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1. Climb The Right Tree

Date: 25 January 1963 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

I know that your hunger has not been fully appeased, even after listening to two excellent discourses, radiating bliss (ananda), given by these scholars (pandits). Both of them said that they had no claims to scholarship and that all that they were able to see and speak about was due to My grace. Well, that is but a way they have cultivated to curb conceit. Hanuman was not aware of his vast strength; he had cultivated that much self-effacement. Someone had to remind him of his skill and prowess and then, Hanuman would rise to the occasion, with his powers fully awake. It was also pleaded on your behalf that I should speak to you today, for it is a long time since I spoke to you at this place. I feel I must satisfy this desire of yours. You call yourselves devotees, so I shall talk to you about the dharma of people who seek to acquire devotion. No one can become a devotee by naming themselves so, nor by others calling them so. Devotion involves dedication, with nothing held back; not even a wisp of ego should remain. His command alone counts; His will prevails. Like a drunkard, the devotee has no sense of honour or decency, pride or conceit. The devotee is a drunkard (matta), a mad person (unmatta), unconcerned with all that is unrelated to the ideal. The devotee is deaf to the call of hunger and thirst, misses steps in logic, and calculates wrongly while dealing in the market place. Narada says that those full of the liquor of ignorance stumble after the shadows of the world, while those drunk with nectar of wisdom never move away from the Highest, which they have discovered as themselves.

Devotion must soften the mind

You saw this in the case of this Sastry a few days ago when he came and sat in this Hall for the first time, after 30 years of intense study of the Srimath Bhagavatham. He felt that he had won the fruit of years of study and worshipful exposition. He lost all awareness, and some of you thought he had an attack of epilepsy or something akin to it. I knew that he was in the realm of bliss (ananda). That is why I did not encourage you to take him to the

hospital. Even today, you noticed how, when he started to describe the depth of divine grace, he was overcome with joy. The Lord broke His own plighted word in order to give the devotee the credit for making Him do so, Bhishma had said that he would force Krishna to wield a weapon on the battlefield, contrary to His declared intention. Bhishma would accept defeat only from the Lord! So Krishna strode toward Bhishma, brandishing the disk (chakra) in order to win. This Sastry was describing this, when he broke down. Devotion must soften the mind and keep it receptive to the higher emotions, the purifying impulses.

Every being is a pilgrim to reach God

Bhishma was a devotee and, by winning the Lord's grace, he was clothed with more majesty and splendour than any earthly emperor. What majesty have these petty sceptre-holders? They cannot claim to have inner peace, inner joy; they know not the joy of sharing love with all. Bhishma surrendered to the Lord when He challenged him with good vision (su-darshana). That is to say, when the Lord offers su (good) darshana (vision), one must be wise enough to surrender, to give up all; that is what Bhishma did. Like the kitten calling the mother to where it sits, by mere mewling, the devotee has only to yearn, to mew with the pain of separation. The growing crop in the fields thirsts for rain. It sees the heavy rain clouds sail across the sky, but it cannot rise up to that altitude and drink the life-giving rain; nor can it bring the clouds down to the ground. Humanity too sizzles in the hot sun, the unbearable heat of ego and greed. It needs the rain of grace; it knows it can flourish only then in peace and joy. Just as the clouds form droplets and fall upon the fields that they choose to foster, the Formless Absolute individualises Itself, assumes form, and comes down in the midst of humanity to save and sustain, That is the secret of God (Madhava) coming down as man (manava), the cloud taking pity on the crop parching in the sun. Once the rains come, the sun has its uses! So too, when the grace of the Lord is gained, ego and greed can be put to profit by being made to flow into useful channels. In past ages, Avatars (divine incarnations) rid the world of evil by destroying the few fanatics and ogres who wrought it. But now, fanaticism and felony reign in every heart. The number of evil people is legion. No one is

free from that taint; all are wicked to some extent or other. Therefore, everyone needs correction; everyone has to be educated and guided into the right path. Every being is a pilgrim destined to reach God and merge in Him; but most people have forgotten the road; they wander like lost children, wasting precious time in bypaths.

You can win the Lord's Grace only by dharma

Man (manava) has to become God (Madhava); that is one's destiny, the plan and purpose of one's being armed, as no other animal is, with the sword of discrimination and the shield of renunciation. The human being is the only animal that can picture a previous existence and existences in a series, with impressions accumulating from one to the other. What you see and feel in a dream has some basis on what you have seen and felt in the waking state; so too, what you see and feel in the present life has, as its basis, what you have seen and felt in other lives, previous lives. You can win the grace of the Lord only by right action (dharma). Dharma induces and develops the spirit of self-surrender. Without the training that the practice of dharma gives to your senses, feelings, and emotions, you cannot have steady faith and steady detachment. The Lord is Dharma conceived as a personality. Rama is known as Righteousness Personified (Vigrahavan Dharmah). If you step across the bounds of dharma and play foul, you cannot win the game of life.

Pursue your task with one-pointed effort

When Hanuman was speeding along the sky like an arrow from Rama's bow, many temptations attempted to halt him. He did not delay or turn back. He sped on, intent only on the task his Lord has set for him. When the Mynaka mountain rose up to offer him a little rest, he trampled it down into the depths of the sea. The mountain rose again and pleaded for the chance to serve him for a while. It had decked itself with green orchards and fragrant flower gardens for his recreation and recoupment, for when Indra slashed off the wings of all the mountains in past ages, Mynaka had fled with the help of Vayu, Hanuman's father, and he wanted to express his gratitude by granting hospitality to the son. But Hanuman pleaded that his master's task brooked

no delay. A few moments later, Hanuman was confronted by a terrible monstress, Surasa by name. Hanuman overcame her by skilful tactics and avoided further delay. You should pursue your path to liberation with such one-pointed effort. Sastry said that the Lord wishes that His devotee should shine over non-believers; that His devotee should be happier, more contented, more courageous than the rest. Devotion ought to make a person so, but devotees do not cultivate these traits deep enough. They let the chance go to waste. If Sastry gives his sons a hundred acres each, one son may tend it well and reap golden harvests from it: another may allow it to lie fallow and himself sink into misery. The equipment each has brought from previous lives may be different, and you cannot blame the father for this state of affairs. Even the blood of one son may be fatal when transfused into another son. Spiritual strength will be less in one, more in another, in proportion to the efforts of each, now and in the past.

Let the light within shine

The pity is that people are not eating the most relishing, the most nourishing fruit, from this garden of nature. People are climbing the wrong tree and seeking to pluck the wrong fruits, so their appetite is ruined, their taste is vulgarised, their health is destroyed. Only the glory of the Lord can satisfy the hunger of a person, for that person is part of that glory. Only experience can reveal the sweetness, the sublimity, the purpose of that glory of the Lord. Parasurama came across Rama and challenged him when he was returning to Ayodhya after his marriage. Rama had won Sita by bending and breaking Siva's bow and thereby humbled the pride of all the crowned heads that had come seeking Sita's hand. But Parasurama was intoxicated with his own achievement in defeating the kshatriya rulers in twenty-one campaigns. That pride lowered the divine status of Parasurama, so he could be felled in a moment by Rama, who was to all appearance just a stripling! The Lord, it was said, punishes some and favours others. Let Me tell you, the Lord does neither. He is like the current in this electric wire. It rotates the fan and makes one's life cooled; it operates the electric chair and makes one's life shorter. It has no wish to allay the warmth of the atmosphere; it has no eagerness to kill. The Lord's grace is like the wind that blows. Roll up your sails, and the

boat lies limp and lame; unfurl them, and it moves faster and faster. It is like light: One person does good using the illumination; another executes an evil plan with its help. Have an "inner day" but an "outer night". Let the light within shine. When you are unaware of the world, though in it, heedless of its call for participation, you are having an outer night and an inner day. The Vedas teach you this truth and impart the discipline needed to attain this fortune.

The Lord is the Father of all in the world

The Sastry spoke of the value of vedic discipline. The Vedas declare that if an act (karma) is done in a definite way, a definite result will accrue. They give you a pen filled with ink, they teach you how to write and what to write. They are so kind. The Mother that is the Veda (Veda-matha) is so full of maternal love. She repeats an injunction over and over again, just as I go on reminding you of the disciplinary rules of the Nilayam on every possible occasion. Therefore, do not set aside the commands of the Vedas: they are the authentic voice of the Lord Himself, as heard and recorded by purified intellects. A father gives his wealth to the son who respects his wishes and obeys his orders, not to the rebel son who flouts him. The Lord is the Father of All. If you are an asthika (a person who accepts that there is God and shapes his life accordingly), then you will get the asthi (wealth or property). A person who is an idiot, ignorant of their true interests, unaware of their own downfall, is not entrusted with their own wealth or property, and a guardian has to take care of his affairs until he proves himself able to manage it with care.

Dwell always on the glory of God

It may take many lives for a man (or woman) to prove that he knows what is best for him, that he is able to chalk out his own future without harming himself or others, that he is aware of the pitfalls on the way. So, it is best to trust to the experience of sages, who were filled with compassion and who were moved by that compassion to illumine the path of liberation. This experience is enshrined in the Vedas. Faith in the Vedas irrigates the heart and makes it yield the harvest of universal love. The Sastras warn you of false

steps; they console you in times of stress; they strengthen you in distress; they give correct interpretations of moral dilemmas. They prescribe the dress, the food, the manner of speech, the methods of social conduct, the mode of mutual behaviour, the lines of onward march. They are the conscience of society. In this Prasanthi Nilayam, too, certain limits are laid down, certain modes of spending time usefully are recommended by Me. All who come here, whether long-time residents or new arrivals, have to observe them. You have seen Me, stayed here, and heard these discourses. Let Me ask what is the gain? Are you going back unchanged, unaffected? Dogs do not chew sugar cane; they seek a bone instead. Ill-fated mortals recoil when the talk is about God, goodness, spiritual effort, and a vision of the divine. But you must pull yourselves up into the purer air of spiritual life, draw yourselves away from slums and by-lanes, and travel on the highway to God. Dwell always on the glory of God; then, you will shine in that glory. Adhere to truth, that is the surest means of removing fear from your heart. Love (Prema) can grow only in the heart watered by truth.

What is devotion and who are devotees?

Nagaya, even while he plays the role of Thyagaya, is always conscious that he is Nagaya. "Thyagaya is the role I am playing," he would say. Now go one step further. When asked who you are, say that you are the embodiment of God (Narayana-swarupa) playing the role of Pullaya or Thimaya or Mallaya or whatever your name is. So too, every other person is a role played by Narayana (God). Narayana washed clothes as the washer man, shaped wood as the carpenter, forged iron as the blacksmith, prepared pots at the wheel as a potter. He is all this - and more. His glory is inexhaustible. The Avatar (divine incarnate) is another role He takes up for another purpose. The Lord comes as Avatar when He is anxiously awaited by saints and sages. The pious (sadhus) prayed, and I have come. My tasks are three, or rather two, since protection of virtue and protection of vedic culture are both practically the same. The two are, therefore: fostering of the Vedas and fostering of devotees. Now, what is devotion? Who are devotees? Devotion is faith, steadiness, virtue, fearlessness, surrender, absence of egoism. Worship done however elaborately and pompously is sheer waste of time and energy. Why

pluck flowers and hasten their death? Some of you go round this Nilayam and satisfy yourselves that you have done so many circumambulations, but they can be called so only when your mind circles this place along with your feet.

Talk less, talk low if you must

I notice that while your feet are taking you round by force of habit, your tongues blabber about the faults of others, or the price of vegetables, or the dishes you propose to cook for lunch. Before you start on your rounds, which you call pra-dakshina, give your mind as dakshina (thanksgiving offering) to the Resident of the temple, the Lord. That is the first thing to do, and perhaps the only thing to do. Making the rounds is not to be taken as prescribed, for loosening the limbs or giving them some exercise. This Nilayam should not be treated with scant reverence. Make the best use of your stay here. Do not treat this chance lightly. You come spending much money and put yourselves to much trouble to reach here, but you do not bloom as fragrant offerings at the Lord's feet by learning the spiritual path. The senses have to be curbed into obedient servants of the spirit. For example, I insist on silence. Talk less, and talk low when you must talk. Do not thrust your sorrows, your needs, your problems into the ears of those who have come here with their own bundle of such things. They are not interested in adding to their troubles. I am here to listen to you, to console you. Do not by loudness of voice disturb those who are meditating or reading or writing the name of God.

All ills are traceable to faulty living

Meditate if possible, by yourselves, alone; read spiritual books if you can; write the name of the Lord in the quiet of your corner. If you cannot do these, at least do not disturb others who are doing these. Encourage one another to march along the path to God. Become entitled to the honoured title of devotee. My glory is spread daily through those who call themselves My devotees. Your virtue, your self-control, your detachment, your faith, your steadfastness - these are the signs by which people read of My glory. Not that I want any such prop. But it just happens so, in this world, where people estimate others indirectly rather than directly. Let Me tell you, such devotees

are very rare. That is the why I do not address your gathering as, "Dear devotees!" You can lay claim to that title only when you have placed yourself in My hands, fully, completely, with no trace of ego kept back to cater to your vanity. All ills are traceable to faulty living. And what is that traceable to? To ignorance of one's real nature, ignorance so deep-rooted that it affects thoughts, words, and deeds. The drug that can cure it is patented under different names: spiritual wisdom (jnana), action (karma), contemplation (upasana), devotion (bhakthi). They are all the same in potency and curative power. The difference lies only in the method of administration either as mixture or as tablet or injection. Be confident that you will be liberated; Know that you are saved. Go and tell all that you went to Puttaparthi and that you got there the secret of liberation.

The mind must become the servant of the intellect, not the slave of the senses. It must discriminate and detach itself from the body. Like the ripe tamarind fruit, which becomes loose inside the shell, it must be unattached to this shell, this casement called body. Strike a green tamarind fruit with a stone and you cause harm to the pulp inside, but strike the ripe fruit and see what happens. It is the dry rind that falls off. Nothing affects the pulp or the seed. The ripe aspirant does not feel the blows of fate or fortune, it is the unripe man who is wounded by every blow.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

2. Revealing You To Yourself

Date: 03 March 1963 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Upanayanam Day

Deekshith just said that this is a sacred day, not only for the 35 boys who were initiated into religious studentship (brahma-charya) but for Sanathana Dharma (Eternal Universal Religion) itself, since the sacred thread ceremony (upanayanam) here is an important step in the restoration of the code of conduct prescribed for the four social groups of Hindu Society (varna-ashrama dharma) itself. The study of the Vedas is the highest type of learning, since it leads to the conquest of death. All other studies deal with the means of living or the surroundings within which you have to live; they deal with earning and spending, deriving a little pleasure by this trick, escaping a little grief by that other trick. The Vedas show the path to the Realm of Eternal Bliss, where there is no birth or death. People learn details about China, Russia, and America. They know about the volcanos of the Pacific and the islands of the Arctic regions. But they do not know an iota about the features of their own inner realms.

Spiritual wisdom must grow from within

There are five sheaths in people, but they are aware only of the outermost one, the material sheath (annamaya kosa), in which they are housed. Even this is just an awareness, not full knowledge. There are deeper layers of which they are ignorant: the sheath of vital energy, mental sheath, sheath of intelligence, and sheath of divine bliss (pranamaya, manomaya, vijnanamaya, anandamaya). Those who are conscious only of the material sheath can claim to be the embodiment only of embodiment of desire but not of Rama (kama-swarupa, not Rama-swarupa). That is to say, they will be swayed by every gust of desire; they will scarcely be able to control desire and rise to the demands made on nobler virtues by the Divinity latent in them. They will get proper inspiration and instruction to explore and exploit the inner realms only from the Vedas and the Sastras that expound the vedic truths. The Karma Kanda (Chapter on karma) is the biggest part of the Vedas, because sanctified activity (karma) is the means by which the tree blossoms and the

fruit matures and grows; the Upasana Kanda (the contemplative portion) deals with the method by which the fruit ripens; and the Jnana Kanda (chapter on spiritual wisdom) describes spiritual knowledge (jnana), the process by which the fruit fills itself with sweetness. The first stage takes the longest time, so it comprises the largest portion; the second and the third are quicker by comparison. They are shorter. The third stage can be accomplished even apart from the tree by keeping the fruit in a warm place amidst straw or in a hot room. One can acquire the sweetness of spiritual knowledge by keeping oneself in the company of the good or even by remaining in a solitary place, all by oneself in meditation, for example. But by whatever means, the sweetness (the spiritual knowledge) cannot be injected from outside; it must grow from within. It is a transformation of the inner nature, won by a struggle with inner foes.

Get rid of grief in this life itself

Just think of this for a while. You are in this body, in this receptacle, in order to realise the God you really are. This body is the cocoon you have spun round yourselves by means of your impulses and desires. Use it, while it lasts, to grow wings so that you can escape from it! You came into this world crying, announcing your grief at being thrust into it, grief for having lost hold of God. Having come with grief, decide not to go with it from here. Get rid of it in this life itself. You were told now that the Ramayana was welling with sorrow and misery; the main mood of that epic was, it was said, agony. Well, the first step to prayer is a touch of agony. Agony is more potent than awe in leading you Godward. Grieve for lost chances, lost time; every day, move forward to the Goal. Amidst all these absurd loves and hates, the meaningless game of having and hoarding, losing and lamenting, building and demolishing castles in the air, you have no moment of real calm.

Everything in the universe is divine

Peace of mind will not descend on you because your room is air-conditioned or your sofa soft-cushioned. It does not depend on your bank balance or the diplomas you have collected. It can come only when you deny the demon in

you all chances of moving you and encourage the Divine in you to manifest Himself. The demon is the prompter of the demonic (asuric) traits mentioned in the Gita. Everything in the universe is divine; it is; it shines; it is lovable. It is Being-Awareness-Bliss (Asthi-Bhathi-Priya, or Sat-Chit-Ananda). For it is the same as the Universal, Eternal, Absolute, which is also Being-Awareness-Bliss. This is the spiritual instruction that these boys got today through the mantra that was taught them. Upanayana means, "near-leading," leading near, leading the boy to the teacher, taking him to the teacher, the guru, for this initiation. The guru who can give this initiation must himself have transcended name and form, the relative regions of worldly ambitions and achievements; the guru must have experienced the Oneness of all this variety. Such people do not put up boards to announce their greatness or compete with others for status or reward. These boys are especially lucky: Good fortune, of which even they are not aware, has brought them here for this ceremony, which will transform them. They have consciously done meritorious deeds in previous births, the fruits of which they are now tasting, unawares. The guru does not teach anything new but reveals you to yourself. The guru trains you to cleanse the mirror of your heart so that you may be reflected in it, without warp or twist. The spiritual disciple (brahma-chari) must obey the commands of the guru without flinching and to the full.

Use your fullest powers to grasp the truth

While Anjaneya (Hanuman) was bringing the Sanjivini Mountain, he had to take a course that made the citizens of Nandigrama see him in the sky; Bharatha, who saw the strange sight of a monkey carrying a hill, brought him down with an arrow, but when he learnt that the hill had the drug that could cure Lakshmana, who was stricken in battle, Bharatha offered to send the hill quicker to where Rama was, by shooting an arrow that could lift it and carry it fast. But Anjaneya said that he could fly quicker than any arrow from the bow of the fastest marksman! Use your fullest powers to grasp the truth. Rely on your own skills, your own force; then they too will develop to the utmost demand you make of them. That will give you the greatest joy. Many of these boys are today joining the Vedic School (VedaSastra Pathashala) here or have already joined it. They will be enthused by each other in their study and

spiritual practices. When ten friends gather around you and shout, "Come, come, let's go," you feel like joining them, and you gladly go on the adventure. Teachers at the school, who are experienced men, will foster virtues and encourage at every step. I am planting the sapling in your heart; they will water it and manure it. I shall also water the sapling off and on, especially, when they are not with you. In order that the lotus may not go dry, the lake has to be full of water. Love (Prema) is the water that must fill the heart: hatred will make it a parched waste. Have faith in your own Atma (true Self or Being); that is the medicine. Act always in the spirit of service and kinship with all; that is the regimen.

Surrender must be complete, without reservations

To all of you I say, "Let mountains fall, let the sea overwhelm the land, but do not give up your spiritual practices. And remember, spiritual practices are a waste unless you grow at the same time in virtue and uprightness." If you give up all and surrender to the Lord, He will guard you and guide you. When you complain, "Oh! He has not guarded me," I reply, "You have not surrendered." The Lord has come just for this very task. He is declaring that He will do so; that is the very task that has brought Him! Of course, you only talk of surrender (sharanam), of placing all at the Feet, but you withhold a great deal. Your minds are wayward like monkeys that skip and jump from bough to branch. Give them to Me; I can make them steady and harmless. When I say sit, they will sit; when I say stand, they stand. That is what Sankaracharya offered to do; he told Siva that he would hand over to Him the monkey that was his mind so that it might be tamed and used for His delight. But it must be a complete handing over, with no reservations.

3. Ask For Me

Date: 04 February 1963 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

Today, you had the nectar of Ramayana from these two pandits. They spoke with genuine joy when they dilated on the incidents of the Ramayana. One of them selected today the hospitality shown to Bharatha and his retinue by the sage Bharadwaja and how Bharatha reacted to it. The other Sastry, who generally talks on other topics, was persuaded this evening to select Narada's description of the qualities of Rama to Valmiki as the theme of his talk. Remembrance of Rama's name (Ramanama) is so sweet that I could see all of you relishing these talks. If a man talks about Rama without himself being inspired by the glory of the Lord, it sounds hollow; it is of no benefit; it is like the image of a table heavy with edible dishes seen inside a mirror - the dishes in the mirror will fill no hungry stomach. No language can picture the actual bliss that the Name can confer; words can at best delineate only an atom of that joy. People come into the world burdened with delusion (maya) and its instrument, the mind. The mind expresses itself through attraction and repulsion, affection and hatred (raga and dwesha) toward the external world. Affection is passionate (rajasic) in its effect; it can be used for one's uplift, as Narada used it to fix attention on the Lord. Hatred is negativistic (thamasic), as Durvasa expressed it in his dealings with Ambarisha and others. Without affection and hatred, the mind cannot function at all. If these two are removed, there can be no mind and no delusion, and you get fixed in spiritual wisdom (jnana). Let affection and hatred go and let Rama enter; then there will be no mind or illusion (manas or maya).

Have aversion toward evil, pride, and egoism

The Taithiriya Upanishad analyses the mind and its behaviour very well. It gives directions for merging the mind in God and the weapons with which you can foil the tactics of affection and hatred. Use them for positive purposes, as Narada and Durvasa did. Have attachment to the Lord and aversion toward evil, pride, egoism. Water and fire are incompatible; fire is put out by water. But, by means of fire, you can convert water into steam and use it to haul

long lines of heavy wagons. How to overcome affection and hatred? By discrimination, by inquiry, by reasoning - arrive at the truth by this means. Duryodhana, though he stuck to falsehood, greed, and envy, had a swell time according to the Mahabharatha - flags flying, festoons swinging, banquets every day. But Yudhistira, the eldest of the Pandavas, had exile, poverty, and privation as reward for his high morality. This does not mean that Vyasa, who wrote all this, is a cheat or a fool. Righteousness (dharma) stood firm in spite of hardships; faith (sraddha) was steadied and strengthened. In the case of Duryodhana, prosperity did not induce caution, humility, or discrimination. So you revere Yudhistira and execrate Duryodhana today, centuries after they died. Valmiki also pictured Rama as wandering forlorn in the forests, but Rama never for a moment wavered in the path of dharma. So Rama is revered even today as the embodiment of dharma.

Ask to be examined and your progress recorded

The teacher-disciple relationship that has been established between these boys and those who initiated them into the Gayatri Mantra has also a special spiritual quality, which directs the pupil to learn with gratitude and the guru to teach with love. There are cases when the pupil was made to forget all that he had learnt when the guru was displeased with his behaviour. India has been the land of divine communion, of renunciation, of the spiritual intuition (yoga-bhumi, thyaga-bhumi, veda-bhumi). It spoke of sama-dhi, the wisdom that sees all as equal repositories of Divinity. Equanimity of outlook (samathwam) is just a matter of origin and essence; water in lakes, pits, wells, and rivers is rain water, though the taste, colour, name, and form are different based on where the rain fell and how pure the container was. Divine grace is like rain: pure, pellucid, falling on all. How it is received and used depends on the heart of the person. The Lord does not test a person just for fun; He does not pile calamity on calamity because He enjoys it. Examinations are held to measure achievement and award marks and honours. You must ask to be examined so that your progress may be recorded. Dheekshith spoke of Bharadwaja setting up an audience hall with a bejewelled throne and all other paraphernalia for the reception of Bharatha. Bharatha mentally installed Rama therein and stood behind, framing his brother. Bharatha was applauded

for this act of genuine detachment by the sage. He was glad the citizens came to know the real nature of Bharatha by this means.

The Avatar has no blemish, no trace of quality

Bharatha did not partake of the rich banquet that the sage had prepared. He was too grieved over the turn of events to think of food, drink, and sleep. He did not even take a drop of water before he could speak to Rama. The thought of Rama was so intense in him that people saw Rama in the form of Bharatha. Ceaseless contemplation had made him an exact replica. That is the depth of fruitful devotion. But you praise Me when all goes well and call Me stony-hearted when grief assails you. Grief or joy, whatever the Lord hands out, you must welcome with equal calmness. It was declared that Rama was born of the pudding (payasam) that was brought by the deity from out of the sacrificial fire. No Avatar is born flesh and blood, including this Avatar. The body of the Avatar is awarenessful (chit) substance; it is not inert (jada), like other materials. The embryo of ordinary mortals is enveloped in watery stuff; the embryo of the Avatar is encased in the pure white milk of holiness. That is why there is no blemish in the make-up of the Avatar, there is no trace of qualities (gunas).

Rama's insistence on His vow of hermit-hood

Dasaratha wept, for he had no sons to offer ritual food when he was to move out into the next world. When all are of the form of God and of the substance of God, who is son and who is father? Who is to offer food to whom when that high stage of wisdom is reached? Fortitude (kshama) is the father, peace (santham) is the mother, renunciation (vairagya) is the wife, and the Lord is the son, the centre of affection. Dasaratha desired the lower type of son, the male issue, to save him from perdition. This desire brought his "spirit" again before Rama, when Sita was about to enter the fire in Lanka. Ravana was killed, and Rama asked Sugriva and Lakshmana to crown Vibhishana as Emperor of Lanka, and he pleaded with Rama Himself to bless him on that auspicious occasion. But Rama insisted that His vow of hermit-hood prevented Him from entering an inhabited city. Then, Rama sent Hanuman to

Sita and to bring Sita to the camp in a palanquin. Vibhishana had not thought of that; he was too immersed in other affairs. Hanuman bowed before Sita and got a vision of Lakshmi rising out of the waves of the ocean of milk. He felt that that vision was enough compensation for all the births he had to undergo. While the palanquin neared the camp, a sublime splendour spread everywhere from it, which astonished the monkey hordes. Rama sent word that Sita may alight and walk the remaining distance, so that they may fill their eyes with her glory. This is not mentioned in the books.

Two purposes of Sita's fire ordeal

When Sita was about ten yards away, Rama, who is butter when He melts and steel when He hardens, said, "Stop, I can accept you only after you pass through fire." Lakshmana swooned at this thunderbolt, and the monkeys who had to bring the fuel for the fire bent under the weight of even twigs. The fire ordeal served two purposes: to scorch the slanderous tongues, which haunt the tracks of Avatars at all times, and to retrieve from the fire the real Sita who had entered into it, prior to abduction by Ravana. Dasaratha also came, to assure Rama that Sita was purity itself and also to satisfy his parental craving to see his son. He appreciated the steadfastness of Rama in the respect he had for his father's wish; he also saw the monkeys rise again from the battlefield and gather around Rama. The demonic persons (rakshasas) had already attained liberation, for they had the vision of God when they drew their last breaths. "The monkeys came down to be My instruments, so they have no death. Neither are they born, except at My command," said Rama. People must also become His instrument in order to escape death and birth. People have come, imprisoned in the ego, and have to liberate themselves. This can be done only by becoming aware of the Universal Basis. Like a man sunk in poverty, dwelling in a hut that is raised over a vast underground treasure, people are suffering with a spring of joy inside them, of which they are unaware. I have come to give you the key to that treasure, to tell you how to tap that spring, for you have forgotten the way to blessedness. If you waste this chance of saving yourselves, it is just your fate.

Do not hunger for comfort or riches

You have come, most of you, to get from Me tinsel and trash, petty little cures and promotions, joys and comforts. Very few of you desire to get from Me the thing I have come to give, viz. liberation itself - and even among these few, those who stick to the path of spiritual practice and succeed are a handful. Many are drawn away by the outer signs of sainthood, the long gown, the beard, the rosaries, the matted hair; they keep track of many such who move about in this land and follow them into the wilderness. It is very difficult to demarcate clearly the manifestation of the Lord, so I am announcing Myself and am Myself describing My mission, the task, the characteristics, the qualities that mark out the Avatar from the rest. Do not hunger for comfort or riches; hunger for bliss (ananda). If you have faith, and if you keep the name of Rama as constant companion, you are in heaven (Vaikunta or Kailas) all the time. These are not distant regions that have to be reached by tortuous travel; they are springs of tranquillity that are in your own heart. You cannot have this chance of the nearness of the greatest of all sources of joy in any other place. Here, it is so near, so easy to attain, so full of grace. If you fall back, you will seldom get the chance again. Ask and get what will save you, not what will bind you. You ask from Me a thousand things of the world, but rarely do you ask for "Me". That is why I seldom address you as devotees. I usually address you as Embodiments of the Divine (Divyatma swarupulara), for Divinity (Divyathwam) is your real true nature. Though you do not know it, it is a fact, so I can address you so with confidence. I can even call you Embodiments of heavenly Divinity, but as for devotion, since it is a quality that will make you desire the Lord and nothing else, I find you cannot lay claim to it.

Methods to curb the Ravana tendency

Some of you claim to be Sai devotees or Rama devotees or Krishna devotees. No, unless you are perfect instruments in His hand, you do not deserve that name. For example, Bharatha can call himself a Rama devotee. He lived with name of Rama in every breath; he was with Rama in the forest and on the battlefield; he suffered as much as Rama; he was as much an anchorite as his brother, so he too became dark skinned like Rama. Listening, contemplating

on what has been listened to, and practising what is dictated by the mind so transfused - these are the methods by which the Ravana tendency has to be curbed. What is that tendency? It is lust, greed, inordinate desire for things of the sensory world, egoism, and the rest of the fatal brood. When the pot of milk on the hearth boils over, you pour cold water on it, and it settles down in the vessel itself, is it not? Durvasa is the example of the pot boiling over, and Narada, of the pot of milk that does not. Narada had the name of the Lord always on his tongue, so the senses did not establish mastery. If you also keep your senses and your wishes in check, you will gain by listening to these talks and by this visit, and I will be happy that you have taken to the path that will give you real strength and joy.

No one can liberate you, for no one has bound you. You hold on to the nettle of worldly pleasure, and you weep for pain. The kite is pursued by crows as long as it carries the fish in its beak. It twists and turns in the sky trying to dodge the crows, who seek to snatch the fish. Tired at last, it drops the fish. That moment it is free. So give up attachment to the senses, and grief and worry can harass you no more. The kite sits on a tree, preening its wings, enjoying its happiness. You too can be so happy, provided you drop the fish you have in your beak.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

4. The Search For Sita

Date: 05 February 1963 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

For three days, the pandits who spoke here have been discoursing on the Ramayana. This is understandable in the case of a specialist like Dheekshith, but even the other wise person turned away from his usual topics and spoke on the Ramayana. Of course, the Ramayana is a limitless ocean, from which any number of canals can be dug and water drawn. I was wondering whether at least today someone will refer to Krishna Principle (Thathwam)! Not that one gets tired of the Rama Principle. The Reality of the Lord is ever fresh. Every life is a new chance, a fresh opportunity for realising the Truth. Yesterday is gone; today is the fresh chance, the new opportunity; tomorrow you cannot be sure of. Every minute is to be welcomed as unique and as valuable - precious, in fact. Do not pine over the chunks of time you have wasted. Instead, seize the moment that has come within your grasp. Search for the Lord as Hanuman searched for Sita. He had not seen her; he had only heard her being described. He could also judge what she should be like, since Rama could aspire for her so deeply. It was like the attachment of Purusha (The Primal Entity, God) for prakriti (nature), no less. Like Hanuman, people should also seek the incomprehensible primal energy (adisakthi) among the multifarious counter-attractions and distractions of Lanka.

Through righteousness and action man can attain salvation

Since the Entity (Purusha, the Primal Energy) is not known, one has to discover it by means of the characteristics it is supposed to have. The experience of sages is the only guide, the only map, the only chart. That chart is supplied by the Bhagavatham, the Ramayana, the Puranas. Have the universal mother (loka-matha), the Tripura-sundari, in your heart, Her lineaments clear and pure. Then proceed bravely into the land of demons and you will succeed. Saturate yourself in the search; establish yourself in the faith; then, you can fill yourself with the bliss. Who can describe the signs of the Sita you seek to find? Only Rama can, for He is the master. Take Him as the truest guide. The Vedas are like that. Lakshmana, Sugriva, and the rest

are as the scriptures (sastras), arguing by deduction, not from actual mastery. They did not describe Sita - they could not, for they had not seen. When Rama went to the hermitages at Chitrakoota, the sages, saints, and vedic scholars, all gathered round Him, and their gratitude at getting His darshan (site of a holy person) was as a garland of flowers on His breast, flowers of many hues, but all strung on a strand of deep devotion. They knew that Rama was both the Seen and the Unseen, that He had come to establish righteousness (dharma) and karma, for through dharma, as well as karma done along the lines of dharma, one is certain to attain peace and salvation. The Avatars insist on dharma. It is declared that the purpose of the Avatar is the establishment of virtue, but what is dharma for, if not for liberation from the bondage of ignorance?

Every step of the Avatar is predetermined

The plane has to land at certain places in order to take in those who have won the right to fly by the tickets they have purchased. So too, the Lord has to come down so that those who have won the right to be liberated may be saved. Incidentally, others too will know of the Lord, of His grace and ways of winning it, of the joy of liberation. Some deny even today the possibility of air travel; they curse the contrivance; they cavil at it. Similarly, there are many who cavil at the Avatar that has come to save. Dheekshith spoke of Kabanda, who swore at Rama and wanted to eat Him up alive, but Rama liberated him from his curse and restored him to previous glory. If you condemn the Brahmin and the Vedas, you drift afar from Me; if you desist, you are drawn near. Parasurama, the inveterate foe of the Kshatriyas, appeared before Rama when Rama was returning to Ayodhya after the marriage. He was blazing like fire, terrible to behold, for he had heard the twang of Siva's bow when Rama broke it in two. He challenged him to draw the bow of his father and to meet him in single combat. But Rama said, "You are worthy of respect; you are a Brahmin and you are related to Viswamitra." Every step in the career of the Avatar is predetermined. Rama knew that the coming of Surpanakha was the prelude to the coming of Ravana; He had asked Sita to enter the fire and remain in it as just as an outer manifestation. Even before the human manifestation, the Lord had decided that the Sakthi (Energy) must

also accompany Him, because Ravana's penance was so strong that only some major sin could make the blessings he had won from the gods null and void. The ordeal of fire through which Sita was asked to prove herself was not an ordeal at all; it was arranged only to recover Sita from the fire in which she had taken shelter, in preparation for the Lanka episode. That is the way of the Avatar; it will not go about announcing its nature; it will announce itself by deeds.

Do you yearn for the Lord's mercy and grace?

Jatayu recognised Rama's Divinity; he said, "Rama! I am content; this body has realised the acme of joy. I have seen you and have been touched by you. I have spoken to you and imbibed your voice." Only Rama knows the significance of each step of His and the character of the next step. He carves His own career. You were told that Rama showed man how to bear suffering, while Krishna taught him how to overcome it. No, Rama was all bliss (ananda) inside, though he outwardly lamented for Sita. Divine Reality is known only to Rama. What can the rest know?. At best, they can have but a glimpse of Rama's grace - and even that only if they are immersed in intense inner prayer for God. Think of Him, call out to Him, and He melts. Whatever form He may be shining in, that intensity will make you recognise Him. He may be a cowherd boy standing under a tree, with a flute at his lips. You will see him and adore Him and place Him in your heart. You extol the Lord as love, mercy, grace, but do you yearn to earn them? Do you believe you can win them? Do you strive to treasure them?

Have an idea of the place of your last journey

Take the example of Surpanakha, Ravana's sister. She was mutilated by Lakshmana, rejected by Rama, and ridiculed by Sita - humiliated beyond cure. She fled in terror to her brother, and what did she ask him to do? She described Rama's heavenly charm, His divine grace, and advised her brother to fill his heart with the sweetness that Rama exhaled all around Him! Rama came to feed the roots of truth and righteousness (sathya and dharma), so Sita joined Him through correct orthodox rites. There was no abduction of

Sita. In the Krishna Avatara, the task was to foster peace and love (santhi and prema). Now, all four (peace, love, truth, righteousness) are in danger of being dried up. The dharma that has fled to the forests has to be led back into the villages and towns. The absence of dharma that has ruined the villages and towns has to be driven to the jungle. You will have no rest until this is done. For it is your problem, the problem in which each of you is vitally involved. Now, you are unaware of the problem, the problem of liberation. Once, a courtier for a king was so idle and ease-loving that whenever the king ordered him to see someone, he raised flimsy objections like, "Perhaps, he is away," "If he does not greet me, what shall I do?" "What if he gets wild?" "I may not be able to return in time." etc., etc. So the king got the word "Fool" embroidered on a broad tape and commanded him to wear it on his brow so that all may learn a lesson. The courtier became the laughing stock of the palace. Within a few months, the king was on his death bed, and the courtiers vied with one another in weeping over him. When the fool came near, the king told him with tears in his eyes, "I am leaving on my last journey, dear fool." The fool said, "Wait, I'll bring the royal elephant." The king shook his head and said, "Elephants will not take me there." The fool pleaded that the king might use the chariot, but when told that chariots would also be of no avail, he suggested the royal steed as the alternative. Even that was of no help, he was told. Then the fool innocently asked the king. "To what strange place are you traveling?" The king replied. "I don't know." At this, the fool untied the tape from his brow and tied it on the brow of the dying king. "You deserve this more; you know you are going, but you don't know where! You know that elephants, horses, and chariots don't go there, but you don't know where it is or how it looks!" he said. But you can have some idea of that place if you evaluate your deeds and thoughts now, in this life.

5. Sweeten And Lighten Life

Date: 06 February 1963 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

Perhaps this feast of repeating Rama's name (Ramanama) is cloying to some tastes, but it is something that is ever fresh, that gives undying sweetness to the heart that is filled with the love of God. One single Name will yield fresh sweetness, fresh joy, every time it is rolled on the tongue. I have to tell you the things I told you often before, for until digestion is well established, medicine has to be taken. The face has to be washed day after day. One meal is not the end of the story; you have to eat again and again. To get angry is but the effort of a moment, but to get peace, to become unaffected by the ups and downs of life, is the result of years of training in Vedanta. It can be well established only on the basis of the belief that all material things that fall within the range of sensuous experience are fundamentally non-existent. They are products of illusion (maya), of the tendency to see many where only One exists. You see corpses proceeding one after the other to the graveyard, but you move about unconcerned. You feel you are eternal. In fact, you are. That is the real you, I mean. Just as the water you drink is eliminated as perspiration, the karma that you accumulate is eliminated through karma that is gladly borne. So, bear both "mirth and moan" with equal calm. Like the space (akasa) in the pot merging with the space outside the pot, silently, fully, with no trace of separation or distinctness, merge with the Universal. That is real surrender, salvation, liberation (saranagathi).

Today is the fastest friend, hold fast to it

Rama is extolled as the ideal son, who acted according to his father's wish regardless of his own happiness. But Bhishma is a better example in this respect. He acceded to a whim of his father and in so doing made even a greater sacrifice than Rama. Dasaratha made Rama an exile in the forest for fourteen years to satisfy the claims of Truth, while Shantanu made his son Bhishma give up the throne as well as wedded life to satisfy a sensual desire of his senile body. As a matter of fact, it is not obedience to the father's whim that is important; it is adherence to sathya and dharma, which is Rama's

forte. Dheekshith said that kings, because they have to compromise with justice and truth some time or other, usually go to the nether regions. His kingdom is, really speaking, his body. He must evince as much interest in the proper upkeep of the most distant part of his kingdom as he does in the upkeep of his toe or scalp. Pain anywhere must be felt and remedied as quickly as pain in any part of his body. Such a king never goes to the nether regions. He is indeed thrice blessed. Janaka, for example, felt that all was His, not his. Though he had a body and all the commitments of kingship, he felt as if he was without a body and without a family. It requires all the strength one can collect to carry a load uphill. The gear, the accelerator, have both to operate to haul a car up a steep hill. The guru who taught you cannot do anything to haul it; he can only guide you. Control of the senses, changing the mode of life and the habits of thought - these have to be done by you. The senses say, "Why struggle? Eat, drink, and be merry while you can," but the guru says, "Death lands on you without notice; overcome its fear now, before he calls. Now is the true friend; yesterday has deceived you and gone; tomorrow is a doubtful visitor. Today is the fastest friend; hold fast to it."

Be tranquil amidst the storms

Once when his eldest brother, Dharmaraja, promised a mendicant yogi some help for a ritual sacrifice and asked him to call the next day, Bhima ordered all drums to beat and all flags to fly, for, "My brother is certain to live until tomorrow! At least, that is what he believes will happen." Death stalks your footsteps like a tiger in the bush. So without further waste of time, try to give up sloth and anger; be tranquil amidst the storms; mix in tranquil company. Let the fragrant aroma of divine thoughts, full of love to all, rise around you; why try to scatter fragrance from scent-sticks available in the market? The flame of experiential knowledge of Supreme Reality (jnana) can reduce to cinders the impulses inherited through many births and many experiences. In the heat of that crucible, dross is burnt and precious metal is isolated.

The Lord is sweet in every one of His actions

Spiritual effort requires regular habits and moderation in food, sleep, and

exercise. Fasting weakens the intellect and reduces the strength of discrimination. The body, the mind, and the spirit - all three must be equally looked after. Unless you have "muscles of iron and nerves of steel," you cannot contain in your head the tremendously transforming idea of monism (adwaitha), of your being the universal itself, the Eternal Reality itself! Lesser strength can think only in terms of servitude or subsidiary roles. To see truth as truth and untruth as untruth, clarity of vision and courage of vision are both needed. The seven-walled fort - the feeling of mind and mine (mamakara) and the six evil tendencies of lust, anger, greed, infatuation, arrogance, and jealousy (kama, krodha, lobha, moha, madha, and matsarya) - has a garden in the centre and a lake, where the divine bird (hamsa) plays. It is the image of your own true self; become aware of it and you are saved. You have come into this world (lokha) to enter the presence of the Lord of the world (Lokesha), so do not tarry in wayside inns, mistaking them to be the goal. The Lord too will be longing for the arrival of the lost. He is like a cow yearning for its calf. Once Krishna was in a fix; it was Rukmini's birthday, and it was also the anniversary of his marriage with Sathyabama! Both queens were awaiting His arrival in their palaces, but Krishna, to the great mortification of the proud Sathyabama, went to Rukmini first. After sharing the feast with her, He entered Sathyabama's palace. Sathyabama was in an inconsolable mood of resentment, but, though she did not offer anything to Krishna out of pique, Krishna Himself picked up a few jambu fruits from the garden and ate them, appreciating all the while the care with which the queen was looking after the garden and the extraordinarily fine taste of every fruit that grew in it! Sathyabama was thus encouraged to forget the sense of injury. The Lord is sweet in every one of His actions, movements, words, gestures. He is sweetness itself.

This life is a dream you have taken to be true

Take the instance of Rama. Bairagi Sastry recited a poem about the lotus feet of Rama treading the stony, thorny jungle regions. But Kaikeyi had not realised this when she asked that Rama should go into exile. She learnt about it and was horrified at what she had done only when she saw Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana in the hermitage, as she watched her son plead with Rama to

return to His throne. Rama never felt the thorn or the stone, for He had devised the jungle Himself in order to infuse faith in the sages and nip their fears. As a matter of fact, what functions have those feet other than warding off the hurdles on the path of devotees? The bearer alone knows the weight of the load on his shoulder. The tiniest suffering in you causes the same suffering here also. An old woman from Salem is here, since a week. Her son, a young man of twenty-five years, is insane and cannot attend to his needs. She does not know how much I was affected, but I was inquiring, "Did he take his morning coffee?" And telling her, "Carry food to him and feed him, he is hungry." Her anxiety was just one-sixty-fourth of Mine! You think that I pay attention only to those who sit in front? I see all and I am with all, wherever they may be. Only those who have been blessed will know, not the rest. No fuel, no fire. No spiritual practice, no subconsciousness desire. Pour oil and light the wick. You are on a pilgrimage to the beyond, so you cannot long dwell in this beneath. Some time or other, sooner or later, this birth or the next, you have to realise that this is but a dream you took to be true; you have to pack up and march. This is non-Being (asath) going toward the Being (Sath). This is darkness (thamas): this is the realm of death. Proceed toward the effulgent light (jyothi); proceed toward the realm where immortality reigns.

Let the desire to be saved sprout in you

The tree might appear to be dry, but it will bloom, it will bear fruit; do not despair. I shall make it sprout provided the sap of repentance is still running. Come just one step forward, and I shall take a hundred toward you. Shed just one tear, I shall wipe a hundred from your eyes. I bless only thus! May your bliss (ananda) grow. When the night grows chill, you draw the rug tighter around you, is it not? So too, when grief assails you, draw the warmth of the name of the Lord closer round your mind. Out of all the hundreds of thousands of Indians, you alone have gained this contact through your good luck. Let at least the desire to be saved sprout in you, and I shall see that it grows and gives fruit, provided you yearn and try. To pour the nectar of grace, the vessel must be cleansed. Clean it and demand the nectar; do not grieve later that you missed the chance, since it has come within reach. You

will not know Me in a trice, or even in days. It is something that has to be realised by stages, in due course, through discrimination, non-attachment, and clear-sightedness. You have been squatting for four hours, and some of you might be squirming and feeling an ache in the back. But it is no ache. Pray that you may get this feeling all through life, for you have been receiving the teaching that will sweeten and lighten life itself.

Each has their allotted task, according to the status, taste, tendency, and earned merit. Do your task with the fear of God and of sin deep in your heart. Welcome pain and grief, so that you take both success and failure as hammer strokes to shape you into a sturdy spiritual aspirant. Inner content is more important than outer prosperity.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

6. Home Or Cave?

Date: 08 February 1963 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

Deekshith spoke about the glory of the Lord, and the other pandits gave you detailed accounts of the experiences of ideal men who struggled to arrive at the Truth. Everyone must be interested in knowing about these, for all should have an ideal to strive for, a goal to be reached. Otherwise, life is reduced to aimless wandering. For saplings to grow, soil is essential; for ideals to get implanted, knowledge of the struggles and successes of saints and sages is essential. These experiences are not uniform; each spiritual aspirant has a different story to tell, depending upon their equipment and enthusiasm. So the vision and the glory are different, though all are divine. The mansion of India's glory is built of charming stones, each block being the hardy penance of some sage or other. No one sage can be neglected, for if their attainment is ignored, the wall of the mansion would be so much the weaker. Take the case of Agastya, for example. I mention him because someone gave out his name while addressing you. He is called "potborn", but remember that he and Vasishtha were both children of Mitra-Varuna and were both born from the same pot! He put an end to the evil deeds of the ferocious giants, Ilvala and Vathapi, by just three words, "Vathapi jeerno bhava (Vathapi is becoming ruined, wasted)." He made the high-peaked Vindhya mountain bow his head and become low; that is why he is known by the name Agastya! That is to say, he taught humility to the proudest in the land.

The home must resound to the name of God

Agastya is also reported to have drunk off the ocean all in one sip. That is to say, he dried up the ocean of the objective world (samsara), with its waves of grief and joy, prosperity and adversity, success and failure. It is not any special power, this feat; it is a parable explaining that though he was a married man with a son who recited the Vedas as soon as he saw light, he had conquered all attachments of the world. Be attached only to the ideal - that is the sign of a sage. Kabir was weaving a yellow silk garment for the Lord, for his Rama. He had to work the loom alone, by hand. He recited

"Rama Rama Rama" and went on weaving ceaselessly. The cloth became twenty yards long, but Kabir did not stop. His penance continued unabated, and the garment was becoming longer. The bliss (ananda) of the craft, devotion to his Lord, was enough food and drink for his sustenance. When he gave it to the temple priest for clothing the idol of Rama, the garment was just the right length and breadth, not a finger breadth more! Such men are the mainsprings of the joy that spiritual persons fill themselves with in India. The home (griha) must resound to the name of Govinda; otherwise, it is just a cave (guha), where wild animals dwell. The body needs a house, but the body is itself a house. In that house, too, the name of Govinda must be heard, or else it is a mud pot (ghata), not a man's body.

Offer God the fragrant leaf of devotion

An insidious disease is now rampant among most people, namely, unbelief. It sets fire to the tiny shoots of faith and reduces life into cinders and ashes. You have no criterion to judge, yet you pretend to judge. Doubt, anger, poison, illness - all these have to be scotched before they grow. Repeat Rama's name (do Ramanama) whether you have faith or not. That will itself induce faith; that will itself create the evidence on which faith can be built. A fisherman once spread his net over a lake and sat watching for robbers, who might drag away his catch. He sat on a tree, and to get a clearer vision all round, he plucked leaves and pulled off branches. It was a bilva tree! The day was Magha Krishna Chaturdhasi, Sivarathri day. Mahasivarathri (the great night of emergence of Siva's radiant form), in fact. And, right under the tree where bilva leaves fell, there was a sivalinga (egg-shaped stone)! For want of food, he starved the night, so he got the merit of a vigil and a fast! His wife ardently waited for him in his hut. Just when she was about to eat her supper, a dog peeped in. She felt it was very hungry, so she followed it with the plate of food and fed it, in a spirit of worship. She also kept vigil. In the morning, he went to the temple and prayed that he may merge in God; his wife prayed that he may be spared for her sake. But God had both of them merged in Him. You attach importance to quantity, but the Lord considers only quality. He does not calculate how many measures of "sweet rice" you offered but how many sweet words you uttered, how much sweetness you added in your

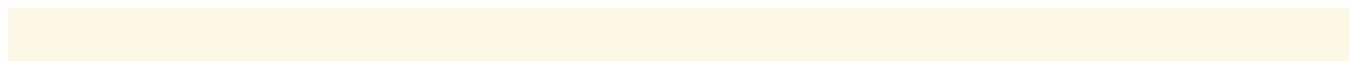
thoughts. Offer Him the fragrant leaf of devotion, the flowers of your emotions and impulses, freed from the pests of lust, anger, etc. Give Him fruits grown in the orchard of your mind, sour or sweet, juicy or dry, bitter or sugary.

Your homes must be immersed in highest peace.

Once you decide that the orchard in your mind is His, all fruits will be sweet; your seeking refuge for protection (saranagathi) will render all fruits acceptable to the Lord, so they cannot be bitter. And, for water, what can be purer and more precious than your tears - shed not in grief, mind, you but in rapture at the chance to serve the Lord and to walk along the path that leads to Him! All who aspire to be devotees must eschew attachment and aversion. You need not be proud if you are able to sing better or if your worship room is better decorated. There must be a steady improvement in your habits and attitudes; otherwise, spiritual discipline is a vain pastime. This place as well as your homes when you return must be immersed in the highest peace (santhi) - undisturbed by any streak of hatred or malice, pride, or envy. No worship or penance, no oath can equal the efficacy of obedience, obedience to the command given for your liberation.

Individual reconstruction is much more important than construction of temples. Multiply virtues, not buildings. Practise what you preach, that is the real pilgrimage. Cleanse your minds of envy and malice, that is the real bath in holy waters. Of what avail is the name of the Lord on the tongue if the heart within is impure? Injustice and discontent are spreading everywhere due to this one fault in man: saying one thing and doing the opposite, the tongue and the hand going in different directions. One has to set oneself right and correct one's food, recreation, and method of spending leisure as well as habits of thought.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba



7. Bend Before Love And Truth

Date: **March 1963** / Location: **Prasanthi Nilayam** / Occasion: **Shivarathri**

Do not grieve that the Lord is testing you and putting you to the ordeal of undergoing the tests, for it is only when you are tested that you can assure yourself of success or become aware of your limitations. You can then concentrate on the subjects in which you are deficient and pay more intensive attention, so that you can pass in them too when you are tested again. Don't study for the examination at the last moment; study well in advance and be ready with the needed knowledge and the courage and confidence born out of that knowledge and skill. What you have studied well in advance must be rolled over and over in the mind, just previous to the examination; that is all that should be done. This is the pathway to victory.

Many grieve: "It is said that getting the audience of a holy person (darshanam) is destruction of sin (papanashanam). Well, I have had darshan not once but many times, and yet, my evil fate has not left me and I am suffering even more than before." True, they have come and had darshan, they have sowed fresh seeds secured from this place - seeds of love, faith, devotion, good company, Godly thoughts, remembering God's name, etc. - and they have learnt the art of intensive cultivation and soil preparation. They have now sown the seeds in well-prepared fields of cleansed hearts. Now, until the new harvest comes in, they have to consume the grain already stored in previous harvests. The troubles and anxieties are the crop collected in previous harvests, so do not grieve and lose heart.

In this sacred land, people have forgotten the real source of sacredness, of holy life, of living in peace with oneself and others. Now, the time has come to remind them of it. With the jewel around the neck, the wearer has been searching for it everywhere else. A person has to hold the mirror to their face. The vedic clarion call will soon ring in the ears of humanity. The Person has come to remind people and to redirect them along the true path.

If anyone challenges you to show them one text where the principles of Sanathana Dharma (Eternal Religion) are succinctly stated, tell them about the Bhagavad Gita. It is the essence of the Vedas, the Sastras, and the Puranas. The Gita is like a bottle of fruit juice obtained from a basket of fruit. It will not get dry or rot like the fruits, for the juice has been well extracted and preserved. Its taste and excellence will persist until the end of this age (the Kali Yuga), and then it will merge in the Vedas.

In the forest of worldly life (samsara), the body is a tree and the thoughts, feelings, and imaginations are the branches, twigs, and leaves. Worry, anxiety, and fear are the monkeys that frisk among the branches. Grief in its various forms represents the insect pests that destroy the blooms. The blossoms are smiles; the owls and crows that infest it are anger, hatred, sloth, and spite!

The sun never rises or sets; it appears to rise and appears to set on account of the revolution of the earth! What happens when the sun rises is that the invisible becomes visible, that is all. This series of rising and setting of the sun exists only for those who feel it; it does not exist for those who deny it. The duality of appearance and non-appearance can be overcome by spiritual wisdom (jnana); so also, when the Sun of Knowledge is known, it is experienced as shining always with undiminished lustre.

Lingam means simply "the sign," "the symbol". It is just a mark that indicates merging (laya), that is to say, the passing away of the mind and all mental agitations and all mental pictures, which means this objective world. Sivarathri is the day on which the moon, the presiding deity of the mind, is as

near merging as possible, so just a little extra effort that day leads to full success. The spiritual aspirant can thereby achieve complete destruction of the mind. The realisation is that everything is subsumed in this lingam, which is the symbol of the formless.

God is a huge fire, and the sparks that fly out from it are the individual souls (jivis); the individual souls are infinitesimal fractions of the same effulgence, having the same splendid essence as their base, but the wind of impressions left on the mind by past actions (vasanas) sweeps upon the sparks, puts out the light, and destroys the heat. But the same wind cannot put out the fire, it can only feed it further and cause its splendour to shine forth in even greater measure, for the will of the Lord can only add to His glory.

Just as the dreams you see are shaped by the experiences, cravings, and disappointments of the waking stage, the experiences of the waking stage are the results of your previous lives. While dreaming, you do not relate the incidents and emotions to the waking stage, do you? You feel they are unrelated, unique, genuine experiences, is it not? So too, you do not realise that your joy and grief, your actions and reactions in the waking stage are all based on your past lives. Nevertheless, they are so based.

A great painter once came to a prince and offered to do a fresco on the palace wall; behind him came another, who declared that he would paint on the wall opposite whatever painting the first one drew, even if a curtain hid it from view while he was painting and even if he was not told the subject of the fresco! Both were commissioned to the tasks they had accepted. The second man finished his work at the very moment the first one announced that he had completed the task! The prince arrived in the hall, where a thick curtain

partitioned off the two artists and their paintings. He saw the fresco and admired it very much. Then he ordered the curtain to be removed, and lo, on the wall facing the fresco, there was an exact duplicate of the picture that the first man had so laboriously painted! Exact - because he had polished the wall, making it a fine big mirror! Make your hearts clean and pure and smooth, so that the glory of the Lord might be reflected therein, so that the Lord might see His own image thereon.

Cricket players do not derive as much joy as the onlookers, so develop the attitude of the onlooker, the witness. The batsmen, bowlers, and fields men do not get a fraction of the pleasure that the 'fans' beyond the boundary derive. They note each fault and excellence in stroke and defence; they appreciate the finer points of the game. So too, to get the maximum joy out of this game of life, cultivate the attitude of the onlooker, even when you have to get embroiled in the game.

I will not bend before anyone for anything. I am therefore unafraid. I bend for love, I bend before truth, that is all. Do not worry about worldly comforts and ask Me about those things as if they are all-in-all. Do not waste your precious lifetime in distracting doubts about the existence of the Lord in human form, here and now. Cultivate love (prema) toward all; that is the greatest service you can do to yourself, for all others are but you yourself. You too should bend only before love and truth, not before hatred and cruelty and falsehood.

- Sparks from discourses delivered on the occasion of Shivarathri, 1963.

People did not come here to sleep and eat; they came to manifest, by disciplined processes, the Divine in them. That is why each is called an individual (vyakthi), one who makes clear (vyaktha) the power (sakthi) that

is in them - the divine energy that motivates them. For this purpose, people have come endowed with a body and the intelligence needed to control it and divert it to useful channels of activity. You must achieve this by the steady pursuit of morality and good deeds (dharma-nishta and karma-nishta).

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

8. Devotion Of The Cowherd Maids

Date: **March 1963** / Location: **Prasanthi Nilayam**

The meaning of the Krishna Avatar is beyond your understanding. Why, all the Avatars (divine Incarnations) are inexplicable, in the language of this world, in the vocabulary of common people. To attempt it is to encase the ocean in a canal by its side. You can understand it only when you become lost to the world and its attachments through the expansion of your sympathies and the purification of your motives. The One Godhead was experienced by the cowherd maids (gopis) as immanent in every being; they steadied their minds and installed Him therein. Veerabhadra Sastry said just now that the Lord will not stay in the heart unless it is maintained, fixed, and unagitated. Of course, when you place a child in the cradle, it must be firm and unmoving, but once the child is laid, the cradle can be swung, for it is only when it is swung to a song that "I am glad and you are glad." Remember, the Lord is also a child, He is the personified Being-Awareness-Bliss (Sat-Chit-Ananda), devoid of qualities (gunas). Sastry said that when Uddhava came to Gokula, the cows were fat and full, the cowherd maids (gopis) were happy and joyful, and the place was full of fragrance and music." But the facts were different. The place was forlorn, and the men and women were disconsolate and helpless. The cattle were also overcome with grief. Uddhava brought them all a fresh lease of life. Krishna told him, "Their hearts are merged in Mine; their minds think only of Me; they have forsaken even bodily needs, and they exist only because they hope to see Me again, some day." So how could the gopis be as happy and gay as Sastry described? Uddhava himself was humbled at the sight of their complete surrender and the pangs of separation that consumed them. That is the very reason Krishna sent Uddhava to them. Every act of Krishna had a meaning, a purpose, and a sweet aptness.

The simple gopis were wiser than yogis

The gopis were convinced that Krishna was the Lord. Many yogis and ascetics, many kings and great kings (rajas and maharajas) among whom Krishna moved had not realised that truth. The unlearned simple cowherds and

cowherdesses were wiser. When you too feel so affected by those pangs, you can understand the gopis, not until then. For that pain, the message of Krishna is the antidote. "Your grief is caused by your limited artificial outlook; you take Me to be a limited bound entity, so you feel I am far away, I am absent, I am by your side, etc. You are hugging a delusion. Awake to the Truth and establish yourselves in joy." The One does not, of its own free will, desire to become many. It has no desire. It has no likes and dislikes. It is immanent and transcendent. It is all this and more. What then is the reason for this manifold appearance? The reason lies in the mind of the devotee. You declare. "Baba appeared before me in this form; I saw Baba in this form." But what happens is that you desire that vision. I do not change into that form. The Lord is sugar, sweetness. You may drop it into tea or coffee or milk or water. Into whatever thing you put it, it will make it sweet. That is My nature, My signature: sweetness. Once It has melted, what remains is neither water nor sugar but a third thing: syrup. But when your tongue is bitter through envy, hatred, and pride, how can you taste the sugar?

Seek God just as you seek food

The Lord cares for the motive, not the object offered. The tiny leaf from the cooking vessel that Droupadi gave Krishna satisfied His hunger and the hunger of the universe - for she saturated it with her devotion. The tulsi leaf placed by Rukmini in the scale was able to balance the weight of Him who has all the 14 worlds in His belly, for her intent added so much weight to it. The handful of flattened rice that Kuchela took to Krishna was worth less than a paisa, but it was suffused so heavily with the devotion and faith of his wife that it brought great good fortune. It is possible to fill a world of feeling in an atom of deed, and the Lord will value and appreciate that. Krishna is the causeless conditioning. You cannot discover the causes for His acts or deeds; it is sheer waste to search for them. If you go on searching for causes and then trying to tread the path, you may not get the chance at all. You have come as humans in order to reach God, remember that. People stop you on the way and ask, "Why do you go to Madhura-Brindavan, to Thirupathi, to Puttaparthi?" But nobody asks you, "Why do you take food?" In fact, one has to seek God just as one seeks food. Both are necessary for happiness. People

seek happiness because they are originally and truly free, immortal, so they seek to overcome death.

Everyone must rise to the level of the cowherd maidens

Do not blame the Lord for your failure in spiritual practice. Examine yourself. Suppose you set the alarm clock for 6a.m. and go to bed; if it rings only at 10a.m., you infer that something is wrong with its nuts, bolts, springs, wheels, etc. So too, when the expected results do not materialise, infer that something is wrong in you yourself, your habits of food, drink, sleep, conduct, behaviour, or attitude toward others. Everyone, be they a Brahmin or pandit or student or artist, has to adhere to a strict code of discipline. Without that, victory is beyond reach. You must become master of the senses and attain the Supreme Energy (Maha-asthi) from this basic deluding power (mayasakthi). In short you too must rise to the level of the cowherd maidens (gopis). The body is assigned to you as a boat to cross the ocean of worldly life (samsara), but you use it for storing things that give worldly joy and do not launch it on the waters. Misusing it like that, it comes in the way of all activity that is really conducive to happiness. Use it in the way of righteousness (dharma), and success will be yours. Bhima asked Dharmaraja whether he would agree to it if Duryodhana invited him for another game of dice after the 12 years of forest and the one year of incognito were over, and he replied, "I can never deviate from the path of dharma." Since that was his attitude, the Pandavas were helped by the continuous grace of Krishna and the blessings of sages like Markandeya and Veda Vyasa. The Kauravas, on the other hand, were debilitated by curse after curse from enraged sages and by one ill omen after another.

The cowherd maidens are best examples of yearning for the Lord

Your spiritual practices involve not reading or writing as much as actual experiencing. Ravana was a past master in the four Vedas and the six Sastras (spiritual sciences); his ten heads were full of them. But to what avail? He had no peace (santhi), nor could he give peace to his kith and kin. What is the profit if you simply repeat, "Delicious food, delicious food" a thousand times?

You have to eat, digest, and assimilate. You have no deposits on your account in the bank of Bhagavan's grace, yet you dare issue cheques, expecting His grace when in distress! Have the deposits, or, at least have some property on hand (like service to others, love toward all, nonviolence) so that you can mortgage it and get help. If you have neither, why blame the bank? Through your daily avocations and activities you can realise the Lord, believe Me! The cowherd maidens (gopis) are the best examples of this, the best proofs. Remember ever the name of the Lord with the agony of unfulfilled search, and remember ever His beautiful form with the agony of being forced to be away - then you too can see Krishna in your midst. That yearning must be there. Then the result is certain.

The Lord wants sincerity, not imitation

Prahlada was immersed in that thought when he was thrown downhill, trampled by the elephant, and tortured by the minions of his father. He paid no heed, for he heeded only his Lord; he needed only his Lord. The cowherd maidens also, when they listened to Krishna's flute (murali), lost all attachment to the world and to the senses and to the manifold objective phenomenal things; they yearned for the sublimest spiritual merging with the Infinite, which was always calling on the finite to realise its finiteness. By the purification of impulses, one gets into the higher stage where the mystery of the Divine is grasped - the realm-of-spirituality (salokya) stage. Then, by contemplation of the Divine, the stages of proximity to Divinity and likeness of the form of Divinity are won. Many great mystic poets attained this height. Jayadeva sang in that strain. But if you sing that song in the same way, Krishna will not appear. He wants sincerity, not imitation. The name uttered with sincere faith was the flower offering of the cowherd maidens (gopis); that was the bead of their rosary.

9. A Drama Within A Drama

Date: 10 February 1963 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

The two pandits who spoke have given you substantial food, but one feels full only after drinking a glassful of water in the end. I shall provide the water now. Of course, the water drawn from the spiritual texts (sastras) is not just water, it is nectar. The pandit referred to some episodes in the Ramayana that cause confusion and doubt. He asked why Dasaratha chose an occasion when Bharatha was absent to raise the question of Rama's coronation, why the Ahalya incident (Rama touched the stone in which Ahalya was imprisoned and she was freed) was allowed to reveal the divinity of Rama when all along Rama is depicted as only human, why Vali had to be killed by such a virtuous hero as Rama from behind a tree, why Kaikeyi, who loved Rama even more than she loved Bharatha, suddenly got so concerned about Bharatha. The fact is, doubt grows wild in the absence of faith. Faith can be established only when one grasps the inner significance of each incident and remark.

All must reach the goal some day or other

Dasaratha did not invite the king of the Kekayas for consultation along with the other leaders and princes who were called to give their opinion on the choice of Rama as the heir apparent, for in that case, subsequent events in furtherance of the Master Plan would have been rendered difficult. In fact, Dasaratha did not command Rama to go into exile in so many words; he only acknowledged to Kaikeyi that he had granted her two boons and that he was now helpless to back out of that grant. It was Kaikeyi who communicated the news to Rama. Silence was as good as approval, and Rama had to accept silence as the command from His father. Kaikeyi had to intervene so that the Avatar's purpose might be fulfilled. The sense of righteousness in Rama was so strong that when he heard of the dilemma in which Dasaratha was caught, He helped him to come out of it unharmed; he insisted he would go into exile, as his father had promised by implication. The Divinity (Atmarama) in everyone prompts one to stick to truth and to the moral code; you have only to listen and obey and get saved. Some hear even its whisperings; some

listen only when it protests loudly; some are deaf; some are determined not to hear. But all have to be guided by it sooner or later. Some may ascend a plane, others may travel by car or board a bus, some may prefer a train journey, others may like to trudge along - but all must reach the goal some day or other. Sugriva forgot his plighted word and indulged himself in the newly won revels of the court; he ignored the fact that the mundane world is based not on wealth (dhana) but on virtue (dharma). So Rama prodded the snake Ananta to raise its angry hood and hiss furiously. That is to say, he reminded Lakshmana of the ingratitude of Sugriva and made him furious. An ungrateful king is as worthless as an ungrateful subject.

Grace must be won by spiritual practices alone

The pandit spoke of the death of Vali, which gave Sugriva the throne. But remember, it was not Vali alone that died. His primal ignorance (ajnana) also died with him. He saw Rama, with all His divine glory, as filling the entire universe, which is but a fraction of His personality. Rama's anger at Sugriva's dilatoriness is a drama within a drama, for Rama knew that Sugriva would set about the task of searching for Sita as soon as He gave the prompting. The Avatars all play a drama within the drama of this universe. You say that Rama 'wept' for Sita, but how can an ant judge the depth of the sea? Rama was the greatest hero in history. He killed the 14,000 demons (rakshasas) led by Khara, Dussasana, and Trisiras all by Himself! Every demon beheld a Rama in every neighbouring demon and, full of fury, slew the Rama and was killed in turn by his neighbour. The Avatar behaves in a human way so that mankind can feel kinship, but He rises to super-human heights so that mankind can aspire to those heights. The real nature of humanity (nara thathwa) can be transformed into the real nature of God (Narayana thathwa), for both are basically the same. Only, you have to switch on to the particular wave-length. Know it, adjust correctly, and the all-pervading will be grasped clearly with no distortion. You may read the Gita many times, but the Gita ('line' in Telugu) of grace must be won by spiritual discipline. The line of fortune that the palmists say will bring success is the result of grace alone. You may say that you are the master of the Gita-sastra, that you have read and digested it, but when you belch, the taste and the flavour must be manifest! They are not evident

at all. Trifles are sought after, temporary benefits pursued, joy and grief alternately tease and agitate. The sea of worldly life (samsara) has to be crossed and all its waves transcended, with the help of remembrance of the name (Ramanama). If you seek to know the highest and secure the award of the Lord, there can be no place for doubt. The heart should be set on achieving the task of realising the Lord within you, as the motivator. The Lord comes in human form to show this.

Falsehood looks easy and profitable, but it binds you and pushes you into perdition.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

10. True Nature Of Rama

Date: 01 April 1963 / Location: Rajamundry / Occasion: Rama Navami

Virtue, or right conduct (*dharma*), is not a matter of time and space, to be modified and adjusted to the needs and pressures of the moment. It means a number of fundamental principles that should guide mankind in its progress toward inner harmony and outer peace. A person who strays away from dharma meets with greater harm than even physical slavery.

There is a dread now about invasion and bondage to the enemy if you are not alert enough and united enough. But the loss of dharma is an even greater calamity, for what is life worth if one cannot live up to the talents with which one is endowed? These principles are called eternal (*sanathana*) because their origins are not dated, their author is not identifiable; they are the revelations made in the clarified intellects of impartial sages. They are basic and eternal. They do not represent temporary vagaries.

India stood unshaken and undaunted against the onslaught of attitudes that were bred in other lands to suit the needs of limited societies because she stuck to the dharma that was laid down for all time and all people. Indian rulers also respected the rigours of dharma and took the advice of the repositories of dharma and the interpreters of dharma - those who were purified in the crucible of penance and austerities (*tapas*). They recognised the Ruler of Rulers and sought His guidance by prayer and penance. They knew that their Master was the Eternal Indweller or Onlooker. They were taught that He was in full sympathy not only with the king but even with the lowliest of his subjects. Therefore, the rulers of this land were warned to care for the happiness and cure the misery of every single individual in the State.

The Divine Is An Indivisible Entity

Dharma (righteousness, virtue) is the code of conduct that will promote the ideals of each stage of a person: student, householder, earner, master, servant, spiritual aspirant, renunciant (*sanyasi*), etc. When the code is

distorted and mankind undermines its earthly career, forgetting the high purpose for which one has come, the Lord incarnates and leads people along the correct path. That is to say, He comes as a human being to restore the principles and reestablish the practice of dharma. This is what is referred to as dharma-samsthapana in the Gita. Among these forms assumed by the Lord, there is no higher or lower, though pandits may argue who is better or greater among, say, Rama and Krishna! That is but a type of intellectual gymnastics, which gives the pandits the keen joy of a pugilistic encounter! Veerabhadra Shastry posed a similar problem now. Let me tell you at the outset that the Divine is an indivisible entity, whatever form it may assume, here or elsewhere.

Rama never deviated from dharma

Rama appeared as an illusory human form; He stuck to dharma in daily practice, even from His infancy. He is the personification of dharma. There is no trace of vice (*adharma*) in him. His divine Nature is revealed in His calm temperament and feeling of love and affection. Meditate on Him and you are filled with love for all beings; dwell on His story and you find all the agitations of your minds quietening in perfect calm.

When Thataki, the female demon, had to be killed, Rama argued, hesitated, and desisted, until Sage Viswamitra convinced Him that she had to be liberated from a curse by His own arrow. That is a sign of His love and affection. Rama never provoked another in order to create a convenient excuse to destroy him; on the other hand, He gave the adversary every chance to be saved. He carried the message of dharma to the monkeys and demons (vanaras and rakshasas), as well as to sages like Jabali. He accepted the homage of Vibhishana without demur, and He announced that He was prepared to accept even Ravana, if only he would repent his iniquity.

"Speak the truth," says the sacred revelation (sruthi); Rama stuck to truth, in spite of all temptations. "Practise virtue," says the sacred revelation. He never deviated from the path. For example, as you know, He had to live 14 years in the forest to fulfil His father's behest. During that period, He did not enter an

inhabited town or village. He avoided Kishkindha and Lanka even when the coronations of Sugriva and Vibhishana took place. Vibhishana pleaded with Him very plaintively, saying that only a few days remained out of the 14 years, but Rama sent Lakshmana instead. He did not waver or overstep. That was the strictness with which He kept the vow.

Make Rama your Atma Rama

Rama is the Embodiment of Virtue (Dharma-swarupam); Krishna is the Embodiment of Love (Prema-swarupam). Rama was ever aware of the obligations of dharma. When Dasaratha, running after His chariot in mortal anguish, cried out, "Stop, stop" and called on Sumanthra to stop, Rama told him not to. He said, "If he chides you, tell him you did not hear him."

Sumanthra was in a fix. How could He say something not true? But Rama explained, "This order to stop the chariot comes from a grief-stricken father, whereas the order to take Me to the forest came from the king, whose minister you are. Do not hear the ravings of a man who has lost his reason through sorrow; you must listen only to the commands of the king."

Even before the advent of the Avatar, the stage is set to the minutest detail; Kaikeyi is ready with her two indefinite boons; Dasaratha is ready with the curse of the ascetic on his head, entailing upon him a death due to anguish at the separation of his son, and the monkeys (vanaras) are ready to help the divine purpose. Sita is ready, risen from the earth, to provide the cause for the downfall of evil. Just as a garland is made of flowers gathered from many plants, flowers of many hues and fragrances, so too the garland of the divine story is made up of a variety of incidents, a boon, a blessing, a curse to provide the wonderful plot of His Story.

Some say that Rama shows man how to suffer! Well, if a king arranges a play in the palace and takes delight in enacting the role of a beggar, and acts it very realistically, do you therefore declare that he is suffering the miseries of beggary? Rama is bliss (*ananda*). Bliss is Rama. If it is not sweet, how can it be sugar? If Rama is suffering, He cannot be Rama. A ball of iron cannot burn

the skin, but make it red-hot and it does. That is but an assumed role. When the heat subsides it is as cool as ever.

Repetition of Rama's name (Ramanama) will save you if you have at least the devotion to father and to mother that Rama had. If not, repetition of Rama's name is merely a movement of the lips. Meditate on Rama's form and true nature when you recite or write His name. That will give exercise to the mind, and it will be made healthy and strong, in the spiritual sense. Make this the Embodiment of Virtue your Eternal Bliss (your Atma Rama), on this birthday of Rama. That is My advice and My blessing.

11. The Fifth Veda

Date: 23 April 1963 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

Gullapalli BuchiRamaya Sastry spoke about the Mahabharatha so well and with so much scholarship since he has been specialising in its exposition for years. The Mahabharatha is considered by many as not so conducive to devotion as the Bhagavatha, for instance, or the Ramayana, but if once you know the taste, no one will give it up or consider it as of lower value. It is called the Fifth Veda, not without reason. The Vedas reveal things that are beyond the reach of the intellect. The truths declared by the Vedas are made practicable and simple, interesting and instructive, by means of stories and homilies in the Mahabharatha. The Purva Mimamsa (an inquiry into the ritualistic action part of the Veda) deals with the path of worldly desire and the Uttara Mimamsa with the path of renunciation. The Purva Mimamsa deals with the reason (karana) and the Uttara Mimamsa with the duty (karyam), which is wisdom (jnanam). In the Mahabharatha, both paths are fully explained, so it is called the Fifth Veda. It is the essence of Veda itself. In Telugu there is a proverb, "If it is a question of listening, listen to Bharatham (meaning the Mahabharatha); if it is a question of eating, eat garelu (a kind of cake)." That is because the Bharatham gives in a sweet, simple style all the inspiration that one needs for this world and for the next.

Where there is dharma, victory is assured

The Veda spiritual discipline (sadhana) has four pillars on which it stands: truth, right conduct, peace, and love (sathya, dharma, santhi, and prema). They have to be practised and experienced, and their combined result, namely bliss (ananda) has to be enjoyed. Krishna told the Pandavas that He did not know anything about the fateful dice game, which started the succession of calamities. "I was in Dwaraka at the time," He said. Dwaraka means the citadel with the nine gates (dwaras), the body itself. Krishna is the witness of everything; anything done without His approval or without being dedicated to Him will be a failure. The five Pandava brothers are the five vital energies (pranas), symbolised in story, and with the help of the Lord, they

won the battle against the forces of evil. Where there is dharma, victory is assured. The Mahabharatha teaches that truth. The Pandavas had many temptations placed before them to slide back into unrighteousness (adharma), but they held on to the difficult path of dharma and won. The status of manhood has been won after aeons of arduous struggle, and to waste it in vain pursuits, forgetting the Divinity that has to be manifested, is indeed pitiable.

God weighs only the feelings behind prayer

Droupadi praying in distress from the assembly hall of the Kauravas is an instance in point. The Mahabharatha proves times and again that the Lord answers prayers that come out of faith and agony in yearning. A cowherder called Maladhasa was determined to see the Lord as He was described in the sacred texts he had heard expounded in the village temple by a pandit. So he prayed and prayed to the "black Lord riding on the white bird" all the time his cows were pasturing in the fields. Eleven days passed, but there was no sign of the "black Lord riding the white bird". Maladhasa had forgotten to take food and drink during all those days and had become weak - too weak to walk or talk. At last, the Lord melted at his entreaties and presented Himself before him as an old Brahmin. But the Brahmin was not riding a white bird, nor was he black, beautifully black, as the pandit had described. So, he asked the Brahmin to come the next day at seven in the morning so that he may bring the pandit and verify whether He was the Lord Himself. The pandit laughed at the whole affair and refused to take part in it; but Maladhasa was so overly persistent that he agreed. The entire village turned out on the river bank the next day, long before seven o'clock. The Brahmin was there, exactly as he had promised, and Maladhasa showed Him to all. But they could not see him! They began to laugh at the cowherder's antics and threatened him with a severe beating for bringing them along as butts for his joke. Maladhasa could see the Brahmin clearly, but no one else could. At last, he got so enraged that he walked up to the old Brahmin and gave him a whacking blow on the cheek, saying, "Why don't you show yourself to all?" That blow changed the entire scene. Krishna appeared in resplendent robes, smiling face, captivating form, and the white bird. As the astounded villagers were recovering from

amazement, the heavenly chariot floated down from the sky, and Krishna asked Maladhasa to sit inside it. Then, with the Lord by his side, Maladhasa rose up and was soon out of sight.

Mahabharatha is an inspiration for all time

The Lord always weighs only the feeling behind the prayer to satisfy and please. The form with quality is visible to the eye and cognisable by the senses, but something unapproachable by the senses has to be offered. In this way, action (karma) itself becomes worship by the addition, to the saturation point, of dedication. Attachment is the seed; feeling is the sapling; love is the tree; being-awareness-bliss (sat-chit-ananda) is the fruit. The Vedas have section on action, devotion, and knowledge (karma, upasana, and jnana). The Mahabharatha teaches all three, so, for the Veda tree, the Mahabharatha can be said to be the fruit. You have heard that the Lord comes down when dharma declines. Well, the decline of the Vedas is equivalent to the decline of dharma, for Veda is the very root of dharma. There are five treasures that the good always try to guard and that you should endeavour to foster: the cow, the Brahmin, the Vedas, the sastras (scriptures), and chastity. If these are lost, then life is lost; everything that adds value to life is lost.

You are your own foe and friend

Where there is dharma, there Krishna is; so think for yourself, each one of you! How far have you deserved the grace of the Lord? You draw Him near; you keep Him far. You entangle yourself, bind yourself, and get caught in the trap. No one is your foe except yourself. No one else is your friend. You are your only friend. The guru shows you the road, and you have to trudge alone, without fear or hesitation. The Mahabharatha clearly explains the dikes that the Eternal Universal Religion (Sanathana Dharma) has constructed to direct the wild flocks of the senses and the emotions into the sea, without harming the banks. Student celibate, householder, recluse in the forest, ascetic - these stages of life, with the restrictions and regulations prescribed for each, are such dikes to guard the individual and society from the upsurge of the beast

in man. Even today, the Mahabharatha can be of great help; it is an inspiration for all time, for all humanity. The battle between Dharmakshethra (the camp of the virtue-bound, noble Pandavas) and Kurukshetra (the camp of the egoistic, wicked Kauravas) is ever on, and however strong the Kurukshetra might appear to be, even if it has the Yadavas (Krishna's clan) on its side, as long as the Lord is the charioteer, victory is certain for the champions of dharma. Even now, when the Chinese are pressing on the frontier, the best armour for the country is dharma, which will win the Grace of God. What is not possible for a people who have won that?

If only people knew the path to permanent joy and peace, they would not wander distracted among the by-lanes of sensual pleasure. Just as the joy felt in dreams disappears when you wake, the joy felt in the waking stages disappears when you wake into the higher awareness, called jnana. Use the moment while it is available for the best of uses, the awareness of the Divine in all. When you die, you must die not like a tree or a beast or a worm but like a human being who has realised that they are God (Madhava). That is the consummation of all the years you spend in the human frame.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

12. Sankara's Nondualism

Date: 28 April 1963 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Sankara Jayanthi

The six enemies of humanity get a foothold in the mind because it is filled with the darkness of ignorance (ajnana). Those enemies are nocturnal birds, like bats and owls, which cannot tolerate light. Darkness will not flee if you throw stones at it; nor will it disappear if you lay about it with a sword or shoot it with a gun. It will be destroyed only when a lamp is lit. Sankara taught this simple truth to many who were ignorant of this simple fact. The people of this country were lost in the pursuit of many goals because their vision was blurred by darkness. Sankara taught them that the Vedas, Upanishads, and Sastras had but One in view: the One-without-a-second (adwaitha). Sankara, when quite a young boy, was one day offering worship to Devi, the household Deity, because his father was away and his father had asked him to perform worship in his absence. He placed milk before the image and prayed pathetically that She should sip the milk, as he imagined She was wont to do when his father did the worship. He wept so sincerely that Mother Devi melted at his wailing and drank the entire quantity! Sankara had seen his father distribute the milk that was offered to the Mother, a tiny spoonful, to every member of the family; but, since the cup was emptied in one quaff by Her, nothing remained. The boy feared that he would be blamed for drinking what was the share of the others, so he wailed again. Devi felt great pity at the plight of Sankara, who had taken the Image to be alive and who had compelled Her already to manifest Herself from it. But she did not pour milk out of Her palm, as I do; instead, she pressed Her Maternal Breasts and filled the cup. Sankara's anguished yearning had succeeded in making Devi respond!

Beginners only need image worship

Similarly, the other day, Sri Ramamurthy, who is sitting among you here, shouted, "Swami" in sincere faith and agony. His wife was writhing in pain because her clothes had caught fire. She was too panic stricken to call out My name, but his cry was heard by Me. I hurried to the spot, which is, as you say,

400 miles away; I crumpled the fire out, before it was too late. Sankara worshipped images in childhood, and he knew the value of God as endowed with qualities (Saguna swarupa). He advised worship of the Form to the large majority of people, even later in his life. Little children must be taught with the help of slates and boards on which illustrations are drawn. Temples, images, and pictures are the slates and boards for the children in spiritual progress. But, if you play with a toy elephant, you cannot derive the experience of contacting the real one. The Formless can be conceived only when you have transcended Form.

Sankara's nondualism is the ultimate truth

When Sankara thought of renouncing the world (in order to get the authority to educate it), he felt that his mother's consent had to be taken for the step. So, while bathing in the Poorna river near his house, he cried out one day that a crocodile had caught his leg. It was true, for the crocodile was, as in the Gajendra-liberation story, only worldly life (samsara) called by the name "sensual desire", to put it in other words. When Sankara's mother came rushing to the bank of the river, he told her that the crocodile would let him off only if he became a monk! This was also true, for renunciation, detachment, giving up worldly ties is the means of saving oneself from bondage. The bewildered mother agreed, and the boy left home to seek his guru and, through him, the secret of liberation. Sankara lived for only thirty-two years, but during that time, he purified and consolidated the various schools of worship and brought them under the over-all care of one philosophical principle, nondualism (adwaitha). The great aphorisms (mahavakyas) on Supreme Reality of the Vedas once again began ringing in the hearts of all, with their true meaning. "I am Brahman; Thou art That; Consciousness is Brahman (Aham Brahmasmi; Thath-thwam-asi; Prajnanam Brahma)" - all were explained in simple, convincing logic, in sweet captivating poetry. Sankara's nondualism is the ultimate truth, so it is only confirmed, not shaken, by the discoveries of science or the flights of intellect. It speaks of the unity of matter and energy; of time and space, of the universe being but Brahman seen through the veil of illusion (maya), which also is but an activity of the Primordial. Sankara knew that nondualism requires intense spiritual

effort of will to remove all trace of ego, all idea of duality, from the mind of the human being. So, as a preparatory discipline to the dawn of the awareness of one's real unity with the substance of the universe, he taught the rules of yoga and devotion and karma. These, according to him, will brighten the intellect, cleanse the emotions, and purify the heart. Nondualism is the awareness of the Divine in everything, everywhere, in full measure. Sankara suggested good company as the very first step in spiritual discipline. The company of the wise and the good will develop into detachment and love of silence and solitude. That will promote the disappearance of delusion (moha), which, according to Arjuna, is the fruit of listening to the Gita. When that happens, one is established steadily in the reality of this and that, the identity of this with that (the Thath-thwam). Well, the recognition of that identity is the attainment of liberation.

13. Auspiciousness (Sivam), Not Corpse (Savam)

Date: 29 April 1963 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

Ghandikota Subrahmanya Sastry read and offered what he called a Garland of Nine Poetic Gems (a Navarathna Haram). Though I do not accept garlands, I certainly accept the devotion that gives fragrance to the garland. He said that the Vedas are for the glorification of the Gods, that in the Kali Yuga (the age we are in), one is asked to rely more on repeated remembrance of God (namasmarana) for liberation. Why is it considered enough for the people of this age? Well, other spiritual practices are fraught with difficulties. They need rigorous discipline and much preliminary effort. Again, there is another advantage in namasmarana: as soon as the Name is uttered, the owner of the Name comes into view. When you think of the Form, the Name may not always accompany; you may not be able to identify it. There may be more than one name, and you may be confused. But take the Name and the Form automatically appears before the mental eye. In Bharath (India), the discipline to remove attachment to the senses and to curb the mind from running after fleeting pleasures has been clearly laid down for ages, and we have the experiences of many saints recorded in the sacred literature of this land. All the activities of thought, word, and deed are sublimated to this higher purpose. A person is auspicious (sivam), not a corpse (savam); the person has three eyes, which are derived from the sun, moon, and Agni.

Where the Lord's Name is sung, there He sits

The Agni eye is the internal eye, which can be opened by the discipline of the yoga. The three-eyed Siva can see the past, present, and future. You can recall the picture of boy of ten whom you have seen as he was when you saw him, but you can't see him as he is now or as he will be ten years hence. But if you earn the three eyes (thri-nethra), capable of seeing the past, present, and future, you can see all three. You become master of time and space. The Name is enough to give you all the results of every type of spiritual effort. This is accepted by all the scriptures (sastras) and all the spiritual aspirants who have left accounts of their struggle and success. Moreover, the Name is

capable of being recited and meditated upon by all, equally. Of course, the Name is a limitation of the Universal; it identifies the unidentifiable through one of its aspects. Take the disguise as a means of saving yourself; take it as a boat that will take you across the sea of birth and death. When you repeat the Name, all the sweetness of the Form and its associated glory must come to memory and, just as your mouth waters when you remember some sweet dish you relish, your mind must "water" when you contemplate it. Choose the Name that captivates your heart. Why run after riches when all the pleasure and satisfaction that riches can offer - and even a hundred-fold - can be got by dwelling on the Name? The Lord has said that where His Name is sung, "There I sit." He establishes Himself there! He will not move from that place. So, the tongue is enough to win Him, the tongue that speaks the language of the pure mind. The Lord is a Wish-fulfilling Tree (Kalpavriksha). You have to approach Him and develop attachment to Him. You must win His grace and be ever near Him, keeping back all the forces that draw you away from Him. Even if you commit some technical faults in singing about Him or in worshipping Him, it does not matter. Intense devotion makes every error excusable. Nectar, though poured into a brass cup, will not lose its savour or taste. Poison, even if is poured into a cup of gold set with gems, will not lose its death-dealing property.

The Name persuades the Form to bend and bless

Devotion will force the Lord to give you Himself as the gift. The coronation ceremony of Sri Ramachandra (Rama) and the celebrations were all over, and the presentation of gifts to all important people was over. Then, Sita remembered that Maruti (a name for Hanuman, meaning son of Marut) had been forgotten. Only Rama, Sita, and Maruti were in the hall. Rama wondered what to give him: He suggested to Sita that the gemset ring that Janaka gave him on the occasion of the marriage would be the best gift, because, as He said. "Your father gave this to me on the day he gave you to me; Maruti gave you to me a second time. So I shall give him this." Maruti did not seem quite happy when the ring was placed in his hand. Evidently, he did not appreciate the gift because it was not given in full sight of all; when all were given, he was neglected! But Maruti placed it near his ear as if he sought to know what

sound emanated from it: he bit it with his teeth and tried to peer into its structure. Rama asked him why, and Sita was also anxious to know. Maruti said, "I am finding out whether it has the repetition of "Rama" (Ramanama), which I want to the exclusion of everything else." Then Rama embraced him and said, "Maruti! What other gift can I give you? I shall give you Myself as the gift. Accept Me!" So that is why he was neglected at the time everyone else was awarded gifts! That is why wherever Maruti is, there Rama is bound to be - wherever Rama is, there Maruti is invariably present. The Name is so valuable for the devotee. It persuades the Form to bend and bless.

The Name that pleases you is best for you

Just consider this: the form changes from age to age, from one appearance to another. Rama and Krishna were different in form; even their deeds were distinct. But still, people agree when you say that they are identical. But tell them that Rama held the Govardana mountain aloft, and they will not accept it. The Name has the association of all the special fragrance of the divine play (leela), the power, and the spiritual instruction. Each person has a special attachment to one Name out of many, suited to the temperament and inherited instincts and tendencies shaped in previous births. Meera loved the Name Giridhari (mountain-holder). That leela appealed to her as the most significant, as the most symbolic of the Lord's glory. The name that pleases you, that arouses the sweetest and the purest love, is best for you. "The thing that pleases is Rama (Ramayathi is Rama)." "The thing that destroys illusion (maya) is Hara or Hari (Harathi is Hara)."

Keep the Name lit on the tongue

Surdas was overwhelmed with grief when the lovely little body who held his stick and led him along the road to Brindavan suddenly left him with the announcement that his name was Krishna! He ran about with both hands extended to catch Him and keep Him in his embrace, but Krishna had disappeared. Then, Surdas shouted, "You may run away from my clasp, but I have you in my heart. You can never run away from there." Prahlada was also like that. He had no other thought; he saw nothing else. Elephant, snake,

poison, fire - all were for him were the Divine Principle (Narayana-thathwa) itself. How then could they harm him? The Name is the Narasimha for the Hiranyakasipu of the mind (the man-lion Avatar, Narasimha, slew the evil Hiranyakasipu). The passionate (rajasic) and ignorant (thamasic) forces besieging your heart are bent on your downfall. Just as they give calcium and vitamin tablets to cure anaemia, etc., take Repetition-of-the-Name tablets to get rid of mental anaemia and other illnesses. There are some throat pastilles, which you have to carry to your mouth and whose taste you have to slowly swallow in order to relieve a cough; have repetition of the Name on your tongue and imbibe its taste slowly to get rid of the troublesome upsurge of passions and emotions. Keep the Name lit on the tongue; it will illumine your interior and also the exterior. It will cleanse your mind as well as minds of those who hear the Name when you recite it. Keeping it on the tongue is like keeping a lamp lit on the door step at the entrance to your house. Repetition of the Name (namasmarana) is the best spiritual discipline; it is the most beneficial good action. It is the highest prayer, the most profitable spiritual exercise. Kuchela won the grace of the Lord through the same means. Fill the Name with your love whenever you repeat it; saturate it with devotion. That is the easiest path for all of you.

A mere five-minute inquiry will convince you that you are not the body, the senses, the mind, the intelligence, the name, or the form, but that you are the Atma Itself, the same Atma that appears as all this variety. Once you get a glimpse of this truth, hold on to it; do not allow it to slip. Make it your permanent possession.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

14. Truth, Auspiciousness, Beauty

Date: **May 1963** / Location: **Prasanthi Nilayam** / Occasion: **Excerpts from Discourses delivered in May 1963**

To earn the grace of God, you have to pray to the Personified Power with Name and Form; it is your yearning that decides in what form the Lord appears. You call and He answers. If you are not earnest, if you feel indifferent and say, "Let Him come when He wills, in the Form He likes and with the Name He prefers," He will not come at all. Call on Him with anguish, and He will respond. In Rajasthan, there was a priest who worshipped the image of Balakrishna (the child Krishna) installed in the temple, attached to the palace of Udhaipur. His name was Devesha. His story may not be found anywhere, but since he was intimately connected with Me, I know him very well. Every night he used to "put Balakrishna to sleep" with appropriate ritual and close the door of the shrine, but before he came out, he would take from the head of the image the jasmine garland he had placed there in the evening and wear it himself, before proceeding home. Of course, when the great king (maharana) visited the temple, the garland had to be given to him to wear. One day, however, the great king came immediately after he had worn it inside his tuft of hair, so when the ruler demanded the flower, he had to get inside the shrine, slyly remove it from his tuft, and hand it reverentially back to king. The king was happy that he had not missed the gift, but he was shocked to find a strand of gray hair in it! Suspecting some tricks, he shouted angrily. "What! Has our Balakrishna grown old and grey?" To save his skin, the priest said, "Yes, Yes." The king replied, "Well, I shall not disturb now, but early tomorrow, I shall come and see if His hair has really gone grey." Devesha had no food or sleep that night. He wept his eyes out in agony, for, in his fear, he had imposed old age and greyness on the ever-youthful Lord. The morning came, and the king hurried to the temple to open the shrine. They both looked in and, lo, the hair was grey. The king suspected that the hair was false, planted by the priest. So he pulled and tugged at it, only to find drops of blood at the roots. God had responded to the anguished cry, the call of the agony. The Formless will assume any Form and undergo any transformation to satisfy the yearning of the devoted aspirant. The overriding

purpose is to make all action-oriented beings (karma-jivis) God-filled beings (Brahma-jivis). One must crave the vision of God; only then is one entitled to the status of human-ness. The human (manava) must reach the Divine (Madhava). One must conquer the mind. The human is the ruler of the mind (manas), not its slave. Who takes the role of educator from the beginning of your life? The mother, is it not? Nature (Prakriti) is the Mother, the feminine principle, the illusory energy (maya). She is the great teacher. If you do not learn the lessons well, nature punishes you, boxes you in the ear, hits you on the head. She is a stern, merciless instructress, but if you learn well, she will lead you proudly to the presence of the Supreme Person (Purushothama). Obey nature and be well trained by her. Then, you can inherit the glory of Purushothama. If you disregard Her teaching, the Mother gets disgusted with you, and the Father will also disregard your entreaties. The commands of nature, given for your good, are called dharma. Have that dharma as the witness of all your thoughts, words, and deeds. Be guided every instant by the dictates of that dharma, and success will be yours. Little children must be taught with the help of big letters scrawled on boards and slates. Temples, images, and crystal stones are the slates and boards for children in spiritual progress. But even if you play with a toy elephant, you cannot get the experience of contacting a live elephant, can you? The formless Godhead can be understood by you only when you have rendered yourself formless! When you are in the world of qualities (gunas), you have to attach yourself only to a God with attributes (Saguna Lord). Even a thief does not like being called a "thief". He gets either ashamed or angry when he is called that. Why? Truth is his real nature, and his true nature revolts against the appellation. The Atma is always auspicious and holy (sivam). So it protests vehemently when the vehicle where it resides is called inauspicious (amangalam), dead (shayam). The Atma is also beauty (sundaram). A U M is the egoism of Supreme Self (Param-Atma); it has no ugliness in it. So it is always beautiful, charming, lovely (sundaram). That is why, when it is described as ugly, deformed, disgusting, etc., the thief lowers his head in shame, for something revolting to his true nature is being imputed. Truth, Auspiciousness, Beauty (Sathyam, Sivam, Sundaram) is yourself; you have not realised it because of delusion, ignorance, and false inference. Get rid of these and merge in your real self.

Enter from now on into a discipline of repetition of the Name, the incessant remembrance of God through the name of the Lord. It does not need any special time or extra allotment of time; it can be done always in the waking stage, whether you are bathing or eating, walking or sitting. All the hours now spent in gossip, in watching sports or films, in hollow conversation, can best be used for silent contemplation of the Name and Form and the splendour of the Lord.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

15. Siva Sakthi

Date: 06 July 1963 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Guru Purnima

Baba was brought down the winding stairs into the private room on the ground floor, because He insisted on giving darshan to the thousands of devotees who had come on that auspicious day. He had had an attack of cerebral thrombosis (or tubercular meningitis?) and was in bed for eight days from the morning of Saturday, 29 June, to the evening of 6 July. His left hand, leg, and eye were affected, His right hand had also slight palsy, the tongue was indistinct, and the face was twitching. He was placed on the silver chair in the prayer hall, and His hand and leg were adjusted in proper position.

As soon as He was seated, He communicated the following message, which was interpreted and announced.

This is not Swami's illness. This is an illness that Swami has taken on in order to save someone. Swami has no illness, nor will He get ill at any time. You must all be happy; that alone will make Swami happy. If you grieve, Swami will not be happy. Your joy is Swami's food.

Then, Baba signed to Kasturi to speak, and after his short speech was over, Baba wanted the mike to be held before Him.

He asked through it, "Do you hear Me (*Vinipisthundha*)?"

But, though He asked again and again, the voice was so indistinct that no one could make out what it meant.

He then signed for water, and when it was brought, He sprinkled a little with His shaking right hand on the stricken left hand and on His left leg. He stroked His left hand with the right. Immediately, He used both hands to stroke His left leg; that touch was enough to cure it. He doffed the disease in a thrice! He started to speak! It was the same musical voice.

God is the refuge for those who have no refuge

For those who have no refuge, God is the refuge
Dhikkulenivariki dhevude gathi

That is exactly the reason I had to take on the disease that one helpless devotee was to get. He had to suffer this dire illness, as well as the four heart attacks that accompanied it, and he would not have survived it. So, according to My dharma of protection of devotees, I had to rescue him. Of course, this is not the first time that I have taken on the illness of persons whom I wanted to save. Even in the previous body at Shirdi, I had this responsibility. The suffering that you saw was too much for this particular devotee, so I had to save him by Myself going through it. This is My divine play (*leela*), My nature. **It is part of the task for which I have come: the protection of disciples.** People who were near Me during the last week were asking Me to give them the name of the person whom I had saved. I told them that it would make them angry against that person, for Swami, they would say, "had to undergo so much of pain in order to save that one person." They replied that they would honour the person, because of the extraordinary devotion that persuaded Swami to run to his rescue on Saturday morning.

Baba's Identity, Mission and Advent revealed

Some people even asked Me whether it was this person or that, giving names of those who had attacks of paralysis, especially on the left side! This is even more ludicrous, because when I save a person, I save the person completely. I do not wait until the person gets the disease, and I do not leave in them a fraction of the disease so that the person may be identified later. It all looks so funny to Me, the guesses and surmises that you make. Even in Shirdi, Dhadha Saheb, Nandaram, Balawanth - all were saved by these means. Balawanth was destined to get the plague, but the bubo was taken over and

the boy was saved. This is perhaps the longest period when I kept devotees wondering and worried. That was because of the heart attacks that had to come later to the devotee, from which he also had to be saved. Then there is another reason why the 8-day period had to be observed. Well, I shall tell you why. That means I must tell you about Myself, about something I have not disclosed so far, something that I was keeping within Myself for the last 37 years. The time has come to announce it. This is a sacred day, and I shall tell you.

You know I declared on the very day when I decided to disclose My Identity, My Mission, and My Advent that I belonged to the Apastamba Sutra (Code of conduct) and the Bharadwaja Gothra (lineage). This Bharadwaja was a great sage, who studied the Vedas for full one hundred years, but, finding that the Vedas were endless (anantha) he did penance for prolonging life, and from Indra he got two extensions of a century each. Even then, the Vedas could not be completed, so he asked Indra again for another hundred years. Indra showed him 3 huge mountain ranges and said, "What you have learned in 3 centuries form only 3 handfuls from out of the 3 ranges that the Vedas are. So give up the attempt to exhaust the Vedas. Do a ritual sacrifice (*yaga*) instead, which I shall teach you. That will give you the fruit of Vedic study, full and complete."

The ritual sacrifice performed by sage Bharadwaja

Bharadwaja decided to perform the ritual sacrifice. Indra taught him how to do it, and all preparations were completed. The sage wanted Sakthi to preside over and bless the sacrifice, so he went to *Kailas*. But the time was not opportune for presenting his petition. Siva and Sakthi were engaged in a competitive dance, trying to find out who could dance longer. Eight days passed thus before Sakthi noticed Bharadwaja standing in the cold. She just cast a smile at him and danced along as before! The sage mistook the smile as a cynical refusal to notice him, so he turned his back on Kailas and started to descend. To his dismay, he found his left leg, hand, and eye put out of action by a stroke. Siva saw him fall; He came up to him and consoled him. Bharadwaja was told that Sakthi had indeed blessed him and his sacrifice.

Then, Siva revived him and cured him, sprinkling water from the water pot (*kamandalu*). Both Siva and Sakthi granted the sage boons: They would both attend the sacrifice, they said.

All past assurances accomplished by one incident

After the ritual sacrifice was over, They were so pleased that They conferred even more boons on the sage. Siva said that They would take human form and be born in the Bharadwaja Gothra (lineage) thrice: Siva alone as Shirdi Sai Baba, Siva and Sakthi together at Puttaparthi as Sri Sathya Sai Baba, and Sakthi alone as Prema Sai, later. Then Siva remembered the illness that had suddenly come upon Bharadwaja at Kailas on the eighth day of waiting in the cold on the ice. He gave another assurance. "As expiation for the neglect that Sakthi showed you at Kailas for 8 days, this Sakthi will suffer the stroke for 8 days, when We both take birth as Sathya Sai and, on the 8th day, I shall relieve her from all signs of the disease by sprinkling water, just as I did at Kailas to cure your illness." It was the working out of this assurance that you witnessed today, just now. This had to happen, this stroke and the cure. The assurance given in the *Thretha Yuga* (era) had to be honoured. I may tell you now that the poor forlorn devotee who had to get the stroke that I took over was a convenient excuse, which was utilised. You see, a railway engine is not made available to haul just one railway car; they wait until a number of cars are to be taken along, and then they put the engine into action. So too, the disease had to be gone through, the devotee had to be saved, the assurance had to be carried out, the mystery had to be cleared, Divinity had to be more clearly announced by the manifestation of this grand miracle. All these were accomplished by this one incident. Let Me tell you one more thing: Nothing can impede or halt the work of this Avatara. When I was upstairs all these days, some people foolishly went about saying. "It is all over with Sai Baba," and they turned back many who were coming to Puttaparthi! Some said I was in *samadhi*, as if I was a spiritual aspirant! Some feared I was the victim of black magic, as if anything could affect Me! The splendour of this Avatara will go increasing, day by day. Formerly, when the Govardhana hill was raised aloft by the little boy (Krishna), the cowherd boys and maids realised that

Krishna was the Lord. Now, not one Govardhana hill but a whole range will be lifted, you will see! Have patience, have faith. Tomorrow morning, I shall give every one of you the respectful blessing (*namaskaram*) that you missed today.

To discover one's reality and to dwell in that divine peace, one need not give up the world and take to asceticism.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

16. Protection Of Devotees

Date: 07 July 1963 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

Yesterday, when I came into the hall, I could see the agony you all felt. That was because you identified Me with this body, which was having the illness. If you had known My truth, you would not have been sad. In fact, if you had known your Truth, that would be enough. The illness came and went; I was its master throughout. One day, when it reached its climax, I was watching its behaviour and directing it to finish its dharma. For I had taken it on Myself, so I must allow it to do its dharma! All kinds of silly stories were circulated when I was ill! Some people feared that when I went to the south recently, some black magic was inflicted upon Me, and that the stroke was the consequence. Let Me tell you that nothing evil can affect Me. Nothing can harm Me. I am the Master, the Power (Sakthi) that overpowers everything else. I knew that short explanation: some people were saying that I was in silence or a state of concentration (mounam or samadhi). Now why should I keep the vow of silence? If I am silent, how can I carry out My task of reforming you and making you all realise the aim of life? And why should I seek samadhi, I who am the Embodiment of Bliss and of Love (Ananda-swarupa and Prema-swarupa) Myself. It is the wavering doubter, the ignorant dabbler, who will lend their ear to such talk. The true devotee will discard all such news. For the devotees here, the 8 days were days of intense penance; they had no other thought than of Swami.

To think low or mean is also egoism

Once, Krishna also pretended to be suffering from headache, an intense, unbearable headache! He acted that role quite as realistically as I did last week. He wound warm clothes around His head and rolled restlessly in bed. His eyes were red, and He was in evident distress. The face also appeared swollen and pale. Rukmini, Sathyabama, and the other queens rushed about with all kinds of remedies and palliatives, but they were ineffective. At last, they consulted Narada, and he went into the sick room to consult Krishna Himself and find out which drug would cure Him. Krishna directed him to

bring - what do you think the drug was? - the dust of the feet of a true devotee! In a trice, Narada manifested himself in the presence of some celebrated devotees of the Lord, but they were too humble to offer the dust of their feet to be used by their Lord as a drug! That is also a kind of egoism. "I am low, mean, small, useless, poor, sinful, inferior" - such feelings also are egoistic. When the ego goes, you do not feel either superior or inferior. No one would give the dust wanted by the Lord; they were too worthless, they declared. Narada came back disappointed to the sickbed. Krishna asked him, "Did you try Brindavana, where the cowherd maids (gopis) live?" The queens laughed at the suggestion, and even Narada asked in dismay, "What do they know of devotion?" Still, the sage had to hurry thither. When the gopis heard Krishna was ill and that the dust of their feet might cure Him, without a second thought they shook the dust off their feet and filled his hands with the same. By the time Narada reached Dwaraka, the headache had gone. It was just a five-day drama to teach that self-condemnation is also egoism and that the Lord's command must be obeyed without demur, by all devotees. When I said that I had taken on the illness that was destined for someone who could not have suffered it or survived it, many of you felt, "Why should Swami, for the sake of a single person, plunge so many of us in grief?" Well! Didn't Rama proceed to the forest though all Ayodhya wept? My dharma of protection of devotees must be carried out; the dharma of the disease must also be worked out. Krishna could have stopped the rains, however powerful Indra was, but Indra had to do his dharma, and by lifting Govardhana hill to protect the cows and cowherds, Krishna manifested His Divinity! In this case also, it is the same divine sportive act (leela). Using the chance to demonstrate to a doubting world the Divinity inherent in this human form. I told you yesterday that even this lucky devotee was just an instrument to work out the promise made in the past to the Sage Bharadwaja; it served to announce My real nature to you all. You are indeed fortunate that you could witness on the sacred Guru Purnami Day this magnificent proof of My Divinity.

Karma of a higher order leads to wisdom

There is no truth (sathyam) without goodness (sivam); there is no goodness without beauty (sundaram). Truth alone can confer auspiciousness, and

auspiciousness alone is the real beauty. Truth is beauty; joy is beauty. Falsehood and grief are ugly because they are unnatural. The intellect, subconscious mind, and heart (buddhi, chittham, and hridayam) - these are the three centres in the individual where spiritual wisdom, action, and devotion (jnana, karma, and bhakthi) reside. The effulgence of Truth will reveal Goodness; do karma that is approved by the higher wisdom, not karma that is born of ignorance. Then, all karma will be auspicious, beneficial, and blessed. The experience of that goodness (sivam) is what is called beauty (sundaram); for it confers real bliss (ananda). That is My Reality. That is why My life is named "Sathyam Sivam Sundaram". Do karma based on spiritual wisdom, the wisdom that all is One. Let the karma be suffused with devotion, that is to say, with humility, love, compassion, and nonviolence. Let devotion be filled with spiritual wisdom; otherwise, it will be as light as a balloon, which drifts along any current of air or gust of wind. Mere wisdom will make the heart dry; devotion makes it soft with sympathy, and karma gives the hands something to do, something that will sanctify every one of the minutes that have fallen to your lot to live here. This is why devotion is referred to as upasana - dwelling near, feeling the Presence, sharing the sweetness of Divinity. The yearning for upasana prompts you to go on pilgrimages, to construct and renovate temples, to consecrate images. The sixteen items of honouring with which the Lord is worshipped satisfy the mind, which craves for personal contact with the Supreme. All this is karma of a high order; they lead to spiritual wisdom. First, you start with the idea, "I am in the Light." Then the feeling, "The light is in me," becomes established. This leads to the conviction, "I am the Light." That is the supreme wisdom. See yourself in all; love all as yourself. A dog caught in a room whose walls are mirrors sees in all the myriad reflections - not itself but rivals, competitors, other dogs that must be barked at. So, it tires itself out by jumping on this reflection and that, and when the images also jump, it becomes mad with fury. The wise man, however, sees himself everywhere and is at peace: he is happy that there are so many reflections of himself all around him. That is the attitude you must learn to possess, that will save you from needless bother.

17. Lakshya Worship

Date: 02 August 1963 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

Though there is no particular reason for this evening's gathering, Kompella Subbaraya Sastry tried to discover one, and he concluded his speech with a reference to the Varalakshmi worship that is generally done in Hindu homes today! This search for 'causes' is another of the delusions that pester people; people are out to seek the cause of everything, and in that confusion, they forget to derive the full benefit of the result that is before them. Sastry quoted from the Soundharyalahari to explain the meaning of Siva-Sakthi, probably moved by the incidents of the last Guru Purnami Day. Siva-Sakthi is the conjunction of insentient or inert (jada) and awareness (chit), the conjunction of the wire with the current, which activates all the instruments - fan, stove, bulb, and radio. Siva-Sakthi is in all, not only in Me; there is only the difference in power and capacity to manifest. The firefly has some power of illumination; it also emits light. We have oil lamp, the electric bulb, the petromax lamp, the moon, the sun - all emanate light; that is the common quality. Like that, both good and evil have the right to exist. The evil has to be used for the purpose for which it is suited. The skin of the orange is not sweet, but it helps to protect the sweetness within. The bitter green skin of the unripe orange protects the fruit during the ripening period. The skin also gradually takes on some of the sweetness and flavour of the ripening orange; so too, evil has to be slowly transformed into good by the subtle influence of association.

Purpose and rationale of nature around us

The senses may be used for the purpose of increasing spiritual bliss (anandam). When fruit juice is poured into a cup, the cup does not know its taste; if you hold it in the palm, you do not get the taste. You have to drink it with the straw, the senses; then the tongue, the intellect (buddhi), experiences the sweetness. The fruit juice is nature (prakriti) around us. Taste its sweetness, namely, the Divinity that is immanent in it; that is the purpose and rationale. Nature is just the divine play (leela) of the Lord set before you

so that you may become aware of His glory, His splendour. If the mind obeys the dictates of intellect, the individual gains. If the orders from Delhi are obeyed by every state, then the country gains in strength and unity. But if the mind becomes the slave of the senses, then woe be to the individual. When the mind thus follows the outward bound senses and forgets the Reality, when the individual revels in the dream world of false fantasy, this divine mother pats the child and wakes it. There is then no more need to tell them anything else. When awake, the truth will stand revealed. Your right is to realize cosmic nature, so don't play about forever in the thought of the body, the consciousness that you are just this five-foot body. Transcend the attachment to the family, the home, the village, the community, the district, the state, the nation. You must acquire not the independence denoted by the political fact of self rule (swarajya) but the freedom of the spirit called swarajya (dominion over oneself).

All different conceptions of God are valid

The cry of equality now being used as a slogan is a vain and meaningless cry, for how can people, inheriting a multiplicity of impulses, skills, qualities, tendencies, attitudes, and even diseases from their ancestors and from their past be all of the same stamp? And in spite of all this advertisement for supposed equality, you find more misunderstandings and factions now than at any previous period of history. Those who promote inequality are those who most loudly proclaim this modern doctrine of equality. Each person has a different conception of God and of goodness, according to their upbringing and the state of purification of their impulses. All such conceptions are valid. When water is let into the fields, you will find sheets of different shapes - circular, rectangular, oval, square, according to the shape of the fields. The fertility or the quantity of the crops harvested do not vary according to the geometrical correctness of the shapes. How far, how fast you have established attachment to the Lord, that is the test. The rest does not matter. Steady love of the Lord is like a mosquito curtain; it will keep out the disease-carrying delusion and pride, lust and anger, greed and jealousy. Develop faith so that you may love without doubt. The "illness" that ended on Guru Purnami first shook the faith of many, but, later, confirmed the shaken faith. That is

not as good as keeping faith unshaken, whatever may happen. How can the nose that falls down when you merely cough be firm when you sneeze? Sankara harmonised the various schools and sects. I had to do My dharma (divine duty), and every act of Mine has its significance, which you cannot understand. You are in the dark, so you fear more. You cannot notice the heaps of earth and the pits on the road. You cannot even know that the road is smooth and fine. There is no fault or partiality in creation - be confirmed in that. Then you will waver no more in your faith. If God's creation itself were faulty, all would have suffered equally! Now, each person has a different version to give, if you ask whether they are happy and why. The same person speaks differently at different times about the acts of the Lord. So the fault lies in you, the excellence that you praise is in you. You see yourself in the outside world; what you like or dislike is your own self!.

Wealth accrues by fair means as well as foul

Sankaracharya declared, "Brahman alone is real; the world is false (Brahma sathyam; jagath mithya)." But he did not therefore discard the world as beneath notice. He continued the work of Kumarila Bhatta, harmonised the various schools and sects of those days, established missions for the propagation of the non-dual (adwaitha) doctrine in the four corners of India - Badrinath, Sringeri, Puri, and Dwaraka - and then left. "Brahman alone is real; the world is false" is the essence of the holy scriptures (sruthi). That truth can be cognised by minds trained through dualistic worship of the personal God and qualified non-dualistic (visishta-adwaitha) emphasis of the individual (jiva) as the limb of the Absolute. One batch of students should be passing out of a college while another batch is joining the first year class. So too, more and more people must take up devotional activity and slowly ascend to the stage of full knowledge of the Supreme; then only can humanity achieve the Goal. With this idea, Sankara established the missions. A man lost in the jungle was asked to move on in a certain direction, and after some time, he saw a village. Now, that village did not emerge for his sake just then. He saw what was already there, that is all. So also, non-dualism shows you the way to something that is already there but that you did not recognise so far - namely, your being the unlimited, illimitable Brahman. Well, just a word about

the Varalakshmi worship, which Subbaraya Sastry mentioned. Let Me tell you frankly, I do not like this Lakshmi worship, which people do, expecting to grow rich and accumulate wealth. They even speak of Dhanalakshmi and have special sacred prayers to propitiate Her. Wealth (lakshmi) accrues by fair means as well as foul; money is earned by gambling, by various forms of deceit, by highway robbery itself, by high and low, by all and sundry. Worship the goal (lakshya), I shall appreciate you! Keep the goal (lakshya) of expanding your love till it embraces all beings, till it sees every being as your own self - keep it ever steady before your mind's eye. Then, Lakshmi will, of her own accord, favour you to the extent necessary for realising the goal. Never doubt that. Never falter.

Life is a battlefield, a dharmakshetra (field of righteousness), where duties and desires are always in conflict. Smother the fiery fumes of desire, of hatred and anger, that rise up in your hearts; it is sheer cowardice to yield to these enemies that turn you into beasts. When obstacles come, meet them with courage. They harden you, make you tough.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

18. The Love Of The Cowherd Maids

Date: 12 August 1963 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Krishna Jayanthi

Kompella Subbaraya Sastry spoke about the coming on earth of the incarnation of Krishna and read extracts from the Bhagavatham describing the antecedents of the birth. All of you enjoyed listening to him, though many of you listened to the story for the hundredth time. The story of the Lord does not lose its sweetness when repeated. Knowledge of supreme Self, meditation, and selfless action are, each one of them, hard to go through, but like chutney, which is salt, chilly, and tamarind in the right proportion ground to a paste, devotion that consists of these three in the correct proportion is bound to be appetising to all tongues. The grace of the Lord is a subject dear to everyone. The subject is within the grasp of all. The Lord also can be addressed by any Name that tastes sweet to your tongue or pictured in any form that appeals to your sense of wonder and awe. You can sing of Him as Muruga, Ganapathi, Saradha, Jesus, Maithreyi, Sakthi, or you can call on Allah or the Formless, or the Master of all Forms. It makes no difference at all. He is all names and all forms. He is the beginning, the middle, and the end; the basis, the substance, and the source. So, any story that brings His glory, His grace, and His beauty into your consciousness, must perforce appeal to you.

Every thought sets up a function, agitating all around

Believe Me, all mental modes or functions are impermanent. A mental mode is a circle, like the circle that emanates from the place where a stone falls into the still water of a lake. The water gets agitated, and the circle affects the water up to the farthest end. Every thought acts like the stone on the stillness of the mind; it sets up a mental mode. It agitates all round. The path of attachment multiplies these circular waves and seeks to create further and wider agitations. But the path of detachment aims at stilling the waters. No agitation at all. Preserve the calmness, even the level. Keep the agitating thoughts away. Concentration on the name and form of Krishna tends to calm the waves of mental modes. When E.M. Forster came to India, for some time he was with the Thakore of Rajkot, and when he found the Thakore engaged

in meditation before the image of Radhashyam (Krishna), he wondered at first what it was all for! The Thakore had no wants to fulfil - what could he pray for? One day, he asked the Thakore, "Why?" He replied that for him, Krishna was the embodiment of love, beauty, and bliss (prema, sundaram, and anandam), so when he meditated on that form he was filled with love, beauty, and joy. The senses, intellect, and emotions all get purified and clarified by dwelling on the pure and the splendid. Forster was induced to try the first steps, and though he found it rather difficult at first, the thrill engendered by the strange calm egged him on to persist. He found meditation good and useful.

Krishna's pranks reveal His divine essence

Krishna was only a few weeks old when a certain ascetic came into the house of Nanda; Yasoda had the baby in her lap. Of course this is an incident not found in any book - I have Myself to tell you this. The maids ran in, for they were afraid the child might start weeping at the sight of the uncouth individual. Nevertheless, the individual walked in, and Yasoda found that when he was sent away, the baby raised a cry - not when he was approaching! The sage also announced himself as having come to see Krishna, the Supreme Self (Krishna Paramatma), a name that was new to the entire family. No wonder the baby cried when that distinguished visitor was asked to go! Devaki had been given the vision of Krishna being the Lord Himself, but this sage had discovered the arrival of the Avatar by the grace of the Almighty. It was Baba who had invited the sage for His darshan (sight of a holy person). The replies that Krishna gave when the cowherd maids (gopis) complained to His mother about His mischievous pranks and thefts of milk, butter, etc., also reveal, by the inner meaning they convey, the divine essence that He was. "Why did you drink the milk from the pot she was carrying?" "She was taking it to be offered to God, perhaps, God might have drunk it up." "Where had you run away?" "I was always with you, is it not?" "Why do you hold that butter pot in your clasp?" "So that others may not eat it!" "Why do you put your hand into that butter pot?" "I am looking for a lost calf." These were the types of answers with which He taught them. He was the Ancient One in the new garb. His words came from the beginning of time.

Radha's love was pure without egoism

The Radha Principle (Thathwam) is also a deep, inscrutable one. She was ever in contemplation of the Lord and His Glory. She too saw the child Krishna as the divine manifestation, separate from the human form. One day, Yasoda was searching for Krishna, who had strayed away. She looked almost everywhere, and at last she went to the house of Radha. Radha just closed her eyes and meditated on Krishna for a while, and when she called "Krishna," Krishna was there. Yasoda shed tears of joy. She said, "I love Krishna as a mother; I have a sense of egoism in me that He is my son and that I must save Him from harm and seek to give Him guidance and protection. Your love is pure; it has no egoism prompting it." The gopis (cowherd maidens) had that one-pointed love (prema), unwavering, clear, and pure. The relationship between the gopis and Krishna as depicted in the Bhagavatham has been unfortunately judged by persons who have not regulated and controlled the agitations of their minds. This subject is beyond the comprehension of such people. Only celibates (brahma-charins) of the most ardent and ascetic type like Sukha Maharishi, who described it to King Parikshith, and in recent years Ramakrishna Paramahansa, can appreciate that relationship and pronounce upon its uniqueness. All the rest are apt to see in it only the reflection of their own failings and feelings. The language of worldly life is the only language they know; the regions of thuriya - beyond the regions of wakefulness, dream, and deep sleep - to which those experiences relate are not within their reach. So they drag the subject down to their own level and claim that they have mastered their mystery.

Every Godward step makes you shed all attachment

As a matter of fact, the inner eye, the inner senses are needed to grasp the meaning of this relationship. Oruganti has shown that it has eluded the grasp of most interpreters, for it is closely allied to the non-dual experience of the super-conscious state where there is no mind (nirvikalpa samadhi) itself. The mind has to be the master and not the slave of the senses, if the interpretation has to be just. Thoughts, wishes, deeds, and feelings - all have

to be purified of the desire for gain. Egoism itself must lose all its hold on the interpreter, as it did on the gopis. Love toward the Lord such as the gopis had should make a person strong, not weak. In fact, the gopis were not weakened by their love; they were rendered tough. Ramakrishna also exhorted his disciples, like Narendranath, to grow strong with the cultivation of love toward the Lord. Every step taken toward the Lord makes you shed bit by bit all attachment to the world. How then could the gopis retain their physical awareness? Druva went into the forest to get from the Lord the boon of sitting on the lap of his father, a very ordinary wish of a plainly earthly type. But as he advanced in penance, that wish disappeared from his mind, and his mind was elevated to great spiritual heights. How can one who has tasted nectar (amritha) be eager to taste water? Or crave tamarind fruits after tasting dates and having them in one's possession? Every craving will be sublimated into the higher realms of pure consciousness the moment one enters the spiritual field.

The gods came to the world as cowherd maids

And then who are these cowherd maids (gopis), according to the Bhagavatham itself? They are demi-gods who wanted to share in the glory of the Avatar and who came down to the world as witnesses and sharers in the divine cosmic sport (leela). They came for a purpose; they are not ordinary village folk, who could be dismissed as a crowd of voluptuous women. They saw the Divine, not the human at all, in every gesture and gait, every word and phrase of Krishna. They had no occasion or chance to be agitated by secular thought waves; all their thoughts were awakened by divine promptings and urges. Like the magnifying glass that catches the rays of the sun and directs them all to one spot, thus concentrating the heat on one point and helping it to ignite, the hearts of the gopis collected all the agitations of the mind and concentrated them and caused the illumination and the flame. The flame burnt all dross; the illumination revealed the Truth. All other interpretations are to be laid at the door of either ignorance or scholasticism, the pompous pride of mere book learning, which scorns the exercise of discipline.

Meaning of Krishna's theft of butter

Krishna is condemned as a thief who stole butter from the cowherd maidens, but the butter represents the devotion of the heart that is got after the process of churning. It is a question of a symbol being taken as literally true. He is the Stealer of Hearts (Chitthachor). The thief steals at night, in the darkness, without awakening the master, but when this thief steals, the master awakens; He wakes him and tells him that He has come. The victim is left supremely happy and satisfied. Every gopi had the highest type of devotion in her heart. They saw only Krishna wherever they turned; they wore blue kumkum on their foreheads in order to remind themselves of Krishna. Many husbands protested against the colour of the kumkum, but they dared not wipe it off lest harm should befall them and the sacrilege recoil on them alone. [Here, Baba, who had filled his hand with petals of jasmine flowers, pulled apart by Him from garlands given to Him, showered the petals from one palm to another, and they fell in a cascade of blue gems.] Even the gems they preferred were of this type, blue, like Krishna. [He showed the gems the astounded gathering. Each gem had Krishna's form in it, beautifully clear.]

Do not have pride in your attachment to God

There was a gopi named Suguna. One day, when Krishna was with Sathyabama, He pretended to have a severe stomach ache. In spite of all the remedies that she tried, she could not afford relief. Of course, it was all acting, superb acting such as the paralytic stroke I had for a week previous to Guru Purnami recently! Even Rukmini was not admitted into the house to ask about Krishna's health. But Rukmini found Suguna pining outside the door in great agony at the illness of the Lord. She gave her the articles and asked her to go in. Krishna welcomed Suguna and made her sit at His Feet and ate the fruits she had picked up from Sathyabama's own garden and suddenly, the ache had gone. It was her agony at the Lord's condition, her simple sincere devotion that was so effective. There should be no artificiality in your attachment to the Lord, no affectation, no pride, no egoism left to soil the freshness of the flower you offer. Sathyabama protested when Krishna accepted the fruits, for Krishna had brushed them aside as tasteless when she

had herself offered them as the precious product of her assiduous gardening effort. They were tasteless because her pride had entered into them. When the simple rustic gopi picked them from the ground and saturated them with her devotion, they became tasty and attractive for the Lord, who cares for the inner feeling (bhava), not the outer show (bahya)! The only love that will not allow pride and envy to interfere with its purity is love toward God. I know that many of you who know that I have been taking only a cup of buttermilk daily for the last two months are genuinely grief-stricken, though I have been telling you that no work of Mine has been stopped or delayed as a result of what they call My "reduced intake of food". That is a sign of their love but really, I live on your bliss (anandam), not on this material food at all. I wish that you realised this and stopped worrying or weeping.

Remember always that it is easy to do what is pleasant, but it is difficult to be engaged in what is beneficial. Not all that is pleasant is profitable. Success comes to those who give up the path strewn with roses and brave the hammer blows and sword thrusts of the path fraught with danger.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

19. Bamboo Bower

Date: **12 August 1963** / Location: **Prasanthi Nilayam** / Occasion: **Krishna Jayanthi**

Here was an occasion when Krishna laid His flute aside and declared that He would not play it again. It is a long story, not found in books. I alone must tell you about it, for only the Person who has experienced it can describe it, A bride called Neeraja came to Gokulam as the daughter-in-law of a Gopa family. Her husband and parents-in-law warned her against Krishna and His pranks and threatened her, on pain of dire punishment, to keep away from Him and to avoid Him by every possible means. It was Govardhana Worship day, and all the cowherd boys and maidens (gopas and gopis) had to go beyond the village limits to circumambulate and worship the Govardhana Hill, a festival they celebrated every year. Neeraja went with the others, and in spite of the severest warning, she peeped into a crowd of enthusiastic gopis watching the dance of Radha with Krishna in a flower bower near the hill. She was so captivated by the divine Presence that she was no longer the same person. Another day, while on the Yamuna river bank, she saw Krishna fashioning a flute from a reed taken out of bamboo bower, and she heard Him play! Oh, it was overwhelmingly ecstatic! It was a call to transcend the material bonds to free oneself from the trammels of earthly endeavours. Neeraja did not care for anyone now. She became God-mad. In fact, she was the first to hold the reins of Akrura's chariot when he was taking Krishna to Mathura away from Gokulam and try to push the vehicle back! Well, she was driven out of her house by the mother-in-law for that. She was an outcast. The whole village rose up against her. She spent her days in the bamboo bower, her whole mind fixed on the Lord whom she had installed there.

Krishna responds to the call of yearning

Years passed. Nanda, Yasoda, and Radha left the world. Neeraja was now 52 years old. One day, she prayed desperately to Krishna, "I can no longer bear this forlorn life. My eyes have gone dry, they have no more tears to keep this love green. My heart is fast turning into a wasteland. Come, O Lord, come and save me, take me unto yourself." Krishna heard the prayer. He responded to

her yearning and called her by name so sweetly that His very voice filled her with new life. The bamboo bower was fragrant with divine glory. Krishna came near and took Neeraja's palm In His Hand. "What do you desire?" He asked. She asked "What is the purpose of life?" "To merge In God." "Well let me merge in You ... but before that, before my love merges in yours, let me hear you play on that flute for a short while." Krishna smiled and gave the excuse that He had not brought His flute. But seeing Neeraja's yearning, He plucked a reed from the bamboo bower and broke it right and in a trice converted it into a flute. With Neeraja on his lap, Krishna played so melodiously on the flute that the entire Gokula and even the whole world was bathed in ecstatic joy. When He stopped, Neeraja had attained final beatitude and was no longer a limited individual gopi separate from Him.

Krishna laid aside His flute and said He would not play on it again. That is the story of one gopi. The story of every gopi will be interesting, each in its own way, for they were all so transmuted by the devotion they bore toward the Lord. The gopis were declared by Narada in the Bhakthi Sutras (aphorisms on devotion) to be the greatest among the devotees).

In your daily affairs, do not create factions or revel in hatred. See the good in others and the faults in yourselves. Revere others as having God installed in them. Revere yourself also as the seat of God. Make your heart pure so He can reside therein.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

20. True Vision

Date: 02 September 1963 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

Last evening, when you heard about the Incarnation as Krishna, your hearts were filled with joy, which overflowed through the eyes, as I could see. Your minds too were purified by that experience. The Avatar had come in order to guard the world and to strengthen righteousness (dharma) as the means of guarding it. Books that contain the Lord's words and great people who know them declare that the Lord assumes human form in order to carry out these purposes. The story of Kuchela tells how one has to meditate on Him to worship Him and to honour Him. Kuchela knew exactly what had to be given to the Lord. The Lord cares for the feeling that accompanies the gift, the attitude with which the offering is made; He is not moved by the quantity or the cost. Droupadi offered a tiny piece of leaf sticking to the side of the vessel in which she had cooked the meal, and the Lord was so fully fed that He said that He was freed from all hunger. Rukmini placed just a single basil leaf on the scale, but since she had saturated it with her devotion, it weighed as much as Krishna Himself. Kuchela took a little "beaten rice", and the Lord ate it with relish and was highly pleased at the offering so full of devotion. A piece of paper that is white, tough, and clean is not as valuable as another piece of equal size that, though soiled and dirty, has upon it the imprint of the Reserve Bank, making it a hundred-rupee note. The imprint of devotion makes the "beaten rice" precious. Give the Lord the fruit, love, that grows on the tree of life. Develop the illumination of love and the bats of grief, envy, and egoism will fly away into the darkness.

Have the goal of merging in the Absolute always in view

You must have the goal of merging in the Absolute (sayujya) always in view; do not give it up or forget it. Be like the river that flows slowly to the sea. A man who has purchased a ticket to Calcutta from Madras, because that is the place he wants to reach, will not halt at any other place on the journey; he has the destination always in view. Of course, he may be interested in the sights and scenes on the way; he might get down here and there for

refreshments, but he will not seek a home anywhere, in between. Being in the same place, being near to the master, and likeness of the form of the master (salokya, sameepya, sarupya) may come in between; in fact, they do. But do not be satisfied with those stages. They are intermediate stations, remember. You have to reach each and travel beyond. In this Kuchela episode, the wife of Kuchela plays a more important role than Kuchela himself. She has much more devotion. In fact, women are more devotional than men. They can master their minds better. It was her maternal love that prompted her to send Kuchela to the Lord so that her children might get a full meal. She had faith in the Lord. Kuchela hesitated and argued that Krishna might not recognise or remember him or invite him in or accept his homage.

Fear of God should be absent in a genuine devotion

Kuchela is described in the Bhagavatham as constantly engaged in meditation on God. But then, how can his doubt be explained? His wife urged him to give up all doubt and proceed at least as far as the gate of Krishna's Palace. She was certain that Krishna would call him in if he took at least that little trouble. Of course, fire warms all, but one has to go near it, is it not? Staying away, you cannot complain that the fire is not warming you. Kuchela was so nervous that he could be persuaded to go only up to the gate. Once it was decided that Kuchela would go, she took a quantity of paddy, just a handful, from the place where she had hidden it for a rainy day. She put it in boiling water, took it out, dried it and then, frying it over the fire, pounded it with a pestle to prepare the "beaten rice" that Kuchela said was Krishna's favourite food while at school. This was tied to a corner of the cloth worn over the body, and he moved on, his fear increasing at every step. Such fear should be absent in the genuine devotee. That devotee must approach the Lord as a right and earn the grace that is their clue. Of course, the Lord showers His mercy on the distressed person and on one who longs for wealth as well as on the seeker of spiritual knowledge and the liberated person. The distressed person is one who is ill and suffering; the one who longs for wealth is the poverty-stricken who seeks prosperity and fortune. So Krishna called Kuchela in, with overwhelming joy, and reminded him of the happy days at school that they had spent together at the guru's feet. Even while Kuchela

was squirming to hide the common-place offering tied to the corner of his tattered cloth, Krishna sought out the stuff and began eating it with great relish. Devotion had made it very tasty to the Lord.

The Lord can transform poverty to wealth

It is related that Rukmini Devi held His hand when He took the third handful, and the reason given usually by commentators is that she was afraid all the riches of the Lord would go over to Kuchela if a few more handfuls were taken in by the Lord! What a silly idea! As if the riches of the Lord are exhaustible, as if He would care if devotees carried all of it away, as if the Mother of the Universe is stingy in Her gifts. This can never be true! The real cause for Her holding the hand of Krishna was: She claimed her share of the offering of the devoted heart; She wanted a portion for herself; it was her right to have a share. Kuchela left Dwaraka rather disappointed because he was not given anything or even a promise of anything. He was sad when he remembered his family and the starving children. He was so lost in grief that he passed his own house without noticing that it had undergone a great change and had become overnight a huge big mansion. His wife saw him, called him back, and related how suddenly happiness had been showered upon them by Krishna's Grace.

Sweeten your speech, sanctify your deeds

Kuchela's spiritual practices started that day! Until then, he was just a ritualist, going through the outward forms of the rites prescribed in the scriptures (sastras). When he realised how the Lord can, through His miracle powers, transform poverty to wealth, he decided to win the grace of God to secure perpetual, undiminished joy, that is to say, to win merger with the Divine (sayujya). He got true vision, the vision of what is good for him (sudarshana). And, in the midst of the treasures that now filled his residence, he lived the life of an ascetic, without any attachment. He knew that it was all a dream, the riches now and the poverty then. The emperor dreamt he was a beggar and wept when he was refused alms at one door and was overjoyed when he got a stomach full at another door. He woke up, and he was no

longer poor; he was an emperor. Even that is a dream, an illusion. Brahman alone is Real (Sath); Nature (prakriti) is unreal. Be in this awareness always - that is the highest spiritual discipline. Seek the vision of the Divine, make your speech sweet, and make your good deeds an offering. This is the three-fold path. Become a child, lose your conceit and pride. When you are still in the region of the qualities (gunas), motivated by desire (whether for the good, the grand, or the mean), you have to seek the Mother; when you are free from the bonds of the qualities, the enticements of desire, the Mother Herself will hasten toward you and fondle you in her lap. Purify your vision, sweeten your speech, sanctify your deeds - that way lies liberation.

I do not accept from you flowers that fade, fruits that rot, coins that have no value beyond the national boundary. Give Me the lotus that blooms in the clear pellucid water of the lake of your inner consciousness; give Me the fruits of holiness and steady discipline. I am above all this worldly etiquette, which enjoins you to see elders with some fruit or flower in your hand. My world is the world of the spirit; there, values are different. If you are happy with faith in God and fear of sin, that is "service" enough for Me. It pleases Me so.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

21. Objective Desires, The Poison

Date: 06 September 1963 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

Kalluri Veerabhadhra Sastry made bliss (ananda) well up in every one of you by his clear and moving description of the incidents of the Bhagavatham. His words were apt and sweet; his comments revealed the inner significance of the events; he made all partake personally in the life at Brindavan of the families of the cowherds during the time that Krishna was among them. Some people feel intoxicated by the emotions or get almost mad on account of the devotion they have. But such overpowering emotions have to be mastered. One has to transform devotion into spiritual wisdom and become stronger thereby. One's life is meaningful only because one can use it to see God. The goal of life is the final merging in the sea, God. You should not fill life with the world; that will make it a vanity fair, an insanity fair. Listen to all such things that will draw you toward the principle of Godhead; then think it over in the silence, make it part of your consciousness. This process of reflection makes you a human being; that is the test of human.

Sensory object is one's most deadly poison

Veerabhadhra Sastry described the scene of Krishna's dance on the head of the serpent, Kaliya. Well, Kaliya is a huge big serpent, full of poison, rolling in death and destruction. He is the representative of humanity, rolling in sensory objects - poison, as far as its effect on life is concerned. The sensory object (vishaya) is the most deadly poison (visha). When Krishna danced on the head of Kaliya (incidentally I might add, you should make your hearts as smooth and soft as the hood of the snake), the poison was all vomited! And the serpent was subdued. When God is revered, the world and all its poisonous fumes recede and you are restored to original health. Make the name and form of the Lord dance upon the hood of your heart. Krishna had no attachment to sense objects (vishaya-vasana), so He could plunge into the pool, call out to Kaliya, jump onto his hood, and trample on it and squeeze the poison out. If you are deep in the mire, you cannot pull out another who has fallen into it. Be on the bank; do not get caught. You are now struggling in the

mire of worldly life (samsara), the slithery mud of attachment. So how can you trample on the snake? You can save yourself only by calling on God, who is free from sense objects and is on the bank. Hold His hand, and He will pull you on to hard ground. In those days, Krishna never parted from Balarama, but that day, He came alone, without him. He was wearing a necklace of green beads, a nose-ring of pearl, and a ring of pearls in his right ear. He wore no shirt or coat, just a yellow silk round his waist and a kerchief wound round the head, or, rather, thrown carelessly round one end this way and another end that way! The peacock feather, which is described by poets and sages, was not always worn. It was struck up, only off and on. Of course, peacocks abounded in Brindavan then, and they are found in plenty even today. On his bare chest, there was a mole, which could be clearly seen, an inevitable mark of all Avatars, including the Sais.

Krishna had no objective desires

Krishna saw the carcasses of animals that had died when they inhaled the poisoned air near the Kaliya pool, and birds had fallen dead on the ground. Nothing green could survive in the neighbourhood. As soon as Krishna jumped into the pool to save the region from the serpent's havoc, his companions ran home to bring the parents, so that they could intercede and stop the foolish pranks of their mischievous son. They were in great panic. Only Radha was calm and collected. She knew that for Him, it was a minute's fun, a moment's resolve. He had no objective desires (vishaya), so poison (visha) could not affect Him. Even objective desires will be transmuted into higher spheres of purity when one approaches the Lord. Nothing against dharma can stand the presence of the Lord. That fire will consume all impurities. People forget that Krishna was just eleven years old when He finally left Brindavan, the scene of the Rasaleela (a dance Krishna performed with the gopis), for Madhura, and from there to Dwaraka. The Bhagavatham itself explicitly says that. But it is ignored because the minds of the people and the poets who want to see sensuality in the Rasaleela are vitiated by attachment to sense objects. The boy, Druva, went to the forest to do penance and get a boon from the Lord, so that his father might treat him as lovingly as he did his half-brother. But as he progressed in spiritual practices, that wish was forgotten, and more lofty

ones came to occupy its place. The Lord, once He enters the mind, will rid it of all evil. Ram (God) and kam (desire) cannot coexist, Lord and lust cannot be together. How then could the gopis have any body-consciousness when they adored Krishna?

The Lord never does anything without purpose

Krishna had already announced His glory to the cowherd maidens by such divine miracles as the uplifting of the Govardhana mountain. He had proved Himself superior to Indra, Brahma, and Varuna. He had manifested the universe in His mouth and showed that He had come on a divine mission to destroy the wicked and save the good. There is no worldliness in his behaviour; it is all other-worldly. The Lord never speaks a word without relevance or significance, He never does anything without appropriateness or purpose. Garuda is the symbol of karma, with the two wings of faith and devotion, the bird on which the Lord will take His seat, the heart as the bird. Radha is nature (prakriti), known as the universe (dhara), which helps you to think about the basis or support (adhara) in a regular continuous flow (dhara). The incident of the rope is another instance. Krishna felt that it was time to reveal His Truth, so, just as He showed all creation in His mouth when His mother asked Him to show her His tongue when she suspected He had eaten sand, He made even the longest rope too short to bind Him. It became the talk of the place, and everyone felt he had all the 14 worlds in Him!

Know the secret passage to the heart of the Lord

Avatars choose the time and mode of announcement of their advent and their glory. Even in this Avatara, such miracles had to be done when I decided that the time was opportune for taking people into My secret. Let your mind dwell ever on Krishna of such stature. Sanctify every word and deed by filling it with love of Krishna or whatever name and form you give to the Lord you love. The gold from which an anklet was made can become the gold for a crown on the head of a temple image, but it has to be melted in the crucible and beaten into shape. The waters of the river might be dirty, but the devotee who sips it with a mantra or a hymn in praise of God on his lips transmutes it into

sanctified water. The body becomes healthy by exercise and work; the mind becomes healthy by devout contemplation and remembrance of the divine name (namasmarana), by regular, well-planned discipline, joyfully accepted and joyfully carried out. Nonviolence is the rice; dedication is the gram (chickpea flour); expiation the raisins; repentance the jaggery (unrefined cane sugar). Mix all these well with the ghee (clarified butter) - virtue. That is the offering you should make to your chosen deity, not the paltry stuff you make out of articles obtained for a paise in the shops! The gopis knew this secret passage to the heart of the Lord, and they realised Him quickly and fast.

The Lord has no hatred in Him

You have heard that Krishna is the Flute-God (Murali-Madhava), and what exactly is the flute? You must be the flute. Let the breath of Krishna pass through you, making delightful music that melts hearts. Surrender yourself to Him; become hollow, inclination-less, egoless, desireless; then, He Himself will come and pick you up caressingly and apply you - the flute - to His lips and blow His sweet breath through you. Allow Him to play whatever song He likes. The Lord is all love. He has no hatred in Him. Once, at Shirdi, a certain Dr. Pillai came with much suffering, and he prayed for ten births with the chance of dividing the pain into ten parts, so that he could suffer a little each time and pay off his karmic debt without being hard put to paying it all off in one! He was informed through Kaka Saheb that he should fall at the feet of Baba, and, as he did so, Baba got the pain transferred to himself. For ten minutes, Baba suffered, at the rate of one minute for each birth, and thus he rid Dr. Pillai of his obligation. Baba was quite normal as soon as the 10 minutes were over. Love must be many-stranded in order to be strong and tough. A single strand is too weak. Have it many-stranded, one toward the mother, another toward the father, other strands toward husband, wife, friend, son, daughter, etc. Of course, love is all-embracing, it cannot be confined to one item and denied to another. It is a current that flows over all. Meditation on the Lord and His love will help you to tap it from the depths of your heart.

No living being is without the spark of love. Even a mad man loves something or somebody intensely. But you must recognise this love as but a reflection of the embodiment of Love that is your reality, of the God who is residing in your heart. Without that spring of Love, which bubbles in your heart, you will not be prompted to love at all. Recognise that spring, rely on it more and more, develop its possibilities, try to irrigate the whole world with it, discard all touch of self from it, do not seek anything in return for it from those to whom you extend it.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

22. Transform Inertia Into Austerity

Date: 07 September 1963 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

Oruganti Narasimha Yogi has been explaining the Krishna Principle (Thathwam) to you during the last three days. Pandits (scholars) are the instruments through whom you can gather the key to the understanding of the mystery of God; they give you the gist of the scriptures (sastras) in easy, simple, style and interpret them in the light of whatever experience they have earned. You have to listen to them with faith and devotion, in a mood of humility. Arjuna told Krishna, "I came into this battlefield a brave person (dheera). I have now become a man in distress (dheena), for I am but an instrument in your hands." Arjuna was an embodiment of divine consciousness and not, as he imagined, a mud-filled body. He was suffused with divine consciousness, not earthly inertia. Only he was not aware of it. A person gets into the company they deserve, is it not? From the company, you can judge a person. Well, Arjuna had the Lord Himself for company! Arjuna had the faith to concentrate on the Gita teaching even in the midst of the battlefield, on the eve of the fight that was to decide the fate of his family. He had devotion enough to compel Krishna to show him the Cosmic Form of God (Viswarupa, Viratswarupa) itself! He had the humility to declare that he would much rather beg than kill his kith and kin. He had the humility to fall at the feet of Krishna when he could no longer see how he should proceed. Develop these qualities, and you too can get the company of the Lord.

Ignorance is the disease afflicting the mankind

Krishna aroused the passionate (rajasic) qualities again in Arjuna, by prodding him and laughing at him for his cowardice and un-warrior attitude of renunciation. Thus, the qualities of sloth and ignorance (thamasic qualities) were removed. Later, He transformed Arjuna into a noble, pious (sathwic) hero, fit for the war of righteousness that he was to wage. The Isavasya Upanishad mentions that ignorance (ajnana) is the greatest sin. The fault of being miserly (karpanya dosa) that the Gita mentions is another name for the same ignorance. The Gita is the specific for this fell disease, which afflicts the

majority of mankind. You must all study the Gita daily. Read a few verses and meditate on the meaning yourself; it will dawn on you in the silence of your heart. You need not read elaborate commentaries. Each word in the Gita is a gem. No more do you need gemstones for the ear, the nose, and the neck. Have the gem of the Gita verses in your heart, and let them activate your intellect and your hands.

Essential purpose of all divine play is Bliss

As long as you are entangled in the sensual world, you cannot distinguish the real from the unreal. You have to discover the real through discrimination; there is no avoiding that responsibility. You have to do it now or later. Power, status, wealth, authority - these are useless in this adventure. Alexander, during his campaigns in the Punjab, was anxious to see a celebrated sage. He went to the cave where the sage was and expected to be received most thankfully and with demonstrations of welcome. But the sage simply asked him to move aside and go. He was not interested in the famous world-shaker, the Greek conqueror. Alexander was very angry; he threatened to kill the sage and drew his sword. But the sage said calmly, with a laugh "I do not die; I cannot die." That put some sense in Alexander, and he put his sword back into the scabbard. Narasimha Yogi spoke of the divine play (leela) where Brahma (One of the Trinity) takes away the entire population of Brindavan, including the cattle. Using His miracle power, Krishna creates identical men, women, and children and identical cattle, and they carry on undiscovered, quite normally, for one year! Now, Brahma is not different from Vishnu or Krishna; they do not work contrary to each other; they both work out the same plan. This form (rupa) is that form; this disguise (upadhi) and that disguise are both of the same divine Energy. The essential purpose of all this divine play is divine bliss (anandam). So, the One carries away when in one disguise called Brahma and creates substitutes when in another disguise called Krishna - all for the sake of the bliss it gives to the participants as well as to the onlookers and those who listen to the story later. This is one way of announcing the divinity of the Avatara, which has to be done so that people may listen and obey. The common people will sit up in wonder, and their awe will ripen into faith; later, even if one starts discriminating and arguing pro

and con, the Avatar will only be glad, for the faith will thus be confirmed.

Remove the feeling of inferiority that dwarfs you

The mind is ever unsteady; it has to be educated; its quicksilver quality has to be curbed. The mind is really the Embodiment of Consciousness (Chaithanya-swarupam), and it will become steady only when it is merged in the Divine (that is, in Chaithanya). There may be ice on a lake, which is inert (jada), but move it all to one side, press it aside, and the natural form of water, the Chaithanya, reveals itself, That Chaithanya has no joy or sorrow. It is ever in perfect equilibrium. "I am That." I am not affected by either. Mine is Samadhi - intelligence that is sama (steady), unaffected, unchanging wisdom. Remove the cataract and the vision becomes clear. So too, remove the feeling of inferiority that dwarfs you now. Feel that you are absolute, eternal, and blissful; then, every act of yours becomes a sacrifice (yajna), a ritual worship (puja). The ear, the eye, the tongue, the feet all become tools for your uplift, not traps for your destruction. Transform the quality of inertia (thamogunam) into the quality of austerity (thapogunam) and save yourself.

Know the best way to show your gratitude

You are indeed lucky that such learned and experienced pandits share with you their scholarship and their joy. Practise contemplation of what you hear; that is the best way to show your gratitude. You have another advantage too. With your experience, you can understand the Bhagavatham better. Swami's nature is all-pervading Love (Viswaprema), you have known, and Bhagavatham is the story of Viswaprema. I declare that I am in every one, in every being. So do not hate anyone or cavil at anyone. Spread love always, everywhere. That is the best way to revere Me. Do not seek to measure Me or evaluate Me. I am beyond your understanding. Pray or worship for your own satisfaction and contentment. But to say that I will respond only if I am called or that I will save only if I am thought of is wrong. Have you not heard the declaration. "Sarvathah pani padham"? It means that you can hear My footsteps, for I walk with you, behind you, beside you. My ear will be there to listen when you cry out in agony, "Don't you hear my heart's plaint? Have you

become so stony-hearted?" Ask Me to protect you like the apple of the eye, and My eye will be there to watch over you and guard you. Have incense and scent sticks for the ritual worship, and I smell them. I answer to whatever Name you use. I respond to whatever request that you make with a pure heart and a sanctified motive.

23. You And I

Date: 08 September 1963 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

As Subbaraya Sastry said, the body has to be used to ascend the ladder of the three qualities (gunas), from inertia (thamas) to activism (rajas) and from activism to goodness (sathwa), so that finally you may get beyond the ladder into the heights above. The body is the root of all the grief and disquiet that is now the lot of mankind. Why? The body was acquired by means of the good and bad that was done in the previous birth. Collectively, they are called karma. Karma is caused by attachment and hatred, affection and disaffection. They are the products of sheer ignorance, ignorance of the unity of all creation including oneself. This ignorance can be removed only by good knowledge (su-jnana).

The three steps to reach non-duality

When a man suffers from a stomach-ache, the best treatment will be salts or a hot water bag applied to the stomach, and not medicated collyrium for the eye. Ignorance can be removed by acknowledging the universality of God and merging your individuality in the Universal. First, practise the attitude of "I am yours." Let the wave discover and acknowledge that it belongs to the sea. This first step is not as easy as it looks. The wave takes a long time to recognise that the vast sea beneath it gives it its existence. Its ego is so powerful that it will not permit it to be so humble, as to bend before the sea. "I am yours; You are the Master. I am a servant; You are sovereign. I am bound." This mental attitude will tame the ego. Make every activity worthwhile. This is the religious outlook named marjala-kishora - the attitude of the kitten to its mother, mewling plaintively for succour and sustenance, removing all trace of the ego. The next step is: "You are mine," where the wave demands the support of the sea as its right. The Lord has to take the responsibility of guarding and guiding the individual. The individual is important, worthy to be saved, and the Lord is bound to fulfil the need of the devotee. Surdas said, "You are mine; I will not leave you; I shall imprison you in my heart; you shall not escape." The next stage is: "You are I" - I am but

the image, and You are the Reality. I have no separate individuality; there is no duality. All is One. Duality is but delusion. The first sign of spiritual life is detachment (vairagyam). If you have no detachment, you are illiterate as far as spiritual scholarship is concerned. Detachment is the ABC of spiritual effort. Detachment must become strong enough to make you discard the bondage of the senses. Just a few minutes of thought will convince anyone of the hollowness of earthly riches or fame or happiness. When you are affluent, everyone praises you. When the tank is full, hundreds of frogs croak all round. When the tank is dry, not a single one is there to address the tank.

Seek the difficult road of God-realisation

If a corpse had a few jewels on it, the proverb says, many will claim kinship with the dead person. But if it has no valuables on it, not a single person will come forward to weep for it! Consider when you are adding more and more sums of money to your bank account whether you are not accumulating troubles for yourselves and your children, making it harder for your children to lead clean, comfortable, and honourable lives. When you struggle to achieve paltry fame by devious means, remember who among crores of your countrymen are honoured today and for what. Don't you see that only those are honoured everywhere who gave up, renounced, and sought the more difficult road of God-realisation instead of the easier path of world-realisation? Welcome all the blows of fate, all the misfortunes and miseries, as gold welcomes the crucible, the hammer, and the anvil, in order to get shaped into a jewel. Or as the cane welcomes the chopper, the crusher, the boiler, the pan, the sprayer, the dryer, so that its sweetness may be preserved and used as sugar by all. The Pandavas never demurred when disasters fell thick upon them. They were happy that they helped them to remember Krishna and call upon Him.

Submit to the will of God in a resigned way

Bhishma was in tears on the bed of arrows, when he was about to pass away. Arjuna asked him why, and he replied, "I am shedding tears because the miseries undergone by the Pandavas pass through my mind." Then he said,

"This is done in order to teach the Kaliyuga (the era we are now in) a lesson: never seek power, position, or pelf but submit to the Will of God in a completely resigned way, so that you may be ever happy and unmoved." The Lord rushes toward the devotee faster than the devotee rushes toward Him. If you take one step toward Him, He takes a hundred steps toward you! He will be more than a mother or father. He will foster you from within you, just as He has saved and fostered so many saints who have placed faith in Him.

Anger and hatred can be used to ward off the evil that stalks the spiritual aspirant; be angry at things that hamper you, hate the habits that brutalise you. Cultivate supreme knowledge, and visualise the Lord in all things and activities. That makes this human birth worthwhile.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

24. Be Queens!

Date: 12 September 1963 / Location: Mysore / Occasion: Maharani's Women's College

Principal Parvathamma has been yearning a long time for this day, when I could come to your college and speak to you. This college, as she said just now, has been in existence for eighty-five years, and it has educated and sent into various fields of life thousands of women. Bharath (India) is the land where Bha or Brahma vidya (knowledge of Brahman) has attracted the rathi (attachment) of its people, where the people have a natural attraction toward spiritual practices, where the call of the Infinite is listened to with keenness. This keenness has now declined. It is a great misfortune, and you must see that this keenness is not lost. You should decide that it must be revived, at least in your own hearts. An intellect that is moved only by truth and a consciousness that will not tolerate the impurity of meanness or vice - these two are the prerequisites for the fulfilment of that ideal. This is the wealth (asthi) that will make a person a believer in God (asthika)! The intellect must investigate, as far as it can, the fundamental problem: why this birth, whither this life, whence this adventure, what is the effect of human actions on this life and on future lives, etc. Consciousness must dive deep into the Divinity that underlies it.

Have faith in your own essential Divinity

Education that does not confer modesty and wisdom is a sheer waste of precious time. Whatever else you learn or do not learn, equip yourself with the strength that is necessary to be virtuous, to resist temptation and the lures of the objective world. Discrimination is not the cleverness that is given inordinate value today but the capacity to see things in their proper proportion, to evaluate the temporary and the lasting, the particular and the universal, the shallow and the deep. You must also have the attitude of reverence toward the past, toward the elders who are the repositories of the saintly spiritual wisdom and the experience that you have to acquire. Have also faith - faith in your own essential Divinity, faith in the higher values attainable by earnest practice and the exercise of detachment. Life becomes

sweeter with a little dose of denial, too; if you get all your desires, it begins to cloy. Deny yourselves many of the things your mind runs after, and you will find that you become tough enough to bear both good fortune and bad. Now, people are apt to go by the appearance rather than the reality of things. Once, an ardent devotee of Ganesha used up all his riches to make golden images of that God as well as of the mouse that is His vehicle, besides an umbrella, a seat, and other appurtenances, all of gold. Later he fell on evil days, so he had to sell all these loved things. The merchant who offered to purchase them started weighing each item and declaring the price it would fetch. When he said that the Ganesha would fetch as much as the mouse, for both were of equal weight, the man got enraged and complained that he was being let down. Ganesha must fetch more than the mouse! That was because he forgot the reality and attached value to the appearance, form, and name and not to the substance.

Education is not for mere living

If value is given to the office that a man holds, which is but temporary, as soon as he retires and starts sitting on a bench in the Lal Bagh (a park), people will stop recognising and saluting him! The schooling that gives only outer polish is just a waste of opportunity. Education is not for mere living; it is for life, a fuller life, a more meaningful, a more worthwhile life. There is no harm if it is also for gainful employment, but the educated must be aware that existence is not all, that gainful employment is not all. Again, education is not for developing the faculty of argument, criticism, or winning a polemic victory over your opponents or exhibiting your mastery over language or logic. That study is best that teaches you to conquer this cycle of birth and death, that gives you mental equipoise that will not be affected by the prospect of death, that will not be disturbed by the blessings or blows of fate. That study begins where this study of yours ends. When this material world is studied and analysed, you realise that it is just a conglomeration of good and bad, and you aspire for something beyond this duality. The light will dawn on you only after you have acquired truth, righteousness, peace, and love (sathya, dharma, santhi, and prema). The root cause is that the basic thing is not known or experienced. How then can lasting peace be achieved?

Joy and grief are not brought about by others

When the doctor said to apply this ointment at the place where the scorpion stung his son, the fond father asked the son, "Where did the scorpion sting?" The boy replied, "in that corner," and the father applied the ointment to that spot on the floor! How can the pain disappear? Take the lamp to the place where the darkness is. Joy and grief are not brought about by others, they are emanations from within you. So, cure yourself, do not try to put the blame on others and start plans to cure them. You carry piles of books up and down, from your rooms to college and back. You know more about questions than about the answers. You can learn more by observation and meditation than by pouring over the pages of books. The really valuable things you can learn from the Vedas, the Upanishads, and religious scriptures. A pandit engaged a boat to take him across the flooded Godavari river. When the journey over the river started, he began a lively conversation with the boatman. He asked the boatman whether he had any schooling, and when the reply came that he had none, he said sadly, "Alas! A quarter of your life has gone to waste. It is as if you have drowned those years in the Godavari." The pandit asked the boatman whether he could tell him the time from his watch. The boatman confessed he did not have a watch nor cared to have one. The pandit deplored and said, "Half your life has gone into the Godavari." His next question was about newspapers - did the boatman read any, what was his favourite paper? The boatman replied that he did not read any, nor did he care to know the news. He had enough to worry about already. The pandit declared forthright that three-quarters of the boatman's life had been liquidated. Just then, the sky darkened with storm clouds, and there was an imminent threat of rain. The boatman turned to the pandit; it was his turn to put a question. He asked, "Can you swim?" When the frightened passenger confessed he could not, the boatman said, "In that case, your entire life is now going to merge in the Godavari." This is the case of the educated in India today. They do not have the education that will help them in distress or dire need to win back their mental poise.

Be prepared for both joy and grief

You are being carried along the flood of material pleasures and lures. How long can you drift like that? When you live in the world of desire, you must be prepared for both joy and grief. If you invite Minister Bhoga (material enjoyment), you must be prepared for the visit along with him of his Private Secretary Roga (illness)! Invite, on the other hand, the Minister Thyaga (sacrifice) or his colleague Yoga (meditation), and you will be happy to receive their Private Secretary bhoga (enjoyment), who plays a minor role in the presence of his master.

Develop a pure and strong character

Real education is not the command over a number of languages. I remember an incident that happened some time ago. The wife of an educated gentleman used to get letters from a certain LakshmiNarayana, and the husband suspected him to be a boy friend of her college days. When a telegram came one day asking the wife to meet LakshmiNarayana at the railway station, he hid the message and waited for developments, full of anger at the stranger as well as at his own wife. Tragedy was averted when Lakshmi, the college friend, rushed in, disappointed that the wife did not meet her at the station according to the telegram. It seems she had come to that very town because her husband, Narayana, had been transferred to that place! Mere literacy is the source of such silly suspicions! What is the worth of education if virtuous conduct is not found in those who claim to have been educated? Develop a pure and strong character. Remember, most of you will get married, and you will have the great responsibility of rearing up families. That is a very valuable opportunity. Learn to adjust your likes and dislikes to those of others, learn the gentle art of sacrifice and service - keep in mind, when you react angrily against your mother-in-law, that a day will come when you too will have daughters-in-law! Try to appreciate their points of view; they may have greater forethought, greater experience, a greater sense of responsibility; they may know more about people and things than you, who are fresh entrants in their household. The family of the husband whom you marry is a good training ground; it is a field of spiritual practice. When you are found fault with, do not fly into a rage. Instead, examine your own conduct

and discover the faults in yourselves. Self-examination is the first step to self-improvement and peace. Do not exaggerate the faults of others, but give them a wide margin and see them as small. Exaggerate yours; see them big and strive to remove them fast. Take all fault finders as your friends and well-wishers, for they give you warning signals in time.

Cultivate a sweet temper and sweet speech

I find that now-a-days, the art of cynical argumentativeness has spread everywhere. This is a dangerous sign. On account of this, reverence has disappeared, and respect for the teacher has also gone. Of course, there are teachers who undermine their own dignity by such acts as begging cigarettes from their own students! A murderer was once sentenced in court, but, while arguing his defense, he pleaded, "I am the Atma (Pure Self), as the Gita declares. How can I kill or the deceased be killed?" The judge answered, "Do not worry. You will not die when you are hanged, nor can I get you executed. It is all Atma, undying, unkillable, everywhere, in all." Dharma (Law) is applied by such people only when it suits them; otherwise, they do not care for its commands. Cultivate a sweet temper and sweet speech, which is its natural consequence. Speak without anger or spite, without any artificiality or formality, straight from the heart. Then, you will be spreading joy and love among all. When your parents plead that they cannot afford to clothe you as you wish or give the various frills of finery that you crave, do not get wild and quarrel with them. Be bold enough to resist the temptation of yielding to the pressure of the crowd. Remember: nourishing good qualities (guna-poshana) is as important as nourishing the body (deha-poshana).

Be silent partners, inspirers, and teachers

You go about filling every bus in attractive dresses and carrying heaps of books, but let Me tell you that the greatest beauty aid for women is virtue. Attach importance to discipline (nishta) and not to breakfast (nashta). You can miss breakfast but not discipline. Live a regulated disciplined life from now on; make it a habit, an armour that will protect you from harm. Pray to God and recite His name or meditate on His glory for some fixed period of

time every day; you will find it amply rewarding. Don't say, "Let me have a taste of the reward, and then I shall start the spiritual practice." Practise, and the experience will follow, must follow. This college is known as the Maharani's Women's College. I want each of you to be a maharani (queen) of your household. Queens watch the world from the inner apartments of the palace, through interstices in the wall or enclosures; they can see, but they are safe from other eyes. That is the highest women's duty, as laid down in the scriptures (sastras). You should not be seen or talked about; you must be away from public gaze; you must be silent invisible partners, inspirers, and teachers. If you desire that others honour you, you should honour them too. If others must serve you, serve them first. Love begets love; trust engenders trust. Self-aggrandizement and selfishness bring disaster in their train. As a matter of fact, no joy can equal the joy of serving others. Be like this timepiece; show the correct time to all who desire to know, regardless the person who comes for the information. It has no likes and dislikes.

A prayerful life will be a source of strength

People call you weak. Do not believe it. Having all these strong points in your favour - intelligence, discipline, spiritual capacity, consciousness of other's excellences, awareness of your faults, eagerness to improve yourself - how can you be called "weak"? I was asked by your Principal to plant a champaka tree in the garden of this college, and I did it gladly. But the thing that will give me greater pleasure is to plant the sapling of prayer in your hearts. A prayerful life will not yield to the fury of passion; it will be a source of strength and cooperation. Decline in the discipline of constant thought of the Lord (namasmarana) has been the cause of the decline of this country. A single household now has ten factions and parties. Those who cannot reform their own homes have started reforming the country and advising cooperation and harmonious living to others. Knowledge of the Atma as the very basis of all beings is now forgotten, and that is the cause of lack of peace - all the unrest, the confusion, and the moral crisis of today. It is to awaken the sleeping and communicate this message to them that I have come. I bless that all of you may have lives full of joy and peace; I bless that this college may have many many more years of useful life, useful in helping the women of this land to

realise themselves and help others to do so.

The journey of every person is toward the cemetery. Every day brings you nearer to the moment of death. So do not delay the duty you must carry out for your own lasting good. Recognise that you are Siva (God) before you become a sava (corpse); that will save you from further deaths.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

25. Orphan But Protected

Date: 15 September 1963 / Location: Vanivilasapuram, Mysore City

Kannada is a sweet and soft language, but I do not propose to speak in it now. I feel that you can follow Me even if I speak in Telugu. I am happy to lay the foundation stone of this Home for Retarded Children and the hostel and workshops of the Mahila Makkala Koota, for service is the best form of worship. I know this institution does real service. It is a lighthouse in the sea of mere worldly mindedness. For all the higher forms of service, devotion is the very life breath. Of the two, worldly gain (preyas) and spiritual merit (sreyas), Sunandamma has chosen spiritual merit. So, even when she is ridiculed, she carries on; even when praised, she does not accept the praise. If she must succeed in this venture, she must strengthen her faith in the Lord. That is enough. When the election season is on, you find people suddenly going round and round and falling at the feet of all and sundry, praying for votes. They could have fallen at the feet of the Lord, and He would have showered His grace. A godly person, full of humility and the spirit of service, would have received the needed votes even without this humiliation of door-to-door soliciting.

Faith is the very breath of victory

Be good, be serviceable, be useful, be kind, be God-fearing - then, the confidence of the people will be yours. I am sure Minister Kanthi, who is here, will agree with Me when I say that such a person has no need to beg for votes. People will themselves come forward and offer the votes at their feet. Faith, faith - that is the very breath of victory - faith in oneself, faith in the good work one has set upon, and faith in its success in spite of signs of failure. Attachment and hatred are the greatest enemies of progress in any scheme of social service, why, in any scheme of work. If a man is deluded into believing that he is saving others, then woe be to him, for there is no other at all. All are One, one person's sorrow is everyone's sorrow. The fundamental flaw is the ignorance of humanity. If only one is wise, one would know that all individuals are waves on the surface of the self-same ocean. Selfless action is

the ideal to be aimed at. But now, everything is measured by the result, the gain that accrues. Study is also for the salary one can get on the basis of the degree that is its goal. If you fan a person out of love, when you stop the person cannot blame you, but when the paid servant stops, the master takes him to task. In the first case, the act is done without selfish desire (in the nishkama way); there is no aim to seek gain. The desire for gain is like the poison fangs; when they are pulled out, the snake of karma is rendered harmless.

Faith becomes steady through spiritual discipline

The correct discipline to acquire the desireless (nishkama) attitude is dedication, and dedication is possible only when you have intense faith in God. That faith becomes steady through spiritual effort. Now, spiritual effort is like the snacks one eats; the main dishes are all of the world, from the world. However, the spiritual must be the major portion of the food. You must be aware of the danger of a fall, in time. Do not behave like the master of a house, who when his wife said, "I hear some noise; it is perhaps a thief," replied: "I know; don't interrupt my sleep." In a few minutes, she said, "He came into the house." But the man said, "I know." Later, she said, "He is opening the box." Still, the man said "I know," and kept quiet. After some time, she said, "He is running away," and the man said, as formerly, "I know." He did not pay any attention to the warnings of the theft. So too, you do not heed the warning but move forward to the calamity, with eyes open. Once you feel that all are waves on the self-same sea, you will no longer use the term "helpless orphan (a-natha)", which I found in the report that was read. In one sense, there is no helpless orphan at all; all are protected by a guardian (sa-natha), for the Lord takes care of all. He is the Lord of individualised souls (Pasu-pathi), pasu meaning individual living beings (jivas). There is only one Masculine (Purusha) in creation; all the rest are feminine (stri). There is no fool, too; that is only a role played by that particular manifestation of the embodiment of spiritual knowledge, i.e. the Supreme Self (Paramatma). Nagaya might play the role of Thyagaya, in the film on Thyagaraja, but all the while, his Nagaya is the truth, the reality. The Thyagaya is a temporary role in the drama of life.

Journey to God is to be through good karma

Remember this and do not tarry on your journey to God. You fill up the petrol tank with fuel for the journey that lies ahead, don't you? When you propose to keep the car in the garage for long, you do not fill the tank. Well, the body is also fed with fuel so that it may go on a journey: the journey to God. That journey is through karma, good karma, activity with renunciation of its fruits (nishkama karma). Such karma is termed "related to the body (kayaka)", the exertion of the body for the liberation of the soul imprisoned therein. Not all the raindrops that fall from the sky manage to reach the sea. Only those that flow into a flowing river attain the goal of all the drops, for they all come from the sea and yearn to reach their source. I find that the sun has invaded this side of the hall; the hall is not big enough to provide shade for all of you. I cannot bear to see you suffering. I find one man has fainted there. Here, take this sacred ash (vibhuthi) to him. Let him drink it in a glass of water. (He waved His right Hand once and created a quantity of vibhuthi as a token of His grace.) When I am leaving, do not crowd around and fall at My feet. Do the obeisance (namaskaram) in your hearts; that is better than crushing everybody and pushing forward. There are many old men, sick persons, and children, so be calm and patient. Why do a thing that gives neither you full satisfaction nor Me satisfaction? Make Sai the resident of your heart; that gives you happiness and Me joy!

You must tread the spiritual path with an uncontrollable urge to reach the goal. You must cultivate the yearning for liberation from all this encumbrance. Remember that you have to dwell in a house built on four stout pillars: righteousness, wealth, desire, and liberation (dharma, artha, kama, and moksha); righteousness supporting wealth and liberation being the only desire. However much you may earn either wealth or strength, unless you tap the springs of supreme bliss (ananda) within you, you cannot have peace and lasting contentment.

- *Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

26. Building Or Begging?

Date: 15 September 1963 / Location: Mysore / Occasion: Meeting of the Trustees

I Myself asked Sunandamma to call you all here this evening so that I can talk to you about the great piece of social work you are engaged in. I laid the foundation stone for your institution this morning; I blessed the endeavour because you are serving women and children, especially children who are mentally defective and physically handicapped. I understand you have the help of experts in psychology, who can understand the special problems of the underdeveloped children. So far so good. As trustees who have undertaken to help Sunandamma in this Mission of Mercy, I advise you to start the construction of the rooms for the inmates and for the classes first. The prayer hall can wait; the atmosphere of the place where such work is being done cannot be anything but a prayerful one. This is penance (tapas) that you are doing, and the children and adults who watch you and your efforts do not require anything more inspiring than that.

Discover a bridge between ancient and modern

Sunandamma was telling Me that some of you want the buildings to be reminiscent of ancient Indian architecture, a kind of temple, in fact, while others prefer the latest style, plain utilisation and cheap, without elaborate decorative motifs. You cannot revive the hut made of leaves, the hermitage, now, in the 20th century; you have to discover a bridge between the ancient and the modern. Moreover, I want the ancient spirit in the heart, not in bricks and mortar. When the children are all of this modern age, affected by its attraction and attitudes, how can the style of the building in which they dwell change their outlook? And what of the teachers? They are imbued with the passions and prejudices of the modern age. Change their hearts into leaf huts, full of the ideals and aspirations of the sages of this land, charged with simplicity and sincerity, moved by the urge to expand in love to all beings. Then the style of the building does not matter. It is the architecture of the mind that matters. If the needs of the modern age require a change, change the non-essentials. Do not dilute the truth so much that it loses its

genuineness. If someone favours drinks of a blue colour or red, do not pour blue dye or red dye into the bottle; pour the drink into a blue or red glass, and offer it to them. That would be enough. So too, if one style of building is to be preferred, by all means, put up the structure, but do not change the essentials of the work to be done therein or the outlook of the workers.

Patience and strenuous effort will be rewarded

Pleasant and moderate, these are the directions. Let it not be too garish, too ramshackle, too costly, too fragile. Take the middle course to yield maximum benefits. The craving for sense objects cannot be given up fully, so transform it into an instrument for worship. Dedicate all your efforts to the Lord, and accept all achievements and failures as proofs of the grace of the Lord. His will decreed that they should so happen. Transform all six passions into instruments for spiritual uplift. I know also that you are worried about funds for the completion of your plans. Sunandamma even asked Me to show the way! Well, He who showed the way so long will do so hereafter also. This will be completed; otherwise, I would not have laid the foundation stone. Good works never languish for want of funds; the Lord will come to their rescue. Only it may take some time, so do not lose heart. The orange is quite bitter when it is green, but time gradually sweetens it into a delicious fruit. Patience and strenuous effort will get rewarded. I must tell you, however, that for such good causes as this, do not collect money in devious ways. Help should come from pious hearts, from well-earned money, from persons who know and appreciate the purpose for which they give. That is why I oppose all benefit shows, where you tempt people with a dance or a drama or a film and collect money for your pet plan. I am also against lotteries, where the lure of getting a big prize for which one does not do anything, a prize collected out of other people's earning, is used for the collection of funds. Let each one give out of the fullness of his heart, on their own initiative, whatever they can give gladly after studying well the present work and the future possibilities of the institution. Your duty is only to inform. Do not try even to persuade. Begging for the sake of work that is inherently good is an insult to human nature - the one who asks and the one who is asked are both demeaned. I want to give you this courage and this confidence. Carry on in a spirit of humility and

fortitude, and you will succeed.

All the joy you crave is in you, but, like a person who has vast riches in an iron chest but has no idea where the key is, you suffer. With proper directions, dwelling upon them in the silence of meditation, it is possible to secure the key, open the chest, and be rich in joy.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

27. Human And Divine Actions

Date: 18 October 1963 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Sri Sathya Sai Hospital, Seventh Anniversary

Many people consider all acts of worship as "His" and all acts of earning and spending as "Mine". But this is a mistake. All acts are "His". There is no such distinction between actions of a person and God; all karma leads you toward God (Madhava) or away from Him. For example, you say that you fall ill, that you are in good health, etc. That is because you feel that the body is "you", whereas you are really only the *Atma*, with the five sheaths that you have superimposed on it. This is the result of the system of education now prevalent, which teaches that the bliss (*ananda*) one derives from the senses is all the bliss that one can get. It does not disclose to the individual the eternal source of bliss that one has within oneself. There is no training in the art of acquiring mental peace. No one is told the secret of attaining the state of equanimity amidst the confusion of modern civilisation. Everyone is induced to float with the current that drags humanity down to fear, anxiety, and despair. Life today is similar to the situation when the master of the house is restricted to a tasteless regimen while the members of the family revel in a banquet. The senses revel without limit, but the Atma is ignored.

Modern education does not produce wise people

Modern education produces only "learned fools"; it does not produce wise people who can meet life calmly and bravely. Its products know how to fill themselves with information, devise tools or handle them for the destruction of fellow people, or cater to the whims of the senses, but they are helpless to meet the crisis of death, a crisis that is inevitable. Hanumantha Rao of the I.A.S., who is the President of this meeting, said that during the last 14 years, when he had not visited this place, many great developments have taken place, including this hospital. Some of you may ask why there should be a hospital at all, here! Why should not Baba cure diseases by an exercise of His will? That is the question. Well, for one thing, this hospital is not My only hospital. Hanumantha Rao has a hospital in Madras, where disabled children

are treated and trained to be useful and self-respecting individuals. That too is My hospital. In fact, all hospitals everywhere are Mine. I visit them all. Why, all those who call out from their hearts for succour, in whatever language, from whatever clime, whether from hospitals or homes, are Mine. Do not confine Me to these few acres around Prasanthi Nilayam. Wherever a person craving perfect peace (*prasanthi*) lives and prays, there a Prasanthi Nilayam exists.

Faith in grace is not yet strong

You should remember another point. The hospital serves to increase faith, to demonstrate Divinity, and to remove doubt. That is also necessary. Besides, you have to mark time in consonance with the song that is sung. Many are hungry for medical treatment, and they are satisfied only if drugs are given and injections administered. Their faith in grace is not yet strong. So a hospital is required for such grace, that is the crucial gain. The hospitals can be closed, especially if the spiritual practices used for gaining grace results in simple lives spent in contentment and undisturbed calm. The King of Death does not bring a noose when he comes to drag people to his abode. The noose is made by the victims themselves, and they have it already round their necks, awaiting the arrival of the end. It is the noose resulting from action that each manufactures and winds round the victim that ultimately drags the victim away. Become aware of your reality, and you will lose the sense of identification with the body. That will make you disease-free. You will have perfect ease. This is quite easy, understanding that you are not the body. For you are practising this truth every day for at least six hours ever since birth! If that cannot teach you, I wonder what can. Every day when you sleep, where are you? Who are you? Your senses are inoperative, your intelligence is in abeyance, your mind creates a world of its own and, after playing in it for sometime, lapses into inactivity. That is sleep, the nearest you reach in your journey to *samadhi* (super-conscious state).

Each one of you can become Bhagavan

Live in the true nature of Self (*Atma thathwam*); that will ensure peace

(*santhi*). With the poison of attachment and hatred inside you, how can you be pronounced healthy? If you experience the true nature of Self, you become *Bhagavan* (Divinity) Himself. That is why I do not address you as devotees! You are not devotees; you are more than that - you ought to become Bhagavan. Each one of you can become Bhagavan by merging your separate individual soul (*jiva*) in the Ocean of the Universal Atma. Death comes swooping like the falcon on chicken feeding on the ground. The man who dies prays to Me to receive him; the people who weep at his departure pray to Me to keep him alive. I know both sides of the picture, the past and the present, the crime and the punishment, the achievement and the reward, so I carry out what is just, though modified by My grace. I am not affected one way or the other by the arrival into the world of some or the departure from it of some others. My nature is Eternal Bliss. You can share in that Bliss by following My instructions and practising what I say.

28. The Day They Got The Light

Date: 20 October 1963 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Avatar Day

I am surprised that you read out a welcome address to Me and extolled Me as the Embodiment of Supreme Knowledge and Love (Jnana-swarupa and Prema-swarupa). I must tell you that I am no stranger and therefore need no welcome. I am no stranger anywhere, much less here of all places, where I took birth. I belong to you. I am very near to you. Besides, I do not like this praise, for praise places you at some distance, whereas I take delight in being with you, beside you, around you. No father likes his sons to praise him! No son approaches the father with a welcome address in which his scholarship, wealth, strength, and virtues are listed and extolled. Kinship evokes kindness; there is no need or chance for formal ceremonial behaviour. Now, you have asked Me to switch on these street lights, and you have mentioned that this is a supreme moment, for the village is to be free from darkness and full of light hereafter! Let Me tell you, this village is not getting light today! It got the Light the day this Sakthi (meaning Himself, Sai Baba) took birth in this place! For what is this little light that illumines just a few yards around each pole when compared with the Light that illumines the heart and spreads joy and peace.

Light from Puttaparthi is widening over the world

From that day, when this light appeared, you have been witnessing how the Light is widening over the country, attracting the attention of the entire world to this tiny hamlet nestled among these hills, away from the flow of the turbid currents of civilisation. Now, you have buses and lorries coming along the newly laid roads. Just today the decision has been made to improve the roads around this village to the standard of tarred roads. You have at the Prasanthi Nilayam an up-to-date hospital, you have a fine school building for your children, and this and the neighbouring villages have the benefit of this very useful electric current, which you can now direct for various purposes at home as well as in the fields. You gave Me this garland of flowers when I came, but I would have been glad if you, every one of you, had become a

fragrant flower, free from the insect pests of vice and wickedness, strung on the thread of devotion to God. That means you must be united and of one mind, free from hatred and spite, factionalism and greed. Villagers are being ruined everywhere by elements that promote faction and sow the thorny seeds of hatred in fields where useful crops have to be grown. Here, many feel that you are not attending bhajans or frequenting the Nilayam as much as they do. They say among themselves that the inhabitants of Puttaparthi, the village where Sri Sathya Sai Baba was born, have no devotion! But I know that you are every moment thinking about Me, watching for Me, talking about Me, pointing Me out to visitors, expecting Me to return soon when I have gone out of this place, etc. If this is not constant remembrance (smarana), what is it?

Injurious attitude is being perpetuated

You must have seen women carrying a number of water pots one over the other on their heads. They may have babies on their hips, and children that they lead along, but all the while their thought will be about the hearth in their kitchens and the food that is being cooked there, for they are anxious that it should not be spoiled. The strength-giving, peace-creating culture of Bharath (India) has been submerged by the flashy, glittering ideals introduced from the West during centuries of foreign rule. The attention of the people of this land is drawn from the heights to the lowly needs of the senses and the stomach. Even after Indians regained the power to shape their own future, the situation has not improved, for the same injurious attitude is being perpetuated. The beliefs and practices of the past are condemned as superstitions by the inheritors of that very heritage! I won't agree with people who dismiss them as superstitions, for they gave those who believed and acted according to the belief the most precious treasure of bliss and peace (ananda and santhi). They helped to pull out the poisonous fangs of karma, fangs that inject greed, egoism, and hate. They taught man to do action (karma) as a sacred duty and leave the result to God, thus avoiding the two evils of pride and frustration - pride that the act was a success, frustration when it did not succeed. It also contributed some positive good; the karma was done well, as well as the individual can execute it, for all karma was

transformed into worship of the Supreme. Humanity was saved by this emphasis of selfless action, from unending desire and inexplicable sorrow. Now, like water, people flow ever downward, and at the least disappointment they break into bits and drops.

Faith in the Divinity of people has to be restored

Once again, that attitude must be implanted in humanity. One has acted the role of clown or servant or an extra much too long; it is time one took on the role of a hero for which one is destined and equipped. So, like the garland maker who selects flowers of various hues, sizes, and fragrances for preparing a garland, the Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha (Society of Pandits) too has selected these pandits and prepared a garland. The purpose of this Society is to remind everyone of the role of the hero they have to play. Of course, I am the sustainer of the flowers, not the garland maker! The heroism of the wise person has gone from this land, and the weakness of the ignorant has overwhelmed the people. Sloth has taken the place of earnestness; hesitation has halted courage. This has to be corrected. Even in other lands, the sense of values has to be restored, and faith in the Divinity of humanity has to be restored. That is the task for which I have come. Even the pandits who have great scholarship have no happiness. The scriptures that they have mastered are designed to confer peace of mind, contentment, and unshakable joy, but the repositories of that scholarship are a very discontented group today. They have the umbrella in their hands, no doubt, but it does not protect them against rain or shine! So, even they have to be made aware of the excellence of the knowledge they are carrying and its curative property. Know thyself - not the sun and moon - is the specific for humanity's ills.

Act up to your professed declarations

Watch the mind, just as you watch the cable through which the current flows. Do not establish contact with the mind; it is as bad as contacting the cable. Watch it from a distance; then only can you derive bliss (anandam); search for the cause of ignorance just where it resides. Then you will find that the

mind in association with sense objects is the cause. Cut it off from the vision of sense objects, and spiritual wisdom dawns. Once, a man proclaimed himself established in super-consciousness (a sthithaprajna) and an adept in yoga. He went into samadhi in a trice and sent his inner cosmic energy (kundalini sakthi) to the crown of the head! Then he got himself buried in the river bed, but he rose after a few days and started asking for cash contributions from onlookers! It was a descent from the sublime to the ridiculous. You must guard against that. Be consistent; act up to your professed declarations. The members of the Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha (Society of Pandits) have to share their learning and their experience and their joy with the people, that is their elementary duty. For this, they are not to receive any monetary benefits, for they are only doing their duty, increasing their own joy, sharing their own enthusiasm. I am sure this assembly hall will move from victory to victory, for it is contributory to My work. This huge auditorium was erected, would you believe it, in 15 days! It was all done by the devotees; not a single cooly was employed. The Chithravathi river helped a good deal, for it supplied the sand with which the place was filled. No government, no force of authority could have achieved this so soon; only devotion can inspire this consistent firm faith. It is all the effect of Will. The Will is there, so the great hall also will carry on its great task, unhindered.

The body is the cart, and the mind is the horse that drags it. No food is given to the horse, which is really the more valuable of the two. Give the mind and its culture the importance it deserves; then only is life worth living.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

29. World Prosperity

Date: 21 October 1963 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

One meaning of karma, which is popularly accepted, is that it is one's destiny or fate, the inescapable "writing" on the brow, which has to work itself out. There is no escaping it. But people forget that it is not written by some other hand. It is all written by one's own hand. And the hand that wrote it can also wipe it off. The husk with which the paddy is born can be removed by effort; the worldly illusory power (maya), which persuaded you to write all that destiny, can be conquered in an instant, and then the entire page can be wiped away. Men are spinning cocoons for themselves; they suffer because they are unable to come out of it into the world of light. They are like the monkeys caught by the wandering beggar, dancing at the end of the rope and begging pennies from those sitting round the ring. Sankara said that he would willingly offer the monkey (mind) to Siva so that He may teach it tricks that please Him and use it for getting alms for Himself. That is to say, Sankara proposed to fill his mind with thoughts of God, so that the monkey would be tamed and made to serve God's purpose. You too must make the mind the servant of God, not the slave of the senses.

Criterion to determine the dharma of each person

You must have watched a bird sitting on a branch that waves in the wind. It is unafraid, because it has more confidence in its wings than in the branch. It knows that, any moment, it can take to its wings and leave the perch, the uncertain perch. The branch is the objective world (prakriti), and the wings are the grace of the Lord. Develop strength of wing and sit on any tree. You won't come to harm. But if you trust the objective world and rely only upon the protection it gives, you fall. Mullapoodi Narayana Shasthri and Vajapeyam Venkateshwara Avadhani both spoke now of the difficulty of demarcating what exactly dharma (duty) is and what the criterion is to determine the dharma of each person. Well, the dharma that you have to follow is to be what you profess to be. This is an easy and intelligible test. If you feel and believe that you are a brahmin, then you have to follow the dharma as laid

down for a brahmin. If you feel and are convinced that you are the Atma, then your dharma is the Atma dharma (divine-oriented duty). If you feel and are certain that you are the body, then the body-oriented duty is the dharma for you. But everyone must imbibe higher values and consider themselves as Atma and follow the Atma dharma. That is the mission for which I have come. That is the work of the Vidwan Mahasabha (Society of Pandits). Wherever the ants may be, sugar will be placed near the entrance leading to their colonies. All people are Mine; so the whole world has to be saved from the consequences of ignorance or limited knowledge. I will get all My people near Me, for they are Mine and I am theirs. Then I will start teaching and training them until they become entirely ego-free.

Devotees seldom know what is good for them

For the last 25 years, it has all been sweetness, kindness, soft persuasion; hereafter, it will be different. I will drag them, place them on the table, and operate. That is to say, I have no anger or hate; I have only Love. It is Love that prompts Me to save them, to open their eyes before they get deeper into the morass. The Society that was inaugurated yesterday will approach the people, those who are as yet ignorant of the great teachings of Veda and Vedanta, who have not enough capacity to digest it and assimilate it into their system. Therefore, it will be given in small doses that can be easily assimilated, with love and sympathy. Each one of those pandits will contribute some share to the eradication of ignorance (ajnana). The watchword will be the ancient vedic prayer,

"Lead me from darkness to light ... (Thamaso ma jyothir-gamaya ...)."

It will be lighting the lamp in village after village, lighting little lamps from these big lamps. This work has to be done, but the rulers won't take it up, nor do the ruled ask that it be done. Unless the child starts wailing, the mother will not feed it. But this Mother is different. She knows that the child must be

fed and when it is to be fed. The advent itself was according to My resolve (sankalpa); every step in this Avatara is due to My own resolve, not due to the prayer or petition of devotees. Devotees seldom know what is good for them.

Foster the Vedas and ensure world prosperity

Since Brahmins are the custodians of the Vedas and the scriptures (sastras), fostering the Brahmin will foster the Vedas and scriptures and ensure world prosperity. Some say that the Brahmin has monopolised the Vedas and scriptures and that he is misusing that monopoly for his aggrandizement; it is said that the Veda is a huge conspiracy by a clique of Brahmins for promoting the wealth of that community. This is very far from truth. Look at all the rules and regulations, the prohibitions and denials that the Brahmin has to observe. They were all laid down for the Brahmin by Brahmins themselves. Eating, drinking, moving about, sleeping, conversing, working, giving, receiving, earning, spending - all the various activities of living are controlled by hundreds of restrictions. This does not convey the impression of a clique bent upon enjoying at the expense of the rest of the community. Moreover, the regulated life of the Brahmin and the rites, vows, fasts, and prayers that he undertakes as part of his duty are intended to benefit the whole world, for securing world prosperity. As a matter of fact, you must encourage more and more Brahmins to keep up the traditional way of regulated life. That is also one of the purposes of the Vidwan Mahasabha (Society of Pandits). Goddess Bhavani gave Sivaji a sword and sent him on Her work of restoring dharma (righteousness). This Siva-Sakthi (meaning Sai Baba) is giving the sword courage into the hands of these pandits and asking them to go forth in order to reeducate our people and remove their ignorance (ajnana). Sivaji's sword was always used only on behalf of dharma. Once, when Sivaji with his army paid a visit to the ashram of Samartha Ramadhas, his soldiers invaded the field opposite and plucked the sugar cane, eating off the entire crop. When the owner protested, they beat him with the cane itself. Sivaji heard about this, and he not only punished the soldiers for the theft but, on the recommendation of his guru, made the land of the peasant tax free for all time! These pandits know the medicine for the worldly disease (bhavaroga); learn it from them and begin taking it. Attend the meetings that they will

address in the villages wherever your district committee arranges. Accept whatever good they give. Become the soldiers of Prasanthi, to drive away the Chinese from your hearts, those who are undermining your awareness of the Atma. Honouring them is honouring Me; neglecting them is neglecting the Vedas and Sastras, and it is as foolish as neglecting Me.

30. Supreme Spirit And Supreme Lord Of All

Date: 20 October 1963 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Avatar Day

People have known about everything else except death. Why should a person die? Of what benefit is it to die? Why does one die? The answer is in order that one may not die again. One is born so that one may not get born again. Having been born, a person earns and acquires land, riches, materials, grain, articles of comfort, and luxury, which they feel will give happiness and which therefore become the objects of the struggle. But the object of realising God is forgotten. You may ask, "Why should anyone seek good company, do good deeds, and direct the mind toward good thoughts?" You are listening to Me, and what do you get when you so listen? You agree that I am giving you bliss (anandam), is it not? Well, what do you give Me in return? Give Me the observation of what I am telling you; practise what I teach, that is enough. That is all I ask. A person should not die like a cat or a dog. One should leave the world better and happier than when one came into it. One must get away, full of gratitude for the chance given to see God in everything that one saw, heard, touched, smelt, and tasted. One must remember the Lord with the last breath.

Never allow your attention to stray away from God

To get that recollection, a lifetime of practice is needed. When you are at the steering wheel of the car, you may be hearing the talk going on inside the car and even join in it; you may be doing many other things, but your attention will always be on the road ahead. When the mother returns from the well with three pots, one over the other on her head, talking to her companions, her mind is concentrated on the baby in the cradle that she left at home. So too, when you are engaged in various duties and obligations of the world, never allow your attention to stray away from God, the Goal. Be always attentive to the signs of His glory and His mercy and His omnipresence. A soldier is the result of many years of intense training; his courage and coolness on the front line are the product of several years of calculated exercise and discipline. As Rani Narasimha Sastri said, it is only after years of intense study that one can

appear for an examination, and the results are not announced immediately; you have to wait some more time for that. So, cultivate the habit of remembering the Lord with every breath; only then can you remember Him with the last breath. An old man was lying on his deathbed. I think he belonged to the Kannada country. While in his last moments, he could only blabber some word, which his children could not understand. They called in a doctor and asked him to give oxygen or something so that the words might become clear. They surmised that he was announcing to them exactly where he had kept the money he had earned, so they did everything to get the words correctly. They could distinguish only one sound, ka! So they asked whether he meant kanaka (gold), karu (calf), kanaja (granary), kasabarike (broom)! When the broom was shown, he nodded his head and died. So he had to take birth as a broom!

Death is a consummation that is inevitable

You should not die like that man; you must die like Bhishma. He lay on the bed of arrows while he taught the Santhi Parva to the Pandavas, and he died with Krishna before him and in his heart. Death is considered as something to be afraid of, as something that should not be spoken about in happy circumstances! But death is neither good nor bad. You have no choice in the matter. You can't get it sooner if you welcome it, nor can you avoid it if you condemn it as bad. It is a consummation that is inevitable; from the moment of birth, the march to the cremation ground has started. Some reach the place quicker than others, some go by a round-about route and arrive late. That is the only difference between person and person. And yet, people walk about as if death is but a distant calamity. When some neighbour loses their child, you console him saying that it is all a dream, that children are born and die because they are creditors who have come to realise old debts incurred in previous births, etc. etc. But when you lose a child of your own, you do not console yourselves by the same arguments. They are only for the consumption of others.

What dies is the body, not its occupant

Arjuna addresses Krishna as the Supreme Lord of all (Purushothama), for He is Supreme amongst the Supreme Spirits (Purushas). Purusha means He who is in this pura (fortified town), namely, this body. Each body has the Supreme Spirit in it, and the entire universe has the Purushothama immanent in it. So, after all, what dies is the body, not the occupant of the body, the Purusha. The faith that you have the Purusha in you will cleanse the mind of all evil and the senses of all evil propensities. The vessel must also be clean, not merely the drink. Without that, remembrance of the name or meditation, done for however long periods they may be, will not yield fruit. That is why the Vedas were entrusted to the Brahmins, along with rigorous rules of discipline. Without minds cleansed by that discipline, the study of the Vedas is a barren exercise. When a man was about to die, the wife asked, "What is to happen to me?" The parents asked the same question, and the children asked, "What is to happen to us?" Even the servants asked piteously, "What is to happen to us?" The dying man looked around helplessly and asked all of them "What is to happen to me?" He could have foreseen the event if he was wise and prepared himself with an answer to that question. Then he could have died in peace, and seeing him die so calmly, his children could also have benefited. Now, a fashion is spreading in conversation; "Oh! It is all God's grace," when something you consider good happens to you. If it happens to somebody you don't like, it is not God's grace evidently, for God is specially yours and not the other fellow's. When something you dislike happens to you, why don't you take that also to be a sign of God's grace? Resign yourself into God's hands; let Him give success or failure, what does it matter? He may be bent upon toughening you, or it may be for your good in the long run. How can you judge? Who are you to judge? Why judge? Do your best and keep mum. Fix your mind on this attitude.

Death will not give advance information

You don't know when the cameraman is going to click. Mathew, who takes photographs at the Nilayam, at least jumps about in front of you with the camera pointed at this place or that, but death will not give any advance intimation or say 'Ready' and wait until you are ready. Therefore, be ready always, so that you may produce a good impression with His name on your

lips and His form in your cleansed heart. You do not now realise your good boon in getting Me as the Guide. I shall not rest until I reform all of you. The basement for My work has been completed; now, the structure will rise upon it. I go round the whole world alone, with no paraphernalia and no publicity, because I am established in My own glory, in My own truth. I have Atmic relationship with all, so I am always succeeding. To protect the crop, the weeds have to be removed and manure must be applied; that is the work of these pandits of the Vidwan Mahasabha (Society of Pandits), instruments that were long unused and neglected. Join this great work; it is the chance of a lifetime for you.

The ills of the country are due to under-nourishment - not so much under-nourishment of the body but under-nourishment of the spirit, want of spiritual exercise, neglect of spiritual regimen. Allowing the malady the fullest scope, people are engaged in reciting the names of the drugs in the pharmacopia! They do not make any attempt to take the drug in. The means of conveying into every home and village the life-giving waters of the spirit have all dried up or got choked up. That is why under-nourishment, with all its attendant symptoms of debility, nervous disorder, and mania is so rampant today.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

31. The Gita Balance

Date: 24 October 1963 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

Many pandits and scholars have explained the Gita in many ways to you all these days. If you ask Me, I will say that the Gita is like a balance - scales, needle, and all. The scale on the left is verse (sloka) 7 of chapter 2, speaking of "miserly man (karpanya dosa)" (Arjuna is speaking of his helplessness, neediness, blemishes, his worldly problems). The fulcrum is verse 22 of chapter 9, beginning with "Ananyaschinthayantho mam" (Krishna promises He will ever be with one and help one who is wholly immersed in contemplating Him, with no other thought.) The scale on the right is the verse in chapter 18, speaking of "Sarva-dharman parithyajya" (Krishna calls on Arjuna to give up all desires, to surrender to Him.) See how apt the fulcrum verse is; it speaks of single-minded attention, steady, like the needle of a well-adjusted balance! Really, the Gita begins with two scales and a fulcrum, the two armies of Unrighteousness and Righteousness, with Krishna the Teacher in the middle! We have the two scales of worldly and other worldly, clamouring for attention and respect, and spiritual knowledge (jnana) alone can remove Arjuna's ignorance. That is the will of the Lord. Spiritual wisdom has to be put into practice. Otherwise, it is useless. Once, the deer of the forest gathered in a great assembly and discussed their own cowardice in the face of the pursuing hounds. They argued, "Why should we, who are equipped with fleeter feet and sharp antlers, be afraid of these insignificant dogs?" At last, a resolution was moved and passed that no deer should henceforth flee before hounds. But even while the cheering was going on, they heard the distant baying of the hounds, and not one stayed there. All fled as fast as their legs could carry them! The resolution could not be put into practice!

Karma has to be done as it is one's nature

Now, these pandits are well versed in the art of teaching and explaining the sacred scriptures to people. What is lacking is training for the people in the art of listening to them and following their suggestions for spiritual advancement. The art of engaging in action (karma) without getting involved

is the thing that has to be learnt, Karma has to be done because it is part of one's nature, not out of any external compulsion. The sun is a worker by nature. He draws the vapours of water high up to form clouds, which pour back as rain. No one taught Him to do this. When you do action dictated by nature, it won't be a burden. It is when you go contrary to it and do something out of the way that you feel the misery. The police constable's life is not natural, so he feels happy when he comes home and, doffing his uniform, gets into ordinary clothes. When the baby wails, all rush toward the cradle because its true nature is to smile and be contentedly happy. So too, karma done for the profit arising therefrom accumulates consequences that bind a person. It increases in size like a snowball. But karma done without any thought of the fruit therefrom keeps on diminishing and leaves you free from all consequence.

One cannot escape from doing karma

Virtuous actions have to be done; there is no escape. Fleeing to the forest is no solution, for it only gives the situation a new turn. Your body may be in the jungle, but your mind will wander in the market place! A spiritual seeker was once initiated by a yogi into some mantra (holy words); he wanted to meditate on it undisturbed, and he found his home too full of distraction. He fled to the forest and discovered a convenient tree under which he could meditate. Before long, the birds roosting on its branches started to clamour aloud, and they showered their droppings on his head. He was greatly incensed. "Have I no place where I can commune with God!" he cried. "Children at home; birds and bats in the jungle! I shall immolate myself, get born under better auspices, and then start spiritual practices afresh," he decided. So, he collected a pile of fuel and making a pyre out of it, lit it, and was about to ascend it, when he was accosted by an old man. "By all means, carry out your decision, but just now the wind blows from here toward those huts where we live, so please wait until the wind turns its direction, for the smell of burning human flesh does not agree with us. Or, if you are in hot haste, you can shift to some other place and avoid being a nuisance to us poor folk." The seeker felt he had no freedom even to die. So he returned home, and decided to brave it all there itself. He understood that karma has

to be carried through in the objective world itself, and there is no use trying to shake it off in a huff. From the unrest - the confusion and travail of the world - one has to snatch harmony and peace.

Be in the world but not of it

Vishnu is described as lying on the snake and also in absolute peace! The snake which has poison (visha) represents worldly desires (vishaya), and when you rest upon it instead of allowing it to envelop you, you can afford to have peace (santham). Let your boat be on the waters, but do not allow the waters to enter the boat. Be in the world but not of it. That is the secret of a successful life. Desire leads to ultimate ruin. It can never be destroyed by fulfilment. It grows upon each satisfaction and becomes a monster that devours the victim. So try to reduce your desires, go on reducing them. A pilgrim once accidentally sat under the wish-granting tree (kalpatharu)! He was terribly thirsty and said to himself, "How I wish someone would give me a cup of sweet cool water!" Immediately, a cup of deliciously cool water was placed before him. He was surprised, but drank it nevertheless. Then, he wished for a meal of tasty dishes, and he got it in a trice. This led to a wish for a cot and a bed, and when he wished his wife was there to see all this wonder, she appeared in an instant. The poor pilgrim mistook her for an apparition, and when he exclaimed, "O she is an ogress!" she became one, and the husband shook in terror, crying, "She will now eat me up," which she promptly did! The chains of desire binds one to the point of suffocation. Control, curb your tendency to wish for this and that. Tell the Lord, "You are enough for me. I do not wish for anything else." Why pine after golden jewels? Pine for gold. The Gita teaches the lesson of unconditional surrender to the Lord (saranagathi). Wish for His will to prevail, not for your wish to succeed. This is what Krishna meant when He said, "Be one who renounces all self-centred actions."

Surrender is the main gate to attain liberation

Death is but a passage from this life to the next; it is the change from old clothes to new, as the Gita says. But some cynics laugh at the comparison

and ask, what about the death of new-born infants, children, youth, and middle-aged persons? Their bodies cannot by any stretch of meaning be classified as worn-out! Well, the clothes might not be old, but the cloth out of which they were made must have been from very old stock, so that though new clothes were prepared out of it, they had to be discarded soon. Again, there are some crooked people who refuse to believe in a previous life because they cannot recollect the events! These people cannot recollect the events of one particular Dasara festival, say, 5 or 10 years ago, though they are certain they were alive on that day! Forgetting the events of that day does not mean that they were not alive at all. It only means that they did not pay any special heed to them, they had no objective or special reason to keep it in memory. Surrender is the main gate to enter the mansion of liberation from birth-death cycle (mukthi). It has four floors: meditation, activism, devotion, and spiritual knowledge (dhyana, karma, bhakthi, and jnana). Each floor rests upon the one beneath, and the topmost one cannot be reached without ascending the first three. Remember this when you hear people arguing about the relative superiority of the yogas or labeling themselves as 'this' or 'that' in the spiritual field.

Human life is superior even to the life of gods

The Gita does not refer to any problem of family or social life. It teaches the spiritual aspirant the path that leads to perfect communion with the Divinity inherent in themselves. Bulusu Appanna Sastry extolled this human life as superior to the life not only of beasts but even to the life of the Gods, because only the human can strive to squeeze answers to questions on the human's own origin, significance, and goal out of experience in this objective world. Ramachandra Sastry indicated the measures for clearing the mind of enmeshing obstacles so that the answers might be reflected therein. And the third pandit who spoke today, Maddulapalli SathyaNarayana Sastry, made it clear from the scriptures (sastras) that the world has peace, bliss, and spiritual knowledge (santham, anandam, and jnanam) as its fundamental base, real Reality. What is needed is to remove the shade that is hiding the effulgence, the screen that covers the truth from view. The Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha (Society of Pandits) has been designed by Me for this very

purpose.

Try to break the coconut as it comes from the tree. The shell is covered compactly by a coat of fibre, and you cannot break the nut even by hitting it with a crow-bar. But take off the fibrous armour, and breaking it is very easy. When you take a coconut to be offered in the temple, you take it after removing the fibre. Then, you offer it to God, breaking it into two halves. This is the symbol of destroying the ego and surrendering to the Lord. So you have to remove the fibre of desire for sense objects and then go before the Lord devoid of desire and anger; there you declare that you are egoless by breaking the coconut into two. Then you will be accepted, not before.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

32. That - You

Date: 25 October 1963 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

Peri Venkateshwara Sastry and others relieved you from hunger by their speeches; now, it is My turn to sharpen your yearning, which is the hunger of the mind for the higher joy. When dharma declines or, rather, when those who have a duty to regulate their lives according to dharma lose faith in it, then its restoration cannot be taken up by all and sundry. A broken bridge on a highway cannot be set right by amateur skill and the momentary enthusiasm of the villagers around. The very authority that laid down the road and planned the bridge has to initiate repair. The Lord has come again on this Mission; He has collected the engineers and contractors and the labour for the purpose. He is now set on the task. When Krishna knew that Brahma had taken away and hidden the cows and calves and cowherds and boys - the whole lot of them that had gone out of their homes into the pastures - He created anew the same number, the same types, the same persons, cattle and all, and nobody suspected for one full year that the genuine was hidden and that it was the duplicate that was in the village everywhere. All that was thus created was the true nature of Krishna, the Krishna Principle (Krishna Thathwa), just as all that was hidden by Brahma was also the Krishna Principle. You too are the Krishna Principle; what other Principle or Essence is there, really?

Everyone must be conscious of the Krishna Principle

Even now with Me, My creation out of the void is for some definite purpose; just as it was then. Then it was to purify and sanctify the cowherd maidens (gopis); now, too, the aim is to purify and sanctify. Nara (man) is limited and deluded; when that limit is crossed and when that delusion is gone, he is Narayana (God), and he shines in his Essence. Each person must be conscious of this Principle (Thathwa), which is that person's reality. To make each one conscious of it is the aim of those who come for the revival of righteousness (dharmasthapanam). In the Mahabharatha, the most noteworthy theme is this revival of righteousness. When the Pandavas were exiled into the forest, it is

as if the five life breaths (pranas) of dharma, the sustaining forces of dharma, were exiled. Dharmaraja is the life-breath of right conduct; Bhima, of the protective might of dharma; Arjuna, of the faith and devotion needed as its foundation; Nakula and Sahadeva, of the steadfast faith essential for the practice of dharma. When the Pandavas went to the forest, Hasthinapura (the capital city of the Pandavas) was reduced to Asthinapura - a city of bones, without flesh and blood. You call Me Personification of Virtue. But each of you is a Personification of Virtue, only you have strayed away. To bring you back to the status that you have lost - that is My aim. This Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha (Society of Pandits), which has been established here this Navarathri, will be doing just that job. Today, its aims and objects as well as the methods of working were discussed and settled. It is your Society; you can make use of it in proportion to your devotion and capacity. The deposits that these pandits have made in wisdom and penance are yours; draw cheques on them and they will give you the riches, without question.

The sowing part of the work has begun

Pandits and scholars of Vedas and Sastras have been suffering a lot, due to neglect by society. But that is not the result of their having studied the Vedas; it is because they have not put what they have learnt into action. Everyone must wait till the fruit is ripe. It will take time for the growth of the tree, for its blossoming, for the fruits to appear, to ripen, and to be filled with sweet juice. Pluck it before time and you have to throw it away. To become a graduate and take a degree, one has to struggle with the alphabet at first, then read words formed by the letters, then study sentences, and finally complete texts. The fruition of their studies has come now, after all these years, when the pandits have secured this medium for sharing their joy and their wisdom with their brothers and sisters. The pandits have been allotted districts, and a selected few will be supervising the programmes in each district. The District Committees will arrange meetings and invite the pandits for three-day sessions of the Society.

The light is in you, you are the light

This is the sowing part of the work, sowing the seeds of the Karma, Upasana, and Jnana Kandas (three sections of the Vedas dealing mainly with rituals, worship, and spiritual knowledge), of Vedanta, of Dharma Sastras, of the glory of God as described in the Ramayana, the Mahabharatha, and the Bhagavatham. You have to look after the fields, tend the young crop, feed it with manure of reflection, rid it of pests, and harvest the happiness that comes from eating the nourishing grain. That is the real agriculture for you. The chance to share in this agriculture will come only to a few, the few who are endowed with the merit of many lives. First, the Society will be concerned with Andhra Pradesh. Later, it will reach into Karnataka and Kerala and then all the States of India, and even outside India. Already, there are quite a few Sathya Sai sanghas (groups) outside India, and they are pressing for the extension to their places of Swami's grace in this form too. The first profit from such a Society is that you will be able to tend and develop something that is specially India. I am saying this because you understand only the language of profit. Whatever you are asked to do, the first question is, "How much will the profit be?" This greed for profit (labha) has made you sink in greed (lobha)! The highest profit is the arrival through this road back at the place from where you came, your own home. Brahma, who was born in the lotus that arose out of the navel of Vishnu, wondered how he came to be there, and it seems he searched and searched for the place from where he came. He could not trace it at all. But by some little thought, you can know from where you came, or, rather, what your real nature is. Then what remains is the attempt to attain it. That is what is meant by liberation, or moksha. Simple faith in the words of the wise is more profitable than years of study and discussion. Meditate on such great aphorisms as "That thou art (Thath-thwam-asi)", and as you go on pondering them in your mind, meanings will dawn upon you without the help of any commentary. Commentaries only tend to confuse you. Think of the Thath (Divinity), analyse the thwam (you), and then you will be convinced that asi (equality) is the only solution. You are in the Light; the Light is in you; you are the Light - these are the steps.

You can be free from fear only when you are confident of the strength of the

foundation. You do not see your breath or weigh it, but breath is the very sustenance of life. The unseen is the basis of the seen. If you are caught up in the meshes of the seen, you cannot know the importance of the unseen.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

33. This Will Not Last

Date: 26 October 1963 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

The greatest wonder of all is that nobody knows themselves, nobody struggles to know about themselves, even among those who spend their lifetime in knowing about others. Your Self is something subtler than water or air or even space (akasa). It must go into the eye, so that you may see; it must move into the hand, so that it may hold; it must move into the feet, so that you may walk. The senses are inert materials; the 'I' must operate so that they may function. That "I" is Brahman, mistaken to be separate! In the Thretha Yuga (Era), monkeys (vanaras) were made to act and talk like humans (naras). In the Dwapara Yuga, human (nara) was transformed into God (Narayana) by the grace of Narayana. In the Kali Yuga (the era we are in now), the declaration is made that the human (nara) is Narayana Himself. The space in the pot and the space in the monastery are identical with the vast sky space; only the disguises, pot and monastery, keep up the illusion of separateness. The senses are the villains; they instill the delusion that you are the body. Curb them as the bull is curbed by the nose ring, the horse by the bit in the mouth, the elephant by the goad. When the Pandavas were traversing the Himalayas toward the end of their careers, Dharmaraja was still affected by mental anxieties, so he prayed to Krishna to spend some time with them. On His departure from their dwelling, Krishna gave Dharmaraja a note, which he was to read to himself whenever he was affected by joy or grief. The note read: "This will not last (Eppudoo undhadhu)." That is one method by which mental agitations can be calmed.

You are in this world under sentence

Take life in the world as a compulsory duty imposed on you. You are now in jail under a sentence for crimes committed in a previous birth. The superintendent assigns various duties - cooking, drawing water, hewing wood, etc. You have to do the work assigned to the best of your ability, without any expectation of reward. If you behave well, cause no trouble, and do the assigned duties without demur, then some days may be written off your

sentence and you may be released sooner, with a certificate that you are reliable and good. This attitude will give you practice in selfless action without expecting reward (nishkama karma), which is very valuable for curbing the senses. When you talk of God to some people, they ask, "We will believe only if we can see Him." When the Vidwan Mahasabha (Society of Pandits) pandits go to the villages for their mission of spreading the truths of the Vedas, this question will crop up. Then you have to ask them, "I won't believe that you have pain unless I can see pain with my eyes." God is Bliss. How can bliss be shown and seen? Whether others believe or not, 2 plus 2 equals 4, You may agree or refuse to agree, but that is a fact, proved by the experience of all those who agree. So too is the fact of God.

Live in constant thought of God

You must live in the constant thought of God as well as of another fact: death. The body is the car in which you are riding to death. You may meet death any moment, while riding - some tree or lorry or ditch or slush will bring it. Remember death. Remember that time is running out every moment. Then you will not be tempted to waste time in idle talk or vain pursuits or wanton mischief or vulgar entertainment. Travel in the car carefully, slowly, with due regard to the needs of others on the road. Do not greedily try to overtake others or compete in speed; know the limitations of the vehicle and the road! Then you will not meet with any accident. Your journey will be a happy experience for you and the rest of the people. In his speech, Jonnalagadda SathyaNarayanamurthy was exhorting you to teach, to reform, to reconstruct, and to do many other things. But not all can enter upon such tasks. First self, then help. Improve yourself, teach yourself, reconstruct yourself. Then proceed to solve the problems of others, That reconstruction is quite easy, provided you inquire calmly into your own personality. "Am I the body or the senses or the mind or the intellect, etc.?" You heard in the folk tale on Sivaji how Goddess Bhavani gave him the sword. This Siva-Sakthi (meaning Sai Baba) will give you the swords of spiritual knowledge and spiritual instruction that will destroy the forces of ignorance. Take them and become wise and happy.

Activity results in either joy or grief, due to the attachment with which it is done. "I" and "mine" are the two fangs of the serpent; pluck them out. Then, you can safely handle the serpent and play with it. You need not give up your activity. As a matter of fact, you have to be intensely active. In this land of sacred action, it is only through karma that you can transcend karma. Birds and beasts are not aware of this secret; the human being alone can select and accept the karma that is most profitable for liberation from the chain of karma.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

34. Resolve

Date: 28 October 1963 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

Kalluri VeerabhadhraSastry declared now that the Ritual Sacrifices for Self Enlightenment, which started on the 20th, had ended, but there is no conclusion for the sacrifice (yajna). All life is a sacrifice. When does the sacrifice meet its conclusion (samapti)? I shall tell you. Sama means Brahma; apti means prapti, attainment, reaching. When Brahma is attained, that day, that moment, the sacrifice that is life can be said to have ended, not until then. Today, this conclusion marks only the end of these rituals. Carry on the sacrifice, wherever you are, by means of listening, contemplation, and deep meditation. Sastry today described the story of Rukmini Kalyana. Now, this is not simply the story of a marriage. It is the union of Purusha (the Supreme Spirit) with Prakriti (creation, the objective world) itself. The Brahmin intermediary is the symbol of vedic authority through which alone the merging of the two is known. Rukmini is the individual self (jiva), and Krishna is the Supreme Self (Paramatma). She is suffering from the rules and restrictions imposed by objective world; egoism is her brother, worldliness is her father. But, on account of her good conduct, her mind rested on God. So she was able to plan a method of reaching God.

One is born to serve out one's sentence

Rukmini's prayers, repentance, yearning, and steadfastness were rewarded. Her observance of the age-old code of good conduct at last saved her, for she went out for the worship of the universal mother Goddess (Gauri puja) before the marriage rite. In that temple, she was immersed in the worship of God, so she was liberated from the bonds by the God who was lying in wait! The parents and brother and all the relatives objected, but an individual is born to work out their destiny, not to act a role in someone else's drama. One is born to serve out one's sentence; when the sentence ends, one is free. You shall not remain in prison on the pretext that a dear comrade is still in! Just think of this fact: Rukmini had not met Krishna before; there was no preliminary wooing. The soul yearned, and it won. They had met in the realm of the spirit.

This is no ordinary marriage, though the people who write about it and describe it in divine stories speak of it as the romantic adventure of a wilful girl and a young, care-free bravado! It is the merging of That with This (Thath, the Godhead, with thwam). The same thing is referred to as "this" if it is near and as "that" if it is far. "This" is there (that is, when it is not here but there). That (Thath, the Godhead) is the same as this (thwam), only it is far away. Why is it far away? Because it is beyond the reach of the intellect, the senses, and words. Words are inadequate to communicate one's experience of the Godhead. In fact, even the attempt is beyond the fortunate sage.

Conception of Brahman depends on one's experience

Two pilgrims were passing through a forest and sitting under a tree. They were talking about the debt people owed to several "mothers". One of them detailed a list of such "mothers": the mother that gave birth, mother cow, motherland, and mother scriptures. The talk drifted toward the importance of cow worship (go-puja), and they began discussing what exactly is meant by the word go, which means a cow. There ensued a debate about its characteristics: a tail, two horns, four legs, an udder, etc. They rose up and wandered long to discover an animal with those items and at last espied a buffalo, which they worshipped to their heart's content. So, the conception of Brahman will also depend on each one's equipment and experience, but that does not mean that there are so many different Brahman. A man is called daddy, son, uncle, grandfather, cousin, nephew and husband, but that does not make him more than one individual! Our Vidwan Mahasabha (Society of Pandits) will establish this truth in the minds of all. It is not out to condemn any faith or attract people into a new faith. It will be engaged in fostering the positive attitude in spiritual effort. As Sanathana Dharma (the ancient, eternal, universal religion) has always done, the Society will encourage all to move forward from wherever they are in the direction of the Lord, whom they are free to picture in whatever Form they like. No harsh word is to be used when referring to another's faith, for faith is a precious plant, and harshness might make it wither. Know the truth; experience the bliss (ananda) - that is the message that these pandits (vidwans) will carry. Those who say that bliss (ananda) is the essential nature of man have the responsibility to be full of

bliss themselves. You enquire of people the reason why they look depressed, and you are not worried if they look happy. Why? Because depression is unnatural; it is against one's essential nature. Water is cool; that is its nature. So, the hot spring in front of the temple of Badrinath by the side of the ice-cold Alakananda river is looked upon with wonder. Be yourself, what you tell the other man to be. People will follow only the person who speaks out of personal experience.

Spiritual sciences (Sastras) are based on spiritual aspirant's experience

Some people were on this bank of the river. Since they were strangers, they sought information whether the river could be crossed at that point and how. A lame fellow said, "It is dangerous to cross at this point; go further down." They did not believe him, for he could not have waded through! A blind man said, "You can cross, but keep more to the left for some distance and move to the right afterward." They did not follow his advice, for he could not have known; he must have been led by someone else. At last a man came who volunteered to take them across. "I have crossed often; I live on the other bank, and I own lands on this side." So they followed him with confidence and reached the other bank safely. A little boy is taught names and facts by the elders. It calls a thing a dog; another thing a tree; a third thing a stone. When asked, it says that is a man. How does it know? Because it has been told so. The characteristics of animals, plants, trees, birds, and human beings have been taught by the elders, and the child believes them and takes them on trust. Then why can't you also believe in God? You are told that also. For thousands of years you have been told that there is God, with many characteristics by which you can visualise Him. The sastras (spiritual sciences) declare that the signs of God are such and such. The sastras are based on the experience of spiritual aspirants, and they have as much authenticity as anything else. Many things are taken on trust, depending on the reliability, the impartiality, the attainments of the people saying them. The sages (rishis) are impartial; they have no intention to deceive or mislead.

Love alone can understand love

If you feel that you too must have the experience or else you will not believe, well, come and experience. There is no use simply coming one day and going away the next day, saying, "I have seen Sri Sathya Sai Baba. He wears a fine long gown and He has wonderful hair." If you spend the time lounging in the hotels here or playing cards or listening to tales, how can you understand? Determine to discover, decide to learn, dive deep, and then you will know. Thousands have come now, and in the years gone by, many have no desire to know. Many who have the desire are unaware of the fact that they must pay more attention to actual experience of the mind, not to the sense impressions. You may be staring at something, but if your mind is not focused on it, you cannot cognise it. If your body is in this auditorium, your ear in the hotel, and your eye all round the compound, how can anything be learnt? Love (prema) alone can understand love. Love is the manner of speaking, truth the substance, dharma (virtue) the language, peace (santhi) the result aimed at. As a matter of fact, I am the Embodiment of Love (Prema-swarupa). I do not need any rest in My efforts to give you bliss (ananda). All this sacrifice (yajna), this gathering of pandits, this Vidwan Mahasabha (Society of Pandits), is for your bliss.

Join this great task of establishment of righteousness

If all this arrangement is done somewhere else, what a great noise it would have made! People would have scoured the land with lists of likely donors, worried this person and that, and finally boasted of their achievements. But here, only just a few know about this. It was all a case of the Will Power (Sankalpa) working itself by the force of its own goodness. And what do you bring to Me? Only tears! Tears of grief when you come and tears of bliss when you go! I am unattached to any event or plan. I am not worried at all by fear of failure, for I know that My plan must succeed. This Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha (Society of Pandits) is also not something new; it is eternal (sanathanam). Only, it is now once again set on the age-old mission. This work of establishment of righteousness (dharma) is being done over and over again. You have now the chance to share in it, so join this great task and make your lives worthwhile. These evening discourses of pandits and My own

discourses have to stop from tomorrow, for I must start meeting those of you who have brought huge loads of grief, discontents, difficulties, and problems for My attention. That is also My work and I shall gladly attend to it.

Have a timetable for spiritual sustenance, just as you have now for physical sustenance. A breakfast of pious repetition of the Lord's name and meditation, a lunch hour of ritual worship of the Lord, "tea and snacks" of reading scriptures or sacred books in the afternoon, and a light dinner of devotional music in the early hours of the night. Follow this regimen, and you can sleep soundly and wake up refreshed.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

35. Immortal Voice

Date: **November 1963** / Location: **Prasanthi Nilayam** / Occasion: **Dasara**

They speak of two types of karma: physical and spiritual. This division is absurd and even dangerous. All acts and activities are spiritual; the body is but an instrument for spiritual progress and attainment. Modern education emphasises the physical and neglects the spirit, which is crucial. It teaches that joy derived through the senses alone are worthwhile. It does not give even a glimpse of the deeper and more lasting joy derivable through the spirit that is your real self and is, in essence, bliss, peace, spiritual knowledge - truth, goodness, and beauty (ananda, santhi, jnana - sathyam, sivam, sundaram. You must have noticed that I never address you as "Dear devotees," for how can you be only that? You are Bhagavan, you become that by just shedding the ignorance (a-vidya) that makes you imagine that you are limited. That is why I address you either as Embodiments of Peace, or Bliss, or the Divine Soul. That is your real nature. But you are not even told who you are! Your misery is traceable to this failure to know yourself. Educators today do not teach the ways and means of crossing the sea of misery, of facing success and defeat, of remaining calm and collected. The brain is stuffed with information, the hands are trained in skills, but, the senses are not tamed, the intelligence is not curbed, the mind is allowed to run amok. That is the cause of the tragic crisis in the world today.

Do karma full of joy and enthusiasm

You have been born in this land of spiritual activity, and your duty is to engage yourself in continuous uninterrupted action (karma). Do not get bogged in gloom and sloth; do karma full of joy and enthusiasm, as if each act is an offering at the feet of the Lord. India (Bharatha Desham) is the seat of the spiritual teacher of humanity. That is the role it has played and has to play, but, as a consequence of undue attachment to the senses and the world, fostered by blind admiration and snobbish imitation, the role has been forgotten, to the great loss of ourselves and of the rest of humanity. The restrictions, regulations, and rules of guidance for individual, family,

community, nation, and humanity are either not remembered or brushed aside as obsolete. The joy, peace, and contentment that one gets by observing them are themselves witnesses of their worth. The pandits and scholars who have assembled here for the Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha (Society of Pandits) being inaugurated now have a great responsibility, for they must hold fast to the total peace (prasanthi) that the study and practice of the Vedas and Sastras has conferred upon them; they must also share that total peace with all humanity. They must always be bold, free, and happy, for they know that this is all an unreal dream. They know the goal of life, and they are marching steadily toward it with every passing minute.

Grief is the greatest friend of man

All that is matter (padartha) must be transformed into spirituality (parartha); that is My plan. The spiritual wisdom that the Vedas and Sastras have given to these people must be distributed. At present, these scholars have no self-confidence, because they are losing faith in what they themselves have hitherto considered invaluable. They send their children to technical courses and secular studies, for they are heavily pinched for means of livelihood. They have started to ask, "What is the good in having an umbrella that allows the sun to burn you and the rain to soak you?" But the vedic treasure house has vast riches, which are urgently needed today. It is to conserve, develop, and utilise it more fully that this Society is inaugurated now. The Veda is the basis of dharma, which is like the Mother in its loving care for humanity. India (Bharatha bhumi) is the land of spiritual union, spiritual activity, renunciation, and spiritual enjoyment, not sense enjoyment. The Kauravas failed because they stuck to empire and greed for power and fixed their minds on enjoyment. The Pandavas secured divine guidance and won because they stuck to spiritual joy, ascetic self-control, simplicity, and sincerity. To follow the same path is the sign of wisdom. That is the path of virtue (dharma), from which mankind has strayed away. Grief is the greatest friend of humanity, for it opens the eyes and shocks you into the search for the secret of peace and happiness.

There is no need for tears or despair

A monkey put its hand into a pot of nuts and tightened its fist full of the food, but it could not take its hand out of the narrow neck because the fist was too big for it. Unless the nuts were dropped back into the pot and the fingers released, the hand could not be got out! That is the situation of humanity today. Greed is giving great pain, but people have not discovered the fact. So they cling to their possessions and try to pull their hands out, giving great pain. There is no use blaming the nuts or the pot. The fault is in the monkey itself. Nature (prakriti) is the pot, and the sensory objects are the nuts. A bird sits on a tiny twig in perfect confidence! Where does it get the confidence from? Not from the twig but from its wings, which can take it aloft at the slightest sign of danger. The twig is objective world. Sit on it lightly, gaily, confidently, but rely more on the wings, namely the grace of the Lord, who can lift you aloft, away from the objective world at the slightest premonition of danger. The twig is not very reliable, but the wings are always there to save you. The revival of that dharma is a task that the rulers have not planned for. It is a programme that the people are not keen upon. Then who has to take it up? It was said that I have taken this Form in answer to the prayers of noble souls and others. Some mothers feed the baby only when it starts crying; the more considerate and loving type of mother knows when the baby is hungry and need not be called to its side by a loud wail. This Mother is that type of Mother. I have come because I felt I had to come. I resolved upon this. There is no need now for tears or despair, either among the repositories of vedic wisdom or among the good, who suffer from the cruel winds of vice (a-dharma). This campaign will succeed; it will not fall. The welfare of the world will be ensured through the fostering of the Godly everywhere, and more particularly of these reservoirs of the ancient wisdom of this land.

Love is God. God is Love. Where there is Love, there God is certainly evident. Love more and more people, love them more and more intensely. Transform the love into service, transform the service into worship; that is the highest spiritual discipline.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

36. Gift Of Spiritual Knowledge

Date: 05 December 1963 / Location: Srisailam

EVEN in this holy place of Srisailam, such a jubilant and auspicious celebration has not taken place for years. In this land where penance (tapas) alone is valued as significant, in this land of spiritual activity, there is no reason why confusion and turmoil must spread. It is all due to the multiplication of wants and desire for sensual pleasure instead of spiritual contentment. Even the starting of a place for the gift of food to the poor, here, by the Akhila Bharatha Arya Vyshya Sangham (Association) , today is a sign of the decline of faith and strength. There should not be any need to feed; the cry "give, give" should not be heard in this land of plenty and prosperity (annapurna). This place must be approached in a true spirit of humility and prayer. Picnic parties and tourists have no place here. There are many legends regarding the temple at Srisailam. Mallikarjuna (a form of Siva) is the white, fragrant, pure God, the grace-showering Siva, who bends in mercy at the slightest yearning of the devotee. Bhramaramba (the consort) is the bee, hovering on the fragrant jasmine (mallika), drawn by the honey of the flower, the true representative of the devotee.

Legends the forefathers have treasured

Do not laugh at the legends that your forefathers have gathered and treasured. They have invested the place with sanctity and elevated the thoughts and fancies of generations of men. This shrine has consoled and comforted thousands and thousands of pious persons, year after year. Sankara was here, and he sang of the holiness of this place and the calm he enjoyed here. He installed a chakra (sanctified holy symbol), which, I may tell you, is in a small cave by the side of Pathala Ganga. The desire to do service to the poor and the hungry is good, but it is taking a turn toward building up institutions and collecting funds and seeking donations. While this is being done, egoism increases, envy spreads, feelings of inferiority and superiority spring up, and the mental peace one had is spent while one is caught in this affair. All the struggle falls on one person, though there may be a committee.

And, when the institution is finally built, a sense of possession develops, and though all institutions are the Lord's and nothing can rise or exist without Him, people forget it and claim all the credit. There are certain dire possibilities that I want all social workers to guard against. First, cleanse your own minds; then start advising others. Earn mental peace and strength for yourself; then try to secure them for others. Learn the secret of lasting happiness yourself; then endeavour to make others happy. Seek the real limb, not the artificial limb. Get the doctor who would assure, "hereafter your will not fall ill," and not the doctor who gives some relief to the present attack. The atmosphere of holy places should improve. The nature of monks (sanyasis) requires drastic correction. Too many of them are involved in householder functions; too many of them are after worldly fame and riches. All this will be done by Me as part of establishment of dharma. The Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha (Society of Pandits) about which Veerabhadhra Sastry spoke is one of the instruments for this revival of dharma.

Humanity needs food more for the spirit

More than food for the stomach, humanity needs food for the spirit. The "food (anna)" that Annapurna Devi (Goddess of Nourishment) gives is the not food - rice and curry. The alms that She is asked to give are alms of spiritual wisdom, not the handful of rice that you think it means. They are the alms of spiritual wisdom, love, devotion, and grace). Seek Her grace to get more spiritual wisdom, more love, more devotion, and more grace. Do not lower the standard of service when serving pilgrims in this holy place; place emphasis here on devotion, detachment, and spiritual wisdom. Do not encourage pomp and insincerity here, of all places. If someone, out of sincere devotion, gives a naya paisa, accept it as if it is a crore. Do not accept a crore if it is given with a view to parade wealth or advertise detachment. I am laying the foundation stone of the new block of this pilgrims rest-house, and I bless that you may so act that the significance of the name "Annapurna" is not neglected. You have My blessings in full measure; join hands, all of you, in this task and make it a success soon. Do not feed indiscriminately and make this an asylum for idlers. Feed only those who come with yearning to spend some days in this holy atmosphere; then only will people be grateful. Feed those who come here for

spiritual discipline, for living their lives in the presence of God; feed those who are living examples of the joy that comes from spiritual effort.

The sages of ancient times divided karma into vikarma (karma that is intentionally done) and akarma (karma that is done without any intention to gain the consequence). Follow the latter, and you will save yourselves from suffering. All other activities - the earning of wealth, of reputation, of fame and publicity - result in suffering.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

37. The Natural and the Artificial

Date: 06 December 1963 / Location: Srisailam

Truth, virtue, peace, and love (sathya, dharma, santhi, and prema) are the four pillars of Sanathana Dharma (Eternal Universal Religion), the four faces of the Ancient Teaching. Of course, these words are on the lips of everyone, but what they mean is something quite shallow and ineffective. To describe an incident just as you saw it happen is sathya; to give water to the thirsty and food to the hungry is dharma; to suffer calamity in silence is santhi, and to nourish wife and children is prema - that is the general interpretation! But this is all wrong. Truth is something that is not modified by time or space or characteristic. It must be the same forever, unaffected and unchanged. Then alone is it Truth. It should not be proved false by some subsequent event or knowledge. Dharma is a body of principles that are fundamental to social stability and individual progress. There are various branches of dharma - obligatory duty, duties pertaining to status and stages of life, etc. - but the aim of all is to help one, stage by stage, toward liberation from grief and from the chain of birth and death. See how grand the conception of each is - compare this with the common meaning that has been so far given. Then, take the quality of peace (santhi). It denotes the capacity to bear success and failure, joy and misery, defeat and victory, with perfect equanimity. And, love (prema) is the quality of equality of everyone, of not only nonviolence (ahimsa) but the conscious acceptance of the duty of love, because every being is a spark of Divinity, as much of a spark as you yourself.

All lies in the inspiration behind the act

The first step in spiritual training is to curb the power of desires, which prompts the senses to pursue objects. If the wish is for objective pleasure, it harms the individual; if for God, it is good. If a house is set on fire, it is incendiarism; if Hanuman sets fire to Lanka, it is justifiable retribution and a good lesson. If a bandit cuts off your hand, it is injury (himsa); if the doctor saves your life by amputating it, it is non-injury (ahimsa). Attachment to sense objects makes an act low; attachment to God makes it sacrosanct.

Daksha's ritual sacrifice (yajna) was converted into a battle because the Supreme Lord (Parameswara) was not present; the Kurukshetra battle was transformed into a sacrifice because the Supreme Lord was present. Daksha scorned the Lord; Arjuna dedicated himself at the Lord's Feet. That was the difference, and that is the explanation. It all lies in the motive, the inspiration behind the act and the word. Devotion is not like lime pickle, to be used only when you have fever; it is one's daily substance, the vitamin one must have for physical and mental health. Contemplation of God is the main rice dish; the rest are side dishes, appetisers, fillers. Take the tablets of constant thought of the Lord (namasmarana), and all the experience of your daily life, the good and the bad, will be digested nicely. You don't eat paddy, do you? You have the sense to remove the husk and then boil the rice before you eat it. So also, why do you take in nature as it is? Remove the allurements it has to the senses, make it just an expression of divine will and then assimilate it. Have constant thought of the Lord (namasmarana) with full faith and pure heart. You forget your nature in the complex tangle of artificiality; you miss the natural (sahaja) when you are caught in the net of the artificial (a-sahaja). The natural is love, peace, truth, bliss. The artificial is hate, falsehood, war, grief, and greed. You must discover the spring of your own truth; you cannot play truant for long. After many a birth, even if their number is a hundred, you have to reach the source from where you strayed. Your mind is steady when it is engaged in other activities, but when it is focused on God it begins to waver. It does not like to stop its vagaries, which it will have to do once God enters your heart. Tame it by remembrance of God (namasmarana). That is the message I have come to announce. Have God's name on your tongue, the divine form in your eye, the divine glory in your heart - then thunderbolts will pass you quietly by. Repeat the name of God (do namasmarana) in some set manner, with full faith and pure heart. When the country is endangered, it is as bad as when the body is endangered. The Name will give you courage to save the Mother. If all of you strengthen your moral qualities and develop faith in God and Sanathana Dharma (Eternal Religion), calamity can never visit this land. Let all believers in God proclaim the value of meditation on God. I shall bless that endeavour; I know that will save you and save the country. That is why I am blessing you on this note of joy.

The consequence of karma can be wiped out only through karma, as a thorn can be removed only by means of another. Do good karma to assuage the pain of the bad karma that you have done and from which you now suffer. The best and the simplest karma is repetition of the name of the Lord; be ever engaged in it. It will keep out evil tendencies and wicked thoughts. It will help you radiate love all round you.

- *Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

38. Project Site, Worship Site

Date: **06 December 1963** / Location: **Srisailam** / Occasion: **Address to the Workers at Project Site**

I live upon the bliss (ananda) that you derive when you sing the name and glorify the form of the Lord. That is My food, My daily sustenance. So I have no need to talk to you. It is sufficient if I sit here and draw in the bliss that you feel when you do bhajana (group singing of the glory of the Lord). You have all gathered here from the distant corners of our country, from every state and every linguistic unit, in order to pool your separate skills of hand and head for the successful completion of this great task, which will give food and happiness to millions of brothers and sisters for centuries. This is a great chance for all of you, a chance that comes to few, however skilled they might be. It is a rare chance that comes to few in any country. The lake that will fill this gorge with waters of the Krishna river when you build the dam across it will be your selfless service with renunciation of its fruits (nishkama karma), an ocean (samudra) of selfless effort. You will all see it and feel its coolness, depth, and strength. It will gladden you and inspire you and make you feel that your life has been worth while. Don't go about this holy work in a haphazard way, without faith and devotion. By that faith and devotion, you have to curb this mighty river, which has carved its way through these hard rocks since the beginning of time. And you have to obstruct its speed and its rage for the benefit of humanity and beast. Humanity must, by its skill and daring, make this wayward child of nature halt for a while, and pass on.

Canalise your passions into useful fields

This task will become lighter if you curb your own waywardness and your own egoism, anger, malice, envy, greed, and the roaring flood of your passions. Dam them in your own hearts, and canalise them into useful fields. Utilise the force of those qualities to gain better results from your efforts and spiritual discipline. Grow in those fields the fruits of peace and love. That is the agriculture that aspirants know and that you can also learn with ease. For it is an ancient science, which your own forefathers practised for ages. I have

come to remind you of it and to tell you all of the need once again to follow that path. Blood, phlegm, bile - these decide, by their proportion and predominance, the physical health of a person. So too, three qualities decide by their proportion and predominance the mental health of person. Just as you obey the rules of health for fear of falling ill, you have to practise certain mental restrictions and regulations so that you may have peace, contentment, joy, enthusiasm, and faith. You have to apply the brake on the wayward mind so that it may not drag you into disaster. You have ever to work in the cool shade of two dreads: the dread of sin and the dread of God. You do not remember that you are really and genuinely Peace and Bliss, that you are fundamentally (and therefore, mentally too) Truth, Eternal, and Pure. The anxiety and fear that haunt you now are caused by this loss of memory. The intention of the Lord is that you should have peace and bliss every moment of your life, but you forget the springs that well up within you, that have their source in the Divinity enshrined in your hearts, and you pine for what you feel you have not.

Prescription for peace and contentment

All of you gathered here may not have the same name and form for the God whom you adore. You may differ in habits, customs, manners, and styles of food and dress. But the bliss you derive from them is the same. Every one of these has been designed by the wisdom of ages to give you security, safety, and satisfaction. When the word (pada) is changed, the matter (padartha) remains the same. Water is known by the word pani in Uttar Pradesh, thanneer in Madras, and neeru in Andhra Pradesh, but the substance is the same. So, you may speak different languages or use different sounds and signals and follow different habits of food and dress and even of worship and prayer. But they are all, believe Me, instruments for your uplift and progress. I shall give you one prescription that will give you the peace and contentment that you seek: It is remembering the name of the Lord (namasmarana). Install on the tongue any one of the thousand names of the Lord, current in any part of the world, among any community of devotees. Repeat the Name for some time at least every day as part of your duty to yourself, a discipline that will yield good results, a habit that you should cultivate as compensation for the

hard toil that you do by your body from sunrise to sunset.

Spend a few minutes daily with God

Bharatha (India) is the land where everyone has rathi (attachment) to Bha or Bhagavan (God). But today, people are in fact losing that taste and that attachment. You may tell Me, "We are so busy, we have no time to spare." Well, I cannot believe it is true. I know that you are finding time, in spite of the hard work throughout the day, to attend cinemas, to engage in wayside chats, to promote and partake in factions and quarrels, and for many other distractions that add to the sum of your worries. It is best to stay away from companions who drag you to such distractions that weaken and worry you. Spend a few minutes every morning and evening in the silence of your own shrine or home, spend them with the highest of all powers that you know of. Be in His elevating and inspiring company; worship Him mentally; offer unto Him all the work you do. You will come out of the silence nobler and more heroic than when you went in. Just consider. Do you come out of the cinema theatre more peaceful, more heroic, purer, nobler than when you went in? No. Your passions are aroused, your animal impulses are catered to, your lower nature is fed. Nothing else can give one that rich reward that silence and prayer and communion with the Master can give. Not even a decent bank account, nor a string of degrees, nor the muscles of a prize fighter.

Spend money you earn usefully and wisely

There is a story connected with the construction of the great temple at Kalahasti. It was built according to tradition by sage Agastya, helped by Brighu and Bharadwaja. Every day when the sun was about to set, Agastya called every worker before him as he sat on the river bed. Under his instruction, the two sages poured sand taken from the bed into the lap of each worker; that was his wages! Now, that sand changed into gold in strict proportion to the work that the receiver had put in that day. One who did more work got more gold; one who did less, less. If one had wasted the entire day, it would remain sand as far as that worker was concerned. There was no injustice, no grumbling, no favouritism. All worked in the presence of the All-

seeing, so all accepted the gold that was vouchsafed by the Almighty, for it was just his due, no more, no less. It is work that is done in this spirit, the spirit of the constant presence of the Lord, that is honest. The Lord will reward by His grace work that is done sincerely and gladly, not work that is done for fear of superior officers or foremen. If your hearts are pure, your work too would be pure. Remember the grandeur of what you are engaged in here. Remember the might of this river, which you are persuading to obey you. That will make you humble and devoted. In the Prasanthi Nilayam, the devotees themselves carried on their shoulders stone, mortar, and sand, and as a result of the selfless service they did, we have now a big hospital, a fine school, and a huge auditorium. The entire building is saturated with their devotion, so I once said that the patients are cured by the aroma of that devotion itself.

Be careful when you choose your friends

You should use the money that you earn usefully and wisely. Millions of rupees are distributed at every project site to the workmen, but at the end of it all, when the camp is broken and the people start packing, they have little to carry home! Do not fritter away your hard-earned incomes on tinsel, entertainment, and temporary pleasure. Think of your future, your children, your parents. Think also of the reaction these wasteful attractions produce. Think of the harm they inflict on your precious character. Think of all those who are dependent on you for food and shelter and the love that you alone can offer them. Examine each item of expenditure with reference to these noble tasks. That is the sign of the wise person. Do not admit into your mind the demon of restlessness (a-santhi). Direct all your cleverness and all your intelligence to the successful execution of the great drama that all of you are helping to present. It is His drama. He is the Director, and you are but a role, an actor carrying out His will, speaking words that He has put in your mouth, making movements as directed by Him. It is all a matter of the company you fall into. Be careful when you choose your friends. Form small groups of good people (sathsangs) and meet regularly for bhajans and mutual consultations about spiritual matters. Read some fine spiritual classics like the Bhagavad Gita. Fill your eyes with the beauty of His form, your ears with the story of His

miraculous activities (leelas), your hearts with the sweetness of His glory. Inspire yourselves by seeing Him everywhere. Think of His immanence in every hill and dale, every human being and beast, every tree, bird, and insect. You will be really thrilled by the joy of that vision. That will make your work as light and as satisfying and worship (puja).

Dwell on Brahman that binds all individual souls together

The monkeys (vanaras), while building the bridge across the ocean, carried huge boulders on their heads, repeating Rama's name all the while, and that made the rocks weigh less. It is even said that they wrote the name on the stones, and that made them float! Each time they hauled or lifted a stone, they sang Rama's name in unison, so they were a happy lot, doing worship, not work, which is unpleasant. Rama's grace helped all to overcome obstacles. Take the name and make your work light. That is My advice to you. Your officer here gave Me a garland of flowers just now. It is made up of two things: flowers that were buds yesterday, blossomed today, and will fade before morn and the thread that was, is, and will be. The flower is impermanent; it represents the living being (jiva), which is subject to birth, growth, and decay. The thread is eternal, it is Brahman (Omni-being) on which all living beings are strung. The living beings, like these flowers, are of different characteristics and natures and past impressions, but the string is one uniform consistent base, the Brahma Sutra, which binds all together in one common creation. Dwell upon that unity for some time at least, every day, and that will save you from all types of agitation. You are engaged in the task of conferring welfare, happiness, and prosperity on millions of people. I bless you so that you may complete the sacred task quickly and successfully, without the shadow of misfortune of interruption of any sort, and with no discordant note.

Without control of the senses, a person is like a horse without blinkers, like a bull that refuses to yield to the yoke, and spiritual practices are a waste of time and energy. The special feature of one's composition is that one has

discrimination, detachment, and synoptic intellect; one can discover Truth, be fixed in it, and gain unshakable peace.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

39. The Turn Of The Key

Date: 08 December 1963 / Location: Dronachalam

The task now is to install dharma in every heart, to shed light on every road, through the revival of Vedanta. The world is like a famished person waiting for a feast. It is like the parched land waiting for rain. I have seen and felt the atmosphere of this land surcharged with discontent and dishonesty; I have seen it from Kanyakumari to the Himalayas. That is why thousands like you seek sacred sight, touch, and talk (darshan, sparshan, and sam-bhasana). I am only surprised that thousands are denying themselves the chance. People are daily growing more and more greedy to know more about the lives of others, more extrovert, in fact. People want to escape from themselves by interesting themselves in others. They do not want to worry about the details of their own life or the problems of their own rehabilitation. Of what benefit is all this burden of information that you seek to carry in your head, this knowledge of the various regions of the world, without a knowledge of the region of your own self, the centre of all the interest that you evince? It is no good wandering all over the world, contacting people of various races and getting engrossed with earning and spending without being able to know your own identity!

To win bliss, spiritual discipline with detachment is essential

The tree of the human body finds its fruition when it yields love (prema). That sweet gift is the reason it grew and had to be fostered. It drew its substance from the earth and the sun. What does it give in return for the gifts it got from both of these as well as from the human community? Love. The fruit is sweet, but the rind can afford to be bitter. The rind of anger, malice, envy, and greed has to be peeled off before the fruit is put to use. Use the bitterness in you to preserve and develop the sweetness within yourself. From the experience of saints and sages, you can realise that the joy got from the external world is infinitesimal when compared with the bliss won through spiritual discipline. To win that bliss, spiritual effort full of detachment is essential. When boring is done to draw water from the earth, the pipe has to be kept free of air so that

the water can rise up. If air enters, the water will not rise. So too, be sure that attachment to worldly things does not mar your spiritual efforts. Love will not well up if sensual pleasures and personal pride invade the mind. As long as life persists, you will be caught up in heights and depths, good and bad, rights and wrongs. Duality is inevitable. It is even necessary. A hero shines against a background of villains. Prahlada's faith had to be tested against the background of Hiranyakasipu's denials. The Pandavas demonstrated the strength of meekness only when they faced the savagery of the Kauravas. A city has pipes for the drinking water as well as for sewage. A person has a system of arteries as well as veins, for the circulation of pure and impure blood. Both contribute to the health of the individual.

Yoga is often turned into disease (roga)

The fault is this. You know that a thing is improper, but still you continue to do it, curbing your conscience and suppressing the nobler impulses. The world is all set for profit as the quickest means of attaining joy. High profit, quick profit, easy profit. Why, when measuring or counting, you don't start with "one" but say instead "profit". The next one is two, of course, but the idea with which you start is profit and not service! The problem should not be how to live glamorously so that you make others envy you but how to live gloriously or, better still, how to die gloriously - so gloriously that you are not put to the humiliation of dying again. What do you take with you when you die? Mahamud of Ghazni instructed his Vazir to take his corpse to the burial ground with both his hands raised, so that people should see that he came with empty hands and went with hands as empty as when he came, even though he had plundered the wealth of a hundred cities. Spiritual effort has to be taken up under the direction of an expert who knows your health and temperament well. Over-enthusiasm and irregularity are both to be avoided. If discrimination plays false, spiritual practice is a snare. A little forgetfulness of the limits of heating may spoil a kiln of bricks, a few extra handfuls of washing soda will ruin a bundle of clothes in the wash, a few extra words with the neighbour regardless of time and a whole potful of rice is over-boiled and wasted. Vigilance, care, circumspection - these are very important for the spiritual aspirant. Yoga is often turned into roga (disease) for lack of

continuous self-examination.

Attach yourself to the larger Self

A man weeping because he has been bitten by a cobra in his dream can be cured by just being woken up! No doctor is needed. So too, when Arjuna, who was suffering from ignorance (ajnana), was given spiritual knowledge (jnana), he recovered and did his duty. The pain and the snake will both disappear if the dreamer is awakened. He is only imagining that a snake bit him. When you invite a blind man for dinner, remember that you have to lay two plates, not one for one guest only, for he will be certainly accompanied by a guide. The blind man is Arjuna, and the guide is good knowledge (sujnana). Sujnana will lead him aright. Both are in the same person. However, Good knowledge has to take charge and lead. Turn the key to the right, it is unlocked. Turn to God and righteousness, and the lock opens, the chain falls away. Turn the key to the left, and you become bound, the bolt falls in, the chain holds fast. It is just a question of the point of view - outlook or inlook? Out-query? In-query? For all this, the prime need is faith. Faith in yourself! You can move mountains in the social level if you conquer your mind in the individual level. Curb your powers and make them run along useful channels; that will result in joy for you and others. To get that faith, know your Truth. To know your Truth, attach yourself to the larger Self, of which you are a part, by constant remembrance of the Name (namasmarana).

To obtain the attitude of surrender, of dedication, you must have faith in God. This world is His play; it is not an empty dream. It has purpose and use. It is the means by which one can discover God. See Him in the beauty, the grandeur, the order, the majesty of nature. These are but shadows of His glory and His splendour. Adoration of God leads to the knowledge that He is in all. When you experience that there is no Second, that is spiritual wisdom (jnana)!

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba



40. Fine Arts And The Finest Arts

Date: 14 December 1963 / Location: Bengaluru / Occasion: Sivajinagar

India is the sanctum sanctorum of truth, virtue, peace, and love (*sathya*, *dharma*, *shanthi*, and *prema*); she has been holding forth these ideals and emphasising their practice for centuries. *Bharath* (India) means the land that has *rathi* (attachment) to bha or *Bhagavan* (God); it means that the people here are God-loving, not so much God-fearing. If you love God, you have to love humanity also. This teaching that truth is the basis of virtue, which lays down individual and social duties and obligations, and that truth is also the root of love and peace - this is the unique feature of Bharath.

Sathya (truth) is enough; no other God need be worshipped. Here, in the spiritual teacher's house and hermitages (gurukulams and rishi-ashrams), the emphasis has always been on practice, conduct, and deliberation. Use your reason; it is a God-given gift. Determine yourself whether the prescription will cure you. Then follow also the course of discipline that is recommended with the particular drug. Then you gain bliss (*ananda*), full, free, undiminishable. The people of Bharath (India) have been receiving this teaching from the cradle to the grave for ages.

Do not waste money on pomp and show

Sundaramurthy had arranged a "grand" procession for Me from his institute to this stadium, for today he is celebrating the Silver Jubilee of his institute! Let Me tell you this now itself: I do not like this pomp and show. I do not derive any joy out of it. Pomp such as this has become a fashion now, even among ascetics and monks who ought to know better. They profess poverty and simplicity, and yet, they allow or encourage their disciples to waste much energy and money on pomp and pageantry, which serve only to develop the egoism of themselves and their followers. The emphasis on show makes a thing hollow of all meaning. The misery of the present age is largely due to this empty ritual of insincere demonstrations.

You should all resolve to maintain the honour and dignity of the country, which is your responsibility. Bharath (India) is entitled to be the *guru* (preceptor) of the world. Hers is no mean history. This is the land of Krishna, where the Vedas and the Upanishads saw the light, where Sankaracharya established monasteries for the propagation of the *Sanathana Dharma* (Eternal Universal Religion). This land will be saved, for it has a mission to perform, which no other can fulfill. Don't yield to silly fears that this or that country will endanger Bharath's freedom. That is impossible. The Avatar of the Lord has come, and the effect will be safety for this holy land. Live the life that was held forth as the ideal by the sages of the past, and happiness is ensured. That kind of life will give internal contentment and quiet calm.

Festival of the Atma is more magnificent

Prayer is a more powerful force than military reinforcements; if made with a sincere heart, a prayer will be certainly answered. It will strengthen the hands of the people of this land more than any other source of encouragement. It will join the hearts of the people more than lectures or pamphlets can do. What is the use of trying for the unity of mankind or the union of this continent or that, with so many factions and misunderstandings festering this country? Become united yourselves sincerely and firmly before advising others to close up their ranks. Repent for the faults of partisanship committed by you, and begin a new chapter of brotherly cooperation. Sundaramurthy and his friends and coworkers are happy today because of the "Silver Jubilee". It is a festival for the institute.

But I consider the festival of the Atma to be more magnificent. The Atma has an eternal festival! It is bliss-filled (*ananda-swarupa*). It is beyond time, so it does not calculate the passage of time. How can one celebrate a festival, let Me ask, while afflicted by body falsehoods, sense falsehoods, mind falsehoods, and world falsehoods? One believes the falsehoods that are named the body, the senses, the mind, the world! One pursues them and tastes joy and grief, and, when a certain number of years is passed in the pastime, one celebrates a festival!

The human being is a compound of animal and angel

This is illusory power (*maya*) within the great worldly illusion (maya). I have not come to announce to you that this institute has finished twenty-five years of existence. I am concerned with the spiritual arts, the finest arts, rather than the fine arts. I want Sundaramurthy to depict spiritually elevating subjects in dance, like Radha and Krishna and their sublime relationship, which is beyond the ken of people. One must give up themes such as drunkards, evil men, power-drunk personalities, and clowns, which cater to vulgar tastes.

Adjust all items of dance and dramatic representation to the spiritual urge in humanity; foster it, fertilise it, and take people a little nearer to the Goal. The human being is a compound of animal and angel, we can say. The human has in it the wolf, the monkey, the bullock, the jackal, the snake, the peacock, the bear - but beneath all these, the pure spark of Divinity is there too. It is the duty of all who cater to the senses to transform the low values now pervading and transmute them into higher values. The rulers must also canalise the enthusiasm and imagination of the people along healthy lines.

41. Seeing Only Brahman In All

Date: 15 December 1963 / Location: Bengaluru / Occasion: Sathya Sai Bhajana Mandali, Malleswaram

Those who live in Malleswaram have made good arrangements for celebrating the Annual Festival of the community singing (bhajana) that they have been conducting here. Bhajana always gives bliss and peace. See that it is not used for increasing your egoism, or mutual recrimination, or envy or pride, as very often happens. Be humble, be calm, be tolerant. Cooperate with all and treat everyone with courtesy and kindness. Devotion is not a uniform to be worn on Thursday evenings, when you gather for bhajana, and to be laid aside when the bhajana is over. It must mean the promotion of an attitude of humility, of revering parents, teachers, elders, and others; it is a mental outlook, an attitude that is ever-present. It is the sustenance of the heart, just as food is sustenance for the body. Like the needle of the compass always pointing to the north, never deviating from that direction, returning to it, readily, gladly, quickly, whenever it is shaken off that line, so too the devotee must face the Lord ever, must be happy only when he is set toward Him.

The spiritual three-river confluence leads to seeing Brahman in all

Many people think of God only when grief overtakes them. Of course, it is good to do so; it is better than seeking the help of those who are also 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 devotion is in the peace that the devotee has, peace that protects them against the onslaughts of success as well as failure, fame, dishonour, gain, and loss. Devotion is the river Ganga, detachment is the river Yamuna, and spiritual wisdom (jnana) is the river Saraswathi of this spiritual confluence of three rivers (thriveni). Spiritual wisdom is the through-train; you just board it, that is enough, and it takes you direct to the destination. Devotion is the through-carriage. Though it may be detached from one train and connected with another, if you get into it, you need not worry; as long as you stick to your place, it is bound to take you to the destination. Karma

(action) is the ordinary train. If you board it, you have to disembark, climb in and climb out at every junction, load your luggage and unload it, and do a good lot of work to reach your destination. Devotion alone is enough even to acquire spiritual wisdom. It ends in seeing only Brahman in all, and it destroys egoism. Wisdom also gives you these. Narada once offered to teach the cowherd women (gopis) the principles of philosophy - vijnanabodha as he called it. Krishna agreed. But the cowherd maidens said, "We do not care for your learning and your discourse. We see Krishna everywhere and in everything, so we have no hate or envy or malice. We have equanimity (sama), and we have no egoism. We believe this is enough for us." Narada found that what they claimed was correct, so he left discomfited.

You are not traveling Godward

Now, most of you are leading a double or treble life. Practising union with God (yogam) in the morning, enjoyment (bhogam) the rest of the day, and suffering (rogam) at night. You seek bliss outside you and suffer from the ulcer of desire inside you. You utter one thing with the tongue and carry out the opposite with the hand. You claim to be seekers of spiritual wisdom, but you are attached to the delusion you have cultivated. You have a ticket for Calcutta, but you are traveling in the train headed for Bombay! With the body, which is your ticket, and world knowledge and attachment as your luggage, you are traveling not in the train that goes Godward but in the train leading to the objective world (prakriti). This is the pity! The roots must go deep, deep down to the level of underground water. The trees that grow on the dikes of canals are green with thick foliage. Your roots must also go deep into the Divinity that will keep you green whatever the dryness of the weather or heat of the sun.

You can recognise God in your own self

This is the age of profit. The question that anyone asks when asked to do a thing is, "What is the profit?" "How much is the profit?" "How sure is the profit?" Well, let Me also ask, "Of what profit is all this feeding and growing, this striving and struggling, this earning and saving and spending, this losing

and gaining, this speeding in cars and planes, if by these means you do not get peace in the mind and joy in your heart?" All these activities serve only to hide the real nature of the individual, to overwhelm it under a mass of trivialities, to suppress the natural influence of the real Truth of humanity. Develop a love for God, Then you can recognise Him very near you, in your own Self. That is the assurance I am giving to all of you.

The conquest of the ego is a very hard task. Years of persistent effort are needed to get success in this endeavour. For getting a degree, you struggle in the university for a number of years, poring over books day and night. How much more difficult is this examination, success in which guarantees lasting happiness and escape from the weary round of birth and death.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

42. The Divine Voice

Date: **December 1963** / Location: **Prasanthi Nilayam**

Narakasura is present in everyone as lust, hate, and greed and as fear and grief, which are against the very nature of humanity. Just as an umbrella with inferior cover cannot protect you from rain but only one with a waterproof cover can, so too in this storm-driven world incessantly flushed by torrential rain, an umbrella with desire-proof and anger-proof covering is required. The five elementary constituents of the universe (fire, earth, water, ether, and wind) cannot harm one who is equipped with such protection. The five fortresses (durgas) in which Narakasura is said to have taken refuge are the five elements. There is great latent power inherent in everyone, and when that power is made explicit (vyaktha), a human being deserves to be called individual (vyakthi). When that is made manifest, the demon will automatically be destroyed. Your reality is Atma; your quality is bliss (ananda). What does it matter to you if the Narakasura of the Puranas is killed by Krishna and Sathyabama? For you, Krishna is the Super or Omni Self (Paramatma) and Sathyabama is the individual self (jiva). Paramatma destroys the evil propensities with the active collaboration of the individual self: the individual self defeats evil with the active grace of the Lord.

Make desire the servant of Rama

India is the repository of spiritual power, but now, scarcely anyone practises the disciplined life that is the mark of that power. Millions go on pilgrimages, millions of copies of sacred texts and spiritual lore are bought and read, thousands of ascetics and gurus are scattered over the land and receive the homage of the people. Yet, there is no peace in the heart, no food in the stomach, no clothes to keep the cold off the body. India, which is the granary of the earth (annapurna-swarupa), has to go about with begging bowl for food for her children. This tragedy is caused by ill-discipline, by want of self-control, by what can be called the absence of Self-government, or government of the Self. SathyaNarayana, when he acted the role of Sathyabama in the drama, remembered always that he was SathyaNarayana,

though he was also aware that he had a part to play in the drama, and he played it well. It would be a failure for him to forget either his SathyaNarayana-hood or his Sathyabama-hood. So, too, act in the world, but remember your genuine Self. When human beings forget that this is a play and starts assuming it real, the Lord comes down to remind them of it. Otherwise, when the execution scene is enacted, heads will fall. When Lanka is set on fire in the drama, the theatre itself will be consumed. Do not take the world more seriously than it deserves. There is space for only just one throne in your heart. But now, you are inviting too many to sit on it - or you try to put two thrones there, one for Rama, and one for desire. Or, when you find it difficult, you are inviting Rama and Kama (Desire) to squeeze themselves into that one seat! Or, you install Kama and want Rama to sit down below as his henchman! No wonder Rama deserts you. Make Rama the deity on the throne and utilise desire as His servant - then there is no harm.

Cultivate the inward look

The mother cat, it is said, takes hold of the new-born kitten and shifts it from place to place seven times within a few days of its birth, so that its eyes might open and it might see! The kitten gets proper vision after going through seven transfers. But the human being does not get the vision (viz. that one is in reality the deathless, birthless, infinite Atman) even after one is shifted from womb to womb a million times! This is the tragedy of ignorance and sloth. You have heard the Gajendra-liberation story, the elephant, caught and dragged by the crocodile, appealing helplessly to the Lord and the Lord sending down the good-vision (sudarshana) discus to slay the tormentor and save the beast. The story has a deeper meaning, which has universal appeal. The wild elephant is the individual (jiva), full of sensual greed and blind with delusion. It enters the tank of the objective world (samsara). There, the crocodile of egoism grasps its leg in the vice of its teeth and pulls it down deeper and deeper into the mire of objective world.

There is a definite process for God-realisation

The individual struggles by itself for a long time until its pride is exhausted

and its faith in its own powers is spent. Then it appeals in complete surrender (saranagathi) to the Lord. And what does the Lord send? Good sight (sudarshana). Mark that word! What does it mean? Sudarshana - Good sight! Beneficial outlook! A vision that is correct, conducive to lasting joy, namely, the inward look, away from the sense objects. As soon as that sight is cultivated, egoism is destroyed and the individual is freed. Live and act in the world, by all means, but deal with the objective world as you apply collyrium to the eye. The eye is not blinded by the collyrium, it is rendered more efficient, more charming, that is all. So too, worldly life must make your spiritual effort more efficient and more pleasing to yourself and others. Be like the lotus, which, though born in mud, rises higher, through the waters, to the region of sunlight. It requires both mud and water for its existence, but it knows their real value, so it does not allow itself to be contaminated by either. A great sage once fell in with a gang of non-believers in an atheist settlement. They crowded around him and plied him with impertinent queries and insisted that he must show them the God in whom he believed. The sage promised to do so, but he asked for some milk before he could demonstrate God. The vessel of milk was brought. He sat silently for a long while, stirring the milk with his finger. The crowd got exasperated at the delay and at his silence. They asked him what he was at. He replied that he was only trying to spot out where the butter was - at the top, middle or bottom? The crowd shouted that it was everywhere, in every drop of milk, and that he could see it only when the preliminary process of churning was done. he sage answered, "Well, the Lord is also immanent in every atom of this universe. He can be perceived and experienced only when the preliminary spiritual exercises are done." There is a definite well-known process for God-realisation also, just as there is a definite well-known process for butter realisation.

I want devotees to improve their behaviour and character. It is no good attending the temple and sharing loudly in the singing of devotional songs, with cymbals in your hands. They are but external signs of enthusiasm. God watches the thought power behind it, not the outward pomp.

- *Sri Sathya Sai Baba*