



Summer Showers 2002

Divine Discourses of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Index Of Discourses

1. Education Should Lead To Perfection	2
2. Excellence Of Ancient Indian System Of Education	13
3. Harmony And Beauty In Ramayana	27
4. Ramayana - An Ideal For Every Family	36
5. Yad Bhavam Tad Bhavathi	51
6. The Ideal Brothers	58
7. Rama - The Ideal Hero	67
8. Ramayana - The Divine Masterplan	75
9. God Has No Specific Form	88
10. Reduce Your Desires	98
11. Sense Control Is The Highest Sadhana	109
12. Health Is Wealth	119
13. Fundamental Principles Of Indian Culture	129

1. Education Should Lead To Perfection

Date: 16 May 2002 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 2002

Sarve sukhino santu Sarve santu niramayah
Sarve bhadrani pasyantu Ma kaschit dukhabhak bhaveth

May all be healthy, happy and prosperous!

May all lead a life without sorrow!

(Sanskrit Verse)

Embodiments of Love!

THE Bharathiyas pray for the welfare and well-being of all the people of the world. This is the foremost principle of Bharathiya culture. The culture of Bharath is eternal, everlasting and steadfast. Its glory has remained undiminished through the ravages of time. The students today have forgotten this sacred culture and are consequently facing great problems. They are distancing themselves from peace and bliss. The Bharathiyas of yore experienced bliss and shared it with others. Even the people of other countries recognized the greatness of Bharathiya culture and tried to follow the same for the benefit of their respective countries.

Truth and Self-confidence are the Keys to Success in Life

Abraham Lincoln, who rose to become the President of America, was born in a poor family. His father was a carpenter. His mother worked hard to earn a little money to educate him. Their income was barely enough to run the family. Lincoln had to face many hardships. He did not have even proper dress to wear. When he went to school, his schoolmates made fun of him as he was shabbily dressed. Unable to bear their taunts, one day Lincoln went to

his mother and wept bitterly. She enquired as to what the matter was. Lincoln said, "Mother, all my schoolmates look down upon me because I am poor and do not have a good dress to wear. They dislike my company." Then his mother pacified him, saying, "Son, you should understand our financial condition and act accordingly. Your schoolmates talk in this manner because they are well-to-do. We have to conduct ourselves keeping our financial condition in view. We are not rich. We have to face this situation with fortitude." She drew him close, wiped his tears and said, "You should not feel unhappy over such a trivial matter. We do not have rich friends and relatives. But we are rich in self-respect and self-confidence. Understand that self-confidence is our true wealth. One with self-confidence and self-respect is the richest of all. Money and comforts are transient. So, strengthen your self-confidence and self-respect. They will certainly bestow on you all prosperity. Do not get carried away by what others say." These words of wisdom made an indelible impression on the tender heart of Lincoln. He started believing that self-confidence was his true wealth and his very life-breath. He stopped paying heed to the taunts of his schoolmates and continued his studies with determination. As there was no light in his house, he used to study under streetlights at night. At times, he had no food to eat and went to sleep after drinking a cup of water. His mother used to work day and night tirelessly to make both ends meet. Sometimes, she used to starve herself in order to feed her son. Lincoln lost his mother when he was still a child. So, his father Thomas married again. His stepmother was a noble lady and looked after Lincoln with love and affection. She also taught Lincoln to develop self-confidence. Lincoln was happy under her loving care. He paid glowing tributes to her, saying that he never thought that a stepmother could be so kind and compassionate as she was towards him. He made all efforts to keep her happy.

Unmindful of adverse circumstances, Lincoln worked hard and pursued his studies with determination. He passed his examinations with distinction. People were amazed at his success in examinations. He attributed his success to his self-confidence. He never uttered a lie. He considered truth as God. Later he got employment in a store where he worked with diligence and honesty. Gradually he earned reputation as a man of truth and integrity.

Recognizing his nobility, his friends requested him to contest the election. They said, "There is no trace of truth or morality in politics. There is no justice at all. The country needs a person like you who would uphold truth and justice." Initially, Lincoln was reluctant to enter politics. He felt he did not have the strength to achieve success in politics. Even some elders started exerting pressure on him to contest the election. They promised that they would extend all the necessary help. Lincoln stood in election and emerged victorious. Ultimately, Lincoln became the President of America. Just imagine, a boy born in a poor family rising to the level of the President of America. His self-confidence was responsible for this.

Times, country and circumstances may change. But the purity and power of the heart do not change. Before Lincoln became the President of America, people did not realize the power of self-confidence and faith in God. It was Lincoln who taught these values to the people of America. Following the example of Lincoln, more and more people started developing self-confidence and faith in God. It is enough if a country has one person like Lincoln.

"The moon illumines the world at night and the sun during the day. Righteousness illumines the three worlds, and a noble son illumines his entire clan." (Telugu Poem) Culture Emphasizes Cultivation of Virtues **Students!**

You should become the noble sons of Bharath. Strive to reverse the present trend and lead the country on the right path. First of all, transform your heart. Only then can you bring about transformation in others. If you want to be respected, in the first instance you should respect others. Respect all without any difference of caste, religion, etc. understand that the same Atmic principle dwells in all. Ekoham Bahusyam (the One willed to become many). This is the teaching of the culture of Bharath. As people have forgotten this sacred culture, they are unable to earn the love of their own parents.

What is Samskruti (culture)? Samskara (refinement) is culture. That which purifies is culture. We do not partake of paddy without processing it. We separate the husk and boil the rice before eating it. Refinement is similar. We should refine ourselves by giving up wicked qualities and filling our hearts

with purity. Only then can we get strength and happiness. A healthy body will have a healthy mind. Some people have a misconception that the body and the mind are two separate entities. The body cannot exist without the mind.

Manah Eva Manushyanam Karanam Bandhamokshayo
(mind is responsible for both bondage and liberation of man).

So, you should fill your mind with sacred thoughts. Both the body and the mind are closely interrelated. The body is the vesture of the mind and the mind is the basis for the body. So, the body and the mind should be put to right use.

Today students are pursuing various types of studies and are acquiring high qualifications. But mere academic qualification will not give you true happiness. Food sustains the body but cannot give bliss. Money provides comforts but cannot ensure bliss. Both the body and the mind are important. How should we maintain our body? How can we purify the mind? Students should clearly understand this. When you have a healthy body and a pure mind, you become a perfect human being. Without this, you are only half man, not a full human. The purpose of education is to mould man into a perfect human being. Modern education lacks this capability. Many feel that they can be happy in life if they have money. But money cannot give you true happiness. It cannot ensure sound health. You have to cultivate virtues if you want real happiness. It is not by Dhanamu (money) but only by Gunamu (virtue) that one can remain happy and healthy. Modern students are interested only in Kalimi (wealth), Balimi (power) and Chelimi (friendship) but not in Gunamu (virtue). What is the use of possessing wealth and power without virtue? One should depend on character and not wholly on wealth, power or friendship. Ancient Bharathiyas made this country ideal as they relied on the cultivation of virtues. Bharath is a sacred land. One who is devoid of virtues cannot be called a true Bharathiya. Give up bad thoughts. Never utter profane words and never indulge in evil deeds. This is the

teaching of the culture of Bharath. It lays great emphasis on unity.

"Let us move together, let us grow together, let us grow in intelligence together,
let us live in harmony with each other without giving room for conflicts."
(Telugu Poem)

We say, all are our brothers and sisters, but how many are translating this ideal into action? Our actions should be in harmony with our words. Jesus taught, Brotherhood of man and Fatherhood of God. The same truth is professed by the culture of Bharath. Sow the seeds of good thoughts, water them with good actions and remove the weeds of wicked qualities. Only then will you reap the crop of bliss.

Students!

Today is the first day of the Summer Course. Purify your body and mind. Put into practice the teachings of our ancients. Follow the ideals demonstrated by great men like Lincoln. His mother taught him that self-confidence was the greatest wealth of man. Develop self-confidence. Uphold self-respect.

Do not do anything artificially. Whatever you do, do it 'heartfully' (wholeheartedly). Art is external, heart is internal. Follow the dictates of your heart. People greet each other 'good morning', 'good evening', etc., but most of them do it in a mechanical and artificial manner. Truly speaking, there is no morning or evening. We call it morning when the sun rises in the east, and evening when the sun sets in the west. But actually speaking, there is no sunrise or sunset. It is because of the rotation of the earth that we see the sun during the day and the moon during the night.

Moon is the presiding deity of the mind. Before Rama lifted the bow of Shiva in the court of King Janaka, Sita's mind was not at peace. When Sita went to

Ayodhya after her marriage with Rama, one day she confided to Him how the moon of her mind was clouded before Rama lifted the Siva bow. Rama then told Sita that at the time of His birth, thick clouds covered the moon; so, it could not have His Darshan at the time of His birth. Rama then promised to the moon that He would add Chandra (moon) to His name to make it happy. Rama further told that in His next incarnation in Dwapara Yuga, the moon would be the first to have the Darshan of the Lord and to pay salutations to Him. True to the words spoken by Lord Ramachandra, the moon had the good fortune of having the first Darshan of Sri Krishna when His father Vasudeva was carrying Him across the river Yamuna. Thus, the moon was the first to do Namaskar to the Lord in His incarnation as Krishna.

Give up Body Attachment and Experience the Atma

Embodiments of Love!

You may not have any material wealth; it is enough if you have self-confidence and self-respect. Respect everybody. Offer your Namaskar (salutations) to elders wholeheartedly. What is the inner meaning of Namaskar? When you do Namaskar, you join your palms and bring them close to your heart. The five fingers of each hand symbolize the five Karmendriyas (senses of action) and five Jnanendriyas (senses of perception). These ten senses should follow the dictates of your heart (conscience). That is true Namaskar. Some people do Namaskar in a mechanical way. They do not bring their two palms together. They say Namaskar and lift their hands, as if they are going to hit you. When you do Namaskar, bring the ten fingers together and keep the two thumbs close to your heart. (Here Bhagawan demonstrated on the stage how Namaskar should be done by keeping His joined thumbs on His chest.) It means that you are doing it wholeheartedly. Thumb is the most important finger, without which the hand becomes useless.

This is the way our ancient sages and seers did Namaskar. They led a sacred life and performed penance without any sense of fear in dense forests amidst wild animals and wicked demons. What was the source of their courage and strength? They had no Dehabhimana (body attachment). They had only

Atmabhimana (attachment to the Self). What was the weapon they carried with them? They carried the weapon of self-confidence with them. That is why they could even tame wild animals like lions and tigers and play with them. They had absolutely no sense of fear. It is from self-confidence that one gets courage. Today man is fear-stricken because he lacks self-confidence. Life has no meaning if one lacks self-confidence. Modern youth do not have faith in the Atma at all. They ask, "Where is the Atma?" The Atma is everywhere. Atmavat Sarvabhutani (see the same Atma in all beings). Sarvata Panipadam Tat Sarvathokshi Siromukham, Sarvata Sruthimalloke Sarvamavruthya Thishthathi (with hands, feet, eyes, heads, mouth and ears pervading everything, God permeates the entire universe). Take, for instance, air. It is present everywhere but you can neither see it with your eyes nor catch it in your hands. You cannot deny its existence because you cannot live without it. The same can be said of the Atma too. The Atma is the life principle of all beings. That is why in temples a ritual called Prana Pratishtha (investing life principle) is performed to the idols. You cannot live without the Atma. Who is responsible for your breathing process? It is the Atma.

The five elements are the very forms of the Divine. This was the teaching of Buddha. In the beginning, he visited many noble souls and listened to their teachings. He studied many sacred texts but he was not satisfied. Ultimately, he came to the conclusion that the five elements are the very forms of God. In order to understand divinity, you have to understand the nature of the five elements. You may worship God in the form of idols and derive some satisfaction out of it. There is nothing wrong in idol worship. But understand that God is not confined to idols. He dwells in your heart. Understand the nature of your senses and put them to sacred use. Only then can you attain Nirvana. Buddha understood this truth and attained Nirvana. His cousin Ananda was by his side during his final moments. Buddha noticed Ananda shedding tears and said, "Why do you have this body attachment? Body is negative, whereas I am positive. This negative has to be given up some day or the other." Today people are deluded by Dehabhimana because they lack Atmabhimana. No doubt, you have to take proper care of your body. You have to discharge your duties but do not be unduly attached to the body.

"The body is made up of five elements and is bound to perish sooner or later,
but the indweller has neither birth nor death. He has no attachment whatsoever.

Truly speaking, the indweller is verily God Himself who is in the form of the Atma."

(Telugu Poem)

Sense Control Imparts Lavanya

The body needs to be maintained well in order to carry on our life journey. But do not waste your time by constantly thinking of it and getting attached to it. Without the Atma, the body cannot exist. So, the Atma is the fundamental basis of life. It is a grave mistake to repose faith in the body forgetting the Atma. You should have faith in the Self and make sacred use of your senses. Only then can you cultivate Lavanya. According to our ancients, Lavanya connotes beauty of character. Today we find many women bearing the name Lavanya. As one's character develops, the splendour of one's personality increases. Such a person will remain youthful even in advanced age. He will be ever blissful and beautiful. He will be the very embodiment of Sathyam, Sivam and Sundaram. This body (Swami points to his body) is approaching its 77th year. How is it that this body remains youthful and attractive? It is full of Lavanya due to the purity of my character and sense control. Whoever has sense control will have Lavanya. You do not find the pictures of Rama or Krishna looking old. They were ever young and full of Lavanya. Today youngsters lack sense control and consequently are ageing very fast. A youth of 16 or 17 today looks like an old man of 60 or 70! Lack of sense control is the cause of their ageing fast. You will have all the physical strength and vigour when you have sense control. Put the senses to proper use and exercise control over them. You will then be endowed with Lavanya. Be cheerful and smiling. Do not laugh in an artificial manner. Man has no reason to be sad because it is contrary to human nature. Where is the need

for him to cry when he has the ever blissful spirit within? Never cry. Always be happy. You should lead an exemplary life and set an ideal to society by helping the poor, the sick and the needy.

Follow Me and Attain Bliss

Students!

This is the first day of the Summer Course. Understand the purpose behind conducting the Summer Course. You would have wasted a lot of time during these two months of vacation. If you waste your time in futile pursuits, you cannot have sense control. And if your senses are not brought under control, your health as well as your studies will suffer. Make sacred use of your time in this Course. This Summer Course is meant to cultivate virtues in you so that you may attain Pushti (strength) and Santhushti (happiness) and experience Sathyananda (true bliss).

Nithyanandam, Parama Sukhadam, Kevalam Jnanamurtim,
Dwandwateetam, Gagana Sadrisham, Tattwamasyadi Lakshyam,
Ekam, Nityam, Vimalam, Achalam, Sarvadhee Sakshibhutam, Bhavateetam,
Trigunarahitam

(you are the embodiment of truth and bliss, you are wisdom absolute, the one without a second, beyond the pair of opposites, expansive and pervasive like the sky, the goal indicated by the Mahavakya Tattwamasi, the eternal, pure, unchanging, the witness of all functions of the intellect, beyond all mental conditions and the three Gunas of Sattwa, Rajas and Thamas).

This is your true nature. So, you should always be in a state of bliss. It is possible only when you give up body attachment. One with body

consciousness can never attain bliss. However, the body has to be maintained properly. You should not eat as you please. The stomach is like a petrol tank; it should not be overloaded. You should have Mithaharam and Hithaharam (moderate and wholesome food). Take, for instance, Swami's example. Many people dine with Me everyday. They are aware of this. For the past one month, I have stopped eating even Ragi Sankati which was My regular diet. I am taking only one Chapati and nothing else. You all can see how blissful I am. Some people may think that Swami is looking weak. It is just a reflection of their feelings. There is no weakness in Me whatsoever. I am very strong. I can walk any distance. If necessary, I can even run. What is the secret of this? My Lavanya is responsible for this. Many people wonder as to how Swami appears so young and blissful even at this age. How can you expect Me to be otherwise? I have no worry at all. I am always full of bliss. Follow Me. I keep saying, My life is My message. Follow in My footsteps and you will also remain energetic and blissful forever. Lead a happy, healthy and ideal life and serve the nation. Understand that you are born to serve and not to rule over others. Develop the spirit of service and sanctify your lives.

Bhagawan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajan, Hari Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahin ... (After showering bliss on the participants by the melody of the Bhajan, Bhagawan further advised the participating students.) Students -Boys and Girls!

Everyday after the classes are over in the morning, do not waste your time in roaming about. Ruminates on the good things taught to you by the learned speakers. Imprint their teachings on your heart. This is what you are supposed to do in the following fortnight. When these teachings are firmly imprinted on your heart, they will become a part of your being. When Uddhava brought the message of Krishna to the Gopikas, they told Uddhava that they wanted Krishna and not his message. They told him that the form of Krishna was imprinted on their hearts like a picture imprinted on a sheet of paper. It was not possible to separate Krishna from their heart. Like the Gopikas, develop the feeling of oneness with God and say with firm conviction "God and I are one". Do not waste your time in idle gossip. Observe Mounam (silence). Talk less, work more and study more.

2. Excellence Of Ancient Indian System Of Education

Date: 16 May 2002 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 2002

Punar Vittham Punar Mithram Punar Bharya Punar Mahi
Ethath Sarvam Punar Labhyam Na Sareeram Punah Punah

(If money is lost, one need not be worried about it, for one can earn it again.
If a friend is lost, one can have another. If wife is lost, one can marry again.
If one loses one's piece of land, one can purchase another.
All these can be regained. But if the body is lost, one cannot get it back.)
(Sanskrit Verse)

ONE may lose one's wealth but it can still be earned back; one may lose friends but better ones can be befriended later; one may lose one's wife but remarriage is still possible; one may lose land and property; but these also can be regained. All these can be recovered somehow or the other but the body once lost, the same body can never be regained. One can have the experience of bliss so long as the body exists. So, one should make every effort to experience bliss while the body lasts. Our ancients made relentless efforts to protect and safeguard their bodies so as to experience bliss. But they were not able to retain their bodies permanently. Since the body is not permanent, one should spare no effort to attain the state of bliss in one's lifetime.

Ideals of Education in Ancient India

Since time immemorial, this sacred land of Bharath has been the birthplace of all branches of knowledge and education. Numerology, grammar, music and fine arts, etc., had their origin in India. In fact, that which is not found in India

cannot be found anywhere else. It is therefore said, "Yanna Bharathe, thanna Bharatha". This sacred land is the birthplace of many men and women of pristine virtues and high ideals.

"This land of Bharath has given birth to many noble women like Savitri who brought her dead husband back to life; Chandramati who extinguished a wild fire with the power of truth; Sita who proved her chastity by coming out of blazing fire unscathed and Damayanti who reduced an evil-minded hunter to ashes with the power of her chastity. This land of piety and nobility attained plenty and prosperity and became the teacher of all the nations of the world because of such women of chastity." (Telugu Poem) However, some foolish people are deluded to think that they would find in foreign countries what is not available in India. What is it that you cannot obtain in this sacred land? It is the treasure trove of all knowledge and wealth. Unfortunately, people lack determination. If one is determined and makes sincere efforts, there is nothing that one cannot achieve or obtain in Bharath.

The Indians in the past made strenuous efforts to conduct experiments and research in the field of education and devised an original system of education. In those days, each university specialized in one area of learning or the other. Kasi University specialized in the area of Vyakarana Sastra (grammar). Alankara Sastra (rhetoric) was the speciality of the University of Kashmir. Ujjaini University imparted knowledge in the specialized area of Nyaya Sastra (law). The science of law was taught and preserved in its pristine and pure form there. Today's laws are distorted into illegalities. On the other hand, at Ujjaini, no scope was given for anything that was unlawful to enter its portals. Bharath was famous for propagating and teaching such lofty ideals and for its dedicated teachers and students. The science of Ayurveda (health sciences and medicine) was very well developed in the kingdom of Bharatha. In this way, each university specialized and taught a particular subject and popularized it. There were several such reputed universities in ancient Bharath.

Ujjaini, Kasi, Takshashila (Taxila) and Kashmir - these were all great centres of learning. Navadvipa was a reputed centre for learning logic and law. The

tenets of law that could not adequately be interpreted elsewhere were easily explained and expounded here. Unfortunately, modern students are unaware of the great wealth and power of the fund of knowledge of India and are going all over the world in search of wealth and knowledge. This is a highly unworthy and mistaken outlook. Such ignorance should be dispelled. We should have the light of wisdom in us. Only then can we realise the Divine and experience bliss.

Embodiments of Love!

What you need to know today is that India is the repository of all knowledge and power. Spiritual science, physical sciences and fine arts like music, literature and poetry had their birth in India. They were all discovered by ancient Indians. Why are the students neglecting such a sacred land? This is the mark of extreme ignorance. Students are unable to recognize this truth and are running after worldly pleasures. These can never give happiness. Even if some pleasures is obtained, it will not last long.

Ideal Student-teacher Relationship

The universities of yore did not have huge buildings and infrastructure. The residence of the teacher itself was the university. The tree under which they sat was the classroom. The soft words of the teacher wafted over like cool breeze and were imprinted on the minds of the students. The students were few in number. However, the capacity of the teacher to impart knowledge was immense. The teacher taught in such lucid and simple terms that students could easily understand the higher sciences and grasp advanced subjects. Such educational institutions flourished in ancient Bharath. When the Britishers came to India, they were much impressed by our system of education and attempted to investigate the cause for the high standards of ancient Indian universities. They however failed in their endeavour.

The ancient system of education in India was based on Sabdapramana, i.e., the word of mouth. The practice of writing everything was not the main mode of teaching. The students listened to the teachings imparted by the preceptor

with utmost interest which got imprinted on their heart straightaway. This was the main reason of high standards of education in ancient India. The entire process of communication was oral. There was no rigid timetable, or even curricula and syllabi. The teachers taught the student any science or subject that he was keen to learn. There was no interference from the government. The teaching-learning process was entirely heart-to-heart. The students kept their hearts open and the teachers filled them with knowledge. It was this heart-to-heart learning that enabled India to propagate wisdom and knowledge throughout the world. Lessons were taught at any time; it never mattered whether it was day or night. The hearts of the teachers were highly pure and sacred. They did not charge any fee from the students for imparting knowledge to them. It was the responsibility of society to look after the needs of the teachers. Depending on their capacity and capability, the citizens contributed towards the livelihood of the teachers and provided them with all comforts. But never was any fee collected from the students. Thus, the education system of India was deeply sacred, highly valuable and profoundly blissful. But, unfortunately, the Indians are neglecting their ancient system of education and hence are losing an invaluable heritage of knowledge and bliss.

What were the duties of the students in those days? They would rise early in the morning, perform their ablutions and prayers before commencing their studies. The students went from house to house and collected food for themselves and the teachers. The teacher would then take whatever was required for him and the rest would be partaken of by the students as sanctified food. The teachers and students were totally selfless and pure-hearted. It was in such a sacred atmosphere that the knowledge of scriptures, epics and sacred texts was taught and learnt in ancient India.

The teachers were highly dedicated and selfless. Every nectarous thought and word that originated in their heart was transferred to the students in a loving way. As education today has been made into a commercial activity, the mind of man has become perverted. In those days, food or education was never sold. Education was made available free of cost. Goddess Saraswathi was not bound by the shackles of commerce and trade. She was worshipped by

grateful teachers and students for her grace as the bestower of the sacred knowledge to the teachers and learners.

"Saraswathi Namastubhyam Varade Kamarupini,
Vidyarambham Karishyami Siddhir Bhavatu Mey Sada.
Padma-patra Visalakshi Padma-kesara Varnini,
Nityam Padmalaya Devi, Sa Mam Patu Saraswathi."

(I begin my education with salutations to myriad-formed Saraswathi, the bestower of boons. May she always grant me success! That goddess with eyes like lotus petals, coloured like the pollens of the lotus, ever residing in the lotus, may she protect me!)

Saraswathi, Bhagawati, Bharathi, Poornendu-bimbanana were her various names. Daily prayer was offered to the goddess Saraswathi before starting teaching and learning. But the name of Saraswathi is conspicuous by its absence in the modern system of education. Goddess Lakshmi was worshipped by her many names, viz., Indira, Lokamatha, Ramamangaladevata, Bhargavi, Lokajanani, Ksheera Sagara Kanyaka, etc. Prayers invoking the goddesses and extolling them by their various attributes lent purity and sweetness to the teachings of ancient Bharathiyas.

The Aim of Education is God-realisation

It is in such a sacred land that God has repeatedly taken human form. God is not some incomprehensible figure or entity. He can be most easily experienced. Daivam Manusha Rupena (God takes the form of man) God incarnates in human form. Today, however, man is not ready to accept this reality of God's incarnation in human form. Our ancients followed the paths of Karma (action), Upasana (worship) and Jnana (knowledge) to realise God.

They offered prayers to God and worshipped Him in many ways.

"Yasya Jnanadayasindho Agadhasya Anagha Guna
Sevyatham Akshayo Dheera Sa Sriye Cha Amrutaya Cha."

(That Lord who is the ocean of knowledge and compassion, fathomless, changeless, and replete with all pure attributes is worshipped by the earnest seekers of prosperity and immortality.)

The sacred knowledge was offered free of cost. There was no discrimination on the basis of caste, community, race or religion. All were considered equal. Music, literature, dance and fine arts were all encouraged and fostered. Carpentry, pottery and various branches of smithy were also encouraged and taught with dedication. The aim was to make the students self-reliant through proper education. The teacher was the repository of all knowledge. Every student received knowledge directly from the teacher. Without the teacher, there could be no learning. The teachers in those days were noble and virtuous.

The science of medicine was highly developed in ancient India. Charaka was a highly reputed and well-known name in the field of medical science. Today the heart-lung machine and several other complicated and sophisticated equipments are required to treat heart disease. No such gadgets were required in those days. Charaka treated the patients while chanting Mantras in praise of God to invoke His grace. The heart disease would vanish without a trace. For that matter, every disease can be cured by invoking God's grace. One can achieve physical, mental and spiritual strength by chanting the Divine Name.

Efficacy of Namasmara for Man's Liberation

Embodiments of Love!

It is impossible to achieve anything without the grace of God. Sadly today, man is steeped in injustice and unrighteousness. All his thoughts are selfish and evil. His vision lacks the warmth of love. Idealism has reached rock bottom. First of all, man needs to grow the crop of love in the field of his heart. This was the teaching of Charaka. God is not in some distant land but resides in your very heart. He is with you, within you, above and below you and also around you. With such faith, man should chant the Divine Name. Discarding such an easy path, man is subjecting himself to needless agony and suffering. On the other hand, people in ancient days would instantly get rid of any suffering - all by chanting the sacred Name of the Lord. Harer Nama Harer Nama Harer Namaiva Kevalam, Kalau Nastyeva Nastyeva Nastyeva Gathiranyatha (chanting of the Divine Name is the only path to liberation in this Age of Kali).

In Kali Age, Namasmarana (chanting the Lord's Name) is the panacea for all our suffering. There is no greater power than the Divine Name. Chanting the Lord's Name bestows infinite bliss on man. No one can estimate the power of the Lord's Name. In Krita yuga, meditation was the chief means of man's liberation. In Treta yuga, it was Yagna and in Dwapara yuga, worship. But in Kali yuga, Namasmarana is the most potent spiritual practice to earn God's grace. That is why the practice of Namasmarana has been spreading to all parts of the world.

Students!

If you make a proper enquiry, you will realize that all powers are present in you. The tremendous power of magnetism that is latent in man cannot be found anywhere else. All the powers of the world are immanent in man. Though man is such a powerful entity, he considers himself to be a weakling and hence suffers. You are all the embodiments of Divinity. God is not separate from you. He resides in your heart. You can have a blissful glimpse of God if you turn your vision inward. You are unable to see Him because you

lack faith.

Poems and Plays Written by Swami in his Childhood

During my childhood, I used to compose several songs with deep meaning and gave joy to the villagers by having them sung. It was the time when Hitler invaded Russia in the Second World War. Some people organised a meeting and approached me with a request to compose some songs which could inspire our freedom fighters. A doll was placed in a cradle on the stage. I then composed a song extempore in the form of a lullaby to the doll.

"Do not cry, my child, do not cry.
If you cry, you will not be called a valiant son of Bharath.
Go to sleep, my child, go to sleep.
Did you get scared because the terrible Hitler has invaded the invincible
Russia?
Go to sleep, my child, go to sleep.
Do not cry, my child, do not cry.
For the Red Army is marching under Stalin.
They will put an end to Hitler.
All the countrymen shall unite and fight to win freedom;
Go to sleep, my child, go to sleep." (Telugu Song)

The villagers listened to the song with appreciation and amazement. Many of them wondered as to how this young boy Sathyanarayana Raju had come to know about Hitler and Stalin. These names were unknown to the people in this region. There is nothing that Sai does not know. Yet I pretend as if I am not aware. I ask you, "When did you come?" You may think that Sai Baba is not even aware when you have arrived! I do know. But I still ask the question to give you happiness. My only intention in asking such questions is to make you happy that Swami spoke to you. I do not think that you entertain any doubt about my knowledge of your arrival.

One day some school students came to me. They all used to address me as Sathya. They said, "Sathya! We are planning to enact a play in the school. We want you to write the story and some songs for it." I agreed and prepared the script for the drama. In this connection, I wrote a song, taught it to two of the students and asked them to sing in public.

What are these times that have descended on us! Oh folks! What are these times that have descended on us!

The face powder has formed a cheap substitute for the turmeric powder;
Oh folks! What are these times that have descended on us!
Gold necklaces have given way to cheap trinkets and chains;
Oh folks! What are these times that have descended on us!
(Telugu Poem)

In this way, I used to teach the people lessons that needed to be taught. In those days, sporting a wristwatch was considered a fashion.

People hang silver medallions from leather strap on their left wrists - and call it fashion!
Grotesque appearances are made that cannot be seen by the eyes - and they call it fashion!
Long moustaches are cut to tiny patches under the nose - and they call it fashion!
(Telugu Song)

I used to compose such songs that made fun of modern fads and tried to draw the attention of the public, particularly the youth, towards ancient customs and traditions.

Karanam Subbamma was a noble and pious lady. She loved me very much. I was then just seven years of age. She often came to me, calling "Sathya, Sathya". I did not respond immediately. Whenever she called me, she kept asking, "Child! Why do you not come to my house?" I would respond, "I am not a beggar to keep visiting others' houses. I shall come only if invited and not otherwise." One day she prayed, "Son! My husband is taking to immoral ways and ruining himself. Can you help me in correcting him?" I replied, "If you do not think otherwise, I will teach him a lesson. I will compose a few songs with suitable wordings and make the boys sing them in his presence." Subbamma was worried that her husband would get angry with me. I comforted her, saying, "A person's anger is his own enemy. It cannot harm me." I then trained some boys to sing a song with the objective of correcting the evil-doer. This was a task that could not be achieved by mild and soft words. Only hard-hitting words could correct him and make him feel guilty. The children were scared. I gave them courage by saying that I would be with them. The Karanam's name was Narayana Rao. I wrote a song specially to correct him, passages of which ran as follows:

"You will become an outcaste in your own community;
Your relatives will not entertain you and will drive you out;
Your friends will beat you with their slippers if they see you!"
(Telugu Song)

I used such harsh words to make him give up his misdirected ways. I was able to hit the mark! The Karanam learnt a good lesson and gave up his vices. Subbamma was thrilled. Though I was a small boy, she ran and fell at my feet and thanked me profusely. She said, "Raju! You are small only in appearance but there is an enormous divine power hidden in you. There is none else who could be so daringly forceful and set right so powerful a person as the Karanam!" She then told the father of this boy, "Venkappa! You are mistaken if you consider your son an ordinary boy. He is very powerful. He will set ideals for the whole world in future. Do not get deluded with the

feeling that he is your son. Send him to my house." He declined her request and said, "It is not customary in our family to give our children for adoption. Whatever be our limited capacity, we shall look after him ourselves. I cannot send him to another house." In this way, I lived a life of freedom and courage. I did not allow anybody to have control over me. I have no defects or shortcomings. So, why should I fear? I led my life cheerfully and fearlessly.

I wrote some dramas also. I had several small plays staged by small children. One such drama was entitled: "Cheppinattu Chestara" (Do they act as they speak?) Develop Divine Feelings from your Childhood There lived one Panchagam (almanac) Ramappa. Kameswari was his mother. She used to conduct Satsang in the evening for a few ladies in which she preached philosophy after reading from sacred books. Whenever she discoursed, I sat there. She read highly philosophical Vedantic texts and explained their meaning somehow, though she herself found it difficult to understand these. She had even the handicap of not knowing the words properly. So, she tried to teach in her own way. She explained to the group of ladies that God is omnipotent, omniscient and protector of Dharma. Taking a suitable opportunity, I used to tell her the correct meaning of these verses so as to help her to explain this to other ladies.

Women were hardly educated in those days. They used to gather in the evening around such literate ladies and spent their time listening to sacred hymns and stories about God. I was organizing such groups right from those days. I used to tell them the efficacy of Satsang. I assembled little children and organized a Pandhari bhajan group. With anklets that tinkled and cymbals that clanged, they enthusiastically sang and danced along the streets early in the morning, waking up slumbering villagers. Earlier, villagers did not get up till 7.00 a.m. But when I started organizing Pandhari bhajans with the help of children, they started rising at 5.00 a.m., and also started offering prayers to God after their morning ablutions and bath.

"Taking cymbals in hand,

Tying them up firmly to hand,
Clanging them together to beat out desire and anger from within,
Let us take the path to Shirdi,
Let us sing 'Jai Jai Ranga'
Let us sing 'Jai Jai Sai'
and hurry towards the Lord."

Thus began the idea of Nagar Sankirtan. I started Nagar Sankirtan when I was seven years old! Subbamma would quietly join the group as well, enthusiastically playing the cymbals.

Right from childhood, I have always been engaged in imparting knowledge and propounding sacred teachings to the people. The Pandhari bhajan group (Telugu Song) was so popular that people from neighbouring villages also came to participate in it. All those who took part in it experienced ecstasy and bliss. Subbamma felt very happy. For two rupees, a sackful of puffed rice could be bought. She arranged to have it distributed as prasadam to all. It is essential to develop divine feelings right from your childhood.

I was sent to Kamalapuram for studies. Kamalapuram lies between Cuddapah and Tadipatri towns. There in Kamalapuram a businessman named Kote Subbanna somehow found out that I had the capability to write poetry. He came running to me and said, "Raju! I hear that you compose excellent poems." I told him, "It is not that I compose poems. Whatever I utter is itself poetry!" He said, "I shall get a pair of shirts and trousers stitched for you if you write some poems for me." I told him at once that he must not approach me with such cheap bartering offers. "I am not waiting for you to give alms to me. There is no need to talk to you if you do this!" In this way, I admonished him.

He then explained that he had stocked a brand new medicine in his shop. He wrote down and gave me a detailed list of its benefits. It was called "Bala Bhaskara". He requested that I compose a song on the "Bala Bhaskara" and

teach it to a group of children, and make them go round the streets singing the song. I told him to come back in an hour! The classes were going on. I did not want to shirk my responsibilities. I therefore told Kote Subbanna to come an hour later, after the classes and collect the poem. I then set the tune and composed the song. It ran as follows:

"There it is! There it is! Oh, children! come, come!
There is the medicine Bala Bhaskara;
Be it an upset stomach or a swollen leg;
Be it a joint pain or flatulence;
Be it any ailment, known or unknown;
Take this Bala Bhaskara for an instant cure!
If you wish to know where it is available:
There is the shop of Kote Subbanna;
It is in that shop that you can pick it up.
Come here boys! come here!
It is an excellent tonic
Prepared by the famous physician Gopalacharya himself,
Come here boys! come here!"
(Telugu Song)

Kote Subbanna's joy knew no bounds when he heard the song. He brought a big basket of laddoos and placed it before me with gratitude. I directed that these be distributed to everyone present there. I never took sweets right from my childhood. Why do I need to have sweets when I have all the sweetness within me? My mind is sweet, my love is sweet. Why then do I need sweets? In this way, my primary task was to help everybody, make them happy and remove their suffering.

Embodiments of Love!

Our Vice Chancellor has prayed that I should speak about the sacred source

of joy, the Ramayana. Truly speaking, I am not satisfied with the present educational scenario. Today people can study as much as they wish. But what is the use of this education? They are engaged in Dhanarjana (earning money) and not Gunarjana (imbibing virtues). Money is no doubt essential but it is not the be all and end all of life. Virtues are of prime importance. All that you learn is forgotten at some point of time or the other. What is needed today is spiritual education. It is said: "Adhyatma Vidya Vidyanam" (spiritual knowledge is real knowledge). It is this knowledge that needs to be imbibed in the heart. This sacred knowledge is available in the Ramayana. The Ramayana is an ancient text. It has survived the vicissitudes of time, ups and downs of history and several other turbulences, and still stands high as a great ideal for humanity. There are several subtle secrets in the Ramayana that are not understood by many. I shall take these tiny saplings, develop them into huge trees and make you sit and relax under their cool shade. This shall be my endeavour from tomorrow onwards.

3. Harmony And Beauty In Ramayana

Date: 17 May 2002 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 2002

Daivadhinam jagat Sarvam Sathyadhinam tu
Daivatam Tat Sathyam Uttamadhinam Uttamo Paradevata

The entire creation is under the control of God. That God is under the control of Truth.

That truth is under the control of noble ones. The noble people are greater than gods.

(Sanskrit Verse)

Embodiments of Love!

THE society today is in utter need of Ramayana. We do not have children who respect their parents, nor do we have parents who have great affection for their children. We do not have disciples today who revere their preceptors; nor do we have preceptors who have great love for their disciples. We do not have homes where parents shine as role models for their children. We do not have homes where brothers live with mutual love and affection; nor do we have homes where wives and husbands shine as ideals to others by virtue of their mutual love and affection. Good manners and courtesies have vanished. The Ramayana stands as an ideal for the trouble-torn society of today in various fields of activities.

House is the First School

The parents of today do not bother to find out the ways and means of bringing up their children and keeping them under control. They think that their responsibility is over after admitting them into a primary school or a

village school. Home is the first school for children. It is in this school that children should learn to respect their parents; to observe Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Non-violence; how to behave in the school; how to respect the teachers; and how to behave with fellow students. They must also know how to abide by the rules and regulations of the school and how to observe discipline. It is by learning these things that the students turn into ideal students.

Wake up from bed,
When the cock crows in the morn: Brush and bathe,
Eat properly
And moderately.
Go to school
And study diligently.
Earn a good name that
You are an obedient student.
Don't move when weather is damp.
And never go near ditches.
Run and play
Have fun and frolic.
If you abide by
All the principles mentioned above
You will enjoy both health and wealth.

But nobody is imparting such a teaching to the children.

Vishwamitra in Ayodhya

When sage Vishwamitra came to Dasaratha, the emperor received him with all courtesy, invited him to occupy a high seat and yearned to know the reason for the sage's arrival, and, without entertaining any shadow of doubt, offered to render any service the sage needed. When people come to our

house, it is essential that we treat them respectfully and give joy to them. The sage told the emperor, "O Dasaratha! I have decided to conduct a Yagna for the welfare of the world. But the demons pose many impediments to the conduct of the Yagna. I have the power and the strength to counter them, for I have powerful weapons at my command. But the austerities of the Yagna forbid me to use them when I myself am performing it. Violence and bloodshed are prohibited for a rithwic performing a Yagna. I therefore seek the help of your sons to accompany me to protect the Yagna, which I am going to perform for the welfare and well-being of the world." These words came as a shock to Dasaratha. He did not like the idea of sending the tender little boys to the forest. He thought that it was unjust on his part to send them to the forest. He told the sage, "Master, pardon me. I will assume the responsibility for the protection of the Yagna. These boys are quite young, hardly fourteen years old. They are not well acquainted in the art of using weapons. How can they protect the Yagna?" Vishwamitra pretended to be angry when he heard the words of the king. He roared, "The descendants of Ikshvaku never go back on their promises. You have promised me that you would certainly honour my request. It is unfair on your part to go back on your word. If you think that you are correct I am going back." Dasaratha took to heart the words spoken by Vishwamitra. He knew that he should be extremely careful in dealing with Pamulu (snakes) and Swamulu (sages). He also feared that Vishwamitra might curse him. He called Vasishta, the family guru and held deliberations with him. It satisfied Dasaratha to some extent. Sage Vasishta looked at Dasaratha and said to him, "These youths are not ordinary boys. You are downcast because of your attachment to your children. They will fall upon the enemies like thunderbolts. You are not able to appreciate that they are the Divine might itself in human form." Then Vasishta called for Rama. Rama came and stood in front of Vasishta. Lakshmana also came, as it was his practice to be with Rama always. Dasaratha introduced his sons to Vishwamitra. They offered their salutations to their father Dasaratha, guru Vasishta and sage Vishwamitra. They stood waiting there. Vishwamitra was transfixed looking at the splendour on their faces. He desired to do namaskar to the children. But it was not appropriate to do namaskar to the young boys openly. So he saluted them in his heart. The pairs of brothers Rama and Lakshmana, Bharatha and Shatrughna always

moved together. Lakshmana followed Rama like a shadow. Shatrughna always followed Bharatha. There was a reason for this.

Why the Brothers were in Pairs

When Dasaratha performed the Putrakameshti Yaga, the Yajna Purusha appeared and offered the vessel of sacred pudding to Vasishta. Vasishta handed over the sacred vessel to Dasaratha who in turn distributed it equally between his three wives. Kausalya had the confidence that the son born to her would be the king of Ayodhya as she was the eldest queen. Kaikeyi also had the confidence that the son born to her would one day be coronated because Dasaratha had promised so to her father at the time of marriage. But the virtuous Sumitra had no such hopes. As the emperor did not make any promise to her, she thought that her son would only serve the king. She carried her share of pudding in a bowl and placed it on the parapet wall of the terrace while drying her hair. From nowhere an eagle came and carried away the bowl of sacred pudding. Horrified at this, she immediately ran down and informed Kausalya and Kaikeyi about what had happened. Since Kausalya and Kaikeyi were virtuous, they shared their sacred pudding with her.

The queens were noble without an iota of selfishness or jealousy. They shone as examples of harmony, understanding and mutual love. Their conduct is worthy of emulation in the current times. The three queens offered their prayers and partook of the sacred pudding. Kausalya gave birth to Rama first; and then Kaikeyi to Bharatha and lastly Sumitra gave birth to Lakshmana and Shatrughna together. The sons of Kausalya and Kaikeyi were happily playing in the cradle whereas the sons of Sumitra were wailing all the time, day and night, without even taking food. Sumitra went to sage Vasishta and told about her wailing children. Sage Vasishta closed his eyes and went into yogic vision. The truth dawned on him. He said to Sumitra, "As you partook of the sacred pudding given by Kausalya, you gave birth to Lakshmana who is an amsa (part) of Rama. As you ate the pudding given by Kaikeyi, you gave birth to Shatrughna who is a part of Bharatha. Place Lakshmana by the side of Rama and Shatrughna by the side of Bharatha. They will rest peacefully." Sumitra did as instructed by Vasishta. All the children slept peacefully without crying.

Sumitra felt very happy at this and said to Kausalya and Kaikeyi "Lakshmana and Shatrughna are your gifts. My children will serve your children. Lakshmana will serve Rama and Shatrughna will serve Bharatha. It is my good fortune that my sons will serve others." Rama and Lakshmana, Bharatha and Shatrughna were intimately connected. Wherever Rama went, Lakshmana followed him. Rama would not eat food unless Lakshmana ate with him. Similarly Bharatha also would not eat food unless Shatrughna was in his company. When Bharatha went to see his uncle, the King of Kashmir, Shatrughna too followed him even though no one told him to do so. When Rama was leaving for the forest, Lakshmana also started following him though Rama had not told Lakshmana to accompany him. Rama even told Lakshmana, "Brother! You should remain in Ayodhya to serve our parents who will be pining away in my absence. It is your duty to console them and give happiness to them." To this, Lakshmana answered, "Brother! My mother has sent me to serve you. You are going to the forest in obedience to the command of our father, whereas I am following you in obedience to the command of my mother." Lakshmana followed Rama wherever he went. Similar was the case with Shatrughna, who was always in the company of Bharata.

Ideal Consorts for Ideal Sons

When the four sons of Dasaratha returned to Ayodhya from Mithila accompanied by their consorts, Dasaratha was overjoyed. He told them, "These four consorts of yours are highly noble and virtuous. I will look after them as though they are my daughters. It is by the Divine grace that I have such daughters-in-law. Where is Mithila and where is Ayodhya? It is Divine will that all of them should be united like this." These four consorts of the four sons of Dasaratha were of exemplary excellence. Sita and Urmila were the daughters of Janaka, and married Rama and Lakshmana, respectively. Mandavi and Shrutakeerthi who were the daughters of Kushadhwaaja, Janaka's brother, married Bharatha and Shatrughna, respectively. As the four daughters-in-law were ideal women, the home of Dasaratha was also an ideal one.

When Vishwamitra took the permission of Dasaratha to take Rama with him for the protection of the Yagna, Lakshmana instantly followed Rama. As they reached the banks of Sarayu led by Vishwamitra, the sage taught them two mantras, "Bala" and "Atibala", so that they would not suffer from sleeplessness and hunger. "Bala" conquers sleep; "Atibala" conquers hunger. Though Vishwamitra knew that Rama was omnipotent yet he came under the spell of Maya and taught him the sacred mantras.

The home of Dasaratha was an ideal one where all the mothers lived in great harmony. The queens of Dasaratha also lived in great unity and understanding. Nowadays it is difficult to lead one's life with a single wife, what to speak of three wives? But the home of Dasaratha was an exception. Great harmony and understanding prevailed there. One may entertain the thought 'why Kaikeyi behaved in a selfish manner demanding Rama's exile for 14 years.' She was working under the divine dictates, for Rama was committed to go to the forest to kill the demons. People entertain the notion that Manthara poisoned the mind of Kaikeyi by her evil counsel. Kaikeyi was not a lady who would listen to the words of a servant. She was a lady of character, endowed with great virtues. In fact, she loved Rama more than her son Bharatha.

When the Devas and sages approached Brahma with a supplication to save them from the atrocities of Ravana, Brahma told them, "I gave a boon to Ravana that he would be killed neither by gods nor even by kinnaras and kimpurushas but I did not mention Manava (human). Hence, Ravana would meet his end at the hands of Rama (in a human form), who is an incarnation of Vishnu." Everything was happening according to the Divine will. Even Lankini gave utterance to the Divine will. When Hanuman hit her, she said, "Bad times are ahead of Lanka." It was prophesied that when a monkey would hit her, the downfall of Lanka would begin. In fact, when Hanuman hit her, Lankini fell flat on the ground. Lankini was a demoness of enormous strength who was guarding the city of Lanka at the portals of the fortress.

The eagle which took away Sumitra's pudding bowl, dropped it on the lap of Anjana Devi while she was meditating. Hanuman was also closely connected

to Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Shatrughna as he was born to Anjana Devi out of the sacred pudding that the queens of Dasaratha had partaken. Because of this reason Hanuman felt a close link with Lord Rama and played an important role in His mission.

Ramayana is for All and for All Times

Embodiments of Love!

The Ramayana stands out as a great ideal to the entire mankind. It sets examples in every field of life. It shows how brothers, sisters and parents should live as ideals. The Ramayana is an inspiration not only for ancient times but also for the modern age. Every man is born in this world to shine as an ideal, not to lead an egocentric life. Every man should stand out as a model to the best of his capacity. The Ramayana demonstrates to all how an ideal family should be and what should be ideal manners like.

When Sita, Mandavi, Urmila and Shrutakeerthi were leaving for Ayodhya along with their husbands, their parents did not shed tears of sorrow as parents do now. The parents of these four women thought that their daughters were duty bound to go to the home of Dasaratha. They did not think that they were going to another home. The daughters too did not shed any tears of sorrow. It was with tears of joy that the parents sent their daughters to the home of their husbands. Such were the ideals of the people of those days.

When Lakshmana decided to accompany Rama to the forest, mother Sumitra told him, "My son, it is God's will that I am your mother and you are my son. We should play our roles according to divine destiny. Don't feel bad that you are going to the forest. Ayodhya without you is a forest for us and a forest in your company, is Ayodhya." These were the ideals upheld by the great women of those days.

There are many lessons that the Ramayana holds out for the entire world. One day Dasaratha noticed that the child Rama was massaging his own feet.

He did not ask the services of the servants to massage his feet. Dasaratha, looking at Rama's condition, sent for the servants immediately to massage Rama's feet. Rama told Dasaratha, "I don't want the services of these servants. I will do my work myself. These are my legs and not someone else's. So I should massage my own legs without depending on others. All are servants in this world." All are one, be alike to everyone. This was the ideal Rama demonstrated.

Lavanya - the Mark of an Avatar

Rama was full of lavanya. Lavanya means control of senses. His character was the cause for His lavanya. In fact, Rama and Krishna were ever youthful. Have you ever seen a picture of Rama or Krishna sporting grey hair? Have you ever seen a picture of Krishna with signs of old age? Have you ever seen Him as a grandfather? All avatars are ever youthful. This body of mine is approaching its 77th year. I do not know any weakness and I can walk quickly. I avoid doing so because it may look funny and people may laugh if I walk fast at this age. People will definitely laugh if a toddler walks with a walking stick in his hand. It will look funny if an old man plays with toys. Similarly, if I walk fast, the devotees may laugh. We should conduct ourselves according to the time, place and circumstances. I conduct myself according to these. I don't know any weakness. Usually, old people have wrinkles on their faces and they suffer from deafness and cataract. I don't have any signs of old age. There is not a single wrinkle on my face. My eyes shine like bulbs and my voice is like a loudspeaker. People go for a cataract operation in their old age. My eyes are in perfect condition. I can see anything at a distance. Nobody knows my power and strength. But I use them according to the need and the situation. I use my power discreetly. Speed breakers are meant to control the speed. They are necessary and they ensure safety. Likewise, sometimes I control my power. These are all signs of my Divinity. You will know my Divine glory slowly and steadily in the course of time. Though I have a human body, I am free from human attachment. Though the body is human, I am entirely Divine.

As Rama and Krishna were born with human bodies, people entertained the

wrong notion that they died in ordinary way. Rama and Krishna did not shed their bodies in the human way. Rama stepped into river Sarayu and vanished. He had earlier sent Sita away. Similarly, Krishna went to Dwaraka. Uddhava saw Krishna sitting under a tree, and then Krishna suddenly disappeared. The bodies of divine incarnations will not fall in the hands of mortals. You must earn the capacity to understand Divinity.

Embodiments of Love!

Since I eat like you, play with you and sing with you, you are deluded into the belief that I am also a human being like you. It is sheer ignorance to think of me in that way. Some devotees think that there is something wrong with my legs when I walk slowly. I do not have any trouble with my legs, I am happy and there is nothing wrong with my health. I walk slowly with measured steps because of the robe I wear. The robe I wear is stitched to the very hem preventing me from taking long steps. My walk is slow, gentle and soft, without any roughness. I am all sweetness and softness.

4. Ramayana - An Ideal For Every Family

Date: 18 May 2002 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 2002

Manam hithva priyo bhavathi
Krodham hithva na sochathi
Kamam hithva Ishtarthavan bhavathi
Lobham hithva sukhi bhavathi

He who has ego is not loved by anyone;
He who has anger ceases to discriminate;
He who has excessive desires cannot control his mind;
He who has greed cannot taste happiness.
(Sanskrit Verse)

Embodiments of Love!

AS long as man has ego nobody will love him. Even his own wife and children will shun him. When anger erupts in man he ceases to be happy. Excessive desires make him lose control over his mind. The day man distances himself from greed he will enjoy happiness.

Rama and Lakshmana in Mithila

Today's discussion on Ramayana will be liked very much by the ladies. Rama and Lakshmana along with Vishwamithra reached Mithila. They soon walked along the streets of Mithila. Like a powerful magnet at work, the gaze of all citizens was attracted towards the two princes. Even the women working inside their houses came out to catch a glimpse of the two boys. Children at school too came rushing out. Everyone stared at the two brothers without batting an eyelid. They wondered, "Oh! What a heavenly beauty these boys

have. They are resplendent like the sun and the moon. Where have they come from? They kept wondering among themselves, but none of them knew the answers.

Finally a young housewife appeared and explained to the women thus, "My birthplace is the city of Ayodhya. Since I am married into a family in Mithila, I now reside here. These handsome boys are the sons of emperor Dasaratha. They are extremely handsome and bear the names Rama and Lakshmana. Even in Ayodhya wherever they appear they would instantly attract everybody's attention." In this way the lady gave the other women all the details of the attractive princes.

Meanwhile, though they were the centre of intense attraction, Rama and Lakshmana never raised their heads. They were enjoying their walk with their heads bowed down. Some women, in order to attract the attention of the princes, threw flowers on their path hoping that at least then the princes would look at them. They made every attempt possible to catch the eyes of Rama and Lakshmana. Some even waved the sacred Arathi. However, the princes remained unperturbed and would not look at anybody. The youth of those days had such sacred vision. At that young age none of them ever looked at women.

The Anxiety of a Mother

The citizens of Mithila were amazed by the beauty, gait and looks of the brothers. The following day the bow of Lord Shiva was to be displayed. A big function was organised. Rama came to the assembly along with his brother. Ravana also had come. There were several other powerful kings and emperors in the hall. On seeing such a gathering, the wife of King Janaka, Sunetra, while watching from behind the curtains started thinking thus: "There are so many handsome and valiant young princes in this assembly. Will it not be better to select one of them, marry my daughter to him and quickly discharge the responsibility? Why does the emperor need to complicate the issue by announcing that the one who bends the bow of Lord Shiva would be the eligible groom? Several heroic personalities have

attempted in the past and have failed. Will these youngsters assembled here succeed? How will their tender bodies bear the burden of the heavy bow?" She was very much worried about the issue and was discussing it with her companions.

Her fears came true when no one in the assembly could even lift the bow. Finally, Sage Vishwamithra signed to Rama to lift the bow. Rama went up to the box in which the bow was kept and lifted the bow. The moment he did that a severe turbulence struck and shook everybody. Lakshmana then got up and with one foot pressed down the earth firmly. Even Vishwamithra didn't know what Lakshmana was up to. He asked, "Lakshmana, what is happening? What are you doing?" Lakshmana humbly bowed the head and said, "This is the help I must render to my elder brother". What Lakshmana meant was that, when Rama raised the bow, there was a sudden tilt in earth's balance leading to the turbulence. By pressing down the earth Lakshmana was balancing the shift.

What love the brothers had for each other! When they were once playing together Bharatha came weeping and fell into Kausalya's lap. Kausalya lovingly enquired, "Child, why are you crying? Did your elder brother scold you? Did your brothers fight with you?" In this way she tried to find out the cause of Bharatha's grief. Bharatha replied, "Mother, none of my brothers would dream of scolding me and fighting with me. They all love me very much. But in order to make me win, despite my best efforts Rama always keeps losing the game. He always wants me to win." The younger brothers should win and for that Rama would deliberately lose. That was always Rama's style. Every brother followed this path and strove to make the other brothers win. Rama knew that if his brothers won and were happy he would be happy too.

Rama Strings the Bow

When Rama lifted the sacred bow of Lord Shiva out of its box, strung the thread and twanged the string, a peel of thunder was set off. Everybody wondered as to how a boy of such a tender age could achieve such a

stupendous task. The bow could not have been lifted even if a thousand men were to make an attempt to do so. Several elephants were required to pull the box into the hall. How could Rama lift such a heavy bow? How could he manage to string it? News of this wonderful feat spread throughout Mithila and created a sensation. After Rama broke Lord Shiva's bow, Janaka sent an invitation to Dasaratha to come to Mithila.

Janaka started making preparations for the wedding of his daughter to Rama. Kushadhwaja was the brother of Janaka. He had two daughters named Mandavi and Shrutakeerthi. King Janaka too had a second daughter Urmila. As the marriage preparations were going on Sage Vasishta consulted Kushadhwaja and proposed that his two daughters be given in marriage to Bharatha and Shatrughna. Kushadhwaja promptly agreed. Janaka shed tears of joy at the turn of events and was prepared to give his second daughter Urmila to Lakshmana.

The Wedding

The brides and the grooms were then readied and brought to the stage. As they were all seated on the stage they appeared to light up the entire city of Mithila. The ladies experienced unlimited thrill. They praised their good fortune at being able to witness the wedding of not just Sita but all the four princesses.

This is divine will. If God so wills He can do anything. Who can do what God does? Who can possess all that God has? God alone is the eternal witness. His will alone can accomplish anything.

The wedding was going on. But the four brothers would not raise their heads and look at anybody. In the modern age on the other hand conversations and frivolous behaviour begins much before marriage! But here the brides and grooms sat with their heads lowered in humility and modesty throughout the ceremony. They carried out the instructions of the priest without raising their heads. I am narrating these incidents to you to highlight the high order of discipline and idealism entertained in those days. Janaka stood beside Rama

and prepared to give away the bride. He offered him Sita's hand and said, "Rama, here is my daughter, Sita" But Rama would not look at Sita despite Janaka's entreaties. This was because the custom of those said that, a woman would become a wife only when the sacred mangalasutra was tied around her neck. Until then the bride and the groom were not expected to look at each other. This was a strict discipline exercised in those days. Such discipline will never appear either today or tomorrow. None can set or match the ideals that were established by the four brothers.

The wedding took place. It was now time for the garlanding ceremony. The brides waited with garlands in their hands, as did the grooms. The three brothers would begin their tasks only after Rama started it first. The parents too waited behind the children. They went up to Rama and bade him to place the garland around Sita's neck so that other remaining brothers could also do the same. Rama did so and all the brothers followed suit. It was now the turn of the brides. Sita waited with the garland in her hands. Moments passed but Rama would not bend his head! His was a valour and dignity that raised, strung and broke the mighty bow of Lord Shiva. He did not want to bend his head before a woman. And in order to protect his own honour, he kept standing.

Rama was tall, broad shouldered and valiant. Though young of age all the brothers were tall and physically strong. The long delay made the people impatient. They wondered as to why Rama refused to bow His head. Rama too was not keen to remain thus. He looked at Lakshmana and made an almost imperceptible signal. The four brothers were always sharp and alert. This was depicted in Thyagaraja's song.

"But for their devotion to Rama, Would a monkey cross the ocean?
Would the goddess Lakshmi worship you?
Would Lakshmana willingly serve you?
Would the highly intelligent Bharatha offer his prostrations to you?
Oh! How great indeed is the power of devotion to Lord Rama's strength"

(Telugu Poem)

Lakshmana was the incarnation of Adishesha - the heavenly serpent that carried the entire world on its hood. He caught Rama's signal and understood that Rama wanted him to raise the portion of earth where Sita was standing. With an equally slight shake of his head, he indicated that this plan would defy the laws of nature and was hence not suitable for execution. If Sita was raised, so would everyone else! Rama signalled back to Lakshmana to hit on some plan to break the deadlock. Lakshmana hit upon an idea. All of a sudden, he fell at Rama's feet and would not get up. Rama was forced to bend down and raise Lakshmana from his feet. Grabbing this chance, Sita at once placed her garland on Rama's neck. The moment Sita garlanded Rama, the other sisters too proceeded to garland their grooms. This incident amply demonstrates the lofty, disciplined and honourable style of functioning and behaviour of the brothers.

As the Brothers so the Brides

The wedding was soon performed. The party returned to Ayodhya. They were received with much love and gaiety. What we need to look at is not merely the virtues of the four brothers. The characters of Sita, Urmila, Mandavi and Shrutakeerthi too need to be discussed and elaborated. They too were highly virtuous. They came from a highly reputed family. King Janaka was known to have mastered his senses. He was an acknowledged expert in Jnana yoga. Daughters from such a family cannot be ordinary mortals. Rama alone was given the order to go into exile. But Sita also wanted to accompany him. Rama meanwhile went to his mother Kausalya. She was shattered when she got the sad news of her son's exile in place of the joyous news of his coronation. "Son you are merely obeying your father's command and going away to the forests. What about your mother's wishes? I am your father's "ardhangi" (his better half). What importance are you giving to the words of this half? I too shall come with you to the forest", she said. Rama then pacified her, saying, "Mother! Husband is verily your God. There is no other

deity beyond him. He is now aged. Added to that, this sad state of affairs has further crushed him. It is not proper for you to abandon him now, at this stage. You must remain here to serve and support him. Comfort him. Give him strength and courage to bear his pain". In this way, Rama dissuaded his mother from following him to the forests.

Sita heard all these. When Rama returned to the palace to be clothed in tree barks, she too started to wear them, indicating her desire to follow Rama to the forests. Rama strongly dissuaded her. In soft tones, she reminded him, "Lord! Why is there one set of moral codes for your mother and another for me? Is the code of conduct not common to all married women? Is it not the responsibility of a good wife to make her husband happy? She is supposed to look after his welfare. Does it not become my responsibility as well to do the same? I shall hence disobey your order and accompany you to the forest." Urmila was a great painter. She was in her room, painting the scene of Rama and Sita's coronation, which she wanted to send to her father. At that moment, Lakshmana entered. He was in a very angry mood. Rama was not agreeing to his pleas and was going ahead with obeying Kaikeyi's orders. He called out to Urmila and informed her that he was proceeding to the forests. Startled at the dramatic turn of events, Urmila got up in a hurry and in the process, accidentally toppled the canvas and spilled colours on it. She lamented, " Alas! This beautiful picture of Sri Rama's coronation scene is totally spoiled now". Lakshmana said, " Urmila! I am responsible for spoiling your painting. Kaikeyi is responsible for ruining Rama's coronation as the emperor. I am leaving now." Urmila's courage and strength of character now came to the fore. Lakshmana had already informed her that Sita too was accompanying Rama to the forest. Urmila was thrilled that her sister would accompany Rama and serve him. But she did not insist on following Lakshmana. On the contrary she told Lakshmana, "Lord! I know that you are proceeding to the forest with the sole objective of serving Sita and Rama. May you succeed without any obstacles. You must spend your days and nights in steadfast service to Rama and Sita. You need not worry about my welfare or even think about me. Never be concerned that you are not present by my side at Ayodhya to look after me. Forget Ayodhya itself because henceforth, the forest is your Ayodhya. This Ayodhya without Sita and Rama is the forest.

Hence, do not give any scope for concern about me. On my part I shall happily contemplate on you and spend my time here." Urmila thus gave tremendous courage to her husband. She felt that Lakshmana's service to Rama and Sita would be disturbed if he constantly thought of her. Hence she extracted a promise from her husband that he would not even think about her during the course of exile for fourteen years. She proposed, "In the forest, Rama will be your father and Sita, your mother. Your primary concern should be to serve them faithfully. Hence, forget all of us here." This was the promise she took from Lakshmana before cheerfully sending him to the forest. Kausalya might have grieved a little, but not Urmila. This is the attribute of an ideal daughter-in-law. She must always encourage her husband by giving him strength and courage appropriately. A housewife is also called 'Grihalakshmi' and 'Dharmapatni' . Urmila discharged her duty as a Dharmapathni by encouraging Lakshmana to tread the path of righteousness.

Bharatha, Shatrughna, Mandavi and Shrutakeerthi were absent when all this action was taking place. They were away on a holiday in the Kekeya kingdom. Mother Kausalya was highly distressed at the turn of events. At this juncture, Sumitra's noble qualities need to be recalled. As was her name, so was her character. She was verily a Sumitra (good friend). She had a pure heart. She did not weep at the turn of events. Instead, she consoled Kausalya thus, "Sister, why are you so sad? Rama, who has incarnated for the emancipation of mankind, can never come to any harm. If you are concerned about his physical welfare, my son Lakshmana is going to be there with Rama always. He will be Rama's attendant and aide. You must not give any scope for fear or anxiety." Yet Kausalya's was the womb that bore Rama. Her pain at his exile was, therefore, immense. In this context, the noble and courageous counsel of Sumitra to Kausalya was much more laudable. However while dealing with the epic Ramayana, hardly anyone discusses these noble attributes of Sumitra. She further told Kausalya, "This entire drama is the masterplan of God. You and me cannot add or change anything in this. For the welfare of the world and the establishment of Dharma, God has enacted this mission. Hence, sister! Do not shed tears. Your tears at the time of departure of your sons will only prove inauspicious to them. With cheer and joy, bless them and send them." Thus did Sumitra stand by Kausalya and give her a great deal of

courage. The princes and Sita soon left.

Dasaratha's Agony

Meanwhile, Dasaratha regained his consciousness and recalled everything. Utterly agitated, he rushed onto the street, shouting, "Rama, are you going? No, no! Please wait!" Sumantra was the charioteer. Dasaratha implored, " O Sumantra! Stop! Stay a moment! Let me have a glimpse of my Rama just once." Rama told him to discharge his duty as per the command of Emperor Dasaratha and not to accede to the wailing pleas of his father Dasaratha. Several scholars have depicted at this point that Rama had asked Sumantra to utter a lie and tell that he had not heard the king's plea to stop. On the contrary, he maintained silence. In such matters of principle and discipline, both Rama and Lakshmana were very strict. They are the ideals to be emulated when it comes to attaining victory and obeying one's parents' commands.

Exemplary Conduct of Lakshmana and Shatrughna

Lakshmana resided in the forests with Sita and Rama for fourteen years. Yet, not even once did he raise his head and look at the face of Sita. On the Rishyamuka mountain, when Sugriva and Rama met and talked, a bundle that contained all of Sita's jewellery was brought before them. She had dropped the bundle to the ground when Ravana was carrying her away by the aerial route to Lanka. Sugriva had preserved the bundle since he did not know to whom the jewellery belonged. During his conversation with Rama and Lakshmana, he had the parcel opened and showed Rama the jewellery. He enquired if they belonged to mother Sita or if some demons had dropped them accidentally. Rama examined everything, but was at a loss to identify any of them. Nowadays, the entire list of the wife's jewellery, along with their appearance and shape is already available! Rama passed the jewellery to Lakshmana and asked him to identify them. Of all of them Lakshmana positively identified only the anklets as having belonged to Sita. Rama asked, "How could you say so?" Lakshmana replied, "Every day after my bath, I would offer salutations at my mother Sita's feet. I hence know these by sight."

What noble ideals! For fourteen years they were together in the same hut yet Lakshmana never looked at Sita's face.

Since they had such noble character, they were blessed with what has been described as 'Lavanya'. 'Lavanya' in Sanskrit means beauty of character. It is used as a mere name today. It actually means purity derived from strict discipline and character.

This was the lofty standard of ideals established by Rama and Lakshmana. Meanwhile, Dasaratha, unable to bear the agony of separation from Rama, shed his mortal coil. There was now a dilemma as to who would perform his last rites. Rama and Lakshmana were away in exile. Bharatha and Shatrughna were in their maternal uncle's house at Kekeya kingdom. It would take at least ten days for their arrival. Hence, Vasishta and other sages decided that the body be immersed and preserved in oil. There was nothing like refrigerating or morgue facilities in those days. And Dasaratha's body remained there for fourteen days.

Bharatha and Shatrughna arrived. Shatrughna is another role model that the Ramayana presents. He matched Lakshmana in every way. While Shatrughna would always serve Bharatha, Lakshmana engaged himself in service to Lord Rama. The twins hence spent their lives in serving their elder brothers. Bharatha always relied on Shatrughna's wisdom and sane counsel. True to his name, Shatrughna was one of tremendous strength and valour - one who destroyed his enemies. There was none to surpass him when it came to routing the enemies. It was his presence that enabled Rama, Lakshmana and Bharatha to remain safe and secure. Shatrughna was one who never talked. Even Lakshmana would talk and sometimes argue, but not Shatrughna.

An Episode

Once, before the wedding episode, Rama, Lakshmana and Sage Vishwamithra were proceeding to the sage's hermitage. They crossed the river Sarayu in a boat and reached the other bank. There, they saw a beautiful hermitage. Lakshmana was astounded and asked Rama, "Brother, what is this place? It

appears like a beautiful township." Vishwamithra replied, "Don't be in a hurry. I shall explain. This hermitage is not an ordinary one. It belongs to Manmatha. He was supremely handsome. He could attract everyone to him. He developed his inner and external strengths and powers. He however tried to influence Lord Shiva and was cursed by him to remain formless - 'Ananga'. That is why this domain is called 'Anga Desha'- the kingdom of Anga. It is a sacred spot because Lord Shiva travelled here. It is hence the gift of Lord Shiva and His very own place." They then rested for the night in the ashram. At dawn, the residents of the ashram gave them a very warm send-off. They had recognised that the princes were the sons of emperor Dasaratha. Hence they were honoured accordingly and put on a well-decorated boat to proceed with their journey.

Shortly a terrific roar could be heard in the distance. A fearful forest, full of wild beasts, came in view. Lakshmana asked Sage Vishwamithra, "Master! Where is this loud sound coming from? What is the name of this eerie place?" The sage replied, "Son! The booming sound is of the river Sarayu merging into the mighty Ganges. The sacred Ganges is like a huge ocean into which this river Sarayu is merging. This is causing this huge roar. This forest is infested with wild beasts and terrible demons." Sthalabalam - Influence of Location They soon stepped into the forest. Wild beasts were seen everywhere and eerie sounds were emanating from all directions. This was the domain of Ravana's sister - the demoness Soorpanakha - and a sense of fear struck anyone who dared enter the forest, as every step was fraught with danger. Hence Vishwamithra repeatedly said, "O Rama! May all auspiciousness be added unto you." Here one must remember that the atmosphere of a place you are in, has a telling effect on your behaviour. Much later in the story when Lakshmana was accompanying Sita and Rama in exile in the forest, on reaching a particular place, all of a sudden his mind totally changed. He suddenly burst out, "Brother! What is all this trouble? Why are you, who is supposed to enjoy every luxury, suffering here? Why am I supposed to suffer with you? Let us go back to Ayodhya now. Why should we proceed further in this terrible forest? How are we expected to eat and foster ourselves?" It was a sudden burst of anger from Lakshmana.

Rama merely smiled and expressed no reaction. Instead, he took Lakshmana's hand and led him out of the forest. The anger that erupted in Lakshmana stayed till they reached the border of the forest. The instant Rama led Lakshmana out of the forest, he calmed down to his usual self. As Rama let Lakshmana relax and calm down under a tree, he explained to the perplexed Lakshmana: "This is the kingdom of Ravana's sister, Soorpanakha. She roams freely in this area. When you had stepped into that area, the vibrations of that place - 'Sthalabalam' , affected you. Soorpanakha's evil qualities diffused into you and forced you to behave thus. We shall leave this place and go away" Lakshmana felt thoroughly ashamed of his earlier behaviour "Alas! What a shame! How could I utter such rough and uncultured words? It is not in me to talk thus. This is definitely the vibration of demonic surroundings. They are not my true feelings." So, consoling himself, he asked Rama's pardon and proceeded on their journey.

Shortly thereafter they could experience the pleasant vibrations of Siddhashrama. The cool breeze and the Vedic chants charged the place with holiness. Vishwamithra then explained, "Sons! This is our Siddhashrama. Lord Vamana was born here. Lord Shiva resided here for a few days." At Siddhashrama, Vishwamithra entrusted Rama and Lakshmana with a job. He said, "Sons! You have come here to protect a Yagna. You should undertake that responsibility. This was also the command of your father. From this moment onwards you are expected to desist from eating and resting. This itself is a big Yagna that you two shall perform. You should sanctify it and emerge successful." Rama and Lakshmana were equal to the task. They never displayed any tiredness, difficulty or weakness.

As the dawn broke, the great Yagna started. The instant the mantras were uttered, Rama and Lakshmana went into high alert and patrolled the place. A huge roar could be heard. One of the sages told the brothers, "There come the demonic hordes. They are being led by Maricha and Subahu. Be ready." Rama and Lakshmana were without food or water or sleep. Yet they successfully discharged their duty and killed the demons and saw to it that the Yagna was performed successfully.

Wedding Invitation to Vishwamitra The total dedication of Rama and Lakshmana to the task entrusted by Viswamithra can be understood from the following episode. As the Yagna concluded, a troop of soldiers came to the ashram. They handed an invitation to Sage Vishwamithra. This was a personal invitation from King Janaka of Mithila. He had sent invitations to all kings and princes to try and lift the bow of Lord Shiva and win the hand of his daughter Sita. In such an assembly, he prayed that the great sage too be present to shower his blessings. Sage Vishwamithra was happy and with great excitement, narrated to Rama and Lakshmana the uniqueness of the great bow of Lord Shiva. He said, "Sons! You must come and see the bow.

There cannot be another of its kind in this world. It is a gift from the heavens. This bow is not an ordinary one. It is worth going and seeing." Rama and Lakshmana naturally developed a curiosity to take a look at the bow. However, Rama gently reminded the sage, "Master! Our father had only asked us to go with you and protect the Yagna. We have no instructions to go to Mithila and see the bow. We cannot transgress our father's orders." For this Vishwamithra replied, " Was it also not your father's command that you should obey my instructions? Hence, you must obey my orders!" The princes could only keep quiet and make preparations to accompany the sage on the new journey.

The Divine Masterplan

For the welfare of this country, you all need to minutely scrutinize how delicately, correctly and righteously Rama handled each situation. He killed all the demons and safeguarded the righteous. All these are actually small parts of a Divine masterplan. It was willed that Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Shathrugna take birth so that they could cause the annihilation of the demons.

Lankini, the guardian at the portals of Lanka, also made the prophecy of the doom of the demons. When Brahma asked Ravana to pray for a boon, the demon said, "My death should not be caused by the Gods, Yakshas, demons, Kinnaras or Kimpurushas. Grant me this boon." Brahma had seen through the

fatal flaw in this boon. The name of human was missing from the list! Since Ravana had made this omission, his death was certain at the hands of a human. Lord Vishnu hence decided to incarnate in human form.

In the entire creation, Divinity assumes the role of being the vital substance. Rama belonged to the solar dynasty. The Sun God was their guardian deity. Without the sun's nourishing rays, life cannot thrive on earth. When creation first began, it took a few crores of years for light to dawn. It was all darkness till then. Similarly, after the birth of Rama, the sun could not shine for fifteen days! Consequently, the moon too remained invisible. Both the sun and the moon lamented that they could not catch a glimpse of the Divine incarnation of Lord Rama. The Moon God performed a penance, praying to catch a glimpse of Lord Rama. At that time, Lord Rama appeared before the Moon God and said; "I know that you could not see me for the first fifteen days after my birth. I hereby grant you a boon. In my next incarnation, you shall have my first darshan - even before anybody else can see me." And it proved to be so. When the next incarnation of Krishna took place, at the midnight hours, as Vasudeva carried the baby to the safety of Nanda's house, it was the moon that had the first darshan of the Divine child.

In this way, there are several intricate, secret and profound teachings in the Ramayana. There are no contradictions or confusions in this epic. The story of Rama is eternal and eminently readable. No matter how many times it is heard, it still does not satiate the desire to hear again and again. This sacred story can never be forgotten. Rama's divine actions can never be ignored. Everything that he did was steeped in righteousness. All that he spoke was only truth. In such a sacred epic, several scholars have introduced distorted explanations and have picked holes in some events and incidents. There can be no scope for perversions in Ramayana.

There can be no place in it for even an iota of untruth or falsehood. The entire story, from beginning to end, is nothing but truth - eternal, pure and serene.

Today, we shall stop with the events of Siddhashrama. The nature of Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Shatrughna is quite unique and wonderful.

"They are wonderful; they are worshipped in all the three worlds;
They are the sickles that cut the creepers of worldly bondage, they are one's true friends;
They are revered by the sages and seers; Such is the beauty of Lord Vishnu's deeds!"
(Telugu Poem)

It is only the ignoramuses that are blind to the inner significance of the Lord's deeds and misinterpret them. This causes confusion and deviates the mind of a true seeker from the sacred truth. The story of Lord Rama is highly sacred. It is only when you hear the story fully can you understand its holiness.

5. Yad Bhavam Tad Bhavathi

Date: 19 May 2002 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 2002

Jihvagre varthathe Lakshmi Jihvagre mithra bandhava
Jihvagre bandhanam prapthi Jihvagre maranam Dhruvam The tongue is the cause of Truth and Prosperity. The tongue also earns for us friends and relatives. It is the tongue that brings bondage and death. (Sanskrit Verse)

The Power of Words

Embodiments of Love!

THE words of man earn him wealth and riches. It is the words of man that cause bondage. Hence words are cause for good and evil. It is better to speak every word after due ruminaton and reflection. Words help us a lot in life.

Man should use his words with utmost care and caution. It is important that man uses words after weighing pros and cons. He should not be hurt nor should he hurt others. Words give life and take away life.

Words are dainty delicacies.
Words are aromatic fragrance.
Words are the essence of nectar.
Words are the essence of the Vedas.
(Telugu Poem)

The words uttered by Rama were sweet and delicious. Words should be pleasant and they should be used in moderation. Words were the cause of Rama's exile into the forest, Kaika's infamy and Dasaratha's death. As words

contain potent sounds, we should use them with utmost care and caution, discretion and discrimination. The words of promise given by Dasaratha to Kaikeyi at the time of battle brought sorrow and suffering to him. So we should use words with utmost care.

Life is impermanent.
Impermanent are wealth and youth.
Wife and children are also impermanent.
Only truth and good reputation are permanent.
(Sanskrit Verse)

The four sages Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatkumara and Sanatsujata live in human beings and render help to them. They come to the rescue of human beings in times of dangers and ward off calamities. The four noble sages are eternal benefactors who work for the welfare of humanity day and night. When Rama was about to leave for the forest, Kausalya said to her son, "Rama! May the four sages Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatkumara and Sanatsujata be with you always and protect you as eyelids protect the eyes"

Rishyasringa at Putrakameshti

Before Kausalya gave birth to Rama she had a daughter by name Shanta. As she was a female child and was not qualified to succeed to the throne, Dasaratha gave her in adoption to King Romapada. The King brought her up and gave her in marriage to sage Rishyasringa.

Dasaratha invited many noble sages to attend Putrakameshti yaga on the advice of his minister Sumantra. He also invited Sage Rishyasringa to come and grace the function. Rishyasringa was a noble sage. There were timely rains, peace and prosperity and people lived in joy and plenty wherever Rishyasringa set his foot. Sumantra went to Rishyasringa and requested him to be the chief rithwik for the yaga. Rishyasringa replied, "I cannot come

alone. I agree to be the chief rithwik but my consort Shanta also should come with me. She shall also function as a rithwik." Sumantra agreed to this. Shanta and Rishyasringa reached there.

As soon as she reached Ayodhya, Shanta did prostrations at the feet of Dasaratha and Kausalya. Dasaratha wondered who she was as she looked like a rishi. Wherever she set foot, drought vanished, making place for timely rains. When the parents wondered who she was, Shanta had to reveal her identity to Dasaratha and Kausalya. She said "I am your daughter Shanta". Dasaratha and Kausalya were overjoyed when they realised that she was Shanta whom they had given away in adoption to King Romapada.

Vishwamitra's Yagna and After

Rama and Lakshmana, led by sage Vishwamithra reached Siddhashrama. Both the brothers guarded the yagna with great care and killed the demons that tried to disrupt the yagna. They kept strict vigil over the yagna without food and sleep. Vishwamithra was very happy on the successful completion of the yagna. Rama and Lakshmana prayed for permission to go back to Ayodhya. Vishwamithra had promised Dasaratha, "O King! Being their father, you are deluded to think that they are ordinary boys. Nothing untoward will happen to them. As soon as the Yajna is completed, I would send them back hale and healthy." At the time of the completion of Vishwamithra's yagna a messenger came from Mithilapura with a message to him. Janaka had sent a message to Vishwamithra praying him to come and attend the function, where the bow of Shiva was to be lifted and strung. After reading the message of Janaka, the venerable sage said to Rama and Lakshmana, "You should go to Mithila to see the bow of Shiva". He described at length the greatness of the bow of Shiva. As the two brothers were interested to see the bow, they obeyed the command of the sage and went to Mithila with him. Rama broke the bow but he refused to marry Sita without the permission of his parents. Rama said to Vishwamithra, "We have come with you for the protection of the yagna and not for entering into marital relationships. I won't take a step further in this regard without the permission of our father." Vishwamitra was not an ordinary sage. Earlier he was a great emperor. He

wanted to take away Shabala, the wish-fulfilling cow from the ashram of Vasishtha by force. A fierce battle ensued between the army of Vishwamithra and the army created by the cow. Vishwamithra was defeated in the battle and all his sons were dead. Realizing that material wealth and power was no match to spiritual splendour and wealth, he became an ascetic.

Rama said, "O Master! The descendents of Ikshvaku always observed the command of their parents. They would not do anything without the permission of their parents. Hence it is not proper on our part to act without the permission of our parents." Rama was steadfast in his adherence to Truth. He always spoke Truth and never swerved away from it. It is said, The world is born of Truth. Everything merges in Truth.

There is no place in the world where the power of Truth is not felt.
This is the pure Truth that all of you should know
(Telugu Poem)

Encounter with Parashurama

Dasaratha and his three consorts, Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi agreed for the marriage. After marriage, as they were returning to Ayodhya, Sage Parashurama encountered them on the way. "Who is the one who broke the bow of Shiva?", roared Parashurama. He challenged Rama for a fight. Rama defeated him and Parashurama submitted his two kalas (splendours) to Rama, who was endowed with twelve kalas. Rama shone with his own twelve kalas, two kalas from his brothers and another two given by Parashurama. That is how Rama shone brilliantly with all the sixteen kalas of the Virat Purusha.

Rama defeated Parashurama with love. Parashurama gave away his powerful weapons to Rama and said to Him, "Rama! You are now shining with sixteen kalas." Rama was the embodiment of truth. There is no power greater than

truth. Hence, Parashurama surrendered to Rama. With the surrender of Parashurama, Rama's power became full and complete.

Brahma's Boon

Once some sages went to Dasaratha and told about the atrocities perpetrated by Ravana. Dasaratha asked them to go to Brahma and pray for his help. When they prayed to Brahma, he said, "Ravana shall die only at the hands of a human being, since I had given the boon that he would not be killed by gods and demons. You go to Lord Vishnu and seek his help." Moved by the prayers of sages and the people, Vishnu said to them, "I know all about your sufferings. Very soon I will be born as a son to Dasaratha and then I will relieve you of your sufferings." Vishnu fulfilled His promise, which he had given to the sages by killing Ravana ultimately.

When Hanuman was about to enter Lanka, Lankini, who was guarding the gates of Lanka said to him, " It will not be possible for you to enter Lanka without my permission. I am the guardian of Lanka." Saying these words she moved forward to hit at Hanuman. When she was about to hit him, Hanuman lifted Lankini with his left hand and threw her down. Then Lankini remembered the prophecy of Brahma, "It would be the beginning of the doom of Lanka, when a monkey would hit you." Further she said, "Hanuman! Your touch has sanctified me." Darshanam Papa nashanam, Sparshanam karma vimochanam, Sambhashanam sankata nashanam. (The vision destroys all sins, the touch frees a person from consequence of all actions and conversation eliminates all troubles.) "It is time for me to leave my body" saying so she breathed her last.

Kausalya felt sad that she was not able to experience the divinity of Rama. "As he has taken human form and born to me, I am unable to consider him as divine. I will regard Rama as a human till he shows me the sign of his divinity." That is how Kausalya was treating Rama as a human. One day Sumitra came and said to her, "Sister, Rama is not an ordinary boy. Lakshmana, Bharatha and Shatrugna also are not ordinary mortals." Sita was firm in her decision to follow Rama into the forests. She said that it was her

bounden duty to follow Rama.

Bharatha at Nandigrama

Bharatha settled at Nandigrama, twelve miles away from Ayodhya. He installed the padukas of Rama on the throne and worshipped them with great devotion.

The four brothers were the incarnations of the four Vedas. Rama was Yajur Veda, Lakshmana who would always chant the praises of Rama was the Rig Veda. Bharatha who would always sing the glory of Rama was the Sama Veda. Shatrughna who wielded the weapons for protection of Ayodhya and his brother were the personification of Atharvana Veda.

Bharatha lived in Nandigrama devoting himself entirely to the contemplation of Rama. He was immersed in the contemplation of Rama, forgoing even food and sleep. His wife Mandavi was also a great devotee of Rama. She also lived in Nandigrama for fourteen years serving her husband. Since Bharatha was immersed in the contemplation of Rama, He too shone like Rama. When he entered Ayodhya with Rama, people could not distinguish between Rama and Bharatha. 'Yad Bhavam Tad Bhavathi' (As you think so you become). Mandavi was a virtuous lady, who was devoted to her husband by paying due obedience to the mothers-in-law and her husband. She shone as an ideal to others. She too became an ascetic with her hair in a single plait. When Rama was entering Ayodhya followed by three brothers and their wives, people could not distinguish between Sita and Mandavi. Sita shone like an ascetic due to fourteen years of contemplation on Rama. Mandavi also shone like her since she was always immersed in the contemplation of the lord. Brahmaivid Brahmaiva Bhavati (The one who realizes the Brahman becomes Brahman himself.). As all the brothers had oneness of thought and feeling, their four consorts also had the same. All of them constituted an ideal home.

Women are more Virtuous

The other day, the lady from Greece mentioned about Vishwakutumba

(Universal family). God is universal. The people of the universe are his kith and kin. The four consorts of the four brothers were the embodiments of virtues and ideal conduct. In a sense, women are greater than men for, men have only three powers whereas women are endowed with seven powers. As they have four powers extra, they shine with greater splendour.

Was not Savitri who revived her dead husband an Indian lady?

Was not Chandramati who extinguished the consuming flames by the power of her truthfulness an Indian lady?

Was not Sita who leaped into the burning fire to prove her chastity an Indian lady?

Was not Damayanti who burnt to ashes the wicked hunter, an Indian lady?

Bharath, surrounded by the sea of sacredness and sanctified by the women of chastity,

A land of noble culture, Was indeed the teacher to the entire world.

(Telugu Poem)

Can you find chaste women like Savitri, Damayanti, etc., anywhere else in the world? India is a great nation. Many eminent men took birth in this country, lived noble lives and stood as examples to the entire mankind. Ramayana is full of ideal men and women who shone as examples to humanity.

6. The Ideal Brothers

Date: 20 May 2002 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 2002

Saravarupa Dharam Shantham
Sarva nama Dharam Shivam
Satchidanandam Advaitam
Sathyam Shivam Sundaram

All the names and forms are but the manifestations of the Supreme Being who is the embodiment of Peace and Auspiciousness.
He is Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute and non-dual.
He is Sathyam, Sivam, Sundaram (Truth, Goodness, Beauty).
(Sanskrit Verse)

THE strength and capacities of the Divine are beyond comprehension; yet, without understanding this, criticism of Divinity is rife. One may praise, another may deride, but Divinity remains the same. Neither will criticism diminish Divinity, nor will praise enhance it. The traits of ebbing and rising are that of this world. Divinity is unaffected by both. Those who hanker after name and fame can never comprehend Divinity. Thousands of students have passed out of this university, having acquired a totally free education. We have not published or advertised this fact. I derive my joy from their joy and remain contented.

Dedication of Rama's Brothers

Yesterday we had seen that Bharatha did not go into Ayodhya with Rama's sandals. He instead built a small ashram at Nandigram and remained there, worshipping Rama's sandals. His wife Mandavi too spent her time contemplating on Rama's name and thus gave support to her husband. Rama

and Sita spent their time roving in the forest. Lakshmana was totally dedicated to their service. But little is said about Shatrughna. None of the texts mentions much about him. Intellectuals are thriving in thousands. People with a power to enquire are also many. Sadly, there are very few who tend to enquire into the intricate and delicate spiritual matters.

From the times of Dasaratha, Sumantra remained the chief minister of the kingdom. He was very loyal to Dasaratha and implicitly obeyed him. In such a situation, the legal heir, Rama was in the forest. His representative Bharatha was on a self-imposed exile at Nandigrama. So, who was handling the day-to-day administration of Ayodhya? It is here that we must probe deeply. From dawn to dusk it was Shatrughna who stayed in Ayodhya, enquired into the problems of the citizens and governed the kingdom. By night he would faithfully report everything to Bharatha. Shatrughna carried out every aspect of administration of the kingdom without causing the least trouble to Bharatha. Though he did so much, his name appears scarcely in literature.

Both the sons of Sumitra always engaged themselves in serving their elder brothers and fostering unity among themselves. They never went after name and fame. Shatrughna dedicated himself totally to Bharatha and executed all his commands. He was highly intelligent, able and powerful. Sadly, such a noble character has not been deeply enquired into. For the fourteen long years, it was Shatrughna who held the reins of the kingdom in his able hands. However, he would never disturb Bharatha even if he had any doubts. The reason was that he felt he would be responsible for disturbing Bharatha's concentration as he was in constant meditation of Rama.

Sumitra had already made a promise to the other queens, "Kausalya! Your son may become the king. My son Lakshmana will become his personal aide. Kaikeyi! Bharatha also may become king. I shall then send Shatrughna to serve him. Both my sons were born to serve and not to earn name, fame or kingdoms." How noble were the two brothers Lakshmana and Shatrughna! Without them, both Rama and Bharatha would not have achieved their fame and glory. They always stood by their elder brothers giving them solid support. This cooperation caused the brothers to remain very dear to each

other.

At the time of the battle, when Lakshmana fainted, Rama lamented thus, "If I search, I may find a wife like Sita; I may find a mother like Kausalya; but a brother like Lakshmana can never be found." Rama was ready to give up anything for the sake of Lakshmana. At that time, he instructed Hanuman to go and bring the Sanjeevani plant. Hanuman was one who always obeyed Rama's command. He always moved as one amongst the brothers. He promptly left, but unable to identify the plant, uprooted the entire mountain and carried it to Lanka. As he was flying over Ayodhya, Bharatha spotted him. Bharatha was getting regular reports from the forest that the demons were troubling Rama. So he suspected this huge figure to be a Rakshasa who intended serious harm to Rama. He took out his bow and shot at Hanuman. Hanuman alighted along with the mountain. Paying his respects to Bharatha, he said, "Oh! King! Lakshmana has fainted on the battlefield. I am taking this mountain containing the Sanjeevani herb to revive him. I don't know where the herb is on this mountain. Hence, in order to carry out Rama's command, I am taking away the entire mountain." Ideal Spouses for Ideal Brothers Bharatha was ecstatic at this news. He sent word for mother Kausalya and said, "Mother! This messenger has news about Rama." He then introduced Hanuman to her who went on to tell her in detail all the news of the battlefield. "There is a fierce battle going on between Rama and Ravana. It shall definitely be over in a day or two. Lakshmana has fainted and these herbs are meant to revive him." Sumitra too was asked to come by Bharatha. She did not express any anxiety at the news about Lakshmana. On the contrary she said, " I am never worried about my sons' welfare. My only concern is that Rama is being put to inconvenience. If my son Lakshmana were to die, I shall definitely send my other son Shatrughna to serve Rama. My only aim is to see Rama happy. It is with this intention that I had sent Lakshmana to the forest with Rama." Hanuman then was taken to Lakshmana's wife, Urmila. She had spent the entire fourteen years painting the pictures of Sita and Rama. Bharatha approached her and broke the news. He said, "Lakshmana's life is in danger. I am at a loss for words and don't know what to do." When Bharatha broke the news to her, Urmila did not show a trace of fear or worry. She said, "My husband's heart is filled with the name

of Rama. Therefore, he is perhaps sleeping peacefully. All the pain and suffering must be Rama's alone. No danger can befall my husband. He will always remain safe." What we need to recognize here is that, the wives of the four brothers were as virtuous and noble as their husbands. The happiness and prosperity of the husbands depended on the noble qualities of their wives. The good conduct and good actions of the wives were also responsible. Their character gave their husbands tremendous support.

After the news was conveyed, Hanuman quickly continued his journey to the battlefield. What we need to know here is that, while as the four brothers spread their ideals to the world, their wives too did not lag behind in doing the same. As her husband Shatrughna ruled the kingdom, Shrutakeerti lent admirable support to him, just as Mandavi stood by Bharatha. They never aspired for anything else. Except at the time of dawn and dusk when they would go to mother Kausalya for her blessings, they never had any other commitments. The good influence of such noble characters can be felt throughout the Ramayana.

Ayodhya saw peace, prosperity and security aplenty. Truth was spoken and righteousness was adhered to, in every corner of the country. Shatrughna's able rule assured this. He would not sleep or rest at all, anticipating some problem or other. He used to worry that any lapse in his administration would bring a bad name for Bharatha. Shatrughna was extremely cautious to see that Bharatha's name was not tainted due to any mistakes of his. He looked after the kingdom with care and concern. He always followed Rama's command. Shatrughna ruled Ayodhya with such noble feelings. Bharatha did not play an active role in the administration of the kingdom. He would merely nod and accede to anything that Shatrughna proposed. What was the reason for this implicit trust? Bharatha knew Shatrughna's selfless love. He also knew that Shatrughna was very capable and would never allow any enemy to venture into the territory of Ayodhya. True to his name, Shatrughna could destroy any such enemy. This led to lasting peace in Ayodhya. The principles followed by the ancient Indians were, Speak the Truth, Follow Righteousness (Sathyam Vada; Dharmam Chara) and pray for the safety of the world. They also laid emphasis on unity amongst the brothers. None must face disrepute.

Everyone must live his life with virtue and good name.

Though Shatrughna ruled the kingdom on behalf of Bharatha, he could never summon courage to advise his elder brother. He never talked back to his elders. When you are replying to elders, you must think carefully and answer. It is a grave mistake to talk to them as you like. Such actions may even lead to some unpleasant situations. Truth must be spoken. Righteousness must be adhered to. Brothers and sisters must live as a closely-knit unit, with understanding among themselves.

In this way, Bharatha and Shatrughna spent their time in Ayodhya and Nandigrama, waiting for the return of Rama.

Shrutakeerti is another character in the Ramayana who is extremely noble. She always tried to lighten the burden of her husband Shatrughna by giving him suitable advice. She would never utter words that could harm others. 'Shruta+Keerti', as the name suggests, would always listen to good only. In turn, she would always speak what was good and conveyed that which was pleasant and pleasing to the ear. She would encourage only what was good and beneficial to others. Dasaratha's daughters-in-law were real gems.

However, in our story, only Rama and Sita are depicted as the lead characters. Not much importance is given to the other roles in the epic. If Lakshmana, Shatrughna, Urmila, Mandavi and Shrutakeerti were not there, the glory of Rama and Sita could not have been highlighted. Rama could not live even a minute without Lakshmana by his side. He would not eat without Lakshmana giving him company. Rama hence demonstrated the ideal of unity and coexistence to the world. In the Vedas, there is a sloka that aptly describes this idealism.

Saha Na Vavathu Saha Nau Bhunakthu
Saha Veeryam Karavavahai
Tejaswi Navadheethamasthu Ma Vidvisavahai

Let us all move together, let us all grow together,
Let us all stay united and share our knowledge,
Let us live together with friendship and without disharmony.

The four brothers displayed such a unity amongst themselves. Today, if there are four children in the house, they take to four different directions.

Encounter with Khara and Dooshana

In those days, Kings used to appoint special messengers to keep them informed about the happenings in and around the kingdom. Once, a message was conveyed to Bharatha relating the enormous trouble that the demons were causing to Rama. A particular mention was made of the terrible duo Khara and Dooshana. They were close associates of the demon king Ravana. They attempted to secretly harm Rama, Lakshmana and Sita. Bharatha was informed of these developments. It was Soorpanakha who poisoned the ears of Khara and Dooshana and goaded them to attack the brothers. Bharatha was hence anxiously awaiting further news about Rama from his messengers. He was also hesitant to approach the elders with this news. Such news was generally conveyed only to Sumitra. She was a great lady. She would always use soft words and advise aptly. Therefore, she was relied upon. Bharatha conveyed this news to Sumitra and sought her advice. He did not mention this to his own mother Kaikeyi. At this moment of Bharatha's anxiety, Sumitra consoled Bharatha and said, "Rama will not come to any harm. He is Divinity incarnate. Therefore, do not give scope for any worries." She advised Bharatha thus.

Khara and Dooshana brought a forty thousand strong army to fight against Rama. In the meanwhile, Rama had instructed Lakshmana to take Sita into a cave and remain there while he destroyed Khara's army.

Sage Vishwamitra had given to Rama all the mighty weapons he had acquired. Rama discharged one such powerful arrow from his bow. That one arrow multiplied into hundred arrows, the hundred became thousand and the thousand in turn became forty thousand arrows and annihilated the Rakshasa army in a trice. Demigods from heaven hailed the victory of Rama and showered flower petals on him. When this news reached Ayodhya, Bharata, Shatrughna and the mothers were overjoyed.

Panchavati

When Rama, Lakshmana and Sita reached the hermitage of Sage Agastya, he also offered him all the weapons that were at his disposal. Moreover, he advised Rama thus: "O Ramachandra! Being a householder, it is not possible for you to stay in my hermitage. There is a place called "Panchavati" in Dandaka forest which is a suitable place for you to stay during your exile." Accordingly, Rama, Sita and Lakshmana stayed in Panchavati and spent their time peacefully. It was here that the demoness Soorpanakha tried to make friendship with Rama and Lakshmana. She was attracted by their charming personality. She assumed the form of a beautiful lady and approached Rama with a request to marry her. Rama said, "No doubt, you are beautiful. Even my wife Sita is no match for you. But what can I do? I am already married and my wife is with me. So, it is better that you marry Lakshmana whose wife is not here at present." When she expressed her desire to Lakshmana, he said, "Rama is my master and I am his servant. If you marry me, you will have to spend your entire life in the service of mother Sita. So, it is better that you marry Rama himself." In this manner, Rama and Lakshmana were having fun. After some time, Soorpanakha became enraged. She thought, "It is because of the presence of Sita that Rama is not interested in me. If she is not there, Rama will certainly yield to my request." With such a feeling she made an attempt to swallow Sita. Immediately, Rama signalled to Lakshmana. He, being highly intelligent, understood its implication and cut the nose and ears of Soorpanakha. He spared her life as he did not want to kill a woman.

Soorpanakha ran wailing to her brother Ravana in Lanka. She was bleeding from her wounds and lamented to Ravana, "Brother! There are two princes

who are the sons of emperor Dasaratha. They are responsible for my sorry state." Ravana had a very pertinent question to ask her. He said, "Sister! Your nose and ears are separate entities on your face. Both could not have been cut off at the same time. How is it that you did not escape after your nose was mutilated? Why did you remain standing till your ears were also cut off?" Soorpanakha replied, "Brother! I cannot explain this. The moment Lakshmana touched me; I was lost in a trance. Their handsome and regal bearing enraptured me. It was as if I lost all my consciousness and remained rooted to the spot." In this way, she kept eulogizing the two princes' noble bearing and virtues.

There are several such incidents and descriptions in the epic Ramayana. Today, we have seen what an important role Shatrughna played in ably administrating Ayodhya for fourteen long years. Bharatha was the ruler representative only in name. The groundwork was carried out entirely by Shatrughna. He alone was responsible for keeping the boundaries of Ayodhya safe. During the fourteen years, not even a single enemy dared to march on Ayodhya. There was no unrest amongst the civilians. Initially, there were fears about an Ayodhya without a king. Rama advised Bharatha regarding the duties of a ruler. He said, "Bharatha, you are now the king. Our father was a mighty emperor who ruled his kingdom well. After his death, it is your responsibility now. Do not answer back to anyone. Never use harsh words to hurt anyone. Always carry out pleasant conversations. There must be no agitation in our kingdom." Both Bharatha and Shatrughna received the advice and followed it faithfully.

Extend Help without Publicity

Today Mariwala has spoken extensively about the achievements of our hospital. I always advise my students not to publicise what we do in the hospital. There are several wonderful things that are happening. One patient from Nepal had his heart on his right side! Our doctors have shifted it back to the correct location. The surgery was understandably highly complicated. Still it was carried out. I told my students that no one needed to be informed about this. People may accuse us of praising ourselves. I told them that their

main task was to make everyone happy. Today, Mariwala has narrated so many incidents that he had never briefed Me about. These boys from the hospital sleep on the ground floor while I stay on the first floor. They always discuss only hospital related matters. I keep telling them, "Do not speak about them anywhere outside. You do your duty sincerely. Extend every possible comfort to those who come." The other day I was informed that a particular injection was to be administered to a patient in order to save his life. That injection costs Rs. 80,000! Mariwala came and asked me whether they could go ahead and buy such an expensive injection. I replied that to save a life, any amount should be spent. I shall bear the expenses, but get the medicine and save his life. Instantly we dispatched a courier to Bangalore and obtained the required injection. There are several such expensive medicines that need to be used in the hospital. No one knows about these details. I believe that, we must not look at the cost if it can save a life. I tell our doctors to continue with their duty and keep the patients healthy and safe. The patients should not be subjected to any kind of inconvenience.

7. Rama - The Ideal Hero

Date: 21 May 2002 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 2002

Sadayam hridayam Yasyabhashitam Sathyabhushitam
Kayah parahithe Yasya kalautasya karothishim

The one whose heart is laden with compassion, The one whose words are marked by truth,
The one whose time is spent in performing beneficial deeds for the welfare of others,
Such ones are not affected by influence of the age of Kali.

Do not Delay Good Deeds

Embodiments of Love!

REALISING that Ravana would pass away in a few minutes, many sages, scholars and noble men came to Ravana and asked him, "O Ravana! You performed many good deeds as well (Sanskrit Verse) as evil deeds. What is it the most memorable thing that you have discovered in your life?" To this Ravana replied, "Sirs! Do not delay the noble acts you want to perform at any time. Put into action whatever noble thoughts and feelings that arise in your heart instantaneously. Procrastination is the thief of time. It is dangerous to delay. At one time, I thought of connecting the earth and heaven with a ladder. I wished to turn the saline water surrounding Lanka into sweet water. I wished to bring comfort and solace to the residents of Hell. Though I decided to do these things, I delayed acting. Thereafter, I could never succeed in doing them. Translate into action whatever good resolve arises in your minds. We waste our time in postponing the good deeds. We should be ever ready to put into action all the good thoughts that arise in the mind." This is the noble

advice that Ravana gave to the people who came to him at the fag end of his life. Since he delayed the performance of good deeds, it brought disaster to him.

The Story of Kabandha

While Rama and Lakshmana were moving in the forest in search of Sita, they accosted a strange person who had his face in his stomach. Seeing his form, they concluded that this person was a demon. Rama and Lakshmana went to the demon and asked him, "Who are you? You don't have any head. How do you live? How is it that you don't have a neck as other people have?" The strange creature answered, "O sir! My name is Kabandha. I have hands that can extend to ten miles. They can grasp any prey that I desire to eat. I fill my stomach without moving much. Who are you? Why have you entered this dense and terrible forest? You seem to be tender beings. You look like princes. To which kingdom do you belong?" Rama who always spoke the truth replied, "We have come here in obedience to the command of our father. I suffer from the pangs of separation from my wife. Someone has kidnapped her. Can you tell us where she is and what happened to her?" Then Kabandha told Rama, "O sir! First burn me to ashes. I will then give you all the information you need." They killed him and burned his body. A handsome being arose out of the ashes and told them, "I was forced to assume this ugly form due to the curses of sages. I was told that whoever burnt me to ashes was verily God himself. O Rama! Your Sita is in Lanka. She is a lady of great chastity. Whoever dares touch her will be burnt to ashes. Very soon you will see Sita in Lanka and will go back to Ayodhya. My words never fail. You may seek the help of Sugriva. May you enjoy comfort and solace soon." After saying these words, he vanished.

Alliance with Sugriva

Rama befriended Sugriva, Hanuman, and other Vanara warriors. Sugriva rendered all help required to search for Sita. He rallied his forces and reached the shores of the sea. They then encountered the problem as to who would cross the sea and go to Lanka. The veterans said that they did not have

enough strength to cross over. No one came forward to cross the ocean. Hanuman volunteered to do so and accomplish Rama's mission. He was ever ready to do any work for the Lord.

In the meanwhile, let us find out about Vali and Sugriva. Vali was a very strong and powerful Vanara king; but he lacked virtue and indulged in evil deeds. Once, Vali fought against a powerful demon Dundubhi. He killed him in the fight and hurled his dead body. The body fell on the Rishyamuka Mountain where the sage Matanga was doing penance. The blood dripping from the body of the demon fell on sage Matanga and disturbed him. Enraged, he cursed that whoever killed Dundubhi would have his head broken into a thousand pieces if ever he set foot on that mountain. Vali picked up a quarrel with Sugriva, his own brother, and banished him from the kingdom. Sugriva started living on the Rishyamuka Mountain for he felt assured that Vali would not be able to touch him if he went to Rishyamuka due to sage Matanga's curse. Hence, Sugriva, accompanied by Hanuman and other well-wishers, settled on the Rishyamuka Mountain. He was contemplating on the ways and means of defeating Vali.

One day Sugriva and Hanuman noticed two handsome persons walking at a distance in the forest. He wondered as to who they were. Sugriva thought that they might have come for hunting. He sent Hanuman to find out about the two brothers. Hanuman disguised himself like a Brahmin and met Rama and Lakshmana. Hanuman's speech was cultured and gentle. He introduced himself as a Minister of Sugriva and volunteered to carry them on his shoulders and take them to Sugriva. There ensued a beautiful conversation between Rama and Hanuman in Sanskrit. Rama understood from the conversation that Vali was unjust towards Sugriva. Vali had appropriated the kingdom from Sugriva and had driven him out of Kishkinda. He accused Sugriva of criminal conduct, of which Sugriva was not guilty. In his exile, Sugriva was in need of a friend who was stronger than Vali. He wanted to test whether Rama was stronger than Vali. He wanted to make an alliance with Rama only if he proved himself to be stronger than Vali. Sugriva said to Rama, "Rama, my brother is of great power and strength. I want to find out whether you are stronger than my brother." When Rama nodded his assent,

he further said to him, "Once my brother shot an arrow through the Sal trees. It pierced five sal trees in a row and emerged out of them. It is very difficult to charge an arrow through a sal tree because it is a very hard wood. Shoot an arrow and let it pierce through at least four trees." Rama smiled and discharged the arrow. The arrow pierced seven trees. Sugriva was deeply impressed by the strength of Rama. He sought the help of Rama to defeat Vali. He also promised to help Rama in searching for Sita. Rama asked Sugriva to challenge his brother for a fight, but cautioned him that that the fight should take place ten miles away from Kishkinda.

Rama told Sugriva to do this because the rules of exile prohibited him from entering into cities and villages. These rules compelled him to confine himself only to the forests. Hence, Rama wanted Sugriva to call Vali out of his kingdom so that he would be able to help Sugriva.

As advised by Rama, Sugriva roared and called Vali for a fight. Tara was the faithful wife of Vali. She wanted to restrain him from entering into a fight with Sugriva. She pleaded with him by holding his hands; "You should not go for a fight now. I have heard that Sugriva has befriended some powerful princes to help him. Do not be in haste, it is dangerous. The wise ones pause and ponder before undertaking any task. Haste can make waste. It can be dangerous too." Tara spoke these words to Vali and took him back. She was a chaste wife who had many virtues. She was highly intelligent. However, when Sugriva persisted in his challenge the next day, Vali came out running to fight. Sugriva fought valiantly, but slowly Vali gained an upper hand. He then beat Sugriva black and blue. Sugriva ran away from the battlefield. He felt disappointed that Rama had not come to his rescue. Sri Rama explained to him that he could not distinguish between the two brothers, as they looked very much alike. Hence Rama talked to him sweetly and consoled him. He also infused courage into him and assured him that he would kill Vali in the next fight. But he asked Sugriva that he should wear a garland around his neck so that He would be able to distinguish him from Vali. He asked Lakshmana to gather flowers in the forest and string them into a garland. Sugriva put on the garland and challenged Vali for a fight a second time.

The End of Vali

A fierce fight ensued between the two brothers. Rama, hiding behind a tree shot an arrow at Vali and brought him down. Though Vali fell down, there was still life left in him. Sri Rama went to Vali and said to him, " You have sinned against your brother Sugriva, you have appropriated his wife. That is a sin because a younger brother's wife is like one's daughter. You appropriated his kingdom, banished him and appropriated his wife. You blamed him for crimes that he had not committed. I don't like to speak untruth. I decided to kill you and hence I promised your brother that I would help him". Then Vali said to him, "O Rama! You have come into the forest to keep up the word of your father. But you have interfered between my brother and me. It is unjust on your part to kill a person, hiding behind a tree." Then Sri Rama replied, "O Vali! I no longer live in Ayodhya. I am like a hunter moving in the forest and you belong to the race of animals. A hunter kills an animal hiding behind a tree. He never goes face to face with an animal to kill it. So I had to kill you hiding behind a tree". Vali listened to him and further said, "Rama, you are of great power and strength, you could have come face to face to fight with me". Sri Rama replied to him, "Vali, I know the boon that was bestowed on you. You have a boon that whoever fights you face to face, half of his strength will enter into you. I know this secret". Vali entered into a long argument with Rama but Rama convinced him of his folly. Finally, Vali said, "O Rama! My life is ebbing away. Make a promise to me that you will make my son Angada, the crown-prince of Kishkinda". Rama agreed to this and fulfilled the promise He gave to Vali. He crowned Sugriva as the king and Angada as the crown prince.

The Three Clashes

There are three clashes amongst brothers mentioned in the Ramayana. They are: (1) the clash between Vali and Sugriva (2) the clash between Ravana and Vibhishana and (3) the 'clash' between Rama and Bharatha. Vibhishana protested against the evil actions of his brother Ravana and incurred his anger. When Ravana banished him from Lanka, Vibhishana sought refuge at the feet of Rama. He helped Rama against Ravana. Rama crowned him as the King of Lanka after killing Ravana. Sugriva sought the help of Rama to kill

Vali; he then became the King of Kishkinda.

In the first two cases, one brother became the King by standing against his own other brother. But the 'clash' between Rama and Bharatha was of a different kind! Neither of the brothers wanted to become King of Ayodhya! Bharatha told Rama, "Rama, you are the eldest and you alone have the right to become the king." But Rama protested, " I will not step into Ayodhya as I want to respect the promise given to my father. You have to rule over the kingdom, as it is mother's wish". Thus Rama refused to yield to the request of Bharatha and rule over the Kingdom. Both brothers wanted to convince each other to rule over Ayodhya.

Rama adhered to truth at all times "Sathyanasthi Parodharmah". For him observance of truth was the highest Dharma. He clung to Dharma tenaciously and believed that truth would be triumphant at the end. Rama was steadfast in his observance of Sathya and Dharma.

Ramayana is HIS-Story, it is Unique

At last the battle between Rama and Ravana started. Rama had respect for Ravana though he was his enemy. He even praised the virtues of Ravana. He knew that Ravana was under the curse imposed on Jaya and Vijaya.

Rama had to act by public opinion also. Since some people may raise doubts about the chastity of Sita, He had to make Sita undergo the ordeal by fire. Sita was unhurt by the fire god who said to Rama, "Sita is pure and faultless".

Rama acted justly at every step. We have discussed about it earlier. Ramayana was a drama in which Sri Rama was the sutradhari (director). He was also a patradhari (actor). The people also had their parts to play in the drama. Rama performed his role excellently. Ramayana has survived the test of time. It has survived even though thousands of years have passed. Sri Rama was dear to everybody. He was an ideal that mankind needs to emulate.

The people of Mithila were fascinated by the appearance of Rama. They went into ecstasy watching the conduct and beauty of Rama. They thought that Rama and Sita made an excellent match. They sang songs inviting people to see the marriage of Rama and Sita. One such song goes like this:

Welcome to all for Rama's wedding; together we shall witness the joyous scene. Many have gathered already, decked up in all their finery.

With necklaces the ladies are adorned
of jewels pure and gleaming.
Rama shall tie the knot today
to beautiful Sita, oh what a fine match they make.
Father Dasaratha has made ready bounteous feasts.
All learned sages are assembled with Vasishtha presiding.
Oh, what a multitude has assembled
to rejoice, hearts with joy overflowing. Wedding of the holy pair
Rama and Sita, such a sight is indeed rare. The sight shall confer great
merit.
Rama looks the cool full moon,
and Sita is a matching double.
The compassionate Rama who loves all
will confer his grace on us all.
Come quickly to see the holy wedding of Rama and Sita.
(Telugu Song)

People sang songs like this, rejoicing at the marriage of Rama and Sita. The people of Ayodhya as well as Mithila were greatly delighted. They rejoiced immensely.

There are always some who lack faith and suffer thereby, but those who have faith in Rama and surrender to Him would never be put to any harm. Ramayana is the history of Rama. It is HIS-story. The Ramayana is full of

noble characters. The four brothers and their wives hold out great ideals for mankind. The mothers, Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi were also great women. They were embodiments of virtue and right conduct. People blame Kaikeyi saying that she was responsible for the suffering of Rama and Sita. She was actually a divine instrument in the mission of Rama. She was not the kind of lady who would be swayed away by the words of Manthara. She was instrumental in sending Rama to the forest so that He could punish the wicked and protect the good. There are great subtleties and secrets in the Ramayana. We will try to know them in the days to come.

8. Ramayana - The Divine Masterplan

Date: 22 May 2002 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 2002

"That which fosters universal peace,
That which destroys all scope for mean thoughts,
That which encourages unity and cooperation,
Is real Education, this is the education a student should acquire."
(Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of Love!

THE Rama principle attracts everybody. Such a principle can be explained for days together and still cannot be expounded fully. If you keep hearing the song of the cuckoo it may tire you after sometime. If you keep drinking, even divine nectar may taste sour at some point of time. But the story of Rama can be read or heard any number of times and one would never feel satiated. He who sings, or reads or hears or gets to read this sacred story of Rama will find it highly nectarous. No one knows the origin of Ramayana or from when it was being sung in public.

However, based on certain evidences, scholars have made a few observations. The conversation that Ravana was having with Sita while abducting her, gives a hint of the age of the characters in the epic, in that era. Ravana told Sita, "My age is now 2000 years, your husband Rama is just 40 years of age and your own age is 39 years." The earth is endowed with several forms of energy. In between Akasha and the earth is permeated by a vast medium of energy field. The power of planet earth is unimaginable. Hence, earth is considered to be the storehouse of all energies. Predominant among the energies is the power of magnetism. Repeated investigations have failed to throw light on the nature of this energy.

Sita is the daughter of Goddess Earth - Bhoodevi. She is therefore also called Bhoojatha. At the time when Rama went to lift Lord Shiva's bow, Bhoodevi rejoiced. The various kings and princes who had assembled were not of the right age for Sita. Their looks too were of no match to those of Sita. Rama alone looked extremely youthful. His physical features were beyond description. He was extremely handsome. Bhoodevi decided that Rama was the right match for Sita. She saw to it that there was no obstruction on Rama's path to victory in the assembly. When Rama lifted Lord Shiva's bow, he used his left hand as if to indicate that he required just his left hand to accomplish something which others found impossible. This was actually the great strength of mother earth at work. She reduced the weight of the bow and enhanced Rama's strength.

The wonderful powers of the earth are indescribable. However, all the minerals, metals and chemicals that are in the earth are present in man too. Energies like the electric, chemical, magnetic, etc., these and many more strengths are immanent in man. One cannot say how many, but every kind of energy and material in the core of earth are already in man. But, there is no realization in man regarding his great potential. The power of the divine in man is extremely sacred. Man is tremendously powerful because of this Divinity in him. He can do anything, if only he wills. Today, thanks to the influence of science, man has reached the moon. He has also brought back dust from the moon. Actually, these are all expressions of the inner strength of man. It is a pity that man cannot recognize his own strength. At present, everyone is asking the others, "Who are you?" Very few ask the question, "Who am I?" All your problems get solved when you inquire into this question. In the answer to this question is embedded the answer to all questions.

Mandodari, the Ideal Wife

While abducting Sita, Ravana was taking her across the ocean to Lanka. He was highly materialistic and hence wanted to impress Sita with glimpses of his riches, power, opulence and acquisitions. With this intention he took Sita into the inner apartments of his palace. But Sita refrained from looking at any of these with utter disdain. Mandodari was very sad at the turn of events. She

advised Ravana thus, "Oh! Lord! Why are you inviting your own doom? Rightly is it said that as the time of destruction approaches, discrimination departs (Vinasakale viparita Buddhi). Why did you have to bring here such a chaste and pious lady like Sita? This is our fate. You are not making attempts to understand the true nature of mother Sita. For that you need to know and control yourself first. She definitely cannot stay in the inner palace. Instead select a peaceful location and put her there." Paying heed to Mandodari's advice, he set up a small house in the Asoka Vana for Sita to live in peace. Mandodari is ranked as an ideal wife, because, like a minister who warns his king against danger, she gave timely advice to Ravana and made sincere attempts to dissuade him from going astray. She told him, "Lord! Instead of doing 'Ramachinta' (Thoughts about Lord Rama) you are doing 'Kamachinta' (indulging in lustful thoughts). From now on you will never face good times again. Your doom is approaching. This is the reason why you are entertaining such wicked, destructive thoughts. You should never cause a woman weep and make her shed tears. If you do so, for every tear that she sheds, you will have to shed a thousand. Never hurt a woman." Thus Mandodari tried her best to make Ravana realize his folly.

One day, Mandodari herself went to Sita. She implored, "O daughter of Mother earth! Accept my salutations. You are a chaste and noble lady. You are highly sacred and pure. My husband is an evil man. His evil deeds are dragging him to his destruction. It is said that "With good feelings, man enjoys happiness; With evil feelings, he himself becomes evil." (Telugu Poem) His bad intentions are making him evil. Please forgive him and save me from widowhood." This episode of Mandodari pleading with Sita is not chronicled in any prevalent version of the Ramayana. Meanwhile, Sita was totally lost in Rama's contemplation. Mandodari's pleas or Ravana's threats did not even register in her mind.

Sita in Lanka

At such a time, what was the situation in Lanka? Just like the situation today, people were highly agitated. There was a strange sense of uneasiness and unrest amongst the citizens. They suppressed their sufferings in their hearts

and would not express them freely for fear of persecution by Ravana. Meanwhile, Vibhishana's wife Sarama took upon herself the task of serving Sita.

She had several conversations with Sita and tried to give her strength. She said, "Mother! I am indeed fortunate to serve such a holy person like you. Your pure character alone can lend some peace to Lanka. Ravana is no ordinary king. He is exceptionally wicked and it is our misfortune that you have fallen into his clutch." Sarama did her best to thus console Sita and lift her spirits.

One night Trijata, daughter of Sarama had a foreboding dream. The dream vividly showed Lanka as being totally dry and arid. It showed all the trees as having withered and fallen. The royal palace was seen reduced to ruins and Ravana was staggering about without even water to drink. She understood that what she foresaw to be Ravana's fate was a direct consequence of his own wicked deeds. At the same time, she was helpless and could do nothing but feeling sad.

Meanwhile Ravana appeared at the Asoka gardens. He visited Sita everyday to announce the countdown to the number of days left for her to accept him. Sita would remain oblivious to all such threats. One day, Sarama approached Sita, fell at her feet and prayed, "Mother! This has been a unique good fortune that I have had. My daughter also has been blessed by this opportunity. My husband is a person of sound character. He is also a devotee of Rama. He has surrendered himself to Rama at the seashore. I am thrilled that our entire family has had this unique opportunity of being at Rama's service." Sita felt a little consoled when she heard this from Sarama; She realized that she had someone she could trust, near her.

Hanuman in Search of Sita

At that moment, Hanuman entered the scene. He had been searching for Sita all over Lanka. He was constantly censuring himself at the predicament he was in. To find Sita, he was forced to look amongst and at the ladies. He

hence entered the inner apartments of the palace. He could feel the evil vibrations from the cruel demonesses who inhabited the rooms. Their actions were most grotesque. Hanuman scolded himself, "Alas! What a sin I am committing! Are these the scenes I am expected to see? These eyes must see the Divine form of Lord Rama and not such ugly scenes. Yet, I am forced to do so if I must succeed in finding Sita. I must not allow these situations to upset me." So strengthening his resolve, Hanuman climbed over the walls of the inner chambers and continued his search.

At the time when Hanuman was captured and brought before Ravana, an interesting conversation took place between the two. Ravana was holding court in a gigantic hall of the palace. Ravana looked at the captive Hanuman and asked, "You are a monkey. You have destroyed the entire gardens. Who has sent you here, O foolish fellow?" Hanuman was no ordinary being! He replied using the same harsh language, "Foolish fellow! The same hero who chopped off the ears and nose of your sister has sent me here!" Ravana was angry at this. He threatened Hanuman, "You impudent fellow! No king has dared address me in such derogatory terms! Watch your tongue, or I shall silence it forever!". Hanuman shot back, "Maybe none has dared to demean you like this. I am Rama's servant and I will definitely talk to you in this tone for you deserve nothing better!" This was the conversation between Hanuman and Ravana. Ravana had already got the news of Hanuman visiting Sita and the exchange of messages between the two. When Hanuman set fire to Lanka and went back, Ravana started worrying that Rama would definitely arrive, anytime from then. He considered the possible defeat at Rama's hands. These were the effects of his own guilty conscience! It led him to hallucinate all such scenarios and did not give him a moment's peace!

We shall now go back to Hanuman's search for Sita. Hanuman was on the rooftop of the inner apartments and from a distance, he espied the tall trees of Asoka Vana. He leapt and reached the gardens. And there under a tree, he finally saw the forlorn form of Mother Sita. Her sorrow was obvious. Hanuman climbed the tree under which She sat and started singing the glory of Dasaratha's son from the beginning. Sita was perplexed and looked up in astonishment. She wondered, "Who is this monkey?" Hanuman was a total

stranger to her. As an answer to her enquiring look, Hanuman respectfully folded his palms and said, "Mother! I am a servant of Lord Rama. I am here to serve your lotus feet." Hanuman's response did not have any effect on Sita. She did not acknowledge his presence or his explanations. It was her bitter experience that the demons assumed a variety of forms and were masters in creating illusions. She suspected that Hanuman too was a part of such a ploy.

Hanuman jumped down from the tree. Constantly chanting the name of Rama, he addressed Sita, "Mother! Here is proof of my identity." He then handed over to Sita the ring given by Rama to him. Sita respectfully pressed the ring to her eyes. She told Hanuman, "Hanuman, how lucky you are! Did Rama Himself give you this ring? This was a gift to my Lord from King Janaka at the time of my wedding. Where is Rama now? How is he?" She eagerly enquired about the Lord in this way. Hanuman gave her courage by saying, "Mother! Be brave, he is coming shortly. He shall definitely come and take you back with him. You must not worry. If you are anxious, please sit on my back. With a single leap I shall take you to Rama immediately." Sita smiled and said, "Hanuman, if I was to sit on your back and go back to Rama, you would be accused of committing the same sin of abduction as Ravana. I do not want you to get such a bad name. Rama himself must come. He must kill Ravana and release me from this prison. Till then I shall wait and put up with this torture. Kindly carry this news to my Lord Rama." With great reluctance and grief, she gave permission for Hanuman to leave. Hanuman could not bear to see the sadness in Sita. He decided to teach the demons a lesson and proceeded to lay to utter waste, the beautiful Asoka gardens. He was finally captured and brought before Ravana. Hanuman accused Ravana of being a sinner and a wicked king. He told that it was the misfortune of the citizens of Lanka to have him as their king. If the ruler was so wicked, he wondered, what could be said about the ruled? Hanuman poured scorn on Ravana thus.

Hanuman Returns to Report

Later, when he reached Rama he conveyed the good news to him. Rama, Lakshmana, Sugriva and all other vanaras were waiting eagerly on the seashore. Hanuman landed in front of them. He was greeted with

congratulations and benedictions of victory from the ecstatic battalions of vanaras. They praised Hanuman and said, "Hanuman! It is by such timely, helpful and sacred spirit of service to Rama that you have won his heart. You have indeed brought good news. May all auspiciousness greet Rama from now on." Before Hanuman took leave of Sita, She gave him her crown jewel. This was one among several that were presented to her by Anasuya. Rama was aware of this jewel. The moment Hanuman handed it over to Rama, Rama was both joyful and agonized. He heard the news that Sita was safe. This gladdened his heart. Hanuman explained to Rama everything that had occurred in Lanka.

"Oh! Sri Rama, listen to my prayers!
Accept the sacred jewel Sita has sent for you
I have seen Sita shivering like a parrot in a cage
Surrounded she is by a number of fierce demonesses
Oh! How they scare her by their threats and weapons
Poor mother can only bow her head in fear and anguish.
Oh! Sri Rama, listen to my prayers!
Firstly, there is Indrajit
Then comes the commander in chief Prahasta
The vast courtyards, the palatial bungalows
The big markets and the dazzling orchids
I have seen them all!
Oh! Rama listen to my prayers!"
(Telugu Song)

In this way Hanuman described in great detail everything that he had seen in Lanka. Hearing about Sita's plight, Lakshmana immediately grabbed his bow and arrows. He urged his brother to get up and act immediately. He said, "This is not the time to rest even for a moment. Let us proceed immediately and put an end to Mother Sita's plight and bring her back safely." Rama calmly replied, "Peace, peace, peace! One should not act in haste. Without

proper enquiry, investigations and planning any action can only produce negative results. Let us therefore proceed cautiously." Sugriva sent instructions to his friends and kinsmen to mobilize a huge army. He instructed that the army enter Lanka, destroy Ravana and return only then.

The Vanara Army Invades Lanka

With such enthusiasm and vigour, the vanara army comprising experienced heroes like Sugriva, Hanuman, Jambavanta and others soon reached the shores of Lanka. The entire city was panic-stricken. The vanara army was all over the countryside around Lanka. They were on the hills, on the treetops, on the plains and everywhere! The monkeys were strangers to the Lankans till they saw Hanuman. The memory of the destruction that Hanuman caused during his previous visit was all too fresh in their minds. They were wondering among themselves.

"Oh! Wherefrom has this terrible monkey come?
Who has sent this messenger of destruction to Lanka?
Our houses are in ruins, our families are homeless
All the houses are on fire, oh! Where are we to take shelter?

We hear he is Rama's messenger come to see Sita,
He is contented with the cooling vision of Sita,
But his anger has heated up our Lanka!

Oh! What destruction! What a calamity!
Our city lies in ruins, thanks to the monkey!
Oh! Wherefrom has this terrible monkey come?

Ravana will face certain ruin
He has abducted chaste and pious Sita,
If the messenger be so strong
Oh! What can one say of the master!"

(Telugu Song)

In this way, the citizens of Lanka were terror-stricken. The monkey which had caused tremendous destruction earlier had now reappeared with more of its kind! Ravana's ministers, courtiers and allies were at a loss as to what to do.

How did the Vanara army cross the ocean? The mighty Hanuman could do it, but what about the entire army? Rama propitiated the God of Ocean with an arrow. The deity responded and facilitated the crossing.

The Vanaras were raising war cries against the demons. Ravana could not stand the noise. A fierce battle was imminent. Ravana was sure to meet his end in the war. This was also the popular sentiment of the citizens of Lanka. They all wondered, "Why is it that this wicked person is keen to meet his doom? He is aiming to burn to ashes not just himself but his entire kingdom as well". Everybody was thus criticizing Ravana within themselves. None of them entertained any pleasant feelings for Ravana.

War commenced. It was a fierce pitched battle. Indrajit, the son of Ravana, who had defeated Indra himself, entered the battle. He was the eldest son of Ravana. It was the second day of the battle. He was geared splendidly in the battle-attire. He was killed by Lakshmana in a fierce battle. Then came another mighty Rakshasa, whom the Vanaras mistook to be Ravana himself. He caused a great deal of havoc and destruction in their ranks. There was none in the army equal to him in might and valour. Vibhishana approached Rama and explained, " Rama! You must kill him somehow. If you kill him, it is as good as striking at Ravana himself. He is a mighty support for Ravana's army. If you hit his thumb, he is sure to fall". And so it was done as told. The mighty warrior fell. Vibhishana was observed wiping his tears. Lakshmana was surprised. He asked Vibhishana, " So many have died in the battle. But why do you weep for this one alone?" Vibhishana replied, " Lord! He was my only son. It is because of paternal attachment that I weep. But in truth, it was

vital that he be removed from the scene. Ravana's arrogance was primarily based on his might. There are several more such heroes on whom Ravana depends". In this way, Vibhishana gave Rama a brief account of several warriors in Ravana's army. Gradually Ravana started losing each one of his celebrated generals.

Ravana Killed

Finally, Ravana himself came to the battlefield. Deep within himself he was worried; but he hid it and fought. As each of his head was knocked off, another took its place. It was proving to be impossible to vanquish Ravana. It was once again Vibhishana who revealed to Rama the secret of Ravana's invincibility and directed where the arrow had to be shot. He said, " Rama! There is no sin in betraying such a wicked person. His death is highly beneficial for the world. I do not aspire for or desire to rule the kingdom of Lanka. But this evil Ravana must be killed." Rama followed Vibhishana's directions and shot his arrow. Ravana fell on the battlefield.

Mandodari came running and wailed in agony, "Lord! I had warned you several times not to meddle with chaste and pious married women. I told you not to cast lustful eyes on spiritually accomplished women. You are now reaping the consequence of your sins. You have accumulated plenty of vices. I tried to dissuade you. But you would never pay me any attention." It is rightly said, "Good advice is never accepted Though given with a good heart.

Evil counsel is immensely attractive to the ears
How will such people ever realize Me?"
(Telugu Poem)

He proclaimed, "Rama! Sita is blameless. She is a spiritually enlightened, sacred and virtuous lady. There is no need for you to test her further. I am withdrawing and extinguishing myself." Thus Sita was brought to Rama. The

monkeys were all agog to catch a glimpse of mother Sita and fell one over the other in total disarray in their eagerness to see Sita. Rama accepted Sita as his wife. Of what use is one's accomplishment if one does not listen to good advice? He is bound to be ruined.

Ravana too could not escape this fate and he paid for it with his own life.

The Fire Ordeal

The vanaras rejoiced at Ravana's fall. They too had lost a several of their own members. Sita was being brought to Rama. Strangely, Rama would not raise his head to look at Sita. Sita was highly anxious and eager to catch a glimpse of Rama. She had been away from her husband for 10 months and wanted to see him at once. But, Rama did not seem to show any interest. Instead, he ordered Lakshmana to light a fire for Sita to prove her chastity. It was Rama's intention that Sita pass through the fire and prove to the world that She was blemishless, sacred, and pure. It was only after this proof that Rama was willing to accept her. Rama knew about Sita's purity - but he was concerned that the world may spread rumours about her character. If Sita were to prove herself with a trial by fire, none would dare open his mouth. Sita saluted Rama, circumambulated the fire thrice and hurled herself into it. The Fire God appeared.

Back to Ayodhya

Meanwhile Vibhishana brought the aerial vehicle - Pushpaka Vimana and put it at Rama's disposal. This vehicle belonged to Kubera, the stepbrother of Ravana. Ravana had vanquished him in battle and usurped it.

Rama, Lakshmana, Sita, Vibhishana, Sugriva and all others boarded the vehicle and proceeded to fly towards Ayodhya.

At the same time, Bharatha was eagerly awaiting Rama's arrival. The deadline Rama had given him for his reaching Ayodhya was over that day. He was distraught with anxiety as to whether Rama would return or not. He had a

chariot kept ready to receive Rama and take him to Ayodhya. Shortly, to his great joy he saw Pushpaka Vimana approaching in the sky. The citizens of Ayodhya were overjoyed. Their hearts were dry without seeing Rama for fourteen long years. The state of the women was beyond description. They had spent fourteen years in great despair. They were unable to relish their food. They had all become almost skeletons in appearance. They had spent their time chanting Rama's name and consoling themselves.

Meanwhile, Shatrughna arrived from Ayodhya with garlands for his brothers and sister-in-law. The Pushpaka Vimana landed and everyone alighted from it. And then a wonder occurred. Everyone was astonished to see that Bharatha and Rama looked identical! This wonder was witnessed by one and all.

Since Bharatha had spent every moment of the fourteen years in constant contemplation of Rama, he had acquired Rama's features and attributes. Shatrughna wanted to garland Rama, but could not identify who was Rama among the two. As everyone was wondering, Lakshmana came to Shatrughna's rescue. Rama was garlanded and one garland was presented to Sita. The entire group moved in a procession towards Ayodhya.

Jubilant Ayodhya

At Ayodhya, there was gaiety and happiness all around. Functions were organized everyday. The populace was extremely happy to get Rama back after fourteen years. This was all due to the power of his Mother's blessings. Kausalya blessed Rama, "Son! May you pass the fourteen long years like you spent just fourteen minutes. No obstacle will come in your way because you are the incarnation of Lord Narayana. None can trouble You. You will definitely reach Ayodhya safe and sound." She lovingly embraced Rama on his return.

It was now Sumitra's turn. She is a good friend to all. Her virtues cannot be easily described. She too was thrilled at the victorious return of Rama. She was confident all through that none could harm Rama or cause Him an iota of trouble for the simple reason that no such person could be born. She brought her daughter-in-law Urmila to Lakshmana. It was fourteen years since

Lakshmana and Urmila had seen each other. She fell at her husband's feet and said, "Lord! It was your total dedication to Rama that has saved and protected you so far. You would always think of Rama. It was that sacred name that guarded and guided you." She was overjoyed and applied vermilion to Lakshmana's feet, as was the custom in those days. Sumitra praised her that it was her good wishes and blessings that had kept her son Lakshmana safe and secure.

Kaikeyi too arrived on the scene. She was not wicked, as is commonly depicted. She was fully aware of the purpose of Rama's incarnation. The house of Dasaratha was indeed fortunate to have four gems of sons and four equally virtuous daughters-in-law. Sumitra gathered the four couples together, blessed them contently and retired from the scene. She told Rama, " I had spent fourteen years of my life thinking only of you.

It was my cherished desire that I see you after fourteen years. I have seen you now and sanctified myself. My life's purpose is served." There was nothing else she wanted from life and she soon died peacefully.

Kaikeyi too was highly contented and at peace with herself. She was subjected to malignant attacks. But she did not heed any attention to them. She was fully aware of the mission that Rama was to undertake. At the time Rama was very young, she was teaching him archery. Rama had then already cautioned her, "Mother! I have incarnated to put an end to the demons. You must chalk out a plan to fulfil this mission." This is the reason that Kaikeyi went on to ask the two seemingly heartless boons from Dasaratha. She pretended to succumb to Manthara's wicked promptings and asked Dasaratha to banish Rama. All that was now past. Rama had returned victorious and everybody was singing praises of his glory. She too passed away, contented with her role in the masterplan. Ayodhya was decked in all frenzy and rejoiced at the return of Lord Rama.

9. God Has No Specific Form

Date: 23 May 2002 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 2002

A tree can be fashioned without any twist and turn,
A stone can be fashioned without any defect.
Can we fashion the mind, without any defect?
The word of Sai is the word of truth.
(Telugu Poem)

The Three Akashas

Embodiments of Love!

OUR warden has asked me to talk about the three Akashas (infinities).

"Akasham Gaganam Soonyam."

That which cannot be seen by the eye, or cannot be heard by the ear or cannot be expressed by words characterizes the realm of Akasha. It cannot be comprehended by the mind either. The sun and the moon, the clouds and the stars belong to the realm of Akasha. There are three akashas: Bhutakasha, Chittakasha and Chidakasha. The Bhutakasha envelops the visible and the invisible phenomena. For example, some stars are visible in the sky; but there are many more that remain invisible. The distance between the earth and the sun is about nine crores and eleven lakh miles. The Bhutakasha spreads over an extent that is impossible to calculate. The sun is a star and there are countless numbers of other stars scattered in the cosmos. They match our Sun in size. Since they are so far away, they appear

like tiny stars to us. Each star shines with the splendour of the sun. The light of these stars travels at an incredible speed of 1,86,284 miles per second! There are other stars whose light has not yet reached the earth.

The light emanating from the stars is stupendous in its intensity. The brilliance cannot be withstood by anything or anyone on the earth. Our sun imparts only a portion of its radiance to earth. Neither the huge stars nor the sun and the moon are capable of generating this effulgence on their own. There is a fundamental power that is the basis of all this. It is the basic illumination from which the rest of the brilliance originates. This primordial power is that of the Atma. It allows the stars, sun and moon to shine.

Chittakasha is a Reflection of Bhutakasha

All these mentioned above are encompassed in the Bhutakasha. What is Chittakasha then? Since everything that is visible is Bhutakasha, it cannot be argued that those invisible belong to Chittakasha. There is a power that is invisible, silent, imperceptible and eternal. This power is the Chidakasha. In Chittakasha is reflected or imprinted everything that is seen in Bhutakasha. The span of the Chittakasha is very small and subtle. On the other hand, the gross and visible Bhutakasha spans a terrific extent. Yet, the entire contents of Bhutakasha appear in the Chittakasha as small blips! For example, you see a huge mountain. When you close your eyes after seeing it, you will be able to visualize the image of the mountain from the Chittakasha. Similarly, the stars and sky and all that is seen are permanently etched on the Chittakasha.

The exact physical extent and dimensions of the Bhutakasha have not been estimated to date. But something can be known of the Chittakasha. The entire visible creation is stored in Chittakasha in a subtle form. Every form and sound in the Chittakasha is a reflection of some entity in the Bhutakasha. Bhutakasha is physically perceptible. That which is mentally perceptible is Chittakasha.

Chidakasha or Atma Encompasses All

The third is called Chidaksha. It is also called Atma. Atma has no form. It has no movement. Nirgunam, Niranjanam, Sanathana Niketanam, Nitya, Suddha, Buddha, Mukta, Nirmala Swarupinam (attributeless, pure, final abode, eternal, unsullied, enlightened, free and embodiment of sacredness). He who has seen this Chidakasha is one who has had the experience of Atma. No educational qualifications, scholarship or special abilities are required to see Chittakasha. On the other hand none can see even the reflection or shadow of Chidakasha, however strenuous the effort.

The distance of several stars from the earth is measurable. But there are many more which are so far away that they are beyond any human estimation.

Scientists have made several attempts to investigate

such a phenomenon. They attempted to reach the Chidakasha with their scientific examinations. All their efforts can take them at most till the Chittakasha only and not a step more. Chidakasha could not be adequately described even by the Vedanta. Science too fails in its efforts. However, pointers are to some extent available from Vedanta on Chidakasha. The reflection of Bhutakasha is Chittakasha. That which reflects Chittakasha itself is Chidakasha. The relation between the three is explained as follows:

1. The one you think you are, which is Bhutakasha because it contains all that you see, hear and experience.
2. The one that others think you are, which is the Chittakasha, because, it reflects in your mind's eye whatever you contemplate on.
3. The one you really are, which is the Chidakasha or the principle of Atma - your true nature. It is Divine Bliss. Bliss, I, reflection of Divinity and Atma all mean the same. 'I' is related exclusively to the Atma. 'I' is a single lettered word. The Vedas declare "Ekam Sat Vipahraha Bahuda Vadanti". 'I' is the truth. It is interpreted in several ways by scholars. I may call 'Anil Kumar' and the reply comes 'I'. I may call

'Girigaru' - once again the reply comes from the other side 'I'. In this way I may call out the names of several lakhs of people; the reply is always 'I'. This unity in diversity is 'I'. It is the Atmatatwa. It cannot be explained as being the sky or earth, etc. It is so infinitely expansive that it has no measure at all. Scholars therefore say, "Akasham Gaganam Soonyam." There is nothing but empty space in which you may see a few stars and clouds. But, to what extent can you see them? Only upto a certain distance. Anything beyond that is invisible to your eyes. That which cannot be seen but only visualized is Chittakasha. 'I' also cannot be visualized. None can give its true meaning.

However, Vedanta always propounds unity in diversity through all its teachings. For instance the phrase "Aham Brahmasmi" translates to 'I am Brahma'. The word Brahma follows the single letter 'I'. Any other word has to follow Aham. Without the letter 'I' the word Atma cannot appear. Therefore the letter 'I' signifies the primordial principle.

The Vedanta advises that though one may have read scriptures and texts, he should still make every effort to find out his true nature. He should repeatedly ask himself: 'Who am I?' This question cannot be answered with your scholarship or practical applications. When asked 'Who are you?' you reply, 'I am Anil Kumar'. To whom is the name 'Anil Kumar' given? Your parents have given that name to your body. What was your name before you were so named? There is no answer. Therefore all names are only given, none of them is born with you. They were all added to you at the time of your birth or later for identifying you in this material world. They do not establish your true identity. Atma has no fixed name. It is its own identity. It has no other form.

Chidakasha is Attributeless

Bhutakasha and Chittakasha can be discussed and studied upto some extent. However Chidakasha has no form or attribute. What form and name can you assign to the formless one? It is therefore its own identity. No one is able to comprehend the true meaning of the word 'I'. Aham (I) should not be confused with Ahamkara (ego). Ego has form, but not 'I'. Vedanta describes 'I'

by negation. It is not ether, ego, sound or any such thing. A master once asked his disciple to find out who he really was. The next day the disciple appeared and said, "Sir, I've found the answer. My name is Ramaiah." The master once again asked him, "Who are you?" After further enquiry, the answer came, "I am the son of Mallaiah and my mother's name is Pullamma." These are all names of various bodies. None of them is your true identity because names relate to the body. They are useful for you to introduce yourself in the physical world. Only one name was born with you and not given. It is 'I'. Atma, 'I' all mean the same. Make efforts to realize the nature of 'I'. That is true Sadhana. There is nothing else you need to know further. There is no need for you to say, "I am Ramaiah" when announcing your true identity. 'I' is itself enough. No other words need to follow 'I' to reinforce your identity. 'I' is unique and always single. Realising this is the secret contained in all of Vedanta.

God is Formless - an Analogy

Chidakasha has nothing to do with reflections, reactions and resounds. It is beyond all the three. It cannot be identified or comprehended with any name or form. At one point of time, in Uttar Pradesh, there was a bangle seller on the banks of river Ganges. One day a radiant form emerged from the Ganges and asked him, "Sir, will you please sell me some bangles?" The bangle seller complied and taking out some bangles for her size, he made her put them on. She said, "I don't have the money for these bangles with me. However, I will give you an address and directions to reach the house. Go to the person and collect the money from him. He is my father. Tell him that money is kept in the locker." The bangle seller then asked her, "Mother, what is your name? I will need to identify you at your house for collecting the money." The form replied, "You can tell them that my name is Ganga" and then vanished.

As directed, the bangle seller reached the house and told the owner that he had come to collect the money due to him from the owner's daughter Ganga to whom he had sold some bangles. The astonished house owner replied, "I am not even married. How can I then have a daughter and how would she buy bangles?" The bangle seller replied, "The lady was certainly telling the

truth. How else could I have discovered and found my way to your house? She even identified your name for me. Is this your name or not?" The person agreed that it was so. The bangle seller argued, " If all this is true, the lady certainly was not lying." The house owner did not even know that he had the amount with him. He searched in his locker and was astounded to find the amount there exactly as predicted.

This person was an ardent devotee of mother Ganges. He was thrilled and told the bangle-seller, "Sir! I worship mother Ganges. She is my patron deity. I have offered myself to her and have hence chosen to remain unmarried. I am eager to see the sacred spot where you saw my mother Ganges. Let us go!" The bangle seller obliged and soon both arrived at the banks of the river. The bangle-seller ardently prayed, "Mother! You appeared to me and took the bangles. You guided me to your devotee's house to take the payment. Will you not appear again and show me your form? I have come to you with gratitude to tell you that I have received the payment due to me." A voice replied, "Here is the blessing that I confer for your gratitude" and a hand emerged from the river, with the newly bought bangles adorning it! The devotee saw the hand and was ecstatic. He exclaimed, "Mother! Will you not show me your true form and sanctify me?" He thus kept pleading and praying. The voice replied, "Son! I cannot show any form to anybody. That is because I do not have a particular form. All forms that you can see are God's forms only! God can appear in any form that a devotee prays to Him to appear in. God Himself has no specific form or attribute. I showed you my hand filled with bangles just as a proof that I have indeed bought the bangles and you must pay the bangle seller." The devotee saw the hand; he was thrilled at the grace conferred on him and said, "Mother! I have seen at least your hand and have been sanctified! I do not want anything else in life". He then fell into the Ganges and breathed his last.

Ramakrishna's Dilemma

Divinity always assumes the form that a devotee visualizes and prays for. None can actually fix and estimate what Divinity looks like, because there is no form at all! Ramakrishna Paramahansa too had a similar experience. He

was staying at Kamarpukur. He was gripped by a strong desire to have darshan of Goddess Kali. Unable to bear the pain of separation anymore, he attempted to commit suicide by jumping into the Ganges. Surprisingly, however far he walked into the river, he found that the water came only up to his knees! He prayed, "O' Mother of the universe! Why are you testing me so? Why do you not reveal your form to me? Why do you not allow me to merge in you? I am unable to bear this tortuous pain." The mother Goddess replied, "Son! I can show you my form if I had one in the first place! I have no form for you to see. My only form is that of Atma. So, contemplate on the principle of Atma. You can see God in any form that you think of. All the forms that you attribute to God are products of your illusion. None of them can be taken to be the true identity of Divinity." Be Attached to Atma You say that Rama or Krishna or Sai Baba has appeared before you. Several people make such claims. These are all figments of one's illusion (Bhrama). As long as you have Bhrama you will be far away from Brahma (Divinity). On the other hand if you have realized Brahma, Bhrama can come nowhere near you. The need of the hour is therefore to overcome this illusion. Get rid off the body attachment. Cultivate attachment to the Atma instead. Your true identity is Atma. It has neither a name nor a form. It is the embodiment of bliss. Atma is therefore described as, "Nityanandam, Parama Sukhadam, Kevalam Jnanamurtim, Dwandwateetam, Gagana Sadrisham, Tattwamasyadi Lakshyam, Ekam, Nityam, Vimalam, Achalam, Sarvadhee Sakshibhutam, Bhavateetam, Trigunarahitam" (God is the embodiment of eternal bliss, He is wisdom absolute, the One without a second, beyond the pair of opposites, expansive and pervasive like the sky, the goal indicated by the Mahavakya Tattwamasi, the eternal, pure, unchanging, the witness of all functions of the intellect, beyond all mental conditions and the three Gunas of Sattwa, Rajas and Thamas).

These are the various names and descriptions of the Atma. However, it has no form. Hence do not aim to see the form of God. Instead consider all the forms that you see to be that of God. Do not fix various forms as unique to God.

Atmic Bliss Alone is Eternal

The feature of Bhutakasha is that, it encompasses the sun, the stars and all the galaxies in it. Do not take these to be the permanent attributes of God! They will all perish someday, pass on or change forms. They will withdraw themselves and disappear from creation itself at some point of time. There is only one thing that will always be with you, in you, around you, above you and below you and that is bliss.

Bliss has no form. There is only one way to know it. People think that bursting out into laughter is bliss! Even laughter should not be a guffaw. The bliss of divine personality is expressed by a delicate smile. No sound accompanies this smile. It is not a guffaw; but it confers plenty of joy to those who see it. Loud laughter is called a "prahasan" while the soundless smile is called "hasan". God always smiles and never indulges in loud laughter. What you see in cinemas is an exercise in histrionics that is passed on as laughter. Seeing this, people imagine that God too must be laughing like this!

Identify God by Expressing Gratitude

There is one aspect that you can use to identify Divinity and show your gratitude. God is giving you so many things. When you are not well a doctor comes and gives you an injection. You pay the doctor his fees. Your expression of gratitude ends there. When you are hungry you tell your mother that you would like to eat something. Your mother gives you some food that you relish with great joy. This itself is an expression of gratitude to your mother. You may be suffering. When someone comes and consoles you and gives you strength, you express gratitude to him. In this way, all help rendered is gratefully acknowledged without fail.

This should be the custom. Unfortunately, there is no such tradition today.

God is giving you so much. You are getting free education, free medical aid and free water. He is talking with you so freely and moving about amongst you so freely. He is giving you everything so 'free'! How do you express your gratitude for all these? You must give up your ego and spread happiness like

He does. That will be the right thing to do. As it is said:

"That heart which you have given me, O Lord!
I give it back to you, O mighty one!
What else can I offer you, my Master!
I offer my prayerful salutations with tears of gratitude. O Lord!
Accept them all with my heart."
(Telugu Poem)

Offer your salutations to God. Without doing this, you will become an ungrateful wretch. You will collapse into the endless cycle of birth and death. Suffering and agony will cling to you. Your tears of gratitude will liberate you from all such problems. You will always be blissful, with cheerful smiles. This is the result of constantly expressing your gratitude to God.

Once, there lived a devotee of Lord Krishna who spent his time ceaselessly contemplating on Krishna's name. But he had a problem! Krishna was depicted in various ways in different pictures. Which form to select while contemplating on Lord Krishna? He could not decide. These photographs are artificially created ones. It is said, "Daivam Manusha Roopena" - God is in the human form. The crowns and jewels in the pictures are additions provided by artists; they are not his true form. His true nature is that He is ever smiling and is always making others smile! He is always blissful and presents bliss to others. That is the true hallmark of Lord Krishna. 'Be happy; make others happy.' It is a give and take philosophy! Give bliss and accept bliss in return. That is the only true form of gratitude you can express to God.

Without expressing your gratitude, you cannot aim

to please God with anything that you may do. You will not attain any happiness in return. When you see your presiding deity, give a smile. Do not stand with a frowning face! With such a serious face, you can never hope to

experience bliss. You must always be happy because bliss is your true nature. Always maintain a pleasant smile on your face. You may definitely encounter problems and obstacles in life. Grief and sorrow may sometimes assail you. Do not break down and cry. These are things that come and go. They are passing clouds and will never stay permanently to trouble you. Do not yield to them; face them head long instead. A steady faith in God will give you the satisfaction of being a true devotee.

Merge in Chidakasha

Today, you worry about your mother, father, kith and kin. How do you expect to attain happiness with so many worries? Who are your parents? They are the ones who gave you a physical body. Whose body is it? It is only a physical entity. Forget the body. Contemplate on Divinity instead. This is true devotion. Ignore Bhutakasha entirely, though it is what you actually see. Chittakasha can be relied on to the same extent. Once you assimilate everything in Chittakasha, you will reach Chidakasha. Hence, develop the capability to completely merge in Chidakasha.

How will you visualize and merge into Chidakasha? I shall explain it in detail later. In this world, several scholars and experts explain Divinity quite extensively. However, Divinity that can be explained is not the true Divinity! These are only descriptions and pointers to Divinity. They can easily make you happy or even delude you. But you must go beyond these and aim to see the reality that is 'Tat'. 'Tat Tvam Asi' - Thou Art That. 'Thou' means 'this'. 'That' is 'Tat'. Both should therefore become one.

In response to Narasimhamoorthy's prayer, I have explained the three Akashas of Bhutakasha, Chittakasha and Chidakasha to you. True 'Akasha' is 'Hridayakasha' - the heart. Chidakasha is vital and ultimate. Every attempt should be made to know its nature.

10. Reduce Your Desires

Date: 24 May 2002 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 2002

Nasthi lobho samovyadhi, Nasthi krodha samoripuhu
Nasthi daridriyavath dukham, Nasthi jnanath param sukham

"There is no disease greater than greed,
One's anger is his greatest enemy,
There is no sorrow deeper than poverty,
There is no greater peace than wisdom."
(Sanskrit Verse)

God Permeates the Universe

Embodiments of Love!

LOVE, Aham, Atma, I - these are all synonyms of the same entity. Every person commonly uses the word 'I'. It means he is revealing his true identity of being the Atma.

Sarvam khalvidam Brahma
The entire creation is Divinity.

Whatever you hear, see or experience is all Brahma alone. Brahma is yet another synonym for 'I'. Einstein once said, "The entire creation is permeated with energy and energy has no form". He discovered this truth in this age, after strenuous investigations. A few thousands of years earlier, the seven-year-old Prahlada came to the same conclusion without any experimentation.

He stated, "It is not possible to decide that God is present here and not present there. He is everywhere and there can be no doubt about it. You can find Him wherever you search for Him".

How did the young lad have such an experience?

His own father Hiranyakasipu tried to have him killed by the bite of poisonous snakes. All Prahlada did was to chant the Lord's name, 'Om Namō Narayanaya!' and, lo and behold, the serpents turned into garlands! Hiranyakasipu then ordered that Prahlada be chopped into pieces. Several swords were used, but Prahlada kept chanting 'Namō Narayanaya', and the swords could not make a scratch on the boy. They then decided to make him drink poison. Prahlada kept repeating, 'Om Namō Narayanaya!' He did not have any other name or thought in his mind. As a consequence, the poison changed into nectar. Seeing the futility of these procedures, they hurled the boy from the hilltop into the ocean below. Prahlada kept chanting the Divine name, 'Om Namō Narayanaya!' and smilingly fell into the ocean. The deity of the ocean himself rescued the boy and brought him to the shore.

The inner significance of these events is that faith is highly essential. Faith is the basis. Without it, chanting the Lord's name any number of times will be of no avail. It is like as a tape recorder repeating God's name. Prahlada was tuned into the primordial sound of Brahma Tatva.

Man's body is a powerful dynamo. All the limbs and the body constitute a generator. There is a steady supply of current from the body. Everything in man is Divine power. Prahlada experienced this current and therefore firmly believed that God could be found wherever He was sought.

Today's scientists have performed several experiments to ascertain Einstein's statement regarding matter and energy. They came to the same conclusion - Energy can neither be created nor destroyed.

Newton too echoed similar sentiments. He had dedicated his entire life to investigate the attractive power of the Earth. He realized that the power of

gravity could not be destroyed. It had no specific point of origin or destination.

"He is eternal without birth or death,
He is ancient without beginning or an end,
He doesn't die, he doesn't take birth, he is blemishless,
He remains the eternal witness."
(Telugu Poem)

Newton investigated in great detail about such a Divine power. He was a great scientist who understood the force of gravity associated with earth. How did he learn this? It is because he discovered aspects of this attractive power wherever he looked. He saw the 'magnetic' power in everything; he too concluded that this energy could not be created or destroyed by anyone. However, it could be transformed from one form of energy to another. For example, the magnetic energy can be transformed into electrical energy. Electrical energy can be transformed into light energy. Though the basic magnetic energy can be converted into any type of energy, it itself retains its original identity. It can vary its intensity - ebbing and growing as necessary. It changes all the time but never diminishes away. As long as the earth is there, the magnetic strength remains. It attracts our steps; it attracts our vision and our hearing.

Desires Overshadow the Divinity of Man

Man when born, is without any desire. At that time he is in a pure and pristine state. He is steady and peaceful. All the strengths of man are at their highest intensity. In the eyes of every man, there are crores of light rays that enable him to see. On his tongue, there are lakhs of taste buds. There are a few lakhs of cells in his ears that help him in his hearing. The entire body of man is full of divine energy. It is said, 'Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma' (The creation is entirely Brahma alone.) Ancient man was so pure that when he touched any

object, the object would get stuck to him! Such was the extent of Divine powers that pulsed through his body from head to toe. As desires gradually multiplied, these Divine powers in him started to decrease. You need not think so deeply to understand this concept. You can test this idea now itself. You have several desires. Let us say that you have ten such desires that are to be fulfilled. Out of the ten, eliminate three completely. You can easily feel the difference in the energy flowing through the body! Your memory too increases. The sages of yore could easily recount from memory incidents that had happened long ago and recite things learnt a long time ago. This was because they had minimal desires in them.

They glorified God as the embodiment of eight essential features. These eight names are:

1. Sabda Brahmamayi
2. Characharamayi
3. Jyothirmayi
4. Vangmayi
5. Nityanandamayi
6. Paratparamayi
7. Mayamayi
8. Sreemayi

God is the embodiment of sound, mobility and immobility, light, speech, eternal bliss, supreme majesty, delusion and wealth.

Faith Alone can Help Visualize God

The sages explained:

Vedahametham Purusham Mahantham

Adityavarnam thamasah Parasthath

O Citizens! We have visualized the Divine form shining like a brilliant sun beyond thamas.

(Purusha Suktam)

The citizens were naturally curious to know where they had seen Divinity; was it inside or was it outside? The answer came:

Antarbahischa Tatsarvam Vyapya Narayana Sthitaha

He is there inside, outside and everywhere.

He can be seen wherever He is looked for. Divinity is therefore all pervasive. A consequence of this all pervasiveness was that the Rishis or sages would not travel around. They would remain seated at one spot and spend their time contemplating on the Lord. It was their constant worry that if they travelled about, they would stamp upon this all pervasive God! They did not wish that they should step on divinity with their feet. Such was the sacred feeling with which tasks were carried out by the sages of yore. Such sentiments were responsible for the highly idealistic characters developed by the people of yore.

What a far cry it is today! With deliberate audacity, one does not mind placing his legs on the idol itself! These are all extreme perversions in action. Why have they arisen? The saying goes, Vinashakale Viparita Buddhi (as one's doom approaches, good sense takes leave). In those days there was a pious environment and therefore pious feelings abounded.

Is it possible to have such an experience and share it with others today? Most certainly, yes! Will you ever be able to grasp such a power in your hands? Certainly!

All it needs is to develop the required faith. Where is this faith? Man does not have faith in himself, how can you expect him to develop such strong faith in God?

Where there is faith, there is love, Where there is love, there is peace, Where there is peace, there is truth, Where there is truth, there is bliss, Where there is bliss, there is God.

Such a feeling of love needs to be fostered. Without love, where will you even experience the truth? If there is no truth, peace can never be obtained. And without peace, bliss is a far cry.

The sages and hermits walked and lived all alone in dense and fearsome forests. What gave them the courage to do so? What weapons did they possess? Guns and bombs were obviously unheard of! Effectively, they had none of these with them, but they had a great deal of faith in God. This faith was like a powerful weapon in their hands. Their faith enabled them to accomplish many things.

India has remained rock steady down the ages because of the faith that our people had had in God. A notable feature of those times in India was the extremely young age at which people would take to the forests. Children below the age of nine were active in performing penances. What was the age of Dhruva when he did penance? He was just 6 years of age. He was motivated by the humiliation he had suffered at the hands of his stepmother. He took his mother's blessings saying, "Mother! I shall obtain the grace and blessings of the Lord and then only return." He selected a spot that was totally deserted and isolated. It was a totally peaceful and silent locality. There, the forest was so thick that one could not even take a step on clear ground. Moving about was out of question. At such a place, little Dhruva stood on one leg and carried out a determined penance by chanting, "Narayana!

Narayana!" The Lord appeared and asked him, "Child! What do you want?" The intelligence of child Dhruva cannot be matched even by the grownups and educated lot of today! Dhruva replied, "I am a small boy. I am here in a totally isolated area and yet you found me. It is only you who could have known about my presence here. You who know where I am will definitely know what I want." The Lord replied, "Son! Manasyekam, vachasyekam, karmanyekam, mahatmanam. You must become a noble person by harmonizing your thought, word and deed. You have determined in your mind to do penance and obtain the Lord's grace. Accordingly you commanded your body, came and did severe penance. Your thought and your action are hence in cohesion. But your words are yet to be ascertained and have not been expressed yet. This is the reason why I am asking you what you need." Dhruva replied, "When I started out I desired a cheap trinket of a glass piece. But now I have got a priceless diamond instead. Once I got this diamond why should I desire the glass piece? I had come to do penance with a great desire that I become a prince and sit on my father's lap. Now I don't have any such desires. I want only you." The Lord replied, "Son! I am ready to give you anything. But I must first sanctify you. You had thought of something and acted accordingly. So your words are not in harmony with your thought and action. Your desire will be fulfilled only if all the three are in harmony. Therefore you should now set about to achieve this harmony. I shall then satisfy what you have now wished for." Obeying the Lord's command Dhruva returned home.

What a high degree of intelligence was there among the children in those days! Such sacredness in their thought! What a noble path they chose to tread! Prahlada was a great devotee of the Lord. He had steady faith in Lord Narayana. He did not rely on his own father or his mother. He knew that mother and father were related to him through physical attachment. He used to say, "Lord Narayana is related to me without any attachments. The Lord is not related to me with some desires in mind. His only aim is to cause my emancipation. I hence desire for only that being who has no desires in him. I should express my desires only to such a one who himself has none." Curtail your Desires for Peace It is therefore advised that desires must be gradually curtailed by everybody. As desires multiply attachment increases. This leads

to more and more bondage. Bondage causes man to suffer in several ways. Where does bondage come from? Your own desires create your bondage. Your sorrows are your bondage. Reduce your desires and you will be peaceful. You will not face any danger. Therefore reducing desires will give peace to man. It is rightly said, "Less luggage, more comfort." Today desires are growing at an alarming pace. Even if he is about to die in a couple of minutes man expresses some desire or the other! What are these desires? What are you gaining from them? Nothing! On the other hand, when you do not have any desires you would be so very peaceful. You may believe it or not, I have no desires in Me. That is why I have no worries. Follow Me! When you too have no desires your heart will be blissful. Desires only imprison you and they do not set you free as you imagine.

When your wishes are fulfilled, you praise Me sky high;
If your wishes are unfulfilled, you censure Me severely;
You commit sinful acts and pray for good results;
Crying to me to pull you out of the mess and save you,
You put the blame on Me for misfortunes of your own making!
(Telugu Poem)

You commit several sins; but ask for fruits of meritorious deeds in return! This is not proper. You must not commit sins in the first place. Always engage in virtuous deeds. As far as possible we should be of some help to others. God Himself is always helping others. Can you not do at least a fraction of this good work to others?

Follow the Master
Face the devil
Fight till the end
Finish the game.

Make it a point to follow the Master. You will then receive His abundant grace. You have been worshipping me for several years with devotion. You sing bhajans unfailingly. Has at least an iota of dirt in your mind been wiped out? On the contrary it is increasing day by day. Are you able to experience at least a moment of bliss wholeheartedly? Definitely not! If yes, why then have you so many desires? What do you gain by desiring for progeny? No doubt, you have to discharge your duty towards your family. But leave everything to God. He will take care of them. You need not entertain worries. Today, you are engaged in looking after their welfare. What is the result? Is it not much better to offer the responsibility to God and let Him handle it? You will be happy and so will they be.

Therefore, we should not ride on our desires. They should be gradually reduced. Lesser the desires, more the happiness. First make efforts to understand the nature of God. When earth was first formed there was only pitch darkness everywhere. Nothing was visible. It rained heavily for crores of years thereafter. It is as an effect of this deluge that the oceans were formed. After the rains the clouds cleared. Gradually the stars appeared. The sun too shone and showered its rays on the earth. The light enabled man to go about his daily life, grow crops and eke out a livelihood. When there was total darkness man had no desires. As light gradually appeared so did man's desires, because he could now see the creation. Today, his day begins with desires! However, during the night he is not assailed by desires. Hence, darkness appears to give no scope for desires. On this count at least one should welcome darkness!

At the time of Rama's birth, for 15 days there was no sunshine. It was darkness all around. Consequently, the moon was agitated. It lamented, "Alas! I am unable to have a glimpse of Lord Rama!" After the passing of 15 days the sun itself was curious to see Rama. He gradually started rising. Consequently, the moon too started its lunar phases. The sun and the moon started executing their assigned tasks. This caused day and night to appear on earth. If you investigate the mystery of nature you will find that man plays no role anywhere in it.

Today, man is inventing medicines to control the population. Such a thing is not possible through medicines. When desires go down, automatically the mind is turned towards God. What is first required is sense control.

This day people from several countries have gathered to spread the message of Lord Buddha to the world. You must all listen to the nature of Buddha and use it to control your mind. Today, controls are being exercised on everything except the mind and desires. It is the desires that must first be controlled. This will give you a great deal of peace. You will be surprised to see so much peace in yourself. Peace is natural to man and will arise on its own once the desires are controlled. Peace is everywhere. Truth and love are everywhere. You are the very embodiment of love. You are the embodiment of peace and truth. You are the embodiment of God. Realise this truth first. Truth is not at some far off place. Truth is here itself! Where there is truth there is God. We chant shanti three times. Outside what you will find is only pieces. Peace is God's property and is available only with Him.

Be Aware that God is the Resident of your Heart

Develop the feeling that God is in your heart. Believe in the truth that God is always residing in your heart. When you have faith in this truth, peace will definitely dawn.

God created everything from truth.
Everything will merge one day in this truth.
There is no place that is not pervaded by truth.
This is the highest and purest truth, realise that!
(Telugu Poem)

We need not set out to search for God. Wherever there is truth, God appears. Where Narayana appears his consort Lakshmi, the goddess of plenty and prosperity, too appears. Hence, if you want wealth, you have to take the first

step! When you succeed in installing Lord Narayana in your heart, goddess Lakshmi too follows her Master into your heart.

With noble thoughts, good deeds and constant contemplation of God, undertake good actions. Help others. Never entertain jealousy. Jealousy leads to total ruin. It makes man totally useless. Unfortunately today, jealousy thrives. Some people even cry when they see someone else better off! They cannot tolerate the other person being happy. This is a very bad trait. You must feel happy at others' happiness. You too will then enjoy success and gain bliss.

There is plenty of grace that God can give you. But it is at a depth! Some effort is required to obtain it. If you need to fetch water from a well, you need to tie a rope to a bucket, lower it into the well and draw the water out. You are neither tying the rope to the bucket nor are you lowering the bucket into the well. The water is therefore not reaching you. The rope to use is that of devotion. This rope must be tied to the vessel of your heart and lowered into the well of God's grace. What you receive from the well, when the water is drawn out, is the water of pure bliss. The well is that of God's grace (Anugraha) and not that of desire (agraha) or jealousy (asooya)!

Get rid of the bad qualities in you. In this sacred environment, why do you give scope for bad habits? By developing bad habits you are leading yourself to a bad fate.

Embodiments of Love!

Live in love with everybody. Once you earn this love, everything else will be added unto you.

11. Sense Control Is The Highest Sadhana

Date: 26 May 2002 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Buddha Purnima, Summer Course 2002

Sarvarupa Dharam Shantham Sarvanama Dharam Shivam
Satchidanandam Advaitam Sathyam Shivam Sundaram

All the names and forms are but the manifestations of the Supreme Being who is the embodiment of peace and auspiciousness. He is Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute and non-dual. He is Sathyam, Sivam, Sundaram (Truth, Goodness, Beauty).

(Sanskrit Verse)

Embodiments of Love!

MAN makes frantic efforts to attain happiness. He reads scriptures, visits noble souls, undertakes spiritual pursuits and searches everywhere in the outer world to find happiness. But he fails to find happiness anywhere.

Buddha too made similar efforts to find the source of happiness. He searched everywhere and at last found that happiness was within him and not in the outer world. He realized that he himself was the embodiment of Ananda (bliss). The ephemeral happiness derived through the senses is not true happiness at all.

Bliss Results from Sense Control

God permeates the entire universe in the form of Sat-Chit-Ananda (Existence-Knowledge-Bliss). The five elements, earth, water, fire, air and ether are the embodiments of God, who manifests in the entire creation as Sathyam, Sivam, Sundaram. Every human being is therefore a manifestation of Sat-Chit-

Ananda. God manifests as sound, touch, form, taste and smell in the elements - ether, air, fire, water and earth, respectively. Since He permeates all the five elements and the entire creation, the Upanishads declare, Isavasyam Idam Jagat (the entire world is permeated by God). God is omnipresent. There is no place in the world where He does not exist. Sarvata Panipadam Tat Sarvathokshi Siromukham, Sarvata Sruthimalloke Sarvamavruthya Thisthati (with hands, feet, eyes, heads, mouth and ears pervading everything, He permeates the entire universe).

If God is present everywhere, people ask why we are not able to see Him. The ocean water reflects the sun above. When the water is disturbed, the reflection of the sun is also disturbed. Similarly, God is in every man. But he is not able to see Him because of his disturbed mind. A disturbed and vacillating mind can never reflect God. A disturbed mind causes confusion and depression. As Arjuna says in the Bhagavadgita, Chanchalam Hi Manah Krishna Pramathi Balavadrudham (this mind is very unsteady, turbulent and is agitated strongly), the mind is highly fickle and vacillating. All the Sadhana that man performs aims at making his mind steady. There is no use doing Japa, Dhyana and Yoga if the mind is not steady. Once you have the five senses under control, you can experience God. He is not far away from you. He is in you, below you, above you and all around you. God, in fact, is the indweller of man. Yet man is not able to see Him. What is the reason? Man's limitless and wayward desires prevent him from seeing God. Desires are the root cause of man's disturbance. Sense control and ceiling on desires will help him to see God all around and experience bliss. So, we have to keep our desires under check. We should not be worried by the evil talk in which others indulge in. We should not be affected by calumny and criticism.

Attain the Supreme State of Desirelessness like Buddha

Buddha wanted to control the five senses. He decided, first and foremost, to acquire Samyak Drishti (right vision). Man today is not able to control his vision because of the fickleness of his mind. Cinema, video, TV, etc., have polluted the mind of man. He does not see good and hear good. Man is the cause of his own restlessness. Besides Samyak Drishti, Buddha emphasized

the need for Samyak Sravanam (right hearing), Samyak Vak (right speech), Samyak Bhavam (right feeling) and Samyak Chintanam (right thinking). Due to lack of these, humanness is fast giving way to devilishness and beastliness. Animal qualities are fast increasing in man. Animals have a season and a reason but man has none. Man today has become worse than animals. Human qualities like compassion, kindness, love and forbearance are absent in him. He should be free from evil thoughts which are the root cause of his worries. This requires Abhyasa (constant and sustained practice). Man can control the mind and attain peace by Abhyasa. It is only in a peaceful mind that noble thoughts arise. The mind should be under the control of man. Master the mind and be a mastermind. Unfortunately, instead of controlling the mind, man has become the slave of his senses. That is the main cause of his unsteadiness. Moreover, he has body attachment (Dehabhimana). This is the reason he gets easily disturbed if people find fault with him. Why should he worry about the body when the body is like a water bubble? You should get rid of body attachment.

Man today has unlimited and unnecessary desires. Take, for example, a person who wants to become the President of a Village Panchayat. If he is elected, he desires to become a minister, then the Chief Minister of the State and later the Prime Minister of the country. What are these positions after all? What does a man get from these posts of high status if he has only evil desires? The outcome of evil desires is evil. So, man should not give room to evil desires and thoughts. Their reaction, reflection and resound is also evil. Evil desires cause evil and sinful thoughts in man. First of all, Buddha developed pure, steady, sacred and selfless vision. He made a great sacrifice by renouncing all worldly comforts, his family and even his tender son. He then gradually reduced body attachment and finally cut it off completely. That is how he attained the state of desirelessness.

Body Attachment is the Cause of Man's Delusion

It is a mistake on our part to identify ourselves with the body. When we say, "This is my body, my mind, my Buddhi, my Chitta, my Antahkarana", it means that we are separate from the mind, body, Buddhi, etc. It is a Bhrama

(delusion) to think that we are the body. As we go on cultivating Bhrama, we distance ourselves from Brahma (God). The more we leave this Bhrama, the closer we go to Brahma. Buddha approached many Gurus and listened to their teachings. He studied sacred texts. He realized that this was only a wasteful exercise.

Modern students go abroad for higher studies, spending a lot of money. This craze for foreign countries is utter foolishness. The parents too encourage their children to go abroad by fanning their desires. They feel proud that their children have gone to a foreign country. They actually spoil their children. It is better to work hard in your own country than to go like a beggar to a foreign land just for the sake of earning money. What do people earn there? When they return to India, they bring with them only the Papa (sin) they earn there. Stay in your country and earn Punya (merit) instead. Unlimited ambitions of man are the cause of this craze for going to foreign countries to earn money.

For the last several decades, people of many countries have been inviting me to their countries. But I do not like to go anywhere. They say, "Swami, come to my country." But which is your country? You do not belong to any particular country. Nothing is permanent. Your body itself is not permanent. The body has however to be maintained. But there should be no body attachment, which leads man to endless cycle of birth and death. That is why Adi Sankara said:

"Punarapi Jananam Punarapi Maranam
Punarapi Janani Jathare Sayanam
Iha Samsare Bahu Dustare
Kripayapare Pahi Murare."

I am caught up in this cycle of birth and death; time and again,
I am undergoing the agony of staying in the mother's womb.
It is very difficult to cross this ocean of worldly life.
Oh Lord! take me across this ocean and grant me liberation.

(Bhaja Govindam)

Worldly life is full of sorrow and suffering. Lord Krishna said, "Anityam Asukham Lokam Imam Prapya Bhajasva Mam" (as the world is temporary and full of misery, contemplate on Me constantly). Having taken human birth, you must find fulfilment in life. You must pursue a noble path. Do not be inflated by praise. You should be above praise and blame. Foster peace. Where is peace? It is not available in the market for you to buy. Peace is inside. Outside you find only pieces. In fact, everything is there in you.

You are the embodiment of peace,
You are the embodiment of truth,
You are the embodiment of love,
You are the embodiment of God.

What a pity that man goes here and there in search of happiness ignoring the divinity within! It is the result of sins committed over many lives. Why do you want to earn sin in the outside worldly life? Better direct your vision inward. You will find Ananda (bliss) there. Bliss is your property. You cannot live without bliss even for a moment. Bliss is your true nature.

Supreme Sacrifice of Buddha

Embodiments of Love!

Buddha was not an ordinary person. He was born in a royal family and brought up amidst princely comforts. But he renounced everything overnight. He performed a supreme sacrifice. Na Karmana Na Prajaya Dhanena Thyagenaikena Amrutatva-manasu (immortality is not attained through action, progeny or wealth; it is attained only by sacrifice). Buddha followed

this Vedic injunction. He had no attachment. Hence, he could detach himself from his kith and kin. His father suffered because he had attachment.

Buddha travelled far and wide. He carried on his ascetic practices. Once a lady wanted to offer food to him. Buddha said, "This is not the food I want. I want Jnana Bhiksha (food of wisdom). I am wandering in search of the food of Jnana, not this worldly food." One day he saw a farmer distributing grains. Buddha went to him and asked, "Where is my share of alms?" The farmer said to him, "Oh lazy monk! Why should I give you alms? I give food to those who work hard. I also work hard. I till the soil. I sow the seeds, remove the weeds, water the fields and harvest the grains. But you do not do anything." The farmer thought that he was working hard. Buddha replied, "I cultivate the land of the heart, I water it with love, I remove the weeds of bad tendencies, I harvest the grains of wisdom and I get the fruit of bliss." There are many such stories related to the life of Buddha. In fact, they are not mere stories but his personal experiences. He made tremendous sacrifice at a young age. The joy that you derive from sacrifice is immeasurable. Experience the joy of sacrifice.

The joy you get by singing Bhajans and by performing worship is temporary. But you will get eternal joy by experiencing the Soham Mantra. Soham is also known as Hamsa Gayatri. "So" means "That" (God), "Ham" means "I am". "I am That" is the meaning of Soham. You should experience it with every breath. When you breathe in, you listen to the sound "So" and while exhaling, you hear the sound "Ham". Watch your breath carefully and experience the reality of Soham with every breath. The word WATCH has an important message to convey. WATCH means W - Watch your Words A - Watch your Actions T - Watch your Thoughts C - Watch your Character H - Watch your Heart The watch you have may break some day or the other. But this "watch" is unbreakable. So, possess this "watch". Watch whether you are speaking good or bad. Watch whether you abuse others or appreciate them. You should not use your tongue to abuse others. Abusing others is a sin. Do not let your tongue indulge in such sins. You cannot escape the consequences of your sinful acts. Everything has reaction, reflection and resound and it comes back to you in some form or the other. Hence, exercise control over the tongue.

Buddha observed Mounam and became quiet. Every sacred act has manifold rewards. By being quiet, Buddha began to experience Soham within him. You may chant the Names of Rama, Krishna, Govinda, Buddha and Sai to steady your mind. Once the mind becomes steady, you do not need to chant. Observe total silence. That is why it is said, silence is golden. Once words become less, the activities and vagaries of the mind also become less. As words increase, the vagaries of the mind also increase. Annihilate the mind by quietude. However, it is easier said than done. Man may die but the mind will not die. The mind vanishes when words vanish from it. Observing Mounam (silence) is one of the ways of silencing the mind. That is why our ancients practised Mounam. We should not allow the mind to go wherever it likes and do whatever it likes. We should not allow the mind to ridicule, hurt and hate others. If you hurt anybody, you will be hurt ten times more. You may take pride that you have abused somebody. But there will come somebody who will abuse you also some day. The sin you commit today will bring retribution to you later amplified manifold.

Embodiments of Love!

We have taken human birth. What should we do having taken birth as a human being? Should we use human birth for earning wealth? No, not at all. We should earn the wealth of virtues. Modern students are interested in acquiring wealth, power and friendship but not virtues. What is the use of leading a life without acquiring virtues?

"In spite of his education and intelligence, a foolish man will not know his true Self and a mean-minded person will not give up his wicked qualities. Modern education leads only to argumentation, not to total wisdom. What is the use of acquiring worldly education if it cannot lead you to immortality? Acquire the knowledge that will make you immortal." (TeluguPoem) The body is temporary like a water bubble. The body comes and goes as the water bubbles arise and burst.

"This body is a storehouse of dirt, and prone to diseases; it cannot cross the ocean of Samsara. O mind, do not be under the delusion that body is

permanent. Instead take refuge at the Divine Lotus Feet." (Telugu Poem) First and foremost, we should develop the spirit of surrender. Perform all deeds with a spirit of devotion to God and as an offering to Him. Then every action will become divine. This is the teaching of Buddha. In this world, the five senses of man play a most important role. Buddha gave utmost importance to sense control.

To control the mind, we should control the five senses. Only then will we be able to realise God. Everything can be acquired by love alone. Love is God, live in love. We can understand spirituality only by cultivating love. That is why I often say, "Start the day with love, Fill the day with love, Spend the day with love, End the day with love, This is the way to God".

Everything is possible by the power of love. Love is everything in this world. The world cannot exist without love. Do not entertain bad desires. They will bring about your ruin. Those having bad desires cannot have a peaceful death. We must keep the mind peaceful and sacred. We can acquire peace of mind only by love for God.

Embodiments of Love!

You have come here from distant countries bearing many difficulties and inconveniences. Lead a life full of peace and bliss. You may have troubles. But you should not allow the troubles to gain hold over you. You can have peace only when you ignore the troubles. Sing the glory of God with love. It is not enough if you pray to God. You should consider that you are God. Say emphatically, "I am God" and contemplate on it incessantly. Buddha also declared that man was divine. God is always in you, with you, around you, below you, above you. See, for example, the word 'GOD'. If you start with the letter 'G', you read it as God. But if you start with the letter 'D', it becomes 'Dog'. The difference lies in your vision. Everything in this world is divine. So, cultivate the feeling of oneness with God.

Body is the Temple of God

You have come here from different parts of the world. I bless you all that you go back home safe and sound full of peace and bliss. Cultivate the faith that everything happens by the Will of God. Buddha tried different kinds of Sadhana. He studied sacred texts. But no literature explained clearly the nature of the five senses. Ultimately, he came to the conclusion that there was no other Sadhana superior to sense control. He realised that the control of the five senses was the real spiritual practice. We should not allow the senses to go wayward. Senses can be controlled only by love. Always live in love. Make others happy by your love. Never harbour hatred or ill-will towards anybody. The quintessence of Vedanta is: Help ever, hurt never. As the scriptures say, Paropakara Punyaya, Papaya Parapeedanam (one attains merit by serving others and commits sin by hurting them).

Your mind will remain steady once you believe that God is in you. In the beginning, your Sadhana may not give you immediate results. But if you continue contemplating on God within you, you are sure to achieve peace and bliss. God is not present in temples, mosques and churches. Body is the temple of God.

"God does not exist in a foreign land, He is in you. Sin is not elsewhere. It is there where a wrong action is committed." (Telugu Poem) Everything is within you. You do not need to study scriptures. All that you need is self-confidence. Self-confidence is most important for spiritual development.

Where there is self-confidence, there is truth.
Where there is truth, there is bliss.
Where there is bliss, there is peace.
Where there is peace, there is God.

Hence you must cultivate self-confidence. Otherwise, there will be utter confusion. Take, for example, this very building. It stands on its foundation. The building cannot exist without the foundation. Similarly, self-confidence is

the foundation for everything in life. You can achieve everything with self-confidence. Perform your duty with sincerity and self-confidence and follow the ideals set by Buddha. Buddha had all the luxuries at his command. But he renounced everything. Bliss lies only in Thyaga (sacrifice) and not in Bhoga (sensual pleasures). Once you take to the path of sacrifice, you will attain bliss. That is the sacred teaching of Buddha.

Embodiments of Love!

First and foremost, reduce your attachment to the body. As your attachment to the body increases, your suffering also increases. The body is the temple of God. Think that this is not your body but the temple of God. The body is sacred as God resides in it. It is God's gift to man. Hence, use the body for performing sacred deeds and attaining bliss therefrom. When you share bliss with others, you will experience divinity. Continue your spiritual practices. But remain always suffused with the feeling that God is in you, above you, below you, around you. Never think that God is away from you. "I am not alone. God is with me." Strengthen this feeling in you and shape your life accordingly. Lead your life with love.

12. Health Is Wealth

Date: 27 May 2002 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 2002

Do realize that man has no contentment
Despite acquiring plenty of riches and luxuries
Peace and contentment will accrue to man
Only when he attains consciousness (Atma Tatva)

Students, boys and girls!

FOR man health is the greatest wealth. From time immemorial, many countries have been delving into the ways to preserve good health and disseminating the knowledge among all. In the absence of sound health, human aspirations become futile. Unable to realize this truth, man is losing his wealth by wrong habits. Right from ancient times, Indians and Romans have been espousing the cause of good health and endeavouring to achieve it. Of course, several other nations have also been conscious of the importance of health. Realising that health was indeed the greatest wealth, they went on to treat each limb of the body like the head, the mouth, the nose, the eyes, etc., as a separate unit in itself. Thus, focusing on each part, they adopted specific modes of nurture for each. Such well-nurtured state of health among mankind has gradually deteriorated now. In France, for one, discipline in respect of food was practised meticulously. Not because they thought that body was all-important to man, but because they had visualized that soul resided within the body. And when the house is safe, the resident will be peaceful and comfortable.

So, you may be thinking that this body would anyway perish, today or tomorrow. It may indeed be a water bubble. But many are the legendary persons who used this water bubble to lead an ideal life, accomplishing monumental deeds and studying profound theories. Here Deha, the body,

became essential means for Desha, the nation, to reveal sacred ideals. Principles of perfect life were propagated to other countries through the virtuous lives and meritorious deeds of the individuals in the nation.

Cultivate Healthy Habits

Today's youth do not understand this secret of life. Dawn to dusk they adopt unhealthy ways of living and face miserable consequences. Scholars, noble men and many such intelligent people carried out a variety of experiments and discovered ways to free this body from disease and illness. When body is ridden with diseases, health wanes and one is afflicted by all kinds of miseries. In the modern times in particular, Romans evolved a perfect model for health, aiming to mould each limb of the body into a strong and well-nurtured part. Besides, the youth strove to develop the three important qualities of character, courtesy and gentleness. Consequently, they continued to have long lasting strong bodies and remained self-reliant. Even at the age of ninety years, they were independent and looked after themselves without anybody's help. They also gave importance to beauty along with health. The body possessed charm and good looks only when it was healthy. So, to retain beauty we should pay great attention to health.

Nowadays, why does a teenager of 16 years look like a decrepit of 60 years? The unhealthy practices that they are used to in their daily lives are the actual reason for this. As soon as we wake up in the morning, we should cleanse our mouth. The inner and outer sides of teeth should be brushed well. Surface of the tongue should be cleaned thoroughly. For, mouth is the front entrance, the gateway for all diseases. While talking to each other we should be cautious of unpleasant odour. Health should thus be protected through hygiene. Not only this, each working part of the body should be fit and robust. We should always be aware of the truth that divinity is inherent in each limb and organ of the body. That is why Vedas extol God as "Angeerasa", the essential fluid in the limbs. Each part of the body has its intrinsic characteristic goodness.

You should learn from Mahabharatha, how strong were the Indians who

protected their health in this manner. At the time of the great war, Bhishma's age was 115 years and he was Commander-in-Chief. Similarly, Krishna was eighty-six and Arjuna was eighty-four. Such were the mighty warriors of those days who lived with health and happiness. Thus by preserving health, the men and women of those times were able to be exemplars for many ideals to the nation. They ate and slept in time. Ate lightly; never partook of anything out of schedule. The other day I told you a poem:

From the time you wake up till you go to bed
You spend your life, irresponsibly, for eking out livelihood
Having forgotten God, and misutilising your learning
What heights of happiness have you reached? Do think honestly, O man!
(Telugu Poem)

Swami then sang a Telugu rhyme on good habits for students:

As the cock crows, get out of bed;
Brush your teeth and relieve yourself,
Bathe, dress up and breakfast.
It's good to eat light and chew well
As you relish your favourite dish.
Off to school for serious studies;
And the good remarks of being a humble child.
Don't get wet and don't play in dirty puddles.
When it's play time, sprint, jump or dribble the ball.
If you follow the above directions You will enjoy the wealth of health.

Nowadays none wakes up when the cock crows, nor when the loud whistle of train blows, but get up late in the morning at eight or nine. What is the reason? They go to sleep late at night. Are they at least using the night hours

for studies? Not at all. They put on Television or Radio, thus polluting their own minds besides wasting time. Much of what is seen on the television are things that are lewd, disgusting, immoral and vile. Such are the undesirable things being shown. I wonder what pleasure or profit accrues to Government out of all this. On the other hand Government promotes this as a great medium. So it is Government which is spoiling the children. It turns the pure, steady and selfless hearts of the youth into impure, wicked and repugnant. On top of it, it seeks for more import from foreign countries.

Instead of habituating children to such evil traits, can one not encourage good practices? Can they not be shown good stories which promote good behaviour in them? None protests against this evil, neither parents inside house, nor the teachers, the educated persons and the elders in the society. The reason simply is that they too have succumbed to this addiction. So if they try to correct children, they would have to face the question "What about you?" Such are the elders of to day to whom children would give a piece of mind. They in fact are the ones who occupy the front seats in front of TV sets. Let me tell you what some of these elders are up to. They tell our students when they go home on vacation, "Son, it is an year since you watched TV or movie, as you were at Puttaparthi. Now go ahead and watch them to your heart's content". Mothers even serve meals to them in front of the TV set itself. Should any mother interested in the well-being of her child do this? Certainly not. But unfortunately they are all out to spoil their own children. And Government only adds to the problem, mindlessly. The government servants themselves are glued to TV as soon as they return home from offices. Or they go to clubs where they drink, fill themselves with unhealthy food and gamble. It is precisely due to these bad habits, evil traits and unhealthy activities that today's citizens are turning into cruel people. Even their speech is not soft and pleasant but is very rude. That is why I often tell you, 'You cannot always oblige, but you can speak obligingly'. One should speak obligingly with all humility and modesty. Today even these virtues are disappearing. In addition to all this they squander away money in idle pursuits.

When wealth increases so does pride.
With prosperity grow vices galore.
With moderate prosperity there is less scope for pride.
With increasing humility virtue grows.
(Telugu Poem)

Wealth is the source of all evil ways of life. A student has come here from America. Today in the morning I called him for an interview. There in the interview I asked " My son, how much do you earn". "I earn \$30000 in a month", he said. " How much do you save", I enquired. "I couldn't save anything" he replied. Then I chided him, "you have degenerated into a demon. How can you waste so much money? Is this the purpose for which you went abroad? I never show mercy on any one who wastes hard-earned money in evil indulgences". I even told his wife that she was behaving like Soorpanakha by accepting and joining hands with her husband in his extravagant evil life style. I told them, "You both are burning away your lives. This is not acceptable. Having been abroad you should return with the ideals you picked up there".

Why go Abroad for Money

Where do you find ideals but in the country of Bharath?

Yanna Bharathe Tanna Bharatha.
What is not in Bharath is not of lasting value.

There are as many things to learn as you wish in Bharath. Why then do you go abroad? Is it for money? Then are you able to save any? You squander it away. Ultimately, having run out of the monthly salary you take to dish washing or selling of newspapers for survival. Back at home your parents feel proud that their son is in US but would be ashamed to know what menial jobs

you do there. Why stay in US and take up menial labour? You should rather earn well and return home to share with your parents and lead a happy life.

Matru Devo Bhava, Pitru Devo Bhava.
Parents are like God.

You should indeed help them for they struggle to raise you.

Students make frantic efforts to obtain visa for some western countries as soon as they pass the examinations. They struggle to reach there to make money but return with empty hands. But this situation will not last for many days, I must tell you. Those who have gone to America are going to come back within five or six years. It will not be possible for them to stay on there. The situation is turning dangerous. Motherland is the right place. Swadharma, one's innate obligation, is appropriate to discharge. Paradharm, alien values, always cause fear and insecurity. Enjoy what is your own. Wherever you may go be proud to be an Indian.

Is there a living human on this earth who wouldn't brace up and say: This is my motherland, This my beloved mother tongue This faith is ours. (Telugu Poem) Parents are dreaming big and feeling great that their children are earning well. But do take a look at the evils that befall them in this mad rush to make money. Even as they arrive in the foreign country, children are born, sometimes, a number of them. They do not know how to raise the children. And the children go astray. As in the case of the wicked monkey which wrecks the whole garden, they are spoilt and they spoil their children too. Neither should you be spoilt nor should you allow others to be spoilt.

Bharath is a sacred land. The syllable Bha in the name means radiance (in Sanskrit). So Bharath spreads radiance, that is, it spreads the light of wisdom. It is said, 'God, having some affinity, takes birth in Bharath again and again to teach the nature of its reality to humanity'. It is only in Bharath that all

Avatars take birth. Only in Bharath, Dharma is propagated. Sathyam Vada, Dharmam Chara: Speak Truth and Behave Righteously. These two ideals are to be cared for as the two eyes in life. I am stating facts and not just praising when I say that, more or less, the students of Sathya Sai colleges and schools are found to possess these ideals. When you see their counterparts elsewhere you feel ashamed. It is an awful situation. What would happen to them in the future, none can conjecture. Parents are scared to even talk to them. If a father tries to talk about the son's smoking habit, he would promptly be asked to shut up. Not stopping at this, the son would pull out a cigarette and smoke right in front of the father. Smoke he may, but is this not an insult to the father who brought him up. Who benefits from the birth of such an ill-mannered son? It is better if such a son without respect for the father should be dead. So you must respect your parents and earn them a good name.

Strive for Unity

Students! Cultivate good habits. Awaken noble thoughts. Unity can be achieved through love alone. The country will be torn apart into pieces if there is no unity. Today, political parties are all-powerful and a number of them are mushrooming with different names, patronages, and partisan views. They are breaking up the nation and its villages and distributing the fragments among themselves. What is happening to the sacred land of Bharath! Today, when one says he is from India, he will face a volley of probing questions about the state, the district and the town that he particularly belongs to. This was not the case earlier, for entire Bharath was one place, like a big home. With such love and unity did Bharath prosper? With the advent of political parties, each and every village has been fragmented into factions. What are these parties, and for whose advantage are they doing this? Purely for their selfish ends! You can see nothing but selfishness from top to toe in these political leaders. And they have hoards of yes-men as followers. This is not the proper way. You must strive to unite the country. India is one; all Indians are brothers and sisters; Brotherhood of man and Fatherhood of God - such feelings of unity we should foster. Never think of dividing the country. Why even differentiate the states based on the languages spoken? One can learn any language anywhere, so why have such

differences?

Students, boys and girls! Never give chance to such differences whosoever may advise you. Declare fearlessly that you are all children of Bharath. You need not follow the senseless elders who divide the country. They do this as they lack intelligence, but do you also lack? Society is a train in which all of us are travelling. Those who have lived their time get off at the next station or the following. But you as youth have a long journey to undergo. Such long journey demands from you great amount of courage, confidence and idealism. There is none who tells children such good points. When Sai Baba does so others criticise Him. I do not care about any criticism or praise. I have nothing to lose if they criticise, nor anything to gain if they praise. Whatever I say is for common good. Let all be united like brothers and sisters. If they do so this country will achieve great fame. Right from ancient times Bharath's splendour shone brightly. You should again strengthen and develop the country. Brush aside personal animosities if any. Stay together like brothers. It is only when you do that will you find true devotion, true fervour and true liberation. Devotion never divides. It sees unity in diversity.

Always Have Pure Thoughts and Feelings

Students, having studied in our educational institutions and having undergone the summer course, you should show the benefits of the ideal education you have acquired. Live cheerfully. Never put on a long face. Negative thoughts show up as ugly expressions. Pure thoughts and feelings will always keep us cheerful. I am always cheerful. People wonder how Sai Baba could always be smiling. I cannot but smile. I have no negative feelings, no bad traits, no bad thoughts nor any bad habits. I am always pure. You too should follow this. Follow the Master, Face the Devil, Fight to the End and Finish the Game. Follow Me. Be happy like I am. Be cheerful. That makes me very happy. However, some people indulge in meaningless laughter, which is loud and comical. Just like the way they laugh in movies. Such laughter is no better than crying - it is not true cheerfulness. So lead a cheerful and ideal life. Do not harm anyone under any circumstances. Help Ever and Hurt Never. That is the ideal historically upheld by Bharath. Paropakara Punyaya Papaya

Parapeedanam.

Students!?! What you have learnt in these fifteen days should bear fruit. I am worried you may finally waste this whole effort of providing hospitality, serving you sumptuous feasts, looking after every need and placing before you words of wisdom. You must make best use of all these and tread the path of idealism with good behaviour, good actions and good thoughts. Will you promise me that you shall do so? Will you? (The whole assembly exclaimed in affirmation spontaneously). Good boys. Good girls. Just do that. That's all I expect of you. In fact, I had no plans of giving a discourse today.

Firstly, preserve your health. Bad habits are the root cause for ill health; so eschew bad habits totally. Where the young children should have chubby cheeks, you see today faces looking shrunken. You must build up good health. Good health enables you to carry out meritorious deeds. You will derive happiness out of such deeds. Thus happiness is a product of good health. So take proper care of your health to find happiness. Happiness is your greatest wealth. Health is your greatest wealth.

Eat your meals on time. Have your fill. Relish and enjoy the food provided by your parents which they have secured through much hard work. Never find fault with it or refuse it. If you relish fondly, it nourishes your body well. Then the body can do any amount of work.

Be Ideal Students, Shun Vices

Boys and Girls! What you have learnt here today is different from the kind of studies you did earlier. You must find the essence of education and live by it. Never abuse anyone with harsh words. Today if you hurt the feelings of others with harsh words, tomorrow many others will hurt you with harsher words. You cannot escape this law of reaction, resound and reflection. So speak kindly and receive kind words. Do good to others and get good in return. I expect you to become ideal students and uphold the above ideals. No other joy do I need for myself than this. For this pleasure I am prepared to sacrifice everything. How many crores of rupees am I spending for your sake! Look at

any other college. Does it compare in beauty to ours? Then the facilities I provide! Over and above, I create ideal environment. I never touch a single paisa of yours. If anyone is not well off, I grant them scholarships to cover personal expenditure. I shall give anything to see students become good. But some of them still cling on to vices, even after having spent a long time here.

Students! I am indeed begging of you: please shun your vices, give up bad habits, develop virtues, cultivate good habits, take to right path and enjoy an ideal life. If you have both health and happiness, you need not acquire anything else. Money can always be earned, but what is really important is earning of virtues. Money without virtues is of no use, for, it is virtue that gives happiness in life and not money. Make your parents happy. If they are into bad habits and try to pull you in, tell them as follows: "These things are not good. They spoil us. We know that you wish our well-being but you are showing to us wrong ways of life. Swami told us what is good for our well-being; allow us to do that." Do lead a sacred life on the sacred path with good behaviour. All of you be happy and I shall tell you many more special things.

13. Fundamental Principles Of Indian Culture

Date: 29 May 2002 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Summer Course 2002

Embodiments of Love!

THE Atma is present in the body of each human. One who realizes and lives out the truth that the two - the Atma which is everywhere and the Atma within himself - are one and the same, is a real spiritual practitioner. Whoever he may be - a householder, a recluse, a renunciant or a celibate, when he realizes the truth that the divinity in humanity is one, God shall always be with him and protect him. Bharath is a holy land. The wind that blows here has truth in it; the dust that rises is pervaded with righteousness; the waters that flow are suffused with love. Every individual born in this land has the quality of forbearance. A country having such sacred being, aims, wisdom and stature is not to be found all over the world. That is why the ancestors saluted this land by acclaiming justice, embracing honesty and enthroning righteousness. But the state of affairs in Bharath today are bizarre in contrast with the sanctity it had enjoyed in the past. Even today there are thousands in India who are aware of this truth. However, how many among them could attain Divinity? Man can attain sanctity only when he actually experiences the oneness of Atma.

The Glory that is Bharath

You cannot find in India a tongue that does not praise God or a hand that does not perform acts of charity. The hands of every Indian are those that give. The heart of every Indian is one that delights in God's names. Indeed, those who are unable to appreciate the glorious legacy of Bharath can only be called fools.

When Vivekananda was in America, he declared, "God's hands, feet, eyes, heads, mouth and ears are everywhere. There is no place in the land of Bharath where God's presence is not felt. His footsteps are heard wherever one goes. The melody of God is heard wherever one pays heed to. The joy of

God is felt in every heart. I must return to Bharath. Earlier, I had shown a little indifference. Now I shall go back and proclaim emphatically that every atom in Bharath is suffused with divinity. I shall sprinkle her dust on my head. I shall feel the love that stirs in every drop of river Ganges".

Bharath is the land which is filled with Divine nature, and glows and grows with it. Bharath is the birthplace of truth and righteousness. It is the home of peace and non-violence. In fact, there is nothing that is not available in Bharath. The Vedas proclaim, "Yanna Bharathe Tanna, Bharatha". That which is not present in India is not present elsewhere. It is as if the whole world is bundled together and placed in Bharath. Unable to realise the mighty power and potential of their land, Indians visit foreign countries, and feel weighed down with inferiority at what they see there. Where there is self-restraint, there will be no place for violence. Bharath proved this time and again. Many covet such self-control which is natural to Indians.

People undertake spiritual practices for inner happiness. People consider the nine types of devotion to God as spiritual practices, namely, Sravanam (listening), Kirtanam (singing), Vishnusmaranam (contemplating on Vishnu), Padasevanam (serving His Lotus Feet), Vandanam (salutation), Archanam (worship), Dasyam (servitude), Sneham (friendship), Atmanivedanam (Self-surrender). However, Indian culture did not consider these as real spiritual practices. It sought the eternal and ultimate Reality, which is but one. Truth is one wherever one searches for it. It is described that Brahman has the appearance of Truth and is replete with Truth. Truth shines resplendently at all times. Truth is all-pervasive at all times.

The hearts of Indians are suffused with Kshama (forbearance). India encountered many setbacks and sufferings since the beginning of history. But Indians were not perturbed. They extolled, "Forbearance is truth, forbearance is righteousness, forbearance is the teaching of the Vedas, forbearance is non-violence, forbearance is compassion, forbearance is sacrifice, forbearance confers happiness and heavenly bliss. In fact, it is everything in all the worlds." (Telugu Poem) Forbearance is their life-breath. They inhale and exhale forbearance. Forbearance is the greatest strength of Bharath. This is

the reason for its stability despite so many sufferings and losses. No amount of difficulties can unsettle a person of forbearance. He who has no forbearance will face unprecedented difficulties. One who believes in forbearance remains unmoved and untouched in the face of difficulties. The Bharathiyas are filled with such forbearance. Another form of forbearance is love. Love is also synonymous with peace. Thus, forbearance, love, peace - all mean the same. Manava (human) is referred to as love by Upanishads. Bharathiya is one who possesses love as his nature. Indians today give up Indian culture and run after worldly, materialistic and transient things which cause misery. If you ask what is the power of forbearance, it is too great to put in words. It cannot be measured by mind and speech.

Such is the sacred culture of Bharath which people of other countries extolled. As India disseminated this culture to other countries, they too found happiness. Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavanthu (May all the people of the world be happy!). Whoever keeps this principle in mind will always be happy. The most influential aspect of Indian culture is to see divinity everywhere. Unable to understand such sacred principles of Indian culture students are hankering after various material acquisitions. This is folly. Indian culture has many subtle ideas and words. If you ask what is the fastest thing, the scientists of today would say it is the light or suchlike. But Indian culture would not settle for this. The fastest and quickest thing is human mind, it says. What is the mightiest thing in the world? It cheerfully responds, mother is the mightiest of all.

Nothing is greater than mother in this world. Mothers' might is nation's might. That is why India is addressed as Bharath Matha (Mother India). We call it motherland and not fatherland. Only mother has such power. If you ask who speaks to you with affection and courtesy in a foreign land, it is the mother tongue. Wherever one goes, words in mother tongue sound nearest and dearest. So the speediest thing is not some aeroplane but the mind. The mind has its presence everywhere. It is a tool for bondage as well as liberation. Mind can take you right up to salvation. What else can be faster than mind then? Such similes are innumerable in Indian tradition. Many more are there that students should know.

Understand the Nature of Love

There is nothing greater than Love. It is forgiveness and peace. You should understand the distinguishing characteristics of love. Love is never sad. It is always cheerful and knows not what sorrow means. It does not hurt others nor is hurt by others. Love is the blessed thing that would get through any situation without causing hurt or getting hurt. That is love in the form of communal coexistence. You say God is angry with me. In fact, God has no anger. He is trying till date to know what anger is like. It is always love and love alone for him. God has no hatred. He even searched in darkness but could not find it. For, there is no place where love is not present. Love has no hatred or jealousy. Love alone is match for Love. Love is Love. It is infinite, immortal and has nothing similar to it. It has no death. It is wrong to think that love is not visible. Big mistake! Unable to see love within ourselves we search all over. How can one find it outside? For instance, if you want to see this kerchief, look for it where it is lying. You cannot find it where it is not there. On the other hand, love is everywhere. There is no place or thing without love. So how can one say he cannot see love? How can such love get angry? When something is against our wish, we consider it as anger. There is nothing in this world that is against God's wish. So how can he get angry? Just not possible. He is by your side always.

So, without trying to comprehend the nature of love, it is a mistake to think that love is present elsewhere. Indian culture is all Love. How is culture defined? It is defined as the process of refinement. This kerchief is a product of culture. Where did it come from basically? From cotton. Cotton is separated from seed, yarn is spun out of it, mounted on a loom and woven into a fabric. Only after performing so many processes of refinement that cotton takes the form of cloth. Similarly take a silver plate. Initially it is just metal. The metal is given to a silversmith who melts it down in a furnace. The molten silver is then poured into a mould to set to the shape of a plate. After going through this difficult process that the silver plate becomes usable. So, if such extensive refinement is required to make silver into a plate, then how much refinement is needed to transform an ordinary man into a divine person! No

one makes any effort to undergo the process of refinement. Man wants to become God instantly. Yes, he can if only he has the required faith. You should have total faith. How can a person who has no faith, but pretends to have, ever find love? God is the personification of love. He is all love. It is right to match love with love. You have to engage love with love only. That is the real refinement process required.

Love is your God

Many people undertake enquiries about God in today's world. They even indulge in spreading 'Message'. Such 'Message' is resulting in 'Miss-Age'. What is this message? If one really seeks God he need not search for him. Wherever he sees, God is found there.

Like the child-devotee Prahlada told his father,

Have no doubt, O king of demons
That God may be here but not there God is omnipresent
Wherever you look for him, He would be there.
(Telugu Poem)

If one fills his mind with doubts and wants to find God, is it possible? God is the form of truth. If you look for him by means of truth, he appears at once.

If one studies how noble, sacred, holy and glorious Indian culture is, it reveals itself to him. Studies are made, but in 'reverse' direction. Once upon a time several scientists embarked on an exploring mission to find God. After much efforts they were told in a church "O poor fellow! You are looking around everywhere for God. First understand who you are. Conquer yourself. You will find that God is within you." Ignoring this fact, you go to Japan, America or Germany to discover God. No need to go anywhere. You have to move hardly half an inch to reach into your inner space. He will appear to you there. If you

develop outward vision and want to see the indweller, how can He be seen? First and foremost, develop inner vision then you can see him with your own eyes.

Embodiments of Love!

Love is your God. Love is everything for you. Beget love through love. How do you visualise Love? The Gopikas prayed to Krishna as follows:

Play sweet music with your divine lips on your divine flute,
Make the shower of love fall and flow in this loveless barren land,
Sow seeds of love and make them sprout, and ardent love flourish there.
(Telugu Song)

The nature of Love was best revealed in Dwapara Yuga. The Gopikas saw Krishna everywhere. They were very much attached to Krishna's form. When one visualizes God in a form and contemplates on it, the form manifests before him. Initially they too did not recognize Krishna's real nature. They thought, "Oh! That naughty son of Yashoda, who indulges in silly acts like stealing butter from one house and dropping it in another." Why should Krishna indulge in 'cheating'? You may consider it as 'cheating'. Not at all. There is something mysterious about it. What exactly is butter? When milk is churned in different vessels and the essence is extracted it is in the form of butter. Similarly, to bring out God, who resides in all forms of life, such churning has to be carried out. There is divinity in such unity. Consider a simple illustration: Take milk and heat it on a stove. When it boils over, sprinkle a little water into the milk. Immediately, it recedes to the bottom of the vessel. If you ask the milk why it subsided, it would say "I made friendship with water all this while. After coming in contact with fire, the bond broke and water left me. I could not stay alone so I rose from the vessel to follow my fellow into the fire." See what intricacies exist in simple relationships! These are the secrets which help to discover divinity. Coming to Krishna's acts of

stealing butter, many call him a thief. This is a mistaken perception. If he were to be a thief, why would he leave traces of butter sticking all over his face? Yashoda herself had this doubt, and asked, "O Krishna! You smell butter, the whole village is agog, and there are complaints galore. You are so small. How can you cause such trouble, my dear? What is all this? Is there no butter in our house? Wont I give you as much as you want? Why should you take butter from other's houses?" Krishna replied, "Mother! It is not that we do not have butter in our house. Butter represents heart. The butter inside the hearts of those people is very sacred. Our own butter may not taste as good. Their butter is very pure and has sacred aroma." Thus, when mother Yashoda pleaded with Krishna not to go out but enjoy the butter available at home, he said no to her, as he found something special about the butter in Gopikas' houses. He assured her, "I am not stealing. I am taking it away right in their presence." That is why devotees sing "Bada Chitta Chora, Brindavana Sanchara". They call Krishna Chitta Chora (the thief of hearts). When called so Krishna used to feel very happy. Actually if you call someone a thief he would get into a fight with you. But Krishna enjoyed when he was addressed as thief of hearts. And even more when you merrily sing such songs. So God indeed is the thief of hearts. He is the indweller of everybody's heart and conscience. Chitta is the butter hidden in the hearts. Krishna is the one who steals such hearts. In divine tales even names have mystery in them. The word Krishna is derived from the Sanskrit root words which variously mean, 'one who enjoys', 'one who makes others happy', 'one who cultivates', etc. These names have much inner significance such as 'the one who cultivates the fields of hearts'. Similarly, he adds the curd of love to set the milk of your heart into curds. Curds are added to curdle milk. Through love alone you can get God whose form is love. God is captured by love alone. See, what yogic mysteries are available in the culture of Bharath!

Culture is the Essence of Spirituality

Students! You are undergoing the Summer Course in Indian Culture and Spirituality. There is no difference between spirituality and culture. Culture is contained in spirituality. That which refines is culture. We have gold with us. It is given to goldsmith who melts it in fire, administers hammer strokes, cuts

designs into it and finally turns it into a bangle. How much refinement process is needed to make a bangle! Similarly, we bring home paddy harvested from the fields and store in the house. Do we eat it straightaway? We first remove the husk, add water and boil it. Once it is cooked well, we partake of it. You can never make use of something as soon as it comes into being. You have to refine it and then enjoy its use.

Students! You cannot master all knowledge as soon as you are born. Gradually, you learn to recognise alphabet, spell words, form sentences and then to write. Is it not? That is how culture is. Once Ravana felt very angry. He could not control himself. He went to Lord Shiva and said, "O Lord, how biased you are! How narrow-minded you are! You endowed ladies with such beauty, charm and exquisiteness and created man like a shapeless log of wood. What is the reason for this? Then Lord Shiva laughed and said "O madcap! You are drawing such comparisons only because you don't know what beauty means. Tell me, where in women is the elegance of man? Where is the elegance of peacock's feather in the peahen? Where is the grandeur of the humped back of bull, in the cow?" Hearing this Ravana shut his mouth. Therefore, God bestows beauty where it is required and to those that require it. Beauty is related to the heart. If your heart is pure, you will look beautiful in the eyes of all and give happiness to all. If your heart is impure, only profane things will attract you. I had mentioned earlier while speaking on Ramayana that, once upon a time Soorpanakha who deemed herself most beautiful, approached Rama saying, " Rama! Does Sita possess the beauty that I do? She looks emaciated. Look how beautiful I am. Rama and Lakshmana laughed within themselves at this. Everyone considers himself/herself good looking but may appear ugly to others. So, they did not want to argue with her. They told her "We don't match your good looks. Please find someone who is as beautiful as you are." It is easy to criticize but very difficult to analyse. But in this world many criticise divinity in many ways.

Embodiments of Love!

Every aspect of Indian culture radiates beauty and joy. There is beauty in joy

and joy in beauty. Beauty is joy and joy is the nectar of life. Some great books define the nature of God in particular ways. You must read everything about Indian culture with reverence and interest. Indian culture does not differentiate one faith from another. All faiths are one. All forms are one. For instance everyone pays homage to the dead body when someone passes away. Why do they do that? If you ask Mohammadans they would say "Sir, the soul which had permeated this body was precious and beautiful. Since such soul had lived in this body, we salute it." Similarly, Christians would say, "We had ignored when the beautiful soul was present in the body. Today since the soul has left, we honour this body." They perform various funeral rites religiously. Since every religion has the belief of treating human body with respect, we too must do it. What does human body represent? Deho Devalaya Proktho Jeevo Deva Sanathana (body is the temple and the eternal indweller is God). This body is indeed a sacred temple. We should realize the divinity within.

The Purpose of Summer Course

It is in order to teach you such ancient ideals of Indian culture that we started these summer classes. The idea is also to wean you away from wrong practices in day-to-day life, inculcate good habits, initiate refinement, and to make this refinement the goal of your life. To develop refinement is a great act. Student is not the one who merely studies. Studies should be complimented with refinement. Education is useless without refinement. So, it is to protect you from the mindless activities, frivolous sights and meaningless chatter, which you indulge in at home during holidays, and to give you an experience of culture and thus changing your minds for the better, this course is designed.

Guru Nanak first started the practice of community singing. When many voices join together and pray as a single voice, it is called community bhajan. He started this and it spread throughout the nation. Such holy persons took birth in India and taught many such good things. How delightful is the sound when so many sing together in unison. That is nothing but unity in diversity. We must do the same and enjoy real happiness. Bhajans may also be sung by

getting together family members or a small group of people, and derive happiness from it.