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1. The Godward march

Date: **11 January 1966** / Location: **Prasanthi Nilayam** / Occasion: **Sankranthi**

The Uttarayana Punyakala or the Makara Sankranthi is a holy occasion to pray to the Lord, as the Vedas instruct you to pray:

Asatho ma sath gamaya (Lead me from unreal to Real);
Thamaso ma jyothir gamaya (Lead me from darkness to Light);
mruthyorma amrithamgamaya (Lead me from death to Immortality).

Use this day to address this prayer, sincerely to your Ishtadevatha (chosen deity), your Aradhya-devatha (the Form of the Lord you like most). Festivals connected with the Moon and the Sun are celebrated in our country, in order to drive into the minds of men the importance of mind control (Chandra or moon is the Deity of the Mind) and of clarifying the intelligence. (Surya or the Sun is the Deity of the Intelligence). When the Sun moves North-ward - that is 'Godward' - the Intelligence too must proceed Godward. That is the significance of the Uttarayana. Putting your faith in the machines and machine-made things, faith in power of the controlled mind and in the potentialities of the clarified and purified intelligence has declined. Yanthra (machine) has eclipsed the manthra (sacred formula); but, this is a passing phase. Manthra alone can guarantee shanthi or peace. A king became insane; he imagined he was a beggar, that he was ill, that he had become decrepit, and he wept. Now, how is he to realise that he is a king? You have to restore his reason; that is the only way. So too, the Immortal, Blissful, Invincible imagines himself to be limited, and little. He blames himself and calls himself a sinner, born in sin and revelling in sin, praying on his knees to be saved. Of course, if he knows he is divine, he will never stoop to sin or vice or weakness.

Transmute every act into sacred worship

The tree of life is a tree of delusion, with all its branches and leaves and flowers of maya. You can realise it as such, when you do all acts as dedicated offerings for God. See him as the sap through every cell as the Sun warming and building every part. See Him in all, worship Him through all, for He is all. Engage in activity, but, fill the activity with devotion: it is the devotion that sanctifies. A piece of paper is almost trash; but, if a certificate is written on it, you value it and treasure it; it becomes passport for promotion in life. It is the bhava (thought behind) that matters, not the bahya (outward pomp); the feeling, not the activity that is performed. At Thirupathi or at Bhadrachalam, you find only a stone shaped as an idol; as stone, it is of little value. But, when feeling permeates it, when devotion transmutes it, the stone becomes the Supremest Treasure of the human mind. Man does not know this secret of transmuting every act of his into sacred worship and so, he suffers from disappointment and grief. There is a lot of wasteful discussion as to the superiority of one marga or path over another, especially between the partisans of karma, bhakthi and jnana margas. But these three paths - Work, Worship and Wisdom - are supplementary, not contradictory. Work is like the feet, Worship, the hands, and Wisdom, the head. The three must co-operate and complete life. Worship or Upasana or Bhakthi marga is the name given to the path of sharanagathi or surrender to the Lord's Will, the merging of the individual Will in the Will of the Universal. Lakshmana is the classic example of this spirit of surrender that saves. Once during his exile in the forest, Rama asked Lakshmana to put up a leaf-hut on a site of his choice. Lakshmana was shocked; he was struck down with grief. He pleaded with Rama: "Why do you ask me to select the site? Have I any individuality left? Can I choose? Will I select? Don't you know that I have no will of my own. You decide and I obey; you command, I carry out the order." That is real sharanagathi, real bhakthi. This can be acquired by constant practice of detachment.

Make every act God - worthy to win His grace

The Lord is so full of Grace that he will willingly guide and guard all who surrender to Him. When the battle with Ravana was over, one glance from His merciful Eye was enough to revive the vanara hordes which had fallen on the

ground and to heal the wounds they had earned during the fight. There were some Rakshasas who had penetrated into the camp in vanara disguise; when they were brought before Rama for summary punishment, Rama smiled and pardoned them, for they had assumed the monkey form so dear to Him; He sent them away, unharmed to the enemy's camp. That was the measure of His mercy. To win that Grace, you must become permeated with dharma so that every act is God-worthy. With the sharp chisel of intellect (buddhi), shape the mind (manas) into a perfect image of Dharmamurthi, the embodiment of dharma. Then, the rough-hewn idol of humanity that you now are, will shine with the splendour of Divinity itself. That is the task to which you should dedicate yourself today.

The tongue must be sanctified by the repetition of the Lord's Name.
It has also to use sweet expressions which will spread contentment and joy.
Be very careful about your speech.
Man's biggest weapon of offence is his tongue.
The wounds that his tongue inflicts can scarce he healed; they fester in the heart for long.
They are capable of more damage than even an atom bomb.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

2. From Saalokya to Saayujya

Date: **February 1966** / Location: **Prasanthi Nilayam** / Occasion: **Shivarathri**

Service of man is more needed than service to the Lord Himself. In fact, such service is equal to service of the Lord. That is the path of real bhakthi. For, what greater means can there be to please God than pleasing His children? The Purusha Suuktha speaks of the Purusha or God as having a thousand heads, a thousand eyes and a thousand feet. That is to say, all are He. Though there are a thousand heads, there is no mention of a thousand hearts, there is only one heart. The same blood circulates through all the heads, eyes, feet and limbs. When you tend the limb, you tend the individual; when you serve man, you serve God. So many thousands of you have come here to the Prasanthi Nilayam for the festival. In most homes, guests and relatives are welcomed only when it is known that their stay will be short. But, here, however often you come, however long you stay, the joy you derive is undiminished; for, the kinship is not worldly, it is Athmic. And, Athmic Bliss knows no decline or change. When your goal is the service of the Lord, the adoration of God every step is a spring of joy; even moment is a valuable chance. Perhaps you think that the bhajana and sankeerthana which you partake in here is all that is required of a bhaktha. No, these are only sanctifying acts which purify the mind; they are karma which elevate you and help to pass time purposefully. They promote detachment from the body and from objective pleasures. It is because you are encouraged to cultivate this attitude and taste the joy of renunciation that you feel happy while here.

Stages of relationship with God

Praise and blame are the obverse and reverse of reaction to the great and the sublime. The cinema screen is not affected by the volcanic eruption pictured in the films or by the turbulent sea with mountain high waves. It is neither singed nor does it get wet. A city has under its streets two varieties of pipes, one carrying drinking water and the other, sewage. The human body has veins for good blood and bad. The intake of food has to result in the discharge of offal. The relationship with the Lord is described as developing from

Salokya (in the vicinity) to Sameepya (nearness), and from Sameepya to Saruupya (Form of the master) and then on to Sayujya (absorption into the Form). You can understand this clearly, if you take Salokya to mean, being in the kingdom ruled by the Lord as monarch, or as a servant in the palace where He dwells. You are under His pari-palana (fostering care); you are aware that it is He who sustains you. In the sameepya stage, you feel you are a personal attendant on the Lord, in His entourage, privileged to be near Him and to be called upon by Him when occasion arises, for some personal service. You have neared the principle of Godhead, intellectually; you feel His presence ever, emotionally - that is Sameepyam. Then, the Saruupya stage is reached when the devotee is so near, so kin, that he wears the "royal robes" - a brother, for example, can wear the same robes. So he has the same ruupa, he has the splendour, the glory that bespeaks the full blossoming of the Divine that is latent in him. Lastly, when you are the son, the Heir Apparent, the KumaraRaja, you approximate as much as possible to the Royal Power and so, you can say, "I and My Father are One." That is Sayujya, becoming One - Retainer, Attendant, Kinsman, Heir. These are the stages of the soul's journey to Realisation of the Oversoul.

Know the purpose of fasting

There are many among you, I know, mostly women, who practise fasts. But, there is a limit to austerity, which they do not respect! There is a meaning in fasting which they do not understand! They fast on Monday for it is the day of Shiva, on Tuesday for it is sacred to Lakshmi, on Wednesday for some other God, on Thursday for Me(!) on Friday again for Lakshmi, on Saturday, to propitiate Shani and on Sunday, for the Sun! Lal Bahadur Shastri, that good and simple man, pleaded that you miss a meal on Monday nights, but, these misdirected aspirants spoil their health and well-being by overdoing the vow of fasting. Periodical fasting is prescribed in order to help the system overhaul itself and to give much needed rest to the processes. Again during the fast, you must not be aware of hunger at all! Are you sure that it is so? You must free yourself from all thought of food and concentrate on the thought of God. If thoughts of food bother you, if pangs of hunger disturb you, then, it is much better to eat and then start Sadhana. Upa-vasa, the word for the vow of

fasting, means "living in the proximity of God" (Upa-near; vasa-living) and so, the vow is meant to liberate you from the worry and bother of preparing and eating food, so that you might dwell more intimately with God. Remember that the purpose of Fast is spending time in the contemplation of God and not simply punishing the body by cutting a meal or a series of meals. Vows, vigils, fasts, etc. along with all kinds of voluntarily imposed or involuntarily suffered hardships are to be looked upon as promoting spiritual strength, not as weakening physical stamina. They dig around the roots and make the plant grow fast. They clip the wayward twigs and make the tree tall and truly trim.

Look upon joy and grief as teachers of hardihood and balance.

Grief is a friendly reminder, a good taskmaster; even a better teacher than joy.

God gives both protection and punishment;

for how can He be the Lord, if he does not insist on strict accounting and strict obedience?

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

3. Be happy when tested

Date: 18 February 1966 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Shivarathri

Bharath means the land where there is rathi (attachment to Bha (Bhagavan or God)); and so, all days are sacred for the people born here, all rivers are sacred, all hills are sacred. The Ganga is sacred from source to sea, but yet, there are some spots associated with some holy event or sage or seer or temple which are treated with extra reverence; such places are Rishikesh, Varanasi, Prayag, Haridhwar, etc. So too, among the days of the year, some are treated as holier, when a special effort is made by the devotees to approach God through special puuja (ritual worship) or japa (pious repetition of holy names or sacred formula) or dhyana (meditation). Shivarathri is such a day.

And for you assembled here, this is a day which you will treasure in your memory for a lifetime. Meeting with fellow-pilgrims and kindred aspirants is a piece of rare good fortune. Every one of you is a temple, with the Lord installed in your heart, whether you are aware of it or not. The Lord is described in the PurushaShuktha scripture as thousand headed; it does not mean that He has just thousand heads, no more, no less. It means that "the thousands of heads before Me now have just one heart, which gives life and energy to all, and that heart is the Lord. No one is separate from his neighbour; all are bound by the one life-blood that flows through the countless bodies. This is the special teaching of Sanathana Dharma (Eternal Religion), which the world needs. And this one precious message, the children of Bharath have unfortunately forgotten.

The body has been given for a grand purpose

The Lord has endowed man with the body and so, every limb and every sense is worthy of reverent attention. Each must be used for His Glory. The ear must exult when it gets a chance to hear the wonderful tales of God. The tongue must exult when it can praise Him. Or else, the tongue of man is ineffective as that of frogs which croak day and night, sitting on the marshy bank.

Krishna told Duryodhana, when he said that he was not afraid of God and man, that he was indeed pitiable. The pasu (animal) fears; the mriga (beast) terrifies. Man should be neither. He should neither terrify nor get terrorised. He must be neither a coward nor a bully. If he is a coward he is an animal; if he is a bully he is a danava, an ogre. It is because you feel the urge to use the body with which you have been endowed, for this higher purpose that you are here in Prasanthi Nilayam. The kinship among you and of all of you with Me is ageless; it is eternal. It is not based on worldly relationship; it is based on the aspirations of the heart. It is Prasanthinilaya sambandham the bond of the abode of Supreme Peace.

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

Present tragedy of our country

Brihaspathi, the teacher of the Gods, was one day asked by his son whether he had no means of liberation from the recurring pain of birth and death. He replied that he had; only, he must earn and practise and win it himself. Many begin with a weakening want of faith: Will I, can I, succeed? How long will I have to spend in the task? But, sathya, dharma and prema (truth, virtue and love), if practised, will give the strength needed to win the shanthi that comes of liberation. Then, the son asked what he has to do. The father told him that complete renunciation of all worldly attachments (sarvasanga-parithyaga) alone can endow him with freedom. He was happy that he had a son who sought these higher things of life. He was quite different from the fathers today, who invite their sons to play cards with them and waste the precious hours in trivial games. If such a question is asked by a son today, the father will conclude that the son has gone mad and he will become prey to all kinds of wild fears; he will start thinking of frantic remedies. That is the tragedy of our country. The son went, far from hearth and home, and after eight years of

ascetic practice, he returned with a victory over hunger and thirst. The father put him to test. Tests must be welcomed, for they alone can give confidence. When you drive a nail into the wall, you try to shake it a little, to ascertain whether it has been driven firm. Tests are essential everywhere and more so, in the spiritual field, where success is often deceptive and short-lived. The son admitted that he had not earned peace of mind, unshaken fortitude. The father said he ought to acquire sarva-sangaparithyaga. The son went again into the forest and spent one full year there, without caring whether it was shade or sun, hot or cold. When he came back, the father was still not happy, for he had not discarded the one fundamental attachment, the attachment to the ego. He was still involved in the mesh of I and mine. Once the ego is suppressed, that very moment two consequences follow: freedom from grief, acquisition of joy. To achieve this great consummation, you must take one step after another. Good deeds like ritual worship, repetition of holy names, meditation, observance of vows, etc., are the 'steps'; good thoughts like prayer for greater discrimination, more chance to serve others also help. Slowly, steadily cleanse the mind; sharpen the intellect; purify the senses; and win grace. You have come here, prompted by prema (Love); cultivate that prema, move about with that prema. Treat the old and the sick that are here with some special care; give them the chance to be in the shade, inside the auditorium, and those of you who are young and sturdy, give them room. Observe the disciplinary rules that are prescribed for your sake and be benefited by the darshan of the abhishekam (Ceremony of pouring water) at 11.00 a.m. and the Lingodbhavam (the emergence of Shiva formless form) at night.

4. Please man; please God

Date: 19 February 1966 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Shivarathri

You see a plane zooming in the sky; some one tells you that it is flown by a pilot, but, you refuse to believe, because you do not see him from where you are. Is this correct? You must go into the plane to see the pilot; you cannot deny his existence, standing on the ground. You have to guess that the plane must have a pilot. So too seeing the Universe, you have to guess the existence of God, not deny Him because you are not able to see him. People do not believe in God, but, they believe newspapers and the news they publish about things they do not see or cannot see. They believe what their ears hear, more than what their eyes see or minds experience. A blind man is in darkness and when he denies there is light, we need not attach any value to his denial. Even if man does not attempt to seek God, he can at least seek to get shanthi, santhosh, soukhyam and swatantra - peace, joy, happiness and independence. He does not now seek even these. Nor does he try to learn how he can get them. The top spins perpetually and has no rest; man too pines and labours for ever and ever and has no relief from the round. The only peace and joy that he gets now are of a momentary kind; here now, gone the next minute. Pain puts a stop to joy; joy is but the absence of pain. Why must man live for years - a burden on earth, so much of rice or wheat consumed year after year, with no return in joy or peace to himself or others? The petromax light will shine bright only when you pump air vigorously; your light too is dim and well nigh out; pump vigorously, that is to say, engage yourself in spiritual practice and illumine your mind better and spread light on all who come near you.

Do not cast aspersions against the Divine

You have given up even the little sadhana that observance of Shivarathri demands. In olden times, people will not put even a drop of water on their tongues, this day. Now, that rigour is gone. They used to keep vigil at night, the whole of it, repeating Om Namasshivaya without intermission. Now, the name of Shiva is on no one's tongue. People argue and discuss, at the

slightest mention of God. They think they are superior enough for that. The Divine can be known only by those who know the signs, the characteristics, the special excellences, by a study of the scriptures. There is a special science relating to that. Simply because you have a tongue and can wag, do not cast aspersions against the path of God or against the Divine. Of course, if one can escape grief and pain and ensure joy and peace by denying God, the attempt can be made. But, even non-believers and atheists have misery, grief and pain. Atheism is not more profitable than theism. The atheist simply transfers the burden from the head to the shoulders, denying that there is no head. The burden has to be borne, but only with greater hardship. There is the story of a king, the minister and the servant going in a boat over a stormy lake. The servant was thrown into panic at the sight of water all round. There was danger of his upsetting the boat itself. So, the minister caught hold of the fellow, pushed him into the water, dipped him a number of times in spite of his shrieks and then when he cried, The boat, the boat, he was hoisted back. Once in the boat he knew he was safe from the waters of which he was afraid. So too, we are in God, but, yet afraid of the waters of samsara (worldly life). It is when we suffer the ordeals of worldly life that the security and safety of faith in God can be realised.

You need a Guru to see yourself

The eye which is an inch long can see the stars, millions of miles away; but, is it the eye that sees? Can the eye see itself?. No. You must learn how to know others and more than that, how to know yourselves. You are most curious about others. Even casual acquaintances you meet in railway compartments, you ask about their family affairs, their property, and lineage. But, you do not know your own lineage, property, your heritage and status. You are Manuja, born of Manu, the person who laid down the moral code which is your property. You have the Lord installed in your heart and so, you are essentially Divine. All this wealth you deny and you go about poor and weak. To see your own eyes, you need a mirror; to see yourself in your native grandeur, you need a guru (preceptor). Those who deny God are denying themselves and their glory. All have Love in their hearts, in some form or other, either towards the children or the poor or their work or goal. That Love is God, the spark of

the Godly in them. They have anandha (bliss), however small or temporary, and that is a spark of God and the Godly. They have peace, detachment, sympathy. All these are reflections of the Divine on the mirror of their minds. These are all mental excellences, revealed through an appreciation of the advantages of virtue. If they are revealed through helplessness, as the case of the thief in the story of Tenali Ramakrishna, they are no good. That thief exhibited great shanthi and sahana, (peace and forbearance) motivated by fear.

Practise self-control with steady faith

Noticing that a thief had come into his garden at night and that he was hiding under a snakegourd bush near the well, Ramakrishna called his wife to his presence. He asked her to bring a rope and bucket so that he may draw water from the well. The wife drew the water and gave the bucket to him. The thief watched his movements and he crouched in the darkness, expecting that the man and his wife would go into the house soon. He planned that he should gain entry later and collect his loot without being caught. Meanwhile, Ramakrishna pretended that he had something in his throat. He poured the water into his mouth, gargled loud and spat underneath the "snake-gourd bush right where the thief was crouching! He got it right on his face, and that was Ramakrishna's intention too. The poor fellow could not run away, he could not protest, he was afraid to move; he showed perfect fortitude. But, do you call it a virtue? Do you appreciate him for it? He was motivated by fear, not faith. Such shanthi and sahana are of no use at all. Practise self-control with steady faith. Then it is a source of strength. You are afflicted with the disease which the Geetha can cure, the disease of moha (delusion), which warps your sense of values, fogs your vision and distorts your outlook. But, to benefit from the drug, you must have the vishada (sorrow) which Arjuna had, the prapaththi (dedication) he was capable of, the vairagya (detachment) he had developed and the ekagratha (concentration) he evinced. He was ready to go abegging for his livelihood rather than enthrone himself as king after the killing of his kinsmen, teachers and elders. Have that keen yearning; then, the Geetha can destroy moha and liberate you.

Do not seek the faults of others

Discover for yourself your stage of spiritual development, to which class in the school you would fit in. Then determine to proceed from that class to the next higher one. Strive your best and you will win the Grace of God. Do not bargain or despair. One step at a time is enough, provided it is towards the goal, not away from it. Beware of the pride of wealth, of scholarship, of status, that drag you into egoism. Do not seek the faults of others; seek your own. Be happy when you see others prosper; share your joy with others. However high you move up on the ladder of education, do not let the roots of Indian Culture dry up in your heart. There was a great Pandith well versed in Sanathana Dharma and deeply attached to its practice. He sent his son overseas for higher education. He took him to the temple of his Kuladevatha (family deity), Kalimatha, and with tears of gratitude in his eyes, he showered on his head the sacred prasad of Kalimatha, when he boarded the steamer. He wrote to him often, pleading that he should keep up the rites of worship, even in the strange lands to which he had gone. He was confident that his son will not give up the performance of the morning and evening ablutions and recitations. After some years, the boy returned by plane, in outlandish clothes, but the pious father believed that his deeper convictions had not altered and that he was genuine Indian still. He took him first to the temple of Kalimatha, for he felt that he had returned safe and strong as a result of Her Blessings. He uttered a sthuthra and begged the son too to pray. He was shocked to hear the boy address the Goddess, 'Hello, Mrs. Shiva! How do you do?' The old man's heart broke at the discovery that his son had cut himself away from the sustaining principles of SanathanaDharma.

Consequence of departing from Truth

These are the cardinal principles of Sanathana Dharma: sathya, dharma, santhi and prema (truth, virtue, peace and love). Dharmaraja, the eldest of the Pandavas, was a sincere adherent of sathya. But, during the Kurukshethra battle, he was persuaded to utter a white lie, a subterfuge which he thought was excusable, though it was not cent percent honest. In order to kill Dhrona, the master archer and General on the opposite side, they had to somehow

trick him into discarding his bow, so they planned a subterfuge. They named a war- elephant after Dhrona's son, Aswatthama. Then, they killed it. Immediately within the hearing of Dhrona, the Pandava army was asked to shout in glee, Aswatthama is killed - the elephant, which was strictly true. But while the soldiers were repeating the words, the elephant, drums were beaten, bugles were sounded, trumpets pealed, so that Dhrona heard only the first three words. Naturally, he took them to mean that his son had met with his death from enemy hands. Dhrona was heavily laden with grief, his hands could not wield the bow and the arrow, as deftly as usual; at that moment, he was overwhelmed and slain. For this one sin that he had encouraged, the only one in his life, Dharma-rajah had to spend a few minutes in Hell, says the epics. Such is the consequence of departing from sathya even by a hair's breadth.

Life is best spent in alleviating pain

Listen to the sequel. When the emissaries of the other world were escorting Dharmaraja after death to Hell, for this nominal sojourn, the denizens of Hell suddenly felt a coolness and a fragrance in the air they breathed, a strange peace and joy, a thrill and exhilaration which they had never hoped to enjoy. That was the consequence of the holy soul approaching the region of terror and torture. The unfortunate sinners gathered around Dharmaraja to be soothed and comforted by his very sight. When Dharma-rajah was directed to turn back towards Heaven (the term of his sentence was soon over) the populace of Hell cried out to him to prolong his stay. They were reluctant to go back to the heat and the pain. Hearing their piteous wail, Dharmaraja declared that he was surrendering to them all the merit that had earned Heaven for him; he was willing to stay with them! But, that great act of renunciation not only benefitted the suffering creatures, it gave Dharmaraja a greater lease of life in Heaven and a more honoured place there. Life is best spent in alleviating pain, assuaging distress, and promoting peace and joy. The service of man is more valuable than what you call service to God. God has no need of your service. Please man; you please God. The Purusha Shuktha sings of God as having a thousand heads, a thousand eyes and a thousand feet. That is to say, all beings are He, all who have heads, hands

and eyes. They are not separate. Note that it is not mentioned that He has a thousand hearts. There is only one heart. The same blood circulates through all hands and heads. Each being is a limb. When you tend the limb, you tend the individual. When you serve man, you serve God.

5. Love the source of love

Date: 20 February 1966 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Shivarathri

Yesterday and the day before, you all had the chance to drink the nectar of anandha (bliss) here; I am happy you have a chance today to imbibe the sweet nectar of Spiritual discourses. I see you all like the waves of the ocean, when the Moon rises in the sky. Of course, the prema (love) you have for the sources of all prema is the real reason of this anandha I see shining in your faces. My arrival and My resolve to re-establish Dharma (virtue) are both the consequence of this prema, as you can well understand. But, this anandha must be directed along useful channels of activity. The value of the eye will be known only when we happen to go blind. The value of water can be known only when there is scarcity, not when all the taps are pouring plenty of it into the buckets. When tanks and wells go dry, men cry out for a cup of water. So too, this anandha. Gather it, garner it, develop it and irrigate parched heart with it, while you can. In the past, Shankara strove to re-establish in the heart of man the faith that he is the Limitless Almighty; he tried to remove vicious traits that had taken residence there, so that man can move towards his Reality.

When he has even a glimpse of that reality, man becomes free from ego, free from pride and despondency, so that praise does not please him or abuse sadden him. He is rendered stable and secure, like a mountain peak, which no storm can shake. Like the screen in the cinema hall, he is not affected by the fire of calumny or the rain of extolment. The Buddha once said at Buddhagaya that good and bad, fame and ill-fame, praise and calumny, are as the two feet; one cannot move without either of them. They are inevitable in the process of living. Food and offal are both inside man; he has veins for the red blood as well as for the blue. A city has pipes under it for bringing drinking water and for taking away the drainage.

Do good to others to make them happy

A nasthika (atheist) came near Buddha and challenged him in violent

language, abusing him, casting aspersions on him and his associates, exhibiting foul manners of the most reprehensible kind. Buddha listened to him but did not react at all. The poor fellow's tongue got exhausted and he became mad with anger. He went out of the presence, in great huff. When asked the reasons why he did not speak a word in reply, the Buddha said, "When some one comes to your door with intention to be your guest, the slightest indication that you have become aware of his coming, a word like 'Hello' or 'when did you come?' is enough to make him settle down in the house. But, if you do not notice him or react to his talk, he will return without much ado." Many of you are pained by the calumny that some papers are indulging in regarding Me. Many are urging that something should be done about it. But, I am holding every one back, for, that is the best way to deal with both praise and blame. The ocean knows no overflowing or drying up. It is ever full, ever majestic, ever unconcerned. I have been advising you to do good to others, to make others happy, to help others live comfortably. This is called sath karma (beneficial acts). Now, these papers that live on falsehood are able to scrape together a little money from people with low tastes. That is a beneficial act; again, the people who spread such fantastic absurdities, knowing them to be false and knowing that they are manufactured by their own brains, get joy out of this exercise. Do not stop them from it, for, without spending a single naya paisa, you are now able to give them joy. Let them revel in their own mud. Joy is what one derives from one's own mind; when the mind is vicious, it derives joy from vicious things. When it is pure, only purity can give it joy.

God appears as many and varied

Hiranyakashipu declared that God is nowhere; his son Prahladha said that God is now here. The father suffered humiliation and destruction. The son rose to the heights of blessedness. The son knew that all this is God appearing as many and varied. A young daughter-in-law, newly come into the family, was serving dinner to the members of the household. Diners called for ghee, butter, buttermilk (yogurt) and, she simplified the process of serving, by giving them 'milk' instead, for she felt that milk included all they wanted. When you are immersed in the anandha of the Lord, you are master of all the

lesser anandhas also. When you dive in the sea, you must seek pearls; when you go to the Kalpavriksha (the wish fulfilling tree) ask for the Highest Bliss. Do not crave for the smaller when the vastest is available, for just a little more effort. There is a natural craving in man to become one with the vast, the supreme, the limitless, for, in the cave of his heart, there resides the self-same Supreme. It is like the young calf pining for the cow. Each calf knows its mother. You may have a thousand calves and a thousand cows. Let loose the calves and each will find its own mother. So, too, you must know where you get your native sustenance and support. They are available only with God, from whom you came.

The sad condition of humanity at present

There must be a sense of urgency in you when you take to the spiritual path. For, death is lying in wait to snatch you off. At a ferry on the Ganga, hundreds were waiting for the boat to come back from the opposite bank. When it came, they hustled into it and while the boatman was rowing it across, they quarrelled with the fellow-passengers and the boatman and were dealing blows among themselves. They were immersed in faction and fighting, higgling over the fare and demanding a few more inches of squatting space. They were unaware of the danger to their very lives. But, one wise man among them warned them and said, Brothers! In ten minutes, we reach hard ground, please keep quiet, forget these petty desires, pray to God. This is the sad condition of humanity also at present. On the brink of death, people revel and waste precious moments in empty pleasures. The fault is: identification with the body. The body is but a dwelling place, a vehicle, an encasement. See yourself as a resident in it and most of your grief will disappear. You will become less ego-centric for, you will then feel kinship with others, who are residents in those other bodies.

Vivekananda was once in a certain town, during his peregrinations. People recognised in him a great monk and a profound scholar and so, for about three days, without intermission, streams of visitors poured into his presence. Some asked about subtle points in sadhana, many argued with him on the intricacies of logic, grammar, and ethics that are found in the Shasthras.

Students sought to know the problems of national regeneration and the solutions he could suggest. But, there was an old woman, sitting in a corner, watching Vivekananda with avidity, who did not speak one word. She was there for all the three days, waiting for a chance to come near the monk.

Qualities that win God's Grace

When the lady finally got the chance, she asked him, Son! Shall I bring you something to eat? These people never gave you anything, nor did they give you even a few minutes to go and beg food from the town. Tell me, I shall run and bring you food and drink. Vivekananda was overjoyed at the tender heart of that mother; he said, "You are indeed blessed. What can mere scholarship or mere earnestness to serve do, to save man? Sympathy, service, putting yourselves in the place of your neighbour and trying to assuage pain and sorrow - that is what wins Grace." Through Love and Service, the mind is cleared of ego and God is reflected therein. A man borrowed money from another and promised to return it at sunrise the next day. The other fellow asked, Bat, how are you certain that the sun will rise tomorrow? At this, the creditor retorted, Bat, how are you certain that I will live to repay it or that you will live to take it back? Everything about life is uncertain. So, march on, from this very moment, take at least few steps towards the goal, while you can. That very attempt might induce the Lord to extend your stay until you attain the goal.

Love for the Lord should not degenerate into fanaticism and hatred of other names and forms. This type of cancer is affecting even eminent men now-a-days. But, you must avoid it. Believe that all who revere the Lord and walk in fear of sin are your brothers, your nearest kith and kin. Their outer dress or language or skin-colour, or even the methods they adopt to express their reverence and fear are not important at all. Sugar dolls are valued for the sugar, not the shapes they are given by the manufacturer. Their sweetness makes men purchase them. Elephant, dog, cat, rat, jackal or lion, it does not matter. That is a matter of individual fancy. Each is sweet, that is the essential thing. The sweetness draws the maanava (man) towards Madhava (God): the pravrriththi (deed) towards nivrriththi (dedication), the anandha

(joy) towards Sath-chith-anandha (Bliss in the awareness of the Supreme Being). When the appetite for these grows, all low desires and hungers cease

The best form of serving God

Prahladha knew the truth, Sarvam Vishnu mayam jagath - This world is all filled with the immanent God". He knew it by study and by experience; he knew it as an ever-present fact. So, when he was asked to frame a boon to be granted by the Lord who concretised before him, he asked neither for the revival of his father nor the restoration of his kingdom, long life, wealth or fame; he asked for the chance of assuaging the pain and sorrow of all beings! God, he knew, was manifest as those beings and the best form of serving God was to serve those manifestations and give them relief and joy. The tongue must justify itself by sweet soothing words; the hand, by soft harmless acts. The body must be spent in upa-vasa - being in the constant Presence of the Divine.

Many of you misunderstand upavasa to mean 'fasting' and I know, you overdo it. You fast on Monday to please Shiva, on Tuesday to please Lakshmi, on Wednesday to propitiate some other God, on Thursday in My Name, on Friday for Gowri and Saturday, for fear of Shani and on Sunday, to get the favour of the Sun. Lal Bahadur Shastri wanted that you should fast one day to help solve the food crisis, but you are prepared to help him much further. Now, this fasting will not bring you nearer to the Grace of God.

Do not overdo anything, be moderate

Upavasa means that all your thoughts and deeds and words on those holy days must be about God, that you should spend the day 'near' Him, 'in' Him, 'for' Him. It means that eating, sleeping and other bodily avocations have to take to secondary role, and the meditation and japam have to take the main role. If your body wastes away as a result of these fasts, God will be blamed; so, you are only drawing down the calumny of people on the God you adore. They will come to you and say, What! Before you started this Sai Baba Puuja, you were looking much better; now, you have become so thin and frail; you

can scarcely move ! And they continue talking against Me in the same strain.

Do not overdo anything; be moderate and wise. You speak of My being Sarvabhoothantharatma (the Inner Motivator of all beings) and Sarvavyapi (all-per-vading); but, yet, you get angry and upset when you are prevented from coming here for Navarathri or Shivarathri. You should not belie the faith you have in the Omnipresence: 'Women especially have to be obedient to their elders and husbands. Do not feel that the husband or the children are hindrances. You should not entertain the slightest trace of disgust at either of these. Worship the husband as the Lord; serve the children as Shri Krishna was served by Yashoda. See in them the Lord you revere.

In the days of Emperor Krishnadevaraya at vijayanagar, an infectious disease appeared and gained ground quickly. It was reported that the disease spread through rats and so, each house was supplied a cat, together with a 'cat allowance' for feeding the cats. But, the rats showed no signs of decline in numbers. After a few days; the discovery was made that the cat allowance was misused by every one and the cats had become too weak to pounce upon the rats and catch them for eating.

The cats must be fed, so that they may eat the rats. So too, the body must be fed so that wicked tendencies, sensual appetites, evil propensities may be vigorously attacked and put down. Unless this work is done, the Divine in man cannot bloom. The earth around the trunk of certain trees has to be turned now and again so that the roots might get strong; the branches have to be trimmed, so that blossoms might appear and fruits might be got. So too man has to dig around the edges of the mind, trim the traits of character and tend the tree of life.

Take calamities as acts of God's Grace

Practise the attitude of offering every act at the Feet of God as a flower is offered in puuja. Make every breath an offering to Him. Do not upset by calamities; take them as acts of Grace. If a man loses his hand in an accident, he must believe that it was the Lord's Grace that saved his life. When you

know that nothing happens without His sankalpa (resolve), everything that happens has a value added to it. You may be neglecting a creeper in your back-yard, but, if a sage passes by and says it is a rare drug that can cure snake poison, you erect a fence around it and do not allow children to pluck its leaves even for fun! When you know that the Lord is the cause, the source of all, you deal with everyone in a humble reverent manner. That is the path which will lead you quick to the Goal.

Service in all its forms, all the world over is primarily spiritual discipline, mental clean up! Without the inspiration given by that attitude, the urge is bound to ebb and grow dry, or, it may meander into pride and pomp. Just think for a moment: Are you serving God? Or, is God serving you? When you offer milk to a hungry child, or a blanket to a shivering brother on the pavement, you are but placing a gift of God into the hands of another gift of God! You are reposing the gift of God in a repository of the Divine Principle! God serves; He allows you to claim that you have served! Without His Will, no single blade of grass can quiver in the breeze. Fill every moment with gratitude to the Giver and the Recipient of all gifts.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

6. Hitha and priya

Date: 16 March 1966 / Location: Mumbai

The recognition of one's innate Divinity and the regulation of one's daily life in accordance with that Truth are the guiding stars for those who are caught in the currents and cross currents of strife and struggle in populous cities like this. Without that Atmajnana, life becomes a meaningless farce, a mockery, a game of fools. It is the acquisition of that awareness that makes life earnest sweet and fruitful. Man is not aware of the grand goal of his pilgrimage. He is straying into wrong roads which lead him only towards disaster. He puts his faith in things outside himself and plans to derive joy, from and through them. He does not know that all joys spring only from the spring that is inside him; he only invests the outer things with his own joy drawn from inside himself; he envelopes the outer things with his own joy and then, experiences it as though from that other thing - that is all!. When you try to prepare a meal, you may have with you all the materials you need: rice, dhal, salt, lime, spices, vegetables. But, unless you have the fire in the hearth, you cannot get the edible meal. So too with life Jnana (of your own reality, as just a wave of the ocean of divinity) is the fire which makes the material world and the external activities and experience, edible and tasty, assimilable and health-granting and joy-giving. That joy is called Anandham; it is uplifting, it is illuminating, it is constructive.

Release can be won only through travail

Life 'here' is for the sake of reaching 'there'. That is to say, iha-nivasam is for para-prapthi. And, let me tell you this. You cannot attain sukham through sukham. That is to say, the joy of release can be won only through travail and trial. Through pain is achieved by woman the bliss of mother-hood. Through toil, the coveted grain is earned by the farmer from the field. Through long days and nights of steady swatting is the examination passed and the Diploma won by the student. Deprive yourselves luxury and even comfort, detach yourselves from what you hold dear and near through sheer ignorance of what is the thing most dear and most near to yourself; pine, struggle, strive

ceaseless-ly - and, then you are blessed with the inexpressible Bliss of merger with the Universal, of Sakshathkara. It is grief that makes joy worth while, a precious possession; it is the pitch-dark night that prompts the seeker of light; it is death, that lends zest to life.

Life is not a simple affair; it is not governed by uniform laws which can be discovered and applied. Twice two may not always be four, in life, though it may be so in arithmetic. Each one has his own strength and weakness, his foibles and fears; his skills and handicaps, and so no one prescription can be suggested for all. One day is sunny, but, the next may be rainy. One man may come upon a treasure while walking on a road; the man behind him on the same road may lose his purse and all that he possessed! Each one must proceed from the place where he is, at his own pace, according to own light. But, if each has caught a glimpse of the Athmic Reality, of the source from which he has emerged and the goal into which he is to merge, then all will reach the goal of the journey, sooner or later. Once that glimpse is received either through grace or through a Guru or through some other means, the fascination for the body and the senses which dominate it, and the world which feeds the senses, the fascination for the vainglorious adventures in search of fame and fortune, will become meaningless and will fade away; man will then have instead of the deha-bhranthi (yearning for body) which now torments him, the yearning to know and be established in the Dehi, the Divine Indweller.

Do not try to cover up your defects

For that yearning and the pursuit that is impelled by it, the first equipment that is necessary for the individual is 'a rigorous self-examination' to remove all evil from oneself. Do not try to cover up the defects, the down-dragging tendencies and habits. When people go to a shop to purchase cloth to have dresses prepared for themselves, have you noticed that they prefer coloured materials to white? The answer they will give when you question them why they choose coloured materials is, "It will not reveal dirt"! So, you see how anxious people are to hide their defects, instead of striving to remove them. They are so much attached to physical comfort and objective pleasure.

Really speaking, the body has to be treated as a wound that has to be washed, bandaged, and treated with medicated ointment, three or four times a day. That is the real purpose of food and drink and raiment. Thirst is the disease; drink is the drug. Hunger is the disease; food is the medicine. Craving for pleasure is the disease for which detachment is the medicine. Once the Atma is cognised, all is Unity; you will find that all is really One. This is the goal prescribed by the ancient scriptures of this land. But, the children of this sacred land have neglected the path and they are today struggling in the quagmires and cesspools of faction and fear. When the four bulls that grazed in the jungle were united and watchful of each other's safety (for they felt they were all One) the tiger dared not approach them; but, when discord broke them and created out of the One, four separate individuals, they were attacked one by one, and destroyed by the tiger. That is the fate of those who feel separate. Know that though vyakthis (individuals) may be separate, the shakthi (power) is one; that Shakthi is the Param-atmathathwa.

What is beneficial may not be pleasing

This is the Message that I bring - the Message that will confer strength, peace, hope and fulfilment. This Message surely is hitha (beneficial), though it may not be priya (pleasing). A patient has to take drugs and put himself through regimen that is beneficial; he cannot ask for only sweet medicines and comfortable regimen which please him. The Doctor knows best. He has to be obeyed, for the sake of recovery. The ministers of Ravana spoke only what was pleasing to him; they were afraid and so, they proved dangerous counsellors. Vibheeshana, the brother, alone gave him the beneficial drug, the drug which would have cured him; but, since it was not priya, Ravana rejected it and fell into perdition. The Vedas and Shasthras, since they were won by penance and travail by sages and seers who were interested only in the welfare of humanity and the liberation of Man are the greatest repositories of hitha. They advise that Man must regulate his 'out-look' and develop the 'in-look'; the inner reality is the foundation on which the outer reality is built. It is like the inner wheel in the car, which directs the outer wheels. Know that the basic reality is God, Omnipotent, Omniscient, Omnipresent. Become aware of it and stay in that awareness always.

Whatever the stress and the storm, do not waver from that Faith. Or you can earn that awareness by reminding yourselves of it with every breath of yours. How can you so remind yourselves, you may ask. By means of any one of His Names, any Name that is fragrant with Divine Perfume, any Name that is reminiscent of His Beauty. His Grace, and His power.

Realisation can come only if you deserve it

Start with this first lesson, from the spiritual primer. Do not merely boast that you have mastered the Bhagavath Geetha, having read it a hundred times over, and learnt by rote all the slokas with all the commentaries so far written upon them. Among all the millions who were taught the Geetha, Arjuna alone had the Vishwaruupa Darshana, the realisation that this Universe is but a partial manifestation of His immeasurable glory; why is it that these great Pandiths had no such experience? Realisation of that reality can come only to the aspirant who deserves it. Arjuna had reached the highest stage of surrender when the teaching started and during the process, he had unexcelled Ekagratha or concentration. No wonder he was blessed. Unless one has the same degree of surrender, the same yearning and the same concentration, how can one expect the result that Arjuna attained? It is no easy path, this path of Sharanagathi, of Prapaththi, that the Geetha lays down. The seed that is dried in the sun will sprout when planted in the soil; it has janana (birth) and marana (death); the cycle of birth and death cannot be got rid of by study and scholarship. Most sadhakas are like the dried seed only. But, Arjuna was not a dried seed; he was a fried seed. He was gudakesha, who had mastered the senses. He had repelled the advances of Uurvashi, whom he defeated, by his attitude as a son towards his mother.

For all who seek to cleanse the mind and climb upwards to the realm of spiritual bliss where 'this' and 'that' are discovered as ONE, the uninterrupted remembrance of the Name is the most effective sadhana.

Let the pretty wishes for which you now approach God be realised or not, let

the plans for promotion and progress which you place before God, be fulfilled or not; they are not so important after all. The primary aim should be to become Masters of yourselves, to hold intimate and constant communion with the Divine that is in you as well as in the Universe of which you are a part. Welcome disappointments, for they toughen you and test your fortitude.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

7. The inner wheel

Date: 16 March 1966 / Location: Sardar Patel Stadium, Mumbai

Forsaking the various attractions and distractions of this vast city, you have come here, to this stadium, drawn by the call of the Spirit; this is to be commended because the Light of the Spirit is the veritable Beacon for those struggling in the darkness of worldly affairs. That darkness creates confusion and makes you take one thing for another. The stump of a tree appears to be a thief, lying in wait to rob you of your purse. The knowledge of the Atma is the Light which will disperse the darkness as well as the doubts and diversifies which it creates. Without this knowledge, man is lost in the wilderness; he behaves as if he has lost all memory of himself, as if he has forgotten his name, native place and the place to which he is proceeding. He evokes pity among the wise!

Awareness of his identity, of his being Atma, is the sign of wisdom, the lighting of the Lamp which scatters darkness. That Atma is the embodiment of Bliss, of Peace, of Love but, without knowing that all these exist in oneself, man seeks them from outside himself and exhausts himself in that disappointing pursuit. Birds that fly far from the masts of a ship have to return to those very masts, for they have no other place to fold their tired wings and stay. Devoid of this jnana, all efforts to seek spiritual bliss and peace are futile. You may have rice, dhal (lentils), salt, vegetables and tamarind; but, without a fire to cook them soft and palatable, they are as good as non-existent. So too, japam, dhyanam, puja, pilgrimage - all these are ineffective, if the knowledge of one's basic Reality and Identity is not there to warm up the process. The Atma is the source and spring of all joy and peace; this has to be cognised and dwelt upon. Without this cognition, human life is an opportunity that is lost. One has to come into this wilderness again and again in order to learn the way out. The quantities of food consumed, the hours of sleep spent in bed, the riches earned and enjoyed add up to a colossal waste, if the main purpose of life is neglected.

Virtue is strength; vice is weakness

Life is a campaign against foes, it is a battle with obstacles, temptations, hardships, hesitations. These foes are within man and so, the battle has to be incessant and perpetual. Like the virus that thrives on the bloodstream, the vices of lust, greed, hate, malice, pride and envy sap the energy and faith of man and reduce him to untimely fall. Ravana had scholarship, strength, wealth, power, authority, the Grace of God - but, the virus of lust and pride which lodged in his mind brought about his destruction, despite all his attainments. He could not dwell in peace and joy for a moment after the virus started work. Virtue is strength vice is weakness. Man differs from man, in this struggle against the inner foes. Each gets the result that his sadhana deserves, that his acts in this and previous births deserve. Life is not a mechanical formula, where 2 plus 2 always make 4. To some, it may be 3, .to others, 5. It depends on how each values the 2. Moreover, in the spiritual path, each one has to move forward from where he already is, according to his own pace, in the light of the lamp which each one holds in his own hand. The demons were too conceited to bend before the Lord; they put too much trust in arms and number; they ignored the subtler and stronger forces of the spirit, which could carry mountains, bridges, oceans and annihilate the anger of the elements. You must strive to diagnose your own character and discover the faults that are infesting it; do not try to analyse the character of others and seek to spot their defects. This self-examination is very necessary to bring to light the defects that might undermine one's spiritual career. People buy clothes with deep colour, so that they may not reveal dust or dirt; they do not prefer white clothes, for they show plainly their soiled condition. But, do not try to hide your dirt in darkness; be ashamed of soiled natures and endeavour to cleanse them fast.

Man suffers from fever of the senses

Consider also the true nature of what is now named bhoga or luxury, a thing that drags people away into excitement and insane pursuits. All the variety in taste, colour, smell of the multiform items of food is, when you consider it fairly and squarely, a mere drug to cure the illness of hunger; all the drinks that man has invented are but drugs to alleviate the illness of thirst. Man

suffers from the fever of the senses and he tries the quack remedies of recreations, pleasures, picnics, banquets, dances etc., only to find that the fever does not subside. The fever can subside only when the hidden virus is rendered ineffective. That virus will die only when the rays of jnana fall upon it.

There are two things that draw man's mind, hitha and priya (the beneficial and the pleasant). Prefer the beneficial to the pleasant, for the pleasant might lead you down the sliding path into the bottomless pit. Vibheeshana spoke hitha to Ravana, but he lent his ear to the priya that his sycophantic ministers spoke. He exiled his brother and honoured his courtiers; he sealed his fate by this preference of priya over hitha. The true doctor is interested in curing you of all illness and so, he advises hitha to restore your health; the Guru is such a doctor. Obey him, even when his prescription is unpalatable, for, you can be cured only by him.

Cultivate quietness, simplicity and humility

Now this country is pursuing priya instead of hitha and that is the reason for all this distress and discontent. Indian Culture has always emphasised the hard way, the beneficial way; but, people are now after cultures that cater to the senses - the outer, the external, the frill and the fancies, the mirages and the momentaries. Indian culture advises the control of the senses, not catering to them. The car is driven by means of a wheel which is inside it; when that wheel is turned, the outer wheels move. So also, the inner wheel has to be turned in man, so that he may progress. Trying to move the outer wheels is a sign of ignorance; it is waste of precious energy. Inner concentration is to be developed in preference to outer distraction. Cultivate quietness, simplicity, humility, instead of noise, complexity, conceit. Of the twenty-four hours which comprise a day, use six for earning and spending, six for contemplation of God, six for sleep and six for service to others. You are now spending not even five minutes in the contemplation of God and you are not ashamed. What a tragedy!

Best course to develop taste for liberation

Ponder over your sthithi (present condition), gathi (direction of movement, sakthi (capabilities) and mathi (inclinations). Then, enter upon the path of sadhana step by step, so that you approach the goal faster every day, every hour, every minute. Arjuna became entitled to the Geetha Upadesh (spiritual instruction) from the Lord Himself, because he evinced the vishada, the vairagya, the sharanagathi and the ekagratha - essential to assimilate the Great Message. When the yearning for Liberation has become intense beyond expression, man can set aside all social conventions, worldly norms and codes of conduct, that do not subserve that high purpose. Then, Prahladha can give up his father, Bheeshma can counter his Guru, Meera can desert her husband and Shankaracharya can play subterfuge with his mother. To develop that taste for liberation Namasmara (rolling the sweet Name of the Lord saturated with sugar of His splendour on the tongue and in the mind) is the best course. This is an exercise that can be practised at all times and places by all, irrespective of creed or caste or sex or age or economic and social status. It will keep you in constant touch with the Infinite and so, it will transmit to you something of the Wisdom and Power of the Infinite.

8. Krodha and kaama

Date: 17 March 1966 / Location: Mumbai

Bharathamatha is the mother of Vamadeva, who knew his identity with the Universal Parabrahmam from the moment of his birth; of Prahladha, who from the day he lisped uttered the Name of Narayana; of Shuka, who had the unique Adhwaithic Realisation even while a boy; and a Shankaracharya, who mastered the intricacies of Vedantha even while in his teens. She is the mother of heroes like Bharatha, who gambolled with lion cubs, Arjuna who could wield his undefeatable bow, in either hand; of Shivaji, who faced fearful odds to fulfil the smallest wish of his Guru Samartha Ramadas. Among her children, we have men like Shibi, Harishchandra and Karna who are shining examples of the spirit of renunciation and women like Seetha, Savithri and Damayanthi who are brilliant stars in the firmament of virtue. No wonder India rose to the position of the Guru of the Globe, the Teacher of all Humanity. This heritage is fast being forgotten and India started a journey away from her legitimate direction. Man, according to this ancient teaching, is not simply a co-ordinated collection of limbs, senses and sensations. He is all these, governed by intelligence, sharpened by the modes and memories earned through many births. That intelligence itself is an instrument with a limited range of efficiency; there are many goals which it cannot achieve. These can be reached only by the descent of Grace and Power from above. Complete surrender of the ego to that Power will bring it down, fill you with itself.

Develop a pure unsullied mind to get peace

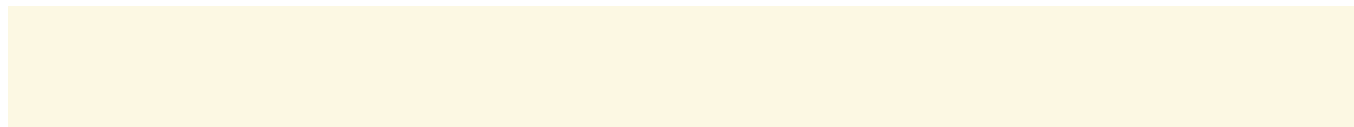
Vibheeshana was capable of that surrender and so he was accepted and assured quickly. It took Sugreeva much longer to reach that stage, for he had some personal aims to realise, through Rama and his faith in him was clogged by doubts. Has he the skill he professes to possess? Can he kill such a formidable adversary as Vali? He surrendered to Rama only when his doubts were cleared.

Speaking of the Ramayana, you will notice that there are two little incidents, centred round two minor characters, which sparked off the entire epic: the resentment of Manthara and the lust of Suurpanakha - Krodha and Kama. In the Jeevitha Ramayana, the life-epic of each of you, beware of these two, krodha (anger) and kama (desire); a tiny spark of each is enough to destroy peace and joy. Weed them out, before they destroy you. The mano-nasana (extinction of the mind) - with all its likes and dislikes, its flowing out into the objective world in search of joy - can be effected, if the senses are rendered ineffective. Then, like the faggots on which the corpse is cremated, in the process of cremation, the corpse as well as the faggots both become ashes. Sensory activity is the warp as well as the woof of the mind; when that ceases, the mind vanishes. It starves and dies. To get santhosha and shanthi you must develop a pure unsullied mind, unsullied by egoism and its pro-geny - lust, greed, envy, anger, hatred and the rest. For this, you must seek sath sanga (good company), perform sath karma (good deeds), entertain only sath alochana (good thoughts) and read sath granthas (good books). You may see a thousand good things or listen to a thousand good words or read a thousand good books - but, unless you put at least one into practice, the blemishes in the mirror of your heart will not be wiped off. The Lord cannot be reflected therein.

Constant practice with full faith will transmute Nara into Narayana, Manava into Madhava (man into God); for Narayana is your real nature, Madhava is your real essence. You are but a wave of the sea; know it, and you are free.

Do not serve for the sake of reward, attracting attention, or earning gratitude, or from a sense of pride at your own superiority in skill, wealth, status, or authority. Serve because you are urged by Love. When you succeed, ascribe the success to the Grace of God who urged you on, as Love within you. When you fail, ascribe the failure to your own inadequacy, insincerity, of ignorance.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba



9. Make the mind a mirror

Date: 17 March 1966 / Location: Mumbai / Occasion: Vallabhbhai Patel Stadium

India is the charming land where nature presents beauty to the eye and melody to the ear, fragrance and soft refreshing coolness. It is the heartening arena for the exercise of viveka and vairagya (discrimination and non-attachment to the world). India provides a rich heritage of philosophy and practical spirituality, a galaxy of eminent saints and seers immortalised by poets of pure renown. But the language of the past, the treasure house of this vast and valuable experience is now known only to a few and even they are fast disappearing through neglect and want of encouragement.

Sanskrit, which was once the language that linked the learned men and women of all parts of India, from the Himalayan hermitages to the cowrie-decked ascetics of Kanyakumari, has now earned the ill-fame of a 'dead language' and is being consigned to oblivion by the ungrateful children of the motherland.

This mother has given birth to Vamadev, who had realised that he was no other than Brahman, even in the womb; to Prahlada, who recited the holy Name of God even as a child, who revelled in the midst of unbearable torture in the recitation of the sacred mantra, Om Namonarayana (Salutations to God Narayana, the Supreme); to Shukadev, the unexcelled anchorite, unattached to the world of the senses from childhood; to Shankaracharya, the supreme ascetic and interpreter of the Vedas and Upanishads and the two other basic texts of Sanathana Dharma, the Geetha and the Brahma Sutras, the Master who revived Bhakti and sang in praise of every great Hindu shrine; to Prince Bharata who played as a child with a gambolling lion cub; to Arjuna, the greatest Bowman who could shoot arrows with both his hands, the disciplined disciple of the Lord who won from Him the sublime teaching of the Bhagavad Geetha; to Shivaji, the devoted servant of Samarth Ramadas, who built an empire where Sanathana Dharma reigned; to Shibi and Karna, unique examples of selfless renunciation; to Seetha, Savithri, Dhroupadi, Shabari, Meera, Andal and many other women who

proclaimed the supreme significance of Dharma to purify and liberate the mind, who gladly entered the raging flames rather than suffer the ignominy of disloyalty to the ideals of that Dharma; to Empress Chandramathi and Dhamayanthi who welcomed every disaster as but one more example of the loving interest that the Lord had in their progress towards His Feet.

Become the ideal candidate for Divinity

Man is just not a creature with hands and feet, eyes and ears, head and trunk; he is much more than a total of all these organs and parts- they are but the crude image that came out of the mould. Later, they have to be ground, scraped, polished, perfected, smoothed, softened, through the intellect and the higher impulses and the pure intentions and ideals. Then, man becomes the ideal candidate for Divinity, which is his real destiny. The impulses will be rendered pure and the intentions will be raised to the higher level, if man but decides to dedicate all his deeds, words and thoughts to the Lord. For this, faith in One Supreme Intelligence, which conceived, conserves and consumes this Universe, is essential. The next step is to be convinced of one's own helplessness and distress at one's own grief. Then, surrender to that Intelligence is easily achieved. Sugreeva sought the Grace of the Lord, come as Rama; but he was afflicted with doubt regarding His prowess and His integrity. But the Lord had such love towards him that He submitted to the tests which he desired Him to undergo casting off with His Foot the heavy corpse of an ogre, shooting an arrow right through seven sal trees, etc. But Vibheeshana saw that He was the Lord in human form and he ran straight to him for protection and surrendered unconditionally at his feet. So he was accepted without the faintest demur by the Lord, even though those around Him expressed apprehensions.

Cleanse your heart and make it a clear mirror

Therefore, cultivate faith and surrender; then Grace will flow through you into every act of yours; for they are no longer your acts, they are His and you have no concern about the consequences thereof. All acts and words and thoughts will thereafter be pure, saturated with love, conducive to peace.

Cleanse your hearts so that the Lord may be reflected therein, in all His Splendour, in all His myriad forms. There was a famous painter who approached Krishna and arrayed before Him all his masterpieces and all his titles, medals and trophies. He offered to paint a portrait of Krishna, an offer which was gladly accepted. Sittings were granted and the portrait was ready; but it was discovered by all that looked at it that the picture was somehow different from the Krishna who gave the sittings. The painter was graciously given a few more chances, but every time his picture was found quite off the mark, for it depicted a figure which all agreed was not that of the Krishna who gave the sittings. The pride of the artist was pricked; he hung his head in shame and left the City utterly humiliated. Naradha saw him on the outskirts of the City and hearing his plight, the sage told him, The Lord has a multitude of forms; indeed, all forms are His. So, you cannot fix one form on Him and succeed in painting Him. I shall advise you how to proceed and took him aside.

The next day, the painter appeared at the Court with a big framed 'picture' covered by a white cloth; the Lord asked him to uncover it and when he did so, it was discovered that he had brought only a mirror. Lord! You have a thousand forms; in this picture, all forms are clearly and instantaneously depicted, he said. Cleanse your heart and make it a clear mirror; the Lord's glory will then be reflected therein.

When the senses are negated, mind disappears

The desires that cling to the mind are the blemishes that tarnish man's inner consciousness. Control the senses, do not yield to their insistent demands for satisfaction. When a corpse is placed on a pyre, and when the pyre is lit, both the corpse and the pyre are reduced to ashes. So too, when the senses are negated, the mind too disappears. When the mind disappears, delusion dies and liberation is achieved. Faith in God is the best reinforcement for spiritual victory. When you revel in the contemplation of the splendour of the Lord, nothing material can attract you; all else will seem inferior; the company of the godly and the humble alone will be relished. This Maharashtra has been for long the home of saints who have sung of the Grace of the Lord, whom

they had realised in the altar of their hearts. The flood of Bhakthi which they brought down by their songs has fertilised millions of parched hearts in Maharashtra and other regions. By then japa, thapas and yoga sadhana (recitation of Lord's Name, penance and yogic practice), they have enabled many an aspirant to approach the Lord quicker and more intimately: so intimately that no disappointment can shake their faith. Kabeer, Ramadas, Tukaram and many others have built the royal road of devotion for humanity, When it is a claim for spiritual excellence, Maharashtra makes it with confidence among all the States of India with Saurashtra as a close competitor. It is your duty now to live up to the heritage handed over to you for development by the pious forefathers.

Spirit can only be awakened, realised through individual discipline and the Grace of God.

These two can be won through Love, Purity and Service to others.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

10. Escape from entanglement

Date: 23 March 1966 / Location: Sardar Patel Stadium, Mumbai / Occasion: Ugadi

This day is a sacred Day which has to be spent in sacred thoughts and deeds and not in cheap debilitating sensual pleasures and pastimes, like feasting and film-going. Of course, people in their ignorance resort to these hollow hilarities, urged by the innate and inescapable urge for anandha. The anandha (Bliss Supreme) within seeks anandha pure and undefiled. It can be secured only through the satisfaction of higher and more sublime desires like the yearning for freedom, for expanding ourselves to the utmost limit, for escaping from bondage, for realising the Ultimate and the Universal. Each such festival has been designed by the sages as a step in the progress of man towards this Goal. Nevertheless, we are casting many a New Year Day behind us unmindful of its significance. Year after year is wasted in misdirected effort at attaining anandha, and in the consequent misery and despair. Just consider! The second is the very basic unit of Time, which we measure in what we designate as a Year. Sixty of them make up a minute; sixty of these form an hour; twenty four hours constitute a day; about thirty of these make a month; twelve months pass and we say a year has passed! When twelve months are over, when we come back again to the first in the list of months, we call it the New Year Day and go on a spree to mark the occasion.

Learn how to acquire bliss and peace

Really speaking, nothing new has happened today. It is not the year that is new; it is the second that follows this present second that is really new. Do not wait for the celebration of something new in Time until the minutes, the hours, the days, the months add up to a year. Celebrate the immediately succeeding second by an honest effort to get lasting joy. There is no touch of meanness in trying to get joy or anandha. It is only the means that make it unworthy and futile. As a matter of fact, it is to fill himself with anandha that man has come to this world, equipped with mind and intelligence, memory and speech, courage and conscience. Only man has the chance and the capacity among all living beings. But man has forgotten the errand and is

wandering in the wilderness, trailing behind trivial pleasures, which he assumes to be honourable and beneficial.

Man's determination to acquire anandha and shanthi should not flicker like the flame of a lamp placed on a gusty, windowsill. He must learn how to acquire them from the scriptures composed by saints or from the wise who have won them. Then he must adhere to the Path, however sharp the criticism, whoever callously condemns it cynically. Cynical laughter cannot harm the sadhaka. Can a storm shake the Himalayan range? Let not your faith in the goal or the road quake before trouble or trial, toil or travail, distress or despair. They are but passing clouds, casting temporary shadows, hiding for a little time the glory of the sun or moon. Do not get distracted by doubt or despondency. Build the mansion of your life on four firm pillars: dharma, artha, kama and moksha (virtue, wealth, desire and liberation), the Purusharthas (goals of human effort) laid down by the ancient sages, each pillar bound strong and safe with every other. Do not allow the pillars to slant or tumble as many individuals, communities and nations are doing now.

Qualifications of a true devotee

Contemplate on Rama, the Ideal lived by God for man. Rama is virtue personified (Vigrahavan Dharmah). Rama is the supreme exemplar of the virtues that man must cultivate so that he might live as a master, as a husband, son, brother, friend, or even as a foe. The other three brothers of Rama personify the other three ideals: Bharatha is the embodiment of sathya, Sathrughna of shanthi and Lakshmana of prema. Study the Ramayana with the aim of imbibing from it the ideals for happy living, for making this life worth while, and you will be amply rewarded. Then you can deservedly style yourselves devotees of the Lord. You have now multitudes of claimants for the status and for the appurtenant benefits of "devotion." You can see them being carried along the roads to holy rivers or cities by buses or railway coaches; you can see them singing spiritual songs wearing all the paraphernalia of devotion. But the claim to be a Devotee of the Lord, a Votary of the Highest, can be admitted only if the passions and emotions are pure and the character virtuous. The tongue may utter the Name of the Lord, the

ear may be open when the glory of the Lord is recited, the hand may scatter flowers on the image of God; but the tongue may not know or relish the taste, the ear may not yearn, the hand may not hanker. These can happen only when the heart is aware of the Supreme, when the mind is thrilled when the glory of God is recollected. Otherwise one is like the spoon which dips into sour and sweet with equal alacrity and insensitivity. It does not refuse or relish any of the tastes. The Vedantha which such men read is just a few pages of matter, though spiritual matter. It is not a text that is practised, that becomes part of the daily conduct and character of the person.

The first step in Dharma is gratitude

The lives of divine personages, sages and seers that men read, if not taken as tonics to improve mental health as signposts for life's tortuous journey, are mere tales that fickle the fancy. The wise man finds in them beacons in the darkness. Bheeshma, for example, has to be revered and accepted as an inspiration, even more potent than Rama so far as homage to the father is concerned. In order to cater to the carnal cravings of his senile father, craving which he could have ordinarily condemned, he denied himself gladly, spontaneously, without demur and for the entire period of his life, both wedded life and royal status. The Vedhic injunction pithru devobhava (revere father as God), was honoured by him in the fullest manner. This moral code, the product of centuries of selfless pursuit of individual and social contentment, is now thrown to the winds by the present generation. Sons clamour for a share in the property of the father, but not for a share in his love. They close their ears to their needs and commands. Parents have conferred this physical equipment called body, with which we can attain the Absolute, to serve God in all living beings, to glorify Him in and through Beauty and Truth; this equipment which is essential for liberating ourselves from the direst of bondages. So gratitude and honour are due to them from children. An iron box is essential to keep safe precious stones; so too, the body is essential to keep safe the precious gifts of virtue, faith, love and discrimination. The parents gave it and so they have to be respected by speech, action and behaviour. How can you expect the Heavenly Father to respond to your prayers if you do not respond to the demands of the earthly

father? The first step in Dharma is gratitude; the first duty of the child is reverence to the parents. When the first step is absent, ascent is impossible

God can be found by diligent Sadhana

Another irreverence that is harming progress is the cynical sneer with which the younger generation has been taught to welcome all reference to God and religion, Who is this God? Where is He to be found? What does He do there? they ask in derision. When a wandering monk was accosted thus by a gang of villagers, he asked them casually to bring him a basin of milk. He looked long at it, stirred it with his finger, shook it around and was silent all the time. The villagers asked him why and he replied, I am trying to locate the butter which they say is in milk. I do not see any in this basinful of milk. The gang laughed at his colossal ignorance. They told him the butter was there, in every drop of the milk, though he could not see it with his eyes or take it out with his finger; it had to be curdled, churned and collected, that was all. The monk declared, So too, God is immanent in the Universe; He is in the most distant star as well as in the blade of grass under your feet. You can see Him provided you curdle this Universe with viveka (discrimination), churn it with vairagya (detachment) and collect it with sraddha (earnestness). In the grain of sand as well as in the grandest galaxy, God can be found by diligent sadhana. He is the core of every being, as butter is in every drop of the milk. Like a lighted lamp, God's Grace spreads all round, on all who approach Him and love to be near Him; but if you interpose a shade which shuts out the light from you, you have only yourself to blame if Grace does not shine. Open the doors of your heart, so that the Sun may shine through and disinfect the vices therein and illumine its corners. You must initiate that little effort, at least. The Sun will not open the doors and enter. To get the programme right and pleasantly, you have to switch on and tune in the receiver. That is an inescapable effort.

Adopt the sacred texts as guides for daily life

Believe - strive - succeed; that is the message of the sacred texts. But the texts are not put to these uses by those who handle them. They are read for disputative ends, for pedantic display of intricate scholarship; or as some

people do, they are worshipped as holy relics of the past. They are seldom adopted as guides for daily life, as life-belts during the perilous sea voyage called life. The Ramayana, the Mahabharatha, the Bhagavatha are mastered, but not allowed to become master. You go through them without allowing them to go through you! The volumes are bound in silk and incense sticks are burnt before them, while man prostrates before them in reverence. But no attention is paid to what the pages proclaim. The frills and fringes attract the mind, more than the kernel provided by the text. I am reminded of an old widow who shed tears for hours on end listening to a Pandith who was expounding the Geetha. At the end of the series of discourses, when the Pandith had finished the Valedictory Puuja, he called the old widow near the altar and publicly acclaimed her as a sincere seeker of the Godly Path, for she was the most punctual, the most earnest and the most devoted among the hundreds of listeners, as was evidenced by the tears she shed whenever the words of the Lord were referred to. The old lady was surprised at all this. She said she had understood not a word; she did not know what the Geetha was or said; she shed tears because the black string with which the palm leaf text of the Geetha in the hands of the Pandith was tied reminded her of the cord round the waist of her departed husband!

Concentration needs faith

Thousands may attend a Geetha discourse and sit through it in pin-drop silence, which gives one an impression of deep concentration and undivided attention; but who knows how few are really being transmuted by the Message of the Lord? The eyes see, but the ears wander; the ears hear, but the mind is meandering; faith is a slow-growing plant; concentration needs faith. You know. the story of Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, how he slapped Rani Rasmani in the face when she stood before the shrine at Dakshineswar with folded hands and half-closed eyes, to all appearance praying to Motter. He knew that she was not praying but actually involving herself with plans for a civil suit in a court of law and so he reminded her of the sanctity of the place and the need to pray for higher objectives, by that slap. The Rani acknowledged the act of service and prevented the servants from admonishing the Parama-hansa. He had done her good, she said.

The scriptures convey a living message; the idols of God convey a living lesson. They are not wood or stone. That is why Shri Ramakrishna did not support those who directed that a broken idol be discarded; he asked whether Rani Rasmani would discard Mathur Babu, her son-in-law, if he happened to break his leg. He recommended that the idol be mended and used for worship. Act according to your profession. Do not play false to yourself and to your ideals. To deny by your acts the truth of what you preach is a sign of cowardice and moral suicide. You say that Baba knows and sees everywhere, but you do something wrong, in the belief that Baba is somewhere else. You pray to Kali in the idol, believing it to be alive; you hide something behind the idol, imagining that no one would know about it.

The law of Karma holds out hope for man

The most valuable message the scriptures convey is this: Carry on your legitimate duties; discharge your obligations; live up to your rights; but do not allow attachment to grow. Be like a trustee so far as family, riches, reputation, knowledge and skills are concerned. Leave them gladly aside, when the call of death comes. Death is pictured by some as a terror-striking God who rides a monster-buffalo, and pounces on you with a noose. No, the noose is of your own making. He does not pounce; he gives advance notice of his arrival to take you - notice in the form of intimations like grey hair, falling teeth, failing vision, deafness of hearing, folding of the skin, etc. He does not ride any beast; he is only another name for Time. It is Time that creeps steadily towards you and shears the cord of life. So, utilise the capacity for karma (action) with which you are endowed, to liberate yourself from the clutches of Time. The Law of karma holds out hope for you; as the karma, so the consequence. Do not bind yourself further by seeking the fruit of karma; offer the karma at the Feet of God; let it glorify Him, let it further His splendour. Be unconcerned with the success or failure of the endeavour. Then, death can have no noose to bind you with. Death will come as a liberator, not a jailor.

These great teachings of the ancient texts are the heritage of the human community; they must be handed down to the growing generation, in homes

and schools. The people, as well as the leaders and rulers whom they have chosen, have to take up this task. I would ask the Minister, the Speaker and the Chairman of the Legislative Council who are here to remind themselves of this duty. The seed of devotion, detachment and duty has to be implanted early, so that the harvest of peace, contentment; co-operation and love may be gleaned. That is the task for which I have come. If they share in that task, they are certain to succeed.

Plant the seed of devotion early in life

I have been in Bombay for ten days now and I must say that the people here have been very disciplined and they have evinced great thirst for spiritual sustenance. I shall certainly come here more often. Today is Gudi Padua and that has brought such a large number of you here, in lakhs, to this place, The Seva Samithi Volunteers have done very good work today as well as on all these days and I bless them specially. From tomorrow, you need not trek to the Gwalior Palace for bhajan or darshan (audience). I would advise you to treasure in your heart the anandha that you earned there for ten days; recapitulate in the silence of your hearts your prema and My prema and dwell gladly in the Prasanthi, that is the fruit of that sadhana.

A car is for going on a journey, not for merely decorating the garage, washed, oiled and painted. Man too must journey towards God, not simply feed and have fun.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

11. Diminish desires

Date: 27 March 1966 / Location: Pune

Man fills his days with unremitting labour; he is immersed in perpetual anxiety and worry. Busy beyond description, with no time to stand and silently contemplate God's handiwork, he is troubled by strange inexplicable misgivings; he runs helter-skelter after hollow comforts; he is blinded by hate and greed. Caught in this toil and turmoil, man has lost knowledge of the one anchor that will save him from the tornado, namely, discipline of the vagaries of the mind. That discipline has to be learnt and practised as early as possible in life; it is not to be postponed to old age, when the physical equipment with which man is endowed has become worn out and weak. There are many who try to warn their children away from holy men and sacred books, for they fear that they may develop a taste for these disciplines too early in life; but there is no "too early" in this matter; it is always "late", whenever you begin. For, who knows when the span of life is brought to a close.

Spiritual discipline is based on faith in the unity of all beings on the basis of the all-pervasive immanent indwelling Atma. There are thousands here before Me, listening to My words, but fundamentally they are all One; for they are but a thousand waves on the face of a single underlying Ocean. Food earned by all the limbs and organs of the body making co-operative effort to procure it and make it ready for consumption is converted by the stomach and other organs again by co-operative effort into strength which is shared by all the limbs and organs. Not one part is neglected. You are all the limbs of that One Cosmic Body, the Purusha, who is far more expansive than the Universe, this Universe being but a small fraction of His Splendour. Individuals - as individuals - may be deluded into the belief that they are different from the rest. But the Atma in each is the Atma in all.

Divinity flows through everyone

In this garland, quickest to strike the eyes are the flowers, while the thread upon which they are strung has to be inferred; it is not so patent. But, without

it, they will all fall off. So too, without that bond in Brahman (the Supreme Absolute), you will fall off as unrelated entities; in fact, you are entities on account of the Divine spark within, the Divine current that flows through each and activates each, On that Ekam (one), all this anekam - is strung (many); On the One, the many secure support.

The sages of this land knew that the mind is an instrument which can bind man or release him from bondage. One has to understand its working technique, as well as its potentialities. You must learn how to wield it, rather than yield to it. It is the mind that weaves the pattern called the 'I'. The way in which it establishes this ego and elaborates it into a multitude of shackles is called Maya (deludious force). The mind prompts the senses to project into the outer world of objects, for it builds up notions of pleasure and pain, of joy and grief and constructs a whole array of urges and impulses. It resists all attempts to escape into the Eternal, the Universal, the Absolute. It protests when the individual is eager to become conscious of his identity with these; but when it finds determined opposition to its tactics, it surrenders and disappears. When this handkerchief is recognised as a mere arrangement of yarn or better still as mere cotton basically, the warp and the woof disappear from the consciousness. The mind is composed of the warp and woof of desire; when man is established in the experience of the ONE, there is no desire, for who is to desire for whom or what? So, mano layam or mano nashanam (dissolution or destruction of the mind) is accomplished. So, man has to diminish desire to become free from delusion; desire comes of attachment; deliverance comes from detachment.

Attitude necessary for developing detachment

A little reflection will give the attitude necessary for developing detachment. You have a house in this city; you have lived in it some years; you call it yours; you are proud of it; you protest angrily when a poster is pasted on its walls; you have taken great care to see that it is comfortable, charming, impressive. Then one day you sell it. It is no longer the object of your attachment. Even when lightning strikes it, you are not disturbed. Now, the fields you have purchased with the sale proceeds become yours and they

attract all your attachment. When flood waters invade those fields, you are very concerned and you run hither and thither trying to save them from harm. Next, you sell them too. You call the money yours; you put it in a bank and you become attached to the pass book issued by the Bank. You keep it in an iron safe and scan its pages lovingly. The money you gave the Bank may be loaned by them to some one you do not like, but you do not care. You have the pass book with you. Now what exactly is yours? To which were you attached so deeply? The house, the fields, the money, the pass book? To none of these things. You were attached to prestige, comfort, show, greed: things that arose in your mind as desire, as urges; to your own ego, basically. That was the thing which induced you to claim these things, one after the other, as yours!

Come out of the well of ego

Each of you must take up some spiritual effort in order to cleanse the mind of lust and greed, of envy and hate. Come out of the well of ego into the sea of the Universal Spirit, of which you are a part. Force your mind to breathe the grander atmosphere of the Eternal by reminding it of God and His Glory, every second, with every breath, when you repeat any one of His Names. Or, engage in some work which will take you out of your narrow self into the vaster magnificence; some task where you dedicate the fruit of karma to God, where you devote your time and energy to share your joy or skill or knowledge with fellow-men. Or, keep yourself surrounded always by persons devoted to the higher life; persons who will encourage you to move forward along the road towards the goal. By these means, you can achieve chiththa shuddhi (cleansing of the mind), so that the Truth can be clearly reflected therein. Sath-sanga (company of pious and holy men) leads gradually to withdrawal from the entangling activities. When a cold bit of coal is placed in the midst of glowing cinders, and when the fire is fanned, the coal too gets glowing with fire. Jnana-agni or the Fire of Wisdom operates similarly.

Virtue and faith needed to win God's Grace

Individual effort and Divine Grace are both inter-de-pendent; without effort,

there will be no conferment of Grace; without Grace, there can be no taste in the effort. To win that Grace, you need only have faith and virtue. You need not praise Him in order to win His favour. For example, I did not like the fulsome praises with which you flooded Me in the address which was read when this meeting started. I am yours and you are Mine. This is a family gathering; as a matter of fact, all gatherings that I meet are family gatherings. The entire mankind is My family. It sounds very improper when a member of the family is extolled by another before the rest. This is a habit, a ceremonial, that is borrowed from political life, where ministers are given addresses wherein they are praised so that some benefits may accrue to the place which they are visiting and which present those praises. The present decline in spiritual progress that is so marked among the heads of monastic institutions and leaders of orders is due to this indiscriminate flattery heaped upon them by fawning groups. Praise feeds the fire of egoism and fogs genuine faith. The disciple or pupil should not flatter the Guru, nor should the Guru flatter the pupil or disciple. The relationship should be like that of father and son. If the son flatters the father or if the father fawns upon the son, it would be ridiculous.

Knock: the doors of Grace will open. Open the door-the sun's rays waiting outside will flow silently in and flood the room with light.

12. Equal half, not better half

Date: 18 April 1966 / Location: Anantapur / Occasion: Basic Training School for Girls

A school is assuredly a sacred place, where a holy task is being put into action - the shaping and moulding of the fortunes of many generations of the country. The children here learn the skills and the special aptitudes which can take each of them to the goal of happiness, which can take the families and societies to which they belong, to peace and prosperity. They are here corrected and trained; they are introduced to the grand culture that the ancient seers and sages of the land have discovered and laid down. This is therefore a sacred place and I am glad I came here and met these children. I am glad that their parents, especially their mothers, have also been invited and are present. For they should know the school which their children attend and the teachers who train them, so that they may contribute their gratitude to those who share their responsibility. More than all, the character of the children must be made strong and pure. Give them all the confidence and courage they need to become good, honest, self-reliant children. It is not enough if they learn something by which they can make a living; the manner of living is more important than the standard of living. The children must also have reverence towards their religion, their culture, their educational attainments and their country. They must learn well their mother tongue, so that they can appreciate the great poetical works and epics written by the seers of their land. This will give them valuable guidance in the stormy days ahead. They must also develop a deep reverence for their' motherland, for Bharath is the most ancient as well as the wisest teacher of humanity and every, child born here has a great responsibility to know, respect and practise the teaching, which is so universal and so meaningful.

Do not give room in your hearts to envy

The human heart when young is very soft; it responds to grief and pain in fellow-men. It is the example of elders, the lessons they receive from parents, the company they get into, and the training they get in school and society that harden these hearts into stone. Keep those hearts soft; learn to share

with others their grief and their joy; do not get jealous when others are happier or when others win prizes or credits in examinations. Emulate their industry, pray for a higher share of intelligence or a sharper memory, but do not give room in your hearts to envy and malice. Envy is a deadly poison; it will contaminate character, ruin health and rob you of peace. Be Anasuyas (un-affected by envy), and you can subdue the Gods of Creation, Protection and Destruction. Like a pest that destroys growing crops, envy enters slyly and spreads quickly. So even in small matters, be vigilant to ensure your not falling a prey to envy. Parents must not find fault with others in the hearing of children, or show their hatred or envy of others before these tender minds. The Goddess at Shri Shailam is called Bhramaramba - the Bee that hovers ever at the Feet of Shiva, drawn by the fragrance of His Glory - for He is called Mallika-Arjuna, the White Jasmine. The hearts of children are pure, they are drawn easily and naturally to the Feet of the Lord for they have no vishaya-vasana (attachment to sense objects) preventing them from inhaling aright the Fragrance of the Divine Glory. The bliss that radiates from the faces of these children is evidence of their innate simplicity and sweetness.

Learn to respect and honour your parents

The parents of these children have to be congratulated, for they have realised the value of school education for their children and put them here, inspite of various difficulties, economic, social, etc. I know how many of them are depriving themselves of a full meal every day so that their children may get the benefit of education. Children must be grateful to them for all this and for the love they bear for them. They daily pray for your health; they pray that no harm may befall you; they pray that you earn a good name in school. I know all this, for they pray to Me. You must learn and behave in such a way that they are made happy, in return. Until marriage, you are under their care and after that, you must bring honour and good name to the family of the husband. That is your duty and it is only when you fulfill the duty that you are blessed by God. The parents gave you this body and fostered the intelligence and love that are embedded in it; so, gratitude is their due. If you do not honour the parents who are the creators in human form, how can you learn to honour the Creator in Divine Form? Moreover, the parents reveal to you the

glory of God and the means of worshipping Him; they are the first representatives of authority which you meet with, authority modified by love and care. Learn to bend before that authority and you will learn how to submit to the Lord. As the twig is bent, so the tree is inclined. Schooling is not merely for ahara and ah-lada (food and delight), for earning a living and learning to enjoy leisure. It is to activate the Divine qualities of viveka, vairagya and vichakshana (wisdom in action, non-attachment and discriminatory power), to ensure in the individual the stabilising virtues of shanthi, sathya and dharma through the blossoming of prema.

Faith can give strength and peace

The flag which was hoisted now is the Flag of Victory, which marks the winning of Freedom by India. When we hoist it in the quadrangle of a school, it must mark the victory of the school in shaping its students into citizens worthy of India's ancient culture, worthy of India's precious heritage of spiritual wealth. The root is education and the fruit is virtue. Otherwise all the schooling is a waste of time and money. This is a temple of Goddess Saraswathi, who grants the wisdom to grasp the ultimate Truth and to acquire the knowledge which dispels ignorance for ever. This is the alms that Shankaracharya begged from Annapoorna, the Goddess at Kashi; not the alms of a handful of rice for relieving physical hunger. It is virtue that made Dhroupadhi immortal; India had many such great women whose virtue and wisdom are extolled through the centuries. Seetha, Savithri, Gargi, Anasuuya, Dhamayanthi; women who are installed in the hearts of millions of people who worship them; they draw inspiration from them when confronted with calamity or crisis. They were full of unsullied love towards all who suffered; they were ready to serve the poor and the distressed; they were so steady in their faith in God that they put up with the direst misery in joyful submission to His Will. Faith can give you that strength and that peace. You must love and revere your teachers. That is the first step in the discipline which leads to a virtuous character. They have your progress as the spur in their work; they have a lot of patience to put up with your errors; they take your hand in theirs and lead you gently on into the wonderland of knowledge about the world and its Creator. If you disregard them, how can you imbibe the lessons they are

eager to teach you? Without sikshana (learning), there can be no rakshana (protection); education alone ensures safety. If educated, you can be safe from the temptations of the world which induce you to speak falsehoods, to appropriate another's property, to hate others, to take advantage of another's weakness or ignorance.

The ideals of Indian marriage

So, derive the best out of these elders who have been entrusted with your education. They are specially trained for the purpose and selected for their efficiency. If you respond to their efforts, their enthusiasm will remain green. In ancient times, the voice of the teacher was supreme. Even emperors did not interfere with the freedom of the teachers to train and punish their sons. The son was handed over to the teacher and they supported him in all his efforts to instruct and improve him. They never sided with the son against the teacher. But now the children are the masters; they dictate terms; if they get poor marks, the parents declare war against the unfortunate teacher who cannot inflict even the slightest punishment on the pupil. That is why the standard of teaching and learning has fallen so low today. The ideal for women is the status of Sathi, the faithful wife, the loving mother. The dharma is very laudable. The Indian ideal of marriage is that the right half is the husband and the left half of the same body is the wife; pathi and sathi (husband and wife) are complementary, parts of the same unit. When Shankaracharya challenged the famous ritualist scholar Mandanamishra for an intellectual duel, the judge who was to hear the arguments and counter-arguments and decide who has won, was Udayabharathi, the wife of Mandanamishra, himself a contestant. The other contestants agreed to this! Imagine the faith that they had, not only in her intellectual eminence, but more than that, in her utter impartiality and integrity.

The true sign of a Hindu housewife

And, do you think she neglected her domestic duties during the long hours when Shankaracharya and Man-danamishra were carrying on their intellectual warfare? No, she was attending to her household chores. That is the true sign

of a Hindu housewife. She was an eminent scholar; yet she was cooking in the kitchen for her husband and the guests and managing the household like an ideal Grihalakshmi. It is said that she put a flower-garland round the necks of both the contestants and attended to her work, away from both. She said that she could discover who scored the victory quite easily, for the garland on the defeated candidate would fade while that on the successful person will remain fragrant and fresh as ever. When at last her husband lost the encounter, according to her own judgement, she came forward and claimed her right as the equal half not the better half, but the 'left' halo to continue the contest. "You cannot claim the laurels of victory until you defeat me too, for I am half of my husband, and I remain undefeated." What a great inspiration is this Bharathi for all of you! Our Puranas and Shasthras, the Upanishads, the Vedas, the lives of the saints and seers of this land, contain hundreds of such incidents which serve as beacons to light your path. Learn about them and derive benefit from them.

If you deny God, it is as if you deny yourself. There is no God, you declare; but, you assert that I exist. Well, who is that "I" that exists, that exists throughout the varying stages of growth, physical and mental, in joy and in grief?

That "I" is God; believe it. For that "I" sees with the eye, tastes with the tongue, walks with the feet, argues with the intelligence; but, all the while, it is conscious that it is separate from all these. When you affirm there is no God, you first assert and then declare the absence of the entity. You assert the non-existence of something that is. That "I" must be conceived as a wave of the ocean of God, not as the first person singular.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

13. Unrivalled mastery

Date: **April 1966** / Location: **Anantapur** / Occasion: **High School for Girls, School Day**

The sons and daughters of Bharathamatha (India, the motherland) won freedom and are engaged in building up this land as a land of plenty; but there are nations that have no peace even in the midst of plenty; they are obsessed by fear and anxiety on account of the very plenty they have earned for themselves. The only guarantor of peace for the individual and for society is spiritual progress and spiritual discipline. In India, as well as in other countries, there is to be seen a sad neglect of just these two objectives. Providing housing, clothing and food gives sukha (physical happiness); providing education in skills and imparting information about the world gives a means of livelihood.

But the ancient adage says, "ha sukhat labhathe sukham" - Real and lasting happiness cannot be won through physical happiness. Lasting happiness, happiness that will not be shaken or diminished or modified by good fortune or bad, can come only by the discipline of the mind and faith in a Higher Power that guides all the deeds and words and thoughts of man. The lamp of that spiritual awareness has to be lit and fed, so that the footsteps of man can take that path and proceed unharmed.

The Vedas and Shastras have declared that man can attain that stage of happiness through activity considered as duty, as 'worship' considered as dedication and revelation of the Oneness of the Universe, in an Intelligence cleared of the dust of doubt and delusion, by that dutifulness and that dedication. Sab;am Vishnu mayam jagath- - the Universe is saturated with Divinity; there is nothing here which is not HE: Ishavasyamidham sarvam. He is the base and the superstructure, the material and the manner, the inner motive and the outer movement. The body is the temple of the Lord; the atmosphere of this temple is by its very nature filled with love for all beings. But man, overpowered by egoism, fouls it with envy and greed and so it festers with disease and distress.

The two arch-enemies of man

Kama and krodha (lust and anger) are the two arch-enemies of man which undermine his divine nature and drag him down into the mire. The Ramayana story is woven round the anger of Manthara and the lust of Surpanakha. The Ramayana of each individual too is woven round these two elemental passions. When the first intimations of these evil influences threaten to invade your mind, stop and inquire coolly into the nature of the urge, the manner of the promptings, the type of the consequences for you and others. Reason out these things, in silence and solitude.

The fundamental discipline for acquiring sukham and shanthi which is the most precious heritage of India is now denied to her children in school and college. This is a lamentable fact. Instead, everything that tends to increase anxiety and fear, discontent and distress, is being encouraged through films, books, magazines, dramas, paintings, newspapers and all other means of communication, including speeches by agitators and public men. Worry about what might happen to life, reputation, wealth and authority in the very next moment is haunting every one; insecurity stalks the land, torn by hatred and greed. People have lost the comfort of self-reliance; they have no faith in their own strength, and no confidence in others.

Man fritters away his time in petty pleasures

Man is the most devalued entity today; everything else has risen in value; man is cheap; he can be neglected with impunity. He knows not his own greatness or worth. He does not know how to elevate the smallest act of his into a means of realising the Grace of the Lord. He does not know the alchemy by which every failure or disappointment can be transmuted into a golden chance for self-surrender and for building up the bulwark of Bhakthi. He fritters away precious time in paltry activities and petty pleasures, which lower his self-respect and injure his physical and mental calibre. He must try to live up to the great traditions of his forefathers and the great men of his motherland.

The newspapers have a great role to play in this task; but they are content to cater to the vulgar tastes and become waste-papers soon. I was during the last month in Maharashtra State, in Bombay, where lakhs and lakhs of people satisfied their thirst for darshan (audience) and where I was discoursing to several thousands on the fundamentals of the Vedas and Shasthras and directing the members of the Prasanthi Vidwanmahasabha (Maharashtra Branch) to resuscitate the glorious culture of our land, I was discussing with ministers, judges, business magnates, doctors, lawyers, editors and others belonging to Maharashtra, Saurashtra and Delhi about the programme of Dharma-sthapana (establishment of righteousness).

"My truth can never be fully grasped"

And here, in this part of India, certain newspapers were wallowing in the lies that they invented and circulated about what had happened to Me. They print without any shame their despicable inventions displaying malice and envy of the lowest order. Of course, such calumny is quite an ancient experience for the eminent; this is My experience in previous yugas also. The successors of Shishupala cannot remain idle; but consider to what low level human wickedness has descended. I do not care either for praise or blame; I only pity these people who, in order to scrape together a few paise from the poor, resort to such venal tricks. For all who are pained by these subhuman antics I declare: "Even if all the fourteen worlds unite together, the work for which I have come will not suffer a bit; even if earth and heaven combine, My truth can never be fully grasped." Without giving ear to such patent lies born out of malice and greed, I would advise you to form a sathsang, where you will meet and exchange truths and virtuous talk, where you will study holy books and discourse on the glory of God. Why waste precious time in scandals about others and criticisms of others' behaviour? Cultivating envy, malice, hatred and anger against others is an evil pastime that recoils on oneself. In every one there is resident the self-same divine spark; so cavilling at the neighbour is tantamount to cavilling at Divinity. The game of life is worth playing and becomes interesting only when there are bounds and rules which limit and control. Imagine a game of football without any rules or bounds for the field. It will be chaos; it will be a free fight; it will be a riot. No one can say who wins

and how. The Dharma marga and the Brahma marga are the boundaries of the field. The virtues fight against the vicious tendencies. Play the game, paying heed to the warnings of "Foul" and "Out".

The child has its tongue and the mother has hers. The mother keeps the child on her lap and pronounces the words so that the child may learn to speak. However busy the mother's tongue maybe, the child has to speak through its own tongue. The mother cannot speak for the child and save herself all the bother! The Guru, too, is like that. He can only repeat, remind, inspire, instruct, persuade, plead; the activity, the disciple must himself initiate. He must jump over the stile himself. No one can hoist him over it.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

14. Bharatheeya Culture

Date: April 1966

Dharma (righteousness) is the way of life that confers lasting joy; the Shasthras are the source of dharma; they lay down the rules of dharma. The Shruthis and Puranas, the Shruthis and Itihasas are all included in the term Shasthra. Of these, the Shruthis are the most authoritative. The others all follow the Shruthis and keep in step with them. Bharatheeya culture is the expression of such sacred ideals. Throughout the ages, this culture has been providing spiritual teaching and training in a friendly fruitful manner. The Puranas are but simple and sweet expositions of the Shruthi ideals of life; that is why they are called, the comrades of man. Those who study the Vedas and understand the principles direct from them are called Shrothriyas and Nais-thikas. They are the highest grade of seekers. Those who understand them from the popular texts like the Puranas and base their conduct on that knowledge are of the middle grade. They get inspired from some excellent poems and dramas also and they follow the dharma that is sought to be explained through those media. Thus, Hindus have tried to spread the principles of their culture through various means among the masses. Bharatheeya culture teaches not merely the truth about the visible objective world; it lays bare the truth of the subjective invisible world of the spirit also. This is the task of SanathanaDharma or Veda Dharma. This religion has in it the principles of all contemporary religions. Those who doubt this should examine the scriptural sources in an impartial spirit. Due to the wide influence of Western civilisation, absence of exposition and explanation by persons who have accumulated experience, inability to clearly grasp the meaning of the texts, and neglect of the Sanskrit language which is the precious treasure of India, truth about the greatness of Bharatheeya culture is largely unknown today.

Hindu Culture is World Culture

As a diamond shines in splendour when it is cut into many facets, the foundation principles of Hinduism will shine brightly and illumine the world,

when one starts the inquiry, patiently and enthusiastically. How can you know the taste if you do not eat? How can you know the depth, if you refuse to enter the water? Those who spurn Bharatheeya culture without practising it are as foolish as those who dismiss a dish without tasting it. Hindu culture is the pillar and support of the nation; it is the backbone of the spiritually adventurous; it grants both this world and the next to all beings. It is really World Culture, the culture that the world needs. Other cultures assume various forms in various climes. But, the culture of Bharath has asserted eternal values, values for all times and all climes - like dhaya, dharma and dhama (compassion, virtue and self-control). It has not bent before the pressure of patronage or persecution.

The impact of Western civilisation has given rise to certain new sects that attempt to re-form and modernise Hindu religion. Hindusim has the strength to correct their egoism and establish concord. Hinduism is the one religion that proclaims the truth that there is nothing separate from God and it proves it too. Because people are not able to understand this fundamental integrating principle, hatred and malice have grown in the followers of other faiths.

Religion has its root in the mind

There are not wanting Indians who see only the externals of religious observance and start condemning religion itself, as fraught with disaster to the people. These people even argue that religion itself should be abolished from life. Alas, their insane slogans remind us of the efforts of the ant to judge the depth of the sea or that of the cat to drink up the Ocean of Milk. Perhaps they do not realise that their negation of religion is itself growing into a 'religion'. Had they known this, they would not have ventured into a field of which they know nothing. Others attempt to design a composite religion, without first seeking to manufacture a composite mind. Unless all become of one mind, all cannot welcome a single religion. Religion has its root in the mind. Correct the source; the end will be corrected. Ensure that the basement is strong; then you can build a house of many floors over it. Unless you ensure the strength of the foundation, the house will topple down. To plan the

destruction of religion without realising what religion does to man, is itself the height of ignorance and irresponsibility. Of course, injustice, indiscipline and superstition might raise their heads in the name of religion. But, religion never sanctions these. The chief purpose of religion is to make man aware of his relationship with God. Every person has full rights for worshipping God and winning His Grace. But, whatever the road, whichever the path, the Goal is the same. Vedhic religion will not permit you to quarrel with any other religion, or hate it or decry it. It insists on tolerance and respect. If you seek to develop love towards all men and the spiritual outlook that will sustain it, you will have to follow the discipline laid down in the Shasthras, for your stage and state.

The sign of the Mahatma

What is Truth, what is Love, what is God? Unless these three are clearly understood, man cannot fulfil himself, nor can he realise his true glory. But, people nowadays interpret these, according to their pet fancies without delving into their implications or even without approaching those who know those implications, for instruction. The Shasthras emphasise that it is inner conviction, inner purification that matters. Also that the conviction must be expressed through good deeds. This emphasis is now ignored; only the gesticulations of the outer man remain. So, people believe that the observance of the "Don't touch" rule is itself sacred, sanctioned behaviour. This is 'kitchen religion', not Vedantha dharshana or the religion expounded in the Vedas.

The fault lies in those who talk and write about religion, without putting the preaching into practice. Thought, speech and action must be co-ordinated and complementary. Each should be in strict accordance with the others; that is the sign of the Mahatma (high-souled), the dharmic individual, the Pandith. Those who do not adhere to this are Duratmas (bad souled), not Mahatmas. To be truly religious is to follow the footsteps of these Mahatmas. Religion has to confer knowledge of the Self; that is its real purpose, not providing matter for club conversation or coffee-hotel-debates. Every one has to strive to know his own truth and experience it. That striving is the heart of religion; it is the

goal of life. Without it, life is as bad as death. Only when superficial activities are transcended does true religion begin. It leads to Brahmanandha, through the awareness of one's identity with Brahman.

Good acts that help promote Bhakthi

Bhakthi is the foundation for all religions. Of course, japa or homa or offering of flowers, or going on pilgrimages to holy places cannot be taken as bhakthi! They are good acts that help promote bhakthi. True bhakthi opens the door of jnana. Faith in God and His Glory and His Grace must be supplemented by discrimination of the Real and the unreal and the control of the senses. Those who argue whether bhakthi or jnana is superior for God-realisation are travellers in the dark, for, they argue from ignorance. The unripe fruit and the ripe fruit have different tastes, but, they are the same fruit; the unripe fruit becomes later the ripe one. To understand clearly the basic principles and to explain to others these principles, a knowledge of Sanskrit is essential. Samskrithi or Culture has arisen out of Sanskrit. Sanskrit is the most ancient of all the languages of the world. It is the original spring out of which has flowed all arts and all ideals. The root words of languages are all to be found in the Veda bhasha or Sanskrit. It is invaluable for world culture, but, it is a cause of concern that it has now fallen into neglect. Some among the supporters of Hinduism who profess to revive it are engaged in the establishment of their own name and fame, than the work which they have to do. They fight among themselves, shouting "I am more worthy of respect", like the Yadavas who destroyed themselves by internecine war. The herd of monkeys ruins itself as well as the garden it enters; so too, these people ruin themselves and damage the reputation of Vedhic religion itself.

Vedhic religion should be revived at all costs

But, there were many great individuals who sacrificed their all and suffered untold miseries for the sake of reviving and re-establishing the religion of the Vedas. Their thapas (penance) has made this religion survive, with whatever little strength it has. Without them we cannot imagine what would have been the fate. Take an example from contemporary affairs. Every one knows that

the whole country is preparing single-minded to keep away the Chinese hordes. But, few recognise the fact that, but for Shankaracharya and his establishment of Adhwaitha and his fostering of Vedhic religion, India would have become another "China". Deep reflection is needed to realise the enormously important work carried out by such great personalities, incarnations of God or of a part of His Glory. "The advent of the great is for no little task", it is said. They do not move among men to discuss tawdry stuff or take part in trivial themes. Those Mahatmas bound themselves with the duties and obligations of dharma; they were ready to engage in activities dictated by the Vedas; they gave up all desire to cater to the ego; they respected the rules and regulations prescribed for them by the Shasthras; they curbed all evil desires; they dedicated themselves to the promotion of Vedas and the revival of the Hindu religion. There is no comparison between them and the religious teachers and expounders of today. Those great men spoke from actual experience and so their authoritative exposition promoted faith and encouraged belief. The exposition by the leaders of today have no base in experience and so, faith is being undermined. For the sake of mankind, this religion has to be revived and strengthened. For, Sanathana Dharma (Eternal Religion) has maintained itself even today, in spite of the devastating current of Time, for this very purpose. From an article written by Baba for the Mandalothsava Sanchika, Sanathana Vedantha-Sabha.

You must examine every moment of your waking time whether you are observing the precepts of Dharma or straying away: Dharma is now just a convenient excuse to derive benefits from others, not an opportunity to fulfill your duties to others!

You remind others of it, when you desire to squeeze some advantage from them. You must remember not only the rights that Dharma confers but also the duties it imposes.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba



15. The zenith of creation

Date: **May 1966**

The traditional number of created beings is 84 lakhs, and man is the final item of the evolutionary procession; but, why did the number stop at 84 lakhs? It stopped because man is the zenith, the fullness; he is Madhava in fact, though he has ignored the truth and holds fast to the belief that he is just a man. He is endowed with manas, buddhi, chiththa and ahamkara (mind, intelligence, reasoning faculty and ego), all four, in an integrated personality, whereas the birds and beasts and all other species have mostly ahamkaram (ego) alone. The lives of the later are centred round the aham and its desires and demands. But, man has the capacity to follow sathya,dharma, shanthi and prema; man alone has it. If he does not evince that capacity and develop it, he is as bad as a vanara or a danava (ape or ogre). When man was created, there remained nothing higher to create.

There is a story about Kalidasa which illustrates this point. It is said that the other poets and scholars in the court of Emperor Bhoja were green with envy at the quick rise to fame of Kalidasa and at the largesses that the Royal patron showered upon him. So, they poisoned the ears of the Emperor against Kalidasa and when he challenged Kalidasa to disprove the allegations he was alone and helpless against his traducers. Kalidasa could appeal only to his other patroness, Kali matha, Mother Kali. He told the king that they could all come to the temple of Kali and when he prayed to Kali, to stand witness to his integrity, they could hear the answer that the Goddess would give. He had such faith in his Mother. The entire court was present next morning at the Temple; Kalidasa prayed. Then, in the tense silence, they all could hear a Voice..."Kavirdhandee, Kavirdhandee, Bhavabhoothisthupandithah" (Dhandi is a poet, Dhandi is a poet; Bhavabhoothi is a Pandith). That was all. No reference was made to Kalidasa, when all that was wanted was a judgement about Kalidasa and his merits. Naturally, Kalidasa was enraged. He forgot himself in his rage and shouted Koham rande? (Who am I, you slut?). Kali kept calm; Her temper was not roused. After a moment she replied, 'Thwamevaham, thwamevaham, thwameva aham, na samshayah" (You are

Myself, I am thymself, undoubtedly"). That identity is the destiny of man.

Let every act be saturated with Bhakthi

Sage Vyasa made man aware of his value. He collated the Vedas, wrote the Mahabharatha and the Bhagavatha and the eighteen puranas and, the Brahmasuuthra. All these contain the same nectarine teaching, though the Vedas may be more highly revered. A boat may be a small appliance, but, it can take you across the sea. A lamp may be a small contraption, but, it can light your path across a jungle. What is wanted is persistent effort, ceaseless karma, activity. The torch may illumine only a distance of two yards and you may have to go two miles in the night. But, do not despair. Hold it in your hand and walk on. With every step, the torch will illumine a few steps more and so, you can reach the goal safe. Walk on, do not sit idly on the side of the road. Move on from one step to another - shravanam, mananam, nidhidhyasanam (hearing, recapitulation, concentration). Only, let every act be saturated with bhakthi. Bhakthi is not something added on to make life more appetising; it is the very breath of life. It should inspire every act, every word, every thought.

Speak so that your language is as sweet as your feelings are. Make the words true and pleasing.

(Sathyam brooyat; priyam brooyat).

But, for the sake of pleasing another, do not speak falsehood or exaggerate. Cynicism which leads you to speak about a thing in a carping manner and in order to bring it into disrepute is as bad as flattery which makes you exaggerate and cross the boundaries of truth.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

16. Three types of road

Date: 23 May 1966 / Location: Chennai

To be born as a human being is a great piece of luck. For, man alone can attain the status of the Divine, by recognising the reality of his being. No beast or bird can reach that height of realisation. But, it is tragic that instead of valuing the chance and utilising it, man fritters his years here and dies, without seeing the light. He is disgracing himself and denying his destiny. A minute's reflection will reveal how far he is from the goal, the precious stage of self-realisation. Man is neither a picture, nor a sculpture, which are both lifeless and have no aspiration of their own. He has activity, attainment, a hunger for expansion, for immortality. But, what a pity, he does not dedicate his life to the Divine, he is caught up in the vain pursuit of comfort and cosy living. And to style himself as a son of Bharatha matha (Mother India) and yet, behave so foolishly is a greater shame. He is simply converting a fine moonlit night into a night of thick blackness.

The "believers", "the orthodox" are mainly responsible for this state of affairs. They neglect the faith, they imitate western culture. Does the west deny its culture? No; they learn about other cultures, and yet, they follow theirs with enthusiasm. But, you have neither this nor that; you fall, in between.

God cannot be grasped by anyone fully

When I see the long lines of people going to Church every Sunday, I am glad; but, when I find you talking apologetically of your visits to temples and sages, I dislike it. Why not assert that you had been to a temple or sage, boldly, with heads erect? Why fear even the most trivial persons? Why yield to worry and misery, claiming all the time that you are a believer in God? You are born as a consequence of the activities you were engaged in, in past births. When a bus is speeding along, a cloud of dust follows it; when it halts, the passengers get the dust all over. But, how far can you travel without bringing the bus to a halt? The one consolation is: you need not always speed along the mud road; better roads are in store. The mud road, the fair weather road is the Samithi

Road; the metalled road which comes later is the Zilla Parishath Road; at last, you get on into the asphalt road, the road of the Highways Department, where the bus will not drag behind it any cloud of dust. The mud road is the Karma marga (road of activity), the metalled road is Upasana marga (road of worship, contemplation) and the asphalt road is Jnana marga (road of divine knowledge, wisdom), join the Jnana marga soon; then, there will be no dust.

The people of this country have lost reverence for things spiritual. There are many sages and saints in India, but, on account of cynical neglect, like Bhasmasura, India is planning its own extinction in the cultural field. Bhasmasura placed his hand on his own head and that reduced him to ashes. Persons who have not advanced even one step towards God by means of sadhana (spiritual discipline) start pronouncing judgements; God cannot be grasped by any one fully. When you dismiss an act as miracle, you are only admitting that it is beyond your ken; you use that word, because you have no other means of describing God's behaviour or movements or action.

In spiritual matters, faith is the basic requisite for progress. That faith had to be guarded carefully. Yield to the Lord, who is more kin to you than your own parents; yield to no other. Do not allow your faith to falter with every passing gust of wind. Believe that all the three worlds cannot unseat Truth; all the fourteen lokas cannot seat Falsehood on the throne. Your duty is to carry on sadhana undisturbed by what others may say, holding fast to the certitude of your own experience.

Bear with others,
With patience and understanding;
practise Sahana and Sympathy.
Try to discover points of contacts, not of conflicts.
Spread brotherliness,
and deepen kindness
Through knowledge. Then,
Life becomes worth-while,

without fail.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

17. Sweetness in the fruit

Date: 02 July 1966 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Guru Purnima

Most men spend the lifetime allotted to them or earned by them in the partaking of rich but harmful food and drink and indulge in glamorous but more harmful pastimes. What a pathetic waste of precious stuff!. Though belonging to the animal genus, man has much more than his fellow-beings in physical, mental and moral equipment. He has memory, language, conscience, reverence, awe, wonder and an inexplicable sense of discontent, the precursor of detachment. He has the glorious chance of visualising his identity with the Mystery that is manifested as this Universe; but he is so sunk in ignorance that he behaves as though he is an animal like the rest and wallows in grief and vice. It is as if fire has forgotten its capacity to burn or water its nature to wet; man has forgotten his nature to reach out into Godhood, his capacity to seek and secure the Truth of the Universe of which he is a part, his capacity, to train himself by virtue, justice, love and sympathy to escape from the particular to the Universal. He can attain the consummation and climax of merging with the unchanging that is behind all this change. It was Vyasa, whose memory is enshrined in this Festival of Vyasa Poornima, who held before erring man this destiny and this discipline, in the various texts that bear his name. Vyasa collated the Vedhic texts and composed the Brahmasuuthras stringing together in epigrammatic form the essential teachings of Veda and Vedantha. He also placed humanity under a deep debt of gratitude by elaborating the moral and spiritual lessons of Veda and Vedantha in the magnificent poetic philosophical epic, Mahabaratha, and in the sweet bhakthi- saturated collections of divine stories called Bhagavatha. Each of these can by itself effect the liberation of man, provided he imbibes the lessons and practises them. While the Brahma suuthras may be helpful only to a limited number of intellectual seekers, the Mahabharatha and the Bhagavatha are for the common man, the unlearned seeker. They serve equally well and as quickly as the other texts, if not quicker. The Veda Vedantha may be taken as a Rupee Note while the epics and Puranas like the Mahabharatha and the Bhagavatha are 100 paise which mean the same thing, for the rupee is equal to 100 paise.

Do every deed in a spirit of dedication

The Puranas and the epics teach the path of devotion and surrender. They ask that man should do every deed in a spirit of dedication. Allow the wind of doubt or the sun of despair to affect the pot of anandha you have filled, and it will evaporate quickly. But keep the pot in the cool waters of good company and good deeds; it can be preserved undiminished for ever. Anandha too grows when you dwell on it in silence and recapitulate the circumstances which yielded it. That is why manana is held so important a part of spiritual effort. Like the child which throws off its toys and starts crying, you too must realise the paltriness of the toys of fame and fortune and call out for the Mother. The child feels that all else is trash before the love of the Mother and the blessedness of Her Presence. One should not aspire for anything less. Kalidasa in the court of Bhojaraja was insulted by the senior poets and scholars who were jealous of his attainments. He was poor and that was enough reason for them to look down upon him. When the tank is full, the frogs sit round its bank and croak; when it is dry, no frog leaps by its side. The seniors spread scandals about Kalidasa and attempted to cast him out of court.

Cleverness is out of place in spiritual affairs

Kalidasa knew of only one Person who was free from jealousy and pride and that was Kali, the Mother. So he went to the Kali temple and prayed before the Mother to assure him of high status among poem. After a long time spent in intense prayer, Kalidasa heard a Voice emanating from the shrine and it extolled Dhandi and Bhava-bhuthi as great geniuses and scholars. There was not even a whisper about his attainments! So, he got hurt and even enraged; he gave vent to his ire in harsh words and insisted that She should declare the truth, however unpleasant. Then the Voice announced, Thwamevaham, thwamevaham, thwamevaham, na samshayah" - "You are Myself, you are Myself, you are Myself, without doubt!" What greater status did Kalidasa need than this? That is the reply that every seeker will get, for that is his truth, his reality, his prize and consummation. There are many stories which describe

Kalidasa as a very resourceful poet who defeated the stratagems of his opponents by yukthi (cleverness); but his bhakthi was much greater than hisyukthi. I am reminded of the cleverness of a householder when he heard at midnight the noise of his house being broken into by thieves. He guessed that they were within earshot and so he asked his wife loud enough to be heard by the thieves. "Why are you torturing me thus, asking me to bring back all your jewels that I have pledged with the Marwari? I know that all your gold has gone to him and you know that I have not even a rupee with me; let good times come; I shall certainly recover them and give you. But now?" You need not be told that the thieves left, to enter some other house that night; they left the house that had "no gold, not even a rupee." Such cleverness is out of place in spiritual affairs where all artifice and artificiality are impediments rather than helps. It is when cleverness increases and chokes sincerity and straightforwardness in spiritual matters and in the relationship between God and Man that the Avathar comes. As the Health Minister of Mysore said just now, cleverness degenerates into conceit, and that makes man forget God who is the inner motivator.

Learn the art of operating the human machine

You may have a costly transistor or watch or phonograph with you, but if you do not know how to use it efficiently they are mere lumber. Now, imagine what a wonderful machine you yourself are! Should you not know how to operate it and get the best results out of it? What is the benefit, if you use a sharp silver hilted sword to cut vegetables? Indian seers discovered the art of operating this human machine, but their descendants have allowed that art to decline. The teachers have no desire to learn it, have no qualification to practice it, or enthusiasm to discover it. The leaders of the people, who are in charge of Government are unaware of it. Provided there is the thirst to know it, even one sage who is adept in that art is enough; many can light their lamps at the flame of that sage. Vyasa is one such sage, the foremost and the first. That is why he is described as Narayana Himself. By imbibing the teachings of the Bhagavatha, your thamo guna (quality of inertia) will be raised into rajo guna (quality of restless activity) and purified into sathwa guna (quality of poise and serenity). It is like the fruit growing by the

combined influence of the earth and sun first into full sourness, then to partial sweetness and finally complete sweetness, in three stages. Man too by the twin forces of the Grace from without and the yearning from within, grows into the complete sweetness of anandha and prema.

The human being is a composite of man and beast and God, and in the inevitable struggle among the three for ascendancy, You must ensure that God wins; suppressing the merely human and the lowly beast.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

18. The bottomless pit

Date: 03 July 1966 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

By an inordinate attachment or raga to the seen, man has become an alien to the realm of the unseen. But the unseen is the basis of the seen; the thing that gives stability and value to it, the thing that is true and valid. In spite of the warnings administered by countless saints and teachers through the centuries, man has today in this land of Bharath forsaken the unseen for the sake of the seen. The unseen alone can confer contentment and courage to face fortune as well as misfortune. Ignoring it has caused the discontent and distress prevalent in every heart and home today.

Develop bhakthi (devotion) and you are free, for the Lord takes on the burden you carry. The Ramayana is the great text for all who yearn to surrender to God and win Him. From beginning to end, it illustrates the various steps leading to it and the blessedness acquired when one accomplishes it. Lakshmana is a great example: he gave up every object of affection in order to be with the Lord and serve Him. Once, while in the forest, Rama directed Lakshmana to search for a suitable location for a Parnakuti (adobe) for His stay, and build one thereon. Lakshmana shed tears when he heard these words, for he interpreted this to mean that he had freedom to think and act on his own. He had surrendered his will to his brother and could only follow orders; he had lost all sense of independent judgement.

God is happy when He rescues those in agony

Vibheeshana is another example of full surrender. Ravana had a gang of courtiers and ministers who catered to his whims and flattered his vanity; and while each of them advised him to challenge Rama in open war and keep Seetha for himself, Vibheeshana, his own brother, chastised him for his wilfulness and lust and urged him to save himself, his kingdom and his kith and kin by restoring Seetha unharmed to her Lord. When Vibheeshana went over to Rama, Rama knew that he had a pure heart that could not survive in the poisonous atmosphere of Lanka. So He took him and saved him. The Lord

likes to be called Artha-thrana-parayana (protection of, and devoted to, the distressed and oppressed) more than any other name, for He is most happy when He rescues those in agony. See how He yielded to the entreaties of Sugreeva who required Him to demonstrate His prowess before surrendering to Him! He wanted to rescue Sugreeva, who had lost his kingdom and his queen, and so He was willing to be put to test by that apprehensive supplicant! Bharatha gave up his mother, his throne and all his wealth and power; he revelled in travail and poverty, he dwelt only in the thought of Rama in the forest and denied himself every thing that his brother could not get. By constant contemplation on Rama, even his complexion changed into Rama's.

Be an instrument in the hands of God; let Him use you for any purpose He prefers. How can any one question His will? There was a merchant who asked the sailor about his grand-father and father. It seems they both died on the sea. So the merchant asked the sailor whether he was not afraid of sailing on the sea. The sailor asked the merchant where his forefathers had died. He was told that they had all died in bed, so he too asked the merchant whether he was 'not afraid to go to bed! Death comes to all, somewhere, somehow; but the wise man achieves the Vision ere the end. Have the cool spring of devotion in you; then, the fires of anxiety cannot harm you. Then, every visitation of calamity will take on a new meaning, as a sign of Grace, to harden you, toughen you and make you seasoned timber, for His purpose.

Sublimation of the senses is essential

A dog lying comfortably in the middle of a busy thoroughfare - you will have seen some dogs enjoying a siesta in that spot full of danger, creating an island for itself in the midst of the traffic flow - was once asked why it had chosen that spot. It replied that it wanted to discover who among the pedestrians were good and who were bad. It explained that though there was enough road space on both sides, some men prodded it just for fun or out of sheer mischief in order to shoo it off. Such men are innately bad, it declared. The others who mind their own business, go their way, and do not concern themselves with things they meet on the way which distract their attention

delaying their journey are good, it said. That dog spoke true, for the men who cannot let well alone are really obstructing their own progress. The main thing is the control and the sublimation of the senses. Letting them have their way, by directing them on the objective world of tastes, smells, shapes, melodies and softnesses is to fall into a bottomless pit. It is like locking up the treasure in a golden box with a golden lock. The thieves get a richer loot, that is all. The Geetha speaks of bhakthi, jnana, karma, as yogas and by yoga is meant what Pathanjali intended it to mean: chiththa vriththi nirodhah, that is, the stilling of the agitations of the Mindstuff. Vishnu is the supreme exemplar of this calm, for He is "shanthakaram bhujagashayanam", the very picture of peaceful calm., though reclining on a thousand-hooded serpent; the snake being the symbol of the objective world with its poisonous fangs. Being in the world but not of it, not bound by it - that is the secret. Mareecha gave up even the urge to live when he got the chance to die at the hands of Rama, with his eyes fixed on the charm of that Divine Form. He knew that Rama was, as he said, "Vigrahavan Dharmah" - Dharma in cognisable form. So he thanked Ravana for the chance given to him to be killed by Rama's arrow.

Fortitude is the foremost sadhana

The conquest of the senses and of the passions and emotions is a hard process and a slow process, which will be crowned by success only by systematic endeavour. Take anger, for example. There was once a huge big wrestler who was strutting along a street, proud of his physical strength and his victory over many rivals. As he passed, a middle-aged woman tittered at his size and appearance. The wrestler gnashed his teeth in anger and lunged towards her. The woman ejaculated, What type of strong man are you, who cannot take a woman's laughter calmly? and the wrestler had to hang his head in shame. Sahana (forbearance) is the best sadhana, fortitude is the foremost sadhana. That is the greatest lesson of the Shasthras. How can man serve others or the Lord who is resident in all when the senses drag him away from that service or when passions peep in to tarnish the love that inspires the service? The Lokeshha (Lord of the world) is engaged in spreading anandha in the Loka (world); man should be engaged in spreading anandha around him. That is the way to co-operate and share in the task of the Lord. Every

evil deed hastens one's fall. Ravana carried away Seetha; men many wonder why, when he did that nefarious deed, the flames of Divine wrath did not reduce him to ashes, or why the anger of a chaste woman did not consume him. But the consequence of all the thapas (penance) he had gone through and the boons he had won from the Gods stood as an armour for long. Ravana must meet his doom through his own folly and wickedness. The Lord is but a witness; He is above all hate and anger, of attachment derived from mine and thine.

Karma without Dharma leads to destruction

The Rakshasas of Lanka were adepts at yagas (sacrificial rites) and yajnas (ceremonies in which oblations are presented); every home in the island was under a canopy of holy smoke emanating from the sacred fires lit for ritual worship. That was the karma-path for blessedness, but that path without Dharma led them to destruction. Bhojaraja once held a discussion in Court on the relative importance of Karma and Dharma. Karma, Dharma and Brahma (action, virtue, and Supreme Being) are the three stages of spiritual progress. It was seen that they were all equally important at the proper stage of development. The poets used to ask for patronage with the word, dehi, which Kalidasa once interpreted as, They are not asking you; they are addressing you as 'dehi', 'the one with the body', 'the One who has encased Himself in this physical equipment', 'the Atma,'. They are reminding you that you are essentially the dweller in the body, not the body with which you are likely to identify yourself. Once a poet approached Bhoja for help and when the Emperor held before him a purse, he refused to accept it, because he said, You must give me something which you have earned by the sweat of your brow, not something which you have appropriated from the earnings of others' toil. The Emperor appreciated the argument; he asked him to call on him the next day. When the poet presented himself the next morning as directed, Bhoja gave him 16 copper coins which he had earned from a smithy, handling the hammer to beat the red hot iron. The poet held out his hand for it; the coins were given; but, what a wonder, they were gold coins, not copper. The toil of the king had made them pure gold. One must give only what one has legitimately earned. Then the dehi (the indweller in the body)

gives without deha (body)- consciousness.

In this Kali yuga, the principle of Divine Love is not in evidence. It is smothered in jealousy, conceit, hatred, fear, falsehood and greed. That is why it is best referred to as the kalaha yuga (the age of faction) marked by fights between mother and daughter, father and son, teacher and pupil, guru and guru, brother and brother. The recitation of the name of Krishna is the best method for cleansing the mind of all these evil impulses.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

19. This bank and that bank

Date: 14 July 1966 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

I am glad that the State Bank of India is opening a branch here in the Prasanthi Nilayam area. Artha (wealth) is one of the Purusharthas - legitimate objects of human endeavour. The four purusharthas are dharma, artha, kama and moksha. They have been listed so, in that order, on purpose. Dharma (righteousness) has to direct and control the process of earning wealth (artha) and moksha (liberation) is to be the regulating factor of desire (kama). All artha accruing from sources minted by adharma (vise) is to be treated with contempt as unworthy of man. All desires that do not subserve the one supreme need for liberation are to be given up as beneath the dignity of man. So, the Adhyathmic (spiritual) basis of dharma and moksha : as to be the root of both artha and kama. Without it, earning degenerates into plundering; desire degenerates into death. This Bank helps you to keep your money safe when you deposit it with them. They are happy to receive it from you; they will allow you to make use of it when you are in difficulty. But your money helps you only in worldly distress. You accumulate it with great care, by thousands of acts of denial, denying yourselves this comfort or that convenience, saving in this item and that, spending less and earning more; but a day comes when you have to leave the pile and go, emptyhanded. This passbook will not be looked into there. Why, even while here, when the pile grows into an attractive quantity, sons start fighting for it, causing you anxiety and fear; taxes take away a large share; thieves and crooks have an eye on it.

Depositing spiritual efforts gets peace

There is another Bank which receives deposits and maintains accounts strictly and confidentially. Every little sum is entered and accounted for deeds, thoughts, words, good, bad and indifferent. If this Bank takes good care of your asthi (properties, wealth), that Bank watches whether you are an asthika, a person who acts on the assumption that there is asthi - a sovereign guiding principle that is divine, that whispers warnings from the heart when

dharma and sathya are infringed, when artha and kama enslave man unchecked. No son can sue for that asthi; no tax-gatherer can lay his hands on it. No crook can transfer it to his purse. Open a deposit account there, in that Bank, for your prosperity here and hereafter. That deposit, growing by your spiritual efforts, will give you joy and peace. While you should develop this saving habit here, for the sake of old age and a rainy day, it is necessary that you should develop that "saving habit" for the hereafter, so that you may be saved. Dharmam chara, sathyam vadhathat is the method. Dharma and sathya and prema are the currency accepted by that other Bank. All acts, words and feelings ringing with the purity of these metals will be accepted as deposits. So, along with an account in this bank, you must take care to have an account in that other Bank also. You talk glibly of Ramarajya but how can it be established, if you do not emulate Rama? He was Vighrahan Dharmah - the very embodiment of virtue. He never deviated from it. Dasaratha means he who is master of his ten senses, the five karmendriyas (senses of action) and the five jnane-ndriyas (senses of perception): that is to say, the successful sadhaka. Such a person can have the holy progeny of the four Purusharthas: Dharma (Rama), artha (Lakshmana), kama (Bharatha) and moksha (Shathrughna). Become a Dasaratha and have that holy progeny, as a gift from God.

Draw upon the accounts of previous births

This bank will not give loans to all and sundry; its help is only for those who are credit-worthy, who have impressed by their industry and integrity that they will make good use of the money and keep their word. That other Bank too will save from distress and grief those who have sathya, dharma, shanthi and prema. This bank will help only in proportion to the deposits that stand in your name; that Bank too deals like that. The consequences of the meritorious activities of previous births can be drawn upon now; but unless you have them, no cheque will be honoured. Moreover, only those who have the account can operate. Each must have a separate account in his own name; one brother cannot draw on the account of another brother; the wife cannot draw on the account of the husband. This bank will give loans if you mortgage your house or lands, property that has come down to you from your

ancestors, gold jewellery that has come to you from your mothers, etc. That Bank also will allow you to draw upon the accounts of previous births, and deposits made then. That is why you find some people, who are obviously wicked and cruel, mean and miserly, yet leading 'happy' lives, free from pain and grief. They have drawn upon deposits made in the past. They are entitled to that happiness. Sometimes, this bank will grant you overdrafts, so that you tide over temporary crises; the extent of the overdraft is settled by the Manager with reference to your reliability and capabilities. It is like the anugraha (Grace), that God will confer on you when you have earned it by sath karma.sath chinthana, sath bhava, sath sanga and Namasmarana (good deeds, good thoughts, good feelings, good company and constant contemplation on the name of God and the glory it seeks to express).

Surrender your Ego to God's safe deposit vault

Banks have safe deposit vaults, where customers can keep their valuables, jewels, legal documents and other things like silver and gold, which attract thieves; they can then be free from worry; they can sleep in peace. Surrender them to the custody of the Bank and dismiss anxiety from the mind. That other Bank, dealing with spiritual accounts, has also a safe deposit vault. Surrender your jewels of intelligence, cleverness, capacity to serve and the gem that you most value, namely, your EGO to the care of God; then, you can be happy. Mam ekam sharanamvraja, He invites. Surrender to Me alone. Then, He assures Ma suchah: You need not grieve at all.

Arjuna is called by the Lord in the Geetha, 'Dhananjaya'; people explain the word dhanam to mean booty gathered by him from the kings whom he defeated. Dhanam means 'any valued possession, an object of affection'. The most valued possession is self-knowledge. Arjuna has earned this; so he is called Dhananjaya. This bank deals with one type of dhanam, that Bank deals with another. This dhanam (money) and the rest can be earned by any one; even black marketeers and dacoits, crooks and pirates can amass money. But that dhanam which is acceptable in that other Spiritual Bank comes only to those who struggle to be virtuous and detached, humble and holy.

This earthly dhanam you take to this bank; that other dhanam, the punyam you do, the purity you achieve, the love that you manifest - bring Me those precious things and I shall accept them as deposits.

Whatever God grants is for your good, for your liberation, not for your fall or bondage. A God who does evil is no God at all. God has no likes and dislikes; he is above and beyond all traits and characteristics. He is Gunatheetha. So, how can He be hating or revengeful? He is Mercy, He is Goodness, He is Wisdom, He is Power. He gives you what you ask; (so be careful what you ask). Learn to ask the really beneficial boons. Do not go to the Wish fulfilling Tree and come back in glee, with a towel that you asked and got!

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

20. The tree of life

Date: **03 August 1966** / Location: **Kothacheruvu** / Occasion: **Opening of the Primary Health Centre**

I am glad that this Primary Health Centre has brought us all together today. This is a source of great joy to the villagers and so I am also happy. The rulers of our States, of whom the minister and the legislators now on this platform are the representatives, declare that they are trying their best to develop the resources, natural and human, of this country and to provide on the basis of those resources, food, clothing, shelter, education, employment, security and health in ample measure to the people.

But the development of the moral and spiritual resources of men is neglected and the provision of peace and spiritual happiness is ignored. Happiness and peace do not follow when man is fed well, clothed well, housed well and even educated up to a high standard and employed under comfortable conditions, with no injury to health or security. There are many who have all these in plenty but who are yet worried or in pain or discontented. They depend on the inner equipment of man, not on his outer skill or riches. Man is fundamentally Divine, and so, naturally, the more he manifests the Divine attributes of Love, Justice, Truth and Peace, the more anandha he is able to enjoy and impart. The less he manifests them, the more ashamed he ought to be, that he is living counter to his heritage. The tree of Life has to be watered at the roots, but now, those who plan to raise the standard of living, water the branches, the leaves and the blossoms. The roots are the virtues; they have to be fostered so that the flowers of actions, words and thoughts may bloom in fragrance and yield the fruit of seva (service), full of the sweet juice of anandha. Planning for food, clothing and shelter is only promoting the well-being of the cart; plan also for the horse, the mind of man which has to use the food, the clothing, the shelter and other material instruments for the high purpose of 'escaping from the ego into the universal'.

Loss of self-confidence is the chief defect

The distressing poverty of the Rayalaseema district was also described by some speakers; I would ask you not to be carried away by despair or lose faith in man or God. Mention was made of Emperoi Shibi who offered his own flesh to an eagle whose prey he had rescued from his talons. There is also the supreme example of Karna whose sacrifices were so spontaneous and self-effacing. Donors imbued with this spirit of detachment are even now not absent amidst us. Their services should not be lightly cast aside or forgotten. When a few tiny stones get mixed in rice and get between the teeth, you say in disgust that the plate of rice is but a plate of stones. It is human nature to exaggerate in order to create an impression. We treat joy as incidental and insignificant and dwell more on grief and pain. The chief defect of which these are but manifestations is the loss of self-confidence and enthusiasm among the villagers. They give themselves up at the slightest sign of loss or danger. They do not know that the secret of strength and courage lies in themselves. Villagers have lost the art of living together in peace and harmony. Factions have taken deep root to the detriment of the peaceful pursuit of professions. Besides, the children of the village who receive the kind of education imparted in the schools develop contempt for agriculture and other rural occupations and flock towards towns where the outward pomp of modern civilisation attracts them. They then become victims to the vanities of the western ways of life, and are weaned away from the culture of their ancestors.

Regulation must come from within

The Doctor in charge of this Primary Health Centre spoke of Family Planning and of the artificial methods popularised here for the limitation of children. Though such methods may appear to succeed, they are fraught with much danger; they will inevitably lead to large-scale demoralisation of character and weakening of moral stamina; stamina on which the ultimate strength of a people depends. The regulation must come from within, not from without; people must control themselves through their own innate strength, not get controlled through fear of some one or desire for temporary gain. Self-control promotes self-reliance, self-knowledge and self-advancement. Only the immediate consequence is considered by the partisans of family planning; the

long-term consequence is ignored. It is like a bus owner who overloads the bus in order to gain a few chips, but when the tyre bursts as a result and he has to replace it, he will rue the greed which caused the loss. If only half the prayers addressed to Government are addressed to God, you can win His Grace and solve the food problem, for God alone can give the rains that fill the tanks and reservoirs to irrigate the fields where the crops are grown. Have sincere faith in God and surrender to Him, acting, speaking and thinking in such a way that He is pleased. Be pure, be simple, be sincere and He will answer your agonising call.

Glorify God and walk in His path

What can the Government do when the monsoon fails and the tanks are dry? Even the Chief Engineer for Electricity says that he cannot give you power for working pump-sets for wellirrigation, because the rains have failed! So, instead of indulging in vain prattle, glorify God and walk in His path and pray to Him. Spend the allotted span of years in the contemplation and the adoration of the Almighty, not in servile praise of the feeble, the futile and the weak. Life is an opportunity afforded to each not to eat and drink, but to achieve something nobler and grander: to master oneself and merge in the Reality Three quarters of your attention should be paid to the dehi - the occupant of the deha or body - who always speaks of the body and its components as 'mine'. For this body and all experiences which one gains through it are as unreal as dreams. You have now seen and experienced the procession through the streets of your village of Swami and the Minister; you have seen Me and heard My speech; but when you go to bed within a few hours and dream during sleep, you are not aware of all this; you see and experience a new set of events, which at the time are as real, as impressive, as significant as these; and when you have deep sleep, nothing 'is', except probably the inner consciousness that you are you. When you dream, the dream is real; when you wake, the waking experience is as real as the dream was. The fact is, it is all a dream, a creation of the mind when the atma (the true self) is reflected in it. Remove that Mind, have nothing on which the atma reflects and then the atma shines in its own splendour in its own solitariness.

Effort is essential for contacting God

Once you attain this jnana, the waking experience of fifty years will appear as of five seconds only, as in a two seconds dream one passes from childhood to grandparenthood and experiences passage of 50 years of time! Jnana is as passing from swapna (dream) stage to the jagrath (waking) stage which judges the dream stage as unreal. Seek the springs of anandha (bliss) within you and happiness will be your lot, here and for ever. Believe that the anandha within you is derived from God who is your Reality. Effort is essential for contacting God and deriving anandha therefrom, just as effort is needed to listen to the radio programmes that are everywhere around us. A yantra (instrument) must be procured for the reception of that music or talk; a manthra (a sacred formula) is needed for the concretisation of that abstract entity, God, and for sharing the Bliss that He is. A little of that Bliss will wipe out all trace of pettiness and passion from man. Now, relations between men are vitiated by malice and hatred. The Government, the administration and the people (prabhuthwam, adhikaris and praja) are as the three blades in the electric fan; when all three rotate together in the same direction and at the same speed, they conduce to comfort. Anger, malice, greed, envy - all these are obstacles in the path of love and co-operation. They lower man from the Divine to the animal level. Bear with others with patience and understanding; practise sahana (forbearance) and sympathy. Try to discover points of contact, not of conflict. Spread brotherliness and deepen kindness through knowledge. Then life becomes worth while, without fail.

Time is a prime factor for good fortunes

The reason for the very long time which has elapsed since I came to this village last, a village which is within a few miles of Puttaparthi, is to be sought, not in the attitude of individuals, but in the kala, karma and karana which must coincide before such an event can come about. The kala (time) must ripen; the karma (occasion) must also arise; and the karana (circumstances necessitating My presence) must occur. Then alone is this possible, is it not? It takes time for a fruit to mature and acquire sweetness and become eatable; time is a prime factor for most good fortunes. Make full

use of Me, that is all that I ask of you. I have at no time any feeling of separateness. I invite all to come and know and derive benefit from Me. Dive and know the depth; watch and discriminate; eat and know the taste. I long for people who do that. We shall close with some songs reciting the Name of God. It is My general practice to induce people to learn the sweetness of the Name. I begin My discourses with the recitation of a spiritual poem and end them with these Namavalis (series of divine names), and in between I give the lesson I love to teach. It is like a tasty health-giving meal, which I serve you on a plate (the poem) covering it with a lid (tile Namavalis). That is how you may take it.

21. Proper care of the boat

Date: 03 August 1966 / Location: Kothacheruvu

Like the three blades of a fan which must be activated by the current to rotate like one, in order to make life pleasant; the three - the Cabinet, the Officers and the People - must be activated by the spirit of service and work joyfully in unison, in order to make the people happy. The three must not be disturbed or dislocated by mutual envy or greed or hate or malice; they must all be activated by love and sympathy. Sahana (forbearance) is the lubrication needed. In the firmament of the heart, the intellect (sun) and the mind (moon) revolve on their regular courses. If the passions mentioned above dim the glory, they are to be dismissed as passing clouds that cannot affect the sources of light. The more you reason out things, the plainer will become the reality. Reasoning power will never hinder the discovery of the Truth; only, you have to go as far as reason can take you; then, you can see the vast vistas beyond. Man has been endowed with enormous, immeasurable talents, skills and power. But, he is using all that to journey towards a poor satellite of the earth on which he lives, instead of journeying towards the wonderland of his own inner realms, where he can come face to face with God who is his inner Reality, the inner Reality of this entire phenomenal world. A man dreams that he is a boy, he grows and marries, he fondles his children and his grandchildren: the story of fifty years is telescoped to a period of two 'waking moments'. This is within the experience of all. The dream was 'real' experience during the dream; it 'lasted' for fifty years but, when judged from the point of view of the 'waking' it lasted but two minutes. So too, from the point of view of the 'fully awake', the jnani, even the waking stage is ephemeral, illusory. That is why jnana is declared to be so illuminating; it reveals the Truth that all this is only 'relatively' real; the Absolute Reality is the Brahman.

Virtue alone can endow love and sympathy

This truth has been discovered and proclaimed in this country ages ago. It is a shame that to-day the people of Bharath are not aware of this heritage. The

tree of life can yield the fruit of anandha only when it is watered by virtue and fed on faith. Provision of food, clothing, and shelter will not ensure peace and joy; they can come only through virtue and faith. Virtue alone can endow love and sympathy. We are now putting the cart (the body) before the horse (mind) and providing for the safety and strength of the cart only. The horse (mind) is allowed to grow wild or is starved.

There is no love and sympathy between even the members of a household. Kali yuga has become Kalaha yuga, the era of wrangling and wars. Even while foes are surrounding this country, there is wild hate between one State and another, claiming 'this bit of land is mine', 'that bit of land cannot be yours', forgetting that both are limbs of the same body. Similar is the fate of nations also. Integration of hearts can come about only through the recognition of the Oneness of All, and the renunciation of sensory pursuits. Tolerance is very essential. The body is but a boat, an instrument, for crossing the sea of change, that you have earned through the merit of many generations. When you have crossed the sea, you realise the Dweller, in the Dwelling. That is the purpose of the body. So, even when the body is strong and skilled, even while the intellect is sharp and the mind alert, effort must be made to seek the Dehi (Dweller), in the deha (body). This Health Centre helps to keep the body strong and free from handicaps. The boat should be seaworthy. You can make it so, provided you take advantage of this Centre. That is the reason why I have so readily agreed to be present here today. - Discourse Delivered at the opening of the New Building of the Primary Health Centre, Kothacheruvu village, (for which land and part of the cost of building was donated by a villager).

Get the flower,
and you have its
beauty and fragrance.
In colour see harmony,
in light see joy.
In outward form

and in the depths of things,
behold your Self
You are the Truth.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

22. Of Him, to Him, by Him

Date: 07 September 1966 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Krishna Jayanthi

This day is dedicated to the worship of the Narakara (the Divine in human form) which the Nirakara (the formless) assumed, in order to save man from the marshy terrain into which he had been drawn by the delusion which blinded his vision. Yama (God of death) can be countermanded by samyama; that is, death can be conquered by control of the senses, and of the desire that prod them on. When man forgets this fact and starts living as a slave of the senses, God out of His infinite mercy comes among men and guides him along the heavenly path into Himself. Man has not evolved into the finely equipped animal that he is, so that he might eat, revel and sleep; he has to retrieve the meaning out of the meaningless, to attain liberation while in chains, to raise the atma with the leverage of the atma itself - Uddhareth atmanatmanam. How much land and how many bungalows can fill man's maw to satiety? Some clay or other, sooner or later, he will have to give up the accumulation and leave. Some one had a hundred acres in the south; but he had an itching for more, at least a thousand. So he went in all directions seeking regions where he could get vast areas of uncultivated but cultivable land. At last, he came to a Himalayan kingdom and the King gladly offered to give him all the land he hungered for; the only limit he placed was- his endurance. He said the man should start with the sunrise and start walking without tarrying; he should return to the starting point before the sun sets; all the land enclosed by his route, traced by his steps from start to finish, would be his. That was the generous offer the King made. The greedy migrant waited anxiously for the first rays of the rising sun and he started off on the circumference of a very wide circle, running in fact, until evening fell; he was so exhausted when he neared the starting point that within three yards of the starting spot, he dropped dead! His heart stopped beating. He had over-worked it in his mad race to appropriate as many acres as he possibly could before sunset.

Mental peace alone can generate health

Many people spend their years piling and piling, and then, are dragged away by death, ere they could preen themselves on the size of the pile. Money can purchase drugs but mental peace and content alone can guarantee health. Medical experts can be hired but life cannot be secured on lease. God incarnates to foster sadhus, it is said. By sadhus, they do not mean the dwellers in Himalayan retreats; they mean the virtuous person who forms the inner reality of everyone of you, the outer appearance being but a mask which is worn to delude yourself into esteem. Every one is a sadhu, for he is prema swaruupa, shanthi swaruupa, amruutha swaruupa (embodiment of bliss, peace and immortality). But, by allowing the crust of ego to grow thick and fast, the real nature is tarnished. By the action of sath sang (the company of God-minded persons), by systematic attention to self-control and self-improvement, man can overcome the delusion that makes him identify himself with the body and its needs and cravings. When you feed the cow with fermented gruel so that it may yield more milk, the milk emits an unpleasant smell. When man engrosses himself too much with the trifles of the world, his conduct and character become unpleasant. It is indeed tragic to witness the downfall of the child of immortality, struggling in despair and distress. If only every one examines these: What are my qualifications? What is my position? They can soon realise their downfall. Will a tiger, however hungry, eat popcorn or monkey nuts? Aim at the goal which your lineage entitles you; how can the parrot taste the sweetness of the mango if it pecks at the fruit of the cotton-tree? Let your effort be in keeping with the dignity of the goal. Never slacken effort, whatever the obstacle, however long the journey.

Do not postpone what you can do today

The goal will near you faster than the pace with which you near the goal. God is as eager to save you as you are eager to be saved; He is prema. He is karuna (loving and compassion), for all who flounder on the road. He is called Bhaktha-ab-heesta-pradha (He who grants the desires of the devotees). You say that I laugh within Myself, that I roll My hair on My fingers and draw them tight over My face-but let me say why. It is a sign of My anandha over leaping its bounds, anandha at the success of bhakthas in capturing My heart. There

was an emperor once who asked the sages who visited his palace, Who is the best among men? Which moment of time is most blessed? Which act is most beneficial? He could not get a satisfactory, answer for long. At last, his realm was invaded and he was defeated by rival forces and he had to flee into the jungle. There he fell into the clutches of a primitive tribe who selected him as a victim to their goddess. While in this precarious condition, he was seen by an ascetic, who rescued him and took him to his quiet hermitage where he and his students tended him lovingly back to health and happiness. Then he discovered the answers to his questions. The best among men is he who has compassion; the most blessed time is the 'present', this very second, and the best act is to relieve pain and grief. You decide to start Namasmarana (remembrance of the Divine name) "next Thursday," as if death has assured you in writing that he will not call on you till that date. Do not postpone what you can do today, now, this very moment.

God intercedes in time to save the devotees

Now that I referred to Namasmarana, I shall tell you another story. There was a merchant who was exhorted by his teacher to repeat the Name of the Lord; he pleaded he had no time to sit and repeat it: the shop took up all his time and energy. He had to go out a little away from the village every morning for answering the calls of nature. He spent about half an hour for this. So, the Guru asked him to use this time for the daily smarana. Hanuman, the great Ramabhaktha (a devotee of Lord Rama) was passing through the sky, when he saw the merchant defecating and heard him repeat Ram Ram Ram while so engaged. Hanuman was incensed at his impertinence; he was desecrating the Name by pronouncing it while unclean. So, he gave him a hard blow on the cheek and continued his journey to Ayodhya. When he reached the Divine Presence and looked at the splendour-filled face of Rama, he noticed the swollen red print of a hand upon His cheek. Hanuman was shocked and His grief was too deep for words. Rama told him, Hanuman! Do not ask Me the name of the person who dealt this blow. I always anticipate the moment of calamity for my bhakthas (devotees) and I intercede in time to save them. That poor merchant, sitting outside the village, who was repeating My Name when you were coming here, could he withstand the terrible onslaught of your

angry fist? The fellow would have collapsed on the spot. So, I intercepted the blow and received it on my own cheek, my dear Hanuman. Bhaktharakshana (protection of devotees) is one of His main tasks. "Yogakshemam Vahamyaham" (welfare and safety) is no empty assurance; it is the Vow of the Lord, and He is Sathya-swaruupa - very embodiment of Truth.

Dwell on the Supreme Love of the gopees

This is the day when you have to meditate upon the Murali (flute) of Krishna and the melody it aroused in the veins of mankind, animals, birds and plants, and even hills and rivers, rocks and sand-dunes. The Narakar (God in human form) that appeared on this Janmashtami (the birthday of Shri Krishna) gave the Geethagangodakam-the sacred panacea of Ganges water, the Geetha eternally pure, capable of slaking the thirst and wiping off sins. Dwell also on the supreme prema (Love) of the Gopees, their surrender of everything gross and subtle, of ego and egoistic attachment at the feet of the Sovereign Purusha or the Purushottama, the Supreme being. They spoke no word except prayer; they moved no step except towards God, they saw and heard only Krishna; they spoke only of Him, to Him, whoever might have been near them; Krishna had filled their hearts. He transmuted them into the most self-effacing group of devotees that the world has seen.

23. The juggler behind this jugglery

Date: 08 September 1966 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Krishna Jayanthi

If only the agony and toil now being experienced by man for keeping himself and his family in comfort and to accumulate the symbols of wealth and power are directed towards God, man can be infinitely more happy. The veil of maya (illusion), however, hides from him the face of God which is shining from every being and thing around him. Maya is of the nature of thamas (darkness and ignorance). In deep dreamless sleep, the self alone exists, but it is there supervened by maya or ajnana (ignorance) only. You are not aware then that you are Brahman; that is the difference between the jnana (spiritual wisdom) and the sushupti (deep sleep) stage. The jnani knows he is One with Brahman; the person in deep dreamless sleep does not know. All persons experience it; so it is universal. It is not real, it is not explicable. We cannot pronounce it as a-sath, (non-existent), for its effects are everywhere; we cannot pronounce it as sath (existent), for when the Reality is experienced, there is no duality at all. From the standpoint of wisdom, maya is unreal; in the vision of the enlightened saint, maya is absent. It is a peculiar, anirvachaniya (indescribable) phenomenon. To the jnani, who has crossed the shores of change and difference, it is non-existent; to those relying on reason, it is inexplicable; to the ordinary man, it is a fact. Maya creates the universe; it spreads before the mind the vast paraphernalia of the objective world. It is a narthaki (juggler), an enchantress who entices the intelligence and traps the senses. This na-rtha-ki can be subdued by kee-rtha-na (mark the change of syllables). Keerthana is the concentrated contemplation of the glory of God. The mind is filled with admiration at a juggler's manipulations, so long as one does not know that it is willed and caused by the juggler; once it is known that all the tricks are enacted by him, one rests satisfied that it is mere maya - temporary flashes, attractive displays which do not last. Keerthana reveals the juggler behind the jugglery and you know that He is capable of much more, for He has infinite wisdom, infinite power and infinite mercy.

You can make Maya fall at your feet

As the shadow that you cast is reduced bit by bit with every step that you take towards the Sun, until the Sun shines right on the top of your head and the shadow crawls under your feet and disappears, so maya too becomes less and less effective as you march towards jnana. Then it is well established in your understanding and maya falls at your feet and is powerless to deceive you further; it disappears, so far as you are concerned. Though you cannot know while in this dual world how maya originated, you can know how it can be terminated and can succeed in exterminating its effects. Maya has no beginning but it has an end, for him who wins the light by which the darkness can be negated. A Guru once told his pupil to receive a precious gift, sweet beyond imagination, and preserve it free from ants, flies, rats, cats and men who lie in wait to remove it from his possession. The pupil did not keep it in a pot and put a lid over it; he ate it and it was safe in his stomach from external ravages. Seeing this, he gave him a Mahavakya, a profound spiritual truth expressed cryptically but sweetly, and asked him to take it in and enjoy its sweetness and refreshing taste. The manana and nididhyasana (reflection and meditation) of the Mahavakya will develop the power of resistance against all doubts and diversions. When you pile up riches, fear and anxiety are also piling up in proportion. But pile up the rich treasure Krishna-dhanam and fear and anxiety disappear.

A merchant was once hauled before a magistrate for selling adulterated ghee which smelt bad and was a danger to health. Judgement was pronounced that he should either himself consume the entire quantity of ghee as a punishment, receive 20 stripes or pay a fine of a 100 varahas (gold coins). He preferred the ghee and started drinking the stuff; but finding the smell was unbearable, he chose the stripes. He received about a dozen but he could not stand more. So, he finally told the magistrate that he might be let off with the fine. If only he had opted for it first, he could have avoided the foul drink and the excruciating pain. By his indecision, he had to taste the reek and the rod.

Man must opt to God, sooner or later

Similarly man does not opt for God in the beginning, when grief overtakes him. He has to opt for God, sooner or later; but he does not recognise the

inevitability. Choose wisely. A merchant had four wives; he had to go to Bombay once on business for a long stay; he posted letters to them asking them what they wanted him to bring from Bombay when he returned. The first wife (symbolic of thamas or dullness) wrote for some effective drugs which would ameliorate her physical illnesses; the second wanted him to bring fashion saris and choli pieces as well as jewels of Bombay design. Her behaviour marks her out as a symbol of the rajasik temperament. The third wife (the sathwik type) wrote that he should bring her some good books like Dhyaneswari, Sai Sathcharitha, etc. The fourth wife, however, (the jnani, who had gone beyond the three gunas) wrote "I require nothing, I want only you." Of course, every one of them got what they had asked for; the fact one became the happiest of all. Have no desire, empty your mind of all cravings, become hollow and straight - be-come a flute and Krishna will breathe through you sweet melody to still the agitation of the world.

Burn away your sensual cravings like camphor

Cleanse the heart with the water of prema and the detergents prayer and contrition, so that the stains of desire might be removed. Then God will pour His Grace into it. You should give up lokabhranthi and dehabhranthi (attachment to the external world and to the body), if you yearn for God. There is no use trying to have one foot in one boat and the other foot in another boat. You may be in this Prasanthi Nilayam area for 20 or 25 years, but if you worry more about physical needs and comforts than japam and dhyanam, your stay is a waste. You have made no progress at all. The waving of the camphor flame at the end of the bhajan sessions is to remind you that your sensual cravings must be burnt away without leaving any trace behind, and you must offer yourself to God for being merged with His Glory. There was an old woman who had two grand-daughters, one a termagant and the other a modest girl. When they touched her feet before departure from her house, she blessed the termagant: "May the festoons and the auspicious Rangavalli drawings on your doorstep be ever fresh and untrodden, unwiped; may your purse be full, ever undisturbed." She meant, of course, to curse her with barrenness. She blessed the other girl, thus: "May your doorstep be unclean, may your purse be emptying fast," meaning that she would have a

number of happy boisterous children, a mode of blessing for a married woman, usually given by a grandmother. On the face of it, the first one looks like a blessing and the other statement a curse. But, the inner meaning is different. This grannie blessed unasked; the modest and truthful person can also receive blessings out of the spontaneous Grace of the Lord, provided he is steady in his virtues. He should have no hypocrisy in his make up.

Obstacles are to be treated as ensuring safety

Have faith in yourself, your own capacity to adhere to a strict time-table of sadhana, your own ability to reach the goal of realisation. When you have no faith in the wave, how can you get faith in the ocean? A small lump of steel can become a beautiful efficient watch through the application of intelligence and skill; can man not be transmuted into a sage who has realised the ultimate through the instruments of viveka and vairagya? The sacred books of all religions help man to reach his eternal Abode of Peace. All caravansarais are built to help the pilgrim on his way to the goal. He stays there for a time; he is instructed about the next stage of the journey and then he moves on refreshed by the stay. Obstacles that come in the way are often treated with a certain amount of resentment by the pilgrims on the spiritual path; but these tests are to be treated as ensuring safety. You drive a nail into the wall to hang a picture thereon; but before hanging the picture, you try to see whether the nail has been well driven by shaking it; when you are certain it does not shake even when all your strength is used, you become bold enough to hang the picture on it. You must welcome tests because it gives you confidence and it ensures promotion.

Believe in your own experience

Do not give ear to what others say. Believe your experience. What gives you peace and joy (Atmanandham), believe in that. That is the real basis for faith. Why should you go about asking all and sundry whether something is either salt or sugar? Is it not foolish to wander about consulting people about this? Put a little on your own tongue; that will settle the matter. What you are now doing is to reject as salt what your own experience has proved to be sugar,

simply because some one who has not tasted it like you proclaims it to be salt or because some one who is down with fever finds the thing bitter. Gather wisdom from wherever you can acquire it; listen to the good things teachers of different denominations elaborate upon. I would advise you to weigh in your own mind, against your own experience, the teachings that you have heard. Shravanam (listening) should be followed and should be confirmed by mananam (reflection), on the implications, the background, the reservations, the limitations of what you have been told. Then there is another process: Nididhyasana - meditation on the truth that you have garnered - planting it deep down in the consciousness to be made part of your spiritual make-up.

24. Krishna thrishna

Date: 1966 / Location: Chennai

Thirst for Krishna, for seeing Him, hearing Him, His Flute, for installing Him in the heart, in the mind, for grasping His Reality through the intellect - this thirst is the healthiest, the most conducive to peace. Devotion to Krishna is the chain by which the monkey mind can be fastened and subdued. Transmute all the desire with which the senses torment you into the thirst for Krishna and you are saved.

Krish means attract, draw, as in akarshana. Even a confirmed protagonist of Adhwaitha, (the contemplation of the Universal Absolute without name and form), like Madhusuudhana Saraswathi confesses that the attraction for the playful child on the Yamuna sands is irresistible. Leelashuka declares that though the Shasthras taught him the truth of the Nameless Absolute, his heart taught him to revere the Cowherd Boy with the Flute. He prays that, when he draws his last breath, the Fair Child of Brindhavan with the Feather Flute and Flower might smile on him and bless him.

Krishna draws the mind away from sensory desires; that is another way in which the draw operates. He pulls the mind towards him and so, they are pulled away from everything else, for everything else is inferior, less valuable. He satisfies the deepest thirst of man, for peace, joy and wisdom. That is why He is Meghashyama - dark-blue as the rain cloud. The very sight of the rain-laden cloud is so refreshing. He is lotus-eyed, lotus palmed, lotus-soled; the lotus is reminiscent of cool, calm, deep lakes of limpid water, the water that quenches thirst. When Krishna-thrishna is quenched, the highest Anandha is attained; there is no more need, no more want, defect or decline. The urge to drink inferior drinks, that only feed the thirst, disappears when once the sweetness of Krishna nama and Krishna bhava (name and thought of Krishna) are tasted. Sense objects are like sea water that can never allay thirst. Radha, Godha, Meera, Chaithanya, Ramakrishna, Suurdas - they knew the nectarine taste of that Name.

Significance of Krishna's birth and growth

The Radha thathwam, the real nature of Radha can be understood only by those who have acquired that deep 'distressing' thirst for the Formful Aspect of the Lord, and for the Divine Call that resonates in the heart as the entrancing tune of the Flute. Krishna is said to have been born in Gokula, He grew up in Brindhavan, He proceeded to Mathura and He established His home finally at Dwaraka. The significance of this to the sadhaka is, "Let Krishna be born in the Gokula of your Mind; let Him grow and play prankishly in the Brindhavan of your Heart; let Him then be fixed in the Chiththa of Mathura; and, finally, let Him rule over the agitationless Consciousness as the Lord and Master of Dhwaraka." The Nirvikalpa anandham is the final result of His Kingdom established at Dhwaraka, in the centre of the waves.

Krishna will get born in the mind of man only when three prerequisites are attended to- Make the mind (manas), Bhakthimaya (saturated with Bhakthi). Make the intellect (buddy), full of Jnanadeepthi, (illumination of His glory), Make the body (deha), the instrument for Sathdharmacharana (practice of dharma, of moral virtues). Bhakthi is the Raja; Jnana and Vairagya are the two Aides-de-camp of this monarch. They are the guards that ensure safety. Unaccompanied by these two, the Raja is not quite secure.

Steps to cultivate thirst for Krishna

The thirst for Krishna is a sign of health in the spiritual field. Not to have it is a sign of bhava roga - the fell disease that afflicts worldly persons, the symptoms being grief, discontent, pain and worry, even when wealth and health are endowed. That thirst can be cultivated by the reading of scriptures, the cultivation of congenial company, lessons from a kind and considerate Guru and regular practice of japam. Once it is acquired, the thirst itself will lead you on to places and persons able to quench it. That is the advantage of spiritual quest; the first step makes the second easy.

The bane of modern times is the value attached to a cynical destructive type of judgement, by fickle, feeble intellects. A doctor's prescription can be

judged only by an equally qualified or a more qualified doctor, not by a patient suffering from the same or a different illness. No person afflicted with lust or envy or greed or attachment or egoism can pronounce judgement on the ethereal, formless, nameless principle that concretised as Krishna. Krishna is described as blue in physical colour, for, He is as deep and inscrutable as the sky; the blue is the colour which the eye comprehends, though the sky has no colour at all. So too, Krishna has no colour or attributes but, in order to comprehend Him, the mental eye attributes a colour. Grace of Krishna can be won only by the good. The Rakshasas (demons) did not get Amritha (nectar); for they would have misused it. Knowledge in the wicked is power misused for the stratagems of hate and greed. Grace too is power and it has to be endowed on the deserving only. Therefore, character has to be sublimated into saturated piety and devotion. Then only can Grace be secured. Mere repetition of name, Krishna, will be of no use, unless the contemplation of the Glory of Krishna starts purifying the character at the same time. Thus, manava (human) becomes Madhava (divine). Mruthyu (death) is changed into Amritha (immortality). Through thanmaya, (saturated with Divinity), this mrinmaya (mud-filled body) becomes Chinmaya (saturated with Divine consciousness) - through saturation, this clod becomes God. That is the consummation of Krishna-thrishna, the thirst after God, which wells up in one's own heart.

Brahman was in existence,
well before mind and intelligence came into existence.
Brahman cannot be understood
by one's mind or intelligence.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

25. Studies

Date: 1966 / Location: Pune

Earning a fat salary is not the chief thing at all; no. The aim should be the cultivation of virtue. Studies are the roots of the tree of life. The attachments which the individual develops towards kith and kin, the objects of the world, the ideals and the goals, the fancies and fashions - all these form the branches and twigs. The blossoms which the tree produces are the intelligence and its manifestations. The blossoms yield the fruit of Anandham or Joy. The fruit of anandham confers the sweetness called Character. The essence of character is virtue. It is in virtue that the tree of life justifies itself. The root of education fulfils itself in the fruit of virtue. Without it, life is a waste; it is as much a waste as a tasteless fruit. So, the aim of all study should be the cultivation of good qualities, the development of virtuous habits, the raising of the standard of values, of one's own self-respect. We say, 'they study' or 'he studies'. What really is the study? Years of study do not give any idea of the 'entity' that studies! The result of study does not reveal itself in character and virtue; the educated person is more prone to temptation and more addicted to evil habits and evil attitudes. The best that can be said of the learned is that they are efficient in the art of argument and cynical discussion and criticism. The real subject of study for men is the study of the means of ending death and birth.

Result of knowledge without virtue

Millions read, and write; millions attain degrees and become experts and specialists; they are efficient collectors of information or big encyclopaedias of general knowledge; but, not one can say, who he really is. What is the use, then, of the vast amount of exertion and energy they have spent for their education?

Each space rocket costs as much as will maintain all the Universities in India for a period of twelve years! What a colossal waste is this? People try to fly millions of miles into space, but, they are powerless to travel even half an

inch to their own inner realm and discover what lies therein, what their reality is. This 'Science' has enveloped the whole world in mortal dread; each nation holds its life in the clasp of the palm and is shivering in hate and fear, awaiting the moment when it may be reduced to ashes or dust. That is the result of knowledge without virtue. A spark of hatred or pride or short temper can set the whole world aflame today. But. the science that was extolled and practised in India since ages is the science of sense control, of mind control, of character development, of the cultivation of the individual and social virtues, the progressive unfoldment of the Divine in man, not of the mean in man. It speaks of the reality *aspuurnam* (fulfilled), and of this world too, as fulfilled, *puurnam*. From the full, this full has manifested. It does not posit any incomplete, unsatisfied vacuum or discontent. For, it taps the very spring of eternal Joy and Strength and Wisdom. That is the path of spiritual discipline, steady intellectual and moral discipline. That is the basic, the essential study. The cultured person is the person who has cultured the spirit, not the person who caters to the senses and enslaves himself to their attractions.

Foster the divine in each one

When the buddhi (intellect) is thus transmuted, man attains siddhi (fulfilment). When moral discipline is absent, man reduces himself into a brute. There is the spark of the divine in each one and the duty is to foster it and develop it and benefit by it, rather than smother it and silence it. How to keep in constant contact with this higher Self that is seeking expression in our acts and words and thoughts? The best means is the simple exercise of Nama smarana, the repetition of any one of the meaningful Names of the Lord, signifying the Glory that lies embedded in man. People indulge in all types of purposeless gossip and scandal; they find time and interest in these degrading pursuits; but, they have no inclination to awaken the Divine in them by constant indwelling on the splendour of Creation and the Creator. See only such scenes as will foster this discipline; speak only of elevating, uplifting subjects; listen only to purifying topics; think and feel only pure thoughts and emotions. That is the way to develop the Divinity inherent in each one. Our thoughts now build up only castles in the air; our plans are like bubbles on the surface of the waters. They are ephemeral, because they have

no grounding in the permanent, the eternal base.

Life on this world is a bubble that is formed in a second and bursts the next second. It is a fair, that lasts a portion of a day. The entire career of a person starts and finishes in a matter of two hours. All the pomp and paraphernalia that man seeks and flourishes are of the stuff of dreams. Which among these is true? Which among these lasts for all time, without degenerating or declining or dying? You are all present now; you are seeing Me and listening to Me; you feel now that this is true. But, how long is this true, how true is all this? This is real experience for you, so long as you are in the waking stage. This night, when you lie down in bed and start dreaming, the dream is as real to you as all this. This waking stage and all this experience are then unreal. You experience fears, delusions, joys and pleasures in the dream and they are all true, so long as you dream. But, wake up; and, the dream is negated! Both are dreams, a night dream and a day dream. Only one idea is permanent, throughout the dream, the deep sleep and the waking, the idea of the 'I' - I dreamt, I slept and I woke. That 'I' - the I behind all the manifold millions - that I is the Truth and nothing else.

Distinguish between essential and non-essential

The question may arise, if there is only one 'I', which is the Eternal and the Absolute, why do all the individuals have different experiences? The newly educated worry themselves with such questions. But, they are due to a false cleverness, not deep inquiry. For, the same current activates the fan and gives air, illumines the bulb and gives light, heats the stove and cooks, moves the wheel around and works the machine. The instruments are different, but, the inner energiser is the same. Some bulbs are 40 watts and some 60, or 100 or 1000 watts. The current is the same, but illumination is different. Have a powerful bulb, and the light is strong. Change it, it is dim. Name and form are not essential; the inner current is the truth. Take the body; that itself has the hand as a limb; the hand has fingers, the fingers have nails, in their turn. Through every part of every limb flows the same life force. So too in this Universe which is the Body of God, every being is a part of a limb, that is sustained by the same divine essence. So, resolve now to analyse and honour

every one; distinguish between the essential and the non-essential he; and, revere the essential He, the divine He. Of course, the body which is the case for this divine spark has to be guarded and taken care of, until its purpose of self-realisation is fulfilled. But, its nourishment and care should not overshadow the attention due to the mind, its purification and sublimation. Now the body is nourished with tiffin in the morning, lunch at noon, tea at 4 p.m. and dinner at night. 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. The mind has to be hale and hearty, joyous and peaceful, free from agitations and worries. That can be done by the recitation of some holy name or the performance of some holy act which conduces to welfare. This is the study that will confer lasting joy.

Sathyam is My Prachar;
Dharma is My Adhar;
Shanthi is My Swabhava;
Prema is My Swaruup;
Follow any one of the Four
You are Mine, I am Yours.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

26. To the Students

Date: 1966

What is called modern civilisation might give a little more comfort, health and personal happiness, but real mental strength and peace are absent in it. Only virtue and truth can award these two. Why should the body be kept in good trim? Why should man be fed, clothed and housed comfortably? Why should man live well or rather, live at all? Who is exactly deriving happiness? Is it the sense or mind or intelligence or consciousness? Who is this I that seeks happiness and is happy or is not happy? Try to think of answers to these questions. After knowing who this I is, you must try to know what this outside world is. You see these flags fluttering; now, what is it that flutters? Is it the cloth, or the rope or the wind? You know it is the unseen wind that causes that flutter. So too, you see the effect, not the cause, when you observe Nature around you. The bungalow is seen, not the foundation under the earth; the tree is seen with all the crowning glory of leaf and blossom and fruit but, the roots that grip it and feed it are not visible. You cannot therefore deny them. So too, for everything that can be seen, heard, smelt, tasted and touched, God is the cause. Man is born as man because he is to realise this truth, and feel the presence of God in all beings and things.

The message of Sanathana Dharma

Education is incomplete and even ineffective if the educated have not known the Reality or at least the means of knowing it. The only means of knowing it is to cleanse the intelligence of delusion and deluding prejudices. To cleanse the intelligence, virtue has to be practised, along with reverence, humility and detachment. Reverence has to begin with the parents and elders and teachers. Revere them, be humble before their longer experience and deeper love. Know what dharma (virtue), is and follow it strictly. That is the message of Sanathana Dharma (eternal religion), which is the precious gem in the necklace of Bharatha matha (mother India). Now, you are casting off that gem and priding yourself on the plastic tinsel that you have put in its place! Years ago, the copy books in primary schools had the lines, "Jayaram Jayaram Jai

JaiRam" "Suddha Brahma Parathpara Ram", introducing the children to the glory of the Name of the Lord and the Brahmik substratum of all creation. Now, they are taught to sing, "Ding dong bell, pussy is in the well" or, "Ba, Ba, Black sheep, have you any wool?" reducing them to the level of sheep or pussies. The sense of human dignity is destroyed by this tinsel type of education.

The tree of life is dried up if the roots are eaten up by greed or envy or hate. Education must train children to love, to co-operate, to be brave in the cause of truth, to be helpful, to be sympathetic and to be grateful. The training must be supplemented by the conduct of the teachers, the parents, and the elders. There is no use teaching the children one thing and holding out examples of the opposite before them. When Bharatha sought Rama and weeping, told him of the death of their father, Rama told him, "Bharatha! You do not follow the disciplines taught by dharma. That is why you are weeping now." Dharma makes you brave and calm.

Every farmer knows that good seeds must be sown for getting a rich harvest. If the seeds are bad, his efforts are fruitless. Sow the seeds called Name of God in the well-prepared field of the heart; feed it with the manure of Faith; have discipline as the fence to keep out stray cattle. Without a fence guarding the crop, farming will be shooting without a bullet; all sound and no game.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

27. Develop detachment

Date: 1966 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

When the new born child weeps, all around are happy and their faces are lit with smiles; this is strange, for when some one weeps, others should not laugh. But, this is the fate of man. He weeps that he has come into the world; but, these who have been there long are not aware of the truth and they are misled into joy at petty comforts and transient pleasures. Man is happy one moment, the next he is plunged into grief or fear and the moment after, he is deep in worry. When the seven colours of the spectrum revolve together, the effect is "no colour"; when they stop revolving, the seven colours can be separately identified. When the three blades of the electric fan revolve fast and no blade is separately noticeable, they give cool comfort. So too when the different qualities of Sathwa, Rajas and Thamas are unrecognisably integrated, then only is man happy.

Supari is brown; pan is green; chunam is white, but, when these three are together chewed, the colour is red!

When the three gunas are equated in sadhana (spiritual practice), the result is shanthi. The lamp is the sathwa guna, the wick is the thamo guna and the oil is the rajo guna. When the three are integrated, they give the Light of jnana which illumines all problems.

Three-wheeled contraption to realize Brahman

When a plane flies across the sky, it leaves no mark on it, no streak that lasts, no furrow or pothole that interferes with further traffic. So too, allow all feelings and emotions to cross your mind, but, do not allow them to cause an impression. This can be done by inquiry, by quiet reasoning within oneself, more than by listening to lectures or study of books. Little children are trained to walk, by means of a three-wheeled contraption which they hold and push along. The Pranava is such a contraption, with the three wheels of A, U and M, the Omkara Tricycle. Holding it, man can learn to use the two feet of Bhakthi

and Vairagya. If he gives up his hold on the Omkara, he plumps down on the ground helplessly. If he walks on with the help of the Pranava japa, he can certainly realise the glory of the Brahmam, which is the very substance of the Universe.

Nagamahasaya, the householder disciple of Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, was able to escape the chains of samsara by becoming humbler, and humbler smaller and smaller, with less and less egoism, and so tiny, that he could creep through to safety. Vivekananda on the other hand expanded himself until he identified himself with the entire Universe and so, the chain broke, unable to contain his majesty. Nagamahasaya felt "I am the servant of the servants of God", Dasoham. Vivekananda felt that he was the Master, the Isa who was Idam Sarvam, Sada Soham, He was always steady in the conviction that he was That. This is called Jeeva-Brahma-aikya-anusandhanam - the practice of the Consciousness of the identity of the Individual and the Universal. This is the real Kalyana or Holy Rite, which man must endeavour to celebrate.

Egoism is the bane of the Age

The identity will not develop Ahamkaram or Egoism. It will merge the ego in the Universal; the idea of I will disappear in the Thee, which is the only entity one becomes.' aware of. Egoism, conceit, Ahamkaram is the bane of the Age. In every field of activity pride is the undermining evil. Even sanyasins and the presiding monks of monastery institutions are not free from this fatal flaw. "Eat like a dog and wander like a fox", was the lesson an old sage taught his disciple. He should not have any thought of the morrow or about where to lay his head. He should not cater to the senses or count his age or feel his pulse and complain of ailments. He should not celebrate his birthday or encourage others to do so. The essential attitude that one should cultivate is, to engage in all activities that are one's duty without getting attached to the work. As the sky's clear blue is not affected by the clouds or rainstorms, lightning or thunder, but, remains the same in spite of those temporary disturbances, the mind of man too must be clear and clean, in spite of all the storms and stress of life. Edison, the great scientist and inventor, used to be in his laboratory for

hours and even days together, concentrating on some experiment on which his whole attention was bent; milk or bread or tea was pushed through the door, but, they were all untouched by him. So great is the concentration that science demands. Consider then how much more should the sadhaka be fixed in ekagratha (single-mindedness), in order to achieve success in the subtler and more slippery sphere of spiritual conquest.

That is the supreme task of man, the victory for which he has come equipped. He must be light and bright, like a lamp on the waters of the Ganga; if weight is added, it will sink and the light will go out. The weight is "attachment to worldly goods", "the pursuit of sensory pleasures." Just ponder for a moment: how many millions of men have died so far? Have any of them taken from here anything to the realm into which they have disappeared? A man was dragged to court; he asked three comrades of his to come and bear witness to his innocence. One friend said, "I shall not move out of the house; let them who want my statement come here"; the second said, "I shall come up to the doors of the court; but, I dare not get in"; the third said, "Come on! I am ever with you." The first is the wealth one has accumulated; the second is "his kith and kin" who will come as far as the cemetery; the third is "the fame, the honour, he has won.

A valuable instrument to win God's Grace

When a person dies, his property and things remain at home; they do not go with him into the beyond. His relatives cannot also go; only the good or the bad name he has earned will last. So, he has to live in such a way that posterity will remember him with gratitude and joy. To lead the good life, constant prompting from the God within is a great help. That inspiration can be got only by constantly reciting the Lord's Name and calling on the inner springs of Divinity. The Name is so valuable an instrument to win His Grace, to realise His Presence, to picture His Form, to remember His Glory, that even if it is repeated from the heart once in the morning, once in the evening, that will make the griham a griham (house), instead of a guha (cave). The lamp of the Name when it is lit will illumine the household and make it a home, instead of a hole. If a lamp is kept burning in a room, it may go out when

winds blow in from the windows. The indhriyas are the windows and when they are open, the "Name Lamp" will not burn steadily. So keep the outerfaced senses closed to the influences that attract, and concentrate on the Name of the Lord and its beauty and sweetness. Note how happy, contented and carefree were the great saints who revelled in that Name - Jayadeva, Thukaram, Kabeer, Suurdas, Thulasidas, Ramakrishna. By simply shouting Shivoham, you cannot become Shiva; develop the qualities of Divinity like Universal Love, absence of attachment, etc. Then, you will be entitled to assert Shivoham, though you may not assert at all, for you will have no aham feeling then!

Namajapa saves man in all Ages

There are some who say that in the Kaliyuga man can save himself by means of this Nama japa (recitation of the Lord's Name), and that this is a special concession for the weaker mortals of today. Probably, they think that it is quite easy to reel off quickly names of the Lord on the tongue, like a tape recorder. It is not only in the Kaliyuga (present Iron Age), in every Yuga, Namajapa saves man. Bheema in the Mahabharatha is considered to be a strong fighter and a very emotional and short tempered hero, but, really speaking he was a great bhaktha. Once Krishna showed this to his brother; when Bheema was fast asleep, they could hear from every pore of his skin the sound of Nama japa emanating ceaselessly. Dharmaraja had uttered some white lies during the war in order to foil the plans of the enemies and for this, he had to spend a few minutes in Hell. When he was approaching that place of torture, his very nearness conferred on the unfortunate dwellers such refreshing peace and coolness and comfort that they prayed to him not to desert them. Dharmaraja learnt that they were able to get some relief, because he had accumulated merit by his good deeds. Then, Dharmaraja declared, "Let them have all the consequence of all my good deeds and let me be impoverished of all the joy due to me". This made them happy no doubt, but, Dharmaraja did not become poorer, for the very act of renunciation was such a colossal meritorious act that colossal joy was available for him in heaven, besides the quantity already earned by him. Every act has its consequence which cannot be escaped, except by the Grace

of the Lord. The Grace of the Lord can be won only by virtue and truth. So, develop sathya, dharma, shanthi and prema; cultivate vairagya - non-attachment to things and persons; remember death which is around the corner and time which is fast fleeting away. Take recourse to the ways of liberation, before 'you are bound.

I am Nataraja The King of dance-masters. I know the agony of teaching you each step.

Bear all and do nothing; hear all and take nothing; serve all and be nothing.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

28. Economy and the elements

Date: 15 October 1966 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Dasara

Dasara is the festival that celebrates the victory of the forces of good over the foes that resist the progress of man towards light. The sages who have decided on these festivals have a high purpose. They want us to imbibe the inner meaning and use each such day as a step in sadhana, as a reminder of the journey which each person has to undertake alone to the Feet of the Lord. The forces of good (devas) are combating with the forces of evil (asuras) in every living being and if they only rely on Mahashakthi, the great Divine Force that fosters and fends the Universe, they can easily win and reach the goal. People try' to reform the world without making any effort to reform themselves; for, it is easier to give advice and admonish others than take the advice and advance ourselves. The others are fundamentally reflections, whereas the original, namely, you yourself have to improve your shape! Strengthen the inner urges towards virtue and goodness; become impregnable there; then you can set about reforming the others. I shall tell you of one form of worship which will endow you with divine strength. Godhead expresses itself initially as the five elements, the sky, the wind, the fire, the water and the earth. All creation is but a combination of two or more of these in varying proportions. The characteristic nature of these five elements are: sound, touch, form, taste and smell; cognised by the ear, the skin, the eye, the tongue and nose. Now, since these are saturated with the divine, one has to use them reverentially and with humility and gratefulness.

Nature is in essence Divinity itself

Use them intelligently, to promote the welfare of yourself and others; use them with moderation and with the idea of loving service to the community, to all. They are all free and full of precious potentiality. Appreciate the plenty and the preciousness. You know from experience that excessive quantities of wind or fire or water are injurious to health. Drinking more water than needed is a torture; inhaling more air is suffocating. Fire in moderation can warm or

serve to heat and melt; but, beyond a certain limit, it is a holocaust, liven sound, beyond a certain limit, is a calamity, a weapon which can distract and drive people mad. So, efficient use of these is itself a form of worship. The body is equipped with mechanisms which ensure a steady degree of warmth, beyond which or beneath which man cannot be healthy and active. Prakrithi (Nature) is in essence Divinity itself, Ishavasyam idam sarvam: all this is divine. Vasudevassarvamidam: all this is Vasudeva, God. So, tread softly, move reverentially, utilise gratefully.

There was an ascetic once who felt an intense desire for milk; he decided to pray to God, either for its fulfilment or for its destruction. He knew that the Lord was reclining on anantha (thousand-headed serpent) on the Ocean of Milk and so he chose to pray to Him in that form, as Narayana. Though the original purpose of the ascetic's thapas (penance) was the purely physical need for milk, the Lord was so pleased with his steadfastness that, after proper trials and tests, He granted him Liberation itself. The man who initiated thapas for milk was rewarded with a permanent: denial of mother's milk. That is the greatness of the Grace of God. God in His mercy took pity on him and felt he was wasting his efforts in the pursuit of a cup of milk a day. One must develop deep detachment. It is no use becoming so enthusiastic, to renounce some food or drink to which you have become bound, when you hear a discourse or when some religious text is expounded within hearing. Detach yourself from all that keeps you away from God.

Maintaining silence is a step in sadhana

You feel the presence of God when silence reigns. In the excitement and confusion of the marketplace, you cannot hear His Footfall. He is Shabdabrahma, resounding when all is filled with silence. That is why I insist on silence, the practice of low speech and minimum sound. Talk low, talk little, talk in whispers, sweet and true. When you want to place a heavy thing on the ground, place it with care, do not drop it from a height and make great noise. Do not drop your bed from a height; bend and place it slowly, where you want to spread it. Examine each act of yours and see that you execute it with minimum noise. Transact all dealings with minimum speech. Do not

shout to a person standing far; go near him or beckon to him to approach you. Loud noise is sacrilege on the sky, just as there are sacrilegious uses of earth and of water. This is the reason why we have certain disciplines at the Prasanthi Nilayam, which you are all expected to follow. Maintaining silence, as a step in sadhana which you learn here and practise wherever you go, is the most patent of these rules. Also, emphasis on the wise use of water and electricity, of earth space all around. You must see that your attention, when you are doing bhajan or listening to a discourse, is not divided between the task in which you are engaged and the pots and pans that you have brought with you. See that their safety is ensured and then come; or, better still, escape from undue attachment to material possessions. Then you are advised to spend time in meditation or japam or the quiet pursuit of Namasmarana; for peace and joy are not to be found in external nature; they are treasures lying hidden in the inner realms of man; once they are located, man can never again be sad or agitated. So, use this holy atmosphere, this splendid chance, these precious days to the fullest. With every inhalation, utter the name of God; with every exhalation, utter the name of God. Live in God, for Him, with Him. That is the Message of the Prasanthi Flag I am hoisting now.

The lotus, born in slime and mud, rises up through the water and lifts its head high above the water; it refuses to get wet though water is the element which gives it life!

Be like the lotus.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

29. The supreme physician

Date: 15 October 1966 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Dasara, Hospital Day

The deha (body) is a vehicle that even gods aspire to possess. You know that gods seek to come into human form so that they could utilise the intelligence, discrimination, detachment, etc., that the human body alone is capable of exercising, to realise the Ultimate Reality, which when known makes everything else known. The body with which the hospital is concerned is the ratha (the chariot) of the individual or the jeevi, the dehi, the resident, the master. It is the castle from which one can fight against the foes of attachment and egoism; it is the boat by which one can cross the sea of change and chance. The realisation of the reality, through Adhyathmicsadhana (spiritual discipline) is an arduous enterprise, as fraught with calamity, as playing with fire or duelling with tigers or battling with barbarian hordes. One has to be alert; vigilant and fully trained to meet all emergencies. Many quail before its impossible demands. The Upanishads have compared the aspirant's path to a razor's edge. Man is the monarch of all animals; his is the most glorious chance among all living beings. Though the elephant lives longer, the lion is more fierce, the eagle more far-seeing, the cock more punctual in early rising, the cow more imbued with the spirit of sacrifice, man has in him vaster potentialities which can be brought out by proper culture. If only he intensifies his thirst for God, he can live in perpetual content, instead of grovelling in perpetual discontent, pining for land, buildings, bank-balance, furniture, status, power, authority and all such trivial satisfactions. At last, when man is about to leave the world, as leave he must, he is surrounded by his wife and children who lament loudly, asking, "What is to happen to us when you leave?"; but the poor fellow is confronted by a more urgent, a more personal problem: "What is to happen to me?" And he has no more time to discover the answer or to prepare for something good to happen.

Men born with a cry should die with a smile

In fact, if he had tried he could have known the reality and gone with a smile,

instead of a groan or a whine. Men are born with a helpless lamenting cry; they should die with the smile of happy joy. That is the purpose of the years between. But those years are wasted now. God, who is the anchor that will save man from stress and storm, is neglected and ignored. Man is tossed about from one want to another, one grief to another, until he is blinded by despair and exhausted by foiled pursuits. Most illnesses are due to this despair and this exhaustion. The deha (body) has to be nourished so that man can reach the dehi, the real indweller. Bheeshma taught from his bed of arrows that the body is to be fostered since it is an instrument for good deeds. Three fishes lived in a tank; one told the other two that the water was getting dry and they would be well advised to leave, ere it was too late. But, one said, it could save itself when the contingency arose; the third was caught by the fisherman, though the first migrated early enough and the second managed to break through the net. Yama is the fisherman; unless early notice is taken of the process of drying to which the tank of one's span of life is subject, one gets caught. Migrate into the sea of Grace, which will not dry; or learn the art of breaking through the net of death. It was the sathwa guna (quality of goodness) that moved on to God; the rajo guna (quality of activism) broke the net; the thamo guna (quality of inertia) got caught. Grow into the sathwik stage and save yourself. Discard sloth, denounce fanaticism and declare yourself a dedicated servant of the Lord. Then, Grace will be showered on you.

Pronounce the Lord's name with love and joy

Namasmarana is the process by which this dedicatory attitude can be cultivated and confirmed. When confronted by calamity, you must attach yourself to this sadhana even more firmly, instead of losing faith in it and getting slack. The drug should not be given up when it is most needed. The pity is, when the first disappointment faces you, you lose courage and confidence and give up Rama or Krishna or Sai Baba. Another point about this Namasmarana. There are some who ejaculate Rama or Sai-rama or Mahadeva when they are disgusted with some happening, or when they are displeased or depressed, in a tone indicative of distance or unwelcome surprise. They say it with a sigh or a groan. This is wrong. The name of the Lord must always

be pronounced with joy, thankfulness, exultation, awareness of the uniqueness and the splendour. Say it with love, say it with sincere yearning.

There was a great sage who was bitten by a serpent during a yajna which he was celebrating. His disciples lamented the incident and cursed the wily reptile. But, he quietened them and said, "No, the snake is a messenger from God. All beings are our kith and kin. This serpent is sent by God to liberate me from this body. Honour it, welcome it; do not beat the messenger of the Lord." Death is not a deplorable event; it is the journey's end, the owner getting out of the car when the time is out and the goal is reached. It is a consummation, a happy conclusion, or at least it ought to be, if only all are wise enough to treat it as such and be prepared for it.

A strong will is the best tonic

Buddha's father decided that he should get attached to the world and the senses; he built around his son a wall and a garden of delight and pleasure; but Buddha escaped into the atmosphere of detachment, to discover the secret of human sorrow and devise a cure for it. Now, people seek to realise God while clinging on to the world and its fake joys. This is like the mother-in-law who hated her daughter-in-law so intensely that she wished she would become a widow, but she loved her son so much that she wanted him to live. How could the girl be widowed when the son lives? The two are incompatible; God cannot be gained through attachment to falsehood. You must have a proper sense of values. A woman attacked her husband with a pestle; the pestle broke and she bewailed its loss; she did not worry much about the husband's head, which had also broken. Is this a sign of wisdom? Can you call it an awareness of values? The body is a house given to you for rent; the owner is God. Live there so long as He wills, thanking Him and paying Him the rent of faith and devotion.

A strong will is the best tonic; the will becomes strong when you know that you are a child of immortality or a person who has earned the Grace of the Lord. Medicine and hospitalisation are for those who doubt and hesitate and argue about this doctor being more efficient than the other, this drug being

more powerful than the rest. For those who rely on the Supreme Doctor, His Name is enough drug. The Pandavas had faith and devotion; so they won grace and they succeeded in defeating the wily stratagems of their foes. The reinforcements provided by the Lord are the most reliable means of support. When you get them, dishonour, defeat and despair fade away like fog before the sun. Disease too dare not approach you. On this day, when the Hospital is celebrating its Anniversary Festival, I advise you to avoid disease, to avoid drugs and hospitals by strengthening your spiritual urge and invoking the Grace of God.

Anandha is the best cure for mental depression

Mrs. Macrae of New York spoke in her Presidential Address, of her experiences in the mental clinics she runs in the United States of the curative value of music. She has tried the same curative treatment in the hospitals for defectives in Hongkong also. Anandha (spiritual bliss) is the best cure for mental depression; as a matter of fact, it is when the inner springs of anandha are ignored that man gets depressed. India has recognised the salutary effect of music on the mind; its potency to restore calm and equanimity, to still the waves of agitation and worry. Music is the instrument by which passions are sublimated, emotions are tamed, impulses directed to higher purposes. We have forgotten the great role assigned to music in our culture. We are admiring the lilts and jingles of the films and losing the profundities of classical music. People talk loud and long on Indian culture and its preservation and promotion, but when it comes to practise, they fail miserably. When this body had attained its ninth year, I had written a drama on this fundamental trait of modern man, saying one thing and doing its opposite. When Vedas are ignored, vedana (pain) is the consequence. The teachings of the Upanishads and the Geetha which give all human activities the correct sense of proportion are invaluable in preserving mental and physical health. They direct man along the paths of peace to the realm of inexhaustible bliss.

You might say that karma of the previous birth has to be consumed in this birth and that no amount of grace can save man from that.

Evidently, someone has taught you to believe so. But I assure you, you need not suffer from karma like that.

When a severe pain torments you, the doctor gives a morphine injection and you do not feel the pain, though it is there in the body. Grace is like the morphine, the pain is not felt, though you go through it!

Grace takes away the malignity of the karma which you have to undergo.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

30. Achieve nil balance

Date: 17 October 1966 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Dasara

You will find in the Dasara Programme here various items like Vedaparayanam (Vedhic chanting), puuja for Divine Forms, the feeding of the poor, dramas, music, Harikathas, reading of Puranas (moral epics), lectures on Shasthras (scriptural texts), etc. - all designed for various purposes that may not be evident on the surface. You may be under the impression that all this is but customary and traditional. No. Each item has a deeper significance; it is intended to bring about a definite benefit for some section or other. The Vedas are for all mankind; they have prayers for peace, subjugating the anger of the elements and of human communities; they invoke the forces of nature to be calm and beneficent; so, the parayanam (recitation) of the Vedas promotes world peace and human welfare. For those who derive joy when the names of the Lord are recited, each name evoking one facet of the splendour of God, we have the puujas. For those thirsting for directions along the path of sadhana, we have the discourses by the pandits: Musical recitations and discourses transmit the teachings of the Shasthras and Puranas in pleasant palatable ways. The dramas are visible representations of the essential lessons embodied in our scriptures. All these unfold the petals of the heart of man. The lotus in the heart of man pines for the Sun, the splendour of the Lord. But to attain it is hard. Withdrawal of all affection towards the world alone can win it. God is the nearest and dearest entity, but ignorance hides Him from the eye. The love that God bears man is unequalled; yet, He appears to man as a distant, formidable, unapproachable phenomenon. The stars appear as dots of light, for they are at a great distance from us. So too God appears insignificant or ineffective to many, because they are keeping themselves too far from Him. If some people say there is no God, it only means they are at too great a distance to be aware of Him.

Be free from desires that drag you down

A green gourd sinks in water; but a dry one floats. Become dry, rid yourselves of attachments, desires, avoid anxieties, worries. Then you can float

unaffected on the waters of change and chance. Even water, when it becomes steam, can rise into the sky. Become light, lose weight, bale out so that you may rise higher and higher. Yoga is defined as chiththa vriththi nirodha - the prevention of impulses that agitate the inner consciousness of man. These impulses add to the ballast. Be free from desires that drag you down; have only the yearning to come face to face with the Truth. That Truth is shining inside you, waiting to be discovered. Like the dhobi (washerman) in knee-deep water dying of thirst, man too suffers with the panacea in easy grasp. God is the antharyami (Indweller), and so, when He is sought in the outer world He cannot be caught. Love Him with no other thought; feel that without Him nothing is worth anything; feel that He is all. Then you become His and He becomes yours. There is no nearer kinship than that. Fifty others may be peeping into the kitchen, hungry and expectant, but if you are the child of the master, you will be served first. The namam (name) can light the spark of that Love. When two branches of a tree grate on each other hard for some time, enough heat is generated to set the tree on fire. So too, when one Name and another rub together quick and hard, spark of jnana (spiritual wisdom) ignites the mind. Jnana-agnidagdha-karmanam - "The flames of jnana reduce to ashes the effects of all activities" says the geetha; they do not affect man any more. Like a rope that has been reduced to ash, it can bind no more. So long as the consequence of karma persists, man is bound to be born, to finish the consumption thereof. For, the slate of karma has to be wiped clean so that the account of birth and death can be closed with nil balance. Desire is the prompting behind all activity. Desire is the urge. No activity, arises in those who have attained all desires, for they rest in the atma which has no desire.

Wipe off the balances of karma-consequence

Any balance of karma-consequence will involve some years of imprisonment in the body. The Shasthras advise man to wipe off the balances by four steps: by scotching all sparks from the fire; by getting rid of all signs, symptoms and causes of fever; by paying off all balance of debt; and by suffering off all consequences of karma. A spark may start another fire; a virus may multiply quick and bring about relapse; a little unpaid debt will soon assume huge

proportions through high rates of interest; a karma, however trite, done with intention to benefit by the fruit thereof will involve birth in order to eat the fruit. The first stage is karma-jijnasa - the execution of karma (action) on proper lines, with proper mental attitude; then comes dharma-jijnasa - the observance of moral codes for the upkeep of society and the discharge of one's duties and obligations; last comes Brahma-jijnasa - resulting in the appreciation of Namasmarana as the primary sadhana. The Name is sugar; you can make sugar dolls of any shape; call it by any name appropriate to the shape, cat or rabbit, eagle or elephant; the sweetness and the calorific value are the same. So too, when engaged in the sadhana of Namasmarana, you can select Om Shakthi, Om Narayana, Om Srinivasa, Om Paramatma, Om Sai Rama - the curative value, the cleansing value, is the same; the sweetness on the tongue is the same. Start on the journey to God and travel light. Namasmarana will make you stick to the thought of God. Now you are like a mouse caught inside a drum, a mridanga. When the player beats on the right, the mouse runs to the left; when the left is beaten, it runs in terror to the right. So too, you run from Paramatma to prakrithi (objective world), reluctant to stick to God and at the same time, retreating from the denials and disappointments of worldly activity. You have come from God; you are a spark of His Glory; you are a wave of that Ocean of bliss; you will get peace only when you again merge in Him. Like a child who has lost his way, you can have joy only when you rejoin your mother. The ocean drop rose as vapour, joined the congregation called cloud, fell on the earth, flowed along the ravines, and at last reached the ocean. Reach like-wise the ocean you have lost. Start on that journey and travel quick and light. Mrs. Macrae is so full of devotion that she considers every spot connected with Me as sacred beyond words. So, she went into the village the other day and collected stones and pebbles from the ground on the site of the house where this Sai again appeared with body. Every stone that lay there appeared attractive and precious to her mind; so she brought a big bucketful to her room, not realising that it would be too heavy a luggage for her when she embarks for Teheran, Rome and New York. Do not store much, for you will have to discard them one day. Have devotion in the mind, cultivate the feeling, the attitude, the dedication. That is enough. It is only in Sanathana Dharma (the eternal Moral Code) that the importance of karma in shaping the destiny of man, the fact of the individual

undergoing many births in his progress towards birthlessness, and the mighty Grace of God's coming as man among men to gather them around Him in holy companionship for saving them and saving the world through them, is so strongly and so clearly laid down. If you doubt any of these great truths, you are certain to suffer and grieve. Every one of you must be saved, sooner or later, by the Grace of the All-Merciful. Make it sooner rather than later. Keep the goal clear before the eye and march on.

Pure words, pure speech; holy listening, holy reading; seeing holy things - these make the heart pure. The confusion and travail that now afflict you, are the consequences of impure speech and impure sight.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

31. The taming of the wild

Date: 17 October 1966 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Dasara

It is indeed a pitiable fate that a people who drank the nectar of spiritual culture and spent their days in peace and joy should today be in the throes of fear, faction, failure and feebleness. The Saraswathi river that flows underground and unseen, but which sustains and fertilises the crops sown on the soil, has become dry; faith and devotion have declined, so that man looks upon brother man as a rival and as a competitor, rather than as the image of the same God that he reveres.

Great sages, filled with magnificent sympathy for their fellowmen, laid down rules, regulations, limits and directions for daily life and conduct, so that man's hand and brain, his instincts and impulses may not turn against man, but may turn towards the ideals of sathya, dharma, shanthi and prema. They declared that every karma must be weighed in the balance and approved only if it cleanses the emotions and passions; it has to be cast aside if it curdles or fouls them. Bhavashuddhi (purification of mental disposition) was the fruit of karma and any act that befogs the bhava (thought process) or excites it into Rajas (passion) or demeans it into thamas (inertia) has to be avoided. Yajnas and yagas (sacrificial rites and sacrificial offerings) were prescribed so that man may learn the glory of renunciation, not the glitter of pomp and conspicuous waste.

Yajnas imposed on the performer and participants a rigorous routine of physical and mental cleanliness that: led them on to the presence of the Supreme. Like the attractive pictures in children's primers, they drew attention and held it fast; they took the delighted readers along the lessons and helped them to master knowledge itself. They learnt Akshara (the unchanging eternal truth) through the changing karma. The worship of idols, temple rituals, vows and fasts, festivals and holy days, all these are designed to tame the wildness of man and train him to tread the straight and sharp path to self-realisation.

Hanker after God more than after gold

The age-long approach to life and living that has suffered a set-back in recent years, as the Minister said, is sure to triumph again; the enticement of science and western fashion, of cynicism and ruthless egoism will fade away; it is but the ash upon the cinder that is glowing hot; blow a breath and it falls away. Like clouds that pass along the sky casting shadows on the plains, these distractions lead some away from the goal; but there is no need to despair that India will lose its heritage. Now that the rulers too are inheritors of the same treasure and aware of its uniqueness, the danger of its neglect is very much less. The rulers are not different from the ruled; the people themselves select the rulers and entrust them with powers, responsibilities and funds to plan and perform programmes of all-round uplift. So, there must be greater mutual understanding and cooperation than in the past, when the rulers belonged to a distant country and strange culture. The Minister described in his speech how progress in mechanisation and industrialisation has brought various social ills and individual maladjustments in their wake; he recognised the efficacy of Sanathana Dharma (the eternal religion) in assuaging these evils and commended the study of the Vedas, Shasthras and Puranas. He spoke of an advisory council of religious leaders which can help the rulers in preserving and promoting the principles and practices of Sanathana Dharma. What the rulers are anxious to give, the people must be eager to take; what the people are eager to achieve, the rulers must be anxious to foster; that is the way the country can go forward in this fundamental field of spiritual activity. Above all, people must hanker after God more and after gold, less. Vishayavasana - the urge to accumulate fortune, to live in luxury, to revel in scandal, to delight in falsehood, to take pride in display - these must be cast aside. They bind a man to triviality; they smother his divine nature which struggles to blossom into service, sacrifice and all-pervading love.

The mind is the villain; it is another name for desire; the texture of the mind is just desire; both warp and woof are desire and nothing else. If desire goes,

the mind disappears. When you pull out all the yarn from a piece of cloth, you have no more cloth. So too, pull out desires from the mind; it disappears, and you are free.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

32. Poorna minus poorna is poorna

Date: 19 October 1966 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Dasara

Every being needs prema (Love), inhales and exhales prema. For prema is the basic breath; every one is the embodiment of prema. Love knows no fear and so, love needs no falsehood to support it. It is only fear that makes people warp the face of truth to make it pleasant for those whom they fear. Love also seeks no reward; love is its own reward. That is the sole gain, the joy of loving and being loved. When it is directed to God, it is called bhakthi. Who would not love God when once he is aware of His Glory, Majesty, Might and Mercy? Love removes all egoism; the self is forgotten, it is superseded, it is transcended. Any trace of greed for gain, vishayavasana as it is called, degrades prema into a bargain over the counter. Whatever the Loved One does or gives is satisfying to the Lover, the Adorer. A child is all love; its smile is most innocent; it has not learnt to work for gain. It has no vasana - attachment to the goods of the world. It plays with a doll for a while and throws it off the next moment. The love-full heart of the child hardens with age because greed breeds hatred and envy.

It is only prema that can successfully carry out schemes for service and uplift. Love creates sympathy; love will show the way where hatred can only confound. When a toddler is learning to walk, love will place no obstacle in the path; on the other hand, it will encourage; welcoming each forward step and overlooking each fall. The plans for the uplift of the villagers, which the Minister derailed just now, have to be executed with love and sympathy. Many a beneficial act in the country is rendered barren because of harsh criticism and wanton disparagement. Bhakthi alone can transform people's hearts into Sathya and Dharma.

Know the items of the spiritual menu

Take the ups and downs of life as natural; they are incidental to the world of compounds and components. A sanyasin (ascetic) named Ramakrishnaswamy was informed by a disciple who rushed into his presence that his son had

died. The Swamy sat unmoved; he only said, "Water flows; fire burns; the wind blows", meaning that the corn pound of five elements has some day to disintegrate. The Swamy laughed at the concern of others; he was brave because he knew. Those who know are called guru: heavy, weighted. They will not be moved by storms; the leaf on which no dish is served tends to rise up in the wind and fly, but when it is weighted by servings of food, it will remain unshaken. Virtues, faith, steady discipline, devotion, detachment, equanimity - these are items of the spiritual menu.. When you have attained true wisdom, you will find that good fortune should not be gloated over, nor bad fortune grieved over. The hero treats both with equal unconcern. They are breezes and storms that cannot affect the depths of the ocean of bliss in the heart of man. The Minister spoke of gardeners who tie a weight at the end of snake-gourds, in order that they may grow long and straight. Done when quite young, the weight pulls the gourds and prevents them rolling into curves. Children too must be trained to grow straight by the parents, the teachers and the company into which they are led. In the old days, they were awakened from sleep at 4.00 a.m. The mother sang fine hymns and poems until dawn when she moved about in the house and the children imbibed the lesson of prayer automatically from her. Now, children get acquainted with the heroes and heroines of the Puranas (epics) and of Rama, Krishna and the other manifestations of Divinity only through the films. They identify them by the names of the actors who assumed those roles. They miss the sublimity and the sweetness of the epics and the mythological stories since they rely on modernised and mis-shaped rescensions for their acquaintance.

Words cannot describe God's glory

Parents do not encourage them to proceed to the Presence of the Great, to listen to the discourses of genuine teachers, to visit sacred places where the atmosphere is fragrant with sadhana and study. Arjuna was called Dhananjaya, not because he somehow managed to bring from various sources much wealth, but because he was rich in viveka, vairagya and vichakshana (wisdom, detachment and discrimination). These are the riches one has to earn and accumulate. When his son completed his education and came home, a father asked him various questions, eager to discover whether

he had used his years of study to the best advantage. The son made him exceedingly glad by his answers. At last, he asked him to describe the glory of God. The boy sat silent and did not answer. In spite of hours of sweet persuasion, and even threats of drastic punishments, the boy was adamant; he did not open his mouth. The father lamented his fate in having a son, who though proficient in many branches of learning, had turned out to be an atheist. When he was on the point of bursting into tears at the calamity that had overtaken him, the son said that he was answering his question in the best manner possible - by silence; for how could words describe His Glory? That son was a remarkable son; the father too by his question and by his reaction to the silence of the son demonstrated that he was a remarkable father.

Feel that God is the Father of all beings

The Minister appreciated the discipline you maintain here, though I am yet not quite satisfied. The silence maintained here must be carried over to wherever you go; it is to be taken as an exercise in the control of the senses that are exterior oriented. The tongue should not talk evil; the eyes should not look out for evil; the ears should not seek evil. The presence of God in every being makes every one holy; thinking low of others amounts to thinking low of God. When you follow the convention of addressing others as Sodara Sodarimanulara, ("Brothers and Sisters"), you must cultivate the feeling that God is the Father and that you are all brothers and sisters, each to the rest. This brotherhood is more real and binding than the blood brotherhood, for here the paternal property for which you struggle can be shared without the share of each being diminished in any way. When the Poorna (full) is subtracted from the Poorna, Poorna is found to be the balance. * * Ishavasya Upanishad says:Poomasya Poomamadaya Poomamevavasishyate: From the Full (Brahman) proceeds this Full (Universe). That (Brahman) remains Full, even though this (Universe) has come out of it. The Minister said that he is anxious to be of some service, as Minister, to the thousands of pious people who come here from all the States of India and even from abroad; and so he is accepting the proposal to constitute this Prasanthi Nilayam into a Township, so that you may solve the various special problems that arise as a result of

the arrival and stay of these large numbers of pilgrims. I must say that I have no desire to keep away from any one place or village or people. Interested as I am in fostering and guiding countries across the seven seas, I am interested in associating with and fostering places that are near and neighbouring. The attitude of exclusion, of this being Mine and that being not Mine, can never arise in Me. He also announced that he had decided on improving the road that leads to Prasanthi Nilayam. I am not too enthusiastic about this amenity because, when you improve the means of access and make them easy and quick, the really earnest seekers will be swamped by others who are actuated more by curiosity or the urge for a new type of week-end. When pilgrims had to ascend the steps up the Seven Hills to have the darshan (audience) of Lord Shrinivasa they pinned their faith on God; they called out 'Govinda, Govinda' so that they may have strength and stamina added to them by His Grace. Now, when cars and buses go up in a matter of minutes, the Hills do not resound to the name of God. The mind is not cleansed by that discipline of physical endurance before the pilgrim stands in front of the shrine to offer his heart to the Lord. But I do not stand in the way. Provide only such facilities as will complement the atmosphere of this place - that is My suggestion.

33. The road to bliss

Date: 20 October 1966 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Dasara, Avatar Day

Eyes made of earthly material, intelligence shaped out of incompetent senses - with these you cannot comprehend Me. The jnana-nethram (the eye of pure wisdom), alone can see the Lord in all His Glory. That eye is won by shravana, manana and nididhyasana (listening, reflecting and meditating). Listen with faith; reflect with discrimination; meditate with one-pointed devotion. Then the truth will be revealed and doubts will disappear. Arjuna, Janaka and Parikshith all had the fortunate chance of shravana; they followed it up with reflection and meditation and so were blessed by realisation. The process is an inner transformation, an inner discovery. The fog is inner, the veil is across the heart's door: the veil which Thyagaraja prayed to Lord Shrinivasa to move out of the way. Do not select tonics and drugs for the illness you have diagnosed as yours and believing in the labels and advertisements, do not start using them. Take the advice of a doctor who has known the peculiar problems of your body and its upkeep; accept his diagnosis and his prescription with full faith. Such a one is called the Guru; he will help the process of removing the veil. When the veil is removed, God can be experienced everywhere in full. When some one told Socrates that he could not see God in the sky or the upper regions of space, which were pointed out by men as the dwelling place of the Deity, he said that He can be seen only by wearing a three-fold lens over the eye: bhakthi or prema or adoration; viveka or discrimination; and vairagya or renunciation. Prahladha wore these lenses and he saw Him everywhere, in pillar and plant. His father had bandaged his own eye with cynical doubt and so he could not see Him.

Don't neglect or bypass God

There was a king who sought a teacher who could put him into heaven; he was so conceited and drunk with power that he felt he deserved it. When any one came forward, he plied him with such impossible questions that they were aghast at his impertinence; but the king did not leave them at that. He threw them into prison. At last, one man came promising to show him the

way. He was brought into court and seated before the king. The man, however, took no notice of the king, but began conversing with the courtiers and the pages and attendants, inquiring after their health and wishing them well.

The king was incensed at this neglect of his high authority and he asked the soldiers to lead him out and give him a thorough beating. The man said, "Before I am led out, let me tell you this: I am to be given a thorough beating because I did not respect you first, but bypassed you and talked to these servants of yours. Well, God is the king of kings, the Lord of all the worlds; you have neglected Him; you are bypassing Him; you talk only to these servants; consider what punishment you deserve for this. The king realised his blunder and thanked the teacher for removing the veil of conceit.

The ego is at the root of all the factions that rob the world of peace today. Individual fights with individual, country hates country; in every field, in every community, hatred and envy are having full play. People whose noses drop when they cough, how can they keep their noses on the face when they sneeze? Those whose anger is aroused for petty things at home, how can they pacify the people of strange nations waging war? The cause is in ourselves; but we accuse others and multiply discontent, through avarice and fear. When some aspirant follows a saint, another asks him why; and when the reply is given that it is to gain mental peace, he tries his worst to cast doubt and turn him back. Ghandikota Shastry said just now that I gave him a Shivalinga forpuuja with the remark that it was My Swaruupam. I do not like this contribution to publicity; I want publicity for the teachings and the message. I want thathwa-prachara, not vyakthiprachara - publicity to principles, not to individuals. That is more important. About Me there is no need to talk.

Getting rid of envy is difficult attainment

There are some vyakthis (individuals), who publish their attainments and boast they walk on water or fly in the air and challenge others to do likewise. It is a far greater and a far more useful attainment if a man can rid himself of

envy, pride, greed and malice. This is a more difficult attainment too, as evidenced by their behaviour. The person who is established in His Divinity cannot be shaken by these. Thothapuri wanted that Ramakrishna must give up even his Ishtadevatha Kalimatha, when he sought the highest bliss, and he helped Ramakrishna to overcome his deep-rooted attachment to that Name and Form. What then are we to say of the attachment to mere name and fame of these yogis and rishis (sages), at the present time? They will not stir a finger; they will not give up a single desire or habit; they cannot miss a meal or sit quiet for an hour; but they expect that God must grant them immortality and men must take them as their example!

Escape from the anaemia of want of faith

People become anaemic and then they are liable to be infected by more serious fevers, because their powers of resistance are weakened. So too, when they lose faith in God, they lose faith in themselves; when they lose faith in their own strength and divinity, they lose faith in the source of that strength and divinity, namely God. They then become the victims of pride, hate and envy and such other acute fevers, which rob them of mental health. To escape from the anaemia of want of faith, practise Namasmarana (remembrance of the Lord) the reading of scriptures and the contemplation of the evanescence of the world with all its charms. The vibhuthi (holy ash) which you smear on your forehead is intended to convey this basic spiritual lesson that every thing will be reduced to ashes, including the brow that wears it. Though I am speaking to you since half an hour, My concern is more for the boys behind the curtain there, in the green room. They are preparing to enact the drama Radha bhakthi and they are so enthusiastic about it that they did not take time off, even for food. The love that these boys have towards Me and the love that I shower upon them are matters that only they and I can know. I may say that it is this prema that induced Me to express through this drama the bhakthi of Radha. Though we persuade these boys of the Patasala to go home during the summer holidays and be for some weeks with their parents, they do not seize the chance; they start weeping when they think of leaving. Their pure hearts are saturated with sweet devotion. I am not inclined to entrust such boys to the care of others, so far as this

Drama is concerned. So I have Myself supervised over the rehearsals; I Myself making ready their costume, their makeup. I have also brought here, from their far-flung villages, the parents of the boys who appear on the stage so that they too may share in the joy. Let them be thrilled at the opportunity to see their boys enacting, in My presence, a play that I have written for them and you. The play itself has in the dialogues, songs and words, the quintessence of a dozen discourses of Mine; the boys will now provide answers to the doubts that haunt the intelligence of every one of you. Watch; listen and benefit.

The tongue must be sanctified by the repetition of the Lord's name. It has also to use sweet expressions which will spread contentment and joy. Be very careful about your speech. Animals have horns, insects have stings, beasts have claws and fangs. But, man's biggest weapon of offence is his tongue. The wounds that his tongue inflicts can scarce be healed; they fester in the heart for long. They are capable of more damage than even an atom bomb.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

34. Living in compartments

Date: 22 October 1966 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Dasara

A peculiar religion has now appeared and is gaining influence among the people. It can be named Modernism. Navaneetha (new fad of fashion); giving up the old because it is old, getting enamoured of the new because it is new. It takes delight in light things; discards ideas that are difficult to understand, attitudes that are difficult to learn, duties that are felt to be burdensome, obligations that are considered irksome. Gaiety, vanity, effervescence - these are its traits. It recognises no bonds, no limits, no restrictions, no bounds. It will not bend before age or learning or goodness or authority. It discards all the directions of the ancient texts about rites, ceremonies, fasts, vows, worship and the rest. It laughs at those who practise moderation and self-control, at old people who insist on tradition and on maintaining age-old customs. They carp at pilgrimages, for no place is holy or hallowed in their estimation. They cannot understand the joy and the enlightenment that seekers derive from image worship; they dismiss it as superstition and as flummery. This fashion has enslaved even the so-called educated class, who wear the livery of the west, who are the manasa puthras (brain washed sons) of the west. They are not educated enough to weigh the pros and cons of their beliefs; they have no training in discrimination between what gives lasting content and what is but flimsy and flamboyant; they have been plucked by their roots and subjected to artificial feeding. So they are subject to this illness of navaneetha.

Why go begging when you have a treasure?

The Prasanthi Vidwanmahasabha (Assembly of scholars) has been established in order to combat this infection. These Pandiths will reveal that man is a precious jewel encased in a fivefold box, a treasure preserved within the five koshas: Annamaya, Pranamaya, Manomaya, Vijnanamaya and Anandhamaya, as they are named (five sheaths :the material, the vital air, the mind, the intelligence and the inner bliss). The Pandiths will ask the question: why do you sell this jewel for a bag of coal? Why demean yourself and go begging

and fawning when you have this priceless treasure in your own custody? When men degrade themselves and behave worse than the beasts from which those rose, the Avathar takes place and God moves among men, warning, exhorting, revealing, encouraging, inspiring, illumining and leading man towards his destiny. He served as the charioteer for Arjuna, for the Avathar utilises every chance to uplift man and teach him the mastery of his impulses and instincts and even of his intelligence. Krishna told Arjuna, I have decided to assume a big office in the conduct of your war with the Kauravas. I too have decided upon a big task and these Pandiths of the Prasanthi Vidwanmaha-sabha are the instruments I have chosen for it.

Dhroupadhi in the Mahabharatha, when she was suffering in the Virata court, prayed to Krishna, saying, "How can I submit to the wickedness and vileness surrounding me?" I am a daughter of Bharathabhumi (the land of Bharath) I am born in a great family with honourable traditions, I have inherited the incomparable eternal Culture." You too must live that heritage in order to find yourself.

Hearts of all must be purged of hate

About nine centuries ago, Krishna Mishra wrote a drama called Prabodha chandrodayam, in which Virtue is monarch, Shantham (or Equanimity) is the queen and the rival against whom the king has to wage war is Moha (attachment). Vedantha Desika composed a similar play called Sankalpa suryodaya, which deals with the same theme. King Viveka is there obstructed at every step by King Mahamoha, until he overcomes Vighna (obstruction), who has travelled about in the five regions of yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, prathyahara (outer and inner sense control, seating posture, breath control and withdrawal of sense activity) and found his way barred everywhere by righteous observances. Prabodha is the manas-thathwa, the mind which has to be purified and sublimated through sadhana and discrimination. Pour the mind into the crucible of sadhana and melt it so that you can mould God thereby; then every atom of the mind will become an atom Divine. The world is now living apart, in compartments, on the bases of race, religion, colour, creed, caste, convictions, etc. Those who question the

validity and value of these compartments are themselves in a compartment, by themselves. Metal pieces heaped together are still pieces; they have not become one. The world has become united only in the form of a heap; it has not been melted in the crucible of love and moulded in the image of God. The hearts of all men must be purged of hate. Speeches and writings cannot bring about the unity of man; can the ocean get hot, when the forests are aflame with fire?

Deeds that will confer self-respect on you

The anandha (bliss) that you derive when you are good and do good must be enough inspiration, enough reward. Resist all temptations to fall into vice; avoid treading wrong paths; keep away from evil company. This will confer on you self-respect; you will rise in your own estimation; you need not bend your head before any one. If you live like that, that life itself is the best prachara (pathcity) for Me. When falsehood and malice are raving mad, take it as a test of your viveka and of your kshama (forbearance). Newspapers of today are the waste papers of tomorrow; unless they are nuisance papers, they cannot earn even a few coppers. I am glad that some fellows are able to earn some livelihood by using My Name. You must treasure your experience and ignore the vapourings of people who have not had similar chances or who are wilfully vile. Some worms have to bore through cloth; they make no distinction because their nature is to injure and damage. Silk or wool or cotton, cheap or dear, imitation or genuine, they cannot distinguish. They just damage, for the sheer mischievous pleasure they derive from the exercise of their faculty. Keep away from such; develop sath sang (good company) and be happy like the fish which have water all around them.

Practise detachment from now on; practise it little by little, for a day will come sooner or later when you will have to give up all that you hold dear. Do not go on adding to the things which bind you to them. Bind yourself to the great liberator, God.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

35. The ideal poem

Date: 23 October 1966 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Dasara, Vijayadasami

Today, Vijayadhasami, is a thrice sacred day for Prashan-thi-vasis (the dwellers of the abode of peace), that is to say, those who live in the Prasanthi Nilayam, here or elsewhere. It is as sacred as Thriveni, where three rivers commingle their holy waters. Today is the samapthi (conclusion festival) of Dasara; it is also the Samapthi (conclusion) of the yajna sapthaha, the seven-day rite of puuja and parayanam (adoration and recitation); it is also the samapthi Day of the poorva-avatharam (the previous incarnation), the Samadhi Day (the entombment) of the Shirdi Sareeram (body of Shridi Sai Baba) Sam-apthi also means the attainment of Brahmanandha (Brahmic Bliss) and so this day we have a chance to imbibe the Bliss Indescribable.

Karma (action) and Upasana (contemplation), the two stages of sadhana devoted to the attainment of God-realisation, can be noted and seen; but jnana the stage of ripeness cannot be seen. The karma symbolised by the Yamuna, and bhakthi (devotion) symbolised by the Ganga, meet at the point where the jnana or Saraswathi flows unseen. But today, people have lost the enthusiasm for karma, the exultation for bhakthi and the eagerness for jnana. The true vidhya is that which reveals the atma (the true self) to man. When these facts are neglected, the Avathara (incarnation) takes place to re-teach the duty of man, the dharma. What is the dharma (the moral code) that has to be re-established today? It is Sanathana Dharma (the eternal law), nothing less.

The Highest alone must be sought

Not that there are no sages even now on earth. Great Kavis and Mahapurushas and Mahapandiths are with us, even today. But, in the mad pursuit after pomp and pageantry, the feverish struggle to defy and defeat others, there is no time to imbibe their messages and taste the sweetness of the sadhana they prescribe. The poets of the modern age are not to be compared to the Kavis (Poets) of the past, though the same name is used to

indicate them. Those Kavis had purified their consciousness so much that God was clearly reflected therein. The poets of today retain all the blemishes and failings which cater to lower urges. They exhibit more bile than bhakthi; they have no mastery over the senses or passions; they are slaves to hate and greed; they render unholy the message they spread, for they write of low ideals and cheap victories. Such people have no right to name themselves 'poets'. The senses should not be allowed to over-ride man. They must be instruments within the control of man. They are mere servants, orderlies, helpers. The knife is best used to cut fruits or vegetables; you should not use it for cutting your throat. The senses have to be trained to be free from thamas (inertia) and rajas (passion); they must be neither dull nor dragging, neither dormant nor dangerously diverting. The gunas must be overcome. A student approached a guru and asked for the road for shanthi. He replied that he must develop sahana (tolerance) towards all men and all things and all events. Nothing should arouse interested reaction, disgust or desire. The highest alone must be sought; God alone must be desired. Prema steady, unchanging, undiminshable, can only be Vishweswaraprema - Love towards the Lord of all the worlds. Chala-prema (changing love) is love towards the changing world. When a bhaktha placed two grains of rice on the idol with no motive or desire for reward, but in a pure spirit of devotion, they turned into gold grains. If he had some motive, they might well have turned into stone.

Do not bargain with God

Now, people pray to God to relieve them from pain, grief and loss, to confer on them health, strength and wealth but if you develop an intimate attachment to Him and make Him yours, then He will manage to give you all that you need. Do not demean the relationship into bargaining: give me this, then I shall give you this in exchange. If you insist on wages, you become a coolie. Become His own. He is providing for the idler, the insane, the shirker; can he not provide for you? The father feeds the sons, whether they are idlers or shirkers or steady workers in field or factory. When you offer God a fraction of your wealth, you do it out of conceit that the wealth is yours, that your hand is upper and the recipient's hand is lower. In one of the poems read today, the question was raised why God should give eyes that look outward

and then blame when they wander in the outer world. No, the eyes do not wander; it is as the messenger of the mind that the eye wanders. If the mind orders them to keep aside, the eyes have to obey. The poet also charged God for equipping man with an insane mind; no, the mind is not insane; it can be used for tightening bonds as well as for loosening them. Bandha and moksha can both be effected through the mind. You have the choice. It is an in - merit for either. Condemn the use, not the tool. The poet should not attempt to engage in publicity; he should not add lines merely for stuffing or for padding, in order to make it long and copious. There should be no artificial stepping up of emotion or passion. These must be natural, arising naturally out of the context and the character. Otherwise, the poem will be lopsided and it will slide from the sublime to the ridiculous. A Brahmin was reciting the Vedas scrupulously correct, with Udattha and Anudattha in the proper places; hearing it, one Sowcar asked him to sing a song and when the Brahmin protested he had no music in him, the Sowcar threatened him with dire consequences if he did not comply. So, out of fear, to escape punishment, he sang a song slurring over the words, I cannot sing, I will not sing; but this rascal wants me to have a fling. Fear or greed, doubt or denial should not be the urge driving the poet towards expression. To blame society for one's own deficiency is like blaming the pillow for the headache one suffers.

Have Love even for misguided people

When the winnowing is done, the husk falls far, the heavy grain heaps near. The mean tactics of vicious pens that appear in the gutter papers serve to separate the husk from the grain. No one can shake truth, no one can install untruth. I am established in Truth and I have come to secure for Truth its rightful place. Envy and greed make man resort to tricks and barter one's honour and character for a few pieces of copper. When people observe this vast gathering drawn by love and only love, some of them who have no love in their hearts but only hate, cannot keep quiet; they must eject the poison of hate. Of course, there have been such traducers in all ages, for all who came down to help mankind: Rama, Krishna, Shankara. Do not develop hatred towards them, for, sooner or later, they are bound to repent and make good. Milk poured into water gets paid for as milk. Lies about Me also sell and earn

for them some cash! Leeches fall off when they have sucked full to bursting point. Pray for their transformations into Sathwik souls, for their blindness to be cured and for their becoming attached to Truth rather than to sheer untruth. Dwesha leads to duushana (hatred leads to the casting of mud). Love leads to mutual understanding and sympathy. Have love even for these misguided people; they will join the pilgrims path soon.

The thirst for worldly goods can never be allayed; trying to satisfy it makes it only more acute. Thirst can never be quenched by drinking salt water, which is the objective world.

Human desire is illimitable, without end. It makes you pursue the mirage in the desert: it makes you build castles in the air; it breeds discontent and despair once you succumb to it.

But, develop the thirst for Krishna, you discover the cool spring of anandha within you. Krishna nama (name) makes you strong and steady; it is sweet and sustaining.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

36. The one Purusha

Date: 24 October 1966 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Dasara

It is part of human nature that man desires to reach the presence of the Almighty, see Him and be ever with Him, for deep within the human heart is the urge to reach the place from which he has come, to attain the joy he has lost, the glory which he has missed. Man is himself divine and so it is a matter of the ' deep calling unto the deep, of the part calling for the whole, of the sky in the pot yearning for the sky surrounding it. Attempts to reach the presence have to be made quick and fast, for death lies in wait to snatch man away. Birds soaring in the sky can see carrion on the ground; but they do not see the net laid to catch them. So too, man is able to see far into the future by means of his intelligence, but when it comes to the finale of death which awaits him, he is blind.

To reach the presence of the source of Bliss, that is, God, you must tread the foot-steps of the great saints and seekers, like Jayadeva, Gouranga, Meera, Ramakrishna and others. Practise their teachings, follow their example. The path of dedicated activity, of surrender to the Highest, of incomparable Love towards the embodiment of prema - that is the sweetest path, giving joy at every step that is won. Hari nama (the Name of the Lord) which all these seekers had on their tongue is described by them as sweeter than all the sweet things put together. Like a lamp held in the hand which will illumine every foot of the journey, because it will come with you however far you go, the Name will illumine every minute of your life. When Radha was asked what she wanted from the Lord, she answered that she was content when she had Him and did not seek anything else from Him.

Tricks cannot deceive the all-knowing One

The mind fancies that it can get joy from the objects around, about which the senses give it information. The mind can be mastered by jnana (Supreme knowledge), that all is Brahman or that all is His Play. To realise that the world is but the Lee/a of God and that you are but a puppet in His hand, you

must learn bhakthi from the Gopees. They were so saturated with the attitude of surrender that they lost all body-consciousness and had only one Form before their eye, one thought in their mind, one song in their hearts, that of Krishna. Their bhakthi was not a superficial pose, an escapist stratagem, or a temporary aberration. It was the very breath of their life; the very reason for their existence. A man heard the noise of a thief entering his house at dead of night; so he asked his wife to weep aloud, while he found fault with her in a loud voice for requiting him to get back from the pawnbroker's shop all her jewels, or at least her mangalasuuthra (marriage pendant), which he had pawned for three rupees that very day. He pleaded direst poverty; he had not even a pie in the house; what could he do? Hearing this story, the thief chided himself for all the trouble he had taken to break into the house and quickly made his exit from it. Tricks may gain success in worldly affairs; but they cannot deceive the all-knowing One. Tricks will only recoil on the seeker. When thieves like egoism slyly try to rob you of the gem of jnana that you have treasured in your anthahkarana (inner consciousness), seek His help to overcome them. And help will be rendered. The mind is the enchanter, the usurper who has established sovereignty over you. During a marriage festival in a certain town, there came into the house an elderly lady whom the bride's people revered because they believed her to be the kins-woman of the groom, and the groom's people honoured her because they took her to belong to the bride's party. She managed to enjoy the hospitality of both parties for weeks, until someone with a sense of curiosity started an enquiry into her bonafides. Each party disowned her and as soon as the enquiry started, the lady disappeared.

Have viveka and vairayga as security personnel

The mind too will disappear as soon as the enquiry starts, for it is like cloth composed of the warp and woof of yarn. Each yarn is a desire, a wish, an attachment. Remove them and the cloth vanishes. Delusion is the cotton, desire is the yarn, mind is the cloth. Through vairagya (detachment), the warp and the woof can be pulled out. The sadhaka (spiritual aspirant) must have as his security personnel, viveka (wisdom) and vairagya. Then he can move through the world unharmed.

A sanyasin (monk) once went right into the house of a zamindar, but he was surprised to find that the master of the house was having a mud bath; when asked why, he said, I want to show that I cannot afford anything costlier; though to tell you the truth, for you are a monk to whom I can confide this, I have hoarded a pretty heavy pile for a rainy day. The sanyasin called him a fool and exhorted him to spend it on good works while he could. Do not be like the bees, which get only smoke for all the days of toil they spend at the hive to hoard the precious honey in the combs. They are smoked out and the comb removed for the honey. Do not postpone its disposal until the last breath, he said.

Relationship between all beings and God

Give the world only secondary importance; the primary place should be reserved for loosening its coils. The Jagadjanani (Mother of the Universe) will hurry towards you and caress you only when you cast off the dolls and cry. Yearn from the very depths of the heart, yearn with your whole being. Leave no sesham (balance) of attachment in the mind; then only can you get the grace of Sesa-sayee - He who reclines on the Supernal Psychic Serpent. Do not care for the cynicism of the worldly minded; they may try to drag you into the by-lanes, away from the royal road of viveka-vairagya. Even Avatharas are targets for small men who reveal in pouting venom on the great; how then can those who seek to expand their affection and universalise their vision escape? The Pandavas never lent their ears to slander about Krishna; they had an understanding of His Glory and they surrendered completely to Him. Krishna too reciprocated their love. He declared that Dharmaraja was His head, Arjuna His shoulders, Bheema His trunk and Nakula-Sahadeva His feet. He Himself was the heart. That was the relationship between the Pandavas and the Lord. That is the relationship between all beings and God; only the Pandavas recognised it, believed it and benefited by it, whereas Others do not. The Lord is the Hrudayavasi (dweller in the heart).

On hearing the news of Krishna having left the world at the end of His Mission, Dharmaraja decided on the Mahaprasthanam, viz., trekking alone in the Northern direction, silently without turning back, until one falls dead. He

proposed this step to Bheema and asked him what he had decided to do Bheema then answered,"Brother! Have we become today different from what we were when the great game of dice took place? Then, you staked us and lost us, without asking for our approval. Now too, when you decide on one course as the best for yourself, it is best for us too, for we are like the Panchapranas of one body, the five vital airs that sustain it jointly. "Their 'body' was one and Krishna was their heart.

The Lord alone is the Purusha

For the Gopees and Gopalakas (cowherd girls and boys), Krishna was the heart. That is how they appear to us in the Bhagavatha. They revered Krishna as their Pathi, Master, Lord; for, really speaking, the Lord is the only Purusha (true strong personality). All the rest are A-balas, feminine, weak. the weaker sex. Even the most heroic of men moan and weep while in distress; in silence and solitude. They have moments of helplessness, as much as the others. When they are irresolute and haunted by doubts, they resort to prayer and supplication; they too are weak. It is only the Lord who can be said to be strong under all circumstances, impregnable, imparting strength to all. So, when you read about the prema of the Gopees, remember that all beings are 'feminine' and the Lord alone is the Purusha. It is only through prema that God can be persuaded to reveal Himself and jnana earned. Now I must stop; because these devotees from Bangalore have put up a floral jhoola (swing) and they are insisting that I should sit in it and swing. I do not appreciate this. How happy I would be to swing in the jhoola of your hearts! In the jhoola of Omkara, to swing to the tune of Thatthwam-asi (thou art that) rising from the hearts of living beings from all the seven worlds - how magnificent that would be! You seat on the jhoola set up in your hearts, not Madhava (God) but manas! That is why mankind is denied peace and joy.

37. Kith and kin of all

Date: 25 October 1966 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Dasara

The river of human life meanders along, through many a valley, leaps over many a cliff, loses itself in many a marsh, and seeks to empty itself in the ocean of Divine Grace; though, what happens is it falls into the undrinkable expanse of salt. The flood flows from the heights to the depths; only the flames of fire do ever rise from the depths to the heights. That is why we say, jnanagni, the Fire of Wisdom or Realisation. Man suffers because he has developed hunger as vast as the sky, with a throat as narrow as a needle. His throat must become as vast as the earth; his heart must blossom wide through shanthi and sahana; that is, through equanimity, and fortitude. Then the desire of man for full lasting undiluted anandha can be attained. Once a being has evolved into man, there is no relapse for him into lower forms of life; for man alone is capable of viveka and vichakshana (discrimination and wisdom); when he suffers, he worries why suffering has become his lot; he concludes that the cause must be sought, not in the vagaries of God or the whims of others, but in himself; if not in the present life, then in previous lives. Man alone can analyse his mental reactions and feelings and draw conclusions therefrom. There are millions of stars scattered all over the firmament, but we have only darkness at night; during day, the sun which is a minute dot of light when compared to most of those stars gives us brilliant illumination. The reason is: the stars are far far away; but the sun is near.

Attitude of devotion makes you humble

The star of jnana is far far away; we do not bring it near, nor attain nearness to it. We are content with the dusk, that information, skill, scholarship and intelligence provide. We do not seek the magnificent vision that intuition clarified by sadhana can confer. V. K. Rao was telling us now of the mass killings and cruelties inflicted by western races because of fear on Jews and others, of the deep discontent which afflicts the nations which went through two world wars to win the precarious peace of today. He said that the thinkers of the west are turning more and more to the East to learn the art of keeping

peace and winning peace, indwelling undisturbed Peace - Prasanthi.

A lion saw its image in the limpid lake; it grew envious of another lion as strong, as young, as fierce as itself; it essayed to destroy it, by jumping upon it and tearing it to pieces. It was drowned in the process; that is the fruit of envy. Others, who are our own images, arouse envy and lead to disaster. Bhakthi or the attitude of devotion and dedication makes you humble and kills envy; jnana or the awareness of your being an integral part of God, who is all this, makes you kin with all, and there is no place for distinction, which breeds envy. Harischandra stuck to truth and became immortal; Karna stuck to dhana (charity) rejoicing at the chance to be of service to those in distress, and he achieved immortality. Do not accumulate impediments; renounce little by little and get into the attitude of sacrifice. Try to be of help to others to the extent of your capabilities. To remove the darkness of ignorance, light the lamp of the heart with the oil of devotion, the wick of the Name of the Lord and ignite it with a Mahavakya (great Vedhic dictum). Let devotion help in leading you to God, in removing ignorance of His Glory and Omnipresence. Use it as oil for the lamp of anandha.

Train the eye to find the Footprints of God

Rayaningar read some poems from Krishnakarnam-ritham, where the gambols of the child Krishna are described very picturesquely. Outwardly, the stanzas appear to picture objective things, but they have a deep subjective value. You must use the objective picture as a flame to light the subjective emotion of devotion. For example, there is a stanza about the child Krishna overturning the pot of curds and running away with the ball of butter and Yashodha the mother discovering His hiding place, by means of the footprints impressed on the floor by the curdsmeared soles.

The butter the Lord covets is the fruit of yoga, the final product of the churning of the mind by viveka. He loves to feast upon it; and He moves away with it into the solitude of self-realisation. We too can discover the Lord through His Footprints, which can be discovered everywhere, provided sincere search is made with trained eyes. You can find the footprints

wherever there is beauty, virtue, humility, justice, truth, love and peace. The eye has to be trained to discover the footprints of God; in this process, the mind has to be mastered. The mind is the pivot of thoughts and feelings. The mind is the thinking aspect of Brahman, the Absolute Consciousness. The Absolute Self manifesting itself in imaginative activity is Mind. However, instead of turning towards the Absolute, it turns outward and starts using the senses as its instrument; it forgets its source, the Atma. How and why this happens is inexplicable; we know that this happens and that it can be avoided and prevented. The intellect cannot grasp the secret of worldly delusion, which is called maya, for it too is bound by it. One has to transcend the intellect in order to understand it. That is a fact and the fact has to be faced. The mind is the background for the world. If thoughts and activities of the mind are sound, healthy, non-violent, filled with love, morally harmonious, then, Peace is near at hand and Brahman (Supreme reality) can be attained. That is why sadhana is to be strictly pursued to train the mind inward, towards God, its source.

Remember the God in whom you move, the God who makes you move, the God who is all this vast universe, every atom, every huge star.

Select some Name and Form for this all-pervasive, immanent God and keep those on your tongue and before your mental eye. That is what is called japasahita dhyanam (meditation-cum-recitation of the Name).

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

38. Birthday Message

Date: 1966

In the beginningless and endless Stream of Time, night and day, summer and winter, roll endlessly on; they are carried mercilessly on over the Universe by the flood. The term of living beings diminishes with every day. While being carried forward in the flood, man is surprisingly unaware of his fate; he never spends a thought on his fast declining life-term, He is blind in his ignorance.

Riches and wealth are short-lived; office and authority are temporary; the life-breath is a flickering flame in the wind. Youth is a three-day fair. Pleasures and fortunes are bundles of sorrow. Knowing this, if man devotes this limited term of life to the service of the Lord, then, he is indeed blessed.

Seek refuge at the Feet of the Lord even before the life-breath flies out of the cage of the body. It is an open cage! Any moment, the bird may fly into the outer regions. That is the fact. The ignorant do not realise this; they beat their drums and proclaim proudly how rich they are or how happy they are, surrounded by their sons and grandsons. Alas, the very physical frame which is so carefully nourished since birth rots and falls aside. What then shall we say of those who feel that these other things are "mine"? Theirs is but the delusion of an insane mind. Everything is untrue, everything is impermanent; castles in the air, constructions in dreams. Contemplate on this Truth; approach Shri Hari and glorify Him; that alone can confer on you permanent Joy.

Inside the room called Body, in the strong box called the Heart, the precious gem of jnana exists; four wily thieves kama, krodha, lobha and asuuya - lust, anger, greed and envy - are lying in wait to rob it. Awake to the danger before it is too late; reinforce yourself with the support of the Universal Guardian the Lord, and keep the gem intact. That will make you rich in prema, rich in shanthi.

When Bliss is attained there is no grief

When the clouds that hide the face of the moon are wafted by the winds, the moon shines clear and cool; so too, when the clouds of egoism are wafted away, the mind of man will shine pure and full, with its own native light. That is the stage of Bliss. When that is attained, there is no more grief. Where there is the lamp, there darkness cannot exist. The lamp of jnana once lit never dies, never fades, never flickers. The anandha and the shanthi too never fade, never flicker. But the anandha and the shanthi that men seek from the objects of the world prompted by their senses flicker fast and fade and die. They satisfy for a moment a foolish craze. They are attained through lust, anger, hate and envy and so, they are false and fickle. Control and conquer these; then only can you acquire real Anandha and Shanthi. You can not only acquire these, you can become these.

What do the wars of mankind teach, except this, that lust, anger, hate and envy are evil forces that haunt man? Examine the anarchy and the lawlessness, the chaos, and killings that have arisen in the world today. They are the products of these forces. Why, even the ills of your bodies and of your homes are but the consequence of these evils.. Unaware of the faults and failings in oneself, man imputes faults and foists failings on others and starts blaming and hurting them. This is sin; this gives you a feeling of innocence and exultation for a while, but, cannot confer anything other than worry, grief and pain.

Spiritual aspirants must control anger

Hate and envy distort man's true charm. Anger is the fuel for all varieties of sin. Just look at yourself in a mirror, when you are attacked by anger, and you will discover that you are then akin to Suurpanakha or Lankini of ancient times. The Rajo guna that is over-powering you then is the Rakshasa trait you must learn to avoid. Those aspiring for success in the spiritual field must therefore decide to control anger, to subdue the vagaries of the mind with its changing resolution to do and not to do things. They must put down their mental agitations and worries and see that they do not create worry in others also. They must convince themselves that in every one there is Shivam,

recognisable as swasam (breath); they must develop Vishwaprema (Universal love) and demonstrate it in their words and deeds. May you all win sathyam, shanthi and sukham through these means. May you merge in the source of all Anandham. There is also another point. The Shastras say that envy, greed, lust, anger are all vyadhikaranam (sources of disease). Those afflicted with these qualities may consume the most healthy food; but, it will not give them health. They will suffer from various digestive and nervous troubles. Therefore, devotees and those aspiring to be liberated, must cut asunder these evil tendencies with the sharp sword of jnana (spiritual wisdom). They must pray to the Lord to save them from contact with these foul characteristics. From this very moment, pray for the Grace which will enable you to control and conquer them. Deepen your faith in God. Expand your prema and take into its fold, the whole of mankind. There is no alternative path for the bhaktha.

You should not be ever entangled in the meshes of this world and its problems.

Try to escape into the purer air of the spirit as often as you can, taking the name of the Lord on your tongue.

Of the 24 hours of the day,

have 6 hours for your individual needs,

6 hours for the service of the others,

6 hours for sleep and,

6 for dwelling in the Presence of the Lord.

Those six hours will endow you with the strength of steel.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

39. A constable on each side

Date: 11 November 1966 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Diwali

The Navarathri is celebrated in commemoration of the victory of Daivathwam (Divinity) over Danavathvam (Satanity) through the intercession of the Mahashakthi as Chandi, Durga and Kali; this day is Deepavali, commemorating the victory of heavenly over hellish influences, of virtue over vice, as symbolised by the victory of Krishna-Sathyabhama over Narakasura, of the upward pull into Heaven and the drag down into Hell. Man's career in this world is a perpetual struggle with the down-dragging impulses and the raising impulses. It is Dharmakshethra, where the Kurukshethra battle is being waged, from birth to death. Life is a game with fire; one has to derive the warmth without getting burnt. One has to use the senses and the intellect wisely, for liberation rather than get entangled in their wiles. The joy one has lost has to be recovered from the inner consciousness which has been covered by the darkness of ignorance. How can the bangle, lost in the field where dhal (lentil) was grown, be recovered from the vessel in which the dhal is being boiled? Search for the joy in the inner vision; set it right and you can discover it there. The Narakasura in man can be destroyed by the constant dwelling of the mind on Krishna who slew him, as the Bhagavatha relates. The smarana has to be constant. If you rub a bit of iron on a hard surface, it develops heat; continue to rub it vigorously; then it can be made red-hot: If you do so with long intervals, the iron bit will become cold and all the effort up till then is a waste. The work has to be repeated over again. There are some who set a limit of ten thousand or twenty thousand repetitions of the Nama everyday and when that number is reached, they are content; they resume the smarana (remembrance of God's name) only when another day dawns. The mind, meanwhile, like a sheet of water from the top of which floating moss has been pushed aside with great care, resumes its cover of moss very soon. The task has to be repeated.

Hold the Feet of God wherever you are

Smarana must be the unseen spring of every activity of man, every minute of

his waking life; then it will become the spring even during dream and will help the 'I' during deep sleep to merge in the 'He', for ever. Like the mother whose attention and anxiety are centered on the baby in the cradle, whether she is near the well or in the cow-shed, in the kitchen or the temple, man too has to keep his mind at the Feet of God, wherever his body may be. This state of constant remembrance can come only through long practice; it will not be acquired suddenly. So, strive for it steadily. With Vishweshwara (Lord of the Universe) in your heart, you can wander over the entire Vishwa (world). A priest who was employed in a Shiva temple had to go to some village some day and so he asked his son to do the puuja (ritual worship) and perform arathi. The son was a novice; while doing arathi, he has to wave in a circle the lighted camphor cube with his right hand and at the same time ring a bell vigorously with his left hand. But both his hands automatically made the same movements; both waved round, or both shook vigorously.

A little practice is wanted to succeed in coordinating the two different movements. So, too, a little practice will teach you to hold fast to the Feet of God, while roaming about in the world doing all duties and carrying all responsibilities as dedicated to Him. Develop shakthi (physical health and mental alertness) and yukthi (cleverness in discovering the way to lasting happiness); then you will have rakthi (attachment, which if turned to God becomes bhakthi (devotion) which promotes virakthi (detachment from all that distracts the mind away from God) and leads to mukthi (liberation).

World must be charming when it moves away

Lakshmi (wealth) and Jyeshtadevi (poverty), Her elder sister quarrelled as to who was superior in status; they approached the three Gods-Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva-to decide it for them; but they could not assume the responsibility for the decision! They excused themselves with the plea that they had no time. When Naradha was approached next, he recommended that they should abide by the judgement of a certain famous merchant of Varanasi. They proceeded to his presence; he was caught in a dilemma, for if Lakshmi the Goddess of Wealth was displeased by his pronouncement, he would suffer; nor did he want to be blessed by Her elder sister, for she was the

Goddess of Poverty! So he pleased both by his reply. The elder sister is welcome, charming and beneficent, when she moves away; the younger is welcome, charming and beneficent, when she moves towards. Both were satisfied that they were declared equally charming, beneficent and welcome. The world must be charming to the seeker, when it moves away from him; that is all that there is in it. We now consider the atom as all-important and the Atma as insignificant. This is a tragic reversal of values. That sense of real value must influence every choice that you make. The lakshya (goal) is Godrealisation, the realisation of the reality over which all this is but appearance. That should not be allowed to fade. So long as you act with an eye to benefit by it for yourself, you will have to undergo the consequence and suffer either joy or grief, being born to bear them both. A person being transferred from one jail to another will have two constables who will escort him; the punya and papa (good consequences and bad consequences of actions) are the constables who lead man from one birth to another. If you must escape from their attention and avoid migration from one jail to another, act-but do not calculate the consequences. That is to say, do not worry about the consequences; leave it to God who prompted the act and made it possible. Dedicate the act, the will, the wish, all to God.

The process of learning lasts until death

Samartha Ramadas, while a boy, was going through the bazar reading books. Some one reprimanded him for reading while walking. He said that Ramadas could read when he reached school. But Ramadas replied, For me, the entire world appears as a school, which I must attend throughout life. I do not see any difference between the school where I learn some lessons and the world where I learn other lessons. The household is the school for women; the office or factory or the field is the school for men. The process of learning lasts until death and is resumed at birth. Samsara (worldly life) is the sara (the essence) of all anubhavas (experiences). Of course, you must exercise your own intelligence and pin your faith on the Name and Form you like.

You know how the father and son who purchased a donkey and brought it home were forced by others' suggestions to carry it and when crossing a

bridge, lost the donkey as it fell in the river. They first wanted the son to ride it; then some one chided him for forcing the older man to walk along; when they both sat on it, others chided them again and suggested that they both should carry it home, and when they acted upon that suggestion, the frightened animal jumped over and fell into the river, because they were then passing over a bridge. If you listen to all and sundry and surrender your judgement, this is what happens. Have one Name-Form for japam, dhyanam and smaranam. Then only can concentration take root.

The way to build up Sai Fraternity

Reference was made to the bond of prema which binds you to this place. Your prema towards Me and My vathsalya (affection of mother to the child), these two are the bonds. I have no desire to keep you here at the Prasanthi Nilayam; I know you have duties and obligations to individuals and institutions who depend on your service. They are also Mine. I also want to give you the experience of My being everywhere, not restricted by time or space, or causation. When Narakasura was destroyed, that is to say, when the six foes of man (lust, anger, greed, rification, pride and jealousy), which drag him towards a fall are overpowered-then the flame of wisdom can shine clear and bright. It is in order to demonstrate this that on this Day, deepas or lamps are lit and ranged on every house, dispelling darkness, which is the home of evil and vice. Sathya or Truth will defeat the forces of falsehood. That is the meaning of Sathyabhama being the instrument which the Lord used to destroy Narakasura. I need not tell you in detail about the legends which have grown round Deepavali. Cultivate sad gunas (good qualities), engage yourselves in sath karmas (good deeds), be always in sad goshti (good company)-that is the way to build up the Sai Samaj. (Sai fraternity).

When you break a coconut in a temple, you should feel that your egoism is broken too.

The coconut offering is not made so that God may consume the kernel!

It is a symbol of the destruction of the Ahamkara (egoism), which has to be

split into two at one stroke, the stroke of wisdom.

When do you get the effect? When does the coconut break at one stroke?
When the fibrous cover of the shell is removed, is it not?

So too, man must remove the fibrous matter that encases his heart - lust, anger, envy and the rest of the wicked brood.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

40. The Name of God

Date: **November 1966** / Location: **Prasanthi Nilayam**

Nine paths lead to the Grace of the Lord, say the Shasthras. They are, Shraavanam (listening to His Glory), Keerthanam (extolling His Glory oneself), Vishnu smaranam (keeping the Lord and His Glory ever in the memory), Padha sevanam (worshipping His Feet), Vandhanam (adoring His image and His devotees), Archanam (ritual worship), Dhasyam (service), Sneham (developing the attitude of a companion and comrade of the Lord) and Atma nivedanam (dedication of oneself to the Lord). They are the paths that lead one to the goal. Each individual must aspire for the Grace of God. That Grace will endow joy here and hereafter. But, unhappy man gets involved in the agitations of his mind and intoxicates himself with ignorance and so he denies himself the joy of basking in the Grace of God. In India, the special sacredness of human birth and the ways of making it fruitful have been known since ages. But, few realise this and benefit by it.

Nowadays, idol-worship which is considered a valuable discipline by Hindus, is being ridiculed. This is a big error.

For, as a cup or some other vessel is needed to drink milk, so too to imbibe the Grace of the Lord a vessel called Idol is necessary. The idol is a means and not the end; it is the outer form; the inner content is Divinity. Western critics laugh at idol worship and say that Hindus reduce God into stone; but the truth is, Hindus elevate stone into God. God is the seat of illumination; He scatters all darkness of Ignorance. That is why Shri Shankaracharya said Bhaja Govindham (Extol the Glory of Govindha) Bhaja Govindham, Bhaja Govindham, Moodha Mathe! (O Mind that is immersed in the sempiternal darkness of ignorance).

Feeling must saturate Nama smarana

There was a pilgrim once who reached a jungle at nightfall. He found that he had to go through five miles of jungle before he could get shelter in a village.

He had a small lantern in the hand; he lighted it, but found to his dismay that the flicker could light only a yard ahead of him. How can I walk five miles with the help of this tiny circle of light, he lamented. A wise man passed that way and saw his plight. "My dear fellow, hold that lantern in the hand and walk on. You can go five miles or fifty, and always you will be in the circle of light around the lantern." So too, on a raft made of two logs tied together, a man can safely cross the ocean. The instrument may be small, but, the work it can do may be out of all proportion to its size. A small torch will help a man to pass through a thick forest. So, do not think that the Name of the Lord is just a mutter of a syllable or two. Though small, through it the Principle of Divinity can be realised. A tiny seed contains within itself the potency to produce the huge tree. The Shasthras say that in the Kritha Age, man was able to achieve liberation through dhyana (meditation), in the Thretha Age, through yajna(ritual sacrifice), in the Dwapara Age, through Archana (worship) and in this Kali Age, he can reach the goal through Nama smarana (constant dwelling on the Name of the Lord). It is not enough if you know the glory of the Name; it would be like the knowledge of the vitamins that a tablet contains. That knowledge cannot cure; swallow it; let it be assimilated; then, the tablet will cure. Mere exercise for the tongue is no good; feeling too must saturate the Name and the brain must be reminding one of the meaning of the Name. Then is the joy complete.

God seeks sincerity not outer show

Every one craves for shanthi, but, performs acts that lead to the opposite end, a-shanthi. He desires peace and courts worry. He plants the cotton tree and looks forward to the mango fruit. One must know how to earn what one needs. I am amused when I see man behaving like this. He is like the bird that sees the lump of flash and hops towards it, unaware of the net which is laid to trap it. Man is unaware of the trap, of his being bound. Through the contemplation of the Name of the Lord, he can escape from the net. But, for the Name to liberate him, his heart must be rendered pure. Otherwise, like the untinned copper vessel which turns food cooked in it into poisonous stuff, the vicious heart will turn all discipline into springs of dire pain. People read the Ramayana from beginning to end continuously for 50 or 60 years, but they

do not evince even an iota of the devotion of Hanuman. They make no attempt to bring the Ramayana into their daily life. They discourse on the bhakthi of Hanuman or of Radha or they talk loud and long on Chaithanya, but, of what they speak, they do not practise a bit. They sing songs on the glory and the grace of God. Even radio receiver sets do; and tape recorders also sing. God seeks sincerity and steady faith, not outer pomp and show. A King once ordered a building contractor to bring him fine straight smooth timber, without any knots; the poor fellow searched in all the depots throughout the land but could not find the timber without the knots, though he could procure a few lengths of smooth round wood. At last, he saw a plantation of bananas and there saw the tall straight smooth round knot-less timber he was looking for. He brought the banana trunks to the King, but, he derided him for his stupidity, for, though the outer qualities were there in the banana trunks, the inner strength and stamina were not there. Similarly, the Lord too looks more for the inner purity and strength.

Greed will spell man's doom

Of course, it is good to yearn for anandham; but you must know also the means by which it can be acquired. Death awaits at every step and you must be conscious of the urgency of the endeavour. A farmer yearned to take up more land for cultivation and he went to the Thungabhadra area and the Nagarjunasagar area in search of land for cultivation. Finding that the price of land there was very high, he went to Northern India. He learnt that in a Himalayan state, good land was cheap and easily available. So, he proceeded thither. The Raja promised to give him all the land that he could walk around from sunrise to sunset on a single day. So, in his uncontrollable greed, he rose with sun and without wasting a minute for breakfast, he walked fast - indeed, he ran very fast - in order to cover as much land as he could. He never took a second's rest; he was happy that he could get a pretty vast area free; when the sun was about to set, he was within a few paces of the point from where he had started. He was too exhausted to take even the few steps he needed; he fell down on the ground he coveted so much and breathed his last. His heart could not stand the strain of walking so fast, so long, with such hurry, and tension. At last, he got only six feet of ground for his grave. Greed

spelt his doom. In spiritual matters too people have this greed. They are immersed in wordly tumult for 23 hours and 55 minutes, they remember God for 5 minutes only (when some fear overtakes them. it may be a few minutes more), but, except God to set right all their problems. To become pure enough to deserve Grace, you have to remember God, whenever you get the chance, wherever you get the prompting.

Know the method and means to realize God

Singing hymns makes the remembrance more vivid and the heart melts at the awareness of God's Glory, when praise is poured through music. The Lord has announced to Narada. "Wherever my Bhakthas sing, I instal Myself." The Lord loves harmony, melody, music. The name when sung attracts more. Beat the time, sing in turn. Birds that perch on a tree fly away when you clap hands beneath it and shout. So too. to drive away the birds of lust, anger, greed, attachment, pride and hate that perch on the tree of yourself, beat the time with both palms and shout, O Rama! O Krishna! - that is enough, that saves the time needed to cleanse the area of the mind also The chance to realise God must be fully utilised. Of course, one must know the marga (method) and the means. You may have a knife; but, remember the knife is to be used for slicing fruit or vegetables for the dinner. It is not to be used for cutting open one's own neck. So too, do not use the chance of this human career to ruin oneself; use it to liberate oneself. The Nama (name) is a Nara (boat) by which you can cross the sea of life-so, take to see that it springs no leak. through kama, krodha and the rest. These gunas (qualifies) cause leaks in the heart; so, if you have them, even Grace when poured into it by God will fall through and go to waste So, one has to be extra vigilant. I have said often that the mind is like the lens of a camera. Point it towards any object and click; it will create the impression on the plate. It is for you to choose the good and reject the bad. Try to merge with the vast, the magnificent, the Universal. When a glass of water is poured into the sea, it is transformed into sea water. Do not pour it into the drainpit, for it will become drainage water.

Name of Lord is the panacea for all ills

Again, spiritual discipline has to be practised regularly every day; it is like sweeping dusting the floor of the home. A day's neglect means accumulation of more dust. The altar of the heart will be clean if sadhana is regular. "Sarvadha (always), sarvakaleshu (at all times), sarvathra (at all places), Harichinthanam (remembrance of God)," say the Shasthras. You may not have any other resource, but, the strength derived by the repetition of the Name is resource enough. To slake one's thirst, all the waters of the Ganges is not necessary; a glass is enough. For the cure of disease of "birth-death", the tablets of Nama are enough. They are like the B12 tablets now being given for various illnesses. The name is a panacea; there is no need to seek another. It has sufficient efficacy.

Samsara (worldly life) is the thraranopaya (boat for crossing over) and Namasmarana (remembrance of the Name of the Lord) is the means of liberation. Take the instance of Naradha. Some one asked him why he was continuing to recite the Name of the Lord even though he had access to Kailash and Vaikuntha (the heavenly abodes of Shiva and Vishnu) and he had won the Grace of Lord in full measure. Naradha replied, "What greater Anandham can I have?" When Thukaram was walking along repeating 'Ram, Ram', some passerby asked him, "What do you hope to get by this incessant repetition? Is it Kailash or Vaikuntha?" He replied, "I do not know what is meant by Kailash or Vaikuntha; I only know that Ram nam gives me Heavenly Bliss." When the heart beats to the tune of Ram nam, that is heaven, indeed.

Sadhana is essential because the effects of karma have to be removed by karma alone, as thorn is removable only by another thorn. You cannot remove it by a knife or a hammer, or even a sword.

The knowledge that the world is unreal was itself spread by Shankaracharya by means of activity in the unreal world, the establishment of mutts and the writing of books, the partaking indisputations.

You cannot desist from karma; only, you have got to take care that it is saturated with prema and promotes the welfare of the world.

41. The pole star

Date: **November 1966** / Location: **Prasanthi Nilayam**

The pure heart shines with a faultless brilliance. Sweet love grants unblemished joy. Goodness is the most efficacious specific for the illness that lays humanity low. Goodness is the reservoir of even immortality. Attach yourself to goodness fully and you can renounce all sorrow. Goodness confers great contentment; Anandha confers great freedom from fear. In fact, when life becomes merged in the thought of God, it is fixed on the pole star. Man is the child of immortality. All men are brothers, for all are speaks of the same Divine Flame. All the fundamentally Atman; the love for the Atman and the endeavour to realise it are the birthright of each individual. There must be mutual love and there must be universal anandha, resulting from this mutual love. But, today, the happenings are quite contrary to this stage of things. What shall we say of human behaviour, what shall we say of the daily bickerings and troubles? What of the conflict of opinions and arguments? What of the lootings and killings? What is the cause of all this? All are our own; all are ourselves. We are pointing the knife against ourselves; is this a sign of purity of mind? What has happened to the injunction laid down in the Vedas, "Sathyam vadha; dharmam chara"? Each person aspires to be happy and to have peace of mind. With this in view, each one engages himself in various activities. But, both happiness and peace evade him and play hide and seek with him. But, does man give up the search? No. like a top, he turns round and round to capture them. Still, they elude him.

Money cannot improve morals of the community

What is the reason for this state of affairs? Is it defective effort, or the very law of activity? Or, is it the fundamental nature of the world itself?. Or, is this failure due to the spirit of the times? No, a little thought will convince that no one of these surmises is true. The real cause is "absence of faith in the victory of the good." That faith can come only with the growth of devotion to God. At present, there are many who declare they will reform the world. They have the intention to reform and they endeavour hard. They shout from platforms,

thumping the tables, that the world is in a bad condition and that they have the remedy ready with them. But, the result of their efforts make the world more seriously ill. How can purity be attained by lectures? They propose to cleanse the community by means of more money; how can money improve morals? The Five Year Plans have followed one after another; but, the rot remains. The evil has become heightened. The atmosphere has become fouler and fouler.

What is to be done next, to improve matters? Is the diagnosis wrong, or is drug not available? The fault lies in wrong diagnosis and wrong treatment. The illness is unlimited freedom. That has brought about the state of uncontrolled passions and the resort to weapons of destruction. Liberty has to be enjoyed within certain limits; otherwise it becomes licence or even licentiousness. The limits of liberty are called disciplines. The discipline has to be exercised in all fields of activity. Absence of this discipline has led to the sad plight of the country today.

Man should reach Paramapadha sooner or later

Before man decides to lead others and to prescribe for the world, he must learn to have command over himself and his emotions and passions and be at peace with his own inner urges. He should win a victory over his inner foes; then only can the outer foes be defeated. The effort to establish peace is so gigantic today but, the result the concrete result, is very little. Well; the world itself is a mystery to man. It is beyond the reach of human intellect and imagination. And, each man is a fragment of that mystery. Of course there are some who have seen through the nature of the world and have succeeded in realising its true condition. But, man neglects such sages. What then can be do, to live in peace upon it? Eat, and then you know the taste. Enter, and then you know the depth. Consult them, and then you get a true sense of values. The wheel of time revolves relentlessly with no interval. The evil of one day emerges as the good of another day; the morals of one sect becomes in the eyes of another, immoral. What is right for one is wrong for another. One man's foe is another's friend. Caught in this trap of duality man swings like a pendulum, unaware of the underlying unity; he struggles with many a

fall, many a blind search, stumbling along the track of life. He weeps and laughs, he rejoices and regrets, he halts and hastens - since the beginning of his history. This is the tale of man's sojourn on this world. But, however hard the track, he must sooner or later reach the Summum Bonum, the Parampadha that is the inescapable destiny. Man must know his high destiny and steadily walk the path of sadhana; he must pull down the obstructing walls. He must develop the great and unifying quality of love and approach all with brotherliness. That gives man the' supremest happiness and peace. For Atma shanthi (peace of mind), there is no better instrument than Vishwa prema (Universal Love). One other point. Imitation can never form the basis of progress. To take pride in imitating others is the first step in spiritual fall. It weakens one's discrimination and reasoning power. It cuts at the very root of liberty. The aim of the Hindu way of life, of the Hindu culture and of the rules laid down for the Hindu, is very significant and full of meaning. It is nothing less than directing the entire consciousness towards higher values and ultimately, towards God.

Resolve to live in harmony with all around, to live in a state of perfect peace, to love everyone and to dedicate your life to the service of fellowmen. This is the path-way to Divine and Everlasting peace.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

42. Pranava the praana

Date: 23 November 1966 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Birthday - 41

In the atmosphere of faction and hatred that is now prevalent in the world, the attainment of Prasanthi or undisturbed inner peace is eminently desirable. Whenever man suffers from any illness, like headache or stomachache, the physician investigates the causes, for only then can he prescribe the correct remedy. He cannot send the patient away, with some quantity of salt or ointment. If he does so, he does not deserve the faith that people repose in him.

Getting involved in this *samsara* - the process of worldly living, which changes and turns with time and space - that is the true cause. It is the ups and downs that *samsara* involves, that cause joy and grief. The decline in grief is welcomed as joy; the decline in joy is bewailed as grief. They are but the obverse and reverse of the same coin *samsara*. *Samsara* has only some *sara*, that is to say, a little reality, a microscopic quantity of truth. It is called in the Bhagavad Geetha a tree named *Aswattha*, a name which means 'that which will not exist another day'. This appellation brings out the fact of illusion, which is mistaken as lasting and real. But being a huge big tree, it can be destroyed only by the axe of *jnana* or, as the Geetha says, by *jnana-agni* (fire of spiritual wisdom).

Spiritual discipline essential to destroy illusions

To generate that fire in awareness, spiritual discipline is essential; it is the only means. The steps are very difficult, for each one insists on your overcoming the handicaps of the ego, which is rooted in the consciousness.

The steps are:

(1) Every act has to be dedicated to the Lord; that is to say, it has to be true, just, virtuous and saturated with love, and it has to be done as an adoration of the Source of Truth, Justice, virtue and Love which is the Inner Motive in

man, the Lord.

(2) No factious fight should mar the discipline. The Source or the Lord may be given any Name or pictured in any Form.

Now, Vaishnavas and Shaivites boycott each others' water and fire; they will not borrow either from the other sect. Crossing swords with each other, they lose the gem of Truth.

When protagonists of the two sects started fisticuffs in his durbar, the King asked each of them whether he has seen the Lord in that Form; not one of them had seen: they had only read books which taught them arguments. Faith transforms lead into gold by its sublime alchemy. Sakkubai transmuted by her faith, stone into heavenly essence; the idol into the embodiment of the divine Ideal. Foster your faith; do not disturb another's Faith; why argue with another that Sai is supreme, when the fact is that worship of the Lord in any form, in any name, is worship of Sai?

(3) Avoid cleverness and pompous scholarship in the process of spiritual discipline. Verbal jugglery is an unprofitable pastime. A stork was elated that it is superior to the Moon, for, as it argued in its scholastic pride, the Moon is white only in one paksha; I am white in both *pakshas* (paksha means both a fortnight and it also means, a wing); the Moon is the enemy of *Neeraja*, only at a specified time; I am the enemy of Neerajas all the time (Neeraja means the Lotus, which closes at moon rise; it also means fish, which the stork gobbles up all the time, whenever it is able to catch them). But his is merely clever punning on words; it does not guarantee innate superiority.

Understand the four qualities of God

(4) Prema is enough to realise the Supreme. Prema is the absence of hate, absence of dislike and prejudice; it also means the positive virtues of sympathy and affection, so that you grieve when others grieve and exult when they are happy.

God has four qualities and it is only when you cultivate them that you can understand Him. They are - Divine love (*prema*), Beauty (*soundarya*), Sweetness (*madhurya*), and Splendour (*shobha*). The development of prema is enough to add unto you the other three. When you are so full of love for the divine in all creation, that stage is beauty; when you are immersed in the sea of Universal Love you reach the acme of sweetness; when your mind loses its identity and merges in the Universal Mind, then there is splendour indescribable.

Those who are too weak or unsteady to go through this discipline bring up all kinds of lame excuses when charged with malingering. A farmer's dog was a fierce animal; it leapt towards a visitor with bared teeth and would have bitten him but for his timely discovery of a thorny stick on the ground, with which he hit the dog on the head. The dog retreated howling in pain; the master heard it and got wild at the visitor for inflicting wounds on the dog's head; he dragged him to the Royal Court.

The King asked him why he had beaten the dog, which according to the farmer was quite a harmless pet. The visitor said that it had actually leapt at him and bared its teeth. The farmer said that this did not justify his using a thorny stick; he could have used a smooth stick, instead. The visitor retorted that when one is anxious about saving one's life which is in jeopardy, one has no time to discriminate and pick and choose; one has to use what one can find. Besides, he asked, why, the dog could have threatened to bite me with its tail; when it bites with the teeth, I have to reply with something equally sharp." The Raja appreciated this point and he was acquitted. Because it was his pet, the farmer resorted to all these tactics; the visitor had to use countertactics. Straight dealing could have avoided the bother.

OM is the symbol of unchanging, eternal God

Whatever you do in the spiritual field, you should do it as a spiritual exercise, with full knowledge of its significance for progress. Many people do not know that Om or *Pranava* is the merging together of three sounds, A, U, and M. When you write GOD, you do not pronounce it 'jee-oh-dee', you voice it as

GOD. So too, AUM is pronounced Om. Om has a sequel, of a fading M sound which finally tapers into silence, a silence that is felt and experienced. The pranava was taught to every child as the very first sound, when it was initiated into the alphabet. We call letters *akshara* - the unchanging. Om is the symbol of the unchanging, eternal, universal, supreme God. So that was the very first letter taught to the children of India. Now, Om has given place to A, B and C.

Om is the sound of the movement of the stars in the firmament; it is the sound that manifested when the dawn of creative Will stirred the *Nirakara* (the Attributeless) into activity. As a matter of fact, every little disturbance of equilibrium produces sound, however minute. The meeting of the eyelids when the eye winks results in sound, however faint. There are infinitesimally faint sounds which no ear can hear. So, you can understand that when the Elements originated and Creation started, the sound Om was produced. That sound is the primal, the primeval One. When you are in the dual world trying to overcome the duality, you identify 'Him' with 'yourself' by the japam of soham; when the 'I'-consciousness and the 'He'- consciousness disappear, you repeat only Om, that is to say,

Soham minus Sah (He) and aham(I).

Pray to God for illumination and guidance

That is the experience you need and you claim you crave for; but your activities and behaviour, your routine and road indicate that you are not sincere. You say you are going to Bangalore, but you have boarded the train that goes in the opposite direction towards Guntakal. Ascertain clearly whether the train is the right one and then board it.

There are quacks and cranks and even crooks who claim to know the road; but the best course is to pray to the God within for illumination and guidance.

Then you will get the guidance without fail. You will have read that when God appears to the ascetics who undergo thapas in the forests for years, He asks them, "Ask Me what you want from Me", as if He were not aware of the purpose for which the thapas was gone through: especially when He has appreciated it and has come on purpose to the very place to reward him for it. Yet, God asks the reason why. For, the tongue is the spokesman of the mind and it may at the last moment ask for something that lies dormant, in spite of the concentration of his consciousness on his main wish. Dhruva who entered the forest for thapas in order to bring God before him, so that he could win from Him a status for his mother and himself equal to that of the Chief Queen and her son, realised that it was too unworthy a boon to demand from the Almighty; he therefore asked for Liberation from Birth and Death, and eternal company of the Lord. Others erred and asked at the crucial moment, for things quite out of keeping with the main wish with which they plunged into the venture.

Vak, or Voice, has to be rigorously trained to avoid chatter and wandering prattle. Keep the tongue under control; do not express what all you are prompted to say; cut that inclination to the minimum. Silence will charge the battery and you can win through a longer period of meditation. Be full of prema and then your words will spread prema. They will be sweet and soothing like balm to those who suffer.

OM is the root of all sounds in all the worlds

The most effective method of cultivating prema is to practise *Namasmarana* (remembrance of Lord). Or, better still, spread your time in *Pranavopasana* (the repetition of Om). Om is the origin of Creation; it is the source, the sustenance and the strength. It is the *prana* (life) of every being. Just as air forced through the reeds of a harmonium produces the *sapthaswaras*, (the seven musical notes), Sa-ri-ga-ma-pa-dha-ni, so the one Om is at the root of all the sounds in all the worlds. Know its significance and practise its recitation.

In the Geetha, the Lord has assured that the person who dies with the

Pranava filling his last breath is sure to be liberated. Of course, mere calling to memory is of no benefit. The sound 'OM' will not help when the mind is flitting from one desire to another; and weeping over the imminent departure from the world and shivering at the world to come, how can the sound help? The glory of OM has to be apprehended throughout life, if it is to stand out before the mind at the moment of departure.

Women can perform Pranava-upasana

There are some who deny women the right to repeat the Pranava. This is sheer prejudice; it is not laid down in the Shastras. When women are entitled to *Brahmavidya* (Yajnavalkya taught it to Maitreyi, his wife), as the great scholar-disputant in Janaka's court, Gargi proves, how can any one keep the Pranava away from them?

The Pranava is Brahman.

Om ithi EkaksharamBrahma: the one word OM is Brahman.

The Shastras are composed by persons who have known and experienced that the One Brahman, symbolised by Pranava (Om), is inherent in this multiplicity of creation; they have outgrown all distinctions of caste and sex; they seek the progress and liberation of men, women and all animate and inanimate creation. How can such saints exclude women from this great instrument of jnana and yoga? Krishna too does not say that whoever among men who pronounce the Pranava at the moment of death, etc. The word He uses is, whoever without any qualification of sex. He does not say, whoever is authorised, or whoever among the deserving. The clear intention of the Lord is to encourage women as well as men to take up Pranava-upasana (contemplation on OM). You will have seen that I do not discourage any one from the upasana. It is the royal road to spiritual victory, which all are entitled to use.

43. Devaluation of Man

Date: 18 December 1966 / Location: Trichy

There is a great deal of argument and agitation because the currency has been devalued; some say it is a good step, some say it had to be done whether good or bad, some argue it could have been avoided or postponed. But the net result has been anxiety and worry for all. More important, however, and more to be deplored is the devaluation of man that has been taking place systematically in recent times. Man is held to be a tool, an instrument, and not as born primarily for his own fulfillment. Each man has to educate himself through trials and errors and attain graduation by reaching the full knowledge of his own reality. He has a great destiny and he is equipped with the skills needed to achieve that destiny. He is not a helpless victim of circumstances. But the tragedy is that he has allowed the equipment to rust through neglect and he has forgotten the goal. The road he has to traverse is also overgrown with brambles and the signboards have disappeared. That is why the person who laid the road has come again to lead man along it, after repairs and renewals. Consider how man has been shaped since millions of years for this high destiny. During the primeval cosmic chaos, there were two phenomena struggling to overwhelm each other. On one side was the fiery lava flood vomited by the volcanoes and emanating from the crevices and chasms that scarred the horrifying face of the earth. The destructive conflagration swept in all directions scattering panic and death, heralding the end of everything. On the other side, scarcely noticed, microscopic amoeba floated furtively on the water's edge or clung desperately in the cracks of rocks, keeping the faint spark of life unharmed from fire and flood. Who could have predicted at that time that the future was with the animalcule or amoeba, whose appearance itself was due to an accident, and whose survival was an enigma? Who could have foreseen that these minute specks of life could hold out triumphantly against the devastating onslaught of heat and cold?

Man is the zenith of creation

But that speck of Chaithanya or Life-Consciousness won through. Sheer intelligence, adaptability and perseverance in 'willing' to live helped it to defeat the mortal fury of the elements. By the unfoldment of that Chaithanya, the amoeba blossomed into various species of living beings, gigantic and microscopic; at last, it grew into man; in man, it bore fruit as goodness and virtue, sympathy and sacrifice, oratory and music, song and dance, scholarship and sadhana, martyrdom and sainthood, and as repositories of Divinity; nay, even divine Manifestations assumed the human form. This is the reason why man is said to be the zenith of creation. This is the purpose for which he has struggled through stone and grass, tree, bird and beast. Hence, man should not fritter away the precious prize he has won; he should not slide back into the beast; he must move forward into Divinity. He must become aware of his strength and weaknesses and become clear about his goal, his path and his potentialities. He must act up to his worth and capacity.

Ego is the seedpot of down-dragging tendencies

Man is endowed with the capacity to separate himself from his body and the senses and the mind and the intelligence. He feels and says, My eyes, my ears, my feet, my hands, my mind, my reason, etc. He knows, deep down in his consciousness, that he is apart from all these; that he is their user, owner and master. No animal feels itself different from the body; for them, they are the body. They do not know that they are occupants of the physical frames. Man can, by a simple exercise in silent reasoning, discover that the physical frame is unreal and temporary. This should lead to vairagya (detachment), achieved through vichakshana (analysis), the result of viveka (discrimination). Once man is free from undue attachment to the body and its appurtenances, he is liberated also from the pulls of joy-grief, good-bad, pleasure-pain, etc. He is firmly established in equanimity, fortitude, undisturbed balance. Then man discovers that the world is one kin, in God; that all is Joy, Love, Bliss. He realises that he himself is all this apparent world, that all the multifarious manifestations are the fantasies of the Divine Will, which is his own reality. This expansion of one's individuality to cover the ends of the Universe is the highest leap of man. It gives supreme anandha (bliss), an experience for which sages and saints spent years of prayer and asceticism. Egoism is the

seedpot of greed, envy, anger, malice, conceit and a host of other down-dragging tendencies. They cloud his intelligence; they divert the attention from truth and make the false appear as real, the real distorted as false. So it becomes essential to cleanse the mind of these through regular sadhana, to tune the little will to the Infinite Will of God, so that it becomes merged in His Glory. Scholarship or skill, however deep and varied, have no cleansing power. They only add the alloys of pride and competition. Learned men are not necessarily good, nor are men with spiritual powers over nature above pride, envy and greed. Sathya, dharma, shanthi and prema are the hallmarks of a purified heart, a heart where God is enshrined and is manifest.

Man today lives only at the animal level

The world is today in deep distress because the common man and his leaders are all distracted by lower desires and lower motives, which require only the lower skills and meaner impulses of man. This is what I call 'devaluation'. Though man is inherently divine, he lives only at the animal level. Very few live even in the native human level. Instead of transforming his hearth, his home, his village, his state and this world into a Prasanthi Nilayam, the Abode of the Peace that passeth understanding, man has made the world an arena for the wild passions of anger, hate and greed. Instead of making the senses (which are after all very poor guides and informants) his servants, he has made them his masters; he has become a slave of external beauty, evanescent melody, exterior softness, tickling taste, fragrance. He spends all his energies and the fruits of all his toil in the satisfaction of the trivial demands of these untamed underlings. When the mind is controlling the senses, you have lasting joy; when the senses are masters, you are dragged in the dust. This is the most tragic result of devaluation. Every act which lowers the authority of viveka and honours the siren-call of the senses devalues man. Intelligence must be the Lord, the Master.

Whenever the senses demand anything, intelligence must start discriminating, asking the question, "Is this an act in keeping with the Divinity immanent in me?" That will prevent devaluation.

Tragic result of man's devaluation

To accept that man is related to the apes or that he is an animal made of mud or matter is to devalue him. Man or manava, as he is called in Sanskrit, is a spark of Madhava or God. He can blossom into God. He is born to be perpetually happy, but is everywhere in misery. This is a tragedy; it is like the dhobi (washerman) who died of thirst though he was standing kneedeep in the running stream; or like the man who closed his eyes and stumbled along in the darkness. The source of happiness is in him; the source of light is in his eyes. Real education has to teach man how to tap this spring of joy and light. If this task is not undertaken by schools and colleges, it should be performed by parents and elders and all who are keen to prevent this devaluation.

Speak so that your language is as sweet as your feelings are. Make the words true and pleasing.

(Sathyam brooyath; priyam brooyath).

But, for the sake of pleasing another, do not speak falsehood or exaggerate. Cynicism which leads you to speak about a thing in a carping manner and in order to bring it into disrepute is as bad as flattery which makes you exaggerate and cross the boundaries of truth.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

44. Which is real? This or that?

Date: December 1966

The Beacon of the Spirit is the Light-house for the storm-tossed ships carrying humanity across the furious waves of the ocean of life. Instead of earning that light and saving himself from wretch, man is getting lost in travails, torrents of trouble, worry and agony and vain voyages in search of attaining the absent treasure. Unless that light is present ever with man, unless efforts are made to have it shining clear in the heart, all the activities of life are shrouded in the darkness of ignorance. Man is wasting the great chance he has been awarded. One wonders whether he has to appreciate or discard the charms of Nature and the external world, whether to laugh or weep at their illusory attractions. Man prides himself on his capacity to know everything, but, he has failed to know this truth about Nature. Blind to the real characteristics of this world, man has become a pendulum between birth and death.

Of course, every one desires and devotes all his energies for securing *shanthi* and *santhosha* (peace and joy). But, they elude his grasp. He spins like a top, he is immersed in incessant effort; but what does he win? Nothing. For, what has to be sought after first, is "spiritual progress". Through that alone can peace and joy and happiness be won. Attached to the imperfect instrument called Reason, man fails to earn these ends. He forgets the special mission of man, the mission for which he has been specially endowed, and rotates in fruitless adventure.

Devoid of the principle of Godhead, no activity can be worth while. Brahman, the Universal Absolute, is all this; It is the source, the substance, the sense; it is as cotton in the cloth, mud in the pot, wood in the chair, the basic substance. One must be established in the awareness of this fundamental Unity, not simply be carried away by the apparent multiplicity of Name and Form. The multiplicity is unreal. It is temporary, evanescent.

Detachment will liberate man from illusions

Is man a bundle of the senses? Is he just the physical frame? Is he the mind? Or is he consciousness, with all its levels? Where did all these come from? Where are they journeying to? How far can one decide the shape of one's journey? These are the questions to seek answers for. Now you run about asking every one you meet, "Who are you?" but, you seldom stop to ask yourself, "Who am I?" You are drawn by the news of the world, not by news of your own inner world. Of what avail is all the knowledge you gather, if the knowledge about yourself is absent?

The truth is: man has emanated from the *Atma thathwa*, the Brahman; he has to rejoin It. As the waters of the sea evaporate and form clouds to fall as rain and flow as streams and rivers to rejoin the sea, so, man too must reach the source, after all this peregrination! Now, man is unaware of the "From address" and of the "To address"! He knows only the address where he is. One can know the two addresses only by contact with the good and the godly. Attach yourself to the good and earn detachment; detachment will liberate you from illusions; that will make you steady in the faith, in the Principle; that faith will liberate you. So, certain disciplines have to be followed to realise the truth about oneself.

Religion does not preach difference

This is emphasised in Sanathana Dharma. But, due to political and cultural forces, *Sanathana Dharma* (Eternal Religion) itself is being neglected. The goal of life should be the earning of Atmic faith. That alone confers great joy, that alone is true religion. People glibly say that religion too is a convention of man, fashioned for the moment. No, religion is much more useful than that, much more established. It is rooted in intelligence, individual discrimination. It insists on unity of all this in one basic principle, Brahman. It does not advocate or preach difference and manifoldness.

Godhead is described in the Vedas as *Shahasra Sheersah*, thousand-headed. It does not mean that God has a thousand heads. There are thousands present here before Me; the heads are thousands in number but the heart-

beat is the same in all. So too, God is activating all the heads, as the same electric current activates the fan, the stove, the bulb, the mike, the machine, the tube, etc. The instrument is different, but, the power is the same. The individual is different but the indwelling force is the same.

The question may arise, why then all this distinction, this superiority and inferiority, when all are activated by the same Brahman: That is a question dealing with the outer, the exterior aspects of man. In the basic substance, there is no high or low; the difference is caused by difference of the instrument, the *upadhi* (the container). The current is the same, but the wattage of the bulb differs and causes the difference in light. People say that the body is real, that it is permanent, that the senses give correct information, that the emotions are real. The mind has to be fixed on any object so that it can be seen or heard or become the target for any sense. The eye for example is the bulb in the torch (body); the switch is concentration; if the mind does not concentrate, the eye cannot see. No object has any particular taste; the malarial tongue feels all sweet things bitter. The ajnana - afflicted mind will feel objects to be pleasurable and permanent. The ajnana has to be overcome by means of spiritual discipline. Sanathana Dharma teaches us the method; but, we have started ridiculing our own culture and extolling other systems and faiths.

He who conquers his senses is an Emperor

Really speaking, there is no other system or faith. All religions, all faiths are but phases or facets of the same Universal Faith and Discipline. It is like the seven blind men who examined the elephant and described it to others. The man who held the tail in his hand saw it as a snake; the man who felt the leg said it was a pillar; the man who examined only the ear swore that the elephant was like a winnowing basket. This story has a deep inner meaning. The Atma is one, but, each one sees a fraction and judges it differently. It is the integrated sum of each of these facets of reality.

India is the home of many facets of the Truth, the lovely garden which has many languages and many philosophies and faiths, all depicting the One

Brahmam, in many a brilliant colour. This garden was preserved safe, by the sea on three sides and the rampart of the Himalayas on the fourth. If such a safely-guarded land is being eaten into, the fault lies in us only. We are invading each other in unarmed campaigns and pointing the finger of scorn at others. We have to desist from the attacks we lead against others, moved by envy, anger, pride and similar passions. The internal struggles we wage against each other in the name of our own home, village, district and state have to be stopped, with strong will and determination. When we are engaged with so many internal foes like greed, anger and pride, how can we stand up against others? He who conquers a country can be called a *Raja* (king); but, he who conquers his senses is truly a *Chakravarthi* (Emperor).

Janaka's dream and its lesson for the sadhaka

We must strive for this victory. People boast that they know much, but, of what use is all that knowledge if they do not put into practice and win peace and contentment? Fundamentally, the inquiry that makes living worth while is, "Where-from have I arrived? Whither am I going?"

King Janaka used to gather many rishis in his palace and take delight in discussing with them about spiritual problems; he was a great adept at sadhana and he attained the highest stage of samadhi through Raja yoga. One day, while in the midst of the court, with the Queen and the maids, even while he was conversing with them, he fell asleep. He had a dream, during that sleep. He dreamt that he was deprived of his kingdom, that he was roaming half-mad, hungry and deserted in the jungle, begging for food from whoever he met, that he came upon some men washing dishes and vessels after a feast which they had shared, that he ran towards them seeking some crumbs, that they gave him some little quantity of rice scraped from the vessels, that he was about to put it into his mouth when a big bird flew in and swooped it out of his grasp; so, he yelled in pain and grief, and the Queen heard it and she woke him up.

Of course, when he woke, he knew he was the King. He remembered that a second previously, he was a beggar. "which is real? This or that?" he

wondered. He questioned within himself, which is real, this or that? To every one who inquired what the matter was, he put the same question. "Am I a king or a beggar?" He wanted each one to tell him which was real. The queen and others were frightened at this behaviour; they sent for the ministers and with them came, Ashtavakra, the preceptor. He discovered the situation as soon as he saw the King; so, to the question that the King put him, he answered, "Raja! This is unreal; that is unreal; you, who experienced this as well as that, you alone are real."

Both waking and sleeping stages are unreal

You too have spent this day in various activities and now you are listening to My words and feeling happy. How long is this real? Only until you go home, spread your beds and sleep. The waking stage is real until the sleeping stage; the sleeping stage is real, until the waking stage. But, both are unreal, because one cancels the other. So, why take life so seriously, so frantically? All efforts, all talk, all pleasures end with the graveyard. Every step takes man nearer to that, not farther. Then, why revel while living, believing this to be real and lasting?

You must have heard elders say some warning words. Practise two, give up two.

The two things to be given up are: all remembrance of (1) the evil that others do to you, and (2) of the good that you do to others.

The two things to be practised are: (1) belief that death is certain and inevitable, and (2) that God exists and yields to prayer and purity.

But, usually, men do not forget the evil that others do or the good that is done by them; they forget the fact of death and the fact of the existence of God. If you seek for profit in every act, of what use is it? Bank deposits, buildings, degrees, titles and riches have all to be left behind. As soon as the last breath is drawn, the body becomes a thing of bad omen; it is moved out of the house one has built and loved. Treat life as a two-hour play.

Who, after all, is this I, which you love so much? Are you the body? You say, my stomach, my head, my foot; who then are you? You are the breath, the *shwasam*. So long as there is breath, you are Shivam; when that leaves, you become *shavam* (a corpse). So, treat the world as a two-day fair, treat life as a two-hour play, treat the body as a two-second bubble. Develop love and devotion to the highest ideal, God.

That path is beset with hardships. They help, they do not hinder your forward steps. They serve as the shears that trim a growing bush. No one can escape these ups and downs while on the journey. Fix attention on the goal, that is the means to be happy and peaceful. Whatever the obstacle, God's Grace can transform it into a help for you. Educate your mind to view hardships as helps. The mind it is that binds or liberates. What is the mind ultimately? It is a web of desires and wishes; this handkerchief here is, if you ask Me, only apparently, a handkerchief. Really speaking, it is just yarn; remove the yarn, all the yarns in the warp and woof, and what remains? Why multiply desires and get bound, by the mind? Use it for liberation, instead.

Devotion implies faith in God. Without that faith, man lowers himself to the level of birds and beasts; he does not live up to the faculties that he is endowed with. A tiny bird that perches on a bough is not scared when the bough sways in the gale. Why? Because it relies not on the bough, but, on its wings. You on the other hand rely on the grip you have on the branch of samsara, or the world and its ramifications; you do not rely on the Atma or the God within, who buoys you up. That is the reason why any little shake in the bough frightens you. Have faith in your Divinity, in Divinity as such, and nothing can harm you. That is the crucial skill you must develop.

Learn to swim across the sea of life

A man was crossing the Ganges in a boat; he asked the boatman if he had no watch and when he laughed at it, the man said, "No; need or no need, whether you know how to consult a watch or not, unless you own a watch, a quarter of your life is as good as having gone into the Ganges." Sometime later, he asked the boatman whether he had a radio receiver and when he

learnt that he did not possess one, he said that another quarter of his life can as well be considered sunk in the Ganges. "You are not up-to-date at all; every one worth anything has a barber's box contrivance called transistor hanging round his neck at the end of a strap." A few minutes later, he asked, whether he read any newspaper and when the boatman apologised for his illiteracy and his lack of interest in news, the man squarely said that another quarter of his life can be pronounced to be liquidated in the waters of the Ganges! Just then, the overcast sky became dark and furious and forks of lightning threatened a thunder-storm and a heavy downpour of rain; it was now the turn of the boatman to ask a question. He said, "Do you know swimming?" and when the man pleaded that he did not have the skill, the boatman replied, "In that case, your whole life is as good as liquidated."

Learn the art of swimming across the sea of life, with its waves of success and failure. That is the real skill to acquire.

45. The cleansed heart

Date: December 1966

Gain, gain; that seems to be the refrain of life in every activity of man. When a heap of grain is measured, the counting begins not with ONE but with the utterance of the word, Labha (gain) instead! The wise hold that there is another gain which is far more desirable - attaining the Presence of God, merging in the Supreme Bliss that God is, liberating oneself from the little pleasures which divert us from the pursuit of the highest pleasure, Divine Bliss.

Become a kin to God, His kith and kin. Do not aspire to be a wage-earner in God's household. Do not demand wages calculated and bargained for. The work done for wages will not be as sincere and as joyful as that done through love, reverence. The brothers and the sons do not demand wages at so much per day, as their right. They are looked after nicely and well by the Master of the household; everything is found for them, whether they demand or not.

Ananyas chinthayantho mam,
ye janah paryupasathe
Thesham nithyabhiyukthanam,
yogakshemam vahamyaham.

This assurance is given by the Lord in the Geetha. Whoever has no thought other than of Me, whoever always dwells in reverence to Me, with such I always reside and for such I provide the wherewithal here and hereafter. Reading this assurance, many ask the question - "we are doing this puuja and that; let us see what he does for us in return." But, they pay no attention to the conditions laid down for the conferment of Grace.

Grace of God is immeasurable

In Telugu, too, there is a poem that advises people to give up kinsmen who do not come to your rescue, horses that throw you off {he saddle and gods that do not confer boons when worshipped. But, this act of discarding is allowed in the poem to sumathis only, that is to people with "good discrimination". Of course, such people know the ways of worship as mentioned in the Geetha verse quoted above and so, the boons they deserve will be granted to them, unasked. The Grace of God is immeasurable; He is love, all of Him. Contemplate on Him as Love, recite His Name as the embodiment of Love, revere Him as Love.

This is the easiest path to God. Some feel despair that to them. God is far distant, because they have no resources to visit holy places and prostrate before famous shrines sanctified by saints and sages, no time or talent to master the Vedas. This is quite wrong for God does not measure out Grace in proportion to these external achievements. He is not moved by quantity. To appease your hunger, the grain in all the granaries of the world is not needed; a handful is enough. To slake your thirst, you do not crave for all the waters of all the rivers; a glassful suffices. Similarly, one lime act of surrender is enough to win His Grace for ever. Years of asceticism or study or sadhana are not called for. "You and nothing else," fix this in the mind and live in that conviction. That will transmute all your acts into worship invaluable puuja.

Act done in spirit of surrender becomes yajna

Arjuna was sentenced to engage himself in warfare against his elders and kinsmen, by the Lord. His heroic lineage and Kshathriya blood urged him forward to fight; his fear of sin and retribution urged him to desist. "Am I to rule over the kingdom after winning it by destroying those who I revere and hold dear"? he asked himself. Then the Lord instructed him, right in the middle of the opposing armies. In the second chapter of the Geetha, He told him of Sharanagathi (the doctrine of surrender). Arjuna heard it and said, 'Lord' I have no will of my own; I surrender to you." Thereafter, the battle was transmuted into a yajna where adharma was offered in the sacrificial fire.

When an act is done in spirit of surrender to the Lord, it becomes a yajna; when it is done in a spirit of egoism, it ends in a battle. Dhaksha, the Emperor, performed a yajna; but, in his pride, he neglected the Lord and His Shakthi. So, the yajna was upset by a fight. When there was no egoism marring the battle, it became sublimated into a yajna. That is the alchemy which sharanagathi can accomplish. First, self-assurance that you are dhasoham (I am his instrument); then, through the winning of His Grace, the consciousness that you are Shivoam (I am Shiva) or Soham (I am That) will become your unshakable experience. To grasp this grand truth of the immanence of Godhead (Sarvam Vishunumayam Jagath), the first path is bhakthi (devotion). For, generally through bhakthi, when it is intensified, one sees in all, the form of God that he reveres.

It is difficult to understand the Adhwaithic conception that "My reality and the Reality of the Universal are the same." "I am That"; this can be realised only through the sharp intellect and clear discrimination. This cannot be established in the consciousness, by external argument or efforts. One has to be an adept in dhyana and vichara (meditation and enquiry). Once the illness of a rich lord was diagnosed by stranger monk as a defect in the eye and he was advised to cast his eyes on a single colour only. The lord collected all the paint he could get and all the painters of the region and daubed everything green - walls, roofs, fences, roads, tree stumps. When the monk returned after some months, he was surprised at the stranger appearance of the town. He asked the lord the reason for this and he was told that it was in accordance with his own prescription! The monk chided him for taking all that trouble and spending all that money, for, he could have gained the same end by putting on a pair of green glasses! When the vision is clarified into Brahma thathwam, then, all will be seen as the One Basic Brahman. No amount of external asceticism or attire can instill that conviction.

Speak words that are true and beneficial

The basic Brahmic unity makes every one equal; this equality can be realised only at that high level of experience. Until then, all talk of treating all as equal to one another is more self-deceit. Why, even such a simple thing as the

advice to speak the truth leads to complications which can be resolved only by compromise. The Geetha advises you to speak, "Anudhwagakaram vakyam, sathyam, priyahitham" (words that are true, that are pleasant and beneficial). There is a story in connection with the Pandavas and the short-tempered sage, Dhuurvasa. When at the conclusion of the battle of Kurukshetra, Ashwatthama returned from the pilgrimage and learnt that the Pandavas had won, he swore that he would exterminate the victors single-handed and set out to discover them. Shri Krishna desired to save them from the mighty man's mortal ire; he approached Dhuurvasa and requested him to keep the brothers in his custody in some hiding place. Dhuurvasa agreed, but, on one condition: if Ashwatthama asks him where they you can speak the truth, but, speak it in an angry tone, that is enough. So the five brothers hid themselves in a cave over which the sage (who had destroyed many by the terrible imprecations with which he reacted whenever he was provoked into anger) sat in silent meditation.

God cares for purity of motive behind the act

Ashwatthama saw Dhuurvasa and with nervous steps and palpitating heart, he ventured to disturb his meditation. He asked him hesitating with fear, whether the Pandavas were anywhere near him Dhuurvasa was silent for some time. Then in one burst of thunder and lightning, he shouted "Where do you think they are? THEY ARE HERE!" His tone was full of disgust and resentment at being interrupted and his face indicated that an imprecation was on the tip of his tongue. Ashwatthama dared not stand there any longer. He interpreted the statement "THEY ARE HERE" to mean only "well, what are you looking for here? If they are here, what dare you do about it?" and left. By watching mere external appearance, you cannot judge the reality.

Sudhama too was in the same predicament. When his wife directed him to proceed to Dhwaraka and pray to his boyhood churn' Shri Krishna for material help in running the family, he was nervous about the success of his mission, for, he fixed his attention on the externals, namely, the fort, palace, bodyguards and all the paraphernalia of kings. He compared them with his own dress, appearance and the low value of the offering that he was taking to

Him. The Lord cares for the purity of the motive behind the act, not for the pomp and the show.

Man's supreme ignorance

Real bhakthi is also a matter of the inner consciousness, not of the outer behaviour. There are people who complain that their devotion to the Lord is limited and shaped by the wordly bonds that bind them. It is not the world that binds them; it is they who bind themselves to the world! People trap monkeys by placing big pots with small mouths in the gardens and putting some groundnuts inside them. Then they wait nearby. The monkeys come and put their hands inside the pots and fill their fists with the nuts. Now, they find that the hands full of nuts cannot be taken out of the pot, for the mouth is too small for the fists. In this helpless condition, they can be caught easily. They fall a prey to the trappers. If only they drop the nuts, they could escape from the burden of the pot and get free. But the attachment to the nuts spelt disaster to them. So too, man gets attached to sense-objects which he is loth to give up and so, he gets entangled in the world forgetting the purpose for which he has come. This is the supreme ignorance. You must try to make the best use of the time allotted to you. You do not try to find out what you were before birth, after birth, and after death. The potter digs up clay to make his pots; that creates a pit but, before his house, the clay has become a heap. And after the process on the wheel, they become pots, which become clay again, when they break and disintegrate. Clay persists in the pit, the heap and the pots. The pots are short-lived and so, they represent the jeevas, the individuals. Clay is the Brahmic substance, which underlies all creation. Know this and get established in the Absolute.