



Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 7 (1967)

Divine Discourses of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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1. Milk and Water

Date: **01 January 1967** / Location: **Chennai** / Occasion: **New Year**

THIS day is celebrated in India too, as New Year Day, in accordance with the observance of Western countries, whose calendar begins the New Year on the first day of January. But if you only ponder for a minute, you will realise that every second is new. Every second marks a new birth; it is a fresh chance for achieving a new victory. For, the goal as envisaged by Indian culture is the realisation of the Atma by the individual, not the acquisition of wealth or scholarship or fame. The chief duty of man is investigation into Truth. Truth can be won only thorough dedication and devotion. And they are dependent on the Grace of God, which is showered only on hearts saturated with Love. The question, "Where does God exist," is often trotted out by people nowadays. By unceasing recitation of the Name of God, Prahladha knew that God is everywhere; it is not correct to assert, "He is only here" or that "He is not there." The realisation of this Truth can come only after intense sadhana (spiritual practice). You may see all kinds of attractive articles in a departmental store; they cannot be yours merely for the asking. Only those articles for which you pay the price can be secured by you. Realisation may be an attractive article for you to carry home with you; but, you have to pay the price. It cannot be yours if you have only argument of appeals in your possession.

Strive for freedom from dependance on passions

You deserve to be a king only if you are the undisputed monarch of a kingdom. When you are fleeing from the throne, pursued by foes, how can the dignity of that status be appropriate for you? So too, it is only when you have defeated the inner foes of lust, greed, hate and pride, and secured undisputed mastery over yourself, that you can ascend the Throne and claim to be the Master.

In India, we say we have won Swarajya (Freedom); but, Swarajya (identification with the self-effulgent Brahman) is the status we should each

aspire to win. Swarajya is political independence, freedom from the humiliating yoke of an alien ruler. Swarajya is freedom from the degrading dependence on passions and emotions. When external shackles are broken we have Swarajya. When internal shackles are broken we have Swarajya. Swarajya alone can ensure peace and joy.

God is not far from you, or away in some distant place. He is within you, in your own inner altar. Man suffers because he is unable to discover Him there, and draw peace and joy from that discovery. A dhobi, standing knee-deep in a flowing river, washing clothes therein, died of thirst, because he failed to realise that life-giving water was within reach. He need only bend and drink. Such is the story of man. He runs about in desperate haste, to seek God outside him and dies disappointed and distraught, without reaching the goal - only to be born again. Of course, you have to be in the world, but you." need not be of it. The attention has to be fixed on God, the God within. In the Kannada country, there is a festival called Karaga. The central figure of this holy rite keeps many pots on his head, one over the other, and moves in the procession, keeping step with the music; he has also to sing in tune with the rest and keep time to the beat of the drum. But, all the while, he has his attention fixed on balancing the precarious tower on his head. So, too, man must keep the Goal of God-realisation before him, while engaged in the noisy, hilarious procession of life.

Jnana can be won with a pure mind only

Some people are envious of the high standard of living reached by the rich nations, but the poverty of India is much more congenial to the good life than the luxurious and vainglorious life of the West. The sea has a vast expanse of water, but can it quench the thirst of man? Similarly, however much a man may possess, if he has not cultivated detachment, it is but arid waste. Detachment from sensual pleasures and objective pursuits helps the growth of Love towards God and the Godly.

People boast that they are interested only in inquiry and reason, that they follow only the path of jnana (spiritual knowledge). They aspire to be jnanis

(liberated persons possessing spiritual knowledge)! But jnana cannot be won without a pure mind. He must discover who he is, before he ventures upon the inquiry, "Who is God?" Once he has discovered who he is, there is no need to know who is God, for, both are the same. When you come to know that God is in you, you will value yourself much more, for when a man knows that the piece of 'glass' he has picked up is a diamond, he will keep it in an iron safe, for better security. When a boulder has been carved by a sculptor into a charming idol of God, it will be prized high and installed in a magnificent temple and worshipped with ritual ceremony by generations.

The wrong notion that the world is real and that you are the body has been so deeply implanted in you through birth after birth, that it can be removed only by means of a very potent drug, administered continuously. The drug, Ram Ram Ram, is to be swallowed and assimilated ad infinitum. Its curative essence will travel into every limb, every sense, every nerve and every drop of blood. Every particle of you will be transmuted into Ram. You must melt in the crucible and be poured into the Ram mould and become Ram. That is the fruition of jnanaRamanama or any other Name if chanted and absorbed in the mind, will help control the vagaries of the senses which drag you away into vanities.

Conquer inner foes, triumph over your ego

There is a vast difference between India five centuries ago, and India today, in the field of sensecontrol. Today, the senses are allowed free play; man is a slave to greed, lust and egoism. The fault lies entirely with the parents and the elders. When their children go to temples or religious discourses, they reprimand them and warn them that it is a sign of insanity. They tell them that religion is an old-age pursuit; it should not be taken seriously by youngsters! But, if only they encourage them, the children can equip themselves better for the battle of life. Parents ought to advise the children: "Be convinced that there is a God, guiding and guarding us. Remember Him with gratitude. Pray to Him to render you pure. Love all; serve all. Join good company. Visit temples and holy men." You read in the papers of campaigns, conquests, victories, triumphs, etc., but they are all material conquests and

other triumphs. Campaign against the temptations of the senses; conquer inner foes; triumph over your ego. That is the Victory for which you deserve congratulations, not the others. That is what I referred to as Swarajya. The year becomes new, the day becomes holy, when you sanctify it by sadhana, not otherwise. Sadhana can grow only in a field fertilised by Love. Love or Prema is the sine qua non of bhakthi (devotion to God). The love you have towards material objects, name, fame, wife and children, etc., should be sanctified by being subsumed by the more overpowering Love of God. Add two spoons of water to two seers of milk, the water too is appreciated as milk! At present your sadhana can be described only as mixing two litres of water with two spoons of milk! Have the Love of God filling and thrilling your heart; then, you cannot hate any one, you cannot indulge in unhealthy rivalries, you will not find fault with any one. Life becomes soft, sweet and smooth.

Butter is in every drop of milk; chicken is in every part of the egg.
So too, God is in every part of the Universe.
He is the strength; He is the substance; He is the sustenance.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

2. Stagnation in the same class

Date: 14 January 1967 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Sankranthi

WHEN the Sun, the Deity that inspires the Vision, moves North, man too must develop the Northward or the Divine urge and engage himself in tasks that will take him nearer to God. That is the meaning of dividing the year into two - the Southward half and the Northward half. But that is just a warning and an exhortation. Man can overcome the limitations of South and North; he has always, throughout the year, the Northward or the Divine urge driving him onward and upward. He need not wait for the Makarasankranthi (starting of Sun's Northward journey) or stop with the Karkatakasankranthi (starting of Sun's Southward journey). All spiritual endeavour has as its aim the attraction of the Grace of God on ourselves. That is why when you go to a temple and stand before the main shrine, you strike the bell hung there; the sound will draw the attention of the Lord to the supplicant just arrived. The bell must be accompanied by a sincere prayer from the heart. Spiritual effort should not become mechanical repetition of set formulae or execution of dry formalities. A sage who lived long ago had a cat in his hermitage; whenever he performed a homa (offering oblations to gods into the consecrated fire), the cat frisked about the Fire and gave a lot of trouble to him. So he used to catch it in advance and keep it under an inverted basket for the duration of the homa. His son who watched this operation for years thought that this cat-catching and cat-imprisonment were vital parts of the ritual itself. So he took great trouble to seek out a cat before every homa and felt happy when he got one which he could keep under an inverted basket in the same room. That is an example of meaningless mechanicalisation.

Maintain inner equanimity with all your strength

It is Maya (illusion) that makes man take the Nama and Ruupa (the name and the form) as real. Attachment is born out of this Maya only. It acts like a veil to hide the reality behind all this multiplicity. Maya is the vesture of Madhava (God); he who believes it to be true is Manava (Man). By sadhana, a man can escape from the enticement of Maya and realise that it is all false, for it does

not subsist for all time. Potharaju knew that all is God: he writes that the Bhagavatha was composed by the God in him. He is the One in all; Mam ekam - Me, the only One - as the Geetha says; he surrendered fully to God. Shrinatha his brother-in-law, himself a great poet, pleaded with Potharaju to dedicate his Bhagavatha to the King, who was certain to reward him with heaps of precious gems. But Potharaju brushed him aside; how can any one have a ride in two boats at the same time, he asked Shrinatha. His mind refused to wander away from the feet of Rama, where it had tasted nectar. Gopanna too had no other thought than the beautification of the residence of Rama, and the service of Rama, at Bhadrachalam. Thyaga (renunciation) alone can grant the immortality of merging in God. You must be unaffected, ever in calm joy, in the inner depths; it does not matter if the waves play on the top, heaving and falling, for that is but the action of wind upon water! Do not lose the inner equanimity; maintain it with all your strength.

Three classes of devotion

How long can you stagnate in the same class? Have you no wish to get promoted to the next higher class? In Bhakthi (devotion), there are two classes, Sahajabhakthi and Viseshabhakthi. Sahajabhakthi is satisfied with worship, bhajan, namasmaran, vratha (group singing, remembrance of Lord, vow-keeping), pilgrimage, etc. Viseshabhakthi craves for purity of character, suppression of impulses, practice of daya, prema, shanthi, ahimsa (compassion, love, peace and non-violence), etc., and inquiry into the why and wherefore of man. It is a matter of shame that people stick to the same class year in and year out. Then there is another higher class named Parabhakthi, too. Cleverness can correct and solve external problems; concentrated sadhana alone can correct and solve internal crisis. Four friends once started dealing in cotton. They had a godown for the storage of the bales; finding that the cotton seeds attracted rats into the godown, a cat was introduced by them to scare the rodent throng. They tied jingles to her feet and since they loved it much, the jingles were of gold! Once, when the cat jumped from the top of the pile of bales, it started limping on one foot. So they applied some balm and tied a long strip of bandage round the injured foot. The bandage got loose and the cat unaware of the long narrow cloth she

was trailing behind her, sat near the fireplace. When the cloth began to burn, she ran helter-skelter and fled into the godown itself, where the entire stock of cotton was reduced to ashes in a trice. The four friends had assigned to themselves each one of the feet of the joint cat and the injured foot belonged to one of them; so the other three charged him with the damages which they claimed from him.

The six enemies that threaten man's domain

The matter went to court and after hearing arguments on both sides, the judge said, "The injured leg has no responsibility, for it was taken into the godown with the trail of fire by the three healthy feet. So, damages have to be paid by the owners of the healthy feet to the owner of the limping foot." What may thus appear correct at first sight, might prove wrong on second thoughts. There is a correctness from the worldly point of view and a correctness from God's. Find out what the point of view of God would be, by association with godly men; they can give you proper advice. You should seek and not avoid good men. In the months of Shravan and Bhadrapadh, the crops are thirsty in the fields; but man is ever afflicted with thirst of a different kind, to drink the poisonous water of sensual pleasure. Each one is entitled to a crown after the surrender, the total surrender, of the six enemies that threaten his domain' kama, krodha, lobha, moha, madha and mathsarya (lust, anger, greed, delusion, pride and envy). He wears a crown with these foes still formidable inside him and carries not gems on his brow, but stones. He is coolly carrying stone. The real coronation is that of Vibheeshana, performed under the auspices of Rama, a status won through surrender and sacrifice. A tube in the bicycle tyre is punctured by nails on the track; "I" and "Mine" are two nails that puncture the progress of man. Viveka and Vairagya (discrimination and detachment) are the two aides-de-camp of man. Keep them strong and give them full facility, for they help man to live unharmed and joyful. There was a son who, when asked by his father what course he would like to take after his school certificate, replied, "the Race Course." That is the consequence of not having these body guards.

Feel the Presence of God, revel in His Glory

When Krishna leapt down from his chariot with Chakrayudha (the wheel-weapon) in His hand to slay Bheeshma, Arjuna jumped down with Him and holding both His Feet, he prayed, "Oh Lord, you have given word that you will not wield any weapon. Let it not be said that you broke your word to save me from Bheeshma; I am prepared to die." That was the measure of his bhakthi. Bheeshma too had equal bhakthi. He did not step forward to fight the new challenge, nor did he question the Lord. He stood silent, drinking in the charm of the Lord and filling himself with the vision of the magnificence of God. That was the measure of his dedication to His Will.

Become attached to God. Feel His Presence, revel in His Glory. Do not cause Him 'disappointment' or 'distress' by any act or word which He does not approve. Do not give Him the slightest 'bother' or 'worry.' He has none, but if you love Him deeply, you will be concerned about Him, just as if He is your Lord and Love. Jatayu had an unremitting stream of Ramathoughts and he was rewarded by Rama; He came to him in his last moments and Himself performed his last rites, a duty He did not carry out directly even for His father! When Krishna returned from the court of Duryodhana, after His Mission for Peace on behalf of the Pandava brothers, Sahadeva told Him: "Pardon us, Oh Lord. I knew the rogues would not pay heed; I would fain have stopped you from proceeding to their den, but you were so kind." God will serve you; He will save you and be by your side ever - only you have to cultivate your character and polish your interior so that He might be reflected therein.

Sweetness alone is the offering that God likes

Let His Will be done - this should be your guide-line. The Emperor of the Cholas sought to visit the Shrirangam Gopuram Temple, of which he had heard much. He got his chariot ready and moved forward many times in six months; but every time a recluse in ochre robes with a rosary round his neck and a halo around his head intercepted the vehicle. When the emperor alighted to honour him, he kept him engaged in conversation which was so enchanting that he forgot his journey and its goal.

One day, when he lamented over his failure to fill his eyes with the glory of Shrirangam, the Lord appeared before him and said. "Why do you lament? I am the Master who came to you so often as soon as you set out for Shrirangam; recognise Me in all, that is the genuine pilgrimage to Shrirangam." Consider all whom you meet as the Lord of Shrirangam, your Master. Show untarnished Prema towards all who come to you. What is the service that the ocean with all its mass of water does? It cannot slake the thirst of single human being. What is the profit if a miser lives a hundred years? This is My message to you this day: Do not exhibit anger or grief or pain. Be happy, spread happiness around you. Sweetness alone is the offering that God likes. There was a man once who hired an aged elephant for the bridal procession on the occasion of the marriage of his daughter. After the ceremony, when the procession returned home, the bride descended from the howdah and at that very moment, the elephant crumpled and died. The owner of the elephant was shocked at the news; he refused to take it as an unavoidable misfortune. He insisted that the identical animal had to be returned to him alive. He went to court on this issue. The judge had some mud pots kept at the back of the door which the greedy owner had to open for passing through. When he opened it, the whole lot was broken. The judge insisted that he had to restore those very pots! Thus was sense driven into that fellow's brain. Do not have this type of stupid fanaticism; modify its rigour by a little discrimination. Be reasonable, considerate, sympathetic, full of toleration of the other points of view. Improve yourselves day by day in these matters. That is My Blessing for you today.

Just as you prescribe minimum qualifications for every profession, the minimum qualification for Grace is surrender of egoism, control over senses and regulated ahara and vihara (food and recreation).

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

3. Lamps lit from the same flame

Date: 22 January 1967 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

YOUR sister from America was telling you about her experiences as a practitioner and teacher of yoga. There are two roads to fulfilment' Prarthana and Dhyana - Prayer and Meditation. Prayer makes you a supplicant at the Feet of God; meditation induces God to come down to you and inspires you to raise yourselves to Him. It tends to make you come together, not place one in a lower level and the other on a higher. Dhyana is the royal road to liberation from bondage, though by prayer too, you earn the same fruit. Meditation needs concentration, after controlling the claims of the senses. You have to picture before your inner eye the Form on which you have elected to contemplate. Or, as Indhra Devi has said now and as she is teaching her pupils in the West, you can elect to meditate on a Flame, a steady straight Flame of Light. Picture it as spreading on all sides, becoming bigger and bigger; enveloping all and growing in you, until there is nothing else except light. In the glory of that all-enveloping Light, all hate and envy, which are the evil progeny of darkness, will vanish. Know that the same jyothi or light is in all. Even he, whom you were treating as your worst rival, has the selfsame light in his innermost heart.

Be brothers in pilgrimage with all others

When you see in a house, on the walls of the shrine room a picture of Mine, do you not feel a wave of reverence and kinship, surging within you? You may not like him for any other reason, but this picture will bring him closer to you though the owner of the house may be your rival in the professional field. So, too, know that every other person has in his heart of hearts a picture of the God you revere. Recognise it and reconcile your misunderstandings; close up all gaps and be brothers in pilgrimage, encouraging and inspiring each other along the arduous road. Or, if you have Me as the object of meditation, sit in a comfortable pose, which is neither irksome nor flopping, let your mind dwell for some time on some good sthothras (hymns) or incidents from the sacred stories, so that the senses escaping into the tangles of worldly worries may

be quietened and subdued. Then, with the Name on the tongue, try to draw with the brush of your emotion and the hand of your intellect, a picture of Swami, slowly, from the cluster of hair to the face and neck downwards, spending time in contemplating each as it is getting drawn and when the picture is full, start from the feet up to the head again, so that your attention is never for a moment diverted from the Form you love to meditate upon. By this means, it can never go astray. When a golden image is made of Ganesha, for example, the head is gold, the feet are gold, the silk cloth that is worn is also gold. Every part of the picture drawn is Divine. That picture must, by this process of deep concentration, be imprinted on the heart, so that like picture printed on paper, it cannot be peeled off or erased. Do not change the pose in which you have started picturing; do not draw today a Swami sitting and tomorrow a Swami standing or walking or talking. If it is Krishna, do not change from a Toddler-Krishna with butter in His palm to a Cowherd-Krishna with a Flute, or with the Govardhanagiri raised over His head or a Geethacharya as the Charioteer. Have one Form; that is ample help.

Delusion of 'two' should disappear, all is one

Invitations are sent out, bands strike music, flags are hung, guests are fed, announcements are made - all with the intention of having many witnesses for the marriage of the groom with the bride. Similarly, festivals, holy days, vows, rites, pilgrimages, fasts are to invoke the blessings of the good and the godly upon the marriage of the soul with the Oversoul. The fundamental rite is simple; the recognition by the soul that it is the Oversoul overcome by the illusion that it is not. That is the stage of Samadhi, equal awareness, equipoise, levelness of consciousness devoid of ups and downs.

Indhra Devi will instruct you in yoga practices but I wish to emphasise that great care is to be taken to keep the mind of the student of yoga free from blemish. The mind is like a camera; when the lens is turned against any object and clicked, the picture of that thing gets printed on the slide. So, be ever vigilant; turn it always towards the holiest of objects, God, and click. When the holy Ganga is near, why wallow in the cesspool? Contemplate on God in any form and stay pure.

Merge yourself with the whole of creation; allow the whole of creation to enter the portals of your mind in one happy joyful family re-union. Envy, which like a mistletoe saps vitality out of all Sadhana, can creep in only when you feel your neighbour as different, distinct, disturbing. You do not feel your hand as a nuisance, because it is yours, a part of you. Your neighbour is also as much you. All men are lamps lit from the same flame which is God. From one tiny seed, the giant banyan tree bearing billions of tiny seeds is born. God alone knows the secret of His mighty Majesty. Out of the one seed called Brahma, all this Universe has emanated, with each country as its branches and each individual as one single seed. That is why it is said that Ishwara resides in the region of the heart in all beings. The seed is hard inside the fruit; when the fruit gets rotten, the seed does not rot. The Atma is unaffected by changes in the complexion of the body. Man has come with a definite allotment of time to engage himself in activities which will award him Liberation and merge him in the Universal of which he is a drop. Remember this mission.

See that you are strong and unshakable inside

Time, regularity of time, is an important factor in dhyana or yogic practice. Stick to the same time every day. If for any reason, say, a train journey, you are Unable to keep to the schedule, remember at the same hour Prasanthi Nilayam, recall to memory the thrill of dhyana there at that hour and fill yourselves with the holiness. That will give as much joy as real dhyana at Prasanthi Nilayam. Know that the external is only the reflection of the internal. The bimba (object) is inside and the external world is but its prathi-bimba (images). See the Lord within; see the world as the reflections He casts. This jnana (spiritual wisdom) alone grants liberation - -Jnanath eva thu kaivalyam. Of what profit is it to plaster all the wall space in your home with pictures of Swami when He is not installed in your heart? You declare that Swami is Sarvantharyami - that He moves, from inside, every thought word and deed. You; cry out, "Swami, are you not aware of my grief?." You do' not cry out, "Swami, are you not aware of my errors?" These you dare hide from Me, as if I do not know! Such devotion is just show, arranged for exhibition only. You may have a finely painted door; but if it has been eaten by white ants inside, it will disintegrate at the first knock; it cannot stand weight or

pressure. See that you are strong, hard, unshakable inside; outside polish is not needed. Let the roots penetrate deep into the real core of your being.

How to meditate on the Lamp and the Flame

The aspirant who goes along the path of bhakthi finds at the gate of the mansion of the Lord, the Mastiff, maya, blocking his entry. He has to cry out in his helplessness, "Swami, come and take me in," so that the Lord, out of His divine pity, comes down, pushes the Mastiff aside and gives him lasting refuge in His Presence. The jnani (liberated person), on the other hand, overcomes the Mastiff by becoming himself the same as the Master. Indhra Devi said that when you meditate on the Lamp and the Flame, you must visualise that the Light spreads and illumines the parents, kinsmen and later, friends and even enemies. There is no need to remind yourselves of physical relationships, which are causal; convince yourselves that the light within you is spreading all around you, encompassing all, lighting millions of lamps in all lands and climes. Remove the hardness, the imperviousness that hides and smothers the light inside you; that is the most difficult and the most essential task for the aspirant. The Atmajyothi (Light of Self) will shine only when the Dhehabhranthi (false idea of body) is absent. How can the Atma shine when you identify yourselves with material encasement? The reality is Param-atma (Super Consciousness) only. It had the first inkling of desire Ekoham bahusyam - "Being One, let many become"; and all this manifested from It, of It, by It. For there was nothing other than It. This body is like the earthen lamp, in which the impulses inherited from previous births are the oil and the ego is the wick. When Jnana lights it up, the oil is consumed more and more quickly and the lamp burns brighter and brighter. Finally, when all the oil is exhausted, the wick too is burnt out. The earthen lamp is then thrown away and becomes dust.

Do not be harsh towards anyone

Do not try to start as an adept in social service unless you have won this Anandha and Shanthi yourself. First self; then, help. Love is God; live in Love. People ride on elephants into wild life sanctuaries to watch elephants! Being

on elephants they seek elephants somewhere else. So, too, man being himself the residence of God, seeks God outside himself, in the complex entanglements of Nature. See your Ishtadhaivam (chosen Deity) in all. Ramakrishna Paramahansa did not disturb the cat when it drank the milk offering placed before Mother Kali in the temple. He saw it as the Mother. When Kumaraswamy saw a finger-nail mark on the cheek of Parvathi, he was shocked; on enquiry, His Mother told him that he was himself the tormentor for he had pinched and scratched a cat while playing not knowing that all beings are the Mother in those forms. In every being there is Sai, so do not hate any one; do not be harsh towards any one.

Do not unto another what you do not like to be done to yourself. For the other is really "you." Even if another uses foul language against you, be calm and sweet; say, "Oh, I am so surprised that my behaviour has given you that impression." Smile in return, do not take it to heart; remind yourself that even Swami is not free from these peculiar beings who revel in falsehoods. Smile when you: hear these revilings and be calm. That is a sign of your meditation progressing fast.

Preserve your physical and mental health

Preserve your mental health by this supreme unconcern. Preserve your physical health also, for ill-health can be a great nuisance to the spiritual aspirant, a great handicap. The body will refuse to be ignored; it will thrust itself upon the attention, if it is beset with disease. The body is the car, the senses are the mechanical parts and through the petrol - the sadhana - you have to keep it going. When you have finished your meditation, do not get up all of a sudden. Loosen the tension slowly, massage the joints a little if necessary, after you have got rid of the tension, sit quietly at the same place and recall to your mind once again the thrill of dhyana and repeat OmShanthih, Shanthih, Shanthih, feeling the Peace within you. Today is Tuesday, called Mangala-vara, the auspicious day. It is called so because Hanuman conveyed the good tidings of Rama coming to rescue her on that day to Seetha; she declared, "Let this day be named Mangala from now on." This was the day of the week when Ravana, the evil force that caused much

terror, was overpowered by Rama and killed. So, I bless that you too will overpower and destroy the wrong tendencies and attitudes and progress fast on the path of sadhana.

4. The trail of wings

Date: 22 January 1967 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

WHAT Indhra Devi has said is nothing new in this country, and for us. In fact, she learnt the elements of yoga here and she is making many lives happy and peaceful in the West through yoga. Her campaign of Light in Darkness is only the *Sanathana Dharma* ideal of

'Thamaso majyothir gamaya' - "From darkness lead me into light."

It is really surprising that any one should train people in concentration; for without concentration, no task can be accomplished by man. To drive a car, shape a pot on a wheel, weave a design, weed a plot of land - all these jobs require single-minded attention. To walk along life's highway which is full of hollows and mounds, to talk to one's fellowmen who are of manifold temperaments, all these require concentration. The senses have to be reined in so that they may not distract or disturb; the brain must not go woolgathering; the emotions must not colour or discolour the objectives one seeks. That is the way to succeed in concentration.

Yoga is *chiththa vriththi nirodha* - the cutting off of all agitations on the lake of one's inner consciousness. Nothing should cause a wave of emotion or passion on the calm surface or in the quiet depths of one's awareness. This state of equanimity is the hall-mark of *Jnana* (spiritual wisdom). *Sadhana* (Spiritual discipline) is the drug and *Vichara* (Inquiry) is the regimen that will cure man of all waywardness and agitation.

Become aware that you are the Light

The process of meditation on the Light of the Lamp which Indhra Devi has told you has to be understood thus first feel that you are in the Light; then,

proceed to the realisation that the Light is in you; later, become aware that you are the Light, no more, no less. But it is easier and better to project the light which you first visualise within you, to the outside world, illumining, more and more of the world, and visualising them all as soaked in the Divine Glory that is in you too. When you feel you are all Light, you will have no weight; everything will be bright. That is why on the Prasanthi Flag, the *Atma-jyothi* is represented as emanating from the *Hridhayakamala* when the Lotus blooms at the first touch of the rays of the Sun, Jnana. You can have other things besides Light to overcome the darkness. Anything that awakens the awareness of the Universal - the Infinite, the Immanent, the Transcendent, All pervasive, Vast, Brahman - is beneficial. You can have some Form of the Universal, like Krishna whose blue colour is redolent with the vast deep sky or sea. Contemplate on that Form, picture it in your mind, spend time slowly and with full attention on that holy picturisation peacock feather, the *kasturi* (black) dots, the brows, the eyes, the nose, the nose-stud of pearl, the mouth, lips, teeth, the flute-Oh, you can spend hours painting Him on the canvas of your heart. (Your attention will wander far in the initial stages, but do not lose heart). It is a very profitable exercise to sublimate your thoughts and feelings. Every minute spent in this dhyana will take you one step nearer Liberation, nearer Mokshapuri, the 'City of God,' of Freedom from Bondage.

Take everything as the Will of the Lord

You are forsaking your real mother and attaching yourselves to the ayahs (maids) who fostered you. Your real mother is Sai, who has affection untouched by ego. That is why Ramakrishna cried out for Her and for Her grace. There is in every one an inner urge goading him forward to the merger in his own reality, as a river is led along to the sea by the compulsion of the flow. The pendulum will swing from right to left, only when you wind the clock. Leave off winding, it will come to a halt. So too, the mind will waver from right to wrong, from mirth to moan, only when you urge it on and encourage it. Desist from winding the mind; it will cease its antics. Do not count your tears of pain; do not pore over your griefs. Let them pass through your mind, as birds fly through the sky, leaving no trail behind; or as flames and floods appear on the screen in a picture-house, without singing or damping the

screen. You must not lose heart when you are disappointed. Perhaps, your wish itself was wrong, or its realisation may have landed you in worse situations. Any way, it is the will of the Lord and He knows best. Disappointments and distress are like the skin of the plantain, to protect the taste and allow the sweetness to fill the fruit. In such dire straits, let your mind dwell on the splendour of the Atma and its majesty; that will keep you alert and brave. The antics of the senses and the mind can be arrested by the whip of *Atmajnana* (wisdom of the true Self).

Prayers to be offered daily

Do this concentration of your reality every day in Dhyana. Follow the same rigorous routine every day - time, place, duration, method, pose, all being unchanged. Then the disturbing factors can be easily humbled and tamed. As Ramakrishna said, do not dig a few feet in a number of different places and moan that you could not strike water. Dig in one place steadily and with faith. The boring drill goes down into the very underground spring of water; drill "Ram" "Ram" Ram"- continuously steadily, and you too can get the rewarding result of Realisation. "Ram" is the name of the drug; the disease will not be affected in the least when you simply repeat the name of the drug; it is only when the drug is taken in, that the disease gets scared and packs up to leave. As the jerks to the body, the *japam* (Contemplative repetition of sacred words) is to the mind. Jerks tone up the body, japam tones up the mind and drives out the evil viruses from it.

The heart is the pot, intelligence is the churning rod,
Sadhana (spiritual practice) is the process of churning and,
Realisation is the butter gained.

If you plead that you have no time to spare for japam and Dhyanam, I will say that it is but laziness that makes you argue so. How can any lower task claim the time that is legitimately the right of the one task for which man is born?

Rise everyday as if you are rising from death. Say,

"Thus am I born. Make me speak soft, sweet words, make me behave coolly and comfortingly towards all, let me do deeds that shower happiness on all and form ideas in my mind which are beneficial to all. May this day be worth while by Thy Service

- pray like this, sitting on your bed, before you start the day's schedule. Remember that pledge throughout the day.

When you retire at night, sit up and examine quickly all the experiences of the day; see whether you have caused pain or displeasure to any one by any word or deed. Then pray,

"I am now dying and falling in to your lap. Pardon me for any lapse; take me under your loving shelter."

After all, sleep is a short death and death a long sleep. Train yourself to waken when *Brahma-muhurtham* begins - that is to say, at 3.00 a.m. You may require an alarm clock at first for the job; but soon, the urge for Dhyana will rouse you. Do not take a bath before you sit for Dhyana, for the ritual of the bath will arouse the senses and you will be too full of pulls in different directions for the process of Dhyana to succeed. Regularity, sincerity, steadiness - these will reward you with success.

When the mind of man is unattached to the ups and downs of life, but is able to maintain equanimity under all circumstances, then even physical health can be assured. The mental firmament must be like the sky, which bears no mark of the passage through it of birds or planes or clouds.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

5. Not Loka but Lokeshha

Date: 08 March 1967 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

YOU know that today is a sacred festival at Prasanthi Nilayam and thousands have gathered here to share in it. Most of them have come with a load of sorrow which they hope to unburden here; many are praying for the relief of their physical or mental ills; some are broken by the weight of misery. Most have some pain or other, some loss or other, for which they crave relief. My task is to appease their grief. "Vaidhyo Narayano Harih" - "Narayana is the Doctor that destroys illness." That is what the Vedhas declare. So, I shall do that work. The doctor does the main surgical operation, or the main task of diagnosis and prescription. The rest is done by the nurses, isn't it? They attend to the patients kindly and considerately, to their food, their temperature, their movements - and with loving care, they help recovery. It is that type of service that I am allotting to you today. If you fail in your duties to these patients if you do not follow the doctor's instructions strictly and attend to their needs as directed, you will be complicating matters and causing great harm. "Na karmana na prajaya dhanena thyagena eke amruthathvamanasuh" - "Immortality can be attained, not by ritual deeds, nor by birth, nor by wealth, but only by sacrifice and renunciation". This is the declaration of the Vedas. The seva (service) into which you are initiated is the first step in the training for this sacrifice. Seva is the highest Sadhana for, God Himself takes human form and comes down to serve mankind and lead it to the ideals it has ignored. Therefore consider how delighted God will be when man serves man!

Worldly thirst makes man bestial, thirst for Krishna

Many people come to Prasanthi Nilayam all alone, though they are old or ill; for, they are too poor to afford a companion or too orphaned to have one. You have to be on the look-out for such, and seek chances to help them. Do not wait until they faint or fall. Seat them in the shade or inside the sheds and relieve their exhaustion or thirst, as best and as quickly as you can. Persuade the younger and healthier persons to vacate their seats inside the sheds for

the sake of these aged and sick persons. And, do not yourself occupy the front rows. The badge does not confer any privilege on you; it only puts responsibilities on you. In your anxiety to see me from close quarters, do not push your way into the front. But, wherever you are, even in the farthest corner, if you are cheerfully discharging the duty entrusted to you, I shall be with you, by your side; do not doubt this. You are wearing my picture on the badge; but I am inside your heart, all the time. The weather is pretty hot nowadays and so, you have one more item of service, the supply of drinking water to the thirsty. The body suffers from thirst for water; that is called, Thrishna; the spirit has a keener thirst, Krishna. Worldly thirst is disastrous; it makes man bestial in his efforts to satisfy the craving. If the earth was a little smaller, man might have swallowed it whole! Luckily it is a little too big.

Grace of the Guru will save the devotee

But, you are not concerned with the world; you are now concerned with the Lord of the world - not the Loka but the Lokeshha. Obey the command of the Lord, that is enough. You need not worry that you have no time, for Japa or Dhayana, or Pooja or Prayer. Shankara, the great Acharya, had four chief pupils Thotaka, Hasthamalaka, Sureshwara and Padhmapadha. Of these, Padhmapadha was intent only on service to the Guru; he could not pay attention to the lessons. The others used to sneer at him for his backwardness in studies. But his deep reverence for the Guru made up for it. One day, he washed the clothes of his Guru and dried them on a rock in the middle of the river; but, even as he was folding them, the river rose fast in a swirling flood; and he had scarce a foothold on the top of the rock. It was getting late; the Guru would need the washed clothes soon; so Padhmapadha resolved to walk across, over the raging waters. He knew that the blessing of his Guru would save him. And it did. Wherever his foot was planted, a sturdy lotus bloomed and bore it on its petals. That is why he came to be called, Lotus-footed, Padhmapadha! The Grace of the Guru enabled him to master all knowledge and shine as a brilliant exponent of the ancient wisdom. Life is short, it is liable to be cut short any moment. The body may fall and release you, without notice. So while you can, you must dedicate the heart to Him who gave it to you. Your heart is your witness; question it whether you have

obeyed the directions of the Lord. A thousand persons may swear that you have not, but if your conscience affirms that you have, you need not fear.

Serve God by serving the Godly

There was a clever miser, who argued that God need not be given any offerings, for, with Amrith (Nectar) in His stomach He would have no hunger or thirst. He argued that it would be sacrilegious to pour water on His Idol, because the Ganga emerges from His feet and it will be highly improper to apply on the head what has originated from the feet. So too, he dismissed the idea of offering the lotus flower, since, it bloomed from His Navel. All these are but excuses, by which conscience cannot be deceived. Do not people make a crown for the idol from gold that once formed an anklet for its foot? Reverence can transform and make things pure and holy. Do not manufacture excuses for avoiding service to God. Serve God, by serving the Godly. God appreciates that service most. The greatest consequence of Seva is the elimination of egotism - Ahamkara. Suurdas prayed that he be made the servant of the servant of the Lord, so that no trace of ego be left in him. This is the reason why the pupil who lived with the Guru, had to go with a bowl to beg his food. Suurdas said, "The Lord does not need my service; he has everything. He has many devotees more efficient than I. But these, His devotees, they are in distress; they need care; I shall serve them and uplift myself." You are now serving the really needy. When a marriage is celebrated in your home, you compel people who are already full, to eat more and more, resulting in waste. While the well-fed are over-fed against their wish, the hungry who clamour at the door for a morsel are driven away with a hail of harsh words. Suurdas told Krishna, "You are eternally content, eternally full, free. Why should I serve you? I shall serve those who are in need of service." See the Universal in all. See all as similar waves, sustained by the same sea. Develop that kinship, that love, that sympathy. Serve others, not with the feeling that they are others, but with the attitude of worship that you reserve for God. One single act of service offered to the God whom you visualise in another is worth all the years of yearning for God.

Your duty is to serve, not search for faults

You may ask, "Swami! When you find a person behaving wrongly, viciously, how can we love him? How can we revere him, as you want us to?" In such a situation consider one thing: Who is it who committed that wrong? What is it that prompted the act? Who did the deed? The body did it. What prompted the body? The mind. Why was he forced to do it? Through the influence of his karma, the cumulative effect of his activities and attitudes through many lives in the past. The Atma in him is unattached, to any deed or motive. That Atma is Divine; love that, revere that. That is My answer.

To put in simpler terms: you observe a big portrait of Swami over the entrance of a house, as you walk along the road. You find that it is the house of a person, who is your relentless foe! But, do you revere the portrait any the less, because the owner of the house does not deserve your love? Of course, you love the portrait, you revere it, wherever it is. Is it not? So too, revere the Atma in every one; it is the God residing in each. Why should you pay attention to his wrongs and vices? Your duty is to serve, not search for faults. Serve with all your heart, serve with pure undefiled love. Under My unseen supervision and guidance you have to serve them and relieve their pains and troubles.

Harsh behaviour will not bring any benefit

There is a popular tune in Thelugu, "Brindhavan is everyone's; Govindha belongs to all." Similarly, Prasanthi Nilayam belongs to everyone, Baba belongs to all. Just as in a hospital, all patients have the right to be treated and to get the drugs, here too, everyone who comes has to be honoured and served.

Talk sweet and soft, to those in pain and grief. When a person is suffering from fever, go near him and say pleasingly and consolingly, "What is the complaint? Where does it pain? What shall I bring for you? Shall I bring you some medicine, or shall I call the Doctor? Do not worry, we shall look after you." Then, those words so full of love will reduce the suffering. They will be overcome with gratitude. "O, what tenderness, what sympathy! Blessed are

the parents who can call these their children," they will say within themselves and they will bless you from the bottom of their hearts. "Even at home, people do not treat us so lovingly," they will confess. That is the fruit you must strive for. If some one who is thirsty asks for water, do not fly into a rage and tell him, "I am not here to supply water whenever you call for it; wait for sometime. Swami is about to come into the Auditorium. I will not move now, to stop your clamour." Darshan of Swami secured by such harsh behaviour will not bring you any benefit. Be vigilant to utilise all chances of seva which will give Anandha to Swami. Observe soft speech, maintain cleanliness and be of use to those in need of service. See that you set an example to others. Do not rush to silence persons talking loudly; go near them, and politely explain to them why silence is insisted upon here; tell them it is the first step in sadhana, that they have to learn how to maintain Prasanthi, not only here, but wherever they are; that the tongue has no task here, it is all for the eye and ear; people will certainly follow your directions if they know the why and where for. Tell them that by loud talk, they are undermining their own peace; and disturbing others. Do not cause more noise than is necessary. When you are about to spread your bed, do not throw the roll on the floor with a loud thud.

Be guided by the discipline of the Nilayam

I must tell the men volunteers this, with some emphasis. You tend to wander outside the Nilayam area, and squat in the shops and eating houses, talking to all and sundry on trivial matters. You have spent much money to come here and you have come with much hope of being at peace here; but, once you go out into the bazar, all the old urges drag you into the whirlpool of worldly things. If it is comfort you need, you could have stayed at home. If it is Grace, Peace, Knowledge of the Path, Sathsang (holy company), that you need, then keep within and be guided by the discipline of the Nilayam. Realise the great good fortune that you have in being chosen by Me for this service, when thousands outside are eager for just one word from Me. The badge is an indication of the Sai within you, it warns you that you are not a bundle of passions and emotions, you are not this body at all but the prathi-bimba (reflection) of God, who is the bimba (the object). The badge has also

the OM, the Pranava, on it; honour it, meditate on its meaning, value it as an initiation. Press it on your eyes when you go to bed and when you wake up in the morning, pray, "O Lord, may all my acts be pure and holy."

Only sympathy can win the Grace of the Lord

All who have gathered here are your kinsmen, your brothers and sisters. Do not worry about your daily schedule of japa or dhyana or puuja, which you may have to forgo; or even your daily routine of food, rest and sleep which will be upset. You will not be missing the chance of heaven, if you miss the Shivarathri vows of vigil and fast. Shiva once demonstrated to Parvathi that, of the many hundreds who bathed in the Ganga and carried the holy water to the Vishweshwara Temple at Kashi, no one had an iota of sympathy towards a dying beggar on the street, whose wife was calling out for a cup of water to slake the thirst of her husband. A thief had the sympathy; he gave the water and won the grace of the Lord; not the other pilgrims, who, keen on rituals, bathed the idol of Vishweshwara with the waters of Ganga mumbling Vedhic hymns on that Shivarathri day! Tomorrow morning, we will have the Flag Hoisting Function. In the evening, the Lingodhbhavam (emergence of Linga) takes place. Thousands have come and thousands more will gather. Serve them gladly and efficiently; serve them so that they will have happy memories of Prasanthi Nilayam and the volunteers.

Practising meditation in silence and solitude, one can in due course establish silence and solitude in the heart, even in the busiest thoroughfares.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

6. Angam and Lingam

Date: 09 March 1967 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

THE Glory of India reaches the ends of the world. She is the embodiment of Spiritual Victory. She has given birth to indomitable heroes who have assailed the inner foes and adventured far into the region of the Reality. These have laid down for the guidance of mankind various disciplines which will prepare them for similar triumphs. Among these, the ceremonial observance of holy days, dedicated to intense meditation on the aspects of Godhead, is highly important. One can understand the ridicule which Westerners, in their ignorance, pour on these observance; but, it is pathetic to find Indians also among the traducers! They too have become blind to the meaning and significance of their heritage. They have not tasted the fruits of the discipline, as they have not practised it. How then can value be attached to their judgement? The state of the Indian nation can be summarised in the proverb: "Father is happy with his second wife; children miserable with their step-mother." The technological civilisation of the West, the culture that places the standard of living in a more honourable place than the means by which that standard is attained, the culture that flies to the moon but is afraid to peep into the mind, has become the favourite wife; the children who are to be fed on mother's milk of Sanathana Dharma (the eternal religion), are miserable, for they have no training to secure it. Born to a rich heritage, the children are growing up destitute and helpless. Each one is the repository of Divine Might, of the Imperishable Atma. Contacting this Reality is the prime purpose of life. But, this is neglected; precious days are spent in inferior pursuits.

Man desires peace and cultivates worry

Ramakrishna Paramahansa bewailed every night that one more day had gone by without His being able, by His prayers, to visualise the Mother as a living Mother. That is the yearning that man must cultivate, not the competitive greed for sensory pleasures that are false and fleeting. Man must engage himself in such tasks as will confer on him peace and lasting joy. Man must examine for himself the merits of various activities, and choose only

such as will benefit him. He desires peace and cultivates worry and anxiety. Planting a lime tree, he hopes to get mangoes therefrom. This is sheer ignorance or wilful blindness, or the result of misguidance. To make coal white, it is foolish to wash it in milk; the milk too gets black. You have to heat it red-hot, and continue the process until it is transformed into white ash. The ash remains ash for ever. Similarly, the Thamasik (dull-witted and ignorant) mind (black) has to be transmuted into the Rajasik stage (red or active and passionate) and then, to the Sathwik stage (white or calm and pious), by the process of spiritual discipline (heating). The blackness and the redness are produced by the qualities of greed and lust. Regular treatment with the drug of self-control (nigraha) will cure you of these. These holy days have been prescribed for inaugurating the treatment. The Shasthras extol the drug and lay down the method of administration. The lives of Saints encourage you to seek it and save yourself by it. Through these, man can ascend from the animal to the human level and from the human to the Divine. Yes. You too can become Divine; I have nothing that you too do not possess. It is latent in you, it is patent and potent here; that is the only difference!

Sanctity of Shivarathri and emergence of Linga

Life is a short and fast-flowing chance; you will have to put every minute to the best use: that is, the discovery of your own Reality, which gives you the highest joy. Do not spend time inquiring about the whence and wherefore of others. Inquire about yourselves. When an election comes along, you wander from door to door, and fall at the feet of all and sundry, to earn their votes. Instead of demeaning yourselves in this manner, if you fall at the Feet of God, and become worthy of His Grace, people themselves will press you to stand for election and fill the ballot boxes with votes for you. For this you must have faith, faith in God and Grace. Now, most people have no faith; what is worse, they laugh at those who have, they scorn those who create and promote that faith.

What is the sanctity of Shivarathri? You answer, "Linga emerges from Swami's Udhara (abdomen)." In fact, the Linga is in every one of you. In the Angam (body) there is Jangam; (in the body composed of limbs, there is always the

movement of the mind towards the external objects); in Jangam, there is Sangam (through this movement, there arises attachment); in Sangam there is Lingam (through attachment and consequent suffering, the individual learns the need for and the efficacy of the Linga, or God, who is His innermost core). Witness the AtmaLinga (Spirit of the Soul) that emerges; derive bliss therefrom. But, make yourself worthy for deriving it.

Shivarathri night should be spent in vigil

For example, let me tell you why this day is considered holy. Today is the fourteenth day of the dark half of the month, when the moon is all but invisible; just a minute fraction remains visible to man. The moon is the presiding deity of the mind. The mind is the source of all the entangling desires and emotions. The mind is, therefore, almost powerless this day; if only this night is spent in vigil and in the presence of the Divine, it can be fully conquered and man can realise his freedom. So, every month, the fourteenth day of the dark half of the month is prescribed for more intense sadhana and once a year, this MahaShivarathri, the Great Night of Shiva, is laid down for the Great Consummation. Vigilance this night is to be secured by sadhana, that is, by means of bhajana, or the reading of sacred texts or listening to the reading of such texts; not by attending film-shows, or gambling, or playing cards. Be engaged in seeing good, listening to good, speaking good, thinking good, doing good; that is the programme for the vigil tonight. Make it also the programme for your entire life.

A father sent his son to the market with a sum of money to bring home some fruits. While bringing them home, the boy saw a few beggars on the road and heard their wails; he realised that they were very hungry and that they needed the fruits more urgently. So he gave the fruits to them and came home empty-handed. When the father chided him, the son replied, "I have brought you invisible fruits that are sweeter and more lasting." Yes; the fruits of charity, rendered to the deserving, are really sweeter and lasting. Seek all chances of doing such good acts.

Now, I shall unfurl the Prasanthi Flag. No good will come if I merely unfurl it

on this building. Prasanthi or the Highest Peace can be won only when each one of you unfurls it in your heart. Ruminates on what I have said when you reach home and digest it and let it add to your strength and forbearance. Dedicate all your deeds, words and thoughts to Sarveshwara, the Supreme Sovereign. The Emergence of the Linga (the ellipsoid-shaped representation of the formless Divinity) will happen today. Do not, in your anxiety to secure sitting space, sit in the sun from 3 p.m. itself. Do not disregard the rules of health. Do not exhaust yourself. So long as you are here, do not waste a single moment in worthless talk. Now, I shall go up to the terrace and unfurl the Flag. Do not fall upon each other and struggle to pick the flowers showered from above. Be restrained, be orderly. Afterwards, move on to the Auditorium, where Abhishekam (ritual bathing) will take place. Witness everything and derive full joy.

Resolve that relying on His Grace, you shall be free from illness from this moment. Transfer the faith that you have in drugs to God; put your trust, not in medicine, but in Madhava. Resort to prayer, to sadhana, japam and dhyanam. They are the vitamins you need; they will restore you. No tablet is as efficacious as Ramnam.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

7. No mirror, no image

Date: 09 March 1967 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Shivarathri

WHEN the word 'Lamp' is uttered, darkness does not vanish; when a patient is told of the properties of a drug, his illness is not cured by attentive listening; when a man suffering the agonies of penury is told of the various ways in which funds can help him to overcome it, he does not feel a bit relieved; a hungry man is hungry, even after hearing a tasty description of a magnificent banquet. If Sanathana Dharma (the eternal religion) is extolled to the skies, as the cure for all the individual, social and national discontent prevalent among mankind, the discontent will not decrease a bit. You must extol it with faith; extol it out of the depth of your experience. You have to experience it and stand witness to its validity; you have to attain the state of perfect and lasting joy. Instead, you have ignored the cure and thus heightened the disease.

Of course, attempts are being made without remission to overcome grief and acquire joy; but success is eluding; and when obtained, it is illusory. Man does not reason within himself about the authenticity of his experience. Constant self-criticism is necessary to avoid pitfalls and entering devious by-lanes. This day being a holy day, you should spend every minute in this intense search. That is why I am telling you about these fundamental issues. For what end is all this effort in life? You spend great effort in inviting your kith and kin, in decorating home, in preparing a feast, in providing music and dance, all for the marriage of the bride and the groom so that they may live together happily ever afterwards, isn't it? So too, all the earning and spending, all the yearning and sighing, all the reading and reciting, are for the individual to be wedded to the Universal, from which it has broken away, so that it may have bliss for ever.

God can be won only by tough discipline

The Universal can be cognised in the wink of an eye; the Bliss is available within a flash; but, you have to know the technique. You may have fresh

vegetables, fine rice, excellent dhal (lentil), clean tamarind - all the requisites for preparing a good lunch; but, if you have no knowledge of the art of cooking, of what avail is all this? You must learn, strive," struggle, and then, success will be yours. Start the process, take the first step; listen with attention, ruminate over what has been heard and try to put into practise a thing or two of what has been told. Nowadays you can bribe your way to success in every sphere. But God cannot be won by tricks or through short cuts. He can be won only by the hard way of straggle, detachment and tough discipline. Yearn desperately for Him, cling steadfastly to Him, fill your mind with His Form, His Majesty, His Glory and His Grace. Man is innately Divine; the Divine comes automatically into his consciousness. But the curtain of maya (illusion) prevents that thrilling contact, that illumining revelation. This maya is also a Divine Artifice, it is a vehicle or Upadhi of the Lord.

There is a story that once the Lord got angry with maya and wanted 'her' to disappear, for people are being led astray by her wiles. Maya said, it seems, "I am the veil that you wear; I am the fog that has arisen out of your own will; I am as widespread as You are; I am wherever You are; give me a place where You are not; I shall take refuge there." Each one of you can tear the veil by attaining the knowledge of the Reality of God; or, you can plead by prayer to the Lord Himself to lift it a little so that you may have a vision of His Reality.

Learn and practise Vibhaga Yoga

Move about in the world like an actor, but be conscious all the time that you are on the way home, to be with the Lord from whom you have come. Whenever the feeling that the drama is real enters the mind, deny it firmly. Do not identify yourself with the role that you play. Such identification will retard your progress. You must learn and practise what is called Vibhaga-yoga in the Geetha. What does Vibhaga mean as in the Geetha expression Kshehtra-Kshethrajna-Vibhaga-Yoga? Vibhaga means division, differentiation, discrimination, separation of one thing from another. Understand the distinction between the Kshethra (the body, the field) and the Kshethrajna (the Knower in this body), He who is aware of all that happens, who is witness, the Dehi (the embodied) who is above all the dualities of pleasure

and pain, good and bad. The base metal of modern civilisation has got mixed up with the gold of Sanathana Dharma, and so the Vibhaga (separation) has to be done in order to get the pure gold. You acclaim the feat when some one is shot up into space and starts revolving round the earth or racing to the moon. You do not realise that men on earth are being starved of resources by this costly adventure and that it is at the same time being tainted by hate and pride. One single rocket costs as much as the total budget of all the universities of India for twenty years! The net result of all this 'progress' is just this: mankind is living precariously on the brink of a holocaust; it is terrorstricken; man startles at the echo of his own steps!

Be eager to come to the rescue of others

Man feels that he is the master of the Universe and that the Universe is existing only under his sufferance. How then can he have peace? This conceit will bring about his fall; man must be humble and realise that he knows so little; even about himself. Without the knowledge of his own self, What is all the lumber now filling his brain worth? Make yourself humble, pure, useful for others. That way lies peace and joy. Today is Shivarathri. Take the ideal of Shiva. When the devastating Halahala poison emerged from the ocean, life on earth was threatened with immediate and total destruction. Shiva offered to drink the poison and save the world. His throat is blue ever since, for the poison has pervaded the area. Be eager to serve, to help, to come to the rescue of others. For this, one must cultivate Sahana (Fortitude, Equanimity). Otherwise, life will be as miserable as resting in the thick shade of a tree infested with red ants! If impatience, anger, hatred, and pride overcome a person, of what avail are other accomplishments? In the firmament of the heart, the Names of God must shine as stars and the confidence arising out of the knowledge of Atma must shine like the Moon when it is full and bright. This is critical time for the people of India, when the self-confidence arising from selfknowledge is most necessary. Both men and women have to earn this knowledge and treasure it. Men should give up the attitude of putting down women. They are not 'servants' to be lorded over; they too have self-respect and individuality. In fact, women have devotion, sympathy, the spirit of sacrifice, fortitude and other virtues in greater measure than men. But yet,

the feeling that if their advice is taken, it is somehow demeaning, is prevalent among men. This must be given up. Pay respect to spiritual excellence and intellectual discrimination, wherever it is evident.

Yearn to reach the stage of perfect Bliss

The highest awareness to which all spiritual effort leads is: "Brahma sathyam, Jagan mithya" - "Brahman is real, the world is mythical." Every atom and cell is a bundle of energy, expressing the Divine will. Matter and energy are not really separate. It is all one Will concretising, pervading, prompting and continuing. To experience the world as such, one must transcend all dual categories and reach the unique, unitary base, identifying It and establishing oneself in It. When the eye is filled with Jnana (Vision of God), the world will be seen as Brahman (the Eternal Absolute). Then the world and the entire complex of being and becoming will assume one colour, the Brahman colour, and you will have perfect equanimity, unaffected by any modification. No mirror, no image! There is only the Person, the Bimba, alone. Yearn to reach that stage of perfect unshaken Bliss. This stage can be known and appreciated only when you strive to be in the company of Sadhakas (spiritual aspirants) and Saints. When a sandalwood tree is felled by an axe, the axe edge too smells of sandal! That is the nature of the good: they bless even those who harm or malign them. Do not pay attention to the cynical laughter and cruel criticisms of the wordlyminded. When a kinsman lands at your door, if you rise to welcome him and speak words of welcome, he will enter and stay; but if you do not cast a look of recognition at him, he will be so hurt that he will turn back and go. So too, do not heed the comments of the foolish. They will then revert to those who indulged in them. I am also the target of such comments! People do not understand the ways of God. How can they know why a particular event takes place at a particular time in a particular manner? He alone can know. But, people try to sit in judgement and talk ill, when for example, some one dies of illness at this place! How can any one escape death? Even Avathars (Divine Incarnations) cast off the physical form when the task for which they have come is over. It is the height of foolishness to lose faith in God when some one you cared for dies. The sentence that he earned is over and he is released. No one is born and allowed to live for the

sake of another. Do not therefore allow any circumstance to affect your faith in God, who is your strength and solace. So, I advise you to utilise every moment of your lives in the most beneficial manner; to serve your fellowmen to the best of your capacity; to cultivate love towards all mankind; to give up hate and malice. Believe that your God, the Form that you revere, is in everyone and sanctify every act as worship of that Form. The Bhajan will continue throughout the night; share in it and fill your mind with the thoughts of the Glory of God, the Glory that you yourselves are.

8. The dying lament the dead

Date: 10 March 1967 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

KAAMA (desire) is the cause of birth; Kala (Time) is the cause of death; Rama (God) is the guardian of life. On account of desire, birth takes place. By Time, which flows unceasingly on, respecting none, the thread of life is cut. Through the constant chanting of the Name of God, life is made worthwhile. Life is a battle; the battle is fought until victory. The goal of victory is the 'Crown' of Atma, the 'Sovereignty' of the Realm of Liberation. That is attained and won by the process laid down in Vedantha. Vedantha is the consummation or the finale of the Vedas. Milk when curdled is rendered separable into butter and whey, and butter when melted and clarified becomes ghee; ghee is the finale, the anta (the final stage) of milk. So too, man's final, irrevocable transmutation is Liberation, Moksha. When you prepare yourself for victory in this battle with your inner foes and the senses, the Lord gives you the reinforcements you need, for you are proceeding to Him and He takes a hundred paces towards you for every ten you take towards Him! Once Ramadas wailed, "O Lord! You are Mighty, All-powerful, All-knowing; I am alone, helpless, orphaned and poor." Then the Lord interrupted the self-condemnation and said, "No, how can you name yourself poor, help- less and orphaned? I am with you, in you, in showering My Grace. The only Orphan in the Universe is Myself; for, I have no guardian, no means of support, nobody to fall back upon. I am the A-natha (orphan); all else are Sa-natha (with Lord), for I am their. Natha (Lord)."

Carry the atmosphere of the Nilayam to your own home

So, do not call yourself as a Dheena (weak person); how can you be a dheena when you are endowed with dhhee? (Dhhee indicates Intelligence, Discrimination). With this dhhee as support, start your sadhana, without wasting precious time in wails. That is the highest duty you owe to yourselves. The sadhana can be to realise God as Formless (Nirguna) or with Form (Saguna). When one walks, the right foot and left foot are both necessary, you cannot hop long, on one foot! The Saguna Sadhana and the

Nirguna Sadhana are as the two feet. When the pilgrimage is over and the shrine has to be entered, place 'the right foot forward! The right foot is towards the Nirguna Sadhana - the Formless aspect of God. You have spent the entire night in the recital of the Name; but do not be content; make it your daily sustenance. Do not imagine this to be like some places of pilgrimage you have visited, where you do not learn any lesson to be treasured in the heart. There you are in a picnic mood or in a tourist mood, seeing sights and collecting curios,. But here, you are silently immersed in the ecstasy of the Divine Presence. Carry this atmosphere to your own village and home and cleanse those places with holy thoughts and deeds. Make this Shivarathri an Akhanda Shiva-rathri - a continuous festival of Shiva-contemplation - an inspiration for making life itself an unbroken adoration of Shiva. "Sarvatha Sarva kaleshu sarvathra Had chinthanam," it is said - "Everywhere, at all times, under all circumstances contemplation on Had (God)."

Avoid even little misdemeanours

When once Brahma asked the sage Naradha what was the most amazing thing he noticed on earth, Naradha replied, "The most amazing thing I saw was this: the dying are weeping over the dead." Those who are themselves nearing death every moment are weeping over those who have died, as if their weeping has any effect, either to revive the dead or prevent their own death! Brahma asked him to tell another, Naradha said, "Another amazing thing is: Every one fears the consequence of papa (sin), but goes on sinning nevertheless! Everyone craves for the consequence of punya (meritorious acts), but everyone is reluctant to do any meritorious act!" Polite conversation is sweet conversation, they say. But, mostly, this sweet talk is made up of falsehood and scandal. People often ask, how can we manage to live in society without a dash of falsehood? This is a wrong approach. Truth-speaking comes natural to man; it is falsehood that is an artificial skill. Be natural; be yourself; then you will not descend into falsehood. Avoid even little misdemeanours, for, by repetition, they warp character, and develop into vicious habits. When the wife is given ten rupees by the husband for shopping, she retains one rupee and spends only nine; and she hides the fact

from her husband. Though the wife may argue that it is not improper, it is a wrong step. Examine your acts, thoughts and feelings every moment on the touchstone of Truth.

When kama is in the heart, Rama has no room

With the doors of your hearts closed by the bolt of falsehood, how can you lay the blame on God if He does not illumine it with the rays of Grace? Falsehood is prompted by desire, by kama; when kama is in the heart, Rama (God) has no room. Let kama and his evil brood of krodha, lobha, moha, madha and matsarya (anger, greed, attachment, conceit and envy) slither out of the heart; then only can Rama instal Himself there. Without this cleansing operation, it is sheer waste of breath to shout Ram, Ram, Ram, swaying and shaking the body! What is the fun in shouting 'Victory', 'Victory' when the enemy is inside the fort, and you are too broken to eject him?

Sow in the field of your heart the seeds of good thoughts, charged with humility; irrigate it with the waters of Love; protect the growing crop with the pesticide called Courage; feed the crop with the fertiliser. Concentration; then, the 'bhakthi' (devotional) plants will yield the harvest of jnana, the eternal wisdom, that You are He, and when that revelation comes, you become He, for, you were always He, though you did not know it so far.

In spiritual matters, faith is the very essence. Doubt shakes the foundations of sadhana and is therefore, to be avoided. Have faith in the wisdom of the ancients; do not pitch your tiny little brain against the intuitions of the saints and their discoveries.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

9. From every throat, his melody

Date: 19 March 1967 / Location: Matunga, Mumbai

THIS land of Bharath is indeed a holy country. Here the sages have sought to discover the means of peaceful life, of happy life in communities of men, of a type of life that will put an end to grief. They discovered and taught the Atmavidhya (Science of the Self), the chief component of which is Prema or Love. God is .where Love is - Love expressed as sympathy, charity, reverence, affection, sacrifice. God is Love, Premamaya, Premaswaruupa, Premabhaskara (full of love, Embodiment of Love, Sun of love), as He is described by those Who have realised Him. So, He can be attained only through Love. Bhakthi is defined as Parama-prema- swaruupa - of the nature of the highest love. It is not blind love; it need not be blind love.

I always advocate deep inquiry to strengthen the foundations of faith. Inquiry will only reinforce the springs of Love. Can there be anything more lovable than God, who is Beauty, Strength, Glory, Fame, Splendour, Wisdom, in their fullest bloom? Love of God creates in man the love for all examples of His majesty, His mercy, His magnificence, His manifoldness. Ramakrishna saw in a flower His charm; He saw everywhere His grandeur; heard from every throat His melody, His Flute song. Even filth and wickedness are loved, for God allows them to be!

Activity and devotion generate spiritual knowledge

The true Indian must have this Love, inspiring and guiding him in all actions. Bhagavath-raththi (Love towards God) is the sine qua non of the child of Bharathamatha. The very word means just that. The great men and women of this land did not waste their lives into the pursuit of earthly possessions, but cast them off as encumbrances hampering progress on the path to God. They abdicated thrones and kingdoms, renounced war, learnt philosophy on battlefields and trekked far and wide in search of spiritual guides. Like men who had forgotten their names, they asked the wise who they were, until they knew their identity. They did not ask all whom they met, as most men do,

"Who are you?," but inquired from all the wise men they met, "Please tell me who I am." That is the way to acquire full content and peace. The I is the foundation on which you build your Divinity and the Mansion of Dharma (righteousness). This truth can be known through Karma and Upasana (activity and dedication, deeds and devotion) which purify and clarify. Just as water and fire get transformed into steam, which moves a locomotive and drags heavy wagons along the rails, Karma and Upasana generate Jnanam (spiritual knowledge), which moves man's life smoothly along the rails of Peace and Joy. Karma and Upasana create detachment; they teach the true sense of values; man learns that peace can be won only by withdrawing the mind from the objective world, not by allowing it to graze in the poisonous meadows of sensual pleasure.

Saints had full faith in their destiny

When you are depressed by what appears to be loss or calamity, engage yourselves in Namasmara, the recitation and recollection of the Names of the Lord; that will give you consolation, courage and true perspective. Remember the distress and calamity that the saints underwent with enthusiastic welcome and be calm during every storm. People laughed at them and called them mad; but they knew that they were in the Grace Hospital of God, not the mental hospital of man. They had full faith in their destiny and so they had full faith in God; they laughed when calamities tried to cow their eagerness, for they knew their latent strength of the Atma within.

Now the pupils of the Vedashasthrapathashala (School of Vedhic Learning) at Prasanthi Nilayam will enact a play on this stage before you. They have seldom acted before such vast multitudes. The drama they enact is saturated with Adhyathmik (spiritual) teachings. It depicts the sovereignty of Bhakthi, Jnana and Faith, in easy, simple and sweet song and dialogue. They will now reveal the inner significance of the devotion of Radha, a devotion that has been the target of criticism bred by ignorance and perversity. The boys will also tell you many things about the spiritual endeavour that you have to make. If others of your own age say those things, you might be tempted to protest, but when the children lisp the lessons, certainly you will love to take

them to heart. Accept the lessons that this drama is intended to convey, whatever be the defects in presentation and performance. Listen in silence and patience; watch with sympathy. The boys may get nervous if you show any neglect or want of attention. Take this as another sign of My Grace and sit through the play in reverential attention.

It is always preferable to approach God for the fulfilment of wants, rather than cringe before men, who themselves are but tools in the hands of God. In his own silent way, God will transform the mind and turn it towards sadhana and successful spiritual pilgrimage. He cannot allow his children to lose their way and suffer in the jungle. When you approach God and seek his help and guidance, you have taken the first step to save yourself. You are then led to accept His will as your own. Thus, you achieve, shanthi.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

10. The key the sages own

Date: 21 March 1967 / Location: Sardar Patel Stadium, Mumbai

LIKE an elephant which was once the leader of the herd, which is caught and tamed for hauling timber in the self-same forest where once it was the monarch forgetful of its prowess and grandeur, Bharath has forgotten its supremacy and wealth of spiritual achievement; it is hauling material lumber and feeling supremely satisfied when it gets sustenance and bondage! Man should be like the tiger, which refuses to eat grass even in the last extremity of starvation. There are certain things that man must refuse to do, even at the worst provocation or the most enticing temptation. Then only can he deserve to be termed human. In this land where thyaga (sacrifice) and seva (service) to others were proclaimed as the twin paths to fulfillment, the fell diseases of greed and selfishness have spread in recent years. This is a tragedy for the entire human community.

I am emphasising this today, because I find that this vast gathering is mostly composed of students from schools and colleges. These diseases are affecting the youth of this land. The youth are the very foundation of the nation; they are the roots that uphold and feed the ideals of the nation. They must, therefore, grow in an atmosphere of reverence and humility, not in the hothouse of passion and faction. The elders must provide the atmosphere, in the homes, in the villages, in clubs, in civic bodies, in legislatures, in all walks of public life. Youths try to behave like their elders; so the elders must be good examples to them. Those who draft the syllabuses and curricula for the schools and colleges must be imbued with reverence for our national culture, which is really pure international culture. Then only can our students become true sons and daughters of India. This is the responsibility of the legislators and the rulers of whom there are some on this very platform. That is why I am telling them this.

Our sages had the welfare of humanity at heart

Now the students have started querying, quite against the culture of India,

the very existence of God, the very need for morality and the very value of sacrifice and service. This is the combined effect of the home, the school, the society and the leadership. If this is overcome, the youth of this land can well raise up this land to grand heights in the coming years. A virtuous character is the lamp which illumines the path to peace and joy. This is the teaching of sages who had the welfare of humanity at heart and who bore the rigours of asceticism to discover the key. The teachings of these ancient seekers attracted the respect of men like Dhara Shukoh, the brother of Aurangzeb, as well as women like his sister, Zebunnissa Begum. Dhara had the Upanishads translated into Persian; he adored them as the highest wisdom. Zebunnissa was also an ardent student of the same culture. One day, when her maid was holding the mirror to her while combing her hair after her bath, it slipped and broke. She was morally afraid to be near her mistress and stood shivering in dread of her anger. But the Princess consoled her saying, "Why worry over the damage to the mirror? Even the body to which all these articles cater is liable to damage and destruction." Like a bird that sees a lump of flesh in the far distance, but does not notice the net spread over it to catch, man too sees but the charms of material objects; he does not notice the entanglements which they cause. Man tries to map the craters and canyons and the volcanoes on the moon, but ignores the craters within his own heart; how then can he acquire peace? Man undergoes enormous trouble to guard his viththam (wealth), but does not spread an iota of energy to guard his chiththam (inner consciousness).

Atma is the source and repository of everything

You say, "Seeing is believing; I believe in God only if I see Him, but are all things seen or heard or touched or tasted as real as they seem? Is it the eye that sees? Your eye may be open and turned in that direction, but if your mind is wandering elsewhere, you will not notice anything at all. You see things only through the illumination of the Atma; you love only because the Atma is Love; you know because the Atma is knowledge. You have shanthi, for the Atma is the source and repository of shanthi. The subtle effect of mantras (mystic formulae) mentioned in the Vedas cannot be seen or heard by the senses; they have to be experienced in and through the inner

consciousness, the Anthah-karana. The sound of these manthras has the power of transforming the impulses and tendencies. The word manthra means "that which saves when turned over in the mind." Revolve the manthra ever in the mind; that will keep off wild talk, purposeless conversation, aimless gossip and scandal. Talk only when the talk is most essential and talk only as little as is necessary. Talk sweetly and without any reservations or circumvention. I want students to be convinced of the excellence of these teachings of the Vedas and Shasthras. I am glad efforts are being made by the Sathya Sai Seva Samithi to spread this knowledge among them. Things cannot be bettered by the grown-ups. Their attitudes have been shaped already. The youth have to develop fine qualities of head and heart. They must join and partake in spiritual groups and be useful to themselves and others. Revere your parents and be useful to themselves and others. Revere your parents and try to make them happy. That is the one item of worship which you can whole-heartedly take up, from this very day. When your parents are rendered miserable by your actions, how can God be pleased with you and listen to your prayers?

Maharashtra is the land of many saints who have spread Bhakthi through their teachings. It is the heart of Bharathavarsha on account of this. Try to deserve being the children of Maharashtra by following their valuable teachings.

11. The Mighty Mahaavaakya

Date: 24 March 1967 / Location: Mumbai / Occasion: Sardar Patel Stadium

IN THESE days, when the black clouds of hatred are spreading from state to state and poisoning the relations between man and man, spiritual discipline and spiritual illumination alone can serve as a beacon light. People feel helpless before the flood of falsehood, injustice and violence. They can be saved only by the four-fold refuge of Sathya, Dharma, Shanthi and Prema. They are infused in man by the religious scriptures and by the stories of the saints and sages in the Puranas which depict their search after God. The enthusiasm which is aroused by the study of these books should not fade away, like the boiling over of milk on the stove. After a few minutes of bubbling over, the milk starts cooling off. When one reaches home, after listening to a discourse, the fervour derived from the message fades into nothingness and one slides back into the fateful routine. This is called Purana-vairagya - the gust of renunciation that one gets when he hears a religious discourse, which soon passes off into the realm of neglect. The Sadhaka (spiritual aspirant) must crave for deeper impression; the Mahavakyas (Vedhic Statements of Truth) he hears, the visual experiences he gains, have to be imprinted on the heart.

There are no two entities but only One, Brahman

All the manifold rules, regulations, limitations, directions, do's and don'ts, have just this aim: to merge the soul with the Oversoul - the Jeevatma with the Paramatma. The Shasthras prescribe yama (various forms of abstention from evil-doing), niyama (disciplined observances), asana (physical posture), pranayama (control of breath), prathyahara (withdrawal of the mind from sense objects), dhyana (meditation) and samadhi (super-conscious state of absorption in the Atman), etc., as limbs of Yoga; besides japam (repetition of Lord's name or mystic formulae), shravanam (listening to God's glory), mananam (recapitulation of what was heard), nidhidhhyasana (constant musing on God's glory), etc. - all with this one end in view - of merging the Jeevatma with Paramatma. Spiritual sadhana is like a duel with a tiger, maya;

it is like playing with fire, maya. By means of the hammer strokes of joy and grief, the iron piece is shaped into a hollow vessel, so that it may not sink in the sea of maya (world illusion).

Mix honey and sea water; the concoction will be undrinkable. In the same way, do not mix the nectarine Grace of the Lord with the greed for sensual pleasures. Develop Prajnana - the pure, unsullied vision of Reality; then you can visualise the One that is appearing as this Many. Prajnanam Brahma, says the Veda; "the constant integrated awareness is Brahma." It is that by which the intelligence integrates, that by which the senses co-operate in bringing about workable conclusions.

The physical body and the Prajnana are related through the senses and the intelligence. When man and God operate together, like the positive and the negative, Prajnana, the current, is generated. It is this Prajnanam that establishes in you the conviction, Aham Brahmasmi, I am Brahman; not that there are two entities, Aham and Brahman, but, as in syrup, where water and sugar have merged, Aham has merged in Brahman and there is only one entity, Brahman. The Sama Veda has the great statement, Thath thwam asi (That thou art), meaning 'What which is beyond Ruupa and Nama (name and form) is you, who now pitiably differentiate yourself and feel distinct, by means of name and form, two transient changing insignia of individuality.' Contemplation on these grand expressions of the Truth fills one with inexplicable joy. Not being aware of these and their sweetness, man misses the great opportunity.

One must have discrimination, not mere ideas

The Prasanthi Vidwanmahasabha is designed to bring this rich treasure to the door of every one in this world, for every one is entitled to it. Not only these; the Geetha, the Ramayana, the Mahabharatha, the Bhagavatha - these too contain the message of God; they should also be taken to the doors of every man. He must be fed on it, so that he may grow in health and strength, courage and confidence; because this is something which once you get, you can never lose' Jnana (Self-Knowledge). There is another thing which if you

once lose, you can never get back; that is, maya. There is a third thing, which you can never get, for it is You yourself; you can never lose also, for it is You yourself that is Brahman. Use your intelligence and you will arrive at the correct interpretation of the manifoldness of the Universe. Science is fast approaching the view that basically the Universe is One. Only, intelligence has to be rid of prejudice and cleverness. A sanyasi (monk) had a bear which he fondled as a pet and took around with him in his wanderings. One day in the midst of the thick jungle, he commissioned the bear to keep watch over him and went to sleep. The bear saw a fly sitting on its master's nose; it tried to whisk it away; but it came back again and did not move away. Incensed as its audacity, the bear brought a big stone and threw it at the fly on the nose. Needless to say, that stone killed the master. One must have discrimination, not simply a fund of ideas.

God is the Companion and Guide of all

The speaker who is the President, referred to Mahatmas and Divine personages, whose vision is of a universal order. But it is difficult for ordinary intelligence to grasp their meaning and mystery. Each of them has his task, his standard, his area and his method or bhava. He said that Sri Sathya Sai Baba knows all that happens in all. That is because I am in every one - Ishwarahsarvabhoothanam - as the scriptures say. This current is in every bulb; only, some are of low wattage, some of high wattage. There is no fundamental difference between Jeevatma and Paramatma. The Upadhis (vestures) or bulbs have differences in power, depending on the filament and its strength. The cow eats grass; the pig eats offal, the lion eats flesh. That is the speciality of the Upadhi; how can there be any comparison or competition between these? A hathayogi had earned many strange skills and he found people gathering in large numbers around a person whom he could not gauge. That person had characteristics which no skill can bring about; Shamham, Sathyam and Prema (Equanimity, Truth and Love). If one's passions and emotions have come under the control of his higher nature, then the Lord will assume responsibility for his progress towards Him. Otherwise, he will have to wait. Do not moan that you have no Natha (Guardian). God is the only A-natha (Guardianless person). All the rest have

Him as the Natha. He is ever beside man, within him as Conscience, without him as Companion and Guide.

This world is the jungle in which you roam; fear is the lion, which drives you up the tree of samsara - worldly activities. Anxiety is the bear that terrifies you and dogs your steps in samsara, so, you slide down into attachments and binding deeds, through the twin roots of hope and despair. The two rats are day and night, which eat away the span of life. Meanwhile, you try to snatch a little joy from the sweet drops of egoism and mine-feeling. Finding at last that the drops are trivial and out of reach, you shout in the agony of the renunciation, calling on the Guru; the Guru appears, whether from within or without, and saves you from fear and anxiety.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

12. The prop you need

Date: 27 March 1967 / Location: Jamnagar

THERE are three entities in the Universe, with which man has to deal: Paramatma, Prakrithi and Jeevatma - God, Nature and Man. Of course, God is to be worshipped by man, to be realised by man through Nature (Prakrithi). Nature is the name for all the various items that impress upon man, the glory and the splendour of God. It is called maya too. Maya is the vesture of God which hides as well as reveals His Beauty and Majesty. Man must learn to use Nature not for his comfort or entanglement to the utter forgetfulness of the God behind the joy he derives, but for the better understanding of the intelligence that guides the Universe. How does a tree grow or a flower bloom? How does man learn about the stars and space, except by the inspiration of the joy and the intelligence which He who resides within endows? Approach Nature in a humble, prayerful mood; then your future will be safe. Ravana coveted Seetha, who represents Prakrithi (Nature), and stealthily brought her over; but that selfishness and greed led him into the deepest fall. If only he had coveted the God behind Nature, Rama, he could have earned eternal joy.

All the sufferings of man today can be traced to this false sense of values. First things must come first. First, self; then, help. Nowadays, people start helping others on the spiritual path without traversing that path themselves. So both the guide and the led fall into the pit. Serve yourself first, that is to say, understand who you are, whither you are going, whence you came and why you journey. After having discovered the answers to these questions from the scriptures, the sages and one's own undisputed experience, man can dare lead others.

Duality is ever the basis of sorrow and pain

People also are not trained to recognise the true from the false, the temporary from the eternal, the right from the wrong, the socially beneficial from the socially harmful. They dismiss all old customs and manners, old

texts and rites, as useless simply because they are old; they adopt new customs and fashions simply because they are new. Time is a good tester; things that have stood the criticism of centuries, the blows of many alien cultures, the attractions of strange fancies - these must have an essential core of truth and validity. The mind has a way of being drawn away by passing fancy. That is why every chapter of the Geetha is titled a Yoga, beginning from Vishadayoga and ending with Mok-shasanyasayoga. This word yoga is used in order to emphasise the importance of Chiththa-vriththi-nirodha - the overcoming of the agitation of the mind. The waters of the manasa-sarovara, the lake of the mind, are never calm; they are seldom level. The slightest shiver in the air affects the layer and creates a series of wavelets which takes a long time to spend itself out. The mind too is stirred by the objects of the outer world and the impressions they make on the inner senses; the mind is either disgusted or drawn towards the objects. This disturbs equanimity; duality is ever the basis of sorrow and pain. Sorrow is the temporary absence of joy; joy is the temporary disappearance of sorrow. Both are not everlasting, except when joy is won by spiritual means.

The assurance that Geetha gives to humanity

How can this stage of yoga be attained? The Geetha proposes to teach just this. Its first word is Dharma and its last word is mama (mine). It teaches every one who studies it mama dharma - "my dharma," "my duty," "my responsibility to myself." And what is that? Yoga. How is this yoga to be attained? By surrendering to God, dedicating every word, thought and deed to God, by effacing one's will and accepting His Will and leaving all initiation of activity to His Prompting, all execution to His Direction and all consequences thereof to His Plan. "Give up all 'right' and 'wrong' and surrender your will to Me. I shall save you from falling; I shall guard you against grief' - this is the assurance the Geetha gives, that is the prop you need. Surrender can be effected only after the perfection of detachment from sensual pleasures, accompanied by discrimination between the real and the unreal. The taints of "I" and "Mine" have to be removed by rigorous sadhana; chief among the disciplines being Narnasmarana, because when you dwell on the names of the Lord, His Majesty, His Grace, His Potency, His Pervasiveness,

these get fixed in the consciousness and one's own capacities and capabilities get eclipsed in the Divine. So, humility increases and surrender is possible quite easily. This is the very purpose of human existence, to see God and merge in His Glory. All other victories are futile. The Vedas proclaim this to be the final goal of man. The Upanishads declare the path. The Geetha illumines it. The saints and sages proclaim its grandeur. Avatars come when people stray from it and get lost in the wilderness and the wastes.

Limit, control, regulate, set bounds and bounds; that is the way to succeed. If people let lose their thoughts, words and deeds, calamity will be the consequence. Shashtra means that which 'lays down limits'; interest in the art of living is created by these rules. Rules of behaviour must be observed by politicians, rulers, subjects, monks, who are leaders of the community and heads of monasteries, scholars and others, for they are exemplars and guides and their responsibilities are greater.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

13. The world, a training ground

Date: 28 March 1967 / Location: Bhavanagar

"WHENEVER there is a languishing of Dharma or righteousness and an upheaval of unrighteousness, I create Myself, for it is part of primal resolution or Sankalpa to protect the spiritual structure of the Universe. I lay aside My formless essence and assume a name and a form suited to the purpose for which I come. Whenever evil threatens to vanquish good, I have to come and save it from decline." The Lord does not insist on all men following one path and accepting one discipline. There are many doors to His Mansion. The main entrance is, however, moha-kshaya (the overcoming of attachment). This is what Krishna exhorted Arjuna to achieve. Arjuna lost heart and allowed the bow to slip from his hand, because he was overwhelmed by a deluding type of attachment.

Krishna had to demonstrate to him that the kinsmen whom he dreaded to kill, the teachers whom he wished to live, those whom he loved and hated, all were but instruments of His Will, puppets pulled by His Hand. This destroyed his attachment and he resumed his task, without any attachment to the consequences. That made him the recipient of the greatest lesson in history. This lesson is valuable for the theist as well as the atheist, for both have attachment to the consequences of their tasks, an attachment which will colour their eagerness and double the distress when disappointed. Moha-kshaya is necessary for both Asthikas (theists) and Nasthikas (atheists), in order to secure lasting joy. Both do not take from here any minute portion of their acquisitions, both can earn the gratitude of men only by sacrifice and love.

The individual is but a spark of the Universal

Mohammed of Ghazni, who amassed vast heaps of treasure by his campaigns against India, died of fever. He directed his vazir to carry his corpse to the burial ground with both his palms uplifted for all to see that the emperor who had accumulated fabulous wealth was going to the other world with empty

hands. "Let every one know how transient is the splendour derived from the worldly possessions," he said during his last moments. When the tree of life sends its roots into the Athmic reality, the unchanging, eternal, universal, immanent entity of which the individual is but a spark, it will flourish grandly, yielding fragrant blossoms of loving service, sweet fruits giving nourishment and joy to all, the sweetness of virtue rendering every bite and chew delightful. This does not mean that you have to renounce hearth and home and flee to the forest. There is no guarantee that the hearth and home will not follow you into the silence and solitude of the forest; for, if your mind clings to worldly desires, you cannot escape them by simply putting some distance between you and them. You may be in the jungle, but your mind may wander in the market place. Similarly, you may be in the market place, but by Sadhana you can still secure a patch of peace in the heart in the midst of the busiest thoroughfare. The mind can build a Silent refuge or tie you up into complex knots. It binds; it loosens bonds. You can sail safe on the sea of Samsar (worldly life), if you have no leaks in the boat; but through the leaks of Kama Krodha, Lobha, Moha, Madha or Matsarya (lust, anger, greed, delusion, pride and envy), the waters of Samsar will enter the boat and it will sink, drowning you beyond redemption. Do not allow the water into the boat; stop all the leaks. Then, you need have no fear in Samsar, you can benefit by all the chances it gives for training the senses, widening the affections, deepening the experiences, and strengthening the detachment.

Let every moment of your life be bhajana

You have to read the newspaper to know how mad and foolish the world is; how futile is heroism, how momentary the glory; and after perusing it for the information it conveys, you throw it aside; it is now a tasteless waste. So too, live but once; so live that you are born but once. Do not fall in love with the world so much that your false fascination brings you again and again into this delusive amalgam of joy and grief. Unless you stand back a little, away from entanglement with the world, knowing that it is all a play whose director is God, you are in danger of being too closely involved. Use the world as a training ground for sacrifice, service, expansion of the heart, cleansing of the emotions. That is the only value it has. When you sing Bhajans, dwell also on

the meanings of the songs and the message of each Name and Form of God Rama - the name should evoke in you the Dharma He embodied and demonstrated. Radha - the name should evoke in you supramental, super-worldly Love she had as the greatest of the Gopees; Shiva - the name should evoke the supreme sacrifice of the drinking of the Halahala poison for the good of the world; the cool Grace heightened by the cascade of the Ganga and the moonlight from the Crescent. Do not waste time purposelessly; let every moment be Bhajana. Know the purpose of Bhajana or Namasmarana and devote yourself wholeheartedly to it; derive the maximum benefit from the years allotted to you.

Be always saturated with prema, do not use poisonous words against any one, for, words wound more fatally than even arrows. Speak soft and sweet; sympathise with suffering and loss and ignorance; try your best to apply the salve of soothing word and timely succour. Do not damage the faith of any one in virtue and divinity. Encourage others to have that faith by demonstrating in your own life that virtue is its own reward, that divinity is all-pervasive and all-powerful.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

14. Limbs of the Divine Body

Date: 29 March 1967 / Location: Mumbai

YOU are called Sevaks (Servant), because you are engaged in Seva (Service). What exactly is Seva? Is it the way in which Bhakthi (devotion) manifests itself, a consequence of devotion? Or is it the cause of Bhakthi, one of the methods by which Bhakthi is expressed and developed? It is neither. It is not the sine qua non of Bhakthi, nor is it the result. It is the very essence of Bhakthi, the very breath of a Bhaktha (devotee), his very nature. It springs from the actual experience of the Bhaktha - an experience that convinces him that all beings are God's children, that all bodies are altars where God is installed, that all places are His Residences. Consider Seva as the best Sadhana (spiritual discipline). This is a great chance that you have secured. Your work among these large gatherings is more beneficial for your spiritual development than days of Japam or Dhyanam. But do not believe that you can by means of Seva re-form or re-shape the world. You may or you may not. That does not matter. The real value of Seva, its most visible result, is that it reforms you, reshapes you. Do Seva as a Sadhana; then you will be humble and happy. Do not strut about that you are improving others; improve yourself. Make Seva an extension of your Japam and Dhyanam - Japam and Dhyanam put into practice, so to say. How can any one contemplate on a God who loves the poor and the grief-stricken and yet be cold when the poor and the stricken are around him?

Serving all types of people is fine education

I do not attach any value to the Japam within closed doors; the turning of rosaries by hands that know no help. I do not appreciate the dhyanam that makes you deaf to the agony of pain. Dhyanam should not harden the heart; it should soften it like butter, which melts at the slightest contact with heat. Seva is a great opportunity to see the God indwelling in all. Rama could have rescued Seetha unaided; but He chose to grant the seva to the vanara (monkey) hordes, for they were the gods who had come to claim that chance. When you stand forth as a sevak - you will have experienced this these days -

you meet all types of people; some who are very cooperative, some who are cantankerous, some who obstruct, some who argue, some who threaten, some who question your motive or authority. Contact with them is a fine bit of education. They toughen your character and train you to welcome with equal joy both praise and blame. Let me ask you, what is the one thing that you crave for most? Grace, is it not? Anugraha (favour), is it not? So long as your words and deeds are in conformity with Sathya and Dharma, so long as your words and deeds are sweetened by Prema and lightened by Shanthi, you need have no worry; you have the Grace in ample measure. Helping people to get dharshan (audience), the dharshan they seek so ardently, is a laudable seva. You are volunteers here to help people crowding in large numbers to get dharshan not to prevent them from it. You have to see that they do not mill around, or rush forward or push the older and weaker persons. See that they sit in silent rows so that they can get full dharshan when I come. You have to help the infirm, the aged and the sick to enter unharmed and to take their seats.

Do not rush yourself for dharshan, as I have seen some of you do, giving up the assignment allotted to you. Do not lose your temper; be sweet and soft, whatever the provocation. Have a smile ever playing on your face. Do not come between Me and those anxious to have my dharshan. They may in their resentment push you roughly aside; you have then no right to retaliate. You should reply with a smile, an apology, a polite explanation accompanied, with a Namaste and folded hands.

Milestones that mark the road to Sai

I know that those of you who are posted for duty at the outer gates or in the garden, at the Bhajana Mantap (devotional singing hall) or the Shoe Counter, feel jealous of those who are in the inner apartments of the bungalow. Some of you go out on errands into the City and are absent from Bhajana, etc. I must tell you this. I have no special brand of Grace for those who are at My door, nor do I neglect the man at the gate. In fact, I have no geographical "far" and "near"; My "far" and "near" are not calculated by physical nearness. You may be My side, yet, far; you may be far, far away, yet, very near and

dear. However far you are, if you but stick to Sathya,Dharma, Shanthi and Prema, you are close to Me and I am close to you. Those are the milestones that mark the road to Me. When your eyes see a ripe mango fruit on the tree, the tongue recollects the taste, the mind craves for it, the back stoops, the shoulders bend, the hand searches for a stone, the fingers clasp it, the arm throws it; and when the fruit falls, the hand picks it, the teeth bite into it, the throat lets it down into the stomach; there and thereafter it is converted into sustenance as a reward for the effort of all and sent as strength to eye and shoulder, hand and fingers, teeth and tongue. Similarly, when you all cooperate to give Me joy, the reward of Grace will be granted to all.

Every Sai Sevak is a limb of the Sai Body

You are all My Limbs, nourished by Me. You constitute the Sai Body. Sai will send you sustenance, wherever you are, whatever your function, provided you give Sai the things Sai considers sweet and desirable, like virtue, faith, discipline and humility. Be happy that you are a limb of the Sai Body. Do not complain that you are the foot and so have to tread the hard ground. Do not be proud that you are the head and so, up and above. It is the same blood-stream, the stream of Prema that circulates in both; the function of each is as valuable as the function of every other limb. The function of each limb is also unique, remember; so do not give room to despondency. Your part is something special, which only you can play. You cannot walk on your head; you cannot think with your feet. Whatever your position, win Grace by your virtue, that is the main gain.

There is no wealth more satisfying than contentment. Eat your fill, you cannot eat more. If you are forced to eat more, it becomes a torture. There is a limit which you cannot overstep without injury to yourself. Find out your measure, your limits, your bounds, and act, do not develop jealousy towards others, whose measures are more, who have less limitations, less narrow bounds. Hold firm the step which you have reached in Sadhana; then transfer attention to the next. Have a clear vision of the goal. March on. Seva of Sai and Seva of Sai Bhakthas (devotees) is the same. When you serve the Sai Bhakthas, because they are Sai Bhakthas, you see the Sai in them, you seek

to please the Sai in them, you revere the Sai in them. It is like serving a temple where Sai is installed, a room where a picture of Sai is adored. Throughout this period of Seva, you think only of Sai; so this training helps you to purify your impulses, defy your thoughts, canalise your devotion and expand your Love. These are big steps in Sadhana, laudable victories.

Concentration is needed for success in every operation

When you are engaged in the simple operation of threading a needle, note how much concentration is needed for success. The fingers have to be steady, the eyes fixed and clear, the end of the thread screwed into a point, the needle's eye kept unshaken. The same care has to be taken when any other operation is to succeed. The Name of the Lord is the Bow, which you lift when you raise your voice in Bhajana. The mind is the arrow you fix; so fix your eye on Brahman the target, and with single-pointed effort, shoot. Then the goal can be realised. I find many young persons here. I am glad that the Seva Samithi (service society) has given them this valuable experience. There are men volunteers and lady volunteers' so I must tell you another point on which I am very particular. You must consider others as your own brothers or sisters. I dislike flippant prattle, casual conversation and even face to face grouping of men and women, at all times, and more specially during spiritual gatherings or occasions. You must be models of straight and courteous behaviour. You must be good and appear good to every one. External beauty and charm are flimsy, they are ephemeral. Real beauty consists in virtue, selfcontrol and selflessness. Sundaram (beauty) arises from Shivam (goodness) and Shivam from Sathyam (Truth). Be guided by this rule.

Be saturated with devotion to God and man

It has been suggested that a permanent body of volunteers be set up, who can be called upon whenever I visit this place, so that the meetings I address and the Bhajana Sessions where I am present may be conducted with minimum inconvenience to all. I suggest that the purpose should be much wider and more expansive. The Sathya Sai Dhal (volunteer corps) shall be the model for all other cities. The members must be saturated with devotion to

God and man; they must have the skills which can make them better instruments. I want them to be sevaks all the time in all places, not merely when I visit the city or at the places where I address meetings. How can they withhold their seva (service activity) on the pretext that I am not present in Bombay? Every seva done with sympathy and skill to any one in distress anywhere in this world is Sathya Sai Seva. If a Sathya Sai Seva Dal man or woman finds a person swooning on the road, or suffering pain or agony when going towards college or office, it is the duty of the finder to render all help possible to relieve the suffering. Do not ignore it and walk on. The Dal must be eager to serve and trained to serve, for service from those who take My Name must be intelligent and sincere. A sevak must be neither elated nor dejected; he must adhere to the middle path. When Rama asked Hanuman to proceed towards the Southern region and described the dangers of the route, he was not dejected; when He gave him the ring to be handed over to Seetha, he was not elated that he had been chosen for the supreme task and given the glorious chance. He just obeyed. Sufficient unto him was the order of his Master, "Go." Hanuman is the ideal volunteer; efficient, humble, silent, serviceable, intelligent, eager, devoted. Develop Bhakthi (devotion) and Shraddha (faithful practice) by means of Namasmarana and Japam. Practise silence and sweetness. Serve all as Saiswaruupa (embodiments of Sai); that is the best plan to realise the Sai in you.

You must have a separate room or corner where you do Japa or dhyana every day, so that the spiritual fragrance might infuse higher thoughts during the process. If the place is changed, it will be like changing the company; the cumulative effect of association will be squandered. Parents and elders must see that their sons and wards are corrected on the spot, whenever they forget or deviate from the path.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

15. Precept and example

Date: 03 April 1967 / Location: Pune / Occasion: Meeting of Headmasters

INDIA is declared a "secular state" and so the students in the schools are denied any chance to receive training in spiritual matters; not even a knowledge of the fundamentals of SanathanaDharma (eternal universal religion). This is a tragedy. The children have a right to the property of their ancestors; but the children of the land have no access to the basis of their ancient culture. India is India because of Sanathana Dharma. It has enabled her to survive many a terrible storm; it has kept the country culturally united, in spite of varieties of language and food habits and dress. The Ramayana and Mahabharatha and the Bhagavatha are revered from the Himalayas to the Cape. The ideals of Sathya, Dharma, Shanthi and Prema which they uphold and exemplify have welded the people and kept them on a path which was beneficial to the individual as well as society. Sanathana Dharma is the only religion that declares that there is no religion that can be labelled 'one and only.' It says that all religions are but facets of the 'one and only.' It says that all Names are names of God, that all Forms are but His Forms. No religion can claim to represent fully the Universal, Eternal, Truth. This is the teaching of Sanathana Dharma. Therefore, if any one finds fault with another's faith, he is casting a slur on his own faith. If any one defames another religion, he only reveals his ignorance of the nature of religion and the glory of God.

Education must open the inner eye of the students

Education must include the education of the mind of man, of his impulses to hate, to hoard, to fight, to defame. It is not merely the acquisition of certain skills by which the materials found in nature can be reshaped into utility products; it is not merely the acquisition of information about the laws of nature. It is the process by which man makes the best of his own inner equipment, his Anthahkarana (inner consciousness), to know himself. It should open his inner eye, more than his outer; the outer must reveal the glory of God, the inner must reveal the God within. Food must contribute to the development of the head; the head must discover the existence of God

everywhere.

The rulers of this land have a great responsibility in this matter. They must bring up the children of this land, not simply as good mechanics and artisans, skilled hewers of wood and efficient drawers of water, but as persons equipped with Sathya, Dharma, Shanthi and Prema; and so able to brave the waves of fortune, to preserve their equanimity under all conditions. Students must learn to be good and steady Sevaks and Sadhakas (servants and aspirants of spiritual discipline). They have to be taught the Yoga of mind control, not breath control which under incompetent leadership might endanger health. I want that they should be given training in these matters, by whatever name the training may be called. Children should grow in the awareness of the brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God. If no provision is made for this atmosphere and this teaching, we are denying them their due. Faith in man involves faith in God; faith in God creates faith in man. Without faith, man is a creature bereft of roots; he dries and withers quickly. Faith in the God within him who makes him say, I, I, I, when referring to what he was made to say and act and do by the prompting from within - faith is the sustenance on which Love and Courage, Contentment and Joy grow. Children can be easily made aware of this inner I, which has the body as its apparel; they will grow in mutual love and cooperation with all men of all lands, when they Know that colour and caste are but apparel which do not affect the real Reality.

Teachers must be like the rishis of old

Of course, to instill in the minds of the young the value of prayer and of humility and loving service to others, the homes where they grow have to be the first schools. The parents have to be imbued with faith in the basic truths of this Universal Religion. They must be seen worshipping at the family altar, meditating in silence, forgiving the lapses of others, sympathising with pain and grief; they should not be seen by the children as worried, helpless, discontented and distressed, as if they had no God to lean upon, no inner reserves of strength and courage to fall back upon.

The teachers should be simple, sincere, straight-forward sadhakas, radiating joy and love. Emphasis on the standard of living, income and expenditure, calculations of costs and prices in terms of rupees and paise will not make a good teacher. He must be like the rishis (sages) of old; balanced, contented, quiet, calm scholars who have practised self-control and who carry about with them an atmosphere of cool equanimity. The friends that the child collects at school and around the home have a beneficial or deleterious effect on its growth. Comics, horror stories, terrorism, gunmen pictures and cinema posters that degrade man into flesh and skin - these drag the prospective hero into a zero. The child learns to worship money and things which money can buy; he admires cruelty and cunning, rather than sympathy and love. So the home, the school and the society - all three have to arouse themselves and take up this challenge to the future of this great land.

There are no bad children at all

Boarding schools and hostels where the teachers and wardens are genuinely interested in thus uplifting the coming generation may succeed more than many homes and most schools. But even they should not try to shape the children into a predetermined mould. Sanathana Dharma has no set pattern. It admits of infinite variety, based on past achievement and present accomplishment.

It has been suggested that the bad children - there are no bad children at all, there are only illbrought up children - should be isolated and given special attention, so that they may be cured of evil tendencies. But I do not like isolating them and directing the attention of every one to them. as specially marked out boys. It is not good for them, nor is it good for the others. You may pay some special attention unnoticed by the rest of the boys, because they happen to come from families that have no roots in spiritual practice: but that is all that is advisable. Of course, a good teacher knows how to manage such things, if he or she has the faith and the intelligence. There should not be, in My opinion, separate "Moral Instruction" lessons in the curriculum; every subject has to be learnt with moral instruction as the thread running through from lesson to lesson. By example and precept, in the class-room and

on the playground, the excellence of intelligent cooperation, of sacrifice for the team, of sympathy for the less gifted, of help to the maimed, the weak, the ill and the poor, of love and self-reliance, of silence and prayer has to be emphasised.

Prefer the moral way of teaching all the subjects

The indirect method of instilling these morals is better than direct teaching through text-books and tests. Tell stories from the Upanishads and the Bible, from the Bhagavatha and the Ramayana, the Mahabharatha and the lives of Saints from all nations and all ages, to illustrate a point while doing any lesson, in any subject. It is possible to teach even science and mathematics in a moral or immoral way. Prefer the moral way. One advantage which will accrue when you take this moral uplift programme in right earnest is that, through the subtle influence of the children, you are cleansing the atmosphere of the homes also. When the boy sits in silence and meditates on the Maker of all this wonder and glory, the parents too will react in the same way and the atmosphere of the home will be filled with humility and love.

If an institute is started where the training in Yoga and meditation, and in the proper leadership of children in schools is taken up, it will do much good. Senior boys and teachers can live there in communication with God for some weeks and return to their schools and workspots charged with faith in man and God. That will be the dawn of a revolution in the outlook and the activities of the India of today.

16. The wayside halt

Date: 03 April 1967 / Location: Pune

REFLECT on the Anandha (divine bliss) we experienced when the Secretary was reciting passages from the ancient Vedas! Reflection on the meaning of the passages recited will give even more lasting Anandha. But on account of a sad decline in our national sense of values, not only have the dhoti (traditional men's wear), the thilak (red dot put in the centre of eye brows) and the tuft which were the signs of orthodox culture disappeared, but even reverence towards the vital truths embodied in the Vedas has disappeared. That is the tragedy. Man is born with a great thirst, a deep hunger, for bliss. He knows he can get it, but he knows not from where. He has faint memories of his being the heir to the kingdom of Anandha. But he does not know how to establish his claim to his heritage. Something in him revolts when he is condemned to die, to suffer, and to hate. It whispers to him that he is the child of immortality, of bliss, of love. But man ignores these promptings and like one who exchanges diamonds for dirt, he runs in search of meaner pleasures and sordid comforts. However learned a man may be, if he has no sense of value, he is bound to fall. Ravana was the ruler of a vast empire; he had untold wealth; his ukase ran to the farthest ends; he knew the ancient texts very well. In fact, it is said that his ten heads represent his mastery over the four Vedas and the six Vedhangas. Yet, as his intelligence was diverted to wicked ends, he had an ignominious death.

Action dedicated to God loses its bad effects

Intelligence is a double-edged weapon. It can cut the chain and liberate you; it can cause fatal wounds and kill. That is why the great mantra which the seekers chant, called Gayathri (since it saves those who recite it), prays to God to preside over the intelligence and render it beneficial to the individual and to society. The sufferings depicted in the Ramayana are due to two characters that make only short appearances, but represent the evil force of lust and anger - Surpanakha and Manthara. They poison the minds of Ravana and Kaikeyi respectively and set the stage for the tale of grief. The education

of the emotions and the control of passions are both included in the definition of Yoga, the spiritual discipline that purifies the intelligence. To penetrate the thick fog that ignorance spreads over Reality, the intelligence must be built on the basis of virtue. When Karma (action) is done as dedication and Upasana (worship) is done as the essential for very life, the Intelligence is clarified so much that the fog disappears and the truth is revealed. Karma, when engaged in as dedicated to God, loses its deleterious effects for the doer, leaves the consequence to God; moreover, he considers every act as an act of worship and so does it to the best of his ability. Karma thus becomes transmuted into Upasana. Upasana starts with some concrete image or idol or Name and Form; then, as the significance of the Name and the Form sinks into the consciousness, all names are seen to be God's; all forms are felt to be God's. Gradually, the truth that the worshipper too is the same entity, deluding himself as separate, because of a separate name and a distinct form, labelling the upadhi (the bodily encasement), becomes evident; this is the dawn of jnana (spiritual wisdom).

There is no desire to remove the dirt, but only hide it

The fog is egoism, which hides the Universal and induces the belief in distinctness; it is a cloud of dust, that smothers the truth. People now love the fog and the cloud, they make no effort to remove them. When you enter a shop and select cloth for pants or bush shins, you ask for black; and the reason why you prefer that colour and dislike white or light shades is that the black will not reveal dirt! The desire is not to remove the dirt, but to hide it from gaze. This has become a universal weakness. People are not ashamed of dirt; they do not seek cleanliness in the heart. That can be won only through Prema and Sathya, through the repetition of the manthra (mystic formula) communicated by the Guru and by sadhana, practised regularly and steadily, with faith.

The Andhra Association can well take up this work - having Sathsangs (holy gatherings) on Saturdays and Sundays and Thursdays, where spiritual discipline for this inner cleanliness can be discovered and practised. Elders must consider how best they can be exemplars in this field for the young men

and women under their care, those who look up to them for guidance, those to whom they are heroes. They should engage themselves in some disciplines like japam and dhyanam, they must evince enthusiasm and satisfaction in those disciplines; they should be courageous in calamity and take both good and bad as gifts from God. Then only can the children in their care learn to live happily and in peace. The parents are like the A.D.C.'s for the child, which is the Maharaja. The A.D.C.'s function does not end when he dresses magnificently and struts about; he has to guard the person who is entrusted to his care. If the two A.D.C.'s neglect their duties, to however small a degree, or if they are not alert and vigilant, there is great danger. So the parents must improve themselves for the sake of their children. Example is more profitable than precept. When the parents have no reverence for God, when the pictures of Stalin and Hitler, Churchill and Lenin adorn the walls of the home, when the child has to breathe the atmosphere of scandal, faction and greed at home, how can it grow into a happy, healthy, balanced individual? The films that children are taken to see are full of violence and falsehood, mean tricks and conspiracies, which tarnish the springs of sympathy and love.

Some parents are the greatest foes of their children

There are parents who are proud when their children join them in card games or even drinking and gambling; there are parents who get angry when their children read religious books, attend temple rites and sit quietly for a few minutes meditating on the awe and wonder the Creation evokes in them. How can such parents claim to be the well-wishers of their progeny? They are the greatest foes of their progress. They do not equip their children with the armour which will render them safe in the turmoil of life. They try to make their children unworthy of the name Indian; for they grow up without learning about Rama or Krishna or the Geetha or the Bhagavatha!

Parents toil to leave their children a pile of riches; but they do not teach them the proper sense of values by which they can know how little the riches are worth, or how best to utilise the riches for their genuine advancement. Children should be taught to live like lotuses in the lake of Samsara (worldly life), being in water but unaffected by it. Lotuses cannot live when out of

water; yet, they will not allow water to enter! Be in Samsara but see that Samsara is not in you. That is the secret of successful living which they do not teach the young.

Strive for riches that cannot be stolen or taxed

The riches that you should strive to amass are not fields or factories, bungalows or bank balances, but wisdom and experience of oneness with grandeur of the Universe and the Force that runs it without a hitch. Arjuna is called Dhananjaya by Krishna because he had won (jaya) such dhanam (riches) that saves man, that cannot be taxed or stolen or transferred. The method of winning these riches is sadhana. People hesitate to enter the field of sadhana, though they crave for the harvest of joy. They are not willing to spend a pie; they want Moksha (Liberation) to drop from the heavens in their laps. They would have the vision of God thrust painlessly into their brain!

When Maithreyi was given by Yajnavalkya vast wealth in the shape of gold and cattle, when he left hearth and home on his spiritual quest, she asked him whether they would be of any use for her in her quest. When her husband replied that they were transient and cheap when compared to the wealth of spiritual experience, she cast them off and sought the precious wealth of thapasand shraddha (penance and religious faith). She got eternal joy through them. You must see Nature as filled with God, shaped by God, as God, in those shapes and smells and sounds. We see the image in the mirror because the light rays are reflected back from the surface of the mirror. You are the reflection of the rays of God from the mirror that is Nature. If that mirror were not there, the Jeevi (individual soul) does not exist as a separate entity. Remove the mirror, then 'you' merges in 'He,' and there remains We. It is Prakrithi (Nature) that induces the belief that you are the body, the deha. You feel you too are Name-Form like Prakrithi. This identification has led to an inordinate degree of attention to the body and consequently, worry and misery.

Develop the Vision, not the body

The principle that food is only a drug to cure hunger is ignored and man is enslaved to the tongue. All the twenty-four hours are spent in attending to the care of the body, the prevention of disease, the promotion of health, the development of muscle, etc. No care is spent on the dehi - the God resident in this physical tabernacle, who has to be recognised and revered. The weighing machine, on which you stand and read your weight with pride, laughs at you for the silly exaltation. It sneers at your conceit over physical victories; it warns you against too much concern over paltry gains. It knows that death is lying in wait to snatch you away, however heavy you may grow. Develop dhrishti (vision), not deha (body). Concentrate on the Maker, not the 'made.' During the battle at Lanka against the Rakshasa (demonic) hordes, a boy sitting on the hip of an ogress was wounded by a chance arrow. The mother dropped the child and fled. Lakshmana pointed her out to Rama and said, "See, how hard-hearted are these ogresses; they have no love in their hearts even for their own children." Rama replied, "Brother, do not condemn them so harshly. She may have other reasons for running away." Rama asked him to find out for himself. She told Lakshmana that not all ogres were hard-hearted. "Do you not know Vibheeshana, who serves Rama so devotedly? Are there no ogres among you, men? Do not damn all indiscriminately. Listen. I know that when it is a question of salvation, each is a distinct unit. Mother and child may go along different paths and reach the goal, soon, or late; each in his or her own time. I must seek my own good. I felt that if I flee and keep alive, Rama may take me captive to Ayodhya and grant me the dharshan (audience) that will save me from this recurring fate." She had faith in Rama's Divinity and her own ultimate liberation.

Ash is a lesson in detachment and renunciation

When you enter a shop and select the thing you want, you have to pay the price; when you sit for an examination, you have to write the answers to questions, to the satisfaction of the examiner; when you seek to learn swimming, you will have to enter the water and struggle with the strokes. When Bhasma (holy ash) is given, doubt haunts some people whether Swami is wishing that the recipient should be a Shaivite (devotee of Shiva)! It is a symbol of the indestructible basic substance which every being is. All things

become ash; but ash remains ash, however much you may burn it. It is also a sign of renunciation, of sacrifice, of Jnana which burns all karma consequence into ineffective ash. It is a sign of Ishwara, and I apply it on your brow, to remind you that you too are Divine. It is a valuable Upadesha (instruction) about your identity. It also reminds you that the body is liable any moment to be reduced into a handful of ash. Ash will be a lesson in detachment and renunciation. Man must live his days without despair and unlimited desire. You should be level-headed, without exulting when fortune smiles or drooping when misfortune frowns. Teach your children this hard lesson. Prahladha, when chastised by his father for disobeying his orders, replied, "He alone is entitled to obedience as a father who orders his son to bow to Hari, and to merge in Hari - not others." If a father commands the son to revere him as Hari, then he is a bitter foe, not a father. The children are the instruments by which Bharatha can be raised; go, I had a talk with the Headmasters of Poona about their moral and spiritual training. An institution will come up in Poona, where parents, teachers and student leaders will be trained to guide them along the right lines; where students too will be trained in spiritual practices that will make them strong and straight.

Study of scriptures and religious texts and such books, without effort to practise, results in illhealth. Being false to one's professions eats away one's self-respect and one starts getting ashamed of oneself. So learn to practise; eat to digest. That is the advice I give you today.

Attachment, affection, interest - these will create prejudice, partiality, illusion; they hide the Truth; they dull the intelligence. Raga is roga (attachment is a disease), so far as the enquirer is concerned.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

17. The obliterating flood

Date: **24 April 1967** / Location: **Chennai** / Occasion: **First All-India Conference of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organization**

LIKE food to a starving man, like showers on a parched field, the Vedhic science of spiritual self-discovery is the life-saver for humanity sliding down to destruction because it has lost its hold on truth, morality, peace and love. You are the instruments in the spread of Vedhic science among the farthest corners of this vast land; you are the chosen ones! You have to show by precept and by example that the path of self-realisation is the path to perfect joy. Hence on you lies a great responsibility; the responsibility of demonstrating by your calmness, composure, humility, purity, virtue, courage and conviction under all circumstances, that the Sadhana you practise has made you a better, happier and more useful person. Practise and demonstrate, do not simply assert in words and deny in deeds. The Sea is considered holy, holier than any river, because all the rivers pour themselves into it. This gathering of workers from all over India is therefore a holy congregation, representing the confluence of streams of devotion. It has become imperative to plan out the process of carrying spiritual knowledge to every door, for the gigantic flood of the modern machine civilisation is fast obliterating all traces of the Divine in man.

Atmosphere today is fouled by sickly competition

The Atma which can confer eternal joy is ignored and man rushes wildly under the sea or out into space to cater to his craving for pride and pomp. Some persons have to step forward boldly now to declare from their own genuine experience that the joy of reaching the moon is as nothing when compared to the joy of reaching the inner moon of Anandha, and the source of all Anandha, the Atma. Saying one thing and being another will defeat the very purpose. The slightest sign of hypocrisy will weaken the foundations of the edifice. That is why it is necessary to lay down certain tests and qualifications, certain broad guide-lines for those who stand forth as workers in this field. Standards and systematic self-examination are necessary at

every stage for the success of every effort.

The atmosphere today is fouled by hate, greed and sickly competition, which cast out the virtues of reverence, humility and equanimity. The world and its ephemeral attractions have become the goal of human endeavour. God who is the Source, Sustenance and Supreme Goal, is ignored both in the external world and in the inner world of impulse and intellect. So, the organisations you are representing have to be ever vigilant and efficient, lest you too are drawn into the vortex. I am not keeping you here any longer, for you have to gather in groups and draw up points for discussion and clarification, in the further sessions of this Conference; some of you have to meet in committees to prepare reports and lists of suggestions and recommendations for presentation to the Conference. So, I bless you all and allow you to go, back to your lodgings, so that you may meet early afternoon for the next stage of the discussion.

Illness is caused more by malnutrition of the mind than of the body. Doctors speak of vitamin deficiency; I will call it the deficiency of Vitamin G, and I will recommend the repetition of the Name of God, with accompanying contemplation of the glory and grace of God. That is the Vitamin G. That is the medicine; regulated life and habits are two-thirds of the treatment, while the medicine is just one-third only.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

18. Sathya Sai Seva

Date: **21 April 1967** / Location: **Chennai** / Occasion: **First All-India Conference of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organization**

THE Vedas are inspired by the holy spirit of Divine Mercy; they seek to transmit to humanity the secrets of a happy life here and of Liberation for ever. They reveal the essence of the Divine Glory. They are the source of spiritual knowledge over the millennia for all mankind. The Vedas and the Intellect, which man is endowed with as a gift from God to separate good from evil, are the means by which the culture of this land is to be preserved and promoted. When the Vedhic treasure house is explored with intelligence, the Atma-thathwa (essential nature of the Self) becomes clear and when that is recognised, man becomes eternally happy and full of peace. This treasure was slighted and neglected as a result of the fascination for outlandish ways of life, but, since some years, the feeling of reverence and the readiness to repent have appeared among the people.

This Conference is itself a sign of revival. You are allotted the task of bringing once again to the homes of the people the message of Athmic strength and Athmic unity. Transmuting 'man' into 'God' and experiencing that Anandha (Bliss) is the one and only achievement for which life is to be devoted. The efforts you make in your own places are directed to bring this goal into the awareness of each person. Of course, there are in existence many organisations and societies engaged in distributing various cures for the 'spiritual' 'ills of their constituents, and therefore, a question may arise about the need for this additional institution. The need has arisen to emphasise the basic and essential discipline, which is practical and universal, as prescribed since ages for the revelation of the Divine in man.

Bharatheeya Culture has to be fostered first

The entire Universe is pictured as but the Body of Vishnu, by the Vedas. And, Bharath (India) is as the eye of the Universe, the reason being that she has the most correct vision of the Cosmos in the context of Time. The mother

desires that the son should uphold the honour of the family; the son should uphold the fair name of the mother and father. So, every Indian has to learn and practise the spiritual science that the sages of this land have explored and discovered. However, due to hostile forces, evil company, ignorant fascination, Indians have neglected this foremost duty. The infection has come; it is well settled in the organism. Now, it has to be cast out. This Conference and the organisations you represent are attempts to cure that illness. The purpose is the same, whatever the name - Prasanthi Vidwanmahasabha, Sathya Sai Seva Samithi, Sathya Sai Seva Dhal, or Sathya Sai Bhaktha Mandali. The first aim is to foster and cultivate Bharatheeya Culture. Let its validity be examined through actual living, and one's own discovery of its values; and communicated to others by those who have experienced the peace and joy derivable from it. I do not want the extolling of the drug by persons who have not been themselves cured by it. Today, in the very land where this culture grew and flourished, immorality and corruption have destroyed happiness and contentment. Many condemn these things, but those are the very persons who commit the wrongs they deplore. Those who profess to lead the people are themselves led astray by the temptation to fall. So, the very first ideal you must keep in mind, when you start and run these organisations is: Do not crave for status or authority or position; do not allow any pomp, or show; do not compete for publicity or recognition or praise.

Unity Consciousness is the heart-beat of India

Duty is God. Do it and be content. You may have yearnings towards self-aggrandizement and plans to fulfil them; I know that some people have already devised plans for getting into official positions; but, you must subdue and destroy those desires. Following My instructions without demur, is the best plan. While engaged in Service (Sella), it is wrong to yield to lower cravings or to follow one's own impetuosity. The Vedas declare that it is only by Thyaga - renunciation, surrender, submission - that immortality can be acquired. In the history of India, you must have noticed that all the great movements and empires were motivated by spiritual undercurrents, not by political or economic stresses. It is only after the advent of the East India Company that politics and the struggle for political power predominated. You

must make politics subserve the need to promote and perfect the fundamentals of Indian (Bharatheeya) culture. The Universe is the Body of God; in the Body, the Unity Consciousness is Bharath, the Ekabhava (feeling of Oneness). "Ekam Sath," (The Reality is One) the Vedas declared aeons ago! That is the heart-beat of Bharath today. This is the reason why sages, saints, Divine personages and Incarnations of God appear here and proclaim their message to mankind from this land. The precious message is now being exported, but very little is used inside the country. That is the tragedy.

Sai organisations must promote faith in God

For the influence available from positions of authority, for acquiring and accumulating power, individuals talk ill of others and breed hate. From dawn till dusk and dusk till dawn, the chief occupation of people today is finding fault with others, trying to publicise the faults in others. This state of things is an insult cast in the face of our hoary culture. It springs from the craving for cheap popularity and temporary fame. Your organisations must endeavour to promote faith in God. If that base is absent, worship, bhajan, puuja, good works - all become meaningless automatic ritual, done under social compulsion. Inner transformation, which is the fruit, can be acquired only when these are done with faith. Faith can grow only from the root of inquiry. Faith is made firmer by inquiry. You must encourage inquiry by the members whom you contact and welcome their efforts to gain first-hand experience.

Man strives to provide himself with food, clothing and housing for the sake of the body; he must also provide himself with some things to keep the mind healthy and happy. It is the mind that conditions even the body. The mind is the instrument, the fly-wheel, the thickest comrade of man. Through it, one can either ruin oneself or save oneself. Regulated and controlled, channelised properly, it can liberate; wayward and let loose, it can entangle, and bind fast. Try to find out when exactly man is having peace, full undisturbed peace. You will see that he is at peace only during sushupti (deep sleep). For, at that time, the senses are inactive, the mind is inert and unattached to the senses or their targets. So, when senses are made ineffective to drag the mind out, man can attain peace. That is the real sadhana, the basic sadhana: the

withdrawal of the senses from the objective world (Nivritthimarga).

Two fangs that make the individual poisonous

Train the mind to dwell on the inner equipment rather than the outer attractions. Use the mind to cleanse the feelings, impulses, attitudes, tendencies and levels of consciousness. Let it not accumulate dirt from the outer world and deposit them within itself. If it is attached to work (Pravritthimarga) the consequences of work get attached to it. Unattached work is the purest; it does not encumber the mind with elation or disappointment. 'I did it,' 'This is mine': these are the two fangs that make the individual poisonous. Pull out the fangs, the snake can be handled and played with as a pet. These organisations must be vigilant to see that egoism and the sense of personal possession, pride or achievement, do not invade them. That is the goal to be kept in view.

When an organisation is started it has to lay down for itself certain rules and regulations. But our rules are of a different nature altogether. Our rules emphasise that members must first practise what they stand for. Whatever you desire others to do, you must first put into daily practice sincerely and with steadfastness. You must do bhajan regularly and systematically, before you advise others about the efficacy of bhajans. When you want to be honoured by others, you must learn to honour them first.

Bhagawan is the medicine for Bhava-rogha

Service has become a word of common currency, but its value is very much reduced by the hypocrisy of the users. Really speaking, only those who are afflicted with agony, equal agony, at the sight of pain and suffering, distress or disease, have the fight to offer service; for, they are not serving others, they are serving themselves, serving to remove as fast and as intelligently as they can, their own agony. Service to others is the medicine one needs to alleviate the distress which fills one at the sight of distress in another being. Feel that you are serving yourself, that you are curbing your own ego. Otherwise service heightens your self-esteem and develops a sense of

superiority, which are both harmful spiritually. Food is the medicine for the illness of hunger; drink, for the illness of thirst; for the disease of bhavarogha (Birth-Death-Cycle), Bhagawan is the medicine; for the disease of desire, Jnana is the specific. For the disease of doubt, despair and hesitation, which are the occupational diseases of Sadhakas, the most effective remedy is paropakara (doing good to others). For the major infection of ashanthi (anxiety), the course of treatment is bhajan. It is to provide these remedies to the sufferers that the organisation has to dedicate itself. A spiritual organisation is really above all rules and regulations; the realm of the Atma is beyond the limits of regulations. In this sense, rules are either meaningless or superfluous in Sathya Sai Organisations. But at least, to satisfy the law of the land dealing with associations of this kind, some rules have to be adopted. For example, who can be members of these organisations, and what are their qualifications? (1) Of course, they must be eager aspirants for spiritual progress. (2) They must have full faith in the Name that the organisation bears and in spreading that Name, in the manner suited to Its Message and Majesty. (3) Besides, the member must have won recognition as a good person. That is all the qualification needed; nothing else counts. There is no need to have money or lands, or scholarship, influence or authority or official position.

Oath must be taken from the very depth of the heart

If you have the three qualifications mentioned, I assure you, even if you have no place in any organisation bearing My Name, you will have a place here (Baba indicated His Heart as the place where they will be accepted). The organisations must be such that members find them congenial places to deepen their Sadhana, to cultivate their virtues and to overcome their ego, by contact with workers who are free from the least trace of that deadly poison. If this is achieved, their success is certain. Secondly, what are the duties of members and office-bearers? You know that the State requires you to take a solemn oath, when you take up an office or enter upon an assignment. Similarly, each member and office-bearer must take an oath, from the very depths of the heart, before engaging themselves in the activities. "Swami, Save me from any act of commission or omission which will affect adversely

the three qualifications You have laid down. Bless me with the skill, intelligence and enthusiasm necessary for the task I am dedicating myself to carry out for my own uplift. Guide me along the correct path; shower on me Your Grace so that I may earn a fair name in this attempt; guard me from temptation and wrong steps." When you rise from bed at dawn, pray thus. At night, when you go to bed, ponder over your activities during the day, examining them, whether you went against any of the conditions of membership, and if any wrong had been committed unconsciously, pray that it may not happen again. Decide to dedicate yourself in this manner, with these ideals for the work ahead.

Do not develop fanaticism in Sai activities

Another point I want to emphasise is this: There are many other organisations with spiritual objectives in this land, run under different names, attached to other Names and Forms of God, like Rama, Krishna. You know that Indian culture insists that you should offer reverence to all the names and forms of the One God-head. In your organisations, there may be some who insist that only Sai Bhajan should be sung, only the Name and Form of Sathya Sai be used. This is a great mistake. You are thereby dishonouring Sai. If you attach yourself to Sai and detach yourself from Krishna, you get a plus there and a minus here; the resultant gain is zero. In this matter do not develop fanaticism or sectarianism. Others may have these, but that is no reason why you should meet them with the same failings. Try your best to avoid such infection. When the other organisations require help, go and help them. This will make them realise the loving universal nature of your attitude. Again, do not encourage differences based on region, language, religion, or any such flimsy grounds. For example, people who exaggerate these differences argue in Madras that only Tamil songs should be sung or in Andhra Pradesh, that only Telugu songs should be sung. If such ideas are entertained, they will undermine the Adhyathmik (Spiritual) outlook, the attitude of unity and oneness which is the keynote of the spirit. This is a field where inner joy, inner satisfaction, internal purity are more important than outer expression. I do not like collection of funds. But, since some expense has to be incurred, I have to allow it under very stringent conditions. Each organisation has as

Members (of the Samithi) about ten or fifteen persons. Whatever expense they decide to incur for the work of the Samithi (Organisation), they have to collect among themselves, without seeking help from those outside the circle. They have, of course, to contribute according to their capacity and limit the work to the resources they can pool among themselves.

A word of warning on collecting funds and spending

Do not plan beyond your capacity and move about with lists from person to person to get funds. By this, the institution gets a bad name and you too will not be spared. You may say, "But, when Swami comes to our place, we must spend a lot on reception arrangements." No, I do not need grand decorations, huge pandals, arches, flags and such paraphernalia. I require only a mike to communicate My advice to the people. Even a chair is superfluous! I can talk standing. Spend sparingly for the minimum needs; do not involve yourselves in expensive luxury. I would like you to spend any extra money that you have for the feeding of the poor or for any similar beneficial object.

Attempts are being made in many places to build Sathya Sai Mandhirs (halls of worship). But Sathya Sai will be happy if He is installed in your hearts; that is the Mandhir I like, not those. When you seek to build that other Mandir, you have to go about seeking donations. Religion has declined in this land due to this donation-seeking and donation-granting. Really speaking, the most precious donation is a pure mind; give that to the organisation and it will shine. I shall tell you a method by which the extra funds you may need for any undertaking the Samithi has in view are to be collected. Estimate beforehand what the expense will be. Suppose it comes to a thousand rupees, give that information to the fifteen members, and fix a day when they shall all meet. That day, keep a locked box with a slit on the lid, in an inner room; let every one go in alone into the room and deposit in the box whatever he feels he can. He can come away without depositing anything; he has the freedom to do so, there is no compulsion. If funds are collected with the knowledge of the rest, a person who is unable to give as much as another may feel humiliated and so this is the best method. When all have finished their turn, let the box be opened and the amount counted. If it falls short of the

estimate, divide the shortfall among all members equally and collect the share from each. If there is some surplus, keep it for the next occasion.

Fund collection campaign will lead to calumny

Do not have lists, appeals, receipt books and all the cumbrous complex of fund collection campaigns. That way will lead you to stratagems and falsehoods, competition and calumny. Do it in this quiet and sacred manner, suited to the holy objectives you have. Some delegates suggested that sub-committees be formed and recognised. But that will increase the number and so give room for more mistakes. Let the responsibility be on a few dedicated persons. The District President must see that small associations in the villages are given proper guidance and help to carry out the task undertaken by them, and to send to those villages, exponents of Vedhic culture in order to instruct and inspire them. Attempts should also be made to spread spiritual knowledge and instill the yearning for spiritual Sadhana among students and youth.

Do not set limits to celebrations of holy days

Sathya Sai Seva Samithis have to bear in mind the word, Seva, and take up Seva work enthusiastically. Seva must be directed towards the removal of physical distress, the alleviation of mental agony, and the fulfilment of spiritual yearning. Some regions are affected by floods, some by drought; the Samithi must make efforts to bring relief to the sufferers from these and other natural calamities.

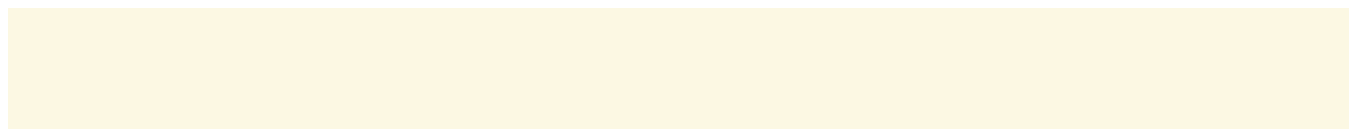
The Bhajan Mandalis, Sathsangs, Bhaktha Mandalis, that are now established must spread the message of Namasmarana, Bhajana and Namasankeerthana at all times and in all places. Jayadeva, Gouranga, Thyagaraja - all these moved through the bazars and streets, singing bhajans and songs about the glory of God and their ecstasy filled lakhs and lakhs of people with Divine fervour.

Yesterday, some one read out a list of Holy Days which the associations were

to celebrate. That list mentioned Shivarathri, Navarathri, Swami's Birthday and Guru Pournami. But you must also celebrate the Birthdays of the Mahatmas who led man to the God within him, and also all days held holy by your brothers. Do not set limits to these celebrations and these days. Make every day a Holy Day and fill it with the recollection of God and His Messengers. Establish unity among yourselves first; do not seek faults in others or excellences in your own selves. The Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man - have full faith in this and fill every act of yours with that reverence and love. Meet together once a week or once a fortnight or at least once a month; have some one to discourse to you, or engage in bhajan or study or dhyana; experience the thrill of spiritual comradeship. Every member of the association must have some item of work allotted to him and he must be present whenever such meetings are held, unless of course it becomes physically difficult. I must tell you about another point also. Wherever you are, whatever work you do, do it as an act of worship, an act of dedication, an act for the glorification of God who is the inspirer, the witness, the Master. Do not divide your activities as, "These are for my sake" and "These are for the sake of God." Even if you divide zero by zero, you get one. When you work, there should be no remainder, nothing should remain over. See all work as one. You should not, the Shasthras say, leave any remainder or balance in debts, in disease, in vengeance against enemies, in the cycle of birth-death. Finish all, down to the last. They should not recur again. If you offer all activities at the feet of the Lord and free them from any trace of egoistic attachment, the consequence will not bind you: you are free, you are liberated, you have Moksha.

Silence has to be started with oneself; that is to say, one must talkless, and think more deliberately, more discriminatingly. One must try to empty the mind of impulses and prejudices and preferences. Thus, man must strive to reach down to his real nature or dharma, which is Divine, Dharmaswaruupa (righteousness personified).

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba



19. The journey in the jungle

Date: 22 April 1967 / Location: Chennai / Occasion: Prasanthi Vidwaanmahaasabha

THE glory of Bharath is indescribable. Its people have reached the Himalayan heights of spiritual endeavour and handed down vast treasures of wisdom for all mankind. But of late, little men search for coal in the diamond mine! Children of this land must seek and secure the gems and be proud of the achievements of their forefathers. The Vedantha Shasthra (spiritual science) is the basic science for the happiness of the individual and of the community of man. It preaches unity, peace and the existence of the Divine in man. Three texts are considered authoritative by the seekers of this land: the Upanishadhs, the Bhagavadgeetha and the Brahmasuuthras. These three teach the essentials for the higher life of the spirit. In order to make the teaching clear to the uninitiated, three great commentators, one after the other, wrote elaborate interpretations of these texts, and since each of them had one particular viewpoint, the three saw in the selfsame texts three different but not divergent paths to the goal of liberation. Shankaracharya elucidated them from the Adhwaithic (non-dualistic) point of view, Ramanujacharya from the Visishthadhwaithic (qualified dualistic) and Madhwacharya from the Dhwaithic (dualistic) point of view. Dhwaitha philosophy or the dualistic point of view declares that the Jeevi (individual) is Jeevi and Dheva (Universal) is Dheva and the twain shall ever be only two. The Adhwaitha school of philosophy declares that there is only one Entity (Dheva) and that the Jeevi is a false improvisation which ignorance conceives, because it is not able to realise the Universal which alone exists. There are no two; Adhwaitha means 'No-two.' Visishthadhwaitha, special or peculiar 'no-two-ness,' declares that Jeevi is a limb of the Universal, a component, but a distinct component of the One.

Faith should be patent even when suffering

All three are genuine paths to the same goal; and, those who follow one cannot change over to another all of a sudden. A car cannot change over to another all of a sudden. A car cannot fly in the air, nor can a plane taxi along

the road to the destination. 'I am the Son,' 'God is My Father,' 'I and My Father are one' - these declarations of Christ are significant in this context. As one's vision gets clearer and sharper, one's knowledge of oneself and the Universal in which he is involved becomes clearer, sharper and truer, until it becomes the very breath, the very core of his existence.

There was a famous scholar once who earned great fame as a Vedhic exponent, but no one could guess his caste. Many suspected that he was not a Brahmin, but there was no means of discovering. At last, the wife of a Pandith said she could easily solve the problem. The scholar was invited for a feast at the place and when he was fast asleep after a full repast, she applied to the sole of his foot a red-hot brand at which the Vedhic scholar yelled "Allah." Thus it was discovered he was a Muslim. Faith should not be a matter of exposition only; it should be patent even when you yell in pain.

Pathanjali in his Yogasuuthras says: "Yogah Chiththa vriththi nirodhaha" - "Yoga is restraining the agitations natural to the mind." Man alone is endowed with the equipment needed to establish mastery over the senses. Birds, beasts and other species have no such capacity to discriminate and renounce. They act on instinct or impulse; they cannot argue, assess, accept or reject.

Stick to your innate nature whatever may happen

A hermit was one day bathing in the Ganga, when he saw floating downstream on a piece of wood a scorpion. This is God encased in the scorpion form and name, he felt; he wanted to save the scorpion. So, he took it on his palm; but, when it stung him, he dropped it on the waters. Then he was stricken with remorse and so, he lifted it up again. Thus it stung him five or six times; but, he persisted in his mission of mercy and at last, managed to drop it on dry land so that it could go its way, alive and happy. Many people watched his efforts and laughed at him for his stupidly exaggerated sympathy. The hermit told them that the scorpion had taught him a lesson and he was thankful for it. They asked him what it was. He said: "Stick to your innate nature, whatever may happen - that is what it has taught me." Its

nature is to sting; it stung, regardless of whom or when.

Man's nature is to achieve Jnana; Anandha is man's essence. Love is the bloodstream that sustains him; peace is the vision that guides and directs him. That is the reason why he is addressed as 'Amrithasya puthra,' in the Upanishads - he is the son of immortality; he is eternal; he has no birth nor death. In the Geetha, Krishna declares that among the mountains, He is Himagiri, the Himalayas. From this, you should not infer that Krishna was a patriot who spoke a good word about a physical feature of His mother-country. To reach the Himalayas, the abode of the pure, white, cool, snow (symbol of the Sathwik virtues) you have to pass through Haridhwar (the gate way of God-awareness) and through Hrishikesh (control of the senses). Then only can you be the liberated soul, which is of the same essence as He. That is the inner meaning of this statement by Krishna. Unless you know the inner and the correct meaning, faith will be uncertain and practice spasmodic.

The three tragedies and the cure to overcome them

The consequence of avoiding the knowledge and practice of Vedantha is the increase of three tragedies: Papam, Thapam, Ajnanam (Sin, Suffering and Ignorance). The Name usually given to the Reality that you are, namely, Rama, is the cure for all three. Atma is known as Atmarama because Rama means that which pleases and nothing confers such vast inexhaustible joy as the Atma. So, the word Rama means the Atma. That word consists of three components: Ra, and ma. 'Ra' is the mystic representative of Agni (Fire) principle; it burns sin into ash, 'a' is the symbol of Suurya (Sun) principle; it destroys the darkness of ignorance. 'Ma' is the symbol of Chandra (Moon) principle; it cools the Thapam or heat of suffering. So, 'Rama' overcomes all the three tragedies and reveals the Truth, the Beauty and Goodness. Repeat the Name, Rama with this significance in mind and you can feel its effect very soon. Man is Atmaswaruupa (of the nature of Atma), which is Truth, Beauty, Goodness, Peace and Love. But he craves against his nature, for the false, the fleeting, the crude, the inert and the chaotic. This is demeaning and disgraceful. Man must turn his face away from these and seek in himself the source of strength and joy. He must always have in view God, of whom he is

an expression, when he does any act. The Kannakanda of the Vedas which prescribes Yagas and Yajnas (Vedhic rituals of sacrifice) is designed to secure for man the Grace of God and not, as is often assumed, a happy life in Paradise. The prompting should arise not from desire for Paradise, but from desire to obtain Grace, to dedicate the Yoga to God, leaving the benefits therefrom to the will of the Bestower. Nachiketa taught his father this superior outlook on the subject of Yaga and Yajna. The emphasis must be not merely on ritual correctness, but unconditional surrender to the God who is invoked and propitiated in these rituals.

Sacrifice the animal characteristics in yaga

For example, the texts speak of Bhuthabali - offerings to the Elements, as a rite to be observed. The common meaning of bali is sacrifice of an animal, but the correct meaning of bali is a tax, a tribute, an impost. It is from the taxes paid by the people that the government is able to provide various services and comforts for better living. So too, it is from the consolidated funds of these balis that the Divine in the elements are providing humanity the benefits they derive, which will facilitate the acquisition of jnana (spiritual knowledge). In the Yagas and Yajnas, Bhuthabali forms an important rite. Sacrifice the animal characteristics like pride, hatred and passion and save yourselves.

When you go to a shop to provide yourself with something you need, you know that you cannot get it without paying its price. You have come here in order to get some inspiration, or information, or some glimpse of the inner treasure that you possess and of the means of benefitting by it - call it Atmasakshathkara, Moksha, Atmathathwa or Liberation, Nirvana or anything else. You have come to this shop for it; we are selling the thing you need. But you are hesitant to pay the price. 'The mouth is closed tight when the bit and the bridle are brought; it opens wide when gram or grass is brought' is said of horses. It should not be said of men. So, when you come to gatherings like this you must come, aware of the precious ware that is here available, and anxious to assimilate as much as possible. Eager attention now, reflection later on what has been heard - that is the price you have to pay.

There is no use of reading without practising

Reflect and put into practice what you recognise as beneficial in what you have listened to. Practice gives you the golden harvest of blissful experience. If you spend all your time in erecting the fence, when are you to raise the crop? When you spend all your time in reading about agriculture and of the excellent crops that can be got by using high yielding strains of seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, etc., but do not plough, or sow, or spray or dig or pull out the weeds, how can the granary be full? Reading, reciting, listening - these are not enough; practise is what is needed.

If you are told that Nachiketa did this or Svetaketu said that, of what avail is it? Unless you adopt them as your ideals, exemplars, guides, these Upanishads and scriptural texts are only fairy tales! Try to understand their steadfastness, their faith, their sense of values, their virtues and their uprightness. And yearn to acquire them. They only can we have another Nachiketa and another Svetaketu. Or else, in the entire course of human history, there will be only one Nachiketa and one Svetaketu!

Learn lesson from the events around you

You have seen hundreds of funerals; but no lesson has been learned. Buddha saw but one. It changed the course of his life and opened a new chapter in the history of the world. You have seen long processions of Sanyasins; Buddha saw only one Sanyasi. You have seen sick men by the hundreds. The renunciation of the Sanyasins, the suffering of the sick, the pitiable condition of the aged - these made profound impression on Buddha. He left his palace, his wife and new born child to seek the remedy for the miseries of life. If you cultivate a mind that will welcome such transforming impressions, these discourses will benefit you. When all the millions who gather all over this ancient land to listen to spiritual discourses, put into practice a tenth of what they hear, Bharath will rise once again to the pinnacle of spiritual glory. But do not despair when confronted by the obstacles, the atmosphere, the handicaps, the dissensions and the doubts. They are all good omens, no

unpropitious ones. You will soon delight in the restoration of Sanathana Dharma to its pristine glory. This must happen, it will happen, it shall happen.

Meanwhile, without losing heart, you should determine your path and pursue it unwaveringly. A celebrated sage once advised an aspirant that he could get God-realisation, in thirty days, if he spent all the twenty-four hours in the contemplation of God. He went to his place, did as he was told and after thirty-six days (he continued for six more days!) he hurried to the sage, in great rage, for he was sadly disappointed. The sage asked him for an account of his daily schedule of activity during the thirty-six days. The disciple said, "Well, I rise from bed at four o'clock wash and get ready for Dhyana by five, meditate until six, move about until eight, have something to eat, doze off for a few minutes, read a few pages, converse with friends for a while on the happenings in the world, bathe and drink something hot afterwards, etc., etc., with Ramanama now and then, in the intervals." The sage answered, "Wonderful indeed! I did not anticipate you will behave so crudely. I directed you to use all the twenty-four hours in the contemplation of God, without wasting a single moment. I did not lay down any other schedule. Spend as much time as there is in thirty days, in the unalloyed contemplation of God; you will attain liberation."

Meaning of unalloyed contemplation on God

The best method of carrying out the sage's direction is to believe that this body is the residence of God; that the food you take is the offering you make to Him; your act of bathing is the ceremonial bathing of Him who is in you; the ground you walk on is his domain; the joy you gain is his gift; the grief you experience is His lesson. Remember Him ever, in sun and rain. day and night, asleep and awake. That is the unalloyed contemplation he advised the pupil to do. Life is a jungle, where there is a great ideal of dry wood which harbours worms and insects. No one cleans the floor of the forest, or cuts away the undergrowth of bush and bramble. To wade through the thorns and the leech-ridden floor of the jungle, one has to wear boots. So too, one has to wear the boots of sense-regulation if one has to pass through the jungle of life, without harming oneself. This is the lesson I want you to carry home with you today,

for pondering over and for practise.

20. The Race and the Prize

Date: 23 April 1967 / Location: Chennai / Occasion: Prasanthi Vidhwanmahaasabha

MAN'S life has a beginning and an end; the beginning and the end are both governed by the law of cause and effect. The nest of a bird built with arduous circumspection on the branch is swayed by the gale and felled by the storm. The lovely petals of the rose, dancing in the breeze, and spreading fragrance around, are blown to the ground by the sudden gust of wind! Man too is floored at the height of his triumph by the stroke of some unseen hand. Man is aghast at the consequence that he experiences; he is unaware of the cause, for he has no inclination to seek it. The cause for birth is the same as the cause for death' fascination for sense-objects and the trail of activity that it involves.

Children are happy since they have not yet got involved in such activity. They scatter joy and enthusiasm, innocence and confidence. How comes it that they are so fresh and gay? Their minds are free from the infection of sense-pleasure-seeking. They are ravelling in the untainted joy of their own innate nature. That is the reason why Christ fondled a child, and advised all the grownups to become children, so that they may be saved. How sweet is the smile of the babe in the cradle or of the child playing in the garden? That is the genuine nature of man which he tarnishes foolishly, year by year, as he grows.

Move on and climb ahead towards the goal of God

In the pure pellucid lake in the heart of man, the Lotus of Divine aspiration is blossoming; instead of offering that flower at the Feet of God, you try the trick placing there flowers that fade, fruits that rot, and leaves that dry. Offer the heart that He has endowed you with, filled with adoration and love! Your Anandha is my Ahara (sustenance), so, cultivate it. It grows only when you meditate on the source of Anandha, the goal of Anandha, namely, God. Seetha was interned by the cruel King Ravana in the most beautifully laid-out garden in Lanka, called Ashokavana (the Forest of No-sorrow). The flower-

beds, lawns and greeneries, trees and creepers, bowers and groves were most pleasing to the eye and refreshing to the mind. But, Seetha derived no joy therefrom! She found therein only empty vanity, lust for power and foul pleasure. But, Seetha felt real Anandha when an ugly monkey started repeating the name of Rama from the branch of the tree under which She sat! That name was for her the source of unfailing Anandha.

The stage of life, the status in society, the profession, the company into which you are ushered, the recreation you like - all these are to be used by you for cleansing the inner mirror, so that God may be reflected clearly therein. Grihasthashrama (the householder stage of life) is a step in the ladder to God-realisation. You do not settle down on a step, or stay on a rung, or build a home on a bridge. Move on, climb ahead, cross over, towards the goal of God. From Iham (this world) you proceed to Param (the world beyond); through the practise of the Dharma (code of virtuous conduct), pertaining to life in the world as a member of the human community, you transcend it and earn the right and the qualification to know about the Dharma of the beyond, the Nature and Glory of the Divine. Iha dharma gives Anandha; but Paradharm reveals to you the source of Anandha and merges you in that source.

In reality there is 'no bondage and no release'

The Lord, who incarnates to restore Dharma, Himself advises the renouncing of all Dharma for the sake of the ultimate Liberation or Moksha and in the same Bhagavadgeetha He recommends in the last chapter the giving up of even the craving for Moksha or Liberation, for there is in reality, "no bondage and no release." It is only a delusion born of ignorance, which disappears when the Light of knowledge is allowed to illumine the place where Darkness prevailed. When you know that you are ill, you should try to take such a medicine that you will not need any other medicine, ever afterwards. You should not fall ill again. When you engage in activity, you must choose such an activity that will not involve you in its chain of consequences. Karma must be such that it does not involve you in further karma. Karma dedicated to God, karma done in a spirit of surrender, with no concern for the consequence - these alone can prevent the sprouting of further shoots from each individual

karma. As a result of recent movements in world-thought man's heart is being hardened by hate and greed, not softened by love and sympathy. Intelligence (the 'dhee') which the Gayathri prayer attempts to urge into enlightened activity, blinds man from recognising in the beauty of nature, in the sublimity of space, time and causation, the might and majesty of God. It is perverted so much that questions like, "Where is God to be found?" "Why does He not reveal Himself to me now?" arise in the mind.

You can find God if only you look into yourself and understand yourself. He can be realised only after a long process of cleansing and at the end of a systematic disciplined preparation. Without learning the alphabet, how can any one dare condemn a classic? The culture embedded in the ancient texts promoted the composure and mental poise that is needed to delve into the depths of one's being. It is concerned with making every one aware of the Atma, the basic Truth, the only entity of which everything else is a by-product.

Religion is the product of awareness

Confusing religion with social customs like taking a bride, or dining with some one or declining to do so, people talk glibly discarding religion or disregarding it. Religion is the Mother and how can any one do without her or deny her or discard her? You can divorce a wife and marry again; but, you cannot deny a mother and declare another as the person who gave birth to you. Religion is not constituted of human fancies; it is the call of the Spirit from which we have come, of the Sea in the heart of the river. It is the sense of kinship one feels, when one sees other beings immersed in grief or joy. It is the exultation one feels when one experiences Truth, Beauty and Goodness. He who denies religion, has no discrimination, no heart, no feeling, no emotion. Matham (religion) is the product of mathi (awareness). Only, he who has none of these will argue that Religion is harmful or superfluous. You can pluck a few leaves off the tree or chop off a few of its branches, but the Tree of Religion is deep-rooted in the human heart; it can never be destroyed or ignored. The fact that the body is but a shaky receptacle that is liable to crash any moment, that the senses are imperfect instruments of knowledge, that objects are not per

se sources of pleasure or happiness, that the sense of 'I' persists in deep sleep too - these cannot be denied by decree or by swearing them off. Like all attainments, the attainment of self-realisation also involves hard discipline and concentrated effort. The price has to be paid!

Love the highest, Love the Most Lovable, God

Let us suppose you are abused, reviled, and grievously hurt, in a dream! Though you are pained at that time, when you awake, you are not aware of what has happened so realistically a few minutes ago. So too, when you awake into the higher consciousness of Jnana (spiritual wisdom), all the grief and joy, the pleasure and pain you experience in the waking stage are found to be as ephemeral as dreams. Report to the police that you killed a person; they will throw you into the lock-up. Tell them you killed him in your dream, they will brush you aside as a nuisance.

Having come upon the world stage as 'man,' one should act the role effectively. The tree is known by the fruit. The human body is the temple of God. He is installed there. Yearn for the realisation of this Truth, seek to discover It and derive Bliss therefrom - that is Bhakthi (Devotion, the path of Love to God). Love the Highest, Love the most Lovable; do not love anything.

There was a Pandith once who taught grammar and rhetoric to a group of pupils. After finishing a course of lessons, he gave them an assignment to compose four lines of poetry. One young man, who struggled with himself to produce appropriate rhyme, had the first two lines: The Full Moon is shining bright The tree has fruits at a height; and in his despair; he completed that quatrain with two more lines, more absurd than those two The food is not cooked aright! Ganganna's face is a horrid sight! The assignment of course is completed; but, how futile, how pathetic, how worthless the result.

By meditation alone can you develop good vision

Man's years of life are also spent in such futilities. He completes the assignments of spending the allotted years, but how worthless is the

achievement! Every one composes the four lines; but do they make any sense? Do they deserve attention or appreciation? No. They pursue every will-o'-the-wisp, every chance desire, every line of thought, and are satisfied that they have 'lived.' But, this complacency is entirely misplaced. When the accounts are closed and debit and credit calculated, what is the profit earned? You have wandered far and wide, but neglected your home. You peep into the stars in space, but keep your inner sky unexplored. You peep into other's lives and pick faults, and talk ill of them; but, you do not care to peep into your own thoughts, acts and emotions and judge whether they are good or bad. The faults you see in others are but projections of your own; the good that you see in others is but a reflection of your own goodness. By dhyana (meditation) alone can you cultivate the good vision, the taste for good listening, good thoughts and good deeds. By Dhyana, you get immersed in the idea of the Universality and the Omnipotence of God. Is it not your daily experience that a bigger worry overpowers the smaller one and makes you forget it? When you fill your mind with idea of God and yearn for Him, and pine plaintively for Him, all lesser desires and disappointments, and even achievements will pale into insignificance. You will forget them all; they will be submerged in the flood of Divine yearning and very soon, in the Ocean of Divine Bliss.

Yearn for God, all lesser yearnings will disappear

I shall give an example from the Ramayana, which will make this point clear. When Dhasharatha the Emperor died, there was no one at hand to perform the obsequies and so, they sent word to the younger sons, Bharatha and Shathrughna, who had left for their kinsman's capital. They were not informed of the death, and when they came and saw the body, they were too shocked at the inert silence of their dear father, that they ran to Kaushalya, the Queen, their step-mother. She burst into tears when the two boys ran into her apartments. They were shocked at this and inquired why. It was then that she broke the sad news of the death of their father. Bharatha was plunged in grief at this tragedy; he wept aloud, beating his breast. It was inconsolable agony. Then amidst the distress, he said, "Mother, how unfortunate I am. I had no chance to nurse him in his illness, during his last days. Alas, dear brother, you

too lost the, precious chance of service," he said, patting Shathrughna on the head. After some moments, he continued, "Mother, how fortunate are Rama and Lakshmana. They were with him. They nursed him and ran on little errands for him. They were with him when he breathed his last. Since we were far away, did father leave any command for us? What was his last wish regarding us? Did he remember us, ask that we should be sent for?" Kaushalya said, "Son, he had only one word on his lips, one form before his eye; that word was Rama, that form was Rama." Bharatha looked surprised. He asked, "How is it that he uttered the name and craved for the form of Rama, who was by his bedside, and did not yearn for me who was far away? O, how unlucky I am? Have I lost the affection of my dear father?" Kausalya replied, "Well, if Rama was by his bedside or near him, he would not have passed away." Bharatha ejaculated, "Mother, where had Rama gone? Why was he away? Where is he now? Did he go a-hunting to the forest? Was he on a pleasure trip on the Sarayu?" The mother said, "No, no. He went into the forest for fourteen years." Bharatha Could bear it no longer. "Alas, what an outrageous tragedy, this? What crime, which sin, did Rama commit to deserve this exile? Why had he to go?" "Your mother wished that he should go, and so he went:" said the Queen. When Bharatha heard this, the grief that he sustained on hearing of the death of his father paled, and the grief that arose at his mother sending Rama into exile for fourteen years supervened overwhelming all else. The greater grief scours off the smaller. So too, the greater yearning will dominate and deluge the lesser. So, yearn for God, and all lesser yearnings will disappear. Loss or gain, honour or dishonour, health or ill-health, joy or grief - keep the mind steadily pointed towards God; that is the goal; that is the prize, for the race of life. Overcome all obstacles by means of that faith, treat the obstacles as ineffective and futile and have the goal alone in view. Visualise God, seek God and merge in God - that is the duty of man.

21. Be a Snake Charmer

Date: 23 May 1967 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

"VYAASO Narayano Harih," it is said; that is to say Vyasa who compiled the story of the different manifestations of God, the Mahabharatha and Bhagavatha, and thus made it possible for mankind to know the glory and majesty of Narayana, is himself a manifestation of Narayana; in other words, he must have been impelled, and inspired, by Narayana, whose instrument he became, through His Will. The Divine that is as omnipresent as the radio waves carrying the programmes of the different stations was received and reproduced by Vyasa, so that mankind can listen and know, know and adore, adore and achieve. This day, the services of Vyasa are remembered with gratitude by all who seek God, and see Him in all that creates wonder and awe.

In children, the mind is in its native purity, for, they have no sense of 'mine.' Jesus took a child up and fondling it, carried it on his shoulder. Children are innocent angels. But, when they grow up, they start developing desires, desires lead to greed, pride, hate, malice, envy; thus, peace is lost and fear and anxiety take its place. To regain the peace and joy of childhood, man struggles in devious ways, ways that lead him deeper and deeper into the morass. Can blind pursuit take you to the goal? Can disease be cured by handling the phial? Can the snake be killed by beating the mound? Peace and joy can be secured only by realising that they are one's own real nature.

The devotee must be skilled in controlling the senses

When you emerge into the world, you have no thirst for sensual pleasure; when you make your exit from the world, you have no such thirst. Why suffer from it, between birth and death? Do not allow it to enslave you and blind you to the goal. Vyasa taught that man has a far greater task to do, between birth and death - to learn and practise the Divine Path. The senses are cobras, which man is now enraging by his desires: when they are excited by the heavy thuds of desire, they raise their hoods and strike. If they are charmed

by the music of bhajan chants, full of the melody of devotion, they swing but do not strike. That is the secret of making them harmless. The bhaktha must be a daksha (an expert), with the knowledge and skill, the know-how of controlling the senses and sublimating the mind. In the Puranas there is mention of a Daksha, a supreme sovereign, who had a daughter, Sathi. Yes; if you are such an expert in the science of spiritual progress you can call Sathi (the wisdom relating to the Atma) your own. Sathi is wedded to (Shiva) God, according to the Purana story. Yes; Atmajnana is wedded to God and so, one can merge in God, if one has the knowledge of the discipline and one practises them. A person who has not acquired this skill is merely a human biped; he does not deserve any higher nomenclature. He is as unimpressive, as inglorious, as insignificant, as purposeless, as a chariot without axle, as skimmed milk; as a moonless night; as a lotus-less lake. Vyasa has said something that gives hope to those who feel that this skill is unreachable by them. He has declared, "I shall tell you in half a verse the gist of all that I have tried to teach, through the eighteen voluminous Puranas - listen! It is an act of merit to be of service to others; it is a sin to harm others." Believing in this, if you sincerely, unhesitatingly, constantly, gladly, lovingly, offer all your skill and strength to the service of others, God will melt and move and manifest Himself in you, before you, with spontaneous Grace.

The three forms of worship Shiva likes

It is not a big problem or a laudable achievement to feed the little stomach and find a few feet of space to sleep. One can manage to live until the call of death releases one from bondage to the body; the greater problem is how to live like a hero, as master of the inner enemies - lust, anger, greed, attachment, pride and hate; how to train the mind, how to listen to the dictates of the Intelligence rather than the senses, and accept Dharma and Brahman (Righteousness and the Absolute Reality) as the two guide-lines of life. Shiva has the trident, three-pronged spear, as His weapon; He is worshipped with the bilva leaf, which is tri-foliolate. The significance is that Shiva likes the three forms of worship, namely, Bhakthi, Jnana and Vairagya (Devotion, Spiritual Wisdom and Detachment). You should not pray to God for secular advantages. You should pray only for Grace. That one-pointed

devotion can be got only by long practice of sadhana, especially, the Sadhana of Namasmarana (Remembering God through his Name). Thank the Lord for giving you this life, this much intelligence, this much detachment; do Namasmarana with this gratefulness in the background of your mind.

You toil day and night for this Loka (world); how many minutes do you devote for Lokesha (the Master of the world)? The Lokesha is the witness of all the worlds. He is to be remembered with gratitude and reverence and wonder. Vyasa spread the glory of Lokesha and made men aware of the debt they owed to God. His day is fixed as a holy day, on the Full Moon Day, for he fills the dark heart with cool, comforting light, the Light that is transmitted from God. It does not emanate direct from him. So, it is moonlight and his Day is on a Full Moon Day.

The mind flutters about and squats on all and sundry objects in the Universe. It refuses to stay only on one idea, God. Like the fly that sits on fair and foul, but denies itself the pleasure of sitting on a hot cinder, the mind too flees from all thought of God. The fly will be destroyed, if it sits on fire; the mind too is destroyed, when it dwells on God, for, the mind is but a pattern of desire woven with the warp and woof of the same material.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

22. Vedha Vyaasa

Date: 23 May 1967 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

VYAASA fulfilled the great task of communicating to Nara the Narayanathathwa (essential nature of God). He gave the key to the mystery of God to man. This is possible only for one who was born charged by God so to do; that is why, Vyasa is called, Vyaso Narayano Harih - Vyasa is Narayana Himself, He is Haft. He described the Glory of the Lord by means of the Bhagavatha, the Mahabharatha and the Puranas. Incidentally He elaborated also on the mystery of Divine Incarnations. As the radio receiver enables us to catch the melody in the air, Vyasa enables us to catch the splendour of God, which is immanent everywhere. Vyasa is called the Adiguru, for He is the first and foremost among the Teachers in India and of mankind. He is called Lokaguru (World Teacher), in honour of this role. Each mission requires a prime mover: you may have the lamp, oil, and wick but, some one must light it; you may have the flowers and the thread, but, some person talented in that time must string them into a garland or form them into a bouquet; you may have both gold and the desire for jewels, but, a smith with the skill must shape it into the coveted ornament; you may have the training and the yearning, but some Guru must provide the answer to the questions that torment you; and illumine you.

Children are embodiments of Peace

Life is a long garland of blossoms, fair and faded, fragrant and futile. They are, so to say, the good and bad of life. Man recognises only the blossoms, happy over some, unhappy over most; he does not see the string on which they are bound together, the Brahmasuuthra, the lasting fadeless Brahma-principle that gives stability to the short-lived flowers. Just as sparrows during a storm fly towards a warm shelter. Man too must take shelter in the Divine Principle to escape from the storms of life. He will be welcomed by the Divine, only when, as Jesus said, he becomes a child. Allow the children to come to me, he said. Children have no strong wishes to run after; they have no overpowering passion of hate or greed; so they are embodiments of Peace.

When children grow older, egoism, pride, envy, malice, hatred, anger begin to enslave them and they are overcome by anxiety and fear. So, one must recapture the years of childhood, to be in Prasanthi (tranquility). Sadhana (spiritual practice) can accomplish this seemingly impossible transformation. Of course, the snake inside will not die, if you rain blows on the mound under which it lives. You will have to forego sleep and rest and food - that is to say, be content with what you get - and follow the discipline prescribed. Then only can you know yourself, and know that you and the Universe are one. This the Narayanathathwam that is in man; it is that thathwam (reality-principle) that urges you to discover it, through the guide-lines laid down by Vyasa and others who came after him. The deadly cobra (sensual desire) that lies coiled in the mound (mind) is now being enraged and made to hiss with spread hood by man's activities; he does not know the charmer's art, by which he can play with it and make it a docile plaything. You must have seen the charmer playing upon a pipe the tune that subdues the cobra; sing the Names of God, sing about His Glory and the cobra of sensual greed will become harmless. That is why the Bhagavatha lays emphasis on bhakthi, on keerthana, on Namasmarana.

Without Prema in heart, one cannot contact God

If you become a daksha (skilled person) by means of anapeksha (desirelessness), then you can merge in the Shivathathwam, unlike the Daksha of Dakshayajna who had apeksha (craving for the fruits) and so, lost the Shivathathwam he had become akin to. Prema which is the essence of bhakthi is built on anapeksha; if there is apeksha, it becomes bargaining and not Love unsullied by gross considerations.

You may become a master of all the texts Vyasa composed, the Mahabharatha, the Bhagavatha and the 18 Puranas, the Brahmasuuthras, etc, but, if you have no Prema welling up in your heart, you cannot hope to contact the Premaswaruupa (embodiment of Love), the Lord. Just as radio waves carry the sound of the programmes everywhere through the ether, even the voices of hatred, envy, malice, scandal and faction foul the space around the world, as much as voices of love, compassion, sympathy,

appreciation and admiration fill it with harmony. It is the duty of everyone to keep the atmosphere clean and healthy, by means of good thoughts and good words. A person who does not possess this elementary equipment for liberation is like a wheel without a hub, whey without butter, the night-sky without the moon, or a grahini (housewife) without the sindhura (vermilion) mark. To confer on Man this Jnana, God in His Infinite Mercy comes down as man, or else, man will degrade himself to the level of beasts. Unless he learns to surrender his ego with full satisfaction, in complete sincerity, with no reservations, to the Lord, he cannot realise Him, though He is resident in his own heart. The anguish that fills the penitent seeker will move the Lord to manifest Himself. In the ecstasy of that moment, man will experience: I am Thou, Thou art I. It is not a remarkable achievement to earn two meals a day and have a roof over the head.

Make the mind an instrument for liberation

The wheels revolve till the end of time. But, the real victory on which one can be congratulated is the victory over the six demons that have encamped in the mind of man, lust, anger, greed, attachment, pride and malice. When you do good deeds, keep good company, immerse your minds in good thoughts, these demons cannot survive in you. Vyasa grouped the Vedas into four. The flower of the Vedhic Tree is Vedantha (the concluding essence) and its Fruit is Anandha-phala. To recognise that fruit, to crave for its taste and to discover the means of winning it, the mind has to be trained and disciplined. The mind is an extrovert instrument; when it flees into the mesh of the outer world, do not accompany it, let it go alone. Watch it struggling and suffering. Do not attach yourselves to it. Then, it will surely come back, chastened and cleansed. This spiritual discipline will certainly control the mind and make it an instrument, not for bondage, but, for liberation.

Vairagyam (detachment), Bhakthi (devotion and surrender) and Jnanam (realisation of the Supreme Reality) to which they lead - these three are represented by the Thrishula in Shiva's Hands. Develop Jnanam through the stages of Vairagyam and Bhakthi, then, you can yourself be identified as Shiva-swaruupam. The mind has to be melted out of shape in the Fire of

Jnana(Jnanagni dagdha karmanam), in order to manifest Shiva thathwa (essential nature of Shiva). That was what Ramakrishna accomplished at Dakshineswar. He transformed himself into a brilliant gem by intensive process of Sadhana. Raidas became immortal, for, he used to ply his awl while stitching chappals, repeating at every stitch the Name of Lord Krishna.

Man must merge his will with Divine Will

Muscular power, mechanical power, political power, military power, scientific power - all are futile when weighed with the power of Grace. Do not ask for futile gifts. Ask that Grace to give you what He knows you most need. Leave the nature of the gift to Him; it may be good fortune or bad; it may be pain or joy; it may be dishonour or defeat. Leave it to Him; He knows best. Dedicate yourself to Him. That is the meaning of the Lord's injunction in the Geetha: Mamekamsharanam vraja. Surrendering to His Will is the only duty you need accomplish, the only task you have to carry out. If you do that, He assures you that no harm shall approach you."Ma suuchah - do not grieve; He says. This does not mean that God is anxious that mankind should fall at His Feet; man should cleanse his mind; he must worship the Grand and the Glorious, the Supreme and the Universal; he must merge his will with the Divine Will, which is what is meant by surrender. That Universal Grandeur is Narayana; Vyasa revealed the Narayanathathwam in all its Glory through his Bhagavatha and so the world must be ever grateful to him. Choose, not Kama but Rama, the Atmarama; meditate on that and draw bliss therefrom. Or, practise meditation according to a fixed time-table, until you overcome the need to remember the time-table, until you are not even conscious that you are engaged in meditation. Or, recite the Gayathri or some such significant manthra with attention to its meaning and value. Or, dwell on the Name, with all its attendant aura of glory. The sound of the syllables has a curative restorative property. That is why the formulae have been laid down by the Sages.

Detachment alone can ensure joy

Or, you can dedicate your talents and acquisition to the service of man, of

man as the visible embodiment of God. Whenever you are serving another and relieving his distress, remember it is your own distress that you are relieving. A cow was caught in a bog and it was floundering helplessly. A throng of idlers was watching its struggles with great relish. A Sanyasin (monk) passing along the road saw the unfortunate animal; he removed his shin. He threw away his head cover; he jumped into the slush, and lifted the cow on to the bank, in spite of its kicks and frantic movements. The throng laughed at his bravado and weight-lifting prowess and some one asked him, "Why could you not go your way, unconcerned?" The Sanyasin replied, 'The picture of that cow's agony cut into my heart; I could not go one step further. I had to get rid of the pain in my heart. This was the cure for that pain. I did it to save myself, not so much to save the cow.' You serve yourself; you harm yourself, when you gloat on the harm you have inflicted on another. There is no ANOTHER! Only those who have reached that stage of spiritual progress have a right to advise on service. You believe that God guards the good from harm and inflicts on the bad, that is not correct. The goodness of the good guards them; the badness of the bad injures them. God is the Witness. The heart of man must be transformed into a cool soft pleasing instrument, as cool and soft and pleasing as moonlight; that is why the Full Moon Day is set aside for offering gratitude to Vyasa, who communicated to man the key of this process, the process of controlling the vagaries of the mind by devotion, dedication, and concentration on the magnificence of the Allpervasive, All-knowing God.

If you have attachment to sense-objects (Raga) you can never be free from disease (Roga). Thyaga (renunciation, detachment) alone can ensure true bhoga (joy, bliss). This does not mean that you can flee from the world; you can never do that. The world will always be with you. While in this world of A-shanthi (turmoil and agitation) you must win Pra-shanthi (the highest type of equanimity). To help you in this process, and to make you aware of the distance you have traversed, tests may be held by the Lord; you must welcome them, as chances to demonstrate your accomplishments and to win credit and appreciation. Do not develop contrary reactions. Students should ask for tests, so that they can estimate the heights they have scaled; they should not protest or run away.

On the foundation of Faith, erect the four pillars of Sathya, Dharma, Shanthi and Prema and upon them, raise the Mansion of your earthly Life. That is the richest property you can earn here.

23. Lead or Gold

Date: 24 May 1967 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

WHEN the Unmanifested Shakthi manifests in an individualised Form, it is a source of Anandha for those who recognise it as such, as you heard just now, from the experience of Dr. Tiberg, who has come from America. She has studied the ancient Shastras of India and has spent many years in this country; she knows that the mission of man is to realise himself as Divine and merge in the ocean of Divine Bliss. Jnana is the treasure that man has to accumulate, so that he can so realise and merge. Cows may be of different breeds, or colours or sizes; but, the milk they yield is the same, the world over. So too, all religions, whatever their origin or extent of influence, are all means to teach man this process. Now, the law of human behaviour has become "each for himself;" this is because the fact that all are "one-in-God" is not known and realised. This is the product of Sadhana; the conviction is of slow growth, but it has to be acquired. Dhurvasa, the great sage who is famous in the epics for his asceticism, is also known for his anger when he is slighted or thwarted by others. He was so sensitive, so egoistic, so uppish, that he forgot the unity of all-in-God. He was ready with a frightful curse when any one showed disregard for his inflated ego. Of what avail are all the years of austerity? Surrender all you have and gain, to Lord. Sometimes, when you have some extra cash with you, you hand it over to a trusted friend, saying, "Keep this for me; I am afraid I may spend it soon if it is in my hands; I cannot trust myself." God is the friend on whom you can put your trust. So, hand over to Him all that you have - and be free and happy. You do not do it now, since faith is wanting.

Happiness of material origin is short-lived

Man still believes that Anandha can be got from the external world. He hoards wealth, authority, fame and learning, in order to acquire happiness. But he finds that they are fraught with fear, anxiety and pain. The millionaire is beset by the tax-gatherer, the cheat, the donation hunter, the house-breaker, and his sons and kinsmen who clamour for their share. Happiness of material

origin is short-lived and has misery as its obverse. Struggle to realise the Atma, to visualise God; even failure in this struggle is nobler than success in other worldly attempts. The buffalo has horns; the elephant has tusks. But what a difference. To live in the body, with the body, for the body is the life of a worm; to live in the body, with God, for God, is the life of man. The dull, activity-hating Thamasik persons cling to the ego and to kith and kin; their love is limited to these. The Rajasik (active, passionate) persons seek to earn power and prestige, and love only those who will contribute to these. But the Sathwik (the pure, the good, the equanimity-filled), love all as embodiments of God and engage themselves in humble service. Pundaleeka was one such. He was massaging the feet of his old mother when God appeared before him! He did not interrupt the service, for he was serving the same God, in his mother! Thukaram declared to Pundaleeka that it was God who had manifested before him; but Pundaleeka did not waver. He asked God: to wait for a while, until he had finished the service of the God he had started serving.

Proceed from the known to the unknown

The prompting inside man to love his mother is an expression of the Divine Nature in him. If there was no spark of the Divine in man, he would not have loved at all. A person who loves is a theist, whether he goes to a temple or church, or not. Pundaleeka was not guilty of sacrilege, for he was actually worshipping God in His most accessible Form - his mother. You have to proceed from the known to the unknown. Then the love expands in ever widening circles, until it covers all nature, until even plucking a leaf from a tree affects you so painful that you dare not injure it. The green vitality of the tree is a sign of the Divine Will, which sends its roots deep into the soil. The roots keep the tree safe from storms, holding it fast against the violent tug of the wind. So too, if the roots of love in man go down into the spring of the Divine in him, no storm of suffering can shake him and crash him into disbelief. As a lump of sugar sweetens every drop of water in the cup, the eye of love makes every person in the world friendly and attractive. The simple milkmaids of Gokul saw each other as Krishna; such was their overwhelming love for the Divine Incarnation. The Bhagavatha, where their Love and the

Love of many other seekers of the Lord are described, is a text-book of Divine Love, Bhakthi. The Mahabharatha, which describes the exploits and excellences of Krishna, is a text-book of Dharma, of the ethics of social and political life, as corrected and straightened by the supremacy of the Right. Begin loving service, this day this moment. Each act will urge you to the next, for the thrill is so inspiring.

The best service and the best time to render it

There was a king once, who questioned many a scholar and sage who came to his court, "Which is the best service and which is the best time to render it?" He could not get a satisfying answer from them. One day while pursuing the forces of a rival king, he got separated from his troops, in the thick jungle; he rode a long way, exhausted and hungry, until he reached a hermitage. There was an old monk who received him kindly and offered him a welcome cup of cool water. After a little rest the king asked his host the question that was tormenting his brain: "Which is the best service?" The hermit said, "Giving a thirsty man a cup of water." "And, which is the best time to render it?" The answer was, "When he comes far and lonely, looking for some place where he can get it." The act of service is not to be judged, according to the cost or publicity it entails; it may be only the offering of a cup of water in the depth of a jungle. But the need of the recipient, the mood of the person who offers - these decide whether the act is gold or lead. Fill every act of yours with Love. Let no one suffer the slightest pain as a result of your thought, word or deed. Let this be your Sadhana. It will surely help you to achieve the Goal.

24. The One in all

Date: **June 1967** / Occasion: [Baba's Message to Divyajeevana Sangha](#)

FROM time immemorial, scriptures and the experience of saints and seekers have agreed in declaring that there is One Supreme Indweller in all beings, and only One. All efforts to distinguish between the devotee, the object of devotion and the means of devotion have concluded, at this point only. Prahladha, the greatest devotee of that Supreme Godhead has declared in the Bhagavatha, "Why doubt and discuss whether He is here or there? Seek Him anywhere and you can see Him there itself." He is near and far, before, behind, beside and inside everything in the known and unknown worlds. People dare describe Him as thus and thus; that reveals only their faculty to guess; no description can exhaust Him or delineate Him, in full. Such description is based on their experience of the transitory outer world and will surely be affected when direct realisation is won of the Highest Bliss. It is beyond the reach of human intelligence or imagination to realise the Full and the Eternal; in proportion to the development of the faculty, man seeks to picture the Vast Magnificence and locate it in Ayodhya or Dwaraka or some such spot and give It a Name and a Form, so that he can approach It and adore It. He might even revere It as Full, but, how can a fraction be Full? How can a facet be the entire Diamond?

All Names and Forms are of the many-faceted One

Consider each fraction as a value, as valid; do not deride it as incomplete. It is impossible to experience the Complete and communicate the experience. Fractions too are facts. They share the splendour and glory; they are sustained by the same spring. When the Full is seen as a part, the Fullness does not suffer dimunition. Rama, Krishna, Vishnu, Shiva - these are Names and Forms of the many-faceted One; when you pay attention to one facet, the rest are not neglected or negated. When the devotee dives into the flood of Bliss that the one Name-Form confers, he is diving into the same Ocean of Bliss that the Full IS. The waters of the Ocean are not separated by lines drawn on them to demarcate this God's region or that God's. Plunge

anywhere; you are plunging into the self-same Bliss. All this variety is the play of Name and Form; without the multiplicity of names to distinguish one from the rest and the vast phantasmagoria of form to identify and cognise, knowledge of the many is impossible; then, all will be seen and felt and experienced as One, which it really is. To remind man of this fundamental Unity so that he may not get lost in the conflicts and complexities of manifoldness, the One assumes Name-Form and comes as Avathara (Divinity incarnated in human form) among men. Then man is drawn towards the Avathara by means of Grace and Prema, and led into the path that will give him the vision of the Full, the One. The One can best be defined as Prema, Love; for, all Nature is immersed in Love, all beings are bound by Love, all are drawn by Love. Love is in all, Love is of all. Love is all. As affection, sympathy, attachment, fraternity, loyalty, reverence, adoration, patriotism, Love expresses itself in many directions. Adhwaitha (non-dualism) proclaims that! this One is inseparable and unique; Dhwaitha (dualism) emphasises the excellence of Its Names and Forms; Visishtadhwaitha (qualified dualism) speaks of the Names and Forms as integral parts of the One. All reveal Its Glory.

Individual and the Universal are ultimately One

Adoration, Puuja, is the way of approach, to reach the One and submerge oneself in Its Glory. Adoration arises when awareness of the glory is effected; then, it is a continuous process, called Sadhana. In the beginning, the Adored and the Adorer are different and distant, but, later, they commingle and come to be more and more composite. For, the Individual and the Universal are ultimately One. The wave must yearn only for losing itself in the sea, it should not have any lesser wish, any other aim. Merging gives full content. The ego will be dissolved; all signs and symbols of particularism like name, form, caste, colour, creed, nationality, church, sect and the fights and duties attendant thereon, will fade. For such liberated individuals who have merged their ego, the only task that will adhere will be the uplift of humanity, the welfare of the world. Their stage of Bliss will react on the world beneficially, without any conscious effort on their part. They have been rendered Amruthaswaruupa and so, they are embodiments of the sweetest Anandha;

Endeavour to reach that Goal and do that Seva, to the world.

25. Three-in-one now

Date: 28 July 1967 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Krishna Jayanthi

THIS Day is a sacred day, when devotees dwell upon the majesty and splendour of the Lord, and taste the sweetness of His Name, which is so dear to them, because it holds within itself the entire Bhagavatha. The Avathar of Krishna was a full incarnation, with all the sixteen facets of glory. In the Avathar of Rama, out of the sixteen, the three brothers had one each and Parashurama, the contemporary, had one, until Rama met Him and overpowered Him and drew within himself the fraction of the Divine power that He had. Other incarnations were for ad hoc purposes, the suppression of evil represented by one evil person or group of persons. The Rama and Krishna Avathars were, however, for more general purposes, the mission of restoring Dharma and fostering virtuous living, besides punishing the wicked and teaching the world that vice will not succeed. Man is an amalgam of humanity, animality and Divinity. It is a tragedy if he cannot get rid of the animality; it is a greater tragedy if he Cannot cultivate his Divinity. Contemplation of the Rama and Krishna Avathars and their ledas (Divine plays) and mahimas (miracle powers) is the surest method of cultivating the Divine in man. Before every incarnation, two collaborators for the task on which the incarnation comes, also appear - the Mayashakthi (deluding power) and Yogashakthi (power of comunion with the Divine). Maya comes as the elder sister to warn the wicked; Yoga comes as the elder brother, to enthuse and keep constant company. Maya thrust Kamsa deeper and deeper into perdition, so that his downfall will be more terrible and educative. But, in this Kali age, the wicked have to be reformed and reconstructed, through love and compassion. That is why this avathar has come unarmed. It has come with the message of love. The only weapon which can transform the vile and the vicious is the Name of the Lord uttered with Love.

The great lesson of Kalinga episode for man

The Name is redolent with Divine Glory; so when it is turned over in the mind it transmutes it into an instrument for liberation from delusion. Take the

name, Navaneethachora (Butter-thief) that is used for Krishna. It does not mean a person who runs away with the butter that people have stored. It is not the stuff called butter, that is got by churning curdled milk, that He stole. It is the butter of Faith, won by the churning process called 'yearning,' from the curdled milk called, 'worldly experiences.' He covets only this 'butter.' When Yasodha chided the child Krishna for this 'theft,' He replied, " But Mother, they like me for stealing it; they are sorry if I do not; they churn it not; they churn it in the hope that I will steal it; when I steal, their hearts are illumined and they awake." Among all the wondrous adventures that astounded people during His childhood, which revealed to them the Divinity that had come among them, the Kalinga episode is most meaningful. The serpent Kalinga was poisoning the waters of the Yamuna and the atmosphere over it, with its breath; all who approached that area, men or cattle, fell dead. But, Krishna, the Divine Boy, jumped into the depths, forced the foul snake to rise above the level of the river, and leaping on its rapid range of hoods, He danced upon them with His tender lotus feet. The pressure of those soft silken soles was enough to force the deadly poison out from the fangs of the monstrous cobra and render it harmless for ever.

Allow the Divine in you to Lord over the mind

This is a great lesson for man. This leela is quite unlike earlier incidents which evidenced the Child's super-human strength and wisdom. He was lifted away by the storm-demon, he was hit by the calf-demon, he was felled by the cart-demon, he was pecked at by the stork-demon, he was poisoned by the nurse-demon; but sceptics can easily ascribe these miracles to accident or coincidence or exaggeration. But, the Kalinga episode is a valuable lesson in spiritual sadhana.

In the Manasa-sarovar (the deep placid mind-lake) of every man, there lurks a poisonous cobra, with six hoods - lust, anger, greed, attachment, pride and hate - infesting the air and destroying all who near it. The name of the Lord, when it dives into the depths, forces it to come up to the surface, so that it may be destroyed. So allow the Divine in you, the Krishna, to Lord over the mind; let Him trample on the hissing hoods, and tame the vicious vipe; let it

vomit the venom, become Sathwik (pious) and sweet. This is the sadhana the episode teaches, the duty it enjoins.

Like all avathars, Krishna announced His advent to the world, bit by bit, step by step, testing every time how far the Reality will be accepted by the masses. The signs and miracles were intended, then as now, to proclaim the Avathar. Even while in the cradle, Yasodha had a surprise from the child one day. She was singing lullabies and relating stories to send the child to sleep. One day, she told the Ramayana story - how Dhasharatha had four sons, how the eldest son, Rama, grew; how Rama was about to be enthroned as Crown Prince; how his step-mother persuaded his father to send him as an exile into forest for fourteen years; how a golden deer appeared before his dearly beloved wife; how he pursued wicked Ravana who had played this trick to get Rama out of the way, came to the hermitage at that time and carried her away to his island kingdom! As she said this, the child seemed to be terribly angry. It held forth its hand, and cried, "Lakshman! Give Me My bow and arrow." The mother remembered that Lakshmana was the brother who accompanied Rama to the forest and she was convinced that He who was Rama had come as Krishna to the world again.

Krishna's revelation of His Incarnation

Chaithanya also gave indications of His being an incarnation to His mother, as a child. Chaithanya was then a baby crawling on all fours. His mother had a guest in the house, an old orthodox Brahmin, who was cooking his own lunch, from the provisions given by her. He desired his food to be ceremonially pure, uncontaminated by the touch of other hands. He offered to God the food he proposed to eat; that was his vow. It was rather late when the offering was ready. Just when he sat before the idol of Krishna for worship, the child toddled forward and dipped his fingers in the vessel of food thus making it 'impure' as an offering to God. So, provisions were given again, food was cooked again, and very late in the day, the worship was resumed. This time, too, the child crawled in from somewhere and contaminated the sacred food! It repeated the mischief a third time. The mother dragged the child away and threatened to thrash the prank out of its head. But the child asked the

mother, quite innocently, "He is calling on me to eat it, but, when I go near him, he gets angry." Thus did He reveal that He was Krishna come again.

All Avathars teach, as the first step in the long road of Sadhana, the giving up of attachment. In the Threthayuga, the Yoga-Vasistha taught the same rule. In the Dwaparayuga, Krishna taught Arjuna to give up Vishaya-Vasana (attachment to the objective world). There was an ascetic once, who had given up all attachment. He was going along a Himalayan track, when the wind blew his hair on his face and blocked his vision. So, he turned and walked in the opposite direction. He was not attached to any direction or place! People utter, with apparent faith, "Krishna-Krishna-Krishna," but they never give up thirishna (thirst) for worldly good or fame. In each Yuga, you have the Avathar of the Lord come to redeem, revive and re-build. At the present time, Mahashakthi (Super Power), Mayashakthi (Power of Illusion) and Yogashakthi (Power of Vision with God) have come, all together, in one Human Form; your endeavour should be to draw near and earn Grace therefrom.

26. The wheel and its hub

Date: 30 July 1967 / Location: Anantapur / Occasion: Engineering College

BHAARATH is the sovereign of all nations, so far as spiritual dominion is concerned; and which dominion can be richer than that? She alone is capable of scattering the clouds of doubt, anxiety and fear that darken the minds of men and turn them to competitive adventures in the realm of material gain and glory. These clouds have appeared over the Indian sky also; people here too are admiring darkness and slighting daylight. They blindly imitate the manners and morals of the West and open the doors of their hearts to the flood of greed and discontent. Of course, the material world which science analyses and studies, and provides the means to control and regulate, is necessary for fulfilling the demands of living, but, it is wrong to imagine that world can give us lasting peace or joy. The Vedas and Shasthras of India were not collected or compiled by fools or knaves, they were put together by people, who gave up the attractions of comfortable life, as so many heroes of scientific discovery like Edison do now: they retired into the forests, so that they could concentrate on the solution of the problems that challenged them. In every statement in the Vedas and Shasthras, you get the genuine ring of actual experience and personal thrill. Do not sit on the bank of the river and pronounce judgements of the depth of the waters, or their taste to potability. Step down and examine for yourselves; that is the sign of the sincere seeker of Truth. If you do not, you can be rejected as a prejudiced or perverse witness. Those who pronounce My act of creating Vibhuuthi (holy ash) as 'magic' are also of the same category, for they talk without any qualification. They cannot tolerate the splendour of the Divine to disturb the darkness they have learnt to like. The impact of material civilisation has hardened their hearts, softened their brains, and made their lives hollow and vain.

Search for comfort will make a man egoistic

The rulers who frame and foster the educational system of the country are responsible for the discontent, disillusionment and consequent delinquencies and disturbances of the students. They pay attention only to the physical and

intellectual training of the youth; they forget the attention must also be paid to mental, moral and spiritual development, so that an integrated personality can emerge. Now, a child is put to school so that years later he may get a cushy job! Schooling is for gaining a living, not for gaining the ultimate in life. In all countries, it is the same. Nowhere is youth trained to earn Shanthi (equanimity, peace); everywhere, the aim is a comfortable life, not a life of peace and undisturbed joy. Comfort is a passing phase; it is a relative stage, between two discomforts. The search for comfort, for riches, for fame, for power over others - these will make a man so egoistic that he is a danger to himself and others. The only safe path is to seek Anandha within oneself, not in or through others. There is great joy awaiting the person who radiates compassion, truth and patience, humility, reverence and piety.

Mind soaked in desire Cannot receive wisdom

Students must demand a revision of the system on these lines; they must demand that they be equipped better to meet the challenge of life. They must convince the administrators that this is essential. After all, they are your own people, interested in your welfare. They must listen and carry out suggestions. Zoroaster, one day, asked the Prince of Iran, "Go, light this lamp, from yonder flame." The lamp could not be lit; for the wick was soaked in water. Then Zoroaster said, "Your mind is so soaked in desire that it cannot receive the wisdom it needs; dry it in the sun of detachment." When teachers and the taught are immersed in worldly desire, how can light be transmitted or kept alive?

There was a mother-in-law once, who declared with evident satisfaction, "My daughter-in-law passed away, no doubt, but, what a wonder, the terrible fever she was suffering from disappeared in a trice." The fever is not the prime thing; her life is the crucial object to be cared for. So too, the student should know how to live a contented, peaceful, happy life; that is more important than a degree or a class in examination. The journey into the inner consciousness to calm the storms that rage there is more important than the journey to the Moon or Mars. The latter may be more spectacular, but, the former is the more beneficial. Life without goodness, good thoughts, good

actions, good words, is like sky in the night, without the moon or stars. It is like a wheel without hub or spokes! No one can push a boulder away while standing on it; you cannot be free from anxiety, while all the entrances through which it sneaks in are open. Stop catering to the senses, and feeding the desires that haunt you. Let the name of the Ananthapur Engineering College reverberate all over the country, as indicating an earnest desire to serve others, as suggestive of sweet talk, and sweeter hearts. I am always happy among students, especially when they are full of love and joy, high ideals and heroic determination. I had met the students of the Kakinada Engineering College, while this same Principal was working there. They did fine voluntary services for the meetings there, which attracted lakhs of people from all over the area. I am happy that this College too has the same tradition of intense study, combined with excellent social service.

The genuine outer signs of bhakthi are three: faith, humility and apprehension. Faith in the ultimate victory of truth and love; humility before elders and the wise; apprehension in the presence of evil, fear to mix with bad company to enter into evil designs, to act counter to the whisperings of conscience.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

27. Sweetness invisible

Date: 31 July 1967 / Location: Anantapur / Occasion: Prasanthi Vidwanmahaasabha

MAN alone has the chance to liberate himself from the wheel of birth and death, through the most pleasant means, that of serving God. But, as a result of ignorance or what is worse, perversity, he lets the opportunity slip from his hands, and suffers grief and pain, fear and anxiety, ad infinitum. By escaping from the clutches of the fascination exercised by material objects and physical pleasures, man can succeed in his efforts to liberate himself. He has travelled long enough on the wrong road; it is time now to turn back and move steadily towards the goal. The love that he has cultivated for men and things has to be sublimated into pure, divine worship. Then it gets transmuted as Bhakthi (Love of God). Convince yourself that the Lord is in you, as the charioteer, holding the reins of the five horses (the senses) and giving you constant counsel, as He did when Arjuna prayed to Him, to lead and guide. Then, it becomes easy for you to convince yourself that the self-same charioteer is leading and guiding all other men and even all other beings. When you are established in this faith firmly, you become free of hate and malice, greed and envy, anger and attachment. Pray to the Lord to strengthen this conviction and this faith; He will open your eyes to the Truth and reveal to you that He is the Sanathana Sarathi, in all. That revelation will confer on you incomparable Anandha, and grant you kinship with Creation's manifoldness. That is the reason why Krishna told Duryodhana, who pleaded with Him for help against the Pandavas, on the eve of the battle, "If you hate the Pandavas, you are hating Me, for, they have recognised Me as the Breath of their Life." Know Him as your strength, your breath, your intelligence, your joy - He becomes all that and more. No more can any faculty of yours hinder your progress. He will direct all of them towards the highest Goal; the senses, the mind, the subconscious, the unconscious, the intelligence - all. Grace will confer all you need.

Seek Grace, it confers all else

A mother-in-law was complaining against the new daughter-in-law that she

consumed stealthily quantities of milk, curds, cream, butter and ghee. The girl's brother who heard this story from the lips of the old lady, called her into the presence, and after reprimanding her for her malfeasance, advised her to give up stealing all the items, except milk. "Milk, you can drink any, quantity you like; but, why steal these other by-products?" The mother-in-law, it is needless to say, was not very pleased with advice! So, seek Grace, that is enough; it confers all else. You must cultivate love towards every one, however distinct the character and capacity of each may be. Though the same blood flows through the entire body, the eye cannot smell, the ear cannot taste, the nose cannot see, do not over-emphasise the distinctions and quarrel. Emphasise the basic brotherhood and love. As sugar that has dissolved in the cup of water is invisible, but patent to the tongue in every drop, so too the Divine is invisible but immanent; capable of being experienced, in every individual, whether he is at bottom or on top. Do Namasmarana (repeated remembrance of the Lord); taste the sweetness that is in the heart of every one; dwell on His Glory, His Compassion, which those names summarise. Then, it will be easier for you to visualise Him in all, to love Him in all, to adore Him in all.

If you talk of anything you do not know, it is a matter for ridicule. If you talk about anything you have not experienced, it is reprehensible, for you are cheating your listeners. If you learn the art of public speaking and talk enchantingly using all the skills and frills recommended in the text-books or borrowed from others, it is cheating, nevertheless. Be sincere; be simple, be honest. That is the best recipe for successful speaking.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

28. Roots into the deep

Date: **July 1967** / Location: **Prasanthi Nilayam** / Occasion: **Guru Purnima**

GOD is Premaswaruupa; God is in every being; so, the fruit of every life is full of the sweetness of that Prema. Like the bitter skin of the fruit which is sweet which casts the cover of ignorance over the precious juice within, so too the bitter skin of envy, egoism, hate, malice, greed, lust and pomp does not allow the sweetness to be patent to all. Every being is entitled to partake of that Prema, irrespective of nationality, colour, creed or status in society. When God and God's Prema are activating every atom, who dare say, 'Stand out' to any one? Ishavasyamidham sarvam - All this is God, is Prema. The lights that Vyasa lit to reveal this great reality have become dim; no one is pouring oil into the lamp; all are interested in pursuing false ideals and fleeting pleasures. Vyasa taught Dharma in the Mahabharatha, bhakthi in the Bhagavatha, and shanthi and prema in the 18 Puranas; he taught the knowledge of "knowledge, knower and the known" in the Brahmasuuthra. He emphasised that harming others is the seed of sin and serving others the seed of merit. That is the lesson of Prema, pure and simple. The person who has delved into his depths and discovered his inner reality is the embodiment of shanthi.

Realise troubles and miseries are God's gifts

Prema is the Amritharasa (essence of nectar) which fills the Upanishadhs. When man realises the inefficiency of the senses, the mind and the intellect, to grapple with the Reality and know the inner core of his truth, then, he discovers he is the Atma which is Sathya, Dharma, Shanthi and Prema. Or, He realises that there is God who is the basis of all this superstructure, who has designed and contrived all this and he surrenders his ego to Him. "Let Your will prevail," he proclaims and resigns himself fully to His plan. That moment is a supreme moment of joy, Anandha. Troubles, miseries, handicaps, grief and pains that were hitherto causes of distress suddenly take on a new and magnificent role: they are "His handwork, His gifts, His Grace." They are no longer unwelcome; they are as welcome as the successes, the pleasures, the

happiness are. Both are His Will. When you go to a new place, you seek out a friend and hand over to him all the money you have for safe keeping; but, if you start suspecting him later, you will have no peace. Have faith in him; you are free; you have no worry. So too, give all your desire-driven activities to God; have faith in Him and be unconcerned for ever. Sarva dharmanparithyajya, (giving up all your desire-driven activities through various codes and regulations) mam ekam sharanam vraja (give everything to Me and have full faith in Me). If the match-stick is soaked in water, how can it ignite when struck? If the mind is soaked in vishaya (worldly desires), how can it be ignited into spiritual endeavour? The Prema with which you are endowed must be directed towards God; then only can it expand, grow, deepen, fertilise all your actions, benefit all those around you. If it is confined to the world, it will be sucked up soon, by the sands of envy greed and malice. Without that expansive Prema which is Divine, man is worse than a pashu (animal), he is a Danava (demon). The pashu or cow yields milk, when its dead calf is stuffed and taken near its udder. That is the measure of its vathsalya (parental love)!

Human life today is like a wheel without hub

The light of Prema is absent in the heart; and, so, bats and nocturnal birds infest it and foul it. The bats are the evil qualities of hate and malice and greed. The Mahabharatha epic which Vyasa collected and composed teaches quite emphatically and clearly the evanescence of wealth, authority, power, physical prowess and all that is considered desirable by man on earth. What did Duryodhana and Karna lack? Still, they fell and were eaten by dogs and jackals on the battlefield on which they had staked their all. It is to develop this Prema and use it for liberation that the four ideals have been placed before man - ideals which he is to strive for consistently, each one being sublimated and subordinated to the next - Dharma,

Artha, Kama, Moksha - Artha or material happiness to be won by Dharma (virtuous living), Moksha (Liberation) to be held as the only desirable Kama or goal. Now, these ideals are being repeated ad nauseum but no attempt is made to act. That is why human life everywhere has degenerated into a

farce, a tragedy. It is like a wheel without a hub, milk without butter, ineffective, waste.

Prema too is of three kinds, depending on the guna (quality) that predominates in the individual. Thamasik Prema confines itself to "me" and "mine," it does not flow beyond that little circle. The Rajasik Prema flows only towards those in power, or have wealth, or to those who will: give it a spectacular effect. Sathwik Prema, on the other hand, always flows towards the good, the pure, the detached, towards awe and wonder, towards God. Pundaleeka was tending his parents when God appeared before him as Narayana. He was revering them as the God in them. So, he asked Narayana to wait a little, He threw a brick towards Him to serve as a footstool on which He could stand, until he was ready to worship Him. If you do not revere the parents, how can you draw from your heart enough reverence to worship the Father who dwells in Heaven?

A cleansed mind alone can recognise God

Prema is the spring that feeds the roots of all the virtues. You must have seen paddy fields where the crop is drying, though the ground is wet and there is a thin sheet of water still under the plants. You must have seen also big trees, standing upon hard dry ground, but, decked with a rich crown of green foliage. Have you paused to find out the reason for this contrast? The roots of the paddy plants do not go deep; the roots of the trees go down unto the very springs of underground water which are perennial.

So too when each of your acts, the words that you utter, the thoughts that shape your desires and emotions - when all these draw sustenance from the roots that go deep into the inner springs of Love, then you will be happy and fresh, you can give shelter and shade to many a weary mortal. Japam and thapas (pious repetition of Lord's Name and penance) and puuja and vrathams (ritual worship and vow-keeping austerities) - all train and subdue the senses. They cleanse the mind so that God can be reflected therein. Just as the sugar that your eyes can see and your hands can put into water becomes so dissolved in it that neither eye nor hand can cognise it again, the

senses and intelligence cannot cognise that immanent God; chiththashuddhi (cleansing of mind) alone can recognise God, just as the tongue alone can recognise the sugar that has dissolved in the water.

Gopikas had the highest form of devotion

The Gopikas had that chiththashuddhi (purity of thought), though inferior minds full of gross desires have fouled the clear springs of their Prema with their ignorant comments. Naradha too thought that the illiterate milkmaids could not have the highest form of devotion; but, when he offered to teach them, he found them so immersed in God-consciousness that they had no thought other than those of Krishna, no words unrelated to His Glory, no act unconnected with His Seva. They had surrendered their all to the Lord who ruled them from within themselves. It has become a fashion for the educated to ask, "Where is God?" "What is His task?" and not wait for answers. They can well believe that there must be some one who launches and regulates the highly complicated rockets that move around the earth and other artificial things in space; but, they cannot believe that there must be some intelligence behind all this manifold galaxy of stars and planets revolving for aeons and along millions of light years of space. Believe in that Supreme Paramatma and engage yourselves in the practice of living. You will then find that you can manage to detach yourselves from the world, though you are in it. You will be like the lotus which grows in water but which floats on it and does not allow it to wet it, like the tongue which is unaffected by grease though it may eat ghee and oily articles. The chiththa (the mind-stuff) should not be contaminated by contact with the sensory objects, that is the means of sadhana.

A man being dragged to court by the police, pleaded with friends to come to his rescue, but one refused to move out of his house, another offered to accompany only upto the court-hall, but a third promised to be with him through thick and thin. When man dies, his wealth refuses to move out of his house, his relatives go upto the cremation ground but the reputation he has

earned goes with him even beyond that.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

29. The mind principle

Date: **October 1967** / Location: **Prasanthi Nilayam**

MAN must rise beyond the animal and master his monkey mind. This is the most important item in sadhana. This technique was elaborated in the ancient Vedhic texts and practised by the sages; neglect of the study and practice of the Upanishads (Vedhic philosophy) and the Geetha has resulted in the crisis we suffer today. So, attempts should be made to revive our ancient culture, which was so practical, so applicable to our everyday problems and so beneficial. Now, there are many details about the mind that have to be remembered and many misconceptions that have to be ignored. What exactly are we doing with our minds? In how many different ways are we harmed by the activities of the mind? How does that mind itself get modified and transformed? One has to study these and free oneself from the sovereignty of the mind. One should endeavour, on the other hand, to establish one's sovereignty over the mind. Then alone is this life worth while. Else, it is a colossal waste. Grasp this maya and in an instant, the postulate of mind is seen as illusion. You can know the 'I' principle. When this "I" is not cognised, how can you answer the query, "Who are you?" You are not the name or label fixed on your material body - Yellappa, Ramappa, Mallappa, or Lakshmanappa. You are not the bodies which your parents named so. Your genuine name is different. You declare, 'This is my leg, my head, my stomach;' but who is this 'I' that possesses these? Discover who this 'I' is; understand that the 'I' is not the body. When this is realised as a true fact, it follows that 'I' is not the sense, nor the mind. So, the 'I' is the resident of this body, whose residence gives all these their validity and value. That is to say, 'I' is the breath.

Illusion is the effect of the mind

So long as breath resides, there is no death. So long as there is current flowing, the bulb illumines. When the current does not flow there is no light. You attach importance to the coming and going of the light in the bulb; you do not observe that the current is ever flowing. The connection is broken, that

is all. The body is a bulb; when the current flows through it, the parts inside it are activated and function effectively. The breath is the current; the breath is 'I'. The Vedas rely on three categories: Direct, Indirect, Inferential; but, there is a fourth also: Shabdha, the Sound, the authenticity of the Sound. The breath is inhaled, retained and exhaled as the sound: Soham Soham, Soham. This means: I am Brahman, I am Brahman.' So, you are not a jeeva (individual soul) or a deha (body), you are Brahman - the Universal, Eternal, Unchanging. The illusion you are now hugging that you, with this reality of Brahman as your core and substance, are only this particular body bearing this particular name - this is what is referred to as Maya (worldly illusion). That is the effect of the mind. The mind has no special individuality; it has no innate, inherent capability. All its powers of mischief are activated and multiplied by man himself. It is agitated by the winds of delusion that blow on it. Now, here is a piece of cloth, though it is just an assortment of yarn. Some yarns are in this direction and some are in the other direction, and so the cloth was created. If we pull out the yarns one by one, there will remain nothing of the cloth. So too, the desires of man are the warp and the woof that has woven this new thing called 'mind'. Remove desire; the mind disappears and is no more.

The Shasthras give facsimiles of what the genuine is, just like the printed reproductions of new issues of currency notes, which are published for the information and guidance of the public. You cannot cut out that bit of paper and use it to buy things. You can only use it as a standard and say that if the note used is different, it is counterfeit. So also, the Shasthras lay down the standards; what is un-Shasthric is counterfeit conduct.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

30. The tiger in the ring

Date: 14 October 1967 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

NAVARAATHRI is celebrated in honour of the victory that the Para-Shakthi (the Goddess of Energy, immanent in the Microcosm and the Macrocosm) achieved over the Asura or Evil Forces, as described in the Devi Mahathmyam and Devi Bhagavatham. The Para-Shakthi is in every one as the Kundalini Sakthi (dormant spiritual energy), which is able to destroy when awakened, the evil tendencies inside the mind; so, the Navarathri is to be dedicated by all for the propitiation of the outer as well as inner Divinity, in order that the outer and the inner worlds may have peace and joy. By means of systematic Sadhana it is possible to tap the inner resources that God has endowed man with and elevate yourselves to the purer and happier realm of the Reality.

Look at the trainers of wild beasts. They bring the tiger, the most ferocious of animals, like a cat into the circus ring, and make it jump through a hoop of fire or lap milk from a plate, face to face with a goat, sitting on a chair! They are able to subdue its ferocity and tame it, reduce it to the position of an unassuming toy! How could they do it? They did Sadhana, they made the tiger also go through a regimen of Sadhana and they succeeded! If you could succeed with the tiger, can you not succeed with the ferocious denizens of your mind?

Three aspects of Shakthi

You can. That is the message of Navarathri, the Nine Days' Festival celebrating the victory of the Primal Energy. That energy, when it is manifested in its Sathwik (quiet) aspect is delineated as the Great Teacher and Inspirer, Maha-Saraswathi; when it is Rajasik (active and potent), the great Provider and Sustainer, Mahalakshmi; when it is Thamasik (dull and inactive), but, latent and apparently quiet as the Great Dark Destroyer and Deluder, Maha-kali. Since Shakthi is all-pervasive, omnipotent, infinitesimal as well as all-comprehensive, it can be contacted everywhere, in outer nature or inner consciousness. Prahladha told his doubting father: "Why doubt, discuss

and delay? Seek it anywhere; you can see It." It is near and far, before, behind, beside and inside everything, in the known and the unknown world. People dare describe Her or Him, as thus and thus; that reveals only their faculty to guess. No description can picture the portrait in full. When direct realisation is won, the tongue is rendered dumb; the portrait is unlimnable. It is beyond the reach of human intelligence or imagination. But, man seeks to picture the vast magnificance within a limited frame and locate it in Ayodhya or Dhwarka or Madurai or Kanyakumari or some such spot, and give it a Name and a Form, so that he can approach It and adore It. The Name and Form identify It, they do not limit It. When you dive into the Sea at one place, you are diving into the Full, not a Fraction, for the ocean is the same everywhere. You cannot separate it into sections by drawing lines on it. Plunge any where; you are plunging into the self-same Bliss. Man has to master two foes, Kala (time) and Kama (desire) - the ravaging tactics of time and the undermining strategy of desire. He must not allow time to rob him of strength and vitality, too soon; he must not allow desire to lead him astray from the search for Shiva, who mastered both Kala and Kama. He subdued Kala or Yama in the Markendeya episode; He burnt Kama when he dared drawing Him into his bond.

31. Moving Temples

Date: 04 October 1967 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

I AM talking to the men and women I choose to be volunteers, before every festival, and advising them about their duties and the spirit in which they should execute them. But, those who act according to that advice are very few! Each is engaged in his own selfish schemes! Each helps himself, and not those who need help. This badge is a sign to indicate that you are unselfish, that you are willing and eager to serve. It is no decoration or prize gift. To have this, and to wander about, lolling in the street, indulging in loose talk and evil habits is treason to those who expect to be helped by you; it is also sacrilege. You bow, fall at the feet, circumambulate the Prayer Hall, and perform all the exercises which proclaim that you are a Bhaktha (devotee possessing intense love to God); you declare before these very visitors that you are Bhakthas; but, your behaviour gives you up; they reveal that you do not deserve the name. Sick people must be given immediate medical attention; old people must be seated in the shade; children must be fondled and consoled. Since there will be a gathering of many thousands for about twelve days and nights, some people interested in making quick money, by transferring to themselves the properties of others, may also be present. It is, of course, a sin, wherever it is done; here, in this atmosphere of Sathya, it becomes doubly so. So, the visitors who come have to be protected from their attentions; you have to be vigilant, discover such characters and prevent their manoeuvres. This badge is a call for help from the thousands of devotees who are coming here, in full faith, that they have the Lord to tend them.

Serve people with no thought of high or low

To be present here is itself a gift of Grace, won by accumulated merit; to be endowed with the badge is a rarer gift. Make the best of this grand chance. This badge is a 'sapling' that has broken through the soil, from the seed of merit that you have sown in the past. See that the sapling is watered and fostered by your honest Seva (service), not dried up in the dust of insincerity

and hesitation. It provides you a valuable opportunity to cast off bad habits and assume good ones. You will have to discard self-conceit and the craving for display, so that you may win Grace. Serve people with no thought of high or low; no service is high, no service is low, each act of service is equal in the eye of the Lord; it is the readiness, the joy, the efficiency, the skill with which you rush to do it that matters. If you do not serve man, who is your kith and kin, with the same feelings, impulses and instincts as you, who is before you, alive and gladly accepting with a smile of gratitude, how can you serve Madhava (God), who is so far above and beyond you, so different and distant, so potent and mysterious? Train yourselves to serve God by serving man, in whom there is God installed in the heart. Convince yourselves that the service of man is worship of God. If you send away some one who runs towards your house for shelter from the rain back into the open street, you are inhuman, to say the least; if you do not do all that lies within your power to alleviate the pain that you find another is suffering from, you are unfit to be called human. Be at least human, even if you do not aspire to become divine! Being human is at least better than the status of beasts, for they do not remember the past, nor plan for the future. Cattle do not know that they are ploughing for the sake of sowing, nor bringing home the harvest, when the mowing is finished. Man piles upon his head the past and the future, and since he is not quite sure, he goes to the additional bother of 'insurance!' Man is burdened with desires; he plans to brighten the future, and wipe out the past. The tiny seed of desire grows soon into a mighty tree; so you have to fry the seed in the fire of thapas (penance), so that it may not sprout.

A volunteer is expected to be an example to all

The fire of detachment will fry the seed of desire, down to the last trace of life in it. Mere transitory fits of renunciation will not succeed in preventing sprouting. Detachment has to be supplemented by the knowledge of the hollowness of the objective world. Else, humility and reverence are but clothes you put on, while wearing the badge. When you take leave and move out from the gates of Prasanthi Nilayam, the clothes are changed and the old tatters of arrogant egoism are worn! When some one uses harsh words against you, do not allow your pride to persuade you to retaliate with harsh

words of your own. When one of your fingers pricks your eye, you do not turn against it and retaliate, do you? The person who was harsh is as much you as your own finger.

You tell people not to speak aloud, nor smoke. If, you yourself commit these lapses how can you insist on others to obey your instructions? Control these tendencies that you have developed; they are recent habits. If you do not master these little evils, how can you ever hope to suppress deeper evils, like greed, pride, hate, malice and other vicious tendencies? This badge is a sign of My Love, of My Compassion. It is an inspiration, a lesson, a blessing! It expects you to be virtuous, an example to all, in devotion and enthusiasm. It is an inspiration, not just for these ten or twelve days. Or, in this limited area, named Prasanthi Nilayam. Wherever you are, at whatever time, do the duty that this badge demands, whether you have it on, or not. Help others as much as lies in your power; if you cannot give them adequately, at least, feel the agony. "Alas! How much is the suffering they undergo! Lord, relieve it soon," pray thus with all your heart. Shankaracharya used to live on alms. In the old days, Imperial Princes, who studied in the hermitages had to seek alms and live on what they collected thus. This is for the removal of silly egoism. As pilgrims yourselves to the holy temple of sath-karma (righteous action), keep away your luggage (egoism) and enter the shrine, to purify the heart. Deposit your luggage in the vaults of "surrender" (sharanagathi). Remember the persons whom you serve are temples, where God is installed. Worship them with the flowers of good words, timely help, and vigilant care.

32. The miracle of love

Date: 05 October 1967 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Hospital Day

THE doctor who is presiding over this Hospital Day is known to Me for many years; he was coming to Shirdhi and is very much attached to Me, since the first day he came there. Though the Shirdhi body and this body are different, the dehi (the person in the body) is the same; and, so I recognise and reward all who come to either place. We have a Hospital here, since eleven years, with twelve beds for inpatients and doctors and nurses and equipment and medicines for treating them and a large number of out-patients. Do not be under the impression that we have this Hospital because I need the help of these doctors and these drugs to cure those who come to Me. There are some who desire treatment by the doctors, in a hospital; that is the means by which they feel they can be cured. Some are anxious that the doctor must give them an injection; if he doesn't, they feel they are neglected. So, I ask the doctor to give them one or even a series! There are many who have no faith in anything except tablets and the needle. They come to the Hospital and while there, they listen to the silence of the Prasanthi Nilayam, and feel the Anandha that is redolent in the atmosphere. They respond to the bhajans (congregational singing of devotional songs) and see how people who partake in it are happy: when they are in that Arogya nilaya (House of Health, the Hospital), they are drawn to this Anandha nilaya (Home of Bliss, the Prayer Hall), and gradually, they equip themselves with the armour of faith, which guards them against any illness.

Today disease has its hold on every family

There is another reason; many patients with illnesses of an advanced nature are brought here; they cannot be accommodated with others, in the sheds or rooms; they require close attention and loving care, special diet and facilities, which only a Hospital can provide. So they could be admitted into the Hospital awaiting My darshan and My ministrations. They can be looked after better there than in the midst of the vast gathering of devotees. When two people meet, it is considered good manners that each should inquire about the

health of the other. This is true of the peoples of both East and West. You ask each other, 'How do you do?' regardless of the fact, that both are every moment approaching death, nearer and nearer. Really speaking, both are undergoing kshaya (decline), not kshema (the security of health)! With each exhalation of breath, a fraction of life-span escapes from our hold. So, each should warn the other, remind the other, instruct the other, to use the available present for realising the God within the Universe and within oneself. The body has to be maintained in good condition, for it is only when embodied in this human tabernacle that man can realise God. The body is either strong or weak, an efficient instrument or an inefficient one, according to the food, recreations and habits of one's parents. Since the elders do not pay attention to these, the health of the children suffers; we have hospitals, dispensaries and clinics in every street now, because disease has its hold on every family, in every home. Even little children wear glasses; young people dye their hair, many wear dentures. The reason is, the atmosphere in the modern home is filled with artificiality, anxiety, envy, discontent, empty boasting, vain pomp, extravagance, falsehood and hypocrisy. How can any one growing up in this corrosive atmosphere be free from illness? If the home is filled with the clean fragrance of contentment and peace, all its occupants will be happy and healthy. The elders have, therefore, a great responsibility towards the generation that is coming up.

Conquer anger when it arises in the mind

Anger is also a great cause of ill-health, besides being dangerous for other reasons. It brings a long trail of camp-followers, each of whom adds its share to the final ruin. So, you must conquer this passion, when it arises in the mind, by reminding yourself of the omnipresence of God, of God as the inner motivator of all, of His being the Director of this Play called Life. Try to think of something else than the circumstances that roused your anger, do some Namasmarana, lie down in bed, go on a long walk, drink some cold water - struggle with yourself, until you win. Do not fight with others; fight with your own urges. When the Chinese hordes poured in, you fought them on the Himalayas, not in Penukonda; isn't it? Penukonda may be more easily accessible, but, the invasion is on the border and the struggle has to be on

the border! Stop the enemy at the threshold; stop anger at the threshold of the mind. Then, the body's safety can be ensured.

Know the "sign which declares that I am Sai Baba"

The best preventive of ill-health is the Anandha that comes of unconcern. Look at Me. I have come with this body, and you can see that there is no difference between this body and any other human body. But yet, illness has never affected this body. It cannot, any time. Even if I welcome it, it cannot approach Me. Nor am I taking any precautions against it. I take all manner of foods, at all kinds of places, in all types of homes. The dhobi's room will be full of varied assortments of clothes, isn't it? My dining table has an equally varied assortment of dishes, brought by devotees at the Nilayam belonging to all the comers of the world. I have no fixed menu at all; I do not care for one. I move about in all varieties of weather, sun or rain, summer or winter, valley or plateau; I drink water from one well today, another tomorrow. But, I am Anandhaswaruupa (Divine Bliss personified) all the time and so, I am never ill. Nor am I in the least disturbed by either the praise or by the maligning, that people pour. When I am spoken of, either in derision or in adoration, My Anandha is the same. A wayside tree having a load of fruits with sweet juice, is admired by some; but, most people are tempted to throw stones. Even lunatics and senile old men will cast stones at it. The tree will only be happy that it is receiving the penalties for its bounty, and contributing to the happiness of the hungry and thirsty. This Prema is My distinctive mark not the creation of material objects or of health and happiness, by sheer exercise of Will. You might consider what you call 'miracles' as the most direct sign of Divinity; but, the Prema that welcomes you all, that blesses all, that makes Me rush to the presence of the seekers, the suffering and the distressed in distant lands or wherever they are, that is the real sign! It is that which declares that I am Sai Baba. For Me, every day is a Festival day, for My Prema is showered everyday! But since you pay attention to the calendar and observe specially these holy days, I also arrange these Festivals here. When the Doctors come and ask Me permission to have a Hospital Day I say, Yes. For that provides you a chance to know from Me the disciplines needed to keep this physical instrument healthy and active.

The Shasthras lay down steps in sadhana, so that man can have peace, contentment and joy. The very first step is to remove the weeds in the garden of your heart, plucking by the roots the briar and bush of lust and greed, of hate and pride and plant in the ground thus cleared the fragrant flower plants of prema (love) and the sweet fruit trees of dharma (virtue).

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

33. Books as benediction

Date: 06 October 1967 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

SIX books, in five languages, were dedicated to Me now, by the authors or publishers. So, this is an appropriate occasion to put the question to ourselves, "Why should books be written, published and read?" Books must reveal, inspire, educate, inform, lead and guide. Yes; but, what should they reveal? Whom should they inspire? How must they educate? What information should they contain? Where should they lead? To which place or stage must they guide the readers? These questions have to be answered before we can pronounce the book good, the trouble and expense worth while and the dedication well done. Those who believe that there is an all-knowing God who rules and regulates the Universe - science has progressed from certainty to doubt, about its capacity to explain the Universe - have to admit that each one is born as a result of His Will. Therefore, there must be a Divine Purpose in life. Man must know the way to attain God, must be led and guided to attain Him, must be educated to rid himself of distractions on the path, must know that, which if known, all else is known. The rest is all secondary, incidental, unnecessary. The Vedantha, meaning "the goal or finale of the Vedas," is the repository of this knowledge, the knowledge of God and of the journey which leads to Him. The different hypotheses about His Nature and characteristics and how to test their validity, the different disciplines that will render the intellect of man sharp enough to grasp the Glory of God, the immeasurable thrill that the revelation of the Glow of God as one's own inner glory will confer, all these are indicated in the Upanishadhs, which form the Vedantha. Every good book written by Man is acclaimed so because it has a vein of this golden glory in its pages.

Spiritual knowledge alone can give peace and happiness

Vedantha means the final product of the fund of knowledge - liberation. The final product of milk is ghee - for, when milk is heated, curdled, churned and the resultant butter is clarified, ghee is secured and it cannot be turned into anything else. That is the end-product. Vedantha is Jnana - the knowledge

that reveals, that loosens 'the knots of the heart' and the bondage to external objects, that discloses in a flash the Unity that is the Truth of all this multifarious Creation. That alone can give shanthi and sukha (peace and happiness). Man can be happy only in vastness, in overflowing into greater and greater power and magnificence. People run up to Nainital or Kodaikanal or Mussorie during summer, in order to escape the heat of the plains. So too, people seek vastness, in order to escape the stuffiness of 'individualised' life. They want the Eternal, the Absolute; not, the temporary and the particular. So, books must deal with the eternal verities, the absolute certainties, the vast immeasurable joys. The fascination that the temporary has over the mind is called Maya or Delusion. For example, under the delusion that white or greying hair is something to be ashamed of and postponed, men and women dye their hair - though for all other purposes, white is considered more desirable than black! The mind is never still fixed on any one ideal. It is ever wavering, flitting from one object to another, hopping from one satisfaction to another. To allow oneself to be led by the mind and bypass the intelligence is the folly called Maya (illusion). The world is a labyrinth in which man has become entangled; he must find a way out. The mind, however is no guide, for it is an aimless wanderer.

See God face to face in all beings

The camel eats thorns and is happy. Man too suffers untold misery as a result of his search after objective pleasures; but he does not seek a way out. He is not aroused into activity to overcome the pain of the thorns in his mouth. The pain makes him resolve now and then to desist, but, that is but a momentary vow. There is no strength behind that resolution. When disgust develops into determination, the habit is terminated, the effects are washed off in the tears of repentance and the mind is eliminated. The Lord is ever behind you. Turn back from the world - He is face to face with you! Cultivate enough strength of mind to know its weakness and to surrender your all, to the God whom you see face to face in all beings and at all moments. He does not calculate the cost of the 'all' which you surrender at His feet. He examines the spirit in which it is surrendered. Shankaracharya stood before a house with his begging bowl. The old lady who lived there was struck by the effulgence on

his face that betokened a realised soul; but she had nothing which she could drop in that bowl. She wrung her hands in despair; she cursed herself; she wondered why the distinguished mendicant had come to her door, instead of going to the doors of the affluent. Then she remembered she had a single myrobalan fruit, the last !of a handful she had plucked from a tree in the jungle a few days earlier. When she felt thirsty, she used to eat a fruit. She brought it out and, with tears flowing in her wrinkled cheeks, she dropped it into the bowl. Shankaracharya was touched by her contribution; the Lord willed; a shower of golden myrobalans fell in the yard in front of her hut. She was placed above want even without her asking for it. That is the way Grace works.

The Lord is Love inexhaustible

You know the various acts of Grace that Krishna conferred on the Pandavas; but, if you know how Krishna came first into the Pandava group, as friend, guide and saviour, you will realise that Grace is showered unasked by the Lord. Parikshith put this question to Sukha, the narrator of the Bhagavatha episodes: "How did Krishna and His elder brother Balarama first meet my ancestors?" Sukha said, 'They were present at the Swayamvara (choosing of husband by the bride herself) of Dhroupadhi, where the Pandavas were also present in the guise of Brahmins. You know that Dhroupadhi was to wed the archer who could successfully hit the revolving fish figure put on a tall post. When the men of the warrior caste failed in this test. Brahmins too were allowed to try their hand if they wished. Arjuna succeeded and won her hand for all the five brothers. They were living incognito in a potter's home. Krishna knew that the winners of this Royal Princess were His kinsmen and so, He went to the potter's hut with his brother. He announced Himself as Krishna and gave them very wise counsel about their future course of action." The Lord is Prema - Love-unsullied, inexhaustible, universal. He has no predilections or prejudices. You have no reason to fear Him; fear rather the tendencies in you that drag you into vice and sin. Books that prompt persons to love God and fear vice are most beneficial. Love towards God must be witnessed by love towards man, for man is the visible manifestation of God, a manifestation whose grief and pain you can understand as akin to your own.

Such books can come only out of hearts that pine and pray. Lead that life and the lines will emerge.

When you cultivate the attitude that you are the body, the body will demand from you more food, more variety in food, more attention to appearance and physical comfort. A large portion of the food now consumed is superfluous; man can live healthily on much less. A good deal of effort and expenditure now spent to cater to taste and to social pomp can be given up, and health too will improve thereby.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

34. Nurse the ancient tree

Date: 07 October 1967 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

INDIA is the land where the dichotomy of 'that' and 'this,' of 'Creator' and 'Creation,' of 'energy' and 'matter,' was resolved in one grand Unity, by both theory and practice, in philosophical schools and in hermitages. The Tree of life, with its countless branches proliferating into thoughts, words, and deeds, attitudes, tendencies, and impulses, is known by the sages of India to have its roots in Heaven! So, every rule and ritual was made sacred and holy, suffused with purity, humility and love. This resulted in peace and happiness, for the individual, the family, the community, the nation and the world. But on account of the domination of exotic ways of thinking, quite contrary to Indian ideals, people have become ashamed to call themselves Hindus, as if the picture the sages drew was a caricature; as if they were being misled by their ancestors. This is a wrong and dangerous attitude; it ignores the lasting benefits that one can draw from the experience of those sages. The attractions of a free and easy life are superficial and hollow. When the wicked Kauravas were undraping the clothes of Dhroupadhi, the Pandavas sat unmoved; for they felt bound by their plighted troth; but the Lord, who loved them for that loyalty, came to her rescue! Now too, the honour of Hindu religion and culture is at stake; it is being derided and discarded by the very people who have the responsibility to foster and fructify them. Hindus are fast giving up the rites and ceremonies that marked the different stages of spiritual development. They join in the humiliating laughter of cynics who proclaim that they circled in outer space and did not find God anywhere; as if the earth under their feet and Nature around them were not witnesses enough for His existence!

India must nurse the tree of Dharma

Indian thought affirms that T and 'He' are one; that all is integrated in the composite whole, true, good, and beautiful, through and through. Indian thinkers have reached the dizzy heights of speculation and the clearest depths of intuition; they have found that the experience of fundamental unity

is not negated by most rigorous logic. Therefore, all other faiths are but facets of this supreme Truth, this sublime experience. And, each little duty cast upon man in the Hindu Code of Morals reflects this awareness of Unity. For example, it is laid down that when a person dines without first feeding the chance guest or the hungry man at his door, he is committing theft, eating a meal of sin, partaking a feast of foulness! Dhamayanthi, deserted by her husband Nala, in the darkness of the forest, could not sleep, for she was anxious about her lord's welfare. Just then, she heard a herd of elephants rushing through, trampling the groups of aborigines sleeping around her; her warning cry was unheeded; they slept too soundly to be awakened. So too, India, that is to say, Vedamatha (the mother who speaks with the voice of the Vedas) has to warn the nations of the world, sleeping the sleep of sense-satiety, that wildness is rushing in to destroy them. This is the role of Bharath-, - to assert that God is a present and persistent factor in human life, in every atom, in the Universe and that God is Sath, Chith and Anandha (Existence, Consciousness and Bliss Absolute). She must nurse the tree of Dharma and garner from it, for the welfare of the whole world, the fruits of Ahladha (spiritual exhilaration), Anandha (bliss) and shanthi (calm equipoise). The preservation and promotion of Hindu Dharma is the need of the times. People who practise its principles have to propagate them, by precept and example. In every one, there is the thirst for God; only many deny it on account of false pride, some on account of ignorance, some call it by some other name, worry, discontent or despair. Some have faith only in Love, some believe only in Truth, some swear that they care only for Goodness - but, all these do not know that they are referring to God alone by these names. They too are pilgrims to the same Sacred Shrine. Prasanthi Nilayam, 7-10-1967 Man must reveal the divine qualities of love, humility, detachment and contentment. If he does not, he becomes worse than a beast and more deadly.

35. The tricycle

BIRTH is the consequence of Kama (desire, lust): Death is the consequence of Kala (Time, the lapse of Time). The God of Desire (Kama) was reduced to ashes by Shiva; the God of Time is Kala or Yama. He was subdued by Shiva. So, one has to surrender to Shiva (God) if one has to escape the

consequences of these two frightfully fatal forces. If between Kama and Kala, you take refuge in Rama, then you can escape the rigour. For Rama is the Atma and Atma (self, infinite) has no Kama and is unaffected by Kala. Nature - both outer and inner - is ruled by the Sovereign Atma, the Universal Soul, the Paramatma. So, if you earn the Grace of the Paramatma, Nature becomes your docile instrument. The body is nature; the vital air is Paramatma. Living beings are pictures moving on the screen; the screen which is unaffected by the emotions, the raging fire or roaring floods that pass over it, is the Paramatma. The worldly will be fascinated by the pictures, which through delusion, appear as if they are all real living incidents; the wise will concentrate on the screen, which is pure, white and clear. When water is poured into milk, it too takes on the nature of milk. Nature too appears to be capable of giving us stability, joy and peace; but, these are really the qualities of the Ultimate, the Paramatma. Like the water mixed in milk, these qualities do not belong to Nature at all.

The three paths to attain God have equal efficacy

The Hamsa (a legendary swan) has the property of separating the milk from the water and drinking the milk only. So too, Paramahansa (realised person, who has achieved Truth) can separate the Illusory from the Real and experience the Bliss, communicated only by the Truth. Ramakrishna was a Paramahansa; he knew how to separate milk (Truth) from the water (untruth) added to it. When he was suffering from cancer of the throat, unable to swallow food, his disciples entreated him to pray to mother Kali, that the cancer may be cured; they felt that Kali will certainly answer the prayer if he but made it. But, Paramahansa refused to ask any such boon from God. His attention could not be diverted to any such low desire. "Why pray? If it is Her will, it will happen; if not, that too is Her will," that was the reply. There is a great deal of useless discussion and controversy about the paths to attain God; some demarcate three paths, Bhakthi, Karma and Jnana. But there need be no controversy on their relative efficacy. They are like the confluence of the three holy rivers at Prayag, the Ganga, the Yamuna, and the unseen underground Saraswathi. Ganga is the Bhakthi-marga (the Path of Devotion) - surrender, control of selfish, sensual pursuits; Yamuna is the Karma-marga

(Path of ritual and ceremonial worship, of dedicatory acts) - engaging in activities, irrespective of the benefits therefrom, doing all duties as worship, eliminating all attachment, all pride of I-am-the-doer type; Saraswathi is the Jnana-marga (the Path of Knowledge; of acquiring true awareness of the Reality) - cognising that ideas of bondage are all delusion that One is ever Free, devoid of change, full of Anandha. The three Paths are like the wheels of a tricycle - the wooden push-cart, which children are given, to train them to take the first steps, while learning to walk. Bhakthi and Jnana are two wheels in one line at the back and the forward one is Karma. The child learns the steps and walks towards the "City of Freedom from Fear and Illusion."

Each step of the Sadhana has to be understood well

Instead of relying upon mere enthusiasm to show the way, it is better that the spiritual aspirant receives guidance from a preceptor during the early stages. For, one has to observe the disciplines, with the awareness of their meaning. Dhyana, Upasana (worship), Pranavarecital - these are best done under proper guidance; mere text-books may lead the sadhaka (spiritual aspirant) into disappointment. The significance of each step has to be appreciated in order to ensure the co-operation of all the faculties of man in the effort and ensure success. Mere mechanical imitation or automatic repetition is of no value. Ask any one why green leaves are strung across the main entrance of the house; the reply will be, "It is the custom, since ages; every decent person does it." But, why? Few people know it; no one cares to know.

In the years gone by, every village home was stocked full of paddy bags, and so, the rats too inevitably infested every home. In one such home, they were celebrating every Full Moon Day the rite called Sathyanarayana Puuja. This required the collection of good quantity of milk and ghee, the previous night itself. The rats attracted cats and the cats often preferred milk and ghee to the rodent food they are accustomed to. So, the milk and ghee were carefully kept in places unreachable to the cats. But, during the celebrations on the sacred day, the milk and ghee had to be kept open and available for use in vessels around the shrine. That was the chance for the depredatory cat; so, the master of the house caught the cat by the neck and put it under a heavy

basket, and placed a stone on it, so that it could not play any mischief with the holy offerings. This was done so consistently every Full Moon Day as a safety measure in one home that the children and grandchildren felt that, puuja or no puuja, no Full Moon Day should pass without a cat being imprisoned under a weighted basket! They started searching for a cat and bring it home, so that the 'ritual of the cat and basket' could be observed without fail.

Surrender to the Divine Will will elevate words and deeds

The original meaning and purpose was lost during the passage of time and later generations were burdened with a belief that danger lurks if a cat is not dealt with, as their forefathers did! From being an insufferable nuisance, the cat rose to a new status of importance! This is blind imitation. The fundamental factor in spiritual life is the suppression of desire' the surrender of the individual will to the Divine Will, which will elevate thoughts, words and deeds into acts of worship. When Ravana fell dead, his queen Mandodhari lamented over his body, "You conquered every enemy of yours, except your own lust! You were pious, you were learned, you subdued even the most powerful foes - but, you allowed yourself to be enslaved by desire. That brought about your downfall." The magnifying glass draws the rays of the sun on a single point and can set fire to paper or grass. So too, concentration of attention can destroy the seeds of wanton desire. That is way I advise a few minutes of Dhyana every day, both in the early morning hours and in the evening, after dusk.

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The scriptures teach that life is unfortunately short. So, the Geetha advises man to appreciate three facts:

- (1) To be born as a human being is a precious opportunity,
- (2) To yearn to realise God is another precious piece of good luck,
- (3) The greatest good fortune is the chance to be in the Presence of God, to be immersed in the service of God and to be engaged in fulfilling Divine commands.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

36. The windows of the mind

Date: 09 October 1967 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

WILL Power motivated by God is the active force available for your uplift. This is called Sankalpa Bala. Develop it by concentration and japa. The mind must be compelled to submit to the dictates of the will. Now, you are easily led astray by the vagaries of the mind. That is why, I say, WATCH! W is for watch your Words; A is for watch your Actions; T is for watch your Thoughts; C is for watch your Character; H is for watch your Heart. If the watch reminds you every second of the need to watch these five, you can be quite happy. The mind swings like a pendulum between one pleasant object and another. To stop the pendulum, the easiest means is to stop winding. That will put an end to the swing. So too, stop encouraging the mind by following its whims and fancies. When we beat another or cause harm to him, we justify it as only right and proper; when he beats us or harms us, we revolt and call it wrong and punishable.

Everything is judged by us on the touchstone of the ego. The mind is a double-edged sword - it can save, but it can also bind. Yoga is the restraint of the waves natural to the mind. By learning and practising the disciplines of yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, prathyahara dharana, dhyana and samadhi (abstention from evil-doing, various observances, postures, control of breath, restraining the sense organs, concentration, meditation, absorption in the Atma), the seeker can overcome and eliminate the mind.

The Five Elements attract and affect the five senses

When the mind is eliminated, the Reality will become patent! It is like the discovery of the lost "tenth man." Ten friends waded across a river in floods, and when they reached the bank opposite each one took a count and found only nine, for he did not count himself! So, they inferred that "the tenth man" was drowned and began lamenting his loss. Then, a passer-by came along and counted them; he found that all were there; the tenth man too was there; only ignorance had kept him unrecognised. This is the consequence of

Illusion. Since you do not know the real nature of the Self or Atma, you do not recognise the Self at all; when this knowledge is communicated by the Guru or scripture, the ignorance of the Self disappears. The senses are the prime motive forces for the mind and the illusion it suffers from. The Five Elements have each a characteristic that affects and attracts one of the five senses: Sound (Ether), which fascinates the mind through the ear; Touch (Air) which draws the mind to itself through the skin; Form (Fire) which manipulates the mind in its favour through the eye; Taste (Water), which enslaves the mind through the tongue and Smell (Earth), which attracts the mind through the nose. Contact with the external world is maintained by the senses for the sake of these experiences - which yield joy or grief. In order to escape being tossed about on the waves of joy and grief, one should cultivate unconcern (upeksha), an attitude of welcoming either, as a sign of Grace. Shri Ramakrishna said that if you must avoid the sticky fluid in the jack-fruit from contacting your fingers when you peel it, you have to apply a few drops of oil on them. So too, said he, "if you do not want the world and its reactions to stick to you, have a few drops of 'unconcern' applied On your mind." This unconcern leads to the deepest yearning for God. Chaithanya went to Brindavan, where every particle of dust was sacred for him, since Krishna trod that soil centuries ago. He did not see or hear or touch or smell or taste anything except Krishna at Brindavan. He was rendered so forgetful to the world around him that he ignored the demands of hunger, thirst and social etiquette. He yearned for the consecrated food that was offered to Krishna in the Temple. But, one night, the Lord appeared before him, and admonished him for entertaining that one desire too! When at last, he gave up that desire also and was overwhelmed with the thirst for Him and Him alone, Krishna manifested before him, from within him. The Divine Chaithanya (Consciousness) illuminated the Chaithanya in human form. Learn therefore the discipline that can make the mind settle on God only and never waver therefrom.

37. Jumping to conclusions

Date: 13 October 1967 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

WITHOUT self-confidence no achievement is possible. If you have confidence in your strength and skill, you can draw upon the inner springs of courage and raise yourselves to a higher level of joy and peace. For, confidence in yourselves arises through the Atma, which is your inner Reality. The Atma is peace. It is joy, It is strength. It is wisdom. So, it is from the Atma that you draw all these equipments for spiritual progress. There are two eight-syllabled axioms in the Geetha, which are the basic beliefs man must have' Shradhdhavan labhathe jnanam (with Faith, wisdom is won) and Samsayatma Vinasyathi (the doubter is destroyed). They are two embankments between which the river of life can flow, safe and steady, towards the Sea of Divine Grace. During the years of youth, the river is subject to sudden floods which may eat into the embankments and damage the region. So, special Care has to be taken to render them strong. The planners of this country's future are concentrating on the production of food, drinking water and housing - but happiness cannot come through these alone. When morality is laughed at, bhakthi is dreaded as a disease, cleverness is placed at a premium, and the individual is humiliated into an instrument to be manipulated and utilised by the State or some other collective authority, how can happiness be ensured? When our people worship ant-hills, trees, snakes, birds, lions and cows, cynics laugh, unaware of the deeper truth it reveals, namely, that God is immanent in all creation. So too, there is deeper significance for the rituals and ceremonies that have been recommended and observed in this land since ages; but now the husk alone remains and the kernel has gone through neglect. It is at such times that the need arises for the re-establishment on the old foundations of the superstructures of Morality and Religion. There can be no religion without moral purity. The two are inter-dependent.

Do good when you feel like doing it, don't delay

Your car is not meant to be kept as a show-piece in a glass garage. It is meant for the roads, for taking you fast and safe to the place where you want

to go. So too, your body must serve the purpose of your journey. Journey to where? No, as it has been happening, to the cemetery. You have nobler things to do than merely die! You must know your own Reality before you die and merge in that supreme Joy. Eat just enough to keep the body in trim; use the body to discover this Reality, namely, God. Sanctify every moment of your sojourn here with pious deeds and sacred thoughts. When Karna was applying oil on his head, with a golden cup of oil held in his left hand, a Brahmin who passed by, held out his hand and asked that the cup be given to him. "Here. Take it," he said, and gave it to him, with the left hand. The Brahmin was annoyed, because no gift should be given or accepted with the left hand. But, Karna explained, "I am giving this to you the moment you asked, for, I do not know whether I will be so disposed when I change the cup from the left hand to the right. Pardon me." Do good when you feel like doing it; do not delay - that is the message of this story.

Not to have a son is no spiritual disaster

One common criticism of Hinduism is that it tolerates the worship of images. But the stone is not worshipped as stone; it is the symbol of the God that cannot be pictured in His abstract, attributeless, Nirguna (Formless) aspect. The idol is of great help in concentration, as was proved by Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Meera, Thyagaraja and a large number of other seekers. Meera derived supreme satisfaction when she experienced the Divine in the form of GiddharaGopala, the Cowherd Boy Krishna, who raised the Govardhana Peak as an umbrella to protect the people and cattle of Gokul against the ravaging rains sent down by the angry Rain-God, Indhra. Each mystic has a special Form which touches the deepest chords of the devotee's heart and moves him into the Divine Ecstasy. Thyagaraja knew that Rama was the Sovereign of all Creation, that He was immanent as well as transcendent; and he drew the highest inspiration by picturing Him as the son of Dhasharatha and consort of Seetha. Another Hindu belief is that food, when it is offered to God and then taken as consecrated by His acceptance, is activated by Divine energy and is freed from all evil influences that might adhere to it. This helps the attitude of dedication, and encourages the conviction of the constant Presence of God as an inseparable guide and

guardian wherever you may be. This betel box that I have is made of lead; now, if some one comes and asks, "Keep the box, but give me the lead," it is absurd because they are inseparable, indivisible. So too, it is absurd to say, "Be a Hindu, but give up these beliefs, this Dharma." They are the very characteristics of the faith. If the Dharma is not known and practised, the Hindu is as bad as dead. Mention was made here of the fear that the childless suffer from; the fear is that unless you have a son, who will do the rites prescribed for the departed, the dead parents will have to spend ages in a special section of hell! This emphasis on begetting a son was made only for royal dynasties. Since, in the absence of direct successors, the kingdom will have to pass through strife and bloodshed. Dhritarashtra had a hundred sons; not one of them survived him and performed the rites to save him from hell! Suka, the incomparable Sage, had no sons; can you say that he missed Moksha (Liberation) as a punishment and spent ages in hell? Not to have a son is no spiritual disaster, I assure you.

Do not be diverted by persons with perverse minds

Look at another absurdity. Some worship God as Shiva and call Him as Pashupati (Guardian of cattle), 'pashu' meaning living beings, the bound; some worship God as Vishnu or Krishna and call Him as Gopala (Protector of cattle), 'go' meaning living beings, the bound. And these two sets of devotees refuse to revere each other! Shiva is extolled as the Creator, Preserver and Destroyer, by those who adore Him. Vishnu or Krishna is extolled as all these three by those that adore Him; but, they don't take the next step of recognising that there cannot be any legitimate reason for their differences. You must welcome all Names and Forms, though you might have a personal attachment to one Name and one Form. You have to admit that the God whom you adore is universal enough to have many Names and many Forms. When a lone dog gets frightened by the shadow that moves ominously in the misty moonlight, it sets up a howl, which is echoed by all the dogs in the vicinity. Not knowing the reason, all howl in unison; it is sheer canine nature. The moonlight of Divine Grace stirs some humans also to howl and others to join in blind imitation. It is their nature; they cannot tolerate the Immeasurable Glory that showers Grace and Faith, courage and consolation.

Your duty is to march ahead, straight and steady, towards the Goal, without being diverted by the exhibition of self-imposed ignorance and perversity. Every Avathar had such pitiable contemporaries. You must have read of Sishupala, Poundraka, Danthavakra and others, in the Dwapara Yuga.

Enslave yourself to God, not to man

Maintain your self-respect as Dhroupadhi did. When she was about to be humiliated in the open court, where her husbands who had staked her and lost her in dice-play to the wicked Kauravas were present, she was so enraged that if she had only cast a look on the gang of ruffians who had won her and dragged her thither, they would have collapsed into heaps of ash; instead, she looked at Dharmaraja, the eldest husband who had staked her and who was sitting before her with downcast eyes. That look quietened her a little. Then, she uttered a curse, which echoed over the earth and heaven. "May the wives of these vipers who laid their hands on my hair and dragged me here, lament their widowhood, waving their loosened hair, in unconsolable grief. Until then, I shall not plait the hair which these barbarians have unloosened now." She proclaimed, in the hearing of all, her lineage, and its reputation for self-respect and her resolve not to tarnish it or demean it. Maintain the dignity of your lineage, the lineage of Rama, Krishna, Harishchandra, Meera, Thyagaraja, Thukaram, Ramakrishna and Nandanar. The glory of your lineage is like a carefully rolled ball of thread. Any slip on your part will result in its disastrous entanglement. So beware! Enslave yourself to God and not to man. Hold fast to your Sadhana.

Be unmoved either by adulation or denigration

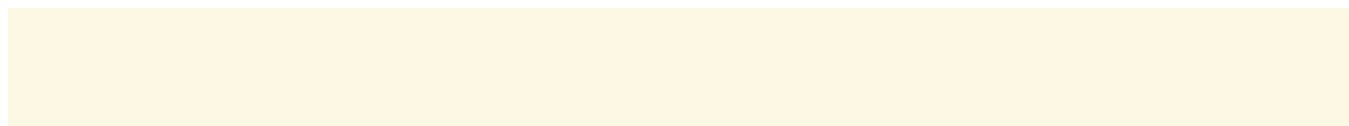
Repeat the Gayathri - it is a universal prayer. It has three parts, dhyana - meditation on the Glory of God as the Illumination immanent in the worlds, upper, middle and lower (Om Bhuhbhuva-swah; thath savithur varenyam); it has Smarana or picturisation of the Grace (bhargodevasya dheemahi) and Prarthana, prayer for compassion for the sake of liberation, through the awakening of Intelligence that pervades the entire Universe, not to any particular Name or Form of that Intelligence; and so, all can use it and be

saved by it. There can be no fanaticism, no hatred, no rivalry, if the Gayathri is adhered to; its japa (pious repetition) will clarify the passions and promote Love. Do not water and feed the tree of desire. Intolerance is the product of anger, hate and envy. Try your best to suppress the first appearance of anger. It does not come upon you unawares. The body becomes warm, the lips twitch, the eyes redden - so, when you get the intimation, drink a cup of cold water, sip it slowly, close the door and lie in bed, until the seizure passes away, and you laugh at your own folly. This may appear difficult, but you have to practise it. For the consequences of your yielding to anger will be so disastrous that you will have to repent long for them.

There was a father-in-law, who was so angry with the son-in-law for not writing letter to him and his daughter from foreign lands where he had gone as a soldier, that he wrote to him an angry letter: "You are as bad as dead, so far as we are concerned, for you do not care for your wife any longer. So she has shaved her head and started wearing widow's weeds." The soldier when he received this letter lamented aloud that his wife had become a widow, not realising that so long as he was alive, that calamity cannot happen! Do not jump to conclusions, abdicating your discrimination. Don't deny the validity of your own experience. Stand on your strength. Be unmoved, either by adulation or denigration. Follow My lead: I am unaffected by either, I march on, alone, undeterred and of My own accord. I am My own Guide and Witness, have full faith in this.

God is no partial benefactor; he gives the fruit from every tree, according to the seed. You have planted the sour mango, hoping to use the fruit for pickles; then, why lament that the fruit is not sweet to the tongue? Do good and aspire to get the fruit of goodness - that is pardonable. It is not as bad as doing bad and blaming God that He has given you the meed for evil deeds.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba



38. Not above, but around

Date: 14 October 1967 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

NO other human community has gone so deep into the problem of birth and death, of thoughts after death and the continuity of the consequences of thoughts, words and deeds, as the Hindus. The solutions they discovered and verified are so universal, so convincing and so beneficial for individual and social uplift, that they have stood the test of centuries of critical assessment by scholars and sages of all lands. One commendable feature of this investigation is that reason has never taken a second place. At every step, the sadhana is to be reinforced by reason. The sadhana (spiritual discipline) is the drug, the intelligent appraisal of the results and difficulties is the regimen. The disease of Ajnana (spiritual ignorance) is cured by the 'tablet,' Prajnana (science of the spirit); that is to say, the damaging consequence of Ignorance is cured by the Higher Knowledge.

But spiritual progress is not merely an intellectual exercise. It is right living, good conduct, moral behaviour. These attitudes are the automatic consequences of belief in a good, just, compassionate God, Who is watching and witnessing every act. So, faith in an Omnipresent, Omniscient, Omnipotent God is the first pre-requisite of a good life.

All impulses sprout from within the mind

Start the practice of goodness with the mother and the father. Serve them, please them, bring honour to their memory, become worthy of their gratitude. Expand the love and the service until you bring within its horizon all living beings, for all are altars of the self-same God; He is described in the Vedas having a 'thousand heads.' So do not adhere to the 'aloners' in religion, who say the 'He alone is God'; change over to the 'also-ers' who know that 'He also is God.' Every head before Me, all the fifteen thousand, is My Head; for, it is the head of God, as mentioned in the Vedas. Every bulb is illuminated by the same inner-flowing current. Let not the bulb think that it is shining through its own will; let it be humble that it is but an instrument, used by the current, to

shed light. If each one follows his own nose, there will be chaos. If each one decides to pursue his own wish or even his own reason (for after all, reason may be used to justify one's own predilections and pet prejudices), man will descend to the level of the apes or worse. So, man has to be guided by the wisdom of the past, the bounds prescribed by his well-wishers, the sages, the Shasthras or moral codes laid down to map the conscience in him. The Shasthras only channelise the urges that arise within men. Like the seed, which can sprout into a plant only from under the soil, all the various emotions, feelings and impulses sprout only from within the mind of man. If the mind is steady, nothing can shake you into indecision or indifference. When Thukaram came out of his hermitage, one morning, for Suryanamaskar (ceremonial prostrations before the rising Sun), his eyes fell upon the palanquin, orchestra, and the royal paraphernalia that Shivaji had sent to take him to his court. He told the messengers of the emperor, "Why have you brought this hearse? No one is dead here. I can still walk. Tell the Emperor that the need is not yet." The Lord is neither up nor down, He is within Faith in God must induce you to run and fall at the Feet of the Lord, irrespective of what others might say or even what might happen to you. Look at the moth; it sees the flame; it is drawn irresistibly by the inner urge to escape from darkness; thamaso ma jyothirgamaya; it dashes into the flame and dies. Look at the bee; it discovers the nectar in the lotus; it settles and sips in untainted bliss; it is unaware of anything else; the sun sets, the petals close, the bee is imprisoned, though it does not know it. It dies before the lotus blooms again with the dawn. But, the lives of both moth and bee are -fully worthwhile. For, this is the merging of Jeeva and Brahman. The Jeeva struggling to merge with Brahman wails plaintively, as the pilgrim to Thirupathi wails, "O, Lord! You are atop the Seven Hills, I am on the plains below." Therefore, it is said, the Jeevi must either rise up to that level or he must, by his prayers, persuade the Lord to come down to him and bless him, by His Presence. This is a wrong inference. The Lord is neither up nor down. He is within, not seen because the heart is unclean. Engage in Karma, until this cleansing is accomplished; then, when the Lord in you is cognised, all your acts will promote the welfare of the world.

Some people say that they will believe in God only when they are afforded

some experience of Divine Will. How can faith arise in the Will for those with such an attitude? They have no keenness to experience; how can examples help? Of course, if some have no faith, the loss is theirs. The Lord is unconcerned. Two and two make four even if some swear that they will not believe it.

Be devoted to Me and receive power from Me. To the extent to which you enthusiastically quicken up this process of give and take, to that extent you will be successful and happy. Deliver all your anxieties, troubles, travails and desire, to Me and in return receive joy, peace and strength of mind from Me. During this Advent, only spiritual aspirants and righteous persons are relatives, friends and recipients of My Grace.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

39. The wet wick

Date: 15 October 1967 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

THERE is a law of cause and effect; every karma has a consequence, whether you like it or not, whether you anticipate it or not. A good karma produces a good result; a bad one has to produce a bad result. Birth is the result of the karma done before death; if you are asked what happens to man after death, you can point to yourselves and declare, "This is what happens"; they are born again. This is no religion of despair; it is a religion of hope, of assurance, of encouragement to lead an active, useful, beneficent life. For the future is in your hands; tomorrow can be shaped by today, though today has already been shaped by yesterday. That is the reason why the biggest section of the Vedas is called 'Karma Kanda' and deals with various types of Karma, calculated to induce detachment, to canalise the desire towards eternal and universal ends, to transmute all acts into acts of worship, to offer adoration to the Devas who preside over every force of Nature, every energy of man, every limb of his anatomy.

The gross leads one on to the subtle

Elaborate rituals were prescribed so that this inner yearning and outward purity may be firmly established. In the constellation called Saptha-rishi-mandala (the Great Bear), the star Vasishta, has very near it, a faint little star called Arundhathi. Vasishta and Arundhathi are the ideal couple. The two are inseparable even in the sky, always at the same degree of proximity. Therefore, the newly married pray to them for blessing them with long years of happy companionship. The star Arundhathi is pointed out to the bride by the groom as the model of constancy.

In order that they may identify it, they have first to note the Mandala (region), then the Vasishta star and then fix their eyes on the Arundhathi star. The concrete is a pointer to the abstract; the gross leads one on to the subtle; the ritual guides one to the right: the sacrifice or Yajna reveals the Indweller. The Thaittireeya Upanishadh takes the student from the gross to the subtle, step

by step, in its effort to teach him the Divine Principle. When Bhrigu, the son of Varuna, approached his father, saying, "Teach me Brahman," he was told in a general way, "Brahman is that from which all this originates, that in which they live, and that in which they enter when they depart," and he was asked to investigate it through meditation himself. Bhrigu declared that 'Food was Brahman,' and when asked to proceed with the investigation, he proceeded to the next hypothesis, that Brahman was Prana (life); later, he found that Manas(will, sankalpa, ichchashakthi) was Brahman; then he reached the stage when he could declare that Brahman was Vijana (intelligence); the next step was reached when he identified Brahman with Anandha (bliss); thus the Upanishadh teaches the subtle, supreme, non-dual Bliss, hidden in the cave of the heart. From the material to the spiritual - that is the process of Upanishadhic teachings.

The new born baby does 'kevvu' (onomotopoeic word in Thelugu for baby's wail); the dying person, as a result of his experience of life, must do 'navvu' (laugh, in Thelugu). The baby wails, since it does not know its name, its Reality; the dying man must laugh, since he should know it. He must die happy that his life-work has been accomplished. Koham? (whom am I) - the question with which he emerged into this world has been answered; he knows: Soham (I am He). He is born ignorant; he dies a jnani (possessing spiritual knowledge).

Faith will grow only through good company

In order to acquire this knowledge, a pupil approached a Guru. The Guru asked him about the books he had studied. The young man replied, he had learnt the Geetha so well that he could recite it upside down. Then the Guru told him, "I do not believe I can help you. For, you have no faith Geetha, the word of God; how then can I expect you to have faith in my word', ' Read the Geetha, with faith, with intent to benefit by practising the teaching. Otherwise, it is sacrilege to handle the sacred message of God in a light-hearted manner. Faith can grow only if care is taken not to fall into evil company. Sath-sangathwe nissangathwam - through good company, acquire the capacity to be alone with yourself; that is the advice of Shankaracharya.

Once there was a hunter who had captured a baby bear and who brought it up as his pet with great love and care. The bear too reciprocated his love and behaved like a good friend for many years. One day, when he was traversing the jungle with his pet, who had grown up into a hefty beast, he felt overcome by sleep; so he laid himself down on the grass, asking the bear to see that he is not disturbed. The bear kept watch very vigilantly. It noticed a fly that flew round and round and settled on the nose of the master. The fly went off when it waved its thick heavy hand; but, it came again, and settled on the nose. The bear got enraged when repeated waves of the hand did not teach the fly that his master's nose was not the fly's resting place. At last, the bear could not bear the insolence any longer! His heavy palm came down with a thump on the nose, a devastating whack! The master died on the spot! That is the consequence of keeping company with the wild and the foolish. However affectionate they are, their ignorance will land you into disaster.

Among the Parsis, there is a story about a Guru and a pupil. The pupil prayed that he may be given some advice to make the pilgrimage to God easier and faster. The Guru sat silent for a while and then told him, "Go. Light that Lamp." The pupil tried his best, but he could not light it. It was filled with water, not oil. So, the Guru asked him to pour the water out squeeze the water from the wick, dry the wick, wipe the lamp clean, fill it with oil and then light it. The water is 'desire,' the Sun that can dry the wick is 'renunciation' and the flame of the lamp is 'Wisdom.' The Guru said, "This teaching is enough for you. You can go; may God bless you." Fill your mind with the desire to see God, be with Him, praise Him, glorify Him, and taste the Glow of His Majesty. There is no bliss higher than that.

40. Seva as saadhana

Date: 06 November 1967 / Location: Mumbai

THE Vedantha declares that the mind (Manas) leads man, either into the cage of bondage or into the vast open spaces of liberation. If it involves itself in sensual pursuits, it drags man down into the sub-human level; if it engages itself in seeking the higher truths, the deeper realities, the more lasting joys, then, it enables man to rise to the level of the Divine. Science deals with matter, jada (things), as distinct from the living, the chith (Conscious), having Chaithanya (Supreme Spirit). Those are the provinces of religion, of spiritual sadhana and yoga applied to mind control. This is the age of scientific advancement, when equal attention is not being paid to spiritual advancement, or religious progress. The jeeva is but the reflection of Deva; which means, man is but the reflection of God. Humanity is very proximate to Divinity: but, man seldom recognises this nearness. He allows his mind to lower him into the animal level, from which he straggled up through many births. A diamond may appear as a piece of glass; but, only those who do not know its value will use it as a paperweight and keep it on the table in the office room. Wise men will keep it inside an iron safe, under lock and key. Man is a diamond, not a piece of glass; he has to shine brilliantly, after going through the process of "cutting" or samskara (purificatory acts),

Contentment and happiness are attributes of mind

Samskara transforms man into God - manava into Madhava. We have a watch on our wrist, which costs Rs. 500 or 600 or even 1,000. The steel out of which the entire watch was made may cost only four annas; but, the samskara it underwent by means of human skill and intelligence raised its value and usefulness. Man too can transform himself into a priceless instrument for God-realisation through the proper use of his mind and intelligence. By the forceful alchemy of the mind, he can attain jnana (spiritual knowledge) and see the Truth that satisfies and illumines.

We feel that the people of our country will be happy, if we only provide them

with food, clothing and housing. We feel that they are suffering, because they have not got these things in an adequate measure. That is an illusion, for, contentment and happiness are attributes of the mind. The mind must be trained to achieve peace and acquire joy. Without such a mind, man is helpless even under the most affluent circumstances. A person may be strong, and charming; but, when he has lost his eyesight, he loses joy. There are many countries on the very peak of material civilization and are very proud about the heights which they have reached. But, have they acquired mental peace? Have they got rid of fear or hate, greed or pride? Of course, there must be a certain degree of comfort for man, physical and mental. But, gaining the things that give comfort should not be the aim of living; once that path is selected, wants multiply and satisfaction becomes a will-o'-the-wisp. The capacity to distinguish between right and wrong will be dulled; egoism will become sharp and strong. Thirst will increase with each quaff; hunger will gnaw more and more with each morsel of the food of material possessions. That is their real nature.

Ask yourself the basic question: Is there something that can be called sukha? Can it be attained by the accumulation of material things? No. Sukha (happiness), can be got and retained only through Atmajnana (the knowledge of the Self) through the Atma which is the source and spring of Anandha. We delude ourselves when we argue that happiness can be derived from things outside ourselves.

By losing your separateness, you lose misery

Life as man is the chance given to every one to achieve one glorious end, namely, realising the Atma and its Universality. He queries every one about his name and whereabouts; but, does not know an iota of his own identity. Who are you, really? You are not the body or the senses or the intellect or the mind, for you speak as if you own them and are different from them, when you say, my body, my senses, my intellect, my mind. He who is the master of all these is the 'I', the 'I' that makes every one else also feel similarly. With every breath, man inhales the consciousness that the Universal eternal Principle that pervades and persists in the entire Creation. That is why he is

repeating silently, Soham, with the inhalation and the exhalation, Soham. During deep sleep, two ideas, (the very duality) disappear. The idea of "that" and the idea of "this" go, leaving only the sense of 'I'; sa and ham fade out leaving only Om, in the sounds soham. That is the seed sound, the Pranava, which is the Pran (breath). Merge in that Om, the Primal Universal Sound and you lose your separateness and your misery and pain. That is the ultimate stage of man - his Antha Vedantha - the final stage of man, his Vedantha, his jnana. Man starts as a Brahmachari, a student of the Brahmic, the Athmic path; he enters the Grihastha (householder) stage, the stage of apprenticeship in the joys and pleasures of the world; then he promotes himself into the Vanaprastha (recluse in the forest) stage, of detachment and discrimination; that leads him on to the Sanyasa (ascetic) stage, of intense spiritual exercise. This ends in the consummation of Samyoga (merging in the Absolute), like the river merging in the sea, losing in the process, its taste, its form and its name. He who knows Brahman becomes Brahman; the river that enters the sea becomes the sea.

Fill every act of service with Prema

You are all engaged in service of one type or other and I know that you are frustrated with the result; you are not happy at the service you do, nor are the recipients happy when they receive the help. But, try to develop prema (unselfish Love), based on Sathya, Dharma and Shanthi; try to fill every act of service with that Prema, try to see every act of service that you receive with the eye of prema; then, there will be no frustration. The person who serves is the person served; you serve yourself when you serve another. You serve another because his suffering causes you anguish and by relieving it, you want to save yourselves from that anguish. Unless you have that anguish, your service will be hollow and insincere. Frustration is caused also by wrong diagnosis of the causes of suffering. A patient may be beating his head, for he is having excruciating pain in the stomach; his pain will not be diminished, if you apply some ointment on the head, imagining that his trouble is centred on the head which he was seen beating. Delay does not matter; discover the real root of the trouble and then apply the remedy. The real remedy for all troubles is a proper sense of values - first things first. Married couples think

they will be happy, when they get a child; but, that is but the beginning of a series of worries. They worry about his health, his habits, his schooling, his friends, his mate, his marriage, his prospects - and so on, in an endless chain. The mind multiplies the roots of worry, anxiety, and grief.

There can be no peace without eliminating the mind

We say 'peace of mind'; but, unless the mind is eliminated, there can be no peace. The mind is but a pattern of desires, warp and woof of wishes, resolutions, plans, ambitions, attempts, attachments. A young man of twenty with his two feet walks about free, wherever he likes. He marries and becomes a quadruped; his walk is rendered slow; it is circumscribed. He gets a child and he becomes six-legged. The more the legs the slower the movement, the nearer the ground, the greater the attachment to things earthy. You can develop detachment by dwelling on the great heritage of man; then, you will not engage yourself in low deeds and thoughts. Man is called in the Indian texts, manu-ja, he who is born of Manu, the great exponent of Dharma-shasthra. So, Dharma (righteousness) is his heritage; he has no right to deny Dharma or act contrary to it. Contemplate on that Dharma, on Sathya and Prema which are the foundations of that Dharma, and then, all your acts will be in consonance with real Bharatheeya culture. See your self in all and in yourself. That alone entitles you to be a sevak, to serve.

This expansive Prema was cultivated in our country, under the leadership of its sages and seers; so, many sadhaks (spiritual aspirants) were able to succeed in seeing God's virat swaruupa (Omnipresence) everywhere. For some years now, this Prema has become abridged and narrowed by egoism and greed, we have become so hard hearted that we are not affected at the sight of suffering and want. People have learnt the wrong attitude of separating themselves from others; so, this land of Annapoorna (abundance in food) has to go about from door to door, in foreign capitals, asking for food for the people.

Meditate on the God who fills the Universe

Try to offer people your Prema; they will respond with lasting gratitude. Give them clothes, houses - they are apt to lose them. Give them education; they may or may not use it for their good. But, give them Prema; they will imbibe it gratefully and fill their hearts with it and be happy as never before. You can grow in Prema, by building the mansion of your life on the four pillars of the Ramayana, the Mahabharatha and Bhagavatha and the Bhagavadgeetha. If you are not able to read these great books and assimilate them, do not worry. Books are only guide-posts, with road signs. They do not indicate the ups and downs met while traversing the roads indicated. That can be known only by actual experience. If you are not able to understand the big texts, I would advise you to simply contemplate on the wonder and beauty of God's handiwork, from the tiny worm to the most distant star, from the circulation of blood in one's own body to the movement of planets and solar systems. Meditate on the God who fills the Universe and transcends it; then, that glory will fill you and you can never more be small-minded or mean. Your acts and words will echo the glory of God. Seva that comes from such experience will certainly bear fruit.

The body is a house taken by you on rent. When your condition improves, you shift to a more comfortable house paying higher rent; when your condition deteriorates, you have to move into a house inferior to the one you now occupy. So earn more spiritual wealth and try to move into a more comfortable 'house' where you can lead a better life.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

41. As He Wills

Date: 22 November 1967 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

I HAVE selected you from among the assembled in order to shape you into Sevaks (volunteers) during the Birthday Festival that begins tomorrow. I have spoken many times before, about the discipline that I would like you to submit yourself to. You can examine yourself and decide how far you have succeeded in observing those rules of conduct. The world today is torn by factions and fear and it is imperative that the good are assured of peace and the general level of living is raised to a higher moral standard by the propagation of Dharma. People must become proficient in Sathya, Dharma, Shanthi, Prema and Ahimsa, weapons that can overwhelm the passions that have turned heart into a den of wickedness. This chance to become a Sevak here is but the first step in training in the proper use of these weapons. Do not imagine that this is a temporary responsibility, which you shoulder today and lay down in a few days. This is a form of worship into which you are initiated so that your hearts may be cleansed and God reflected therein. This training as a volunteer will lead you to see the bliss of Atmanandha and the Light of Reality. It will induce you to search for your own inner truth, your swaswaruupa (own natural form). All the acts you perform must be directed towards one end: drawing down on you the Grace of God. All the provisions stocked in the store-room in your house are there to meet one purpose: appease your hunger. So too all Karma is for attaining God.

Getting fixed in Faith is genuine education

But, caught in the darkness of Ajnana (spiritual ignorance), man mistakes the purpose. He imagines that he can be happy, if he caters to his senses; this is only self-deception. The ego is not the cause of this; the real culprit is the darkness produced by ignorance of the goal of life. Believe that God resides in every one as the Atma, which illumines his senses and the vision. Then, the darkness will disappear and Light will prevail. Learning the process of getting fixed in that faith is the genuine education. The others are lamps that have no flame, that cannot dispel darkness. They may be designated so, but that

name is misnomer. When you call yourself a Sevak, offering service to another, have also reverence in your mind that the person whom you serve is the Lord Himself in that form. This attitude is very helpful for the Sadhak. Manava seva is Madhava seva - the service of man is service of God. But, when? When we feel in the depth of heart that the person whom you serve is a wave of the same sea from which you derive your individuality, your taste, your name and form. I have called you in today and I am naming you as "Volunteers" in order to give you an opportunity to practise this Sadhana of Madhava seva through Manava seva. Do not therefore take this as a new authority conferred on you, or as a burden landed on your shoulders. Acceptance of the Will of God has its own advantage; it yields rich fruits. Hanuman did not become conceited when Rama selected him for the crucial southward search and when Rama gave into his custody the Ring to be given to Seetha (assuring him in the process that he would certainly succeed in discovering her); nor was he affected by fear, at the tremendous responsibility that was heaped on him. He just accepted what was given; he was neither happy nor unhappy. He felt that Rama the Lord knows all and so his duty was only to obey.

God's tests are for giving you greater Grace

You must cultivate the same attitude towards my commands and instructions. Be convinced that if you obey them strictly, you will attain victory. One evening Krishna took Arjuna far out of Dwaraka City and while they were alone together, He pointed at a bird flying over their head and asked him "Arjuna, isn't that a dove?" Arjuna agreed; he said it was a dove. Suddenly, Krishna turned towards him and said, "No, it is a crow." Arjuna concurred and said, "I am sorry, it certainly is a crow." Immediately, Krishna asked him, "A crow, no, it must be a kite. Is it not so?" and Arjuna promptly agreed. "Yes. It is a kite." At this, Krishna smiled and asked Arjuna, "Are you in your senses? What exactly do you see? Why you say, of the same bird, it is a dove, it must be a crow and it is a kite?" Arjuna said, "Who am I to dispute your statement? You can make it a crow even if it is not one, or, change it into a kite. I have found that the safest thing is to agree with you, in full faith. I know of no other course." It was only after this test, for unflinching faith that Krishna assured

himself of the credentials of Arjuna to receive the Geetha advice.

The inquiry about the identity of the bird was a test. God tests man so; you must welcome tests. Tests are only for giving you greater grace. They are not to be treated as punishments. It promotes your confidence. You enter a house and decide to live there, only after you are assured that the foundation is secure, is it not? When your faith is fixed, your life too will flow in peace.

Wishes can never win peace

All who come to Prasanthi Nilayam are your kith and kin, remember. Respect them, serve them with that attitude. To have such attitude you must have deep patience. Praise or blame, appreciation or criticism, you must bear all with fortitude. Never yield to anger or dispiritedness. The command is pre-eminent; have your mind fixed on that. The rest is but incidental. The Dharma shasthras lay down that women, the sick, those who are burdened with loads, and the aged have to be helped and given first preference. Even if the sick man is a decrepit low-born man, the Emperor has to give him the right of way and allow him to be served first; else, he invites punishment from the Gods. The aged have accumulated much more experience than you; they are filled with sweetness, like ripe fruits. The wise men or Jnanis have also to be served and revered. What is the sweetness, in these? It is the quality of Shantham, of being unruffled at the ups and downs of life.

The asceticism that you have to adopt is just this: Obey the Ajna, the order of the Lord. You have no need to fast and torture the body: can you kill the snake by beating the mound, which has it in its hole? Can torment teach you the truth? Control thoughts; divert feelings; canalise the currents of the impulses. The pendulum will stop its swing only when you stop winding the clock with its key. Stop winding; then the pendulum will remain at one point; the mind will remain at the Feet of God.

Wishes can never win peace; a wish is tiny seed from out of which a huge tree emanates, the tree in its turn scatters a crore of seeds, which sprout into crores of trees. Fry the seed and it will not sprout again. When wishes

multiply quick and fast, concentration is impossible; when water is poured on a height, it flows along the inclines, down into the hollows. Concentration is the reverse process: rolling a rock uphill. This requires unintermittent effort, unbroken attention, and ceaseless striving. Allow confidence to slacken but a moment - the rock will come rolling down.

Each volunteer should become a centre of inspiration

You have another great responsibility, too. This land, Bharath, has to guide others in selfless service, in the development of an attitude of detached devotion to duty. From ancient times, India is famous as the land of dedicated Karma, of holy living and thinking, of incessant subduing of the harmful passions surging in the mind, of the tireless pursuit of the goal of Peace. But, latterly, Indians too have been infected by the diseases prevalent in other parts of the world; they have started spuming holy company, sacred books and spiritual discipline. This is a tragedy; once again, the ancient modes of life have to be revived; the ancient attitudes have to be appreciated and adopted. That faith in the imperishable Atman (which is the reality of both the individual and the Universe) has once again to vitalise activities. Being Sevaks and volunteers, you must adhere to Truth, first and foremost. Whatever be the temptation, do not slide away from Truth. In fact, after wearing this badge as the sign of your dedication to service, you must not deviate from Sathya, Dharma, Shanthi and Prema. When a man takes up the role of Harischandra on the stage, he has to adhere to Truth so long at least as he is on the stage. So also, so long as you wear this badge, stick to these four qualities. Then, when you find how happy you feel, how well you are able to move with your fellow beings, you will yourself appreciate the path and stick to it. It is not only during a Navarathri or a Shivarathri or a Deepavali Festival, not only at Prasanthi Nilayam for a few days - but, always and everywhere, you must stick to these virtues. Each one of you will then be a centre of inspiration in your villages. Factions and fear will cease; all will be like brothers and sisters, through your silent influence and example.

Each little act of self-control is Sadhana

These badges must curb your conceit, not fan them into harmful pride. They are not symbols of authority; they are but pointers indicating that the wearer is a trustworthy friend, an efficient worker, a smiling kinsman, a devoted guide, an inspiration. Most of the people who come here are in distress, physical or mental. As mentioned in the Geetha, "Anithyam asukham lokam imamprapya bhajaswa mam". "Having come to this world, which is transitory and full of travail, worship Me, pray to Me." So they come seeking peace, joy and courage, hope, vitality and confidence. They must be welcomed with reverence and sympathy, love and consideration. Try to know that type of behaviour, which line of conduct, which attitude of service will please Me; then, follow that type, that line, that attitude. Then, your service too will be fruitful. I do not like people smoking and so, give up smoking; I do not like harsh language, loud noise, wild behaviour, demeaning conversation on low topics - so, avoid them. I like sweet soft low talk; so, practise that. Do not push or drag; do not just order about! Tell every one the reason why certain rules and disciplines have been laid down; try to convince and win the co-operation of people. Here, everything is part of sadhana and so, each little act of self-control helps advancement. Don't rush forward yourselves, into vantage positions near the dais; wherever you are you can win Grace, doing the duty allotted to you. By neglecting the duty and rushing forward, be warned that you are only denying yourself the Grace. I see all things everywhere; so, there is no need for you to push and rush to catch My eye.

What you feel, that you become

The Lord values the mental attitude behind each act. Yad bhavam, thad bhavathi - what you feel, that you become. Transmute every act into an item of puuja, of worship; then, derive maximum joy. Sai in every being; so, do not slight any. Revere and serve all, to the best of your ability. When some one calls out for water to slake his thirst and you offer him a cup, feel that you are offering it to Me; then, the act purifies you more and cleanses you. It is not the man in need that you serve; you are serving God, that is in you and him. Karma is the flower and Jnana is the fruit. The flower becomes the fruit, in the fullness of time. Only, one has to guard it and keep it free from pests. Charcoal is wood that has undergone but a part of the baptism of fire; let it

undergo that baptism to the full; it becomes white, light ash that flies with the wind into the four quarters. The purification of mind from the passions have to be taken up through the fire of Jnana until success is gained. In sadhana, there is no half-way house, no resting place.

Your installation on the throne of Atma-realisation, as the monarch of your own inner consciousness, is the consummation of sadhana of life itself. One can sacrifice everything for the sublime success. The Pandavas gave up the empire for which they struggled long and sacrificed four million lives on the battlefield, so that they may get enthroned as such monarch. They sought the peace of the Himalayas in the later phase of their life. Only by "giving up" can that status be won. The Upanishads say that immortality can be achieved, not by sacred acts, nor by virtuous progeny, nor by accumulated wealth, but only by "giving up," Thyaga. You have to give up all attachment to food and recreation, to I and Mine when you yearn for the Lord.

Voice of God can be heard in the silence alone

A picture printed on paper cannot be peeled off it; it becomes inherent in it. The Lord's name and form must be so imprinted on your heart. You wear the badge with this portrait on your chest; the original of the portrait must be worn on the heart, imprinted on the heart. The Gopees had done that. Prahladha too had achieved it. That is the reason why he did not wail or protest, when he was subjected to torture and torment; he saw, he heard, he felt, he knew only Marayana, the Lord. Try to develop that deep faith and devotion. One other point: In this Prasanthi Nilayam, you should see that Prasanthi is preserved. Emphasise this step in sadhana before all. In the silence alone, can the Voice of God be heard. Serve the thousands who are arriving here, in this spirit and with these objects in view; that is the way to obey the Will, the Ajna. The ajna (command) is the boat that will take you across the Sea of Change, into the Eternal and the Absolute.

42. The Garden of no-grief

Date: 23 November 1967 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Birthday - 42

BHAKTHI is the state of mind in which one has no separate existence apart from God. The Bhaktha's very breath is God; his every act is by God, for God; his thoughts are of God; his words are uttered by God, about God. For, like the fish which can live only in water, man can live only in God - in peace and happiness. In other media, he has only fear, frantic struggle, failure. The Nandhi (Bull) is the lower nature of man; when it is used as the vehicle of God it secures a place in front of the central shrine of God and it shares some of the adoration offered to God. It is only association with the Divine that can confer value and significance. The mind too gets illumined, and feels joy, peace or calm, only because the peace, joy and calm, which are the native characteristics of the Atma (God) within are reflected on it. There is no attempt on the part of man in recent times to grasp this truth and to gain the constant Awareness. A beast, when it falls into a slough, struggles to get out of it and save itself; but man, who has fallen into this slough of down-dragging desire, does not make any effort to lift himself up from it! Shiva is depicted in the Shasthras and Puranas as carrying a begging bowl! In fact, He is said to use a cranium as the bowl! What is He asking from man? He is the giver, He is the person who demands. He demands only what He has given - namely, a pure heart. He gave it pure; He wants it back as pure as when He gave it. He filled man with Love; He asks for that Love.

Surrendering all facilities to the Lord is Prapatthi

The Ramayana and the Mahabharatha teach the vast possibilities of Love and the bounds between which the Love has to flow, to irrigate the thought, word and deed. Dharma sets the bounds; it lays down the goal. Seetha stuck to Dharma, as fast as Rama did; Dhroupadhi stuck to Dharma as fast as Dharmaraja did. Mothers such as these suckled the heroes of Bharath, and so, this land became the nursery of sages. Seetha had supreme Bhakthi towards the Lord however far He was; Dhroupadhi lived every moment with and by Lord Krishna, the guardian of the Pandavas, however distant he was. The

lotus on the lake is far, far away from the Sun; but distance is no bar for the dawn of love; the lotus blooms as soon as the Sun peeps over the horizon. The moon is so far away, but, when the moon shines in the sky, children clap their hand and run about in glee, happy that 'Uncle' Moon is smiling on them. The aborigine in the forest shoots the birds; that is legitimate so far as his stage of life and his means of livelihood are concerned. But, the ascetic in the forest who is engaged in discovering the spring of Divine Love in himself will be committing a grievous wrong which will undermine his progress, if he denies love to the bird on the tree. So too, every profession, every state of life, each sex, each period of life as fixed by age - childhood, boyhood, adolescence, youth, middle age, old age - has duties and obligations, which set the norm and guide the individual to benefit himself and society. When Seetha was fixed in the Dharma of the wife, she saw Rama in all beings. Though she was surrounded by frightful female monsters, she did not notice them; though she was interned in a charming garden, named Garden of No-grief (A-shoka), she did not see any flower around her. Her eyes, her mind, her thoughts were filled with Rama only. This is the condition of Prapatthi - surrender of all faculties to the Lord.

The ego has to sacrifice itself so that man's divine nature can manifest itself. "Mine" is death; 'not mine' is immortality. Renunciation results in peace. The golden key of non-attachment opens the lock which keeps the door to heaven shut. "Give up; I shall fill the gap" says Jesus.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

43. Pilgrims! Do not tarry!

Date: 24 November 1967 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

WHEN Arjuna plaintively approached Krishna for courage and consolation, the Lord advised him, "manmanabhava" - "Fill your mind with Me. Let all urges be for Me, let all acts be dedicated to Me." The mind has no strength of its own; it has to lean on some person or thing all the time. It is like the stray cow that trespasses into field and eats off growing crops. If you feed it well in your own farm its trespassing habit will vanish. Your pet dog will wander in the bazaar for scrapings from dustbins, if you do not feed it full at home. Give the dog a nice full meal; it will lie under the porch and guard your house! The mind too can be weaned away from vicious desires if you feed it on good thoughts, good resolutions, tenderness and love. Then only will it serve your best interests.

Ramakrishna Paramahansa told an addict that he must not consume more than a given quantity of opium; he gave him a piece of chalk, to weigh every day the quantity of opium he can eat - no more, no less! But, he imposed a condition, whose usefulness in helping him to conquer the bad habit the addict did not realise then. It was that every time he used the weight he had to write on a slate, the Pranava (Om), before putting it on the scale of the balance. The fellow obeyed; the chalk was reduced in weight with every Om, until it was eliminated in full; the opium habit too was reduced out of existence! The Om also helped to transfer his attachment from the opium-induced tranquillity to the everlasting Bliss of God-intoxication.

Sensitive sympathy of a saint for his disciples

Man is on a long pilgrimage towards God. He moves from one life to another to the goal of Splendour. On the way he has to take shelter in many caravanserais, or rest-house, but, however attractive these may be, he cannot strike root but has to remind himself of the journey's end! Once when Samartha Ramadas was moving about the countryside with his disciples, those behind him saw a fine field of juicy sugar cane and entered it and

started pulling out the cane and crunching it with great relish. The owner of the field was naturally enraged at their behaviour and at the loss to which they were subjecting him; he fell upon them with a stout cane. The Master was sorry that they broke discipline so badly, drawn by the desire of the tongue for the sweet juice. Next day they reached Emperor Shivaji's Palace, where a great welcome awaited the Guru and his followers. Shivaji offered to attend personally to the Guru during his ceremonial bath; when Ramadas undressed, Shivaji was shocked to find broad red marks, indicating that he had been beaten! Such was the sensitive sympathy of the great saint that he received on his back the blows meant for his pupils; Shivaji sent for the owner of the field of cane; and, when he stood shivering in fear before the Emperor and his Guru, Ramadas was requested by Shivaji to inflict on him any punishment he liked. But, Ramadas accepted that wrong was committed by his disciples, that they should not have allowed the cane to attract them into theft. He blessed the farmer and granted him a boon that his lands will be tax-free for ever! The sandalwood tree will lend its fragrance even to the axe which cuts it down. That is the nature of the good and the great. Follow their example: do not merely bang the table in your lectures, asserting the glory of the sons and daughters of India. If you are hypocritically banging the table, the table will laugh at you and bang back at you - action and reaction being equal and opposite.

Do the karma which will make more karma unnecessary

Ants build their city grain by grain, selecting the finest mud for the purpose, the result being in impregnable rockfort, where they can live in security. You should also gather, grain by grain, act by act, the wherewithal to build a secure future for yourselves, a mansion of Dharma. You must swallow the drug that will render drugs unnecessary; you should do the Karma, which will make further Karma unnecessary. But, the drug that is eaten now intensifies the drug habit; one Karma leads to a thousand, in order to cover up the consequences. The Incarnation has come to point the way out of this vicious circle.' Hand over to Me your hundred thousand paltry Karmas and worries - each one, a paisa. If they are genuine and sincere, I shall take them all and give you a thousand-rupee currency note (Grace) which is lighter and easier

to keep. Of course even if one pain or grief or worry or fear is counterfeit, the Note will not be given. The Upanishads were not composed or collected by persons who craved fame or fortune; nor are they the vapourings of idlers and scribblers. They have the true ring of actual experience. They arose out of compassion for others wandering in the wilderness, out of concentration on the means of liberation from the dual chain of tears and triumph. Those upon whom the people are traditionally depending for guidance have become callous, forgetting their task, or involved in darkness and dialectics. So, there is need to spread the message of Love, which is the message of God. Simplicity is the sign of Divinity. Pomp, paraphernalia, jaw-breaking formulae, abracadabra, dark mysterious mumblings - these are alien to the spirit of true religion. These are tricks by which man wants to monopolise or gain God.

Control of senses increases efficiency

A bottle gourd when green will sink in water; but, a dry one will float. The mind is the gourd. Dry it in the sun of knowledge, let the weight of attachment, the green of 'greed' disappear; you can float happily over the waves of care. Journeying through life without knowing the control of the senses is like venturing to ride a brakeless car. Disaster is certain. Control increases efficiency; removal of embankments, bonds, brakes, limits - this robs life of sweetness and sense of adventure. How can you play football without rules, 'hands,' 'offside,' 'foul play' and similar limits on freedom to hit and kick? The five elements - ether, air, fire, water and earth - are the vesture of God, as well as of Man. Use them, moderately and with wisdom, with fear and humility. Their characteristics, for which they are sought after, are sabdha (sound) of the sky, representing akasha (ether); sparsha (touch) of vayu (wind); ruupa (form) of Agni (Fire), rasa (flavour, taste) of Ap (water); and gandha (smell) of prithvi (earth). Even these, sound and others, have to be moderate if they have to confer comfort. Care kills quicker and surer than disease. Man misuses his intelligence and memory to grieve over the past and plan far into the future. Thereby he loses his heritage of peace and joy.

Creation, preservation and merging are the three forms of the Divine Will. By Karma yoga, you grasp the meaning of creation and the created; by Bhakthi yoga, you understand the preserver and the preserved; by Jnana yoga, you merge into the principle from which you have emerged.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

44. Naamasmarana - The Panacea

Date: 26 November 1967 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

DIAMOND cuts diamond. Thorn removes thorn. Karma cures Karma. Karma, derided as causing the dualities of grief-joy, pain-pleasure, birth-death, also brings about liberation from the chain of duality. Karma causes both bondage and liberation. The sun rises; that act unfolds the petals of the lotus flower, but, folds the petals of the kumudha flower! The sun sets; that act makes the good men hurry home to the company of their family, but, it makes bad men hurry out of their dens to the places where they revel and rob. The palm falls on the mridhuanga; the sound is pleasant to the ear. It falls on an empty tin; the sound grates the ear. Karma ruins; Karma saves. What is the nature of the Karma that saves? Holding fast to Shivam (God), as the boy Markandeya did. By this, you can foil death and earn eternal joy. What is the nature of the Karma that ruins? Holding fast to Shavam (corpse). By this, you earn endless toil in slime and sorrow. What is Shavam? It is the delusion that you are the 'body'; what is Shivam? It is the consciousness that you are the Indweller, the Inner Motivator, the Anthar-yamin. How can you hold fast to Shivam? By fixing your mind on the Name of the Lord, the Indweller. By the repetition of the Name, with the alert awareness of the Glory It summarises. The Name is the container of immeasurable potence. The Word has much power; in fact, even common words denoting things do possess some potency. For example, when the word denoting some thing very sour to the taste is pronounced within hearing, you find that your tongue waters. When the word denoting some thing that is awfully disgusting is pronounced within your hearing, you are afflicted with nausea. When such is the effect of the pronunciation of common words, what can we say of the tremendous transformation that takes place when the sweet sustaining Name of the Ever-present Indweller is pronounced! It purifies, it cleanses; it elevates; it spreads its fragrance in the atmosphere; it inspires.

Mind must be transmuted into the essence of Godhead

The Name must, however, flow in the mind in an uninterrupted stream.

Namasmarana is a yoga (process of uniting with God); that is to say, it is a means of chiththa viriththi nirodha - of calming the agitations of the mind, subduing the waves of emotions and feelings. The Nama (Name) must always be associated, while intent on the smarana (remembering, recalling), with the Nami (the Named One). It is not a mere sound; it is a significance, the symbol of a Form, of a Fact. All the obligatory as well as optional acts pertaining to the process of 'living' can be gone through, with the Name-awareness as the inspiring background. The mind must be merged in the Godhead; it must be transmuted into the essence of Godhead. When the branch of a tree rubs against another, heat is generated and in the depths of a forest, fires are started when this heat grows strong. Rub a stone over another; heat is generated. But, the process must be without break; breaks only decrease the heat. So, the repetition of the Name in the mind must be without break. Then the fire of Jnana (Realisation of the Reality) will burn out all weakness and delusion.

Indulal Shah spoke to you now of the World Conference of Sathya Sai Organisations to be held at Bombay, 1968. Such Organisations have been established and are working in many countries in order to spread Light and Hope among all peoples. For me, all countries are equally dear; the Universe is the Body of God. Ideas like my country, are all for limited minds, intellects that are bound within boundaries.

There are thousands of institutions that profess to spread Bharatheeya Culture and preserve and publicise it; they are mostly engaged in campaigns for collection of funds. In the Sathya Sai Organisations, money is not the criterion. It need only your hearts, for My Residence and Happiness. I do not like other temples or altars. Purify the heart, by Namasmarana; I shall come, and dwell therein.

We call the home, BHA VAN. The word has two syllables - BHA and VAN. If there is no BHA (Bhagavan - God) in the home, if the light of God does not shine therein, it is only a VAN or a jungle.

45. The treasure under your feet

Date: 1967

ALL acts must be done as offerings to him, dedicated to Him, prompted, planned, executed and blessed by Him. The smarana (remembrance) of the Name will help this Sadhana. The name has to be repeated with the heart yearning for the Named. It should not be like a tape-recorder reeling off the names of a gramophone plate that has stuck, repeating the same note. Know that this life is for realising Him, not for winning petty triumphs. Your ideal, your determination and your activity, all three must be directed to the same consummation, the attainment of Supreme Bliss. The Name will make all activity as welcome as worship; it will add witness to worship itself; it will concretise the Named. It will confer the Wisdom that reveals the Truth. The sweetness of the Name is appreciated most by those who walk the path of Bhakthi. Once Jnanadev and Shanthadev happened to go together through a dense forest; they were both overcome by severe thirst but, could not discover any source of water, except a deep ruined well, with water far too deep and the sides overgrown with bush and briar. Jnanadev assumed the form of a bird, flew in and slaked his thirst. Shanthadev, who was a great Bhaktha, yearned for the Grace from the Lord whom He called agonisingly by Name; the Lord heard the prayer. The waters of the well rose and overflowed, to the place where the Bhaktha was, he could slake his thirst and move on.

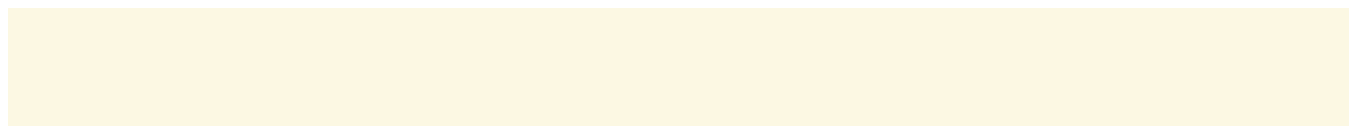
God is undefinable by Names or Forms

The magnet cannot draw to itself a bit of iron that is covered with rust and dust. You cannot yearn for God when your mind is ladden with the rust of material desires and when the dust of sensual craving sits heavy on it. Clear the rust, know the Glory of the God and repeat His Name, in the silence of the heart. Any one of the Names which denote Him can be selected. Do not listen to people who canvass for one particular Name and cavil at others. Do not be misguided by people who make pompous polysyllabic formulae and recommend them as superior to other similar Names. Vasudeva, Krishna, Gopal, Gopeevallabha, Govind, Giridhari - all these indicate the Lord who is

known to most as Krishna. But, Meera was affected most by one Name: Giridhari. That gave her inexhaustible joy, more than any other name. There is no superior or inferior grade of Names so far as God is concerned. You must have noticed that I do not recommend any one name for adoption by you; no, I do not insist on the Sai Name, either of this body or the previous body. All Names are the names of Sai Baba, they are all mine. This is the greatness of the Sanathana Dharma (Eternal Religion) - this insistence on the Oneness behind all the apparent multiplicity. The Atma that it declares to be the basic Truth does not contradict the doctrines of **any** faith. God is unlimited by space or time. He is undefinable by names or forms. He owns all names and will respond to any one of them. Picture Him in any form while meditating on him; He assumes that form, while conferring Grace. It is because India stressed these characteristics of the Highest Principles that she has been for centuries the Beacon of Spiritual Light and Hope. Now we find anxiety, fear, faction, hate and vengeance stalking across all countries. Neighbours hate each other; members of the same family hate each other and fight among themselves. Villages are torn by factions, they fight among themselves. Nations are arming wildly and breeding hatred among themselves. Man has reduced himself to the status of a wild beast. No two minds are willing to cooperate in common tasks. The spark that arises in the individual mind has spread a world-wide conflagration of hate and greed. This has to be scotched in the individual, the family, the village, the city, the nation - in fact wherever it raises its head. Sathya, Dharma, Shanthi and Prema can put out this fire. Man is suffering, because he is not aware of the treasure he has in himself. Like a beggar ignorant of the millions hidden under the floor of his hovel, he is suffering dire misery.

Each and every conscious being has a Dharma of its own. Man's Dharma is to realise his own Reality. The word Manava remindshim of this. Ma (ignorance), na (without), va (action) - He who acts without ignorance or ajnana, that is, He who is jnani is a Man.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba



46. Truth and Love

Date: 20 December 1967 / Location: Ernakulam (Kerala)

THE conference of the Office-Bearers of the Sathya Sai Organisations in Kerala State has been called in order to assess how far the resolutions made at Madras Conference at the All-India level are put into practice and in order to prepare the Organisations for the World Conference that is to be held in May 1968. I have come amidst you because this is an appropriate occasion when I can give you the joy of Darshan. You know that these organisations - Seva Samithis, BhajanaMandalis, Seva Sanghams - are for awakening in man the consciousness of the Divinity inherent in him and to encourage him to cultivate it, so that he could blossom into a real Sadhaka and then into a Sadhu (detached, devoted, virtuous, wise, aspirant), and finally into a Liberated Personality merged in the Supreme. You are about a hundred and fifty in number; your President said that the number of Organisations is still small, but I am not enamoured of mere numbers. For, this is not like any other Organisation. This does not seek to establish a new cult or sect, a new type of Japa or Dhyana, a novel ritual, an initiation that separates people as 'disciples' within the fold and 'noninitiates' without the fold. It seeks to restrain Thamoguna (dullness, ignorance, and all the evils that arise from these) and Rajoguna (passion, violent emotion, desire, egoism and consequent evils); it instills in men the Truth that all are kin in Atma, that the stranger is but oneself in another habiliment, and that service to another is the best service that one can do to oneself. All are limbs of one body, nourished by the self-same life-blood, motivated by the same Will, the Will of God; bound by the same Divine Law. That is the Vishwaruupa (Cosmic Vision), that one must see and experience: God in all, God everywhere. That endows you with everlasting Anandha.

God is the Father, mankind the children

Feelings of hatred, malice, envy and pride that create separation between men who are kin, arise from identification with the body. You feel and believe you are the body; you know your body is separate from the other bodies; your

hunger, your thirst, your comfort, your family, your community, your state - 'thus, you create bounds for your love, and crib yourselves, treating all outside the bounds as enemies, strangers, competitors. But the source is one, the sustenance is one: God the Father, mankind the children. Pay attention to the Fatherhood, more than to the brotherhood. That will underline the brotherhood more and more in your heart and remove the poison of distinction that has come through ignorance. Man is a pilgrim, who has already come a long way from birth to birth. The journey so far accomplished decides how far he has to go still. If he has lost his way and meandered into the deserts or jungles, he will have a great distance to travel yet. If he has been led right, his pilgrimage will end soon successfully. Cultivate sympathy with fellow-pilgrims, seek to know the right path; learn to guide and be earnest to reach the goal, safe and quick.

Don't have crookedness in your speech

These organisations are meant to broaden your love, to canalise your activities along lines of constructive service performed, as worship, not to confer on some people more power over others, or greater control over the activities of other members, or for the display of the devotion of some people. All must be conscious of this, all the time. Help the weak and the unwary at all times.

You have two eyes in your consciousness, namely, Sathya and Ahimsa. They are the guides which will take you to the goal, the two lights, the sun and the moon of the inner firmament. If you want to know the way in which you have to observe Sathya or Truth in speech, look into the Geetha. It tells you that the best speech is "anudvegakaram vakyam" (speech that does not create pain or anger or grief to others). The Shasthras also say, "Sathyam bruyath, priyambruyath na bruyath Sathyam apriyam" - "Speak the truth, but speak pleasantly. Simply because a statement will be welcome to the hearer, don't speak it out to win his approval; if speaking truth will cause grief or pain, keep silent." That is the vow of truth in ordinary daily life.

Don't have hypocrisy or crookedness in your speech. Both unpleasant truth

and pleasant untruth have to be avoided. Sathya is God Himself, as the Shruthi says, Sathye sarvam prathishtitham - "All this is established on the firm foundation of Truth," say the Vedas. So, see that no trace of falsehood contaminates your transactions in these organisations. Truth is My nature, My Mission, My Message. Organisations bearing My Name have to be strictly adhering to Truth. Ahimsa (non-injury) is another phase of Sathya. When once you are aware of the kinship, the Oneness in God, the fundamental Athmic unity - no one will knowingly cause pain or distress to another. Let your Organisations promote Love, scatter Love, be fragrant with Love, and preach the Gospel of Love, through example.

The one advantage that Man has over lower animals, is the vast treasure of human experience he has inherited from his ancestors through language. This is the treasure called Shasthra; if he ignores Shasthra, he is doomed to drag out an animal existence.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

47. Spontaneous Service

Date: 20 December 1967 / Location: Ernakulam

HIS morning I spoke to you about the basic outlook that you should have, when you carry on the various activities of the Sathya Sai Organisations; now I shall go into more details, so that you can chalk out various programmes of work, on behalf of the Samithis and Sanghs and Mandalis, in your own places.

Members spoke now about the irreverent and wild activities of students and the need to divert their activities and adventures into channels which will make them useful and worthy citizens. They are but imitating the elders and leaders. They find their parents and teachers fighting with others to gain some ends or fighting among themselves to gain superiority or power. So, they too fight with others and among themselves. The parents, teachers and elders must set a good example. Otherwise all this schooling and college-going activities are sheer waste, nay, positively harmful.

There is a conscience in man, whispering fight advice, restraining unjust hands, which man has almost succeeded in silencing; but, it is the voice of God; it can never be made dumb. Make the children cognisant of it. In Kerala, there is a practice, still happily existing in rural parts, of the elders gathering the children around them every evening and spending an hour or so reciting aloud the stothras in praise of God. It is essential that it must be revived. Time thus spent in is well spent. It will give great peace and joy. Plant a fruit tree; you get fruits therefrom. Plant neem trees; you cannot expect them to yield oranges! Sow falsehood, fear, faction - you reap the same.

Perform acts of sympathy without fanfare

Samithis can hold classes for children and tell them stories from the Upanishads and Epics, teach them Bhajans, and get dramas enacted by them on Puranic themes. Let them also develop reverence towards parents, teachers and elders. The home atmosphere must be made purer, more holy. They must learn by observation that their parents are happy and without

anxiety because they have full faith in God and they know that whatever happens is for the best. On Sundays, you can gather the children and teach them, in an attractive way, religious texts. You can give them some nutritious milk also at that time, so that they can get both Ksheeram and Saram (Milk and Essence).

The doctors among you can serve the poor by treating them without insisting on payment; give the poor all the attention and care that you lavish on the rich, paying patients. Do it for the sake of God; feel that it is the Puuja you are offering Him. The lawyers among you can help those, who for want of a skilled advocate, have to go unfended or have to suffer at the hands of unscrupulous men. Do not publish these acts of sympathy; do them spontaneously without fanfare. That is more precious than demonstrating your service with the help of headlines and photographs. These reduce the worth of deeds of compassion. You must be uncomfortable, when those around you are unhappy; when you ease their discomfort, you are making them happy and making yourself happy, isn't it ? Similarly, you must be happy, when those around you are happy. This is more difficult than the previous one; but it is the sign of the truly good.

Service done to the disabled is a sadhana

It is your duty to recognise all men as your kin and to share your skill with others, so that the maximum benefits accrue therefrom. The skill is a trust, which must rescue all. Service done in homes for the disabled, the defectives, the feeble minded, the delinquents, the orphans, the refugees - is indeed very beneficial and a good Sadhana. So too, in jails and hospitals. Visit these places often, give solace and strength; light lamp of devotion in the inmates. Do Bhajan; help them to write to their homes, give them books for reading or read books for them, be the kith and kin of those who have none whom they can call their own. Your smile will be a lighted candle in their darkness.

Women devotees, if they have the enthusiasm and support, can start Mahila Sathsangs not only for Bhajans and study of sacred texts and books, but for service of women. Go among the poor in the slums and spread light and joy

therein. Gather the helpless girls and try to provide them with some means of honourable livelihood. Sweeten their lives with bhajan and the Sadhana of japa and dhyana. Women too have a right to know that they are the Atma, encased in human form, and they too can tap the strength, the joy and the peace that the Atma holds. Inculcate in them the prayer habit; that will cleanse the mind of all impurities, and make God shine in His full splendour.

48. God, Ever Near

Date: 21 December 1967 / Location: Tirupunithura

THE two functions happening here today, for which you have called Me, are both interesting, because one deals with the physical needs of man and the other, the spiritual. The Foundation Stone which I laid just now at the Hospital for the Children's Ward will, under the care of the Health Minister who is here, soon become a source of solace for the suffering. The Prayer Hall which I am now proceeding to open will afford solace for the mind, and strength and steadfastness in all endeavours that require courage and faith in a Higher Power that rules the Universe. Spiritual health is preserved and promoted by attention to three Gunas: Sathwa, Rajas and Thamas.

Health is preserved and promoted by attention to three humours: Vatha (wind), Pittha (bile), and Kapha (phlegm). Thri-dosha has to be avoided, that is to say, the three humours must not get vitiated or unbalanced. A healthy body is the best container for a healthy mind; illness makes the mind agitated and anxious. The material and the spiritual are the two pans in the balance; they have to be attended to, in equal measure, at least until a certain stage of progress is attained in spiritual development.

Service to man can be done in either of these ways; but, serving him, by example is best of all. Do not be a bad example to your neighbours or family members. Be good and radiate goodness. That is why, when the education of a pupil was over, the teacher in ancient times exhorted the pupil to speak the truth and observe righteousness (Sathyam vadha, Dharmam chara). Because after the period of study, the young person is to engage in works, so, he has to be given the most beneficial advice, at the appropriate moment. The truth must be spoken, without hypocrisy and deceit; there should be no motive to injure.

Service has to be done with humility and reverence

Acts must also be regulated by the over-all supremacy of righteousness. He is

asked not to neglect the knowledge he has acquired, but to ruminate on it and cultivate it more and more, by putting it to practice. "Treat the mother as God; treat the guest as God." These are important declarations, which must be honoured. And, then, about the gift of service, the teacher has some very fine advice to give. Give in reverence; give in plenty; give with modesty; give as to a friend; give without any thought of reward. Do not give ostentatiously. The service in the Hospital, the service in the Bhajan Group - all have to be done, with humility and reverence. Then only can they yield chiththa- suddhi (purification of mind and thought), which is the main benefit derivable from Seva.

The constant recital of the Name of God - any of the million Names by which He is identified by human imagination or intelligence - is the best means of correcting and cleansing the mind of man. That is why the poet sang, "O, tongue! You are a great connoisseur in tasting and appreciating desirable tastes. I shall tell some that you will like most; it is true; it is extremely advantageous information for you. Pronounce the nectarine words, the Names of God, Govinda, Damodara, Madhava, and derive exquisite joy."

The individual and the universal are one

By means of the Name, you can keep God ever near you. Prayer and Puuja follow the recital of the Name, for the Glory and grace of God draw you to adore Him and to rely on Him for all your needs. In the beginning, the Adored and the Adorer are distant and different; but, as the Sadhana becomes more confirmed and consolidated, they commingle and become more and more composite. For, the individual and the Universal are one; the wave in the sea. Merging fulfils. When merged, the ego is dissolved; all symbols and signs of the particular like name, form, caste, colour, creed, nationality, church, sect and the rights and duties consequent thereon, will fade.

For such individuals, who have liberated themselves from the narrowness of individuality, the only task is the uplift of humanity, the welfare of the world and the showering of love. Even if they are quiet, the state of Bliss in which they are, will shower bliss on the world. Love is in all, Love is of all, Love is all.

