



Summer Showers 1973 - Indian Culture And Spirituality

Divine Discourses of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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1. Opening Address To The Students

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In this great country of ours, the sacred relationship between the teacher and the taught has now become extinct. Truth and discipline, which are essential to good living, have become scarce. Devotion and self-confidence, which should be the primary ideals in our conduct, have disappeared. Moreover, desires devoid of responsibilities, have flourished. Forbearance is the primary feature of our lives. We should be interested to cultivate respect for truth. In our culture, respect for one's mother is regarded as even greater than one's own life.

In such a country, alas, the morals, traditions and attitudes, prevalent in foreign countries have been adopted by us today.

We are completely immersed in superficial appearances. How shall I tell you? The children of mother India do not realise the strength of their own traditions, like the elephant which does not know its own strength.

Dear students, teachers and patrons of education!

With a desire to improve education in this sacred land, we are devising many methods and many ways; but in so doing, we are unable to understand what is of paramount value in all that we are doing. The man who holds the plough for cultivating the land, the worker who works in a workshop, the tradesman who carries his trade and the writer who writes his poetry - indeed, every individual who is engaged in doing any task - are all students in the university of this wide world. However, the writer writes something and changes it. The artisan chisels something and alters it and so on. All these creations and alterations are the results of their own efforts.

In the created world, there is nothing which has no specific use. In this context it is extraordinary that man should make his own life useless. All religions and all castes are creations of man. As such, we are contributing to the divisions and differences in villages and in towns. There are two parts in a village, one which belongs to the rich and the other which belongs to the poor. In a town, we have the old town and the new town. These differences are created by us. While doing so, we forget that the primary objective of everyone is happiness. Happiness, truth and sacrifice constitute the wealth in the treasury of God. You can be happy only when you understand the relationship that should exist between man and man. If we ask ourselves what the meaning of happiness is, we get the answer that absence of sorrow is happiness. Therefore, we have to think about the process of getting rid of sorrow.

Between one star and another and between one planet and another, there is light that shines in the space. In the same manner, between one period of sorrow and another, there should be happiness shining so far as man is concerned.

Before man can enjoy such happiness, we should make an enquiry and realise the inner meaning of some words that we use. In all that man does with a view to love himself, it is not possible for him to ignore loving others. Without cultivating love for others, you can never cultivate love for yourself. Sorrow for yourself is gained by hurting others. In the same manner, victory in every war will result in another war. So also, any happiness that you can give to others will result in happiness for yourself in the end.

Man must realise that he cannot get anything without sharing it with humanity around him. So, you must believe that, in due course, happiness of the people around you will lead to your own happiness. Death is implied in life and sorrow is implied in pleasure. So also, night is implied in the day. We regard sorrow and happiness, night and day as different entities. No, this is not right. On a proper enquiry, we will find that in fact they are the same. Iron, in its native state, is black and hard but when you heat it, it becomes red and soft. This change has come as a result of the change that we have

introduced into the natural state of iron.

In order to realise this truth at all times, we have to participate in good practices, keep good company and accept good advice from elders. From time immemorial, this sacred land has had good traditions, had expounded many spiritual truths and is noted for the exceptionally good teacher-student relationship. A guru like Vasistha and a disciple like Sri Ramachandra, a guru like Sandeepa and disciples like Krishna and Balarama, a guru like Datta Govinda and a disciple like Adi Sankara, a guru like Suka Maharishi and a disciple like Parikshith created the sacred traditions of our country which have remained as shining examples to all from that day till today. The traditions have no parallel in any other part of the world. Where are we to find such teachers or such students in the present-day world? Alas! where is such relationship to be found today between the teacher and the taught? It is only when we accept the need and value of such a teacher-student relationship, with a full heart and a clean mind, that we can get the best out of our traditions relating to this matter. Modern youth should realise the truth in such a statement and for that purpose, it is essential that they understand correctly the relationship between man and man. Only then is it possible to understand the relationship between man and God, between creation and the creator, between Nara (man) and Narayana (God).

It does not matter even if there are no big reforms in our educational system, but it is sad that in the name of education, our youth are acquiring such queer habits that their parents are not able to lift their heads in the public because of shame. It is only when the contents of education that you get are closely linked with ideals of sacrifice, forbearance, truth and love that the youth will get the benefit of education. Students will never get any benefit out of education if it is devoid of these noble principles.

Education does not consist in the accumulation of information and facts from a multitude of books. Reading of books can only enrich you in the information that you may gather but can never give or promote good qualities. You will have to regard good education as a process by which your character is improved and by which you will be able to use your intelligence and sharpen

your mind so as to distinguish right from wrong.

Students must strive to attain strength connected with responsibility. They should also recognise the necessity for becoming aware of the defects in society and in mankind in general. Students must necessarily have three essential qualities - discipline, devotion and duty. It is only when the students have these three qualities, that they will become useful to society. Every student is neglecting these three important qualities. He is behaving in a manner which makes others feel that he is only after getting higher degrees like M.A. or M.Sc. This can also be summed up by saying that he is running after the so-called higher knowledge, not caring for general knowledge. If one does not possess ordinary common sense, however much he may think himself to be educated, he will have to be equated to an illiterate person. If there is no sense of discipline, if one acquires proficiency in English education alone, and if one is not educated in matters relating to the Atma or the self, the only result of such education will be slavery.

Today, one does not have the awareness necessary to respect even one's parents who have been responsible for bringing him up, nor the knowledge of how to conduct oneself in the presence of elders. Many young persons do not know what clothes to wear and when. Should people who do not possess this elementary knowledge be called educated people? If you respect your elders, your parents, your teachers and keep up the sacredness of these relationships, you will be respected in the future. If you do not respect your elders, others will simply ignore you.

Life consists in man's attempt to move from the place called "I" to a place called "WE." If each one becomes so selfish that he always desires that others should respect him and thinks that his interests alone matter, while he himself does not wish the well-being of others nor does he respect others, all of us will be following what may be called a one-way traffic. Life is not a one-way traffic. You should conduct yourself in such a way that you give happiness to others and then ask others to give happiness to you.

Dear students!

Man cannot live in isolation like a drop of oil put on the surface of a sheet of water. Man should realise that the individual and the society together make up the world. The happiness of the individual is intimately connected with the happiness of the society. The prosperity of the society itself is intimately connected with the happiness of the world. If you want to enjoy individual happiness, then you have to accept that the individual, the society and the world must all be happy.

It is because of the defects in our educational system, that a stage has been reached where our youth - both boys and girls - are sometimes taking to bad and unacceptable ways. This will be so, as long as the educational system confines itself wholly to worldly matters and so long as you learn about things relating to the world only. Our educational methods should include spiritual, religious, ethical and moral aspects. It is only then that there is a possibility of the situation being corrected. Every youth must make an effort to generate confidence in himself and he can then enjoy happiness and bliss. He should then be prepared to sacrifice for the good of others. This will lead him to self-realisation. All religions, in essence, preach that you should purify your mind and know your own self.

We should not try to differentiate one religion from another nor one caste from another. The end and aim of all religions and all castes is one and the same. We should try to realise the oneness of all and the essential truth in them. During the one month that is to follow, there will be many elders, who have had considerable experience, talking to you about great men and great traditions of this country that have added lustre to our culture. Do not misuse this golden opportunity. You should preserve in your heart all that you hear. They are like gems that you may have to use in future. I hope that, after this one month, you will go out as torchbearers of Indian culture and re-establish faith in it. Those of you who have come to participate in this course are indeed lucky. Do not waste your time, but listen to what you will be taught and put it into practice in your future life.

2. Sanctity Of The Teacher-taught Relationship

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The world that we see is only a transient one. It is not a permanent one. This world is also full of things which are not quite good or quite important.

Young students!

Indian culture is based on non-dual thought and non-dual philosophy. This special feature of Indian philosophy is known to many people. There are differences between the other philosophies of the world and the Adwaitha or non-dual philosophy, which is prevalent in this country. In most western religions, importance is given to the body, mind and intelligence. Amongst these, intelligence is regarded as the highest human faculty, representing man's self or Atma. This is the angle from which western religion looks at various aspects of life.

Indian thought, on the other hand, considers body, mind and intellect as distinct and additional to one's own Chitta (mind) and Antahkarana (inner consciousness) or the inner heart. Indian culture gives importance to co-ordinating the Atma itself with the highest notion of the Paramatma recognising the oneness thereof in the ultimate analysis. This is the angle from which Indian religion looks at various aspects of life. However, even in India, many religions have come up, flourished and thereby made an attempt at co-ordinating these things with the self or the Atma. All the religions that have come up in this country have given the injunctions that one should speak the truth, that one should not indulge in intrigue, that one should respect one's mother and father and that one should respect his teacher. No religion of this country has ever told anyone not to give respect to the teacher and not care for the mother and father.

All religions have always asked the people to keep away from intrigue. They have never taught us to speak falsehood. Different religions have some differences and some different ideas about the unknow-able God, but they have not differed in essence about things which can be understood and practised with some effort, such as speaking the truth and doing the good.

Today, whatever has been taught in the name of religion and truth, has been forgotten. Things which have not been taught by traditions and in our scriptures are occupying the minds of people, and they are giving them prominence. It is clear that we have no faith in these religions because we are forgetting what the religions have taught us as their essence. We are paying heed to things which do not have religious thought as their basis. It is only when we have complete faith in what has been given as the injunction for man's conduct by various religions and put it into practice that we would be described as proper followers of these religions.

On the other hand, if we only talk about what has been told to us in various religions and the Sastras and do not put this knowledge into practice, we would be described as persons who have no faith in the injunctions given by the religions.

A great many people who are educated, who are in charge of education and who are in responsible positions are asking questions such as: what does religion mean, what is Indian culture, what ethics it stands for and what is morality? By asking such questions and by displaying ignorance of the basic tenets of our religion, they are confusing the minds of the young students. It is clear from their questions that their knowledge has been derived only from books and can be described as book-knowledge. They do not seem to have had any Divine experience at all in their lives. Such is the state of our guardians.

I hope that the students will conduct themselves in a manner that will open the eyes of those who are in charge of education. All my hopes and aspirations rest on the conduct of young people. Young people of today have a great chance and a unique opportunity of setting right the future of this

country. Thus, by giving you the opportunity, during these summer classes, of revitalising the dharma and sacred culture of this country, which have their origin in the Vedas and which have lived through very ancient times, we will help you to restore the reputation of this country to its original place, bringing glory to yourselves and to your country. This is my firm resolve.

The world which we see around us has been referred to as the Mithyaloka (deluding world). If we think that the world is real, it will quickly disappear, change form and tell us that it is false. On the other hand, if we think it to be false, we see things around us causing the feeling that it is real. Therefore, it is neither true nor false. The world is somewhere between truth and falsehood. It sometimes appears to you as true and at other times as not true. That is the reason why it is sometimes called Sat-asat (truth and untruth), because it is both seen and unseen. In this context, we recollect that what we see during the day, we do not see in the dreams of our sleep. What we see in our dreams during the night, we do not see during the day. What is truth and what is falsehood? Our own minds are getting confused. We are unable to see the difference between truth and falsehood. Our ideas and desires keep changing-appearing and disappearing. Therefore, these ideas and desires and our own body itself are unreal. They are not permanent and therefore not true.

Today in the world, we often hear news about some disturbance being caused in some part of the world or some harm being done to people somewhere. There is no news which causes happiness, heartens you, and tells you things more pleasant and permanent. The world itself is a drama of two days. This generation of yours is like a drama lasting for two hours. This individual body of yours is just a water bubble which will last for only a few minutes. How can we regard any of these things as of any value? Our body is a conglomeration of diseases. Our life itself is like a bed, full of bugs. This world is full of sorrow. How are we going to get any happiness in these surroundings?

Thus, neither the desires relating to the body nor the desires relating to worldly pleasures and sensuous enjoyments are going to give us any happiness or bliss. The diseases, the troubles and various other things of that

kind that cause harm to you are putting on the garb of deceit so that they may look outwardly as pleasures. They are chasing you towards all kind of difficulties. As in the normal course of events, the dress you put on will be changed when it has to be changed, so also the dress of pleasure and happiness is only worn temporarily and will be changed to give you trouble as soon as it is all over.

Truly in this world, if you can find an individual who is spending his life in peace and happiness, it will be a matter of great amazement. He may be a very rich and affluent person, he may be a highly educated and respected person, he may be in a position of great power and authority and yet he will only appear outwardly as if he has some happiness; but, in fact, he is worried by so many problems within himself. These problems are bringing so much pressure on him that he is continually unhappy. If you really want to have unbroken bliss and happiness, this age of yours is very appropriate for you to think of the essence of non-dualism or Adwaita philosophy.

There are many people who do not think either of this life or the life after death. Such people are very many in numbers. Even if they think sometimes about these matters, the people who understand what it is to sacrifice, give up even small things in the performance of their duty, and think of doing good so as to improve their lives, are very few in number. When we look at such people, we make the mistake of regarding them as great people. Looking at people who spend all their time and wealth in deriving pleasure for themselves and in decorating and beautifying their own bodies, we again make the mistake of thinking that they are very intelligent people. As time goes on and as bodies grow older in respect of people who spend their lives and money in fulfilling their sensory desires, we still consider them as men worthy of emulation.

These feelings are all wrong. Even though death is staring in the face of an individual every moment, we see him celebrating his birth anniversary, unmindful of the fact that he may meet his death any moment. How are we to interpret the minds and attitudes of such people who do not seem to bother about what happens to them the next moment? The frog that has been

swallowed by the snake and is shortly to die will itself try to swallow some worms, not realising that death is ready at hand to snatch it. The snake in its turn does not know when it will be swallowed by the peacock. Unmindful of the fact that the peacock can swallow it any moment, the snake feels proud that it is swallowing the frog. In the same context, the peacock does not know what is going to happen to its own life, the next moment. A hunter may be chasing it and the peacock does not know what the hunter will do, but in its turn is very proud that it is swallowing a snake. In this world, one person is swallowing another and the other person is swallowing yet another. Each person thinks that he is swallowing another and does not know that yet another person is ready to swallow him.

Further, man thinks that he is swallowing time, while time is there to swallow man at any moment. This is great ignorance on man's part. Because you are so much entangled with the aspects of the body, mind and intellect, you feel that you are subordinate to time and that time will swallow you. However, if you can develop an aspect by which you can feel above the aspects of body, mind and intellect, it will be possible for you to get control over death and regard it as part and parcel of the evolution of the immortal element in you.

We have come into this world with our body as a part of ourselves. So long as you remain a part of this world, it is the duty of the young people to enquire and understand the truth behind all this. What is this body and what is its relationship to the world? It is the determination of Sai to sow in the minds of the young people, which are like the rays of the rising sun, the seeds of desire for acquiring spiritual knowledge.

Your age is the appropriate age at which you can hope to become the future pillars of this country. There is no use preaching such things to elderly people whose minds are like the evening rays of the sun. During this one month, you young people will be told various things about Indian traditions and Indian culture. You will also be told what is good in western tradition and western culture. In fact, you will be told about all great religions of the world. This is the purpose of constituting various components of this summer school.

During this one month, there may be inconveniences that will come your way. You may feel uncomfortable physically but despite these inconveniences and lack of comforts, you should consider yourselves as lucky to be given a chance of understanding the glory of India and the value of Indian culture.

You should be proud to be citizens of our great country. This truth must get into your mind and you should be able to get it firmly implanted in you without wavering and without letting your mind wander away from it. My country is India. My religion is the religion of India. My ideals and traditions have been born in India. You must develop such thoughts in your mind. You must develop great respect and attachment to the culture that has flourished in this country from time immemorial. Our culture is ancient and immortal. You will have to dedicate your life to the future of this country.

Your life can be peaceful only when you can control the agitations of your body and mind. These are harmful. If you are not able to control the agitations of your body and mind while you are young, you will not be able to do so when you grow older. When you are young, you have the strength of body, mind and spirit; and if you are not able to control your agitations at this age, you will not be able to do so when you grow older.

Education has the proper meaning only if you are able to control your sense organs, set your ideas on the right path, keeping your mind clean. One notices lightning in the sky only when clouds gather. In that manner, as lightning follows clouds, wisdom must follow education. One who seeks such wisdom which follows education is a true seeker of education or a vidyarthi. You must forget the foolish idea that education is only for acquiring a degree. Do not seek education for the sake of serving someone else. Have in your mind, as the objectives of your education, the prosperity and good of yourself, your country and your society. Make an effort to sacrifice your life. Do not take the path of selling your education for earning the pittance of a salary.

From the time you wake up till the time you go to sleep, you do many things and even struggle hard for the purpose of getting a little money. For the sake

of one rupee, people tell a lie and do all kinds of things throughout the day. For the sake of money, you adopt many deceitful plans and intrigues and involve God Himself in your meaningless actions. Such people who are after money are all the time pretending to repeat the name of the Lord but are in fact intriguing and trying to deceive the Lord Himself.

Even if others who listen to these things do not understand, does not God understand what you really mean when you make such fake offerings? You will ultimately get what you deserve. Your intrigues may succeed with various people whom you want to deceive, but it is not possible to deceive God. God lives in your heart.

You might have heard the name of Chitragupta in Indian mythology. Chitragupta is the name of the private secretary to Yama, the Lord of death. This means that this Chitragupta keeps an unerring account of the good and the bad which the individuals do in their lives. You may be amused at this and wonder if there is really a Yama, the Lord of death, and if he has a private secretary with the name Chitragupta. All this may give you the feeling that Yama is being described in terms of an office and thus your faith may be shaken up a little. In Indian culture, every word that is used has an inner meaning. We neglect the significance of these stories in our mythology by interpreting them superficially.

Time itself is called Yama. The birth of a body, its growth, the changes that are brought about in a body and finally its death are all caused by the passage of time. If there is no passage of time, there is neither birth nor death. Since time is responsible for bringing about all these changes, and even destruction and death of the human body, time itself has been called the Lord of death.

Time is also called the offspring of Sun. Again we may get a doubt whether the Sun God has a family, a wife and a child. The notion of time has come to us because of the phenomena of sunrise and sunset. That is why time is regarded as the child of Sun. This name Chitragupta is inside the body itself. The mind is hiding inside the human body and this hidden mind is called

Chitrugupta. All the thoughts that arise in one's mind are imprinted upon his heart. If someone asks something, you may hesitate and give an answer which is not the right one; but if the question is asked in one's own heart, one cannot give a false reply.

Even a thief, who has entered another's house and committed a theft, may say that he has not committed a theft when confronted by the police. This is only a pretence. His heart knows fully well the truth that he has committed a theft. That which has been so imprinted on your heart is called Ruta. The truth about the ideas which generate in you, when imprinted on your heart, is called Ruta. The utterance with your mouth of the idea that has been imprinted on your heart, is called the truth. Putting the words that have been uttered with your mouth into practice is called Dharma. The meaning of Dharma or right conduct will therefore be evident and correct only when there is complete co-ordination and an inseparable association between the idea that has arisen in your heart, the word that you have spoken with your mouth and the action that you have undertaken with your body. Thus, if there is complete co-ordination between thought, word and deed, one would call it right conduct. Today, we have not understood properly this sacred word dharma and its full meaning. We have been giving various interpretations to suit ourselves. This is the unfortunate predicament prevalent today.

Divyatma Swarupas!

Young students, the teacher-taught relationship has been very sacred in our traditional way of life. In that context, the verses that go under the name of Bhaja Govinda have a very special significance. Adi Sankara wrote thirty verses under this name and handed them over to the world through himself and his disciples. Because of their importance, I wish to take each one of these verses on each day of the next thirty days and tell you how Sankara's disciples propagated the contents and the sacredness of those verses in the world. The essence of all the Vedas, all the Sastras, and all the Puranas is contained in an explicit manner in these verses. Preserve them in your heart. Regard your stay as a thapas - disciplined spiritual practice. Consider this place as an ashram and sanctify your lives. This is my hope and I bless you

all.

3. The Ladder That Enables An Ignorant Person Become A Liberated Soul

Date: 22 May 1973 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 1973

Young students!

Today, the question arises in the mind of every youth, whether our country Bharath, deserves to be called by that name. We are experiencing Indian culture at the present moment in a most ridiculous manner. For instance, the only significance that has remained in respect of the Gayatri Manthra is the ritual of holding tight the tip of your nose. The sanyasi is carrying a burden on him which is perhaps even more than the burden that the head of a family carries. When we talk of pranayama (regulation of breath), it looks to us as something trivial. It has deteriorated into a meaningless process.

In this context, there should be no surprise if we get a doubt whether India really deserves to be called by her ancient name Bharath, and whether in Indian culture there is any significance left for us at all. It is true and natural that in every country, after some time, a situation of this kind arises and such deterioration sets in. Depending upon the nature of the country, the passage of time and the individuals who live in that country, such deterioration sets in at different times. When such a deterioration sets in, God will appear in human form either in the garb of a Paramahansa (Realised sage) or as an Avatar for the purpose of re-establishing righteousness and restoring the original traditions.

Many years ago, when in this country, righteousness and all that was dependent upon dharma was on the decline, Adi Sankara appeared on the scene and propagated the ancient and Vedic dharma in the form of Adwaita or non-dual philosophy. He also established several well-known seats of learning all over India. The first signs of such decline in dharma were noticed as long ago as 5000 years. This was when Lord Krishna gave up his mortal coil.

More recently, in the year the name of which was Nandana, in the month the name of which was Vaisakhi, and on a day called Panchami, a Sunday, and in the early hours of the morning which we call Brahma Muhurtha, in a place called Kaladi, a village in Kerala, Sankaracharya took birth. At the early age of five years, Adi Sankara learnt the Gayatri Mantra. Having learnt the Gayatri Mantra and through its exposition, by the time he attained the age of fourteen years, he had learnt all that was contained in the Vedas. In this manner, he had the determination to spread the cult of spirituality throughout the world. Sankara was a great individual who, during his lifetime, wrote commentary on all the Upanishads in easily understandable language for the benefit of all people. He prepared the texts and his commentary acquired the name Sankara Bhashya. He devoted all the time that was available to him and all the energy that was in his body for the purpose of propagating the sacred Indian culture all over India.

In the pursuit of this programme, he travelled all over India. During his travels, he lived in Benares for some time. His fourteen important disciples accompanied him. It was his daily routine to move about, along with his disciples, through the streets of Benares and to teach and preach his philosophy. He visited various houses of Brahmins in Benares and established the scriptural authorities for them.

Sankara, during one such travels through the streets, noticed that in a house belonging to an old Brahmin, the owner of the house was reciting some rules of grammar. At that time Sankara entered the house, and he carried on a conversation with the Brahmin. Sankara asked the Brahmin to tell him what he expected to get by reciting the rules of grammar. The Brahmin replied that he had a big family, was unable to support such a big family and that he was acquiring some knowledge of grammar with which he hoped to go about and earn a little money to support his big family. Sankara then told the Brahmin all that was needed to be told and said that reciting rules of grammar will not help him. Sankara returned to his place and decided to put his advice in the form of a verse and that was what happened that day. The substance of the verse which Sankara then composed and began to sing along with his devotees, is as follows:

Sing the glory of Lord Govinda. Utter the name of Lord Govinda, Oh! you ignorant person! You should go on uttering the name of the Lord. It will not be possible for you to do so when death faces you and you are close to it. Reciting rules of grammar cannot save you.

While the greatness of Sankara was evident in this verse itself, his disciples were also very scholarly persons and they wanted to satisfy their guru by exhibiting their abilities. Each one of the disciples then composed a verse, and altogether fourteen verses were composed at that time by the fourteen disciples. As soon as the fourteen disciples thus composed fourteen verses, Adi Sankara himself was pleased and gave expression to his pleasure by composing what has since come to be known as Dwadasa Manjari or the series of twelve verses.

He then began thinking and came to the conclusion that teaching and preaching should be followed by some form of blessing by the guru in order that one may get full benefit and therefore gave four more verses in the form of blessing. In this manner, after having composed a total of thirty-one verses, the name of Moha Mudgara was given to those verses, and they were handed over to posterity as the Bhaja Govinda series. The most important thing that has been communicated in these verses is the word moodhamathi (one so foolish that he cannot understand or grasp). We have to ask, who in this context is the moodhamathi or the one that cannot understand. Sankara himself has given a beautiful answer to this question and the answer is contained in the sentence "Nastiko Moodha Udyate." That is one who does not believe in God or one who is an Anatmavadi, who does not accept the existence of Atma, is the foolish man referred to here. These words "Nastiko Moodha Udyate" have been used by Dharmaraja in the Mahabharatha in the part which relates to the questions put by the Yaksha. Today, we are understanding that moodhamathi signifies one who is a total materialist.

We have to make some further enquiry as to what this word means. There are very few people who realise the truth in the statements, "I am not the body. The body is something that is temporary and will perish. I, on the other hand, am imperishable and I am the immortal child of Divinity." When we look at

these from the worldly aspect, there are many facets that may be noted. One is to tell oneself, I am born in this body, I am growing in this body, and I have the right to enjoy the various pleasures of this world with this body. One may waste his life in this manner.

Another aspect is that, when I can decide as to what I like and what I dislike, where does God come into the picture? Why should I have any faith in God and invoke His blessings for my likes and dislikes? It is not as if there is no other aspect which is quite the opposite of these. Some people feel that they are paying rent for the house in which they live, that they are paying taxes for the professions they engage in, that they are paying for the water, electricity and for practically everything that they use in their daily lives. They question the need for faith in God in any context. It is true that such people are paying taxes for all worldly possessions like a house, water, light, power and so on.

They should also ask themselves what taxes they are paying to mother earth for providing all amenities and for meeting many of our requirements, thus enabling man to carry on his daily life. They should also ask themselves what taxes they are paying to the sun, to the moon and to the space around us for providing the needed light, air and the capacity to work. These unseen powers, which keep us going, are not being paid anything in return.

Scientists can only study and describe the qualities of existing materials. They can divide them into components, reconstitute them into new compounds, and reshape them according to processes which they can explain. No scientist can create things which do not exist. Is man able to produce all the water he needs by mixing elemental substances like hydrogen and oxygen? Is he able to produce natural rain where it does not exist? Is he able to produce oxygen when he finds the need to carry it all the way with him to keep his life process going? Are the scientists able to create the sun and the stars which are the sources that give the necessary light and energy for the existence of man? Occasionally, the scientists may put together a few elemental substances and create artificially small quantities of new materials, but are they able to create the life-giving substances like oxygen, air and water for sustaining the created life on earth? It is not possible for anyone to do so. They can be

created only at God's will and pleasure. The person who realises this truth that all creation is at God's will and pleasure can be said to be one who is not a moodhamathi.

In some cities, there is a shortage of drinking water and scientists are trying to convert the saltish ocean water into drinking water. In this attempt, they may be partially successful; but wherefrom will they get the drinking water if ocean water itself, which is the source, is not available. Thus in all cases, the original substance or the source, if we make a careful analysis and enquiry, is God given and no scientist can create it.

No matter how high a position and capacity a scientist may have achieved in his profession, he can have no connection with things beyond the five elemental substances, earth, water, fire, air, and space. God is behind the curtain and beyond these five elements. God exhibits His powers outside the region of these five elements. Man operates within the region of these five elements. So long as the intimate connection, as we know it in our daily lives, exists between man and the five elements, man cannot understand the true significance of the Paramatma Thathwa (Elemental principle). To some extent, we can make use of the five elements to make things easy and comfortable for ourselves in this material world, but that process should be only for the purpose of understanding the Divine aspect or the Paramatma. On the contrary, to try and confine ourselves within the domain of the five elements for the purpose of understanding God's ways or working in the belief that God can be brought down to the material plane on which we choose to build our sensory desires will be tantamount to wasting our time.

One who is able to understand and realise the truth that these five elements are the creation of God and that they are created at his pleasure is one who understands things in their proper perspective. One who does not understand and accept this perspective as the ultimate truth is a moodhamathi. It means that so long as you do not yearn for the grace of God and so long as you allow your life and its activities to get mixed up with the five elements around you, you will be meeting with a great many disappointments and difficulties. You will be wasting your life and there is no escape from the truth that you will be

spending your life like a moodhamathi.

In the second half of the verse, Sankara is saying that as your death is drawing close and as your end is nearing, reciting rules of grammar will not help you. For man, amongst all the fears that come his way, the fear of death is the most terrifying one. At the time of death, the feeling generally is not just that a lakh (hundred thousand) of scorpions are crawling on you; it is as painful as if a lakh of scorpions are stinging you all the time. Sankara is telling you that when death, of which you are afraid in such an extreme manner, approaches you and you are suffering great pain, nothing except the thought of God can save you. That is what he means by saying that reciting the rules of grammar or recollecting your scholarship in various fields will not save you when you are close to death.

For the verse Bhaja Govindam, Govindam Bhaja, there are varied interpretations given by many learned scholars; and the word Govindam has been assigned several meanings. But the real meaning of Govindam is that it refers to one who looks after the cows or tends the cows. The inner meaning is that it refers to one who has control over the animal nature in man. There is some animal nature which is remaining as a residue in man. This residual animal nature of man has to be changed and transformed. One who is able to transform this animal nature in man is Govinda. For an animal, human nature is inaccessible as a goal, but for man, Divine nature is accessible as a goal. However, as mentioned earlier, there is a residual animal nature in man and we have to enquire what is meant by this animal nature. When we show green grass to an herbivorous animal, it is attracted, comes close and expresses its pleasure by moving its tail. The same animal runs away if you take a stick and go to beat it. In this manner, man today is attracted, comes close if you show him some money, but if you are angry and shout at him, he runs away. Is this not animal nature in human beings?

On the other hand, as human beings, we should not be afraid nor should we cause fear to others. We are not cattle to be afraid and we are not animals to cause fear to other. However, when some wrong deeds come to our notice or when something false is said, then to expose the truth separated from

untruth and punish the persons responsible for such misdeeds should be the accepted qualities of man. These cannot be the qualities of an animal. So when we utter the word Govinda, we must understand and discriminate between wrong and right and punish the person for his wrong deeds and reward him for his good deeds. To carry on the improvement of human nature so as to move closer to the Divine is thus the aspect of Govinda. Every day you have to think of Govinda, utter His name and develop faith and confidence in Him. It is not possible to do otherwise and yet be happy.

Another meaning of the word Govinda is that it is an uttered sound. Whether it is for the words that are uttered by man or for the sounds that are produced by animals or for what has been said in the Vedas, there is only one base. There may be superficial differences in the quality, but the base is the same sound for all of them. Therefore, this alternative meaning enables us to look at Govinda as the personification of sound or sabda. Gam or cow, Bhumin or earth, Ved or Vedas and Swarga or heaven: He who represents all these things is Govinda. This word Bhumin also gives us the meaning that Govinda is at the back of all the drama of this world that is enacted on the earth. In the word Swarga, we get the meaning that He is the Lord of the place where we can get all kinds of happiness and pleasure. In referring to the Vedas, we also get the meaning that in talking of Govinda, we are talking of the aspect of Lord Himself since we say "Vedo Narayana Hari Hi." Thus, we have to recognise that whether it is in the gross, in the subtle or in the causal appearance of this world, it is Govinda who is shining.

It is in this context that Prahlada proclaimed that there is no pleasure in this world. There is no pleasure in being born again and again. There is no pleasure in being born only to die and in dying only to be born again. Why should we be born if it is only to undergo the repeating cycle of births and deaths? One should be born in such a way that he becomes immortal and is never born again. One who, after finding the path, arrives at such truth is the wise person. If we carefully enquire into the words that Prahlada used on that occasion, we will note that he said that the intelligence of such a person is that of a wise man and not that of an animal. This means that Prahlada decided that one who understands and is after the path of immortality is a

wise person. If one does not understand this, he is like an animal. He gave a very satisfactory answer to those who doubt the truth of such a statement. He illustrated it by comparing your body to a bow, your mind to the string on the bow and your life to the arrow. This means that the bow of your body has become subservient to the string which is your mind. When you put the arrow, that is your life, on this string of your mind and pull it, you find that the bow or the body bends. The arrow goes just as straight as is determined by the extent to which you are able to pull the string of your mind. This string of your mind should be pulled quite strong and should not be left loose.

It is in this context that we are told that the right path to reach Madhava is to control our mind. By attaching much importance to our mind and body, a mind which is unsteady and a body which is like a water bubble, our entire life is rendered fruitless.

This first verse is also establishing the Annamaya, Manomaya and Pranamaya aspects of our body. Without food, the body cannot live. If there is no body, we cannot really picture the mind. If there is no mind, we cannot recognise life in the body. The aspects of knowledge and bliss are dependent upon the aspects of food, of mind and of life. Therefore, we are after these three aspects. It is true that these aspects are transient and not permanent and that they have no value. But since the aspects of knowledge and bliss are dependant on these, we attach some importance to them.

To be able to experience the aspects of knowledge and bliss, we should protect our body, mind and life. There is a small example for this. If in our house, we have some valuable jewels and gems to be protected, we put them in a comparatively cheap iron safe. This steel almirah or an iron safe has no value compared to the jewels, but we are putting valuable jewels in it. Our body is like the valueless iron safe. In this valueless body, God has kept for protection, very valuable things like knowledge and bliss. But sometimes, according to our convenience, we think that God has not done the right thing in keeping such valuable things in a valueless and impermanent body. God is the embodiment of intelligence and wisdom and looks at things in a total and complete manner. In His creation, there cannot be anything which has no

specific purpose. He creates everything with a specific purpose. If we keep the valuable jewels in a valuable gold box, nobody will wait till he has a look at the jewels inside. They will take away the box itself as soon as they see it. It is natural to protect valuable things in a valueless box which will not attract attention. Therefore, in order that we may reach the realm of knowledge, bliss and happiness it becomes necessary to look after the well-being of the outer casing namely, body, mind and life.

There is another small matter to which we have to pay some attention. When we keep valuable things in a box, we have to lock the box and keep the key safely with us. If you do not have the key, it will not be possible for you to take out of this box the knowledge and bliss when you really need them. This key has been referred to by Sankara as the key of bhakthi or devotion. When you use the key of devotion and turn it on the side of detachment, you will be able to open the box and utilise the knowledge and bliss that are contained in this box. But, if the key of devotion is turned in the wrong direction, away from detachment and towards attachment, you will not be able to open the box and use the knowledge and bliss for your benefit. Therefore, either for detachment or for attachment, this key of devotion which is between attachment and detachment is important, and you should protect it. It will be possible for you to have this devotion when you have faith in God.

Today in the world, we see many people who say that they have no faith in God. But, in fact, it is not possible to live even for a moment without faith in God. We should not be under the impression that God exists somewhere, having a special form, vested with special powers and so on. What is contained in your own heart as a clean thought and as supreme consciousness is itself God. He is God and you do not have to look for Him elsewhere. This sacred part of one's heart is necessary for everyone. There is no one who does not have such a sacred heart. Because such a sacred heart is present in everyone, one can say that God is in everyone.

He who does not have faith in himself will have no faith in God. There is no one who does not love himself, has no belief in himself and has no ambition to rise higher and higher. Even a man who does not have faith in God does

have faith in himself and desires to have the strength by which to cultivate faith in himself.

This is something which is quite natural and which comes surging from the depths of one's heart. There is a small example for this.

There was once a guru living in a place and he was communicating wisdom to people who used to come for his darshan. Those people who were coming to have his darshan used to bring some flowers and fruits in accordance with Indian traditions. One day, as the offerings were plenty in the form of fruit, he called a disciple and asked him to cut the fruit and arrange for its distribution as prasad. The disciple cut the fruit and reported to the guru that all was ready for distribution and asked him as to whom should be given the first fruit. The guru asked him to start with the person in whom he has the greatest faith and the highest confidence. All the people assembled there thought that the disciple would first give the fruit to the teacher and then distribute to the others. But the disciple did not do so. He took the first fruit himself. When the surprised onlookers asked for an explanation, he said that since he had the greatest confidence and affection for himself, he took the first fruit. This demonstrates that he had indeed, confidence in himself and that he truly loved himself.

When we look at this story outwardly, it may look as if the disciple had no faith in the guru, but we should realise that he acted in this manner because of supreme confidence in himself. Therefore, if one does not touch the feet of God, does not go to a temple or does not go on a pilgrimage, we should not conclude that he has no faith in himself. Confidence in one's self is something which can only be experienced and cannot be exhibited. What is important is that one should have faith in himself. While individuals may have their own notions and these may differ from each other, the Atma Thathwa is one and the same to whomsoever it belongs. Sankara taught this oneness of the Atma Thathwa. It is with a view to promote faith in God that Sankara had taken the moodhamathi as an instrument in the very first verse that he composed. If we want to climb to the top of a tall building, we use a ladder for that purpose. For such a ladder, there must be a base and a top, on both of which, it is

supported. Thus, what Sankara did was to take the moodhamathi as the base and the mukthamathi as the top or the destination.

Between the base of moodhamathi and the destination of mukthamathi, he used the twenty-nine verses that describe the aspects of life as the twenty-nine steps of the ladder. When we go further on and understand all the succeeding verses, there is no doubt that our ignorance will be dispelled and we will get a clear picture of what Sankara conveyed to us in this remarkable set of thirty-one verses of Bhaja Govindam.

4. Avoid Cycle Of Births And Deaths

Date: 23 May 1973 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 1973

One can point at a thing and say that it is not Brahman, but no one can say that this is Brahman.

Whatever is unchanging, eternally true, and whatever is knowledge, and is infinite is Brahman.

It is not possible to explain this in terms of words.

Sacred minded students!

Man generally desires to get something and in fact gets something different. By his ambitions and in his imaginations, man builds up several ideas which are like the nests of various birds. These desires are not generally fulfilled in the manner in which he wants them to be fulfilled. Life is like a long garland. This garland has two ends, one the birth and the other the death. In between these two ends, the garland consists of many flowers. Your dreams, thoughts, ideas, sorrows, joys and pleasures are the various flowers that make up this garland. We have to consider and come to a conclusion whether we shall regard life itself as the garland or whether we shall regard the connections of our body with life as the garland. When we look at the two ends of this garland, it will be quite clear that these ends, the birth and the death, are relevant only to the body and not to the Jiva inside the body. In that context, whether it is pain or pleasure, sorrow or happiness, dream or imagination, all of them are concerned with the body and not with the Jiva. It is the body which is undergoing many changes and transformations. The Atma does not undergo any change but remains permanent, steady, pure, selfless and firm. Truly, our body goes through various stages like boyhood, youth, adolescence and old age.

Depending upon the stage through which the body is passing at a particular moment, it will decide for itself the work that is appropriate for that particular stage. In the stage of boyhood, the individual engages himself in playing, singing, reading and in various other kinds of such pleasures and gets happiness out of those activities. In that stage, he does not think at all or worry himself about what is going to be his future. In fact, he then lives in such fantasy that he is free from all worries and enjoys the period of boyhood.

At that juncture, while he lives unmindful of the world and the worries of the world, he gets into what we may call his youth. The moment youth sets in, his vision gets blurred and he becomes blind in the sense that he does not look at things in the proper perspective. He does not care to look at the earth or the sky. He forgets what is moral and what is immoral. He does not pay any attention to respect or disrespect. In fact, he gets so excited that nothing else matters to him except his personal and sensuous pleasures. In this manner, he makes his life somewhat useless.

Even as he is getting confused while enjoying sensuous pleasures, middle age enters his life. As soon as middle age enters, he begins to feel tied down with responsibility because he has a family and people to look after. He develops an attachment that goes with it. He feels that some power is binding him down and constantly strives to come out of that bondage. At this stage of his life, even as he is struggling to free himself from such attachments, he gets into a period that we call the old age. His eyes will be afflicted by cataract and he cannot see things clearly. He cannot walk fast. His hands will shake and tremble. He cannot hear well and he will be thinking about things that have gone behind him in his youth and in his adolescence. He will generally prefer to be in a reminiscent mood, occasionally wondering and fearing how the future will be for him. Although in his boyhood, youth, middle age and old age, he had sufficient and ample time to think about worldly matters, this aged person will be feeling that he does not have sufficient time to think of God. Such a person will not have peace of mind nor will he find the bliss that goes with the realisation of Atma. He will be steadily declining, thinking only of the past and worrying about how he is going to spend the future.

Thus, man is born, journeys through his youth, grows old, declines and dies. Should people think only of these transformations and nothing else? Should they not think of something more sacred like the Atma Thathwa? During his youth and boyhood, man mixes with several people and spends his time playing with them. As he advances in age, he involves himself in satisfying his desires, runs after women and seeks love and affection. When he grows older, he wants to earn money and amass wealth so that he can use it for his pleasure. When he becomes quite aged, he does not think of the Divine but spends his time in many different ways and finds himself unable to give up the attachments which he has developed in his life. In this manner, man simply wastes his life, turns it into mud and becomes utterly useless in the end.

Young people generally do not have faith in God and they get into a despondent situation by asking themselves the question, is there God or no God? Even the first step of having faith in God is possible only for those who have done some good deeds in their past births. This reference to our past births is something which even the Indians are not able to believe today.

There is a small example for this. As soon as a person begins his life, you find that he shows an aptitude to one particular avocation. Some people become poets. Some become singers, while some others become artists and so on. What is it that gives each individual this special ability. Is it not what he is carrying with him from his previous birth? You may argue that it is the effort that the individual puts in that is responsible for his becoming either a poet or a singer. This is not the case. You will have to think how, without any special training, these individuals are sometimes exhibiting such special skills. Among Indians, there is a belief that one reaps the fruits of his actions, there is a belief in rebirth and also a belief in carrying with us the good or bad we had done in our previous births.

In modern times, people are asking questions regarding their connection with God. They ask why they should pray to God and have belief in Him. According to them, they can do anything they wish to do only with the help of modern science and technology. In this context, they question the need for thinking of

God. Young people today argue and assert that it is a weakness to believe in God, whom they cannot see. While they regard any faith in God as a weakness because we cannot see Him with our physical eyes, they do not regard it a weakness to believe in so many other things, which we cannot see. Today, scientists are able to infer the presence of air by various aids, but are they able to see the air?

While moving about in the sky and having faith in the sounds that we are uttering and hearing as symbolic of the sky, are we able to see the sky? When people talk about their minds and when they complain that their mind is wavering and is not peaceful, are they able to see their mind? When one says that his heart is very quiet or that it is very troubled, is one able to see his own heart? When you say that your head is aching, does this convey anything more than the head, and is there a shape for the pain which the head is suffering from?

Thus there is no form for, and one cannot see things like happiness, sorrow, bliss, mind and so on. When you are having faith and belief in such things which have no physical form and which you cannot see directly, what is it that makes you disbelieve in something like God, whom you do not see? Thus when you talk of not having faith in someone or something that you do not see, is it not a weakness that you regard sorrow, mind, pleasure and so on as real, although you cannot see them.

The world is made up of five elemental substances. These elements do not have a form. For example, air has no form. It takes the shape of the container. Similarly fire has no form and it has only a specific power. It can heat and it can burn. Therefore, these elements have qualities or attributes that you can only describe. They do not have specific forms which you can see. That special aspect which is above and beyond these five elemental substances is Divinity. Because we look at this creation with the help of the body which continually changes, the mind which continually wavers, and the vision which continually falters, we get all kinds of doubts.

There is some justification in our trying to first understand the aspects of the

human body and then moving on to understand the aspects of the Divine. It is in this context that the disciples of Sankara proclaimed that various attributes of the human body, man's conduct, man's thoughts and his material desires have no permanent value and that a study of these things is not a study of the truth. Hence, they moved on to state that the proper thing to study is the Atma Thathwa since that is permanent and shows the way to God realisation. They spent their time and effort in getting together the Bhaja Govindam verses for the benefit of people.

One of the disciples gave a verse, the meaning of which is as follows: While one is in his boyhood, he has the desire to play and sing. When he grows into a young man he begins to think of love and women. When he grows older, his failing mind is full of worries and doubts. When is he to turn towards spiritual affairs and ask questions relating to Brahman?

This is how one goes through his life. During the day, while he is awake, man gets involved with his mind, body, intellect and other organs and he establishes a relationship with material environment and enjoys the situation. During the night while he is dreaming, his body does not participate in any activity, his eyes are closed and he does not see anything with his eyes. In spite of this, he feels that he is going through different situations. While he is moving in many different places and participating in many different events in his dream, he is not able to find out which part of his body is truly participating in all those things. There appears to be no connection between the body that functions in the waking state and the body that functions in the dreaming state. Who or which of these two is the real body?

On the other hand, while he is in deep sleep, he does not have experience of any kind, but when he gets up, he says that he has had a sound and refreshing sleep. Is he able to state and identify who it was that had a sound and refreshing sleep? Can he even identify which part of his body enjoyed that sound sleep? If one who, completely forgetting the environment, sleeps well and wakes up and says, "I have enjoyed a good sleep", we have to ask the question, "Who is this 'I' who enjoyed a good sleep?" Thus in the waking, dreaming and deep- sleep states, there is a self who has been present. This

self is something different from the body and has been present witnessing all the states. It is wrong to think that this self is the same as the body. The body and the self are quite different.

Once Narada met Sanatkumara and asked for enlightenment. Sanatkumara asked Narada about the special power which Narada had acquired because of his learning. To this Narada replied that he knows all that is contained in the four Vedas and the six Sastras. Sanatkumara smiled at this reply and said that while it is a matter of great satisfaction that Narada had learnt the Vedas and the Sastras but he would like to ask whether he had learnt anything of the self and whether he had understood himself. Sanatkumara then told Narada that so long as one does not understand one's self, the knowledge of all the Sastras, all the Vedas, of the Gita and the Upanishads becomes quite useless. Your knowledge will become useful only when you are able to realise the nature of the self. What is important is the Adwaitha darshana. You should be able to realise and understand the non-dual aspect that is pervading the entire universe.

Today in the world, without making an effort to understand one's own self, people are imagining that they are achieving many great things with the help of modern science, and in the process they are putting their feet into many difficult situations. By saying that they are able to travel far into the sky, see the stars, go to the moon and set up camps there, they are only building castles in the air. They may partially succeed in doing such things, but if in the process they do not understand the Self and if they do not have peace of mind for themselves, they are very foolish indeed.

According to the words of poet Vemana, it does not matter even if you go to the world of Indra or to the land of the moon. You should try to get on the Nandi and see the Divine and understand the self. Ordinarily, the word Nandi means "bull". But Vemana has used this word Nandi synonymously with Buddhi or intelligence. He means that if we make ourselves distant from our intellect and go to the moon, the happiness that we get will not be the right kind of happiness. The right kind of happiness is contained in our own mind and within our own thoughts. Without making proper use of our intelligence,

without developing detachment to our body and without having faith in the Divine, we are not going to have the fruits of our actions. If you keep away from cleansing your mind, and if you stick to sensuous pleasures, you will never have the fruit of your actions, even if you go on praying to God for His blessings.

The one who lives in this world should first become a human being and understand what the nature of this body is. One who goes on praising the bad deeds of others is a fool. The way of understanding one's self is the path for liberation. Realising the transient aspect of the human body, one of the disciples of Sankara described the boyhood, youth, adolescence and old age in such a manner that the description creates in you a certain amount of repulsion and detachment. It does not matter how long each one lives. Everyone must leave his body sometime or other. It is very much necessary that so long as we live in this body, we use the available time for understanding God. It is necessary to find the means for ultimately merging with God. We do not know when we are going to leave this body. The body is made up of matter and it will die.

Our ancients have said that the limit for human life is a hundred years, but we cannot believe this. We do not know whether death will come in young age or in old age, in middle age or in the adolescence, or whether it will come in water, air or on land, in the village or in the forest. One thing is true and that is death is certain. If you are a wise man, you should strive to understand yourself while you are alive. Without knowing who you are and without realising the nature of your true self, whatever you may do in your life and whatever you may have achieved, you would have wasted your time and you would not have spent your life in a useful and purposeful manner.

You are spending all your time reading newspapers which come from different parts of the world, and you are anxiously waiting to get news about some individuals from various parts of the world. But you are not anxious to find out what news comes from within your own heart. This news is the most important news. This world is like a newspaper. You can read a newspaper from beginning to end only once, but no one reads the same newspaper again

and again, day after day. Similarly, we have come into this world and we have seen the newspaper of this world once. We should not attempt to see the same newspaper again. A newspaper of today is a wastepaper of tomorrow.

In this way, if we subject our life to the repeating cycle of birth and death, we will be turning our life into a wastepaper. Therefore, we should not agree to see this world again and again. We should make up our mind and strive to see the Divine which is really the paper of taste. In this direction, Sankara did many things to turn the thoughts of people towards God.

You young people should clean your minds, develop pure ideas, and take this opportunity to see what sweetness there is in understanding the Divine bliss. You must dedicate your lives to practising and propagating ancient Indian culture. When you go out of this summer school after one month, you should be able to re-establish the glorious traditions of our country and be messengers of peace for the rest of the people. That you have joined the summer school is not a matter of satisfaction for us. We will feel happy only when you are able to practise what you learn during this one month. You must help maintain the reputation of our country. I bless you that you may be able to do so.

5. Seek The Company Of Good People

Date: 24 May 1973 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 1973

From acquiring detachment, removal of all illusory relationships follows as a consequence.

From the removal of all relationships, steadiness of mind follows as a consequence.

From the steadiness of mind, liberation of the jiva follows as a consequence.

Sacred students!

There are two things which are important for man's life. One is confidence in one's own self and the other is cleansing one's own mind. Man cannot live by himself in isolation. The entire world depends upon the social structure and on the manner in which individuals are knit together into a society. It has been the good luck of our country to have had a society which is well knit on the basis of sacred principles. The quality of forbearance of our society is not to be seen elsewhere. It is blood that flows through the arteries of Indian youth. It is not water. You have to make a determined effort to revive our sacred culture and demonstrate to the rest of the world the vitality that is contained therein. The youth of India should be prepared to sacrifice even their lives for the sake of truth. This country has been such that it had always traversed along the path of truth, had lit the lamp of truth and shed the light of truth. Today, Indians have apparently been subdued by the situations that prevail in the country, by the times in which they are living and by the environment through which they are passing. They have forgotten the greatness of their own culture and are being ridiculed by others. The sacred tenets of our scriptures such as: respect your mother as God, respect your father as God, respect your teacher as God and respect your guest as God, no longer convey any meaningful messages to us in the social makeup of today.

Such undesirable changes have come about in our country today, and it is with a view to expose you to our original and ancient culture that these gatherings have been arranged. Experienced people have been invited to these gatherings to let you know what the greatness of our culture is, and thereby change your hearts. Our purpose is to take you all through experiences by which you will appreciate the true culture of our country.

Sankara was in the position of a teacher for the entire world and he propagated many ideals amongst the people. Amongst them, the concept of non-dualism or the philosophy of Adwaitha, is an important one. Along with his disciples, he taught these things, travelled all over the country, stressed the importance of the aspect of Atma and explained to people the nature of Paramatma or God. He stressed the importance of having Sathsanga or spending your time in good company. He taught that for one's liberation, Sathsanga or good company is an important step and even the first step. When we make an enquiry as to what the word Sathsanga means, we will come to interpret it by saying that it is friendship with good people.

We again have to ask the question what the word "good" means. Although in answering this question, Sankara gave many examples, one is reminded in this context of the very skilful elucidation given by the poet Vemana. In defining a good man, Vemana said that the individual who suffers if he is hungry, who harbours evil, who is burning with anger, and who indulges in promoting intrigue may be said to be a bad man. All others are good people. That man should spend his energy to relieve his hunger has been looked upon with ridicule by the poet Vemana. He draws attention to the fact that even animals and birds do not spend so much effort and time to get relief when they are hungry.

When that is so, how is it that man, who is superior to the animals and birds, spends so much time and effort in search of his food. Who provides the food for the birds in the forest? Who feeds the animals in the forest when they are hungry? Who gives water to the trees that thrive in the forest? God, who finds the food for the frog that is trapped between a pair of large stones, will certainly provide food for the human beings, who are so close to Him. Under

such circumstances, it is not right that man should hanker after food. On the other hand, he should go after realisation of truth and develop faith in God.

When our fellow men are in difficulty, we should go to their help to the best of our ability. You should feel that there is no difference between man and man. You should establish the oneness of humanity and realise the relationship that exists between one human being and another. You should realise that it is the spirit of Atma that runs through the entire range of human beings.

This alone will enable you to reach the ideal of "Brotherhood of man and Fatherhood of God." Today we are using words like brothers and so on in a meaningless way and as mere words. We are not giving any value to either the bodily relationship or the mental relationship that signifies brotherhood. It is only when we can rise above these temporary relationships, of the body and of the mind, and get into the aspect of Divinity that we can understand the true meaning of brotherhood. It is only then that we can realise that it is the same Divine principle that exists in all of us. We should make an effort to realise such truth. It is for recognising such truth, that this kind of good company is essential. You may ask what benefit we may get out of such good company. Man's good as well as bad features receive their final shape when he mixes with other members of the society.

In this context, we can take the example of the dust that settles on the surface of the earth. Although such dust does not have wings and cannot fly away by itself, by acquiring the good company of wind, it can get off the earth. The same dust settles down and cannot move upwards if it acquires association with water. Iron, which is hard, black and dull becomes soft, red and shining when it makes friendship with fire. The same iron, acquires a lot of rust and loses all its strength when it makes friendship with dirt and moisture. All these modifications are coming because of association with others in the environment. It is generally not possible for anything to change or transform by itself without the help of external associations. Even a newly born baby learns to walk, talk, run, read and write only with the help of its mother and the love and affection the latter shows. Without the love and affection from the mother, the baby will grow like an animal and will not be

able to talk, walk or do things which other human beings can do and are trained to do. Animals which are born in the forest, grow and move about in the forest and have certain features which are special to them. If the same animals are given appropriate training by a circus manager, we can make them do things which other animals cannot do. Even birds are able to utter good words in an understandable and clear manner if we give them good training and keep them in good company.

Thus, the kind of sacred life which you wish to lead and the aspirations which you have in your mind about the type of life which you want to live can be achieved if you are in the company of good people. You have to make friendship with good people and follow their example in your daily routine. This is the appropriate age for you to lead such a life and put yourself in the company of elders. During this age, you will be able to develop good ideas and good conduct and you should make a firm determination to do so. At this important stage of your life, you should dedicate yourself to the service of your country and to the service of your parents.

On the contrary, if you spend your time in bad company and wander about the streets like stray dogs, whistling like foxes, you will only be wasting your life. Time wasted is life wasted. If you can understand the strength and the power of good company and use it in the best manner possible, there is every chance of your doing great things. All good people are such that their thoughts are very attractive. Their actions are soft and their ideas are good. The good people can be recognised by their gentle thought, word and deed.

Here is a small example. If a piece of black charcoal is kept in the proximity of a bright red fire the area along which this black charcoal is in contact with the bright fire will also begin to glow. In this analogy, the black charcoal is your ignorance. The bright red fire is the good company. By the two coming together, only the portion of your ignorance that is exposed to the effects of good company will be dispelled. But, if you employ sadhana or practice as a fan to increase the area of contact, then the entire region of ignorance will become bright.

It is, thus, not enough if you are merely in the company of good people. You should also develop the sadhana of prema or love, and become dear to the good people. It is necessary to be near and dear to the good people.

The nature of the bad people is such that they enjoy and take pleasure in seeing the difficulties and troubles which come across the path of the good people. Looking at good people who are doing good things and getting some fame for the good actions which they are doing, bad people become jealous and spread bad stories about the good people and try to pull them down. These people will be making an effort to see only the bad qualities in others with a thousand eyes. The company of such bad people draws us also into bad ways; and therefore, Sankara taught that one should try and keep at a distance from the company of such people. It may be argued that if we keep ourselves at great distance from such bad people and exercise no influence on them, it is possible that these bad people will cause harm to the society and to the country. It may be suggested that under such circumstance, we should go near such people, give them good advice and change their ways.

We should assess and find out how far away we should keep from bad people and under what circumstances. If there is strong faith in our own capacities and in our own good, and provided we have the strength to maintain the good that is in us, then there is a point in our going near bad people and trying to change them into our ways. On the contrary, if there is no strength in our own good qualities, there is no point in trying to change the bad people because you may lose even the feeble strength that you happen to have. It is only when we are able to increase the good in us in a qualitative as well as a quantitative sense, that we will be able to change, to some extent, bad persons with bad qualities.

There is a small example for this. If you take a cup of water and try to sell it for half a rupee, no one will purchase it. If in ten cups of milk, you mix this one cup of water, then they will readily give you the price for eleven cups of milk. This single cup of water has acquired that value only because it is in the company of milk which is good both in a qualitative and in a quantitative sense. On the contrary, if one cup of milk is mixed with one cup of water,

there will be no value for the water, because there is no quantity in such a company. In this case, even the cup of milk which has joined the cup of water loses its value. Thus, when you have one cup of milk and one cup of water which is a mixture in equal proportions, the milk has lost its value. You can understand what will happen if ten cups of water are mixed with one cup of milk. Everything good that the milk had will be completely lost.

In the same manner, if inside our heart and outside our body, we create an environment which is good in ideas and good in actions, the strength and faith in our heart will never diminish, waver or change in any manner. For illustrating this, Ramakrishna Paramahansa gave a striking example. An incense stick, when lighted has fire in it. If some one lights a cigarette, there is fire in it. If a forest is burning, there is fire in it. If a cooking stove is working, there is fire in it. These are all fires of different strengths. If you take a bundle of dry sticks and put it near the incense stick or the cigarette, the dry sticks may not catch fire. Not only will they not catch fire, they will even put out the fire in the incense stick or the cigarette. On the other hand, even if you take a bundle of raw and green plantain trees to the forest fire, they will not succeed in putting out the forest fire but will themselves become part of the fire.

The reason for this is that the forest fire is rich in quality and in quantity. It is therefore able to burn everything that comes into contact with it. The fire on the incense stick and on the cigarette has neither the quality nor the quantity and therefore it itself is extinguished. So it is, that if the good qualities in yourself are feeble, they will be extinguished under the pressure of bad company. If they are strong, they will extinguish everything bad that comes into contact with them.

There is another example for this. We fill a mud pot with water up to its brim. We keep this mud pot very carefully in a place to which even an ant cannot have access. The next day, we find that the surface level of water has been reduced by an inch or two. The reason is that the external environment around this pot is heating it to some extent and a small quantity of water oozes out. If the same pot is filled to the brim and kept in a place where it is

surrounded by water, we will find that the surface level of water is not reduced at all.

As in this analogy, while you are staying for one month in this summer course, you will be filling your heart to the brim with the essence of spiritual learning. When you go back to your places, because the external environment is not the same as what exists here, there is a possibility of the level of spiritual learning in the vessel of your heart becoming lower and lower by oozing out slowly. So you must make an attempt to join sathsanga when you go back, and you must see that the external environment is as good as the internal feeling. Then, the good in your heart does not ooze out.

Sometimes it may so happen that you will find yourself in a different company and some among them may be bad. They may even abuse you and treat you in a bad manner. In such cases, you should make an attempt to communicate the good spiritual essence in your heart to them as well. When a sharp axe is used to cut a sandalwood tree, the sandalwood tree does not feel hurt by the axe nor does it get angry with it. On the contrary, the sandalwood tree hands its fragrance to the axe. The sandalwood is such that even when it is cut to pieces, it gives fragrance. Even when it is rubbed against another stone, it gives fragrance. This is the quality of good people.

Here is a story of a goldsmith who during the practice of his profession was once melting gold. In this process, he was addressing the gold thus, "Oh gold! you are a very valuable thing and people respect you but now you are in my clutches. I will have the great opportunity of heating you, melting you, beating you and doing all kinds of things that will hurt you. This is now my privilege and pleasure". In response, the gold tells him that the result of all his effort to cause hurt to the gold is only to further purify the gold, increase its value by removing impurities and make it shine better and more attractively. But in the process, the heat, the smoke, the pain of having to beat hard are all irksome only to the goldsmith. In this way all the trouble goes to the goldsmith and all the improvement goes to the gold.

If you take good people, saints, men of great character and men who have

steady minds, it does not matter whether you abuse them or hurt them or praise them. The hurt, the abuse and even the praise never reaches them. They are returned to the persons from whom they emanate. You young people are now at the appropriate age when you should make contact with men of great character and good men and choose the path along which you wish to move. I do hope that all of you assembled here will seek such good company and will choose such a path. You should acquire the qualities of truth, prema and forbearance, as also the quality of sacrifice. This period of your life is like the morning time of the day. If you, as you commence your life, turn your mind towards good and towards God, you will be starting your life in a manner where bad qualities do not haunt you, ego does not haunt you, jealousy and other undesirable qualities do not haunt you.

There is a small example for this. In the morning time, the sun rises. If at that time you face the sun and look at it, you will notice that you have a long shadow but it is behind you. If, on the other hand, you do not direct your sight towards the sun but turn towards your shadow, you will notice that your own shadow, a long one at that, is leading you and it will appear as if this long shadow is showing you the path. In this example, you are the Jiva Thathwa and your shadow is the maya (illusion). If it is your desire to overcome maya and leave it behind you, however fast you may walk, you will never get rid of maya if it is in front of you. On the other hand, you turn your sight towards the sun, you can overcome maya even as the shadow is behind you. In the same manner, your mind, thoughts, organs and the body constitute the maya or the shadow. If you want to get away from them, you will have to turn your vision inwards and towards your Atma. When you do this, you will be able to shake off the maya. Therefore, you should make an attempt to join the sathsanga and derive all the benefits that accrue from joining good company. Good company leads you to detachment and by detachment you will achieve self-realisation.

Sankara has given many verses and each verse is to be regarded as a shining lamp of knowledge. You should put the contents thereof into practice and rectify your life. Today, you have learnt the verse of Sankara relating to sathsanga and the benefits which sathsanga confers on us. We have seen the

inner and significant meaning of this verse. In addition to this, we must also put it into practice. It is then that you will be able to realise the Atma Thathwa and develop faith in your own ability and yourself. I hope that you will stick to sathsanga in future and keep away from all bad company.

Kabir looked at good company as well as bad company and said that both of them should be respected. At this, the disciples questioned him how it is that both good company and bad company deserve to be respected. To this, Kabir replied that there is some trouble to the world from the bad people and there is trouble to the world also from the good people. In order that there is no trouble from either quarter, he is paying respects to both of them. The disciples then asked how any harm can result from good people. Kabir smiled and said that association with bad people causes great discomfort. On the contrary, separation from good people also causes great discomfort, and therefore, he was praying to both. There should not be separation from good people and there should not be association with bad people. You must always be praying that both these things may come your way. This is my blessing to you. I hope you will be able to get good company always.

6. Human Life Is Sacred: Do Not Waste It

Date: 25 May 1973 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 1973

In you and in me, truly there is Vishnu.
Your anger, devoid of patience, is of no use.
You can be happy provided you have equanimity and equal-mindedness at all times.
That alone is an experience worth having and you will realise your identity with Vishnu.

Divyatma Swarupas!

Today I have given you one of the important verses from Sankara's Bhaja Govindam and I wish to tell you the inner meaning of this verse with a view to clarify some kind of conflicting idea which you may be having in your minds. When we are able to realise and understand the significance of the statement that God in you and in me is the same, that oneness is nothing but the Atma Thathwa and that the Atma is identical with Brahman, the ignorance in us will be removed.

This is the one truth, and this truth is independent of the different forms and different names which we come across in this world. Irrespective of the forms and names, there is a single reality in all that we see and that is Brahman. After this, Sankara stated that if you have no patience, your anger is fruitless. Such anger is even harmful to you. That your anger, which arises from a lack of patience, helps your unhappiness to grow is also implied by Sankara. The ability to control this kind of anger will come only when you can develop equanimity of your mind. In order that you may be able to acquire this equanimity of mind, you have to make some enquiry. In the third line of the verse, it has also been said that you will have such an ability if you can see

the oneness of all the creation around you.

The same thing has been said by Prahlada when he asked, who is it that gives the strength to all the persons, weak and strong, human and superhuman, and in fact everyone in this world? He who gives strength to everyone, is the strongest of all. Prahlada taught this lesson to his father. Today, one should understand and experience the oneness of the Atma which goes through every form and every living being in the world. For conveying this message, Sankara taught the Adwaitha philosophy to the world.

It is absolutely necessary for everyone to realise this one supreme thing behind all creation. It is only then, that you will be able to develop equal-mindedness and reach the Divine spirit of equality of everything. We need not doubt at all the possibility of realising this oneness in a manifold world like ours. Because our illusions are closely linked up with our desires, we are given to accept the diversity as real. Thus, we are missing this oneness.

There is a small example for this. In a cinema, we see different kinds of pictures but in fact all these pictures have been put on one film. The differences are not being caused by the electric light. They have their origin only in imagination of what you see. The electric light is only one and the film is only one but because of the combination of circumstances in which the film is moving in front of the electric light, we happen to see various pictures. In the same manner, various pictures which arise out of sensory organs are being put on the film of our mind. Through this film is passing the intelligence which may be compared to the electric light. The result is that we see so many different things of the world. Because our sensory organs are following the mind and the light of intelligence is being used, we find the world being presented to us in so many different forms.

If these organs are able to go to the heart instead of the mind and intellect, we will then be able to see the true nature of your self and of the world. What is contained in your own mind assumes many different forms and makes you feel that the individual has many different names. Your own illusion causes you to see the diversity of the world. When we make an attempt to realise

and understand the real situation and the nature of Atma, then the diverse names and forms that you see in the world will no longer trouble you. You will be able to fix your attention to the divine aspect which is one and not many.

For instance, if you think of one individual acting in four different pictures or in four different acts of a drama, assuming four different roles, and if you want to answer the question whether this person is in reality one individual or four different individuals, you have to make some enquiry. Similarly, one individual, that is the Atma Swarupa, either in the waking state, or in the deep sleep state or in his samadhi state is feeling that he is having different names and forms and experiencing different situations as in the previous example. He, in consequence, feels and thinks that he is four different persons.

What happens in our daily life is slightly different in that we do not have four different names for the different roles we play during our life. In effect we are giving importance to the form and the name which we have in one of these four states - the waking state - and we ignore what happens to us in the other three states. Again, to be able to realise that what exists in these four states is one and the same Atma Swarupa, we will have to go through some exercises of the type prescribed as yoga. By yoga, we also get equal-mindedness. By the good deeds done in our previous births, we get the Vishnu Thathwa or the aspect of Vishnu. In order that we may get these two qualities, the aspect of equal-mindedness and the aspect of Vishnu, it is necessary that we have to pay heed to the injunctions laid down in the Vedas. We have also to follow the paths that have been prescribed by the Sastras as well as the paths shown to us by the elders. Because we have trained ourselves in seeing only the external world, we have lost our capacity to develop inner vision.

The tree which gives us what we want has been described as the Kalpavriksha. In this description, a tree has changed into Kalpa. A tree is something which perishes. Kalpa is something which is permanent. It is surprising that we associate a tree which is perishable with Kalpa which is permanent and imperishable. The ocean which is the source of such valuable things as diamonds and pearls and which teaches you aspects which are

quite close to God, is often described in terms of a common thing like salt water. The moon who hands in coolness and comfort to man becomes feebler and feebler during certain periods. Thus, agencies which have been handing in valuable things to humanity are sometimes being described by names which are not quite just or appropriate. The names we use are not even natural. The permanent Atma resides in this impermanent body which is neither clean nor attractive. However, the organs which depend on the body, the mind which depends on the organs, the intelligence which has an association with the mind, all seem to follow the body, birth after birth. For that reason, some qualities which come with the organs, the mind and the body, seem to remain with us as residuary ones in each birth of ours. The crow eats bitter leaves and takes pleasure in so doing. The cuckoo eats tender mango flowers and enjoys the sweetness in them. Ordinary people, in their foolishness, enjoy trivial things. They will be deriving pleasure from the illusory world. On the other hand, people who have developed equal-mindedness will be enjoying permanent things like being close to God.

The experience which man goes through in his waking state and the experience which man goes through in his dream state are entirely different. If we try to find the cause of our dreams, we get the answer that sleep is the cause of our dreams. If we do not sleep, there is no occasion for us to get dreams. For people who are sleeping in illusion, there will be all kinds of dreams which are in the nature of illusion. For people who have steady minds, there is no such illusory sleep and therefore, they will not be having dreams of illusion. They will be enjoying the bliss of realisation and the recognition of oneness.

Good or bad, happiness or sorrow, and such other things which appear to be different and the opposites of each other are in reality one and the same and are like two reflections of the same object. Our Vedantins have said that there is only one thing and that is Brahman and there is no second to that one Brahman. We may ask how we are experiencing diversity and missing the oneness in a situation where there is only one thing, namely Brahman. If I ask a question, "Who amongst you is Krishna?" someone will respond by saying, "I am Krishna". If I ask a question, "Who amongst you is Rama?" someone else

will respond by saying, "I am Rama". In this conversation, you see that Krishna and Rama are names appropriate to different individuals with different forms but in the replies, all of them say "I". This "I" is common to all of them. This "I" is everywhere. Therefore, if one is able to understand that "I" is everywhere, it is easy for him to grasp the real significance of the common element. This sacred sound "I" is appropriate only to the Atma. Since the same Atma is present in everyone, equal-mindedness is possible for everyone to acquire.

These differences are not intrinsically present in various things. It is only our likes and dislikes of these things that make them look different. If various attributes are really inherent in things themselves, then everyone should either like a particular thing or dislike a particular thing. Likes and dislikes are in you and not in the objects. No one has the capacity to decide what is right and what is wrong. Today, while deciding what is good and what is bad, people are imagining that they are in a position of authority and they have the right to determine what is good and what is bad. This is only being ignorant. A particular thing may be liked by some and disliked by others. If this quality is in the object itself, then how can the same thing be liked by some and disliked by others. The likes and dislikes are coming from within the individuals and from the thoughts they have in their minds.

There is an example for this. We drink water that is cool, sweet and tasty. Similarly, we eat fruits which are sweet, attractive and tasty. Such water and such fruits are regarded by us to be good and we therefore eat or drink them. But within minutes, this water gets converted into urine and the fruits get converted into excreta both of which are regarded as bad and we reject them. How are we going to decide what is good and what is bad?

What we believe to be good is turning bad within a few minutes.

This good or bad is the result of your own creation. However, when we look at various things in nature, as a result of changes that take place sometimes, they take different names and forms. Gold, for example, when taken out of the earth, in its natural condition, does not have much value. When we refine

this natural mineral in many ways and purify the gold, it acquires considerable value. If we take the view that whatever is natural is the true form, then we have to explain why natural gold, after treatment and purification, acquires a greater value. Things or objects which, in a raw condition, have undesirable qualities attributed to them will shed those bad qualities and become good after purification and treatment.

In the same manner, we can regard eating, sleeping and moving about as natural attributes of an individual. This individual, who is born with some good and some bad qualities should not think that there is no opportunity or process by which he can purify himself.

Let us take an expensive wrist watch you are wearing, as an example. You should question yourself as to what in this watch deserves the money that you have paid for it. Is it the bolts, the nuts, the jewels and so on that you are paying for or is it the basic metal that you are paying the price for and so on. If you put this watch in fire, the net result will be that you will get metal and metallic ash worth only a few paise. But a skilful workman who understands the technique of making a watch, has used his expertise to convert a small bit of basic metal into a costly watch capable of keeping correct time. This is the process of purification by which he has got a valuable watch out of a valueless metal. This process by which one is able to purify the metal and turn it into a watch is what we pay for.

In the same manner, when an individual is born as an ignorant person, there is a process by which he can purify himself. This process consists of seeing good people, listening to good people, speaking to good people and following the advice of good people. This process can convert you from being an ignorant person to being a Paramahansa or a knowledgeable person.

Just as after having acquired a valuable watch, you will carefully use it and preserve it so that it gives you good service, so also, once you have acquired the valuable quality of being a wise human being with equal-mindedness developed in you, you must also know how to preserve these great qualities and make use of them.

It is by accumulating the benefit of many good deeds in many earlier lives of yours that you are now born as a human being. Because you are not aware of the great good treasures that you have thus accumulated as a result of which you have the reward of your present life, you are not assigning the necessary value to human life. If you are only aware of the extent of the goodness of your previous births that has brought to the stage of your present life, you will never waste this present life.

There is another interesting example for this. An individual took a watch which was out of order to a watch repairer. The watch repairer said that the watch was very old and that it would cost a lot of money to repair the watch. He said that the repair would cost at least two times the original price of the watch. The owner said that he would like the watch to be repaired, even if it would cost so much. The watch repairer thought that, since the owner was insisting on this old and worn out watch being repaired, the watch was probably a lucky one. He replaced the old parts with new parts, repaired the watch and gave it back to the owner. When asked to pay the price of repair, the owner gave the watch repairer two slaps. The persons standing by handed him over to the police and when the police asked him to explain why he beat the watch repairer, he said that he was asked to pay for the repair of the watch twice the price he paid originally when he acquired the watch. Since he had not purchased it but had obtained it by giving one slap to a person, he gave two slaps to the watch repairer. If that man really knew the value or importance of his watch, he would not have given the watch for repair.

Similarly, today we do not know the value of our own human body. We are devaluing it and wasting it in a purposeless manner. To think that somehow we got this human body, more as an accident than for a purpose, and to think that we should feed it with all the pleasures like eating, drinking and so on, and then let it wither away and die is a great mistake. It is not proper to spend our life in such a thoughtless manner. Amongst all the animals that are born in this world, to get birth as a human being is a very difficult thing.

Having obtained a sacred birth as a human being, if we conduct ourselves like

animals and birds, we will then be wasting our lives and not justifying God's gift to us. One has to recognise the ultimate truth that the divine Atma exists in all. It is only then that you will justify the human birth and drive away the ignorance from your mind.

It is possible for one to refer to and describe something which is not Brahman, but no one can say that this is Brahman. That which is eternal truth, that which is unchanging, that which is pure knowledge and that which cannot be described by using words is Brahman. Brahman is the only truth and that is shining in the shape of Atma in all different forms of living beings. It is only when we recognise this truth, that we will be able to attain the stage of Vishnu. It is to enable us to understand and attain this stage of Vishnu that Sankara had handed over the beautiful set of Bhaja Govindam verses to the people.

7. Turn Your Mind Inward To Atma

Date: 26 May 1973 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 1973

Listening to a spiritual discourse, recapitulating and digesting that discourse, moving in good company and so on are the many different ways of serving the body. These may be called the outer practices. As against these, there are only two which may be called the inner practices. One is pranayama and the other is prathyahara. Sankara gave the following verse in the Bhaja Govindam series, in regard to these two practices.

Pranayama is the sadhana or practice by which you hold the prana or the breath. The significance of pranayama may be understood when we recognise that there are five different vital airs namely, prana, apana, vyana, udana and samana. The process by which these vital airs are controlled is called pranayama and this gives us an amount of inner vision. In this pranayama there are three different kinds which are referred to by the names rechaka (exhaling), puraka (inhaling) and kumbhaka (holding breath). Rechaka and puraka relate to methods by which one is able to get control over the various vital airs and take them in. To be able to hold them in the process is described as kumbhaka.

The second practice, namely prathyahara, consists in controlling the mind through the organs. The organs and the mind always wish to look at and concern themselves with the external objects. The mind develops sensuous desires by looking at such external objects. As a result of these desires, the mind becomes impure. The process of prathyahara consists in turning the mind inwards and away from the external objects.

Today several sadhakas, not knowing what to do, are approaching ignorant gurus for guidance and they are practising either pranayama only or prathyahara only. This is not correct. Pranayama and prathyahara go together. In fact, they are reflections of one another. You will not get the benefit if you practise only pranayama or only prathyahara. Both have to be done together and each one depends on the other. It is only when you control

the mind that you can control the prana or the vital airs. It is only when you control the vital airs that you can control the mind. It is not possible to do one without doing the other. By doing both these things simultaneously, you can turn the mind inwards and control your prana. That is how you can control the body which has life in it and you can experience a state of mind called samadhi.

In the second line of the verse, we see that an enquiry directed to finding out what is permanent and what is not permanent is essential. When you make this enquiry you will come to the conclusion that Atma is permanent and true whereas the human body is not permanent and is false. If you go further and enquire into the nature of the Atma, you will find that it is being referred to by sacred names such as Sathyam (truth), Sivam (auspiciousness) and Sundaram (beauty). It is not possible to have prosperity without adhering to truth. Prosperity goes with truth. Similarly, it is not possible to have bliss and happiness without prosperity.

Happiness goes with prosperity. Truth is like a shining light. It is with the help of this shining light that we are able to see nature around us. The ability to use the shining light of truth to see and understand the nature around us stands for the bliss and happiness conveyed by the word Sundaram. Therefore, the mixture or the conglomeration of Sathyam, Sivam and Sundaram is the Atma.

After you have been able to understand the special aspects of these three things, there is nothing else for you to find out, just as after the cooking is over, you have no more need for either the firewood or the hearth.

What is contained in the third line of the verse refers to the state of Samadhi. This line explains how we get to that state of Samadhi. This is attained by using both pranayama and prathyahara. You will thus be able to give up all your desires and turn your mind towards the Atma. When you do this, you will find that the entire body takes a very different turn. The different kinds of energies will all come under your control. This Samadhi should not be foolishly understood as blankness or darkness of the mind. The state of mind

which goes with japa has been described as the state of Samadhi. Here the word japa does not mean holding a chain of beads and merely turning the beads on your fingers. Japa means continual repetition of the name of the Lord. This repetition may or may not be loudly done. It should at least be done in your mind. This repetition of the name of the Lord in one's own mind is called japa. If you pronounce the word japa from the reverse side, it becomes bhaja. Whether it is japa, that is uttering the name of the Lord within your mind or it is bhaja, that is uttering the name of the Lord externally in a loud voice, both of them can be called japa.

Young students!

Samadhi is being interpreted in many ways. If one falls down unconscious or if one utters the name of the Lord in a semiconscious condition or if one behaves in a confused and inconsistent manner, we seem to think that he is in a state of Samadhi. To be unconscious or to be in a subconscious state or to be in a superconscious state is not being in Samadhi. You should understand that only when one is in his natural condition and yet can enjoy the bliss of Samadhi, then alone is he said to be in a state of real Samadhi.

Anything else will be referred to by different names such as hysteria, fits, weakness, being tipsy and so on. These are never to be equated with Samadhi.

Unfortunately, Indians today are not able to recognise and distinguish true Samadhi from these various diseases. Therefore, they are not able to hand over to others the sacred meaning of Samadhi. Words like pranayama, prathyahara, japa and thapa have all to be interpreted properly. In that context, one should understand what this sacred Samadhi means. The words as referring to various things have their meaning. In fact the meaning attached to the word comes from the word itself. So Samadhi must itself indicate its true meaning. "Sama" means equal and "dhi" means buddhi or mind. When you have developed equal-mindedness, you are in a true state of Samadhi.

It is quite possible for you to develop this state even in ordinary life, provided you understand what is meant by pranayama and prathyahara. When the mind is turned inwards, it looks only at the Atma and does not look at the external surroundings. Therefore, when your mind is turned inwards, you will not notice the difference between pleasure and pain, sorrow and happiness or heat and cold. In fact, the mind will not take note of any differences and disparities whatsoever. It is the oneness of everything that you will be able to realise.

When an individual is in a state of Samadhi, he has nothing to do with the world although he is moving about in the world. Although the individual appears to be a part of the society, he is not affected by the society. The mind of such a person is always engrossed with what may be called the Atma Drishti (Sight).

To illustrate such a situation, one can mention several examples. A worm which lives in mud is not affected by the mud at all. Women who paint their eyelashes black will not have the black paint touch the eye balls. The eyes are completely free, although the eyelashes have the black paint on them. We eat so many greasy things. This greasiness may get on to the hand, but it never remains on the tongue. The tongue is untouched by the greasiness.

Let us take the case of a lotus. The lotus lives in water and depends on water for its existence, but the water does not affect the lotus. Like the lotus, like the tongue, like the worm in the mud, like the eyeballs of women, the person in Samadhi is not touched by the world around him. In order that you may understand this state of Samadhi, the last line of the verse says that you must develop what is known as Maha (great) Avadhanam (concentration). Do not be in haste. Do not lose your patience. Do not have a wavering mind. Remember that you should have an unwavering mind if you want to attain the state of Samadhi. You should be able to concentrate.

If you plant a sapling now, how can you get the fruit immediately. The plant must become a tree and then, you can get fruits. Take the case of seedlings which are planted. You cannot get the harvest immediately after planting the

seed. The necessary time must be given. Today, all the sadhakas want to have the fruit as soon as they plant the seed. They do not allow any time. Sankara wanted to tell us in the fourth line of this verse that we should not be in a hurry and that we should remain peaceful and calm. If you fill your heart in this manner, you will attain the state of Samadhi.

Many seekers of truth and many people who are studying this aspect of Brahman often get doubts. They ask how Brahman and the created world which are two separate things can be treated as one. This is the question which they often ask. They doubt the identity of Brahman with nature. There is a small example for this. It is true that apparently Brahman and the world look separate. Take the case of a seed. When you put the seed in the earth, a plant comes out of it. This plant grows into a big tree and this tree gives out flowers, leaves, branches, fruit and so on. You see all these as different manifestations coming from a seed. It is only the illusory appearance of nature that makes us believe that they are diverse. But if you look at these branches, flowers, leaves, fruit and the seed from a spiritual angle, you will see that all these things are different manifestations of the same seed. They have all arisen because the mind pictures them to be so. In the same manner, prakruthi or nature which is born out of Brahman and which you see around must only be a manifestation of Brahman and nothing else. If one regards prakruthi as different from Brahman, it is only an illusion. In order to be able to recognise this, one must have the clarity of mind and the ability to perceive truth.

In order to get an idea of this clarity of mind, we will consider what happened when Dronacharya called the Pandavas one by one, and asked them to shoot at a bird which he tied up as the object. When each of the Pandavas was about to take aim and hit the bird, Dronacharya used to ask some questions. Bheema was first asked what he saw. He said that he saw the bird, the rope which was used to tie the bird and the sky behind it. In this manner, all the Pandavas were called and all except Arjuna replied that they were able to see many things. Arjuna, however, replied that he saw nothing except the bird. This was the concentration with which he approached his object. If you have a desire to learn a particular thing, you must develop intense concentration

towards that thing only. Unfortunately, today when we want to learn something, we concentrate on something else. This is the reason why we are not able to reach our destination and learn what we want to learn.

For the second aspect also, namely the ability to perceive good qualities, there is a good example in Mahabharatha. Krishna called Duryodhana with the intention of testing him. This took place not after the war but before the war. Krishna told him that he wanted to do something important and that he was on the lookout for a good man with good attributes. He asked Duryodhana to look for such a man. Duryodhana searched the world over for a few days and said that there was no person with really good attributes and if there was anyone with good qualities, the best was himself (Duryodhana) and that he came nearest to the desired ideal.

Then, Krishna sent Duryodhana away and asked Dharmaraja to come. He told Dharmaraja to look for a man who is very bad and whose qualities are such that there can be no one else worse than him. Dharmaraja searched the world over and came back and told Krishna that he could not find anyone with bad qualities and if there was anyone with such bad qualities, it was he himself (Dharmaraja). He said that he fits best the description which Krishna gave.

For Duryodhana, to say that he was the best man and for Dharmaraja, to say that he was the worst man, the world is not responsible. The qualities in them and the way they look at themselves and others are responsible. That is why we give so much importance to the ability to perceive the good and distinguish it from the bad. No one can really determine what is good and what is bad. The only alternative is for one to have faith in God and improve his own qualities.

8. Service To Man Is Service To The Lord

Date: 27 May 1973 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 1973

One cannot cross the ocean of this cycle of births and deaths by visiting many sacred places,
nor by performing japa and studying the Sastras. It is only possible to do so by performing seva or service.

Sacred students!

To follow a spiritual path is the desire of all but strangely, the people as well as the rulers are adopting meaningless new methods. This is causing great surprise and ridicule. Unable to understand Indian culture in its true perspective, people are merely wearing good clothes which give an attractive appearance, using words which are deceptive, and are losing confidence in themselves. Our current civilisation is such that we have started borrowing ideas and ideals from outside. They are disturbing our minds. Modern civilisation has taken a turn by which it gives twisted and incorrect interpretation of Indian culture. Individuals are very anxious to acquire positions of authority. They are not considering the need for fulfilling any of their responsibilities. In the case of one who understands his duty and responsibility, it follows automatically that he will, in due course, get a position and authority. But one who does not understand his duty, will never be able to acquire a position.

In order to evolve oneself into a balanced individual, service is an essential quality. This ideal of service has the good quality of removing ego in man. It promotes love and affection. It takes him away from the aspect of worldly attachments and puts him on the path to the Divine. This idea of service also explains to him the meaning of divinity. It can give widespread pleasure and

bliss for the entire mankind. In fact, service is the first step along the spiritual path.

Today, because this sacred service is not practised in the proper manner, people in this country are becoming dependent on others. In the case of one who is willing to serve, the country comes under his control. In the case of one who is not willing to serve but is wanting to lead, the country never comes under his control. If one who understands the spirit of service becomes a leader, that leader will always retain and enjoy his leadership through service. Without understanding service and first becoming a servant, one cannot become a leader. Similarly without being able to destroy, one cannot become a creator.

Man is born in the society. He lives in the society. He grows affluent by serving the society. Under these circumstances, if man becomes distant from society, he will be distant from everything. The child will cry for mother's milk and therefore the child will have to serve, respect and follow the mother. He has to worship the mother. He can flourish and thrive in that way. Just as in this manner, for each and every individual there is the mother and the mother is important, we should regard the country as the mother of all citizens. This is the divine mother and we should serve this divine mother.

Through service, we should be able to fulfil the purpose of our life. In this sacred country of ours, the idea of service has been handed over to us by the Rishis and the gurus. They had enjoined on us that we should fulfil our lives by service. In all the Gurukulas morals and ethics were taught. Teaching good things and preaching great ideals were their daily routine. Man was taught how to cherish sacred ideals and lead a good life. In the Gurukulas, morals and moral life were only taught, but in the Rishikulas, such ideals which promoted the prosperity of the world were put into practice and demonstrated. However, today neither such Gurukulas, nor such Rishikulas exist. In the word Gurukula, the first part is "Gu." In the word Rishikula the first part is "Ri." The two parts together make up the word Guru or teacher. The concept of a real Guru has been handed over by both these ashrams.

The word Rishi conveys to us the meaning that those persons were leading a life in which they had no desires. They had attachment only to the Atma and in that manner, were promoting a spirit of sacrifice and of equality. They were leading lives which were ideal examples to others. For this reason, the ashrams were called Rishikulas. Such sacred places have now disappeared. With that, the letters "Ri" have also disappeared. Only the letters "shikul" remain.

This shikul has become the school of the modern days. Because today's schools have developed attachments to many selfish desires, the letters "Ri" are not there. By some means, we should restore these sacred letters before the word school. You should regard this as your duty and get back the noble ideas into our schools.

When we think of service, we seem to think of work which is a lowly kind of work, usually done by a servant. This kind of association of ideas, where service is thought of as something lowly, is not correct. In the context of service, we should realise that God Himself does a lot of service to the world in many ways. We are familiar with the concept of an Avatar - when God takes birth in human form to re-establish dharma or put back righteousness in its high place - thus doing service to the world. The omnipresent Lord, in the form of Krishna, served Arjuna as a charioteer. Not only this, but after His work as charioteer was over for the day, He used to take the tired horses to the river and wash them. In that manner he was prepared to work even as a cleaner. At that time, Vyasa looked at the Lord and felt that many great persons did not get the fortune which the horses had at the divine hands.

When the Rajasuya yaga was being performed, Krishna came and asked Dharmaraja to allot some work to Him. Dharmaraja turned to Krishna and said that there was no work appropriate to Krishna and that if Krishna would himself indicate what work was suitable to Him, that will surely be allotted to Him. Krishna went close to Dharmaraja, patted him on the back and said that he has a special qualification and that he would like to do work appropriate to His qualification. Dharmaraja could not make anything out of this. So Dharmaraja asked Krishna to tell him what His special qualification was so

that he can find suitable work for Krishna.

He said that he was fit for removing the leaves in which people ate their food and which have been once used. Because after people eat their food in the leaves, they become somewhat unclean, and if those leaves are not removed they create some dislike in the minds of people. Krishna therefore took up this work so that He could give pleasure and good feeling to people.

If some kind of hurt or harm is caused to others, we should make an attempt to help them by doing some service. It is not only by work and by keeping our surroundings clean that you can do service. You can do service by your words as well. With a good word, you can soothe their hearts, and by doing good deeds you can soothe their minds. Therefore, by using good words and doing good work, you will give comfort to others and this is good service.

Today, people who call themselves leaders are not doing good service and as a consequence, the world around us is becoming very confusing. In this context, a story relating to the Krishna Avathara has to be mentioned. One day Krishna approached Yasoda and told her that all his cowherd friends were inviting him to go with them and tend the cows and that he was planning to go. The mother explained to him that to go to the forest will mean that he will have to walk on thorns, that he may have to meet snakes and that he may get close to bushes. She said that his tender feet may not be able to put up with the troubles and she said that it is better if he puts on footwear before going to the forest. She said that shoes for him will be ready only the next day and he could go to the forest only the next day.

Immediately, Krishna asked the mother to tell him how she addressed him. She said that his name was Gopal and that she addressed him by his name. The word Gopal stands for one who tends the cows. He said that he acquired that name because he could tend the cows and be the leader of the cows. Since the cows will follow him as their leader, he said that he will have to do something which the cows also will do. The cows do not have shoes to protect their feet and therefore he said that he also should not have shoes to protect his feet. He said that he will do only that which persons who follow him can

possibly do. He said that if he wore shoes, the cows will also want to wear shoes because their leader was wearing shoes. He was not going to wear shoes and allow those whom he has to protect to go without shoes. This is how he argued with his mother.

This simply means that when God takes a human form, men will try and imbibe his qualities and will behave like him. In those days when God appeared as an Avatar in the form of Krishna, the gopis, the gopikas and the cows followed him. Today, if an Avatar comes and makes some decisions, we will be able to recognise the same as divinity, only by putting such decisions into practice.

If in our houses, we put up a few plants, we also put up fences to protect them. If somebody comes from outside and looks at us working, we are afraid that they will think that we are working like servants. This is not how we should shape our lives. We should shape our lives according to our decisions and irrespective of what others think about us. We should never care for what others think about us. We should be very careful in what we do and we alone should decide whether it is good or bad. The decision should be based on our own guna or thought. Respect or disrespect which others give have no meaning. These are simply words.

There is a small story to illustrate this. In a village, there were two individuals. One of them always used a horse for making his journeys. The second individual would make all his journeys by walking with a pillow in his hand. One day, both of them had to start for the same village at the same time. On that occasion, the man who was accustomed to carrying the pillow led the way. Behind him was the person travelling on horseback. On the way, there was another small village through which both these persons passed. The villagers looked at the individual carrying the pillow and thought that he was carrying a bundle of papers. They thought that he was a peon carrying the papers ahead of the master coming behind. They looked at the man on horseback and they thought that he was the officer. In early days, because there were no cars, all the officers used to make their journeys on a horse back. That is why the villagers thought that way.

As soon as they reached the destination, the man with the pillow went directly into a rest house and sat in a comfortable and boastful manner, resting himself on the pillow. The other person was looking round for a place to tie up his horse. The villagers looked at both of them and thought that the man with the pillow was the officer and the man trying to tie up the horse was the peon. This is how respect and disrespect take shape in the world. The person who was thought to be an officer in one village was thought to be a peon in another village. The person who was thought to be a peon in the former village was thought to be the officer in the latter village. This is only imagination on the part of the onlookers and flows from the minds of people.

In this process, neither respect nor disrespect has come to either of them as a result of intrinsic worth. In a dream, a king may have the feeling that he is a beggar and a beggar may have the feeling that he is a king. As soon as this king and the beggar wake up, they see their natural form. The king has not become a beggar nor has the beggar become a king. This respect or disrespect which they have felt in their dream is of no value at all and are like the passing clouds.

Divyatma Swarupas, students!

You should be prepared to do selfless service. You should never think of being served by others. You have the strength of the body, mind and spirit at this age and therefore you should do service to others right now. You should serve old, hungry and weak people. Such service should be regarded by you as service to God. On the other hand, if you are anticipating that someone will serve you, your life will be going along a dark path.

Many of us in affluence are accustomed to get work done by servants. We feel the position of authority and think that we are entitled to service, but this is going to result in a situation wherein you have to repay the debt of service back to others. What you see, what you do and what you say, will always come back to you as resound and reflection.

We must train ourselves in such a way that we can do our own work and after

that we must be ready to serve our parents. We should then plunge into the society and be prepared to serve the society. This service must come from within you in a free and voluntary manner. We should not prepare ourselves to do work for the sake of showing it to others. It is for the sake of prema and love that we should do work. We should be prepared to do work as a consequence of our realising the oneness of all mankind. If there is an individual who is suffering in a hospital without anyone to look after him and is without any friends, if any of you go to the hospital in those circumstances and talk to him sweetly, you will establish a close bond of affection between you both. This will make you a closer friend of his than even his own relatives. He will take your address and will want to write to you. This is the kind of heart to heart relationship which selfless service can establish. This comes spontaneously from the heart. Nobody can create this kind of attachment by other methods.

An individual who may be a prime minister today will be received at a railway station with hundreds of garlands and hundreds of cars will be waiting for him.

Many persons will be anxious to get into one car or the other along with him. But the moment the position of authority goes, even a rickshaw man will ask him to pay the rickshaw fare. The meaning of this is that if you foolishly try to establish some kind of status and relationship by your position of authority, that status and relationship will not hold for long. On the other hand, if you establish relationship by the Atma way, that will be a permanent and true relationship. This kind of relationship will also take the shape of true bhakthi or devotion. This is truly sacred and comes from the bottom of the heart, irrespective of whether others will value it or not. In this kind of service, given to an individual from the bottom of your heart, you will not even care if the elders in your house deter you from doing such service.

Unfortunately today, they talk of social service in many ways in our country. This kind of service often deserves the name "showy work" and not "social work". There are many leaders who want to do social work. They take a broom stick and sweep the streets, call a photographer and obtain a

photograph of themselves holding the broom stick, and take care to see that the photograph appears in the newspaper.

Never should one go into that kind of publicity. Never should one develop such an ego. All service should come from your heart. By spending ten rupees on feeding ten people, those who want publicity will spend another twenty rupees on a photographer and on publicity. If they can spend this twenty rupees also on feeding the poor, how nice it will be.

Many people who are members of a Rotary Club or a Lions Club or such other clubs talk of doing service. One does not understand whether they are doing service or spending money. These members are often telling one another what to do. They are affluent persons and if once in a month they feed poor people, that will be the right thing. On the other hand, they have a weekly dinner and for each dinner, they spend over twenty rupees per head. The break down for this expenditure is five rupees for the meal, five rupees for mutton and another ten rupees for the wine. This expenditure, with such a break down is given the name of social service. How nice would it be if these twenty rupees are spent on feeding poor people. In future, if one of you are going to be a member of such clubs you should bear in mind these facts and realise what correct service is. Thereby you will avoid such mistakes.

People who are suffering, people who are immersed in sorrow and people who are helpless, should be your real friends. You should help such people. This is what you should accept as your primary duty. There is great trouble in being friendly with rich people. It is true that you should cultivate friendship with all, but if you make a rich person your friend, you will be tempted to ask him for a loan and this will cut off your friendship, because you will be afraid that whenever he sees you, he will ask for the loan to be paid back. You should be friendly with everyone but you should be careful in choosing a true friend. Your true friends are those who are ready to accept your service. Your service will give you a bright future.

Do not develop ego about your capacities while doing service. Be humble and think that God has given you an opportunity to do service. Whatever you do

to others, your feeling must be that you are serving yourself. In fact and in truth, whatever service you are doing to others, you are doing it for yourself. Today, a friend of yours comes to your house and you give him coffee. This good act of yours will get imprinted in his heart. When you go to his house, he will in turn receive you warmly and give you coffee. Thus, the service that you have done today will be returned to you in future.

In another context, if a friend of yours who has no direct help enters a hospital and you help him, he will help you in return when you need it. So you should regard the good that you do as something which you are putting in as a reserve for your future. Whatever you may do, good and bad, if you do it with the feeling that you are doing it for yourself, you will never do bad to yourself.

In this summer class, we have a programme to do social service on every Sunday. You should bear in mind that social service is an important thing, wherever you may be. You should make your body and mind sacred by doing such service. I hope and bless you that you develop such sacred and selfless ideals.

9. Conquer Your Senses: There Will Be No Sorrow

Date: 28 May 1973 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 1973

Who is your wife? Who is your child?
What a mysterious thing is this family?
To whom do you belong?
From where have you come?
Dear brother! know that all knowledge is contained in the answers to these questions.

Pavitratma Swarupas, students!

For the last one week, you have been listening to the Bhaja Govindam verses given by Sankara and his disciples. These verses contain a description of the essence of all our Sastras and all types of dharmas appropriate to the world. Apart from that, you have been told that all the paths in this world lead to only one objective and that objective is to reach God and become one with Him.

When the sun shines in the sky with thick clouds in front, people on the earth are not able to see the sun. However, this does not mean that the sun is not there. If there is a cool wind, the clouds move away and the sun becomes evident. In the same manner, the effulgent sun of our Atma is generally covered by the clouds of our ignorance. If man can drive away the clouds of ignorance by acquiring knowledge, then the self-effulgent Atma will become evident to him. Man in this world is forgetting what is permanent and what is of value. He is running after the worldly pursuits considering them to be real. He does not see the Atma because of the cloud of ignorance. He requires the winds of knowledge and wisdom to move away the clouds of self-deception so as to enable him to see the effulgent Atma.

All physical relationships are temporary. In a stream which is flowing, it is quite common to see branches of trees meeting and separating away from each other after moving together for some distance. The joining of these two branches together is like the joining of two people together as husband and wife. They join, move together, live together and separate and struggle in this stream of life. In this context, Sankara wants you to give up the illusion of attachment.

The next question is, who is your son. This son of yours has come as your son as a result of something which you or he may have done during his or your past birth. It is only to redeem some debt between you both that he has come as your son in this life. This situation has been described in the Bhagavatha in a lighter vein by saying that the son comes to you for the sake of property and not because of any connection with the Atma.

If you ask the questions of anyone, who he is and where he has come from, he will not be able to answer. How can he tell you how many births he already has had and in which of them he was a son to whom? How can he tell you how many births he will have in future and in which of them he will be a husband to whom? He will not be able to tell you how many births he already has had and how he has landed himself in the present birth.

We do not know where we have come from or where we are going. In this illusory world, we go on increasing our attachments and thereby we are moving away from Madhava and are not getting closer to divinity. We are only increasing our bondage and restlessness by this process. In this context, we should not attach any importance to bodily relationships. The body is made up of the five elements and is certain to fall. There is no indication of the body telling you when it was born and when it will die. Do not be misled by this illusory world. Realise the permanent Atma.

There is a small story for this. One day the Yuvaraja or prince of a kingdom was moving about in a forest. He was tired and felt thirsty and was searching for water. He reached an ashram. The inmates of the ashram were attracted by the appearance of the prince, took him inside and gave him fruit to eat,

water to drink, and asked him to rest. The prince did not agree to take rest but wanted to see the elders who lived in the ashram. They then took him straight to the head of the ashram who was a saint. The head of the ashram asked the young man who he was. He replied that he came from the kingdom of Jitendriya and that his name was prince Jitendriya. He was asked what his father's name was and the prince said that his father's name was King Jitendriya. He was then asked how the people in the kingdom were and the prince replied that all the people are Jitendriyas and they always enjoy bliss and happiness. The head of the ashram who was a sanyasi had a doubt. The word Jitendriya means one who has conquered all desires. How is it possible that the king, the prince and the people were all Jitendriyas, asked the swami. He was wondering how one who is a ruler and is controlling people as head of the state, could be a Jitendriya. He wanted to verify it personally.

He obtained the details of the way of reaching the kingdom and proceeded thereto after asking the prince to stay in the ashram. The swami asked the prince to give him the princely robes and himself wear the yellow robes symbolic of a sanyasi. He asked the prince to remain in the ashram till he returned from his mission. The prince was not at all affected by the suggestion, because he was a Jitendriya, and exchanged his robes with those of the swami. The swami took the clothes to a distance, put some blood stains on them and proceeded to the kingdom of Jitendriya. He reached the kingdom and told the gatekeepers to tell the king that a swami was there and that he wants to convey to the king some tragic news regarding the prince.

The swami was allowed to go in, and he met the prime minister and told him that the prince of the kingdom had been killed by a tiger and as proof of the fact that the prince was dead, he showed him the blood stained royal clothes. He wanted this tragic news to be conveyed to the king. The minister remained unperturbed when he heard the news. He smiled and said that it looks ridiculous to see a sanyasi wearing the yellow robes grieve for the death of a prince. However, since the sanyasi wanted to convey the news to the king, he was allowed to do so.

As soon as the sanyasi saw the king, he handed over the blood stained

clothes to the king and began weeping. The king looked at him and was laughing. The king told the sanyasi that in the evening many birds come and perch on a tree and, at dawn, those birds fly away, and each bird goes its own way. One bird cannot tell another where it goes. No two birds are connected with each other. He said that in the same manner, his family consisted of children, wife, grandchildren, etc., who were all birds on a tree and they would all fly away in different directions. That day, one bird as the prince had gone away, and the next day another bird may go away, and it looks ridiculous that a Sanyasi should grieve for such a situation. The Sanyasi thought that it was possible that the king did not like this particular son and that he might have developed detachment to the son.

So the sanyasi thought that he should see the mother, believing that the mother who had given birth to the prince would surely be unhappy at this death and tears would come from her eyes. The attendants took him to the mother of the prince and he told her that the prince had been killed by a tiger and handed over the blood-stained clothes to her. The queen said that there was no reason for such grief and compared the situation to a choultry where many people come for rest during the night and each man goes his way the next morning. She asked what the connection is between people who come into the choultry from different places, and compared the world to a choultry and said that many people come into this choultry. Today the prince has left the choultry and tomorrow others will also leave. None of us will stay permanently in a choultry. Our connections are like that and there is no reason to grieve. She asked the sanyasi why he should grieve for such a situation. In his illusion, the sanyasi thought the mother might be a step-mother and therefore she did not have affection and so he wanted to meet the wife of the prince and give her the news.

He thought that being a sumangali and wife of the prince, she will surely grieve over the situation. He went to the wife of the prince and told her that the prince had died and that she would have to live as a widow thenceforth. Saying this, he cried loudly. The prince's wife laughed. She told the sanyasi that this world can be compared to a forest where there are many trees. The trees dry up and the branches fall into a river. Similarly some more branches

come from another forest and these branches meet in the river. She said that husband and wife are like such branches coming from different families or different forests and meeting temporarily in a river. The river is the river of life. Although the branches are different, the river in which they join is the same and in the same manner she said that between the husband and wife who are like two different branches that have fallen into the river of life, the ocean of bliss is common, and there is no need to grieve about this.

Then the sanyasi realised that all the people in that kingdom were Jitendriyas. So the sanyasi returned to the ashram. He still had the desire to test the prince if he was really a Jitendriya. He told the prince that he saw his kingdom being overrun by enemies and that the enemies had taken the king, the queen and other relations as prisoners and were causing untold harm to the people in the kingdom. He told the prince that in that context, the Prince should return to the kingdom and should not stay in the ashram. The prince laughed and asked what the kingdom is and who the kings are. There is no relation between them. He said that in effect God is the big king, bhakthi is the kingdom and the devotees are the princes. The relationship between the prince and his father was only a bodily one, said the prince. The only kingdom is the kingdom of Atma.

In a similar context, Gandhari was telling about all her grief to Sanjaya in the story of Mahabharatha. She said that amongst the Kauravas, Aswathama, Kripacharya and Kripana were the only three people alive. Amongst the Pandavas, five Pandavas, Krishna and another brother of his were alive. She expressed grief that there were seven people alive on the side of Pandavas while on their side, there were only three people alive. There were altogether ten people alive while so many persons had been sacrificed in the war for the sake of these ten people.

Sanjaya gave a very significant reply to this question. The name Sanjaya signifies one who has completely controlled all his senses. Sanjaya told Gandhari that there is some significance to the fact that there are ten persons left after the war. God wants to proclaim to the world the meaning of all our existence and of the number ten. To the right of the integer one, there is a

zero in the number ten. Zero represents the world and the integer one stands for God. Without "one", the "zero" has no value. That is, without God, the world is meaningless. The world which is false, transient and impermanent will amount to nothing if it is not associated with God.

The earth on which we live is spherical. The sun which gives us light and the moon which gives coolness are spherical. In fact, most things which we see around us in the world have a spherical shape. In that context, our own life has a spherical shape and is nothing more than a zero. By the side of this zero, if we put the divine, life will become meaningful.

The seed contains the tree in it and the tree carries the essence of the seed in it. This is the truth which has been coming to us from time immemorial. The purpose of this life is to realise the truth that the tree and the seed contain each other. All the rest is just illusion or Maya. This Maya has been described and defined by Sankara as that which does not exist. This does not seem reasonable. Sankara gave a beautiful example in answer to this. The big palaces which you see in your dream do not exist when you wake up and open your eyes. In the same manner, you see so many things while you are awake and you experience many things through your senses but when you sleep, these things do not exist. It means that one is a day dream and the other is a night dream. Both are dreams and all the dreams are untrue. The purpose of our life is to search for the truth, if any, in what we see. Therefore, our bodily connections should not worry us and create special beliefs in us. We should only utilise them for doing the duty which we have to do. We should have no special attachment to the world.

There is no mother, there is no father, there are no children, there is no wealth, there are no relations - beware and awake. All that you suffer by birth, growth, and death is painful - beware and awake. This is what Sankara had said. So long as you are alive you should keep your body healthy, your mind and vision steady. You should enjoy the bliss of the Atma by this means. You should not weaken and neglect the body so as to require help from others and become dependent on them. Keep your body healthy so that you can use it well.

This life is like a boat. One side of the river is the material world. The other side of the river is the spiritual destination. Your life is like a river. With the boat of the body, you should cross the river. We should use that boat and reach the destination before it develops a leak. If it develops a leak and deteriorates in the midstream, there will be trouble and you cannot reach the destination. There is no danger even if the boat remains in water for any length of time. If water enters the boat, there is every danger.

You should be in the family and there is no danger. Do not let the family enter you. If you do that, there is every danger. If you can spend your life in this manner, you will yourself be the supreme self. With a view to bring you to this path, Sankara has given you this particular verse in Bhaja Govindam by way of asking questions such as who are you? Who is your wife? Where have you come from? Who are your relations? and so on. By asking such questions, he attempted to make you think and search for the right answers.

10. Worship A Picture As God But Not God As A Picture

Date: 29 May 1973 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 1973

Night follows day and day follows night, summer follows winter and winter follows summer.

Thus time marches on, engulfing us and making our lives shorter.

In spite of this, we cling to our desires.

Truth is something which people do not like. They look at it as if it is inimical to them. Untruth is something which people like. They look at it in a friendly manner. People like to buy intoxicating drinks like toddy and liquor even if they have to pay a high price. They do not go in for health-giving things like buttermilk and curds even when they are quite cheap. This is what generally happens in most families.

Divyatma Swarupas, students!

Time is moving away fast like the wind. The duration of our life is melting away like a block of ice. We will drop the body sometime or the other and leave this world without knowing the purpose of life. When life departs, the body will either be buried or cremated. What is distinctive of human life? Man must recognise the sacred task for which he has taken birth. If he spends his time only in fulfilling his sensuous desires, he will be wasting his life. The duration of a life is an important factor. Therefore, time should be used properly. Man is relying very much on his physical and mental strength. He is not making the slightest attempt to fall back on divine strength.

Today, in the human heart, there is a huge fire. The fire of anger, the fire of lust, the fire of greed and the fire of attachment are always burning in his

heart. He does not seem to realise that all these fires can completely consume him and reduce him to ashes. Unmindful of this, he carries on his life and makes grandiose plans for his future.

If a snake has entered the house, no one will dare to eat, move about or sleep in that house. It is only after the snake is killed that the inmates can live in peace. In this body of ours which is like our home, the snake of desires is living. Not only is the snake of desires living but it is also giving birth to its own offspring in the form of many further desires. While this snake, in the form of so many desires, is living, growing and flourishing in our body, one wonders how man can live in peace. He must have a lot of courage to live in a house full of such snakes. One does not understand if he does this knowingly or unknowingly.

Our birth, our life, our growth, our decadence and our destruction are all a result of passing time. Night following the day and day following the night are also a consequence of passing time. When it is day time for us in India, it is night time for people in America. For half the earth, it appears as day while for the other half, it is night. The earth itself is teaching us a good lesson by exchanging the darkness, of one half with the brightness of the other half. In spite of this lesson, we believe that our life is unchanging and permanent. This is ridiculous. That we change from boyhood to youth, from youth to old age is illustrative of the fact that passage of time brings about changes in us.

This time can be referred to as Goddess Kalika or Kala. This Goddess is dancing on the stage of our life and as she dances, time moves on and the span of our life is shortening. The time that has gone behind is called the past, the time that is now current is called the present and the time that is ahead is called the future. By remembering what has happened in the past and by thinking of what is happening now, we go on imagining several successes and wish to do many things in the future. The past, present and future are all coming because of changing time. They are not something which are specially created. Our primary objective should be to recognise the nature of time and utilise it in a sacred manner.

That is the lesson that all the Sastras and the Vedas teach us. When time itself is swallowing every individual, to grieve and to think that an individual is permanent is not the right thing. The Goddess of time is swallowing everyone. It is possible that the beautiful spring season that has gone may come again. It is also possible that the phases of the moon that have gone may come again. But the water that has once flown in the river and the youth that has gone behind you, will never come back. Since life is a stream moving in one direction only, it is necessary for us to spend our life in a purposeful manner.

In many parts of our country, when we see wealthy people, we say that they had helped others in their previous births and therefore they have got wealth in this birth. This is a common way of talking. We say that one who had led a righteous life, gave to many charities, and made several sacrifices in his previous life will be born in a wealthy family in this life. Sometimes, people are born in a poor family and go into a wealthy family by adoption. One may be born as a very poor man and as time goes on, he may become a very wealthy person by his luck. Further, even after being born a poor man, one may get good education, get into a good job, earn plenty of money and end up as a wealthy person. In the modern age, it is also quite possible that one who is born poor can acquire lakhs of rupees by winning a prize in a lottery, if he has luck. Above all, one may have God's grace and as a result of this grace he may become a very wealthy person. For all this happiness and good luck, his actions in his previous life are responsible. His attempts during this life are not the causes.

If our vision is directed outwards, then we are not able to see ourselves. The true vision of Self will be available to us only when we turn our vision away from the material things. Our intellect is like a torch light. So long as you turn this torch light outwards, you will be able to see the road and the people on the road, but you will not be able to see yourself. When this torch is turned towards yourself, your form can be seen by you. God has given you a clean mirror in the form of intellect. Instead of looking at yourself in this mirror, you are keeping the mirror facing others. If you want to have Atmasakshatkara or look at yourself, you must put the mirror in front of your face.

Sankara has given this verse of Bhaja Govindam in order to make us realise that time is sacred and that we should respect the God of time. Ramakrishna Paramahansa used to spend his entire time in the direction of securing the vision of God. As the night approached, he used to think that he had not had the good fortune of having the vision of God during the whole of that day and he used to shed tears thinking that another day was wasted. Today, young people seem to acquire expertise in wasting time. They talk about unnecessary things for hours together. If they have no other work, they read silly story books and waste time in engaging themselves in useless avocations. Any work, which has no specific purpose or use in daily life, means wasting time. If you have no specific work to do, make it a habit to read sacred books concerning our culture. Read books like Ramayana, Mahabharatha, Bhagavad Gita and so on. Your mind is like a lens. If you read impure thoughts, then that impurity will get imprinted on the plate of your heart through the lens of your mind. Therefore, you must make an attempt to do good, be good and see good. Thus, you must turn your mind in the right direction. Today, you have been told that you will become a realised soul if you feel that "I and you are one." This is not possible since "I and you" can never be one. They always remain as two. You will become a true Adwaithin when you realise that "I and I" are one or that "you and you" are one.

There is a small story to illustrate this. When a guru was sitting and teaching his disciples, one day he said, "Guru Brahma, Sishya Brahma, Sarvam Brahma." Thus the guru was implying that everything in the universe was Brahman. Every day, one disciple was accustomed to greet the guru respectfully on his arrival, but after this particular event, he did not do so, and he never got up from his seat. The guru questioned him on this strange behaviour and the disciple replied that the previous day, the guru said that everything is Brahman and therefore there was no difference between them. Then the teacher thought that what he had said had come back to him as a boomerang and he wanted to teach the student a good lesson. He went to the board and wrote "Guru Brahma" as two different words. He also wrote "Sishya Brahma" and "Sarvam Brahma". When you look at these three, though Brahma is occurring as the same in all the three, the guru, sishya and sarvam are different. Only when these three words also become one, can you say that

all are one. Thus, until you are able to experience this oneness of all in practice, the student will remain a student and a teacher will remain a teacher and there is no escape from the need for the student having to respect the teacher. The basis is one but the containers are different.

There is another example for this. There is a big stone on a hill and an artisan chisels this into the form of a Krishna statue. Then he takes this statue and puts it in a temple and worships it. After the statue is prepared, there will be some bits of stone left over and these bits may say, "Thath Thwam Asi", that they are the same as the basic stone from which the figure of Krishna was carved. But no one will pay homage or worship those bits of stone. All will worship only the statue of Krishna. When we take the significant meaning and look at the basis, the material of the statue and the left over pieces are one and the same. But, for a superficial assessment, the Krishna statue is different from the stone bits and we worship only the Krishna statue.

Such is the relationship between the world and its Creator. The prakruthi and the Purusha are different from each other. Oneness between them will be evident only when there is an amalgamation of the two in your thoughts. You cannot see non-dualism in them so long as you feel they are distinct from each other. In our mind, we should be able to move from prakruthi to Purusha and join them together. We should make an attempt to join these two by taking prakruthi to Purusha. On the contrary, we are dragging Purusha down to the level of prakruthi. You may worship a picture as God but not God as a picture. You can elevate a piece of stone a piece of mud or a bit of paper to the position of God and worship it, but do not bring down God to the position of a piece of stone or a bit of paper.

In our Indian culture, it has been said, "Easwarah Sarva Bhutanam" that is, Easwara is present in all things. You may thus think of a stone as Easwara, but not Easwara as a stone. Sometimes, westerners ridicule us by saying that we worship a stone and imagine it to be God. The correct interpretation is that we are accustomed to believe that God is present in everything in this world. Therefore, we worship tulasi leaves, we worship the cow, the aswatha tree, the lion, the tiger, the snake and, in fact, all the creation in this world,

because God is present in everything in this world. Indian youth should not think that we are doing this in blind faith. The young people should read the great texts which portray our traditions and also know the lives of great people who lived in our country. This is the purpose with which we have started these summer classes.

11. Detachment Is Possible For One And All

Date: 30 May 1973 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 1973

Whether one is a Yogi given to simple living or a Bhogi given to luxury,
Whether one has renounced everything and is a Sanyasi or is still in a family
enjoying attachment,
Peace and Truth are the only two things which can give him ananda or bliss.
His peace is his happiness supreme.

Boys and girls!

When Sankara was engaged in composing the verses of Bhaja Govindam, each disciple was also giving a verse of his own and a principal disciple, by name Nityananda, had given a distinctive message in the verse that he composed. The meaning of this verse is that whether one is given to Yogic way of life or one is given to a luxurious way of life, whether he has renounced the world or is still in it, once he has seen and tasted the greatness of Brahman or the aspect of the divine, he will remain a divine person and nothing will detract him from the divine path. You may ask the question how is this possible? A dancer or an actor, while performing a dance or enacting a drama, does the particular act very well and is not led away from the normal life by what he or she is doing in that act. So, this Yogi or the individual who is living in a family and performing the duties prescribed for that purpose is not attracted into the family. Because we are looking only at the external appearances, we are not able to understand the true spirit in which a Yogi functions.

There is another small example for this. According to Indian traditions and as an accepted practice if one husband has two wives and if one of the wives is pregnant at the time of the death of the husband she will not acquire

widowhood till she delivers the child but continues to enjoy the status of a sumangali. She alone knows the fact that she is widow. Purusha, or the creator of the universe has two wives, Pravritthi and Nivritthi. As in the example just given, Nivritthi only keeps up her appearance of a sumangali for the prosperity of the world and has a special relationship to Purusha, the husband.

It is about this that a clever disciple by name Saunaka questions Guru Angirasa in the Mundaka Upanishad. Angirasa tells that whatever could be taught is of two kinds. One is the knowledge of the lower type, the Apra Vidya and the other is the knowledge of the higher type, the Para Vidya. Whether it is the Rig Veda, Atharvana Veda, Sama Veda or Yajur Veda or the Upanishads, they have all been taught as Apra Vidya. Not only that, Angirasa had taught various things like grammar, prosody, astrology, etc. as part of Apra Vidya. On the other hand, whether it was to listen to, or understand and turn over in one's mind, all that is abstract and all that relates to the divinity or Brahman the eternal, it was handled as part of Para Vidya. This means that once you turn your mind towards understanding the imperishable Brahman then whatever is performed as a function of the body is no longer Apra Vidya but also turns into Para Vidya. We know that King Janaka, even while performing ordinary worldly duties such as ruling the kingdom and looking after the needs of the kingdom, found it possible to turn his thought completely towards the divine.

For Janaka's ability to do this, there is an example. The great Rishi Suka, was once teaching several things to his disciples in a forest quite close to Mithilapura. King Janaka learnt about this and wanted to become a disciple of Suka and listen to his teachings. Janaka went to the forest, made obeisance to Suka and asked that he be accepted as one amongst the numerous disciples Suka had, and requested permission to attend the classes. From that day, Janaka was conducting himself as one of the disciples. One day when he did not arrive in time, Suka did not start his class and waited till Janaka arrived. He further told the other disciples that he was delaying the class for that reason.

When the sage told the other disciples to wait till Janaka arrived, they murmured amongst themselves and told each other that they had joined this great sage only because it was believed that he attached no special importance to kings and such other powerful people. It now appears that he is influenced by the king's wealth and power.

From that day, their faith in the Guru started weakening. They also became envious of King Janaka. This is something which has been known from ancient times. When deserving disciples are given the opportunity of going close to the teacher, others who are not eligible for such treatment become envious.

It is not possible to say when and on whom such grace will fall. Some people, even if they had done a lot of good in their previous births, are reborn the moment their accumulated good work has worked itself out. This means that one should go on performing good actions and thereby rise higher and higher. On the other hand, if one thinks that he need not do any more good, he will lose the opportunity.

As soon as Suka saw such envy and jealousy among his disciples, he decided to teach them a lesson. At an opportune moment, all the disciples were made to feel that the entire city of Mithilapura was in flames. As soon as the disciples saw that Mithilapura was in flames, each one of them began to think of the effect it would have on their houses, on their parents, on their wealth and so on. Each one began to run to the city, with a view to save and salvage what he could. But, king Janaka did not waver and did not move from his place. Suka told Janaka that the flames appear to have spread to the palace and he asked Janaka to go and save the inmates of the palace. Janaka did not agree to do this but was only smiling, thinking that God's will shall be done and no one can change it.

The envious students who ran to the city found that there were no flames at all and that it was perhaps only a make believe. They came back and reported this to Suka. They expressed surprise at the steady mind of Janaka. Suka looked at the disciples who were envious and told them that it is better to have one disciplined student rather than many students who have no

stability of mind. It is good to have one steady mind to whom you can convey a lesson. This is better than a thousand wavering minds.

There is a similar story with regard to Ramakrishna Paramahansa. In the midst of giving a discourse, he found a disciple, by name Rani Rasmani, sitting and pretending to listen to the discourse. He went straight to her and gave this Rani two slaps. Others who were witnessing this event were surprised and were thinking that Ramakrishna did not have a sound mind. Rasmani also was surprised at this and was trying to think if anything was wrong with her and why the Guru was treating her with disrespect. Truly, if one knows one's own faults, he will not commit those faults. In fact, because Rasmani did not know her fault she was not able to realise what was wrong with her. Ramakrishna told her that if she came there to think of her problems of litigation and not to listen to the discourse, she might as well do so in her house.

In the same manner, some people who come and sit here to listen to what is being said here waver and flutter like the leaves of a tree. They move about and look around as if they are crows. They are not able to sit steadily. They look this side and that side. They are unconcerned and unaffected by all that happens here. They cannot even sit properly. Unless you have a steady mind, you cannot understand matters relating to the Atma. They also set a bad example to others. People who have wavering minds cannot be true yogis, even though they may pass off as good devotees in external appearances.

It is in this context that Sankara's disciple, Nityananda wrote this particular verse. Even if you have family attachments, you can do many good things and understand the Atma Thathwa. There have been many saints like Pothana, Thyagaraja, Kabir, Ramdas, Vemana, Jayadeva, Gouranga and so on who have expounded the divine while remaining in the society and retaining worldly attachments. There are others who remove themselves away from the society and go to a forest or a hill to attain this Atma Thathwa. There are yet others in the society who pretend to be great devotees. They always move to places where there are large gatherings of devotees. They pretend to be very detached while remaining in the society. Such actions and such

pretensions can never be the accepted way of life.

Valuable jewels are always kept in strong boxes and sellers thereof show them only to those who really wish to buy them or those who have the capacity to buy them. They do not take the jewels to a fish market and show them to everyone irrespective of their capacity to purchase them. Japa, dhyana, sadhana and other methods of self-realisation are like valuable jewels and gems. They can only be shown and given to people who have unwavering faith and a steady mind. They cannot be given, for purposes of exhibition, to people who do not even know how to concentrate on an object.

There are three kinds of sadhana to develop an unwavering mind. The first is the Meena Sadhana (like the fish). The second is Mriga Sadhana (like the animal) and the third is Kurma Sadhana (like the tortoise). Meena Sadhana can be explained by remembering that fish can survive only in water. The moment it is taken out of water, it perishes. Similarly, Meena Sadhana is one which can be done only in solitude. If you sit in public, the sadhana will not be successful. Being unable to concentrate when he is mixed up with other people and being able to get concentration in solitude is called Meena Sadhana. The animal sadhana is that in which one can get concentration on the earth only. You cannot go elsewhere, say into water, and do it. As in this case, there are some people who can get concentration only when they are sitting in company and among others. They cannot get concentration in solitude. If they are alone, they begin to think of their family problems.

On the other hand, the tortoise can live equally well either in water or on earth. So, if we say that one's sadhana is like Kurma Sadhana or one is able to concentrate like a tortoise, we mean that the person is able to concentrate irrespective of whether he is alone or is sitting in company among the others. This is called Kurma Sadhana. Today, there is no equal-mindedness. You are all developing only what is related to sangha or the society. In this age of youth, it is possible for you to develop intense concentration. While your body and mind are strong, you must control your organs. Otherwise you will have a wavering mind and you cannot control it when you grow older. If you have a wavering mind, you will be wasting your life. If things happen contrary to your

ideas, your desires and your expectations, there will be excitement coming from within you. You should not be subservient to such excitement. You should control yourself and get an upper hand over such excitement. Then only, will you be entitled to God's grace. Be in society, but remain careful to see that your faith and devotion are not perturbed. If your faith shakes, your life will become shaky. If your mind can be controlled, you can certainly do something useful and your life will become purposeful.

I want to urge upon you to make good use of your stay here, without wasting time. Looking at all this, taking a superficial view of this, and your taking down notes from what the teachers have said are not going to be of much use. Only that portion of it which you take to your heart and preserve with care will be of lasting value. In a washerman's house, there may be hundreds of shirts, pants and bush coats with very attractive colours and shapes but all these clothes will be there for a short while only. They will be washed, ironed and returned to the owners. The only clothes that will remain in his possession for a longer time will be his own clothes. In the same manner, your head is like the house of a washerman. The teachings which are being given to you now, go into your head like the clothes of others which go into a washerman's house. Only those teachings which you retain and put into practice will remain with you and all others will go out of you.

If you take a spoon and put it in various items of food like the sambar, buttermilk, payasam and so on, the spoon itself cannot get the taste of any of these items. There is no use if our intelligence moves about in the contents of various lectures that we hear, like the spoon in this analogy. It is only when we consume this ourselves, that useful results will follow.

There is a small story in the Mahabharatha. With a view to getting Krishna on her side, Sathyabhama, a selfish woman, went to Narada and requested him to tell her some way, a short cut, by which she could achieve her objective. Narada knew that Sathyabhama was very selfish and that selfishness will never work in regard to matters relating to God. So, Narada wanted to teach a lesson to Sathyabhama and said that he knew of a method which would get Krishna on her side completely. This method consisted of a devotional ritual in

which she was supposed to give away her husband as a gift to someone and then buy him back by paying money, equivalent in weight to the weight of the Lord. Narada said that if she went through the ritual, Krishna would belong solely to Sathyabhama at all times and under all circumstances .

Sathyabhama did not understand God's ways. She had no idea of God's strength. She was intensely selfish and was lured into the plan which Narada had put before her. Therefore, she had undertaken the ritual of gifting Krishna to Narada and then getting him back after weighing him in terms of wealth. In one pan of the balance, she made Krishna sit and she put all her wealth in the other pan but it was no match to the weight of Krishna. Narada saw an excellent opportunity in the situation and told Sathyabhama that since she is not able to give the money needed to equal her husband's weight, he was taking away Krishna and that from that day, Krishna would not belong to her but would belong to him.

In that situation, Sathyabhama was trying to find someone who would help her. She thought of Rukmini and went in search of her. She found her performing Tulasi puja. Rukmini saw the plight of Sathyabhama and said that she would gladly come to her help. She went with a few Tulasi leaves in her hand. When Rukmini went there and saw the situation in which Krishna and Narada were, she was astonished to find that Sathyabhama was trying to outweigh the Lord Himself with money. She knew that this would never be possible. She addressed Narada and said that money will never outweigh God and only God's name can match Him in weight. Narada did not agree to this and said that since Krishna has a form which can be seen, He must be weighed against something which can also be seen. Narada said that he could not accept something which cannot be seen such as a name as equivalent to Krishna, a form which can be seen.

Since Rukmini had a pure heart, she immediately grasped the situation and she told herself that whether it is fruit, flower, or a leaf or even a spoon of water, if given in full faith, God will surely respond. If there is any truth in this, she expected Krishna to respond to what she was going to do, and in full faith, she placed a few Tulasi leaves in the other pan of the balance after

uttering the name of Krishna.

The name of Krishna became exactly equal to the person of Krishna and the weight of the leaves became the excess in the balance. It is only with affection, love and a pure heart that one can get round God. But if you want to adopt tricks and short cuts and if you want to be foxy and thus try to get round God, He can be even more foxy and turn you into a dog. Your pretensions and your doing things that are not relevant will never take you to God. For this reason, whether one is a Yogi or a bhogi, whether one is in the society or in solitude, if he knows and understands the nature of God, he will change into becoming one with the divine. This is the substance of the verse given by Nityananda in the Bhaja Govindam Series.

12. Grace Of God Can Change A Foolish Person Into A Learned Scholar

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Recitation of even a very small portion of the Gita,
taking in even a small quantity of the sacred water from the Ganges,
performing the puja of Hari even once, can make one so sacred that Yama,
the Lord of death,
will have nothing to say to or ask any questions of such a person.

Divyatma Swarupas!

Sankara, along with his disciples, gave us the Bhaja Govindam verses. One of his principal disciples by name Ananda gave this particular verse.

Anandai was a dull-minded individual and hence was called Giri by his associates. Giri means a dull-minded individual. He became Ananda Giri from then onwards. This dull-minded Ananda Giri wanted to be with the guru and serve him. This was his only aim. Other students were so attentive and clever that they could learn by heart their lessons and recite them to the guru the same evening. Ananda Giri was so dull that he could not recite anything. He made up for this by spending all his time in the service of the guru. Because he was serving the guru at all times, he received extraordinary grace on one occasion and he was able to compose a set of verses called the Totaka verses.

Ananda Giri himself was called Totaka thereafter. It was implied in these verses that an understanding of the essence of our scriptures would lead one to apprehend the Atma. The other disciples read many books, and each one of them converted their heads into a book. Ananda Giri was serving the guru

in such a way that he turned himself into a bee which could go and take the very honey from inside the flower of the heart of guru. Study, divorced from practice, does not make the mind steady. Totaka thought that it is better to know only that part of knowledge which would lead him to immortality. That is why Ananda Giri said in this verse, that it is sufficient even if you read the Bhagavad Gita, which contains the essence of Indian culture, even once.

A person who is hungry need not go and eat all the different kinds of foods that are produced in the world. It is sufficient if he eats what is required to satisfy him and relieve his hunger. It is enough if you take one verse out of the Bhagavad Gita and understand the true meaning of it. It is in this context that Anandai Giri said that taking a small quantity of the Ganges water is sufficient. When you are thirsty, it is enough if you take a small quantity of water to quench your thirst. You do not have to drink up the entire Ganges. In the same manner, Totaka believed that one single ray of God's grace is quite enough for him to demonstrate to the world the nature of the Atma. It is because of the fact that this disciple enjoyed such confidence of the guru, that Sankara established a peetha or seat of learning at Badri and put him in charge of that peetha.

There were four principal disciples of Sankara and they were Padmapada, Sureswara, Totaka and Hastamalaka. These four disciples were chosen by Sankara, and he put them in charge of the four peethas or the principal seats of learning throughout the country.

Sureswara had also another name and that was Mandana Misra. Sankara had several arguments with Mandana Misra on various religious matters. At the end of these arguments, Sankara came out victorious. Thereafter Sankara gave sanyasa to Mandana Misra as he was then a family man. His wife was Ubhayabharathi. Mandana Misra was a learned man. He was learned in all the Sastras and Vedas and in truth he was a Jnani. He was the embodiment of all knowledge.

There is a need for us to understand clearly the nature of the teachings given by Sankara to his disciples. Our country is in a deplorable condition because,

today, we neither have gurus like Sankara nor single-minded disciples like Mandana Misra. Teaching is of two kinds. One method is to teach by word of mouth. This can be accomplished by imparting information and knowledge, which helps and does not hinder to change the outlook, but it does not necessarily transform the listener. Precept and practice remain distinct. The second method of teaching consists of the guru himself setting an example by his behaviour and actions for the disciples to follow. This method is more effective.

Sankara used to thoroughly examine the intent and meaning of the verses composed by the disciples before accepting them. Sankara called Ananda Giri and asked him what he meant when he said that reading a small portion of Bhagavad Gita was sufficient. He questioned him on how reading a small portion out of seven hundred verses could be sufficient to give all the understanding of the Sastras. Ananda Giri gave a very sweet and attractive reply. He said that the prospect of having to read 18 chapters and 700 verses from the beginning to the end would scare away all dull-minded people and they would, in that context, not even make a beginning. On the other hand, if they are asked to read one verse only, they would do so and then develop a taste for the rest of it. They may then read other verses day after day.

This is similar to our efforts to feed a small baby. When he begins to eat, we do not in the first instance give salt, sambar, rice and all at one time. We give a little soft and sweet quantity of food first, so that he will develop a proper taste. Thereafter, the child will want to eat platesfull of food. So also, if dull-minded people are given the taste of Bhagavad Gita through a small bit, thereafter they will desire to read more.

Then Sankara enquired as to what he meant by saying that taking a small quantity of Ganges water would be sufficient. Ananda Giri replied that Ganges is a sacred river and is in the position of a mother to our country, and it has been responsible for our reputation and status. It is known that Ganges water remains unspoilt for any length of time. It contains the elements which give us health and strength. It is sacred in that it comes from the Vishnupada and even if one drop is taken in, it will do a lot of good. Not only this, the Ganges

river flows in all the three possible worlds, in three different names, and with three different qualities. In heaven, it flows with the name Mandakini. On earth, it flows with the name Bhageerathi. In the Netherlands or Pathala, it flows with the name Bhogavathi. The three gunas, Sathwa Guna, Thamo Guna and Rajo Guna, are all contained in the river. In the same manner, in the three possible divisions of time - past, present and future, the same river is flowing. These are the extraordinary qualities of Ganges.

Sankara was not satisfied with the meaning given and questioned Ananda Giri further, with a view to go deeper. Sankara asked him what he meant by speaking about the three worlds. He asked how man experiences these three worlds. Ananda Giri gave the reply that he who recognises that the Atma in all beings is the same, he who recognises this oneness in the universe and derives peace from such knowledge, should be considered to be living in heaven or Swarga. On the other hand, the person who makes a distinction between insects, animals and birds on the one hand and human beings on the other and thinks that the human is a distinctive and superior entity will be in the Martya Loka or the earth, where the human beings live. He then went on to say that if individuals forget the sacredness of human nature and become animals, exhibit qualities like selfishness and greed, and ignore the contents of our scriptures like the Sastras and Vedas, all such individuals will be living in Pathala or the lower world.

Just as our body exhibits depressions and elevations, our ideas also are both high and low. The three gunas, namely sathwa, rajo, and thamo, are present in everyone and what comes up to a point of time will be decided by the circumstances. Life is a mixture of all these three gunas. When a man is happy and is in good circumstances, his ideas too will be of the sathwa type. On the other hand, when something goes wrong, he is immediately excited and the rajo guna shows up. When he has eaten heavily, he will slowly go to sleep and the thamo guna appears. In this way, all the three gunas coexist in the same body and a mixture of them comes up according to the circumstances.

Similarly the heaven, the earth and the lower world are all present in one and

the same individual and each one shows up in accordance with his state of mind. The same has been divided into different categories like the believing, the non-believing and the believing non-believing. It is better to be a non-believer than being a believing non-believer. In this verse, it has been suggested that you should never ride two horses. If you do not know how to ride a horse, it is better not to do so. It is most dangerous to ride two horses at one time.

In man's mind, the Atma is flowing like a clear stream as water flows in the river Ganges. The Indian culture has been flowing through time like the Ganges river has been flowing in a clean and clear manner. It does not get contaminated, it remains everlasting and it flows permanently. That is how Indian culture is in many respects like Ganges. The verses that have been handed over to us by Sankara in the form of Bhaja Govindam are in the sense that there is no selfishness of any kind in them.

The Ganges river, when it flows, does not make any attempt to enjoy the sweetness of its own water. The fruit tree, when it gives fruits, itself never enjoys the taste of its fruits. In the same manner, all the great saints like Sankara have given all their strength and wisdom for the benefit of others. They never utilised it for their own benefit.

In the third line of the verse, Ananda Giri said that if you perform the Vishnu puja even once, you will attain a status where even Yama or the Lord of death, cannot question you. Vishnu here means the omnipresence and if you understand the significance of omnipresence even once, Yama cannot question you. The word Vishnu does not here refer to one wearing the insignia of sankha, chakra, gada, padma. Vishnu here stands for omnipresence, and has no particular form. The bliss that we experience when we think of God is the aspect of Vishnu.

Ananda Giri gave a beautiful example for this. If you take rice and convert it into rice flour, it will not have any taste when you put it into your mouth. Similarly, if you take wheat flour and put it on your tongue, it will not have any taste. If you mix sugar with the wheat flour or the rice flour and prepare

some kind of a sweet, you will get the sweet taste of such a preparation in your mouth. Although there is no inherent sweetness in either the rice or the wheat, the sugar gives the sweetness. In the same manner, when Vishnu Thathwa is added even to a lifeless thing, that object gives a good feeling of omnipresence. This is how Vishnu Thathwa can impart omnipresence even to lifeless things.

Although the sweets which we prepare and eat have many different forms and names, the fact is that all of them contain one common thing and that is sugar. Just as we must realise this truth, we must also realise that in this world, while there are so many individuals with different forms and names, the one common thing that is present in all of them is the Vishnu Thathwa or the omnipresent Atma. This realisation will enable you to develop love for the entire humanity. It is necessary for every individual to recognise the presence of Atma in everyone. You should realise this by your own effort or by listening to what the elders tell you or by having darshan, sparsan and sambhashan, that is by seeing, touching and hearing great people.

On one occasion, Narada went to Krishna and told him that the gopikas in Brindavan who are not very intelligent, are having some foolish and irrational ideas about Krishna. He said that he would go and tell them the truth about Krishna. He asked Krishna's permission to do so. Krishna smiled and thought within himself that there can only be one kind of devotion and there cannot be two types, one appropriate to the intelligent people and the other appropriate to ignorant people. He wanted to teach Narada a lesson and permitted him to go and tell the gopikas what he wished to tell. Krishna thought that Narada was foolish to think that the gopikas were irrational and did not have the right kind of devotion. He knew that no one could excel the gopikas in the matter of devotion.

As soon as Narada got Krishna's permission, he went to Brindavan and met the gopikas. The gopikas came and surrounded him with the eager expectation that he would give some news of Krishna. Narada told them that they were ignorant to realise the real nature of Krishna and that they do not understand the Vedas and Sastras and said that he would teach them these

aspects. Just as one cannot separate the print from the paper on which it is printed, you cannot separate Krishna from the hearts of the gopikas. We say that one who knows Brahman is Brahman himself. That is why the gopikas, who know Krishna are like Krishna himself. Narada realised his own foolishness and left after blessing the gopikas. The fact is that these gopikas have realised the omnipresence or the Vishnu Thathwa that has been described by Ananda Giri in his verse.

It is in this context that Ananda Giri gave another verse. In that verse, he said that we think so much about our families, our relations, our children and our grandchildren. We spend so much time and effort in thinking about the wealth that we have to amass, the methods by which to preserve this wealth and so on. If only we can spend a thousandth part of this time and effort in thinking about Krishna, the Nandanandana, and in surrendering ourselves at His feet, all fears will go. Even the most fearful of all aspects, the aspect of death, will not bother those who develop this kind of thinking. They will live in happiness and bliss, in this world.

In this Kali Yuga, there are many people who do not realise the value of time. They spend so much time in fulfilling their worldly desires that they have very little time left to do good things. They are willing to spend days, weeks and even months on satisfying some foolish desire of theirs, but they say that they have no time for good things. If someone asks you to participate in sathsanga for even half an hour, you say that you have no time, but you do not hesitate to spend several hours in a club. In a house, if someone suggests that you should do abhishekam to a Saligram with a little water, you say that there is no time. Your misfortune is such that on the contrary, you spend gallons of water cleaning a buffalo or some animal like that. For good things, you have neither time nor energy.

Man is not able to determine what is wrong and what is right, and this is the reason why we have landed ourselves in this mess. Therefore we must make a sincere attempt to distinguish truth from untruth. We must realise the omnipresence of God. This will make our lives happy and purposeful. On the other hand, people go on complaining of family difficulties and professional

problems which prevent them from their participating in sathsanga. We have to make an enquiry and see if such responsibilities are really tying a person down or is he using them only as an excuse for tying himself down.

There is a small example for this. In our country, there is a peculiar method of trapping monkeys. This process consists of bringing a big pot with a small mouth and putting some material which is attractive to the monkey inside that pot. The monkey will put its hand inside the pot and catch hold of a handful of that material. It will then not be able to pull out its hand from within the pot. It will imagine that someone inside the pot is holding its hand. Then, it makes an attempt to run away along with the pot; but the monkey is thus trapped. No one is holding the monkey. The monkey got trapped by itself, because it has taken in its hand such a lot of material. The moment it lets the material in its hand go, it will be free.

In the same manner, in this big pot of the world with a narrow mouth of the family, man is tempted by the pleasures of the world and when he gets lost with involvement in those pleasures, he thinks that someone or something is binding him down. No other person is responsible for this bondage. The moment he gives up the pleasures and detaches himself, he will be free. That is the way to free himself from the imagined bondage.

There is another good story of Gajendra, the elephant, which conveys well the meaning of bondage. In the thick forest of life, a wild elephant, the mind of man, will be roaming about. This mind which is roaming about like a wild elephant in the forest of life, becomes thirsty for sensuous pleasures. To quench that thirst, it begins to drink in the lake of the family. The moment the elephant puts its foot in the lake, the crocodile of attachment catches hold of its leg. The moment this attachment catches hold of its leg, the elephant cannot free itself. With this attachment, the elephant struggles till it becomes weak. When it becomes weak, it prays to God and asks to be saved. When in desperation, such a prayer is made to God, grace of God will descend on the person. When the elephant's vision turns towards God, God's vision also turns towards the elephant. This is what is called sudarsana or holy vision. This word does not mean a chakra, as is commonly thought, but it means good

vision. When you turn towards God, God will turn towards you.

To understand this particular verse, we need not go as far as the story of Gajendra. There is an event in my own experience to show how an individual, who initially was completely immersed in worldly pleasures later changed his attitude. I will narrate this event. One person came to me about twenty years ago and prayed that he should meet with success in his examination and secure a high first class. I told him that there will have to be his effort and then the result will be according to God's will. I gave him my blessings and sent him away.

He did secure a high first class and came to me again after passing his examination and asked for my blessings so that he may get a job. Because of his good luck, he did get a job within two months. He again came to me after a few months and asked him if he had a job. He said he had a job and he was happy. He also said that he wanted to marry a typist girl in his own office. I told him that if it is agreeable to his father and mother, he may do so, but they may not like it. He was not inclined to listen to me. He said that even if it meant transgressing the wishes of his parents, he was determined to marry that girl. He in fact suggested that he would even give up his life if this marriage was not possible. Under those circumstances, I criticised him and told him that he must convince his parents before entering into such an alliance. He brought a lot of pressure on his parents and they, finding no other alternatives, agreed to the marriage.

The marriage was over and after a year, both of them came to me again and said they wanted to have a son. After the birth of a son, his expenses multiplied, his wife gave up the job, and he again came to me desiring to get a promotion. By his good luck, he got a promotion. Although he was somewhat foolish in regard to worldly matters, he had great faith in regard to matters relating to Swami. I gave him my blessings and he got a promotion. He did not turn up thereafter for over five years. He was quite happy. In the next five years they had five children.

He came to me again after five years and said that he was fed up with the

family, that he cannot bear the burden of the family and that he was looking for relief from all the mess. He said that he wanted a small job in the ashram itself and said that his family has now got a hold over him like a big serpent. I asked him if the serpent caught him on its own or whether he let the serpent come to him and catch him.

Therefore, you must learn to distinguish between good and bad, between truth and untruth. You must use your education for the purpose of developing faith in God and respect for your parents. Your life should rest on morality and truth. Your life may or may not go on well but you must base it on correct foundations. Money comes and goes but morality comes and grows. It is a matter of great satisfaction if you are educated on the right lines, become an example to others and accept positions of responsibility. In all these things, always keep your heart straight and clear. Then you will get the grace of God. Remember that Ananda Giri, an uneducated and foolish person, became a great scholar and could be the head of a seat of learning in Badri, just because he won the grace of his guru and the grace of God.

13. Detachment Gives Peace Even Amidst Troubles

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This world is like a shining drop of water that collects on a lotus leaf. It quivers and shakes without being steady. Heaps of attachments fill the life of man.

Trouble and sorrow constitute the screen on which the world shows itself.

As a drop of water on a lotus leaf disappears in no time, even so, we should know that our life is transient and will disappear very much like that and in no time. The world is full of sorrow and the human body is full of disease. Our life is full of turbulent thoughts and is like a dilapidated house. Under these conditions, according to Sankara, it is possible to live in a peaceful manner, only by following the divine path and getting over all our worldly attachments. So long as one does not know who he is, one cannot escape these sorrows. So long as one does not realise the Easwara Thathwa or the presence of Easwara in everything, one cannot escape this sorrow. So long as one does not understand that to be born, to grow, to live and to die is only for one purpose and that is to understand the nature of Atma, the one imperishable thing, it is not possible for him to escape this sorrow.

Just as the lotus flower is born in water, stays in water, lives in water and ultimately withers away in water, so also, this human life is born in the Atma Thathwa, stays and lives in the Atma Thathwa and is finally merged in the Atma Thathwa. This verse conveys that the Atma Thathwa is the pond or the lake, that maya is the bunch of leaves and that the Jiva comes out as the lotus flower in this pond of Atma. This lotus spreads the fragrance of many good qualities. While spreading such fragrance, even the water in the pond becomes one with the Atma Thathwa. The drops of water which come out of

the pond of Atma come to the leaves of the lotus and go back to the Atma. This going back to the source is what is contained as an essence in this verse. In the infinity of the Atma, the jiva comes as the lotus because maya spreads in the form of leaves. The jiva which is like the lotus spreads the fragrance of the good qualities which can be ascribed to the Jiva Thathwa.

Vishnu Thathwa is synonymous with the realisation of omnipresence. Out of the navel of Vishnu comes the lotus which gives rise to the creator, Brahma. The various petals that constitute this lotus are the different components of this world. Thus, starting from this Vishnu aspect or the aspect of omnipresence, the creator comes. Out of the creator comes the Jiva Thathwa. Out of the Jiva, come various things which in the end go back and become one with the source, the Atma Thathwa. This is the threefold description of what we see namely Jiva, Easwara and Prakruthi. Our feeling that this threefold description of the universe is equivalent to a diversity therein is an illusion. The oneness of it all is the basis of Adwaitha.

For a tree to be born, to grow and ultimately give you the fruit, there are three essential things. These are the wind, rain and the earth. More than these three, the seed is of even greater importance. If we do not have the seed, even if we have the other necessary ingredients like the earth, rain and wind, we will not be able to see the tree. In the same manner, it is in accordance with the sankalpa of the Lord that man is created in the world. Man comes into this world as if he comes from a seed. In the case of every man, the sankalpa that creates him is like a seed. So long as the sankalpa of desires are in man, it is not possible for him to escape being born. On the day when he becomes completely free from his sankalpa, or desire, that day will he be free from rebirth.

In order that he may take this sacred path, free from desires, he has to surrender himself. There are certain obstacles which make it difficult for one to be able to surrender. Everyone understands that in this world, it is not possible to enter the house of an affluent person or the house of a person who is in a position of importance, with ease and without being questioned. At the entrance to the house, you will find a watchman who will ask what

business you have with the owner. If in the case of a person, who has limited power and a worldly position, there are such restrictions regulating your entry into his house, what is the wonder that in the case of God, who has unlimited powers, there are regulations restricting your entry into his mansion.

If you want to enter the palace of Moksha or liberation, you will find that at the main entrance there are two guards. This entrance is the place where you offer yourself and may be called the gate of surrender. The two guards who are there are Srama (effort) and Dama (patience). The meaning of this is that you must make an effort and you must have patience. These are the two guards at the door. However much you offer yourself in surrender, it is not possible for you to enter God's abode without Srama and Dama. This would mean the control of your outer and inner organs. Today, it has become rare for us to find a sadhaka who has achieved control over his organs. Everywhere you find the path of falsehood. You do not find people who follow the path of truth. Although for external appearances one is a man, the ideas and thoughts are those of a monkey. Where one should naturally laugh, one is found to cry and where one should naturally cry, one is found to grin. Is this not a path of falsehood?

So long as you put on such false appearances, God, who is all merciful, will never show himself to you. All these external and false appearances are described as acting in a drama, whereas what is truth in you could be referred to as the aspect of Narayana. While devoting your life to such worldly pleasures and ideas, it is not possible for you to realise God.

There is a story of a King, who used to ask all people who came to his kingdom to tell him the correct path for realisation. Each one, basing himself either on some standard texts or on what elders had told him, used to say that a particular path was the right one for liberation. While this was going on, a servant close to the King was listening to the many descriptions of the right path for liberation that were being given. He found that the king was listening continuously to various methods of attaining moksha, but he was not putting any one of them into practice.

With the intention of teaching the king a good lesson, one day when the king was sitting and talking to many people in the central hall, the servant came from outside shouting loudly. The king then got up and asked the servant why he was shouting. The servant replied, with some anxiety in his face, that all the camels in the zoo were climbing up to the top of the terrace and running away. The king asked how the camels could climb the terrace and run away. The servant then said that if the king, steeped in luxury, can aspire to climb up the path of spirituality and attain liberation and moksha, there need be no surprise at the camels climbing to the terrace and then running away. The king understood that the servant was wanting to point out to him the absurdity of his attempts and that he should first sacrifice all the worldly pleasures before hoping to attain liberation. From that day, realising the truth, the king started thinking of God and putting good things into practice. You can attain Moksha, even while performing worldly duties, if your mind remains immersed in divinity. You will then be working in consonance with God. However, on account of the influence of this age of Kali, almost all of us fail to understand and implement the inner meaning of these practices.

Vedanta teaches us that once we recognise the essential basis of all that we see, there is no need for any more sadhana. If you have a pot with a hole in it, you can never fill it with water. In the same manner, if the pot of our mind has got many holes in the form of sensory desires, then all the work that we do will not fill our mind with sacred thoughts. Only when there are no holes, can your attempts become fruitful and take you to the divine.

There is a small story to illustrate this. There was a guru with a large number of disciples and the guru was telling them some good things. One day, when the lesson was going on, the teacher told the disciples that while they are engaged in puja and meditation, no matter what obstacles come their way, they must take care to see that their meditation is not disturbed. The disciples had great faith in the guru. There were also some disciples who were staying in the ashram itself. On a birthday of the guru, one disciple decided to offer special prayers to the guru by repeating the 108 names of the Lord. The disciple collected a photograph, 108 flowers and wanted to perform the puja in the traditional manner.

Another disciple invited the guru and took him to his house. The guru while going told the disciple, who wanted to do the worship at the ashram itself, to be careful and asked him to keep the front door closed. The day was very hot and the guru neither had slippers for his feet nor did he have sufficient hair on his head to protect him from the sun. When the guru returned to the ashram and wanted the door to be opened, the disciple inside was engaged in offering puja. The guru knocked at the door and asked the disciple to open the door. The disciple replied that he was engaged in puja and that the guru must wait till the puja was over, as the puja was not to be interrupted.

Today ninety-nine out of a hundred people are like this disciple. They only worship the photograph of the person whose grace they long for, and continue to do so even when the latter is knocking at the very door of the worshipper. In the process, they are willing to even cause harm to the very objective. In this way, even when God is available to us for worship in person, we are getting mixed up in various things and we adopt un-understandable and meaningless methods, by which the worship is not properly done. If we do not recognise the divinity in living beings, how can we recognise it in lifeless photographs and speechless stones? Therefore we must first understand what is meant by seeing divinity in everyone. It will then become quite clear to us that the Atma Thatwa in every being is one and the same.

Our faith diminishes because our ambitions are limitless. There is a small story for this. There was a rich person who had a daughter with a flat nose. The father wanted to get this girl married. Every person who came and looked at the girl used to go away, although they were tempted by the wealth. In those days, persons who could perform plastic surgery were not available. In desperation, he announced that he would give plenty of money to anyone who would marry the girl. He somehow found someone willing to marry her.

The marriage was performed and thereafter the couple developed considerable faith in God. They visited many temples, went on many pilgrimages and bathed in many sacred rivers. They met a saint who advised them that no one who is involved in worldly matters can give a good nose. Only He, who created the nose can bring it back to normal. Although they had

lots of wealth, they were not happy at all. The girl used to feel that others were looking at her and making fun. She suggested to her husband that they should both go to the lonely Himalayas and pray to God and spend a month there in that manner. He agreed and they did so. The girl had a great desire to get back her nose, so she began to pray to God in great earnestness. God appeared, due to her good luck and asked her what she wanted. As soon as God appeared, she asked for the grant of a good looking big nose. God said, so it shall be and granted her the boon.

As soon as God disappeared, she looked at her face. She looked at the big nose and felt that she had become uglier than before. She prayed again more earnestly and God appeared again and asked her what she wanted. She said that she did not want that big nose. God said, so it shall be and granted her the boon. She immediately found that her nose had completely disappeared. She had thought that she was praying to God for a good nose and in the process, she lost her nose completely.

The moral of this story is that although God is present before you, playing with you and talking with you, you do not know what to ask, when to ask and where to ask. Not knowing what we should ask, we are asking him for one thing while really we want something else. In this process, we are getting ourselves into difficulties. God is always ready to give you all that you want, but you do not seem to know what is good for you and what you really want. Since you do not know what you should want and under what circumstances, it is better and easier to surrender yourself completely to God and simply ask for His grace.

The names of those who, without any thought of God, have endeavoured to bring about material prosperity in the world will remain only as those inscribed on the surface of water. Such names will gradually be forgotten. Even if it is a very powerful electric current, it will be of no use to you if there is only the positive aspect and you cannot combine it with the negative. On the contrary, if a machine is only on the negative and is not connected to the positive side of the electric current, the machine will be a lump of metal and no more.

The world is like the negative pole. Divinity is like the positive pole. It is only by bringing them together that we can get peace and happiness. Great saints like Kabir, Jayadeva, Gauranga, Tukaram, Ramakrishna Paramahansa and rishis like Vyasa and Valmiki have their names engraved on our hearts eternally because they had realised the need for bringing the world and God together by converting work into worship.

We should serve the world and earn the grace of God. This is very necessary for youth. Many young people ask the question if there is God. They further ask if God is present, where is He, and so on. They waste their time in asking such questions. In that context, Totaka, a disciple of Sankara, was approached by some young man and was asked such questions. He was also asked why he was wearing the yellow robe and why he was wasting his time by remaining with the guru. Totaka said that his guru only could answer such questions and took the young man to Sankara. Sankara asked him whether his doubt is in regard to his God or Totaka's God. The young questioner asked why Sankara was distinguishing between his God and Totaka's God, while God is only one and is not different for different people. By asking such a question, he displayed his foolishness in accepting the existence of only one God and yet was questioning His reality.

Young students,

What really exists is only God. Everything else is false. We are questioning what truly exists and accepting the reality of what is false without questioning. We should have belief in the existence of the one truth and that is divinity. By such faith, I hope you will pursue a sacred path for going through your life and bring glory to your country.

14. Young Persons Should Have Full Control Over The Tongue

Date: 03 June 1973 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 1973

If one is able to control his senses, even if he is a blind person, he will reach the destination of moksha or attain liberation.

On the other hand, if one's senses are not controlled, even if he is the best of men, he will not be able to reach the divine destination.

Pavitratma Swarupas, students!

You must learn to use the elements of nature properly in order to promote the well-being of man. Although everything in the world is God's creation, we must cultivate the wisdom to make proper use of things. Our sense organs, for instance, have also to be used in the correct manner. Each particular organ has a distinctive feature. Amongst them, the one that tastes, namely the tongue, is a very important one. It is imperative that we keep it in check. Sometimes to satisfy our pallet we consume all types of food, not knowing that through it bad qualities like lust, anger, greed, attachment, arrogance and selfishness grow in us. Many of the different foods that we eat change, in the gross appearance at least, into waste matter which is not of any value and get excreted. In a subtle way, the same food is changing into our blood and muscle.

Even more subtle parts of this food will appear as our mind. Therefore, either for the distortions in our mind or for the sacred thoughts that generate therefrom, the food that we take is mainly responsible. Therefore, good qualities like peace, forbearance, love and attachment to truth can only be

promoted by taking good food. Indian culture, as contained in the Vedas, advises us that control of our sensory organs and living on sathwic and good food are the paths for realisation of the self and liberation thereof. This is the reason why from time immemorial, in our Indian traditions, the rishis ate sathwic food and drank clear flowing water. They kept their minds perfectly clean, and this is how they were able to understand the divine spirit. You should make an attempt to control your tongue when you are young. If, in this age, you do not control your tongue and all other sensory organs, you will have to face many difficulties in your later life.

The prosperity of a Nation does not descend from the sky nor does it emerge of its own accord from the earth. It depends upon the conduct of the people who constitute the Nation. We should recognise that the country does not mean just the lifeless soil around us. The country consists of a conglomeration of people and it is what they make of it. To rectify the world and put it on the proper path, we have to first rectify ourselves and our conduct. If at an advanced age, you try and control your desires and senses, you may or may not win God's grace. On the other hand, if at this young age, you control your organs, there is no doubt whatsoever that you will gain God's grace. There is a small example for this. If you go early in the morning to a restaurant and book your table, you will surely get your meal at whatever time you go there later. On the other hand, if you go at lunch time and ask for food, you may be told that there is no food for you that day.

By reading many books and by developing an argumentative tendency, it is quite common today for young people to get into argument with others. Once a young man aged twenty-two years went to Sankara. When Sankara was giving spiritual lessons to his disciples, he interrupted and asked Sankara if all human beings in this wide world should not be regarded as equal since the same kind of blood flows in all of them. Sankara smiled at this young man and said that the blood flowing in that youngster is hot and fast and so he was trying to push things too far. It is not possible for man to distinguish between permanent and impermanent things. One can adopt the notion of non-duality or Adwaitha in one's own thoughts and attitudes, but it is not possible to equate everything in the world in practice. The young man insisted that this

does not seem right. He stated that to him, the proper thing appeared to be to treat all living things in the same manner. Sankara recognised that if this young man was allowed to go on in this strain, he is likely to reach some absurd conclusions.

Sankara decided at once to teach him a lesson and immediately asked him if he had a mother. The young man replied that he had a mother who was alive and that he respected her very much. He again asked if the young man was married. The young man replied that he was married and that his wife had come with him to the ashram. Sankara then asked him if he had a mother-in-law. The young man replied that the mother-in-law was quite hale and healthy. Sankara again asked if he had any sisters and the young man replied in the affirmative and said that he had two sisters. Sankara asked if all these people were women. The young man asked how it should be otherwise. Sankara asked if he regarded all of them as equal and treated all these people in the same manner and in particular, whether he was treating his mother as his wife and his wife as his mother.

In this world of multiplicity, one has to recognise qualitative and quantitative difference. Each electric bulb is of varying power and wattage. Therefore, the difference in the light radiating from the bulb is due to the difference in the bulbs and not due to the electric current. The current is the same everywhere, but the difference arises from the bulbs with different intensities. God's power is like electric power and our bodies are like the bulbs. The light within will be visible to the extent to which we have faith. There is an enormous amount of water in the ocean but the water which you can take out will depend on the size of the pot which you take with you. Similarly by controlling our sensory organs, it is possible to expand our heart. If you become subservient to the organs, the heart will contract.

There is a small example for this. If we have a balloon and we blow in air, the balloon becomes larger and larger. As the air is blown into the balloon, it increases in size, and when it ultimately bursts, the balloon will lose its form and will merge with the infinity of air around it. As we put more air of faith in the balloon of our heart, it will become large and merge with Atma, which is

omnipresent. This process is called one of merging or reaching the final destination. If in this balloon of our heart, there is no air in the form of faith, the heart cannot expand and it will remain flat and will never have a chance to merge with the divine.

Therefore, if we can develop self-confidence and then attempt to control our sensory organs, we can spend our lives in the proximity of divinity and ultimately merge in divinity.

In our body, all the other organs are controlled by the tongue. If only we can control our pallet and avoid excessive eating, excessive talking and refrain from using words which ought not to be uttered, our health will improve, and we can have peace of mind. This is why Sankara taught a very good lesson to the tongue by asking that it should become sacred and utter only sweet and divine words like Govinda, Damodara, Madhava, and so on.

We should not cater to the tastes of the pallet unreasonably. If we feel hungry, we should just take good food in a reasonable quantity to relieve the hunger. We should train ourselves in such a manner that our desire to satiate the pallet diminishes. In the same manner, if you desire to abuse others, restrain yourself from using bad words for a long time thereafter. If you treat the tongue in this manner, the tongue will realise that you are not willing to give it what it wants. If it becomes necessary to utter some words, you must first ask yourself if the words are sacred and then only utter them. It is very much necessary for young people to get control over the words they utter, if they wish to avoid harm from the tongue.

I have mentioned to you several times that the patience which the tongue shows is not shown by any other organ. If we turn this tongue into a path which is not sacred, we will be turning our life itself into a path which is not sacred. The care and forbearance, for instance, with which this tongue moves amidst the teeth is remarkable. The teeth are like sharp knives all round and if we understand how the tongue moves amidst them, we will then understand the forbearance which the tongue shows. If the tongue is even slightly careless and gets under one or other of the teeth, immediate harm is

done. In the same manner, we should lead a life which does not get any harm from the enemies who might be surrounding us.

If we want to know also the sacrifice which the tongue exhibits, we have to realise that when we put some good tasty food on the tongue it only recognises the taste and immediately passes it on to the stomach for further digestion, but it does not keep it for itself. On the other hand, if we give bad food which does not taste well, the tongue immediately throws it out of the mouth.

If we again take the aspect of respect, we can see that the tongue deserves great respect. It moves about in its own house and is not like a dog which goes and uses others' houses unnecessarily. Because of the great respect which the tongue commands, it gets a good name for the owner. By using sweet words, he gets to be liked by all. If the tongue only abuses and always talks ill of others, the individual gets such disrespect that people will call him an animal. So, either for our getting a good name or bad name, the main cause is the tongue.

When a crow comes and perches on the top of our house, we take a stone and pelt at it. On the other hand, if a cuckoo comes on the roof and sings, we will listen to its songs with great pleasure. We hate the crow and like the cuckoo, not because the cuckoo has done something good to us and the crow, something bad, but since the cuckoo has a good voice while the crow has a bad tongue. Therefore, this sacred tongue should be used for the purpose of uttering sweet words. By uttering sweet words, we should be able to turn others also in the society into good ways. In this manner, you should spend the years of your youth by uttering sacred words and speaking about good things. This is what I expect you to do. By exhorting you to take this lesson and spread the same to the world, I am bringing this discourse to a close.

15. Morality And Truth Constitute The Basis Of Our Culture

Date: 04 June 1973 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 1973

Divyatma Swarupas!

For the past several days, we have been listening to the verses composed by Bhagavatpada Sankaracharya in the series entitled Bhaja Govindam. We have been taking their essence, which is like the sacred honey. Sankara's verses help us to understand divinity. Mind is like a clear mirror, but it is made impure by our desires. The one hero by the name Kama (lust) pervades everything in the world. This hero, however, can not go near the kingdom of Atma. Kama or lust has a very close friend called Krodha or anger. Lust and anger are always together.

An individual who has anger and lust in him can undoubtedly be called a dead body or a living corpse, a Sava Sakthi. It is only people like Thyagaraja, who lead a life of sacrifice and thereby entered the kingdom of Atma. Such people may be called the Shiva Sakthi. A disciple of Sankara stated that even a Yogi will have a downfall if he is unable to control his senses. In order that we may control our senses, we have to control our attachments or desires for material things.

Today, young people do not understand what is meant by going close to Atma. They are vitiated by material desires and due to lack of guidance at home they are unable to distinguish between good and bad. On account of bad company and by witnessing inconsistent stories which are portrayed in our cinemas, our young people are involved in developing blind lust, arrogance and greed. They are becoming proud of the little knowledge they acquire. They do not have humility, with the result that they are developing into undeserving citizens of this great country. Thus they are ruining themselves. You must dedicate your life to truth and promote prosperity of the world and thus spend your life in a fruitful manner.

The easiest way to control sensuous desires is to practise altruistic love. Love is of three types. The first one is based on gross selfishness, binding the ego-mind to a feeling of possession. Such an individual does not bother about the sufferings of others. To him, all that matters is his property and his wealth. This kind of love will not make anyone really happy and no one will develop any affection for such a person. He, in turn, will not be concerned about his own respect, but will think only of fulfilling his basic desires.

The second type of love consists of pretending to love people who are wealthy, physically strong, and in positions of power with a view to derive some benefit from them. A large number of people exhibit only this kind of love. Status and wealth are not permanent, therefore this type of love is also not the right one as it is based on the self-interest of deriving benefits from others.

The highest type of love is bereft of any selfishness and of any pretension of love for people in authority and affluence. This type of love is based on the knowledge that the eternal and universal Atma pervades everyone and everywhere. If a person develops such equal-mindedness by regarding the entire world as one, then he will cultivate the highest type of love.

It is not matter, but the indwelling Atma Thatwa which is of perennial value. For example, we bring a fruit tree and plant it in our backyard with the intention of letting it grow. With love we water this fruit tree, give it manure, and look after it with care because we want it to grow into a big tree. For some reasons, if this plant begins to dry up day after day, we will not care for it. With our own hands, we will pluck it out and throw it away.

What is the meaning in your showing so much concern when the plant is green and negligence when it dries up. The presence of life, which is symbolic of divinity, is what attracts us to the plant and we show great affection. The absence of life in this plant is what makes us neglect it and not even look at it.

With great affection, we buy and bring some fruits to the house. If for any

reason, some of them get rotten, we throw them away. In the same way, if there is an individual in whom there is life, we look after him with great care. But the moment life, which is none other than divinity, goes away from that body, we show no affection to the body. We also keep away from that body and cremate it.

All the sacred stories of our mythology and culture contain the experiences of elders. Understanding their significance, we should put them into practice. The Pandavas regarded Krishna as the Lord at all times irrespective of whether they were in difficulties or not. Even when such mighty persons as the devas came to oppose him, Arjuna never shirked fighting them. Arjuna fought many wars with great courage. However, it is significant that when he was accompanying the women from Dwarka to Hastinapura after the war of Mahabharatha, he became weak and could not fight against even the cowherds. Arjuna understood that because earlier Krishna was present with him in his mortal form, he could fight so many battles with such courage, but now that Krishna was no longer in their midst, he was not able to fight. All the courage of Arjuna had disappeared even as Krishna left this world.

We should understand that where there is no God, there is no courage. All the human bodies will simply be reduced to mere leather bags in which there is no life at all if there is no contact with the divine. Out of such experiences, the Pandavas gave many ideas to the world and for this reason, the Pandavas acquired lasting reputation. They set an example worthy of emulation by the rest of the world. The Mahabharatha is simply the story of the Pandavas, and is often referred to as the fifth Veda.

With a view to use the sacred story of the Pandavas for some material purpose, the Taneshah of Delhi once invited to his court the eight renowned poets of Vijayanagar. These poets were asked to describe the distinctiveness of the Mahabharatha. They did so in a beautiful and attractive manner. After hearing the story, Taneshah wanted to write a fresh epic in which he would figure as Dharmaraja, the eldest of the Pandavas, all the ministers whom he liked would figure as the other Pandavas, and all his enemies would figure as the Kauravas. In other words, he asked them to write a Taneshah Bharatam.

Those poets were not inclined to produce an epic of this kind and were discussing among themselves how they could tackle the situation. Amongst them a clever poet by name Tenali Ramakrishna came forward and said that he would undertake preparing this book. He wanted to teach a good lesson to the Taneshah. The Taneshah then asked him to prepare the text in a week's time. The week was coming to a close and Ramakrishna had not even started writing. The other poets were afraid that the Taneshah would punish them.

By the end of the agreed period, Ramakrishna took a few pieces of paper and went to the Taneshah who in turn had invited many friends to listen to this great text. Taneshah asked Ramakrishna if the Bharatam was completed. Ramakrishna said that it was nearly complete but that there were one or two minor doubts which required clarification from the Taneshah. Then the Taneshah asked him what these doubts were so that he could clarify them. Ramakrishna replied that he had some hesitation to raise these doubts in public, and he would wish to do so when both of them were alone. Taneshah and Ramakrishna went inside and Ramakrishna said that he had a doubt as to who would fit in the role of Droupadi.

Since Droupadi was wife to all the five Pandavas, the person in this role would have to be wife for the five Pandavas in the story. This means that Taneshah's wife would be a wife to the ministers as well. Ramakrishna asked Taneshah if he would agree to give this role to his wife. This was not at all liked by the Taneshah. He told Ramakrishna that there was no need to write such a Bharatam and asked him to clear out, after giving him suitable gifts.

Thus we see here that the Taneshah wanted to have the reputation of the Pandavas, but he did not want to accept the sacred terms under which the five Pandavas took Droupadi as their wife. Today, if we want to establish the nobility of our culture, we should realise and accept as a fact that the basis for it is respect for morality and truth. We should follow the path of morality and truth. If we want to have the reputation alone but not follow the path followed by our ancestors, we will only be doing what the Taneshah wanted to do. This will be leading an artificial life. We should not hanker after getting a name and cheap popularity. We should look to the fulfilment of life.

16. All Differences In The World Relate To Name And Form Only

Date: 05 June 1973 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 1973

To think that some are your enemies, some are your friends,
some are your children, some are your relations,
and to develop attachment or dislike towards them is not correct.

See the one Atma in them all. Give up illusion and ignorance.

We have friends and foes, likes and dislikes; whereas Vedanta teaches us to develop equal-mindedness. Just as we do not punish our teeth for accidentally biting our tongue because we consider both the organs as parts of our body, so also, we have to bear in mind that the eternal and universal Atma resides in everyone and everywhere. We should not accentuate differences, but concentrate upon unity. If we attach importance to the bodily relationship, then the individual variation will come to the fore. On the other hand, we should remember that a teacher, a friend, an actor, a guru, and a disciple are different from each other only in name and form. The Atma which is the witnessing consciousness in all of them is the same. The presence of Atma in all these names and forms establishes the oneness of all of them.

From the standpoint of the Great Atma, all that you see, including your own body, in the ultimate analysis, belongs to this universe which is composed of five basic elements. The entire temporal world is spun out of your ego. Appearances are the concoctions of the mind. Our final goal is to ascend from humanity to divinity. So we must utilise this transitory period of our lives to achieve our cherished objectives.

Man is a mixture of the body and Atma - Kshethra and Kshethrajna - the

house and the one who lives in the house. It could be regarded also as Prakruthi and Paramatma, that is Nature and God. It is like a seed consisting of two halves, the illusion and reality or the sthira (fixed) and the chara (moving). If Kshethrajna, the one living in Kshethra is not there, the question of a body existing does not arise at all. A word signifies the existence of what it denotes, and the existence of a thing precedes the usage of a word. The word Kshethrajna has got the additional letters "jna" when compared with the letters contained in the word Kshethra. Kshethra is therefore contained in Kshethrajna and the additional "jna" stands for jnana or the embodiment of wisdom. Without Kshethrajna or Jnana Swarupa, the embodiment of wisdom, there can be no Kshethra.

The body has life only so long as the Jnana Swarupa resides in it. Our Vedanta says that the body is the temple in which God, in the form of Jiva, is residing. In the other pair of words, we have sthira, (something which is fixed) and chara (something which is moving). Nature is always moving about while Paramatma is stationary or sthira. What keeps changing all the time is the world, and what does not change is the Paramatma.

In Indian experience, there is an analogy which comes from the domestic grinding device. This consists of two circular pieces of stone. The stone that is below is stationary while that which is above keeps on revolving. The knowledge that relates to man's life in this world is called the Hematarak Vidya. This keeps on revolving round the world. In the centre of the fixed stone, there is a small wooden peg, which we may compare to our objective. If we put grain in the hole, around this peg, whatever goes away from the centre or the objective, gets powdered; but the grain which keeps close to the centre does not get powdered. It retains its original form.

This means that one who has God in his mind and makes an attempt to keep close to God, remains unchanged. One who goes away from God becomes pulverised and changes his form. Our overindulgence with the body hampers our recognition of our true destination. Even the skin of a dead animal has some value, but the body of a dead person has no value at all. I do not mean to tell you that you should be careless about your body and that you should

give no attention to its upkeep.

We have different kinds of vehicles for transporting us. We have a cycle, a car, a scooter, a bus, and so on; and it is necessary for us to look after these things and put some oil and petrol when needed and keep them in working condition. In the same manner, our body is like a chariot for us. As we look after our cycle or car and give it the necessary petrol and oil, we have to take care of the body so that it may take us through the journey of our life. We have to give it necessary food and keep it in a good condition. Just as when you get your car stuck in mud, you will need the help of many people to take it out, so also, if you get the chariot of your life stuck in the mud of a family, then you will need the help of so many people, of sathsanga, etc. to get it out of the muddle.

along the correct path. On the other hand, we are taking it along a crooked path. That is why we are getting into difficulties, and even losing some of the parts which make up this car of the body. About eighty percent of the people are losing the vital parts of their bodies in this manner by taking to crooked paths. Out of the rest of the twenty percent, fifteen percent are keeping them like cars that are kept in a show room. They decorate themselves, dress well, and eat well. If we have a car, which is intended to transport those who want to travel, and if it does not achieve this purpose, we should regard it as a piece of metal and not as a car.

The body is like a boat to cross the ocean of life. It should be used to understand our source which is also our goal, that is, Brahman. The disciples of Sankara had taught the need for understanding the nature of likes and dislikes, the need for pursuing the sacred ideals in this verse. The body is made up of five elements and is therefore sure to die. The one Atma which resides in the body is permanent and will not die. That is referred to as God Himself. That is the reason why Sankara's disciples asked questions such as who are your enemies, who are your friends, who are your brothers, who are your relatives; and they performed the sacred task of explaining about the Atma.

Divine bliss is the coveted destination for man. We ask ourselves where this bliss is, how does one reach this place of bliss and what should we do to attain this. Today, we are not taking the chariot of our body bliss. The answer has been given by the disciples of Sankara. They said that this bliss is to be found in children who are in ecstasy and who do not have the knowledge of their surroundings. As we grow older, we get more and more involved in sensuous desires. We are not thinking even for a little while about the bliss that we experienced in our childhood.

Christ said once that bliss is playing around the tender cheeks of children, in whom there are no desires. Children often exhibit this bliss in a remarkable manner. The bliss and happiness which children show have no parallel in anything else in the world. For example, if a mother is carrying a child and walking on the road, the child sometimes looks back and laughs. Children have got this extraordinary quality in them that they can make elders also laugh. The reason for this is that they are under no illusion about the importance of their bodies.

Elders are so much immersed in thinking of their body and things that involve the body that even if they want to laugh, they cannot do so. They only put up a pretence of laughter. It is in this context that the Bhagavad Gita says that one who laughs is Narayana and one who cries is Nara (man). When Nara, represented by Arjuna was crying in a despondent mood, Narayana, represented by Krishna was at ease, even in the battlefield.

We laugh only when we are happy. When we are happy, we not only laugh but also try to sing some songs.

Those who have a sweet voice will sing in public. Those who do not have a sweet voice, will at least sing in the bathroom. Krishna had a sweet voice and perfect knowledge of Raga (musical tune) and Tala (rhythm), and so he was singing the Gita even in the battlefield. The word Gita means song and amidst many difficulties in the battlefield, it is only a Krishna who can sing. This shows that God is the embodiment of happiness.

Young students!

You must keep your mind and body in good condition. You should use your body for the sake of establishing truth and righteousness in the country. You must remember that Indian culture of which you are the custodians, should be re-established by you.

17. Seek Work, Worship And Wisdom, Avoid Wealth, Wine And Woman

Date: 06 June 1973 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 1973

Wealth must always be regarded as potentially harmful.

That you can never derive even a little happiness from it, is an unquestionable truth.

A wealthy person sometimes becomes afraid, even of his own son.

This is what always happens in this world.

Pavitratma Swarupas, students!

Man is respected because of his good qualities and not because of his material possessions. It is in this context that Samuthi, the youngest disciple of Sankara, gave this particular verse. Normally man gets so entangled with the world that he mistakenly hopes to derive peace from it. He forgets that he has to pay attention to the four Purusharthas namely Dharma, Artha (wealth), Kama (desire) and Moksha (liberation). Artha and Kama will attain their correct significance if we regard Dharma as our primary basis and Moksha as our final destination. These days we forget the basis and the destination and retain only that which is in the middle and all our life is spent in thinking of Artha and Kama. By neglecting the foundation, that is Dharma and the goal, that is Moksha, we are concentrating only on Artha and Kama. In fact, we should put Dharma and Artha together and Kama and Moksha together. By doing so, we shall use wealth for good purposes and desire only to attain Moksha.

This country depends on four mathas or mothers. They are the Bhoo Matha or the earth, the Veda Matha or the Vedas, the Deha Matha or the people, the Go Matha or the cow. These four mathas are like the four pillars of our

country. These four pillars can also be referred to as sathya (truth), dharma, shanthi (peace) and prema (love). These four cardinal principles are such that with sathya or truth, you have to safeguard the world; with dharma, you have to safeguard the Vedas; with santhi or peace, you have to look after the Go Matha or the cow; with prema or love, you have to look after the people or your fellow human beings. We should regard truth and right conduct as the two eyes of our country. It is only when our motherland, our great mother, has these two eyes, sathya and dharma, she can look after the country and care for her children. If however, by our behaviour we make her blind and remove these two eyes, how can she look after her children?

What is being referred to as righteousness must be promoted in our country with a full mind. We should also help people to put it into practice. When we look at poor, helpless, or weak people, we should be prepared to give them help with all our strength and effort. The reason for adopting such an attitude is that all human beings are brothers and are children of one mother - the universal Divine mother. Therefore, we must develop this feeling of brotherhood and try to help everyone.

As a result of wealth, man is changing into a demon. Possession of money makes one very proud. When one has wealth, he is not inclined to follow the righteous path. He will also lose his capacity to distinguish right from wrong. This has been described by poet Vemana by saying that if your wealth increases, then you will be arrogant; and when your arrogance increases, your bad qualities will increase. He goes on further to say that if your wealth diminishes, your arrogance also diminishes and along with this, your bad qualities will also disappear. This does not apply to all people.

We know, as a matter of common knowledge that there are wealthy people who with their wealth do many good things. In our country, there are many sacred places. There are places of pilgrimage where people go and have a holy bath. There are places where there are temples. There are places where poor people are fed. Many of these have been established by rich people. In this country which has acquired such a sacred reputation, everyone should make good use of his wealth. Such was the clarion call given by the disciples

of Sankara in the verse which I am explaining to you today.

Before realising the need for equal-mindedness, Ramakrishna Paramahansa was attaching importance to things like wealth and position. On one occasion, with a view to test Ramakrishna, a disciple by name Narendra or Vivekananda kept gold coins under the bed of Ramakrishna. Immediately Ramakrishna got up because he felt as if his body was burning. The inner meaning of this story is that Ramakrishna was still seeing the distinction between gold on the one hand and mud on the other and so on. It means that he had not got over these differences. At that moment he was still distinguishing one thing from another, but later Ramakrishna held mud in one hand and gold in the other and kept on exchanging them until he lost the sense of distinction between them. He had then realised the equality or the oneness in them.

While it is quite possible for such realised people to make no distinction between things of value and no value, for other common people who have to carry on their daily lives and who have responsibilities of the family, there has to be a distinction between gold and mud. They cannot treat them alike in daily life. But, the inner meaning is that in one's mind, there should not be any distinction. By the possession of wealth, some people will develop some crooked ideas in their mind.

Those of you who are students of history will understand this. Queen Victoria was ruling over the British Empire for a long time. She had a son who was rather impatient at the long period of rule by his mother as he, himself, wanted to sit on the throne. In an open meeting, he went and asked the queen when she would die so that he might occupy the throne. She at once found that this man was very ambitious and ordered that he be put in prison. Even if he is a son, the desire for money and position made him greedy and as a result, he had no respect for his mother.

There is a small story in our Upanishads which tells us how the possession of wealth will change the qualities of some people. A mother, who had a lot of money, had only one son. The boy had lost his father early in life. As the boy grew older and older, he developed bad habits because of his wealth. He got

into bad company and did things which he should not have done. In fact, he looked like a mad fellow. He was wasting his life. The world is such that if there is a large quantity of water in a tank, many frogs come and gather in that tank. But once the tank is dried up, all the frogs will disappear and they will not even tell you where they are going. In the same manner, many friends will gather round you as long as you have wealth; and the moment this wealth disappears, the friends will also disappear without telling you. In this manner, the son of that wealthy person gathered a large number of bad friends and in course of time this had crossed all acceptable limits. Many people, as some of you know, spend their time in this manner and waste it without any purpose.

The son used to come to the mother, day after day and demand large sums of money, with the result that the mother's affection towards the boy began diminishing and she developed a positive hatred towards the boy. The mother was feeling sorry; and as days went on, the respect for the mother in the boy also completely disappeared. The boy lost all attachment to the mother. She thought that it is much better that such a son who brings down the honour and reputation of the parents dies rather than lives, and therefore she worked out a plan one day. At the same time, the son had his own plan as he thought the mother was coming in his way of fulfilling his desires and using the wealth. He therefore thought that it is better that such a mother dies rather than lives.

One day the son was to kill his mother with an iron rod as the mother came to serve him food. On the same day the mother decided to kill the son by poisoning his food. When the mother came to serve him food, the son hit her with the iron rod and killed her. A few minutes later, the boy also died after eating the poisoned food. So, both mother and son died and this is what their wealth had done to them. Because of the wealth, the mother had lost affection for the son and the son had lost affection for the mother. Is wealth intended to bring such bad results?

We should never regard wealth as the most important thing in our life. We should regard dharma as the most important thing in our life. We should

thereby earn the grace of God. You should have money which is enough to meet your essential requirements. Anything more than that should be used for charity and such other good things.

Today, we do see many situations amongst the students by which they get spoilt by possessing excess of money. In the first instance, it may look very difficult to get on with minimum amount of money; but if they can control their desire for money, they will be very happy and peaceful thereafter. When students are really in need of ten rupees, they prepare themselves to ask for twenty rupees. In that context, when the children ask for twenty rupees, the parents should give only ten rupees. This is very essential. The son may feel hurt if he gets only ten rupees when he asks for twenty rupees. Even though he feels hurt momentarily, he will get strength later on. If he is given twenty rupees when he actually needs only ten, he will get bad friends and spend that money on them.

There is a small story which is significant in this context. On a Saturday, a father was engaged in worshipping the Lord and he called his son and told him to get some plantains for one rupee. This son was a good boy and he went and purchased the plantains, but on the way he saw a mother and son standing on the road; they were very hungry. When the hungry boy saw the plantains, he ran towards them. The hungry mother, who saw the boy running, ran after him and caught him; but both of them collapsed of hunger. When this young man found these people suffering so much from hunger, he thought that it was much better to feed these hungry people than take the bananas home. He gave the bananas to this mother and son and later brought water and gave it to them. These people were so relieved of their hunger and thirst that they expressed their gratitude in many different ways and shed tears of joy.

This young student went home empty handed. When the father asked him if he had brought the bananas, he replied in the affirmative. When asked where the bananas were, the son replied that the bananas which he brought were sacred, will not rot, and cannot be seen. The son explained that he fed two hungry souls with the bananas; and the fruits which he brought home are

only the sacred fruits of action.

The father then felt that his son was worthy of him and felt that all his prayers had been answered that day. He thought that his life was very sacred as he had such a good son. The father developed great affection for the son from that day and they came much closer to each other. Such a closeness between father and son is very rare today. If you can develop such a feeling, you can develop your country into a Thyaga Bhoomi and a Yoga Bhoomi and build up great traditions.

If we ask ourselves what kind of relationship should exist between children and parents in our country, I have to tell you another story. A mother, father and son had been coming by foot from a long distance. On the way, the father died as he did not have sufficient food. The mother, along with the eight-year-old son, started earning her food by begging from door to door in one of the big cities. On the day when she got sufficient food, she used to give food first to her eight-year-old son. If something was left, she ate. Otherwise she denied herself food and remained hungry. In this manner, as time went on, she was not getting sufficient food, and what she could gather was sufficient only for the son. She was herself starving and because of this, she developed an incurable disease. In this process she became so weak that she could not even get up and walk. The eight-year old son touched her feet and requested permission to go and beg for food, so that he may collect food for both of them. In our country, no mother will permit her son to go and beg for food. That is the heart of an Indian mother. But when this boy came and asked for permission to go and beg, it was inescapable and she reluctantly agreed that the boy may go and beg for food. The boy used to first feed the mother and if anything was left, he used to eat. If nothing was left, he used to tell a lie to his mother that he had already eaten his food. In this manner, he was spending the days. As time went on, the boy became very weak and sick.

One day he went to the house of an officer for begging. The officer was sitting in his veranda and reading a newspaper. The boy's voice was very feeble, and with a feeble voice he asked for alms. The officer found that the boy was very weak and hungry and offered to serve him food in a leaf rather than give him

alms, and the officer went inside. By the time he came out with food on a leaf, the boy had collapsed and was murmuring feebly that the food may be sent to his mother. So saying, he gave up his life. Our country, which had experienced such affection between mother and son - an affection running through our blood - is today witnessing a sorrowful situation. Things have become so bad that one dare not think of what the situation actually is.

Divyatma Swarupas!

We have the saying "Mathru devo bhava, Pithru devo bhava." You must remember that the mother and father are divine and each of them is like the God. You must put these sacred ideas into practice in your life. In India, the most sacred thing is respect for one's mother and father, who have not only given their blood in giving birth to us but also starved themselves on many occasions to give us what we need. If you respect your parents today, your children will respect you in future. If in future, you want to enjoy happiness, pleasure and bliss, even now you must be good, do good and see good. This is the way to God. Do not forget God and do not fear death. You should, in this manner be a heroic son of your country. Our wealth is the wealth of righteousness, knowledge and wisdom. That is the reason why Arjuna was called Dhananjaya. This name does not refer to ordinary wealth. This simply means that he had the wealth of wisdom in an abundant measure. Arjuna had several other titles which described his great qualities.

There are three words of which we have to take note. All the three words begin with the letter "W." They are work, worship and wisdom. Work here stands for sacred work which one should do for promoting the prosperity of the country. You should always do good work. You should worship with a pure mind. Wisdom is superior knowledge and you should aspire to acquire knowledge with wisdom. These are the three things which will enable you to lead a proper life. There are three other words, all of which also begin with the letter "W" and you must avoid them. They are wealth, women and wine. They will, if one is after them, take you to the barbarous depths of human living. You should avoid them.

Students!

Some of you must take to this sacred path. Like the disciples of Sankara who had proclaimed the importance of truth, those of you who follow this path will be able to resurrect Indian culture and will enjoy bliss and happiness. I bless that you may realise such a state of bliss.

18. Jiva And Brahman Are Like Two Halves Of A Seed

Date: 07 June 1973 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 1973

If one moves about in this world without due regard to moral principles, and without exercising the necessary self-control, he will be immersed in illusion and ignorance even if he is a devoted person.

This is like the fact that one cannot dispel darkness, without the help of a lamp, a situation which is quite natural in the world.

Pavitratma Swarupas, students!

On the stage of the world, everyone has been going through a variety of acts. Everyone is participating in many different types of shows. Every living being from amongst the eighty-four lakhs of jivas has been doing this; but in this particular birth of a human being only, one is trying to earn God's grace in many ways. He is trying to satisfy God and earn His kindness. Alas! In spite of his trying hard, he has not succeeded in earning such grace. The appearances that we are putting out through the songs that we are singing and the words that we are uttering, are really hollow.

In this world, it is a common practice that when a man is carrying a load on his shoulders, he wants to walk fast and reach his house early so that he may relieve himself of the load on his shoulders. In the same manner, if an officer goes to his office in the morning, he will be asking himself at five o'clock and even before that, when he can go home. When you are making a journey in a car, in a bus, or in a train, you tend to ask when the journey will end and when you will reach the destination. While this is so in regard to worldly situations, even after going through many births and deaths, man does not

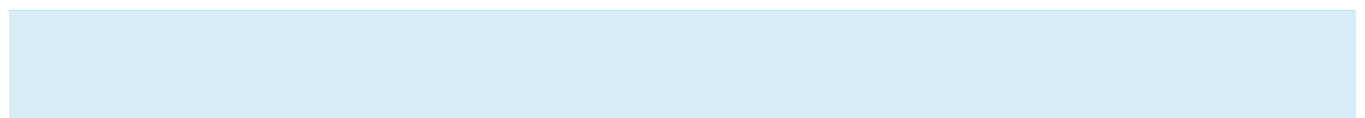
seem to ask himself the question when he will reach his destination, the goal of Divinity.

Today, in the world many attempts are being made to increase the leisure which man can get; but, we are not making the necessary attempts to secure peace. If man does not have peace, even if he gets leisure, he will not get any satisfaction. A Jnani or a wise man, will be unperturbed and peaceful, even if he works for all the twenty-four hours of the day. On the other hand, an ignorant person will look very troubled and ruffled even if he has no work at all and is able to enjoy leisure for the whole day.

Not having found peace on earth, man is flying to the moon. A little later we shall discuss the question of whether or not man can get peace on the moon; but we should try to ascertain what man hopes to get by spending several crores of dollars for the purpose of going to the moon. On the moon, the body may be cool but the mind is in a state of terrible fear. Are we going to attain peace on the moon if we cannot find it on the earth? We are not going to find peace in such places.

We will find it in the innermost heart of each individual. To look for peace outside one's own heart is a great mistake. One should look within himself for peace and do so with a clean mind. It is like our describing something with a very attractive name and hoping that the name will hide the true nature of the contents. When you actually look into a thing of that kind, you will find that there is nothing worthwhile in it at all. We talk of the moon and going to the moon, with acclaim, but what we get on the moon is perfectly useless. It is only the name that is attractive. Instead, if we spend several crores of dollars on people on earth who deserve to be helped, how nice would it be?

In the same manner, every man on the earth wants to have peace. With a desire to have peace, man makes many attempts and undertakes many types of work.



Where there is dharma and righteousness in the heart, there will be promoted good qualities;
Where there are good qualities, you will find harmony;
Where there is harmony, there will be order;
If you find order and discipline, you will find peace in the world.

Therefore, peace depends on the quality of the individual. Cultivation of good qualities and virtuous conduct is the path which leads towards Self-realisation.

There is a small and interesting story relating to this aspect. Once God created a soul and told him that he will give him whatever he wants. Immediately, the Goddess sitting with the Lord, told Him that He was going too far in giving such a boon to the Jiva for there are no limits to man's desires and ambitions. Man is greedy and if he is given the freedom to ask, he will ask for anything. Then God told the Devi that He is not so careless and ignorant in giving such a boon as she seems to think; because whatever man may ask for, he will certainly not ask for peace of mind. He will have to come back to God at least for his peace of mind if for nothing else. The Devi then asked how such peace of mind could be found. God replied that, man does not have to come to God, because in every Atma, Paramatma resides. If man thinks and does service in a selfless manner, he will surely find peace of mind.

Today, we are reminded of the adage that the proper study of mankind is man himself. Wherever there is oneness of the thought that comes to one's mind, the word that comes from one's mouth and the deed that one performs, there is the spirit of Atma. If there is no oneness, no unity or co-ordination between thought, word and deed, there will be no peace of mind. At this age, you must understand and give a sacred place to the Atma or soul; and you must recognise that the thought that comes from your mind should be pure, the word that comes from your mouth should be true, and the work that you

do should be sacred. I hope that you will realise the importance of these statements and give them a prominent place. The predominance of bad qualities keep the good qualities suppressed.

There is a small example for this. If you want light, you require a container, some oil and a wick. These are the three essential things. If all these things are there, then the light that you see will be shining like the grace of God. In this analogy, we have to regard vairagya or detachment as the container, devotion or bhakthi as the oil, and work as the wick. If all these three things are present in a person, then wisdom in him will be shining like a light. If you do not have these three, then God will not be there to light the lamp of wisdom or knowledge.

It may also happen that you have all the three components and yet you do not have the grace of God for lighting the lamp. The container, the oil and the wick may be there; but, will there be light? Flowers, needle and thread may be there, but will the garland come of its own accord? Gold and precious stones may be there, but will the jewels come of their own accord? There may be intelligence and education but will you get wisdom without a guru? You may be very intelligent but when someone writes the letter "A" on the blackboard, you will not be able to find out what it is till someone tells you first that the particular shape represents the letter "A." Mere intelligence, devotion and detachment, devoid of wisdom, will not help you to attain the desired result.

In this world God is present, mixed up with jiva, in every living being. If to some extent, you forget the jiva and concentrate on the aspect of God, you will find that there are no obstacles in your life. Between jiva and God, there will ultimately be only one that is God. If you take a seed, break it into two halves and put them into the earth you will not get a plant; but if you plant the whole seed, you will get a sprouting plant. In the same manner, jiva and Brahman together constitute one seed. They are like two halves of the whole seed and only out of the whole seed will life sprout. Each one has no existence by itself.

We are born as human beings. We proclaim ourselves to be Divine. With all this, we do not understand the true nature of human life. When a human being is living as a human being, it gives great pleasure to God. When you are called a human being, you should conduct yourself in a manner that is befitting of a human being.

There is a small example for this in the Ramayana. Ravana made several attempts to get Sita for himself. He had put on different appearances. But Sita avoided coming into the hands of Ravana. She was always thinking of Rama. Having realised this situation, Mandodari, the wife of Ravana, told him that if he wanted to aspire for the hand of Sita, there was no use putting on different appearances. She said that the only chance of success is in Ravana putting on the appearance of Rama himself. Then, Ravana replied that if he could really put on the sacred appearance of Rama, he would not get such evil thoughts in his mind at all! When you look like Rama, you will get the thoughts and ideas appropriate to Rama and not those of Ravana.

In this context, if we put on the appearance of a human being, we should have qualities of a human being and not those of a monkey or a demon. The power to distinguish right from wrong, to keep away from sin and to be attracted to good, are the qualities appropriate to a human being. They in turn will lead man towards divinity. Man shares with animal some common characteristics such as eating, sleeping and fearing. The distinctive feature which renders man different from an animal is jnana, or intelligence. The animal does not have intelligence.

In the Ramayana, we have the story of Hanuman. He sets an example to all of us by the manner in which he conducts himself. When he comes close to Rama, he shows extreme humility and respect. What is the reason for Hanuman exhibiting such humility in the presence of Rama? The reason for such behaviour lies in the description of "Ramo Vighrahan Dharmaha" of Rama. Rama is the embodiment of dharma and therefore in the presence of dharma, he shows humility. The same Hanuman, when he went to Lanka, had put himself on a pedestal higher than that of Ravana because Ravana asked him to squat on the floor like a monkey. The reason for this is that while in the

presence of dharma, Hanuman is humble and obedient, but in the presence of an arrogant king, he would not show any humility. In the same manner, you should bow down to dharma, and show respect to teachers and elders. On the other hand you should show courage and prudence when placed in a predicament which is adharmic. Even then, you should not take to anarchic methods.

Today, without even making an enquiry as to what is dharma and what is adharma, people are behaving like monkeys which are in a state of excitement. There is a small example for this. One student went to a hotel and ordered some food. He ate the food and started leaving without paying money to the hotel keeper. Then, the hotel keeper insisted on the money being paid. In such a situation, if students attack the hotel and set fire to it saying that the hotel keeper had insulted one of them, it becomes bad and unworthy conduct. This kind of an incident brings disgrace to the entire student community. This is taking a wrong path while having the sacred Saraswathi, Goddess of learning, in your heart.

Today, even if the cost of something in a hotel goes up by one naya paisa, the students undertake a strike. Even if the bus fare is increased, the students undertake a strike. Taking into consideration the time and place, if Hanuman conducted himself in such an up right manner, how much better should we conduct ourselves when we call ourselves human beings?

The difference that exists between a monkey and a man can be easily understood. A monkey is called a Vanara and man is called Nara. The only difference is in the additional letter "Va" which means a tail. Therefore, one who has a tail is a monkey and one who has no tail is a man. Despite this difference, the behaviour seems to be the same. In a monkey, there are no qualities which can be attributed to man; but in a man, there are some residuary qualities, which are characteristic of a monkey. In order to get over and shed these residuary qualities of a monkey which are hanging on to us, we should go along the sacred path.

It is in the context of taking such a sacred path that the disciples of Sankara

spoke about morality and truth and declared that even for one, who gives a considerable amount of charity and help, if he does not have morality and truth, his ignorance is not going to be removed. Vemana has poetically expressed that one who eats or swallows a dog is a knowledgeable person: one who eats or swallows a pig is even wiser and is like a Yogi: one who eats or swallows an elephant is the noblest soul. Here Vemana used the word dog synonymously with anger and one who can control his anger is like a knowledgeable person. He used the word pig synonymously with ego. Therefore if you can suppress your ego, you are like a Yogi. In the third line, the elephant is compared to arrogance. If you can control your arrogance, you become a Jnani or a noble soul. He implies that if you can control your anger, ego and arrogance, swallow them and digest them so as not to exhibit them, you become a great Yogi. Therefore, young people should make a great effort to suppress their anger, ego and arrogance. You must develop sacred ideas like truth, forbearance and prema and convey their sacred ideas to your friends and thereby help to uphold the great traditions and culture of the land of Vedanta.

19. Present Is The Most Sacred Of All Time

Date: 08 June 1973 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 1973

To be born again and again, to die again and again,
to lie dormant in the womb of the mother before every birth,
is an endless cycle of Samsara.

Please, Oh God! By your grace, quickly get me out of this troublesome cycle.

Divyatma Swarupas!

Whatever is born into this world and takes a form is sure to change, decay and pass away. But before one dies, between birth and death, there is an intervening period. The changes that come about in that period, such as the growth and decay, are inevitable. These changes in life occur for all living things. Every human being must ponder over this aspect and make an enquiry about the manner in which he is spending time between his birth and death. Are we making proper use of our time and fulfilling the purpose of our life? Vichar helps to gain Vairagya - enquiry helps to gain detachment. He will see that most appearances which man puts on are only pretensions. As soon as the merit of his past births is exhausted, he will give up this transient life and die. He will take with him all the good and all the bad that he has done during this life.

We try to enquire into the significance of the phenomenal world when we witness birth following death and death following birth. Is this cycle of birth and death the only significant feature of this world? On an enquiry, we conclude that we die to be born again and that we are born to die again. This conclusion is not the right thing.

Generally speaking, people take medicine so as to cure themselves of their disease, but correctly one should take medicine so that one does not have to take it again. Similarly an individual having taken birth should try that he may not take birth again. To be born to die and to die to be born again gets one caught up in the wheel of time.

Without having a body, one cannot do anything in the world. The body has got a gross form and this gross form is only a means to fulfil the main purpose of life. This body is as much responsible for bondage as it is for our liberation.

They say that man's mind alone is responsible for man's bondage and man's liberation. This is not the complete truth. Both body and mind are responsible for our bondage and liberation. Without the body, one cannot recognise the nature of one's mind. The life, mind and intelligence become evident only while accompanying the body. Therefore, we must use such a sacred body for the useful purpose of seeing truth. A human being is the most sacred of all the animals. To be born as a human being is an extraordinary gift. Therefore, man must use this life of his in a purposeful manner.

The disciples of Sankara have pointed out that man remains in a miserable state in the womb of the mother during this cycle of birth and death. He gets some relief from such suffering after his birth. Therefore, he must make life a sacred one.

The world is comparable to a big machine. Each individual is a cog in that big machine. The totality of all beings constitute that machine of the world. We may feel the futility of our lives when we are compared to a small pin, a bolt or a screw in that huge machine, forgetting that the machine is dependent upon a small pin, etc.

For example, imagine a railway train running at a great speed. This train will not come to a stop even if lakhs of people try to stop it. Those who make an attempt to stop it may be harmed. But if the driver puts on the brake, with the help of a small pin, the train will instantly stop. This train, which is running at great speed and which could not be stopped by lakhs of people, has been

stopped by the use of a small pin. In the same manner, when man uses his mind, his ideals, his intelligence and when he faces sorrow, trouble and untruth in this world, he can have the capacity to counter the sorrow in the world. This is so, in spite of his being only a small pin or a bolt in this big machine of the world. Therefore, he must regard himself as a good and useful person in the context of the prosperity of the world.

We should not at any time be afraid that life will fly away from this body. This body is made up of elemental substances and will perish sooner or later is an obvious fact and a natural phenomenon. When we think deeply, indeed it should not be a surprise that life will fly away from this body. What should cause surprise is that life could stay in the body for such a long time.

There is a small example for this. Let us take a cycle tyre or a car tyre. If in that tyre, a small pin is pierced, all the air that is in the tyre will go out. While all the air that is in the tyre goes out under such conditions, we should really wonder how this tyre of our body, which has nine big holes in it, can at all hold life in it without its leaking out.

Everything is held together by God's strength. God is present everywhere. You are only a means through which God is seeing everyone in this world. You are only imagining that you are seeing with your eyes, but you are in fact seeing with God's eyes. This world is full of God and everything that you see is God. The body is like a water bubble, temporary and transient, destined to perish.

A poet describes this situation by saying that you cry when you are born, you cry when you die, you cry all the time in your life for one thing or another; but you do not cry when you find dharma declining. Each one of you is a small particle in the kingdom of God. You should try to keep in check all the organs of your body, only then will you achieve the desired result. If you take a stick and beat on the ant hill, will the snake die? If you punish your body, will the sensuous desires disappear? If you give up eating and drinking, will you realise yourself? Without knowing who you are, how can you have knowledge of the Divine? Therefore, the first thing to do is to find out who you are.

Here is a small story. A king used to ask three questions of all the people who came to him. The first question was, who is the best among persons? The second was, what is the best of time, and the third, what is the best of all actions? The king was very anxious to know the answers to these questions. The king was never satisfied with the answers that he got from various people. One day, he went to the forest for pleasure. He was moving about the hills and plains and felt very tired. He saw an ashram and wanted to take some rest there. By the time the king reached the ashram, a sadhu was watering some plants. This sadhu saw that the king had come there rather tired. He stopped watering the plants, ran up to the king and gave him some good fruits and cool water. At that time, an individual wounded all over the body, was brought to the ashram by another sadhu. As soon as the sadhu saw this, he went to the individual, cleaned all his wounds and gave him some herbs which could cure the wounds. He was also telling him sweet words which could console the person.

The king came to the sadhu and wanted to express his gratitude and take leave of him. The sadhu blessed the king; but the king was still troubled by his three questions and wanted to see if the sadhu could enlighten him on that matter. The sadhu stated that the answers to the three questions were contained in the actions which the king had witnessed in the ashram. The king requested the sadhu to elucidate the matter. The sadhu said that when the king came to the ashram he was watering the plants and that was his duty. At that time, on seeing the king, the sadhu had given up his duty and came to the king and gave water and fruit. This was in accordance with correct traditions, as the king was his guest. While relieving the king of his thirst and suffering, another injured individual had come to the ashram. Therefore, the sadhu had given up the duty of serving the king and went to the other individual and began serving him. Whoever comes seeking service from you is the best of individuals at that time. Whatever satisfaction you can give him by serving him will be your duty and this will be the best of work that you can do. The present, when you can do something, is the most sacred of all time. You do not see the future as your eyes cannot perceive it. Past has gone and you can do nothing about it. Thus, the present time in which you can fulfil your duty, the service that you can do to the person who comes to

you, and he who comes seeking your service are the three best things. These are the answers to the king's three questions.

At this young age of yours, you should recognise the present time as the most important. You must fulfil your duty which is the best of work you can do. Your duty is to respect your mother and father. Your duty is to keep away from bad things and also to do whatever work you have undertaken to do in the best possible manner. In doing these things, you will do the best of things and serve the country in the best possible manner. It follows that at this age you must strengthen the three qualities of discipline, devotion and duty. This present life of yours will not come back again and so you must attach importance to good qualities.

It is much better for you to live as a swan for a few minutes than to live a wasteful life like a crow even for fifty years. Prahlada had said that we should use our hands to do sacred tasks. At all times, you should use your mouth for uttering the name of the Lord. If you cannot show kindness and compassion, your birth is simply to ruin your mother's health. Since you have been in the mother's womb for so long and given her so much trouble, you must do things which will give her happiness.

You must express your gratitude. You have to pay four kinds of debt in this world: debt to your mother, debt to your father, debt to the saints and seers and the debt to God. Since your mother has given you her blood, her life and strength, and is responsible for your birth, you must show gratitude by respecting her. You must show gratitude to your father, who gives you money, education and protection. The rishis or saints teach you human qualities and so you must show gratitude to them. Ultimately, God is responsible for all these; so, you must show your gratitude to God.

In our country, there used to be a practice called the "sacrifice of an animal." This was referred to as Bhoota Bali or sacrifice of life. In ordinary parlance, Bali means killing something. The word Bali also means a tax. We are paying tax for electricity, tax for water and so on because we are getting these things from inaccessible places and given to us in accessible places. In the

same manner, Bhoota Bali is like paying tax to God for His having given us life and the chance of understanding Atma. So we have to pay tax to God in return for this good He has bestowed upon us. This tax is paid in the form of sadhana and good deeds. Man wants peace, happiness and bliss for himself. These can be had by paying taxes in the form of meditation for peace, prayers for happiness and bliss and various other sadhanas for similar good things.

In order to get what you want, you have to pay something. In an office, if you work full-time, you get full pay. If you work part-time, you get half pay. Today, we show only part-time devotion and we want full-time reward for this part-time devotion. How can we get this? If you give only part of your mind and ask for full return of the grace of God, it is like asking for full pay for half work. If you recognise with the fullness of your heart that everything that you do is by God's grace, then surely full return will be given by God. You try and you will get it.

20. True Education Results In Humility And Equal-mindedness

Date: 09 June 1973 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 1973

Give up bad qualities like lust, anger, greed and attachment.
Ask yourself who you are.
If you are so foolish as not to know who you are,
you will have endless troubles in hell.

Pavitratma Swarupas, young students!

Fourteen disciples of Sankara had given fourteen different verses describing the nature of detachment. After that, Sankara himself gave the Dwadasa Manjari or the set of twelve verses.

Out of these twelve verses, this is an important verse and lays great emphasis on detachment. Lust stands out as a prominent leader of all the bad qualities. The other three, that is, anger, greed and attachment follow this leader and do things which are dictated by him. In fact, Kama, the God of lust, is responsible for our birth; and Kala, the God of time, is responsible for our death. Rama is responsible for our life and all the good therein. If by our conduct, we can deserve the grace of Rama, Kama and Kala are not going to trouble us very much. Like fire covered by ash, like water covered by a precipitate, like the eye covered by cataract, our wisdom lies dormant, covered by Kama.

It is necessary for us to enquire into the source and nature of Kama. Till we are able to do so, we will not be able to distinguish between what is lasting and what is only temporary, what is right and what is wrong. Kama increases our attachments and thereby weakens our memory and intelligence. Once the

intelligence becomes weak, we will become inhuman. Thus, Kama has the capacity to ruin our life. If we understand the nature of Kama well, it will go away from us in one moment. If we give a high place to it without understanding, then that will get the upper hand and will begin to dance on our heads.

There is a small story for this. In one village a marriage was to take place. The party of the bridegroom came to the village and was staying in a home. The party of the bride was staying in another house. In between both these parties, there was one individual who was demanding all kinds of comforts from both the parties. This individual used to go to the bridegroom's place and tell them that they were always coming late and causing lot of problems to the bride's party. People belonging to the bridegroom's party thought that he was some respected elder from the side of the bride. Similarly, he went to the bride's house and told them that they were not respecting the bridegroom and members of his party and were not giving them all the respect that was due to them. This individual was enacting a drama. He was going to the bridegroom's party and was behaving as if he was a respected elder from the bride's side, and he was also going to the bride's people and behaving as if he was a respected elder from the bridegroom's side. When this drama went too far, the two parties started investigating who this gentleman was and found that he belonged to neither side. At this time, this individual quickly disappeared without telling anyone.

In the same manner, we have the two parties of Pravritthi and Nivritthi, that is: that which deals with this material world and that which deals with the spiritual world. Once you have these two, Kama enacts this particular drama of going to one and the other and posing as a well-wisher. But once you make an enquiry and find out the origin of this Kama, it will disappear, even as the individual in our story disappeared.

This disease of Kama cannot be cured by any medicine. It is not going to be suppressed by a change of place. The only way it can be cured is to earn God's grace; and therefore, if you want to suppress it, you have to deserve God's grace. In order that you may deserve such grace, the Gita says that the

sadhaka should become a daksha.

Daksha is a name for one who has learnt all the possible branches of knowledge, such as Pravritthi, Para Vidya, Nivritthi, Aparā Vidya and so on. You might have heard the stories of Daksha contained in our Puranas. This Daksha of the Puranas had all female children. One of them is Sathi Devi. The name Sathi Devi stands for wisdom. Because this knowledge or wisdom is present with Daksha in the form of a daughter Sathi Devi, Easwara sought Sathi Devi for himself as his bride. In so choosing Sathi Devi as his bride, Easwara became related to Daksha.

So, if we want to get near God and establish a relationship with God, we have to seek and acquire wisdom. When you acquire wisdom, all other branches of knowledge will automatically come to you. But, today, one is a sadhaka only in name. We are spending all our time in eating food. The sadhakas of today eat heavy food, sleep like Kumbhakarna and become fat beyond all limits. This is the reason why Indian culture is being ridiculed to some extent. One who does not cause any hurt to others one who does not trouble others, and one who does his own duty without depending on others can be recognised as a worthy individual. In this young age of yours, you should try to reach the divine and remain humble. You go to colleges for acquiring education, but you forget why you have gone there. Students must spend their time in understanding the main purpose for which they want to get education. Many go to colleges and waste their time in pursuit of sensuous pleasures. At the time of their examinations, they open their books for the first time.

Prema Swarupas, students!

You will not get this age of yours ever again in your life. You must realise its sanctity, only then you will be able to acquire knowledge. You must try to grasp the essence of what you study. If your head is empty and receptive, one can fill it with some good things. But if your head is already filled with all kinds of ideas, how can we put anything further into it?

The Bhagavad Gita states that if a large number of impure ideas enter your

head, it cannot be rectified all of a sudden. They have to be got rid of slowly and steadily. Sometimes we feel that these bad ideas are so deeply rooted in us that it is very difficult to uproot them. You should have a firm determination to get rid of them. Ideas come to you slowly and over a period of time as a result of your own deeds. We should recognise which of them are under our control and which of them are beyond our control.

Here is a story which illustrates how one should deal with a bad habit. One individual got into the habit of eating opium regularly. It was not possible for him to control this habit of eating opium. By taking the opium, he was always in a kind of coma and was in a weak state. While he was in this state, a saintly person visited his city. The opium-eater went along with the crowd to have the darshan of this saintly person. The saint was offering advice and comfort to many who were given to bad habits. Along with them, the opium eater also sought the advice of the saint. On seeing the opium eater, the saint said that his health was deteriorating and that he should give up eating opium. At this, the opium addict said that it was not possible for him to give it up easily and requested the saint to give him some advice as to how this could be given up. The saint asked him how much opium he was used to taking every day and was shown a certain measure as the average quantity that was being taken every day. The saint got a piece of chalk, equal to the measure of opium that was being taken every day and told him that he may continue eating opium but should not take more than the size of the chalk piece each day. The opium eater was quite happy, but he was also told that every day he should write OM three times on a blackboard with that chalk. In this manner, the chalk was reducing in size every day and so the amount of opium which the person was eating was also reducing gradually. Ultimately this habit was removed.

In the same manner, today one takes to smoking a few cigarettes each day and then this number increases to ten, twenty, and ultimately he becomes a chain smoker. In the same manner, various bad qualities have been growing in some of you. Even after knowing that those are bad qualities and are harmful if you do not make an attempt to decrease and give up those bad qualities, it is a sad state of affairs. What is the purpose of your education and

knowledge if you do not give up a habit which you know is a bad habit. Therefore, no devotee should follow the path of ignorance and be called a moodhamathi, but should follow the path of righteousness and be called a mukthamathi. We should have our attention fixed on knowledge and wisdom.

It is also said that if you can get rid of your ego, you can understand Brahman; but then, you have to ask yourself as to how ego can be got rid of. Today, we think that what has come with a form is Ahamkara (ego). We also equate Ahamkara to arrogance. Ahamkara is not always arrogance. It is present at all times and in all the three aspects - sathwic, rajasic and thamasic. This ego has the capacity to take man into very crooked paths. It promotes selfishness and ultimately results in making man forget who he is.

Ego also appears because of beauty, education, wealth, position or caste. If you want to think of your beauty as the cause of your ego, you should know that beauty shines and disappears in a moment like a lightning. If you want to think of your wealth or your strength as the cause of your ego, these things are like mirages and they disappear in a moment.

If we regard the ego as depending on our position, one does not know when this position will rise or fall or even vanish altogether. The moment you lose your position, you become an ordinary person. So, there is no point in having ego which depends on position or authority.

If you want to feel important or arrogant because of your education, it is well known that true education consists of cultivating humility and removing the ego. True education does not bring arrogance. Education brings humility in its wake, and all educated people look at everyone else with humility and equal-mindedness. If we ask the question who is a blind man in this world, we get the answer that he who knows everything and yet is not able to see things in the proper perspective is a blind man. If only we are able to give service and conduct ourselves with humility when we see elders, that will be referred to as true education. Without knowing the essence of education, do not go about saying that you are an educated person. Your beauty, your age, your strength, your wealth and your position should not make you feel very proud

because with advancing age all these will vanish. In this context, what is the point in your feeling proud of this leather bag of body.

Divyatma Swarupas, students!

You go and join schools, colleges, and universities for the purpose of getting education. Do not think that the education which you should get is confined only to the colleges or schools. Education should be got from all the world over. It can be got from a workshop. It can be got from a farm. It can be got from a profession or trade. Even moving in the market can give you education. All aspects of life can impart education. You must regard the world itself as a big university. From the time you get up from your bed till the time you go to sleep again, you are using your education for earning the pittance of a livelihood. If you cannot use your education to be near the feet of the Lord, what is the purpose of all this knowledge? You must have God in your heart and recognise all living beings as equal. You must make every effort to overcome the four obstacles, namely lust, anger, attachment and greed. So long as these thieves are in your home, there is no certainty that you will get the treasure of wisdom. But after driving away these thieves, you will get a bigger thief into your home and that thief is God Himself. That is why He has been called "Chitta Chora" or one who steals your heart.

The story goes that on one occasion Krishna walked by Suradas holding his hand for some distance. Suradas asked Him if He was Krishna and Krishna then let go his hand. Then Suradas exclaimed, "How can I know you and understand you? You are smaller than the smallest particle that one knows. You are larger than the largest thing that one can conceive of. You are mightier than the eighty-four lakhs of created species. You are the biggest thief among the big thieves. How can I understand you?" In recognition of the fact that God is the only one who can remove ego and Ahamkara from us, He has been called Madhusudana. This word is usually indicative of one who has conquered a demon by name Madhu. But madhu also means something which is sweeter than honey and for man, his ego is sweeter than honey. Therefore, in this context, one who can completely destroy this ego is called Madhusudana. Thus, our ego, which is very sweet, can only be removed by

God who is also very sweet. We must have faith in Him and give up our ego and move closer to God. If you do this, God Himself will see when you have to be respected, what you have to be given and when. The entire thing will be His responsibility and all will rest on God Himself. Sankara's message is that you should remove these four thieves, which are in the form of bad qualities within you.

21. Dharma Will Always Protect Those Who Adhere To Dharma

Date: 10 June 1973 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 1973

With empty words, one can never experience bliss and happiness.
Without planting the seed, no one can reap a harvest from land.

Pavitratma Swarupas, students!

The universe, willed by Easwara, is the embodiment of Ananda. Prakruthi or Nature, Easwara and Brahman appear to be different, but their oneness can be recognised by the rasa (sweetness) prevalent in all of them. These have been divided up for the purpose of understanding. They have been given the names Mukti Dhama, Vaikunta Dhama, and Goloka Dhama. These three correspond respectively to Moksha or liberation, Bhakthi or devotion and Jnana or wisdom.

Mukti Dhama is the name given to the path wherein one enquires about the various forms and names visible in creation, which being impermanent, leads one to realise that Sath-chith-ananda, that is, Nirakara or the God without name or form, is the essence of Reality. In this way, one reaches the aspect of yoga and through yoga one attains mukti. This path is, therefore, called the Mukti Dhama.

On the other hand, when one surrenders one's ego to the Lord, thinks of Him and Him alone at all times, he would be following the path of devotion and this is named Vaikunta Dhama.

If one develops noble ideas in all the three states, namely the gross, the subtle and the causal, and enjoys continued bliss recognising the oneness of

everything and developing fully the feeling of his identity with the Brahman, he will be following the path named Goloka Dhama.

Man's nature is such that it keeps on changing from moment to moment. The changing mind veils the true nature of his own self. Due to this ignorance, he sees duality in this world, and begins to relish change. For example, even if one is a good singer, if he goes on singing the same song with the same tone all the time, it will cease to be attractive. A song, though not visible to the eye, consists of several different pleasing sounds. Each tune has a particular form and name. Man always desires to enjoy different tunes in their different forms and names.

Although the world is only one, because it is mixed with various qualities or gunas, it exhibits itself through different sensory perceptions such as sound, touch, sight, taste and smell. In the same manner, although the jiva is only one, because of its previous Samskaras or accumulated impressions, it unknowingly dons various names and forms.

We mistakenly believe that what is seen is truth and what is not seen is untruth. The unseen aspect, in fact, constitutes the basis for what we see. For example, there are fruits, leaves and branches in a big tree that we see. The basis for all these has been the seed and the roots that we do not see. All the mansions that we see have for their base the foundations under the ground which are invisible to us. For man's happiness and good appearance or for his misery and ugliness, the mind and its behaviour are responsible.

What we see outwardly as a man and all the qualities he exhibits depend ultimately on what we do not see and that is his mind. If a horse, which is intended to pull a carriage, is made to sit in the carriage, can it pull the carriage? Just as this horse cannot pull the carriage if it sits in the carriage, so also the Divine principle in our body, which is intended to pull the body along the path of life, cannot do so if it does not disengage itself from the body. Just because one sits in a car, he does not himself become the car. He can at best become one who drives the car. The self that is in the human body cannot lead the body, so long as it is under the illusion that it is identical with the

body. It is only by throwing away this illusory feeling and becoming disengaged from the body that the self can gain control over the situation.

In order to enable you to disengage yourself from these bodily aspects and lead you along the right path, the Bhagavad Gita has given us several lessons. I have been asked a question today, by a young student amongst you, in regard to what Krishna had said in the Gita about human beings giving up their bodies and taking up new bodies as they are reborn, in the same manner as one would abandon an old and torn shirt and take up a new and good shirt when it becomes necessary. He stated that to him, this seems appropriate in the case of aged persons who have developed several bodily infirmities and asked how we can reconcile this in respect of young people whose bodies are still quite fresh and able.

Students!

God's sayings are very difficult to understand, their meaning can be perceived only with wisdom. Only such individuals who have deep faith in God and who are knowledgeable about the ways of God can unravel these matters. What is like an old shirt or a new shirt can be understood only if we look at it in the proper perspective. I wish to explain this to you in some detail.

You go to Kashmir in summer and find that woollen cloth is available there at a low price. You buy it, bring it with you, leave it in your box and forget about it. After four or five years you find it in your box while rearranging things. You are reminded about it, call a tailor, and get a suit made out of it. Wearing that suit, you attend a marriage function. While sitting for a meal, the trouser gets torn and you ask yourself in amazement how a new trouser could get torn so soon. No doubt it is a new trouser, but the cloth is quite old. In the same manner, your body may be young, but the nature and age of the jiva may be quite old.

Another student asked a question relating to the propriety of what Dharmaraja had done when he announced that Aswathama had died. While

doing so, Dharmaraja added in a low tone that an elephant of that name had died. No doubt Dharmaraja created the impression that young Aswathama had died, and to that extent he misled the listeners. Was this right and justifiable? In this case, we have to remember that in actual fact, on that day, an elephant bearing the name Aswathama had died; and this had been pronounced by Dharmaraja in a low tone. It is also true that Lord Krishna had prompted Dharmaraja to make the announcement in that manner with the intention of weakening the warrior Dronacharya by playing on his attachment to his son, Aswathama. Krishna convinced Dharmaraja that he would not be speaking an untruth if he announced the death of the elephant, in a low tone. Dharmaraja as such merely obeyed the Lord. If Dronacharya could not hear the word elephant, it was his fault and not that of Dharmaraja.

The war was over. They were all resting in a tent. Dharmaraja who was feeling sorry, went and begged of Krishna to let him know why He ordered him to conduct himself in a manner not consistent with his name and reputation. Krishna said that He never does anything which is not just and which is not right nor will He ask His devotees to do so. Whatever He does has some meaning and reason.

To explain this, He gave a good example. If a thief enters your house during night and steals some valuable things and escapes along a narrow path which may be thorny and if you want to catch him, you have to pursue him along the same narrow path. You cannot hope to catch the thief by going on the royal road because it is wider and free from thorns. To catch a thief, you have to follow the path which he, himself, takes for his escape. In the same manner, Dronacharya, a Brahmin, a guru who is well versed in all the Sastras and the principles of right conduct, and whose right place is where learning is imparted, has, in violation of all traditional duties, comes to the battlefield. This is the first wrong committed by him. Moreover, he has undertaken to fight with Pandavas who are his own disciples. This is the second wrong committed by him. I have come to this world to re-establish dharma. In order to triumph over adharma, I had to chase Dronacharya in the same path which he himself had chosen for breaking the rules of dharma.

You may get another doubt in this situation. Having described the conduct of Dronacharya, who has undertaken to fight with his own disciples as wrong, should we not regard the decision of the Pandavas to fight against their own teacher, Dronacharya, as wrong? This cannot be the fault of the Pandavas. From the very beginning the Pandavas were following the dictates of the Lord. They were sticking to the path of dharma. Even after the armies on both sides ranged themselves on the field in a battle array and while each one was sounding his appropriate battle cry, Dharmaraja set aside his battle dress, his weapons and walked bare footed to his guru. As he was thus walking up, the Kauravas thought that he was coming to surrender and were exulting in the feeling that the Pandavas were defeated. Not only that, Dharmaraja's brothers too were very upset. However, knowing the promptings of Dharmaraja, Krishna suggested that all the brothers should follow the eldest brother, as they had done all their life. While they were surprised at this conduct of their brother, they did not wish to disobey the Lord. They also set aside their armour and weapons and accompanied Dharmaraja, bare footed.

They all first walked up to Bhishma and addressed him thus: "You are our grandfather and have been our father ever since our father died. You brought us up with great affection. We have to fight against you. Please grant the permission." Bhishma was so moved by the Dharmic conduct of Dharmaraja that he readily blessed them, granting them the permission they sought.

Thereafter, they walked up to their guru, Dronacharya and addressed him thus: "You have been our guru. While Aswathama is a son born to you, we have also been your sons, as we have been brought up by you. However, due to circumstances, we have to fight against you. Please grant us the permission." The guru's heart melted immediately. He embraced Dharmaraja and said, "Whoever protects dharma will in turn be protected by dharma. So, I bless you. Victory shall be yours because of your observing dharmic rules in so meticulous a manner." The Pandavas' observance of the principles of correct behaviour, just before the war was to commence, was a highly commendable feature of their lives. Therefore, it is abundantly clear that the Pandavas did not deliberately mislead Dronacharya.

Students!

The stories that you read in the Puranas may occasionally raise doubts in your mind. Do not get confused, be sure that there is no act of God which has no purpose. You must have the faith that these stories and incidents in our sacred texts like the Bhagavatha and the Bhagavad Gita are intended to establish and uphold dharma. Even God, while doing work relating to the good of man, has to adopt at times plans not easily understood by us. His desire to protect the devotees on one hand, to uphold truth and right conduct on the other, drive Him to do things which seem confusing to us on an apparent assessment.

There is another example where God had done something, seemingly un-understandable, to protect His devotees. It was the last day of the war of Mahabharatha. All the Kauravas had perished. The only exception was Duryodhana. Even as he was approaching his end, he asked his friend, Aswathama, to do something that will give him courage and solace. Aswathama assured him and took the vow that before the day dawns, he would kill all the Pandavas and bring that news to Duryodhana, thus causing him mental satisfaction. Aswathama went to the temple of Kali and prayed to her for strength. Kali, with an unseen voice, told Aswathama that Pandavas being dharmic people, their own right conduct will protect them and that no one can kill them. Nevertheless Aswathama insisted on pursuing his determination and extracted the blessing of Kali only in general terms and set out on his task.

Knowing about the promise given by Aswathama to Duryodhana, Krishna decided to save the Pandavas and went to Durvasa. The sage Durvasa welcomed Lord Krishna. Krishna said that he had some work to be done and said that Durvasa was to undertake the task.

Durvasa was overjoyed, and readily agreed to do what the Lord would ask him to do with one condition, namely, that he would not tell an untruth. Krishna said that He will never ask him to tell an untruth. He will only ask him to tell the truth but follow his guidance.

Krishna conveyed the vow of Aswathama to Durvasa and asked him to protect the Pandavas for the night. He was to dig a pit, make the Pandavas sit in the pit, put a plank over it, and himself be seated over the plank. If Aswathama came, as he would in a few hours time, and enquire about the whereabouts of the Pandavas, Durvasa was to state the truth but with emphasis on certain words. Durvasa agreed. Aswathama searched all over for Pandavas, could not find them and came along to Durvasa in the hope that this great saint, who knows everything, would be able to tell him where the Pandavas were. He praised Durvasa for his divine knowledge and asked him where the Pandavas were hiding. Durvasa remembered what Krishna had told him, pretended anger and shouted "Pandavas! They are hiding under my feet!" Aswathama was afraid of Durvasa getting into further rage and took his remark as expressing only his disgust and walked away. Thus the Lord could protect His devotees and Durvasa did not have to tell an untruth.

With a view to strengthen your faith in our Puranas and Sastras, I have given you the answers today to two chosen questions. Until you are able to develop such faith and gain the necessary strength with which you can unravel the inner meanings of the many stories that are contained in our sacred texts, you should follow your elders. That will put you on the right path. I will bring this discourse to a close and take up further questions in the following days.

22. Everyone Must Work Without Seeking The Fruit Thereof

Date: 11 June 1973 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 1973

You look at things with your eyes. You feel very happy that what you thus see is the truth.

But if you want to understand what reality is, know that it is hidden behind the curtain.

Do not take rest. Come with me and then we shall see the same.

Pavitratma Swarupas, students!

How can you find the one who is all-pervasive and ever-effulgent? He is present in you, around you, and in all places. If you close your eyes and search for Him, how can you find Him? Two lids in the shape of "I" and "Mine" are covering your eyes of wisdom. If only you can open those lids, you can see the real truth of the world. Ignorance is false identification of Self with body or mind. Spiritual endeavour helps to outweigh the worldly desires. Thus the mind is quietened and one reaches the state of egolessness wherein the self-effulgence shines of its own accord. The experience in the egoless state awakens you from the dream of relativity and bondage.

Nature is composed of three basic gunas or qualities, Sathwic, Rajasic and Thamasic, and their interplay determines the nature and moods of human beings at different intervals of times due to the predominance of one or the other.

There are three types of human beings. Those who exert to satiate their sensory desires. Exulting when they are joyous and grieving when they are in the midst of troubles can be compared to a piece of iron. If you put a piece of

iron in fire, it becomes soft and red; and in the process it loses its intrinsic characteristics. When you take it out of fire, it becomes hard and black and gets back its original form. Such people like iron exhibit good qualities so long as they are in good company, but the moment they move away from sathsanga or good company they return to their old habits and incorrigible style of life.

On the other hand, there are others who, in the midst of sorrow, feel happy. Such people can be compared to gold. If you take a piece of gold and put it in fire with a view to melt it, the piece of gold gets rid of its impurities. In the same manner, even when man is in the midst of sorrow, if he can get rid of the sorrow and feel happy, he is like a piece of gold.

People who remain unruffled in the midst of joy or grief can be compared to a piece of diamond. This means that they will always remain in a state of equipoise. In the case of a diamond, you may try to cut it in many ways; but with each cut, its value only increases. By such treatment, the value of a diamond is not going to diminish. Persons of this type always reside in the realm of Brahmananda.

Desire and fear drive man away from his duty and bring him down in others' estimation. Desire exiles us from the happiness that is within us, and its momentary cessation allows us to taste a little of that happiness for the time being. When one seeks to know anything other than himself, without caring to know the truth of himself, the knowledge he obtains can not be right knowledge. One who cannot understand himself will never understand anything about divinity either. In the sacred field of the heart, you will find a Kalpavriksha, the tree which gives you all that you want. Around this tree will grow an enormous number of weeds. If you can remove these weeds, you will get the vision of this boon-giving tree in the field of your heart. This is called Atma.

In order that we may experience this Atma Thathwa, we only have to undertake certain types of actions which are related to the Dharmic way of life. Some people say that all the karmas that we do are different aspects of

dharma. But it is not possible that all karmas are aspects of dharma. Yet others say that only that kind of work which is Sathwic or that which relates to Nivritthi, can be called dharmic karma.

Since we are told that the karma, either Sathwic or not, related to worldly matters can alone be described as dharmic, we should here make some enquiry. At times we are kind to individuals and at other times we even kill our enemies in a battle. These are also karmas. In order to protect this body, which is ultimately responsible for the performance of karma, we do many kinds of work. Work to fulfil our sensuous desires cannot be treated as related to dharma. It is only when you remove selfishness and various kinds of desires from your mind, while working, can that work be described as an aspect of dharma. We can regard such karma as fulfilling the dictates of divine dharma. Such actions will also help the individual to advance spiritually.

Although dharma reveals the notion of oneness to one and all, yet in practice it varies in different countries, with different individuals, and in different epochs. If mind concerns itself with worldliness, then it is separated from the light of the Atma and this separation causes mental perturbation. In order to have a vision of God you have to purify the inner instruments and conduct a virtuous life. We should keep our intelligence disengaged from the worldly issues. Intelligence should not be made a tool to satiate physical and mental obsessions. On the other hand, it should be used for the revelation of Atma. It should only be a witness and remain unaffected by the surroundings. Then it is in a state of Nivritthi.

In this context, sacrifice of work cannot be something which relates to Nivritthi. Sacrifice of one's desires alone can be associated with Nivritthi. People sometimes refer to the Karma Phala Thyaga (renunciation of the fruits of action) and say that one has to sacrifice the result of whatever work one does. If this is so, they argue that no work need be done at all and they assert that this is what Bhagavad Gita teaches us. Nothing can be farther from truth. No one can sacrifice all work and yet live. The body has been created for doing work. Therefore everyone must perform work. But in doing such work, if

your thoughts are sacred, you will do good work without seeking the fruit thereof.

Some weak-minded people desire to sacrifice the body in their devotion. This is a poor sacrifice and this cannot lead them towards the goal. Your attempt should be to remain unaffected by the surroundings. On the other hand, if you sacrifice your body, you may again be reborn to do the same karma.

Man encounters three kinds of knowledge called the Jiva pragna, Easwara pragna and Atma pragna. The Jiva pragna tries to bind the individual. The Easwara pragna tries to bind others. The Atma pragna gives you liberation from all bondage. We must therefore try to acquire Atma pragna. If we acquire Jiva pragna or Easwara pragna, it will result in bondage either for us or for others. It cannot be the means for your liberation.

We should also understand the difference between Easwara pragna and Atma pragna. It is customary to make a distinction between "I" the individual and the "wisdom" that he possesses. The feeling that "I" and the "wisdom" are separate implies that there must be something which establishes the connection between these two. If there is nothing between the individual and his Jnana, then it is not possible for us to distinguish between these two. This indiscernible power or the connection between the individual and his Jnana, has been referred to as Jneya. Because this indiscernible Jneya is between these two, we distinguish between them. The moment this Jneya is removed, you get a feeling of oneness. Therefore, that which is to be known, the process of knowing it and the one who desires to know must all become one. If they are separable from each other, there is a duality. This process of merging Jneya makes man forget his individuality and makes him one with the object of knowing.

There is a small example for this. There is one who loves and one who is loved, but in between these two, unless there is the act of love, no connection is possible. Just as this act of love brings together the individuals who are in love with each other, so also the process of Jneya brings together the objective that is being known and the one that wants to know. If we,

therefore, make an intensive study of this process Jneya we will understand the unity of the one who wants to know and the one that has to be known.

The various processes and attempts for realising this oneness can be regarded as important aspects of dharma. This dharma is called by three names, the inner dharma, the gross dharma and the subtle dharma. Dharma also takes the three attributes sathwa, rajas and thamas and moves in the three parts of Bhakthi, Jnana and Karma or worship, wisdom and work. This fact of dharma taking these three aspects is implied in the full and complete meaning of the word Sanathana Dharma.

For us, to be able to recognise the divine principle in all the three gunas, namely sathwa, rajas and thamas, and also to recognise the presence of divinity in the past, present and future and to be able to associate divinity with the three aspects of the body - the gross, the subtle and the causal - are the essential features of dharma.

Because it is difficult for an ordinary individual to comprehend dharma in its entirety in the three different periods of time - past, present and future, in the three aspects of the body - gross, subtle and causal, and in the three gunas - sathwa, rajas and thamas - we generally take an easier path and we talk of specialised types of dharma, dharma relating to the body, to the caste, to the individual, to the society, and so on. These specialised forms only help in propagating the original Sanathana Dharma. If we do not follow these specialised forms of dharma, it will not be possible for us to recognise and practise Sanathana Dharma.

There is again a small example for this. Our body consists of many organs. We can conclude that the body is in a good and prosperous condition only when all these organs are in good shape. If one or more of these organs is not functioning well, we cannot say that the body in its entirety is healthy. In the same manner, these individual and specialised dharmas relating to the caste, body, religion, society, and so on enable the total Sanathana Dharma to shine and be healthy.

For instance, if six blind people go near an elephant, and one of them touches its stomach, the elephant appears to him like a big wall. Another blind person touches the ears of the elephant. To him the elephant looks like a big fan. Another touches the leg of the elephant, and he would describe the elephant as if it was like a pillar. Yet another blind person described the elephant as a big rope after touching the tail of the elephant. The elephant is actually the totality of all these parts, each part felt and described by a different individual.

In the same manner, many blind people are touching this vast Sanathana Dharma, and describing it as consisting of only that which they are able to comprehend. Those who follow Vaidika Dharma, those who follow Jainism, those who follow Christianity, those who follow Islam, and so on, all of them describe that part of Sanathana Dharma which is appropriate to their respective religions. Sanathana Dharma in its totality is not being seen and described by any one of them. Each one of them is describing only a fragment. We need not discuss whether what each one of them is saying is true or untrue. There is no doubt that they are describing accurately what they have experienced and what they have chosen to describe. But each one is describing only a part of dharma. No one is describing the totality of it.

Therefore, if you want to understand and establish the total picture of dharma, what you have to do is to make a synthesis of the essence of all religions. When we are able to bring and put together the ideas of everyone, the moral laws supported by all religions, and the truth that is in all religions, we will have a picture of Sanathana Dharma.

No one has the right to hate or criticise another's religion. You have the right to describe your dharma or the particular aspect which you have chosen to understand. But you have no right to discuss and criticise other aspects. You have direct experience of only one aspect which you have chosen, but you have no expertise in other aspects. When someone comes and tells you his views, you will feel that he is right because he is describing that particular component which he has chosen and understood. You will feel that each one is right in his own way. You will have no reason to think that he is wrong.

Before we start an argument, we should try and assess our own capacity and our own strength.

I will now tell you something which is known to most of you in your daily experience. In big cities, they have large traffic circles, where four roads meet. There are signposts telling you which way to go. If you are coming from the east, you must look for other vehicles coming from north, south and west. If you do not do so, you may meet with an accident. As in this analogy, this big circle of Nature or Prakruthi has four roads meeting it. These roads are Veda, Sastra, Ithihasa and Purana. If you are going along one path, say of Purana, without recognising what the other three paths contain, how are you going to conduct an argument? Many people know Puranas but they know nothing of Vedas. Some people know Vedas but they know very little of Puranas. In the same manner, some may know Ithihasas but not the others. It is through the recognition of the oneness of all the four - that we will get God's grace.

If we only take God as an ideal and the charioteer of our life, we will not be subjected to any harm. Like the policeman who stands on duty at the circle and tells you how to safely go through the traffic, God tells you which way to go safely in this wide world. The policemen today create some confusion and cause accidents without looking in all directions, but the Divine policeman in God will never let such accidents take place. If only we surrender to God, there is no doubt whatsoever that our life will be very happy and God will look after us.

Students!

Today you may not understand the full meaning of dharma, but in the next few days I wish to expand on that by giving you easily understandable examples. Some people are very confused about the nature of dharma. This need not be so, Dharma deals with your happiness, security and peace.

23. The True Nature Of Dharma

Date: 13 June 1973 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 1973

After committing a bad act, you cannot hope to get some good result.
After having done something good, you need not be afraid that you will get bad results.

If you plant the seeds of lemon, how can you get fruits different from lemons?

All forms and all religions relate to Him.
He is present in all the idols which we worship.

Pavitratma Swarupas, students:

In this infinite world, there are manifold Jivas. Amongst all of them, man reigns supreme. While eating and sleeping are common to all living beings, man is distinguished by two qualities. One is dharma or right conduct and other is jnana or wisdom. If this jnana and dharma are not present in man, he will also have to be grouped along with all other living beings.

We should first enquire as to what dharma means. Dharma ordains man to observe certain rules of behaviour for social and spiritual progress. The observance of such restrictions and disciplines can be called dharmic. Dharma is also capable of causing hurt to people who try to cause the decline of dharma. Similarly, dharma will protect those who will try to protect it. Another sacred quality of dharma is that wherever it is, there will be victory as well.

This sacred word dharma has been commented upon by many elders in this country. This country has been bound by the rope of dharma and therefore it

acquires a distinctive feature and serves as an example to other countries. This word dharma, which is really bound up with an infinite variety of meanings, is being inadequately described by one word, duty, in the modern age. Duty is something which is connected with an individual, a predicament, or with a particular time or country.

On the other hand, dharma is eternal, the same for everyone everywhere. It expresses the significance of the inner Atma. The birth place of dharma is the heart. What emanates from the heart as a pure idea, when translated into action will be called dharma. If this is to be explained in a manner that all can understand, one can say, "Do unto others as you want them to do unto you" - that is dharma. Dharma consists in avoiding actions which would hurt others. If anyone causes happiness to you, then you in turn should do such things that will cause happiness to others. When we recognise that what others do will cause difficulties and if we do the same things, that would be adharma.

Sometimes, and under some circumstances, an individual who commits a wrong has to be told in very clear terms that he has done something wrong, in order to improve him. Simply because one uses a knife sometimes, one cannot conclude that it is an evil thing or that the individual is a cruel person. For example, sometimes a doctor uses a knife and cuts open the heart while performing surgery. Will this be called cruelty or an act of helping?

If you do something which is connected with untruth, it could be called adharma. But whatever action you do with prema cannot be called adharma. Law is love, and the entire system of law is based on love. For instance, if a boy commits a mistake and if the mother beats the boy, would you call it cruelty or adharma? In this context, dharma has acquired many different meanings. There is dharma relating to time, relating to the world, relating to heart, relating to a sect, and so on. There are varieties of dharma which have come up in usage at the present time.

The sum total and essence of all these dharmas is Sanathana Dharma. It is in this context that we can say that all religions are His and all forms are His. No dharma will ever teach you to be disrespectful to your parents or teachers. It

never tells you to speak untruth. All religions have had much in common and that is the good in them. What we have been doing is to neglect what has been common to all religions. On the other hand, what has not been said by any of the religions is attracting our attention. That is the reason why we have taken to the path of adharma.

If each one develops faith in his own religion and puts into practice whatever has been said in his own religion, then there will be no room for the difference of opinions which are flourishing now and for the uncultured way in which we often talk. While you profess faith in your religion and act in your daily life in a contrary manner, then one can understand what faith you have in any religion. If you have true faith in the religion which you profess, then there is no chance of your behaving in a manner contrary to the tenets of that religion. When precept is divorced from practice, then it appears like an external cloak. This itself is adharma. All our devotion and faith today are in appearance only. They are not truly in you.

If we go to any place of pilgrimage or a place of worship, we show a great deal of devotion and faith; but when we come away from such places, all our devotion and faith are left behind. It is in this context that the Bhagavad Gita has said, "Satatam Yoginaha". This means that you must be a Yogi and a devotee always and at all times. Our good qualities are in the forefront only when we are doing puja or japa. The moment we come out of our puja, we shed such qualities. Good qualities are not to be tied down to a particular time and place. They should be observed in one's entire life continuously.

One individual had to cover a distance of ten miles at night. He had a lantern in his hand and the light of this lantern was shining and lighting the way only for about four or five yards. He entered the forest, then he began to wonder how he can travel for ten miles with that lamp, which was giving light only for a few yards. At this time, a sanyasi was also going that way. The sanyasi asked him where he was going and why he was feeling so sorry. The man said that he had to travel ten miles. The light in his hand was showing only a few yards, and he was worried as to how he could travel such a long distance. The sanyasi said that if the person took the light with him, then it will show the

way for all the distance.

In the same manner, our virtuous conduct will help us throughout our lives. You may doubt the omnipresence of God; but if you realise that your own body is the temple of God, your own heart is the seat of God and that the Jiva in you is simply a reflection of God, then your meditation room is your body itself and so He is present wherever you go. Therefore in all the deeds that you perform, in all the individuals that you meet and in all the thoughts that you entertain, you must see the Divine and act accordingly. In order that you may have these qualities, you must develop faith and follow the paths indicated by the sacred texts like the Bhagavatha, Mahabharatha, Ramayana, Bible, Quoran and so on.

If we think of Easwara, we at once picture someone who has tied up his hair, who has a trident in his hand, who has three eyes and who wears a leopard skin. Easwara really means one who is the highest being like Maheswara and who possesses all types of prosperity. It is by the very thought or sankalpa of Maheswara that we believe that creation, maintenance and dissolution of the created world is taking place. It is usual to describe Maheswara as consisting of Siva, Vishnu and Rudra as three parts.

The name Siva signifies that he gives us happiness and prosperity. On the other hand, Siva is also one who shows us the correct path relating to wisdom, prosperity, and gives us various types of wealth and has, therefore, been also called Sankara. The word Sankara is to be understood as consisting of two parts "San" and "Kara". The word kara means to hand in and the word san means all kinds of wealth. One who hands in all kinds of wealth and prosperity to us is Sankara.

It is in the context of these sacred meanings, that I told you earlier about the three kinds of pragnas - Jiva pragna, Atma pragna and Easwara pragna. I also mentioned that Jiva pragna binds oneself, while Easwara pragna binds others, and Atma pragna liberates all.

Some people have doubts in their minds as to how Easwara pragna can bind

others. By using his wealth, one can make an attempt to bind others. Here the word wealth has a very wide meaning. We can bind others with wealth when it takes the shape of money. We can bind others with wealth when it takes the shape of intelligence. We bind others with wealth when it takes the shape of love. All these are different forms of wealth.

You can also bind others by wisdom. God is referred to as Bhakta paradheena and this implies that the devotee can bind God by his devotion. Therefore, this idea that the wealth, given by Easwara in so many different forms, can be used to bind one is something which is in the nature of neither truth nor untruth. It is a concept which is in between these two.

One who has acquired the wealth of wisdom and becomes identical with wisdom becomes very happy and is referred to as, "Thath eva thwam". This means that this person is in great bliss and is one with the object of his wisdom. Sometimes this person who is having wisdom, while only looking at the object of his wisdom finds great happiness. This state is referred to as, "Thwam eva thath". In these two statements, you will find that one place belongs to the guru and the other place belongs to the disciple. One who sits in the place of Thath and explains the significance of Thwam is the guru. One who sits in the place of Thwam and makes an enquiry about the nature of Thath is the student. The guru stands in the place of Sath. The student also lives in close proximity to Sath. He has the opportunity of himself getting "Sadbhava" or good ideas. When you are in the proximity of a good thing, then you must yourself get the nature of that good thing. Under those circumstances, the student gets the opportunity of becoming one with the guru and moving into the Nivritthi state.

If I have to explain to you easily and clearly this concept, I have to draw your attention to the practice in our country of undertaking Upavasa (Fast - Being in the constant presence of God) in the name of God. To get at the significance of this, we have to understand the difference between Upasana and Upavasa. Upavasa is to live close by. Upasana is to sit close by. We do not feel the heat when we are sitting near an air-conditioner. Likewise in winter if we sit near a heater, we get the benefit of warmth. We do Upavasa

because we want to go close to God and stay near Him.

What is the benefit of going close to God? The benefit is that the sath-chith-ananda of God will come to us and the bad qualities in us will go away. This is how we should understand the meaning of Upavasa. It is our attempt to go close to God but in practice we have reduced this to eating half a dozen chapathis, a dozen plantains and drinking a pint of milk after refraining from eating rice. Is there any meaning in this kind of Upavasa? Often, in this manner, we are not comprehending the correct meaning of our sacred culture. To some extent, we are therefore disappointed at the results which our sadhanas and practices bring us.

Pavitratma Swarupas, students!

You have come here for this summer course and staying here with the specific purpose of understanding the truth. You must take the truth about these things to your heart and also spread them amongst your friends when you go back home. You must see that the future of our country is rebuilt on such firm foundations. I bless you and bring this discourse to a close.

24. Meditation Is Different From Concentration

Date: May 1973 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 1973

I have been searching. I have been searching all the time.

I was searching then and I am searching now to find one amongst men who has the true spirit of man.

There is no dearth of human beings. Looking at man's form, I am not able to find the true nature of the divine.

Looking at some wild cotton fruits, we sometimes imagine and are under the illusion that they are mangoes.

Looking at wild cane, we chew it under the illusion that it is real sugarcane.

Looking at marble stone, we suck it under the illusion that it is candy.

We should not be deceived by looking at the external form of man.

What is important is not the external form, but his gunas or the attributes.

Divyatma Swarupas, students!

It is essential for us to cognise the distinctiveness that characterises a human being. In order to acquire these qualities, we have to develop concentration, a spirit of sacrifice and faith in God. The wisdom, thus attained, shines like the sun. In our state of ignorance, however, the illumination of the wisdom is covered by the cloud of selfishness. So long as man is not able to push away the clouds of selfishness, he cannot look at the sun of wisdom.

The tree which radiates cool shade does not even think of the benefit it imparts upon the travellers. On the other hand, when man thinks of his body, he thinks of his wealth, his family, his belongings, his wife and his children and gets attached to these belongings. We must make an enquiry and find out who the "I" is when an individual says, "this is my house, this is my money, this is my father" and "this is my body." We should find out who the

individual is who is making such a claim. We should find out whether it is the body which is claiming all these things or whether it is "I" the self, residing in that body which is claiming all these things. If it is the body which is claiming these things, then what is the meaning of saying, "this is my body". So the body is not he and it is separated from him. The body by itself is lifeless. The life in him is what is claiming all these things.

It is the attempt to find who this "I" inside the body is, which is called Sankhya. Sankhya means an enquiry into the nature of material objects, but when we enquire into the origin of the "I" the enquiry will be called "Taraka". In the state of Taraka, one forgets everything else and enjoys the bliss of the divine Atma and this is termed as Amanaska. Sadhana enables you to recognise the meaning of Sankhya, Taraka and Amanaska.

For example, when we have milk from which the cream is not separated, we cannot see ghee separately. On the other hand, when we convert milk into curds, get buttermilk out of curds, and out of this we remove the butter and melt it, then we are able to see ghee. This ghee, which we have separated from milk, can never be mixed with milk again. Whatever efforts you may put in and whatever trials you may make, the ghee will not mix with milk but will remain separate. So is life. At first Taraka, Sankhya and Amanaska look one and the same and inseparably mixed with the body, but when we perform some sadhana and separate them, they will be separated and will not have any desire to mix with the body. In the word "Soham" the letter "sa" denotes Paramatma or the divine. "Aham" denotes the Jiva or man. When we combine these two and utter them together, we get the word "Soham". We then get to recognise the fact that jiva and Paramatma come together. It is also common practice in our country to meditate on the word "Soham" in order to recognise the identity and oneness of jiva and Brahman.

Free from form and name, being the one without a second, always remaining pure and only as a witness, divinity remains in the realm of Atma and is referred to by the two letters "Thath". When man concentrates and meditates on "Thath", out of his meditation will come "Thwam". The word "Asi" is always ready at hand to bring these 'Thath' and 'Thwam' together. A combination of

these three gives the Mahakavya "Thath Thwam asi".

The significance of this Mahavakya "Thath Thwam asi" should be well understood. I mentioned yesterday that "Thath eva Thwam" signifies the position of a teacher and "Thwam eva Thath" signifies the position of a student. The teacher explains the meaning of "Thath" to the students and the student understands the aspect of "Thath" by being in the place of "Thwam". The oneness of the teacher and the taught is the destination for the process of learning. Therefore, we must remove our feelings and ideas which relate to external appearances. We must develop the notion of the divine and become one with the divine. What are these external manifestations? They relate to our gross, subtle and causal bodies.

When you utter the sound "aham", it involves the three gunas: sathwa, rajas and thamas. This sound which is the same as the ego, when it is associated with these three gunas, moves about in the three aspects of the body and manifests itself as Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara, which are the different aspects of the world.

Everything that we see and experience in this material world must be regarded as vritthi or some kind of work. Even listening to someone is also a process and may be called a vritthi. But listening to God's name or uttering God's name for producing sacred sounds, will not be called a worldly occupation. It is something between Pravritthi and Nivritthi and it enables one to bring these two together. If you want to change the worldly aspects of Pravritthi into detached karma or Nivritthi, some sadhanas and practice are necessary. These sadhanas can be referred to as meditation or dhyana.

How do we practice this meditation and what is its inner meaning? We have to develop faith in the various paths that lead to meditation. Then only is it possible to reach the object of meditation or understand the purpose of meditation. The word dhyana is being interpreted by many people in many different ways. They are also prescribing different kinds of meditation and causing some amount of confusion in the minds of aspirants.

Dhyana stands for the sadhana or the practice by which the sadhaka meditates upon God and thereby unifies the three constituents, namely, the object of meditation - God, the person who is meditating - the "I" or the individual and the process - the meditation itself. The combination and oneness of these three is dhyana.

The process and significance of dhyana these days is being misinterpreted and is being equated with concentration or single-mindedness. For acquiring concentration, we do not have to meditate. In fact we are concentrating all the time. Drinking, eating, writing, reading and walking involve concentration. Concentration refers to something which is subservient to the various senses of perception, namely sabda, sparsa, rupa, rasa and gandha (hearing, touch, seeing, taste and smell). If you have to read a paper, your eyes will have to see the paper, the hand has to hold the paper, and finally the mind has to synthesise all the perceptions. It is only when all these acts are brought together through concentration that we can read the paper.

If we have to walk on the road, we have to watch for the traffic and we have to note if there are any obstacles or pits or snakes or scorpions. Similarly, when we drive a car, an enormous amount of concentration is required. Therefore, this kind of concentration with which we are familiar in everyday life cannot be called dhyana or meditation.

To have the divine as your objective, to rise above your senses and keep your mind well above your sensory organs will be called meditation. Meditation is thus superior to your sensory organs and concentration is subservient to your sensory organs.

There is a small example for this. There is a rose plant and in it you have the leaves, thorns, branches and the flowers themselves. In this context, the ability to distinguish between thorns, leaves, branches and flowers can be termed as concentration. After looking at all these things, we can identify the flower. Once you are able to locate the flower and concentrate on it, then you can pluck it out without touching the thorns. Once you have plucked the flower, there is no relation whatsoever between the flower, on the one hand

thorns, leaves and branches, on the other. The separation of the flower from these other parts of the tree is called contemplation.

You will take this flower and offer it to God. After you have offered the flower to God, the tree, the branches, your hand and even the flower do not exist at all. This offering, where others have disappeared and God alone exists, is called meditation.

Your life is like a rose plant. All your relationships are branches in this rose plant. Your qualities or gunas are the leaves and your attachments and desires constitute the thorns. Your prema is the flower of the plant. The exercise of keeping the flower of your prema away from the thorns of attachments and the branches of relationships is contemplation. The moment you offer this prema to God, you have achieved the oneness of all three. This prema is pure prema. The reason is that in the process of obtaining it, you have separated out the thorns and leaves from the flower. What you have in your hand is therefore a pure flower of prema.

So long as the material desires lurk in you, your affection will be considered as lust. True and pure love will manifest itself when lust is withdrawn from your affection. This type of love will be expanding, since it will be selfless. The contracting type of love is based on selfishness. You can cultivate pure love by remaining in good company and by putting into practice directions of our Vedas and Upanishads.

You should consider your intellect as a mirror and try to keep it clean. The true nature of yourself as a man can be seen only in the mirror of your intellect. It is only when you regard this entire world as your own house and regard everything in your house as your own that you can give a shape to your prema so as to make it an expanding prema.

There are three types of sadhanas. The first type is a sadhana which the monkeys practise and is called the Markata sadhana. The second is called Vihanga sadhana and is typical of sadhana practised by birds. The third is called the Pipeelika sadhana or the sadhana practised by the ants. So far as

the monkey is concerned, it goes to a tree, plucks a fruit but does not eat it then and there. It then jumps from one branch to another. In this process it loses this fruit altogether! This is a kind of sadhana where we want quick results. We want to see God quickly and in this process we go on changing the objective of our sadhana every day and change from place to place like a monkey.

The second kind of sadhana can be compared with the behaviour of a bird. A bird swoops down on a fruit and hits it so sharply that the fruit drops on the ground. In the process. the bird loses its objective.

The third type of sadhana is typical of what an ant does and is called pipeelika sadhana. As is well known, an ant breaks up all items it wants to eat, into very small bits, carries each bit slowly and steadily and brings them to its own location. It is always successful in acquiring its food. Even in sadhana, we have to be slow and steady, and that will enable you to attain your objective. Just as these ants cut their food into small pieces, bring them back home and eat them at leisure and fearlessly, so also we must not swerve from our path, we must keep the object in our mind and we should not let our vision flutter. Thus, for our spiritual progress we should maintain discipline and keep the mind under control. We should do everything in the name of God.

Students!

In this age of yours, you must develop sacred ideas. The reason will become apparent to you when you listen to the following incident. One Vedantin and one exponent of Dwaitha philosophy came to me after arguing with each other and asserting that the theories of each one are superior to those of the other. They asked me to decide who was the superior amongst them. In their foolishness and ignorance, they asked me whether it is better to follow the Dwaitha philosophy or it is better to follow the Vedantic preachings. I told them that the validity of the Dwaitha does not depend upon the individual who is supporting it, and the validity of Vedanta and the sadhanas prescribed therein, do not depend on the individual who is supporting them. If this

individual supporting Dwaitha changes his mind, is Dwaitha going to become weaker? Similarly, if the person supporting Vedantic thought changes his mind, the Vedas are not going to become weaker. The strength of Dwaitha and of Vedanta depends on their respective contents and not on arguments of individuals. I told them that these arguments are in the nature of exhibitionism and thereby they are only securing food for themselves.

Today good and bad is being coloured by our own attitudes or prejudices. We shall start seeing good everywhere if we promote good ideas in ourselves. Do not let the books master you, but instead fill your hearts with love. I bless you that you will be able to do so.

25. Man's Attempt Should Be To Merge With God

Date: 14 June 1973 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 1973

Divyatma Swarupas!

Sanctity of human life is implied in our culture, yet man attempts to get rid of rebirth. We are born as human beings as a result of the divine sankalpa.

We have to perform certain obligations and duties. The primary purpose of life is to realise one's self. In fact, in wanting to get rid of rebirth we are acting contrary to God's wish by trying to be away from God's creation.

On the other hand, one should try to be identical with God. This cycle of births makes you see the multiplicity or duality, whereas jnana makes you see the oneness or non-duality. This is the difference between man and the supreme being, the Lord. It is possible for us to attain the Adwaitha darshana or the feeling of universal oneness, by practising prescribed sadhanas and by accepting the authority of the Veda.

There are three ways of doing so. The Sathwic path will be to recognise unity in diversity and to see the divine as the one without a second, free from all differences, identifying with the Atma and attaining the state of bliss.

The Rajasic path implies the feelings of mine and thine, binding the ego to various differentiating feelings, distinguishing between happiness and sorrow. One remains under the spell of name and form and is unable to recognise the oneness of Atma.

The Thamasic path is totally contrary to truth. Following this path, one perceives diversity having no belief in the oneness. An ordinary person spends all his life in looking after his body which he considers to be primarily real. In this belief, one ties one's self up unnecessarily with several bondages by entering into manifold physical relationships.

For example, a youth of about twenty years was living with his mother aged sixty years. He had been enjoying the affection of his mother for all the twenty years and he had been regarding the body of his mother as his mother. By passage of time, the mother died. On the death of his mother, the boy wept and expressed his sorrow by saying, "Oh mother! you have left me and gone away?" The body was in front of him and if the body was his mother, there was no meaning in his saying that his mother had left him and gone away. That which had truly left him and gone away was the life in his mother's body. So long as life remained in that body, he had been treating that body as his mother. Therefore, the truth is that the life in the body was his mother. So long as life was in it, he had been caring for the body with affection and calling it his mother. In fact, without his realising, he was caring for the life inside the body and not the body.

By establishing relationships with the outward appearances, we are binding ourselves with bodily attachments and we are not able to understand the real significance of life. When a person says, "this is my house", "this is my mother", "this is my wife", what he is saying is something coming from within him. It is not an external connection of one body with another. This "I" in him is something which is quite distinct from the body and is simply looking at events as a witness.

The first thing which you have to do is to recognise the Atma which is only a witness and is not subject to pain and pleasure which the body experiences. All occupations and all the work which we do with the body are only connected with the gross body. This may be referred to as Jiva pragna. This Jiva pragna is the ordinary or outward kind of work. Then, there is work which is connected with the subtle aspect of the body.

This is called Easwara pragna. The subtle qualities tend to bind you subtly.

We can acquire freedom from attachments only if we cultivate good qualities. Although at times bad qualities appear to yield temporary pleasure, in the long run they will harm us. Sathsanga - good company - is important. It helps to cultivate good qualities. Suppose you set fire to a small piece of wood in a

forest. That piece will not rest till it sets fire to the whole forest. The bad qualities are like a forest fire. The bad people ruin themselves and try to spoil everyone around them. They inject their bad qualities into their surroundings and they ruin their friends and relatives.

Good people sacrifice their personal interests and purify the atmosphere of their environment. They are like incense sticks which go on burning while spreading fragrance to everyone who comes close to them. One who always thinks of helping others, harbouring sacred feelings in mind, will be improving day after day. A person endowed with sacred qualities can be compared to a man who builds a wall. The man who builds a wall will continuously climb up and he will never climb down.

On the other hand, individuals who are always causing trouble, harm and hurt to others and who are jealous of the prosperity of the others, can be compared to the persons who are digging a well. The persons engaged in digging a well will continuously descend lower and lower, while the persons who are building a wall will ascend higher and higher. We must shape ourselves like the ones who are building a wall and not like the ones who are digging a well. A person will be called a Jnani, that is, living in the orbit of Atma if he can recognise the Atma pervading the entire universe. Such a Jnani, or a wise person continuously thinks of God. Although he lives in the world, he does not allow the world to live in him, as he cannot think of anything other than God.

For explaining this situation, a description of Radha bhakthi is most appropriate. This has been misinterpreted and erroneous impressions have been created, although there is no room for wrong impressions in this type of devotion. To regard Radha as the name of a particular woman or to think that her devotion was like a human love is not correct. In God's view, there is no difference between man and woman. That is why Narada described only the Jiva that is in both and did not distinguish between man and woman. These differences are related only to the body and not to the Jiva or the Atma. Both men and women experience joy, sorrow, hunger, thirst, pleasure and pain irrespective of their sex. The experience is the same in essence. There may

be only minor differences. Women show their sorrow outwardly and shed tears while men show greater forbearance and experience sorrow internally. In regard to the external conduct, there may thus be some differences, but when we take up the inner significance it is the same for both sexes. We should therefore regard Radha's devotion as something sacred and distinctive. To attribute our own interpretations for this is wrong and sinful. Her devotion is a matter of complete surrender, and thereby she imprints herself completely on the heart of Krishna. She had thus made her life sacred. The aspect of such a surrendered mind, whether it is that of a man or a woman, is the aspect of Radha. The form of this is the form of Radha.

There is a small example for this. Whether you use the English language or the Telugu language, some sounds have to be put together to make a word. We shall take this word Radha as consisting of four sounds R A D A. If they are uttered in that sequence, we have the word Radha; but if they are uttered beginning with the second letter, we get the word Adhar. If we start with D, we get Dhara and if we begin with A we get Aradh. Thus, this way of looking at the matter gives a beautiful definition of Radha. That is, Aradh is the Adhar for Radha and Dhara. The Aradhana of Dhara is Radha.

The meaning of this is that at all times, at all places, and under all circumstances, Radha is simply thinking of Aradhana of God. Any person who makes such an attempt will be termed as Radha. This means that if you want to enter such a path, with your gross body, with your subtle and causal body as well, you must join good company and always entertain good ideas in your mind.

There is a small example for this. In a clock there are three pointers or hands moving at different speeds. One is the seconds hand, the second is the minute hand, and the third is the hour hand. As the seconds hand moves and covers a large area, the minute hand moves only through one division. As the seconds hand covers sixty divisions, the minute hand covers only one division. When the minute hand covers sixty divisions, the hour hand covers only one division. We are able to see easily the movement of the seconds hand and even that of the minute hand, but the movement of the hour hand

is such that we cannot see it. In this case what you cannot see visually is of utmost importance. It is only in the context of the hour hand that the minute hand and the seconds hand assume any importance. If the hour hand is not there, the seconds and the minute hands are of little use.

Our body does many things and is like the seconds hand of this example. After this gross body does a considerable amount of good, the subtle mind will be able to move a little. After the mind does many good things, the causal body or the sacred Atma will be able to move a little bit. The causal body is like the hour hand. We have to recognise here that the gross body and the subtle mind are existing for the sake of the causal body or Atma. They have little or no meaning by themselves. We have to bear in mind that the causal body is the most important thing. We may, in that context, allow the gross body and the subtle body to take part in various sacred tasks. It is only then that we will be able to render useful service to our causal body.

The ocean is like the grace of God. When we are able to converge our intelligence - intelligence corresponding to sun's rays - on this ocean of anugraha or grace, we will get the vapours of thoughts and ideas. These vapours are converted into the clouds of truth. These clouds of truth will result in the rain of prema. Drops of prema join together and begin to flow as the river of ananda. The origin for this ananda are the raindrops of prema, and the origin for those rain drops is the cloud of truth. The cloud of truth arises from the vapour of thoughts and the thoughts themselves arise from the ocean of grace. Such ananda arises from the ocean of grace, undergoes all these transformation and finally rejoins the ocean of grace.

Ocean water is salty when taken directly from the ocean and can be compared to sastrajnana or book knowledge. The water obtained from the river has changed in taste and is sweet. This water may be compared to anubhavjnana or wisdom obtained through experience. More than the knowledge that you can get from reading Sastra, you should value the wisdom that you can get from experience. By taking the knowledge from Sastras, you can convert it into wisdom of experience by putting the knowledge into practice in your daily life. Knowledge obtained from books is

like energy. You have no energy in you because you lack experience. Truly, young people like you should have such energy that if you go and hit a piece of stone, that piece of stone should break and you should not get hurt. It is surprising to see how weak you are.

There is also one small example to illustrate this weakness in man. Man appears very strong only outwardly. Even if a mosquito sits on the tip of his nose, at first he just drives it away by a gentle flap. If it returns and sits for a second time, he tries to hit it hard. If it comes a third time, he begins to fight with it. This is the strength which young people have these days. They are unable to tolerate a mosquito. Such strength, physical or otherwise, is not our real strength. Our real strength lies in our resolutions to practise our ideals. For this, we need the grace of God and the strength which divinity can give us. Strength of the human body, when one cannot control his senses, is like the strength of an animal. Our attempts should be to strengthen our mind and not to strengthen only our limbs at the expense of our intelligence. We should not do things which will cause great excitement. To undertake such things and to bring about anarchic behaviour is bringing disgrace to ourselves.

Your learning must be such that it goes to your heart and not to your head. You should make your heart a photographic negative so that you can get as many prints out of it as you wish. It is very important that the education you receive during this stay of one month for this summer course should be imprinted in that manner on your heart. You will then grow into responsible citizens of our great country and uphold its traditions in your future lives.

26. Do Not Exploit Nature Without Seeking The Grace Of God

Date: 15 June 1973 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 1973

Lust and anger, greed and attachment, arrogance and jealousy follow from birth to death. Everything dissolves into complete silence at the time of death. To be born, to live and to pass through the various stages of life is a matter of botheration. Even the karma which you carry with you is a botheration. You should look to Sarveswara who alone can find you a solution for all these troubles. Our country has acquired great name and fame all over the world. Our motherland has given birth to many great people. We have also been able to achieve independence in a non-violent way. Art, music, literature, Sastras and knowledge have flourished in this land from time immemorial. Keeping in view these ancient and glorious traditions, now it is up to you to maintain the glory of your motherland.

Prakruthi has no beginning. She is timeless. She cannot survive without the company of Purusha. She can be compared to a pious wife. Her beauty is beyond all description. Her strength is enormous. She can push anyone into the confusion of a family when one forgets God. She can cause trouble to even great people. Prakruthi has been communicating a lesson to us that there can be no pot without the mud. There can be no ornament without gold. There can be no cloth without yarn and there can be no world without the Brahman. It is erroneous to separate Prakruthi from Paramatma and regard them as distinct and worship nature alone. We should not be subservient to nature, but make it subservient to us. Nature is not anybody's property. It is not even the property of all the people put together. Nature belongs to God.

Therefore, if you want to keep nature under control, you will have to do so only after earning God's grace. If after acquiring God's grace, you undertake to conquer nature, it will herself yield to you. Today, by neglecting and forgetting the Lord and believing that nature is the only thing that is important, we are attempting to use nature unsuccessfully for selfish purposes.

For understanding this situation, the Ramayana provides the best illustration, Ravana had all the powers and he performed many Yajnas and Yagas. He knew all branches of knowledge and was a very able person. In spite of all these abilities, he did not care for Rama, the Lord, but wanted Sita. Pursuing this desire, he lost his kingdom, his people and himself in the end. Sita is born of the earth and is the child of the earth. Rama is the Lord born on earth as an Avatar and he took Sita as his spouse. There is no point in anyone thinking that he can get Sita without the knowledge and permission of Rama. This is like wanting to exploit nature or Prakruthi without the grace of the Lord or Purusha.

When Rama was going to the forest, he told Sita to stay back and serve his parents. He said that he would come back in fourteen years. But Sita gave up all her comforts to accompany Rama to the forest. Because she sacrificed everything, she could have the company of Rama. What is the reason? Sita thought, believed and put into practice the ideal that to a wife, her husband is of utmost importance. This is the essence of the culture of our land.

However, the enticement of Maya at times is irresistible. In the forest, it so happened that Sita was attracted by the golden deer, although she gave up much more valuable things earlier in life. Rama went after the golden deer to secure it for her. The final result was that Sita had to leave Rama and go away. Sita had to lose the sacred company of her husband, and she was taken away to Lanka. It implies that when she gave up kama or desire, Rama was near her; but the moment she was attracted by the desires, Rama became distant from her. If you want Rama to be with you, kama has to be given up. If you have worldly desires, then Rama will not be near you. You have to choose between Rama or Kama, that is, either you cling to God or to his Maya.

In order to cultivate detachment, Vedanta indicates four different paths. They are known as the Salokya, Samipya, Saroopya and Sayjuya. It has been taught in the ancient texts that Salokya is something like the gross body, Samipya is like the subtle body and Saroopya is like the causal body. It is only through cultivating detachment from the world and gaining wisdom that you

can reach a correct understanding of the various aspects of the body and finally attain the sacred state of Sayjuya or the supercausal state wherein Atma will shine as a Sakshi or a witness.

The Brahma Thathwa will be shining with effulgence without any external container. In order to identify the Jiva Thathwa, the bodily aspect, with the Brahma Thathwa, which is free from the body, these four paths have to be followed. In order to realise Brahma Thathwa or the formless reality, one has to choose a form as a stepping stone to reach the formless. As you look at a form with wisdom, the wisdom and the form will gradually merge into each other. Some support or direction is needed to cross over from darkness to light, mortality to immortality. Some definite form of the gross type, as a temporary object, is a help to pass through the subtle body and the causal body. It is then possible for us to reach the object of Dhyana. Once you reach the destination it can be enjoyed all the time.

You may look at this in a different way. At this moment so many of you are sitting in this pandal and listening to Swami. Each one of you is passing through a direct experience which will last for a specific time. However, after some time you will be able to remember this particular experience. This means that your previous experience of a limited duration has become a permanent picture in your mind and that can be recalled at any time. An experience always leaves its imprints permanently on your mind.

This has also been expressed in three different aspects namely: you are in the light, the light is in you and you are the light. This also means that you have to first become part of the world, then you have to take the world into you as the second step and finally you become identical with the world. Therefore, we should understand that if we are not here, there is no Prakruthi or nature.

Some people say that man wants food. This is not correct. Man has not come for food. After man is born, food becomes a necessity. Therefore, food has come for man. We should eat to live and not live to eat. We have come to proclaim the truth and stand by dharma. This is what we have to bear in mind and this is our purpose in the world. Just as you need petrol if you have a car,

likewise you need food for your body. The car is used for transportation and as such it has to be kept clean and in order. Likewise a body has to be kept healthy, because through it one acquires the four Purusharthas namely dharma, artha, kama and moksha. It enables us to know the true basis of the phenomenal world, the fact behind the fancy.

Realising the oneness of divinity, one should serve the fellow beings in a selfless manner. The nature of the world can be correctly understood by serving others, and herein the concept of duality is tentatively implied, which eventually will lead one to understand the aspect of non-duality. It is difficult, at the very outset, to enter the orbit of Adwaitha. When you want to learn to swim, you learn by depending on a contrivance like a float or a tyre around you. Once you have learnt to swim, you will give up such a contrivance. If you do not have this helpful contrivance in the beginning, you cannot learn to swim.

Similarly, in the beginning, you must have some object before your mind. It may be a photo or a light, and gradually you must move on to the formless one - the supreme Atma. Finally, you can give up the object. You can see your reflection only if there is a mirror. If there is no mirror, how can you see the reflection? So long as there is a feeling that there are two things, you and your image, it is a feeling of duality. Between the object and the image, there is the mirror. If you remove the mirror, there is neither the image nor the mirror. You are the only surviving one and that is the object. This is the essence of Adwaitha. In the same manner, you have some object and with the help of this object you see yourself and your image. Therefore you, the individual, Prakruthi, the world around you and Easwara, the Creator, are one and the same.

No one can be isolated from the stream of life. Each one is a part and parcel of society. One should make an attempt to merge with the omnipresent. By being in this world one gets a chance to progress spiritually. Therefore, man feels some obligation arising from his social conscience towards society. It is well-known, however, that when one leaves this world, one has to leave everything. Even a blade of grass cannot be carried when one dies. Even Sri

Rama and Sri Krishna were not able to take anything with them when they gave up their mortal bodies. Such great beings, however, leave behind some sacred ideals for the posterity. The good actions and spiritual maturity of such beings is remembered for all times.

27. Know Who You Are Do Not Ask Another Who He Is

Date: 16 June 1973 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 1973

That which remains smaller than, and within, what is infinitesimally small:
that which remains bigger than, and envelops, what is infinitely large:
that which is present everywhere and manifests itself under all
circumstances, is Atma.

Atma is Brahman and Brahman is Atma.

That which, if we know, we will know everything;
and that which, if we do not know, we will not know anything.
The one that teaches such things, distinguishing between Para Vidya or
higher knowledge,
and Apra Vidya or worldly knowledge, is the real guru.

All our culture and the manner of our living is contained in our Vedas. The Vedas have not emanated from any human being. They are, in fact, words and sounds that have been uttered by God. The ancient rishis, who heard the Vedas through their sense of hearing, passed them on to their disciples by word of mouth. What has been heard in this manner as divine sound is referred to as Sruthi. No one can change the words that are contained in them. Perhaps the Ithihasas and Puranas can be commented upon and annotated; but it is not possible for anyone either in this country or abroad, to suggest any changes in the contents of the Vedas. The Vedas can also be referred to as "Sabda Brahman". These sacred Vedas spell out the nature of dharma. What is contained in the Vedas is pramana or authority. The religion of the Vedas is what we follow. We should be really proud of the religion that has come to us from the contents of Veda dharma.

Unfortunately today, there are people who have lost faith in the religion of the Vedas, who rather look down upon temples and who talk lightly about sacred places of pilgrimage. It is incredible that such people are prospering in this country. The Vedas easily pass beyond the comprehension of ordinary folks, even the pundits, who memorise them by heart, do not sense their full significance. The praise as well as abuse of what is contained in the Vedas is quite common. When a drop of rain falls on the ground and as a result of breeze this drop gets evaporated and disappears, so also the praise and abuse, when hurled at us is blown off by the breeze of intelligence.

Some political leaders came here a few days ago to meet me. They asked me some questions. Among them were many meaningless questions. During conversation, someone asked me who I was. I gave a reply which was quite appropriate to this question. I said that, when I am in the midst of men, I am a man. When I am in the midst of women, I am a woman, and when I am in the midst of children, I am a child. When I am alone, I am Brahman. Not only I, even you, when you are in the midst of elderly men, you behave as an elderly man. If you are in the midst of women, you exhibit feminine nature. When you are amongst children, even if you are a supreme court judge, you behave like a child. This is particularly so when one is playing with his grandchildren. When you are alone, you will feel distinctive and divine.

It is customary for one to find out the prices of the things in a market even if one does not have the capacity to buy any of them. Whether you really desire to understand me or not, like the foolish people who do not concern themselves with the real nature of things but only look at the form and name, you come forward to ask such a question. The one who does not know who he himself is, often asks questions of others as to who they are. One who makes an attempt to know who he is will not ask such questions. If we want to look at this phenomenon in the worldly way and give it a charitable interpretation, we have to say that this person who has asked the foregoing question surely knows that I am Sri Sathya Sai Baba and that is why he has come to see me. In spite of this, if he asks this question, we have to conclude that he is not steady and does not know what he is asking. The whole world is moving in

this direction.

When we spend so much time and effort to understand the contents of our Sastras, Ithihasas and Puranas, we should be able to use all that knowledge to understand the divinity in us. When we can put them into practice, our effort will become purposeful. Otherwise our time and life will be a waste. To read books and to convey to others by way of teaching what we have learnt and at the same time not putting any of the things that we have learnt into practice, is a wasteful occupation. Maybe you have read many books and known many things, but there is no evidence in your behaviour of your learning.

Divyatma Swarupas, students!

It is not necessary for you to read so many books. What you really want is the grace of God. This age of yours is such that there is room for a great deal of confusion. In order to avoid such confusion, you should handle your mind very steadily and slowly and bring it under your control. You should never be in a haste and use force to control the mind. If there is a cow in our house, which is wanting to go out and eat the harvest in the field, what do we do to bring such a cow back? We try to find out the kind of food that it is after and feed it with better kind of food in the house. Gradually, it will thereafter give up the tendency to go out of the house.

In the same manner, our mind wants to wander out and look at many things. It wants to indulge in different thoughts. In order to control the mind, which is running after fulfilling worldly and sensuous desires, we substitute the nobler idea of God in the place of such desires. We make the mind think of God and gradually turn it away from worldly desires. But today, man is pressing hard to wean his mind away from these worldly desires; but he is not succeeding. He is being defeated and humiliated. Truly, these desires and attachments which the mind is developing are characteristic of the present day. Even our intellect is unable to exercise sufficient control over the mind.

In these circumstances, either we should try and cultivate the habit of

loneliness or we should join some sacred company, think of good things and wean our mind away. One of these things has to be done if you want to control the mind. In this modern age, the idea of joining a Sathsanga is being looked down upon as if it is something mean and crooked. On the other hand, we do not see anything wrong in spending a considerable amount of time dressing our own hair or doing similar things. We are spending a lot of time in painting our faces, in dressing ourselves and choosing our trousers. While spending so many hours on trivial things to make your external appearance more attractive, if you are asked to spend five minutes each day on meditation or in the thought of God, you give a reply that you have no time for that kind of a thing.

There is another matter which requires some attention. Today every young man has a small comb in his pocket and he also has a small mirror. Every young girl carries a huge basket and in the basket she has a whole market. Why do we carry all this paraphernalia? It is because we want to set right our hair when it gets a little dishevelled. If our face needs a little touching up, we look after it immediately. We pay undue attention to our body, but we do not restrain our mind from following the crooked ways. It is our internal instruments which have to be set right so as to enable us to pursue the sacred path. In order to remove the entanglements that distort the right vision, you should cultivate devotion, love and wisdom.

Divyatma Swarupas!

We must understand how the unsophisticated gopis and gopalas, who had not read the Vedas, were attracted to the Lord and how they loved the Lord. While remaining immersed in the thought of God, they regarded Mahavishnu as the chaitanya or the life-force prevalent everywhere. This realisation was possible only for the gopikas, because of their intense devotion. Learning derived from various Sastras and all the Vedas is of no avail if it does not help you to reach the feet of the Lord.

28. Self-confidence Leads To Self-realisation

Date: 17 June 1973 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 1973

The path of karma or work is like a path by which you go on foot.
The path of bhakthi or devotion is like a path by which you go on a cart.
The path of jnana or wisdom is like a path by which you go on an aeroplane.
The path of yoga or concentration is like a path by which you go on a steamer.

Pavitratma Swarupas, students!

The Bhagavad Gita has given the three words "Jnatum, Drashtum, Tatvena Praveshtum". The word Jnatum means knowing by enquiry. We should enquire about the aspect of "I". But is mere enquiry of this kind going to give satisfaction to you? By knowing that food is available in the kitchen, your hunger is not going to be relieved. So also, by knowing the availability of the required things in the market, your need is not going to be fulfilled. Can the darkness in the world be dispelled by merely spreading the news of light? A man who is suffering from disease will never get rid of it if you simply describe to him the qualities of various medicines. You can get some satisfaction only when you administer the required medicine so that the disease can be cured, eat the required food to satisfy the hunger, spread the light to remove the darkness, and so on.

Therefore, while we must first understand the "Jiveswara prakruthi" or the nature of "I", of the "world", and of "Brahman", there has to be a second step and that is to visualise all of them. Even this is not final and there has to be a third step of your entering into the whole aspect and identifying yourself with it. You cannot attain the experience of happiness and bliss by mere study and practice. It is only when you identify yourself completely with it that you will

be able to experience the full significance of it.

These steps have been referred to as "Drashtum" and "Tatvena Praveshtum". It means that you have to enquire, visualise and then become one with it. You begin with the quest in the nature and origin of "I", then attain the experience of its vision and get released by realising the non-difference between the witness and the witnessed.

For this purpose we have to follow certain paths. These have been referred to as the five different akasas in our Vedanta. These five akasas are the Ghatakasa, Jalakasa, Daharakasa, Chidakasa and Mahadakasa.

Ghatakasa refers to the state in which man is engrossed in the body consciousness. He thinks of his physical bearing, his age, his appearance and his form. For example, when you enquire from an individual as to when he arrived here, he would normally specify the day and the time of his physical arrival. This reply signifies his false identification of self with the body. Here the self remains chained to the gross body.

Whereas in the state of Jalakasa, he makes a distinction between the body and the self. If an individual gets a stomach ache, then he will say, "I am having terrible pain in my stomach" It is apparent at that stage that when he says "my stomach", he considers his stomach and as such his body as distinct from the mind. In Jalakasa the self remains chained to the subtle body.

On the other hand, when you reach the state of Daharakasa, you start enquiring about the nature and origin of "I", distinguishing it from the body and ultimately apprehending that this "I" arises from your innermost being. This kind of enquiry can be compared to an enquiry that one makes about worldly matters in the state of wakefulness. During wakeful awareness all your organs like the eyes, the limbs of the body and even your mind are active. You travel with your body, you see with your eyes and you experience with your mind. Therefore Daharakasa corresponds to wakeful experiences.

Chidakasa corresponds to subtle experiences, wherein the Self remains the

witnessing consciousness. In that state, you are above and apart from your body and your life. It can be compared to a dream state. In a dream you may feel that someone has come and cut off your head. You yourself are seeing the head being separated from the body. In that situation, you are quite apart from the body. Your life has not gone although your head has been separated. You are only witnessing the subtle drama.

The same can be illustrated thus: if you cause a hurt with a knife to another person, it can be looked upon as an offence. But if you dream of having cut off the head of a judge, and even after waking up you confess it to the judge, he is not empowered to take any action. Therefore in the realm of dreams, you only remain an onlooker.

Lastly Mahadakasa signifies ones ability for equal-mindedness. In this mental state, you develop the sameness of attitude towards heat and cold, light and darkness, sorrow and pleasure. This state is not above the mind, as in deep meditation the mind itself ebbs away, whereas Mahadakasa is a state wherein you achieve mental equilibrium. Mahadakasa is also known by the name of Kootastha lakshana. This can be illustrated by an example. You are yourself singing a song and are listening to the sound, and if you meditate upon the origin of this sound then that can be referred to as "Kootastha lakshana." It is in this context that Arjuna enquired from Krishna about the relative importance of deha - body, and of dehi - indweller; about the devotee of the formless and a devotee of the one with a form. The arguments relating to the relative greatness of these two aspects have gone on endlessly. Between the Upasana of a specific object and the Upasana of the infinite without any attributes, we also have a mixture of both. These three are known as - Saguna, Saguna-Nirguna and Nirguna. These three, however, are only different methods and the ultimate goal is the same. If you wish to understand easily the difference between these three methods, you can compare the Upasana of a specific object to a cloth, the intermediate mixed method to the threads or fibres that go to make up the cloth, and the Upasana of the unseen or the attributeless infinity to the cotton which is the very base of thread and cloth. From cotton we get the thread; and from the thread we get cloth; but if we pull out all the threads from the cloth, then the

cloth itself disappears. In essence there is nothing except cotton in all these.

Here is an example. If I show you a pillow and ask you about the external covering on it, you will say that it is cloth. If I ask you what is inside, you will say that it is cotton. For Vedanta, both are the same and both are cotton. Thus, in all these three paths there is only one common feature and that is prema. Once you fill your heart with prema, it really does not matter what path you adopt. It will become possible for you to reach the destination. This prema has also been referred to as Priya. This is a feeling caused in you when you look at an individual whom you like. After a feeling of Priya, you wish to make him more attached to you. That attempt is called Modamu. When you bring that object closer to you and experience it, we call it Pramodamu. The combined action by which you see an object, get it close to you, and enjoy the bliss called Pramodamu, will be referred to as Kootastha.

God likes all the three paths because the basic idea in all of them is the same. God is concerned only with true devotion. God has no attributes, it is only we who picture God differently according to our individual variations. Take an example of a mother who has three sons. In a state of emergency, the government legislates that from every family one individual has to be recruited for the security of the country. The mother has the same affection for all the three children, yet because of the compulsory legislation, she has to offer one of the three sons. She will allow the eldest son to join the security forces because of his greater maturity.

In the same manner, we are all children of God and He has three types of children. The Saguna Upasakas, the Nirguna Upasakas and the Saguna - Nirguna Upasakas. Here, God will treat the Saguna Upasaka as the youngest of the three because of his innocence. The Nirguna Upasaka will be treated as one who has gained spiritual maturity. For God, the Saguna Upasaka is a small child while the Nirguna Upasaka is a grown up child and the Saguna-Nirguna Upasaka is like the middle one. The Saguna Upasaka will surrender himself fully to God, will be happy in uttering the name of the Lord, in contemplating the form of the Lord, in thinking of the gunas and attributes of the Lord. Just as a mother looks after every need of the youngest, since he

cannot ask for it when he needs it, so also in respect of the Saguna Upasaka, God will look after all the needs at the appropriate time and will give him all that he deserves. It is only for a young baby that there is no difference between good and bad. This young baby has no likes and dislikes, does not think of when he has to get food, when he has to get clothing and so on. Its mind is quite pure and is not attached to anything.

The total dependence on God is considered as Saranagathi (absolute self surrender).

What is sought to be surrendered is your mind, but when it is itself turbulent and beyond your control, then how can you surrender it? Mind can only be surrendered when it is serene. In that stillness of mind one apprehends the all-pervasive aspect of God. Knowing that God is present in everything, then where is the question of surrendering? Who is to surrender and to whom is he to surrender? It is only when you have the idea of duality that this word has some significance. If you reach the stage of non-dualism in your mind, then there is nothing to surrender.

Love is an indispensable factor in reaching the state of non-duality. The gopikas and the gopalas realised this oneness and were never bothered about the troubles created by their bodies, by their minds and by their families. They were having God alone in their mind. On one occasion, Radha prayed to Krishna and said, "Oh Krishna! according to circumstances, maybe you have now taken the birth of a human being but it is not possible for anyone to say what form you will take or at what time. I only wish to become one with you and identify myself with you at all times." We may ask how this is possible. Here is the reply. "If you become a flower, I will become a bee and go around you. If you become a tree, I will become a creeper and wind around you. If you become the endless sky, I will become a shining little star and be in you. If you become a mountain, I will become a small rivulet and flow close to you. If you become a big ocean, I will become a river and flow into you." In this way, Radha prayed that she be given an opportunity to become one with the Lord.

It is difficult to express with the mere meekness of words the sacred devotion of the gopikas. In our own country, there are some who give a wrong meaning to this sacred aspect. Such people are unfortunately on the increase. The vision of such people is always half closed. There are, however, wise people who open up the flower of their heart and are receptive to the idea of God and the nature of divinity. Performing your daily work sincerely, filling your hearts with love, and feeling the presence of divinity amounts to true surrender.

There are three categories of human beings. There are those who have faith in God, there are those who have no faith in God and there are those who are indifferent. For instance, in a bush there is a flower, its fragrance prompts those who have faith in God to search for its source. These can be termed as asthikas or believers. Then there are those who enjoy the fragrance but do not bother to question about the source, these can be termed as the believing non-believers. There are yet others who are neither looking for the flower nor perceiving its fragrance. They may be termed as non-believers. We presume that the non-believers are those who have no faith in God, but in fact it is not true. There can be no one who has no faith in himself. All people who have faith in themselves are believers. Without having belief, you cannot have disbelief.

People who have no faith in God say, "There is no God". In that sentence, we first make a positive statement, "There is" and then we say, "no God". People who are stronger in their disbelief say "God is no where". In this sentence, there are four words God, is, no and where. In these, take the words "no" and "where" and move the letter "w" from the beginning of "where" to the end of "no". The sentence will now read "God is now here". In this change, we have not brought in a "w" which is not there nor have we removed a "w" which is there. We have only rearranged the letters. "God is now here" represents the feeling in one's mind and "God is no where" represents the feeling in another's mind. Such reflections have nothing to do with the existence or non-existence of God.

For an individual suffering from jaundice, everything looks yellow. This is only

a temporary disease, but it deflects his true vision. To one who is suffering from malaria, even a sweet laddu will taste bitter. This is the result of temporary sickness in him. So also, lack of faith in God is a disease. Here is an example. In a marriage feast, everyone sits in a line for food and they begin to serve some laddus. After some have been served, a few may say that they do not want laddus, not because they do not like them, but because they have a sugar factory inside themselves as they are diabetics. The Nasthikas are like this. They are suffering from the disease of non-belief, and therefore they say that they have nothing to do with God. In fact, they do want to know about Him. Some other people, however, even though they have no disease say that they do not want the laddus just because they want to imitate others who are saying so. As in this analogy, seeing some people say that there is no God, several other foolish people also say that there is no God. This is a ludicrous situation. Either you should surrender to God or you should be able to follow your own dictates, but you should not reveal your hollowness by merely imitating others. You should develop self-confidence and with that you will get self-satisfaction. Once you acquire self-satisfaction, you will be able to show self-sacrifice and this will result in self-realisation. Self-realisation thus ultimately depends on the base of self-confidence.

29. God Is Known By A Thousand Different Names

Date: 18 June 1973 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 1973

Sing the Gita. Utter the thousand names of the Lord.

Meditate continuously on Sripati. Spend your time in the company of the good.

Give away your wealth to the weak and needy people.

Pavitratma Swarupas!

One of the disciples of Sankara gave this particular verse describing the speciality of Gita, dhyana, sacrifice and the unique features contained in the several names of the Lord. We are asked to sing the Gita. By singing the Gita we will be turning away our minds from the material desires and mitigating our restlessness. Gita, being the essence of Vedanta, is the Royal road to salvation. It is the word of Sai as well. It has been said in this verse that there are a thousand names of the Lord.

It is customary in our country to regard the Lord as having several forms and names like Hari, Siva, and so on. God has been described as a Sahasra Seersha Purushaha, one possessing a thousand heads. Some people regard Sripati as referring to Vishnu and some others say that it refers to Siva. Such an argument is a waste of time. So many different names and forms of the Lord impel you to see His omnipresence which is described as the effulgent light. He represents all that is described in our scriptures. He is the embodiment of prosperity. He is Sabda Brahman, and so on. Hence, Sripati does not denote any particular name, but it just denotes the divine Atma.

We use the appellation Sri for denoting sacredness to all things which need to

be sanctified. The appellation of Sri is affixed to human bodies which are temporary and made up of five material elements to denote our respect. We also use this appellation even in the case of the Lord because the body in which he appears is temporary. In the case of Rama or Krishna, we use Sri because the names refer to the bodies which were impermanent. Thus, for giving sacredness to a destructible body, we use Sri.

In the case of Siva, Sankara and Easwara - names which denote permanency - we do not say Sri Siva or Sri Sankara. This appellation has no meaning because the Siva Thathwa has no body and no form. It is eternal and does not take a body. The word Sri means Mangala or prosperity. Because Mangala is permanent, He who is the husband of such Mangala is referred to as Sripati. The Sri here signifies that divinity is permanent, unchanging and indivisible, and can be worshipped in any form of the Lord.

It is said that Vishnu rides the Garuda. We also refer to Siva as a Nandi Vahana. We refer to Brahma as being the husband of Saraswathi. We say many other similar things. Thus we attribute so many qualities to these names and forms. This is only in accordance with our own notions of looking at these different forms and names. After mature deliberation, we will come to the conclusion that God abides in all Jivas and all creation. When we say, "Jantunam nara Janma durlabham" we mean that amongst all the animals, to be born as a human being is the most difficult thing. In ordinary parlance, when we talk of Jantu we think of an animal. This word comes from the root "Jan". Whatever is born from the womb of a mother is referred to as Jantu. In this sense, man is also an animal. Even a rat, because it gives birth to young ones from its womb, is called a Jantu. Another name for animals is Pasu and one who looks after the Pasus is called Pasupati. The name Pasupati for the Lord springs from the fact that He looks after all the animals. Pasupati denotes Easwara.

On the other hand, we know that Gopala is a name for Krishna. These names indicate that He who looks after the well-being of all the animals is God, bearing different names. We should synthesise the apparently differing thoughts. Without our attaching too much importance to these names and

without laying too much stress on the concepts of Vishnu as husband of Lakshmi, Brahma as husband of Saraswathi, it is good to give one name, the name of Pasalanatha to the Lord. This will bring to an end all the confusion of distinction. The word Pasalanatha also means that He is the head of all Jivas. This is a way of recognising the oneness of divinity. On the other hand, according to our Puranas, we can also reach the same conclusion by taking "pa" to mean Parvathi, "sa" to mean Saraswathi, "la" to mean Lakshmi and regard one who is the Natha of all the three to be the Pasalanatha.

We may now try and reconcile differences between the Vahanas or transports of these Lords. We have accepted that one vahana is Garuda, the second is Nandi and the third is Hamsa. We can reconcile these three. If we use one word Vihanga Vahana then we can see that all the three will be covered. 'Vi' stands for Vrishaba or Nandi, and 'ha' stands for Hamsa and 'ga' stands for Garuda, and the name Vihanga brings about the desired synthesis.

We should regard all forms of God as one and the same. It is in this context that the disciple of Sankara used the words Sripathi rupam. In this verse, another word sajjana-sangham has been used, which means only good company can uproot bad ideas. In this context mere puja or visits to holy places is not of much help. Amongst the holy and the good people, you spontaneously feel good and cultivate good qualities. Both your bad and good qualities generally depend on the society in which you move. Therefore, if you want to promote your good qualities, you must move in a good society. By keeping good company, you get an opportunity by which you can promote good work and good ideas. In the third line of this verse, the disciple of Sankara has established that good company is essential.

In the fourth line, it has been said that you must share your wealth with those who deserve to be helped. The poor people, having families, deserve such charity. Sanyasis who have no responsibilities are not in need of such charity. A portion of whatever you earn must be set apart for the future and the good of your children. A portion should be used for good purposes, for charity, and for helping others. In this way you will be using your wealth in a sacred manner.

However, most of us incline to believe in God if our desires get fulfilled, and loose our faith in God when the course of life runs contrary to our wishes. These considerations, in any case, have nothing to do with the truth about God. The evil propensities are prone to become confirmed habits. The malady of these habits cannot be cured through mechanical sadhana.

There is a small story for this. An individual was suffering from indigestion. He took several medicines in vain because the disease had become chronic. However, fortunately for him, a saint came his way and suggested a cure for his disease. The saint told him to chew and suck the pieces of rock salt the whole day. On doing so for some time, he felt considerably relieved of his trouble. This person used to distribute sweets to the children on festival days. On one Deepavali day, he visited various shops and in every shop he found the laddus to be tasting bitter. This was on account of his sucking the salt. One shopkeeper who knew his habit of sucking the salt suggested to him to wash his mouth before eating the laddu. Complying with the suggestion of the shopkeeper, he found the laddu to be sweet. In the same manner, while succumbing to your bad habits, you do not gain the sweet and sanctifying fragrance from the sacred company of the divine personalities that you come across. You can get benefit from the good company only after cleansing your mind. Then you can enjoy the bliss of Atma.

It is in this context that the statement, "Yad bhavam tad bhavati", has come to be used. An object is viewed differently from different points of view. The appearance of the world conforms to the colour of the glasses you wear. The change in the colour of the appearance is due to the change in the colour of the glasses. Therefore, many people do not imbibe good ideas from good company because they hold on to their prejudices, preconceived ideas and preoccupations. To them, Kumbhakarna sends messages of sleep and they go to sleep, while others who are awake are troubled by extraneous thoughts of their offices and so on. Yet others keep on looking hither and thither, and therefore only a small minority of participants absorb the good ideas from Sathsanga.

There is a small story for this. At one time, there was a pundit who was

expounding the Ramayana, and he undertook to do this for a period of seven days. A woman, who had recently lost her husband, used to attend the same for some solace. She was a regular visitor and used to always sit in the front row. The pundit was expounding the Ramayana every day, and this woman was constantly looking at the book and shedding tears. The pundit presumed that she had great devotion. So at the end of the seven days, he announced that because of her regular attendance and devotion, he would give the prasada first to her. While doing so, he asked her if she had enjoyed the discourses on the Ramayana. In great sorrow, the lady replied that she did not know whether the pundit was reciting the Mahabharata or the Ramayana. She further said that she was, however, in great grief, because the black string at the back of the book was reminding her of the string which her late husband used to wear around his waist. Thus she conveyed that her tears had nothing to do with the pundit's exposition of Ramayana.

Egoism blurs thinking. For instance, there was an artist who had travelled far and wide and had built up for himself great reputation. But, so far he could not achieve access to Krishna. As such, he was anxious to seek the approbation from Lord Krishna as well. With this view, one day he got an appointment with Krishna, met him, and requested him to stay still so that he could paint his picture. He prepared the outline and told Krishna that he would get ready the final painting in a week's time. Krishna was an antavasi and knew the ego of the painter. After a week, the painter brought a finished portrait, covered with a white cloth. In Krishna's presence, when he uncovered the painting, the painter himself was shocked at the lack of similarity between Krishna and the painting. The painter was completely surprised and asked for a further week's time to get the job done. Next time also, the same thing happened. In this manner, the painter tried several times but every time the result was equally disappointing. In complete frustration and total dejection, he wanted to leave the city and go away.

When he was thus going away, sage Narada met him. Narada told him that it is silly to attempt to paint the picture of Lord Krishna. The Lord has no fixed form and He can change His face every second. Narada advised, "If you do want to paint Him, I will tell you a method which will enable you to do so".

Narada whispered something into the ear of the artist. Following the advice given by Narada, the painter came back, covered something with a white cloth and again approached Krishna and told him that this time, he is welcome to change in any manner; but the painting will look exactly like him. When the cloth was removed, Krishna saw a mirror and this mirror reproduced an exact replica of Krishna. If, therefore, you are imagining that God is like this or like that, it is not correct. You cannot describe God and all your attempts will fail. It is much better to make your mind clear and clean, fill it with love and devotion and that will enable you to have the true vision of God.

30. The True Nature Of Friendship

Date: 19 June 1973 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 1973

O Lord, play your Murali to enable Prakruthi to dance in ecstasy around you and enjoy the sonorous music flowing out of your Murali; which spreads the vibrations of love in the atmosphere, fills up every heart with love and promotes love under all circumstances.

The concept of the ideal human relationship evolves when it is inspired by love and based upon truth. Sathya - truth and Prema - love form the foundation of this kind of friendship. This sort of connection is divinised with the sincere mingling of the hearts. Friendship based on altruism adopts the motto: love for all and malice towards none, keeping in view the well-being of others, overlooking personal interests. Such an attitude makes life enjoyable and helps, also, to set right the world. Such attitudes make persons voluntarily give more and receive less, whereas if egoism creeps in you, then you like to receive more and give less. The difference in attitudes of egoists and altruists reveals the contradiction between the concept of ideal friendship and the actual manner in which it is practised in everyday life.

Friendship should not be based on considerations of fear and favour. On the one hand, you try to be friendly with a person who is in authority and power out of fear; and on the other hand, you try to be friendly with an affluent and wealthy person in the hope of gaining some personal benefits. Wealth and status being temporary, our friendships will also turn out to be of a transitory nature.

If a person is adopting wrong ways, a true friend should not be afraid of pointing out his errors with a view to improving him. It is not enough to merely share joy with each other; but it is more important to share the sorrow

with each other. Sacred friendship is that which enables one to help others, at all times, and in all circumstances.

You know that Krishna and Kuchela were friends in the ashram of Sandeepa in their young age. As they grew up, Krishna became a king and Kuchela was so poor that he could not even feed his children. At the insistence of his wife, Kuchela approached Krishna for some help. The gatekeepers stopped Kuchela at the entrance. Kuchela hesitatingly revealed his identity to the guards and requested them to inform Krishna that an old boyhood friend had come to see Him. As soon as this message reached Krishna, Kuchela was escorted to the palace. Kuchela met Krishna, spoke for some time happily, and took leave of Krishna. On returning home, he found that Krishna had already showered His grace resulting in all kinds of riches given to him. Kuchela told his wife, "Krishna received me with great love, and this shows His kindness and generosity towards the poor people. He looked at me from head to foot. Out of His love, He gave me all the riches for the little parched rice that He ate from my hand." Friendship, in these days, can be illustrated by a story. A person had three friends. He had taken to several bad ways and consequently had to face a court case. He went to a friend and sought his help. The friend frankly told him that he would not like to associate himself with the crime committed by him. He refused to give evidence to rescue him. The second friend, when approached, told him that he would only go up to the court but would not be a witness in a witness box. Thereafter, he approached the third friend for help. He immediately responded and said, "Yes, your troubles are mine, my troubles are yours and I shall help you in whatever manner you wish me to help." It is quite clear that amongst these three the third is the best kind of friend. For our life also, we have three such friends. At the time of death, one has to leave behind all that one owns. Wealth and status do not accompany you. Your friends and relations may come till the burial ground to bury or cremate the body, and thereafter all will return home. Only the good and bad acts that you have performed in your life will accompany you. Your next birth will be carved out according to your deeds in this life.

In order to remain good, you must cultivate respect for truth which is permanent, whereas everything else including your body is subject to change,

decay and death. So it is desirable to undertake various practices to win the grace of the Lord at this young age while you have the energy and ability to learn and concentrate. It is quite probable that some of your friends may point out to you that this is the age to make a success of yourself in worldly affairs. They will advise you to earn money and enjoy life. According to their way of thinking, the pursuit of God can be kept in abeyance till the age of retirement from active life. But, the fact is that the young age, being impressionable and formative, is the right age to develop sacred ideas and practise spiritual sadhanas. It is common knowledge that if throughout one's life one pursues Maya, then at the time of death it will not be possible to divert one's thoughts towards God. Therefore now is the time for you to lay the foundation for a good future.

Pavitratma Swarupas!

Today, we may or may not know the significance of prema. From now on, you should make a determination to cultivate friendships based upon love. Do not allow the current meaning of friendship to corrupt your minds.

In this connection, one is reminded of the love the gopikas and the gopalas had for Krishna and on account of their love, they gladly bore all the sufferings. This illustrates the sacred friendship based on love for the divine. At the time of Krishna's departure to Mathura, many gopikas tried to hold back the legs of powerful horses to prevent them from going forward. The wheels of the chariot were held by them, but they could not succeed in preventing the chariot from moving forward. Finally, unable to do anything, they addressed Akrura, "You have the name Akrura but you are the most cruel person we have ever met." After Krishna had gone, all the gopikas were expressing their sorrow in many ways. One gopika addressing Krishna said, "You should stay back and play your Murali, whatever else others may say. We depended on you and hoped to be at your feet. Will you leave us and go away to Mathura?" A mother also shows great affection to the son. This aspect too is similar to friendship. Yasoda, the divine mother, did not find Krishna and all her thoughts were on Krishna. The mother sang in the following words: "You have always blessed us by playing your Murali. Why are

you not showing your face now? Have you forgotten the prema of your mother? I have been waiting all these days in the hope that you will return. I cannot wait any longer. Please come soon." On the other hand, Krishna had gone to Mathura and Kamsa gave him a lot of trouble there. The news reached Devaki and Vasudeva who were in prison. Devaki was very much disturbed on hearing the news that Kamsa was troubling Krishna. She was continuously looking through the windows, fearing that some bad news would reach her any moment. In immense distress she would think that: "The demons who are in the form of men have taken Krishna to the city of Mathura. They must have given him a lot of trouble. Kamsa is a very cruel person. He must have brought wild elephants to fight with Krishna. He has no heart in him. Can he not think of the fact that Krishna is very young? It is unfortunate that we have lived to see the troubles that Kamsa is causing to Krishna." These sentiments strengthen the feelings of friendship. Only such sacred relationship, associated with prema, springing from the fountain of one's heart, is true friendship. You must transcend dissension and live in harmony, by raising your hearts to God.

31. God Alone Can Be Your True Guru

Date: 20 June 1973 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 1973

The vision of God who resides in the heart can be had through an unwavering devotion for the Lotus Feet of the Guru, and by relieving oneself from the shackles of family and by controlling the vagrant mind and the sense organs.

Divyatma Swarupas!

This is the last verse of the Bhaja Govindam series. After composing it Sankara left Benares. It has been stressed in this verse that you must have unwavering faith in the guru, but you must try to understand as to what kind of guru Sankara had in mind in this context. One who lights up the Atmajyothi in you by teaching you what is right and what is good, helping you to practise the sacred principles contained in the Sastras, disciplining your mind, can be regarded as the proper guru. The word "gu" means darkness or ignorance and "ru" stands for the removal thereof. This means that the darkness of ignorance can be dispelled by the light of wisdom. Such is the function of a guru. "Gu" also stands for one who is beyond all attributes and "ru" is rupa varjita or one who has no form. One who has neither attributes nor a form is only God.

In the present-day world it is possible that the gurus will teach the right path and right ideas, but it is not possible for them to lead you from darkness to light or from ignorance to knowledge. Only God can do this. The present day teachers are of two types. There are those who claim to be exponents of Vedanta, but their main intent being catering to the worldly desires. They conform to the whims of their disciples and in doing so they succeed in dispossessing them of their possessions. Such gurus are an unbearable

burden upon the surface of the earth. They correspond to another meaning of the word guru, which means weight or burden. The second type of gurus are those who can expound the sacred texts and help the disciples to discipline them-selves to some extent. They impress upon their disciples that the guru himself is Brahma, Vishnu, Easwara and also Para Brahma. This is how such teachers enhance their own stature in the eyes of their disciples.

There is a lot of difference between a teacher and a guru. A teacher transmits what he has learnt in return for a reward, whereas a guru, through his grace, enters your heart, broadens it and enables you to comprehend the aspects of divinity. Such a being, in the form of a guru, appears at an appropriate time. For example, when King Parikshith prayed, Suka immediately appeared.

The entire world of manifestation is the play of Brahma, Vishnu and Easwara. Brahma creates, Vishnu sustains and Easwara dissolves or merges. Brahma determines your next birth according to your previous karmas, whereas Vishnu sustains the creation of Brahma. A plant cannot grow of its own accord. It has to be looked after, watered and fenced. Only then it will become a big tree. In the same manner, it is not enough for the guru to merely suggest to you to recite the name of the Lord and to carry on meditation, but he has also to look after your practice and progress by giving you the necessary support and strength.

The work of Easwara is to make things merge with infinity. Laya or dissolution means merging the soul with Paramatma. Easwara dissolves the individual into universal. Thus, the entire process consists of creation, sustenance and merger. The trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara does not represent the three gurus but relates to the same being functioning in three different directions at three different times.

Now let me clarify the significance of Sakshat Para Brahma, distinguishing it from the trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara. We classify Brahma into four types. First is the four faced Brahma, then we have the Srishti Brahma or the aspect of creation. We also have the Sabda Brahma and the Ananda Brahma. The four faced Brahma causes sound resulting in creation and

becomes the Sabda Brahma. There cannot be creation without sound and sound itself is caused by vibration. This sound has been compared to Akasa, the space or the sky and since sound is everywhere, the sky too is everywhere.

It is in this context that we describe God as being above all attributes. All the five human senses, sabda, sparsa, rupa, rasa and gandha: hearing, touch, vision, taste and smell are the material attributes.

One who is above all these and not affected by any of them is God. This may be illustrated in the following manner. All these five attributes: hearing, touch, vision, taste and smell are present in the earth. Earth is the first of the five elemental substances: earth, water, fire, air and space. That is the reason why earth is very heavy and cannot be moved easily from one place to another. While all these attributes are present for the earth, there are only four attributes for water. The smell has gone away and because of this, water is lighter and easily moves from one place to another. In case of fire, there are only three attributes. It has neither taste nor smell and is even more free in its movements. When we take the fourth element air, we find that it has no form, no taste and no smell. It has become even lighter and can move very freely. The fifth element is space or sky. It has only one attribute and that is sound. All other attributes are missing and therefore the sky is the lightest and spreads all over. If the sky - characterised by the attribute of sound alone - is present all over, God who has no attributes at all will naturally be present everywhere. He is omnipresent. That is why God is described as Gunateeta or one who is above all gunas. These five elements which compose the material world - earth, water, fire, air and space - have attributes; but when all the attributes are extinct, we conceive of something which is all-pervading. When we say that God is omnipresent, we mean that none of these things which weigh us down are present in Him. On the other hand, God, who is beyond all Gunas, remains unaffected even by pervading them. For instance, there is mud in the pot but there is no pot in the original mud.

Sankara expressed the same idea in another place in another context by saying, "Brahma Sathyam Jagan Mithya" or Brahman is real and the world is

an illusion. In another place, Sankara said, "Sarvam Vishnu Mayam Jagat." This means that the entire world is filled with Vishnu. It is common for the young students to refer to such apparently contradictory statements with some ridicule. Such observations have been made by great people, who have pondered over these matters very deeply.

It is for us to interpret them correctly. I will give you an example to convey the proper meaning. Among the people sitting here, ninety-nine percent of them are accustomed to seeing cinemas. It is common that you sit facing the screen and then feel impatient that the pictures are not appearing on the screen. After some time, pictures begin to appear on the screen and you feel happy. These pictures on the screen are continually changing. They do not remain permanently on the screen. The pictures that appear on the screen are Mithya. They are not permanent, but the screen is permanent. In this context, we should understand that the screen is real and the pictures are an illusion. The screen can be compared to Brahman. The permanent and all-pervasive Vishnu, and the impermanence of the world explain the true meaning of "Sarvam Vishnu Mayam Jagat." All that you cannot see, hear or understand cannot be ruled out as non-existent. Even if you put a powerful light in front of a blind man, he will only see darkness, because he does not have the eyes to see the light. Likewise, persons having no faith will not perceive God even if you show God to them. They do not have the eyes to see divinity and they proclaim that there is no divinity. There is an example for this. A blind man can neither see his body nor describe his looks, but it does not follow that he has no body. In the same manner, the Atma pervades the entire universe, but we are not able to perceive it because we do not have the eye of wisdom.

Once a sadhaka, who had a great ambition to know something about the divine, wanted his eye of wisdom to be opened. He entered a cave where a guru was residing. While entering the cave, he saw a small light. As he moved forward, even that little light got extinguished. In darkness one feels frightened and in fear, we think of God very intensively. Thus, he uttered loudly the word "Namassivaya" and on hearing this, the saint asked him who he was. This person said that he had come to seek his grace. This great saint,

who was sustaining himself in the cave only by breathing the air around him, had the competence to know the mind of his visitor. He said that he will answer his questions later but asked him to first go and light the lamp which had just been extinguished. The visitor took a match box and tried to light the lamp but did not succeed. He told the guru that he had finished all the match sticks and yet he had not succeeded in lighting the lamp. The guru asked him to see if there was oil in the lamp. After seeing the lamp, he found that there was no oil and reported to the guru that there was only water in the lamp. The guru then asked him to open the lamp, remove all the water and pour oil in it, and then try to light it. The person did this but the lamp would not light even then. The guru then said that the wick was probably wet with water and asked him to dry it nicely in the open and then attempt to light the lamp. He did this and succeeded. Then the person ventured to mention his doubt and sought the answer from the guru. The surprised guru said that the appropriate answer was being given all the while. The visitor pleaded that he being an ignorant man was not able to understand the significance of the teaching and requested the guru to explain to him in clearer terms.

The guru said: In the vessel of your heart, there is the wick of your jiva. That wick has been immersed all these days in the water of your sensuous desires. Therefore, you are not able to light the lamp of wisdom. Pour out all the water of desires from the vessel of your heart, and fill it with Namasmarana of God. Take the wick of jiva and dry it in the sunshine of vairagya. Then you come back to me and you will certainly be able to light the lamp of wisdom. What is required is the process by which you take the wick of jiva and squeeze out of it all the water present in the form of your desires and then put into the heart the oil, devotion or Namasmarana. It will then be possible for you to light the lamp of wisdom. By doing so, you will see the amar jyothi or the lamp of wisdom.

able to see this jyothi or the lamp of wisdom which will enable you to help yourselves and others only if you practise what you have learnt here. If you get all these quotations by heart and only repeat the words, others will think that you have acquired something which is very hollow during your stay here.

One lazy sanyasi, who was an idler, once went to a village. He was very hungry and he saw a house and presuming that this family was very devoted, he thought that he would get food from them. He entered the house and asked for alms. The lady of the house saw him and said that she would feed him by giving him a full meal instead of just giving him some alms and asked him to go to the river that was flowing nearby and have a bath and come. In the meanwhile she said that she would keep the food ready. This idler said, "Govindeti Sada Snanam", meaning that the utterance of the name of Govinda was as good as taking a bath. He said that he was thus ready for the meal. The lady was equally clever and she said, "Ramanamamritam Sada Bhojanam", meaning that the utterance of the name of Rama was as good as eating a meal.

32. Closing Address To The Students

Date: 21 June 1973 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 1973

At one time we are joyous, and at another time we are sorrowful. The one and the same object which is a source of happiness turns out to be a source of agony with the interval of time. Therefore, joy and grief are only states of mind and the objects which are themselves subject to change cannot give us lasting happiness. Change is not real. Whatever can be changed basically cannot be real. Knowing that the life of placid enjoyment is naturally inimical to serious spiritual effort, the good people consider difficulties as stepping stones to a higher state in life.

Then, there are those who rationally analyse merits and demerits. Such people regard faults as faults and merits as merits.

Then again there are those who are unable to see truth, beauty and goodness anywhere but are always eager to see imperfections everywhere and find faults in everyone. Such people have limited horizons but unlimited ambitions.

Pavitratma Swarupas, students!

We are responsible for the situation in which we are placed today. Yesterday shaped today and today will shape tomorrow. The yardstick of human progress does not depend upon the appearances, that is, wealth, possession and authority. Such appearances can be likened to the passing clouds or external cloaks. Man's real value is based upon his adherence to good conduct and his reliance upon truth. The youth of today must try to protect Dharma and pursue truth, acquiring thereby a loveable and good nature. It is only then that you will be able to enjoy happiness and also serve as an example to others. You have to uncover the screen of flesh and bones to intuit the Atma, so doing, allow the mind to abide in it and get absorbed in the bliss of Atma. It is a contradiction in terms to get attached with the finite and aspire for the infinite. Let the posture of devotion be not a facade to hide

the collusion between mind and matter. The tainted ego tarnishes the view of wisdom. Ignorance, the disease of the mind, must be removed by knowledge. Remembering that you are not the body but the Atma leads you to knowledge. The mind thus can be harmonised with the spirit within.

It is well known that Viswamitra took recourse to his physical strength and intellectual superiority while challenging Vashishta. In the end, however, his physical strength got depleted and his intellect did not function. It was then that he understood the greater importance of the power of Divinity. He undertook penance at that stage.

The entire universe is permeated by Divinity. The world is an appearance of Brahman, and Brahman itself is Nirakara - formless. Our elders in the ancient times based their lives on the eternal and universal philosophy of Vedanta. This traditional way of life of our land has withstood the stress and strain of several invasions during the past centuries. You have been given valuable gems by several teachers and scholars during the past thirty days, and now you will do well for yourselves if you treasure them. Do not convert these gems into pieces of charcoal in course of time. Usually wealth or ornaments are regarded as valuable possessions. These possessions are valuable only so far as life is in you. Our good character should be considered as our real wealth and our good conduct as our prosperity. Our knowledge of the Brahman should be our most prized possession.

This land is called Bharath and this signifies that her children enjoy the bliss of God. "Bha" stands for "Icha" or desire, "Ra" stands for "Kriya" or work, and "Tha" stands for wisdom. These three must be co-ordinated. In other words, our actions should spring from the desire to attain the view of wisdom. We should not submit ourselves to any temporary excitements or allow our impulses to plunge us into thoughtless actions. The surge of thoughts arise and subside in you. While you indulge in thoughts, do not permit these thoughts to cloud the effulgence of Atma.

The summer course was organised in order to acquaint you with Indian culture and spirituality which would help to improve yourselves resulting in

the betterment of the future of the country. Therefore, you should not let any weakness dissuade you from treading the right path. If in a big tank there is a small hole, all the water will flow out. In the same manner, even if you have a small sensory desire in you, then all that you have learnt will be of no avail. Attraction for the world distracts you from the reality. Just as you have draped your bodies in white, your mind should also be draped in white, that is, you should become pure. You should surrender to God your pure heart filled with the vibrations of love.

It is believed in our country that if you commit a sin knowingly or unknowingly, and if you have a dip in the Triveni Sangam or the confluence of the three rivers, then you will be saved from the consequences of that sin. It means that if you sincerely repent for your sins from the core of your being, then you will get rid of their consequences. All of you have had a dip in the Triveni during the summer course and therefore, all your earlier faults have been atoned. You should guard yourselves in future by desisting from committing error and resisting evil. Good work and selfless love will help you to tread the path of wisdom.