man's bondage. You bind yourself to Nature and the family, by your attachments and desires. To withdraw yourselves from these attachments and to reduce your subjection to the external world, you have to

practice control over your eyes, ears and tongue.

Three qualities of each sheath

In this context you have to consider three factors: the gross, the subtle and the causal. Taking the examples of the tamarind fruit, you find that it has the outer rind, the fruit inside it and the seed within the fruit. All these are associated with one another. Our body is like the outer rind of the tamarind fruit. Our mind can be compared to the fruit within. Our causal body is comparable to the seed in the fruit. The human entity is the combination of these three. And in this entity, there are five Kosas (sheaths) - the Annamaya (the food sheath), the Pranamaya (the vital air sheath), the Manomaya (the mental), Vijnanamaya (the intelligence) and the Anandamaya (the Blissful) Kosas.

The Annamaya Kosa has three qualities: hunger, thirst and sleep. The Pranamaya Kosa (the vital sheath) has also three qualities: inhaling, exhaling and motion. The Manomaya Kosa has these three qualities: Sankalpa (thought), Vikalpa (absence of thought) and Manana (introspection). Vijnanamaya Kosa has three qualities: Medha Shakthi (intelligence), Viveka Shakthi (power of discrimination) and Vijnana Shakthi (wisdom). The three qualities of Anandamaya Kosa are Priyam (fondness), Modam (delight) and the Pramodam (Supreme delight or ecstasy). Everyone aspires to have these three experiences. When a person sees something and has liking for it, the feeling is Priyananda. When he enjoys an object or an idea or the company of a person dear to him, that experience is called Modam. The experience one has when he identifies himself with an idea of a person or an object that he likes is called Pramodam. For example, one learns that mangoes have come into the market. He derives a pleasure immediately on seeing the mangoes. This is Priyam. He then buys the mango and takes it home. The joy he derives from possessing the mango is Modam. Then he eats the fruit with relish. The joy derived from this is Pramodam.

The Devotee's delight in experiencing Divinity

The devotee, yearning constantly for a vision of the Lord, derives a similar kind of delight, which has been described as "Nithyanandam Parama Sukhadam," (Ever-blissful and conferring Supreme happiness). Or he may wish to see the physical form of someone who is eminently estimable and dear to him. The moment he sees such a person he experiences delight. This is Priyam. He goes near the person and delights in the nearness to him. This is described as Modam. When they experience joy together, it is called Pramodam. There are three levels in the experiencing of this Ananda (joy). Many kinds of spiritual practices are resorted to for realising God. During these exercises, one day God appears in a dream. The devotee rejoices in it. When the Lord seen in the dream appears before him, the devotee derives even greater delight. When he is able to move and sport with the Lord, he becomes ecstatic. That is described as Brahmanandam or Yoganandam or Advaitanandam (the bliss of oneself with the Divine). It is also called Paramanandam (Supreme Bliss). Of all forms of delight, the bliss that is experienced in oneness with the Divine is unexcelled.

Develop a keen sense of discrimination

To achieve this state of bliss a start has to be made with the control of the senses. The senses have to be directed along right lines. The mind is the basis for all these sense organs. Without mental consciousness, the sense organs will not be able to function at all. From time to time the senses are likely to go astray. If a brass vessel is struck with a stick, it will send out vibrations. Likewise, when someone criticises you, your mind waves will get excited by the sound waves reaching a certain nerve centre in the brain. Immediately an angry reaction occurs. The stage is set for a quarrel. Then there is no control over the mind. On the other hand, someone else may come and praise you. You forget yourself and get immersed in joy. The sense of discrimination may be lost through excessive elation or through deep distress. When the discriminating power is weak, the mind is prone to pursue wrong courses. You have, therefore to find out the true role of the mind. Below the mind is the vital principle. Above the mind is the Buddhi (Intelligence). Buddhi is associated with the Agni (fire) principle. Prana (the vital force) is also associated with the fire principle. The mind is situated

between these two. "Chandrama Manaso Jatah" says the Veda (The moon is the presiding deity of the mind). The moon is considered a watery planet. Caught between the two "fires" above and below it, the mind is unstable.

The Atma and the senses

You must understand how the mind functions. It is the underlying current in all sense organs. Supposing you are asleep and are experiencing a dream. You see in the dream your parents and friends. Was it your eyes that saw them in your dream? No. In the dream state the eyes are closed. In the dream state you are talking to your parents and friends. But compared to the waking state, the mouth is silent in the dream state. You feel in the dream you are listening to what your parents and friends are saying, but it is not your ears that are hearing. All that you see, hear or say in the dream are all the processes of the mind alone. Hence it is obvious that sense organs are only subsidiary organs and not self-acting instruments. However, beyond the senses, the mind and the Buddhi (Intellect) there is the Atma (the Indwelling Spirit). Each sense organ has only one function to perform and cannot perform any other function. The eye can only see but cannot hear. The ear can only hear but cannot see. The tongue can only speak but cannot hear. Each sense organ is confined to its specific function. But the Atma comprehends and transcends all of them. It can see, listen, speak and think, hence, it is said: "Buddhi grahyam atheendriyam" (The Atma transcends all senses).

Egoism cannot be cured by medicine

The sense organs are subject to various kinds of afflictions. With such disabilities, they cannot serve as reliable indicators of truth. Take, for instance the tongue. When a man is hungry the laddu (made from sugar) tastes sweet to the tongue. But the same laddu tastes bitter to the tongue when a person suffers from Malaria. Thus, when there is disease, the tongue fails to serve as a truthful organ of taste. Consider the case of the eyes. When one is healthy, the eye sees every colour in its true form as red, green or yellow. But when a man suffers from jaundice, the eye sees everything as

yellow. Here, again the eye fails to serve as a reliable indicator of truth when it is subject to disease. All the organs in the body are prone to disease of one sort or another. But, of all the ills to which man is prone, there is one which cannot be cured by medicine, that is, Ahamkara (egoism). This ego aggravates the tendency of the senses to lead man astray. In this context, there are seven factors which have to be considered: (1) Deha (the body); (2) Karma (action); (3) Raga (attachment); (4) Dwesha (hatred); (5) Ahamkara (egoism); (6) Aviveka (lack of discrimination) and (7) Ajnana (ignorance). These seven influence the human condition. Ignorance undermines the power of discrimination. Without discrimination Ahamkara (selfconceit) develops. Ahamkara breeds the twins: attachment and hatred. Attachment and hatred lead to the experience of kartha (the consequences of one's actions). Raga and Dwesha generate actions of various kinds. These actions, in their turn, are the cause of birth in a deha (body). It follows that the root cause of Janma (human birth) is Karma (action). When your actions are good, you obtain a good birth. Your birth is the result of your actions. The nature of one's birth determines one's attachments and aversions. The attachments of a good person (by birth) are to God and the godly way of life. He yearns for God, adores God and worships God.

Six forms of devotion

Such a person develops one or the other of six forms of devotion such as Santham (tranquillity), Sakhyam (friendship), Dasyam (service), Vatsalyam (maternal love), Anuragam (loving feeling) and Madhuram (ecstatic devotion). Bhishma, Arjuna, Hanuman, the Gopikas, Yasoda and Radha are examples of the different forms of Bhakti. Bhishma manifested devotion in the Santha form. Lying on a bed of arrows for 56 days, awaiting the advent of the auspicious moment for giving up the body, Bhishma devoted his thoughts to God with a serene sweetness and calm mind. Arjuna is the exemplar of Sakhya Bhakti. All his life he was devoted to Krishna, enjoying the relationship as brother-in-law, but always adoring Krishna as his divine mentor. Arjuna's devotion was based on kinship. Krishna, for the same reason, protected Arjuna as a kinsman. Hanuman's devotion to Rama exemplifies Dasya Bhakti (service as a form of devotion). Hanuman's only thought was to serve Rama

always, be near to him and wait for his commands. Once Rama called Hanuman and asked him: "Hanuman! How do you love me?" Hanuman replied: "In terms of the physical, I look upon you as my Lord and regard myself as your servant. In terms of the mind, you are the object and I am only your image. Spiritually, You are I and I am You. I am experiencing you in these ways. As long as I have the body consciousness, you are the Lord and I am your servant." This is the attitude that prevails in Dasya Bhakti. Anuraga Bhakti (loving devotion) is exemplified by the Gopikas. Whatever work they might be doing, their thoughts were centred on Krishna and they were always yearning for Him. When work is done in this way, it is transformed into worship. Every action is dedicated to the Divine and is performed as an offering to the Divine. With this attitude, the Gopikas were prepared for any kind of trials and tribulations from husbands and mothers-in-law. They worshipped Krishna without any feeling of rancour and bitterness against those who treated them harshly. Krishna was firmly implanted in their hearts. This is known as Anuraga Bhakti - the form of devotion in which the devotee is inseparably bound to the Lord in his heart. Yasoda exemplified Vatsalya Bhakti - loving the Lord as a mother loves a child. Despite the numerous miracles performed by Krishna and in spite of witnessing manifestations of his divinity in various ways, Yasoda regarded Krishna as her son and loved Him with maternal feelings. Even when Krishna showed to her all the fourteen worlds in His open mouth, Yasoda imagined that it was only her own imagination and Krishna was just a child. Even when Krishna was performing wonders in Mathura, Yasoda was worried about Him as any mother would and made anxious enquiries about her Gopala, when Uddhava came to Repalle. In worshipping Krishna, devotees have their own individual partiality for certain names. Meerabai always hailed Him as "Giridhara Gopala." Sakkubai always called Him "Ranga! Ranga!" Yasoda was attached to the name "Gopala." Radha is an example of Madhura Bhakti. Radha completely identified herself with Krishna. Her devotion to Krishna was on an inseparable relationship. The Radha-Krishna relationship is that of Prakruthi and Paramatma (of Nature and God).

Control of eyes and the tongue

In the journey to the Divine, man has to reduce progressively his desires, which are the cause of all his difficulties. It is true that man cannot exist without desires. But, they should be within reasonable limits. There can be no happiness without control of desires. Among the senses, two are most important: the eyes and the tongue. Because of their exceptional importance, the Lord has provided them with the means of restraining their activities. The Lord points out: "You silly man! Take note that I have provided natural means for closing the eyes and the mouth." If you do not want to see anything undesirable, you can close your eyes with the eyelids. The ears and the nose have no such devices for closing them. The mouth has lips which can seal the tongue. Observe, therefore, restraint in speech and control the tongue. Control your eyes. When you control your eyes and tongue, you can easily control all other senses. When the eyes roam freely, the tongue begins to wag without restraint. When the tongue is engaged in endless talking, the eyes want to look at every conceivable thing. When both these organs combine without restraint, life can become a calamity. Therefore, direct your eyes on good things alone.

Students should realise that only when they have control over what they see, what they hear and what they speak will they be able to live happy and meaningful lives. Observe moderation and sweetness in speech. Do not engage in purposeless and evil talk or in scandalous gossip.

The triple purity that pleases the Lord

There are three things which are immensely pleasing to the Lord: A tongue that never indulges in falsehood. A body that is not mired by causing harm to others. And a mind that is free from attachment and hatred. These three constitute the Thrikarana Suddhi (Triple Purity). Refrain from uttering falsehood, inflicting pain on others and entertaining ill-will towards others. Practise silence as a means of preventing the tongue from straying away from truth. The ancient sages practised and preached silence for this purpose. In the use of sense organs, there must be due regard for moderation and purity. This applies to food as well as to other things which you may take in.

Bliss is experienced in the desireless state

It is the mind that has to exercise control over the senses, which cannot function by themselves. The mind is present in three states of consciousness - the waking, the dreaming and the deep sleep states. But it is absent in the Karana (causal) state in which there is only experience of the Divine. This is the state of total desirelessness. It is only when desires cease that the mind stops functioning. Real bliss is experienced in that state. As long as the mind is active, there can be no escape from sorrow. To the extent the mind is under control, you can experience happiness. One way to reduce desires is to get absorbed in activity. Idleness encourages the mind to indulge in all kinds of thoughts. If you are intensely engaged in reading, singing, playing or any other activity, the mind will have no chance to wander hither and thither.

Detachment alone can give happiness. Thyaga is the real Yoga. Three evil qualities have to be renounced before man can rise to his real role. Anger which smothers Jnana (wisdom), lust which pollutes Karma (deed) and greed which destroys one's love for God and man. The touchstone which pronounces an act as meritorious is "renunciation." If an act is self-directed, if it helps to inflate the ego, it's a sin.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

10. The Rama Path

Date: 26 March 1988 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Rama Navami

See no evil, speak no evil, hear no evil: Bear in mind the image of the three monkeys Which impart this message. There is no wiser counsel than this. Studying thoroughly the Vedantic texts And becoming an expert in expounding them, Without cultivating good qualities, Can a person be a true human being at all? From days of yore, Bharath, by upholding spirituality and propagating the Divine message, has been the preceptor of mankind, promoting their well-being and setting a shining example to the world. "Let all the worlds be happy" has been the basic principle governing the Hindu way of life. The ancient rulers, sages, scholars and even women who were exemplars of chastity led lives of renunciation and sacrifice to uphold the Dharmic culture and heritage of the country. The Ramayana story illustrates the greatness and sacredness of this culture. The Ramayana is not merely a story of Rama. Rama + Ayana is Ramayana. Ayana means Path. The inner meaning of Ramayana is that the path shown by Rama should be followed. From the moment of birth man is engaged in a variety of activities for preserving his way of life and achieving his goals. At birth, man, as a child has no bad qualities and is wholly innocent. But as time passes, because of the type of food he consumes and the changes in his. lifestyle, and the kind of association he develops, his dress and manners undergo changes. Along with these, he develops likes and dislikes. After getting "educated," he develops ego and pride, passion and other bad qualities from head to foot. They acquire a strong hold over him.

Man becomes a slave of his desires

As a consequence, he starts deluding himself that he is all-knowing and that there is none other greater than him. Filled with the arrogance of youth, he looks with contempt on others. If man, however, seeks to live as a human being, he has to face many difficulties and vicissitudes in life. He has to overcome the obstacles and impediments he faces. Today man appears to relish only pleasures derived from the senses. Every man is filled with various

desires. As he grows, the surging vigour of manhood makes him headstrong. He fails to realise the true purpose of education. He develops ambition to become a great scholar, singer, actor or businessman. He is caught up in the bewildering maze of desires. As a result, despite his inherent divinity, he becomes a slave of his impure desires and forgets his true human worth. While birds and animals are content to live on whatever they can get, man alone has insatiable desires and is filled with greed. There should be a limit to one's acquisitiveness and desires. Excess of anything is harmful and should be avoided. The principle message of the Ramayana is that there should be rigorous control over desires. Human life should be sanctified by control of the senses, regulation of the mind and utilisation of the intellect.

The example of Lakshmana

Every notable character in Ramayana stands out as an ideal for the world. All of them are embodiments of Dharma. Consider the example of Lakshmana. Valmiki has described Lakshmana in many ways. He has called him "Rama's other self." In the Kamba Ramayana, Lakshmana is described as the "second virtue of Rama." Tulasidas characterises Lakshmana as "Rama's right hand." Rama and Lakshmana were associated inseparably as "Bimba and Pratimba" - one was just the reflection of the other. In his great quality, his immaculate purity and spirit of sacrifice, Lakshmana is his own example. In accordance with his father's commandment, Rama had to go to the forest. Lakshmana was under no such compulsion. Making the supreme sacrifice of his own accord, he elected to accompany Rama. Ayanam (Rama's path) was the apple of his nayanam (eye). Hence Lakshmana had a key role in Ramayana (Ramayana). Leaving his mother, forsaking his wife and rejecting royal pleasures, Lakshmana chose to follow Rama as the be-all and the end-all of his life. By his sterling quality and exemplary character, Lakshmana stands out as an ideal to the world.

In the forest while Rama and Lakshmana were going in search of Sita, they came to the Rishyamooka mountain. There they made friends with Sugriva and Hanuman. A bag containing ornaments was given to Rama by Sugriva, who told Rama that the bag was dropped by a woman who was going in an

aerial chariot. Rama handed the ornaments to Lakshmana and asked him whether he could identify any of Sita's ornaments amongst them. Lakshmana said: "I cannot recognise the bangles. Nor can I recognise the head ornaments in this bunch. I can recognise only the anklets among these jewels. They are the ones worn by Sita. I can recognise them because everyday I had been prostrating at her feet for years."

Lakshmana revered Sita as a mother

Rama lived in Ayodhya for twelve years after his marriage. After that, Rama, Lakshmana and Sita spent 13 years in the forest. During all the 25 years he had been with Rama, Lakshmana had not looked at Sita's face even once. Nowhere in history can you find an example of one with the character of Lakshmana. He revered every woman as a mother. Rama directed Lakshmana to leave Sita in a forest near some sage's ashram. Sita was pregnant at that time. When Lakshmana was about to leave, Sita said to him: "Lakshmana! It may be fitting for Rama to send me to the forest to appease public opinion. The duty of a king is to protect his subjects and be an ideal ruler to them. Eschewing completely all ideas of "mine" and "thine," the ruler should be concerned solely for the well-being of the people. Sri Rama's reputation is the source of my joy. I do not grieve because he has sent me away. Rama's glory and fame should be everlasting. But, you, who are my brother-in-law, how can you agree to abandon me in this forest? Pregnant as I am, how can you have the heart to leave me alone in this wilderness? Please stay with me at least for some time and then you may go."

Lakshmana's devotion to Rama and Sita

Lakshmana replied: "Revered mother! All these years I have not even seen your face. In spite of the complete innocence and purity of your character, you have been the victim of calumny by thoughtless people. If now I were to stay with you, your good name will be subject to reproach. In these circumstances I am prepared even to give up my life for you, but I cannot suffer your reputation being sullied in any way. Moreover, I have to carry out Rama's orders. Rama means everything to me. I cannot live for a moment

going against the commands of Rama. Therefore, Oh mother! forgive me and allow me to return." He prostrated at Sita's feet and entreated her to let him go.

In this manner, Lakshmana dedicated his entire life to upholding the glory of Rama and Sita. He thereby demonstrated to the world his own great qualities. Now, look at Bharatha. Refusing to accept the kingship that was offered to him, looking upon Rama as the only fit person to rule the kingdom. Bharatha set out for the forest to meet Rama and persuade him to return to Ayodhya.

Nature of Dharma

Both Lakshmana and Bharatha dedicated all that was theirs to the Divine. They had no trace of selfishness or self-interest in them. They adhered to Rama's path of Dharma (Rama-ayana). As all the brothers followed the path laid down by Rama, the Ramayana vindicates its title. "Ramo Vighrahan Dharmah" (Rama is the very embodiment of righteousness,) says Valmiki. What is Dharma? Today all kinds of worldly Dharmas are proliferating. When we try to find out what is Vaidik Dharma (Dharma according to Vedas), there are confusing and conflicting opinions. "Dharayiti iti Dharmah," it is said. (Dharma is that which sustains the world, that which upholds the world.) Every object in the world has got certain unique qualities. The quality that is the vital essence of the object reveals its Dharma. For instance, it is the basic quality of fire to burn - burning is its Dharma. When the fire loses its capacity to burn, it ceases to be fire and becomes mere charcoal. Sweetness is the inherent quality of sugar. If sugar loses its sweetness, it is no longer sugar but sand. The Champaka flower has the natural quality of exuding fragrance. If there is no fragrance in it, it is not Champaka. In the same manner, for man the quality of Ananda that flows from his heart is his inherent Dharma. But man today, for the sake of external achievements, forgets this inherent nature. For all, whether they are educated or not, there is one common Dharma: They should extend to others the same honour and regard which they expect others to show towards them so that they may feel happy. We should not do to others anything which if others do to us will cause pain and unhappiness to us.

Do unto others as others do unto you

This means that we should not cause harm to others because we do not want them to do harm to us. This is the natural Dharma which is relevant to all people in worldly life. Not everybody can understand or follow Vaidik Dharma (Laws of Eternal Religion). Hence, in our ordinary daily life, the simple principle to be adhered to is do unto others as you would like others to do unto you.

However, what we notice among most people today is rampant selfishness and self-centredness. While they want to be respected and honoured by others, they will themselves show no respect or regard to others. Dharma is not a one-way traffic. It calls for "give and take." Today the spirit of sacrifice is absent among people. The foremost lesson of the Ramayana is readiness for sacrifice. It is only through thyaga (renunciation or sacrifice) that one attains Yoga (oneness with Divinity). The Ramayana proclaims the ideal of sacrifice. Obeying the commands of his father, renouncing the kingship and wearing the bark of the tree, Rama went to the forest as an exile. He was complying with what he regarded as Ajna (divine command). He demonstrated to the world what adherence to truth means.

Dangers of disobedience of divine command

Ajna is a great injunction. If it is disobeyed, there will be no joy. Transgression of Ajna leads to many hardships and difficulties. (There are episodes in the Ramayana which point out the serious consequences of disobeying the Ajna). Before leaving the hermitage in search of the golden deer (Maricha in disguise), Rama issued a stern order to Lakshmana not to leave the hermitage in any circumstance or any situation. Rama told him that whatever difficulties or pressure he might have to face, under no condition should he leave Sita alone. This was Rama's command to Lakshmana. But Lakshmana, because he was subject to some extent to ordinary mortal failings, became weak in his resolution. When Sita heard the cry, "Ha! Sita! Ha! Lakshmana!" uttered by Maricha by a voice resembling Rama's, she urged Lakshmana to

go immediately to the rescue of Rama. However much Lakshmana pleaded that according to the orders of Rama, he could not leave her alone, she used the harshest words to compel Lakshmana to go. Sita's words deeply pained him. Unable to bear her harsh words, violating Rama's instructions, Lakshmana left Sita and set out in search of Rama. The subsequent tragic developments - the carrying away of Sita by Ravana and all the troubles that had to be gone through to find and recover Sita - all these caused deep anguish to Lakshmana. He lamented: "Is it not because I transgressed Rama's orders that these troubles overtook Sita and us?" All his life Lakshmana was distraught by these thoughts. He often felt: "This was the only occasion in my life that I had acted against Rama's orders." But, there came another occasion when he was faced with a cruel dilemma: whether to adhere to or act against Rama's orders.

Lakshmana's second transgression

When Rama was on his way back to Ayodhya, the Lord of Time, Yama, came to Rama. While conversing with Yama, Rama had issued a strict order to Lakshmana not to allow anyone inside during his talks with Yama. Rama said if he allowed anyone, he (Lakshmana) would lose his head.

Lakshmana was a courageous and resolute person. He was guarding the door scrupulously. At that time, the sage Durvasa arrived there. He told Lakshmana: "I have to go in urgently for a talk with Rama." Lakshmana firmly refused to let him in. Enraged at Lakshmana's stand, Durvasa angrily declared: "I will utter a curse on Ayodhya. I will destroy your entire dynasty by my curse. Beware, Oh! Lakshmana!" Lakshmana was shaken by the irate sage's threat. He was caught in a profound moral dilemma. "If I let the sage in, my head will be cut off. If I do not let him in, not only the city of Ayodhya but my whole race will be ruined by the sage's curses." Lakshmana could not reconcile himself to the destruction of Raghuvamsa (his dynasty). Nor could he suffer the prospect of the people of Ayodhya being destroyed. He resolved the dilemma in this way. "By disobeying Rama's orders I shall be losing only my head. But, thereby I shall be saving my dynasty and the people of Ayodhya." Coming to this decision, he allowed Durvasa to go in. Lakshmana

felt: "It will be a supreme good fortune to have my head cut off at Rama's hands. I will be the only sufferer. If I do not yield to this sage, my entire race will be wiped out." Lakshmana thus deeply considered the pros and cons of his decision and chose to sacrifice himself rather than allow others to suffer.

Code of duties

The Ramayana is full of such illustrious and exemplary characters. Unfortunately today those who discourse on the Ramayana, indulge in all sorts of interpretations. The Ramayana is a great text which indicates what should be the ideal relations between brothers, how the members of a family should earn the love of parents, what should be the ideal relations between husband and wife and what are the duties of any specific person in any specific situation. Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrugna adhered to the Ramapath and lived strictly according to his injunctions. Their example should be followed by every family in the country. Sita was prepared to face any trouble and make any sacrifice for the sake of her husband. She sought no comfort for herself. She dedicated her life to the service of Rama.

Consequences of lust, hatred and greed

The Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Bhagavatha are three monumental works which point out the disastrous consequences which result when one is a victim of Kama (lust) or Lobha (greed) or Krodha (hatred). In the Ramayana, Ravana exemplifies lust. The entire Ramayana story happened because of Ravana's lust. Rama's advent as Avatar was for the purpose of destroying Ravana.

In the Bhagavatha, Hiranyakasipu is the personification of hatred - hatred towards Hari. He went about asking: "Where is that Hari? There can be none greater than myself." Because of this hatred for Hari, the Lord appeared in the form of Narasimha (Man-Lion) to destroy Hiranyakasipu. The Lord vanquished the demon of hatred. In the Mahabharata, Duryodhana symbolises greed. As a result of his greed his entire clan was destroyed.

Ravana, Hiranyakasipu and Duryodhana are examples of the disastrous consequences of lust, hatred and greed. Besides containing these warnings, the Ramayana, the Bhagavatha and the Mahabharata indicate what is Dharma and how it is to be honoured and adhered to. Duryodhana, whose avarice knew no bounds, went to his mother, Gandhari, on the eve of the Kurukshetra battle, to seek her blessings. In keeping with the ideals of mothers in those days, Gandhari told Duryodhana: "Yatho Dharmah, Thatho Jayah" (Where there is righteousness, there is victory). She did not wish victory for her son. Duryodhana then went to his preceptor Dronacharya and prostrated before him. Dronacharya told him: "Yatho Dharmah, thatho Krishnah: Yatho Krishnah Thatho Jayah." (Where there is Dharma, there is Krishna. Where there is Krishna, there is victory). The same message is contained in the last sloka of the Bhagavad Gita: "Yathra Yogeswarah- Krishna Yathra Partho Dhanurdharah Thathra Sri Vijayobhutih Dhruvaneethih mathih Mama" (Where there is the Supreme Lord of Yoga, Sri Krishna and where there is the mighty archer, Arjuna, there are to be found all prosperity, success and justice). The Ramayana relates how before leaving for the forest, Rama went to Kausalya to seek her blessings. Kausalya told Rama: "Your Dharma will protect you during your exile in the forest."

Sumitra's illustriousness as a noble mother

Lakshmana prostrated before his mother Sumitra. The noble lady told her son: "Only the place where Rama is not is the forest. The forest in which Rama stays will be your Ayodhya. Without Rama in Ayodhya, we will be living in wilderness. Redeem your life to the service of Rama." Because there were such illustrious mothers, fathers and preceptors in those days, the Upanishads could exhort the people to revere the mother as God, the father as God and the Guru as God and the guest as God.

The life stories of Rama and Krishna are indeed treatises on righteousness. They are sacred works. They taught mankind how to sublimate human life. The message is clear: adhering to Truth, practising Righteousness, spreading Love everywhere, remaining ever peaceful, life should be sanctified.

This day should not be celebrated merely as the anniversary of Rama's birth. The day we install in our hearts the path laid down by Rama is the real birthday of Rama. Celebrating of holy days should not mean having a good feast on those days. We should seek to make the teachings, of the Avatars concerned, a part of our lives. We should follow the path laid down by them. Only then, celebration has any meaning. Our lives also get sanctified. All studies, recitations and listening to discourses are of no value if practice does not follow precept.

Only those who sacrifice all can enter heaven

Once three persons reached the gates of Swarga (heaven). One of them declared that he was the master of all scriptures and therefore the gates should be opened to let him in. The guardians of the gate said: "You are familiar only with the texts. You have no practical experience. You may leave." The second man said: "I have performed many Yagas and Yajnas" (sacrificial rites and rituals). The guardians told him: "You have performed the sacrifices for selfish aims. You have no place here." The third person, a farmer, neared the gates and said: "I am a poor farmer, owning a hut on two acres of land. I have been offering food and drink to passers-by and giving them shelter when necessary. I have shared with them whatever little I had. This is all the sadhana I have been able to practice." The guardians said: "You may enter." The story illustrates the truth that only those who are prepared to sacrifice what little they have for relieving others in need, are entitled to enter heaven. Many have read a great deal and listened to innumerable discourses. What effect have these had on them? Has there been any change in their lives? If they examined their lives, they will find that the answer is negative. While listening to a discourse they may be inclined towards renunciation. They welcome the teaching. But after a few moments, they return to their original selves. Hence, the first requisite is a change in mental attitude. Without a change in the mind, other changes in a man are of no use. It is one's qualities that should be transformed, not the attire he wears. Ramayana conveys a great message. It is a compendium of qualities such as Thyaga (renunciation), Daya (compassion), Karuna (kindness), Sahana (forbearance), Sanubhuthi (empathy).

Body is the result of Karma

Man today is bound by seven types of bondage: 1. Deha (Body); 2. Karma (action); 3. Raga (attachment); 4. Dwesha (hatred); 5. Ahamkara (ego); 6. Aviveka (foolishness); 7. Ajnana (ignorance). These are the seven bonds that bind man. Wherefrom has ignorance emanated? It is the product of Aviveka (lack of discrimination). Aviveka is the outcome of Ahamkara. Hatred is the cause of ego. Attachment gives rise to hatred. Attachment arises from action. The body is the result of Karma. In this chain of causes and effects, the starting point is Karma and the culmination is in ignorance. How is ignorance to be removed? Ignorance is like darkness. Any amount of struggle with darkness will not serve to remove it. But the moment a lamp is lit, the darkness will disappear. For dispelling human ignorance the lamp that is needed is the Divine name.

Today, to acquire Jnana (the Higher Wisdom) you have to have recourse to the Name of God. In the Kali Yuga two things are most important. Nama and Dhana (Divine Name and Charity): Annadhanam (the gift of food) and Harinamam (chanting the name of Lord Hari). These are the primary requisites. If you have these two basic qualities, they will serve as two wings to take you to heaven.

I desire that you should all cultivate a spirit of sacrifice and render to your fellowmen whatever little help you can give and with this I bless you all.

Do not blame the Lord for your ignorance or foolishness or perversity. Just as underground water wells up in a gushy stream when a bore is sunk down to the depth, by constant Ram, Ram, Ram, Ram, touch the spring of Divinity and one day it will gush out in cool plenty and bring unending joy.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba



11. Seek Ye First

Date: **16 April 1988** / Location: **Ooty** / Occasion: **Discourse to the students of the Sathya Sai Institute at Nandanavanam**

All worldly pleasures are transient and temporary. Very often they result in sorrow and disappointment. God alone is the source of enduring bliss. The purpose of human birth is to realise the inherent divinity in man.

Once a great Maharaja (ruler) held a big exhibition of paintings and art products. The finest works of art were on display. The exhibition was open to one and all. The Maharaja announced that anyone could walk in and take away whatever one liked. Large numbers of men and women went to the exhibition and took back with them whatever they fancied. Among them was a lady. She saw everything in the exhibition. She came out through the main door without taking anything with her. The Maharaja noticed that of all the persons visiting the exhibition she was the only one to come out empty-handed. He was curious to know what the reason for this was. He asked the lady: "Madam, how is it you have found nothing to interest you in the exhibition? There are so many attractive things on display. Was there nothing that pleased you?" She replied: "There are innumerable desirable things in the exhibition." The Maharaja asked: "But was there nothing which you wanted?" "No," she said. The Maharaja said: "If that is so, tell me what you desire and I shall give it to you." She said: "Maharaja, will you promise to give me what I want? Is your offer genuine? Will you keep your word?" "Certainly," replied the Maharaja. "If that is so, I want only you," said the lady. True to his word the Maharaja surrendered himself to her. When the Maharaja himself became hers, all that was in the exhibition also became hers.

The whole Universe can become yours

This cosmos is a vast exhibition. It is the creation of the Lord. All are entering this exhibition and taking whatever they choose. Some seek jobs, others wealth and so on. They are content to take objects of their choice.

But no one asks the question: "Swami! If I take away one thing or another, what is it that I gain? If You become mine all these will become mine." When you have entered the Cosmic exhibition, you must seek the Divine. Then, the whole universe becomes yours. You must seek that which is lasting and unchanging. There is no meaning in going after one thing after another. There is no end to that process. There is no satisfaction in that. What you acquire today, loses its charm the next day and you desire something new. But once the Divine is attained, all things are obtained. In the cosmic exhibition, you are seeing, hearing and experiencing innumerable things. You experience depression, confusion and disappointment. You have no contentment.

Asantruptonijo nashtah.

Lack of contentment is the true loss.

The man who is not content is continually experiencing loss. There is no limit to desires. One feels hungry, another is thirsty. If the thirsty man is offered water, he is not satisfied, he wants a cool drink. When he is given a cool drink, he is not satisfied, he wants ice cream. And so on. He is not satisfied with anything. There is no end to desires for material things in the world. To get rid of these desires, man must turn his mind towards God. That is the way to achieve contentment and lasting bliss.

Many people think of God only when grief overtakes them; ofcourse, it is good to do so; it is better than seeking the help of those who are equally liable to grief. But, it is infinitely better to think of God in grief and in joy, in peace and strife, in all weathers. The proof of the rain is in the wetness of the ground, the proof of Bhakti is the Shanthi the Bhakta has - Shanthi that protects him against the onslaughts of success as well as failure, fame and dishonour, gain and loss.

- *Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

12. Brahmacharya

Date: 23 April 1988 / Location: Kodaikanal

The edifice of life is a four-storied mansion. In this mansion the ground floor is most important one. The upper three storeys are based upon this. It is known as Brahmacharya (continence or celibacy). In everyone's life childhood and youth are extremely important. This period of life should be regulated by practising purity and tranquillity. Brahmacharya means leading a life of pure thoughts, pure actions and pure aspirations. Unfortunately today people tend to regard Brahmacharya as living somehow in an unmarried state. The term Brahmacharya carries within it its sacred import. Brahma-charya means whatever thoughts we entertain, whatever actions we perform, whatever enterprises we undertake, they should all be filled with the consciousness Brahman (the Supreme Omnipresent Divine). Conducting ourselves with the awareness that the Divine is present everywhere is "Brahmacharya."

Brahmacharya is present in all four stages

The basic characteristic of Brahmacharya is that one should be full of pure thoughts, all one's actions should be sacred and one should be engaged in selfless service. Brahmacharya is not confined to the early years of one's boyhood and adolescence. Brahmacharya is a state that is implied in all the three other stages of life also (Grihastha, Vanaprastha and Sanyasa). The base is Brahmacharya. The second stage or storey is that of Grihastha (the householder). The third is Vanaprastha (retirement to the forest). The fourth is Sanyasa (complete renunciation of all attachments). Brahmacharya is present in all three other stages like an undercurrent: Brahmacharya in the Brahmacharya state, Brahmacharya in the Grihastha state, Brahmacharya in the Vanaprastha and Brahmacharya in the Sanyasa states. In all four states, Brahmacharya is immanent in equal measure. It signifies purity in all the states. Only when there is purity, Brahmacharya has any meaning. Manava (Man) means one who is pure. Man means one who is noteworthy. It also means one who has faith. These are the various meanings of the Sanskrit word Manava. Delving into the meaning of the word Manava further, it will be

noted that it consists of two terms: Ma (ever) and Nava (new) - that which is ever new, that which is always fresh. In this freshness there is pavitrata (purity or sanctity). Hence, in this sacred human birth, to lead a life filled with pure thoughts and pure actions is characterised as Brahmacharya. So the real meaning of Brahmacharya is not confined to the corporeal discipline of celibacy attached to it in the physical sense, but it implies recognition of the Divinity inherent in man and leading a life based on that recognition. Therefore, for the life of the householder, the recluse and the renunciant, Brahmacharya is the foundation.

The foundation of a student's life is purity

The period of a student's life is a crucial stage in life. All the three other stages are based upon one's life as a vidyarthi (student). Whatever purity or sanctity you develop during your student days will determine the degree of purity in the other three stages. Life as a student is thus a foundation for the rest of one's life. Hence a strong foundation must be laid for the ground floor. If the ground floor is weak and gives away, the whole edifice will collapse. Hence, the entire human existence should be sanctified by observing Brahmacharya. This implies that, by practising purity and recognising the omnipresent Divinity, one should regulate one's daily life by spreading purity and sacredness everywhere. Purity of mind, purity of Chittha (consciousness), purity of the heart and purity in action - this fourfold purity constitutes Brahmacharya. Whatever you do, you must act with the same sense that it is an offering to the Divine. This is the real significance of Brahmacharya. Food is the primary requisite for life. Without food one cannot live. Hence life has been described as Annamaya (composed of food). But man is not content to live on food alone. The mind is not satisfied if the stomach is full. Although food is essential for the body, the mind craves for Ananda (bliss). Life can find fulfilment only if Ananda is experienced. Hence, man cannot rest content with merely being alive. He has to be active and ever on the move. In the process he has to ask himself the questions 'Why am I restless? Why am I active? What do I do to engage myself in actions? When the right answers are found for all these questions, all actions become sacred.

The heart should be filled with sacred feelings

"What for am I performing these actions? How am I doing them? What is the sanctity attaching to them?" It is when one enquires into these matters, he will realise their true purpose and meaning. This enquiry has to be conducted in the proper way. He should ask himself whether the enquiry is purposeful or futile. Once he comes to the conclusion that a certain action is right, he should do it with earnestness. Brahmacharya is the primary requisite for developing pure thoughts and performing pure actions. Moreover, in practising Brahmacharya, it is essential to cultivate sacred thoughts. The heart should be filled with sacred feelings. You must eschew from your mind any thought of causing harm to anyone. Only then, the life that starts with Annamaya (food-filled) will culminate in Anandamaya (a blissful life). Man should not consider that happiness consists in having a house full of children and equipped with all the amenities for comfortable living. Nor can peace be realised through wealth, power or position. Peace is the outcome of our actions and thoughts. If our thoughts are pure, our actions will also be pure. When actions are pure, life itself becomes holy.

Concentrate on your duty in the present

The primary reason for the lack of peace in the world today is that the thoughts and conduct of people have gone astray. The first step, therefore, is to make our thoughts pure. We need not bother about the past or the future. Concentrate your attention on your duty in the present. Dedicate all your energies to the fulfilment of this duty. This was the basis on which our ancients directed their lives, according to the injunctions of the Vedas and the Sastras. Today there is a wide gulf between the lives led by our ancients and the prevailing modes of living. What is the reason for this difference?

Admittedly, food is essential. But there is scarcity of food today. What is the reason for this shortage? The fact is people have given up the practice of Yagas and Yajnas (sacrificial rites and rituals) which used to be performed in the past. Yajna is not merely sitting in front of a fire and uttering some mantras. Yajna really means the spirit of sacrifice or thyaga (renunciation).

Today this spirit is totally absent. Indeed, the desire for bhoga (enjoyment) has grown limitlessly. Because of this, the fascination for external objects has developed, leading to the forgetting of one's true nature. As a result, man has become prey to the numerous sufferings. Divinity is ever present in man in all its purity. But man is unable to recognise this because of his attachments to transient pleasures like the black bee. This bee has a proboscis with which it can bore a hole through a strong bamboo or even through the human body. But when it enters a lotus flower and the lotus folds itself, the bee is unable to get out of its tender petals because it is immersed in the enjoyment of the honey in the lotus and forgets its own real strength. Likewise, man today, forgetting the Divine that is present within him and in everything he beholds, immersed in worldly concerns and intoxicated with mundane pleasures, is oblivious to his own true Divine nature. Man forgets his inherent capacity in the involvement with the mastery of the external world.

Do not ever give up faith in Divinity

The youth of today must get away from these involvements and develop confidence in their true selves. Whatever difficulties they may confront, whatever obstacles may come in their way, they should regard them as passing clouds. Nothing in the world is permanent. Only one thing is permanent and unchanging. That is the Divine. Install firmly in the minds the Divine and regard it as the only permanent entity that can confer enduring bliss. All others - whether they be relations, friends or possessions - cannot give you lasting bliss. One of the students had spoken about how in one year both his parents had passed away, leaving eight children, of whom he was the eldest. In this tragic situation, Swami alone could offer solace and courage to the bereaved children. From that time to this day Swami had been looking after the children who looked up to Swami as "Sai Mother" and "Sai Father." No kith or kin could have looked after them in this manner. The Divine does not give up anyone who has faith and trust in the Divine. Difficulties may come in succession like mountains, but they will disappear like snow if Divine grace is there. What is required is firm faith in God. Strengthen your faith in the Divine.

Another devotee (an American businessman) was once faced with such difficulties that he wanted to wind up his business. But Swami advised him not to do so. Because of his past experiences with Swami, he had firm faith in Him and carried on his business. He was able to get over his difficulties. No one has suffered in this world who has had firm faith in God. Many have come to grief because of lack of faith.

Disbelief in divine affirmations

Today you believe in what you see in the films or what you read in the newspapers or novels. You believe in what you see in a play or what is said in an almanac. But you have no faith in the Divine pronouncements of the Vedas: Thath Thwam Asi (That thou art), Ayam Atma Brahma (This Atma is verily Brahman), Aham Brahmasmi (I am Brahman). Prajnanam Brahma (The Constant Integrated Consciousness in man is Brahman). People have no faith in these Mahavakyas (Divine affirmations), but are easily misled by the meretricious declarations of worldly men. This is the lamentable degraded plight of man today. The mason is man has abjured faith in God. He has become a victim of faith in wordly things. The first requisite is for men to develop faith in God. This is even more essential for the youth. Whatever plans you may draw up for the future, base them on faith in God. They should be righteous. You will then achieve success.

13. The Scientist and The Saint

Date: 06 May 1988 / Occasion: Easwaramma Day

The word Manava (man) has several meanings. One of them is that man has an ancient origin. Ma meaning "not," and nava meaning "new" indicate that man is "not new." He has had a long past. Another meaning of the word is "one who lives without ignorance" (Ma - ignorance; Na - without; Va - lives). The reason for this is the fact that in man there is a sacred principle composed of the five basic elements (ether, air, fire, water and earth). If we examine the nature of the human state from the scientific point of view, it is found that the tissues of the human body are composed of the four elements: hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen and carbon. The unified expression of these four elements is the human condition. Ignoring this unity, scientists today are seeking to explore the nature of matter by breaking up the Love principle. "The Spirit of Love is Spirituality." "Splitting of Love is Science." Scientists are exploring matter by dividing Love. They are unaware of the nature of Love. They are ignorant of Purity. Scientists are imbued only with a sense of enquiry into matter. Consequently, today there is a complete divorce between science and spirituality.

Matter and energy are not separate

Scientists are not examining the relationship between matter and energy in the correct way. Scientists hold the view that matter is convertible into energy and vice versa. But, in fact, the two are not separate. They are inseparably interlinked and interdependent. The attempts to divide matter and energy have given rise to many doubts and confusions. What is the new discovery that scientists have made today? All their discoveries are of what already existed. Take, for instance, gravity. Gravity has existed from the beginning of creation. Newton sought to find out the laws governing gravitation. He did not discover the phenomenon anew. He only found out what already existed. That the earth had gravitational attraction was known even before Newton investigated it. Likewise, matter and energy have existed from the time of creation. Both are comprehended by the mind only. When

the mind functions in relation to the Divine it acquires the form of energy. When the mind is turned towards Prakruthi (Nature), the latter assumes the form of matter. Mind is the cause of experiencing joy or sorrow and for comprehending matter and energy. Recognising this quality of the mind, the sages declared: "The mind is the cause of liberation or bondage for humanity." There are two concepts - Drishti (seeing) and Drishyam (that which is seen). It is because of the power of sight that we are able to see the visible objects. It is because the objects are there, we are able to see them. There is thus an inextricable relationship between seeing and what is seen. Today, it is because we separate seeing from the things seen that sorrow arises. Seeing and that which is seen should become one.

The One in the many

What is pavithram (purity)? This has been characterised as Shakthi (energy, power). Purity has been described as the state of desirelessness in man. When there are desires, sorrow also dogs them like a shadow. When there is sorrow there can be no purity. The mind is the cause of both desires and purity.

The Vedas have declared: "I am One; I shall become many." It is the One that has become the many. This is the unity that underlies the diversity. In this context, these concepts have to be understood: Sajatheeyam, Vijatheeyam and Swa-gathabhedham. Sajatheeyam: Although human beings differ in form and characteristics in various respects, they belong to the human species. Sajatheeyam refers to the oneness of the species. In terms of the human body, every human being has one thing in common regardless of other differences. Differences of race, religion, caste, language or community do not affect oneness of humanity. This is sajatheeyam - -belonging to the same species. Whether one is an American, a Chinese or an Indian, he is a human being. Vijatheeyam relates to differences between species. For instance, there is nothing in common with a human being and a tree. The tree does not belong to the same species as man. There may be innumerable varieties among trees. But all of them belong to the vegetable kingdom. There are differences between the human species and the species of trees. These

differences are covered by the term Vijatheeyam (differentiation among species). Swagathabhedam: This term relates to functional differentiation. For instance man has hands, legs, ears, eyes, mouth and other organs all in the same body. Blood is the same. The heart is one only. But each organ discharges only its specific function. The eyes can only see, but cannot hear. The ears can only hear but cannot see. The body is one but each organ and limb performs only its particular function. This functional differentiation is called Swagathabhedam.

Power of the Divine is indeterminable

Scientists today are accomplishing any number of things. But they are unable to recognise the divine potency that exists in the human being. Here is an example. The earth is one. When a lemon seed is planted, the fruit that comes from the lemon plant tastes sour. If a mango seed is planted and a tree grows from it, the fruit of that tree tastes very sweet. If a neem seed is planted, the fruit from the neem tree is bitter in taste. The soil is the same; but the fruits from the different trees have different tastes. Likewise, although all human beings are made up of the same elements, hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen and carbon, individuals vary in their mental and other qualities. What is the reason for these innumerable differences? What is the force that is behind these genetic differences? How do the scientists account for them? When they are able to understand the reason for these infinite differences, the scientists will achieve fullness in their knowledge. The truth is, no one can determine the magnitude or range of the powers of the Divine.

Science is partial, spirituality is wholistic

The fundamental difference between science and spirituality is this: Science is concerned with investigating the external phenomenal universe. Spirituality is engaged in exploring the inner workings of the Divine. The scientist is one who has an external vision. The one who has an internal vision is a saint.

Here is an example of the difference between scientific truth and spiritual truth. If you draw the figure of a circle, that which ends wherefrom it started

in the full circle has been described as Poornam (the full or the whole). "Poornam adah, Poornam idam, Poornath Poornam udachyathe. Poornasya Poornam andaya Poornameva avasishyathe." (That is Full. This is Full. When the Full is taken out from the Full, the Full still remains.) The Full Circle represents spirituality. For in it the end and the beginning are the same. Spirituality knows no difference between beginning and end. The very term Adhyatma means that which has no beginning or end.

To understand what is science, you cut the full circle into two halves. The left half is a semicircle which resembles the English letter "C." "C" is science, that is, it begins at one point and ends at another. Between these two points there is a big gap, which is called agamyagocharam. It is beyond reach, invisible and incomprehensible.

Matter is creation, Spirit is Creator

Matter and Spirit may be regarded as two semicircles. Scientists are only investigating matter and are ignoring the Spirit. The two parts have been described in Vedantic parlance as Prakruthi and Paramatma.

The scientist is the one who enquires into the nature of srishti (creation). The saint is one who seeks to know the Creator. The scientist is preoccupied only with studying creation. What about the Creator? Once you understand the Creator, you can understand the whole of creation. That was why Saint Thyagaraja said: "Rama, If I have your anugraha (grace) all the grahas (planets) will be within my grasp." Therefore, if you comprehend the Creator, you can easily know all about creation.

Creation (the phenomenal universe) is within the comprehension of the senses. All that we hear, see and experience are within the purview of our senses. We refer to all these things as "this," "this" and "this" (Idam). But what is beyond the senses is referred to as "that." "Poornam adah Poornam idam" (That is Full; This is Full). The term "That" refers to something which is distant. From what is "That" distant? From what is "This" near? We use the term "This" to refer to things which are within the purview of the senses;

"That" refers to what is beyond the senses. So, what is beyond the senses has been called Adhyatmic (spiritual). What is below the senses has been called Bhouthik (elemental, constituted by the five elements). We are simultaneously below the senses and above the senses. Below the senses is the body. Beyond the senses is the Hridaya (the spiritual heart). The eternal Hridaya is encased within the perishable body. It is like keeping valuable jewels in a relatively cheap iron safe. Divinity is the valuable treasure kept in the iron safe of the body. This indicates our true form.

Bend the body, mend the senses, end the mind

If you wish to understand your true nature, you have to do three things: Bend the body, mend the senses, end the mind. The first step is to "bend the body." That means, you should not allow the ego to develop within your body. Cultivate humility and do your duties sincerely. This is what is implied in "bend your body." "Mend the senses" calls for examining how the senses behave, whether they are tending to go astray, and correcting and restraining them when necessary. "End the mind" calls for quietening the vagaries of the mind. How is this to be done? It is by turning the mind in a different direction. For example, there is a lock and key. When the key is turned towards the left, the lock gets locked. If the key is turned towards the right the lock is opened. Thus the key performs both functions of locking and unlocking.

End the mind by turning Godward

In man, the heart is the lock. The mind is the key. When the mind is turned Godward the heart develops detachment. When the mind is turned towards the world, the heart develops attachment. Thus both detachment and attachment result from the way the mind functions. When the mind is directed towards Prakruthi (Nature or the phenomenal world), bondage ensues. When you turn your mind towards Divinity, you experience Ananda (bliss). "End the mind" means turning the mind Godward. All you have to do is to dedicate every action of yours to the Divine. Then everything becomes easy and a source of bliss. Science can offer you only temporary worldly comforts. Spirituality alone can give you enduring bliss. All the amenities

which provide temporary comfort also give rise to unhappiness. A person may be sitting in an air-conditioned room. But his mind is filled with anxiety and worry. His brain is heated. One who has peace of mind will experience no discomfort even if he is in a forest. Peace, therefore cannot be got through science. In fact, science and technology today are leading man away from peace. Is any scientist enjoying peace of mind? No. He is leading an utterly artificial life. He is filled with worries. His mind knows no rest. All the ills of man today are due to the fact that his mind is never restful and quiet. The mind is preoccupied with worries. Even an inanimate machine needs some period of rest. But no rest is given to the mind.

If we desire peace for the individual, for the society and for the nation, it can only be achieved through spiritual means. Hence, recognising the truth, without attaching excessive importance to worldly comforts, we must make every effort to acquire peace of mind. No doubt physical comforts are necessary up to a point. But they should be limited to meeting the basic demands of nature. For instance man requires sleep. Similarly peace of mind should be got through natural means. The spiritual path is the only way to achieve "the peace that passeth understanding."

14. Conquest Of Desire

Date: 29 May 1988 / Location: Brindavan

Do not go after wealth and possession, Oh Man! With good sense, control your desires. What you get is the result of your actions. With right means, regulate your mind. Chant the name of Hari and Govinda Oh dull-witted man!

When Death knocks at the door Kindred and scholarship will avail naught. Embodiments of the Divine Spirit! Thrishna has two meanings: Desire and Thirst. It is natural in daily life to have a desire for certain necessities and comforts. Among the necessities for daily living, three are most essential food for sustenance, garments to wear and shelter for dwelling. The desire for these is natural for man. Even in this there are two kinds of desires: One is natural. The other is excessive and misdirected desire. "I want a house" is a legitimate desire and one should seek it. But it is greedy to possess two or more houses. Today greed is more prevalent among men than desire for necessities. With the result that man is afflicted with grief and worry. He has become a stranger to contentment. He is steeped in discontent on account of insatiable desires. The other meaning of the word Thrishna is thirst. Whenever one is thirsty one has to drink water. When will this thirst end? Thirst will not end as long as life lasts. Even at the moment of death people feel thirsty.

How is the thirst (for material things) to be quenched? It is possible through the efflux of time to get rid of iron shackles when they get rusty, but it is not easy to get rid of thrishna (desire). Thrishna is the cause of limitless desires. If desires are fulfilled, one's ahamkara (ego) gets inflated. If they are not realised hatred develops.

Sadhana constitutes Divine Wealth

There are three doorways to hell for man' Kama (lust), Krodha (hatred) and Lobha (greed). Desires tend to get out of bounds. Hence it is essential to try to curb them as far as possible. The process of controlling desires is called

sadhana. The literal meaning of sadhana is the effort you make to achieve the object you desire or to reach the goal you have in view. Sadhana is thus the primary means to realise your aim or objective. A second meaning of the term is Sa-dhana, that is wealth that is associated with Divinity. Dhana is described in three ways as Aishwarya, Sampadha and Dhana (material wealth). All of them refer to the same thing. The wealth will not accompany us when we give up the body. If wealth is lost, it can be regained. If strength is lost, it may be recovered. But if life is lost it cannot be got back. Hence, while life still remains, one must strive to acquire the divine wealth that is imperishable and everlasting. Your conduct constitutes this divine wealth. It is only by the way we live that we can acquire this divine wealth.

Cultivate good qualities, character and conduct

Good conduct alone is our real wealth. Good qualities alone constitute our real Aishwarya (treasure). An unsullied character, expressing itself in a pure and perfect life, constitutes the most precious riches one can possess. Good conduct, good qualities and an exemplary character are the most valuable riches one can possess. But men today have given up these three and are seeking worldly goods and, immersed in their own concerns, are imagining that they are leading pious lives. The Divine cannot be attained through such delusions. All the teachings one listens to, the books one studies and the education one receives, are only serving to nourish these delusions and not helping men to seek the Divine. To realise the Divine, one has to get rid of these delusions. Today education is said to be advancing at giant strides. Students! Nothing much will be lost if we have no education at all. All education today aims only at preparing students for worldly purposes. Think of the great sages and renowned men of the past who did not have this education but who led such exemplary lives! What great things are you going to achieve by pursuing these studies all during your waking hours, merely for earning a living, while forgetting God? The uneducated and illiterate are better than the "educated," who are ruining the country. It is the educated who are responsible for plunging the country deep into the mire of insolvency. The illiterate might not be doing any positive service to the country but they are not doing any harm to it. But the educated are doing more harm than

good to the nation. It is better not to have such deleterious education than allow it to cause havoc.

Discover your own true nature

Man today is trying to master every kind of knowledge, but is unable to discover his own true nature. This is what Prahlada told his father Hiranyakasipu when he said that although Hiranyakasipu had conquered all the worlds, he had not conquered his senses. By conquering the worlds one may become the supreme sovereign over them. But one who has mastered his senses is supreme over all rulers. He is the king of kings, the king maker. True education should induce humility in the student. Without humility education will lack lustre. Humility will bring out the true qualities of an educated man. It will proclaim the virtues of a person. Reverence for elders, loving regard for parents, discriminating between right and wrong, adoring the Lords - -these are the hallmarks of humility in an educated person. This is the essence of good character. It is the fragrance of hum an life. We should realise that one who has given us this human birth may be expected to take care of us in one way or another. It is needless to aspire after wealth, position, fame or power. If you do your duty, all these will come to you of their own accord. Enthroned in your heart the love of God. Once that love is enshrined in you, the whole world will be yours. If you are a slave of desire, you are the slave of the world. If you have conquered desire, the world will be at your feet.

Truth and love are the essence of all Sastras

Recognise the truth and pursue your studies on this recognition. Whatever learning one may acquire, Whatever degrees one may flaunt, Whatever power or position one may wield, Whatever japa or worship one may perform, One cannot achieve Liberation Unless one has deep love of God. Therefore, cultivate that love first. Love is everything. Truth and Love should be regarded as the two eyes of every person. If we have these two eyes, we can master the world. Truth and Love can be regarded as the distilled essence of all the Sastras. Love is the quintessence of all the Dharma Sastras; it is the

goal of all religions. If we drink nectar of Love and Truth, we do not need anything else to sustain us. Love and Truth cannot be taught by gurus or learnt from books. They may be set forth in granthas (books), but you will not experience their gandham (fragrance). They can be acquired only by living them in life. We must endeavour to love all. If we are to earn the love of the Lord, we have to love everyone. The best way to love God is to love all.

Fill your heart with Divine Love

Love all, serve all. Hating everyone, cavilling at everyone, feeling jealous of everyone, if you want to experience grace, how can you have it? Only if there is water in the tank, you can get water in the tap. If the tank is dry, how can you get water from the tap? If you fill the tank of your heart with Divine love, you can have love towards everyone and receive love from everyone.

Whoever it may be, whether he is a devotee or a believer, an aspirant or an unbeliever, his actions will determine what rewards or punishments he gets in life. You sometimes think: "The Lord has protected me in this manner or punished me in this way." It is not the Lord who has protected you. It is not the function of the Divine. It is your prayer that has protected you. Your good actions have saved you. Your good behaviour is your shield. If you have experienced difficulties, calamities or sorrows, they are the consequences of your thoughts and actions. Hence, whatever happens to man, good or bad, it is the result of his own deeds. God is a witness. Current is flowing in an electric wire. When you switch it on, the light burns, when you switch it off, the light goes. But it is not the light that is coming or going. It is the operation of the switch which brings the light or turns it off. The current is serving you and also punishing you. God is the cause of creation, protection and mergence. Likewise, the current has powers of creation, protection and destruction. How does the current create? Drawing energy from a generator, it provides power for lamps to burn, for fans to work and for various other instruments to function. The current is one, but the uses are many and diverse. In all these ways it discharges a creative function. It also gives protection to man in various ways through light, fan, etc. But, if out of a mistaken sense of gratitude, you touch a live wire, it will give you a shock,

which may even prove fatal. Thus, it has also the capacity to punish.

God is present in you as Prajna

God acts as creator, protector and destroyer. You must show your gratitude to God by your actions, not by words. You have to learn how to make proper use of the things provided for you. God is omnipresent. He is within you. Your good conduct, in the form of God, gives you protection. He is present in you as Prajna (Constant Integrated Awareness). The Vedas have declared: "Prajnanam Brahma,," (Consciousness is Supreme Reality). If the students ask themselves, "Where is God?" they will get an answer in the prayer that they utter before every meal. You utter the mantra, "Brahmarpanam" and recite the sloka: "Aham Vaisvanaro Bhootwa Praninam deham Asritah." The latter sloka means: "I (the Divine) have entered all bodies of living beings in the form of Vaisvanara." This means that the Lord who is within you is giving you protection (by digesting the food you eat and nourishing the entire body). If you act against the dictates of your heart and conscience, God will punish you. All that you see outside is only the reflection of your inner being. The good or the bad you experience are the reflection of your feelings. Do not delude yourselves that by merely offering worship in a temple, you have earned the grace of God. If you worship God, but harass the people around you, will you earn the Divine grace? Your prayers earn a plus for you in your spiritual balance sheet. By causing harm to people you earn a minus. The result of this plus and minus is zero. It is, therefore, of primary importance that you should develop a consciousness of the divinity present in all beings.

Practise the preachings of the scriptures

Today the Bhagavad Gita is being preached from street to street. It is revered as a sacred book. Similarly the Quran, the Bible and other sacred books are worshipped as spiritual texts. But is anything being done to practice what the sacred books teach? Many eminent persons have declared their belief in the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man. The Brotherhood of Man is considered a great ideal. But the Gita has presented a higher ideal. Brotherliness is considered as a great quality. But we know how brothers fall

out, take their differences right up to the Supreme Court and ruin their families. How can the mere fact of being brothers be considered a great virtue in itself? The Gita commends the "Ekatma bhava," the feeling that "One spirit dwells in all beings." It declares that the Atma residing in all beings is one and the same. "Eko vasi bhootha antharatma," declares the Gita (The indwelling Spirit in all beings is One). Nor is that all. It also declares that all human beings in the world are a fragment of the Divine. How many are aware of this truth and how many are living up to this pronouncement? Very few, indeed. In spite of the prodigious propagation of the Gita, how many are practising its teachings? How many are leading exemplary lives? Few. In this situation, it is enough if you adhere to one thing. You have no need to study any books to contemplate on God or earn God's love.

Spirituality is the only way to purity

There is nothing wrong in studying the scriptures. But you have to put into practice the teachings which you value. Continuous study merely clutters up the brain with lumber. Confusion results from studying the views of different authors. The first requisite is to strengthen faith in one's self. Hold fast to one belief and adhere to one path. If you persevere in this manner, divinity will manifest itself spontaneously in due course. Students have to cultivate along with education, humility and observance of Samskaras (right conduct). It is only when the heart is purified through Samskaras that education will also get saturated with purity. Spirituality is the only way to purity.

Do not hesitate to practice humility and obedience, discipline and compassion. Give up pride of your status, wealth, scholarship, or official position. "Can't a big officer, a rich merchant, a great scholar, a highly respected man in society descend to this level of clubbing with this sorrowing man?" Do not ask such silly questions. These qualifications of which you boast will disappear with death or sometimes sooner. The Ananda that you give and the Love that you share will be your lasting possessions.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

15. Let Your Light Shine

Date: 23 June 1988 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

This is the age of science and technology. Its civilisation and culture are bound up with knowledge of the physical universe. What the students have to learn today, however, are the culture of the Soul, the broadening of the Spirit and purification of the Heart. This knowledge leads to the unfolding of the Spirit and the sublimation of life. Along with the development of the intellect, the blossoming of the heart should also be promoted. Only that education is total and full which comprehends enlargement of hridaya (the spiritual or loving Spirit). It should serve to promote ethical values. Only then will it be possible to lead a well-regulated and disciplined life. The marks of true education are selflessness, humility and unostentatiousness. The ethos of Bharath is based on righteousness and justice and an inherent goodness of character. The edifice of right education rests on four pillars: Self-control, Self-support, Self-confidence and Self-sacrifice. Students today are totally oblivious to Self-support. How, then, can they achieve Self-control? Education should aim not merely at making men human, but should try to make them perfect human beings. We may not have all the physical means necessary to help to protect the country. But if we adhere to Truth, that will confer on all of us the strength we need. If we stand by Truth, we shall be saving the whole world.

The six virtues students should cultivate

Students have to observe some do's and don'ts during the educational career. Foremost among these is the cultivation of good company. "Smara sajjana samparkam" (Welcome the company of the good). Then comes avoidance of association with bad persons. "Thyaja durjana samsargam" (Run away from evil company). By association with bad persons even a good student turns bad. "Kuru Punyam Ahorathram" (Do meritorious deeds night and day). You must be engaged in sacred actions. You must participate in service activities, serving with patience and sympathy the sick and the destitute. You must always be prepared to render any kind of help that people in distress might need. Man is subject to the vagaries of the mind. Hence students should try to

cultivate the six virtues of shama, dhama, uparathi, thithiksha, sraddha and samadhana. Sama means control of the external senses. Dhama means control of the internal senses, namely mind, intellect, chittha and ahamkara. It is on account of the promptings of the internal senses that external sense organs operate. The internal senses are not visible. They are like the steering wheel in a car. The wheels that are external cannot turn unless the steering wheel is turned. The mind is the steering wheel. It is only when the mind acts that external organs like hands and feet can function. Hence, students should try to control the mind, using the intellect and the discriminating power of the chittha.

Uparathi is the process of turning the mind inward and purifying one's thoughts and feelings. By these means of self-control and self-regulation, one should try to get self-satisfaction. This comes when one lives up to the dictates of his conscience. Make your conscience your master.

Maintain equanimity in your entire life

Then comes thithiksha - equal-mindedness in the face of happiness and sorrow, victory and defeat, loss or gain. You must cultivate this equanimity from your student days. You should not give way to depression owing to failure or get unduly elated over your success. Without equanimity your entire life may be seriously affected by lack of balance. Sraddha (earnestness) is essential for accomplishing even small things in life. Through Sraddha, you develop the capacity to make proper use of your time and opportunities. Maintaining a proper time-schedule for all your daily activities will help you keep your heart in perfect condition. The schedule should be observed strictly. The decline in discipline everywhere which we witness today is due to the failure to observe the rules relating to time and place. Education today has taken the wrong road. There is no spirituality or excellence in it. The accent is all on getting some book knowledge by rote, scoring marks in the examinations and getting degrees to earn a living. Education should be for acquiring knowledge and not for earning a livelihood.

The essence of true freedom

The aptitudes of students for specific subjects like mathematics or literature should be ascertained by teachers and students should be encouraged to develop their special talents. Instead, what is being done today is to make students take up courses which will enable them to earn lucrative careers. Jobs and not a good life have become the aim of education. Education should comprehend development of body, the mind and the spirit. It should be concerned with Prajnana (Constant Integrated Awareness). There is a great deal of talk about freedom. Largeness of heart, refinement of sensibilities and purity of the mind constitute true freedom. Freedom does not mean living as you please. Selfcontrol, self-satisfaction and self-knowledge constitute together the supreme expression of freedom. Freedom today has been equated with license. This is a travesty of freedom. Every student must become a light unto himself and a light for his home, his city and his nation. Unlike other educational institutions, the Sathya Sai Institute lays equal emphasis on scientific, economic and spiritual education. You should pursue your studies having regard to the unique environment obtaining here. You have to adjust yourselves to the conditions here and make the best use of the facilities and opportunities provided for you. Develop fraternal feelings towards your fellow-students.

I only want men whose hearts speak for them. I have no use for words divorced from the heart. You must put into practice human values and prepare yourselves to play your role in any sphere of life in a spirit of universal love and compassion. Discourse while inaugurating the new academic year of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning as its Chancellor in the

The Divine aspect of your personality will encourage humility, truthfulness, love, fortitude, detachment and eagerness to serve. Cherish the manifestations of these qualities in your life and practice these whenever you get a chance. The innate brotherhood that sanctifies the human race is destroyed by the weeds of envy that grow in the mind. These weeds ruin

one's personality.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

16. True Sacrifice

Date: 26 June 1988

Students! Embodiments of Divine Love! Life is fraught with vicissitudes, trials and tribulations. The world looks attractive but is the abode of suffering. Life is like a water bubble on a lotus leaf. The lotus is born in water, grows in water and depends on water for its existence. "Sathyam, Jnanam, Anantham Brahma" (Being, Awareness, Eternal - the Omni-self). This is the Lake of the Eternal Divine Spirit. From this arises a lotus in a subtle form. Thoughts and feelings are the fragrance emanating from this lotus. Maya is the lotus leaf. Life is the water bubble on this leaf of Maya.

The Atmic principle is the basis for everything in creation - its origin, growth and dissolution. Considering the evanescent body as permanent and real, and leading a life devoted to worldly and mundane pursuits, man is lost in delusions, which cause sorrow and suffering. Ignorance of his true nature is the root cause of all sorrow. When this ignorance goes, there will be freedom from sorrow.

Gita lays stress on enquiry into eternal

Man is compounded of two basic constituents: one which is permanent and the other which is transient. They are: the Atma and the Anatma; the body and the indwelling spirit; the Kshetra (field) and the Kshetrajna (Knower of the Field). As one who is essentially Divine, man's primary duty is to enquire into what is permanent and what is impermanent, what is real and what is unreal, discard what is false and adhere to what is true. This is the theme of the Gita in the cantos devoted to "Kshetra - Kshetrajna Vibhaga Yogam." and "Gunathraya Vibhaga Yogam." The Gita lays stress on enquiry into the eternal and the evanescent as a primary requisite for man. The aim of education should be to enable one to discover his own true nature. By concentrated effort and by sacrifice of every kind, different paths have been discovered for experiencing Divinity. The Upanishads have declared "Not by rituals or progeny or wealth can immortality be attained. It can be got only through

Thyaga (renunciation)." What is it that has to be renounced? What is it that has to be sought? Man should be engaged in a perpetual enquiry to find out from the myriad objects in the universe, from his varied experiences and his multifarious activities, the means of achieving Ananda (bliss). Today the world is plunged in chaos and conflict. What is the reason for this? All the joys and sorrows experienced by man stem from his actions. The actions themselves are the result of thoughts arising in the mind. It is only when the thoughts are good that the actions will be pure. When man's actions are pure, society will be healthy and peaceful.

Lessons to be learnt from Nature

The secret of true renunciation has to be learnt from the trees, the cows and the rivers. The trees bear fruit for the benefit of others; Rivers flow for the good of others; Cows give milk to nourish others; The human body is for rendering service. When trees, cows and rivers are setting such an example in unselfish service to others, human life will have no meaning if it is not devoted to selfless service. When we start enquiring, "Where is God? Who is God?" Nature as the vesture of God provides the answers. It is well known that the earth spins around itself at the rate of 1000 miles an hour. It is ceaselessly doing its duty without rest. Because of this rotation you have night and day. Moreover, the earth is going round the sun at the speed of 66,000 miles an hour. As a result, we have changes in seasons conducive to cultivation of crops. The earth, the sun and the moon are providing a lesson to man regarding the fulfilment of one's duties. They are also demonstrating the importance of activity for mankind. All of them - trees, rivers, cows, the earth and the sun - are acting unselfishly. At the same time, what they are doing is essential for man's existence. When these are rendering such selfless service, what kind of renunciation is man displaying? Man is enjoying the benefits provided by Nature, but is showing no gratitude at all in return.

Misconceived magnanimity

Despite all the progress in scientific knowledge, man has not learnt the real purpose of education and has not developed the sense of gratitude. One

without gratitude is worse than a wild beast. Doing good in return for good done is nothing to boast about. Real goodness consists in doing good even to one who has done you harm. But in applying this principle, discrimination should be used. History is full of examples of misconceived generosity and forgiveness. Mahomed Ghorri invaded India several times and was defeated by Prithviraj, who let him go back as a sign of his spirit of magnanimity. Ultimately, Mahomed of Ghorri conspired with Jaichand to take Prithviraj as a prisoner. Instead of showing gratitude to Prithviraj for his magnanimity, Ghorri Mahomed gouged the eyes of Prithviraj. History teaches that no quarter should be given to wicked persons who are treacherous and ungrateful. In rendering service to needy people, students should remember these lessons from life and use their discrimination and intelligence. In the pursuit of education, students should take note of three things. One: You should not talk about matters of which you have no knowledge. It is a mark of foolishness. Two: It is dangerous to pretend that you know something when you are really ignorant. Three: You must strive to acquire knowledge and impart it to others only after you have mastered the subject. Today many pretend to be all-knowing. This is a sign of Ahamkara (egoistic conceit). Egoism can bring about the complete downfall of a person. It is like a pest that destroys the very root of a tree. It has two accomplices: attachment and hatred. The combination of these three is enough to ruin the life of any person. Hence, the primary need is to get rid of egoism, which is fostered by ignorance. Education can become meaningful only when you have developed humility and right behaviour.

Learn the value of leading a simple life

Today much effort is wasted on ostentatious living. Students should learn the value of leading a simple and unostentatious life. You may be aware of Sardar Patel, who was Deputy Prime Minister in the Government formed after Independence. One day, a colleague of his, Mahavir Thyagi, went to Patel's residence. While talking to Patel, Thyagi noticed Patel's daughter, Maniben, doing the household chores. She was wearing an old sari, patched up in some places. Thyagi asked her: "Maniben! You are getting a bad name for your father. What a high position he is holding in the government. He is the Deputy

Prime Minister of the country. Being his daughter, if you are like this, you will be taken for a beggar. The dress you are wearing is not befitting at all." Maniben was indignant and told Sri Thyagi: "Thyagiji! It is only those who have earned money by foul and unjust means that should feel sorry for the clothes they wear. I am not ashamed to wear the clothes out of my own labours while I am carrying on my legitimate duties. Those who spend lavishly on their comforts by the money earned by their parents have to feel ashamed about themselves. I have nothing to be ashamed about. In looking after my aged father, I do my work, wearing the clothes I choose. I do not hanker after anyone's wealth. I know how to maintain my dignity and self-respect. No one need teach me how to conduct myself." Maniben left after saying these words.

The dedicated life of Maniben

Dr. Sushila Nayyar, who was seated on the same sofa as Sri Thyagi, told him in unmistakable language: "Thyagiji! You do not know Maniben well enough. From the time she wakes up in the morning right up to going to bed in the night she is ceaselessly working without any rest. Although her father is the Deputy Prime Minister, she attends to all the household work herself. She cleans the vessels and washes her father's clothes herself. She spins on the charkha whenever she has some spare time. She stitches the clothes for her father. She makes saris for herself out of discarded dhotis of her father. It is difficult to find anyone equal to her in the ideal life she is leading." Such was the dedicated life led by Maniben in those days. It is hard to find today any young woman or man who can live life like that. Most young people lead ostentatious lives, wasting the hard-earned money of their parents. Students! Realise what you owe to your parents and act in a manner which will not grieve them. Avoid waste of money, of food, of time and energy.

Experience joy in the control of desires

Having come to the Sathya Sai Institute for your studies, you have to set an example to others. You have to get rid of all bad traits. This is the sacrifice you have to make for acquiring good qualities. Real enjoyment does not

consist in wearing expensive clothes and leading a luxurious life. You must experience joy in the control of your desires and in leading a tranquil life. Do not poison your minds by excessive desires. Buddha was once asked: "Who is the richest man in the world?" Buddha replied: "He who has much satisfaction (with what he has) is the richest man." To the question, "Who is the poorest man?" Buddha replied: "He who has many desires." A Maharaja, who was listening to Buddha's sermons on contentment and renunciation, wished to earn the approbation of Buddha. Buddha used to keep with him always a rattle-drum. His disciples once asked him: "Master! Why are you always keeping this rattle-drum by your side?" Buddha replied: "I shall play on this drum the day a person who has made the greatest sacrifice approaches me." Everyone was eager to know who this person would be. Such persons are often the forgotten men of history. Wishing to attain this distinction, a Maharaja loaded his elephants with considerable treasure and went to Buddha. He hoped to offer the treasure to Buddha and earn his praise.

Buddha shows what true sacrifice means

On the way, an old woman greeted the Maharaja and pleaded: "I am hungry. Will you give me some food?" The Maharaja took out a pomegranate fruit from his palanquin and gave it to the old woman. The old woman came to Buddha with the fruit. By then, the Maharaja had also come to Buddha and was eagerly waiting to see when Buddha would sound the rattle-drum. For a long time Buddha did not use it. The Maharaja stayed on. The old woman approached Buddha staggering on her legs, and offered him the pomegranate fruit. Buddha took it immediately and sounded the little drum. The Maharaja asked Buddha: "I offered so much wealth to you. You did not sound the drum. But you rattled it after receiving a small fruit. Is this a great sacrifice. Buddha replied: "Maharaja! In sacrifice, it is not quantity that counts. It is the quality of sacrifice that matters. It is natural for a Maharaja to offer gold. But what great sacrifice is made when a hungry old woman offers the pomegranate fruit to the Guru despite her hunger. She did not care even for her life and gave the fruit. What greater sacrifice can there be? It is not sacrifice to offer what is superfluous for you. True sacrifice means giving up that which is most dear to you, that which you value most." Students! You must give up your

selfishness and strive to please the Lord in whom you have faith by dedicating your lives to the service of the Divine. The whole universe is permeated by the Divine. He is omnipotent, omnipresent, and all-knowing. Be conscious that he is not confined to any place. He is everywhere and in everything, including your body. He cannot be seen by dissecting the body. But when the mind is directed towards God, He can be experienced. The men who landed on the moon declared that they did not find God there. God cannot be found through yantras (machines). He can be experienced through Mantras (sacred formulae).

Swami wants you to become ideal citizens

Students! This Sathya Sai Institute has been founded to train ideal students who would be able to change the world which is today plunged in chaos and corruption. Bharath, which was the fountain-source of righteousness and spirituality, is today divorced from Truth and Right Conduct and is plagued by evil forces. Swami does not seek anything from you except that you should develop into ideal citizens who will bring good name and fame to Bharath. This is the sole purpose for which Swami brought the Institute into existence. All education is free here. You have all the facilities needed for your studies. You have to transform yourself and help to transform the country. In olden days, people regarded everything as given by God. They placed God first, the world next, and themselves last. Today all this has been reversed. The 'I' comes first, the world next and God last. The Mahabharata shows what it means to place God in the forefront or otherwise. Both Arjuna and Duryodhana went to Krishna to seek His help in the impending war. Krishna said they could make the choice between himself and his army. Arjuna opted for Krishna and Duryodhana chose Krishna's army. In the ultimate outcome, the Pandavas, who placed God in the forefront, achieved victory, while the Kauravas, who had faith only in arms, lost everything. Discourse at the Sri Sathya Sai Institute Hostel, Vidyagiri,

17. Bhaktha Sakhaa Bhagavan!

Date: July 1988 / Location: Brindavan

Many call themselves devotees, but this claim means nothing by itself. It is like addressing a letter to someone. Unless it is acknowledged by the recipient, you cannot be sure whether the letter reached the addressee and how he reacted to it. Likewise, whether one is a devotee or not should be declared by the Lord Himself. This is what Krishna declared regarding Arjuna. He told Arjuna: "You are my devotee and you are my friend." Arjuna did not declare to Krishna: "I am your devotee." Krishna was not content to declare: "Arjuna, you are my devotee." Why did He go on to say: "You are my friend?" Would it not have been sufficient if Krishna had declared, "you are my friend"? Why should he say, "you are my devotee"? In this declaration, there is a profound spiritual significance. This will be clear only when we practice the spiritual life. If merely the Lord were to say to Arjuna, "you are my friend" his ego will get inflated and he will take undue liberties with Krishna. If He were to say, "My dear, you are my devotee," he will be extremely submissive. A kind of fear will be instilled in him. Fear should not be instilled; nor should he be encouraged to take excessive liberties. Hence, the terms devotee and friend, were used by Krishna. "You are my friend. You may be free with me up to a point. You are my devotee. So observe certain restraints. Exercise control over yourself in your devotion."

Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the master

In dealing with devotees, the Lord has to maintain a balance. Here is an example from the life of Ramakrishna Paramahansa.

Whether in olden times or nowadays, there have always been some persons who indulged in calumny against good men and derided the good actions done by them. Ramakrishna's disciples had to go by boat across the Ganga to get whatever was required for his ashram. Ramakrishna used to assign different tasks each day for the young disciples in the ashram. One of them was a gentle youth known as Brahmananda. Vivekananda was an aggressive

and short-tempered youth. One day Brahmananda went by boat to bring provisions for the ashram. As soon as they saw an ochre-robed person in the boat, the other passengers got very indignant. They started abusing Ramakrishna Prahmahamsa in various ways. They remarked: "He is a pseudo-sanyasi. He is spoiling all young men," and so on. Brahmananda silently shed tears, remembering the teachings of the master. During the trip he was apprehensive about what might happen. On the return trip, the earlier story was repeated. He listened silently to the abuse levelled against Ramakrishna and did not venture to quarrel with them. After his return, Ramakrishna asked him to narrate what all had happened. After listening to Brahmananda's pathetic story, Swami Ramakrishna burst out: "How could you remain silent while your guru was being reviled? You have committed a sin. You are not fit to remain in the ash rain." Narendar (Vivekananda) who was standing nearby, listened to the angry words of the Master. Brahmananda fell at the feet of the Master and pleaded for forgiveness.

Vivekananda's reaction on the criticism of his guru

The next day, it was Vivekananda's turn to go by boat to buy provisions. As soon as they saw an ochre-robed youth in the boat, the other passengers started abusing Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. One rich man accused Ramakrishna of spoiling young men by his teachings. Narendar remembered what the guru had said the previous day, rose from his seat and gave a slap on the cheek of the reviler. Narendar was a strong, powerful person. He told the traducer: "Will you keep your mouth shut? You may have your likes and dislikes and we have ours. What right have you to condemn us? If you do not keep silent, I shall hurl you into the Ganga." Everyone in the boat got alarmed that the irate youth might actually carry out the threat. All of them became silent. Vivekananda brought the provisions and returned by boat to the ashram. On the return journey no one ventured to open his mouth. Ramakrishna asked Narendar to relate what all happened during his boat trip. Narendar related what all had happened and said: "All of them kept their mouths shut after I had slapped one of them for criticising the guru." Immediately Swami Ramakrishna observed: "Chi! Chi! How unbecoming of you to dishonour the robe you are wearing by losing your temper, exhibiting

hatred and causing hurt to a person. You are unfit to stay in my ashram. What does it matter what anyone says? How does it affect us? Their praise or censure will not touch us. Narendar pleaded: "Swami! I was listening yesterday to what you had said to Brahmananda. Because of that, I behaved in this manner. You took him to task for remaining passive. You take me to task for retaliating. I am unable to understand what is the proper thing to do."

To each according to his needs

Ramakrishna explained his divergent reactions by an example. He said, "There are four tyres for a car. What should be the pressure in the front tyre and the rear tyres have been laid down. If there is excessive pressure in some tyres, it should be reduced. If some tyres have low pressure, they have to be inflated. Only then the car will run smoothly. Narendar suffers from excessive pressure. He requires to be deflated. Brahmananda is excessively weak, so he has to be inflated." The teachings of the masters vary according to the condition of the disciples. Likewise, in the Bhagavad Gita or other scriptures, statements might appear which seem to contradict each other. These differences relate to differences in circumstances and requirements of the person concerned. You should not contrast one statement of the Swami with another and ask why there is a contradiction between the different statements. In the Gita itself, in one place, Krishna stresses the need for action, at another the adherence to Dharma, and in another place commends renunciation of all Dharma and urges complete surrender to the Lord. These apparent contradictions are not contradictions. The teaching varies according to the state of spiritual development of the person concerned and the situation in which he is placed. The inner significance of the great teachings of the Avatars and sages should be properly understood before any criticism is attempted. No room should be given for logic chopping or verbal controversies. You have to observe only two things: Adhere to Truth. Cultivate Love. Develop the feeling-"Love is my Supreme Lord. Truth is my sovereign. I do not need anyone else." You have to recognise that these Divine attributes, Truth and Love, exist equally in all beings. Develop the sense of equal-mindedness and equal regard for all. This is the true sadhana. Cultivate love for the Divine and share that love with all beings.

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

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

18. Renunciation and Realisation

Date: 11 July 1988 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

The wise one recognises his own defects And seeks not the faults in others. He is most degraded among men Who sees only the faults in others Oblivious to his own defects And unaware of his true Self. The worth of a human being is based on his *buddhi* (intellect). The more the intellect develops, the better one is, as a man. As the intellect declines, the human descends to the level of animal. A bamboo is valued in terms of its thickness and height. The sugar cane gets its value from its juice.

Man's worth has declined today because he does not recognise the importance of the intellect and of conduct based on intellectual discrimination. The form is human, but the thinking is at the animal level. Man has earned the appellation of "two-legged animal." Having acquired the human form, man should conduct himself with intelligence. This is achieved through *thyaga* (renunciation) and *yoga* (spiritual discipline).

Real renunciation is giving up evil qualities

Thyaga is a vital aspect of human life. Some day or the other either he will have to give up worldly goods or they will leave him. When he has no spirit of renunciation, the world may compel him to give up things. This cannot be avoided. What is it that is to be renounced? Are the external objects, like houses and vehicles, what should be given up? Or is one to give up kith and kin or one's possessions? No. These things can be renounced easily. With some determination all these can be given up. But, this is not real sacrifice. It can be a *bhoga* (form of enjoyment) or a *roga* (a kind of disease). The real renunciation which one has to make is the giving up of the evil qualities of *Kama* (desire), *Krodha* (anger) and *Lobha* (greed).

"Kamam Karma nasanam" (Desire is the destroyer of action).

"Krodham Jnana nasanam" (Anger is the destroyer of wisdom).

"Lobham Bhakti nasanam" (Greed is the destroyer of devotion).

Kama (desire) sullies actions at their very roots. Desire deprives one of the powers to discriminate between right and wrong action. One loses the capacity to judge the consequences of one's actions. Hence, the Upanishads declared: "First of all offer your obeisance to Karma (personified as deity)."

"Thasmai namah Karmane" (Salutations to that action).

This means that before you do anything, offer your homage to that action. A prayer should be offered to Karma: "Whatever I do, let it be helpful to others; let it not be harmful to anyone. Make my action sacred in this way." But men today embark on actions in the expectation of what they can get from society and not what they can offer it. This is not the right attitude. Each one should ask himself: "What is it that society can receive from me? What good can it get from me?" Actions should be undertaken with this high-minded attitude. Desire makes one incapable of entertaining such a large-hearted view. With the result that all our actions get tainted in one way or other. Kama thus turns men away from following a sacred path in his actions. Hence, the pronouncement:

"Kamam Karma nasanam" (Desire is destructive of right action).

Angry man cannot succeed in any endeavour

Then comes Krodha (anger). Anger makes a man insane. It causes loss of wealth, undermines one's reputation, alienates one from his fellowmen and leads to the loss of everything. The angry man cannot succeed in any endeavour. He will encounter endless troubles. Doing sinful deeds, he is

despised by the world. Anger deprives a man of his wisdom. He loses his worldly knowledge, his sense of discrimination, his powers of judgement and even the knowledge gained from past experience. Anger is fraught with such dangerous potential.

The third vice is Lobha (greed). Whatever he may earn, whatever he may achieve, the greedy man is incapable of renouncing anything. Such a one is ready to receive anything from anyone but is not willing to part with anything. Greed breeds the attitude in which one says: "What will you give me if I come to your house? What will you bring for me when you come to my house?" Greed promotes this kind of insatiable attitude for possessions. You have to give up an evil tendency of this kind.

Attachments should be properly restricted

The practice of giving up is known as *Vairagya*. The literal meaning of the word is "that which is opposed to *raga* (attachment)." Raga signifies attachment to the body. There is nothing wrong in attachment. Raga includes love for family, kith and kin. This attachment is not wrong. You should love your parents and show regard for your brothers and sisters. You should keep your body fit and healthy. These are legitimate desires. What should be noted, however, is that there should be limits to such attachments. You may have noted that in singing, the raga is important. But when the musician indulges in excessive elaboration of the raga, it tends to become *roga* (an infliction). The words of the song should not be lost in the elaboration of the raga. The fire in the oven should be just enough for the food to be cooked. The salt to be added should be limited to the quantity of dal to be prepared. Salt in excess will spoil the dal. Likewise, our attachments should be properly restricted.

Today we are witnessing attachments growing without limit. Attachment to the body, to relations, to education or to the acquisition of knowledge is exceeding all limits. Even with regard to desirable objects, it is essential to limit one's desires.

"Na shreyo niyamam vina" (There can be no happiness without restraint of desire).

When there is no restraint, excessive desire becomes an evil. It leads to misery. When we strive to control desire, in due course it develops into vairagya - non- attachment or renunciation. Vairagya means giving up association with objects, while recognising their inherent worth. In a band of ten bad men, there may be one good man. Among ten good men there may be one who is a seeker of God. Among ten seekers, there may be one filled with love of God. Among ten lovers of God, there may be one at least who desires to experience the Divine. Among ten such devotees, there may be one at least who is ready to renounce all attachments. And only such a man qualifies for earning the love of God. That is why it has been declared: "Only through renunciation can immortality (oneness with the Divine) be attained."

Role of consciousness

How is this renunciation to be effected? The world is made up of objects. It is inert. In the waking sense, the senses cognise all these objects. But the senses are also inert. The eyes that see, the ears that hear, the tongue that speaks and the nose that smells - all of them are *jada* (inert). In fact, the entire body is inert. But all these inert objects are able to function because of the presence of *chaitanya* (consciousness) in the mind, the intellect, the *chittha* and the *ahamkara*. Thus we have to realise that the entire phenomenal universe is jada (inert). It is *sthoolam* (gross). This gross universe has to be treated as inert matter. The four subtle elements of consciousness - *manas* (the mind), *buddhi* (the intellect), *chittha* (the will) and *ahamkara* (the ego) - are *Maya*. What is Maya? Ma (not) ya (exist). That which does not exist but appears to exist is Maya. Maya makes the unreal appear as real and the real as unreal. The other name for Maya is Ajnana (ignorance). Ajnana is that which hides the real from you and makes you regard the non-existing as existing. It makes the false appear as true.

How Maya works

One sees people dying before one's eyes and others afflicted with disease. But he believes he himself will not die. This is the mark of *Ajnana*. When so many are dying, how can anyone regard himself as not subject to death? Maya is the cause of thinking the impermanent as permanent and the permanent as perishable. Even subtle experiences such as dreams are the result of Maya. We see and experience all sorts of things in dreams. All of them have a reality only in the dream state. They disappear in the waking state. We disregard them. What appeared to be true in the dream state becomes unreal in the waking state. What is dreaded in the dream state causes no fear when one is awake. This is the nature of Maya, its secret. Both, what is experienced in the physical phenomenal world and in the subtle subliminal state of dreams, are the result of Maya.

Karana (the causal state of deep sleep) comes next. It is only an image - a reflection. It has no consciousness. It has neither form nor name. It is not subject to happiness or sorrow. Of what use is such a state?

The waking state experiences the jada (inert). What is experienced in the dream state is Maya. And in the Karana (causal or deep sleep) state, there is only a reflection. All three are of little account. There is one thing which transcends all these that is the *Mahakarana*. That is the *Paratatwa* (Omni-self). The Atma that is in the Para-tatwa and that which is in the jada (the inert matter) is one and the same. Vairagya consists in recognising these oneness. It is not the giving up of things that constitutes vairagya. Vairagya consists in enjoying, without attachment, things which were previously enjoyed with attachment.

We are like puppets on the screen

We might have learned a lot, acquired many things. We might have enjoyed many things. Where are they now? What has happened to them? Why did we part with them? What benefit did we derive from them? When we enquire into

these matters, we will realise that the things we enjoyed, the individuals with whom we associated, and the experiences we had are like figures of puppets on a screen. They are like clouds that come and go. We must seek to know the basic truth about the human condition. If you take a vessel with water and pour it into the ocean, you cannot recover that water again. If smoke goes up in the sky, it cannot be collected again. An apple that has been eaten and digested cannot be got back. But the stuff of the mind cannot be merged in an ocean, or sent up to the sky or consumed as food. The workings of the mind cannot be eliminated by these processes.

Mind should be kept under restraint

Why, then, is there a call for *mano-nigraham* (control of the mind)? Nigraham (control) really means being indifferent to the vagaries of the mind. It is difficult to control the mind, as it is difficult to confine air in one's grasp. Likewise, how can anyone control the mind which is allembracing in the vastness of its range and comprehension? When it is realised that the mind is made up of thoughts and doubts, the elimination of the thoughts is the means of restraining the mind. Thoughts are associated with desires. As long as desires remain, one cannot have vairagya (detachment). It is necessary to limit desires. Take for instance, a car. If you press the accelerator, it picks up speed. In pressing the accelerator, however, you have to bear in mind the state of the road, the curves and bends and the ups and downs. Similarly the world we live in is replete with ups and downs, with joy and sorrow. Having regard to this fact, the mind must be kept under restraint as far as possible. The car cannot move unless the accelerator is pressed. But this should be done with circumspection. In making the journey this caution should be observed. Likewise, we need the mind, but it has to be used in the proper way.

Power of the mind and role of the intellect

Today men are subjecting themselves to all kinds of difficulties and problems because they are giving a free rein to the mind. This is where the vital role of Buddhi (intellect) comes in. The intellect enhances the power of man. It is the

greatness of the intellect that distinguishes man. The intellect has the potency to comprehend the entire cosmos. Consider the power of the mind. One goes round the world, sees many cities, looks at mountains and rivers and meets innumerable persons and has varied experiences. All these infinite variety of objects, persons, scenes and experiences are imprinted in the subtle form in the mind. How is it that such a small mind can contain all this vast panorama and countless objects and impressions? Is there room in the mind for containing a high mountain? You have to understand the boundless capacity of the mind.

"Manomoolam idam jagath" (The Cosmos is based on the mind).

The individual through his body is part of the cosmos. Think for a moment how pitifully small is this body in relation to this vast universe. Recognition of one's infinitesimally puny size should lead to humility. At the same time, there is infinite potentiality in man. That is why Vedanta declares that the Divine is subtler than the subtlest atom and vaster than the vastest object in creation.

You may have seen the huge banyan tree in the Theosophical Society at Adyar, Madras (now called Chennai). It is a very huge tree. But its seed is an extremely small one. That small seed has the potential to grow into a vast extensive tree. Likewise, the human mind is exceedingly small, but it can comprehend this vast universe. The mind appears as an insignificant speck in the universe, but the universe is immanent in this minuscule mind. It would appear as if the universe and the mind were telling each other: "I am that" and "That is me."

The secret of infinite capacity of the mind

As long as you have the body-consciousness and attachment to the body, you cannot understand this secret of the infinite capacity of the mind. If you have

only a superficial view of the world you cannot understand its vastness in the subtle domain of the mind. There is a big water reservoir. When you look at the water, your reflection is seen in it. You say, "That is myself." But when you discriminate, you realise, "I am not that." Try to distinguish between these two concepts. When you say, "That is myself," you are only thinking of your body. Suppose you say that is yourself and people come and beat the image in the water with sticks, will you feel anything? But if that reflection of yours is abused by anybody you get angry. When it is beaten you don't feel the pain but when anybody abuses it you feel the effect. When it is beaten you feel it is not yourself, when it is abused you feel that it is you. Therein lies the secret of Vedanta.

On the one hand you say "I am that," but when that "that" is being beaten you don't react; on the other hand, when that "that" is abused you react. When you realise that your inner Atma is the same in everybody, then any pain caused to anybody is your pain. But when you have body-consciousness and anybody says anything derogatory about anyone else you feel it is not directed towards you and it doesn't affect you. This essential truth is the heart of Vedanta.

To understand this great secret of secrets you should participate in such assemblies as this. You must listen, think over what is said, put in into practice and make it yours. Vedanta has emphasised these three things: *Sravana*, *Manana* and *Nididhyasana*. *Sravana* means hearing. Whatever you hear, you should revolve in your mind, that is *Manana*; then *Nididhyasana* is putting it into practice. For example, the mother says: "I have prepared a number of sweets." After knowing this, which is *Jnatum*, you see all these sweets on a plate, that is *Drashtum*. Then, when you eat these delicious sweets, that is *Praveshtum*. Then you get happiness and strength. This unity of *Jnatum*, *Drashtum* and *Praveshtum* (knowing, seeing and experiencing) is the unity in the diversity which is the real path to *Ananda*, eternal delight. *Vairagya* does not mean that you should give up everything and go to a forest. *Vairagya* really means you should stay where you are, in whatever station of life you are in, and understand the subtle nature of things, while giving up desire based on the external aspect. It means that by using

discrimination you should know what to expect and what to reject. You should strive to recognise the divinity in every object you see and enjoy it. That is real vairagya. That is the mark of a true human being.

A temple where God is adored as a living Entity is as the heart to an individual. It is said that you should not sleep in a village where there is no temple; for, the people there are sure to be so ungodly that your life is in danger amidst such unbelievers. God is the guardian, the corrector, the admonisher, the savior; so, people must get into the habit of calling on Him as a living Presence. The temple helps soften the hearts; it instills the virtues of compassion and charity. Greed and cruelty will spread in an atmosphere that has no devotion and adoration to God. Make yourselves into moving temples. Become aware of the God that resides in you. It is He who protects you, provides for you, prevents you from falling a prey to pernicious propensities.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

19. Nature: God: Man

Date: 12 July 1988 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

Men run hither and thither In search of food, of worldly goods, Of position and pelf, name and fame; But few seek to realise God. This is the truth declared unto you. Men pursue intensively mundane studies But do not seek to study the path to Liberation. Dear students! The cosmos is the magnificent manifestation of the Divine. When you direct your vision on this vast creation you are filled with awe and wonder. True education consists in understanding the inner meaning of this creation. At first sight what we see are inert objects like mountains and hills. We cannot see any sign of chaitanya (consciousness) in these objects. The second category of objects are trees. There is consciousness in them, but they cannot move from place to place. They are stationary. The third category are living beings. Besides consciousness, these have the capacity of motion. Man belongs to the fourth category. He has not only fully developed consciousness, but has another extraordinary, marvellous quality. That is the supreme gift of Sambhashan (speech). Starting with the inert, we have the conscient, the mobile beings and the human species with the power of speech. If this progression in the creative process is tightly understood we can realise how important is the advent of man.

Om is the primal letter in the alphabet

The ancient sages, after performing severe penances and making profound enquiries, realised and declared how unique is the human birth. "Vedham etam Purusham mahantam Adithya varnam tamasah parastath" (We have known that there is a Supreme Purusha who is effulgent like the sun and who transcends darkness). By their penance, meditation and intuition, they recognised two things: One is Akshara (the alphabet) and the other is Sankhya (numbers). In the alphabet the primal letter is "Om." All other letters have emerged from the Pranava (Om). "Om" is the first letter among all letters. It comprehends within itself all other letters of the alphabet. During bhajans, when the harmonium is played, the bellows are pressed and the reeds are manipulated, we have the musical notes, "Sa, ri, ga, rna, pa, da, ni."

What is the source of these seven notes? It is the same air that produces the notes. That air is filled with "Omkara." And it is that "Om" which produces the separate notes, "Sa, ri, ga, ma, etc." Likewise, among numbers, we start with one and go to nine, ten. In all the numbers, one is the primary number. All the other numbers are multiple variations of one. If you take away one from nine you have eight. If you add one to eight, it becomes nine. What comes and goes is one alone. What remains is also one.

Nature and Divinity

From this, the sages drew the inference that the beginning and the end are One, which is the Divine. They declared that this One is the beejam (seed) of the cosmos. No seed exists without husk. Because the grain is covered by husk its parts are not visible to us. For the cosmos, Prakruthi (nature) is the husk. The seed of divinity is within it (and enveloped by it). We cannot experience the seed of divinity within as long as it is covered by the husk of Nature. We have to endeavour to get at the truth about Nature. The Upanishads declared: "Isavasyam idham sarvam" (All this is permeated by the Divine). That means, there is only one thing that is immanent in the entire universe. If the truths declared by the Upanishads are to be understood, we have to seek the truth of everything in our daily lives. For instance, why has Nature come into being? Nature's role is to help man, the crowning achievement of the evolutionary process, to realise the Divinity immanent in creation. Mountains help man to build houses by using stone slabs, quarried from them. Trees provide the timber for constructing houses and also firewood for domestic use. Among animate beings, every creature, from an ant to an elephant, is of assistance to man in one way or another. Cows provide nourishing milk to man. Bullocks are useful for ploughing the fields and helping to grow food crops. All other creatures like birds, fish, sheep and others are serving man in different ways. Seen in this light it will be clear that all things in creation are helpful to man in leading his life. Even the sun and the moon are serving man. The sages regarded the Sun as an important deity and worshipped him through the Gayatri mantra.

Man's debt to Nature

Thus man is deriving innumerable debt from Nature, and enjoying the amenities provided by Nature in various ways. But what is the gratitude he is showing to Nature? What gratitude is he offering to the Divine? He is forgetting the Divine who is the provider of everything. That is the reason for his becoming a prey to various difficulties and calamities. While he is receiving countless gifts from Providence, he is offering nothing in return to Nature or God. This shows how unnatural and heartless is the behaviour of man. When we are enjoined to return good for evil, how unbecoming it is to fail even to return good for good? Man is not learning the great lessons Nature is teaching him. The foremost lesson is doing service with no expectation of return.

People ask, "Where is God?" The answer is provided by Nature. Who is it that has created the five elements, the five life-breaths, the five sheaths, the five external sense organs and the five internal sense organs, which are all ceaselessly carrying on their functions according to their prescribed roles. The seasons in their regular cycle are teaching a good lesson to man. Therefore Nature is the demonstrable proof for the existence of God. Nature is not under any obligation to any man, it takes no orders from any man, it operates according to the will of the Divine.

Science is being used for destructive purposes

The artificial instruments produced by man function for a time and then become useless. Scientists today have launched many satellites in space. Sooner or later they cease to function and drop away. No one knows how, when and in what circumstances the planets in nature were created but they have been going round in space ceaselessly and unflinching for billions of years. These planets have been created for the welfare of mankind and not for destructive purposes. God is the creator of the world for man's good. All the planets created by Him are serving mankind. Many of the missiles and space instruments produced by scientists are for destructive purposes. Science is being used more for destruction than for construction. What is the reason for this? The Ego is the cause. The sense of egoism and conceit arising

from it is the root cause of the destructive tendencies in man. Man today is placing more faith in his physical and mental strength than in the strength coming from faith in God. How long can it last? In a mere fit of sneezing, life may leave this body. What meaning is there in regarding it as permanent?

Let no one be proud about his beauty, strength and youth. The ravages of old age are ahead and will overwhelm him. Even while you feel puffed up by your strength and energy as a youth, age creeps on you irrevocably. With the body bent, wrinkles on the face and bleared eyes, the old man becomes a butt of jokes for juveniles, who call him an old monkey. What is lasting in all this? Everything is subject to change and decay in this world. Whether it be physical objects or individuals, all are transient and impermanent. Nothing is lasting. Only your purity is permanent. Purity is the essential nature of man. But if man leads a polluted life, he is degrading himself.

Love does not seek any return

Man's purity is manifest when human relations are based on heart to heart and love to love. Love has a form of a triangle with three arms. Prema (divine love) does not seek any return. Where an individual offers love in expectation of a return, fear overtakes him. The one who loves with no expectation of any return is totally free from fear. Love knows only to give, not to receive. Such a love is free from fear. For true love, love is its own reward. Thus, love seeks no return, is free from fear and is its own reward. These are the basic features of true love. Love today is based on desire for a return benefit. It is filled with fear and anxiety. Thus love is motivated. When love is based on a desire for transient and perishable objects, life will be futile. Love must be its own reward.

You have to show your gratitude to God

Love is eternal. You are the embodiment of Love. You are the embodiment of Peace. You are the embodiment of Truth. You are the embodiment of God. It is only when this supreme truth is realised, and our life is based on it, that our love can make our life meaningful and enable us to comprehend the world.

Your studies, your conduct, your actions, all that you see, hear and think- -all these should be regarded as offerings to the Divine. This is the true meaning of Saranagathi (taking refuge in the Divine). All that is seen, heard or experienced should be considered as intimations of the Divine.

Have firm faith in the reality of God's existence. You have to show your gratitude to God for the benefits showered on you. Consider, for instance, how the Divine has filled the atmosphere with life-giving oxygen to enable you to live. The biggest fan made by man can provide breeze only for a small area. But the winds caused by Nature can blow over the whole world. Who is the cause of this wind? There are three kinds of lamps in this Mandir. They illumine a small space. But the Sun created by God illumines the whole world. We pump water with the help of pump sets. Can all the water pumped by these sets equal a fraction of the water got from a heavy downpour of rain which can inundate the Ganga? Who is it that is providing this air, this water and this illumination? We are enjoying all these, but we show no gratitude to the provider of these benefits. We render thanks to those who render trifling acts of service. But what thanks are we expressing to God who is providing such essential life-sustaining amenities for meaningful human existence? Can this be a virtue in a human being? Is it a sign of a right education? Is it the mark of a scholar? No. You must show your gratitude with humility and sincerity to whoever has done you any good.

You must shed your narrow outlook

Education that does not promote gratitude is worthless. It is the parents who give you education. The guru is the educator. The Divine has given you the capacity to get educated. Hence, the mother, father and the guru are to be revered as God, as enjoined in the Vedas. You must show your gratitude to your parents, offer due respect to the teacher, and base your life on faith in God. You may feel proud that you are getting on in life by your own abilities and intelligence. This is utterly foolish. You must cultivate a wide appreciation of Nature. You must shed your narrow outlook. Realise for instance, how small is the eye. But it is able to see the whole universe. Even your eye is teaching you a lesson. "What a fool are you? In spite of my minuscule smallness, I am

able to see the whole universe with my wide vision. But your mind has a very narrow outlook." You must try to broaden your heart and enlarge your mind. You must dedicate your chittha (will) to the Divine.

Do not jump to conclusions, abdicating your discrimination and do not deny the validity of your own experiences, stand on your strength. Be unmoved, either by adulation or denigration. Follow my lead, I am unaffected by either, and march on alone, undeterred and of my own accord. I am my own Guide and Witness. Have full faith in this.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

20. Wealth Or Grace?

Date: 17 July 1988 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

Embodiments of Divine Love! Man's life is determined by his qualities. The transformation of the world is related to the transformation of the individual. The world will change only when the individual changes. When individuals are good, society also becomes good. We tend to attach importance only to the external forms of social institutions. We lay stress on the conditions prevailing in the political, economic, social and environmental spheres. Changes in these spheres alone are not enough. Mental and spiritual transformation is more essential. What man should seek is not longevity in life but divinisation of life. He must develop his good qualities. The span of life is determined by Time. It is virtue that has to be nourished. The character and conduct of a person are based upon his qualities. Forgetting this truth, people go after changes in the external conditions of life. When the Yaksha asked Dharmaraja (in the Mahabharata) "Who is the guide and protector for the world," the latter replied: "Only the good man is the protector of the world." If there were no good people in the world, it would be a hapless world.

Students seek only material gains

Hence, today, even more than the teachers, it is the students who have to be exemplary and highminded. Teachers and students today do not live up to this ideal. Students are self-seeking and self-centred. Likewise, the teachers also are self-regarding and self-seeking. Students go to teachers only to get their desires fulfilled. When their wishes are satisfied, they feel content. Otherwise they are disappointed. They are even prepared to take up cudgels against teachers. The result is that harmonious relations between teachers and students do not develop. What is most deplorable today is the indifference of students to their mental development, because they are concerned only about their narrow personal interests. They seek only material gains. Vairagyam (renunciation of desires) is not a virtue that can be got by a message from others or as a result of prodding by someone. However many books you may read, or discourses you may listen to, or advice you may

receive, the spirit of renunciation has to emanate from the heart within you. It cannot come from outside. Buddha's father, Suddhodana, tried every conceivable means to prevent his son from developing detachment. But he could not prevent Buddha from renouncing the kingdom and family and leading the life of a renunciant. Our life is not based entirely on annam (food). It is based on the Atma (Spirit). One who regards food as the basis of life is an Ajnani (ignorant of the truth). The one who realises that the Spirit alone is everything in life is a Vijnani (the man of Higher Knowledge). Rantideva declared: "Oh Lord! The man who regards food as the summum bonum of life is a papi (sinner). The man who seeks a spiritual life is a gopi (a pure devotee of God).

Power of love alone confers true strength

Krishna Chaitanya once went to the temple of Jagannath, at Puri. He was a handsome youth at that time. He addressed Lord Jagannath in these terms: "Oh Lord! You are not merely Jagannath (the Lord of the world). You are the Lord of all the worlds, of the Cosmos, the Lord of Life, the Lord of the Spirit, the Lord of all embodied beings. You can accomplish anything. I do not seek from you the powers of yoga or physical strength. I seek only the power of your Love. Your love will give me all the strength I need. It will be my real strength." The power of love alone confers true strength. All other powers are of no avail. Hence the only strength we should seek from God is the strength of love. With that strength all the powers can be acquired. It is not sir (wealth) that we should desire. We should yearn for Hari. It is not a man of riches who is a Maharaja. They consider only those who have renounced everything as Maharaja (real rulers). It is not rolling in wealth that constitutes enjoyment. To be immersed in God's love and thoughts of God is the greatest enjoyment as well as true yoga. Chaitanya declared that: "The Lord is the indweller in my heart" because according to the Lord's own declaration, "My Atma abides in all beings as the indwelling Atma." It should not be imagined that the Lord is only this human body. He is present everywhere in the Cosmos. He is timeless, without beginning or end. You must try to develop the awareness of this omnipresent Divine in your heart.

All wealth is impermanent and unreal

Today we seek to accumulate all kinds of wealth by various activities. When these activities themselves are transient and evanescent, how can the wealth acquired by them be lasting? All of them are impermanent and unreal, as declared in the Gita. There is only one permanent and immutable reality, that is God. People are forgetting this truth. You may appear externally to be a great devotee and claim that you are doing many things to please God. But the truth cannot be hidden from God. You must consult your conscience and find out whether your devotion is genuine.

Annamacharya, the composer, sang many songs in which he hailed God as his sole refuge and support. Later he had the realisation that he had been trying to deceive God by his words. Then a great change came over him. We should realise that we cannot please God by our books or our songs or by our learning and scholarship. Nor is it possible to please God by intellectual eminence or clever tricks. Annamacharya declared: "The degree of everyone's (spiritual) attainment depends on the nature of his thoughts. Oh Lord! Whatever the feeling with which one envisages you, you appear to him within that form." Divine Grace is in proportion to the measure of your devotion. You can take from the vast ocean only the amount of water your vessel can contain.

According to the purity of our actions, we will get the fruits thereof. Our precious human birth can be redeemed only by developing human qualities and leading a righteous life. You (the students) must make good use of the golden opportunity you have got now. Besides worldly education, cultivate meditation on God and develop the inner vision. Become Raja yogis. Raja yoga implies doing your duty without concern for the results and dedicating yourself to the service of society and welfare of humanity. This is the penance which Emperor Janaka did.

Seek to experience the Divine internally

The foremost duty of students is to concentrate on their studies, behave in an

exemplary manner in all their relations with the outside world, and seek to experience the Divine internally as a spiritual discipline.

The first sutra (aphorism) in the Brahma Sutras declares: "Athhatho Brahma Jignasa" (Then thereafter seek to know the Brahman). In the four words of this sutra are contained the meaning of life. To begin with, the nature of creation has to be understood. We have to view creation in relation to its vilakshana (extraordinary magnificence). Next, our conduct has to be salakshana (harmonious) and orderly. We have to realise that the whole universe is permeated by the Vishnuswarupa (Divine). Our conduct should be such that no one can point a finger of criticism at us. It should be blameless and pure. If the heart is also pure, one will not get immersed in the body-consciousness. The body is doubtless an essential instrument for fight living and its health and fitness should be safeguarded. But our main concern should be to experience the Divine in everything in creation. If the latter is ignored, physical existence alone will have no meaning.

Karma, Dharma and Brahman

In this context, how is one to seek the knowledge of the Brahman? This quest can begin after one has acquired knowledge of Dharma - that is, after the stage of Dharma Jijnasa has been completed. When is Dharma Jijnasa accomplished? When Karma Jijnasa, the knowledge of Karma, has been mastered. There are thus three stages. Karma Jijnasa (Knowledge of Karma) Dharma Jijnasa (Knowledge of Dharma) and Brahma Jijnasa (Knowledge of Brahman). This means the progress is from Karma to Dharma and from Dharma to Brahman. Hence, one must have full faith in Karma (prescribed duties) and Dharma (the principle of right conduct). To observe Dharma, one has to ensure purity in thought, word and deed. Dharma is the basic goal of life. Sri Rama has been described as the very embodiment of Dharma. (Ramo Vighavan Dharmah).

Surrender yourselves to the Will of the Divine

Students should bear in mind the rules of right conduct that should govern

their life. They are passing through the most precious and sacred period in their lives. This should be well used. Dedicate all your thoughts and aspirations to God and surrender yourselves to the Will of the Divine. Surrender may appear to be difficult, but it is not so. It is in fact like keeping your money in the bank. You will be able to draw money from the bank whenever you need it. Similarly when you have entrusted all your concerns to Bhagavan, you can draw from Him whatever you need. What is it that stands in the way of this surrender? It is your ego and your possessiveness. You do not have sufficient trust in the Lord. People desperately cling to their possessions saying: "My money, My house" and so on. They forget that when you surrender to the Divine, you acquire His grace. Some time or the other your wealth will go. But once you have earned the grace of God, you can feel secure and satisfied. Bhagavan does not need your wealth. He is always a "Chittachora" (one who steals the heart), not a "Vithachora" (a stealer of wealth). It is you who have to change from "Vithachoras" to "Chittachoras."

21. Three In One

Date: 29 July 1988 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Guru Purnima

Man's foremost duty is to make The stream of Divine Love Flow throughout the world. It is not for living for himself That every man has been born; Only by having the noble thought That he has to serve the society Will he ennoble himself And achieve self-satisfaction. Of what avail is human birth If you cannot get rid of narrow feelings And resolve to serve all mankind? What greater message can the Guru give ? Embodiments of Divine Love! Forgetting his inherent eternal divinity, man today regards life as intended only for the pursuit of selfish aims. It is this divinity that should be manifested in man's life.

Creation is the projection of Divine Will. It is called Prakruthi (Nature). In every object emanating from Nature the Divine principle exists and must exist. It is to proclaim this immanence of the Divine that man has evolved. Consciousness in Nature is not purposeless. When it is filled with ego, it gets deformed. When it is turned towards the Atma, it becomes Divine. To whom is this consciousness to be dedicated? Not for selfish ends. It should be offered to the Divine. However, man today is caught up so much in selfish pursuits that he has degraded himself to the level of animals and is displaying demonic traits. At every step he is violating Dharma (Righteousness). Every desire is turning into greed. Large-heartedness is on the wane. Man's vision has lost the light of love. Truth is the casualty in man's speech. Spirituality has become a form of ostentation. Qualities like Kama (lust) and Krodha (anger) are having a free rein. Consciousness has become dormant in man. Human relationships have become mechanical and artificial. In fact, humanness has virtually disappeared.

Why the Divine incarnates

In this situation, what is it that man should seek? How can he attain peace and happiness? The first requisition is the cultivation of the love of God. The Puranas and the ancient sages have declared that the Divine incarnates to

punish the wicked and protect the good. This is not correct. The Divine incarnates to inculcate love in mankind and teach how love should be promoted and practised. Only when such love is developed will man be free from sorrow and trouble. Sins will be wiped out and fear will cease to haunt men. Where there is love of God, there will be fear of sin. When both of these are present, society will experience morality. Man's primary duty is to foster these three - Daiva Preeti, Papa Bheeti and Samaja Neethi (Love of God, Fear of Sin and Morality in society). This has to be done by developing Bhakti (devotion) on the basis of faith and love. Actions have to be performed with devotion. Love is devotion; the faith generated by love is jnana. The actions done on the basis of love and faith are karma. The combination of jnana and karma leads to upasana (worship). Upasana is the combined outcome of Bhakti, Jnana and Karma.

Develop love to experience bliss

The dualistic attitude is rampant in man today. Dualism can never eliminate sorrow. It can only increase it. It takes man far from bliss. Therefore, it is essential to cultivate the sense of ekatwa (oneness). Love alone signifies that oneness. For this love, there is no path, no reward, no discipline other than love itself. The more you develop this love the more you experience bliss. Today love is cribbed and confined. It is limited to one's kith and kin. Our love should transcend these narrow limits, embrace the whole world and extend love to every living being. Love is present in everyone in varying degrees. In Nature everything functions according to its specific qualities. "Swabhavastu pravarthathe," declares the Upanishad - (Everything behaves according to its specific nature). It cannot be altered or destroyed by anyone. This is the inherent attribute of Nature. It manifests the Divine principle, which is eternal, immutable and unchanging. To bring out this divine aspect in Nature and make it manifest, all things have been endowed with certain gunas (qualities). They are Satwa, Rajas and Tamas. To endow nature with these qualities, certain media are necessary. These have been described as Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara.

The Gunas and the Trinity

Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara are not entities with forms. The Trinity represent the deified expression of three qualities. The Puranas have misrepresented Brahma as a four-headed deity engaged in cosmic creation. This is not correct. In fact, the Trinity represents the three gunas. There are five elemental powers in Nature - Bhoomi, Apa, Agni, Vayu and Akasa (earth, water, fire, air and space). If you want to understand the process of creation, the order of describing the elements has to be reversed. Starting from Akasa (space), we have in succession air, fire, water and earth. Nature has to be understood in two ways: one, in relation to the process of creation; the other, in relation to everyday experience. Likewise, when the order of Brahma, Vishnu and Easwara is viewed in relation to creation, it has to be reversed; we have Easwara, Vishnu and Brahma in that order.

To begin with, what does the principle of Easwara signify? The Gita declares: "Easwarassarvabhootanam hriddese Arjuna thishtathi" (Easwara dwells, O Arjuna, in the heart region of all beings). Easwara, therefore means the Lord of the Heart. He illumines the heart of every being. This means that the Divine power of Easwara is present in every heart. The other name given to Easwara as Lord of the Heart is Atma.

The Supreme Guru

It is from the heart that the mind has emerged. The mind corresponds to the Vishnu principle. Vishnu means one who is all-pervasive. The mind is equally all-pervasive. "Manomoolam idam jagath," it is said. (The mind is the basis of the cosmos). The mind pervades the entire universe. Hence it signifies the Vishnu principle. Brahma is traditionally described as arising from the navel of Vishnu. It is from the mind that Vak (speech) has come. Vak is the embodiment of Brahma. Hence Brahma has, among other names, "Sabda Brahmamayee" (Sound as Brahman). Thus Easwara, Vishnu and Brahma symbolise the heart, the mind and the faculty of speech. The combination of all these three represents the Atma. Hence each of the three should be revered as the one supreme guru in three forms. Gurur-Brahma, Gurur-Vishnuh, Gurur-devo Maheswarah.

Gurussakshath Parabrahma Thasmai Shri Gurave namah. This sloka, which has a profound and sacred inner significance, has been given a distorted meaning, elevating the role of the ordinary teacher, fragmenting the Divine and missing the basic truth of oneness expressed in it. Gurur-Brahma: The Brahma referred to here is not the creator. It refers to Vak. Gurur-Vishnu refers to the all-perva-sive mind, which is present in all beings. This is the Vishnu principle. Gurur-devo Maheswarah: This refers to the seat of the heart. Gurus-sakshath Para Brahmah: This means that the unity of speech, mind and heart represents the Supreme Atma, which should be revered as Guru.

The Gunas and the Cosmos

What is the role of the Guru? It is the total removal of the darkness of ignorance. As long as there are the three gunas, there can be no freedom from darkness. It is only when one transcends the three gunas that one attains the state of the Guru. Alternatively, when one realises the unity of the three gunas, the message of the Guru is comprehended. The import of the unity of the three gunas is indicated in the Gita declaration: "Mamatma Sarvabhootha Atma" (My Atma is the indwelling spirit in all beings). That which dwells in all beings is the One only. "Eko vasi Sarvabhootha antaratma" (The One that is the Inner Spirit in all beings). Forgetting this basic principle of Oneness and lost in the wilderness of multiplicity, men are having no peace. It is on account of the varied functioning of the three gunas that the process of creation, growth and dissolution takes place. The three gunas are the primal source, the basis and the life-breath of the universe. They are responsible for the manifestations and transformations in Nature. The permutations and combinations of the three gunas in varying proportion account for the infinite diversity in the Cosmos.

The Trinity and their colours

Three colours have been ascribed to the three gunas. It is commonly believed that Vishnu represents the Satwa Guna. It is not so. The Satwa Guna is really the attribute of Easwara. It is not subject to Maya. In the state of Yoga nidra (yogic sleep) it acquires the chith-shakthi (the power of Awareness) and

appears as Suddha-Atma (the Pure Absolute). Hence Satwa represents the Easwara principle. Its colour is white. The Rajo Guna manifests itself in likes and dislikes. It used to be associated with Brahma. But this is wrong. It is a quality associated with Vishnu. Vishnu has been depicted as a deity bearing a conch, the discus, the mace and the lotus. Vishnu has also been described as Alankaraswarupa - one who is embellished by decorations. Vishnu also bears the name Viswambhara - one who protects and rules over the universe. As a Raja (ruler), he has the Rajo Guna. The colour of Rajo Guna is red. Then, there is Brahma. The Rajo Guna has been attributed to Brahma. This is incorrect. Brahma represents Tamo Guna. Tamo Guna is associated with Murkhatvam (irrationality) and andhakara (the darkness of ignorance). It is filled with Mamakara (the sense of possessiveness) and Abhimana (attachment). These two impulses account for creation. If there were no sense of 'I' and "Mine," the creative process would not go on. These two are the insignia of Tamo Guna, which is represented by black colour. White, red and black are the most important colours. All colours are merged in these three. Likewise, there are in the world, people with Satwa Guna, Rajo Guna or Tamo Guna and are distinguished by one or other of the three colours.

Five kinds of sadhana

What is the way to bring about unity in diversity of colours? The ancient sages, after deep enquiry, have indicated five different paths for achieving this objective. They are: Sathyavathi, Angavathi, Ananyavathi, Nidhanavathi and Swarupatmaka-jnanam. Sathyavathi is a kind of sadhana. This sadhana reveals the presence of the Divine in the subtle form everywhere, in everything, in the same manner in which butter is present in milk. The sadhana provides the proof for the view that God is the Universal Indweller abiding in all beings. No one should think that God dwells in a particular place or in a particular being. The purport of this sadhana is to make one realise that God is present in all beings and to act on that conviction.

Next is Angavathi Sadhana. There are the five elements: Space, air, fire, water and earth. The Divine is present in each of these elements in a specific form. In Akasa (space) the Divine is present in the form of sound as "Om."

Akasa is the base and the form of Pranava (Om) issues forth from Akasa. Vayu (air) has the power to sustain life. This power is represented by hydrogen and oxygen in the atmosphere. Oxygen has this Divine life sustaining potency. The Divine is thus present in air in the form of Prana (life-giving breath). This is the matter of daily experience for everyone. When somebody faints, the people around him are cleared so that he may have more air and breathe more freely. This is the recognition of the presence of the life-energy in air. In fire, the Divine is present as an alarm-signaller. Even when a fire is mild, people are careful. Consciously or otherwise, when we have to deal with fire, we develop a sense of cautiousness. In water, the Divine is present as Prajna (Constant Integrated Awareness). The scriptures declare: "Prajnanam Brahma" (Integrated Awareness is Brahman). This Prajna arises out of water. When a person becomes unconscious, water is sprinkled on him to restore consciousness.

The potencies present in the five elements

The fifth element is the Prithvi (earth). In the earth, chaitanya (consciousness) is present. The potencies present in the five elements - Prajna-shakthi (Integrated Awareness), Jagrata-shakthi (the awakening or warning potency), Chetana-shakthi (Consciousness), Sabda-shakthi (the potency of sound) and Jiva-shakthi (life-sustaining potency) are all different forms of the Divine power. Those who are engaged in the Angavathi sadhana regard the five elements as manifestations of the Para matma (Supreme) and offer worship to them. The third sadhana is Anyavathi. In this sadhana the Divine is worshipped on the basis of certain insignia in a particular form like that of Vishnu or Shiva. Shiva, for instance, is envisaged as a deity with the trident, the damaru, three eyes and is worshipped in this form. Similarly Rama is pictured as one bearing the Kodanda bow and Krishna as the Lord with the flute, wearing a peacock feather on his head. In this manner each deity is distinguished by certain special insignia for purposes of worship.

Nidhanavathi is the common type of sadhana

Next is Nidhanavathi. This is the common type of sadhana practised by most

people today. It comprises the nine types of worship practised by devotees: Sravanam, Kirtanam, Vishnusmaranam, Padasevanam, Vandanam, Archanam, Dasyam, Sneham and Atmanivedanam.

The fifth sadhana is Swarupatmaka Jnanam. This sadhana aims at achieving the realisation that every individual is the embodiment of the Divine and hence the Divine is present in everyone. The Gita declares: "All feet are His; all eyes, heads and mouths are His." That means, all human forms are Divine. True education should enable one to realise his inherent Divinity. We speak often about prayer. Prayer does not mean petitioning to God. Prayer is an index of the experience of Atmic bliss. It is a means of sharing this bliss, spreading it all around, being immersed in that bliss. Prayer must come from the heart. Prayer that is not heartfelt is utterly useless. The Lord will accept a heart without words. But He will not accept words and prayers that do not come from the heart. This is why God is described as Hridayesa (the Lord of the Heart). It is only when you have faith in this that you will be able to manifest your divinity. Regard the body as a temple in which the Trinity Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara - reside. There are no separate places where Brahma, Vishnu or Easwara dwell like Vaikunta or Kailas. These are the delusions born out of ignorance. God is inside you, outside you, around you. You have to recognise this truth and live according to it. Chittibabu (who had addressed the gathering earlier) referred to persons who are racked by doubts all the time. As long as you are filled with doubts, you cannot experience peace or happiness. We must perform all actions in the firm belief that "we are God and God is in us." We must experience this sense of ekatwam (oneness).

From unity to Divinity

What is the use of all the sadhanas you are doing? Only when the underlying unity of the Satwa, Rajo and Tamo Gunas is recognised can you experience the bliss of Self-realisation. For realising the Atma (Self) there is no need to go to any place. Do not imagine that the Divine comes from somewhere to give you darshan. What need is there for One who is Omnipresent to go from place to place? The Divine is beyond coming and going. Realise the importance of

unity. To achieve unity you have to cultivate purity. Where you have purity, you realise Divinity. Today you have no unity, purity or divinity. You have only community in the narrow sense of "mine" and "thine." You must develop fraternal feelings, without regard to barriers of race, religion, caste and class. When you develop this sense of spiritual kinship, the nation will progress and prosper. In the name of Guru Pournima, you perform some pujas for some persons and waste your lives. There is only one Guru. He is God. That Guru is within you. You are seeking the Guru all over the world. Your gunas (qualities) are in you in the form of Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara, and can protect you, elevate you or ruin you. When you act righteously and pursue the right path, they will protect you by their Vishnutva (Divine potency).

Do not give up God; realise God is one

Sin or God have no separate existence. Our actions and thoughts assume the forms of sin or merit as the case may be. The royal road to happiness and the removal of sorrow is right action. The essence of all religions, all teachings and spiritual paths is only one thing: Love. Develop that Divine Love.

Above all, whatever your difficulties, whatever the ordeals you have to undergo, in any situation, do not give up God. God is One. Whether you are affluent or destitute, whether you are a scholar or an ignoramus, whatever troubles you may be faced with, whatever spiritual practices you may adopt, whether you are regarded as a sinner or a saint, "Do not give up God and realise God is One."

Man suffers from two types of ills, physical and mental; the one caused by the disequilibrium of the three tempers of Vatha, Pitha and Sleshma and the other caused by the disequilibrium of the three Gunas, Sathwa, Rajas and Thamas. One peculiar fact about these two: types of illnesses is that the cultivation of virtue cures both. Physical health is a prerequisite for mental health and mental health ensures physical health! An attitude of generosity, of fortitude in the presence of sorrow and loss, a spirit of enthusiasm to do

good, to be of service to the best of one's capacity; these build up the mind as well as the body. The very joy derived from service reacts on the body and makes you free from disease. The body and the mind are closely interrelated.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

22. The Great and The Good

Date: 07 August 1988 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

'Tis rare in this world To get the company of the good; The wicked are a plenty. Granite stones are everywhere But you have to search for diamonds. Differences in beliefs and cultural practices among men are well-known. Although climatic conditions may be the same in the various regions of the world, the ways of living and practices of people are diverse. This diversity is inherent in Nature. It is not a defect but an ornament. This diversity is not to be seen among birds and beasts. That is because they do not have the power to think. Man alone has this capacity. Whatever one's education, position or intelligence, every man desires two things. He wants to achieve greatness and wishes to be a good man. No one wishes to be lowly and despised. What is the difference between a great man and a good man? Greatness is based on worldly attributes. The great man is able to attract people. The good man tries to sustain himself by his own efforts. The difference between the two has to be clearly recognised. The great man enjoys many luxuries and amenities. He has thus many physical comforts. The good man experiences the bliss of the Divine. Greatness has a Rajasic quality. Goodness bears a Satwic quality. Good persons should try to develop Satwic qualities. Greatness is often associated with persons who have likes and dislikes, attachments and hatred and who have an inflated ego. Goodness expresses itself in pure joy and unselfish service to others. Dharma (right conduct) is like a mirror. It reveals to you what is your duty towards your parents, your friends and others. How you discharge your duties will determine how you yourself fare later in life.

Four kinds of temples

There are four kinds of temples: One, Vidyalaya (the Temple of Learning); second, Bhojanalaya (the Temple of Food); third, Vaidyalaya (the Temple of Healing) and Devalaya (the Temple of God). All the four are equally places of worship for man. But because of the infirmities in human nature, they are not all treated alike. People go to a Bhojanalaya (hotel), eat whatever food they like and come out happy. They go to a Vaidyalaya (hospital), relate their

illness to the doctor, and receive the prescribed medicines from him. With this the purpose of going to the hospital is accomplished. If you ask for eatables in a hospital, will you get them? In a hospital you can only ask for medical treatment. When you go to a Vidyalaya (an educational institution) you must seek only knowledge in the subjects you are interested in. When people go to a Devalaya (temple of God) they do not always conduct themselves properly. In a temple you should be concerned only with worship and not think of anything else. Instead of concentrating the mind on the Divine, the mind is allowed to wander hither and thither and think about useless mundane affairs. With the result that people tend to forget that if they secure the grace of God all other things will be accomplished easily. Having come to Prasanthi Nilayam, some persons are developing various differences and doubts and forming undesirable associations and contacts. Thereby both time and resources are wasted. Time is precious and should be profitably used.

Correct your faults and sanctify your life

Education, wealth and strength are necessary for everyone. But the value of each of them depends on the way you use it. When a good man gets the benefit of education, it ripens into wisdom and makes his life an ideal one. But when a bad man gets educated, he gets immersed in disputations and education itself gets polluted. When a good man gets wealth, it is used for charity and righteous causes. He redeems his life by sacrifice. But wealth in the hands of a bad person promotes arrogance and pride and ultimately causes his downfall. Strength in a good man enables him to help the weak and serve the society. Strength in a wicked person encourages him to cause harm to people and harass the weak. Thus education, wealth and physical prowess derive their value from the way they are used. It is only when the individual is transformed and becomes good that society can be changed for the better. Men must engage themselves in a constant process of self-correction, instead of seeking to find fault in others. If, instead of searching for a hundred faults in others, one corrects any one of his own faults, he would be sanctifying his life.

Make no room for jealousy and egoism

Before you undertake any activity, you must examine whether it is right or wrong, good or bad. When such an enquiry is being made, sometimes an evil force enters. It is jealousy. It clouds your vision. This jealousy has an evil companion called Ahamkara (egoism). This ego is constantly seeking to dominate the body and the mind. These two evil elements are always seeking to establish themselves, especially in the minds of the young. Every effort must be made to make no room for them.

Bhakti (devotion) is essential for experiencing Ananda (Atmic Bliss). Bhakti is the source of man's true shakthi (power). This power endows man with various abilities. Through this power man can develop ultimately virakti (detachment). When detachment grows, man achieves mukti (liberation). Mukti (liberation) is not a special state or object. It is the gradual elimination of all desires. Desires arising from Kama (lust), Krodha (anger) and Lobha (greed) have to be reduced as much as possible. Students should make special efforts to get rid of these three evil qualities. They must widen their vision and develop the spirit of oneness with all living beings. This may not be easy to realise but through steady practice and spiritual discipline, it can be achieved.

Like underground water, the Divine is there, in everyone, remember. The Lord is Sarva-bhutantaratma, Sarvavyapi. He is the Atma of every being. He is in you as much as in everyone else. He is not more in a rich being or bigger in a fat being. His spark illumines the cave of heart of everyone. The sun shines equally on all; His Grace is falling equally on all. It is only you that erect obstacles that prevent the rays of His Grace from warming you.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

23. The Divine and The Devotee

Date: 26 August 1988 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Onam

Bhagavan had slipped in His bathroom early in the morning on Saturday (August 20) and an XRay picture taken by the doctors revealed a fracture in the hipbone. Although the doctors had advised four weeks of complete bed rest, Swami declared that he needed no rest and would carry on His work. Swami, however, had to refrain from giving the usual darshans for the next few days.

On the morning of the 26th, the Onam programme began with Vedic chants and folk dances by students of the Srisailam Vidya Vihar. The students: band greeted Bhagavan when He gave darshan from the balcony of the Prashanthi Mandir to the inexpressible delight of the thousands of devotees who had gathered in the Mandir compound. Hundreds of overseas devotees were also present. Beginning His discourse with a call to men to realise their inherent Divinity, Bhagavan devoted a good part of His discourse to an account of what happened to Him on Saturday and cleared all the doubts and apprehensions felt by the devotees regarding His ailment. The entire gathering heard with rapt attention Swami's memorable discourse, which provided not only new insights into His Avataric mission but revealed to them how they should overcome "the ills which flesh is heir to." Bhagavan's discourse delivered on the occasion is given below.

Even the Divine has to submit to Nature's laws

The laws governing Nature were made by God and everyone is subject to them, whether he is a millionaire or pauper. The earth has its power of attraction. If a man slips he is bound to fall and may get hurt. The body is subject to the laws of Nature. When anything happens in the course of Nature, the Divine can face it by self-control. The ordinary devotee cannot do so.

Various rumours and conjunctures were going round among devotees after I

could not give darshan for four days from Saturday. It was My usual practice to bolt My room after giving namaskars to devotees at night. In the morning after finishing my ablutions, I would open the door. On Saturday morning I slipped on a piece of soap in the bathroom and fell on My back. The injury I sustained was a natural consequence of the fall - as natural as heat generated by the fire. Whoever sustains a fall, whether it is Swami or anybody else, will suffer from the consequent injury. Even the Divine has to submit Himself to His own laws governing Nature. In this process occasional mishaps may occur. When I slipped and fell, the hipbone had been affected. By My willpower I got up and opened the room. Then Radhakrishna (My attendant) and the doctors came. There was no need for the doctors to see Me. I have to control whatever happens to Me. This is My example to the world.

Pain is mitigated by diverting the mind

This kind of equanimity cannot be felt by anyone except the Divine. There is nothing beyond the power of the Divine. Although there was excruciating pain on account of the injury, through selfcontrol. My mind did not think about it. If the mind had been dwelling on the pain, the pain would have been greater. The best medicine for the pain is diverting the mind. Every time the body turned, there was a kind of shock. I was wholly engaged in reading the numerous letters from the devotees and was oblivious to the state of the body. "Why should not Swami cure Himself?" I was not as selfish as that. When others are injured do I relieve them immediately? Everything has a time factor. One has to put up with it for the duration of the trouble. The pain can be mitigated by prayer and by diverting the mind. The body is subject to ailment from time to time. It comes and goes. If I rid myself of any ailment instantaneously, people may comment: What a selfish person is Sai Baba? He cures His illness immediately. But He does not remove the pain of others. Whether it is your bodily ailment or somebody else's, attempts can be made to treat it, to teach the sufferer how to control the mind, and strengthen the power of resistance. But it cannot be got rid of the same instant. The time required for healing has to be allowed. During the past four days My mind did not bother about the injury. I did not give up any of My normal activities. I did not come out only because of the entreaties of devotees.

"My Devotees' joy is My joy"

Sometimes I take on the ailments of the others. I do this for My own delight and not out of any external pressure. But in every case of illness, control of the mind is needed to bear with it. This is what every one of you should bear in mind. This is the message of My life. I am exercising various kinds of self-control to serve as an example to you. My love and kindness for the devotees were there in abundance. Otherwise, I would not have stayed on, when the doctors were keen to take Me to Bangalore. When thousands of devotees from Kerala are coming here, it is impossible for Me to go away. I will not go. The joy of the devotees is My joy. I have no exclusive joy of My own. I have no such desire. Why should I be concerned about this body? You must take note of this important fact. This body is not Mine. It is yours and therefore I have no concern with it. Your bodies are Mine. Do not give room in any circumstance, at any time, for apprehensions about what may befall Swami. Nothing can do Me any harm. Occasionally there may be troubles which are incidental to the nature of the body. But these are passing clouds. If you realise the true nature of Divinity, you will not feel that Swami is experiencing great pain and that He should take some medicine. Out of their love for Swami, devotees are appealing to Swami to take rest. But I don't need any rest. Karmanyeva Adhikarasthe (you are entitled to do only your duty). That is My message to you. Although I have been told by doctors not to move, I get up at 5 in the morning, attend to My ablutions, and take My bath as usual. All of you should forget your troubles and try to be as happy as possible. Rest assured that Swami has no troubles and no harm can come to Him. Ills of the body come and go.

Nothing can harm Swami

As I fell My head hit the mosaic floor with a thud. Dr. Krishnamurthy wanted to have My head X-Rayed. I told him: "No one can know My head has been injured. There is no need for XRaying it." My only sadness is that I have not been able to give joy to My devotees. When you know that Swami has the capacity to control anything, why do you think that I am suffering? You think

only about Swami's pain in relation to the body, but do not think about the Atma. You must have the firm conviction that nothing can harm Swami. Concentrate on Namasmarana, constant remembrance of the name of the Lord. There is no use in doing japa and meditation for the sake of Swami. It appears artificial. What you have to bear in mind is that no trouble can affect Swami now or in the future and that everything is part of My play.

Such things happen to the Divine - they come and go. I take no account of them. Here is another example of how the Divine works. The fact that I have been standing here for such a long time is itself a miracle. The legs have been strained to the limit. There has been considerable pain. But in the joy of addressing you I am unaware of the pain. Likewise, in all the troubles and sufferings, you must turn the mind away from them. It is to teach you this lesson that I chose to speak to you today.

At all times and in all situations recite the name of the Lord with devotion. Live in harmony and love with everyone. The Lord's name is sweeter than nectar. Let the Lord's sweet name dance on your tongue. Do not have any anxiety on My account. The devotees from Kerala, though they have missed Swami's darshan on three days, should not suffer any pain on My account. They should think that whatever has happened is for their good.

If you have the Grace of God, no graham can harm you;
maleficent influences even from the most powerful combination of planets
with which the astrologers terrify you will disappear in a trice.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

24. Live In Truth and Love

Date: 26 August 1988 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Onam

The moon illumines the night. The sun illumines the whole world during the day. But, Dharma (Righteousness) illumines the three worlds. A virtuous son sanctifies his family. But not his family alone. His good character shines as an example to the world. To recognise the inherent divinity in man and lead a sanctified life is the essence of human existence. The body, the mind and the Ahamkara (ego) together constitute the human entity. Action, Being and Knowing are the three basic aspects of human life. These three together manifest the human estate. It is the Atma principle that reveals both the differences and the unity of these three aspects. It reveals the uniqueness as well as the divinity of the human existence. Man has to realise that the body and the mind are the expressions of the Divine Atma. The mind has four levels of functioning: Manas (the mental), Buddhi (the intelligence), Chitha (the Will) and the Ahamkara (the Ego). Although it is the body that performs the actions, it is the mind that cognises and the Reality is the Atma. There is a power that encompasses all the three. At the levels of thoughts and doubts, the mind is said to function. At the level of discrimination, the Buddhi (intellect) functions. The intellect indicates what is right and wrong. This is also an aspect of the mind. Constant thinking is the function of the Chitha (the Will). Then, there is the Atma. It is all-pervading. The ego - the 'I' arises from the Atma. All the four are different forms of the mind. The different terms indicate the different functions. Vedanta has declared that the mind is the cause of either bondage or liberation.

Prajnana is Brahman

There is a "Master" who presides over these four expressions of the mind. That is known as Prajna. Prajna is often equated with the intellect, the intelligence, the knowledge or wisdom. But this is not correct. These latter qualities are transient and impermanent. But Prajna is not impermanent. Vedanta has declared that Prajna shines in the body, the mind and the Atma (the individual soul). "Prajnanam Brahma" declares the Upanishad. (Supreme

Consciousness is Divinity).

There is no difference between Prajnana and Brahman or Truth. Prajnana is described as Constant Integrated Awareness. This Prajna is present in all human beings. How can a man who has not understood his own true human nature understand divinity? The first stage for man to realise is that he is no ordinary being. There are in man, Sathya (Truth), Jnana (Wisdom) and Anantham (the Infinite). "Sathyam, Jnanam, Anantham Brahma" the ancient sages declared thus the attributes of Brahman. The Truth referred to here is not about worldly facts. It refers to Transcendental Truth, which remains the same at all times and in all places. The presence of these three in man has to be recognised. Only then will his life get sanctified. Then the distinction between "mine" and "thine" ceases. It becomes possible to lead a life based on truth.

Land of three Avatars of Vishnu

Emperor Bali's life illustrates this truth. Kerala is a region which is hallowed by the advent of three Avatars of Vishnu Narasimha, Vamana and Parasurama. Siddhasramam is a sacred place in Kerala. Because of its location there, Kerala enjoyed supreme peace in olden days. During the reign of Bali, the grandson of Prahlada, the people enjoyed peace and plenty. They were free from disease and poverty. Keralites were known for their hospitality. They gave freely with joy whatever anyone sought from them. The Lord assumed the Vamana form to test the greatness of Bali. Vamana was received with due ceremony and asked what he wanted. The young lad asked for three feet of land to be measured by his feet. Bali asked him why he asked for such a trivial thing. He could have asked for greater things. At that time, Bali's guru Sukracharya warned him that the young dwarf was none other than Vishnu and that if he did not go back on his promise, he would lose everything. But Bali did not heed his Guru's words. He was not prepared to go back on his promise, even if it meant the complete loss of his kingdom and the life itself. Bali told his guru that there can be nothing greater than making a gift to the Lord of the Universe when He came as a supplicant stretching his hand for a gift.

Such was the greatness of Bali, because of whom Kerala enjoyed the bounties of nature. Kerala is a land of beauty, with its palm trees, plantain orchards and dense forests. There is a saying: "Beauty is Bliss. Bliss is the nectar of life."

Bali's life should be an example

Kerala, a small State, has achieved permanent greatness as the place associated with three Avatars. Hence the heart of every person should be filled with the consciousness of God. Today, because of political rivalries, moral values and spiritual pursuits have declined. It is all the more heartening to note that, despite this decline, Onam is celebrated as a national festival by everyone in Kerala from the distant past to the present times. Bali's example should inspire Keralites to adhere to truth and practice love of all human beings. Onam should be celebrated not by feasts and festivities but by practising the ideals exemplified by Emperor Bali.

Devotion to one's motherland is as important as devotion to God. Honesty and integrity are essential for the bright future of the individual. Likewise, national character and patriotism are necessary for the welfare of the country. When integrity and patriotism are developed in an individual his vision becomes broad and his outlook balanced

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

25. Role Of The Avatar

Date: 03 September 1988 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Krishna Jayanthi

Marvellous are the beauties presented by Nature. They are sacred as well as wondrous. What Nature promotes or destroys, what it bestows or takes away are equally amazing. It is not easy to understand these marvels.

Man is born in this world but does not realise the purpose of his birth. Forgetting this purpose, he regards himself as the master of Nature and in his insane conceit forgets his own divinity. He is unable to recognise that it is Nature that provides or takes away, that blesses or punishes, that Nature's sway is extensive. Nature presides over every aspect of life. In his deep involvement with mundane concerns man tends to forget his divinity and what he owes to Nature. All things in creation are equal in the eyes of God. God is immanent in all of them. Hence God and Nature should not be regarded as distinct entities. They are inseparably interrelated like the object and its image. Man, however, looking at Nature externally, considers it as purely physical and intended to provide the amenities he seeks. Nature is the best teacher for man. Every object, every individual, is offering lessons of various kinds to man every moment. This truth was recognised by Bharathiyas from the earliest times. It is the primary characteristic of the sacred Bharathiya culture. From a stone to a diamond, from an ant to an elephant, from a simpleton to a sage, everything and every being in Bharath was regarded as a manifestation of the Divine. Every object was considered worthy of worship. That was why they sanctified a stone image and worshipped it.

Divine love should be extended to all beings

Bharath is the land in which the tender Tulasi plant and the giant banyan tree were worshipped with equal devotion. Cows, horses, elephants and other animals were treated as sacred objects of worship. Even ants were considered worthy of care and protection and rice flour or sugar was offered to them every day. Crows and eagles, dogs and monkeys were deemed worthy of

worship. Not realising the deeper truth underlying this attitude to various objects in creation, ignoramuses choose to regard this worship as a silly superstition. This is wholly wrong. Bharath considered that the expression of Divine love should not be confined to human beings but should be extended to all beings. This is the great ideal that Bharath has held out to the world. The profound secret of this knowledge and understanding has not been grasped by any country. Bharath is the land which has upheld this sacred spiritual truth and adhered to this vision of the Divine.

The sacred aspect of Indian culture

The Gita has declared: "Adveshta Sarvabhoothanam" (Bear no ill-will towards any living being). Hatred towards anyone is hatred for God. The scriptures have also declared: "Sarvajiva namaskaram Kesavam Pratigachchati" (The salutation that you offer to anyone reaches the Divine). Few outsiders can understand or appreciate this sacred aspect of Indian culture. Even many Indians do not realise the purity and divinity which characterise Bharathiya culture. Bharath has always proclaimed that despite variations in names and forms, there is a unity that underlies the diversity in creation. Because Nature is a reflection of the Divine, its laws cannot be transgressed by anyone. Man, who has taken birth to realise his own true nature, instead of seeking to understand the truth about the cosmos, is lost in the pursuit of material possessions. He does not realise, that the human body made up of five basic elements, is bound to perish. This temporary, perishable body should be regarded only as a means for realising the eternal Reality. The body should be considered as an iron safe, in which the precious jewels of good qualities and good actions are kept. It is these qualities that should be cherished. If today, the state of the world appears deplorable, it is because man's actions and conduct are not good. Men should return to the ways of righteousness and lead a good and godly life.

Human birth is the result of Karma

God is not a separate entity. Man is the image of God. "Daivam manusha rupena," (God appears in human form) declare the scriptures. God has no

separate form.. It is to show to humanity how human lives can be divinised that Avatars come from time to time. I have often declared that God does not come down as Avatar to relieve individuals of their troubles and sorrow and to confer joy and happiness on them. Difficulties, troubles and worries come in the natural course as a consequence of past actions. The Gita says: "Karmanubandheeni manushya loke" (Human beings are bound by Karma in the world). As human birth is the result of Karma, there can be no escape from the consequences of Karma. As is your action, so is the reaction to it. When you stand before a mirror and offer salutation before the mirror, the salutation is reflected by the image. If you address harsh words to the mirror, the harshness is reflected by the image in the same manner. It will be evident from this example that the fruits of our actions are determined by the nature of those actions. Bharathiyas have held fast to three beliefs: The law of Karma, the concept of Avatars, and the doctrine of rebirth. The law of Karma means that there is no escape from the consequences of your actions. The Karma doctrine lays down that one has to experience the results of his actions. The concept of Avatar implies faith in God and in the divinity inherent in man. Man does not merely mean the human form. Man is distinguished from other animals and creatures by his capacity to judge what is permanent and what is transient, and his ability to recognise the past, the present and the future. Man alone has the capacity to comprehend this threefold nature of time. Man can ruminate over the past and speculate about the future. He can experience the present. However, man should not worry about what is past. The present is the product of the past. What has happened is beyond recall. It is futile to worry about the future because it is uncertain. Concern yourself only with the present. By "present" we may be thinking only of this moment. But this is not the present as Divinity sees it. For the Divine, "present" is what is "omnipresent."

"No thought of My future"

This means that both the past and the future are present in what is, because it is the result of the past, the seed of the future. Because man has no firm faith in the Omnipresence of the Divine, he worries himself about the past, the present and the future. For the Divine, these three categories of time do

not exist.

The question has arisen in the minds of some devotees: As Swami is aware of what will happen in the future, should He not have anticipated and avoided the slip in the bathroom? I know all about the future. But I think only of the future of others and not of My future. You must note this fact carefully: "Karthavyam yogam uchyathe." (Doing your duty is Yoga). I think only of what I have to do at any particular moment. Some things might happen. They come and go. Happenings in the world are like passing clouds. These incidents give rise to certain experiences. Students should take note of these experiences.

The purpose of Avatar

When the Divine comes down as Avatar - whether it be as Rama or as Krishna, Matsya (fish), Varaha (boar) or Vamana (dwarf) - it is only for one purpose. You recognise only the momentary results of the advent. But you should note that the Divine comes as Avatar only to teach mankind the truth about love. "Oh man, it is because you lack love and are filled with selfishness that the world is plunging in so much conflict and chaos. It is only when you develop love and the spirit of sacrifice that you will realise the divinity that is in the human." The man who has no spirit of thyaga (sacrifice) will be a prey to all ills. A man without love is a living corpse. It is love and sacrifice which make man divine. Love alone is the fruit of love. Love is its own witness. There is no trace of self-interest in it. Because love exists, for its own sake, it has no fear. It is to teach humanity the way of love that Avatars come in the world. The world displays the diversity that has emanated from the One. The Divine demonstrates the unity that subsumes the diversity. Recognition of this "Unity in Diversity" can be learnt only from the Divine. The Krishna Avatar has been described in various ways: As a sport of the Divine in human form, as an ideal for the world, as a sacred ruler, as a manifestation of the Atma. The Divine comes as Avatar to proclaim the pure, unsullied and disinterested love of devotees towards God. People may consider that the Avatar's activities include punishment of the wicked, protection of the good, weeding out of unrighteousness and restoration of righteousness. This is how they may

look at the Avatar's doings. But that is not the way the Lord sees things. There is nothing bad in God's view. Hence there should be no hatred or ill-will towards any being. It is only when you love all, that you can be said to love God.

Think of the Divine at all times

The devotee's feelings determine his concept of God. When a devotee prays, "Oh Lord! Don't you see my sufferings? Don't you hear my lamentations? Can't you see the troubles I am going through?" the Lord appears to him only as a pair of eyes. The full form of the Lord will not appear to him.

The state of mind of spiritual aspirants today is like this: when they are in meditation they appear like Yogis. After the meditation is over, they return to their daily activities and are immersed in mundane pleasures. This is not the way of life preached by Krishna. He declared: "Sathatham Yoginah" (Be Yogis at all times). What we witness today is: "Yogis in the morning, bhogis (epicureans) during the day and rogis (sick) at night." How can such persons ever remain Yogis at all times? You have to think of the Divine at all times, in all situations in whatever you see, do, say or experience. To pray to God when you are comfortable and to blame God when you are in trouble reflects your selfish and narrow outlook. You cannot know what may happen at any time, in any situation. What is bound to happen cannot be prevented. Hence you must regard anything that happens as a gift from God. It is only when you develop such faith and love for God that true spirituality can grow. You should not allow worldly attachments to multiply without limit. Attachment only to the Divine, which transcends all other attachments, is permanent. Wherever you go, whatever you see, develop the sacred feeling that only what pleases God, delights you. The body is only an instrument. It is the Divine that animates it and makes it move about and experience things. Those, who cannot recognise this truth, go about proclaiming that they are devotees, that they are close to God and have renounced all attachments.

The Gopikas' devotion

Sri Krishna once enacted a small drama to demonstrate how the devotion of the illiterate cowherdesses of Brindavan was deeper and fuller than that of Rukmini or Sathyabhama or the sage Narada. He pretended that he was suffering from a severe headache and that only the application of the dust from the feet of a devotee would cure Him. Neither Rukmini or Sathyabhama nor Narada were willing to offer the dust from their feet as they felt that they would be condemned to live in hell if they allowed the dust of their feet to pollute the Divine head of Krishna. When Narada approached the Gopikas, they had no hesitation in collecting the dust of their feet, because their only concern was to relieve their beloved Krishna of His pain instantly without caring about what happened to them as a consequence. Even though they were warned by Narada about the dire consequences of their action, they told him that they were not concerned about the worst that might happen to them if only their Krishna would be relieved of pain.

The ways of the Divine

Krishna's pain was gone the moment the Gopikas offered the dust of their feet. Narada realised that the totally unselfish devotion exhibited by the Gopikas was Parama Bhakti (the highest form of devotion). The Divine exists in everything, in every being, in every foot as well as in the dust on the foot. He is also in the one whom you may consider as a thief. The troubles besetting the world today cannot be removed except through the promotion of unity. This unity can be promoted only through love. There is nothing that cannot be accomplished through love. Love is God. God is Love. Live in Love. Here is an illustration on how love works. For the past fifteen days I could not move about without feeling a "shock." Today when I came out and saw the happy faces of the devotees I was filled with joy and forgot the state of my body altogether. This is how the Divine works to experience your love and fill you with love in return. There can be no joy where there is no love. The Gopikas were filled with such love that they saw Krishna in all that they did.

Fill your hearts with love

When you fill your hearts with love, you have no ill-will towards anyone.

Cultivate the faith that the Divine is in everyone. Surrender to the Divine in a spirit of dedication. The symbolic meaning in the relations between Krishna and the Gopikas is this: The heart is the Brindavan (in each person). One's thoughts are like the Gopikas. The Atma is Krishna. Bliss is the sport of Krishna. Everyone must convert his heart into a Brindavan and consider the indwelling Atma as Krishna. Every action should be regarded as a Leela of Krishna. Gokulashtami is celebrated by offering to Krishna Paramannam (rice cooked with jaggery). The real meaning of Paramannam is Annam (food) relating to Param (Supreme). Paramannam is sweet. Your love must be sweet. What you offer to God must be your sweet love. Your love must be allembracing. This is the foremost message of the Avatar.

26. Devotion Is The Panacea

Date: 15 September 1988 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Ganesh Chaturthi

God is without a second. He is Infinite. It is impossible to measure Him or compare Him with anything. He is omnipresent. Comparison is possible only when there is a second object. The Vedas declare: "Ekam eva Advitheeyam." (One alone without a second). The Divine willed: "Ekoham Bahusyam." (I am One; I shall become many). By His Will the Divine manifested Himself in the many. All religions have accepted this truth. The Bible declares: "God created man in His own image." From the One, the manifold cosmos has emerged. Only man has been endowed with the capacity to control Nature. With the growth of knowledge, the animal nature in man has diminished and he has been able to develop culture. God comes in human form. As the saying goes: "Daivam manusha ruupena" (The Divine appears in human form). Hence man should not be regarded as a mere product of Nature, a creature of the senses and the physical elements. In terms of the corporeal body, all human beings may appear alike. But their thoughts may be different. It is the uniqueness of the Bharathiya culture that it has maintained an unbroken and unchanging continuity through the 'ages. Bharathiya culture bears testimony to the eternal verity that is unaffected by the tides of time or history and remains unchanged during creation or dissolution. This truth is the undercurrent of Sanathana Dharma (the Ancient Code of Righteousness).

Pre-eminence of Bhakti

Bhakti (Devotion) occupies the pride of place in Bharathiya culture. Devotion cannot be confined to observances like worship, pilgrimages or going to temples. These are merely actions indicative of devotion. There is a power which provides a basic impulse for these actions. That is the love of God. Bhakti means Paripurna Prema (total love). This love is motiveless. Love based on a motive cannot be real love. As a river seeks to join the ocean by a natural impulse, as a creeper winds itself naturally around a tree to climb upwards, the devotee's love is a spontaneous expression of the yearning to realise God, free from worldly desires of any kind. The Bhagavatham has

expounded the nature of this sacred love from days of yore. To experience the presence of the Divine, the devotee's love flows as a pure selfless stream. It proclaims that it needs no one except God. It is oblivious to all other things. It regards the Divine as One that pervades everything. God is in every object in the cosmos. All names and forms are derived from God. But by regarding them as distinct entities, man becomes a prey to many difficulties.

Ego is the cause of man's bondage

Man's ego is the cause of this divisive attitude. The man who is wrapped up in his ego cannot recognise God. When ego goes, God appears. When the ego merges in the Atma, there is mukti (liberation). The Aham (ego) arises from the Atma. From the ego, thought emerges and thought is the source of Vak (speech). All these have emerged from the Atma. It is only when the ego goes that the truth of the Atma can be realised. It is ego that is the cause of man's bondage. The entire cosmos has emanated from the Atma, is sustained by the Atma and ultimately merges in the Atma. This truth is expressed in a sutra (aphorism) in the Brahma Sutras: "Thath Ja-la-an" (From That it is born, merges in It and is sustained by It). Man also comes from the Brahman, grows in the Brahman and merges in the Brahman. Nara (man) is like the water bubble that arises in the water, grows in it and merges in it. Narayana is like the water. The aim of spiritual sadhana is to make man recognise the unity that subsumes creation and enable him to realise the bliss in oneness with the Divine through the means of Karma, Upasana and Jnana (rituals, meditation and spiritual wisdom). Although the cosmos may appear multifarious, there is one thing that is its basis. A seed that is planted grows into a tree with numerous branches, leaves, flowers and fruits. Wherefrom did this variety come? All these exist potentially in a subtle form in the seed. That is the significance of Sri Krishna's declaration in the Gita: "Beejam Mam Sarvabhoothanam." (I am the seed in all beings). Just as from a seed a tree can come, with innumerable branches, flowers and fruits, with a seed in each fruit, from the single seed of the Divine the infinite variety of Prakruthi (Nature) has emerged. The relations between beings in the cosmos can be compared to the relations between the branches in a tree. Our feelings may be compared to flowers and life itself may be compared to a fruit. In each

being them is a seed of the Divine.

Mark of Parama Bhakti

The cowherdesses of Brindavan exemplified, in their devotion, the devotee's quest for oneness with the Divine. They saw Krishna in every manifestation in Nature and welcomed association with it, whether it was a tree, or a mountain or the ocean. They wished to be always near Krishna, to sport with Him, listen to the music of His flute and end their lives with Him. This is the mark of Parama Bhakti (Supreme Devotion). Everyone should strive through sadhana to develop such devotion. One should not adore God when he is happy and blame when he is in trouble.

Apart from the Gopis in the Bhagavatham, it is the eldest of the Pandavas, Dharmaraja, who is an exemplar of Parama Bhakti (Supreme Devotion). Whatever ordeals he was subjected to, or humiliations he had to experience, Dharmaraja never allowed his faith in Krishna to weaken. He adhered steadfastly to the belief: "Oh Krishna! Whether I am in a city or a forest, whether I am high or low, whether in happiness or sorrow, you are my sole refuge." It was because of this unflinching and single-minded faith in Krishna that Dharmaraja could achieve glory and stand out as an ideal to the world.

There are various reasons for the advent of the Divine in human form. For the human being, his past karma is the cause of birth. The circumstances of each one's birth depend on his past actions. "Karmanu bandheeni manushya loke" (Man is bound by the consequences of his actions). It may be asked what is the karma that accounts for the advent of Avatars. For Divine incarnations karma is not the cause. The evil deeds of the wicked and the good deeds and yearning of the righteous are responsible for the advent of Avatars. The Narasimha Avatar (the Divine incarnating as half-man and half-lion) was due to the great devotion of Prahlada and the bad qualities of Hiranyakasipu (Prahlada's father).

Why Avatars come

The descent of the Divine is in response to the yearnings and actions of people and not because of any karma of the Divine. This may be understood from a simple illustration. Crops grown on the ground look up to the skies for rain. They cannot reach up to the clouds. The clouds come down in the form of rain to provide water to the crops. To cite another example: There is a child on the floor. It wants its mother. It cannot jump up to the mother. The mother has to bend down, take the child and fondle it. In the same manner, to offer relief to devotees, to protect them and foster them, the Divine comes in the human form. This is described as Avatarana (the descent of God as an incarnation). God comes down from His high level to give joy to His devotees. Man does not try to understand the inner significance of such incarnations.

Devotion is the panacea for all ills

There is nothing greater in the world than Bhakti (devotion). Once the sage Narada demonstrated to his disciples how devotion is greater than anything in the world, including the Divine. While the Divine was greater than the cosmos, which the Lord as Vamana could measure in two steps, the Lord Himself is held in his heart by the devotion of the devotee. "Devotion bestows the highest benefits. Devotion alone is the means to Realisation. Devotion alone confers Supreme peace." Devotion is the panacea for all ills. There is no Veda or Sastra superior to devotion. Divine love encompasses all sacred acts. To achieve oneness with the Divine, one will have to be prepared to sacrifice everything. All the sacred festivals celebrated by the Bharathiyas are full of significance spiritually and socially. Every festival is regarded as a holy event surcharged with divinity. On such a holy day, each house is cleaned up, everybody takes a sacred bath to purify the body, special pujas are performed, coconut is offered to the deity and prayers are offered during the day. The significance of today's festival (Vinayaka Chaturthi) is explained by different persons in different ways. Is it possible to transplant an elephant's head on a human body? The esoteric significance of the Ganesa image is: Ganapathi has been given the head of an elephant because he is known for his extraordinary intelligence. The elephant is symbolic of extreme intelligence. In common parlance reference is made to the elephant's intelligence. "Gaja thelivi" (The elephant is a highly intelligent animal).

Ganapathi is described as "Buddhi Vinayaka" and "Siddhi Vinayaka" (Vinayaka the Wise and Vinayaka the Accomplished). Vinayaka itself means an unexcelled leader. V Exceptional; Nayaka - leader. For whom is he the leader? He is the chief of the ganas (Divine spirits) and hence is known as Ganapathi. He is the chief of Rudra Ganas, Bhadra Ganas and other Ganas.

Vinayaka acted as a scribe to Vyasa

Vinayaka is the embodiment of intelligence. When Vyasa wanted to write the Mahabharata he prayed to Vinayaka for help. Vinayaka agreed to act as scribe on one condition: While dictating his verses, Vyasa should not pause at any stage. As Vyasa was reciting the verses, Ganesa was inscribing them on the palm leaf at a great speed. There was a race, as it were, between the two as to how fast Vyasa could dictate the stanzas and how quickly Ganapathi could inscribe them. When the Mahabharata was completed, it ran into 100 crores of verses. It was a colossal compendium of all knowledge and ranked as the fifth Veda. It contained countless subtle truths. Human beings, the Devas (celestials) and the Asuras (demons), all three groups desired to have a share in the sacred work and prayed to Vyasa. When the 100 crores of verses were divided equally among the three claimants, one stanza of thirty-two syllables remained. How were they to be distributed? After distributing ten syllables to each of the three, two syllables remained. How were they to be distributed? Ganapathi said these two syllables should be given to the world in the names of Hari, Hara, Rama, Krishna, Sai - all the phonetic two-letter names of the Lord.

Vighneswara is the remover of obstacles

What is the significance of Ganesa worship? Man is confronted with many Vighnas (obstacles) in the journey of life. Prayers are offered to Ganapathi - who is better known as Vighneswara - for removing such obstacles and minimising impediments. Ganapathi is an important deity for people of all sects. He is the deity to whom worship is offered first in any ritual. Why is the preeminence accorded to Ganapathi?

Once upon a time Parvati (Divine Mother) and Parmeswara (Divine Father) wanted to decide between Vinayaka and Subrahmanya (their two sons) who was superior. They called the two lads and set them a task. They were told they should go round the cosmos. Whoever came first would be entrusted with a high office. Subrahmanya immediately got onto the back of his peacock and started flying on its wings. But Ganapathi stayed put. Parvati and Parmeswara thought Ganapathi was out of the race. But on seeing Subrahmanya at a distance, Ganapathi got up, circumambulated his parents and sat down. Ganapathi claimed that he had won the race. When Parmeswara questioned him, Ganapathi replied: "The whole cosmos is a projection of the Lord. The Lord is immanent in the universe. When I have gone round my Divine parents, I have gone round the universe." Ganapathi also asked them: "Show me any place where you are not present. You are omnipresent. You are in everything." Because of the acute intelligence he displayed, Vinayaka was made the head of the Ganas by Parmeswara.

There is thus an inner significance for every name and form. Normally an elephant's head on a human body should present an ugly image. But anyone can see that Ganesa's elephant head has an attraction all its own. There is no trace of ugliness in it. It is symbolic of extraordinary intelligence and intellectual ability.

To Unity through Love

We celebrate festivals like the Ganesa Chaturthi as holidays. But they are not holidays but holy days. It is not easy for anyone to recognise the truth about the Divine. His leelas (miraculous sportive activities) are beyond the grasp of the mind and speech. Hence, one should make the best use of whatever one is able to get from the Divine. One should avoid getting into unnecessary and purposeless controversies, which may cause more confusion. Love is the most important element in everything. Through love alone you can unify the world. It is the absence of love that is the cause of hatred. It is this hatred that is undermining human nature. Despite the fact that it is difficult to nourish hatred, while it is easy to foster love, men are engaged in doing what is difficult.

Truth is beyond Time and Space

Uttering the truth is easy. But indulging in falsehood is a tortuous process. One has to take a lot of trouble to cover up one lie with more lies. That is why it has been said: "Sathyam brooyath; Priyam brooyath; na brooyath Sathyam Apriyam" (Speak the truth, speak what is pleasing. Do not utter truth that is unpleasant). God is the embodiment of truth. Truth is the foundation of the universe. This truth transcends the mind and speech and is beyond the categories of Time and Space. Vedanta has described it as Ritam. It is also called Transcendental Truth. Truth is that which remains unchanged over time. You must live up to this truth. You must realise that the Divine is present in everything. Only when you can recognise the omnipresence of the Divine will you be able to experience the Divine. Develop faith in God. All names are His - Rama, Krishna, Christ or any other name. Every man is the embodiment of the Divine. True human relations can grow only when this truth is recognised. The first stage is where you recognise "I am in the Light." Next when you realise, "The Light is in me," and finally you realise, "I am the Light." "I" represents love and light represents Jnana (Supreme Wisdom). When love and light become one, there is Realisation. The Bhakti Marga (path of devotion) is easier than Jnana Marga (the path of knowledge). The Gita has extolled the Bhakti Marga. Love should come from within, not enforced from outside. You should develop disinterested and spontaneous love. The attitude of petitioning to God for favours should be given up. Love of God should not be based on quid pro quo, seeking favours in exchange for prayers and offerings to God. The object of celebrating holy festivals is to devote the day to meditation on God.

From today give up swartha (selfishness), turn your mind towards the Parartha (Supreme), lead a life of Yadartha (Truth) and sanctify your lives. Place your faith in God and do your duty to the best of your ability. Saturate yourself with love and share it with all. If you earn the love of God even to the slightest extent, you will experience infinite joy.

27. You and The Cosmos

Date: 02 October 1988 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Students Hostel

How can Sai be pleased with you
If your thoughts are not good
If your words are not pleasing
If your actions are not right?
Good thoughts, sweet speech And right conduct - these alone
Constitute true education.

To lead a purposeful and worthy life, you have to recognise the true meaning of the body, the senses, the mind and the intellect and know how to use them effectively. All the troubles of mankind are due to the fact that ninety-nine percent of the people lead lives without understanding this truth. The body, the senses, the mind and the intellect are only instruments for the individuals and have no *Chaitanya* (consciousness) of their own. The body is inert. Beginning as a mere mass of flesh, it grows into a handsome boy, an attractive youth and becomes a decrepit old man in later years. Because of these changes in the body, man imagines that the body has consciousness and is not an inert mass. But it is not the body that is the cause of this growth and change. To cite an example, if you sweep your house everyday and throw the dust into a dustbin, in due course there will be a big dung heap. Can consciousness be attributed to the dung heap because of its growth over a period? Likewise the body grows on account of the food consumed by it. See what happens to the body when the food is denied for some days. It ceases to grow; in fact, it begins to deteriorate.

The five elements vary in their subtlety

The body is only a temporary rest house for the Spirit. Vedanta declares: "The body is a shrine for the eternal Spirit inhabiting it." It is necessary in this

context to know what enables the body, the mind, the senses and the intellect to develop or to deteriorate. The whole Cosmos is made up of *Pancha Bhoothas* (five basic elements: Space, Air, Fire, Water and Earth). Their subtle qualities are represented by sound, touch, form, taste and smell. All these have emerged from *Sath-chith-ananda* (Being Awareness-Bliss), the Primal Source.

Akasa (Space or ether) provides the initial impulse. It is comparable to an infinite container. The other four elements air, water, fire and earth - are contained in it. These elements vary in their subtlety. Water is subtler than earth and is more expansive and lighter than earth. Fire is subtler than water and air is subtler than fire and more pervasive. Akasa is subtler than air and is allpervasive. Each of these elements is covered by a *Kosa* (sheath). The mind, the intellect, the will and the ego are enveloped by these sheaths. Akasa (space or ether) is activated by what is called *Athi-gathi* (very high-speed motion or vibrations). These vibrations, by their movement, give rise to air. The movement of air results in fire or heat. It is a scientific fact that friction causes heat, as in the case of rubbing of the palms. To generate heat air is necessary. When the heat cools off, water is produced. Fluids solidify into earth. Hence, the starting point for the five elements is Akasa (space). These elements have come into existence for sustaining the universe and demonstrating the omnipresence and omniscience of the Divine.

Prana functions between the mind and body

In the human being, the *Antha Karana* (the inner psycho-somatic instrument) is made up of the mind, the intellect, the will and the ego. The ego is linked to the *Prana* (life principle). It is encased in the *Vijnanamaya Kosa* (the sheath of integrated awareness). The mind is linked to the *Chitta* (Will) and is encased in the *Manomaya Kosa* (the mental sheath). Thus between the individual soul and the *Prana* (vital principle), the mind functions. The life principle functions between the mind and the body. The *Buddhi* (intellect) functions above the level of the mind. The vital principle functions below the mind. Both the intellect and the Prana are surcharged with *Agni* (heat). It is their combined presence in the body that accounts for the heat in the body. The mind should

not be treated as something trivial. Man comprehends the world through the mind and hence its workings should be completely watched. Because the mind is located between the Buddhi (intellect) and the Prana (vital principle) - both of which are filled with the fire principle - it tends to melt. The presiding deity for the mind is the Moon. The Moon represents coolness and fluidity. Fluids like water have a tendency to flow down and find their level. Fire, on the contrary, has a tendency to go up. The mind, because of its watery nature, has the tendency to move downwards to get interested in petty things. Efforts have to be made to make the mind look upwards.

The primal source of the five elements and man

It should, however, be remembered, that the mind, the intellect, the will and the ego are made up of the five elements, which are all emanations from the Supreme - the Sath-chith-ananda (Being-Awareness-Bliss). This is their Primal Source from which they have emanated like innumerable sparks from a fire. From this source they emerge as billions of atoms and assume countless forms. Man should realise that he has also come from the same Divine Source. Endowed with the human form and gifted with sense organs, the mind and the will, man nevertheless is failing to remember the source from which he came.

What is the cause for the body? The root cause is ignorance. Ignorance robs man of the power of discrimination. Lacking this capacity, man tends to inflate his *Ahamkara* (ego). Egoism breeds hatred, which is the cause of attachment and desires. All *karmas* (actions) are born of attachment and desires. Hence, the primary cause of birth in a human body is one's Karma.

The Cosmic delusion

What is the ignorance that afflicts man? It is the false vision which makes one mistake the unreal for the real and the real for the unreal. An episode in the Mahabharata illustrates how this happens. Recognising the supreme virtuousness of Dharmaraja, the eldest of the Pandavas, Maya, the architect of the Asuras, offered to build a unique mansion for him in his capital at the

time of the Rajasooya Yajna performed by Dharmaraja. This mansion, the Maya Sabha had one remarkable feature. In it where there was no water, a pond would appear to exist. Where there was a pool, there would be no appearance of water. Where there was a door, no door would seem to exist and a door would be present in an apparently blank wall. It was unique in producing delusions of this kind. Duryodhana, Dussasana and other Kauravas came to see this mansion. Imagining that there was water in one place they lifted their clothes only to find there was no water at all. At another place they drenched themselves because they stridently walked into a pool not seeing the water in it.

What is the inner meaning of this story of the Maya Sabha? The cosmos itself is one vast Maya Sabha (a mansion of delusion). Attachment and hatred are represented by Duryodhana and Dussasana. Dussasana means one who is the violator of the rule of law. Duryodhana is one who misuses his strength and abilities. In every man, there are these traits of Duryodhana and Dussasana. In life everyone has to adhere to certain regulations. In the Sathya Sai Institute, for instance, there are regulations relating to conduct of students in the hostel and elsewhere. It is only when these regulations are observed strictly that they can call themselves *Vidhyarthi* (seekers of knowledge). When students misuse their talents and skill, they become weak and go astray.

Misuse of senses will lead to grief

How does this misuse take place? The eyes are misused by looking at undesirable objects. The tongue is misused by indulging in evil talk. The ears, the heart and the hand are all misused in different ways. Misuse occurs whenever a divinely endowed capacity or talent is used for wrongful purposes. It is misdirection of energy. If students indulge in such misuse, they turn into Duryodhanas and Dussasanans and come to grief like them. Hence, no one should misuse any of the powers with which he is endowed. It amounts to an affront to the Divine which is the source of all powers.

Everyone thinks that it is his sense organs; his eyes, ears, etc. - that enable

him to experience and comprehend the world. How true is this? In the dream state none of the senses is functioning. And yet, one has the experience of seeing, talking, hearing, walking and doing other actions. What is the eye that sees in the dream? What is the tongue that talks? In the dream state the mind does all the functions of the sense organs, which are dormant at that time. When you feel in a dream that you are walking through a forest, it is not your legs that are walking. It is the mind which does the walking. It is the mind which assumes all the functions of the senses. The entire world is the projection of the mind. When the mind is properly directed, all the senses will be under control. When you water the roots of a tree, all the branches and leaves will get the benefit.

Cause of man's mental aberrations

The mind is subject to fancies and aberrations. In poor light you mistake a rope for a snake and are filled with fear. When light is brought, you find there is no snake. The appearance and disappearance of fear are entirely the result of mental aberrations. The rope alone was there all the time. The idea of the snake was superimposed on it by the fancies of the mind. The Brahman cannot be experienced unless one gets rid of the delusions of the mind. How is one to get rid of the delusions? By developing faith in the omnipresence of the Divine. This faith can grow when one realises that every object in the world needs a basis for its existence and support.

The Divine is the basis and the support for the entire cosmos. The Vedas are the authority for accepting the Divine as the source of everything in creation. If one can accept the authority of the ordinary almanac for recognising a particular date in the calendar, why should one refuse to accept the authority of the Vedas with regard to the nature of the *Atma* (Self) and the *Brahman* (Supreme Omni-self)? There is authority in the Vedas for everything that we experience in daily life. The Vedas have recognised the uniqueness of human birth and proclaimed the existence of God. It is illogical for man to accept on the authority of the scriptures his uniqueness as a human being and at the same time deny the existence of God. How misconceptions and doubts can arise may be seen from a scientific example. When you hold the mirror before

you, your image is reflected by the mirror. But the image is not in the mirror. The reflection is seen because of the mercury-coated surface at the back of the mirror. You imagine also that it is a true reflection of yourself. This is not true. In the image, your right eye appears as your left eye and the left eye as the right eye. Hence, the image is not the true reflection of yourself.

Nature is the vast mirror of the Divinity

Likewise, Nature is a vast mirror. You regard as real the varied objects you see in Nature. But they are all different forms of the Divine. "The One willed to become Many." This is the truth recognised by all religions. But man forgets this truth and leads a life divorced from faith in the Divine.

Students!

You may yourself enquire into the basis of this creation. To start with, you try to find out what causes dreams. Some may say, "thoughts" are the cause. Some others may attribute dreams to the kind of food that is consumed. Neither of these is correct. The fact is, it is the sleep that is the cause of dreams. So to the question, "What is the cause of creation?" The answer is: *Ajnana* (ignorance). For example: during the summer, the land gets heated up and is completely barren. As soon as there is a rainfall, things begin to sprout and the land looks green. Wherefrom did the sprouts come? Before sprouting the seeds remained in the earth and when the rains came, they began to sprout. If there had been no seeds earlier, the sprouting would not have occurred.

Results of actions are inescapable

Likewise, Karma (past deeds) is the seed for human birth. Your present life is a reaction, resound and reflection of your past actions. Therefore, you are advised to,

"Be good, see good and do good."

When you perform any action you do not think about the long-term consequences. You are preoccupied with the concerns of the moment. But when the final results come you are frightened. Whether results are pleasant or unpleasant they are inescapable. If sugar is dissolved in water, even if you think it is poison, it will only do you good. But if poison is put into water and you drink it, thinking that it is sugarcane juice, it will be fatal. If you regard something bad as good and act on it, the results are bound to be bad. The results are based on your actions and not on your fancies.

It is his conduct that is most important for every person. Conduct is determined by the state of the mind. Instead of giving way to promptings of the senses, every action should be done as a sacred offering to the Divine. You should be indifferent to censure or praise. Such equanimity can come only from faith in God. Lacking this faith and filled with the conceit that he is the doer of everything, man gets immersed in sorrow and trouble. The one who boasts about his achievements should recognise equally that he is the author of his misfortunes. He cannot claim to be the doer and at the same time deny responsibility for the consequences of his actions.

Do your duty leaving the results to God

Hence, in all your actions whether good or bad, do your duty, leaving the results to God. The flowers that you may offer in your puja may not please Sai. It is what you offer from the lotus of your heart that will please Sai. Consider everything in Nature as gifts of God. And when you offer anything, have the sacred feeling that you are offering God what he has given to you. When you feel and act in this way, your life will be filled with peace and joy. Have the firm conviction that the cosmos and God are not different. Look upon creation as the manifestation of the Divine and make proper use of your opportunities to experience the Divine. In your studies, try to combine spiritual discipline with academic pursuits. Only then will you find fulfilment in

education. Every one of you should become an ideal person. You must develop the habit of examining yourself and correcting yourself. Self-correction and self-punishment are as important as Self-realisation. Your senses, like the eyes, the ears, the tongue, are God-given gifts. They should be used only for sacred purposes and should not be misused.

There is only one royal road to realising God. It is the path of Divine love. You have come from the Divine and your destiny is the merger with the Divine. Entertain only sacred thoughts and engage yourselves only in sacred deeds. Thereby you will be sanctifying your lives.

Sai has come in order to achieve the Supreme task of uniting as one family all mankind, through the bond of brotherhood; of affirming and illumining the Atmic reality of each being in order to reveal the Divine, which is the basis on which the entire Cosmos rests; and of instructing all to recognise the common Divine heritage that binds man to man, so that man can rid himself of the animal and rise to the Divinity which is his goal. I am the embodiment of Love; Love is My instrument. Those who have recognised My Love and experienced that Love can assert that they have glimpsed My reality, for the path of Love is the royal road that leads mankind to Me.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

28. The Mother Divine

Date: 14 October 1988 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

Everyone should consider it his foremost duty today to revere the mother as divine and serve her, regardless of country or circumstance. If a man cannot respect and serve the mother, who has borne him for nine months, brought him forth into the world and reared him over the years, whom else is he likely to respect? Maternal love is akin to that of the Creator who projects and protects this infinite cosmos in countless ways. One individual may elect to worship the Divine in the form of his favourite goddess. Another may worship God in a different form and derive bliss from such worship. Each one should note that the forms in which the Divine is worshipped by others are as important to them as his own chosen deity is to him. If, on the contrary, he criticises or casts a slur on the deities worshipped by others, he is committing a grievous sin, however well he may be performing his own worship. Likewise, a man should show equal regard and reverence for mothers of others as he shows for his own mother. There are several notable examples in daily life of the divine quality which motherhood represents. The cow converts its own blood into nourishing milk for man to sustain his body. The cow is the first example of the Divine as Mother. The Earth comes next. Like the Divine, the Earth bears man in its bosom and takes care of him in many ways. Hence the Earth also is the embodiment of the Mother.

Principles that constitute the role of motherhood

In the human body the Divine flows through all the limbs as Rasa (The Divine essence) and sustains them. This Divine principle is called Rasaswaroopini (Embodiment of Divine sweetness). Another name for the same is Angirasa. These Divine principles that permeate and sustain the physical body should also be worshipped as mother goddesses. Then there are the great sages, the Maharishis, who investigated matters relating to good and evil, fight and wrong, what elevates man or degrades him, and, as a result of their labours and penances, gave to mankind the great scriptures, indicating the spiritual and mundane paths and how humanity can redeem its existence. These

sages have also to be revered as Divine Mothers. The cow, the earth, the presiding deities for the body, the sages and the guru are all worthy of worship as the embodiments of the Divine Motherhood. Although these five appear in different forms and names, they have one thing in common with the mother. They play a protective and sustaining maternal role for mankind and hence should be revered and worshipped as Divine Mothers.

Conversely, the mother of every child displays in relation to the child the attributes of these five entities. The mother nourishes the child, provides the necessities for its growth, teaches the child what it should know and what it should avoid and leads it on the path of righteousness.

The powers of Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswathi

The life of a man who cannot respect and love such a venerable mother, is utterly useless. Recognising one's mother as the very embodiment of all divine forces, one must show reverence to her and treat her with love. This is the true message that the Navaratri, the nine-night festival gives us. The supreme Shakthi manifests herself in the form of Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswathi. Durga grants to us energy - physical, mental and spiritual. Lakshmi bestows on us wealth of many kinds - not just money but intellectual wealth, the wealth of character and others. Even health is a kind of wealth. She grants untold riches to us. And Saraswathi bestows on us intelligence, the capacity for intellectual enquiry and the power of discrimination. The Navaratri festival is celebrated in order to proclaim to the world the power of the goddesses. One's own mother is the combination of all these Divine beings. She provides us energy, wealth and intelligence. She constantly desires our advancement in life. So she represents all the three goddesses that we worship during the Navaratri festival. If the Pandavas were able to become so dear to Krishna and make their lives worthy by serving Him, it was not on account of their own merit or austerities. It was mother Kunti Devi's love for them that brought to them such a great fortune. Even when they had to live in a forest or in the House of Wax, she always stayed with them and prayed for their welfare. The Pandavas also reciprocated her love, and that accounts for their final victory. Lakshmana, likewise, was able to dwell in the

forest with his brother Rama, serving him ceaselessly, only because of his mother Sumitra's blessings. She told her son that Ayodhya without Rama was like a forest, and that the forest in which Rama lived would be a veritable Ayodhya to him. It was on account of the hearty blessings of his mother that Lakshmana was able to while away fourteen years in the forest even without food or sleep

Children require mother's loving grace

All our epics and sacred books emphasise the power of the mother's love, her blessings and grace. Consider the story of Gandhari and the Kauravas. When Krishna visited Gandhari to console her after the Kurukshetra war, she accused him of partiality towards the Pandavas. "Though You are God, how could You be so partial? Why did You support the Pandavas in full measure, and allow the destruction of all my sons?" she asked Him. Krishna replied to her that she herself was to blame for the death of her children. He reminded her that though she gave birth to a hundred sons, she didn't cast her loving glance on even one of them at any time. As she chose to remain blindfolded, she never looked at any of her sons with great care, attention and affection. "How could such sinners who couldn't even enjoy their own mother's loving glance thrive and flourish?" He asked her. There is no need to propitiate Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswathi for energy, material prosperity and worldly knowledge. If we love and adore the mother, we shall be showing our love and devotion to all goddesses.

Mother comes first

One's mother is greater than heaven itself. Sri Rama Himself declared that one's mother and Motherland are greater than even heaven. The Navaratri festival teaches this profound truth. One must remember that reverence to one's own mother is one's paramount duty. If one's mother is unhappy, all the expenditure one incurs and all the worship one offers in the name of Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswathi in the Navaratri festival will yield no fruit. Even in the ancient teachings about the persons who are to be revered as Gods - mother, father, teacher and guest - the first place is given to the mother, when it says,

"Mathru Devo Bhava." Even in our casual talk we say mother, father, teacher and God. God is relegated to the last position but the mother is given the first place. This reveals the attitude of Bharathiya culture towards women in general and the mother in particular. It is the mother that holds the child with her hand and teaches it how to walk. It is the mother that feeds the child and teaches it how to eat. It is again the mother that teaches the child how to utter meaningful sounds and speak. Thus the mother is one's foremost teacher. Vemana observed that a son who does not care for his parents is no better than the worms that are born and die in an anthill.

We should deem our parents as Iswara and Parvati and serve them wholeheartedly. If we cannot please them, how can we hope to please God? Consider the story of Lava and Kusa. Sita gave birth to them in the hermitage of Sage Valmiki. They were taught various branches of knowledge by him. Sita also was teaching them many lessons and imparting to them many skills. What happened when Sri Rama Himself came to fight with them? Lava and Kusa remembered their mother with great reverence and aimed an arrow at Him. Rama fell into a swoon when the arrow struck Him. Such is the power of one's mother's blessing.

Ascetic practices, years of constant recitation of the Name, pilgrimages to holy places and shrines, study of the sacred books these will not help the aspirant to spiritual victory as much as communion with the Godly and the good. Bharath is a rare treasure-house of spiritual jewels; it can confer all boons on the sincere.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

29. Towards Human Unity

Date: 20 October 1988 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Avatar Day, Dasara, Vijayadasami

Who gave man his digestive organs ? Who is the author of birth and death ? To know Him is the height of Wisdom. Forget not this truth, oh Man! The poet Bhartruhari said: "Salutations to the Lord of Time who sets everything in motion." Time is all-powerful. One should not waste even a single moment of this precious time. Everyone has to follow the dictates of Time, because Time is not subject to anyone. God is the embodiment of Time. Through good deeds one should acquire the grace of God and redeem one's life.

Bharathiya culture, which is world renowned, whose message has reached all comers of the world, which has withstood the vicissitudes of time and circumstance, which has remained unchanged through aeons since the beginning of creation, bears testimony to the eternal verities. Yagas and Yajnas (ceremonial offerings and sacrificial rites) reflect the image of this culture. What is Yajna? It is not merely bringing together ten Rithwiks (scholars who perform rituals), getting them to recite the four Vedas and to perform homa (make offerings to various deities in the sacrificial fire). Every act done by man as an offering to God - offering all the fruits thereof - is Yajna. Whatever action one does, whether big or small, should be regarded as being done to please the Divine. It may be a sacred or secular act, it may be for the benefit of the world or hereafter, it may be binding or liberating, it may be material or spiritual - whatever be the nature of the action, it must be dedicated to God.

Everything in the Cosmos is permeated by the Divine

Every individual is a preceptor. Every man is Rithwik. Everyone is an embodiment of the Brahman (the Supreme Spirit). Everything in the Cosmos is permeated by the Divine. It is this truth that was proclaimed by the Vedas when they said: "Antarbahischa thatsarvam vyapya Narayanas-sthithah" (The Lord Narayana is present inside and outside of everything in the

universe).

Why, then, is man unable to recognise the omnipresent Divine? The Upanishads enjoined man to offer the fruits of all his actions to the Divine as the means of realising the Divine. In what form can the Divine be experienced? The answer is: "Sathyam Jnanam, Anantam Brahma" (The Brahman is Truth, Awareness and Infinite). Truth is not mere factual accuracy regarding any event or object. This is the Truth in the worldly sense. But Truth in the spiritual sense transcends the categories of Time and Space and remains unchanged always. This transcendental Truth has to be inscribed in the heart. It is in the light of this Truth that man should pursue the journey of life in the world.

What is Jnanam? Jnana (Spiritual knowledge) refers to the Chaitanya (higher Consciousness) and not to knowledge of various kinds. It is consciousness that inspires man, permeates trees and animates even the smallest insects. Saint Thyagaraja sang about the Cosmic Consciousness being present in the ant and the Brahman, in Shiva and Vishnu, in the form of Supreme Love. To experience this all-pervading consciousness is to experience the Divine.

God appears to man in the form envisaged by him

This Consciousness is Anantam (Infinite). It is omnipresent. In whatever form He is worshipped, whatever conception one may have of the Divine, whatever feelings one may have towards the Divine, the Divine responds in that form and image, to confer joy on the devotee. When a devotee prays: "Oh Lord, be by my side and walk with me, behind me and around me," the Lord keeps him company. The devotee can experience only the footfalls of the Lord. If the devotee cries: "Oh Lord! Can't you see my pitiable plight? Have you no eyes for my troubles?" only the eyes of the Lord will appear before him. When a devotee prays: "Can't you hear my lamentations, Oh Lord!" the Divine appears to him only as a pair of ears. Your experience of God is determined by your feelings and methods of approach to Him. The Lord has His feet, head and eyes and ears everywhere and He appears to every person in the form envisaged by him.

The Spiritual aspirant is the embodiment of Bliss

The fourth is Ananda (Bliss). Every person seeks Bliss. The aspirant has been described as the embodiment of Bliss. This Bliss has been described in manifold terms: Eternal Bliss, Supreme Bliss, the Bliss of Yoga (oneness with the Divine), Brahmananda (Bliss of God), Atmananda (Spiritual Bliss). But all these forms of Bliss are merged in one Bliss alone - the Bliss of the Heart (Hridayananda). Whatever small act a man may do he desires to derive joy from it. This joy is within him.

In the statement "Sathyam, Jnanam, Anantam Brahma," Brahma as Supreme Truth, Wisdom and Infinity is the embodiment of Bliss. Brahma means pervasiveness, being present everywhere. When there is no place where He is not, where is the need to search for Him? When the doors of the heart are opened, the Blissful form of the Divine can be seen. This was precisely the experience of the Gopikas. The whole universe is the Lord's Abode Where, then, is the street or door for that mansion ? Play on the life-strings of your body, Shed tears of devotion and offer your Spirit, See Heaven in that experience. That is the road and the door! When you offer life, all your energies and potencies to the Divine, you experience ineffable bliss. Are we today seeking such bliss? Are we aware of it? No. The seat of all bliss is the heart. Vibrations emanate from the heart. These vibrations proclaim the Lord's name. There is no need to engage in any sadhana (spiritual discipline) if the power of the Lord's name is understood.

The three powers embodied in the name Rama

Tulasidas declared that there are only three powers that matter in the world: "Krusanu Bhanu Himakarathe" - Agni (Fire), Surya (the Sun) and Chandra (the Moon). These three are eternal witnesses. These are essential for everyone, whether he is a theist or an atheist, a yogi or an epicurean, a renunciant or a hedonist. Without fire, the body will get cold and perish. Without the radiations from the Sun no energy or vitality can exist in man. Solar rays are essential for the survival of plants or human beings. Equally the Moon is

essential for existence. Human birth is the consequence of past sins and ignorance. It is necessary to destroy sins, eliminate ignorance and achieve peace and serenity in life. Agni (the God of Fire) will burn our sins to ashes. The Sun-God destroys our ignorance. The Moon cools the agitations of the heart. These three are embodied in the name Rama - Ra+a+ma. Ra represents Agni (the Fire-God). A represents Surya (the Sun-God). Ma represents Chandra (the Moon). The name Rama contains within it three deities, Agni, Surya and Chandra. Moreover, the name Rama embodies also the Vedic pronouncement "Thath Thwam Asi" (That Thou Art). Ra is "Thath" and Ma is "Thwam." The essence of the Vedas and the Sastras is contained in the Divine name. The Supreme significance of the name "Rama" is borne out also by Sankhya Sastra (the Science of Numerology). According to this science, the letters Ra+A+Ma make up seven according to their numerical equivalents. Seven is a sacred number as is evident from the sacredness of Saptarishis (the Seven Sages), the seven colours of the rainbow, the seven swaras (notes of Indian music) and the seven days of the week.

Meaning of the Saptaha Yajna

Today we have completed the Saptaha Veda Purusha Jnana Yajna. What does Saptaha Yajna mean? It is the offering of the Seven Sounds within us to the Divine. The completion of the Yajna is described as Samapti. Samapti means Brahma-Prapti (attainment of Brahmic consciousness). The seven-day Yajna is performed for this purpose. These seven days have sped like minutes! What is the reason? It is because the seven days were spent on thoughts of the Timeless Divine and in the activities dedicated to the Lord who is beyond Time, that we also transcended the limitations of Time. If we devote all our time to remembering God, time will cease to be a burden. "Kala-Kala prapannam Kala Kimkarishyathi?" (If we take refuge in the conqueror of Time, what can Time do to us?) When we enshrine Kala (the Lord of Time) in our hearts, we become the masters of Time. How is this to be done? The easiest means is chanting the name of the Lord. Community singing by an assemblage of devotees is to be preferred. This is known as Sankirtan (singing together the glories of the Lord). There are four types of Sankirtan: Guna Sankirtan, Leela Sankirtan, Bhava Sankirtan and Nama Sankirtan. Guna

Sankirtan means singing the attributes of God and dwelling on his numerous auspicious qualities. In describing Sri Krishna's qualities a devotee sang: Can we comprehend you, Oh Krishna! You are subtler than the atom, Grosser than the grossest. Immanent in the eighty-four lakhs Of species, you are their sustainer. With your infinite form How can we ever know you? While describing the Lord in these ways, occasional doubts may arise. If he is in the minutest atom and the vastness of space, why can't we see Him? The cosmonauts who circled the earth might have doubts about the presence of God. But there is a difference between the instruments employed by them to explore the space and the mantras through which God is experienced. God is the embodiment of mantra and not a yantra (mechanical contrivance).

Leela and Bhava Sankirtan

In Leela Sankirtan, the devotional songs glorify the Leelas (the extraordinary sports and other miraculous deeds of the Lord) and the different ways in which the Lord delights and tests the devotees. The Lord's ways cannot be easily understood. He makes one devotee weep and he wipes the tears of another. He turns an ascetic into a pleasure seeker and a libertine into a saint. He excites craziness in one and removes lunacy in another. These baffling sports of the Divine are the theme of the songs in Leela Sankirtan. In Bhava Sankirtan, the devotee's innermost feelings find expression in song. These feelings are of different kinds. Bhishma exemplifies the Bhava (feeling) of peace and contentment. Arjuna exemplifies Sakhya-bhava (the feeling of friendship). Hanuman is an example of Dasyabhava (the feeling of service) Yasoda displayed Vatsalya-bhava (the feeling of maternal love). The gopis exemplified Anuraga-bhava (the feeling of endearment). Radha revealed Madhura-bhava (the enjoyment of the sweetness of the Lord). Among the different Bhavas, Madhura-bhava rank supreme as it is the state of ecstatic enjoyment of the Lord's name and form in all its sweetness.

Difference between Kirtan and Nama Sankirtan

Except in Nama Sankirtan (the chanting of the Name), the other forms of Sankirtan are liable to give rise to doubts and difficulties. Hence, in this Kali

Yuga, the easiest and safest form of Sankirtan is Nama Sankirtan - community chanting of the Names of the Lord. This will not give rise to any doubts or excite emotional disturbances. As one goes on chanting the name, he experiences an inner joy, which is indifferent to praise or blame. The constant repetition of the name of the Lord should lead to an imprinting of the Name on the heart. This can only happen when the heart is softened by love of the Lord. The difference between Kirtana and Sankirtana is that the former relates to chanting by the individual in privacy, while the latter relates to community singing. In Sankirtana, all the participants experience joy in common, hence it is superior to Kirtan, where the joy is confined to a single individual. Many a devotee who will never venture to sing aloud will join in a community singing spontaneously without reserve.

A "miracle" at Dharwar

In this context, I may recall what happened at Dharwar many years ago during my visit to the Karnataka University. That University was completely dominated by Veera Saivas (Fundamentalist Shaivites). They would close their ears to any name except that of Shiva. I began my Discourse in Kannada. My Kannada was sweeter than the Kannada spoken in Dharwar. In their linguistic attachment, they were immensely happy when I spoke in Kannada. It is My practice to end every discourse with a community bhajan. I looked at the gathering and reviewed the state of their mind. I knew the name of Vishnu was anathema to them and if "Narayana" was uttered they would close their ears and if Krishna's name was mentioned they would turn their heads away.

In such a situation, I began singing the bhajan: "Govinda Krishna Jai! Gopala Krishna Jai!" Instantly everyone in the audience responded with "Govinda Krishna Jai!" There was amongst them a Veera Saiva Guru. Even he joined in the bhajan uttering "Govinda Krishna Jai! Gopala Krishna Jai!" At the end of the meeting, the Vice-chancellor, Mr. Adke, came running towards Me and said, "We used to have our own ideas of what Sai Baba's miracles mean. Sai Baba has made people, who had never in their life recited the name of Krishna, chant the name today. This is a great miracle !" What is the inner

meaning of this episode? It means that anyone, whatever his background, forgets himself in a Sankirtan and participates in it. Only the Divine Name can make one oblivious to everything and immerse himself in the joy of chanting the Name. Learn to go through the problems in life with the Name on your lips.

Transcend differences

Embodiments of the Divine! Having come here there is only one thing which is most vital for all of you to recognise and understand. Forgetting all differences of race, religion, caste and creed, disregarding considerations of class and community, you must feel that all of you are children of one God.

Our race is only one: the Human Race. We worship only One: God. Our caste is only one: the Caste of Love. Our language is only one: the Language of the Heart. When you recognise this oneness, eschew all differences and fill your hearts with love, you will be able to redeem your lives by constantly chanting the name of the Lord. That name will help you accomplish anything. It will fill your life with peace and happiness. It will enable you to rid yourself of likes and dislikes. The supreme quality of man is love. Develop love so that you may get rid of attachments and aversions. Thereby you will be sanctifying your lives!

30. Inner Significance Of Festivals

Date: 09 November 1988 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Diwali

Bharathiya festivals and holy days are designed to reveal the greatness and integrity of Indian culture. Failing to recognise the inner significance and power of this immemorial culture, the nation has drifted into a purposeless existence. All these festivals have a profound meaning and purpose. But no earnest effort is made to understand their inner meaning and deeper objectives. These holy days and festivals are intended to celebrate the birthdays of Avatars and saints and to mark the destruction of evil and wicked forces. The ancients observed these occasions to honour the memory of the great souls and to remember how the demoniac forces were vanquished. The advent of Sri Rama, the embodiment of Dharma, occurred on the Shuddha Navami in the Chaitra month. That day is observed as the sacred birthday of Rama. The Bahula Ashtami in the month of Sravana is observed as the sacred day on which Sri Krishna made his advent for the establishment of Dharma and propagating Dharma as the Gitacharya (the teacher of the Bhagavad Gita).

Festivals mark the destruction of demonic forces

The Navaratri festival, Shivarathri and Sankaranthi (festival dedicated to Sun God) are observed as memorable days marking the destruction of demonic forces by the Divine. Vijayadasami is the day when the evil-minded Ravana, who was well versed in all the sciences and was very powerful, was destroyed. The Suddha Padyami in the Asayuja month was the day in which the combined powers of the three goddesses, Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswathi, (Ichcha Shakthi, Kriya Sahkthi and Jnana Shakth) put an end to the evil forces represented by Mahishasura (the buffalo-headed demon). Vijayadasami is also the day when the Asura King, Ravana, was destroyed and Sri Rama was crowned at Ayodhya. It is the day on which the great Emperor Vikramaditya ascended his bejewelled throne acquired as a boon. It is also the anniversary of the passing of the founder of Jainism, Mahavira. Bharathiyas have been observing, in this manner, the birthdays of the Avatars

and the days marking the destruction of the wicked. When Sri Krishna installed a king in Mathura after destroying the wicked, evil-minded Kamsa, Narakasura invaded the city several times. When the residents of the city were apprehensive about their safety and security, Krishna founded a city at Dwaraka to provide a place of refuge for them. The city in which the demon Narakasura had his capital was known as Pragjyotishapuram. The name consists of four syllables: Prag, jyothi, sha and puram. Prag means former; jyothi means light; sha means forgetting and puram means the body. Together the term refers to the heart. The inner meaning of the term is that the man in his body is forgetting the light, the Atmajyothi, in him. Nara has various meanings. One is Atma. Another meaning is that which is not permanent. As Nara, man has forgotten his true spiritual state. When bad qualities enter the city of nara, man becomes Narakasura (a demonic being). The term Narakasura also means one who carries people to Naraka (hell).

Meaning of Naraka Chaturdasi

The life-story of Narakasura reveals the magnitude of his wickedness. His entire realm was plunged in darkness. No lights burn in the homes or in streets. No woman could be seen anywhere in the open. He imprisoned thousands of princesses and tortured innumerable women. Unable to bear these indignities, the women appealed to Krishna for succour. As Narakasura had inflicted sufferings on women, he had to be punished by a woman. For this reason, Krishna took Sathyabhama with Him and destroyed him in battle. Vijayadasami celebrates the victory of Krishna over Narakasura. It is also known as Naraka Chaturdasi. The following day is Amavasya (New Moon Day). Krishna freed from prison 16,000 women and asked them to go back to their respective homes. But all the Gopikas fell at Krishna's feet and pleaded that it would not be possible for them to live in dignity in their old homes after having been prisoners of Narakasura, and they would prefer to end their lives at His feet rather than to go back. "You are the Protector of the Universe, can't you protect us?" they pleaded. Krishna agreed to protect them. Because of the pledge He gave to them that He would bear the responsibility for protecting them, He was called their Bhartha (Supporter). This has been wrongly interpreted as meaning that He was their husband. It is a libel on

Krishna to say that He married 16,000 Gopikas.

Why the lamps are lit on Deepavali day

This Amavasya day is the day of liberation for the Gopikas. It is a moonless day when the night is utterly dark. The Gopikas prayed that as on that day they had got the light of freedom it should be marked by illuminations which would make everyone rejoice as on a full moon night. It is for this reason that the day, which is a New Moon Day, is illumined by lamps and fireworks and turned into a Full Moon Night. There is a scientific reason also for this celebration. With the end of the rainy season water stagnates in many places and the surrounding areas teem with mosquitoes and other insects. The smoke from the crackers and fireworks destroys these insects and disinfects the atmosphere. The inner meaning underlying the Bharathiya festivals should be rightly understood. Note, for instance, the fact that the whole array of lamps are lit by the light from one lamp. That one lamp symbolises the Supreme Effulgent Lord. The others symbolise the light in individual selves. The truth of the Vedic saying, "The One willed to become the Many" is exemplified by the lighting of lamps by the flame of one. The Deepavali festival thus bears out the profoundest spiritual truth. The lamp points to another significant fact. Wherever it may be placed, the flame goes upwards only and never moves down. Likewise, the flame of Jnana (Spiritual Wisdom) leads one to a sublime level through the path of Righteousness.

Four elements required to light the inner lamp

If you want to light a lamp, you need four things. First a container, second oil, third a wick and fourth a match box. If any one of these is lacking, you cannot light the lamp. This lamp can, however, remove only the outside darkness. How is the darkness in the heart to be removed? It can be removed only by Jnana Jyothi (the Light of Wisdom) and by nothing else. How is this Light of Wisdom, this spiritual light, to be lit? This also needs four elements. Vairagya (detachment) is the container. Bhakti (devotion) is the oil. Ekagrata (one-pointed concentration) is the wick. Jnana (Knowledge of the Supreme Truth) is the match stick. Without all the four, the Light of Spiritual Wisdom cannot be

got. Of the four, the primary requisite is the spirit of vairagya (renunciation). Without this detachment, all knowledge of scriptures is of no avail. What is this detachment? It is the absence of attachment to the body. The ego-feeling, which makes one think of the "I" all the time, should be given up. The sense of mamakara (possessiveness) and the ego-feeling are the causes of raga (attachment). How is this disease of attachment to be eradicated? By the process of self-enquiry. When you realise the impermanence of the body and all the sensory experiences, you acquire the sense of vairagya (detachment). It only means you should discharge your duties, treating the body as a God-given instrument for this purpose. "Paropakartham idam sareeram" (This body is for the purpose of helping others). It should not be used solely for selfish ends. Deepavali has to be observed as a day for getting rid of all the bad qualities in us, symbolised by the demon Narakasura. The Gopikas who were freed on that day represent the imprisoned good qualities in us. They should be manifested effulgently. This is the inner significance of the festival. As long as the demonic qualities remain in man, he will be immersed in darkness. Bad qualities and thoughts have to be got rid of altogether. I desire that our festivals and the holy days should be observed in the fight spirit, with an understanding of their inner significance. The destruction of the Narakasura symbolises the destruction of evil and the restoration of what is good.

31. The Spirit Of Service

Date: 21 November 1988 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

Social service does not mean merely going out into the streets and cleaning them. Whatever work you are engaged in, whatever duties you have to perform as an official or an employee, to do your duties efficiently and with diligence and devotion is also Seva (social service). Those in authority who discharge their functions well enough to justify the salary they receive are rendering real service. But such persons are rare. Employees agitate for more wages but do not render commensurate service to justify the incomes they receive. Disinterested service will ennoble man and raise his stature. It endows man with the intelligence and the skills required to refine human nature. Doing one's duty diligently is not enough. Men have to cultivate other qualities like love, sympathy, fairness, compassion and forgiveness. Only when one has these qualities will he be able to render dedicated service. It is the sense of dualism - of "mine" and "thine" - which accounts for all the joys and sorrows, likes and dislikes experienced by man. This dualism is rooted in selfishness, which makes one think that as long as he is all right, it does not matter what happens to the world. Such a selfcentred person, who regards his body, his wealth and his family as all that matter to him, looks upon truth as untruth and the false as true. To get rid of this deep-seated malaise, men have to engage themselves in service. They have to realise that the body has been given not to serve one's own interests but to serve others.

Service is an expression of gratitude to society

Service should not be done in a spirit of condescension or to achieve some ulterior selfish objective. Not recognising the sacredness and purifying power of service, people hesitate to embark on social service. It should not be imagined that one is promoting the well-being of the nation by one's service. One should realise that he is bettering himself by rendering service. Service should proceed from an awareness of what one owes to society. One's name and fame, all the comforts one enjoys, are derived from society. One finds fulfilment in society. That being the case, if one does not serve society, whom

else can he serve? Sheer gratitude demands that one should serve society which is the source of all benefits enjoyed by man. Men without gratitude are worse than wild animals. What are required for service are not money and materials. A loving heart is the first requisite. All service done without a love-filled heart is as dry as dust. Fill your hearts with love. When you are filled with conceit, everything looks out of shape. When you are immersed in the Spirit, everything looks good and beautiful. Forgetting this higher destiny of man, people are ceasing to be human.

The money obsession

Men are engaged today in the all-absorbing occupation of acquiring money, more money. They are obsessed with the feeling that through money alone they can get all they want. This obsession is the root cause of the crisis facing mankind. Although money is needed for certain purposes, it is not the main source of security and happiness for man. Men should learn to lead good lives with modest incomes. Ostentation and pride are the enemies of spiritual progress. Thyaga (the spirit of sacrifice) is essential for rendering dedicated service. Pride is the first evil trait that has to be renounced. Getting rid of bad qualities is real sacrifice; it is also yoga (spiritual communion). This is the message of Bharathiya culture. As this is not being properly conveyed to the people, they tend to go astray and take to wrong paths. They do not realise that to whomsoever they may be doing service, they are indeed serving the Divine in various human forms. Those who serve have to cherish this sublime and sacred feeling. They must strive to see God in everyone.

Embodiments of the Divine Spirit! You must realise that your service activities are done for the sake of your own spiritual purification and uplift and have nothing to do with Swami. All actions should be done with a view to purifying the mind and removing all the dross from it. This is Swami's teaching. It is wrong to think that through actions alone you can attain liberation or redeem your lives. Actions have to be done only for the purification of the Chitta (Will). Without purity of Will, life cannot be spiritualised. Human birth is the result of Karma (action). Right action leads to Dharma (Righteousness). Through Dharma the Divine has to be realised. Birth, Action, Righteousness,

Brahman are interrelated in this manner.

Duties and service

To plead that one has no time for service activities because of official duties or other preoccupations is an utterly lame excuse. Even in your official work you can render service. There is no need to go to bazars for street cleaning. That is not the only means of serving the public. Whatever your official duties, whatever your profession or occupation, if you discharge your duties properly and efficiently, that is also social service. The right attitude for officials in authority towards service should be to ask themselves whether the services they render are commensurate with the salaries they receive. Seldom do we see persons in employment, whether they are workers or officers, doing the amount of work that would justify the salaries they get. They all want more remuneration, but are not prepared to work more. They should realise that this kind of an attitude is a betrayal of the nation. Whose money are they receiving as wages? It is the public's money. To fail in the discharge of one's duties to the public is a grievous disservice. If a teacher imparts education on the fight lines, he is rendering real national service. Likewise, if a merchant conducts his business on the basis of earning not more than what is needed to meet his reasonable needs, he will be rendering public service. When this attitude prevails there is no need to claim that one is engaged in service. He should be content to abide by the dictates of his conscience.

Set an example to service organisations

What will please Swami is the proper performance of one's duties. This constitutes Seva (dedicated service). Avail yourself of every possible occasion to render service to the society. It need not be limited to individuals. It is important to do national service. You need not seek to know what kinds of service should be done. Whenever you find that you can render help to anyone in need, offer it. Do not make distinctions between rich or poor or the deserving and the undeserving. Offer service according to the needs of the situation. Today, the needs of the poor in the rural areas are quite great. In this situation you must go out into villages, organise service activities and

encourage the rural population to participate in them. The village folk should be told the importance of health and hygiene and how to keep their homes and villages clean and healthy.

The Sai Seva Organisations have to set an example to the service organisations all over the world. There is no place in them for differences in caste, creed or community. Character is greater than caste. All your activities should be based on love and sacrifice. "Speak the Truth, Act Righteously." These Upanishadic injunctions sustained Bharath's way of life for centuries. When people live up to them with sincerity and zeal, Bharath will once again stand out as an example to the world.

India is the land where the dichotomy of 'that' and 'this,' of 'creator' and 'creation,' of 'energy' and 'matter,' was resolved in one great unity, by both theory and practice, in philosophical schools and in hermitages. The Tree of Life with its countless branches proliferating into thoughts, words and deeds, attitudes, tendencies and impulses, is known by great sages in India to have its roots in heaven! So, every rule and ritual was made sacred and holy, suffused with purity, humility and love.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

32. Make Others Happy

Date: 22 November 1988 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Convocation - 7

Education is an ornament for man.
It is his secret wealth.
It confers prosperity and fame.
It is the teacher of teachers.
It is one's unfailing kinsman in foreign travel.
It secures the respect of rulers more than wealth.

Education is the basis for leading a purposeful life in the physical world, in the realm of the mind and in society. It equips one with the mental strength and steadiness to face the challenges in life. It enables one to understand the myriad manifestations in nature. It is only when one understands the powers of his mind that he can recognise the relationship between the world and the society. Real education should enable one to realise that mankind is one family. It should help one to experience the unifying forces in society. Unfortunately, education today is not promoting these objectives. We have no lack of intelligent men in the world today. There are any number of scientists. It is because the intelligentsia and the scientists have not been educated on the right lines that the world is plunged in chaos and disorder.

Unity is essential for any achievement

Education today is concerned mainly with satisfying the senses and developing intellectual skills. It ignores the development of virtuous qualities. Despite the committees and commissions set up by the Government to suggest reforms in education, no resolute efforts have been made to effect the necessary reforms. The main reason for this failure is the lack of unity after achievement of freedom. All the ills the nation is suffering from are due to the absence of unity and the preoccupation of ephemeral objectives. There

is nothing that cannot be achieved through unity. Education should promote discrimination and humility. The quantitative explosion in the number of educational institutions - schools, colleges and universities - has been accompanied by a corresponding decline in the quality of education. To have no respect for your betters, to be ungrateful to those who have fostered you, to revile even the teacher who taught you, can this be called "progress" in education? There is little evidence of morality in society. There is a general decline in character and conduct. Bharathiya culture, which laid emphasis on plain living and high thinking, has been almost forgotten. Can there be anything more unfortunate for the country? Bharath, which achieved great heights in every cultural sphere, is today unaware of the magnitude of its greatness. Most students are not aware of even the meaning of culture. Culture refines the human spirit and makes one a complete human being. Today no attempt is made to understand the truth relating to the body, the mind and the Atma.

The culture of Bharath

Culture seeks to integrate the various aspects of daily life and develop a unified outlook. It should enable one to transcend the divisions of caste, creed and community and realise the divine unity that underlies the apparent diversity. Students should realise that Bharathiya culture is not meant only for Bharath, but is meant for all mankind to reveal to the world the path to the Divine.

Today one finds that the virtues exhibited by illiterate villagers and uneducated folk in the tribal areas are not to be seen among the educated urban population. In fact, wherever schools, courts and administrative offices have multiplied, then we witness an increased corruption, injustice and wickedness. In seeking to lead a free and unrestrained life, people are falling prey to the desires of their senses. Educational institutions, which should be havens of peace and serenity, are haunted by fears of insecurity. The true aim of education is to prepare the student for a useful role in society with the help of the knowledge he has got and for leading an ideal life. Science and technology have made great advances in recent years and have a prominent

place in education. It is true that science has helped to improve the conditions of living. But the harm it is doing outweighs the benefits. Man has lost peace of mind and the sense of security. The growth of videos, radios, television, cinemas and air travel has been stupendous.

Misuse of science and technology

But there is no sign in any growth in "Divine vision," with the result that daily life is becoming more precarious. Morality and justice have declined. This must be ascribed mainly to the craze for acquiring modern scientific gadgets. Many middle class people, who have moderate incomes, wish to acquire motor vehicles, TV sets and the likes which they cannot afford to buy from their regular incomes. This leads to corruption and bribery. Even education has become expensive and far beyond the means of middle class earners. In addition, there is a tendency to show off before others, to appear to be better off than one really is. This kind of ostentation is another cause of fall in moral standards among lawyers, doctors and other professional people. There is nothing wrong with science as such. It is the way it is used that produces bad consequences. In the reform of the educational system, it is necessary to ensure that students learn about the right use of science. True education must enable one to gain Atma Jnana (realisation of the Self). Instead of emphasising this need, modern education creates many problems and difficulties for the students. Acquiring a small fragment of knowledge, a student gets inflated notions of himself. With this sort of conceit, he develops a contempt for Bharathiya culture. This is not what true education should aim at. Education should be divorced from job-hunting. Its primary purpose should enable the educated person to lead an honourable and meaningful life in society. If one cannot command respect in society, of what value is his education? Education should make a man recognise his obligations to his parents and others who have made him what he is. Gratitude is a supreme virtue. If one cannot be grateful to his parents, his education is a waste.

Dear students! In the pursuit of your studies, you must place the interests of the nation above your personal interests. If you wish to maintain the greatness of Bharathiya culture, you should fully understand its sacredness

and sublimity. Bharath's prosperity will last only as long as its culture is preserved. Bharath will cease to be Bharath if its culture is lost. Consider this hoary culture as your life breath and as the blood flowing in your veins. The receiving of a degree is not the end of education. Your education will be worthwhile only when you lead exemplary lives in the service of society.

Duty of the educated

In ancient days high value was attached to education and the students led simple lives. Their clothes and their manners were dignified. Today such simplicity and dignity are not to be seen among students or teachers generally. Discipline is at a discount. More than ever it is essential for educated persons today to conduct themselves as men of honour and integrity and raise the moral level of the society. Even in pursuing the spiritual path, the process should not be from Nature to Spirit or God but from Spirit or God to Nature. By seeking to master the forces of Nature through education, people tend to become subjects of nature. Live up to the Institution's motto:

"Sathyam vada; Dharmam chara" (Speak the Truth; Be Righteous).

These injunctions are not properly understood. Adhering to Truth means living up to transcendental Truth which is the eternal verity that is true for all time - past, present and future. "Dharma" does not mean living as you please.

The aim of education should be to serve the nation

The bonds of love that existed between the gurus and the disciples in the past do not exist today between teachers and students. The guru considered it his duty to teach the disciple what was most beneficial for the latter and the disciple loved to render service to the guru and carry out implicitly his commands. In those days the students were few and they received intensive

instruction. Today the students are numerous and education is diluted. Far reaching reforms are needed in the educational system today. The future progress and welfare of the nation depend upon how education is imparted. Students must be imbued with genuine patriotism. Starting with love and reverence for the parents, students should cultivate love and reverence for the Motherland. All your-education must be a preparation for serving the nation. Broaden your vision. Cultivate the spirit of love. Being endowed with the human form, you must strive to develop human values and not stray away from the path of righteousness. Fill your minds with sublime thoughts and your hearts with divine feelings. Consider the entire society as your home. Only then you will realise genuine unity with all. Redeem your lives by revering your parents, honouring your teachers and developing a loving faith in God. In this way you can lead dedicated lives in the spirit of the injunctions of the Upanishad. Be aware of the divinity that is inherent in every being. Thereby you will grow in your own self-esteem. Fill your life with joy.

Be happy; Be happy Make others happy All will be happy God will be happy.

Man is the embodiment of Sathyam, Shivam and Sundaram, and it will call on all to live up to that glory. He has to realise the Truth and demonstrate in thought, word and deed that Truth is the very basis of his existence.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

33. Let The Conscience Rule

Date: 23 November 1988 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Birthday - 63

More effulgent than the Sun, Whiter than the purest snow, Subtler than the subtlest ether, Immanent in all living beings, There's nothing in the Cosmos sans Brahman. The Paramatma is present in the minutest particle. Being in everything, THAT remains unaffected. That Universal Consciousness Illumines and sustains the three worlds, Pervading everything in Creation, That Brahman you are, and Brahman is in you, You and the Brahman are not different. What greater truth can I tell you Good people who are gathered here ? I am in the Light; I am the Light The Light is in me; The Light is me He who is aware of this Is Brahman himself

And Brahman is he.

Embodiments of the Divine Atma! Only a human being can understand God in the human form, not others. Hence the human form itself should be respected. "Daivam manusha Rupena," it is said (God reveals Himself in the human form). God assumes the human form to make His advent in the world, teach humanity the path to Divinity and shower His grace on them.

Man and the Divine in human form

The whole of Nature is a ball of burning fire (energy). This fire is present inside and outside. Likewise the Divine Atma principle is present everywhere. The Divine dwells in the entire Universe, from the minute atom to the vastest star. This Divine power is present in everything in creation. Only man has the capacity to recognise this power. But in trying to recognise it, he may create some crude form and consider it as the Divine in his delusion. Today one can give an amazing scientific discourse on the world, society and many other things. One may appear logically convincing. He may even expound in different ways the nature of the Divine in human form. All these are however, only products of the imagination and not the truth. An eloquent pandit may attempt to describe the Divine, but no one has known or can know the true

nature of the Divine in its fullness. Man alone can know the Divine in human form. No one else can see it or explain it in any other form. All other expositions of the Divine are speculative and fanciful.

An elephant may wish to worship the Divine. Basing itself on its nature, it can conceive of the Divine only as a huge elephant. It cannot conceive of any other form. Even a mouse when it conceives of the Divine, can only imagine the titanic form of a mouse as the Divine. Likewise man can conceive God only in the human form. As long as he regards himself only in human terms, man cannot conceive of God, who transcends the human except in human form.

Pandits: description of God create only confusion

A learned and eloquent scholar may describe God in many ways. Some scholars describe God as "Aprameya, Avangmanasa-gochara, Atheetha, Nirguna" (One who is inscrutable, beyond the reach of the speech and mind, transcendent and attributeless). All these terms are high-sounding but in essence they are just froth. Meanings may be given to these terms and elaborate annotations can be made about them. But they are valueless in terms of personal experience and are fraught with danger. They do not represent the Reality. Whenever you get a convenient opportunity, put this question to a pandit: "What is the meaning of Aprameya?" He will answer that He is one who is not amenable to any logical proof. Likewise he may explain that the term "Avangmanasa-gochara" refers to One who is not recognisable by speech or mind. But beyond this, can he demonstrate the form of the Divine? In my mind the layman's conception of God is better than the descriptions offered by these Pandits. Because these terms can be used even by laymen, but they prefer to remain silent. As a result, there is peace in society. The diverse interpretations offered by the Pandits give rise to divisions and confusions in society. These disturb the minds of people. Rather than provoke such disturbance and confusion, it would be better for these Pandits to observe silence. From ancient times to the present all kinds of terms have been used to describe the Divine but no one has been able to demonstrate the real truth about the Divine. The Divine is present in all things

and all forms are His. How can such an omnipresent Divine be described or demonstrated? Can anyone declare that something is Brahman and something else is not Brahman? Only the deluded may do so out of human weakness.

Appearances and reality are different

Divinity is present in man like fragrance is present in a flower, fire in wood and oil in sesame, not visible but latent. Unaware of this inner truth, men are carried away by external appearances and consider them as the reality. From early times men have been influenced by such ideas and have been steeped in ignorance. They offer milk to anthills (to feed the cobras which are believed to dwell in them), but kill snakes when they see them. They torture the draught cattle that they use in cultivation, but worship the stone image of a bull (the sacred vehicle of Shiva). This is the kind of "philosophy" that people have practised since ancient times. Causing harm to the living and adoring inanimate objects have been weak traits among the Bharathiyas. Men who do not offer even a morsel of food to a starving man will offer all kinds of delicacies as Naivedya (sacred offerings) to the image of the deity. One will drop a bundle of coins in the hundi (donation collection box) of Sri Venkateswara, but will refuse a small pittance to the beggar. All this is regarded as part of our ancient tradition. But how much sanctified will one be if he offers food to a starving man? It is essential to realise the basic truth that God is present in the form of human beings. Is one doing his duty if he inflicts pain on the jiva (a living being) and offers worship to Deva (the Divine)?

Avatars are based on different aspects of the Divine

In the world, God has descended as human incarnation in five different forms. These forms are based on the different aspects of the Divine. One is Nityavatar. Second is Viseshavatar. Third, Aveshavatar. Fourth, Leelavatar, Fifth, Poornavatar. Leelavatar is also known as Amsavatar. Nityavatara, Viseshavatar and Aveshavatar have only five to nine kalas (aspects) of the Lord. Only in the Poornavatar are all the sixteen aspects of the Divine

present. The ancients regarded only the Poornavatars as the full manifestation of God. In this context, every human being must be deemed as Avatar as he has some aspect of the Divine in him. It is because he has descended from the Divine, he is entitled to be called an Avatar. Except as Avatar, God does not give a separate vision of the Divine to man in any other form. Honour every human being. Show love towards every person. Love is not a crop that can be grown on land or a commodity that can be purchased in a shop. Whether one is a potentate or a commoner, only when he gives up egoistic pride and is ready to make sacrifice will love blossom within him.

Embark on the journey towards God-realisation

Do not be weighed down by the feeling that the human estate is weak and subject to delusions and ignorance. It is not easy to be born as a human being. If nevertheless one does not realise his true nature and imagines that God is in the external world, it is the mark of utter ignorance. Hence without wasting time, engage yourselves in your duties and embark on the journey towards God-realisation.

If you want to worship God, worship Him in the human form alone. All other forms are artificial and creations of the imagination. They are products of delusion. While bhrama (delusion) remains, Brahman cannot be experienced. Numerous persons are describing God in manifold ways. The scriptures also describe God in many ways. The expounders are content with reciting the descriptions, but do not seek to experience the Divine. What is the form of the Divine? If you wish to see the Divine, the form you envisage will be only a caricature. Consider your own form as manifestation of the Divine. Esteem yourself as divine. Respect others. Love yourself and love others. This is true worship. It is because this broad-minded attitude to the Divine was not promoted from early times, man has been a prey to all forms of ignorance. There is no such thing as God "descending" on earth or leaving it.

The body is like a water bubble, which arises, grows and disappears in the water. This is the truth. Man is born from Brahman, grows through Brahman and merges in Brahman. Brahman means freedom from Bhrama (delusion). It

is because of delusion that Brahman is not experienced. Man is dominated by the delusions of Ahamkara and Mamakara (Ego and Possessiveness). In what form can you worship the Divine whose form is cosmic? What is it that you can offer to the One who is everything? The world has worshipped Him under different names Rama, Krishna, Allah, Zoroaster, Buddha and Sai Baba. But all these names represent the One Atma. True worship consists in regarding all the forms as one and worshipping the Divine in the form of Love and Truth. It is subtler than a sub-atomic particle. That is why it is said: "Truth is more fundamental than the atom."

Let conscience rule your actions

There is no meaning in worshipping God as Sathyaswa-roopa (the embodiment of Truth), and not adhering to truth in daily life. Dharma (righteousness) is born from truth. This righteousness emanates from the heart.

Righteousness promotes self-satisfaction. It is an expression of self-consciousness. Have faith in the promptings of this divine consciousness. No one should act against the dictates of his conscience. Acting in violation of the conscience is evil. Action according to the conscience is righteous. True worship consists therefore in doing what is right as dictated by your conscience. Divorce between thought and speech is ungodly. There should be complete accord between thought word and deed.

God is only One. Your forms of worship, rituals and beliefs are purely personal and do not relate to the universal. "Divinity" means that which is whole, all-embracing. The One Divine is present in all beings. Every being is filled with truth and love. There is no one without love. The love may find outlets in different ways, but it is essentially one. That Love is God. Do not go against that Love.

Though God may be worshipped in various forms, it is essential to recognise the unity that subsumes all of them. Worship may assume any form, but worship itself is one and the same. Likewise the forms of the Divine may be

varied but the Divine principle is only one Atma.

Only the unchanging Love is true devotion

Today there is only one important thing that you have to take note of give up the delusion that the Divine is in some remote place. Have the faith: "I am God." When you have the faith that you are Divine, you are unlikely to go astray. You will pursue the right path. Believe that God is in every human being as declared by the Vedas and the Upanishads. Mere scholarship does not make a man a Pandit (a man of knowledge). "Pandithasamadarsinah" (Pandits are those who see everything with an equal eye). Pandits should be judged by what they practice and not by their external appendages or what they preach or write. Regard yourselves as children of God. There is really no difference between the Avatars and yourselves except with regard to the number of aspects of the Divine present in each one. These aspects can be enhanced by right conduct and by developing Divine love. That is not true love which wanes from moment to moment and waxes from time to time. Only the love that is unchanging and shines brightly always in the heart is true love. It is unaffected by joy or sorrow, praise or blame. Such love is true devotion. A love that grows or declines according to varying circumstances is not true love at all. When one derives some great benefit or his prayers are fulfilled, he installs more pictures for worship. But if his desires are not fulfilled, he removes the pictures. Can this be genuine devotion?

Get rid of selfishness by adoration of God

All the Divine principles - Brahma, Isa and Vishnu - are to be found in man. Brahma represents the creative principle. Isa (Shiva) is represented by the heart. The Buddhi (intellect) represents the all-pervasive Vishnu principle. Similarly the three divine modes - yantra, mantra and tantra are also found in man. The body is yantra (machine). All limbs in a body are parts of a machine. Our breath is a mantra. With each breath the mantra So-ham (He is I) is pronounced. Our heart is Tantra (the directing power). Have the firm faith that the Divinity is present in the human form. Perform right actions befitting the human form. Eschew selfishness, the attachments and hatred arising

from it. The way to get rid of selfishness is adoration of God.

34. Love - The Key To Human Unity

Date: 25 December 1988 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Christmas

The root cause of all difficulties experienced by man is forgetting his spiritual reality and identifying himself with his body. The body is only the vesture of the Indwelling Spirit. By immersing himself in body-consciousness, man develops egoism and possessiveness, which result in promoting many bad qualities. He forgets his inherent divinity and fails to use the senses and organs he is endowed with for the purposes of the Divine. Two different characteristics are to be found among men. One characteristic, which is rather common, is for one to delude himself that he is a good man, with many virtues, intelligence and talents. The other quality which is rare, is recognition of the good quality in others, their merits, abilities and good deeds and appreciate their ideals. Jesus belonged to the second category. He saw the good qualities in others, rejoiced over their virtues and shared his joy with others. In his twelfth year, Jesus and his parents, Joseph and Mary, happened to go to a Jewish festival in Jerusalem. In the jostling crowds Jesus got separated from his parents. After a frantic search, Mary found him in a temple listening to a speech of the High Priest. When Mary told Jesus about the anxiety that they felt when they missed him, Jesus replied: "Why should you worry about me? When I am with God, who is my Father, why should you have any fear on my account?" Jesus thus revealed that he regarded himself as the Son of God.

Jesus prayed to God for three things

Jesus grew up at Nazareth till he reached thirty. After Joseph's passing, Jesus sought his mother's permission to embark on his Divine mission. He got baptised by John, the Baptist, and spent forty days in penance in a forest. During the penance, he prayed to God for three things: One - He should be blessed with the quality of loving equally everyone; Two He should have the strength and forbearance to suffer patiently any indignity or persecution that he might be subjected to by anyone; Three - He should be enabled to use his God-given body wholly in the service of God.

After forty days Jesus emerged from his penance with the faith that his prayers had been granted. Jesus encountered the fishermen, at Galilee, who became his first disciples. He told them that he had come to establish the reign of love on earth and that they would be his helpers in his mission. He spoke to them about the preciousness of human birth and urged them to seek the Kingdom of God within themselves.

By the way of illustration, Christ told them the following parable: In a river the water is flowing in a swift current. But even the tiny fish are able to swim in it and move about merrily. In the same river, a huge elephant caught in the rapids, is likely to get washed away or drowned in spite of its enormous size. Whatever the speed of the current, the small fish are able to swim freely in the river and enjoy themselves. But an elephant is unable to survive in it. The reason is: What you need for survival in a river is not bulk but the ability to swim. Likewise man who is caught up in the ocean of worldly existence (Samsara) needs, not so much metaphysics, scholarship or detachment, as the grace of Divine love.

Without faith in God one cannot experience bliss

Without any knowledge of Vedanta, if one is blessed with God's love, he can surmount all problems of life. Without faith in God, all scholarship, wealth or name and fame are of no avail. He cannot experience bliss.

Christ also taught that the body should be used for recognising the Indwelling Spirit and not to protect itself. It is the mark of ignorance to pamper the body and ignore the Spirit within. If a tiny sugar crystal is mixed in a heap of sand, even the most intelligent person will not be able to separate the sugar from the sand and recover it. But without any extraordinary intelligence, an ant is able to make its way to the particle of sugar in the sand heap and relish its sweetness. The ant is aware of the sweetness of sugar and is able to get at the sugar even in a heap of sand. Likewise, man: should seek to distinguish between the permanent and the transient and realise what is everlasting. Man is endowed with the capacity to discriminate between the permanent and the evanescent, but unfortunately instead of using this capacity he is

caught up in the delusions of the phenomenal world and is wasting his life. "You must adhere to truth and not succumb to falsehood or unrighteousness. You must face with courage the vicissitudes of life. You must love even your enemies. Universal love transcends all other virtues. Love is the supreme virtue," declared Jesus.

Only Love of God is real Love

Jesus taught that God is Love. Instead of recognising this basic truth, men are allowing hatred, envy and other evil qualities to pollute their love. Man is gifted with the quality of love not to express it for selfish purposes but to direct it towards God. Jesus declared that there was nothing great about returning good for good. They should do good even to those who harm them. As Jesus went on with his preaching and drew multitudes towards him, some of the priests and those in authority grew envious at his popularity. This happens in all countries. They started persecuting him and charging him with treason. Jesus, however, continued up to the end to carry on his mission of Love and Righteousness, first, as the Messenger of God, and later as the Son of God. There is a reason for anyone coming in the human form. This may not be known to all. Only the Divine knows the real purpose. Everyone should regard himself as a Messenger of God and try to lead an ideal life. This means that one has to give up selfishness and self-interest. This may not be easy. But with God's Grace, it should be possible to progress towards Self-realisation gradually.

Love is the means of developing devotion and achieving liberation, apart from other things. Only the love of God is real love. It is the royal road for man to realise the divinity in him and in everyone.

Sai Love unifies all from different countries

Here is an example of the power of love. Today in this hall are gathered people from many countries. They speak different languages and adopt different religions and culture and have different dresses, manners and customs. Forgetting all these differences, they are all moving here as

brothers and sisters because of their love for Sai, which has unified them. They are expressing the joy of oneness because of the love in their hearts. When there is no love there is hatred. Faith in God promotes love. Love leads to peace. Peace prepares the way for truth. Living in truth, man experiences bliss, which is Divine. Where there is faith there is Love Where there is Love there is Peace Where there is Peace there is Truth Where there is Truth there is Bliss Where there is Bliss there is God. Hence, faith has to be strengthened.

Many forms, but one God

The Divine manifests Himself in many forms. God is worshipped in many forms for the joy to be derived from it. In ancient Rome, many Gods were worshipped, as in Bharath. At that time there was no belief in one God. Then came Christianity. The concept of unity in diversity came to be accepted. In ancient Greece, Plato, the disciple of Socrates, was the first to point out the immanence of the Divine in everything in the Universe. Truth is one, regardless of the nation or religion. Truth or Divinity cannot change according to place or circumstance. That is why it is said: Truth is God. That Truth is within us. Vedanta (transcendental knowledge) has described it as Sath-chith-ananda (Being-Awareness-Bliss). The names and forms of human beings may vary, but the Supreme in them - the Sath-chith-ananda - does not vary. It is eternal and changeless. Embodiments of Divine Love! Strike down the walls that separate man from man. Get rid of differences based on caste and creed. Develop firm faith in the oneness of humanity. Cultivate love in your hearts. Only then will the nation be united, prosperous and happy. Look at the state of things in Bethlehem, the birth-place of Jesus. Christmas could not be celebrated there this year, because of the ill-feelings among the people. How unfortunate that while the rest of the world is celebrating Christmas there should be no celebration in the place where Jesus was born.

God belongs to all. He is Universal. All of you have to give up differences of every kind and give no room for narrow parochial and national loyalties. Consider yourselves as the children of one God. You may worship God in any form of your choice, but recognise the truth that God is only one. The observance of holy days like Christmas is an occasion for realising the

importance of love and harmony among human beings. It is not right to celebrate Christ's birthday by feasting, drinking, singing and merry-making. The ideals taught by Jesus should be put into practice. That is the right way to celebrate his birthday. Whomsoever you adore, you must try to live up to his teachings. What kind of devotion is it when the devotee does not practice what he professes? It is pseudo-devotion. Remember the Lord with love. Worship Him with love. Sanctify your life with love.