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1. Worship In The Mind

Date: 17 October 1953 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Dasara, Vijayadasami

When I was at Uravakonda studying in the high school, you know I came away one day and threw off my books and declared that I have My work waiting for Me. The Telugu scholar described the incident of that evening to you all in his speech. Well, that day when I came out publicly as Sai Baba, that first song I taught the gathering in the garden to which I went from the Telugu pandit's house was:

Manasa bhajare guru charanam
Dustara bhava sagara taranam

I called on all those suffering in the endless round of birth and death to worship the Feet of the Guru (spiritual preceptor), the Guru who was announcing Himself, who had come again for taking upon Himself the burden of those who find refuge in Him. That was the very first Message of Mine to Humanity. Manasa bhajare - Worship in the mind! I do not need your flower garlands and fruits, things that you get for an anna or two; they are not genuinely yours. Give Me something that is yours, something that is clean and fragrant with the perfume of virtue and innocence and washed in the tears of repentance! Garlands and fruits you bring as items in the show, as an exhibition of your devotion; poorer devotees who cannot afford to bring them are humiliated and feel sorry that they are helpless; they cannot demonstrate their devotion in the grand way in which you are doing it. Install the Lord in your heart and offer Him the fruits of your actions and the flowers of your inner thoughts and feelings. That is the worship I like most, the devotion I appreciate most.

Re-education of man persists in all eras

In shops, things are kept in separate packets, and each one specialises in some particular article or sets of articles. But in an exhibition, hundreds of shops join to make all varieties of things available, and there is a great deal of window-dressing, arrangement, and display. I have been all these days generally giving individual advice, like the packets available in shops, and giving answers to individual questions. This 'speech' today is a new experience for you. I am addressing a gathering today, but even though it may be new to you, for Me it is not new. I have given advice to large gatherings before, though not in this Appearance. Whenever the Formless becomes One with Form, It has to fulfil the Mission, and It does so in various ways. But the one purpose, the re-education of Man, persists, whatever the era. The first sixteen years of this Life have been, as I have often told you, the period when divine child sport predominated, and the next sixteen is being spent mostly in miracles in order to give joy to this generation. Joy and contentment are short-lived sensations; you have to catch that mood and make it a permanent possession: bliss (*ananda*). After the thirty-second year, you will see Me active more and more in the task of spiritual instruction - teaching erring humanity and in directing the world along the path of truth, righteousness, peace, and love (*sathya, dharma, santhi, and prema*). Not that I am determined to exclude plays and miracles from My activity after that. I only mean that reestablishing dharma, correcting the crookedness of the human mind, and guiding humanity back to *Sanathana Dharma* (Eternal Universal Religion) will be My task thereafter. Do not be led away by doubt and vain argument; do not question how and whether I can do all this. The cowherds of Brindavan also doubted whether the little boy (Krishna) who grew in their midst could lift Govardana mountain and hold it aloft! The thing needed is faith, and yet more faith.

Secret of spiritual success

Once Krishna and Arjuna were going together along the open road. Seeing a bird in the sky, Krishna asked Arjuna, "Is that a dove?" He replied, "Yes, it is a dove." He asked Arjuna, "Is it an eagle?" Arjuna replied promptly, "Yes, it is an eagle." "No, Arjuna, it looks like a crow to Me. Is it not a crow?" asked Krishna. Arjuna replied, "I am sorry, it is a crow beyond a doubt."

Krishna laughed and chided him for agreeing to whatever suggestion was given. But Arjuna said, "For me, Your Words are far more weighty than the evidence of my eyes; You can make it a crow, a dove, or an eagle, and when you say it is a crow, it must be one."

Implicit faith is the secret of spiritual success. The Lord loves not the devotee but his devotion, remember. The Lord's Grace is like rain, pure water, falling equally everywhere; but its taste gets changed according to the soil through which it flows. So also the Lord's words are sweet to some, bitter to others. The Lord's ways are mysterious; He blessed Vidura with the words, "Be destroyed" and Dussasana with the words, "Live for a thousand years;" He meant that Vidura's 'I' will be destroyed and that the wicked Dussasana would have to suffer the ills and tribulations of this world for ten centuries.

You do not know the real reasons behind the actions of the Lord. You cannot understand the motives of other men who are almost like you in everything, actuated by the same motives and having the same likes and dislikes! But yet, how easily you discover the motives of One who is far, far above the level of humanity! How glibly you talk and judge something that is as strange to you as atmosphere to a fish!

Pains indicate birth of new life

There are four types of persons; the 'dead', who deny the Lord and declare that they alone exist, independent, free, self-regulating, and self-directed; the 'sick', who call upon the Lord when some calamity befalls them or when they feel temporarily deserted by the usual sources of succour; the 'dull', who know that God is the eternal companion and watchman, but who remember it only off and on when the idea is potent and powerful; and lastly, the 'healthy', who have steady faith in the Lord and who live in His comforting creative presence always. You proceed from 'death' to 'life' and from 'illness' to 'health' by the experience of the buffeting of the world. The world is a very essential part of the curriculum of man; through the agony of search is born the infant, wisdom. The pains are worthwhile; they indicate the birth of new life. From asanthi (restlessness) you get prasanthi (absolute peace), from

prasanthi to prakanthi (bright spiritual illumination), and from prakanthi to Paramjyothi (Supreme Divine Radiance). It is like the alternating of night and day, this recurrence of joy and grief. Night and day are twin sisters; both are necessary to increase the fertility of the soil, to activate and refresh life. They are like summer and winter. There are some who ask Me, "Baba! Make this summer less hot!" But in the heat of summer the Earth takes in the needed energy from the Sun, so that when the rains come, she may yield a plentiful harvest.

Shine forth in your real nature

'Cold' and 'heat' are both in the Plan of God, and yours is only to know this and treat both as valuable. Thorny plants and thornless plants are both there in nature; the wise man knows the value of both. He plants the thornless one and surrounds it with the thorny ones, so that what he fosters is left unharmed. Activity can save, as well as kill; it is like the cat that bites; it bites the kitten in order to carry it in its mouth to a place of safety; it bites the rat in order to kill and eat. Become the kitten, and work will rescue you like a loving Mother. Become a rat, and you are lost. God draws the Individual toward itself; it is the nature of both to have this affinity, for they are the same. They are like the iron and the magnet. But if the iron is rusty or covered with layers of dirt, the magnet is unable to attract. Remove the impediment; that is all you have to do. Shine forth in your real nature, and the Lord will draw you into His Bosom. Trials and tribulations are the means by which this cleansing is done. That is why Kunthi prayed to Krishna, "Give us always grief, so that we may never forget Thee." They are like the dietary and other restrictions that the doctor prescribes to supplement the effect of the drug of remembrance of God (namasmarana).

Do not give up spiritual practice

Sai is beloved to all people, so you can take up any name that gives you joy. Tastes differ according to the temperament and character one has earned by generations of activity as a living being in this world. The proprietor of a coffee house goes to the nearby druggist for a pill to ward off his headache,

and the druggist, when he gets a headache, goes to the coffee house for a cup of coffee, which he thinks will cure him. Men are like that: the tastes of people differ. The wise one says, "In God is All (Sarvam Brahma mayam)"; another, a yogi, says all is energy; a third, who is a devotee, says all is the play of Bhagavan (the Lord). Each according to their taste and according to their progress in spiritual practice. Do not hurry or ridicule them, for they are all pilgrims trudging along the same road. Spiritual exercise is most required to control the mind and the desires after which it runs. If you find that you are not able to succeed, do not give up the spiritual exercise but do it more vigorously, for it is the subject in which you did not get passing marks that requires special study, is it not? Spiritual exercise means inner cleanliness as well as external cleanliness. You do not feel refreshed if you wear unwashed clothes after your bath, do you? Nor do you feel refreshed if you wear washed clothes but skip the bath. Both are needed, the external as well as the internal (the bahya and the bhava). Children believe your words when you say that the policeman will catch them or the ghost will beat them. They are full of fear, fortitude, and faith! But having grown old and stuffed your heads with all kinds of doctrines and dogmas and theories and arguments, you have now to use your discrimination) and discover God the hard way. This I will tell you, there is no escaping it; all creatures have to reach God some day or other, by the long route or by the short route.

One wish leads to another; one bond brings about ten others. It is in the very nature of human desire, for the joy one gets through its satisfaction is imperfect, limited, temporary, pregnant with grief. You sow bitter seeds and pray for a harvest of sweetness. You wail over the soil, the plant, the rain. What can they do? The seeds themselves are diseased, defective.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

2. Total Surrender

Date: February 1955 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Shivarathri

I do not give 'speeches'; My talks are more of the conversation type. I want that you should follow every word of what I say with reverent attention, for your joy is My food. You can get joy (*anandam*) only by following the advice I give you, and this is why I am particular that you should listen carefully and take to heart all that I say. This is not a mere lecture, wherefrom you do not seek new lessons for life. The Lord is a Mountain of *Prema* (Love); any number of ants carrying away particles of sweetness cannot exhaust His Plenty. He is an Ocean of Mercy without a limiting shore. Devotion is the easiest way to win His Grace and also to realise that He pervades everything - in fact, is everything!

Total surrender, leaving everything to His Will, is the highest form of devotion. Once a *brahmin* was crossing a river bed near which some men were washing clothes. Finding a nice new silk shawl on his shoulder, they fell upon him in a group, shouting that it belonged to the palace and had been given to them to be washed but had been stolen and had not been traced. The poor *brahmin* yelled "Narayana, Narayana," when the blows rained on him, so Narayana rose from His Seat in Vaikunta and proceeded forward; but in a moment, He walked back and resumed His Seat, much to the surprise of His Consort who asked Him the reason for the strange behaviour. Narayana said, "I wanted to help that poor *brahmin*, who has fallen into a den of scoundrels, but he started beating them, blow for blow; My Help is no longer needed."

Conquest of ego needed

When devotion is just emerging as a sapling, a fence is needed to protect the tender plant; that fence is *Sanathana Dharma* (Eternal Religion) and its rules, regulations and restrictions, directions and commands. When the fruit is green, it will not fall even when the gale is furious; but when it is fully ripe, it drops to the ground even in the silence of the night. A small fire will go out in smoke if even a little green is placed on it, but the forest fire will reduce to

ashes even the greenest tree that impedes its fierce march! What is needed is the conquest of the ego. The bullock shouts "*ham hai, ham hai* (I am, I am)", in its egoistic pride. So, when it is just a few days old, you tie it to a post, apart from its mother; you work it to skin and bones; but yet, the animal does not learn the lesson of humility. Even its skin, when drawn tightly across a drum, resounds egoistically, "*Ham Ham Ham*". So the skin has to be cut into slender strings and then when the strings are pulled, the bullock reveals that it has benefitted by all the punishment it has undergone; it murmurs *thum thum thum* (you you you), and its ego is gone. The mendicant goes along the streets, singing the glories of the Lord. He has the sounding cymbals, two of them, the eternal duet of good-bad, joy-grief, pain-pleasure in his right hand, and he twangs the tambura (a stringed musical instrument) of worldly life with his left. Worldly life is the tune to which his songs have to be adjusted, it is the musical note. But both the tune and beat are for the purpose of heightening the effect of the song, which issues from his mouth, the song of the glory of God.

Three types of devotion

I remember telling a questioner in Maharashtra, while in the previous Body, that there are three types of devotion:

1. The *bird* method where, like a bird swooping down upon the ripe fruit on the tree, the devotee is too impatient and, by that very impatience, loses the fruit, which falls from his hold.
2. The *monkey* method where, like a monkey that pulls toward it one fruit after another and by sheer unsteadiness is not able to decide which fruit it wants, the devotee hesitates and changes his aim much too often and thus loses all chances of success.
3. The *ant* method, where like the ant that slowly but steadily proceeds toward the sweetness, the devotee moves direct, with undivided attention, toward the Lord and wins His Grace!

Devotion and faith are the two oars with which you can take the boat across the sea of worldly life. A child told its mother when it went to bed at night,

"Mother! Wake me up when I get hungry." The mother answered, "There is no need, your hunger will itself wake you." So too, when the hunger for God comes, it will itself activate you and make you seek the food you need. God has endowed you with hunger and He supplies the food; He has endowed you with illness and He grows the specifics you need. Your duty is to see that you get the proper hunger and the right illness and use the appropriate food or drug! Man must be yoked to the worldly life and broken; that is the training that will teach that the world is unreal; no amount of lectures will make you believe it is a snake unless you actually experience it. Touch fire and get the sensation of burning; there is nothing like it to teach you that fire is to be avoided. Unless you touch it, you will be aware only of its light. It is light and heat both; just as this world is both true and false, that is to say, unreal.

Habit of judging others as atheists or theists

There is a widely prevalent habit now of judging others and labeling them as theists or atheists. What do you know, what can you know, of the inner working of another's mind? There was once a queen who was a great devotee of Rama. She felt so sad that her husband, the Raja, never even uttered the name of Rama and had no devotion. She had vowed that on the first occasion on which she got evidence of his devotion, or at least respect for repeating Rama's name, she would conduct ritualistic worship in all the temples and feed the poor on a lavish scale. Then, one night, while fast asleep, the Raja uttered Rama's name thrice plaintively and prayerfully. She heard this repetition of the Name and was happy at the discovery of her husband's devotion to Rama. She ordered general rejoicing throughout the kingdom and the feeding of the poor. The Raja did not know the reason for the celebration, for he was told only that it was an order of his wife, which the officers carried out. Similarly, a husband may not be aware of the excellence of a wife's spiritual attainments. There is the case of a couple who were proceeding through a thick jungle on pilgrimage to an inaccessible shrine. The husband saw on the foot path a precious stone, shining brilliantly when the sun's rays fell upon it from between the leaves. He hastily threw some sand over it with a movement of his foot so that his wife may not be tempted to pick it up and become a slave to the tinsel. The wife saw the gesture and chided the

husband for still retaining in his mind a distinction between sand and diamond. For her, both were the same.

Keep the Name as constant as breathing

The Raja who spoke the sacred name of Rama in his sleep felt very sorry, according to the story, that he let Rama's name out of his mouth, for he believed that no one should know of his 'love' for Rama. There are many who will not shout about their guru or their favourite Name and Form, but whether you declare them to others or not, keep them ever in your consciousness. **Repetition of Rama or any other name must be as constant as breathing.** For this, practice is essential. A person once told Dr. Johnson, the famous English thinker, that he could seldom get time to recite the Name of God, what with the hundreds of things he had to do from morning till nightfall and even far into the night. Dr. Johnson replied with another question. He asked how millions of people found space to live upon the face of the earth, which is two-thirds water and the rest is too full of mountains, deserts, forests, icy regions, river beds, marshes, and similar impossible areas. The questioner said that man somehow struggled to find living space. So too, said Dr. Johnson, man must somehow find a few minutes a day for prayer to the Lord.

Example of the highest type of detachment

Devotion and the attitude of surrender that is its final fruits will give you great courage to meet any emergency. Such courage is what is called renunciation. The story of Mohajith, a prince, is a good example of this highest type of detachment. Mohajith went to a sage in the forest and sought guidance in the spiritual path. The sage asked him whether he had conquered attachment, as his name indicated. The prince said that not only he but everyone in his kingdom had! So the sage started to test the truth of this claim. The sage took the prince's robes, soaked them in blood, and hastened to the palace gate with the gruesome story of the murder of the prince by some ruffians in the jungle. The maid whom he met refused to hurry with the news to the royal apartments because she said, "He was born, and he died; what is the special

urgency of this news that I should interrupt my regular routine and run to the king and queen?" When at last he got an audience and was able to communicate the sad news to the prince's father, the king, who sat unruffled, whispering to himself, "The bird flew off the tree on which it had alighted to take rest." The queen too was unmoved. She told the sage that this Earth is a caravanserai, where men come and stay for the night and when dawn breaks, one by one, they tramp their different ways. Kith and kin are the words we use for attachment to the travelers cultivated in the caravanserai during the short term of acquaintance. The wife of the "dead" prince was also unaffected. She said, "Husband and wife are like two pieces of wood drifting down a flooded river; they float near each other for some time and when some current comes between, they are parted. Each must move on to the sea at its own rate and in its own time. There is no need to grieve over the parting of the two; it is in the very nature of nature that it should be so." The sage was overjoyed to see this steady and sincere dispassion in the rulers and the ruled. He came back to the forest and told the prince that, while he was away, a hostile army had invaded his kingdom and slain the entire royal family and captured his kingdom and enslaved his subjects. The prince took the news calmly and said, "All this is bubble, impermanent, flimsy. Let it go the way of the bubble. Guide me to reach the Infinite, the Imperishable."

Grow with self-respect and dignity

Such courage comes out of the Grace of the Lord; it needs generations of learning and struggle. Meanwhile, you must start with the first step, the cleansing of the mind and the cultivation of virtue. Even if you do not start with that step, at least do not laugh at those who do and discourage them. Do at least this much! Then, do not depend upon others for doing your work, like attending to your personal wants. Do them yourself; that is real freedom. Again, never accept anything 'free' from others; pay it back, in service or work. That will make you self-respecting individuals. Receiving a favour means getting bound to the giver. Grow with self-respect and dignity. That is the best service you can do to yourself.

There is no seniority or juniority among devotees

'Uncle' Moon is 'uncle' to all the children of the world. So also, the Lord is everyone's Father, in whose property everyone can claim a share. But in order to get it, you must reach a certain age, a certain standard of intelligence and discrimination. The infirm and the idiotic, He will not consider fit to receive property. His property is Grace, Love (*Prema*). But if you have discrimination and renunciation, you can claim your share, as of right. Bring devotion and lay it here and take from here spiritual strength! The more such business is done, the more pleased am I. Bring what you have, namely, your sorrows and griefs, worries, and anxieties, and take from Me joy and peace, courage and confidence. In My view, there is no seniority or juniority among devotees. The mother spends more time tending the sickly child. She just asks the older children to look after themselves, but she feeds the infant with her own hand. That does not mean that she has no love toward the grown-ups. So too, do not think that because I do not ostensibly pay more attention to one person, that person is beyond the ken of my *prema*. Note this also. In this *Avatar* (divine Incarnation), the wicked will not be destroyed; they will be corrected and reformed and educated and led back to the path from which they have strayed. **The white-ant infested tree will not be cut; it will be saved.** Again, this *Avatar* will not select some place other than the place where the Nativity took place for the centre of Its divine sports, miracle powers, and divine instruction). This tree shall not be transplanted; it will grow where it first rose from the earth. Another speciality is this: the *Avatar* has no affinity or attachment in Its career to members of the family wherein it appeared. Unlike the appearances as Rama, Krishna, etc., where the Life was played out mostly among and for the family members, this *Avatar* is only for the devotees, noble souls, and aspirants on. It has no recitation of holy name, meditation, or *yoga* (practising union with God). It knows no worship; It will not pray to anything, for It is the Highest. It only teaches you to worship and pray. To a worldly person, a God-intoxicated man will appear mad, and the person will laugh at him for it. But to the God-intoxicated man, the worldly appear insane, foolish misled, blind. Of all the insanities that harass people, God-madness is the least harmful, the most beneficial. The world has suffered untold damage due to its "mad" rulers and "mad" guides; but nothing but harmony, peace, brotherliness, and love have

come out of 'God-madness'!

3. God As Guide

Date: 01 August 1956 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Guru Purnima

God is Supreme Energy (*Mahasakthi*) and the individual being is deluding power (*mayasakthi*); He is the genuine, the individual being is but the shadow, the appearance, the delusion. Even I have to put on deluding power to come into your midst, like the policeman who is compelled to wear the dress of the thief so that he can get entry into the gang of thieves to apprehend them and bring them to book!

The Lord cannot come down with His Supreme Energy unimpaired; He has to come with diminished splendour and limited effulgence, so that He can become the object of devotion and dedicated service. In this world, which is impermanent and ever transforming, the Immanent Power of the Lord is the only permanent and fixed entity. In order to realise the eternal and the true, one has perforce to attach oneself to that Source and Sustenance. There is no escape from this path. It is the destiny of one and all, irrespective of age or scholarship, clime or caste, sex or status. While proceeding along the road, you can watch your shadow falling on mud or dirt, hollow or mound, thorn or sand, wet or dry patches of land. You are unaffected by the fate of your shadow, is it not? Nor is the shadow made dirty thereby. It does not worry in the least where it falls or what it wades through. We know that the shadow and its experiences are not eternal or true. Similarly, you must get convinced that "you" are but the shadow of the Absolute; you are essentially not this "you" but the absolute itself. That is the remedy for sorrow, travail, and pain.

The first step in spiritual discipline

Of course, it is only at the end of a long and systematic process of spiritual practice that you will get fixed in the truth; until then, you are apt to identify yourself with this body and forget that the body, which casts a shadow, is itself a shadow. **The first step in spiritual practice is adherence to dharma (righteousness) in every individual and social act.** The *dharma* that is followed in relation to the objective world will automatically lead on to

dharma in the spiritual field also; only you must stick to it through thick and thin. When Aswathama in the blindness of his fury slaughtered the children of the Pandavas, Arjuna, who caught him prisoner, threatened to cut off his head; but Droupadi, the bereaved mother, interceded to save him! She said it was not dharma to return murder for murder, to slay the son of one's own guru. Such steadfastness is needed in the path of dharma; that alone is the sign of true surrender: "Let the Will of the Lord prevail; one's duty is but to connect oneself with the current of His Grace." While in jail, the prisoner cannot call even his clothes his own; so too, while in this jail serving your term, what can you call your own? He gives you food and clothing. He lets you go when the sentence ends, or perhaps sooner if He is pleased by your behaviour while in prison.

Keep the faith in the Lord undiminished

The greatest obstacle on the path of surrender is egoism and mineness or possessiveness. It is something that has been inherent in your personality since ages, sending its tentacles deeper and deeper with the experience of every succeeding life. It can be removed only by the twin detergents of discrimination and renunciation. Devotion is the water to wash away this dirt of ages and the soap of repetition of God's name, meditation, and communion (yoga) will help to remove it quicker and more effectively. The slow and the steady will surely win this race; walking is the safest method of travel, though it may be condemned as slow. Quicker means of travel mean disaster; the quicker the means, the greater the risk of disaster. You should eat only as much as you feel hunger, for more will cause disorder. So proceed step by step in spiritual effort; making sure of one step before you take another. Do not slide back two paces when you go one pace forward.

But even the first step will be unsteady if you have no faith. So cultivate faith. Sathyabama once asked Krishna, "Why are you, doing things like ordinary men? Yudhistira, the eldest of the Pandavas is the best of the brothers, but you hobnob always with Arjuna, whose reputation is not above board." Her faith was not steady! What do people know of the motives that prompt the Lord and His actions? Some found fault with Narada for repeating the name of

the Lord, always, without intermission. But until merging in the Absolute occurs, the name has to be used. The idea of separation will end only with mergence, not before that. Do not waver or doubt when once you are convinced. Seek to understand and satisfy yourself. After that, do not be misled. When the sun is over your head there will be no shadow; similarly when faith is steady in your head it should not cast any shadow of doubt. When man loses his way and strays into the wilderness, believing that he is the body or the qualities or the object, then the Avatar comes to warn and guide. Keep the faith in the Lord undiminished; you can then safely move about in the world. No harm can come to you! Be like the village women with pots over their heads, one over the other, keeping balance even while talking and walking along the winding lane. They do not forget or ignore the burden or the goal. They are vigilant, conscious of the hardships on the way, the stones and the pits; it is inner concentration that pays dividends.

One should depart the world with a smile

Everyone has to make their exit some day. That moment should not be a moment of anguish; one should depart gracefully, with a smile and a bow. In order to do that, a lot of preparation is necessary. To depart, leaving all that has been accumulated during a long lifetime, is a hard task; so prepare for it by discarding attachment to one thing after another from now on. You see many things in dreams, and many things are acquired by you during dreams: power, pelf, status, reputation. But when you awake, you do not weep over the loss, even though for the duration of the dream all that was very real and gave you real satisfaction and joy. That was a "dream", you tell yourself; what prevents you from treating with similar nonchalance the possessions gathered during the waking stage of your life? Cultivate that attitude, and you can depart with a smile whenever the curtain falls on this dreamland stage.

Pray to the Lord to show you the way

In order to bring conviction to you in all this, it is best you approach a guru (spiritual preceptor) who knows the truth by experience and whose daily activities, words, and thoughts reflect this realisation. **The guru is called**

so because the letter GU signifies gunatheetha - one who has transcended the three gunas (qualities), the thamasic, the rajasic, and even the sathwic (ignorant, passionate, and virtuous) - and the letter RU signifies one who is rupa varjitha (one who has grasped the formless aspect of God-head). Of course, one could come to that stage only through the sublimation of the lower into the higher qualities and the steady and conscious ignoring of the part played by mere name and form.

In the preliminary stages of spiritual discipline, name, form, and quality all have their part to play in the moulding of the spirit. The guru destroys the illusion and sheds light; his presence is cool and comforting. That is why this day, a full-moon day, is allotted for paying due honour to the guru. Moreover, the moon is the presiding deity of the mind, and the full-moon day is the day on which the mind has become fully beneficent. Of course, you must know what you have lost, so that you may start on the search to recover it! The guru has very often to tell you that you have forgotten your real name or that you have lost the most precious part of yourself and yet are unaware of the loss. The guru is the physician for the illness that brings about the suffering of alternate birth and death. He is an adept at the treatment needed for the cure. If you do not get such a guru, pray to the Lord Himself to show you the way and He will surely come to your rescue.

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

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba



4. Divine Life

Date: **April 1957** / Location: **Venkatagiri**

A convention of the workers of the divine life mission must include all humanity, for no one is outside its pale, and all are plodding along the road to the realisation of the Divinity that is immanent in each. The mission on which every individual has come is to merge the individuality in the Universal. The life that each being is leading is saturated with the Divine. Existence (*Sath*) is derived from the source of all Existence, Brahman (Supreme Reality) Itself; Consciousness (*Chith*) is derived from the source of all Consciousness, Brahman Itself. Bliss (Ananda) is derived from the source of all Bliss, Brahman Itself. You are all *Sath-Chith-Ananda Swarupa* (embodiments of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss), but you are unaware of it and imagine yourself to be this individual or that, subjected to this limitation or that! This is the myth that must be exploded in order that divine life may start.

It is the Divine that inspires, that activates, that leads and fulfills the life of each being, however simple or complex its physical structure may be. From the atom to the Universe, every single entity is moving toward the estuary where it merges in the sea of Bliss. Divine life is the very breath of all beings; it consists of truth, love, and nonviolence (*sathya*, *prema*, and *ahimsa*). For how can any one be false to another when there is no other at all? Falsehood comes out of fear. When there is no second, there is no fear at all. No one is loved more than the Self; so, when all is the self-same Self, all is loved as the Self is loved. As for violence, who is to injure whom, when all are but one?

Faith in the Almighty will remove anxiety

How to lead a divine life? No special membership entitles you to it. Every struggle to realise the unity behind all the multiplicity is a step on the path of divine life. You have to churn the milk if you wish to separate and identify the butter that is immanent in it. So too, you have to carry on certain processes of thought and action in order to get to the hard core of faith that this world is a funny mixture of real and unreal, that it is in fact false (*mithya*). Divine life

does not admit of the slightest dross in character or delusion in intellect. So, people dedicated to it must emphasise this by precept and example. Wipe out the root causes of anxiety and fear and ignorance. Then only can your true personality shine forth. Anxiety is removed by faith in the Lord; the faith that tells you that whatever happens is for the best and that the Lord's Will be done. Quiet acceptance is the best armour against anxiety, not the acceptance of the heroic.

Sorrow springs from egoism, the feeling that you do not deserve to be treated so badly, that you are left helpless. When egoism goes, sorrow disappears. Ignorance is just a mistake, mistaken identity of the body as the Self! In fact, you must each one try to become egoless, and then the Lord will accept you as His flute. Once, when a number of people were asked by Me what they would like to be in the hands of God, I got various answers. Some said the lotus, some the conch, some the discus, but no one mentioned the flute. I would advise you to become the flute, for then the Lord will come to you, pick you up, put you to His lips, and breathe through you. Out of the hollowness of your heart due to the utter absence of egoism that you have developed, He will create captivating music for all Creation to enjoy. Be straight, without any will of your own. Merge your will in the Will of God. Inhale only the breath of God. That is divine life, that is what I want you all to achieve.

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

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

5. Meditation On The Lord's Name And Form

Date: 23 February 1958 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Chithravathi River Bed

The devotee who spoke first here now was, let me tell you, denying God for 25 years, and it is only since five years, after seeing Me, that he has changed. Of course, many people have had no experience that could change them, so they are not to be blamed for their want of faith. So too, this Seshagiri Rao here was finding fault with his son and daughters for coming to Puttaparthi, and himself for long refusing to come! One day at Bangalore, there was a function in the house opposite his, for I had gone there. During bhajans (group singing of devotional songs), this man hesitantly crossed the road and peeped into the hall, and I went forward and called him and made him sit near Me. I asked him to come to Puttaparthi and invited him to "examine" and "experience". He has been with Me ever since; it is now 18 years since he first came here. This is just the reason I came to sow the seeds of faith, in religion and in God. You might have heard some people say that I became Sai Baba when a scorpion stung me! Well, I challenge any one of you to get stung by scorpions and transform yourself into Sai Baba. No, the scorpion had nothing to do with it! In fact, there was no scorpion at all! I came in response to the prayers of sages, saints, and spiritual aspirants for the restoration of dharma (righteousness).

The root cause of all this restlessness

When there is a sign of a little unrest, the police constable appears on the scene; if the mob gets unruly, the Inspector rushes in; and if it becomes violent, the Superintendent of Police has to be personally present on the scene to quell it. If, however, the situation waxes hot, the Inspector General has to make himself available, is it not? This is a situation in which the I-G is taking over-all charge of the situation. The sages, savants, saints, yogis, and divine personalities have had their try, and they will all be cooperating in the task of reestablishing righteousness and clearing the path for the world attaining absolute peace (santhi). The greatest defect today is the absence of inquiry into the nature of the Self. That is the root cause of all this

restlessness. If you are eager to know the truth about yourself, then, even if you do not believe in God, you will not go astray. The pots are all of mud, the ornaments are all of gold, the clothes are all of yarn. There is unity where one saw only diversity; the basic substance is one and indivisible. That is Brahman (Supreme Reality), that is the Atma, which is your own basic substance too. This inquiry into the nature of the Self is best found in the Upanishads. Just as a river's flow is regulated by bunds and the flood waters are directed to the sea, so too the Upanishads regulate and restrict the senses, the mind, and the intellect and help one to reach the sea and merge individuality in the Absolute. Study the Upanishads with a view to act accordingly, to put the advice into practice. Scanning a map or turning over a guide-book will not give you the thrill of the actual visit, nor will it give you a fraction of the joy and knowledge of a journey through that land. The Upanishads and the Gita are only maps and guide-books, remember.

Call upon the Lord in your own heart

There is the story of a rustic who sat among a gathering of devotees and listened to the exposition of the Gita by a great scholar. All were wonder-struck by the scholarly commentary the learned disquisition on each word and phrase. The rustic, though the exposition was very much over his head, seemed to attend very closely for he was all the time in tears! When at last the scholar asked him why he was weeping, he surprised everybody by the sincerity of his devotion. He said that he wept at the predicament of the Lord, who had to sit at the head of the chariot and, half turning his neck, hold forth so long to convince the dull-witted Arjuna. "How much pain must He be suffering in His neck?," he asked and wept.

That was real devotion, a sure passport to spiritual victory. He had identified himself with the participants in the episode, and the whole setting had become alive for him. You need not even read the Gita or the Upanishads. You will hear a Gita specially designed for you if you call upon the Lord in your own heart. He is there, installed as your own charioteer. Ask Him and He will answer.

Have the Form of the Lord before you when you sit quietly in a place for meditation, and have His Name, that is, any Name, when you do repetition of a holy Name. If you do that repetition without that Picture or Form before you, who is to give the answer? You cannot be talking all the time to yourself. The Form will hear, and the Form will respond. All agitations must cease one day, is it not? Meditation on the Form and repetition of the Name - that is the only means for this task.

Stick to the Name and Form you like the most

The secret is: you should "be", but not be as in sleep, when you are aware deep down within you, that you are. Sleep is enveloped in delusion (maya). Awake from that delusion, but immerse yourself in this sleep that is the real super-conscious state of bliss (samadhi). Repetition of the Name and meditation are means by which you can compel even the concretisation of the divine Grace, in the Form and with the Name you yearn for. The Lord has to assume the Form you choose, the Name you fancy; in fact, you shape Him so. Therefore, do not change these two, but stick to the ones that please you most, whatever the delay or the difficulty. Do not get discouraged that you are not able to concentrate for long from the very beginning. When you learn to ride a bicycle, you do not get the skill of keeping the balance immediately. You push the cycle along to an open maidan and hop and skip, leaning now to one side and now to the other and even fall with the cycle upon you on many an attempt, before you are able to ride with skill and never again to worry about the balance. Automatically, you are able to make the necessary adjustments to correct the balance, is it not? After getting this skill, you can ride through the narrow streets and lanes, and you do not need an open road. You can negotiate your vehicle through the most crowded thoroughfares. So, too, practice will equip you with a concentration that will sustain you in the densest of surroundings and the most difficult situations.

The best spiritual discipline for the beginners

Do not be under the impression that I will be angry with you if you do not accept Me as the Form for meditation! I am not concerned at all; you have

perfect freedom to select the Name and Form that give you necessary encouragement. When you meditate, the mind often runs after something else, it takes another road. You have then to plug that outlet by means of the Name and the Form and see that the even flow of your thoughts toward the Lord is not interrupted; if it happens again, use the Name and the Form again, quickly. Do not allow the mind to go beyond the twin bunds, this side Name and that side Form! Then it will not stray into a third place.

First, when you sit for meditation, recite a few verses on the glory of God, so that the thoughts that are scattered could be collected. Then gradually, while doing repetition of the name, draw before the mind's eye the Form that that Name represents. When your mind wanders away from the recital of the Name, take it on to the picture of the Form. When it wanders away from the picture, lead it on to the Name. Let it dwell either on that sweetness or this. Treated thus, it can be easily tamed. The imaginary picture you have drawn will get transmuted into the emotional picture, dear to the heart and fixed in the memory; gradually will come the time when the Lord assumes that Form in order to fulfil your desire.

Use the body as an instrument for spiritual practice

This spiritual practice is called meditation on the Lord's Name and Form, and I advise you all to take it up, for it is the best for beginners. Within a few days, you will fall in line and you will taste the joy of concentration. After about ten or fifteen minutes in the initial stages and longer after some time of this meditation, have some inward contemplation on the peace and contentment you had during the meditation; that is to say, bring back into your memory the joy you experienced. This will help your faith and earnestness.

Then, do not get up suddenly and start moving about, resuming your avocations. Loosen the limbs slowly, deliberately, gradually, and then enter upon your usual duties. Taste the fruits of meditation and learn to relish them; that is what I mean by this process of repeated reflection. Be careful about your physical health also. Satisfy the demands of nature; the car must be given the petrol that it needs. Otherwise, your head might reel and your

eyes might get blurred through sheer exhaustion.

How can thoughts of the Lord be stabilised in a weak frame? Only, do not forget the purpose of this body when you are tending it. A road-roller is fed with oil and coal and other types of fuel. But why is it kept in good trim? In order to mend the road, is it not? Similarly, remember that you have come embodied so that you might realise the end of this cycle of birth and death. For that sake, use the body as an instrument.

Flying hither and thither, higher and higher, the bird has at last to perch on a tree for rest. So too, even the richest and the most powerful man seeks rest, peace (santhi). Peace can be got only in one shop, in inner reality. The senses will drag you along into a mire, which submerges you deeper and deeper in alternate joy and grief, that is to say, prolonged discontent. Only contemplation of unity can remove fear, rivalry, envy, greed, desire - all feelings that prompt discontent. Every other avenue can give only pseudo-contentment, and a day will come when you will throw away all these playthings and toys and cry, "Lord! Grant Me unruffled peace." The bandit Valmiki prayed so; the confirmed atheist too has one day to pray for peace and rest.

Engage yourself in good thoughts and deeds

People hug brass pots and take them to be gold, but they have to polish them so that they may appear bright. One day, they will get disgusted with this constant polishing and scrubbing; they will pray, "Release me from this scrubbing, this birth, this suffering and this agony." Life is short; time is fleeting: your spiritual practice is creeping at tortoise speed. When will you decide to proceed a little faster? Your spiritual practice is like the answers you write at the examination. If you get only 5 or 6 marks, the examiner will strike out even that, saying, "What is the use of these few marks: it will take you neither here nor there." If you get somewhere near the passing marks, then Grace will give you just a little more so that you may pass, provided you have been a diligent, well behaved student.

Engage yourselves in good deeds, good company, and good thoughts. Fix your attention on the goal. You have not realised yet the secret of this Advent. You are indeed lucky, more fortunate than many others. It is only when Yasoda found every length of rope a little short to go round His belly that she discovered that He was the Lord. So to, you will realise every description of My Divine Glory a little too short of the actuality, and then you will get convinced. Meanwhile if you study the spiritual texts and know the characteristics of the Avatar of the Lord, you might get a glimpse of the Truth regarding Me.

You will know the truth when you experience

There is no use arguing and quarrelling among yourselves. Examine, experience; then you will know the truth. Do not proclaim before you are convinced. Be silent while you are still undecided or engaged in evaluating. Of course, you must discard all evil in you before you can attempt to evaluate the mystery. And, when faith dawns, fence it around with discipline and self-control, so that the tender shoot might be guarded against the goats and cattle, the motley crowd of cynics and unbelievers. When your faith grows into a big tree, those very cattle can lie down in the shade that it will spread.

6. An Attitude Of Challenge

Date: 02 February 1958 / Location: Chittoor / Occasion: Kannan High School

We heard the address of thanks the sixth form boys gave to the teachers of the school and the advice they gave to the students of the lower forms. Their words were very sweet, full of gratitude to the teachers and full of encouragement to the students who continue to be under the care of those teachers. They also expressed their grief that they had to leave a fine school and a fine set of instructors and a fine company of fellow students. But, though the words were fine, I doubt whether the feelings were also such, for after all they knew they have to leave the school for higher studies. All these years, they knew that this day will come. Of course it is good to see the boys express gratefulness for the benefits they derived. They promised also to serve their country to the best of their ability. For they are the guardians of this land in the days to come. I am specially happy in the company of students, for they are like the buds in the garden; they are the young heroes who have to take up the difficult task of national and international reconstruction. The present situation in the world is like a typhoon, causing unrest and confusion. No one has mental quiet; fear and anxiety stalk everywhere; panic reigns even while the conquest of space and the mapping of new planets is being hailed. Even in this country, it is a time of crisis, and no time should be lost to set matters right so that men may enjoy peace (santhi) more than anything else; for, without peace, life is a nightmare.

Tolerate all kinds of persons and opinions

While studying other things, you should also learn the secret of peace. This opportunity should not be missed, for that is the wisdom that will save you. The present system of education aims at making you bread winners and citizens, but it does not give you the secret of a happy life - namely, discrimination between the unreal and the real, which is the genuine training you need. Of course, it is not your fault but the fault of those who direct these affairs. They will have to do it, sooner rather than later. The cultivation of discrimination is the chief aim of education; the promotion of virtuous habits,

the strengthening of dharma, these are to be attended to - not the acquisition of polish or gentlemanliness, or collection of general information and the practice of common skills. First, be fixed in the consciousness that yourself is the immortal Atma, which is indestructible, which is holy, pure, and divine. That will give you unshakable courage and strength. Then, you must develop mutual love and respect. Tolerate all kinds of persons and opinions, all attitudes and peculiarities. The school, the home, and society are all training grounds for tolerance. At school, the teachers and pupils must be aware of their duties and rights. The relationship must be based on love, not fear. Only the atmosphere of love can guarantee happy cooperation and concord. Above all, be good, honest, and well-behaved. That will make the university degrees more desirable and valuable. Do not attach undue value to the passing of examinations, for if you do, you are apt to get terribly depressed when you fail. We hear of too many young people committing suicide when the results of the examinations are announced. Dear children, do not do any such foolish thing. Take failure, if it comes, as a spur to further effort; analyse why you failed and profit by the experience. If you ruin yourself by such foolish actions, it will pain Me, remember.

Refuse to become scapegoats of politicians

Learn when you are students how to succeed in the turmoil of life, how to live without causing pain to others and suffering pain yourself. Do not waste time taking part in electioneering and quarreling over the factions and fancies of elders; they are setting you very bad examples, and you must avoid imitating their low behaviour. Politics is a variety of 'ticks', which infest some individuals and worry their lives out. Do not catch that infection from them. Be clean and content. You are too young to understand the complications and confusions of politics, and you can only be the tools and instruments of people who want to use you for their own purposes. Be bold; refuse to become the scapegoats of such men. Tell them you have better work to do. Proceed only as far as your own talents and experience can take you. Examine everything, and believe only what appeals to you as correct. Do not simply say, Sai Baba spoke well, or Sai Baba writes well; respect Sai Baba only if He does as well as He speaks and writes. Devotion and activity should

go together. Sri B. Gopala Reddi had come to inaugurate the hospital at Puttaparthi, and he said, "If only the government had planned this hospital, even the basement would not have come up now." So also, this school has risen to this fame and height due to the care and love of the founders and supporters. All should cooperate in tending such institutions; difference of opinion must be like the two eyes, each giving a different picture of the same object; both of which, when coordinated, give a complete rounded picture. The donors of this school have done a very good thing: they have done it in a spirit of worship and humanity. Be grateful for their sacrifice, and make the best use of the chance they have provided.

India is blessed with many saints and sages

The District Judge in his opening remarks said that *Bharath* (India) has been blessed with many saints and sages and with many manifestations of Divinity in Human Form. A doubt may arise why such appearances take place in Bharath more than in any other place, when the world is so big and we have humanity everywhere to be saved and guided. There is a reason for this, believe Me! Well, why should, in all India, Kolar alone have gold? Where there is a gold mine, there is the need for mining engineers and chemists who will extract it, separate it, purify it, and distribute it to the various places where gold is in demand, is it not? So also, it is here in India that there is a mine of spiritual wisdom and spiritual treasure: the metaphysical sciences, revelatory scriptures, the Gita, and the Vedas. This has to be distributed pure and unsullied, guaranteed in value and quality, to eager aspirants everywhere, and thus we have here a succession of sages and saints. On account of the teachings and the lives of these people, there is a vast field of spiritual virtue in this land, which needs only a little more care to yield a rich harvest.

Attachment to nature has limits

People suffer because they have all kinds of unreasonable desires, they pine to fulfill them, and they fail. They attach too much value to the objective world. It is only when attachment increases that you suffer pain and grief. If you look upon nature and all created objects with the insight derived from the

Inner Vision, then attachment will slide away, though effort will remain; you will also see everything much clearer and with a glory suffused with Divinity and splendour. Close these eyes and open those inner eyes - what a grand picture of essential Unity you get! Attachment to nature has limits, but the attachment to the Lord that you develop when the inner eye opens has no limit. Enjoy that Reality, not this false picture. The Lord is the Immanent Power in everything. How can those who refuse to believe that the image in the mirror is a picture of themselves believe in the Lord, when He is reflected in every object around them? The moon is reflected in a pot, provided it has water; so too, the Lord can be clearly seen in your heart, provided you have the water of love (prema) in it. When the Lord is not reflected in your heart, you cannot say that there is no Lord; it only means that there is no love in you. Students and even elders here have given up the study of Sanskrit, dismissing it as a useless difficult language. They have neglected the ancient texts, bundling them up and taking them down only on festival days for worship! But western aspirants who know their worth have taken them to their own lands, and they have translated them into their own tongues and learnt their essence with devotion.

Students must honour physical labour

Reading is not enough. You may master all the commentaries, and you may be able to argue and discuss with great scholars about these texts, but without attempting to practise what they teach, it is a waste of time. I never approve of book-learning; practice is what I evaluate. When you come out of the examination hall you know whether you will pass or not, is it not? For you can yourself judge whether you have answered well or not. So too in spiritual effort or in conduct or in practice, each of you can judge and ascertain the success or failure that is in store. Spiritual discipline is the essential thing even for you; no age is too early for it. Just as you tend the body with food and drink at regular intervals, you must also tend to the needs of the inner Atmic body by regular repetition of the Name and meditation and the cultivation of virtues. Holy company, good attitude, and sacred thoughts are all essential for the growth and the health of the inner personality. The body is the mansion of the Lord of the world, His Universe. Just as you are

particular about coffee or tea at regular intervals, be also particular about meditation and repetition of the Name at fixed times for the health and liveliness of the spirit.

Students must have challenging attitude toward things; they must honour physical labour. They should be eager to be of service to those who need it on account of their disabilities. Honour also your elders, and do not miss any chance of serving, honouring, or pleasing them. Whatever gives you health, joy, welcome it, but do not lower yourself by indulging in vulgar pastimes. Do not wander aimlessly in the streets or frequent cinema halls and mix with undesirable company, or cultivate bad habits just for sake of fun.

This country has to be raised to great heights through you, not through its present leaders, remember. Note also that whereas in other countries, people cooperate gladly with some one who is courageous, intelligent, and good, here the national trait is to be jealous of one another, to pull down those who are rising high, and to refuse cooperation and help. You boys must say to yourselves, "These elders do such things, though they know them to be wrong. What a pity! But we shall grow up differently. We shall not belie our words in our actions. We will act together in harmony and love." If you develop such virtues, the nation will prosper; if not, it will be ruined. Have this warning always ringing in your ears.

I bless all of you - citizens, parents, teachers, and students. This school, which was established by the generosity of the people, will grow into higher status and shine as a great institution. I have no doubt of that.

7. Courage

Date: 03 March 1958 / Location: Chittoor / Occasion: B. Z. High School

This talk was not previously planned, but it is a case of the prayer of devotees being fulfilled. I am not giving you any new advice today; it is the same advice that I have given to students in many places. For places may be different but students are the same, and their nature, character, ideals and problems are the same in all places. The President of this meeting said just now that you are all busy preparing for the examinations and that many of you have taken up your books only now. This has become quite usual now-a-days; nine months of the year you read all kinds of trash, and in the two or three months left you pore over the really essential books. This is not correct! It is very harmful to stuff the brain with all kinds of unwanted and paltry things. When you have some free time, read and assimilate such books as will promote an intelligent appreciation of the world and its mystery. To live a happy, peaceful and contented life, good education is necessary, education that is based on *dharma* (righteousness). Do not develop a dread of examinations; there, in a fixed time, you have to write answers to a certain number of questions. Well, some students start answering the very first question and go on serially with the rest. But it is always better to pause a little, read the entire question paper, select the questions that you can tackle with confidence, and write the answers for these in the beginning. This will give you a good fillip to exercise your brains better for answering the more difficult questions later.

Cultivation of virtues is very important

Never lose courage in the examination hall or outside. Courage is the fertilizer that will make the plant of scholarship grow. The field may be good, but manuring is also necessary. You must all become heroes, adventurous and bold; prepare for that role from now on. Man has inside him a whole set of animals: the dog, the fox, the ass, the wolf. But he must suppress the tendencies of all these animals and encourage the human qualities of love and friendship to shine forth. Friendship that is cultivated from childhood

onward is more lasting, so try to cultivate real friends now. Above all, begin the cultivation of virtues; that is more important and beneficial than mere book learning. That gives real bliss (*ananda*); that is the essence of all knowledge, the culmination of all learning. Treat every one as your own people and, even if you cannot do them any good, desist from causing them any injury. Burn the lamp of love inside the niche of your heart, and the nocturnal birds of greed and envy will fly away, unable to bear the light. Love (*Prema*) makes you humble; it makes you bend and bow when you see greatness and glory. An unbending person is infected with egoism of the worst type; remember man is the only animal that can recognise and revere the great and the glorious. Use that capacity and derive the best advantage out of it. Just as two wires, the positive and the negative, are brought together to produce illumination, similarly, the Supreme Self (*Paramatma*) and the spiritual aspirant have to come together in *yoga*, to grant illumination. So, go to the holy men and holy places and keep company with pious men. A magnet attracts only iron; a student attracts toward him only those who will help his study, only such things as will give him joy and daring (*ananda* and *dhairya*).

The easiest habit is speaking the truth

Have faith that Truth will save you in the long run; stick to it, regardless of what might befall. For if you are true, the sense of guilt will not gnaw your insides and cause pain. It is cowardice that makes you hide the truth; it is hatred that sharpens the edge of falsehood. Be bold, and there is no need for a lie. Be full of love, and there is no need for subterfuge. The easiest habit is speaking the truth, honesty, for if you start telling lies, you will have to keep count of them and remember how many you have told to whom and be always alert not to contradict one lie with another! Love people, and you need no longer deceive them with a lie; you will feel that they deserve the truth and nothing less than the truth. Love saves a good deal of bother. Do not be led away by all this present-day talk of equality, either of men and women or of all men. Each has a certain fund of intelligence and a peculiar bundle of instincts and impulses and past impressions. To the extent that you develop them or divert them or diminish their strength, to that extent there is bound

to be difference in your equipment and achievement. Use all chances you get to develop your skills and your health and your character. That is your present duty. Make lasting friendships. Do not by any action of yours cause pain to another; nor suffer pain yourself by foolishness or sheer bravado. In your school, I find there are some girls too; treat them with great respect and do not speak slightingly of them. They are your sisters and by honouring them, you bring honour to yourselves and your sisters. Respect for women is a sign of real culture. So, I call upon you to read good books, revere your teachers, and love all. Do not dishonour your elders. Cultivate the spirit of service and learn how to serve the sick and the needy and seize every chance to help others. Or at least, desist from causing sorrow to others.

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

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

8. Many Roads

Date: 24 March 1958 / Location: Chennai, Y.M.I.A., Mylapore

I have not come to you to "lecture", for I do not believe in the value of mere words, however scholarly or pompous or profuse. I have come only to share with you My *Prema* (Love) and partake in turn of your *prema*. It is that which I value most. That is the real gain. Today, the typhoon of hatred and falsehood is scattering the clouds of virtue, justice, and truth to the far corners of the sky, and people feel that *Sanathana Dharma* (Eternal Universal Religion) itself is in danger of extinction. But that can happen only if the Lord wills, and the Lord who has laid down *dharma* will not allow it to be destroyed. Wherever truth, right conduct, peace, and love (*sathya, dharma, santhi, and prema*) are emphasised, in whatever religion or language, by whichever teacher, wherever the teacher may be, there we have *Sanathana Dharma*. As long as man is capable of *prema*, *dharma* will exist, do not doubt it. When that *prema* is fixed on the Lord, your mental make-up will slowly and steadily undergo a revolutionary change; then, man will share in the sorrows and joys of his fellow-beings; thereafter, he contacts the very source of the bliss, which is beyond the temporary gains and losses of this world. *Prema* directed to the Lord is called devotion, and it is the easiest of all the paths to realise the goal.

For treading the path of devotion, one needs only Love

Devotion can be spoken of as having several stages. There is the stage where service of the Lord alone matters and is its own reward; the devotee does not seek anything more than just the service of the highest, done to the utmost of capacity. This gradually becomes the stage where nothing except the Name and Form of the Beloved is cognised. Again, there is devotion coloured by the three inner qualities (*gunas*): the attitude of the afflicted, the seeker of worldly comfort, the sincere inquirer, and the wise man, who is silent and content with the realisation that all is He. For treading the path of devotion, one needs no scholarship, nor wealth nor riches, nor ascetic rigours. Tell Me, what was the lineage of Valmiki, the wealth of Kuchela, the scholarship of Sabari, the age of Prahlada, the status of Gajaraja, the attainments of Vidura?

Prema - that was all they had, and that was all they needed. The Grace of the Lord is as the Ocean: vast, limitless. By your spiritual disciplines, your repetition of a Name of God, meditation, and systematic cultivation of virtue, this Grace is converted into clouds of truth; and they rain on humanity as *prema* showers, which collect and flow as the flood of bliss (*ananda*), back again into the Ocean - the Ocean of the Lord's Grace. When *prema* embraces humanity, we call it compassion, the quality not of pity but of sympathy - sympathy that makes one happy when others are happy and miserable when others are unhappy. You have seen beggars singing in the streets, is it not? They have each of them a pair of cymbals in one hand by which they mark time and a single-stringed instrument in the other, to the twang of which they tune their singing, The song will be harsh if it is out of tune, and it will be confusing medley if the timing is not kept up. The song of life has to be similar; keep up the daily tasks and sing away in joy to the tune of *prema*. Then only is the music worthwhile.

Two main principles to follow in life

It is the mind that makes or mars a person. If it is immersed in things of the world, it leads to bondage; if it treats the world as but temporary, then by that detachment it becomes free and light. Train the mind not to feel attached to things that change for better or for worse. Do not hold before it the tinsels of worldly fame and riches; attract it toward lasting joys derived from springs inside you. That will bring big rewards. The mind itself will then become the guru, for it leads you on and on, once it has tasted the sweets of listening, recapitulating, and repeated steady meditation. It is the mind that fills the image made by the potter with the Divinity that the devotee sees in it; it is the mind that fills the shrine room with the fragrance of holiness. It is practice, one reads, that imparts strength, as food does when digested and as exercise does to promote health. Saint Thyagaraja sang that the Lord is the inner motive force within the ant as well as the Universe; but though you may intellectually agree, when an ant bites, you do not feel that you have come in contact with the Lord in that form, do you? Do not proclaim great truths aloud; instead, show by your conduct that you attach value to them and that you are guided by them. Be careful of at least this: do not yourself commit

those faults of which you accuse others, and do not ask others to reach a standard that you are loathe to climb up to! If you live according to these two principles, then even if you do not fall before an image or attend the temple ritual or worship as per schedule, you can secure the Lord's Grace.

It is possible to see the Lord dwell in every being

There are many roads through which you can reach Madras; so also there are many roads to Godhead: love, truth, service, compassion, and remembrance of the Lord's Name. There is also the non-dualist who discovers themselves as the basic substance of all creation, as Brahman itself. All paths are right; only some are easier, some more circuitous, some harder. The easiest way to grasp the basic reality is to see the Lord in every creature, the Lord sporting in all this multiplicity, as the underlying reality of all, the Indweller in all Beings. You might wonder and even doubt how it is possible for the Lord to dwell in every being. But have you not seen one single mango seed grow into a tree that gives thousands of fruits, in each of which there is to be found a seed identical to the one which was first planted? So too, the one Lord can be found in every being created by His Will.

Ask only for devotion and spiritual wisdom from Me

Remember, your real nature is the same as the other person's; the other is yourself known by another name. When you do a good deed, you are doing it to yourself; when you do a bad turn to someone, remember, you are injuring yourself, so avoid doing evil to others. I am reminded of what Hussain, the son of Rabbia Malik of Persia, used to do. He rose early and went to the mosque for prayers with great diligence and devotion. When he came back, he found the servants of the house still sleeping on their mats, and he grew wild at them. He swore and cursed them for neglect of religious duties. Then his father chastised him, "Son, why do you get angry with those poor souls, who are too tired to wake up early. Do not wipe off the good results of your adherence to the rule of God by falling foul of these innocent slaves. I would much rather you rise late and abstain from the mosque, for now you have grown proud that you are more religious than these others, and you dare

blame them for faults for which they are not themselves responsible." You must pay attention to these small details also, for devotion is not just a pose; it is a series of little acts, directed by the attitude of reverence for the Divinity in all beings. Watch for the lie that lurks on the tongue, the violence that lurks behind the fist, the ego that lurks behind the deed. Restrain them before they grow into habits and settle down as character to warp your destiny. Ramaswami Reddy said that I work many miracles and that you are all lucky to have had this opportunity of hearing Me. Well, I am like a shop-keeper whose shop is stocked with all things one needs. But, like the man behind the counter, I give you only what you ask for. If the customer asks for a towel, how can I give them a skirt (*dhoti*)? But these material things are not important at all. Ask for devotion and for spiritual wisdom, and I shall be happy. Many do not crave for such things now; it is their misfortune. They are merely wasting their precious chance. Perhaps the elders are to be blamed for this situation. For it is the duty of the elders to show the rising generation by their lives that spiritual discipline and study have made them more joyful and courageous in the adventure of life. Youths always imitate the elders; they quarrel if they find the elders deriving joy from quarrels; they cavil at holiness if the elders do not honour holy men and institutions. So I will not blame the young men as much as the elders.

Piety is not weakness but strength

Faith in God and in spiritual discipline has declined due to want of enthusiasm among the elders in these matters. It is the responsibility of all pious men to demonstrate in and through their lives that piety is not weakness but strength, that it opens up a vast spring of power, and that a person with faith in God can overcome obstacles much more easily than one who has not. I do not insist that a person should have faith in God. I refuse to call any person an atheist. Beings exist as a result of His Will, in accordance with His Plan, so no one is beyond His Grace. Besides, everyone has love toward some one thing or other, and that love is a spark of the Divine. Everyone has ultimately to base their life on some one Truth; that Truth is God. No life can be lived out in complete defiance of Truth; one has to pay heed to truth and speak the truth to some one in order to make life worth living. Now, that moment is God's

moment, and at the moment when one utters the truth, or loves, or serves or bends, one is a theist. So, it is not even devotion that is essential. It is love, truth, virtue, the eagerness to progress, to serve, to expand one's heart, to take in the whole of humanity in one's love, to see all as Forms of the Divine Consciousness.

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

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

9. Examine, Experience

Date: 25 March 1958 / Location: Chennai

I have come to comfort *your* life, not to describe Mine! So I did not like Ramanatha Reddy and Kasturi speaking about Me and the incidents of My life! Your lives are more important for Me, for My purpose is to see that you live more happily and with greater contentment. All beings have to do *karma* (sanctified activity); it is a universal inescapable obligation. Some feel that only meritorious and sinful, or virtuous and vicious, deeds are entitled to be called *karma*. But your very breathing is *karma*. There are certain *karmas* whose fruits you cannot give up! There are physical, mental, and spiritual *karmas*, and doing each of these for the good of the Self is called dedication. Mention was made of Puttaparthi, and you were advised to go there and draw inspiration from the *bhajans* (devotional singing) there. Please do not incur the expense; for wherever you are, whenever you call on Me, your room can become Prasanthi Nilayam, your village can be made Puttaparthi. I am ever alert to respond, ever ready to listen and reply. I want you to be active, fully engaged, for if you have no activities, time will hang heavily on your hands. Do not waste a single moment of the allotted span of life, for time is the body of God. He is known as the Form of Time. It is a crime to misuse time or to waste it in idleness. So too, the physical and mental talents given to you by the Lord as capital for the business of living should not be frittered away.

Social service must be done gladly and reverentially

Like the force of gravitation, which drags everything down, the pull of sloth will drag you relentlessly down, so you must be ever on the watch, be ever active. Like the brass vessel that has to be scrubbed to a nice shine, the mind of man has also to be scrubbed by means of spiritual discipline, that is to say, activity like repetition of the Name and meditation. *Karma* (activity) that is natural and automatic, like breathing, becomes an impious act when it is done consciously, with a definite result in view. A Hindu and his British friend once happened to come to the bank of the Godavari. The Hindu said, "I will

bathe in this sacred water." He recited the name "Hari" as he plunged in and came out refreshed in mind as well as body. He felt great happiness that he got the rare chance of a bath in the holy river. The Britisher laughed and said, "This is mere H₂O; how can you get unspeakable joy by dipping into it? It is all superstition. But the Hindu replied, "Leave me to my superstition; you can stick to your superstition." The cynic got only physical cleanliness but the believer got mental purity also. When you prostrate before elders, the mind too must be humble; it is not the body alone that should bend. Now, many social workers in Madras visit hospitals and do service to the patients there. Most of the work they do is mechanical, like fanning the patients, writing letters for them, and singing *bhajans*, without paying heed to the actual requirements of the patients. Many do this work because it is the current mode of social service. But it must be *karma* done with the full cooperation of the mind, gladly, intelligently, reverentially. The patient should not feel disgusted at the fussiness of the social worker; the patient should be looking forward to the arrival of the person, of someone who is very near and dear. If you do not like that type of work, you need not engage in it. Do not burden your mind by the unpleasantness of the task. Work done mechanically is like the flame of an oilless wick; the oil is mental enthusiasm; pour it, and the lamp will burn clear and long.

Karma should not be done anticipating any result

In fact, *karma* (activity) becomes *yoga* (union with God) when it is done without any attachment. A monk should not even remember what he does; he should not do any *karma* anticipating any result. That is the desireless ideal at its highest. The best *karma* is that which is done at the call of duty; because it has to be done, not because it is advantageous to do it. The monk should have no anger, anxiety, envy, or greed, but your experience must be telling you that monks who are free from these are very rare today. Do not even cast your glance at a monk who is so false to his vow that he craves for name and fame or indulges in calumny or competition. Do not be led away by such persons into disbelieving the spiritual texts and the *Vedas*. One who is firmly fixed in the faith that this world is a mirage of the mind - that one alone is the *swami*; the others are mere Ramaswamis or Krishnaswamis, entitled to

have the epithet *swami* at the end of the name and not at the beginning. Nature is *purathana* - a very ancient entity. The individual soul is also *purathana*, having had many previous entries and exits. But now it has come in with a new dress; it is *nuthana* (modern), come like a pilgrim to a holy place for going the rounds. The individual soul must have a guide who will show the sacred spots and help fulfill the pilgrimage. That Guide is the Lord Himself: the Guide books are *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, and the spiritual texts. The essence of the scriptures lies in this one rule: Repeat the name of the Lord, keeping His Glory always before the mind.

Earn the right to approach God without fear

The Lord is as the divine wish-fulfilling tree, which gives whatever is asked. But you have to go near the tree and wish for the thing you want. The atheist is the person who keeps far away from the tree; the theist is the one who has come near; that is the difference. The tree does not make any distinction; it grants boons to all. The Lord will not punish or take revenge if you do not recognise Him or revere Him. He has no special type of worship that alone can please him. If you have the ear, you can hear "Om" announcing the Lord's Presence in every sound. All five elements produce this sound, "Om". The bell in the temple is intended to convey the *Om* as the symbol of the Omnipresent God. When the bell sounds "Om", the Godhead within you will awaken, and you will be aware of His Presence. That is the meaning of the bell that is rung in front of the inner shrine in the temple. Earn the right to approach the Lord without fear and the right to ask for your heritage. You must become so free that praise will not emanate from you when you approach the Lord. Praise is a sign of distance and fear. You must have heard the Kalidasa story. He said that he would get liberation, "as soon as I go," that is to say, as soon as the ego disappears, for then he shines in his native splendour, as Brahman (as the indestructible *Atma*). The I, when crossed out, becomes the symbol of cross; what is crucified is the ego, remember. Then, the divine nature manifests itself unhampered.

Do spiritual practices in an atmosphere of joy

The ego is most easily destroyed by devotion, by dwelling on the magnificence of the Lord, and by rendering service to others as children of the Lord. You can call on the Lord by any name, for all names are His; select the Name and Form that appeals to you most. That is why 1000 names are composed for the various forms of God; you have the freedom and the right to select any one of the thousand. The guru will give you the Name and Form suited to your temperament and meritorious acts. If the guru commands you under a threat and orders you to adopt a line of spiritual exercise, declaring "This is my command," tell him that the main thing is your satisfaction, not his. You have to do the spiritual exercise in an atmosphere of joy and contentment. The guru should not force the disciple to grow with a bent in the direction that the guru prefers; disciples have the right to develop on their own lines, according to their impressions from the past and bent of mind. The old relationship of guru and pupil has today become topsy-turvy; rich and influential pupils now rule the guru and dictate how he should behave. The gurus also, keen on accumulating fame and wealth, stoop to the tactics recommended by the pupils and thus lower their status. So, examine the guru and his credentials, his ideals and practice, before accepting him. Even in My case, do not be attracted simply by stories of what I "create" by a wave of the hand. Do not jump to conclusions with closed eyes; watch, study, and weigh. Never yield to anyone unless you feel the inner satisfaction that you are on the right path. Above all, do not talk ill of great men and sages. That is a sign of gross egoism and the childish impertinence born of that conceit. My suggestion to you today is this: just as you attend to the needs of the body, feeding it three times a day, in order to keep it in good running condition, so too spend some time regularly every day to keep your Inner Consciousness in good trim. Spend one hour in the morning, another at night, and a third in the early hours of dawn, the *Brahma-muhurtha* as it is called, for repetition of the name and meditation on the Lord. You will find great peace descending on you and great new sources of strength welling up within you as you progress in this spiritual discipline. After some time, the mind will dwell on the Name wherever you are and whatever you are engaged in, and peace and joy will be your inseparable companions.

10. Discrimination And Detachment

Date: 22 July 1958 / Location: Gudur

You are all standing in the open, on the road, and some are even perched on trees; it is really cruel for Me to speak to you for long. But in spite of all this inconvenience, I find you yearn to hear My words, so I shall satisfy you. Well, man is divine, take it from Me. He is really here on a holy mission, for a divine purpose. To consider one as mean or weak or sinful is a great mistake. That is itself a great sin. A person must earn their birthright, namely, peace (*santhi*). Restlessness is an unnatural state. One's real nature is peace To recover the heritage of peace, people try various methods: accumulation of riches, maintenance of health, mastery of knowledge, cultivation of the arts. But these are not fundamental. Three basic wants still remain after all these methods have been tried: the need for reality, light, and immortality. Only when existence, divine light, and divine nectar are won will peace be stabilised. It is no use indulging in arguments and disputations; one who clamours aloud has not grasped the truth, believe Me. Silence is the only language of the realised. Practise moderation in speech. That will help you in many ways. It will develop love (*prema*), for most misunderstandings and factions arise out of carelessly spoken words. When the foot slips, the wound can be healed, but when the tongue slips, the wound it causes in the heart of another will fester for life. The tongue is liable to four big errors: uttering falsehood, scandalising, finding fault with others, and excessive articulation. These have to be avoided if there has to be peace (*santhi*) for the individual as well as for society. The bond of brotherhood will be tightened if people speak less and speak sweet. That is why silence was prescribed as a vow for spiritual aspirants by the spiritual texts. You are all spiritual aspirants at various stages of the road, so this discipline is valuable for you also.

Prema must transform all relationships

Love (*Prema*) is what the individual and the nation must cultivate now for progress. Hindustan became great on account of the flood of *prema* that swept over the land for centuries. *Prema* must again transform all

relationships - social, economic, educational, professional, family, religious, legal, and others. The father must love the child a little more intensely and intelligently; the mother must spread love to all who come within her influence; children must love the servants. The sense of equality that everyone is the repository of the divine Essence must transmute social and individual behaviour.

Discrimination and detachment are given only to humans

You can call Me Embodiment of Divine Love (*Premaswarupa*)! You will not be wrong! *Prema* is the wealth that I have and that I scatter among the miserable and afflicted. I have no other riches. The Grace of the Lord is always flowing like the electric current through the wire. Fix a bulb, and the current, to the extent of the wattage, will illumine your home. The bulb is the spiritual exercises you perform; the home is your heart. Come to Me gladly; dive into the sea and discover its depth; there is no use dipping near the shore and swearing that the sea is shallow and has no pearls. Dive deep and you will secure your desire. Remember, the sword of *prema* has to be kept in the sheath of wisdom. The senses have to be rigorously controlled by discrimination and detachment, the twin talents given exclusively to humans. Discrimination instructs you how to choose your avocations and your associates. It tells you the relative importance of objects and ideals. Detachment saves you from too much attachment and injects a sense of relief, at times of elation or despair. They are the two wings that lift the bird into the air. They hold before you the impermanence of the world and permanence of the Bliss of Reality. They prompt you to direct your lives toward spiritual disciplines and the never failing contemplation of the glory of the Lord.

11. Man And God: Nara And Narayana

Date: 25 July 1958 / Location: Nellore

Everything in its own good time, they say; the fruit has to grow and ripen before the sourness is turned to sweetness. I have been coming to this town for ten years, but it is only this evening that you, in this vast multitudinous gathering, have been able to derive this bliss of hearing Me discoursing! I am happy to meet all of you in one auspicious hour collected all in one place. All that I can tell you about spiritual disciplines have been told often before; man's capacity, his nature, his talents are all ancient possessions, so the advice regarding how to use them is also very ancient. The only new thing is man's perverse behaviour - the directions in which he has been wasting his talents, misusing his capacity, and playing false to his own nature. He has been forgetting the path prescribed in the scriptures for the cultivation of his nature, and hence all this suffering; hence also My advent. People are essentially discriminating animals, endowed with discrimination. One is not content with the satisfaction of mere animal needs; one feels some void, some deep discontent, some unslaked thirst, for one is a child of Immortality and feels that death is not and should not be the end. This discrimination urges one to discover answers to haunting problems: "Where did I come from, whither am I journeying, which is the journey's end?" So, the intellect has to be kept sharp and clear. There are three types of intellect, according to the predominance of one or other of the three qualities (gunas): (1) inertia or sloth (thamas), which confuses truth with the untruth and takes untruth as truth; (2) passion or activity (rajas), which, like a pendulum, swings from one to the other, hovering between the two, unable to distinguish between them; and (3) purity or serenity (sathwa), which knows which is truth and which is untruth.

Poised state is essential to reach the goal

The world today is suffering from passionate intellect rather than an inertia intellect; people have violent likes and dislikes; they have become fanatical and factious. They are carried away by pomp and noise, show and

propaganda. That is why discrimination has become necessary. To reach the goal, an equanimous intellect is essential; it will seek the Truth calmly and stick to it whatever the consequence. I have come to help all to acquire this serene, equanimous nature. You might have heard people talk about the miracles, of My "making" this and 'giving' that, of my fulfilling all your wants, of My curing your illness. But they are not as important as the poised, equanimous state. I appreciate, promote, and instill. Of course, I confer on you these boons of health and prosperity, but only so that you might, with greater enthusiasm and with less interruption, proceed with spiritual practice. Eat well, so that your physical faculties might grow and the good physique will in turn develop your intelligence more fully. Devotion (bhakthi) leads to power (sakthi), and power will grant skill (yukthi). The skill will help you to fix your attachment (rakthi) on the proper objects, and your devotion thus promoted finally results in liberation (mukthi). A certain amount of attention has to be paid to the body and its care, as well as to escape the overpowering handicaps of poverty; but be ever cautious that you are not caught in the coils and forget the transitoriness of all this. Bring your thoughts constantly back to the Atma , which is the substance of all the objective world, the basic reality behind all this appearance.

Finding fault with others comes out of egoism

The first step in enquiring about the Self is the practice of the truth that whatever gives you pain gives pain to others and whatever gives you joy gives joy to others. So do unto others as you would like them to do unto you; desist from any act in relation to others which if done by them will give you pain. Thus, a kind of reciprocal relationship will grow between you and others, and gradually you reach the stage when your heart thrills with joy when others are joyful and shudders in pain when others are sad. This is not the kind of affection toward those who are dear to you or those who are your kith and kin. That is a sign of delusion; but this sharing of joy and grief is automatic, immediate, universal. It is a sign of great spiritual advance; then the wave knows that it is part of the ocean and that all waves are but temporary manifestations of the self-same sea having the same taste as the ocean itself. The others are part of yourself; you need not worry about them.

Worry about yourself; that is enough. When you become all right, they too will be all right, for you will no longer be aware of them as separate from you. Criticising others, finding fault with them, all this comes out of egoism. Search for your own faults instead. The faults you see in others are your own faults; the faults you see in others are but reflections of your own personality traits. Pay no heed to little worries; attach your mind to the Lord. Then you will be led on to the company of good people and your talents will be transmuted.

When you love, you will have no fear

Be a bee, drinking the nectar of every flower, not the mosquito drinking blood and distributing disease in return. First, consider all as children of the Lord, as your own brothers and sisters; develop the quality of love, seek always the welfare of humanity. Love and you will be loved in return, hate will never be your lot if you promote love and look upon all with love. That is the one lesson I teach always; that is my secret too. If you want to attain Me, cultivate love, give up hatred, envy, anger, cynicism, and falsehood. I do not ask that you should be a scholar or a recluse or an ascetic skilled in recitation of holy Name and meditation. "Is your heart full of love (prema)?" That is all I examine. Believe that Love is God, Truth is God. Love is Truth, Truth is Love. For it is only when you love that you have no fear, for fear is the mother of falsehood. If you have no fear, you will adhere to truth. The mirror of prema reflects the Atma in you and reveals to you that the Atma is universal, immanent in every being.

Parents have to be respected and worshipped

I shall not tell you very complex matters; I shall give only simple remedies for the ills you are suffering from. I find here a large number of students. Well, what are they studying for? What is the goal? How are we to judge that they have studied well? By the salary they are able to get, or the cadre they are able to secure? No. Education must result in the development of wisdom and humility. Educated people must be able to distinguish between the momentary and the momentous, the lasting and the effervescent. They must not run after glitter and glamour but must seek instead the good and golden.

They must know how to keep the body in good trim, the senses under strict control, the mind well within check, the intellect sharp and clear, unhampered by prejudices and hatreds, and the feelings untouched by egoism. They must know the Atma , too, for that is their very care; that is the effulgence that illumines their inner and outer selves. This knowledge will ensure joy and peace and courage for them throughout life. Students also must cultivate the art of avoiding the infliction of pain on others. I must also tell the students that they must be grateful to their parents, who give them all the facilities they now enjoy at great sacrifice. In fact, the parents have to be worshipped as visible representatives of the Godhead; they are responsible for your very existence and for all this joy and adventure in the physical and spiritual spheres. For this reason, they have to be tended and respected and worshipped. A boy was begging in the streets for food so that he could keep his bedridden mother and two little sisters alive. One night, when he clamoured in front of a rich man's house, the master got enraged at his piteous cries. The boy was very unlucky that day and had collected only a few morsels; the hour was nearing nine. So he cried most pathetically, and it aroused the ire of the rich man inside the mansion. He came out and kicked the boy into the gutter. He was already very weak, for he was starving himself to feed his mother and sisters, so when he fell, he breathed his last, wailing, "Mother! Here is a little food for you." His hand held the bowl firm even when it had become lifeless!

Parents must set good examples to children

Such is the devotion that the mother invokes and that she deserves, for all the pain she endured and all the sacrifice she bore so that the son might be healthy, happy, and good. Show that gratitude to the parents, boys; remember them and pay them the tribute of at least a tear on the anniversary of their passing away. Do it with faith (sraddha), that is why it is called a religious ceremonial offering to the dead (srardha); not that the offerings you make reach them or that they are waiting for them in some other world. It is a tribute that you should offer in gratitude for the great chance they gave you for this sojourn in this world with all the wonderful opportunities it offers for self-realization. Parents too must encourage children

when they evince any interest in spiritual advance and study. They must also set them good examples. Among the children who are before Me here, there may be many a Vivekananda and many a Thyagaraja. Children must be given every facility to develop the divine talents that are in them. Parents must feel that they are servants appointed by the Lord to tend the little souls that are born in their households, just as the gardener tends the trees in the garden of the Master. They must arouse the latent goodness in these tiny hearts by telling stories about the saints and sages of the past. They must see that children do not develop fear and become cowards, afraid of walking straight.

Give up the delusion you are this physical body

You are all the indestructible Atma , believe Me; nothing need discourage you. In dreams you suffer so much; loss of money, fire, food, insult, etc., but you are not affected at all. When these things happen during the waking stage, you feel afflicted. Really, it is not the real "you" that suffers all that. Give up the delusion that you are this physical entity, and you become really free. And lastly, about Myself. No one can understand My Mystery. The best you can do is to get immersed in it. It is no use your arguing about pros and cons; dive and know the depth; eat and know the taste! Then you can discuss Me to your heart's content. Develop truth (sathya) and love (prema); then you need not even pray to Me to grant you this and that. Everything will be added unto you, unasked. Man (nara) and God (Narayana) are the two wires, the positive and the negative, which combine to bring electricity through. Nara will cooperate with Narayana and become the vehicle of Divine Power if nara has acquired two qualities: truth and love.

Individual reconstruction is much more important than the construction of temples. Multiply virtues, not buildings; practise what you preach, that is the real pilgrimage; cleanse your minds of envy and malice, that is the real bath in holy waters. Of what avail is the name of the Lord on the tongue if the heart within is impure? Injustice and discontent are spreading everywhere due to this one fault in man: saying one thing and doing the opposite, the

tongue and the hand going in different directions. People have to set themselves right and correct their food, their recreation, their method of spending their leisure as well as habits of thought.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

12. Tolerance

Date: 02 August 1958 / Location: Venkatagiri

I had no idea of speaking to you this evening, but of course, I need no "preparation". My Resolve and its fulfillment are instantaneous. Sri Subbaramaiah spoke just now of some important guiding principles of life, like the cultivation of virtues, the development of character, the control of hatred, etc. Advice such as this is being given from a hundred platforms every day, and people listen and depart. But they do not practise what they have heard, so things remain where they are. This is because those who give advice do not follow what they preach; they must themselves be examples of the value of what they teach. Like the blind men who described the elephant, they describe the advantages of acquiring virtues and the benefits of controlling hatred more out of hearsay than out of experience. There is deep-rooted unrest today in every individual, because there is no harmony within. The social and spiritual rules that have come down from ages prescribe one type of conduct; the books that one reads recommend another type; experience gives conflicting advice. But peace depends on the mind and its awareness of the secret of poise. The body is the caravanserai, the individual soul is the pilgrim, and the mind is the watchman. The mind seeks happiness; it feels that happiness can be got in this world from fame, riches, land, and property, from other individuals or relatives; further, it builds up pictures of heaven where there is more intense happiness for a longer time. At last, it discovers that eternal undiminished happiness can be got only by dwelling on the Reality of one's own Self, which is Bliss Itself.

Yielding to despair worsens the problem

The life principle is like the grain covered up in the husk of delusion (*maya*), as the rice is enveloped in the paddy. The delusion has to be removed; the life principle has to be boiled and made soft and assimilated so that it might add to health and strength. The softened rice can be compared to the Supreme Soul. The mind has to be used for this process. It has to be fixed in truth and the everlasting. To remove the husk of delusion, discrimination is an

instrument. Develop the power of discrimination and find out which is permanent and which is not, which is beneficial and which is not. Even in selecting a guru, use your discrimination. Not all clouds are rain-bearing. A real teacher will be able to attract seekers from afar merely by his personality. He need not be talked about in glowing terms; his presence will be felt and aspirants will hurry toward him like bees toward a lotus in full bloom. Seek the light always; be full of confidence and zest. Do not yield to despair, for it can never produce results. It only worsens the problem, for it darkens the intellect and plunges you in doubt. You must take up the path of spiritual practice very enthusiastically. Half-hearted, halting steps will not yield fruit. It is like cleaning a slushy area by a stream of water. If the current of the stream is slow, the slush cannot be cleared. The stream must flow full and fast, driving everything before it, so that the slush might be scoured clean.

Liberation can be achieved by subtle means

I shall talk to you of these first steps only, for they are the most important for spiritual aspirants, and you all are all or are bound to be spiritual aspirants. "*Moksha* lies in the *sukshma*," they say - "Liberation can be achieved by subtle means." Treat the others in the same way as you would like them to treat you. Never brood over the past. When grief overpowers you, do not recollect similar incidents in your past experience and add to the sum of your grief; recollect, rather, incidents when grief did not knock at your door but you were happy instead. Draw consolation and strength from such memories and raise yourself above the surging waters of sorrow. Women are called "weak" because they yield to anger and sorrow much more easily than men, so I would ask them to take extra pains to overcome these two. Repetition of the Name is the best antidote for this, and if only men and women would take it up, the Lord would come to their rescue. That will instill the faith that everything is God's Will and teach that you have no right to exult or despair. When you go to a doctor, you must take the prescribed medicine and follow the advice and instructions. There is no use blaming the doctor if you default. How can the doctor cure you if you do not drink the mixture or stick to the restrictions imposed or regulate your diet according to the advice? Do as I

say, follow My advice, and then watch the result. It is a sign of foolishness to brood over mishaps and mistakes once committed and punish oneself for them by refusing to take food. It is a childish way of correction. What is the good of ill-treating the body for the sake of correcting the mind? Even if you cannot love others, do not hate them or feel envy toward them. Do not misunderstand their motives and scandalise them; if you only knew, their motives might be as noble as yours or their action might be due to ignorance, rather than wickedness or mischief. Pardon the other man's faults but deal harshly with your own. The holy culture of this ancient land has been spoilt by just one impurity: intolerance of another's success, prosperity, or progress. If you cannot help another, at least avoid doing them harm or causing them pain. That itself is a great service. What right have you to find fault with another or to talk evil of him? When you say that nothing can ever happen on earth without His Will, why get annoyed or angry? Your duty is to cleanse yourself and engage in your own inner purification. That endeavour will bring you the cooperation of all good men, and you will find strength and joy welling up within you.

13. Bliss Through Dedication

Date: 01 September 1958 / Location: Rajamundry

Today is indeed a day of joy, since we have met here to share love (prema). The joy is marred to some extent by the want of accommodation in this Hall and the suffering all of you are put to. I feel it is not proper to keep you long in this physical torment while I have comparative comfort on this less crowded platform. That explains partly why you are restless and agitated, an attitude quite different from what you should have on such occasions. The same group of people, you will have observed, differs in its reactions and behaviour when it is in a marriage pandal, a cinema hall, an exhibition enclosure, a temple, or a football match. They are moved by totally different impulses in these various places. In a gathering devoted to the needs of the spirit, what is expected is eager attention, quiet calm, and reverential, prayerful silence. Here, obviously, only the eye and the ear need function; the tongue has no business to wag. I have come to share with you the gift of prema that I have brought, but you seem to be satisfied with the confusion that you already live in!

The unhealthy are to be nursed back to health

Now, that is very much better. It is the silence that is wanted in all gatherings where deeper spiritual disciplines are talked about. Of course, everywhere and every time, it is best you curb your tongue; that is the very first exercise that I prescribe for spiritual progress. What I have to say now is not for those who are endowed with devotion, for they know the path and are already marching on: nor for those who have no spring of devotion in them, for speaking to them is a sheer waste of time. It is for the wavering, the unsteady, the hesitant, who are conscious of the Higher Power and are feebly desirous of contacting it, for they are either ignorant of the technique or afraid of the consequences. It is for such half-apathetic devotees that I talk. Medicine is useless for the dead as well as the sturdy. The unhealthy, hovering between death and survival - these are to be nursed back to strength. I would like you first to learn the art of so living in the midst of

people so that you do not grieve nor make others grieve. Learn to make the best life this chance offers to you to sublimate your instincts, impulses, and impressions left on the mind by past actions (vasanas) and rise higher and higher in the moral and spiritual plane. Make the best out of opportunities like this, and derive bliss (ananda) from every hour, garnering all the profit you can. This town is holy, so there are many metaphysical institutions; many pious men visit it and give valuable advice. I am glad the Malayalaswami of Yerpedu is now here for the four months of ascetic observance. It is a good chance for you to learn from him the teachings of the sages of ancient times. I am sure he will spread good thoughts and good impulses promoting your spiritual advance.

Become conscious of your kinship with God

This is not devotion, this holding a garland in the hand and indulging in paltry conversation in holy places. I do not want nor do I appreciate anyone bringing flowers and fruits into My presence. Bring Me the fragrant flower of a pure heart and the fruit of a spiritual-discipline-mellowed mind - that is what I like most, not these things available outside yourselves for so much of cash, without any effort that elevates the mind. To get a taste for that kind of effort, you must keep the company of great and good men and take delight in good thoughts. By whatever means available, increase the stock of your bliss (ananda) and improve the quality of discrimination and try to store as much of these two as possible, so that you can draw upon the stock whenever the need arises. The chief source of ananda is dedication to God; nothing else can give that genuine and lasting joy. Become conscious of your kinship with the Lord. That kinship is not a mere fancy or a faked theory. It has come down since ages, from the beginning of time itself. It will persist till the very end of time, or, in other words, till the end of time as far as you are concerned. The Godavari river carries all the waters of all the tributary streams relentlessly to the sea. The rain falls on the mountains; as streams it flows in the plains, and the full Godavari rushes through the delta. So too, the individual is born in the path of righteousness, journeys through path of action, and rushes through path of sages to reach path of Supreme Reality. The paths of action and sages are discovered by the organs of perception. Keep them

uncontaminated by demonic qualities and watch vigilantly lest they slip back. The sensory organs drag you into the tangle of nature itself. The cow eats grass and drinks gruel, but out of these it creates sweet sustaining milk; so too, let the experiences that are gathered by your senses help in the production of the sweetness of kindness, the purity of devotion, and the sustenance of peace (santhi).

Do not worry about others and their faults

There is in everyone a spark of truth; no one can live without that spark. There is in everyone a flame of love; life becomes a dark void without it. That spark, that flame, is God, for He is the source of all Truth and all Love. One seeks truth; one seeks to know the reality because one's very nature is derived from God, who is Truth. One seeks Love, to give it and share it, for one's nature is of God and God is Love. Like the paddy seed, which contains rice, the husk is the delusion (maya) that covers the seed within; the rice is the individual soul, and the essence of the rice, the sustaining element, the food, that is the Supreme Atma . So, develop inner vision; do not worry about others and their faults. Do a little examination of the Self. Study the Upanishads and spiritual texts - they might help you a little. Remember, only a little help. They are but maps and sign posts. You must put them into practice; act and experience. Meditate on the truth, and you will find that you are but a sparkling bubble upon the waters - born on water, living for a brief moment on water, and dying upon its breast, merging in it. You owe your birth to God: you subsist on God and you merge in God. Every living thing has to reach that consummation; why, every non-living thing too. So do it now; take the first step. Purify the heart, sharpen the intellect, or at least begin the recital of the name of the Lord. That will give you all the rest in due time. When one plants a mango seed, one is not sure of living to eat the fruit, but that is beside the point. To plant, to nourish, to guard, to grow, that is the duty; the rest is His look out. That is the real renunciation of the fruits of action.

Holy things can be cognised only by holy seekers

Above all, cultivate love (prema) toward all. That will destroy envy, anger, and hatred. God (Rama) and desire (kama) cannot coexist in the same heart. Trust begets trust, love begets love. When I am talking to you with so much prema , you cannot develop any hatred toward Me! Prema makes the whole world kin. It is the greatest instrument of concord. The farmer plants the seedling and watches over it with great care; he removes the weeds; he destroys the pests; he lets in water as and when necessary; he spreads manure; and he awaits the day when he can reap the harvest and fill his granary. So too, you must nourish prema and pluck out the weeds of hatred and envy. Wear red glasses, and all things appear red. Wear the glasses of prema , and all will appear lovable and good. Reference was made here to service of the poor; the eye of prema will see all as God (Narayana); not only the poor but the rich also. The rich too need sympathy. You must pity the rich, for they have so few chances of developing the attitude of renunciation! See all as embodiments of Lord Narayana (Narayanaswarupa), and worship all with the flower of prema . Even My nature can be understood by you only when you wear the glasses of holiness; holy things can be cognised only by the holy seeker. You get what you search for; you see what your eyes crave for. The doctor is found where patients gather; the surgeon stays in the operation ward. So too, the Lord is ever with the suffering and the struggling. Whenever people cry out in agony: "Oh God," there, God will be.

To supplement spiritual discipline, lead a regulated life

The credentials of one doctor can be examined and judged only by another doctor; the patient has to believe and carry out the doctor's instructions if he desires to improve. He can give his judgement on the doctor only after the course of treatment is finished. Unless he obeyed the orders of the doctor strictly and to the very letter, he has no authority to pronounce judgement. So what can you now speak about Me? Follow My prescription! Naturally, it will be a different one for every one of you; it will depend upon the nature, the age, the virulence of the disease, and the treatment you have already undergone to alleviate it. Adhere also to the dietary and other regulations that the doctor recommends. That is to say, it is not merely spiritual exercises like repetition of holy Name, meditation, remembering the Name of God, etc.,

that will have to be done, but in order to supplement the effect of these, you have to lead a regulated life, a life conducive to good thoughts, with virtuous (sathwic) food and noble (sathwic) pursuits. Until you try out My prescription fully and sincerely, it is best you keep quiet. You do not know even a pebble; how can you evaluate a peak? You may be "unafraid", you may not fear anything else, but you have to fear Truth. There is nothing as awe-inspiring as Truth; your Truth, for example, for your Truth is the Truth of the Universe. Today, you may feel you have no need of the Lord, but when the pangs of hunger gnaw, you start pining for food. Therefore, wash your hearts with tears of joy so that the Lord might install Himself therein. A zamindar may own all the fields up to the very horizon on all sides, but he will deign to sit only on a patch that is clean! In the same way, when the Lord chooses the heart of a devotee, it does not mean that all other hearts are not His. They are not clean, that is all He means. He is everywhere, everything is His, His gaze is on all. If God was not all this how could they shine, or exist even as much as they do now? Therefore, have full faith in God and in yourselves. Engage always in good deeds, beneficial activities; speak the truth, do not inflict pain by word or deed or even thought. That is the way to gain peace (santhi); that is the highest gain that you can earn in this life.

14. The Wise Farmer

Date: 02 September 1958 / Location: Mirthipadu

Today, I am really full of joy, for I have before Me people who are engaged in hardy toil and who sacrifice their personal comforts in order to make others happy. What the world needs is work done in that spirit. Everyone has divinity embedded in them, as well as Truth and sweetness. Only, one does not know how to manifest that Divinity, how to realise that Truth, how to taste that sweetness. So, one carries the twin burdens of joy and grief tied to the ends of a single pole slung across his shoulders. Courage is the tonic for getting both physical as well as mental health and strength. Give up doubt, hesitation, and fear. Do not give any chance for these to strike root in your mind. People, by means of the inner divine strength, with which they are equipped, can achieve anything; they can even become Madhava (God). To help you to give up fear and doubt, keep the Name of the Lord always on your tongue and in your mind. Dwell on the endless forms of the Lord, His limitless Glory, while you repeat the Name. Attach yourself to Him; then your attachment for these temporary objects will fall off; or at least, you will start seeing them in their proper proportion as having only relative reality. When the tiny little ego assumes enormous importance, it causes all this bother! That is the root of all the travail.

Ramanama endows you with spiritual power

In your heart, there is the *Atma-rama*, the Rama that confers eternal joy. So repeat the name Rama - the Sun that can make the lotus in the heart bloom. Rama is not the son of Emperor Dasaratha but of the ruler of the ten senses (*dasendriyas*). The recital of Rama's Name must become as automatic as breathing, as frequent and as essential. Rama has in it the seed letters of both the Siva mantra and the Narayana mantra, for it is composed of the second letters of both: *Na-ra-yana* and *Na-mah-sivaya*. This name is acceptable, therefore, to all sects. It also endows you with power and all the spiritual capital you need. Real bliss (*ananda*) can be won only by means of the transformation of the impulses that agitate the mind. It is not to be found

in wealth. You think that the rich man is happy; ask Me, and I shall reveal to you that they are full of grief, for they come to Me in large numbers for relief. They have no peace (*santhi*) at all. A strong physique does not by itself give peace; nor does scholarship, or asceticism or rituals. Only constant dwelling with the Name of the Lord gives unshakable peace, unaffected by the ups and downs of life. It makes man a hero. Sai Baba was till today a formless Name to you, but now it has come with Form and you can keep the Form in your mind. So too, the Name Rama has a form, and you should picture the form also when you repeat the Name; then the name becomes concrete and remembrance of the Name is easier. Live always in the presence of that Form-filled name. Then life becomes one continuous worship of the Lord.

Do your tasks as dedicated to the Lord

Really speaking, you agriculturists are holy souls, for you bend under the weight of the service you do and, with hands raised in prayer, you toil night and day converting dust and dirt into the nourishing harvest of grain for all men to feed upon. This task is holy and the product of your efforts is also sacred. Why cannot this task be made more fruitful by the cultivation of virtues also? That is the real harvest that pleases the Lord and sustains the world. Worry and grief there will always be of one type or other, in the past, present, and future, while walking, dreaming, and sleeping. But place faith in the Lord and do your tasks as dedicated to Him, and they both will vanish.

Do your duties with God's Name on your lips

Narada one day boasted before Vishnu that no devotee could excel him; but this boast was against the very first qualification of a devotee: freedom from egoism. So Vishnu spoke of a farmer who was tilling his little plot of land as a greater devotee and recommended that Narada should visit him and learn "the art of devotion" from him. Narada felt badly humiliated; but he proceeded to the village indicated, in great chagrin. He found the farmer engrossed in his round of duties on the field, in the cattle shed and at home. In spite of the most vigilant watch, he could not hear him speak the name of the Lord more than thrice a day; once when he woke up from bed, another

time when he took his midday meal, and the last when he retired for the night. Narada was naturally incensed that he was deemed inferior to this poor, pale specimen of a devotee. He, Narada, was always singing melodiously of the divine sport of the Lord and spreading everywhere the message of devotional singing of the Lord's name, and here was a horny-handed son of the soil who remembered the Lord only three times a day, whom Vishnu judged superior to him. Narada hurried to heaven, his face flushed with anger and ignominy, but Vishnu only laughed at his plight. He gave him a pot full to the brim with water and asked him to carry it on his head and go round a certain course without spilling even a drop. Narada did so, but when asked how often he had remembered the Name of the Lord, he admitted that in his anxiety to walk without shaking the pot and spilling the water, he had forgotten the Name completely! Vishnu told him that the farmer who was carrying on his head more precious and more spillable burdens than a pot of water and who had to be careful not to take any false step must perforce be admired for remembering the Lord at least three times a day! Therefore, it will be a great gain if you remember the Lord with thankfulness at least thrice or even twice a day; that will give you great peace. Do not give up your worldly duties, but do them with the name of God on your lips, inviting the Grace of God on your heads. Do not involve yourselves in the affairs of your neighbours or others to the extent that you get so entangled you cannot extricate yourselves. Spend your time in the contemplation of the beauties of nature, which are spread out before you in earth and sky - green expanses of the crops you have raised, cool breezes that waft contentment and joy, the panorama of coloured clouds, the music of the birds. Sing the glories of God as you walk along the bunds of the fields and the banks of the canals. Do not talk hatefully in the midst of all this evidence of love, do not get angry in these placid surroundings; do not disturb the sky with your shouts and curses, do not pollute the air with vengeful boasts.

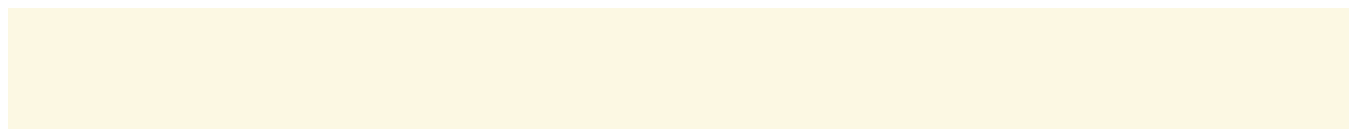
Purify your conduct, cleanse your behaviour

The seedling wants water and manure to grow and yield rich harvest. The tiny sapling of spiritual yearning for liberation from bondage also needs these two.

That is the real cultivation that you must undertake. That is the mark of the wise farmer.. More than all, set right your habits, purify your conduct, and cleanse your behaviour. One bad habit that has taken deep root in this area is the smoking of tobacco, an evil that is fast becoming universal. It destroys health, happiness, energy, and even charm. Smoke will not quench your thirst or fill your hungry stomach. It disfigures your face and denigrates your lungs. It debilitates you and makes you diseased. Control yourself. Do not yield to the snares of friends or society or what is miscalled social convention and become a prey to this and other bad habits. The body is the temple of the Lord; keep it in good and strong condition. It is damaged by food and drink of the *rajasic* (e.g. anger, hatred, greed) and *thamasic* (e.g. sloth, sleep, lethargy, inactivity) types and also by *rajasic* and *thamasic* behaviour. When you get violent and angry with anyone, quietly repeat the name of the Lord to overcome it or drink a glass of cold water or spread your bed and lie down until the fit of fury passes. While angry, you abuse another and they do the same; and tempers rise, heat is generated, and lasting injury is done. Five minutes of anger damages the relationship for five generations, remember. This skeletal cage or body (*asthipanjaram*) is the Hasthinapuram, where we have the blind king, Dhritharashtra, the symbol of ignorance, as well as Yudhistira, the symbol of wisdom. Let the forces of Yudhistira win, with the help of Sri Krishna. Let the tongue, accustomed to the bitterness of the margosa fruit of worldly triumphs and disasters, taste the sweet honey of remembering the Lord's Name. Experiment with this for a time and you will be surprised at the result. You can feel the vast improvement in peace and stability in you and around you. Learn this easy lesson, get immersed in joy, and let others also share that joy with you. This is Message I leave with you.

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

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba



15. Be Heroes, Not Zeros

Date: 03 September 1958 / Location: Peddhapuram

I am happy that I could converse now with so many of you at the same time. Yesterday and the day before, I had the same happy experience, and thousands partook the joy from the words that were spoken. Now the whole world is very agitated; it is full of discontent and anxiety, fear and petty faction and hatred. In order to calm and quieten it and remove the discontent and anxiety, you must have enthusiasm and courage. When defeat and disappointment stare you in the face, you must not give way to weakness or despondency. Never condemn yourselves as inferior or useless; analyse the defeat and find out the reasons in order to avoid it the next time. You should have muscles of iron and nerves of steel. Then your resolution will itself generate the necessary confidence, and that will win over opposition. For the crop of life, courage and confidence are the best manure as well as the best insecticides. Be like lions in the spiritual field, rule over the forest of the senses and roam fearlessly with full faith in victory. Be heroes, not zeros; for man (manava) is of the nature of God (Madhava); he is the imperishable eternal Atma ! Just as rain falling in various parts of the world flows through a thousand channels and reaches the ocean at last, so too, creeds, rituals, religions, and theologies, all derived from man's yearning for the vast inscrutable beyond, flow in a thousand different forms, fertilising many fields, cooling many communities, refreshing tired people in many ways and at last reach the Ocean of Bliss.

Proper atmosphere is essential for spiritual exercises

The Lord is all Love, so he can be seen only through Love. The moon has to be seen only through its own light - no other light can illumine the moon. In the night of utter delusion, the Lord can be seen only by the light that He himself is, namely, the light of pure love (prema). He is Truth and Eternal, so He is beyond the categories of falsity and change. Drop the delusion that you have become old or diseased, or that you have become weak and debilitated. Some people begin to count the years and grieve over advancing age and

shudder like cowards afraid of death. But remember, elation is Heaven, despondency is Hell. Have always some work to do, and do it so well that you get joy. Delusion is the dust that settles upon the glass of the chimney of the lantern and dims the light. The attachment to sensual objects and to the pleasure they give is the soot that sticks to the inside of the chimney; that also dims the light. Clean the chimney by repetition of the Name every day, and the flame will shine for you and others. Also, have good activities and good companionship. That will help very much in spiritual discipline; proper atmosphere is very essential for the aspirant. That is why spiritual seekers used to move out and dwell in the hermitages maintained by sages in the past. In the hermitages, the spiritual aspirants had the unique chance of being immersed in good thoughts, good activities, and good company. It is like keeping a pot of water immersed in water; the water in the pot will then not be lost through evaporation. But if the pot of water is kept in the open so that the wind plays upon it and the sun shines on it, very soon the pot becomes empty. Be careful, therefore, that the success you have won in the promotion of virtue, in the conquest of baneful habits, and in the assumption of regular disciplines are not frittered away by trite company, loose talk, cynical criticism, or lackadaisical effort.

Draw upon God's Grace for all your needs

The Goddess of Victory smiles only on the heroic, those who make lions of themselves, hardy, brave, and adventurous warriors. If you secure the Grace of God, you are reinforced with so much strength that you can carry out even the most difficult tasks. So get the Lord on your side and draw upon His Grace for all your needs. The treasure that is unmistakably precious is the quality of equanimity, unruffledness. Practise this and make it your natural reaction. Why be put out when you see wrong? Why be attracted when you see evil? Remember, evil has in it the potentiality to become good; good has in it the liability to turn evil. There is no fire without a wisp of smoke; there is no smoke without a spark of fire. No one is fully wicked or fully infallible. Take the world as it is; never expect it to conform to your needs or standards. The illusory quality (maya) envelops the good with the blemish of the bad; it makes the evil glitter with the shine of the good. Discriminate to the best of

your capacity, and develop your capacity to discriminate. Struggle to win, that is the best that you can do; few can say, 'I have won.' Your conscience knows the real source of joy. It will prod you toward the right path; your business is to take it as "guide" and not disobey it every time it contradicts your whim or fancy.

India has a rich mine of spirituality

There were two parrots on a tree, twins to be more precise. A hunter trapped them and sold them, one to a low, cruel butcher and the other to a sage who was running an ashram to teach the Vedas . After a few years, he was surprised to find that one bird swore very foully, while the other recited the divine plays of the Lord in a sweet musical tone, which captivated the listeners. Such is the effect of the environment. So, seek and secure good company. If truth is given up and man slides down the path of falsehood, then, as Appa Rao said just now, starvation and disease (kshama) will descend on the earth instead of well-being (kshema), famine will stalk the land instead of the plenty that characterised it formerly. Appa Rao said that in Hindustan, there have been many manifestations of the Lord. That is true, for teachers have to be present where schools are and where children eager to learn are found. You cannot have the teachers in one place, the school in another; the black board in one place, the bell in another. There are mica mines near Gudur; you cannot ask why they are not found near Peddapuram. It is so, that is all. So too, in India, there is a rich mine of spirituality, so engineers have to come here to operate it, extract it, and prepare it for use. That is why more manifestations of the Lord appear here. The atmosphere here is also conducive to the practical application of new modes and methods of extraction and use for the benefit of all humanity.

I am you and you are all I

Bha-ratha means the land of those who have attachment (rathi) toward Bhagavan (bha), that is to say, the Lord. The Lord too has to come in human form and move about among people, so that He could be listened to, contacted, loved, revered, and obeyed. He has to speak the language of

humans and behave like human beings, as a member of the species. Otherwise, He would be either negated and neglected or feared and avoided. The Avatar (divine Advent) has to lift humanity and put it into the crucible in order to remove the slag and inferior metals that have destroyed its sterling worth. When little boys turn the tap without knowing its mechanism, water badly drenches them by scattering on them circular showers; thus is man drenched in grief because he does not know how to turn and get an even flow. If the hero (nayaka) is good, the drama (nataka) will be grand; if the hero is a flop, the drama will be a disaster. The leaders of the people must have faith in their own Atma and the confidence born of that; then they can lead others; then they will not lead them astray, for they will feel kinship with the basic Atma in all. Appa Rao spoke of Me. My Mystery can be known only by traversing My path, which I have here laid down. Understand yourself, and that will reveal Me to you, for I am you and you are all I. There is no need to retire into a forest or a cave to know your inner Truth and to conquer your lower nature. As a matter of fact, you have no chance to exercise your anger there, so victory achieved there may not be lasting or genuine. Win the battle of life; be in the world but yet be away from its tentacles. That is the victory for which you deserve congratulations.

Spread joy at all times. Do not pour into others' ears your tales of woe and worry; carry a smile on your face so that everyone who sees you can catch that exhilaration. When you tell others of your success, your purpose is to create envy in them. You must not only love others; you must be so good that others too may love you. Try to console, encourage, strengthen, and enlighten those who are miserable, downhearted, weak, or ill-informed. Get yourselves equipped for this role.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

16. Training

Date: 09 September 1958 / Location: Venkatagiri

UNTIL about an hour ago, the organisers of this function were nervous that I might not come. They had reconciled themselves to the disappointment in store and were feverishly engaged in making alternative arrangements, for they had heard that the Godavari was in high floods and that I was at Rajahmundry. So they feared that I might not be able to cross the floods and come south in time for this engagement. From the fact that I had permitted them to announce My arrival for the function, they could well have inferred that the floods would subside and that I would be in their midst, for, once My word goes forth, it must happen accordingly. Do not doubt it. The furious waves calmed before Rama; the floods went down in time for Me. We left Chebrole last night at 11 p.m. and reached Nuzvid at about dawn. From there we motored throughout the day, without as much as a halt on the way, not slowing down even when the Kumararaja and others accosted Me near the bridge on the outskirts of this town, for I was determined to be here at 5 p.m. as promised. Let me reveal to you that the organisers were caught a little unawares; they were confused by rumour that I was held up and that I could not be reached by post or telegram or telephone. They asked Me for some time, about two hours they said, for hastening with the arrangements! Believe Me, nothing can hamper Me; My will must prevail. Those who spread stories that I was held up by the floods were ignorant of my Reality. Nothing can hold Me up or agitate Me or cast a shadow on Me come in this Human Form; be certain of that. Not even a hair can be touched by forces of calumny or distrust or ignorance. My Resolve must prevail; My task must be accomplished. My mission will succeed. I have come to illumine the human heart with the Light Divine and to rid man of the delusion that drags him away from the path of peace (*santhi*), the perfect equanimity born of realisation.

Reason for naming persons with God's Names

This School is associated with the late brother of the Raja Saheb, a person

who dwelt on My name even in the last moments of his life, and that was why I agreed to inaugurate it. I find that his name, which is a long compound of a number of fine appellations of God, each redolent with divine Glory, has been shortened into a string of single letters, which has no fragrance, flavour, or significance. This is not proper. Why deprive a name of its halo by amputating it or wiping out all its aura? This distorted list of letters that you have substituted for his full name, probably for the sake of greater convenience, seems to Me even more complicated than the original name, which, though long, reminds one of the magnificence and splendour of the Lord. That is why such names were recommended for men and women in the spiritual scriptures, so that whenever they are mentioned, some one picture of the Lord, sweet and splendid, might appear before the mind's eye. It is indeed good that the girls of this town have now a high school. I appreciate the efforts of all of you to start it, and I see that the building and the equipment are quite satisfactory. I bless that the girls studying here as well as everywhere else (for all schools are Mine, whether I inaugurate them personally or not) may cultivate faith in righteousness (*dharma*) and have sympathy toward all.

Students must be trained in ancient disciplines

Bharath has to take up once again the role of the teacher for the whole of humanity, so every boy and girl of the land must attain unblemished character and lead a life of strict moral discipline. Bharath (India) is a word derived from *Bhagavan* and *rathah* (constant attachment to the Lord), and the word connotes a people who are dedicated to the service and uplift of the Divine in each. So, along with the schooling that you get under present conditions in such institutions, a schooling that helps some of you to earn a living and that gives all of you a certain "polish" and "glitter", you must also undergo training in the ancient discipline that tames the instincts, controls the impulses, and assures steadiness of character. These things are necessary for your own sake, not to speak of the role Bharatha has to play. Training (*sikshana*) is a process in which the teacher and the taught cooperate. It must be a pleasant experience for both, a useful and heartening endeavour. *Kshana* means "a second", and I want that you must learn a good

lesson every second of your school life. For example, when the teacher enters the classroom, children should salute the teacher; that is a lesson in humility, in respecting age and scholarship, in gratitude for service rendered. Teachers too should decide to deserve the salutation of the children entrusted to their care by sincere work and selfless service. The student should not respect the teacher through fear but be moved more by love. The teacher should avoid all methods that frighten or terrorise. Education is a slow process like the unfolding of a flower, the fragrance becoming deeper and more perceptible with the silent blossoming, petal by petal, of the entire flower.

Example, not precept, is the best teaching aid

The unfolding will be helped if the teacher is a fine example of discrimination, humility, and clear-sightedness), rather than a person engaged in the task of mere repetitive teaching and coaching for examinations. Example, not precept, is the best teaching aid. The value of character has to be emphasised here, for this is a school for girls, and traits like modesty and devotion to God are the real jewels for womankind. Women preserve the traditional values of our culture and keep the nation on an even keel. If they fail, it would be famine, not prosperity, believe Me. So, base all educational efforts on building up the character of the students, and then you can confidently think of raising on it the super-structure of curricula, etc. Pupils must know the secret of a happy life and of happy cooperation with other members of the community. There are duties to oneself, one's family, and one's society, which must be carried out intelligently and joyfully. Then only can life be harmonious and fruitful. I declare that this task of renovating and recasting education is a part of My Mission, and before long you will find Me engaged in it and chastising those who simply talk loud and long of reconstruction and the preservation of spiritual values. Girls are the makers of the homes of this land, so this school is a very basic institution, essential for this town. Woman is honoured in this land as the Lakshmi of the home, as the companion on the pilgrimage toward God and self-realisation, and as the mistress of the house.

Girls should dread sliding into moral error

If the women of a country are happy, healthy, and holy, the men of that country will be hardy, honest, and happy. Thyagaraja has sung that even the strongest of heroes are swayed by the wishes of women, so every woman has a very crucial role to play in individual and social uplift. Therefore, I would not burden girls with the study of the geographical minutiae of America, Australia, or Germany. I would rather they knew the technique of mental calm, social harmony, service, and economic contentment. Let them develop a dread of falsehood, of sliding into moral error; that is more important than even the development of the dread of God. Let the girls also know something of the joy that service to those in distress can give, service without a thought of the benefits that may follow from the sympathy shown. Let them learn to lay aside the egoism that poisons the selfless service of even veterans in the field, who go about extolling themselves as founders and promoters, for the service of the poor and the maimed, of this institution and that. The joy of selfless service is the act itself. The fruit of the selfless service is the removal of egoism, not its multiplication.

Attitudes to be developed by children

The students of this school will take up later the most glorious and the most responsible role of Motherhood, so the teachers in schools for girls have a great big task before them: the shaping of the future history of this country. The mother is the pillar of the home, of society, of the nation, and so of humanity itself. Mothers should know the secret of mental peace, of inner silence, of spiritual courage, of contentment, which is the greatest wealth, and of spiritual discipline, which gives lasting joy. The mother should teach the children the value of remembering the Name of God and of mental and physical cleanliness. She should be like the mother in the story told by Vivekananda, who advised her son to call upon Krishna in the woods while going to school alone and helpless. The father and the mother must supplement at home the training given by the teacher at school. They must acquaint themselves with the lesson the child receives at the school and see that their conduct and advice do not conflict with what the child learns from the teacher whom he adores. Teachers and parents must see that children

learn certain good habits and attitudes during these formative years. What is read from books must be contemplated upon, thought over in quietness, reflected upon in silence. This is a very good exercise in intellectual development and in the acquisition of mental peace. The instinct to quarrel and fight over all misunderstandings must be regulated and sublimated. Children should not enjoy the infliction of pain or be allowed to suffer physical pain or mental anguish. They must have a sense of responsibility at least for the safe custody and proper upkeep of their books. They must not take delight in showing off their dress or ornaments or status or wealth before less fortunate children of the school. They have to be taught sensible habits of personal cleanliness and, more important than all, the habit of prayer at regular hours.

Importance of prayer at home and school

They may be encouraged to go to bed regularly every day at 9 p.m. and wake up at 5 a.m. After washing the face and cleaning the eyes and teeth, they may be induced to pray or even to meditate. Do not think that there is a time enough for prayer later on in life, during old age perhaps. The time to lay the foundation for the habit is now. At school too, the day's work should start with prayer for five minutes, which should be taken seriously by one and all and not reduced to the mere formality or farce that it has become in most schools. The slightest sign of neglect shown by the school while arranging the prayer sessions will react on the minds of the children, and they will see through the humbug quickly. So treat the prayer as the very foundation of the entire edifice of schooling. When the last bell of the day is rung, make the pupils stand up in the class quietly and let them observe silence for a minute or two and then disperse. There is nothing like silence to still the waves of your heart. The teachers must tell the children inspiring tales of our saints and heroes and plant the love for spiritual literature. If this school grows up along these lines, then the money so generously offered and so gladly devoted to the establishment of the school is well spent, and I am sure this school will develop into a very useful institution in a short time.

Man can be happy with much less equipment than he seems to think essential. When some article is with you for some little time, you feel it is indispensable, and you do not know how to live without it. Like the silkworm, you weave a cocoon for yourself out of your fancy. Do not allow costly habits to grow, costly from the monetary as well as the spiritual point of the view. Watch your likes and dislikes with vigilant eye and discard anything that threatens to encumber your path.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

17. Qualities And Money

Date: 14 December 1958 / Location: Arakkonam, Tamil Nadu

I FIND that you have simply mentioned that Sri Sathya Sai Baba will be present at the conference. You have not assigned Me any speech, so I can as well be silent. But as far as I am concerned, there is no need for formality or announcement. I am yours; you are mine. I do not await even an invitation; our relationship is not external; it goes deeper into the realms of the spirit. I am with you and in you, so I need no welcome or previous request. The Divine Life Society endeavours to remind man of the Divine, which is his basic reality. Divinity is inherent, immanent in every individual soul, and the process of reminding man of that fact began with the very dawn of human history. What has to be done to lead the Divine Life is just the removal of the fog that hides the Truth and makes one imagine one is something else - something inferior, evanescent, material, momentary. All are holy, pure, part of eternity. But these things shine in each in proportion to their spiritual practices, just as bulbs spread illumination according to the wattage. There is no body that is not sustained by the Absolute; there is no name that does not indicate the Universal. All objects are suffused by that Principle; all names are attributes of its Glory.

Turn to the path of inner content and joy

Everyone must join this association, which harps on this fundamental fact and feeds the craving for immortality deep-seated in humanity. We were told by the secretary who read the report that the membership of the organisation is open to all who pay "four annas" (former Indian coin equal to a quarter of a rupee) a month. I would suggest that membership should be thrown open to all who can contribute not four annas but four qualities (gunas) instead! Those who have truth, righteousness, peace, and love (sathya , dharma , santhi , and prema) are eminently fitted for membership. Insist on qualities (gunas), and do not look for money (annas). One always seeks happiness by trying to satisfy one's desires. If a desire is fulfilled, one feels joy, and when it is not, one feels grief. But the trouble is, desire is a bonfire that burns with

greater fury, asking for more fuel. One desire leads to ten, and one exhausts oneself in trying to exhaust the demands of desire. One has to be turned back from this path of never-ending desire to the path of inner content and joy. That is the task of the Divine Life Society. One grieves because one has developed attachment toward the unreal. One cultivates an unreasonable affection for wealth, but one is prepared to sacrifice the riches in order to save the lives of one's children, for attachment to children is stronger than to the wealth that has been earned! One stoops so low as to neglect the children when the choice is between survival and the children's welfare! But the bliss that one gets when one dwells on the Atma , the source and spring of all joy, is unbounded and imperishable. That is the real joy. The orange rind is not very tasty, but it protects the fruit and preserves it. To get the sweetness of the orange, you must peel and throw off the rind. Such is the fruit of the tree of life; it is protected by a bitter rind, of course, but the wise man does not try to eat the rind; he gives it the consideration due to it and proceeds to throw it off; he then tastes the sweetness.

Every Indian has to live the life taught by sages

In order that this wisdom may dawn on persons most in need of it, the elders must set an example of discrimination and detachment. If they run after sensory pleasures with feverish excitement, how can the younger generation be blamed for their selfishness and greed? The elders must practise what they preach and show how divine life can confer joy, mental poise, contentment, and real happiness. They must spend at least some time every day in the recital of the Lord's Name or in meditation on the Lord; then the children will also imbibe that atmosphere and acquire the sure means of gaining peace (santhi) for themselves. You say that there is nothing as sweet as the name of the Lord, but you do not repeat it at all. You have spoilt the road by neglect and wanton destruction, but you advise the children to walk along it. They will discover the hoax; they will ask you to travel on the road yourself and give them the lead. So the responsibility of the members of the Divine Life Society here is very great. As a matter of fact, the responsibility of any person who holds forth an ideal is great, for he has to attempt to reach it himself while advising others to adopt it. That is why the responsibility of an

Indian is so great, for in this land have been born saints and sages who have taught the world the highest truths of spiritual uplift; and anyone claiming to be an Indian has to live the life taught by them in order to deserve that ancestry and the admiration of aspirants all over the world.

Physical hunger must first be appeased

Divine Life is based on the quality of calm serenity (sathwa guna), which must be cultivated. This quality can be built only upon natural (sathwic) food, food that promotes health, strength, lightness of spirit, and earnestness of endeavour. There is no use distributing the juice of spirituality to underfed and weak people; give rice juice first; make them strong enough to entertain strong beliefs and contain strong ideals. Physical hunger must first be appeased by simple pure (sathwic) food. Then, try to repeat the name of the Lord, the name that appeals to you most. Do not treat the Name lightly; respect it even if you hear it from the lips of a beggar who uses it to procure aims. Though the person who utters it is bad or though his motive in uttering it is bad, do not ill-treat the Name; for its purity can never be harmed. Thank them for reminding you of the Lord and go your way. Above all, do not laugh at and discourage those who call on the Lord. What right have you to substitute misery where there was joy and doubt where there was faith? Love (prema): practise that; develop that; spread that - and all the hatreds and jealousies of today will disappear. That is the duty of the Divine Life Society, here as well as elsewhere.

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

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

18. Education And Peace

Date: 20 December 1958 / Location: Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala

The Governor, Dr. Ramakrishna Rao, spoke now so feelingly about the urgent need to cultivate spiritual values. When economic progress is made without modifying the spiritual background, then egoism, competition, and greed bring the community to grief. Here in Thiruvananthapuram, there is no forgetting the spiritual background. The temple of Padhmanabha dominates the town as well as the daily life of the people, not only of this place but of the entire State. Kerala is itself a holy land, and its holiness has increased by the advent of Sankaracharya and his teachings. The land is very beautiful, as I saw when I came from Coimbatore all the way to this capital city. The scenery formed by the backwaters and the coconut groves stretching from one end of the State to the other was like a vast painting by a great artist on a huge canvas. The Lord enjoys these things as a painter; He appreciates His own handiwork, standing before His own painting or sculpture. To see the Lord's own loveliness in the lovely scenery around you requires not the outer eye but the inward eye. If you develop that, walking over the land or voyaging over the waters is itself a pilgrimage through holy land, giving you glimpses of God in every speck of cloud or patch of green. But all this Divine Beauty (Sundaram) must lead man to truth (sathyam), and all this truth to goodness (mangalam). That is the natural path. The beauty of the Lord's handiwork leads one on to the glory of the Lord; the picture makes you curious about the Painter. The Lord, when His Truth is grasped, confers bliss, which is auspiciousness itself.

Kerala is ancient repository of spiritual wisdom

I found also that the people here are very hardworking and industrious. From one end of the state to the other, people were busy on the roadside, in the shops and fields, in the gardens and canals. Another thing that attracted the attention of all those who were with Me was the stream of children hastening to the schools, with cadjan leaves or slates or bags of books slung on their shoulders, boys as well as girls. The percentage of literacy here is, I know, the

highest in India. Besides every family has a number of highly educated men and women. Thiruvananthapuram is the centre of many great educational and cultural institutions. In spite of all the ancient traditions of spiritual victory, all the granary of spiritual lore, all the activity, all the industry, all the passion to get educated, and all the opportunities that are so gladly grasped, I find here a great deal of unrest. No "inner peace" is prevalent here, where one would expect to find it in large measure. Of course, as the saying goes, "An aged tiger still has the stripes." Let Me tell you that the breath is still there, but strength has gone from this ancient repository of spiritual wisdom, which once taught the secret of equanimity and peace (santhi) to all. Gramophone records are all made of the same material. So too are all hearts of the same Supreme Consciousness. The grooves carved in them appear the same in all the plates. The grooves carved upon the hearts by grief and joy are also more or less the same. It is the needle that runs over the groove that produces through the sound box and the amplifier good music or bad. The needle is the mind, the mind that runs over the happiness and misery and translates or exaggerates the response and makes you feel elated or dejected. If the needle is sharp, the music is a pleasure to the ear. If it is blunt or broken, the sound becomes a screeching torture.

The education man must first secure

The mind is the wind that brings us the smell, foul or fragrant, of the world. When the mind turns to the foul, it makes you disgusted; when it turns toward the fragrant, you are made happy. The wind gathers the clouds from the four quarters; similarly the mind brings into your consciousness the disappointments of many hopes. Again, it is the mind that, like the wind, scatters the clouds that darken it or make it feel lost in the night of doubt. Control the mind and you remain unruffled. That is the secret of peace; that is the education that one must first claim and secure. We find today that, the person who is most highly educated is the very person who is most discontented and unhappy. Then, what is the gain from all the study the person has made of books and of men and things? To gain this equanimity, you have to do not reading but systematic spiritual effort. Then, you can be happy whether you are rich or poor, appreciated or rejected, prosperous or

unlucky. That is an armour without which it is foolish to enter the arena of life. If the arena is entered just for getting sensory joy, you are in for all kinds of trouble. It is like sailing in a tiny boat on a storm-tossed sea without a rudder. So, enter upon the path of spiritual discipline now itself.

Meditation will teach the mind to be sharp

Each one of you has a great deal of concentration; you know the art, for every task requires it and everyone benefits by it. The carpenter, the weaver, the clerk, the boatman - all have it in a greater or lesser degree. Use it for this task also: direct the mind toward its own working, examine it and train it to restrict itself to good company, good thoughts, and good deeds. Practise meditation on any Form of the Lord and repeat, with awareness of the sweetness, any Name of the Lord. That will teach the mind to be sharp and produce good music out of the joys, as well as the griefs that are incidental to life. Like underground water, the Divine is there, in everyone, remember. The Lord is the Indweller in all beings; He is All-pervading. He is the Soul (Atma) of every being. He is in you as much as in everyone else. He is not more in a rich being or bigger in a fat being; His spark illumines the cave of the heart of every one. The sun shines equally on all; His Grace is falling equally on all. It is only you that erect obstacles that prevent the rays of His Grace from warming you. Do not blame the Lord for your ignorance or foolishness or perversity. Just as underground water wells up in a gushy spring when a bore is sunk down to that depth, by constant Ram Ram Ram Ram Ram , touch the spring of Divinity, and one day it will gush out in cool plenty and bring unending joy.

Nothing can give unmixed joy

Life is a pilgrimage to God; the holy spot is there, afar! The road lies before you, but unless you take the first step forward and follow that step with others, how can you reach it? Start with courage, faith, joy, and steadiness. You are bound to succeed. The mind and the intellect are two bullocks tied to a cart, "the inner man". The bullocks are not used to the road of truth, righteousness, peace, and love (sathya , dharma , santhi , and prema), so

they drag the cart along the road familiar to them, namely, falsehood, injustice, worry, and hatred. You have to train them to take the better road so that they may not bring disaster to themselves, the cart they are yoked to, and the men inside it. Your child gives you great joy by its play and prattle, but when it interferes with your work or teases you when you are otherwise engaged, you get very angry with it. It is a source of joy as well as grief. There is nothing that can give unmixed joy. Even if there is, its loss brings about sorrow. This is the very nature of things. So try to correct the very source of joy and sorrow, the mind. Control it and train it to see the real nature of the objective world, which attracts and repels you by turn. That is the real fruit of education.

19. The Moon And The Mind

Date: 07 February 1959 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Shivarathri

THERE are many different stories in the scriptures to explain the origin of the Sivarathri (The Night of the Emergence of linga form of Siva) Festival. Some of them were related now by the persons who spoke to you. Another story is that this is the day on which Siva danced the cosmic dance in His Ecstasy, with all the gods and sages taking part in the cosmic event. When He consumed the death-dealing poison that emanated from the ocean of milk, in response to the prayers of the worlds, which it threatened to destroy, the heat of the fumes was well nigh unbearable, even for Him. So, it is said, Ganga river was poured uninterruptedly on His matted locks - this is the explanation for the abhisheka (ceremony of pouring consecrated water, oil, milk, etc., on the idol), which is offered in all Siva temples for hours on end, and in some places, uninterruptedly. But Siva was only partly relieved. So the cool moon was placed on the head, which gave some relief. Then, Ganga was placed on the matted locks. That was of great help. After this, Siva danced the cosmic dance with all the gods. That is the story, but all this did not happen on a particular day, so Sivarathri cannot be said to commemorate that day. Some say that Siva was born on this day, as if Siva has birth and death like any mortal! The story that a hunter sat on a bilva tree on the lookout for animals to kill and, without intending any worship, unknowingly, dropped the leaves of that tree, which happened to be a bilva, upon a lingam beneath, and so attained salvation, explains only the importance of this day. It does not explain the origin! Besides we have not only the great Sivarathri (Mahasivarathri). We have a Sivarathri every month, dedicated to Siva worship. Again, what is the significance of the rathri (night)?

The close affinity between mind and the moon

Well, the night is dominated by the moon. The moon has 16 fractions, and each day when it wanes, a fraction is reduced, until it is annihilated on new-moon night. After that, each day a fraction is added, until it completes itself on full moon night. The moon is the presiding deity of the mind. "Out of the

mind of the Godhead, the moon was born (Chandrama manaso jathah)." There is a close affinity between the mind (manas) and the moon; both are subject to decline and progress. The waning of the moon is the symbol for the waning of the mind, for the mind has to be controlled, reduced, and finally destroyed. All spiritual exercises is directed toward this end. The mind has to be killed so that illusion (maya) may be rent asunder and the reality revealed. Every day during the dark half of the month, the moon, and symbolically its counterpart in man, the mind, wane, and a fraction is diminished; its power declines. Finally, on the fourteenth night, there is just a wee bit left, that is all. If a little extra effort is made that day by the spiritual aspirant, even that bit can be wiped off and mastery of the mind completed. The fourteenth night of the dark half is called Sivarathri , for that night should be spent in the repetition of the Name of and meditation on Siva, without any other thought either of food or sleep. Then success is assured. Once a year, on Mahasivarathri night, a special spurt of spiritual activity is recommended, so that what is the corpse (savam) can become God (Sivam) by the removal of this dross called mind. This is the purpose of Sivarathri , so it is foolish and even harmful deceit to imagine that "keeping awake" is the essential thing in its observance. People try to escape sleep on this night by playing cards, attending non-stop cinema shows, or watching plays or dramas. That is not the spiritual exercise that should be intensified on Sivarathri . That is a travesty of the vow of "sleeplessness". It vulgarises you and encourages evil and sloth, wickedness, and hypocrisy.

Symbolic meaning of words used in scriptures

On Sivarathri , the mind must become reduced into nothing. Lingam means that in which this world attains nothingness, that into which this world goes. Examine the linga ; the three primordial qualities (gunas) are represented by the three-tiered platform; the lingam above symbolises the goal of life. Lingam means "symbol", the symbol of creation, the result of the activity of the three qualities and of the Brahman (Supreme Reality), which permeates and gives it meaning and value. When you worship the lingam , do so with faith in this symbolic significance. Every word, every Form used in the spiritual texts has a symbolic meaning, which gives it value. The word

prapancha , which you use so freely to indicate this "created world", means, "that which is composed of the pancha-bhuthas - the five elements of earth, fire, water, wind, and ether." Take the word hrdayam used for "the heart". It means hridi (in the heart) ayam (He). That is to say, it means not the organ that pumps blood to all parts of the body but the seat of God, the altar where Siva is installed, the niche where the lamp of wisdom is lit. Again, Siva does not ride on an animal called, in human language, a "bull!" The bull is only a symbol of dharma , standing on the four legs of truth, righteousness, peace, and love (sathya , dharma , santhi , and prema).

Lingam is the symbolic form of the Godhead

The three eyes of Siva are the eyes that reveal the past, present, and future. Siva alone has all three. The elephant skin that forms His cloak is just a symbol for the elemental bestial primitive traits that His Grace destroys. He makes them powerless and harmless; in fact, he tears them to pieces, skins them, so to say, and makes them ineffective. His four Faces symbolise peace, fierceness, auspiciousness, and determination. In this way, realise, while worshipping the lingam , the inner sense of the many attributes of Siva. Meditate thus on Siva this day, so that you may get rid of the last lingering vestiges of delusion. Just as Om is the verbal symbol of God, the lingam is the symbolic form of the Godhead. It is just a form. Everything is delusion (maya), and to grasp it, you must deal with delusion. Otherwise you cannot realise the deluding power. God is as immanent in the Universe as life is immanent in the egg. The chicken is in every part of the egg; so too, God is in every part of the world. I prefer the description Inner Ruler of All (Sarva-antaryami) to the description Inmost Soul of All Beings (Sarva-butha-antharatma). All are in this Hall, each one has no Hall in him, is it not? In the same way, all are in Him; which is better than saying, He is in all. It is delusion (maya) that binds and limits you; all spiritual exercise is to conquer delusion. A bit of iron will sink in water but if beaten and made hollow, it will float. So beat the mind and make it hollow. Then it will float on the sea of worldly life. Above all, have discrimination, and do not be led into taking any false step.

Grow not only physically but also spiritually

You need not waste time in trying to discover Me and My Nature. Understand what I teach, not "who is the teacher," for I am beyond your intellect and your power. You will understand Me only through My work. That is why, sometimes, in order to reveal who I am, I myself show you my "visiting card," something that you call a miracle. Know the mystery and carry out the duty I assign you. In the next fifteen years, a number of young people now growing up will shine as devoted aspirants in the spiritual field; they know that each of them is eternal, truth, and pure and that they are children of immortality. They are growing in discrimination and detachment and are purifying themselves by repetition of the Name of God. But the elders are laughing at such boys because they have taken to the godly path. Perhaps they will be happy if their children loiter in the streets in groups, smoking and swearing and staring at posters. The elders should be elated that their children are on the royal road to real joy and contentment and that they will be serving themselves and the world much better. You do not know how to make an ornament out of gold, so you give it to a goldsmith. Why worry if he melts it and beats it and pierces it and pulls it into wire and twists it and cuts it? Let Him who knows the art shape the child into an ornament of society; do not worry. You must grow day to day, not only physically but in spiritual life also. How long are you staying on in the primary school, writing down the letters of the alphabet? Get up, demand an examination, pass, and move forward to the higher class!

The individual soul must master the inner world first

You are now sitting on the floor of the hall; seek the means to see the top floors too. Progress! Come forward! Then Sivarathri becomes an auspicious night for you. Otherwise it is just another night (rathri) wasted. Many might discourage you and say that meditation and worship can be taken up after you reach a ripe old age, as if they are the prerogatives of or special punishments for the aged. Enjoy the world while you can and then think of the next - that seems to be their attitude. The child takes its first few steps in the comparative safety of the home: it toddles about inside, until its steps become firm, until its balance is perfected, and until it can run about

unaccompanied and without fear. Then only does it venture out into the streets and the wide world beyond. So too, the living being must master the inner world first; become impervious to temptations. It should learn not to fall when the senses trip its steps; it should learn the balance of mind, which will not make it lean more to one side than to the other. After mastering this discriminatory wisdom, it can confidently move out into the outer world, without fear of accidents to its personality. That is why there is this insistence on "sleeplessness" or vigilance. You cannot claim to be educated or grown up unless you have mastered the science of self-control and destroyed the root cause of delusion. It is not this night alone that you should spend in the thought of Siva; your whole life should be lived in the constant presence of the Lord.

Man's basic nature seeks inward contentment

Do not tell me that you do not care for that bliss, that you are satisfied with the delusion and are not willing to undergo the rigours of sleeplessness. Your basic nature, believe Me, abhors this dull, dreary routine of eating, drinking, and sleeping. It seeks something that it knows it has lost: inward contentment (santhi). It seeks liberation from bondage to the trivial and the temporary. Everyone craves for it in their heart of hearts. And it is available only in one shop: contemplation of the Highest Self, the basis of all this appearance. However high a bird may soar, it has sooner or later to perch on a tree top, to enjoy quiet. So too, a day will come when even the most haughty, the most willful, the most unbelieving, and even those who assert that there is no joy or peace in the contemplation of the Highest Self will have to pray, "God, grant me peace, grant me consolation, strength, and joy."

The ills of the country are due to under-nourishment - not so much under-nourishment of the body, but under-nourishment of the spirit, want of spiritual exercise, neglect of spiritual regimen. Allowing the malady the fullest scope, people are engaged in reciting the names of the drugs in the pharmacopoeia! They do not make any attempt to take the drug in. The

means of conveying into every home and village the life-giving waters of the spirit have all dried up or got choked up. That is why under-nourishment, with all its attendant symptoms of debility, nervous disorder, and mania, is so rampant today.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

20. Neither Scriptures Nor Logic

Date: 12 April 1959 / Location: Venkatagiri / Occasion: Adyatmic Conference

Varanasi Subrahmanya Sastry spoke for long on two types of inquirers at the present time and the conflict between the two, namely, the expounders of scriptures and expounders of intellectual reasoning. He said the former accepted the wisdom of the ancients as recorded in the spiritual texts as authentic and authoritative, while the latter preferred to follow the path of reason and take as authoritative only such things as will satisfy their logic. Of course, he showed the defects of the latter group by taking a number of examples and exposing the fallacies of the expounders of intellectual reasoning. He quoted profusely from the scriptural texts and made his discourse abstruse and scholarly. I feel that most of what he said went above your heads, so you have missed the crux of what he wanted to communicate. The intellect (buddhi) revels in discussion and disputation. Once you yield to the temptation of dialectics, it takes a long time for you to escape from its shackles and efface it and enjoy the bliss that comes from its nullification. You must all the while be aware of the limitation of reason. Logic must give way to logos, and deduction must yield place to devotion. The intellect can help you only some distance along the Godward path; the rest is illuminated by intuition. Your feelings and emotions warp even your thought processes, and reason is made by them into an untamed bull. Very often, egoism tends to encourage and justify the wildness, for a person is led along the wrong path by their very reason, if that is the path he likes! You very often come to the conclusion you want to reach!

Scriptures are only road maps or guide books

Unless you are extra careful to examine the very process of reasoning, even while the process is going on, there is the danger that you may be following only the trail you yourself have laid down. Reason can be tamed only by discipline, by systematic application of the yoke, the nose-string, the whip, etc. That is to say, by means of compassion, calmness, forbearance, endurance, etc. Train it to walk quietly along small stretches of road at first

and then, after you have become sure of its docility, you can take it along the tortuous road of the sixfold temptations: the road of lust, anger, greed, delusion, pride and jealousy. Bhasmasura got vast power through the Grace of God, even the power to burn into ash anyone on whose head he placed his hand. But his instincts had not been tamed, his reason had not been purified, so, in his greed and egoism, he tried to reduce the very Giver of the Gift into ashes! The scriptures are only road maps. They are guide books at best, describing the road and giving the directions for the journey. It is the actual journey that will reveal the hardships, the delays, the landslides, and the pot holes, as well as the beauty of the scenery encountered and the magnificence of the final goal. No second-hand account can equal the first-hand experience. Moreover, the scriptures might speak about a thing in many different ways, just to elaborate it for better understanding. Even the Vedas extol a thing in ten different poetic forms, from different angles and standpoints. But some scholars try to treat each such statement as distinct and as having a different connotation, so they add to the confusion rather than reduce it.

Both have good points as well as limitations

The symbols on the map are interpreted differently by different scholars according to their preconceived notions, predilections, and pet theories. So the expounders of scriptures are also not always right. They can be led astray by the desire to score a point over their adversary. They belong to certain schools of thought, and this too acts as a brake on their freedom to seek and know the real meaning of the spiritual texts. I am neither an expounder of scriptures nor an expounder of intellectual reasoning. I am an expounder of love. So, I have no conflict with either the scholar who adheres to texts or the devotee of reason. Both have their good points as well as their limitations. If you acquire love (prema), then you can dispense with the spiritual texts, for the purpose of all spiritual texts is just that: to create the feeling of equal love for all and to negate the egoism that stands in the way. Reason, too, if it comes in the way of this love, is to be discarded as "perverted". All the time and energy spent in pursuing the spiritual texts are a sheer waste if study and reflection do not help you to recognise that the mind is worse than a drunken

monkey. Pilgrimages too are for elevating the heart, sublimating the impulses, and leading the lower self to higher levels of thought and action. Reason serves the same purpose, or at least, it ought to. Reason seeks to know the unity of the universe, the origin and goal of it all, and the laws that govern the microcosm and macrocosm. It peeps behind the ever-receding curtain to get a glimpse of the puppeteer, who pulls the strings.

Do not run after devious desires

Do not engage yourself in the cultivation of or the promotion of wants and desires. That is a never-ending process of sowing and reaping, and you will never reach contentment. One desire when satisfied will fan the thirst for ten more. This year is named crooked (vikari)! So, be warned! Do not run after devious desires or crooked satisfactions. All roads leading to the realm of the senses are tortuous and blind; only the road that leads to God is straight. Cultivate the path of straightforwardness in everything. That will reveal the Atma . Straightforwardness will enable you to overcome the three qualities (gunas). The treatment you have to give these qualities is to grind them to a paste so that a new taste of bliss (ananda) might emerge, just as you grind salt, chillies, and tamarind together to get a tasty chutney for your meal. No single qualities should dominate; all must be tamed and diverted to fill the lake of ananda . It is the internal ananda that matters, not the external, the sensory, the objective, the worldly. If the inner poise or inner equilibrium is undisturbed by external ups and downs, that is real success. Every day is the same as another, the rising and the setting of the sun, the waxing and waning of the moon, the seasons, etc. When 365 days are over, we call it a new year and give it a new number; but the sun and moon are unaffected by it. Be like the sun and moon. Do not care whether they ring out the old year or ring in the new.

Train the mind to disperse the clouds

No one need do anything positive to discover the Atma ; when the "cover" of illusion is denied and destroyed, it will reveal itself in all its glory. What is needed is the removal of the fog, the cloud, the miasma, and the casting off

of all the clinging curtains that limit the self to the body and its adjuncts. How to remove the fog? How to clean the mirror so that the Atma may be reflected clearly and without distortion? The mind, which makes you believe in spiritual texts as the ultimate authority, and the intellect (buddhi), which makes you believe that reason is the supreme authority - both have to be scrubbed and polished. They get tarnished pretty quick! They require constant attention. Like a brass vessel that has to be scrubbed with tamarind and washed and dried so that it may shine like new, the mind has to be treated ever with goodness and service, repetition of the Name of the Lord, execution of beneficial plans, taking up of good deeds, and contemplation of the welfare of all. The sun is up here in the sky; it is the passing cloud that hides him from your vision. The sensory world is the cloud that hides the Atma , ever shining in the firmament of your heart. The same mind that gathers the clouds can also disperse them in an instant; for it is as the wind, which collects them from all the quarters and renders the sky dark, and the next moment, changing direction, sends them in a scurry to wherever they came from! Train the mind to disperse the clouds, not to gather them. Every aspirant has to do this by following a systematic discipline. You cannot reach the peak in one jump; it is a hard job to negate the evidence of the senses; one has to overcome the tendencies that have grown through hundreds of births. The world is an illusion and all is Brahman only for one who has reached the ultimate goal, but until Realisation dawns, one has to wait patiently, hoping and preparing. The growing baby cannot be fed on adult food; you have to adjust the food to the needs and capabilities of the child. Do not overdo or avoid doing anything. Both lead to disease and ruin health.

Develop bliss through cultivation of love

I do not consider intellectual scholarship as very essential for the spiritual aspirant. I advise you to develop bliss (ananda), not through these difficult and even doubtful means but through the cultivation of love (prema), which begins in the home and family and spreads to all creatures. Put down the sharp-edged weapon that seeks to analyse and chop the arguments of the opponent, to cut his point of view to pieces. Take up the sweet pudding of love, which spreads joy and wins over recalcitrant hearts. That is My path, the

path of prema , along which I shall take you. That is why I offer My visiting card to every one of you when you come to Me. I know your name, your degrees, your profession, your status, and your history. But you do not know mine. I have no need to know all about you from a perusal of your cards, but I want you to know something of My Glory. So I give you a glimpse of it, as a divine miracle. But I also give you enough of My prema so that you can mix a little of it with whatever you do or feel or think and make it sweet and palatable.

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

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

21. The Insentient And The Supreme Consciousness

Date: 10 July 1959 / Location: Bengaluru / Occasion: Akhanda bhajans

You have all tasted the sweetness of the Name of the Lord for twenty-four hours, as continuous devotional singing (akhanda bhajans). Akhanda means uninterrupted, without any gap. I am glad you sang without any gap and also that you selected the names of the manifold Forms of God, instead of singing one particular name throughout, as if God had only one facet of personality. The same man is father of his children, uncle to his nephews, brother to some, cousin to many others, and son to his parents. God also has many aspects, and when you conduct bhajans, try to satisfy all who take part by reminding them of the manifold manifestations of the Lord, not simply Rama or Krishna or Sairam. Again, akhanda bhajans means that it should not be just a twenty-four hour affair or even a seven-day affair; it must go on, from birth to death, this contemplation of the Source and Goal of things. The procession to the cremation ground starts immediately on birth, and the beating of the heart is the drum-beat for the march toward that place. Some take a longer route, some reach quickly, but all are on the way. Therefore, bhajans has to start in childhood and has to continue. It must be the constant companion of a person, their solace and strength. Do not postpone it to old age, for it is the essential food for the mind.

There is no consistency in behaviour

You have all been thrilled by these bhajans here, and you are glad that you got the chance to join. But this is just a temporary feeling. You who shared in this glorification of the Lord will tomorrow as enthusiastically join in some other gathering where falsehood and injustice are honoured! There is no consistency in your behaviour. What you feel as correct and what you do are poles apart. That is not the mark of a devotee. If there is no faith, how can you have peace and happiness? People seek frantically for peace and happiness in a thousand ways along a thousand roads. Dr. Bhagavantam was telling Me just prior to My coming here, at the Tata Institute of Science, that

there is something beyond all this objective world, some mystery that becomes deeper and more mysterious with every advance of science. When one door is opened, ten doors that were closed reveal themselves to the surprised scientist. So real peace (santhi) is to be got only in the depths of the spirit, in the discipline of the mind, in faith in the One Base of all this seeming multiplicity. When that is secured, it is like having gold, you can have any variety of jewels made from it. It is all a matter of one's own experience. And the joy of that experience, the profound exhilaration that accompanies it, cannot be communicated in words. All hearing and singing God's Names is to take you nearer that experience. Listening is the medicine that you take internally, and singing is the balm you apply externally. Both are needed. So also virtue (dharma) as well as sanctified activity (karma) are necessary. Karma is the very foundation of devotion to God. It is the basement on which devotion is built. Dharma is the attitude in which action is done, the truth, love (prema), and equanimity with which the mind is activated when it seeks to do things.

Do karma regardless of the fruits thereof

Karma has to be done in and through dharma . Those dominated by ignorance (thamas) do karma solely for the sake of the fruits thereof, and they resort to all subterfuges in order to gain from it. For them, the end justifies the means. Those dominated by passion (rajas) are proud and pompous and boast that they are the doers, the benefactors, and the experiencers. Those dominated by the quality of calm serenity (sathwa guna) will do karma regardless of the fruits thereof, leaving the result to the Lord, not worrying whether it leads to success or failure, conscious of their duties and never of their rights. As a matter of fact, there is more joy in the actual doing than in the result that accrues. This must be your experience. All the elaborate arrangements that the master of the house makes for a wedding in the family, the reception, the feeding, the illumination, the music - these are thrilling while they are being planned and executed, but they do not give so much pleasure once the thing is done. In the end, when the bills come, they might even cause disgust and grief! So it must be easy to discard the fruits of action, provided you spend some thought upon the process of karma and the

worth of the fruit. The individual soul has come to this birth in order to reveal the splendour of the spark of Godhead, which It is. The body is the wick of the lamp, yearning for God is the ghee that feeds the flame. But, like the rat that, attracted by the strong smelling cheap stuff inside the trap, neglects all other articles of food in the granary and falls a prey to its foolishness, people neglect their real sustenance and waste their lives in pursuit of mortal riches.

Various types of devotion

You should see and wonder at the eternal in all this temporariness. This drama has only two actors: the insentient and Supreme Consciousness, who play a million roles. Just as violinist Chowdiah here who played ten musical tunes now and can play 400 tunes on the four strings, the insentient and Supreme Consciousness together play all these roles. Out of a mere 26 letters of the alphabet all the words in the dictionary are formed and millions of books get written, read, and understood. But you should see through this drama and discover the Director, who is none else than God. This can be done through devotion based on desireless action. Devotion is of various types, according to the purificatory acts of the devotee, the state of the mind, and the stage of development. There is the peaceful devotion of Bhishma, the parental devotion of Yasoda, the sweet loving devotion of Gouranga and Meera, and the deep attachment of the cowherd maids (to Krishna). Of these, the devoted-servant attitude, which grows out of peaceful devotion, is the easiest and the best for the majority of aspirants at this time. It means total surrender. Devotion has to be developed by several means or indeed by all means. The mind and the intellect have to be trained and controlled; that is the aim. They can take you as far as the qualified dualism. Later, non-dualistic experience depends upon His Grace, and merging in the Absolute is in His Hands. The chief means are hearing, singing, remembering Lord's Name, prostration, salutation, servitude, friendship, and Self-offering. Friendship is placed just before offering of the Self because between friends, there is no fear, no doubt or disbelief or hesitation.

Mission on which the Lord comes on this Earth

It is to clear the path of spiritual progress of humanity that the Avatar (Divine Incarnation) has come. The restlessness in which man is immersed has to be curbed. That is what is meant by the saving of all good individual beings from the tentacles of grief caused by want of knowledge of the relative unimportance of worldly things. All individual souls must get peace and happiness; that is the mission on which the Lord comes again and again on this earth. He selects a place full of holiness and Divinity and takes on the human form, so that you may meet Him and talk, understand and appreciate, listen and follow, experience and benefit. The tragedy is that when Godhead is invisible, formless, you concretise it as you like and pray to it and get consolation and strength out of it, but when it is before you, concretised in human form, you doubt and discuss and deny! People fall before the stone snake and pour milk on it and wash it lovingly with sacred waters, but when it materialises into an actual cobra, they flee in fear! A true devotee has no fear or disbelief.

Feel no shame in walking on the right path

Prahlada was shivering at the Narasimha (Man-Lion) Form when it appeared from the pillar. When the Lord asked him why, he replied that it was due not to fear at the form of God, for as he said, all forms of His are lovely as they are Divine. It was due to fear that the Form might soon disappear and he might lose the splendid Vision of the Lord. Prahlada's father was so full of passion that he saw the terrible Narasimha Form, but Prahlada did not see it so. To Him, the Lord appeared beautiful and full of grace, for he was saturated with devotion. You must dive deep into the sea to get the pearls. What good is it to dabble among the waves near the shore and swear that the sea has no pearls in it and that all tales of its existence are false? So also if you must realise the full fruit of this Avatar, dive deep and get immersed in Sai Baba. Halfheartedness, hesitation, doubt, cynicism, listening to tales - all are of no avail. Concentrated complete faith - that alone can bring victory. This is true to any worldly activity, is it not? How much more true must it be, therefore, in the spiritual field? But if you have already attached yourselves to some one Name and Form, do not change it, do not choose another in place of the Embodiment of Love. A hundred people might come to your house and

even treat you with affection, but you do not address them as Papa or Daddy. Have your mind fixed on One; do not now and then allow clouds of doubt, like "Is He Great?" "Is He God?" to dim your faith. Be bold. Acknowledge the glory that you have witnessed; proclaim the joy that you have experienced; confess to the Grace that you have earned. When people ask you whether you too are going to Puttaparthi, for example, and whether you too are doing bhajans , say "Yes," proudly, for there is no shame in walking on the right path!

Peace cannot be won by study of books

Some gurus insist on implicit obedience. They even advise their disciples to beat anyone who cavil at their master! I have contempt for all such, and I have come to give them proper advice. The guru can never usurp the position of Siva; it is better that you have Siva Himself as your guru rather than have these power-mad and egoistic teachers, who revel in hatred and aggrandizement. Leave all those who cavil severely alone, with their karma and their ignorant bliss - not merely those who are ignorant of Me but even those who deride all forms of God and the very idea of God. Develop faith in yourselves, so that you can stand like a rock braving the rushing waters of the flood of negation. That faith will make you forget the changing circumstances of the outer world. Ramadas, when he was put in jail, thanked Rama for the great blessing, for he felt that he could now carry on his repetition of God's Name undisturbed by the world, which was mercifully shut off by the high prison walls!

The first steps are the most hard in the pilgrimage

It all depends on the point of view whether you are happy or unhappy. The point of view colours all attitudes and options. Ramadas sang the exploits of Anjaneya (Hanuman) in Lanka and, while doing so, he mentioned the white lilies of the island. Anjaneya heard him sing it and immediately took exception to the description. He said that he had never seen a single white flower there; the lilies of Lanka were red, he declared. Ramadas, however, insisted that they were white. Anjaneya got annoyed at the impudence of poets who tried to pit their imagination against a first-hand expert witness and appealed to

Rama for intercession. Rama agreed with Ramadas! He said that Anjaneya saw them red because his eyes were affected by passionate anger at the entire demonic brood! So, if you have peace (santhi), the world will appear a quite peaceful place; if you have restlessness, the world will be full of restlessness. Santhi is to be won by spiritual disciplines, not by study of books. One judge reads huge big volumes and writes one judgement for a suit; another judge reads the same huge big books and writes quite an opposite judgement for the same suit! Books are just guides for some bit of the road. Afterward, you have to find the way yourselves, and it gets easier as you go. One naya paisa and another make two, four more make an anna, and a hundred make a rupee. The first steps are the most hard; the pilgrimage to Kasi (Benaras) is to begin with the first step. Keep the flame of detachment with tiny sticks until it grows into a big bonfire; welcome all chances to develop discrimination. If you are good for the world, then the Lord of worlds will shower Love on you. Become a blossom, exude the fragrance of selfless service and love (prema); then I shall gladly wear the garland composed of all of you. Take the name of the Lord and repeat it always. I was listening to the bhajans you did here yesterday and today. Your voices were low; they could scarce be heard outside this hall. I know that in a certain institution where they decided to do continuous bhajans (akhanda bhajans), they had to hire a few people at so much per hour so that their plan could succeed. Do bhajans with faith and enthusiasm. Let the whole city shake with devotion you put into every Name that you sing. The Name promotes comradeship and establishes concord; it stills all storms and grants peace.

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

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

22. The Screen Within

Date: 11 July 1959 / Location: Tirupati / Occasion: Thyagabrahma Festival

It has become a convention to address such a gathering as "Brothers and Sisters", though no speaker is prepared to live up to the ideal that such a form of address implies. Many such empty formalities have entered into daily conduct. For example, it was mentioned now, that today is a 'red letter day' in the history of Tirupati. Red-letter days or days that have to be recorded in letters of gold are becoming quite cheap nowadays.

Only four days, remember, deserve that honour:
the day on which devotees gather to sing the glory of God;
the day the hungry are fed;
the day one meets a great sage; and,
the day on which discrimination dawns on the individual.

This day certainly falls in the category, so the secretary's description is, for once, right. I like the work in which this committee is engaged, so I hurried to this place from Bangalore, where yesterday there was continuous singing (akhanda bhajans) by many devotees. I like Saint Thyagaraja. My affection for him is not a matter of today. It is centuries old. And Thyagaraja and Tirupati are also attached to each other. He prayed here that the screen hiding the Light that was inside him might be moved aside by the Lord's Grace. This committee has been trying heroically to erect a place of worship for the saint and a hall to celebrate the Thyagaraja Festival and to encourage the study and practice of his songs. I was sorry when I heard their report and listened to the journeys these people have made to distant places and the dribblets of donations they have received so far.

The means for collecting donations must be pure

Though the report is evidence of their devotion and sacrifice, it reveals the false sense of values that people are developing nowadays. Money (dabbu) must also circulate like blood (blooddu)! Otherwise, that too will cause ill health. There is no better method of using money than for promoting devotion, for then the entire system, individual and social, will benefit. If money is stored and not circulated, it will cause social swellings, and the swellings may become boils and burst. I learn that the secretaries in their despair have thought of running a lottery for completing this structure. I am very much against this plan. A lottery attracts money from persons who are moved by greed; it holds out the attraction of quick riches and tempts men from a wrong angle. It will be tainted money to sell lottery tickets and distribute prizes and use the balance. Though it is for a good purpose, the means must be pure. Everyone who gives even a paisa must give it out of real devotion, knowing that the paisa will be used for the building that one wants to get built. Do not receive money given halfheartedly or with some motive other than devotion. Then only will the building be worthy of Thyagaraja, who spurned the wealth (nidhi) offered by the Rajas of Tanjore and preferred the proximity (sanidhi) of the Lord to the favours bestowed by human donors. It is when diseases are rampant that doctors are needed more; and now, when the standard of moral conduct has fallen very much, people must turn to doctors like Thyagaraja, who dispense the drug of repeating the Name Rama in their own sweet palatable versions. All have equal right to share in the health-giving properties of that drug. In every linguistic group we have great doctors who treat this disease of worldly existence successfully - Surdas in Hindi, Ramalingaswami in Tamil, and Purandharadasa in Kanada, to give just one example in each language.

Thyagaraja's songs impart bliss

Thyagaraja is in a class by himself, not because he sang in Telugu but because his songs are marked by the rare excellences of sincerity of devotion, poetical beauty, and musical melody. The tune suited to the emotional tempo of the idea elucidated in the song; the marking of time quite appropriate to the movement of the meaning; the words, which automatically dictate the marking of time and guide the musician along the notes and the

entire structure of the song, helping the arousal of the yogic urge in the singer - such spontaneous mastery of the science and art of both music and spiritual exercise is seldom found in the history of any language or country. He sang unaware, out of the fullness of his realisation, so the songs have that strange communicative force imparting bliss (ananda) to the singer as well as the listener. Devaki gave birth to Krishna, but the child was brought up by Yasoda in Brindavana. Yasoda had all the delight that the child could give. So too, the Tamil devotees of music have adopted Thyagaraja and have practised his songs more than the Telugu speaking people. They are the Yasoda of Thyagaraja. The Tamils specialise in tune and beat, and they sing with scrupulous adherence to these. However, since they do not grasp the full meaning of the text, distortions painful to the Telugu ear often occur. More and more Telugu devotees have to learn to sing Thyagaraja musical compositions so that the nuances of the Telugu language in the songs may not be missed. After all, the tune, beat, and notations are to help in the more easy assimilation of the message contained in the song and in the transmission to the singer and the listener of the live emotion out of which the song arose in the first instance. This can happen only if the meaning is clear.

Devotion is the reservoir for all the temples

Music as a vehicle of peace is universally popular; men, women, and children of all lands are amenable to its subtle influence. Even animals and plants are susceptible to music. The Lord has said: "Where My devotees sing, there I seat Myself (madbhaktha yathra gaayanthe, thathra thishthaami, Narada)" So the songs of Thyagaraja sung well and with full realisation of the context and meaning are excellent media for the spread of devotion. That is why I came today, to encourage and bless this committee, which is celebrating Thyagaraja Festival. Three things combined to bring Me here: their yearning, faith, and conjunction of convenience! The Thirumalai Tirupati Devasthanam must foster the nurseries of devotion wherever they are found. For it is through devotion that pilgrims flock to the Hill and pray before Venkateswara. If the springs of devotion dry up, with what are the minds of men to be watered? That is the reservoir for all the temples of this land. So, the

Devasthanam can well come to the rescue of this committee. It is doing the work of the Devasthanam, by promoting the musical compositions of Thyagaraja, that develops the spirit of devotion. Thyagaraja was Valmiki himself come to the south of India to sing the glory of Rama and spread the Rama tharaka mantra. He had always the welfare of the individual as well as the world in view. He had the experience of the constant presence of the Lord, so that Rama had to give him audience and come to his help a number of times. His devotion made him ever at peace and joyful.

India is on the threshold of a new era

Prayer and contrition are the two disciplines by which the mind can be cleansed of egoism and hatred; Thyagaraja is a fine example of how this can be done. He was ever engaged in the process of examining his words and deeds and evaluating them on the touchstone of devotion. As the bee in search of honey wanders in search of the flowers, as the creeper clings fast and fondly to the tree lest it fall, as the rill runs to the river and the river rushes to the sea, so Thyagaraja pined for Rama. His songs are pure fragrant blossoms of devotion and, therefore, are immortal. Everyone seeks rest, but the dust of sense craving accumulates on the mind, producing rust and threatening to "burst" it; so one has to test it, off and on, keep it in perfect trim. To remove that rust, the music of Thyagaraja's musical compositions will be useful. Lay aside your cynicism for a while and listen to the captivating tunes and imbibe the sense. The science of spiritual culture and of the control of the mind has been developed and practised in this country for thousands of years, and that is why Indian civilisation has stood the shock of ages and the fury of typhoons that swept whole peoples off their feet. India is still green and fresh, on the threshold of a new era, under the leadership of her own ancient ideals. The taste for good music has also gone nowadays, with the coming of catchy lilts and croonings from the cinemas, and the craze has spread for imitating them even in bhajans! Sing the compositions of Thyagaraja in the classical tunes, and I am sure they will have great appeal. They are not mere songs (paatalu), they are bundles (mutalu) of precious stones; they take you along the road (batalu) to God. If Thyagaraja gets neglected, this Holy Hill will lose height, for the Hill stands so high because it

rests on the pedestal of devotion. Neglect of Thyagaraja can happen only when the people of this land become desperately worldly, deaf to the whisper of the God within.

23. The Temple

Date: 09 September 1959 / Location: Budili Village

I ALWAYS take delight in going to villages and meeting villagers. The villager has a pure unsullied mind, and the atmosphere of the village is sincere and untouched by artificiality. Today is a great day in the history of your village, because you are getting a hospital and a health centre under the Community Development Scheme. I am glad you are aware of its importance. You have made arrangements to celebrate the event in a grand manner, all of you joining together joyfully to carry out the various tasks allotted by the organisers. It is this spirit of cooperation and this joyful comradeship that your village has shown that has brought Me here today. I am Love (Prema), and I want to see prema progress in all places and affairs. Man suffers from two types of ills, physical and mental, the one caused by the dis-equilibrium of the three tempers of wind, bile, and phlegm and the other caused by the dis-equilibrium of the three qualities (gunas): serenity, passion, and inertia (sathwa , rajas , and thamas). One peculiar fact about these two types of illnesses is that the cultivation of virtue cures both. Physical health is a prerequisite for mental health, and mental health ensures physical health! An attitude of generosity, of fortitude in the presence of sorrow and loss, a spirit of enthusiasm to do good, to be of service to the best of one's capacity - these build up the mind as well as the body. The very joy derived from service reacts on the body and makes you free from disease. The body and the mind are closely interrelated.

Despair is a sin against God

You are mostly agriculturists, so I need not tell you that hope is what you feed on most months of the year. Hope sustains you while you plough, sow, plant, and manure the crops that you raise. That hope must be a mental habit even in things distinct from agriculture. Hope will sustain you in all walks of life. Do not give any chance for that vile thing, despair, to eat into the vitals of activity and effort. Despair is a sin against God. When He is in you, why do you lose hope? That is why the Lord says: why fear when I am here? Be

always joyful, optimistic, and courageous. You said that the river Chithravathi that flows near Puttaparthi flows by the side of your village too, and that it is a link between us both. But it is a very feeble link, if at all, for it is full only a few days in the year. The rest of the year it is a sandy waste! If the life-giving waters of courage flow in your heart of hearts, then that Chithravathi is more precious than this dry stream; it is a truer link between you and Me. The village is the backbone of the whole country. The child becomes an adult, the village grows into a town; but we should see that the innocent, simple, sincere child does not grow into a cruel, hard-hearted man. Similarly, we have to see that the quiet, God-fearing simple village does not grow into a noisy negative town. Tomorrow's leaders are being bred in this and other villages all over the land. If you have virtue, towns will have virtue tomorrow. If you have strength, towns will be strong. If you are quarrelsome, towns will be affected by it. Learn to live and work in amity. Make the joyful experience of today a permanent feature of your life.

Do not depend on government for all your wants

Factions and parties in villages are the bane of our community life. All the profit of hard toil is wasted in litigation engendered by hatred arising from them. You grow the food and the material for clothing for the people. You set the example of industry to the indolent. You rise with the cock-crow and you go to bed when the fowls go to sleep. You sweat and toil and watch the sky prayerfully with hands folded in devotion, and you live humbly and thankfully. There is an intimate relationship between the season and farmer (rithu and rythu). Your life runs on an even keel, following the regularity of the seasons. You do not hurry ahead of nature, as townsmen do. I want you to be grateful to the persons who made this hospital possible and to the government who are running it for you. The government collects money from you and arranges these amenities. But you should not depend on the government to satisfy all your wants. Even the officers are not all powerful. They are only servants, who have to obey others. The government is the chauffeur of the car, which is the State. You own the car, and you are the passengers too. Select proper chauffeurs and be vigilant to see that the driver at the wheel does not harm the passengers or the car. That is the duty of the owner, is it not? The

greatest instrument by which success can be ensured for all your efforts is devotion. That will give health, wealth, and prosperity too, for it will eliminate hatred and faction and give more power to your elbow when you plough the land. A man with devotion will do every act as worship of the Lord, so the act will be done better and more efficiently, without any malingering or insincerity. It will also win the Grace of the Lord, so a devotee will be able to raise more crops and enjoy greater health and mental happiness.

Do some inner cultivation

If all the thousand persons in a village sing the glory of the Lord together, that will produce greater harmony and social cohesion than the thousand clamouring and shouting one against the other. Love (prema) will flood the village and fertilise all your efforts if you take the Lord's name and sing together. Do it for some time, and you will yourself bear witness to the changed atmosphere. Sometimes, the cloud of envy and hatred comes to darken relationship. This is due primarily to fear, fear that causes anger. All that will disappear with the emergence of devotion and the humility and wisdom that come in its wake. Anger wastes time, health, and character. Do not allow it free play. Do some inner "cultivation" too, as you are now doing external cultivation in these fields. That has to be done in the field of feelings, motives, desires, and promptings.' I saw your temple while coming in procession on that bullock cart. I found it dilapidated and not in a good clean condition. The heart of the village is the temple; the lamp burning there is the life of the entire village. Keep it burning bright and clear. Someone has placed a broken bandy cart on the narrow verandah of the temple; that is as bad as dishonouring the abode of the Lord. It will not inspire devotion in the people. Keep the temple, however simple and small it may be, clean and free from encumbrances. Do not treat it as some villagers do - as a refuge for idlers, who loiter around and play cards or gamble. Get together a bhajan group in this village. I know you have one; but it must be more active; it must attend the daily worship in this temple and make it a fountain of devotion. That will demonstrate that you have gratitude to the Lord for all the blessings He has showered on you.

Develop the spirit of mutual help

The doctor in charge of the hospital now appealed to you for cooperation. He meant that you should not neglect the bodily ills and damage the tabernacle of God. It is an instrument that has to be well cared for. The doctor is an expert in that subject, having studied medicine for long and being moved by a spirit of service. Honour him for his skill, have faith in him and his medicines, and do not, by neglect or resorting to quacks, worsen the diseases you may have. I say this specially to you, people of Budili! Develop the spirit of mutual help. Villagers have been ruined because one person cannot tolerate the prosperity of another. This is the bane of the Indian character. Everyone is bent on pulling down his neighbour, whereas in the West, they encourage the slightest sign of superior intelligence and industry and show no rivalry. Jealousy is the cause of ruin. It is born of the undue importance attached to the body, the senses, and the accumulation of objects that cater to the senses. See things in their proper perspective, and give them their worth but no more. There are greater things that grant joy and peace. Try to get hold of them; every one of you has a right to possess them. None can keep them away from your grasp.

Fix your attention on the eternal values

You spoke of the Brahmeswara Temple that was once here but that has since gone under the sands of the river. Let not the temple of the Lord that is in your innermost heart be similarly overwhelmed by the sands of lust and anger. You talked of many sages and yogis who have done penance here, according to tradition. Well, those sages and yogis knew which is real and which is unreal. They controlled the vagaries of the mind and dwelt in peace (santhi). Fix your attention on these eternal values; then you will not be swept off your feet by gusts of passion or fits of fury. Then this village, filled with love and mutual helpfulness, will become the ideal for miles around.

24. Many-pointedness And One-pointedness

Date: 25 November 1959 / Location: Madakasira

THOUGH this area and this town are not new to Me, this is the first time that most of you are seeing Me. When a few more dishes are prepared, it become a festival day. So, when the district athletic competitions are held here, it is a festival for the boys and students as well as for parents and others interested in the welfare of the country. You have all put on a glad face forgetting the daily drudgery. You have witnessed the competitions and the games and enjoyed the keenness and enthusiasm of the participants. The students sitting before us are the instruments with which the India of tomorrow is to be shaped. Their teachers, who are also here, are indeed lucky, for destiny has allotted them the noble task, the golden chance, to serve the interests of the people in a pleasant manner, spending their time in the company of innocent fresh children. The father, mother, and teacher are the three primarily responsible for moulding the future of the country. Of these, teachers play the most important role, for they are specially trained and selected for the job; they voluntarily take it up and therefore must carry it out to the best of his ability without demur; they are implicitly trusted by the child, the parents, and the public alike and the trust must be repaid by honest service. The teacher is honoured and respected by the children and the public as the guru, with all the hallowed associations of that word. The teacher may be poor, uncared for by the people at the top, but the satisfaction gotten by the quiet creative work is enough compensation.

Teacher should himself follow the advice he gives

The teacher should never curse his pupils whatever the provocation; he must always bless them. If he swears like a boor, he reduces himself to the level of a boor. He should watch his behaviour rigorously and find out whether there is some habit or trait that if imitated by the pupil will be harmful. He should himself follow the advice that he gives. Otherwise, he will be teaching hypocrisy to the little children and encouraging them to acquire the cleverness not to be found out. It is sheer mental weakness and cowardice

that allows hypocrisy to develop. If you have the courage to face the consequences, you will never utter falsehood. Do not try to rule through the easier means of fear, for that is full of dangerous consequences to the pupils. Try rather the path of Love. Teachers should themselves take to the discipline of repetition of the Lord's Name and meditation; this will give them the inner quiet they sorely need. They should create an atmosphere of plain living and high thinking, for pupils unconsciously accept them as heroes and begin imitating them. They should hand over to the rising generation the riches that past generations have amassed, viz., the spiritual disciplines and discoveries. Learn them yourselves, and teach them to the pupils under your care. This will enable you to discharge the debt due from you to the sages of old. I know that when you sow bitter seeds you cannot grow sweet grain. Yet, certain things are possible even under the limitations of the present curricula and courses of study.

Be grateful to the village where you were born

The unmistakable sign of rain is the wetness of the ground; so too, the sign of a person who has had some years of schooling is good manners. One must have humility and know that the field of knowledge is so vast that one has been unable even to touch its fringe; one must be aware of one's kinship with all mankind and must show a keenness to do service to others, at all times, gladly, and without desire for publicity. The educated boy must move with others in a free and friendly way. God is the moving force in everyone. God is behind all good impulses and useful attitudes, you are all separate beads strung together on that one thread, God. Hatred is ugly, unnatural, and inhuman; it is against the very core of love that is in every one. Always respect another's opinion and another's point of view. Do not start a quarrel at the slightest difference of opinion. The other person may be right and you may be wrong. Ponder over their argument; they might have had the advantage of knowing more about the subject, or you may be prejudiced either for or against, or they may not know as much as you. All differences of opinion are not due to personal hatred, remember. Above all, I must tell you one thing. Honour your parents and the villagers among whom you grow up. Be grateful to the parents for all the care and sacrifice they undergo for your

sake. Be grateful also to the village where you first saw the light. What good is it if after being born in one place and bred in the cradle of its love if you run away somewhere and make that new place better? Always turn your attention to your village and think of ways and means of bettering its lot. That is the gratitude you must show.

Start the spiritual pilgrimage early in life

By all means, master the subjects prescribed in your curriculum of studies, but along with them, study also the principles of the Eternal Universal Religion (Sanathana Dharma). Do not give it up as old (sanathana), coming down from very ancient times. It has stood the test of centuries and is capable of giving you joy and peace even today. It is like a very loving grandmother, anxious and capable of feeding you with nice good dishes. You would not allow such a grandmother to die of neglect, would you? A miser lived in a leaky house. The rainwater poured into the house through the roof, but he sat through it all. Neighbours laughed at him and warned him to get the roof repaired. But in the rainy season he replied, "Let the rains subside, how can I repair it now?" And when the rains stopped, he replied, "Why should I worry about leaks now the rains have stopped?" Do not suffer the leaks when the rains come, as they are sure to do; repair the roof now. That is to say, acquaint yourselves with the spiritual primers and textbooks now; begin the first lessons of silence, prayer, and chanting the Name of the Lord. It is never too soon in the spiritual pilgrimage. Now when you wear bush-coats and strut about in pants, causing envy among the little children who cannot afford these, you feel elated. But you can be legitimately proud only when you are able to control the vagaries of the mind and direct your emotions and desires along honourable healthy channels, braving even the ridicule of your so-called friends. That is real freedom, real success. If you reach that stage, then you become a seasoned driver and can be trusted with the wheel on any road and with any cargo, however precious. Then you will not cause harm either to yourself or to others. Then you deserve to become a leader.

Only men with ideals are remembered by posterity

Be eager and earnest to know more and more about the art of joyful living, happy unperturbed living. One can advance only step by step, and there is the danger of slipping down two steps when you climb one. What matters is the determination to climb, the resistance with which the sliding tendency is met, the yearning to rise to progress, to conquer the lower impulses and instincts. If you have that, the hidden spring of power will surge up within you; the Grace of the Lord will smooth your path. Keep the ideal before you; march on. The student of today becomes the teacher of tomorrow and headmaster later. How? By study, by the development of a reliable character. Only those with ideals are respected and remembered in gratitude by posterity. Rama is honoured and worshipped, while Ravana is execrated. Why? Because of the character they evinced. Have the progress of your country, your Sanathana Dharma , and your own Self always before your mind's eye. Let the hunger for serving these three grow more and more. Then your studies will serve a purpose and give you a sense of mission. Then you will acquire fear of sin, fear of the God within, fear of the mean, respect for elders, and faith in your own self. One thing more: Do not do anything that brings tears into the eyes of your parents. Honour them and obey them. Do not condemn them as old-fashioned. "Old is Gold." They speak out of a longer experience of the world and its tricks.

Winners must be thankful to the losers

Well, I am asked to distribute prizes (bahumathis) to you by Anjanappa and others. They meant that I should distribute the prizes, but "bahumathi " means "multi-mindedness". Now, I never give that type of mind! I always insist on single-mindedness (ekagratha). Anjanappa wished that I give you prasad (propitiatory offering); My prasad is always the Gift of Bliss! It can be got only through single-mindedness. I do not like this competition and strife, this cultivation of egoism through prizes and ranking. I am sure none of you here will be spoilt either by pride or by dejection. Take failure coolly and take victory also coolly. The second is a very difficult mental exercise. The winners must be thankful to the losers for their victory, for if the losers had put in a little more effort, they would have carried away the prizes instead. The losers, by running neck to neck with you, prompted you to run faster and thus

encouraged you to win. They gave you the grit to put in that extra pace, which brought the prize into your hands. And the losers! I ask you not to lose self-confidence. Do not attach too much value to victory or too much importance to defeat. Even in examinations, when you fail, do not be overcome by despair and do silly things like attempting to take your own life. Life is much more precious than that. You are born for much greater things than the passing of examinations. Be brave and patient. All is not lost if you do not pass an examination, which tests just one aspect of your intelligence! Your destiny does not depend upon examination marks; it depends more on character, will-power, and the Grace of God. The Headmaster hoped that this school would become a Higher Secondary School. I bless that it may be raised to that status soon and become a source of light and culture for this part of the country.

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

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

25. Man And Mind

Date: 22 January 1960 / Location: Aukiripalli / Occasion: Markandeya Sanskrit College

Dr. Bhagavantam asked Me now to "speak" to you, but I do not make speeches. I only "converse" with you. I do not make public speeches or address meetings, as so many of the persons who spoke now do. They made "speeches", which were regular feasts to the ear. My conversation will be, on the other hand, "medicine for the mind". Theirs were lectures; Mine are mixtures. So you must take my talk into your mind very attentively and without wasting or spilling even a word. Usually, when you are asked where God is, you point to the sky or some such distant place and say He is there, as if He is just a Person and has a definite place of Residence. But man (nara) himself is God (Narayana), each one of them; God (Madhava) is man (manava), each one of the species. So the number of Gods is thirty-three crores, as given in the spiritual texts or, as can be calculated today, much more. It is delusion that has induced the embodiment of God to imagine and behave as if he is just a man (nara). To remove that delusion, there are various means suited to the needs of each sufferer. But all the treatment and all the struggle is to achieve the experience of being Narayana and discard the limited, bound, relative entity, nara . That is the one harvest yielded by all the various processes. Until one understands oneself, the delusion and the resultant grief cannot be ended.

India is the birth place of spiritual science

Let me tell you that you cannot understand Me and My Secret without first understanding yourselves. For if you are too weak to grasp your own Reality, how can you hope to fathom the much grander Reality of My advent? To grasp My meaning, you have to tear into tatters the doubts and theories you now have and cultivate love (prema), for the embodiment of prema can be understood only through prema . The "miracles and wonders" that cannot be explained by the categories of science are so natural to Me that I am amused when you label them as miracles. The Lord had announced that He would come down for the restoration of righteousness (dharma) and that He would

assume human Form so that all might gather round Him and feel the thrill of His companionship and conversation. And the Lord has come, as announced. For those who are drawn by the pulls of the mind, the intellect, and the ego, things beyond the ken of these three are inscrutable. There is a limit beyond which the mind and the intellect cannot traverse. That is why the Supreme Power has to envelop Itself with delusion (maya) and come down to the level of human comprehension. This Bharathavarsha (India) is the birth place of spiritual science. Here, every man, woman, and child is a student of that science. Each one here is entitled to the study of that supreme subject. The ancient heritage must be handed down to each boy and girl in the land, not merely to the students of institutions like this. In this spiritual science, some one method or other has been emphasised during the various periods of history. It was mystic formula (mantra) once, ceremonial sacrifice (yaga) another time, divine communion (yoga), a little later, and after the rise of Buddhism and its spread to all parts of India and even her neighbours, it has been magical and mystical formularies (tantra). Sankara gave great encouragement to tantra , and Poet Kalidasa also considered it important. It flourished due to the encouragement that Sivaji gave to the tantric scholars, and it dominated the spiritual life of the country for many centuries.

Tantra, a spiritual science based on energy

Tantra means only "that which saves well," so there is no reason to feel apologetic about it. It is just a means to achieve the aim of the merging of the individual soul with Brahman (the Supreme Soul). Sir John Woodroffe has shown in his books that tantra is a systematic discipline, which employs symbolism and sublimation to purify the instincts and control the mind. He removed to a great extent the prejudice that had kept people away from tantra . It is spiritual science based on the feminine aspect of energy (sakthi), which plays a central part in the spiritual progress of humanity. Examine, each of you, your own mental make-up and see whether you have used your discrimination and worldly knowledge to clothe yourself in detachment, so that you do not suffer from attachment to things that will fade away. There is no dearth of books telling you how to be free from grief. The Gita is available in all languages and at a very low cost, say, four annas a copy. The

Bhagavatha and the Ramayana and all other books are sold at the rate of thousands of copies per day, but there is nothing to indicate that they have been read and assimilated. The breath of the mouth must give an inkling of the food partaken, is it not? But the habits, the conduct, the character of the readers of these books have not undergone any change for the better. Egoism and greed are still rampant, hatred has not abated, and envy eats into the vitals of society.

Spiritual study must not develop egoism

Similarly, do not treat My words too lightly. Do not say, "We saw Sai Baba and heard his talk and it was all very fine." Decide at least to carry out some one piece of advice for your spiritual advance. It is very wrong to tarnish the body making it perform a single bad deed or making it move in bad company. Sanctify the body, sanctify each activity by devoting it to a high purpose. I am not commanding you today on the basis of my authority, I am telling you out of the fullness of Love (Prema), on the basis of the right I have to chastise you and direct you along the path. I know that the elders, while themselves neglecting the cultivation of higher virtues and themselves discarding the discipline of repetition of the name and meditation, commit the additional crime of laughing at their children who feel the sweetness of the Name of the Lord and who frequent the places where they can get good company, noble thoughts, and spiritual teaching. They call such young persons demented and try to cure them by their own special course of punishment. Their children's insanity is certainly preferable to the madness for luxury, for gambling, for drink, and for loose morals that have become the only property the elders leave behind for their children. Your study here must develop your powers of discrimination, not your egoism. Do not argue for argument's sake, for it will lead only to dry scholarship and intellectual pride. Such craving for criticism is a disease of the intellect, and it has to be nipped in the bud. Examine the thing that you do not like very closely and with great care. Do not jump to conclusions, favourable or unfavourable. That would be abdicating your precious status of "thinker" and your responsibility to yourself. Even the sun, which is millions of miles away, can set fire to some object if by means of a magnifying glass its rays are focused at one point. So also, focus all your

powers of observation and judgement on one topic and it will surely stand revealed.

Man can and should be the master of his mind

The world itself is subject to constant agitation; how can your plan to lead a quiet contented peaceful life upon it succeed? It is like trying to float without any heaving or falling while being tossed about on the waves of the sea. Under such conditions, the best thing is to recognise the fact and not to worry about the unavoidable. Manushya , the word meaning "man", implies that man is the master of his mind (manas). When people come to Me and complain that they cannot concentrate, I laugh at their weakness, for even the driver of a car is a master of the art of concentration. He does not pay heed to the chatter from the back seat or to the chatter of the person on his left. He is watching the road in front of him with single-pointed attention.

Learn to listen with one-pointed attention

If you have faith, more than half the battle is won. That is why, in the Gita, Krishna asks Arjuna, "Have you listened to what I have said with one-pointed attention?" Arjuna, good student that he is, replies that even in the midst of the opposing armies ranged on the battlefield, he has listened to the words of the Lord with keen concentration. Learn that concentration and your learning will stand you in good stead. I have been asked to inaugurate the Library of this College by the token act of giving over these books to the Principal to be placed on the shelves along with the books already there. Come and read the books in the library and enjoy the teachings that are given by great spiritual aspirants and divine seers. Let children also come and handle the books and turn over the pages; the library must be useful for all persons of this town from the age of 2 to 60 or 70. It is not like a hospital, which is unnecessary for some. It benefits all, so all must make the best use of it. The wisdom that these books contain should percolate to every home in Aukiripaili. Sanskrit learning has to advance by your efforts and your enthusiasm. The whole world will benefit if you keep it burning bright. Fulfill that responsibility of yours to the best of your ability, and the Lord will shower His Grace on you.

Do not mistake the technique for the goal; do not lose your way in the tangle of scholarship. Scholarship and learning are only means for the mastery of the mind. Turn from the Creation to the Creator.

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

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

26. The World, My Mansion

Date: 26 June 1960 / Location: Chennai

This gathering reminds Me of the sea, for here we have in this hall streams of people coming from various directions toward God; people who follow various paths to attain peace and happiness. My Mission is to give you Bliss (Ananda), and I am ever ready to do so. My language may give some of you a little trouble, for you may not follow Telugu, but in this gathering there will be some who will not be able to follow whatever language I speak in; so I shall speak in Telugu itself. There are four things in which every man must interest himself: "Who am I? Where did I come? Whither am I going? How long shall I be here?" All spiritual inquiry begins with these questions and attempts to find out the answers. The four Vedas give the answers to these four questions. Suppose a letter is put into the post box without the address to which it should go or the address from which it has come. It will not reach anywhere. It is a waste to have written it. So too, it is a waste to have come into this world if it is not known where you came from and where you go. The letter will go to the dead letter office! The individual soul will be caught in the cycle of birth and death and can never find itself. For this, enquiry about the Self and for the successful arrival at the correct answers, spiritual discipline is essential. The answers must become part of your experience.

Have tolerance and patience in every act

Spiritual exercises must be done in a disciplined, systematic manner, in an atmosphere of virtue. Just as we have fans here in this hall to cool the atmosphere and make it possible for such a large gathering to sit packed in this hall, so too the fans of truth, righteousness, peace, and love (sathya , dharma , santhi , and prema) are necessary to reduce the sweltering heat of ignorance, falsehood, injustice, and indiscipline. In a world where dharma is being insulted and denied at every turn, peace and tolerance are the roads through which one can save oneself. This is the sum and substance of what I have to tell you and what you have to cultivate. In every act, have tolerance, patience, mutual help. In the family, cultivate patience and mutual respect; in

the community, have dharma and justice; in the community of peoples, have the ideal of peace. The body is said to be the tabernacle of God; the world is the body of God. A pinprick on the toe is immediately recognised as an injury to the self because the toe is part of the self-same body. So too, suffering in one corner of the world is as much the concern of the Lord as suffering in any other. When Andhra State was formed, someone told Me that I had been taken out of the Madras State and made an Andhra! I told him that the whole world was My Mansion and that Madras and Andhra were rooms in that Mansion! The world is a temple, the temple of the Lord, His body where He resides. When I was coming by car to this place, I passed through several streets and I found several halls decorated, because they were having religious discourses there, and readings and expositions of sacred texts and scriptures. Crowds of listeners had gathered in each place; there was no lack of enthusiasm for associations and group singing. Yet, atheism is rampant, and the number of people who deny God and decry Godward-bound aspirants is increasing. Why? Because eating the food does not by itself guarantee digestion. Practice of even a thousandth part of what one has read or heard can alone help in giving peace and joy.

You are here to fulfill God's purpose

What is wanted now is effort, courage, and faith. In effort, you must follow a regulated routine learnt from some adept in the field. For courage, you must feel your own importance for your uplift; never call yourself a sinner born in sin, bred in sin, and engaged in sin. No; that kind of self-condemnation ill becomes a child of God. In every one of you, God is the moving spirit, the very Soul; how then can you be evil when you are here to fulfill God's purpose, according to his Will, His plan, His law? He has endowed you with many faculties so that you may seek Him and reach Him. You are not, therefore, a helpless neglected individual undergoing a sentence of death. You are an embodiment of Bliss, born to a rich heritage, which is yours for the asking. Only you do not ask. Have faith in your destiny and work gladly and steadily to attain it. Devotion (bhakthi) is simply the attachment (rakthi) toward Bhagavan (God), affection toward the Supreme. One need not fly away from hearth and home to cultivate it. If the seed is planted far away

from the parent tree, does it become any different? Boil it and then of course it will not grow again and burden the world. Similarly, boil your instincts and impulses and scorch the sensory cravings that enslave you. That brings you nearer to God, wherever you may be.

Both good and bad emanate from the same mind

From the Ocean of milk when it was churned by the celestial beings and demons, there emanated the cow of plenty (kamadhenu), the tree that grants all wishes (kalpataru), the Goddess of Wealth, the four-tusked elephant of Indra, and also the deadliest of poisons (halahala). Similarly, the mind of man is churned by the forces of good and evil every day, and there emanates from the same mind both good and bad. The bad comes because the mind flows toward sensory pleasures and is lost in the swamps of greed and envy, of lust and pride. When the lion awakes from sleep and roars, all the tiny animals that held sway till then take to their heels. So too, when you awake and repeat the Om (Pranava) mantra, all the paltry animal instincts that strutted about in the darkness will flee. In your own heart you have the entity that is beyond time and space, and if you go on contacting it by the Pranava or by any other symbol, the wild thoughts and impulses will not dare to approach you. If you have the Grace of God, no planet can harm you; maleficent influences even from the most powerful combination of planets with which the astrologers terrify you will disappear in a trice. In order to get that Grace, there are two prescriptions: speak lovingly, as far as the world is concerned, and speak the truth, as far as the next world is concerned. Love (prema) is the weapon, and enquiry is the wheel that must be revolved perpetually to get the light of prema . Until prema emerges, you have to be in the darkness of hatred, where even the slightest movement creates fear and suspicion.

Charge the battery of your spiritual discipline continuously

Never yield to indolence or despair. Suffer loss and grief gladly, for they help to toughen your personality. The diamond is found amidst rocks; you will have to blast through the vein to get gold. Follow the strict regimen that the doctor enforces in order to make the medicine yield the best result. The battery of

your "car" is charged when you come to Puttaparthi or when you go to some other holy place. Or at least that should be the aim of pilgrimage. Charge the battery of your spiritual effort and then, after you return home, do not keep the car idle. If you do, the battery will run down; take the car around and keep it going; then the battery will charge itself. So also, if you do not continue the holy company, the good attitude, bhajans , and remembering God's Name, all this charging becomes a waste. I have not come for propaganda or publicity or gaining disciples or devotees. I am yours and you are Mine. Where then is the need for publicity? I give not lectures but mixtures for your mental health and moral re-invigoration. So take My words as medicine necessary for your health.

Man did not come here to sleep and eat; he came to manifest, by disciplined processes, the Divine in him. That is why he is called vyakthi (individual), he who makes vyaktha (clear) the sakthi (power) that is in him - the divine energy that motivates him. For this purpose he has come endowed with this body and the intelligence needed to control it and divert it to useful channels of activity. You must achieve this by steady pursuit of morality and good deeds.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

27. The Underlying Truths

Date: 10 July 1959 / Location: Bengaluru / Occasion: Akhanda bhajans

This life, which begins with a wail, must end with a smile. When you were a little baby, everyone around you smiled, though you kept on wailing. But when you die all around you must weep at the loss, and you should smile in peace and quiet resignation. The pleasures from sensual enjoyment (bhoganandam) must finally be converted into happiness from divine union (yoganandam); the pleasures of the senses must gradually be left behind, and you must develop a taste for the higher and more lasting pleasure derivable from the springs of your own personality. For divine union, devotion to God is the main thing, the head and the crown; peace and happiness are the other essentials. The fire of sorrow and joy burns when the fuel of impressions left on the mind by actions of past lives (vasanas) is fed into the furnace of the mind. Take away the fuel, and the fire dies out. Take away the vasanas, and you become your own master. This is done in yoga by various physiological and psychological exercises. But devotion is the easier means for this end. Remembering God's Name is enough; it is said that the name Sitarama (Sita's Name) sufficed in the Thretha Yuga (Era), the name Radheshyama (Krishna) sufficed in the Dwapara Yuga, and in the present Kali Yuga, I tell you, all divine Names have that capacity.

De-individualisation is moksha

When you recite Radheshyama, dwell on the significance of the Name; the deeper mysteries of the word must be present before the mind's eye. Then, remembrance of the Name will yield quicker results. Radha is not an individual. It symbolises Dha-ra meaning Earth, the creation. Krishna or Shyama is the Creator, the Active Principle: the Chith (Awareness), the Purusha (Supreme Being). Sakthi (Supreme Energy) is the Supreme Atma; the individual is the individual soul; the Ocean is the Supreme Energy and the Wave is the individual. All the taste and all the forces and roar of the wave are derived from the ocean, and they disappear into the ocean itself. The disappearance of the wave form and the wave name is called liberation

(moksha): that is, merging of the wave in the ocean from which it seemed to differ. De-individualisation is, in other words, liberation. When you do bhajans and sing the Names of God, you should contemplate on such underlying truths. The verse, "Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare; Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare ," has sixteen words, and each of the sixteen signifies a virtue that has to be cultivated along with that bhajan . (Here Baba recited a Telugu song composed by Him on the spot, which indicated the sixteen qualities to be developed by a spiritual person).

Sixteen qualities to be developed

A spiritual seeker should be:

1. full of devotion,
2. prepared to enjoy suffering,
3. free from the attachment to the transitory,
4. eager to serve the Lord,
5. of correct conduct,
6. charitable,
7. having an unsullied reputation,
8. with no blemish on his character,
9. fully content,
10. endowed with good qualities,
11. equipped with all the virtues,
12. equipped with the fruits of learning,
13. ripe in wisdom,
14. self-controlled,
15. adorned with commendable social traits,
16. full of humility and fully surrendered to God. [In Sanskrit, a spiritual seeker must be
17. a bhaktha ,
18. a thapoyuktha ,
19. a samsara muktha ,
20. a padasaktha of the Lord,
21. a vihitha ,

22. a danasahitha ,
23. yaso-mahitha ,
24. a kalmasha rahitha ,
25. a purna,
26. a gunagana ,
27. an utthirana ,
28. a vidya-vikirna ,
29. a jnana visthirana ,
30. swantha ,
31. a sadhguna krantha ,
32. a vinaya vishrantha , and finally, a padaswantha of the Lord

If he has these virtues (here Baba quoted the last line of the song he had just composed), "He is I, I am He. (Vade nenoudhu, nene vadoudu)." Or, at least one must pray, with verbal repetition of each word, for the inner growth of each of these attainments, which will take one nearer the goal. Yes, you must struggle. You cannot go to the top without an effort. Have faith in ultimate victory, and gather courage and faith from wherever you can get them. Do not have contact with persons who sow the seeds of fear or doubt. Treasure all the confidence that you get here, foster it and guard it carefully. Do not let it slip from your grasp the moment you get beyond this gate. The seedlings should be well cared for, watered, manured, and protected from insect pests. Can you pass an examination without studying the texts? But that is what you hope to do! You must liberate yourself from attachment to fleeting things and grow strong and be above temptation.

Never discuss spiritual standards of others

The fish are happy because they are immersed in water; when thrown out of the water, they struggle and suffer mortal pain. So too, one is happy when he is immersed in love, peace, and truth (prema , santhi , and sathya); those are the components of the water that gives life; when one is thrown out of the water, one also suffers and feels terribly miserable. Life is "being" thrown out of the water; spiritual discipline is the struggle to leap back into the life-giving element. For success in this struggle, do not depend upon another; depend

upon yourself and on the Grace of God. Remember that Divinity (Rama) and worldly desire (kama) cannot be together; where Rama is, kama cannot thrive; where kama is, how can Rama enter? Every person must have, as a single stream (dhara), worship (arad) as the basis (a-dhara); that is the easiest means of winning Shyama (Krishna, the Creator). When you carry on such effort unbroken, the Lord Himself will come as your Guide. When Madhurakavi was doing penance, he saw a big pillar of light in front of him reaching up to the sky, and he saw Dakshinamurthy in that light. Then the pillar moved on and on so that he could follow it, and at last, the light led him on to Nammalwar, who agreed to be his guru! The guru later made him realise the Reality. Vemana and Thyagaraja reached the heights of spiritual experience through the Grace of the Lord and the encouragement they derived from His Appearance. Pray to Him and He reveals Himself. He is the yarn in the cloth, the gold in this seeming variety of jewelry; he is the mud in all this pottery; he is that water that sustains all these waves. Once you have realised this, you will be filled with love and respect for all, for all are the same Form as the Lord Himself. Do not cynically talk about the spiritual aspirants. What do you know of the mood of a devotee, that you so easily pass judgement thereon and label him as insane or out of his mind? Never discuss the spiritual standards reached by others; persevere in your own path. "Be moderate in talk, in sleep, in food (yukthahara viharasya)."

Remembrance of the Name is the best antidote for all ills

Never be ashamed to sing the name of God or to sing bhajans . Be proud that you get the chance, be glad that your tongue is put to the best use. When the artist sees a stone, he sees immediately the form of beauty hidden in that stone imprisoned in it; and he will not get peace of mind until he releases that form from the clutches of the stone. Do not see the stone as stone, see the God in it, the basic reality underlying it. Vemana did not visit any temple for years; for years he laughed at those who considered that the image was a symbol of Divinity. But when his daughter died, he was one day holding her picture in his hand weeping over the loss. Then the idea suddenly struck him that if the picture could cause sorrow in him and bring tears, the image could also evoke joy and bring tears to those who know the beauty and the glory of

the Lord. The image was just a reminder of the Presence of the Lord everywhere and in everything. The Lord is the sun, and when His rays fall upon your heart, unimpeded by the clouds of egoism, the lotus bud blooms and the petals unfold. Remember, only buds that are ready will bloom; the rest have to wait patiently. Meanwhile, carry on with the companionship of the Name of the Lord; remembering the Name is the best antidote for all ills.

In order to promote harmony, the first rule you must follow is control of the tongue. Do not give all your thoughts immediate expression. Select, ponder, and then, speak out. Speak softly, sweetly, without malice in your heart; speak as if you are addressing the Sai who resides in everyone. Use the tongue to recite the Name of the Lord; use the feet to go on pure and holy errands; use the heart to contain pure thoughts and feelings.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

28. The Best Tonic

Date: 21 September 1960 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Sathya Sai Hospital

The greatest disease (or absence of ease) is the absence of peace. When the mind gets peace, the body also will have health. So, everyone who craves for good health must pay attention to the emotions, feelings, and motives that animate the individual. Just as you give clothes for a wash, you have to wash the mind free from dirt again and again; otherwise, if dirt accumulates and you form a "habit", it is difficult for the dhobi (person who washes the clothes) as well as harmful to the clothes. It should be a daily process; you should see that no dirt settles upon the mind. That is to say, you should move about in such company that dirt is avoided. Falsehood, injustice, indiscipline, cruelty, hate - these form the dirt. Truth, righteousness, peace, love (sathya , dharma , santhi , prema) - these form the clean elements. If you inhale the pure air of these latter, your mind will be free from evil bacilli and you will be mentally sturdy and physically strong. As Vivekananda used to say, you should have nerves of steel and muscles of iron. That is to say, you should have hope and joy and elation as an unshakable resolution, not despair and dejection.

What is studied is not put into practice

Your heart should be like glass, with the spiritual light inside illuminating the world outside, with the world outside reacting on the inner urges and making them lean toward service, sympathy, and mutual help. Now, people read and study all kinds of unintelligible Vedantic texts and struggle with commentaries and notes and translations to grasp their sense. It is being poured down their throats, but the portion does not get down to soften the heart. It is not translated into practice. The truths of the Vedanta are put on for public exhibition, as in a drama, where appropriate dresses are worn on the stage but taken off when the actor moves off the stage. They do not adhere to them all the time to derive the Bliss of the Soul (Atmananda), which they can give. It is chiefly a matter of careful, well-timed, regulated discipline; it cannot be got by spurts and skips; it has to be climbed step by step, each step being used as a foothold for the next. There is no systematic

living according to any known principle, now; this is true of the student, the householder, the mistress, and the master of the house. Virtues have to be cultivated in the home; each member sharing in the joy with the rest, each one seeking for opportunities for helping others. This attitude has to be stuck to, so that it may stay as character. How can a vessel kept with the mouth downward get filled with water? It has to open up and receive the good impulses. You have to learn each lesson by systematic study. Application and effort alone will give success.

Have faith in the Lord and His Grace

In all effort, if you trust in a Higher Power, which is ready to come to your help, work is made easy. This comes out of devotion and reliance on the Lord, the source of all Power. When you travel by train, you have only to purchase the ticket, enter the proper train, and take a seat, leaving the rest to the engine. Why should you carry the bed and trunk on your head? So too, put your trust in the Lord and carry on to the best of your ability. Have faith in the Lord and His Grace. Try to earn it by using the intelligence and the conscience with which He has endowed you. You have all gathered here to celebrate the completion of four years in the life of this Sathya Sai Hospital. So I want to tell you that the best and the wisest thing is to see that you do not fall ill. The doctor read out in the report that this year the number of out-patients as well as the number of operations was greater than last year, as if that is a sign of progress! But I do not think that speaks well of the people around and their sense of values. The hospital should radiate preventive measures also and try to educate the villagers in methods of avoiding illness. Develop self-reliance; that is the best tonic. You have been born because you did not pass in certain subjects; there is some balance of experience that you must acquire to complete the course. If you get convinced that your true nature is the Atma , then you have finished the course and "passed".

Cultivate prema toward all beings

For reaching that stage, you should start with the cultivation of the "feeling of kinship with all beings" - sarvasamanabhava , as it is called. It is very difficult

to get, but that is the only way to see the Atma that is in all. For example, a person with that sincerity of feeling (bhava) will not be happy at the killing of animals for food or even hunting them. Why should you seek the animal to its den, lie in wait for it, and lay traps for it, so that you may derive pleasure by killing it? Prema should be cultivated toward all beings so that you may see the Innermost Self in all beings. The Atma is Omnipresent. Do not think it is found only in persons belonging to certain castes or colours or creeds, or that it is of a big size in fat people or of a brilliant nature in rich people. It is consistently being, awareness, bliss absolute (sath , chith , ananda) in every being. Spiritual exercise has to go a long way to win this outlook. But you can begin with little things. You can avoid causing annoyance to others, can't you? Even if you are unable or unwilling to do service to others, at least, if you desist from causing harm, that is meritorious service indeed! For example, take the words you speak. I always say purification of words leads to cleansing of the mind. That is why I insist on quiet talk, sweet talk, and little talk; the pure and serene (sathwic) talk - no anger, no heat, no hate. Such talk will cause no quarrel, no blood pressure, and no factions. It will promote mutual respect and love. Then again, do not cynically laugh at the good that others do or at the spiritual exercises of others. Inquire, but do not insult. Respect the sincerity of the other person; respect also elders and people with more experience than you. In company, behave in a well-mannered way, showering brotherhood and joy on all around you.

Moderation in food is always to be welcomed

Strive for the happiness of the community and of the human race. Pray that all people everywhere may have peace and plenty. Be eager to do good and be good. This being a function connected with the Hospital, I must tell you about certain other things also. By regulating your diet and avoiding certain bad habits, you can preserve health. Moderate food and food of the pure (sathwic) type, will promote mental poise and also physical happiness. Moderation in food is always to be welcomed. Many people consume more than the necessary quantity of rich food, and such have to practise moderation. So too, if you do not smoke, you escape a number of illnesses that follow that passionate (rajasic) practice. Any intoxicant or stimulant,

because it disturbs nature's even trend, is harmful. Moderation in food, moderation in talk and in desires and pursuits, contentment with what little can be got by honest labour, eagerness to serve others and to impart joy to all - these are the most powerful of all the tonics and health-preserves known to the science of health, the Sanathana Ayur-Veda , the Veda of the full life.

29. Sathya Sai Gita (i)

Date: 27 September 1960 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

In the Sathya Sai Gita , which Thirumalachar read and explained just now, he has given My name to the "Sathya (Truth)" that he has experienced. Persons who have seen Me are many, but those who have understood My significance are few. So too, those who have "seen" the Gita , that is to say, read it and learned it by rote, are legion, but those who have grasped the sense are few. Gita must be "thagi " (which is the reverse of Gita), that is to say, in Telugu, "drunk" or imbibed! Then, you become a "thagi ", full of vairagyam - and you are free from senseless attachment to the sensory world. Giving up things that please and bind, that ensnare and enslave (i.e. give up raga) - that is what is meant by dispassion (vairagyam). Another thing about the Gita is that it does not speak of the householder stage of life. It deals with the fundamentals of living - not living in this compartment or that but living as such, and the deepest problems of life. It was repeated by one householder to another, so it does not prescribe the recluse's "escape". That is the lesson, both in that Gita and this.

Many read the Gita but few benefit

Gita means "song". Krishna sings at Brindavan with the flute, and He sings on the battlefield too. In both places, the call is for the particular to merge with the Infinite, the Universal. For Him, the place of cremation (rudrabhumi) as well as the sanctified ground (badrabhumi) are the same; they are equally placed for imparting spiritual instruction in the form in which the devotee most likes it, namely, song. And imagine with what concentration Arjuna heard it! His concentration was as steady as that of the cowherd girls who listened to the Message of the Flute in Brindavan. Arjuna forgot the opposing armies, his own hatreds and enthusiasm for war, and became immersed in the teaching he secured. If you develop that one-pointedness in your own particular "battlefields", you can assuredly also listen to the Gita - the Bhagavad Gita or the Sai Gita or the Sathya Sai Gita - that is intended for you. The Gita was spoken to remove the delusion caused by ignorance, and it

succeeded in removing it as far as Arjuna was concerned. Others, like Sanjaya and Dhritarashtra, who also heard it did not benefit, because they were still bound by their own particular brand of ignorance. Dhritarashtra was all the while worried that the battle had not started yet and that his sons' enemies had not been destroyed! So he did not benefit. Many read the Gita , but few benefit. You must have Arjuna's dispassion and Arjuna's one-pointedness to derive profit from the Gita . A pure heart and firm disposition of mind are essential.

Feeling of "I" and "mine" should go

The confusion of Arjuna was the feeling of "I" and "Mine". All of a sudden, he began to feel that he was the killer, that he would be responsible, and that they were his teachers and elders and relations. This feeling of mine has to go; the "I" has to be crossed, and all words, deeds, and thoughts have to be dedicated to the Lord. The baby weeps as soon as it is born because the individual being has no desire to get entangled in objective world once again. It is unwilling to come into this veil of delusion (maya). Science describes it as the process of breathing for the first time and the clearing of the air passage, but why should it weep? The process can be started some other way, say, snaking or shivering, is it not? The weeping child must later leave this world laughing, and the worth of life is to be judged by the end. Love (prema) is the seed, and devotion is the seedling, the sapling. Faith is the manure, company of the good is the rain, the offering of the Self is the flower, and merging together the fruit. With that, one must throw off this coil and become free. The Gita advises renunciation of action, that is to say, karma without attachment to the fruit thereof. Some karmas have to be done as duties, related to the status in worldly life, and if these are done in the proper spirit, they will not bind at all. Do all karma as actors in a play, keeping your identity separate and not attaching yourself too much to your role. Remember that the whole thing is just a play, and the Lord has assigned to you a part. Act well your part, and there all your duty ends. He designed the play, and He enjoys it.

Take refuge in the innermost recesses of the heart

Atma is the ocean, nature is just a wave of that vast ageless, boundless ocean, and the individual soul is just a droplet of that wave. You cannot give up the wave or the sea. You can only merge the name and form of the droplet. Once you enter the depths of the sea, it is all calm, it is all peace; agitation, noise, confusion - all are only on the outer layers. So also in the innermost recesses of the heart, there is a reservoir of peace (santhi) where you must take refuge. There are three types of people: the lethargic (thamasic), who are like iron balls, impervious to any softening influence; the active (rajasic), who are like cotton, absorbent, but not changing their own nature; and the pure (sathwic), who melt as butter melts at the joy or grief of others or at the mention of the divine plays of the Lord. The sathwic dive deep into the source and spring of sympathy. Anger, envy, greed, and intolerance are all so many holes in the pot; the waters of peace, contentment, happiness) leak through the holes, and the pot becomes empty. The pot has to be repaired and all leaks stopped, so that it may be useful. It is when you are in a desperate situation that you call upon the Lord, forgetting your pride and your egoism. The Pandavas were so full of misery in a worldly sense that they always had an attitude of prayer. If I had given you all the comforts and opportunities, you would not have come to Puttaparthi. Trouble is the bait with which the fish is hauled out of the water. Kunthi asked that Krishna should continue giving her and her sons all kinds of misery so that He might grant them His Grace continuously.

Offer your egoism at the Lord's feet

Thirumalachar called this attitude offering of the Self (Atma-arpana), but the Atma is He Himself, so what do you mean by offering Him to Himself? What you would offer at His Feet is your egoism! Offer all the pride, all the separateness, all the delusion, all the attachment that the egoism has proliferated into! That is the worship you have to do. Bring to Me all the evil in you, and leave it here take from Me what I have, viz. love (prema). Develop the capacity to see all as "moved and motivated by the One Supreme Reality or Self". Examine every day what you do and with what motive; then you can yourself pronounce judgement on your progress. Select only pure motives,

pure deeds. You forgot that you are the Atma , and now you remember that you are the Atma . That is all the progress you have to achieve; it all looks so easy, but it is one of the hardest of assignments. The ear is so near to the eye. but it can never see it direct! There was a clown in a palace who always asked questions and was therefore held to be a big nuisance. The king had to put up a board, "No questions," just to escape him. But when the king was on his death bed, he called him near and whispered, "I am going." The clown asked him hurriedly, "Shall I order the royal chariot? The elephant with the howdah? The royal horse full caparisoned? The palanquin? How far are you going? Which is the exact place? How long will you camp there?" The clown was very wise. He knew the questions, though he did not know the answers, and neither did the king. But you can pass examinations only if you know the answers!

The Gita helps to control agitations of the mind

The Gita prompts you to seek the answers and directs you to experience them. It helps you to control the thoughts and the agitations of the mind; it destroys delusion; it develops true knowledge; it makes you glimpse the splendour of the Lord and confirms your faith. You say one moment, "Baba does everything, I am but the instrument," and the next moment the same tongue talks, "I did this; I did that. Swami did not do this for me." If you never slip into wrong, you can be ever certain of His Grace. All hearts are His Property, it is all His Domain. But just as the aristocrat sits only on a clean spot, though the entire area may be his, the Lord will install Himself only if the heart is cleansed. The Lord has said, "Where my devotees sing of Me, there I install Myself, Narada." I must tell you that you are luckier than men of previous generations. The accumulated merit of many previous births must have granted you this luck. You have got Me, and it is your duty now to develop this relationship that you have achieved by sheer good fortune. In four or five years time, you will see yogis and ascetics and sages crowding here, and you may not have such chances of asking Me questions and getting the answers, of approaching Me and directly speaking to Me. So do not be like frogs around the lotus; be like the bees. Plantains and mangos are kept, while yet green, in straw or dried grass or in a closed room so that the heat may

make them ripe and tasty. Meditation on God gives you too the right temperature to ripen yourselves and become sweet and tasty.

Seven things to be fostered for world welfare

Seven things have to be fostered for the welfare of the world: the cow, the Brahman-ward or spiritual aspirant or Brahmana , the Vedas , chastity, truth, non-attachment, and righteousness (dharma). All these are now fast declining, and I have come to restore them to their pristine purity and strength. Do not think that this Sathya Sai Gita was composed by some devotee and that he reads it and explains it here. As he said, I am the inspirer, and it is for your benefit that he has summarised My Teachings in this way. It is said "The One Truth is pure and unshakable (Ekam Sathyam, vimalam, achalam)." Thirumalachar has collected it in his vessel, and he is giving it to you. Of course, no one can unravel the Mystery of the Lord. Even Viswamitra, who came to Dasaratha asking for the two boys, extolling them as divine Incarnations, later forgot that fact and dared teach them mantras (sacred formulas), as if they were just ordinary disciples! He was even proud that the Lord who transformed Ahalya and released her from the curse was his disciple. Pride is one of the worst sins in the spiritual field. If you feel conceited that you are a devotee of Hari, He will "hari " (destroy, in Telugu) you remember. Absolute surrender (Saranagathi) should be like the attitude of Lakshmana. Rama said, "Take Sita and leave her in the forest." Implicit obedience! There is no why! That is Lakshmana. That is saranagathi ; the rest are deserving only of sharagathi (the arrow of Rama).

That is the genuine Gita , this lesson of saranagathi . Increase faith, walk in the path of a dharma , get rid of delusion and ignorance, cleanse the agitations of the mind, and know that He is the Atma and that you too are the Atma .

Have a time-table for spiritual sustenance, just as you have now for physical sustenance. A breakfast of pious repetition of Lord's name and meditation, a

lunch hour of ritual worship of the Lord, 'tea and snacks' of reading scriptures or sacred books in the afternoon, and a light dinner of devotional music in the early hours of the night. If you follow this regimen, you can sleep soundly and wake up refreshed.

30. Sathya Sai Gita (ii)

Date: 29 September 1960 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

If you take Krishna to be a gopala (cowherd), a man of the world like others, then for you he will be just a cowherd! You too climb only up to that stage. You have to take it in the yogic sense that "go " in gopala means living being, so gopala means "He who protects, guides, feeds, and fosters the living beings"; that is to say, "He who is the protector and preserver of beings." You will have noticed that Uddhava, who looked upon Krishna as his guru, benefitted more than Arjuna, who looked upon Him as (a friend. If you have faith that He is God, He will be God to you; if you dismiss Him as mere man, He takes on that role and becomes useless for you. Search for Him with the heart, not with the eye for externals. The superpower has to be sought in the super-state itself, not in the lower states. Then, if you have the eyes that are fit to see and the wisdom to understand, you will find Him. Various people have various methods of worship as well as objects of worship. Vishnu, Shambhu, Sharadha, Allah - are all different degrees of human understanding of the One Unsolved Mystery, the Fathomless Infinite and Absolute. Do not seek variety, seek unity. Do not enter into quarrels about higher and lower; when the same person is honoured by different titles, why should you quarrel over the superiority or inferiority of the title. They all fall short of His Total Glory.

Karma is needed to realise the Truth

Your attempt should be to attain and become the Eternal and the Truth). Truth is that which is the same in the past, present, and future, the same in the waking, dreaming, and deep sleep stages, and which is unaffected by qualities of sloth, passion, and serenity. Again, the Name is greater than even the Named, for the Named may disappear, but the Name will continue and will evoke the Form of the Named. There is no need to exhaust yourselves in the search for the Lord; He is there like butter in milk, like the chicken in the egg, immanent in every atom of creation. He does not come from somewhere or go somewhere else. He is there, here, everywhere. From the atom to the

great, from the microcosm to the macrocosm, He is everything. To realise this grand Truth, spiritual exercises or spiritual activity (karma) is needed. That is, karmayoga , karma performed with this end: "karma done in an intelligent manner (karmasu kousalam)." A millionaire may have various vehicles - cars, coaches, etc. - in plenty. But for his health's sake, the doctor advises him to walk a few miles every morning. Otherwise he will fall ill, the doctor says. So also, for removal of the disease of ignorance, one has to do virtuous action (dharma -directed karma). The oil in the lamp is the fat derived from the actions of previous 'lives'. The stronger the flame, the brighter the light and the sooner the oil is used up. Do vigorous karma , exhaust the effects of the past, and be free from the weight hanging round your neck. There is more joy in the doing of karma than in the fruit it may give; the pilgrimage is often more pleasurable than the actual experience of the temple to which the pilgrim went.

Make spiritual effort as natural as breathing

It was mentioned in the Gita that you should not care for the fruit of your action, but I say now that you may value the result of your actions to a limited extent. That advice was given according to the conditions prevalent then and the delusion that Arjuna suffered. Since it will increase your Bliss (Ananda) and give greater strength to your spiritual practices, I say now that so far as spiritual practices is concerned, you can do them with a keen eye on the Ananda that you will ultimately derive. It was mentioned now by the Principal of the Markandeya Sanskrit College that I was born like Janaka, as the result of some balance of karma ! I have no balance of karma to work out! I am unaffected by karma , as already mentioned in the Gita . The Supreme Power puts on the cloak of deluding power (i.e. comes in human form) in order to fulfill the purpose of contacting and protecting humanity. I have no desire, and thus no binding karma . Only you have the desire, aim, and wish that drag you along various paths. For Me, your Ananda is My Food, your elation is the swing on which I sit, your activity is My Playground. There are three kinds of karma : natural action, like breathing, which has to be done; action done with intent, like the combination of wick and oil in the burning lamp; and action done without intention to gain the fruit of consequences, where there

is neither oil nor wick and so no burning at all. Breath control and yoga (divine communion) must become as natural as breathing and so automatic; that is the summum bonum of spiritual discipline, the state of innate spiritual discipline.

I make people mad about God

Learn from childhood the recitation of the Name and prayer and the practice of silence. Let children contemplate the beauties and the magnificence of God's handiwork and be filled with mystery and awe. Do not count and calculate what the Puttaparthi Sai Baba gives. I do not give in order to attract you to Me; I give only to fill you with Bliss (Ananda). Showering Ananda, that is My task. I do not want you to extol Me; I shall be satisfied if you rely on Me. The mysterious indescribable Super-power has come within reach. It will never engage Itself in any task without fruit. I bring tears and I wipe tears, someone has sung. Yes, I bring tears of joy into your eyes, and I wipe the tears of grief. I am said to make people mad and also to cure madness. Yes, I make them mad about God and about the spiritual discipline needed for that. I cure the madness that makes people run frantically after fleeting pleasures and fall into fits of joy and grief. Some persons have said in their ignorance that I am divine sometimes and that I become human after that! They say I alternate between Divinity and humanity. Do not believe this. I am always of one reality only. The Lord will never undergo a fundamental change; only the external form may change. The essence will be the same. There will not be any decline in value, like becoming human for some time, etc. The Lord will be characterised by unbounded Love (Prema) and unsullied sweetness. There are two duties to be done by man; the one along the path of righteousness for this world and the one along the path of Supreme Reality for eternal liberation. The path of righteousness is the left hand, so it can be left. Why, it will leave of itself after the fruit becomes ripe. That is why it is called "left"! Leave it, and do not grieve over it. But hold on to the right, the path of Supreme Reality, for it is "right" that you should do so.

Never hate others or wish evil to them

Finally, you must know how to use the chance that you have got in this life to come in contact with the Lord. The lamp sheds illumination, but it can be used for various purposes, good and bad; the Ganga is holy but its waters are used for good as well as bad purposes. How you use this chance depends upon your destiny and luck and the amount of Grace that you are able to win. Develop faith; strengthen devotion; and everything will follow. Rama was the representative of Truth (Sathya), Krishna of Love (Prema), Buddha of Righteousness (Dharma). Now it is of all four: Truth, Righteousness, Peace (Santhi), and Love. Sathya is the Dharma , Prema gives Santhi . I command you: never hate others, wish evil to them, or talk ill of them. Then only can you attain the natural form of peace. The Lord alone is aware of the Plan, for His is the Plan! You see only a part of the play on the stage, so it is all very confusing. When the entire story is unfolded, you will appreciate His Plan, not until then; for that, you have to get behind the screen of deluding power (maya) and contact the Director Himself. While you are an actor on the stage reciting your role, you cannot grasp the inner meaning of the entire play, which has the "world" as the stage and "ages" as the duration. If, by acting your role well, you develop Love toward fellow actors, that is more important than getting devotion for God. If you acquire peace, that is a more valuable success than acquiring spiritual wisdom. For devotion is the seed of love and spiritual wisdom is the seed of peace. At the least, devotees should behave as if they are all of one family. Take hold of the chance so luckily available for mutual cooperation in worship and spiritual discipline.

All the powers I have are for you

You are My treasure, even if you deny Me. I am your treasure, even if you say No. I shall be affectionate to you and attach Myself to you; I shall take all the trouble to keep My property safe in My custody! That is to say, in the custody of the Lord, by whichever name you may be calling upon Him. All the powers I have are for you: I am just the store, keeping them ready to be given to you, whenever you ask for them. I shall give Prema even if you do not ask, for it is your right to share in it. Some complain that I did not give them this or that, but that is because their vision is limited to the immediate future or the present; whereas I know what is in store, so I have to safeguard them from

greater grief. They even blame Me and heap abuses, but I will not give them up. I am not influenced by anybody, remember. No one can change My course or affect My conduct to the slightest extent. I am the Master over all. But let Me tell you this. I speak harsh words and "punish" some persons because I have Prema toward them and am eager to correct them and make them better instruments. If they were not Mine, I would have given them up and not cared to take any notice of their lapses. I have a right to chastise those who I feel are Mine. I also know that they still value My Word and that they will feel sad at My being displeased with them. It is due to your wayward mind that you are easily wafted away from Me by some silly persons' irresponsible words.

Peace can be won only the hard way

I sometimes act as if I keep you at a distance; that is done to reform you quicker. When a stretch of road is being repaired, I go by another detour and do not use that bit of road for some time. The purpose is to let the repair works proceed more quickly, so that I may use that road again. I have come to set the world right, so I have to collect all those who are ill and treat them in My "hospital", restore them to sanity, strength and wisdom, and send them back to their stations in life. I must intensify your devotion, reinforce your faith, and rebuild the foundations of your moral nature, so that you can counter temptations with greater confidence. I have come across people who recite a prayer and believe that they are bringing the world nearer to peace with every occasion on which they pray. But peace can be won only the hard way, by eliminating violence and greed from the hearts of individuals. There are cases when the villager in Puttaparthi, on getting fever, tries all kinds of quackery till it becomes too serious; then he runs madly for doctors and drugs to Bukkapatnam and Anantapur and Chikabalapur and Veilore - until he is forced to sell his land to pay off the loan! If only he had taken resort first to a qualified doctor all this could have been avoided. So too, do not run after gurus who are themselves suffering from faulty vision and householder's troubles: do not beg from people who are themselves beggars. Avoid all pride and competition between one another in the spiritual life. Let each one march at his own pace; only the direction and the road have to be Godward.

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

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

31. Sathya Sai Gita (iii)

Date: 29 September 1960 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

Vidura once asked Krishna, "How did you take part in the killing of lakhs of soldiers in the Kurukshetra battle? You could have avoided all that massacre and saved yourselves a lot of bother by simply changing the mental attitudes of the chief participants on the Kaurava side, Duryodhana, Dussasana, Shakuni, and Karna." Krishna answered: "My dear man, I have given everyone a sum of qualities and powers. I have also awarded each a certain amount of freedom to utilise them as they feel best. It is by functioning in this manner that each one can learn better. By toddling a few steps, the child's step becomes more certain and firm. Experience is the best, though the hardest, school. However much you may say that fire burns, unless you actually burn your fingers, you will not believe or know what a burn is." So you have some freedom of action. A cow tied by rope to a tree can roam around that length as radius and eat the grass growing in that space. Even a question paper given at the examination asks you to answer, "Any six questions!" You very often say, "Oh, everything is Baba's will." Then why do you come and ask for this or that or even wish or plan? You must use the intelligence and imagination you have been allotted to the best purpose; then the giver will be pleased to give more. On the other hand, if you misuse the intelligence and turn the imagination against your master, the giver will naturally get incensed and will punish you in order to teach you a lesson.

Prema is essential in all forms of devotion

I have been repeating every time the same advice to you, and sometimes you may even get the feeling that I have only a few things to say! Well, a mother has to repeat the same directions to the child again and again until the child learns and behaves accordingly. The Mothers of the Vedas and Gita repeat the same truths again and again, in different contexts and imageries. That is the sign of all mothers - an overwhelming desire to reform the children and to direct them along the path of progress. Tirumulachar read the section on the yoga of devotion today, and he spoke of the nine forms of devotion, which I

generally talk about: hearing, singing, remembering the Lord's Name, prostration, salutation, servitude, friendship, and Self-offering. In all these forms, love (prema) is the essential component; it is prema that thrills and fills the mind with joy and hope. Pothana, Nandanar, Jayadeva, Gouranga, Thukaram, Meera, Purandaradhasa, Thyagaraja, and others were thrilled so much at the very thought of the Lord because they had prema in such a pure and overpowering form. Some people may laugh at all this devotional singing (bhajans) and call it mere show and exhibition and recommend instead quiet meditation in the silent recess of the shrine room. But coming out in company and doing bhajans like this helps remove egoism. One is not afraid of jeering nor ashamed to call out the Name of the Lord. One gets inspired by the devotion of others; the company of men with kindred sentiments helps to foster the tiny seedling from being scorched by the heat of derision. A person will sweep the floor of their room with a broom when nobody is looking; but to do the same act, considered infra dig , when people are looking on requires some mastery over the ego.

Do acts that are full of prema toward all

Prema is filial piety when directed toward the parents, companionship when it flows toward friends, love when it is felt toward the partner, respect when it moves one toward elders, and affection when it is drawn toward children. Devotion affects your acts in three forms: you do some acts consciously in order to demonstrate your love or give vent to the prema that animates you; you do acts as dedicated offerings to enhance the glory of the Lord, in a spirit of worshipful humility, as if you are laying at His feet all that you are and all that you are capable of, and you do acts that are full of prema toward all as part of your mere existence, automatically, without any tinge of self or whiff of violence upsetting the perfume of the act. The dedicated act leads on to all activity being dedication. The Bliss (Ananda) makes you feel that your effort has been worthwhile. That is the end, the aim, the inspiration. How do you give Me Ananda ? By taking to heart what I say and putting it into daily practice. Deciding to move high but attracted by the low, you betray yourself. Improve your character and conduct; when your feelings become cleansed and your impulses pure, you can see My Form in its Reality. I shall tell you the

thing in a nutshell: Make the intelligence that has to understand Me free from crookedness; let it become straight and sharp.

Our relationship is Atmic, not secular

I have now fallen into your grasp, the very Treasure that you have been searching for, because our relationship is Atmic , not secular or trained. In all other places, you are fleeced, for the relationship is based on the purse. In some places, it is based on caste or scholarship or some other incidental trait; here, it is the attachment that Narayana (God) has for nara (human), the Ocean for the stream, the Universal for the particular. Here, everyone must become unlimited, escaping from bonds that limit him. All can become He; no one is outside the Love of the Lord. The eighteen-year old boy is asked by the mother to go into the kitchen and place a plate before himself, serve himself rice and curry, and eat. The mother is not callous or unkind; she knows the capacity of the boy and treats him as he ought to be treated. She accompanies another son to the kitchen and sits by his side and serves him food. She seats a third son on her lap and feeds with many a song in order to make the process pleasant for him. Do not think that the mother is partial. No, she is only making use of her knowledge of the capacity of her children to make them progress. That is the nature of maternal love.

Some gurus hunt for moneyed disciples

Some gurus have so much love, even toward their pupils. When aspirants go to them asking for guidance, they praise them to the skies, exaggerate their attainments, and grant them titles(!), which are paraded by the unfortunate victims. In this way, the disciples are burdened by additional handicaps to spiritual advance. The gurus want money for various purposes, so they always have an eye on the purses of the disciples. They try to draw out the money by grants of titles or by public praise or by promise of public recognition - all worldly baits, which are derogatory to the principle of non-attachment that they teach and stand for. Let the gurus condemn accumulation of wealth and blame them for the misuse they are making of it; let them be unsparing in their condemnation; that is the sign of the guru who

knows his mission. On the other hand, such gurus ignore and tolerate evil in the would-be donors because they are afraid any condemnation will dry up their source of income. Thus, they ruin the disciples by desisting from giving them the drastic drug they need, urgently, for their spiritual health. It has become a tragicomedy, this hunt for moneyed disciples who can be fleeced. It has been developed by some ascetics into a fine art. The time has come to expose and punish such noble souls, and that will be one task in the establishment of righteousness for which I have come. The brokers that these gurus have scattered over the country have also to be broken. Books, pamphlets, meetings, speeches, talks - all these are no good. Everyone desirous to know Me has to be asked to approach Me and experience Me. In order to get an idea of a mountain, it is not enough if you show a stone and say, "The mountain is a million times the size of this." You will have to see an actual mountain, at least from a distance. The "beyond" is very incomprehensible. Science is like the letter C, always with a gap in the middle, with a gap that is unfilled. Religion alone has filled that gap, for it knows the Reality that persists in the three stages, in the three tenses, and in the three worlds. So, religion is the three O's - a full circle, which may enlarge as you know more and more of the glory of the Lord but which is ever full and complete. At the end of it all, we are at the beginning again. The miracle is but the natural behaviour of the miraculous. That is why I favour you with the experience now and then, so that you may get a glimpse of the Glory. I will be in this mortal human form for 59 years more, and I shall certainly achieve the purpose of this Avatar ; do not doubt it. I will take My own time to carry out My Plan, as far as you are concerned. I cannot hurry because you are hurrying. I may sometimes wait until I can achieve ten things at one stroke, just as an engine is not used to haul one coach, but awaits until sufficient haulage in proportion to its capacity is ready. But My Word will never fail; it must happen as I will.

32. Sathya Sai Gita (iv)

Date: 30 September 1960 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

Today, Thirumalachar read and explained the section on the divine communion through spiritual knowledge in the Sathya Sai Gita that he has composed. No one can say what the real nature of creation is, or of Brahman for that matter. Faced with a Universe that is fundamentally mysterious, which he feels must be endless and beginningless, which he feels must be infinite, the scientist has to accept it, though he cannot form a real picture of that kind of Universe. The scientist also works on faith, that is to say, believing in something that he cannot fully grasp or clearly infer or really calculate. That Reality can be demarcated only by the criterion of "Not this." Brahman is posited and described by a process of negation or elimination, "not this, not this (nethi , nethi)". In this artificial world, all is an artificial mixture of name and form, which are both artificial too. To get the conviction that this created world is a mixture of truth and falsehood is very difficult indeed. When your head knocks against a wall, it is difficult to believe that the wall is half false, that its name and form are a fiction of the deluded imagination and that its real truth is the basic Brahman!

Seven chief characteristics of Bhagavan

But this spiritual wisdom everyone has to achieve some day or the other. It can be got through devotion or karma (activity) or royal yoga . These three are only different names for the process of churning the milk to get the butter that is immanent in it. Once the butter has been got and rolled into a ball, it can be kept separate and unimpaired in the liquid where it was all the time. Similarly, the liberated person can continue in the world free from attachment, once they have realised that they are of the same substance as the Immanent Brahman. When that Brahman is seen through delusion (maya), it appears as (endowed with qualities and is referred to as Lord or Bhagavan. Bhagavan has seven chief characteristics: prosperity, glory, wisdom, non-attachment, creation, preservation, and dissolution. Whoever has these seven you can consider as having Divinity in Him. These seven are

the unfailing characteristics of Avatars , of the Supreme Power, which persists fully when it has apparently modified itself with deluding power. Wherever these are found, you can identify Godhead. You are also of the same nature as the Atma with Supreme Power, but, like the prince who has fallen into a den of robbers and is growing up there, the Atma has not recognised its true identity, that is all. Though he does not know, he is nevertheless a prince, whether he is in the palace or in a forest or in the robber's cave. Very often, the prince will have got intimations of his real status, a craving for the Bliss (Ananda) that was his heritage, a call from his inner consciousness to escape and become himself. That is the hunger of the soul, the thirst for lasting joy. You are all like the man who has forgotten his name. The hunger of the mind can be appeased only by the acquisition of spiritual wisdom.

Give your mind strength-giving ideas and courage

The mind is like a watchman; it has to be kept fully under control by the master. Besides, the watchman will let into the mansion only those who are friendly to the master, is it not? So, only such thoughts and feelings as are conducive to the welfare of the master should be tolerated by the mind. The mind is the chief thing for man, but its role has to be slowly reduced, and it should not be allowed to take full charge. Feed the mind not on wicked desires and unworthy plans but give it strength-giving ideas and courage. When the mind is eliminated, then spiritual wisdom shines forth in its full glory. After the realisation that everything is basically and completely Brahman (the experience of sarvam Brahmath-makam), life cannot be sustained for more than 21 days. Such a person is no longer in this deluding world, so they cannot have any desire or activity. Even food and drink become meaningless. How can Brahman need Brahman and Brahman recognise Brahman as food and Brahman as drink? All the nuts and bolts will fall away; the heart will dry up and the body will collapse. Spiritual exercise is just holding the mirror before the self; the mirror, if it is clean and polished, reveals the Self - that is the Realisation of the Self. All have Atmic uniformity, the truth of everyone is the same. The company of good men leads you to the Lord, while the company of evil men leads you to the mire of the objective world. How to judge good men from bad? Those engaged in penance,

meditation, communion, and worship are good persons; those who do not like these are to be avoided by aspirants who seek spiritual wisdom and want the joy that comes when the small becomes the big, when the momentary joy becomes momentarily important, when the destitute person inherits vast riches. The good person is soft and bends easily before elders, sages, and spiritual aspirants. "Not mine (Na ma)" is the attitude of "prostration (namaskara)"; it is really namamakara : the declaration that "all that I am and have is due to your Grace."

Eliminate all limiting factors by systematic process

Spend your time in company of good people. Brush up your brains by the brush of discrimination. I will not ask you to give up your critical faculty. Evaluate, discriminate, experience, and analyse your experience; then, if convinced, accept. Devotion, yoga , spiritual wisdom - these are three doors to the same Hall; some come this way, some that way, but all enter the same Hall. The spiritually wise person sees everything as the divine substance, the devotee sees everything as the play of God, the karma yogi sees everything as the service of the Lord. It is all a question of aptitude and taste and the stage of development of reason and emotion. As a result of spiritual wisdom, Thirumalachar said, delusion (maya) goes, but delusion does not "come" and delusion does not "go". When a light is brought into this hall, you say that light has come and darkness has gone, but where has it gone? Put out the light, it is dark! The darkness does not come from where it had gone, suddenly, through the doors and fill the hall. It is there all the time. It did not go. Only the hall was lit and light prevailed. So also, when the Grace of the Lord is won, spiritual wisdom will prevail and the delusion of separateness is powerless. How can that spiritual wisdom be earned? By a slow, systematic process, eliminating all limiting factors: greed, lust, pride, envy, hate, and all the snaky brood of possessive instincts and impulses; by the educative influence of dharma , the body of rules laid down by the experience of generations for the regulation of living; by study, rumination and practice; by analysis of the experiences of the waking, dreaming, and sleeping stages; by learning to be a witness of all this passing show without getting involved in its tangles; by overcoming all trends that divide and differentiate.

Vision of Oneness is the highest reward

Prahlada never called upon his father or mother, as children do, when he was tortured; he did not appeal to the torturers to save him; he saw in those cruel henchmen the Narayana (God) he adored. Everything, everybody, was Narayana for him. How then could he feel pain or suffer injury? Non-dualism in practice, the culmination of devotion, fully realised spiritual knowledge, liberated him. The vision of this Oneness is the highest reward the non-dualist seeks. All this is a dream, and you are all actors. Once in Puttaparthi, in a village play, the role of Vali was assigned to a rich man's son and that of Sugriva to a poor man's son. Vali protested that he would not die in the fight with the poor man's son and insisted that Rama should befriend and kill Sugriva instead! The show cannot be changed to suit your whims. When the play says Vali should die and when he has been given that role, he should die correctly just as He has decided. Who knows whether praise and blame are not part of the play?

The faults you find in others are in you

Ignorance of this truth is a serious fault, which has to be attended to in the early stages alone. The doctor who cures that worldly disease prescribed remedies that have to be strictly taken - not the entire quantity in one gulp, nor neglect for months or years, but the drug as well as the regimen. Some people say they have come to Puttaparthi ten or even fifteen times, as if walking up to the hospital a dozen times is enough to cure them. Every time they may also get a bottle of the necessary mixture, but if they do not drink it as directed, what improvement can they register? Spiritually wise people will not look upon Me as wearing this dress, yellow gown today or pink gown tomorrow. They will penetrate to the Real Nature behind this Form and know that this Body is but a dress worn for a purpose. The coming Avatar of this Real Nature will have another dress. You get full spiritual wisdom by the analysis of the knowledge of the Self. Unless you know yourself, you cannot know Me. What you are now doing here is the path of action, what you are uttering is the path of devotion, and what you are revolving in your mind is

the path of spiritual knowledge. What you are experiencing at this particular moment is Heaven. For you are now immersed in the joy of listening to My words. You have no thought now of the several reasons that have brought you here. If I finish My talk and go, you slide into the world of passing things and fleeting desires, vacillating minds and doubting brains. Above all, examine your own conduct and faith. See whether it is sincere and steady. When you sit in the moving train, you find that the trees are moving fast, along the line. Do not worry about the trees; see yourself, examine yourself; and then you will find that it is you that is moving fast. So also, do not blame others and point out their faults. The faults you will find are in you, and when you correct yourself, the world too becomes correct! Spiritual wisdom is the discrimination between what promotes one's progress and what retards. Be your own guru, your own teacher; you have the lamp with you, light it and march on without fear.

God's Grace can destroy effects of past karma

Even reaching the stage when "All is Brahman" is realised as an understatement (because that statement postulates two entities: All and Brahman, and the experience of Brahman alone, IS), you have to go a long way. But do not be down-hearted. The entire encyclopedia is composed of the twenty-six letters of the alphabet, and all scholarship begins with the mastery of A and B and C and D. I am here, ready to help you from the first lesson to the last. Do not be weighed down by sorrow that your karma from previous births is against your progress. The accumulation of the effects of your past karma is stored karma, to be worked out in later lives, and out of that store, you have selected some karma for present consumption; if wisely used and cooked, this latter karma can be made sweet, palatable, and health-giving. Moreover, God's Grace can destroy the effects of past karma or modify its rigour. Never doubt that. If the law of karma is so unbreakable, then why recommend spiritual exercise, good living, and cultivation of virtue? Your present karma will melt like mist before the Sun if you win the Grace of the Lord! The Grace of the Lord is needed for the dawn of spiritual wisdom also.

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

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

33. Foundation For Education

Date: 23 November 1960 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Birthday - 35

Into this tiny hamlet ringed round by "pigmy hillocks" there has come from the far-off Himalayan region the Governor of Uttar Pradesh, Dr. Burgula Ramakrishna Rao, to lay the foundation stone of your school building! Really, this should make at least one thing clear to you: if sincere spiritual exercise is done, even the most difficult thing can be accomplished. I find the whole village of Puttaparthi and even the surrounding villages are immersed in joy today. I too am very happy, for it is not simply a building that will rise up on this spot. It is a new era of prosperity and of progress. He lays the foundation not merely for an educational institution but for education as well. He has not only sacrificed much for the freedom of his country and earned the respect and affection of the leaders of the land, but he is also a great scholar in many languages, and he is an ardent believer in Sanathana Dharma (Eternal Religion). To have the village school begun by him is indeed a very auspicious event. You can be proud that Puttaparthi is a village that has become famous from the Himalayas to Kanyakumari, as the Governor said now. But, as he himself added, it is a great responsibility as well. I consider this function to be the crown and glory of this year's Birthday Festival, for I see the faces of the farmers before Me, beaming with a new hope and a new joy. The elders of this village have at last realised what they have missed all these years due to their own defects.

Puttaparthi is revered with gratitude by millions

To secure pearls, one has to go far out into the sea and dive deep; simply wading in the shallows and declaring that the pearl story is a myth is a sign of foolishness. So too, the elders here wondered so long at all stories of My miracle powers and could not make use of the splendid chances that lay at their very doors. They saw only the light, but did not feel the warmth. That itself proves that though they were physically so near, they were very distant for all practical purposes. They could see the Splendour, the Glory, the Effulgence, but they did not come near and share the Warmth of my Heart.

Entangled in the false and the fleeting, men lose the golden chance of grasping the true and the lasting. They refuse to recognise the fruits that grow on the branches of the tree in their own garden; they pluck it before it becomes ripe and go about decrying it sour. Such is the fate of man; he has always ignored God and pursued the paltry joys of pride and greed. As a matter of fact, Puttaparthi is a name revered and remembered with gratitude by millions today, and it will be treasured in history as an immortal name. No other village has such fortune, but you have been slow to recognise this. For twenty years now, efforts have been made to calm the waves of faction in this village, years during which many other villages sought and won My Grace and Blessings. On many occasions, devotees have pleaded with Me to move out of this miasma and settle down in Bangalore or Madras or some such town, or, if I preferred, some other quiet rural spot. But let Me tell you here and now, this tree has to grow at the very spot where it sprouted; it will not be transplanted; I shall not give up this place, no, not I. This place will be transformed into Tirupati, and those who are little boys and girls today will surely see it in all its magnificence.

Three requisites essential for all advancement

Not only this village but every village is sick with animosities and petty quarrels and vendettas. As the Governor said, many attempts have been made during the last fifteen years to better the lot of the farmer, but the result has been far below expectations and expense. For there is an absence of three requisites essential for all advancement: courage, enthusiasm, and joy. The very nature around is enough to instill awe and wonder, to impart courage, to inspire enthusiasm, and to fill you with joy! It is a type of false non-attachment to close the eye to all the beauty, all the plenty, all the mercy that you receive from Mother Nature, and to mope in sorrow, bewailing your lot. You should be thankful to the Lord for the chance given to you to serve others and yourselves, to observe His Glory and His Grace, and you should look upon all as brothers and sisters. If, instead, you poison your hearts with hate and revel in quarrels, well, what is the great profit you have earned thereby? Have you at least derived peace and content, following that course? You have reaped only further hate and further waste. The surrounding

villages have gainfully made use of the help given by the government and advanced in some ways, but here, you need not stretch your hands before the government; you have a wish-fulfilling tree (Kalpavriksha), ready to give you all that you want! You have the Lord, who protects and promotes all. The virtues of the people are the treasures of the State; remembering the Name of the Lord is the root of all virtues.

The royal road to ensure joy and peace

Narada, who was afflicted with conceit that there was no other who had dedicated his very breath to the recital of the Name, was once humiliated to find that a farmer who managed to repeat the Name three times in the course of his overwhelming multitude of distressing preoccupations from cock-crow to dusk was judged a greater devotee! Joy is your birthright; peace is your inmost nature. The Lord is your staff and support. Do not discard It; do not be led away from the path of faith by stories invented by malice and circulated by spite. Take up the Name of God, any of his innumerable ones, any that appeals to you most, and the Form appropriate to that Name, and start repeating it from now on; that is the royal road to ensure joy and peace. That will train you in the feeling of brotherhood and remove enmity toward fellowmen. Many seeds are sown in the field by you. Some are eaten away by ants, some are washed off by rains, some are picked by the birds, some are destroyed by pests, but some sprout strong and sturdy. This little school will grow into a sturdy high school, believe Me. You, on your part, must do everything to uphold the honour and reputation of this village. When I went to Nainital, right in the midst of the Himalayas, thousands of miles from here, they welcomed Me with an Address written and printed in Hindi, and therein they mentioned this village of Puttaparthi, which they called a sacred place! Well, when people actually come here from the various quarters of the world, let them see a virtuous community of God-fearing men and women, living in peace and content.

The journey of every man is toward the cemetery; every day brings you

nearer to the moment of death. So, do not delay the duty you must carry out for your own lasting good. Recognise that you are Siva (God) before you become a sava (corpse); that will save you from further deaths.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

34. The Click of the Camera

Date: 23 November 1960 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Birthday - 35

WHAT KUPPA Bairagi Shasthri told you now about Atma and the desire of for knowledge of the Supreme Soul) was very learned and useful, especially for spiritual aspirants who have reached a certain stage of discipline and study. But I know that most of it was beyond you. My task is to give you the stuff that you need now, in a form that is both sweet and digestible. It is difficult to grasp the idea of the Atma , about which KUPPA Bairagi Shasthri spoke, in spite of all the quotations he gave from all the commentaries on the Upanishads . Gold in all the jewels is the base and the substance, however many forms and whatever shapes the jewels may have. To become a particular jewel is to lose the universal nature or rather to limit it. To lose the name and form of gold and become a jewel is to feel separate, to forget the One. The Atma does not change, no one can transform it. Its nature is hidden by various veils of ignorance, such as those that Thyagaraja prayed Lord Venkatesha to pull apart, in the famous song, "Thera thiyaga radha ". The veils are known as the mind, the intellect, etc. The jewel must know it is not, it was not, it will not be oval or square or fiat or round, or anklet or necklace or ring or bangle. It must yearn to know its real nature and become aware of the basic truth, apart from the unreal appearance. When it becomes gold again, or, rather when it ceases to think of itself as anything but gold, it can be said to have attained Bliss.

Love has to begin with a great yearning for Light

Just because you have taken residence in this body, you cannot call the body 'I'. When you sit here in this hall, you do not call the hall "I". You know you are separate and that you are here only temporarily. When you move about in a horse cart, you do not say that the cart is you, do you? You do not take the cart inside when you step down from it on reaching home. So also, you have to drop this body when you reach "home". The 'I' in you is the Supreme Being Itself. 'I' is the tiny wavelet that plays with the wind for a moment, over the deep waters of the sea. The wave gives you the impression that it is separate

from the azure and timeless ocean below. But it is just an appearance, a creation of the two ideas - Name and Form. Get rid of the two ideas, and the wave disappears in the sea; its reality flashes upon you and you know. The Supreme Being reveals Its Glory as Love (Prema) in humanity; prema appears in various forms: attaching itself to riches or parents or children or one's life mate or friends. All these are sparks of the same flame, and the Love of the Universal is its highest expression. This prema cannot be cultivated by reading guide books and learning the steps by rote. It has to begin with a great yearning for the Light, an unbearable agony to escape from the darkness and see Light, as in the prayer, "Thamaso ma jyothir gamaya ." The yearning itself will draw down the Light. The Love will grow of itself and by its slow and inevitable alchemy turn you into Gold. Prahlada was a demon, but prema liberated him nevertheless. Jatayu was a bird, Druva but a toddler, the cowherds of Brindavan were unlettered folk; yet, through that alchemy, they all shone in the splendour of prema and knew the Source.

The merit of actions will have its say at the time of death

Once you take on the Name of the Lord which is sweetness itself, it will awaken all the sweetness latent in you; when you have tasted the joy, you can never for a moment exist without that sustenance. It becomes as essential as air for the lungs. You may say, listening to some mythological tales, that it is quite enough if the name of the Lord is remembered, however casually, at the very last moment of life! But it is a hard task to recall that name if you have not practised it for years. In the surge of emotions and thoughts that will invade you at the last moment, the Name of God will be submerged unless you learn from now on to bring that Name to the top of the consciousness, whenever you want it. A shop keeper once was inspired by that tale of Ajamila. He decided to remember the Name with his last breath by a short cut: he named his sons after the various Avatars (divine incarnations), for he knew that he was bound to call them when he was about to die. The moment came at last, and, as expected, he called all his sons by name, one by one. There were six of them, so he called the Lord by proxy six times in all. The boys came and stood round his cot, and, as he surveyed the group, the thought that came to the man's mind, just when he was about to

die was, "Alas! they have all come away; who will look after the shop now?" You see, his shop was his very breath all through life, and he could not switch it on to God at short notice. The merit of actions will have its say, whatever you may wish.

Without faith, no progress is possible

It is no mean achievement to get the Name of the Lord on one's tongue at the last moment. It needs the practice of many years, based on a deep-seated faith. It needs a strong character, without hatred or malice, for the thought of God cannot survive in a climate of pride and greed. And how do you know which moment is the last? Yama, the God of Death, does not give notice of his arrival to take hold of you. He is like the man with the camera taking snapshots; he does not warn, "Ready? I am clicking." If you wish your portrait to hang on the walls of Heaven, it must be attractive; your stance, your pose, your smile must all be nice, is it not? So it is best to be ready for the click night and day, with the name ever tripping on the tongue and the glory always radiant in the mind. Then, whenever shot, your photo will be fine. What is most needed is the cultivation of virtue, fear of sin, and fear of wrong. How do you decide that an act or a thought is sinful or wrong? It has to be done on the basis of the scriptures and of the Voice within. Without faith, no progress is possible, even in the material world. Science considers the seen as the final proof; but how far can you trust the seen? You respect a person not on the basis of his dress or hairstyle, which are seen, but on the basis of their character and attainments, which are invisible. You suffer now because all your attachment is toward nature and all your non-attachment is toward Purusha - God! This has to be reversed! You must cultivate non-attachment toward nature and attachment to the Lord.

All joy is derived from the form-full aspect of God

I am reminded now of the story of Shankara Bhatta. He was a great spiritual aspirant, intent on remembrance of God's Name and meditation to such an extent that he was reduced to skin and bone. He worshipped Goddess Saraswathi (the Goddess of Learning), which is the key to open the doors of

liberation (mukthi). Goddess Lakshmi (the Goddess of Wealth) saw his sad plight and was moved with great pity. She chided Saraswathi for denying Her votary even the common joys of life and Herself hid in his leaky hut to pour on him Her Grace. She offered him plenty and prosperity, fame and fortune. She derided Saraswathi for neglecting to award comfort and joy on Her hapless servant. But Shankara Bhatta turned a deaf ear to Her allurements; he said, politely but firmly, "No, Saraswathi has blessed me with the most precious wealth, the gift of knowledge that liberates me. I do not crave Your Grace. Please remove yourself from my presence." There is nothing so grand and sublime as the Lord in whom you find refuge. Call on Him by any Name or speak of Him as the Nameless one. It is both with Form and Formless. The ocean takes the form of the vessel that contains a part of it. When that is done, the Formless takes Form; the Absolute is reduced to the Particular. You will find out, however, that all the joy is derived from the Form-full aspect of God; the Formless causes no joy or grief; it is beyond all duality. Jewels give joy, not gold. You can experience the Name, you can imbibe the Form; you can take them to heart and dwell upon them and fill yourself with the joy that they evoke. That is why Jayadheva, Gouranga, Ramakrishna, and others wished to remain ants, tasting sugar rather than becoming sugar itself. The Name is like the seed, implanted in your heart; when the shower of His Grace falls upon it, it sprouts into a lovely tree. All trees that sprout from the Names of the Lord are equally lovely and shady. If you have Krishna-nama , the vision that you win and the form that you evoke is that of Krishna; if you have Rama-nama , it is the Rama-form that sprouts.

Do not allow your mind to waver due to doubts

Leelashukha had the Name of Krishna embedded in the well-ploughed field of his heart, so the Lord appeared before him with a peacock feather, a flute, and a charming mischievous smile! He fulfills your innermost aspiration in a flash if it is compelling enough. Only you should not allow your mind to waver due to doubt or disappointment. Leave all to Him and be at ease; it is the man with no faith that is tossed about on the sea, like a ship caught in a storm with neither rudder nor anchor. The devotee bears the ups and downs of life, keeping the balance of the mind even. You sometimes talk as if the devotee

leads a life beset with hardships and sorrows and that one who does not bend before a Higher Power is care-free and prosperous; but this is a totally wrong idea. The devotee sails on an even keel; he has inner peace, a spring of joy, which sustains and keeps the devotee together. Bairagi Shasthri said that this is an auspicious day for you because this is My Birthday; but let Me tell you, I have many Birthdays like this. The auspicious day for you is the day on which your mind is cleansed - not the day on which I took this human form. I am ever new and ever ancient, ever nuthana (modern) and ever sanathana (ancient). I come always for the sake of reviving dharma , for tending the virtuous and ensuring them conditions congenial for progress. Some doubters might ask, "Can the Supreme Atma assume human form?" Well, one can derive ananda (bliss) only through the human form; we can receive instruction, inspiration, illumination only through human language and human communication.

God bows to your will and carries your burden

I will never force you to take up a particular Name or Form of the Lord as your wish. The Lord has a million Names and a million Forms, and He wants that faith and attachment to be evoked in you by any one of them, as you recite the Names or contemplate the Forms. That is why they have a string of 1008 Names for use to worship; the devotee might be drawn closer to the Lord while any one Name is being repeated, however distracted or inattentive they might be during the rest of the list. Like the coldness of the atmosphere, which freezes the water, the compelling agony of the devotee's heart solidifies the Formless Absolute into the shape and the attitude that are yearned for. "as felt, so fashioned (yadh bhavare, thath bhavathi)." He bows to your will, He carries your burden provided you trust Him with it. Therefore, act and feel and speak so that you get "joy here, joy hereafter, and joy everlasting" - all three. I bless you all that you get more success in the struggle.

You must tread the spiritual path with an uncontrollable urge to reach the

Goal; you must cultivate the yearning for liberation from all this encumbrance. Remember that you have to dwell in a house built on four stout pillars: righteousness, wealth, desire, and liberation - righteousness supporting wealth, and liberation being the only desire. However much you may earn either wealth or strength, unless you tap the springs of bliss (ananda) you cannot have peace and lasting content.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

35. The Dangers of Doubt

Date: 28 December 1960 / Location: Chitravathi River Bed / Occasion: Vaikunta Ekadasi

Kasturi now spoke to you about the Puranic story of the churning of the ocean to gain the nectar of immortality). He said that when the demi-gods were overcome by conceit, delusion, and ignorance, the sages cursed them with age, greyness, and senility; and they became easy victims for the demons. So, to restore to them the lost splendour, the Lord suggested churning the ocean and the winning of nectar of immortality. You have to take this story in its symbolic sense. The mythological stories always deal in parables. Each tale has a deeper meaning, something that is more valuable and useful than what appears on the surface. This meaning is to be practised in daily life; they are not stories told to while away the time. Indra insulted Dhurvasa because he was blinded by the power of office, and the curse of the sage forced him to rethink about his Reality, to discover his innate status. Then, he found that he was nectar, of the same nature as the Supreme Reality Itself. In fact, he came to know that he was the Supreme Brahman but moving about in the delusion that he was Indra! The churning is the symbol of the spiritual exercises needed to remove the veil of delusion, more specifically, the royal path of integral spirituality. When the Power of Divinity declines and evil impulses predominate, even the demi-gods fall; they lose their special privileges and rights. Once falsehood enters into the character, you lose contact with Nectar. He dies many deaths, he who is false, afraid of truth, blind to his own glorious heritage of immortality.

In their inner impulse, men are sub-human

Truth (sathya) is that which is eternal. Falsehood is poison; truth is nectar. Truth alone confers splendour or Divinity. So, when the demi-gods fell prey to pride and attachment to unreality, they had to churn their thoughts and impulses, their feelings and emotions, their instincts and inspirations, and bring out the cream of Truth. The two groups who pulled the churning rope are the "forward leading influences and the backward pulling influences" - the divine and the demonic urges. As I said, Indra insulted Dhurvasa and invited

upon himself the anger of that sage because of the ignorance of his fundamental reality, his ignorance, which plunged him in pride. What should be done to restore him to sanity is to re-teach him the Atmic (universal spiritual) basis of all the pomp and pageantry of office, the evanescence that is immanent in all created things. Today, though in outward appearance people are human, in inner impulse they are sub-human or demonic; people who have no charity or sacrifice in them are called demons. Demi-god and demon are mixed in the human make-up, and now the demon rules the roost. Therefore, man has lost his glory and his power and his splendour; he must win them again by spiritual discipline. So make yourselves pure by incessant striving.

Man is but a flame of the eternal fire

The partaking of the nectar that I create is only the first step in this process for you: it does not mean much if you do not take the second step and the third and march on toward self-realisation. You must have faith in the discipline laid down in Sanathana Dharma (Eternal Religion) and in the ultimate divine basis of all creation. Get convinced that the world can give you only fleeting joy and that grief is but the obverse of joy. Strive now, from this very moment, for time is rushing like a swift torrent. Develop the joy that will not decline, the joy that will ever be full. Be true to yourself. Be bold, be sincere. The only reality is the twin bird on the tree: individual soul, which tastes the fruits and suffers, and the Supreme Soul, which sits unmoved and merely looks on. Mention was made now of the form of fascinating woman and the way in which the demons were misled by the enticing charm of outward form. Now, all this talk of the Consorts of the Lord, of Lakshmi, Saraswathi, and Parvathi being the wives of the Trinity, are absolutely silly. They reveal only the worldly living glasses that you wear, the projection of your worldly fancies on the "heavenly families", the weaving of stories on the human model for the satisfaction of human cravings. These names are only convenient expressions for the Divine Power that is immanent in Godhead. For example, Lakshmi is the personification of the Grace of Vishnu; that is why she is said to dwell on His breast! So too, Parvathi is half the body of Siva, inseparably incorporated in Him! The powers of Creation, Conservation,

and Dissolution are coexistent and continuous in Godhead. You may ask how the three can coexist. Well, look at electricity! The current can create, conserve, as well as dissolve, all at the same time, and to the same extent. These divine energies are similarly pictured as inseparably associated with the three aspects of the Absolute. Man's duty is to achieve unity with the Siva Power (Siva-Sakthi), for he is but a spark that has emanated from it; he is but a flame of the Eternal Fire.

Devotion must confer patience and fortitude

Enter upon that task of spiritual discipline from now on; that is the lesson you must learn here. Otherwise, a pilgrimage leads only to the accumulation of vessels - you buy vessels from wherever you go: from Rameshwaram, Tirupati, Kasi, Haridhwar, Madhura, Kumbhakonam. That is the merit you get from a pilgrimage, a room full of vessels. You come from long distances, incur heavy expenses, suffer in the cold in the open, or lie in the shade of trees, and wait for days, expecting the longed-for interview with Me; but in the end, you return and dissipate the peace and happiness you derive from this place. Devotion is something sweet, soothing, refreshing, and restoring. It must confer patience and fortitude. The devotee will not be perturbed if another gets an interview first or if another is given greater consideration. He is humble and bides his time: he knows that there is a higher power that knows more and that it is just and impartial. In the light of that knowledge, the devotee will communicate his troubles and problems only to his Lord; he will not humiliate himself by talking about them to all and sundry, for what can a man, who is as helpless as himself, do to relieve him? It is only those who have that implicit faith in God, who will deign to communicate only with the Lord and none else, who deserve the nectar of immortality.

Make remembrance of the name of God part of yourself

The gross body should be ever immersed in holy company; the subtle body, that is, the thoughts and feelings, should be ever immersed in the contemplation of the Glory of the Lord. That is the sign of the devotee. One who shouts and swears and advertises one's worries to everyone and craves

for sympathy, such a one can never be a devotee. Such men are miscalled devotees. They make earnest men lose faith in Godly ways; earnest men feel they are superior to these pseudo-devotees. And this is a fact. It is a great responsibility to tread the Godward path. There is no sliding back, no halfway stop, no tardy pace, no side lane on such a pilgrimage. It is always up and up, right to the crest of the mountain. Though your responsibility is greater, take it from Me, you are luckier than others. Do not deny with the tongue what you have relished in the heart; do not bear false witness to your own felt experience. Do not carp and talk cynically of the very thing you have revered and adored when the company into which you fall start such raillery. It is said that the devotee can get the Lord everywhere easily, but the Lord cannot get a devotee so easily. Yes, it is difficult to secure a devotee who has that unshaken faith, that attitude of complete self-surrender. Such an attitude can come only by remembering God's Name - constant, sincere, and continuous, as continuous as the act of breathing and felt to be as essential for life. That is the silent recital of the Lord's name, penance, and meditation) for you all. Remembrance of God's Name like this will immerse you ever in nectar, not just a drop on your tongue.

Spiritual discipline has to be followed from a tender age

Do you know how much I feel when I find that, in spite of My arrival and teaching and spiritual instruction, you have not yet started this spiritual discipline? You simply praise Me and strew compliments; that I am the Treasure-house of Grace, the Ocean of Ananda , etc. Take up the Name and dwell upon Its sweetness; imbibe It and roll It on your tongue, taste Its essence, contemplate on Its magnificence, and make it a part of yourself and grow strong in spiritual joy. That is what pleases Me. Do not wait until you are past middle age to practise this spiritual exercise; I know of some parents who drag away their sons who come to Me when still young; they tell them that they can take up religious practices in their old age. These parents do not know the extent of the loss. By some stroke of good luck, their children get the chance of knowing about the right path for peace and contentment, but the parents are angry that the sons do not find pleasure in the articles that gave them pleasure! They feel there must be something wrong in the

make-up of their sons; they tempt them to drink, to gamble, to exploit, to hate - to imitate them, in short - and take them along with them to perdition. But a straight plant means a straight tree; a bent plant can never grow into a straight tree. Rotten, over-ripe, worm-eaten fruits are not fit to be offered to God. Years of sin would have warped the character of a person beyond repair. So the spiritual discipline has to be followed from a tender age.

Doubt is a component of the demonic nature

Faith can grow only by long cultivation and careful attention. The old are haunted by the demon of doubt. I know there are many here who are afflicted by doubt. They think that I have hidden a vessel of nectar in a spot in the sands previously fixed and known to Me only. That is why I now asked some from among those people themselves to decide where we sit on these sands. Kasturi suggested this morning that since the thousands who have come to see the materialisation of nectar cannot get a close view on this flat riverbed, a mound of sand be raised, whereon I can sit. I did not agree because I knew these doubters would immediately infer that the nectar was hidden previously under the mound that was heaped up on purpose! This doubt is truly a component of the demonic nature, for it eats into the vitals of devotion. It clips the wings of joy, it dampens enthusiasm, it tarnishes hope. Such a person cannot attain the goal even at the end of a thousand births. When doubt assails you, welcome the chance to see and experience and clear the doubt. But do not later deny the very truth of which you were once convinced and listen again to the voice of hate or foolishness. Do not put faith in the words of men into whose hands you will not entrust your purse; as a matter of fact, it is the words of such men that are now leading many astray. Really, this is a pitiable state of things, is it not? Come to Me, eager to learn, to progress, to see Yourself in Me, and I shall certainly welcome you and show you the way. You will indeed be blessed. All scriptures, all texts, the Gita , which is the milk of all the Upanishadic Cows, are intended to instill this thirst into you.

Do not vacillate and change Name and Form

The thirst has to be like that of the creeper for the tree trunk, of the magnet for the iron, of the bee for the flower, of the waters for a fall, of the river for the sea. The pangs of separation must gnaw the heart; the entire being must yearn for union. Do not vacillate or change or try a series of Names and Forms. That will only fritter away time and energy. Ceaseless contemplation of the Lord will give ceaseless taste of nectar to you. If you do not follow this path, you are doubly to blame, for you have contacted Me. The Form usually creates doubts, for when only the Name is there, you can build around it all your fancies, all that you want, to complete the picture. Do not be misled by such doubts when the Form has come before you; make the moment useful, the life worthwhile. (Finding that the vast gathering would not be able to see the materialisation of the nectar if He did it while seated on the sands, Baba first created a conch, "the vessel from which the amrith (nectar) will now emanate," as He announced. Then He stood up in the centre of the crowd and "poured" from that empty conch into a silver vessel a sparkling stream of sweet and fragrant nectar, which he later distributed to every person who had come.)

What you have heard and seen must be spoken out, without exaggeration or abridgement; that is truth-speaking (sathya). Of course, when the mind is controlled, the intelligence is sharpened and purified; you see only the One everywhere, in everything, at all times; then that One becomes the only truth, which you see, hear and speak of - for there is nothing else to see or hear.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba